

# TAMWED REGENERATION RESEARCH PROJECT

Research into the needs of two  
communities in rural South India



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A researcher  
interviewing  
members of a  
family for the  
survey

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# Tamwed Regeneration Research

## 1. Summary

This BIG Lottery-funded project aimed to provide statistics that would demonstrate the needs of marginalised and impoverished communities in two areas of Tamil Nadu in India. A research and survey programme was designed, delivered and the results analysed to give statistical evidence of needs and assets that would provide the foundation for a 3 year regeneration programme to contribute to social, economic and environmental sustainability.

## 2. Background

Tamwed is a UK-based charity that was set up soon after the tsunami in 2005 by regeneration professionals and others living in South West England who were familiar with South India through their work or their first hand knowledge of communities in the region. The organisation works with partner organisations in rural Tamil Nadu to link with and support some of the poorest communities that suffer from a long term cycle of poverty and debt which has been exacerbated by the tsunami as well as droughts and storms which could mark the start of the effects of climate change. Tamwed works within the principles of social, economic and environmental sustainability and projects are designed to contribute to self sufficiency without reliance on outside aid. Initial projects assisted agricultural regeneration with farmers whose livelihoods had been affected by the tsunami but were not in receipt of long term financial or other assistance. Tamwed works with two partner NGOs in India through which it has set up or supported small-scale economic programmes, alternative technology projects and health schemes. Most of Tamwed's committee members are experienced managers and trainers in regeneration, sustainability and development issues, working in the UK, India and other countries.

## 3. Objectives

The objectives and the method of delivery of this research project were to:

- Confirm the identity of two communities in rural Tamil Nadu that suffer from social and economic exclusion and deprivation that would benefit from a programme of support.  
*Communicate with locally-based NGOs who will liaise with communities within their project areas.*
- Establish facts and figures relating to social, economic and environmental aspects of the communities.  
*Research each district using available data and filling gaps with surveys.*
- Establish immediate and long-term needs of the communities covering issues such as health, education and environment.  
*Create and deliver a full community survey using accepted and valid consultation techniques.*
- Establish the potential for business opportunities to create a sustainable income.  
*Undertake market research in India and the UK that links culturally, economically and environmentally-acceptable goods, produce and services with purchasers - at home and abroad.*
- Compile a business plan for a project that would lead to an increase in the quality of life of the beneficiary communities.  
*Use all information to produce a plan with the input of beneficiaries and interested parties.*

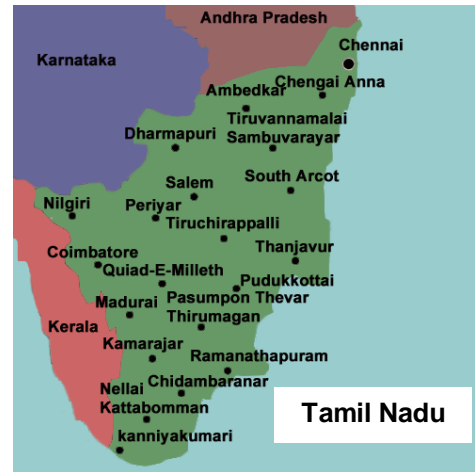
#### 4. Issues and Needs

The project aimed to respond to the principles of sustainable development by meeting an interrelated group of social, economic and environmental needs. It will work among the most disadvantaged groups in Indian society and prioritise issues that include:

- Financial Resources – this will be the main focus of the programme through which other elements will be supported and will include access to micro-credit and small business opportunities.
- Education – it will promote literacy and numeracy among the children and adults of Scheduled Castes and tribal communities that are normally excluded from access to mainstream education.
- Health – the rural areas targeted suffer from trauma and other after effects of the tsunami as well as an increase in HIV/Aids and dietary-related health problems.
- Natural resources – safe water and sanitations are key issues in these rural areas for which Tamwed will aim to provide low-cost, low-tech and sustainable solutions.
- Human rights – this will be promoted by allowing beneficiaries to have a major say in the development and management of any projects and by encouraging them to exercise their democratic rights within state and national PRI legislation.

