**REIMAGINING THE GOOD CITY FROM ENNORE CREEK**

Interview Transcript

**Interview Information**

Interviewer/s: Gajendran V. and Raju K

Place of interview: Indhira Gandhi Kuppam (IG Kuppam), Ennore.

Geo Coordinates: 13.190155 N, 80.313091 E

Date of interview: 16.04.2023

Transcription by: RK

Audios:

1[.230416\_Housing\_IndhraGandhiKuppam&AIR\_Resettlement\_sites\_1.1\_GV,RK.m4a](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yeKRHHPRK3rleLHwMDpv2sQa3at24V-u/view?usp=sharing)

01:27:18 hours

2.[230416\_Housing\_IndhraGandhiKuppam&AIR\_Resettlement\_sites\_1.2\_GV,RK.m4a](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zFJdVnxr2Q1is8XaMiB9HpgcoX_jj4B5/view?usp=sharing)

 00:04:23 hours

**Interviewee Information**

Name:

Pseudonym: R

**Interview note:**

Other reference places:

1. [AIR Nagar](https://maps.app.goo.gl/X6oiPUH3YSg7yUCD7); 13.187214 N, 80.312656 E

2. [NTO Kuppam](https://maps.app.goo.gl/SgvSot3JQD2Nx5g4A): 13.144662, 80.300442

3. Indira Gandhi Kuppam ([old](https://maps.app.goo.gl/76yVBY8knyTZ7GYz7)): 13.198041N, 80.320507 E

**Transcription note:**

R is residing in the Indira Gandhi Kuppam Resettlement site in a rental house, where the housing policy is quite different from others where the community was given separate housing for the community. She generally speaks about the housing of the AIR nagar; the Tsunami resettlement site. R sees the Indira Gandhi Kuppam Resettlement site as better housing and Housing policy. R was allotted houses in the AIR nagar.But she was allotted houses in AIR Nagar, which she has rented to someone else. Have given Pseudonyms to the names referred in the interview and updated in the interview log.

*Audio 1: 01:27:18 hours*

*230416\_Housing\_IndhraGandhiKuppam&AIR\_Resettlement\_sites\_1.1\_GV,RK.m4a*

**-00:00:00**

GV: Earlier you were with Arunodaya Organisation, now what kind of projects/work are you doing?

R: Earlier worked on the issues concerned with Tsunami, the ‘Action Aid’ was the donor. Action Aid Association is an international NGO. They are local implementers.

GV: Who?

R: Arunodhya. It was my village that was affected first because of Tsunami; Laxmipuram Kuppam. It was next to Nalla Thanni Odai Kuppam (NTO Kuppam) and KrishnaKuppam. During the Tsunami I stayed at that place, I was chosen as the ‘field staff’ on behalf of my village to work for my village. Later the work I did was more interesting, I was positioned to work with 5 villages and then 7 villages; and then totally I was covering 23 villages from NTO Kuppam to Sivan Padai Veedhi Kuppam(in Ennore). We were working in these villages. Then I had more interest working towards women, I totally started to work on Women. I was positioned to work on Women among the other countries that were impacted due to the Tsunami with the South Asian Network including Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Maldives. This program was called \_\_\_\_\_\_ Women’s strike Disaster. I got an opportunity on a program to work on ‘How any immediate disasters impact the ‘Women Rights’ in the 7 South Asian Countries.’ We worked together in 7 States in India. I gathered more experiences in this field.

GV: Was the same organisation; Arunodhya or is that any other different organisation?

R: I was Arunodaya at the start, Action Aid was the donor. Only in the last 3 years they (Action Aid) are in the field because of FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) which was implemented after this BJP reign; due to that, an organisation can't be a donor. If any organisation is being the donor then it is stated that the organisation is ‘Mobilising the people to Terror Activities’, they are allowed to work directly on the field. So, because of the FCRA, they are working directly in the field. Before that we used to get a salary, training and all those were made through Arunodaya through a program called ‘Sponsorship Children’ from Spain. We were working with 702 children from NTO Kuppam to …… (stopped). But we worked with 300 + children from Semmencherry and other places; overall there were 702 children from NTO Kuppam to Sivan Padai Veedhi Kuppam. Then we flexibility work on the societal/Community issues of the children; we would support the children, but any child would not receive the sponsorship individually, the funds would sponsored towards the community like ’if the community don’t have water, if the have issues with water or electricity, the funds could be utilized to address/protest towards such issues. The money can be used for Advocacy Policy, a program towards such a section; the expenses had the concept of developing the community.

GV: Do such concepts exist now?

R: No, such things don’t exist. People working like that are called Terrorists; then cases are filed on them if such things are done. We need that kind of sponsorship. They (Action Aid) were donors from Spain, Arunodaya had intervened here.

There was a program named FFLLCT Forum For Land and Livelihood - Coastal Traits; in this Forum there were 4 NGOs including Arunodhya, the other organisations were NAVO, Udhavi and Seedat (not clear about last name) in Kasimedu. It was a 8 year long term project, we organised it completely.

**-00:05:25**

GV: When have you done this?

R: It was a 2007 to 2015 project. If an organisation is working towards Disaster, it would be working on the concept of ‘Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction’. First we provide relief measures/things and we would provide Rehabilitation (maruvazhvu) and the ‘Maru-kattamaippu’ (Reconstruction). After the tsunami in 2004, relief and rehabilitation was carried out in the years 2005 and 2006 to take them back to livelihood like providing boats and such things, to bring them back to their routine life. We started to work on the reconstruction to bring it back completely to normal.

GV: You have done that?

R: No, we have to do that. If the people are impacted by ‘disaster’, our work should be in this context to bring them back to their old normal life, that would be complete work. In such works while doing the ‘Need Assessments’ we have to find the gaps, look through the ways ‘How those gaps can be fulfilled’. If we are working in this area (/domain), we have like this. This is how we should work on ‘Disaster Management’.

While I was working in these communities, there was a lack in Women’s rights. But other domains like unity and all were there with the community; though most things got broken with the community after the Tsunami. It would be good to work with this (fishers) community, because generally in Chennai if we need to enter into any community we need to address the things to the politicians and then only we can enter the community to meet people. But here, we can easily enter the community after addressing the cause to the Panchayat (the local people/community’s body; not the one under constitution) (chennai -la Arasiyalvaadhiya Paakama Ulla pooga mudiyaadhu, but innga Panchayat ah paathutu solitutu ulla polam). We can meet the person's positioned in the Panchayat and we can enter and work with the community with their support. We can’t work without addressing; but we can address and get into the community, they would also provide full support to us.

Then while we are doing an evaluation after 4 years, the community is not aware of what women's rights are? For a woman,’If my husband beats me, I have to accept it’. We found that women were in the mindset to only accept male dominance in their life. Farthima Fernandus, she is famous for Dalit movements. She has worked more with ‘Srilankans’.

GV: Where is she living?

R: She is living in Arakkonam. She came and reviewed women's rights and we were getting these results. From then we completely started working on Women's rights. Then we found that girl children have no higher education, but they study well. They were only educated till ‘Standard 12’ and the girls would not be allowed to study after Standard 12. We took this as an important thing and this is the need for them. Now you can see, every girl would have two degrees, you can’t see any girl without a degree. We can say that's a success from Arunodhya.

If a girl is being attacked in a house, it is thought to be an individual issue. That sight was changed to a social issue if a girl was attacked. We can also say that as a success. If a girl is beaten in her house everyone would go and stand for her. To that extent we have given intervention on the Domestic violences and the concern ‘Act’ (legal Act). We mobilised to such an extent that the women from the community would give intervention in such cases. If anything is more than out of their hand, the women in the community would call us for intervention. Likewise we were providing section (/area;pagudhi) wise interventions to them, now the women are taking care of their own sections (/area;pagudhi). To that extent our implementation for these many years has reached.

