Site Visit Report - Fellowship Siddamma, December 2022

Site Visit Report conducted by Project Steward, Sowmya Suryanarayanan

- I met Siddamma in Chennai, India at my residence on December 28, 2022.
- She arrived in the vehicle funded by Asha, Austin. I took some pictures with Siddamma and the vehicle- unfortunately, I lost those pictures.
- Siddamma spent ~3 hours talking about her goals, progress, and various issues she is facing on the ground.
- She attended the Unorganized Workers General Body Meeting in Trichy.
- Many of the Irula women in Thiruttani who work in farms collecting banana leave after marriage got together and have made a successful business out of grinding grains to make porridge flour. Geetha, Siddamma’s close friend and social activist gave them the money to purchase grains. These group of women are now selling porridge flour to the locals and at local hospitals.
- Sarpam Meeting: Siddamma attended the Sarpam Sangam meeting which was also attended by the Director of Tribal Department. The women who sell porridge flour were present at the meeting. The Director was happy to see their successful small-scale venture and said he would make recommendations to the Govt to purchase porridge flour twice a day and deliver to local jails.
- Forest law was passed by the Central Govt, making Irulas eligible to get land in the forests. Though land is technically available, they still cannot occupy the land. Mahesh who is an Irula from Krishnagiri is working on getting them a piece of land in the forest.
- The local Irula women planted an herbal garden. Siddamma trained them in setting up this herbal garden. They planted the following:
  - Insulin
  - Poonameesai
  - Ranakalli
  - Tulan
  - Lemongrass
  - Aloevera
  - Vicks Tulsi

The Irula women will be selling these herbs locally. Siddamma helped set up this garden in several districts including Cuddalore.
- Siddamma introduced millet growing to farmers.
- Five out 16 cows died in the Bharathi Trust Organic Farm have died. They gave traditional medicine to the cows but weren’t able to save five of them.
- Siddamma has been going to a local rice mill to process/refine the rice grown at her farm. Unfortunately, the rice mill owner has fallen sick and is closing his shop. He wants to give the mill equipment to Siddamma at no cost. He knows that Siddamma has always wanted to set up a rice mill and is happy that his machinery would help the Irulas and their small business venture. Additional masonry work will be needed to set up the rice mill and Siddamma estimates ~Rs 2 Lakhs, though she hasn’t obtained formal quotes.