#### 6. Tamil Nadu தமிழ்நாடு

Tamil Nadu, or 'land of the Tamil', has a population of 65 million with 7 million living in Chennai (formerly Madras) the capital of the state and a major centre for business and industry. Traditionally a manufacturing state, Tamil Nadu is also a leading agricultural producer. The west and north of the state are made up of hills and forests while the east and south are coastal plains. The tsunami affected the whole coastal area. The rural districts covered by this project are to the north and south of Chennai.



#### 7. Partners

Tamwed's partners in India are the Centre for Rural Systems and Development (CRUSADE), which was established in 1991 to work with communities in a particularly poor, rural area to the north of Chennai; and Manushi, set up in 1994 to support communities to the south of Chennai. Both NGOs have set up Women's Self Help Groups with micro credit and other support to assist families to overcome a cycle of debt and poverty. CRUSADE's Secretary is also Tamwed's Project Co-ordinator in India, monitoring project delivery and accounts. As established Gandhian NGOs, they play an important role in improvement of the quality of life of extremely poor and marginalised people who are mostly members of Scheduled Castes (see later). A profile of one of the families who live in a District supported by CRUSADE and who were surveyed for the research is at Annex A.



Tamwed helped to set up an experimental training programme for women to learn embroidery, tailoring and kalamkari – a traditional art of printing detailed designs on to fabric. The market for their products has been tested in India and in the UK giving an idea which items in demand and at what price.

## **8. Needs Assessment Preparation**

Tamwed has assisted relatively small but important projects in Tamil Nadu over two years including training women to produce crafts and clothes to sell and assisting with agricultural regeneration. However, it was considered necessary to research and develop a carefully constructed regeneration programme that would make a long and substantial contribution to the quality of life and environment for communities in two target areas. An application was made to the Big Lottery for a Small International Grant to fund the necessary research and development of this programme. Although some communities in these areas have received financial aid based on a degree of research, this type of thorough needs assessment had never been undertaken. It was hoped that those taking part in this project in India would be able to assist other organisations to assess and analyse the needs of the communities they work with.

The first stage of the project involved liaison between Tamwed and the two partner NGOs to ensure that those taking a lead role were able to contribute to the detail of the programme from the outset. Communities in two areas were identified as being possible participants in the project. They were considered to have the greatest needs and had not been supported by previous projects. It was also necessary to consider the number of people that could be supported in manageable geographical locations during a subsequent three year programme of regeneration and sustainability projects.

The type of quantitative and qualitative research to be carried out for a needs assessment was established during initial meetings with the leaders of the two partner NGOs and a representative from Tamwed who is experienced in researching and developing projects in India and elsewhere. Meetings were set up with residents in the two targeted areas to explain the programme and establish the necessity of using statistically valid methods. It was important to allay fears of intrusion in pursuit of personal information and not to build hopes of an automatic response to issues raised. A Partnership Agreement was signed by representatives from Tamwed, CRUSADE and Manushi to establish ground rules during the programme. A list of issues to be researched was drawn up for a draft survey and grouped under headings such as health, employment and education which was to be tested with a sample of residents. A detailed timetable was agreed (Annex B).

## 9. Locations Covered

India's States are divided into Districts (equivalent to UK's counties), Blocks (districts) and Panchayats (parishes) although the geographical area and population size is considerably larger in India than the UK.

The first of the two areas targeted by this project covers three Panchayats in Sholavaram block of **Tiruvallur** District to the north of Chennai. The total population of this district is 2,755,000 and of a single block, about 200,000. The Panchayats covered are Athur, Old Erumai Vetti Palayam and New Erumai Vetti Palayam with a total population of 5,300.

The second area, to the south of Chennai, covers three Panchayats in Parangipettai Block of **Cuddalore** District. The total population of this district is 2,286,000 and of a single block, about 200,000. The Panchayats covered are: Chinna Kumati, Ariyahosti and Kothattai with a total population of 9,700. See map at Annex C.

## 10. Needs Assessment Survey

The draft survey was refined, clarified, translated and then piloted among villages in the CRUSADE area. It was then printed in numbers and completed by researchers with a sample of households using stratified random sampling. Results were recorded in a specially constructed database by an IT expert engaged by the project. See Annex D for the survey questionnaire. The value of this quantitative survey was added to by qualitative community research through discussions with elected representatives of Panchayats, women's group leaders, local Government functionaries and 'socially motivated' individuals.