The negative side in these interventions is there are more political interventions in recent times. Earlier there was only the Grama Panchayat (village Panchayat: village local governance) that was not leaning towards political parties. Individuals can freely participate in any social events. But when it comes to ‘one village’ and ‘the village justice’, they all were united as one. Now such things do not exist.

GV: Why do you think such things don’t exist anymore?

R: Because of ‘Quarter liquor and Chicken Biriyani’ (Liquor and Biriyani are served as a compensation to individuals, men and young men, who are participating in the election works and election campaigns, political party works in many Tamil Nadu parties especially with DMK and ADMK).

GV When did you start this 8 year project?

R: We started it in 2008.

GV What kind of programs have you done in these projects? Isn’t this related to land rights?

R: Yes it’s related to ‘Land Rights’, in that we would also have ‘Women’s Rights’, ‘Housing Rights’. There is a scheme that ‘Women should be given Patta’, our Forum brought to existence.

-00:10:07

Likethat, we have bought more advocacy Policy interventions. ‘Venessa peter’ was the program officer for us and ‘Alwin’ was there, but he died. They both only bought all these policies to us (the community). That intervention was made with the housing that were provided in the ‘Slum Resettlement sites’ by Tamil Nadu Slum Board Clearance were only 240 Sq. ft. for a family. That too 240 sq. ft. including the walls, without the walls it’s just 210 Sq. ft. But even if a cow should live a healthy life, the cow should have 360 Sq. ft. or 420 Sq. ft. of land. With that we raised the concern,’How humans live in such conditions’. We made many interventions in this context through Action Aid, Arunodhya, FFLLRC. One of our objectives was that the name of the ‘Slum Clearance Board’ has to be changed. The 1972 Act to form the ‘Slum Clearance Board’ (kudusai maatrtu vaariyam) addresses ‘how the people can be developed/enhanced from huts’. If you can learn the Act, then it can be understood. But the ‘Board’ are only working on building houses for people (in slums). Their work has progressed only as a housing ‘Agency’ at present.

In that we had many policies and demanded many things from the ‘Board’. We brought the scheme,’Patta in the woman's name (legal owner of the house)’, to increase the minimum sq. ft. (floor space) to the housing units and also changed the name of the ‘Board’ to ‘Urban Habitat Development Board’; for this we have done many advocacy, many meetings were organised, we also organised meetings with them.

We also bought fisheries police in force and also did intervention with the CRZ, 2011 (Coastal Regulatory Zone) and we made the government give up on the ‘Notification’ after many protests. We have sent posts to the Prime Minister regarding this. There was a CRZ, 1991 Notification which was a more secure legal provision for the fishers. CRZ, 1991 provision was given by Indira Gandhi (former PM). When she was on a visit to the coasts, she saw a lot of trash on the shore. To regularise the coasts and to protect the fishers, coast and sea, this ‘Notification’ was brought into existence. But the ‘NotIfication’ had been repeatedly changed to facilitate the Capitalists and private institutions; till now it has been changed 26 times. If that was made as an ‘Act’, that couldn’t be changed. But it was made as an ‘Notification’, so the government is changing the provision in the Notification.

If a project is proposed, if the project’s proposal is hindered by this notification; the Government would make changes to facilitate the project.

GV: Have you got the 26 modifications made to the ‘Notification’?

R: We worked on the project after analysing all the changes that were brought to the Notification and requested the government to bring the 1991 Notification. Even though it (1991 Notification) had smaller gaps, it was fine; we requested the same to the government. But our sight is that any projects by the government officials are not for the people, the projects are for the Capitalists by Privatisation and Liberalisation; that’s the truth. It is a fact that the projects are not for the people; If those projects are brought for the people, the government can think in that lane. Government knows what shall be the ‘Police Residence’. They know how the IAS officer room should be and how the other government officers' rooms should be built. How the government officials do not come to know the houses of the lay people should be. They (government) feel in the sense that they are providing free houses, they are not studying (researching) the impacts of those houses.

Such houses (small houses) are the reasons for the domestic violences in the houses; this is the reason for the early marriages; this is the reason for extra affairs; this the reason for more illegalities; this is the reason for the economic problems. It’s presumably (back door) housing policy, this housing policy by the government was not bought for the people. A girl in that ‘housing unit’ would not have her privacy; in that same room the father, the mother and her brother would be there, and she has to change her clothes. How would a girl change her dress? Then her father and her brother have to get out of the house if she has to change the dress. How they can get out and stand outside their house every time in such situations.

How food is important to everyone, intercourse between the husband and wife is also equally important. It’s not a bad thing and it’s a humankind thing. How can they have intercourse if all of them; husband, wife and children are in the same room. How can they be happy and how can they meet their needs?

After the age of 40, men and women face many issues between them psychologically in this context. Because women would think that their children have grown up, they (women) would minimise their talks and intimacy (intercourse) with their husband. Because of this trait, the men would think that the women are moving away (opting away: விலகுதல்) from them and giving more importance to the children. But her intention would be that children would be affected if they witness their (couple’s: husband and wife) intimacy in the same room; this is the mothers psychology. It’s common for every mother. But the fathers (or men at that age) would think,’my wife has to be with me’ and it’s also a necessary one. For men it’s a necessary one to relieve their stress and fulfil their needs; they don’t have any other way. In such houses, men are in the situation that they can’t even experience that happiness with their wives. In such situations when the women are continually objecting in intercourse and while their wives are not with them (hubands) and when the men get chances; that becomes the reason to get into extramarital affairs and subsequently it would lead to domestic violences. The men would show their anger towards the women in their houses.

Here the fishers and others who aren’t consuming alcohol are just 1 %; 99% men would be consuming the alcohol. If a person is earning Rs.700 per day, they would take Rs.200 or Rs.300 compulsorily for alcohol consumption and they would be providing only 400 Rupees to their house. If this is the kind of housing situation and if the men don’t get their expected happiness from their wifes, they would not be providing the remaining money to their houses. That money is spent outside their house. One reason is the man would completely consume alcohol or he would rather be spending on extra affairs that providing to his wife. Men would have the mind,’Why do we need to provide the money as we don’t have any happiness in the house’; that is their domain of thought from their situation. That can be seen as a violation in general, but if we see from men’s perspective they lack their necessity.

For women it’s food, rice, serving food to the children are her needs. But for men, a wife is their need. ‘Only if I need something, I would engage with someone if I don’t have that and if I don’t need them; I wouldn’t care for them’, that’s the men’s psychology. Like these people, issues are many, but those are not studied.

GV: Now you have told about the Men, their private space, their necessities and extramarital affairs. Likewise what are the other issues the women in the community are facing?

R: That’s what I said, it's the domestic violation like beating women, scolding them, not providing money for the expenses. All these are violations.

GV: Yes, it's a violation. What are the psychological impacts?

R: They would have many issues in this context. Already they (women) are vulnerable, economically they are oppressed (azhuththa paduvaanga), they have more responsibility. They have to look into their family, they have to pay fees for the children; all the responsibilities beared by women in the coastal (fishers) communities. Men would give the earned money to their wife; they (men) would not take any responsibilities like getting a loan, paying the debt. All those have to be taken care of by women.

**-00:20:00**

When women don’t have this support, economically also they are in a problematic situation. When women experience so many issues within the same room (house), she would get her daughter married to someone at an early age. Then the education development of the girl children/adults are bared in this situation. Mothers would be thinking that, it’s good to get the daughter married to someone and be safer in someone's house, rather than keeping her in the same room where she (mother) has to fight with the husband, the husband (daughter father) would drink liquor and request for intercourse.

Their son would get out in such houses, but where would the women go? Housing units are reason for Child marriage. The education possibilities are lesser; at the maximum people here can do only one ‘Degree’ (graduation). There are examples where the girl children/major women who were affectionate to the partners in the younger age and lost their studies in their younger age. Later they feel the importance of education and they wish to get educated, but the situation has completely changed for them that they are not able to access the education because of various reasons.

