

Sidamma- Asha Fellowship –Proposal (2017-2018)

Background: Sidamma has been working with the marginalized Irula Tribal communities in Tamil Nadu for more than 12 years. She has been supported by Asha Austin for five years (2009-2010; 2010-2011; 2011-2012; 2015-2016; 2016-2017), for a total of Rs 12,60,000, towards a monthly stipend.

Key Achievements: Sidamma's work includes freeing bonded laborers, mainstreaming children into the educational system by providing motivation educational centers. With her intervention, an Irula movement has emerged that is better organized to pursue indigenous legal rights from exploitative landlords. In 2004, Sidamma helped release over 1,000 bonded laborers employed in the rice mills in Tamil Nadu. With her help, the plight of the bonded laborers reached the Parliament and the laborers were ultimately released and rehabilitated. Recently, she has worked tirelessly to rehabilitate Irula tribes affected by recent floods in Tamil Nadu in 2015 and 2016.

Overall Plan for the year of 2017

- About 250 Irulas in Pudiya Gummudipoondi were affected by Bird Flu in Mar/Apr 2017. Four of them died. Many of them received treatment at Government Hospital (GH), Egmore hospital and Roypettah Hospital. The Irulas from this area were evacuated and have been given a plot of land by the Government. Sidamma will be working to raise money to build huts/ homes for them. She will also be working to obtain compensation for the kids whose parents died as a result of the bird flu.
- Sidamma is also collaborating with 2 other organizations DBA and Quinoa based out of Europe. They send volunteers to the organic farm (Bharathi Trust Resource Center) run by Sidamma. They stay in the farm for a few months and spend time learning organic farming methods. Sidamma was invited by these 2 organizations to go to Europe. She was in Europe from April through June 2017. She was there to share and teach various organic farming methods to volunteers, discuss bonded labor and human rights issues.
- Sidamma has a lot of "follow up" work remaining from the flood/cyclone rehabilitation. Irulas from Sorakapettai have been allocated land by the government but haven't been provided with any housing yet. She is also working to get them ration cards. While they have water, electricity is still an issue. She will be working with Orora to provide them solar lamps. Sidamma is also looking for alternatives to educate the children from these communities.
- She is working on trying to get free education for the children of Irula Tribes in the Thiruvallur district.
- Irula Sarpam Leaders Meeting- Occurs quarterly. She plans to attend the Sarpam leaders meetings. These are village level meetings with the panchayats where they

discuss bonded labor issues, and other issues related to number of children needing education etc.

- Sidamma is an advisor to the Un-organized Worker's Federation. The union comprises of agricultural laborers, scavengers, and construction workers. They meet monthly to educate workers on government schemes, control human rights abuse, and discuss issues like alcohol /drug abuse. Sidamma will be attending these meetings on a monthly basis.
- Sidamma will be working with Orora Global to train the Irula women to assemble solar lamps sold by Orora thereby enabling them to be local entrepreneurs and creating more livelihood opportunities.