Women attending a discussion about the Projects in Cuddalore District. This is a very poor, coastal area which was affected by the tsunami with a high incidence of health problems.



Conducting an interview with the head of a household in Tiruvallur District. Most men in this village are part time or seasonal labourers on a very low income.

## 11. Needs Assessment – Analysis

The results of the survey were analysed and recorded for each participating panchayat and then summarised for the two districts. The summary analysis is given at Annex E. This information has been distilled from a detailed analysis of the surveys from each of the six Panchayats.

### a. Area One – Tiruvallur District

The sample of 325 households was distributed to ensure that Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and other groups were proportionately represented. The following is taken from results of the survey in Tiruvallur District which covered 25% of the 1301 number of households in the three Panchayats.

- Only 14% of the adult population has full time employment (29% male and only 4% female).
- Another 15% have part time work and 21% are employed seasonally, mostly in agriculture.
- Only 11% of households own land, the average land holding size being 1.18 acres;
- 21% households own livestock.
- In all three Panchayats, around 15% of the population have health problems – many with their eyes. More than double the number of women than men suffer from some disease or other.
- As many as 61% of people live in houses with a thatched roof. Another 18% have roofs made of asbestos sheets.
- In Athur, adult members work in food, mineral water or butter milk production industries. Some are employed in brick chambers and a few have small laundry businesses.
- In New Erumai Vetti Palayam, working members of most households earn their living through agricultural labour which is only seasonal. Families that own land grow vegetables for the wholesale market in Chennai. In Old Erumaivetti Palayam the main employment is livestock rearing, vegetable cultivation and labouring.

### b. Area Two - Cuddalore District

The sample of 434 households was distributed between Scheduled Caste, Backward Class and other communities in proportion to the population of each community. See later note about the caste system. The following is taken from results of the survey in Cuddalore District which covered 20% of the 2192 households in the three Panchayats. The proportion of members of Scheduled Castes is 18%.

- Only 6% of the adult population has full time employment (12% male and only 1% female).
- Another 11% have part time work and 25% are employed only seasonally, mostly in agriculture.
- 34% of households have land, the average land holding size being 1.92 acre.
- 35% households have livestock.
- Around 5% of the population have health problems that include cataracts, ulcers and diabetes.
- Almost 60% in houses have thatched roofs. Another 7% have roofs made of asbestos sheets.
- In these three Panchayats, full time employment is largely restricted to building and labouring in factories. Most women are unemployed.

## **12. Further Information**

Although the quantitative survey established some predominant issues, it was important to add to this information using qualitative information based on discussions with the communities and the experience of NGOs who are aware of patterns and priorities on issues such as employment and health. It was intended to establish income levels during the survey but this proved difficult with many people not knowing or not willing to impart the amount of money they earn. However, this can be assessed using rates paid for types of work. The most common employment in these areas is agricultural or manual labour for which men are paid up to Rs150 (£1.80) and women Rs75 (94p). It is estimated that in only about a third of households both the husband and wife will be working.

There has been a great impact on social, economic and environmental factors in areas affected by the tsunami. The beneficiaries of most of the relief aid were those living directly on the coast although those living inland experienced short and long term disruption including the salination of farmland. There is an uncounted number of people suffering from forms of trauma which need a specialist medical response. It is estimated that as many as one in two households in some communities have a person with alcohol addiction although this would not be acknowledged to those carrying out surveys.

The initial pilot attempted to find out about interviewees' knowledge about and preparedness for the effects of climate change. The response was a 100% negative on both issues and so the topic was not included in the subsequent survey. Tamil Nadu is beginning to suffer the effects of climate change with a change in weather patterns that are causing disruption to all aspects of life including agriculture on which many people depend for a living.

The Indian Government introduced a National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) in 2006 which covers 6 out of 29 districts of Tamil Nadu including Cuddalore District which was covered by the survey. 100 days work is guaranteed at Rs80 (£1) per day. In Tamil Nadu, the proportion of women to men taking advantage of this scheme is 81%. This income is important to the health of families since most women will spend this income on food to supplement poor diets.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have reported on income inequalities affecting the population of countries such as India. The rapid economic growth of India has resulted in the better-off sections of society experiencing larger increases in their standards of living than the least well-off. The rich-poor divide is illustrated by the ADB as a Gini Coefficient. India's Coefficient rose from 32.9 in 1993 to 36.2 in 2004 and will have risen further by the end of 2007. India scores poorly on the basis of health and land ownership benchmarks.