GV: Do you think the change has happened? Before the girls were not getting education and got married for various reasons, but now they are acknowledging the importance of the education.

R: Yes. If you check with the communities where there was no eviction, their education qualification is higher than this community; they have completed two or three degrees. They are getting married after getting a job. Earlier people used to get married by the age of 18 or 19; and there was advocacy that people should not get married by the age of 18, so they would get married at least by their age 20. Even here there are more ‘Degree’ holders, they have done 2 or 3 degrees, but it happened after lots of struggles.

People with wealth are moving to other rented houses outside the ‘resettlement housing’, where the women are relatively free. What would be the conditions of people who don’t have money?

GV: Are they making any arrangement like accommodating the adjacent house for rental or buying the house?

R: Yes.

GV These kinds of arrangements help them to escape their psychological vulnerabilities. Is that true?

R: Yes, it helps them to escape their psychological vulnerabilities; this can be done only by the people who have the economy. What would the people who have no money do? What would a single woman do? They can’t be spent on this. You are asking about eviction; right?

GV: Yes.

R: If you enter a community, you can see an area where there would male youth/adolescents who would be playing ‘Carrom board’; mostly of them would play beautifully and they would play Goli (marbles game). These are more common practices in the fishers community, even the married men and elderly men would play the game. And they would also play ‘Cards’; all these were played when they were in the village (earlier settlements). Now there are 7,000 families in this resettlement site (AIR nagar).

Just imagine, if the father of the family is fighting with his wife in his house in the village (earlier settlements), then the son in the family would be outside like Bajana Kovil (one of the village temple), or the boy would be in Aunty’s house or the boy might also stay in

Uncle’s (perippa) house which would be a little larger; all these relatives' houses would be in the neighbouring space. Now the fisher community culture has completely changed. In the villages, they would be sitting (just staying) along the sea shore, they would only come to houses only during sleeping times.

While the fishers houses were near the sea shores (old settlements), they (men) would not require a house, their common work was to sit on the beach and play cards; adolescent male would be sitting on the shore and chatting, they would be playing carrom board in a room, there are the common activity and other than these, males in the community are not involved in any other activities. But here (AIR nagar) the Ganja (marijuana) is plenty, we can’t protect male adolescence/youth from it. Even the young adolescent boys who are good, when the houses are small like this and if the father is lying drunk in the house, there would be conflict between the son and father. The mother would be asking the son to get rid from the eyes of the father until he sleeps. The boy would only be away from the house for one or two days in such a situation. On the third day would start to explore, the other boy who has a habit of smoking Ganja would ask him to smoke for trail. Then the habitat boy would also spoil the non-smoking boy. The reason is housing; if the boy has a separate room or a private space, he would be living in own space. There are many boys who are good and have good education and their life is getting worse because of these housing.

Now that there is improvement in the housing policies, all the houses are built only with 420 sq. ft. floor space. It’s all because of the seeds sowed by us (organizations). From Arunodaya, we have been working for the Housing Rights and brought good housing policy. We also demanded that the ‘Houses’ had to be allotted in the woman's name, this was brought into State Assembly’s notice, also demanded that housing for the differently abled (disabled) should be provided in the ground floor and elderly should also be provided houses in the ground floor; we requested that housing rights (allotments) should also be based on the age.

-00:25:05

Now the Patta (legal Housing document) is provided to the residents and the residents have to pay money to the Board (TNUHDB) for 25 years to get that Patta. Now it’s not like that, residents have to make full payment to the Board and the Patta would be provided to them. We also demanded that the residents be given Rights to the land, not just the houses. We can see in the private flats, the resident would be given a document that states the ownership of the land, not just the houses; This was also included in the policy.

GV: What is the difference with this village?

R: This is Indira Gandhi Kuppam (IG Kuppam) village which was on the seashore. We did advocacy for this village and also invited the Collector for this. With the awareness of this community, the people got their separate housing for 120 families.

GV: When did this happen?

R: This happened recently in 2021. It’s been just 3 years since the house was allotted. It's my Father-in-law’s house, we are here for rental (Indira Gandhi Kuppam Resettlement), we were allotted houses in AIR nagar in 14th Block.

GV: Does this house have 420 sq.ft. floor?
R: Yes.

GV: When were the people from Indira Gandhi Kuppam Evicted and settled here?

R: They (fishers) were not evicted, they demanded houses from the government as their houses were next to the coast. They pressured the government and got their houses. Their house was so close to the sea.

GV: What were the issues faced by them?

R: Because of the coastal erosion in that region, their houses were eroded and submerged into the sea. After the house got eroded due to Coastal erosion, Arunodhya along with the Action Aid facilitated and got their houses constructed again in the Indira Gandhi Kuppam (old settlement), those were ceiling houses. Because of the coastal erosion most of those houses also eroded into the sea.

The reason for the coastal erosion in this region is Chennai Port. Before that the coast was extending for more than 3 kilometres, it was before 1984. In the 40 years since 1984, the coast has eroded abruptly and the sea intruded till the road (present Ennore Expressway) and in some years, we are not sure how much the sea would be intruding. All these erosion are only because of the Chennai port and only because of that we got displaced and resettled here.

The reason for the sea has come closer is that, in the chennai port they encroached the sea by dumping the sand to develop the harbour. The wind would erode the sand in the left (North) not in the right (South). On the right, we can see only Marina (a beach). Like this in the North where the Adani port has been established, the coast is being eroded in that region. It would also impact people in another 20 or 30 years. This is how the shore would function, we (village) got eroded because of the chennai port, same wise the people in that religion would also be impacted in the future.

If we look from North Chennai, there (in the South Thiruvallur District) there is no coast to access. The people living in Seppakkam, Koranjur and Mouthamedu villages are impacted by the ash dusts.

GV: You said that Arunodhaya has supported Indira Gandhi Kuppam (old settlement) along with Action Aid to build apartment-like houses. Right?

R: No, individual houses were constructed for the people of Indira GandhiKuppam.

GV: How many houses were built?

R: 72 houses were built and provided to the families.

GV: They are asking for the houses because of the coastal erosion. Right?

R: Yes! Yes! We worked with the community on how to approach and communicate to the ‘Slum Clearance Board’. We mobilied people to work on that, our NGO didn’t intervene in the process, we made the community work on this by ideating.

GV: Who were participating in this? Are there any leaders?

R: Nadarajar was working on this.

GV: Is he living here Indira (Gandhi Kuppam Resettlement site)?

R: No, he is residing outside. His son (with family) is residing in the house.

**-00:30:02**

GV: Is it possible to meet him?

R: He is having some issues, so we can’t be meeting them.

GV: Is it possible to meet any other people?

R: Others won’t be available today.

GV: Not today, I can come any other day. They would have worked as a team, right?

R: There are issues reading this, let me know what details you like to have. They are partitioned into two groups because of issues. I think it would be good to not reach them.

GV: What’s the issue?

R: It’s the issue regarding the allotment of housing like getting houses in the ground floor or top floors. There are two groups now.

GV: You are saying that they were united while getting houses from the SCB, but they got into issues during the allotment of houses.

R: Yes. We don’t need to aggravate those issues by reaching out to them.

GV: Can you share the process of the petitions made by them?
R: While coastal erosion was happening, they (fishers) met the District Collector at different places. Once we went to Sadayankuppam and met the Collector, there were more protests on this issue. After the Tsunami on every ‘Full Moon Day’ the residence would be inundated with water from the sea. Later, we built the houses in the same village and provided them as per their request to build houses there. After their houses were eroded because of coastal erosion, everyone who doesn't have a house is eligible and has rights under the Slum Clearance Act to make ‘Application’ for houses. Then people made Application(/Petition) for the houses and under the CRZ Notification, houses are not allowed in 500 metre zone from the shore; this was put forward by the Slum Clearance Board to evict the people from here and the SCB verified the residence, then the houses were allotted to them here (Indira Gandhi Kuppam resettlement) by the SCB.

