

# Site Visit in 2015

## Siddamma in 2013 - 2014

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Siddamma has not had any financial support since 2012 since Asha Austin stopped funding her in 2012. The only help she had is a few volunteers from Europe who have been traveling down to help her. She has struggled quite a bit on the personal front but because of the support of her children who are now earning, she has been able to continue some of her work with the Irulas.

## Bharathi Trust Resource Center

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- The organic farm is currently trying to sustain itself with the sales of the produce that is grown on the farm. This amounts to Rs.65,000/- per year.
- The farmers on the Bharathi trust organic farm are paid very less compared to neighboring farm. So, not many farmers are willing to work at Bharathi Trust now.
- There is a huge problem of pests, bores and pigs entering the farm. The farm badly needs a fence to avoid huge loses with crop getting eaten up.
- Siddamma has a few interesting ideas on making the farm fully sustainable including a grinding mill which can earn revenue.





- Two or three officials from TN Agriculture Department generally bring seniors and others to the farm to learn and observe the procedures. TN Agricultural Department regularly buys 40-50 k INR worth of seems/ rice from BTRC farm.
- Last year's produce include Tovar daal, Wheat and black gram
- BTRC has been able to spread the Organic word to the local farmers. However, the regulations and incentives favor cash crops like sugar cane and others that rely on chemical pesticides. The government is leaning towards GMO and is a huge struggle for organic farmers.
- TN (unlike Kerala and Karnataka) seems to have no strict zoning which allows only farmers to buy farm lands. This is leading to lesser farmers and farm land and more migration towards other sectors like construction, factory work, etc.

## Siddamma's focus in 2015

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### A) Supporting 20-25 new Irula (tribe) villages

- 1) 20 to 25 new villages have contacted S for help
- 2) The support request generally falls under these specific categories
  - + Bonded labor, salary issues, slavery,
  - + Awareness of their rights and privileges as a citizen, ration, kids education
  - + Accidental death and injury, threats, legal cases and abuse cases
- 3) She is well known and is generally reach out for help. The specific issues will be known in the coming weeks/ months to then cater to the most urgent needs
- 4) She will send us the list of the villages by December 11
- 5) Generally she trains a bunch of self-starters and guides them to then take over their community and handle the local effort where it is possible.
- 6) It generally takes 2-4 years from the time a village approaches her.
- 7) However, the progress duration is getting compressed with experience
- 8) Some issues (that ASHA may be interested):  
Sumangali Chitta: Young girls are sent for work with a promise of taking care of their weddings when they grow older. Leads to exploiting and child labor,

### B) Un-Organized Worker's federation (UOWF)

- 1) Siddamma is an advisor to the UOWF
- 2) UOWF is membership based union that meets regularly to:
  - + Promote workers' rights
  - + Educate workers on government schemes

+ Control human rights abuse

3) She to send out a report on social impact of the work done by them

## Irulas and Renewable Energy

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Given that several Irulas were moved into settlements where do not have good access to electricity, Siddamma has been helping identify people who are not connected to electricity and how their homes can be connected to renewable power.

- **Senjiagram:** This Irula community was relieved from being slave laborers and now live in houses in dark neighborhoods. Siddamma is currently working on making this community a “Solar Village” so that the whole community can be lit up with solar power.
- **Pallarverkadu:** This Irula community lives in coastal regions of Tamil Nadu and are also not connected to electricity. Siddamma is helping these fishermen in this community with solar power lanterns which they can carry with them when they leave home at 4am in the morning, charge it on their boats during the day and bring it back home to use from 6pm to 11pm.



## Awards

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Each year, the U.S. Department of State honors outstanding individuals around the world who are fighting the end of human trafficking. Siddamma was awarded the TIP 2015.

<http://www.tipawards.org/kari-siddamma/>