GV: Do you have those petition copies?

R: It’s all with Natarajan, he won’t be providing those documents. He won’t believe anyone, he is my relative only. Then he also has a bad opinion on NGOs.

GV: I am not from an NGO, I am doing this part of research.

R: I will try to connect you with him.

GV: We are trying to understand this process as this has been done successfully.

R: It happened because we worked at that level in the community on advocacy on policies and Coastal people safety.

GV: You said that people were demanding alternate houses quoting in the petition that ‘in 500 mts from the shore (shoreline) houses are restricted’. Like that, what are other strategies you have highlighted in the petition?

R: We have demanded stating ‘coastal erosion makes us unsafe to live’. Other thing is that there is another village in front of them, that’s Burma nagar (i.e. Annai Sivagami Nagar). We are residing along with them as fishers, so we request for a separate place for our safety. If you witness the place, the houses exist next to the sea. People (from Indira Gandhi Kuppam) were not able to live at that place, the place was not in a liveable condition. During the cyclones they can’t reside in that place; water is getting into the houses. All these facts were verified by the government and houses were provided to them.

GV: Are these houses built after providing petitions to the officers or it was built before the petitions were given to officers?

R: The houses were built only after the receiving the petitions by the officials and after sanctioning of the houses.

GV: This means this housing (site) is partially constructed and allotted for the fishers of the Indira Gandhi Kuppam. Is that right?

R: These houses were received particularly for the people of the Indira Gandhi Kuppam and it was a successful thing for them.

GV: Who identified this place?

R: People themselves identified this place.

GV: What are the other places people were looking for?

R: Earlier, in Sadanyakkupam, some container yards, some spaces of water bodies were allotted by the government. We told them (governments) that their proposed lands are not feasible to build the houses; all the proposed lands were too much western side from the coast; those places were beyond their (fishers) livelihood and away from the sea.

GV: What are places?

R: The place was next to the Sadayankuppam; it was in the centre of container yards; the place was surrounded by container yards. Even the children can’t have safety; what would happen if the children get into a container while playing; nothing can’t be done. We informed the collector that we don’t need the houses, later [this](https://maps.app.goo.gl/XRSEGn63giucoAGL8) place was identified and houses were built.

GV: Who’s place was this?

R: Like AIR nagar, this place also belongs to All India Radio (AIR).

GV: Did the government (TN state) buy these land from the Union government (AIR is a union government entity).

R: It’s a government’s land only.

GV: They are a Union (or central) government, Slum Clearance Board is a state government. Then, How did they buy it?

R: This is a new project ( or scheme), it is possible under the Slum Clearance Board Act. The Union government is also part of this project. People have to pay 1 lakh and 5 thousand Rupees to the government.

**-00:35:05**

GV: What kind of scheme is this? In what way is the union government part of the scheme?

R: It’s Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) scheme. People are also part of the scheme.

GV: Then, it’s a union government and State government’s collaborative project.

R: Yes.

GV: Do all them have to pay 1 lakh 5 thousand Rupees?

R: Yes, all have to pay the amount.

GV: Have all of them paid the amount?

R: No, some have to make their payment and complete it. They are paying on instalments like 5000 or 10000 per month.

GV: Are they allowed to not pay the money?

R: It’s hard for them (people), some 10 to 15 families have not completed their payment.

GV: Has people paid the money in single payment or little by little?

R: People paid money part by part like 50,000 Rupees at a time, 40,000 Rupees once, 10,000 Rupees in instalments (based on the availability).

GV: Is the government fine with these modes of payments?

R: Government has to accept as they don’t have any other choice, because the people have moved in.

GV: Was there any protest to get this housing?

R: No, they were able to achieve a good deal. They were not protesting. Even the 1 Lakh 5 Thousand Rupees is charged for the tiles in the houses. They have gained the house peacefully with the advocacy done by us (NGOs) to the community.

GV: How were you and the village leader working out campaign strategies?

R: We had a forum called CCPM (Coastal Community Protection Movement; Kadalora Makkal Paadhukaapu Iyakkam), under FFLRC in Arunodaya. This was started as a people movement, this was organised with other 4 NGOs partners that were working together; with that forum we gave more awareness to the communities.

GV: What kind of awareness you were providing?

R: Fishers have to reside in the same place; we have the right to reside on the shore.

People gave the planning of the housing in this place.

GV: Were people giving the plan?

R: Yes, people were giving the plan for the kind of houses. This is a new kind of house, these kinds of houses can’t be seen elsewhere. This was created by the people.

GV: How was it created by the people?

R: It’s like a house should have a bedroom. People know what a typical house should be like.

GV: Has the people told you (NGO) or to the Slum Clearance Board?

R: People discussed this and requested the Slum Clearance Board with this housing model.

GV: Did the people include the housing model in their petitions?

R: Yes. People petitioned,‘We should have such houses, we need separate housing for our community (Indira Gandhi Kuppam), others should not be allowed in these resettlement sites; only the village people should be there in the resettlement sites.’

GV: Is the housing only for that village (Indira Gandhi Kuppam) people?

R: Yes, people made petitions in that way. But that didn’t happen.

GV: Why do you think that request didn’t happen?

R: There are many reasons for that.

GV: What are those reasons? Can you share those?

R: Many officers (government) were allotted houses in these resettlement sites.

GV: Officers means?

R: For the ‘Drivers’ (drivers working in the government); the supporting workers.

GV: The Slum Clearance Board officer’s drivers are also having the houses here. Okay.

Are they from different regions?

R: Yes, they are from different regions.

GV: What’s the number of families from Indria Gandhi Kuppam residing here in the resettlement site?

R: Here, not even 10 families residing here are from the Indira Gandhi Kuppam.

GV: But, they were the ones who were requesting for 200 houses.

R: 112 houses (requested). This housing has 120 houses.

GV: What’s the reason for the limited number of houses given to the people from the Indira Gandhi Kuppam?

R: They have their houses not eroded by the coastal erosion. The families whose houses were completely severely destroyed by the coastal erosion are residing here. Others are renting and leasing the houses allotted for them. They would be coming here in a few days (in future), they have no other way.

GV: Why are they residing in the old places even after the houses were allotted to them?

R: It’s easy for them to do their job (fishing) from that place (old Indira Gandhi Kuppam), their boats are parked next to their houses. Boats are on shore, so they can directly go fishing (rather going from here).

GV: Where are the rented people coming from?

R: They are from different places. I am not sure about that.

GV: What is the rental amount of the houses?

R: It’s 5000 Rupees. This house is a 5000 Rupees rental.

GV: Are there any opposition from the Slum Clearance Board (SCB) for renting the houses?

R: They should not be doing this. But, they (SCB) are also sticking notices stating,’the houses should not be rented out or leased out’. But also people have to change.

GV: Has the allotment been given to the people?

R: Yes, allotment (documents) has been to everyone. After completing the payment of 1 Lakh 5 Thousand, the allotment (document) would be given in your hand.

GV: But those houses (AIR Nagar) are not like that. Right?

R: Yes, not like that. That (AIR Nagar) housing has lots of issues, till now we have not paid any rent for that house (which was allotted to her family). We came there (AIR Nagar) in 2010, it’s been 13 years since we moved to that house. We haven’t paid the maintenance charge or any other charges.

**-00:40:33**

GV: Why so?

R: The MLA (member of Legislative Assembly) of that time told people that they didn't need to pay any charges at that time. So we didn’t pay. Another thing is that free houses should be provided to the people impacted in Tsunami (2004), so people said ‘we won’t pay as we are impacted by Tsunami’. Now the government has brought a scheme that people who were allotted houses have to pay compulsory payment (contribution from beneficiaries).

GV: What do you think is the requirement of a Good House?

R: For a human to live with Rights, Toilets are important; it's the most necessary one.

Learning (/reading) Room is more important. To develop education, By stating education development and how the children can get educated if the government provides such housing. Mostly, there are no houses without TV, then how the children would learn in the house. Elderly women in the house wanted to see TV serials; most of them can’t even walk. They don’t know the world, their world is only the TV. I am stating this as an example of the situation of families, if the boy has to get educated in such housing, how can he get educated? The house should have, Bed room, a learning (/reading) room, I won’t say Poojai room (room to have pictures and idols of god) is necessary. I worship god more, I won’t say we can worship god only if Pooja room is present in the house; I am seeing beyond that, we can pay/worship god in any way.

Definitely we need a Learning room, Bed room, Hall and Kitchen room; dining room is not very important, I am not looking for such luxuries. However it might be, but we need houses with 450 sq. ft. floor space per house. Now 420 sq. ft. houses are being built now. Even those houses have to be built with a special attention of 520 sq. ft. or 550 sq. ft. In 10 years even that has to increase.

I was given only a small house, I have two children. Where shall I go with the two children? I rented a house because I am able to pay the rent amount. My neighbour at that place (AIR nagar) wasn't able to provide rent, so they are staying there and suffering; they are also having two children.

GV: You are saying that, if a house is built it has to be built in such a way that the house should also accommodate family members after 10 years; it should be futuristic.

R: Yes, houses are provided for the temporary needs of the family. While I was given a house my 2 children were going to schools. Now both of them got married, where would they go? We have to think on that sort.

In a family if the daughter of the couple got married and is living in another house, while visiting their parent’s house where they would sleep if the house has only one bedroom. Already the bedroom would be occupied by son and daughter-in-law, then where would my daughter and son-in-law go? It’s hard to negotiate between them in this housing. These kinds of houses are also impacting the relationships, these houses are human rights violations, the houses provide an environment for the people to live without dignity.

These houses destroyed the relationships, people visiting the house are leaving the house as they could not find place to sleep in the house

**-00:45:02**

GV: This means relationships are getting lost.

R: Yes. If a woman is facing issues in marital life she needs moral support. But won’t be visiting her mother, as there would be no space for her.

She would be thinking ‘brother and his wife are staying there, it might be an issue for them to stay there’. If she has come to her mother’s house her mentality might change, if not this might also lead to suicide or she might go some where else rather going to mothers house; then people in the house (/relatives) would be searching for her. This led to fights within the relatives and many such issues.

GV: Place is a thing that is also a reason for psychological issues.

R: Yes, importantly these spaces (housing) are killing humans indirectly and housing rights are so important that it might even lead to destroying humanity.

GV: How many years you are here in AIR nagar and here (IG Kuppam)

R: We moved to AIR nagar on March 8, 2010; I was staying there till 2015. After my son got married, there is no more place to live there.

GV: Where are you staying then?

R: We rented a house outside AIR nagar. We were able to pay rent, so we resided but it’s not possible for people not having money.

GV: You are with the community or worked with the community for more than a decade in some forms. Can you share any special cases of vulnerability here?

R: K and M (couple) got diverse, I helped them to get diverse. K (male) got married to someone else. They have 2 children, a male and a female; childrens are adolescents. They (couple) were not able to have a happy (intercourse) life, so he (K) had an extramarital affair. Then he was caught and they (the couple) had a lot of fights. We women (support group) had an exchange of talks to resolve the issues, but he (K) didn’t listen. He left his wife alone and got married to another woman.

Then another couple M1 and B; he (M1) was a first class boy, he studied in Presidency college. I know him from his childhood, his parents did not have male children, later he was born after so many days; he was born after 5 years. He is so talented, he used to go to tuition at early morning 4 AM, he used to study in the morning and he was scoring 490/500 in his examination. He never scored less than 450 out of 500. After coming to this house (AIR nagar) his father was expecting much intercourse from his mother, we (neighbours) know that from our old village on the coast. They were living 4 houses apart from my house (in an old coastal village). He (M1’s father) wanted to be happy (intercourse) with his wife after coming home after fishing for a day and night; it’s his happiness. We (community from evicted village) all know that and we were not taking this as a big thing; we used to laugh at that quarrelling that ‘their house would be locked now’. We would not go to their house even if we need anything to ask when he (the husband) has arrived home; we know his character. But houses here have only one room, each floor has six houses. This boy (M1) was not able to be in his house because of his father’s character, so he used to be with other friends outside the house and he practised the use of Ganja. Once while coming from the Presidency college he fell down and he was dead.

I should not mention the person's name, but many child marriages have happened. I have shared the vulnerability of the people based on the kinds of experiences I had. My daughter completed two degrees, we brought that thought of getting children educated here. There are 2 double degree holders in block 14, there are many such people. Such families move to rental houses when change comes in their life.

**-00:50:00**

GV: As for you, buying the neighbouring house or renting the next house or leasing the houses are not wrong things?

R: I am not saying that those are not wrong things. It’s their environment; we (people) are pushed to an environment where they have to adapt to the lifestyle. Even if we know it’s bad/wrong, we have adapted as that’s their life and there is no other choice for us. We can’t be blaming people. Why has the government given such housing? If the government is providing REQUIRED houses for the people, then why would people leave the house and choose another rental house? Those people are paying the rent with their hard work. I am here because I can pay more rent. People living there are the ones who were able to spend only a lesser amount for rent (rent to another neighbouring house) than me.

GV: It means, people living are poor and asking them why the houses are rented or leased is not a fair thing to do. They are doing it because of the government. This is what you are conveying right?

R: I already said, the government is aware of the requirement of housing for the IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officials, customs officers. There is housing for the IAS people. The houses have 3 bedrooms, a large kitchen, there aren’t enough people to live in that house (aaldrathukku aal ae kedaiyaadhu), there are washbasins in many places. Here there are no Washbasins, we installed one. The unwanted needs are met in those houses (for IAS). If the government is thinking along those lines(IAS housing), why don't they have the same knowledge with the public? They have standards for the Police housing, IAS officers housing and Customs officers housing, in that sort why don’t the government have standards for the people while allotting houses to the other humans. The government is thinking they are just people who should be serving them well; the government has this kind of sight on the people. Other People also have family, they also have husbands, they have children; the children have to get educated. But the government is not having that lens.

GV: You talked about the land rights movement, in what kind of protests you have done in the Ennore region.

R: We have done research in Ennore on the hot water discharge. We have done it through Children regarding hot water discharged.

GV: Who has done that research? Is it Arunodaya?

R: It was done by Arunodhaya.

GV: Do they have those reports now?

R: Yes it would be with them. They involved children in research, children sampling the sediment (not so detailed and clear). There was a study regarding the tablet company (Piramal Pharma) in Kasi Kovil Kuppam, how it’s affecting people and also on the underground water. We told the people that the underground water is polluted, but people didn’t accept that as they were getting rice, pulses, oil provisions during the rainy season from the same company that is polluting. We (Arunodaya and allied NGOs) were the ones who sowed seed to work and address pollution and the environment in Ennore. We photographed the dead fishes in the Creek because of the hot water discharge into the Creek by NCTPS. We did research and we made a report on that, it’s available with Arunodhya.

GV: Where the research was done?

R: The research was done in the Creek where the NMTPP (North Madras Thermal Power Plant, it was called NMTPP was). From the plant, the hot water would be discharged into the Creek and it mixes in the sea. If hot water discharge happens in the Creek, fishes eggs would die, fishes would be floating over the surface because of the hot water. The ashes from the Thermal Power plant get deposited on the coral reefs (thing might have stated oyster beds), the prawns would breed in there. There are no chances for the prawns to breed in the sea because of the sea waves, the prawns would only breed in the river (creek) and during flood the prawns would get into the sea. Even though it’s called sea prawn, the prawns would breed in the creek and reach the sea. Some prawns would stay in the river, those prawns would be caught in the river, they are called ‘river prawns’. Once they enter the sea, they are called ‘sea prawn’. But there are lesser chances for the prawns to lay egg and breed inside the sea. In such Creek, ash deposits over the sediments in the Creek which restricts the prawns to lay eggs and fishes to breed, deposited as residue on the coral reef (oyster beds) that again stops the fishes and prawn from breeding.

GV: Are there any other studies?

R: We have demanded the government to work on all these. The water desalination plants are a failure project, we also requested the same to the government. Salt water has 30% salt content, even though we can't sense the 30% salt with our mouth because of saltiness. Processing such water and getting drinking water, the efficiency of the project would be less than the money spent on that project.

**-00:55:58**

GV: You are saying that it is a cost consuming thing. RIght?

R: Yes, such plants need more expenses to be made. But it’s a failure model. The salt from the processed salt water is again left into the sea, it would take 50 years for that salt to get dissolved in the sea; even then the salt would be getting dissolved, only during the abnormal situations like Tsunami or cyclones the salt would come out along with the things in the sea sediments. While depositing from the plant, it would be saline in nature like 60% of salt content in that solution, there are no changes for the salt crystals to get dissolved. If these salt gets deposited over the fish breeding places like coral reefs and algae regions, the fish resource would get reduced.

GV: Was / Is there any project proposed in the Ennore region?

R: Yes, it’s there. There are no such projects that are not there in the Thiruvallur District.

GV: Where is that project?

R: Beyond Kattupalli the desalination plant is functioning. This was opened by J.Jayalalitha (former CM) and another one in Pattipulam, it’s there beyond Kovalam (South Chennai)

GV: Then you feel that project is a waste one.

R: Any project that is planned in the sea is a waste. All the project that is planned in the sea is against the sea, that would have a counter effect on the cause. Because we can’t predict the sea. Even the Sethusamudram project is also a failure; that project has only a profit objective and nothing beyond that.

GV: You told me about the need assessment, what are the need assessments you have done so far in this region?

R: We have found that women’s rights are lesser. Both the fisheries department and the Marine department, both of those work on the basis of sea and fishers. Today, a community that earns 10,000 crores Rupees is the fishes community. The government can serve us (fishers) just with the ‘interest’ they gain from that money (10k crore). Government don’t need to allot a separate budget for us, the government can easily fulfil our needs just the interest they gain from the profit they make from us. In the Fisheries Department (job) and in the education related to fishes and sea, fisher's children have to be given priority; a particular percent of reservation for the fishers community needs to be allotted. In the Marine sector, many of the fishers would only be seamen; the number of fishes in the officers domain are lesser. Even with the IAS domain, fishers are lesser.

GV: What is a seaman?

R: In the Marine sector, it's the lowest work (in the hierarchy); they are final workers. Even those that need certain education, but what we are asking is that Bramins, people from higher class communities are having opportunity for that kind of education (to higher officers level). So, we are asking for a reservation for the space (number of seats). In fisheries colleges, SC (Scheduled Caste) and ST (Scheduled Tribes) are given ‘reservation’; I think 50% reservation is provided (not fractal one). It’s fine if they (SC & ST) don’t take many marks, but for MBC (Most Backward Community) cut off mark is 192 (out of 200; Standard 12 school marks). To score such marks, children has to be admitted in the CBSC school; how can we make our children get educated in CBSC (Central Board of Secondary Education) schools? It;s hard for the children to get 192 marks. Only if we (fishers) have 192 marks can we do BFS (Bachelor of Fisheries Science) or MFS. Today people with no background are getting education in the fishers university.

**-01:00:30**

Today anyone can be a Talented person, but we are one who are working hard in the sea, we know swimming, we know about fishes. Even small children know about the fishes, if you give fishes to eat to my grandson, he would easily identify and tell if that's a good fish or bad fish (like fresh one or the iced one). There is employment in fish preservation, there is a course/duration to complete to get that job, all these are related to fishers. We are not saying to stop those SC & ST reservations but we are asking for reservations for our community. If the fisher had 50%, it would be good. Only now we are growing in the education sector, how can we take 192 cut off in the standard 12. Other reserved community students are given admission if they just score 50 marks. If the fisher are allowed with 50% Marks to get admitted in the fisheries college, only fishers would be there in that fisheries college. All of them are scoring well at 65%. Fishers have good Brain power as they are consuming fishes.

GV: Why are you saying that?’

R: Fish has vitamins. The things in the fish's eye help in the brain’s growth. You all would throw the eyes and the eye part would be removed from the fish, but we have to eat the eyes of fishes, they (fishers) have good exposure in fishing; swimming is a game for us, why can’t we do that as a job. We are asked to do alternative job (by the government), so then we are asking for cut off (reservations) in the alternate job field related to fisheries. Our position would change in society. If my husband is an officer, my son is also an officer, my grandson shall be Captain or a professor; our situation can change.

GV: You are saying that ‘Fishers have knowledge on the fisheries’, but you are requesting educational opportunities for the upgrade of this community.

R: Yes, for growth.

GV: You have told this for the need assessment; are there any other need assessments regarding the violence against women?

R: In the Fisheries department, only men have the insurance scheme, relife compensation during fishing banned seasons and rain seasons. Women don’t have such schemes from the government, if we pay 1,500 Rupees we would receive 4500 per year in the scheme National Fishers relief amount (Desiyya Meenava Nivaarana Thogai). That the only benefits we (women) get, our demand is that the government should recognise the fisherwomen as workers; they are not doing it. If we are recognised as workers they should be providing us ‘social security’.

GV: What kind of fisheries work do the fishermen's women do?
R: Fisher women do 23 kinds of work related to fisheries. One is fishing, there are fisherwomen who catch fishes, not just here there are fishing women across Tamil Nadu. In Mandapam region (Ramanadhapuram) people would fishing as a family; husband, wife and children would jointly do fishing; they go and reside in the islands and do fishing; that is even happening now. There are women who do fishing, there are women who dry the fishes to make ‘dry fishes’, women do ‘kasap’ with fishes, women sell fishes in the street; the street fish vendors. There are fish auctioneers, fisherwomen would work in hatcheries, aqua ponds. They do work in fish canning works (padha-paduththudhal), there are shell works (collection). In Rameshwaram, fisher women used to pick Paasi (algae) from the sea, in that also some women would be working on drying the Paasi and weighing it. Other works include Roadside fish vendors. There are fish cutters and cleaners.

**-01:05:10**

**-01:06:50**

GV: You said there are 23 different works done by women, do fisher women in Ennore do all these works?

R: No. Here women do fish cutting & cleaning, roadside fish sales, street fish vendors, they dry the fishes on the shore, women sell dry fishes. There is a difference between Fish dryers and dry fish sellers. In Kasimedu there are people who used to buy ‘Kasaar’.

GV: What does ‘kasaar’ mean?

R: Kasar are left or unsold rotten fishes; those things would be bought in baskets and it would be made as food for the chickens. There are women who used to buy the ‘Kasar’ from the Kasimedu and there are women who used to sell the ‘Kasar’ as a Value added product; there are women who would dry the ‘Kasar’. There are fish auctioneers here. All these works are done by fisher women in this region. That 23 different kinds of works are done across Tamil Nadu.

GV: Do you think that the government hasn't recognised fisher women?

R: Only a card is given to the fisherwomen.

GV: What card is given?

R: The card states ‘Fisheries workers’. But if we (women) are recognised as fisheries workers, they should be given the ‘social security’. To get the ‘Social Security’, we are asking the government to recognise us as labourers, we don’t have any pension, no insurance. If a woman is carrying the fishes in a vehicle and if she met with an accident, that’s it, there is no security for her or her family. We only get money for the hard work, nothing else. Now it’s ‘fishing prohibition period’, 6000 Rupees would be given and during the rainy season 4000 Rupees would be given. All these are for the men, we don’t have any such things for the fisher women. Men only have to catch the fishes from the sea and the other fisheries work in the fishers society is done by the women. The money is given to the fishermen, we have issues during those seasons.

From April 15 to June 15, fishing is prohibited for 60 days. For the 60 days the government is providing 6000 Rupees. In that 6000 Rupees, every day the men would demand 200 to 300 Rupees for the liquor consumption. If not there would be a fight in the family, the man would beat his wife. That would be one issue, at the same time women have to provide food for the men, women have to look after the household expenses. Other good things and bad things in life have to be taken care of by them (women). If any festival or celebration comes, women have to take care of that expense. Also women have to take care of the debt they have. Without all these expenses women have to pay the children's school fees in the June month (start of the Academic Year). During the Fishing Prohibition period, it is the women who have more burden on them and the much impacted by it.

Even the women find it hard to sell the fishes in the fishing prohibition period. Women fish vendors won’t get the fishes to sell, women here have to travel to Vanagaram, Chintadripet to buy fishes that are coming from other regions of the county. Only if the fishes come they can, they can buy or else they can’t. The price of the fishes would be more and the vendors would face severe loss in their sales during this period. There is a lot of difference for the fishes that are bought in Kasimedu and in other places like Vanagaram or Chintadripet. If we check the fishes (in Vanagaram and Chintadripet) stored in the tub, the fishes would be good while checking those with our hands. But while shedding those fishes from the tub to our baskets, it would only have more ices and the fishes would be very less. Vendors who buy the fishes would be cheated, there would be rotten fishes sold to the vendors; sometimes vendors can’t raise their voice to question this. During the Fishing prohibition period, women has to face lots of struggles and in this period women would be pushed to buy more loans, even they would be pushed to buy loans with higher ‘interest’ rates. This happens from April 15 to June 15. During this time women were not given ‘relife compensation’.

**-01:10:04**

GV: Then during this time, women have to take care of all the household things; Would men not bother those things at that time?

R: Not just that time, men would not bother about household things any time. Men are engaged in liquor and playcards; that’s it. These two things are their lives. Only some men would give the entire money to their wife, such women would not face many issues. Some men would give only half the amount and they would have the other half. There are men who would only provide a quarter of the money to their households. That too, these men would not consume food without fishes. So women have to buy fish with their money to serve food for the men (during the fish prohibition period). The fish vendor women, even if they don’t get fishes for sales, they have to buy fishes for their household to serve their husbands; without fishes they won’t take food.

GV: How are fishes available in Kasimedu during that fishing prohibition period?

R: Those are fishes from other states like Keralam, Karnataka to Chintadripettai, Vanagaram (fish markets). There is another place near Redhills called Kavangarai.

GV: This means women have to get the fishes arriving from other states to sell from those places.

R: Yes. It would be like 1 ‘o’ clock.

GV: Is it in the afternoon?

R: No, it’s early morning 1 AM.

GV: Then women have to start the previous day night, then buy the fishes and then sell the fishes. Then women wouldn't have good sleep.

R: Yes, we have done research on fisher women. In that we found that the fisher women work (uzaippu) time 18 hours per day.

GV: What research is that?

R: It was done from a University. I am sure about the university. They provided those reports to us. I don’t have that report now. I have seen that.

GV: Was this told by them (researchers)?

R; Not just their research, we (fisher women) are saying that. They have done that as research and produced a report. We are saying, we are working for 18 hours a day; this house can also extend.

GV: Then the sleeping time would be lesser.

R: Yes, we receive only less sleeping hours. That’s why fisher women are getting diabetes, some women fish vendors are having issues with their uterus because of travelling with load on their head to sell fishes. In the fish selling places (fish markets, road sides), there are no toilet facilities, and women face kidney issues. All such issues faced by the fisherwomen happen because of the fisheries job they do. There are women who used to sell fishes on the road just 3 months after giving birth. What will happen? She would not know the impacts then, but she would experience issues in her uterus after 45 years because of caring weight. Because of lifting weight (fish basket) and carrying the load, many women have issues with hip bones; they can’t easily move that bone in the later stage of their life.

GV: Are there any other issues for the fisher women?

R: What kind of issues are you looking for?

GV: Now you have talked about recognition of work and health issues. Generally in villages, women have less participation in decision making.

R: Here with fishing communities, women have lesser decision making power. Earlier it was zero, now it’s not like that women have 40% capacity. Women can’t enter into that.

GV: What women can’t enter (participate)?

R: In a Panchayat (local governing and kind of judiciary body formed by community people which would not have legal credibility).

\_\_***conversation stopped, Mic turned Off and On-ed\_\_***

 ***\_\_jumped into another conversation\_\_***

GV: Can you share about the ‘Meenava Sandhai’, (fisher’s market)?

R: We had consultation in every district, it was held in every coastal district. See this (showing a report), this is FFLLRCC, Action Aid was funding this.

GV: Was there such consultation in Ennore?

R: Yes, we had one in the community hall.

GV: Do you know how people were responding here?

R: It’s the thing that was learned from the community and it was consolidated as one report. We had the meeting in Rameshwaram (-district), Tirunelveli and all other districts.

GV: Where did you have the meeting in Tirunelveli? Was it Kudankulam?

R: I have a friend in Kudankulam named **C1.** We have fought more for the Kudankulam issues, we stayed there and protested. This is a consolidated report; not just my single person. There is an organisation called National Fish Forum; NFF, they are the only national level organisation and it’s recognised organisation. This (report) was made jointly with them.

**-01:15:42**

RK: Is NFF an organisation?

R: Yes, it’s a labour organisation.

GV: You came from Laximipuram village. Can you share about the Laxmipuram Village?

R: Yes. There houses used to be just a structure, other than that, we all would wander (puzhanguradhu) outside places, it was a jolly time. House would always be clean, there was no need to clean, mob the house. To the maximum we would be only food outside the house, even if we cook the food inside the house we would be eating outside the house. All the things that happen outside the house, only while learning my children would get inside and learn, that too when husband is in the home. But in the daytime, they would be learning from outside.

Then, we had happy relationships with the neighbours, then our neighbour would come, we would share a common mat while having the food, I would have food in my plate, they would have their food in their house; we would have the food at the same time. I feel we are losing our culture in the name of achieving ‘privacy’. Because, earlier if any quarrel happens in the community people would run and save those people.

Our next house is made of a hut, it just has one layer of hut-leaves (oolai). So, we can hear any conversation that happens in that house. If my husband talks vulgarly, they would hear that and if they vulgarly, we could hear that. But those issues were not thought of as privilege issues (gourava prachnai), those were just taken as general things. No one had stress.

GV: Was it like there was acceptance that the families are generally like this’?

R: Women accept that ‘other woman’s husband’ is like that (in whatever way there are) and other women also understand however my husband is (others don’t neglect women/family based on their husband’s characteristics). Now it’s not like that; people are living individual lives, there is no moral support for the people. We are not simply inviting our neighbour just to stay here or sleep if a woman has issues with her husband.

In the old village, If he(a woman’s husband) is a drunkard and if he is searching for his wife to quarrel, we would not let tell the truth that his wife is in my house. Now no one is going to another's house, now this has become like a flat (apartment) system. If there is death in the village, no one would cook in that village; for children they would get food from outside and provide for the children; all that was the culture of the community. Now nothing is like that, if a death happens in the same building, people would be cooking in their houses; rice, pulses all that would be carried in front of the funeral. Then there was ‘fear’ about the community; there was coercion within the community; people lived united with the community. Now fishers community has become like ‘Temple elephants’ after the Tsunami (2004).

GV: Why do you say that?

R: I will give you an example, you should have known about the Elephants, they are very affectionate. In the animal kingdom, Elephants live as a community with relationships. In those Elephant groups, only the female Elephant would lead the group’ male Elephant would not lead the group. If any issues happens for an Elephant, every elephant would gather and surround that elephant. Such great Elephants are tied in the temple and Elephants would be used to raising their trump to receive money from the devotees. Likewise, fishers community are in the mindset of seeking anything from any person visiting their residence or they would check if the people have come here to offer something for us and they (fishers) would ask,’would you do anything’ for us.

Earlier, whoever it might be, fisher used to invite the person to have food in their houses. If you are a researcher and visiting the fishers community, they would not expect anything from you. But they would offer/provide you food. They would take care of you, till you leave, it would be their responsibility to care for you. You get prawns, you get fishes, people would come from every household just to visit you; our community (fishers) was of that sort. Now the community people would ask you, what is the use of responding to you; people started expecting things. The Temple Elephants would not realise if they are tied. The caretaker also would tie the Elephants only for 6 months, after 6 months if the caretaker removes the chain, the Elephant would not move from that place. It’s thought has changed to that ‘we are tied up’.

**-01:20:11**

GV: This means that people have been living a life based on some commands; earlier they were living on their own, now they (fishers) could make it live on their own. Earlier before the Tsunami people were fishing and after the Tsunami also people were fishing. Then what changes has made people think in this sort of way?

R: People started to relate the timeline after the Tsunami. People would remember the Tsunami year. But actually there is no relation between the Tsunami and this domain. After that lot of privatisation and liberalisation, capitalism, many projects have been initiated. All the things on the land have been consumed by the rich person, only what’s left is ‘the sea’. They have initiated many projects in the sea, then sea resources have depleted (fishes).

GV: What kind of projects have been implemented in sea?

R: Here we have the North Chennai Power Station (NCTPS), Desalination Plant, then Sedhu-Samuthira project, then port expansion. In these projects, where does the waste water or the effluents go?

GV: Had you been to Ennore in your childhoods from Laxmipuram? Do you have any memories about Ennore river or other things?

R: There are some villages across the river, to those villages we have travelled via boat.

GV: Have you travelled to those villages?

R: Yes, only through boats some village has been accessed. Ennore Kuppam and MugadwaraKuppam were across the river before 1994. Only Thalankuppam and Nettukuppam were existing on this side of the river. Because of the establishment of the North Chennai Thermal Power Plants, people from Ennorekuppam and Mugadwarakuppam have been evicted from there and they have displaced here.

GV: Why do you visit those places? Would you visit your relatives house?

R: With the fishers community, women would be married to other men in the fishers community. On a livelihood basis, fishers from those regions (north of Ennore CreeK) would come here to trade their fishes. Ennorekuppam and Mugadwarakuppam can’t trade the caught fishes within their village, they have to come to Ennore to trade their catches. They have to use that boat service to cross the river.

GV: What was the reason that you have been to the other side of the river?

R: I have been to visit my relatives; we would visit the temple festivals.

GV: Were there temples on that side of the river?

R: Now if you do research, you can find the abandoned grindstone (ammikallu), washing cloth stone in the Sattankuppam, Mugadwarakuppam and Ennorekuppam. We can see the remaining houses that were demolished; if we see all those, we would get tears in our eyes. There are people who left with a hard feeling after seeing their demolished house. We can see ceiling tiles, cloth washing stones, kitchens, all those still exist.

GV: What would the temple festivals look like?

R: We don’t have to say if it's a fisher temple festival. Like other communities, fisher’s community would not go to cinema or going out or going to exhibitions or parks. Their only entertainment is festivals, for female children if the festival is happening for 4 days, children would be wearing new clothing on all 4 days. For fishers, their festival is that much special. Even the Pongal festival is very special for them; they celebrate the Kaanum (3rd day of Pongal) well. That’s their biggest entertainment, nothing else. Fishere here would be visiting the Periyapaalayam (sacred place), to visit that place people would even be getting 10,000 Rupees in loan. Fisher would love that place very much because our (fishers) would get fishes and \_\_\_\_\_\_. Wherever they get these, fishers would go happily. Because they would like that river fishes. Periyapaalayam is very famous; then fishers rarely go to Thirupadhi, now the culture has changed more fishers visiting Thirupathi. Then only a limited number of fishers would be visiting Thirupathi; because only the people who have visited Tirupati would be burnt after their death.

GV: Why so?

R: That came as a cultural change with the fishers.

GV: Other than that, in general, would the people in fishers community be buried after their death?

R: Yes, they would be buried; not burnt. Only people who have visited Thirupathi would be burnt.

**-01:25:00**

GV: Is there any reason for that?

R: The reason is the touched that mountain and they have seen the ‘Ezlu-malaiyaan’ (a god name). If such people are dead, the person would be applied ‘naamam’ (a sketch on forehead) and that person would be burnt or else only ‘vibudhu’ (ash dust of dead person used in temples). Because fishers traditionally follow sivan (saivam) as they are ‘Pandiyans’ (a Tamil Kingdom); they form the Pandiyan dynasty. In the temples in Minjur, there would be more fish symbols. In larger temples fish would be a prominent symbol; which is the symbol of Pandiyars (Pandiyans). Even if you have noticed, people in the fishers community use more ‘fish’ dollars (in neck chains); fishers would like that. It’s the identity of the fishers. If you study the Temples on the shore, you can notice the ‘fish’ symbol even while stepping into the temple. Even the Melur temple (In Minjur) was built during the Pandiyan period; there is ‘fish’ symbol in there.

**-01:26:13**

*Audio 2: 00:04:23 hours*

*230416\_Housing\_IndhraGandhiKuppam&AIR\_Resettlement\_sites\_1.2\_ GV,RK*

RK: Are you aware of any accidents that happened in the 1980s in Ennore creek?

R: That was happening in Pazhaverkaadu.

RK: Was there any accident in the river in Ennore?

R: Yes, there was an accident and one happened in Pazhaverkadu.

RK: Do you remember the year?

R: I was a small girl then. I just heard about it. People died because more people were carried in the boat than the limit.

RK: Do you think that the schemes like beneficiary's contribution of 1 lakh and 5 thousand Rupees is good or bad?
R: I always think people's participation is necessary. But government should also do people, government should definitely do to the people. One more thing is if we get anything easily, those things would not have power; that V maam used to say. It would be good to have our participation with the government. So, I would accept that. We are also demanding the government, then there should be our participation too.

RK: Does the money have interest for the amount that has to be paid?

R: No.

RK: Do you think that liquor consumption has increased?

R: Yes, definitely.

RK: Earlier, was’t that common with fishers?

R: Then the liquor was just made from the fruits, now liquor has more spirit in it. The current alcohol that is in use is impacting the brain. This is also a business tactic. If a person consumes alcohol at night, in the morning the person would be pushed to consume the alcohol again. An educated person or an office going person would avoid alcohol (in the morning). Being a labourer, if the person doesn't have work the next morning, the person would be getting bored; automatically the person is having a headache, the person would choose to consume the alcohol to get relief. While continuing this, they are getting addicted to alcohol.

RK: Do you think that the government saw the Tsunami as an opportunity to evict people from the shore?

R: Yes. The government notifies CRZ, that nothing is allowed in the 500 m zone from the sea (shoreline). Then where does this notification stand for the Taj hotel, resorts, celebrities houses like Vijay house, Suriya house? All their houses are within 500 metre from the sea (shoreline); all those have to be removed. Rick people’s hotels exist in place, and the government can also remove those; if a Tsunami approaches, those things would also get impacted, people in the hotel would also be dead. Why is that not removed? If all these are removed, we can think that the government is acting for the people. In the Taj hotel in Kovalam, 450 people are working; is it okay to let 450 people die? Who is answerable if foreign people who are staying in a hotel die? Only the government is answerable. Then, why is the government supporting those hotels, resorts? All those also be removed. Then we can think if the ‘policy’ is for the people or not.