## **13. Caste System**

The caste system is a dominant issue in Indian society and must be accounted for by projects designed to improve quality of life in any district. The sample for this project ensured that all castes were represented. Under Government reforms, quotas for political representation and employment have been established. However this legislation is often abused particularly in rural areas. For this survey castes were grouped in order of seniority into: Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes (who live mostly in the forests and hills) Backward Communities, and Other Communities which includes all the other castes. 43% of the communities in the areas surveyed are Scheduled Castes - the State average is 23%.



Scheduled Caste (SC) is the name given to 'Dalits' (literally 'broken people' formerly called 'Untouchables') who have historically been prevented from doing any but the most menial jobs. Poor farmers and landless labourers are generally SC and suffer from discrimination that is more predominant in rural areas where they live in colonies outside villages. CRUSADE and Manushi support Women's Self Help Groups in SC communities which empower women to take control over their lives and finances. The women photographed are Self Help organisers from an SC colony in Tiruvallur District.

#### 14. Project Planning

Using the quantitative data and based on experience, local knowledge, qualitative research and discussions, it was agreed to prioritise the following four objectives for a 3 year programme that would aim to improve the quality of life for the most disadvantaged people in the two districts covered. Partners from government, health, education, business and academic organisations would be engaged on each issue. Included below is a brief rationale supporting each objective.

- a. Increase the educational achievements of women and those in poor communities.
- Assist children, aged 10 to 16 and with a special emphasis on girls, from 1,000 families with the greatest financial needs through grants towards education costs including extra tuition, school fees, uniforms, books etc
- Some grants are available via the State Government. The most needy, e.g. lower caste members in isolated areas, often miss out on these grants either because they do not know about them or are not able to apply.*

- b. Increase access to health care and the treatment of prevalent physical and psychological disorders.
- Resource two clinics that will treat a total of 6,000 outpatients per annum for treatable minor medical problems and for diagnosis and referrals.
  - Set up an anti alcohol and drug addiction programme in two centres that will raise awareness of the dangers and consequences in all communities and provide detoxification programmes for 200 addicts.
  - Install toilets in 600 houses.
- Most people need to travel many miles to a hospital, even for the diagnosis or treatment of a minor complaint. This means time off school or work, the expense of travel and a long wait to be examined. Alcohol and drug addiction among men, particularly in tsunami-affected areas, is on the increase causing social and economic problems. The installation of basic toilets in houses constructed with the help of self-build associations will help to improve health and hygiene.*

- c. Decrease dependence on non-sustainable energy and prepare for the effects of climate change.



- Install solar energy units for heating and energy in two health clinics.
- Install solar street lighting systems in 30 locations.
- Providing solar lanterns for 100 of the poorest households.
- To engage the communities of two districts with partners in a programme to prepare for the effects of climate change.

*Solar energy is the most appropriate form of alternative energy in these areas. By installing units in health centres, in villages and in the houses of 100 of the poorest people, this project will help to demonstrate and improve the viability, efficiency and availability of solar energy. The communities surveyed have no knowledge about climate change which is already having an effect. Having raised awareness of the potential impact, representatives will join government, academic and other organisations in planning for the short and long term future.*

d. Increase income through self employment to decrease reliance on low-paid and seasonal labour.

- Set up a training programme in micro enterprise including management and marketing for 2,000 beneficiaries.
- Train and support 1,000 women to attract an income from the sale of embroidered and other goods, locally and abroad.
- Increase the production and sale of vegetables for 500 farmers experimenting with organic and other methods of production.

*An experimental programme by partners has demonstrated the potential for micro enterprise to attract a sustainable income for women in families that currently rely on low paid and short term labour. By testing the market at home and abroad with a variety of items, it has been possible to determine those with the greatest potential. Farmers with access to land have little knowledge about anything but the production of traditional foods using basic methods which are then sold by individuals to middlemen.*



By using more efficient methods and cooperating to sell their produce direct to the consumer, farmers can increase their profit margin.

Social work students from a college in Chennai that will be one of the project's partners, providing a representative for the Advisory and Monitoring Group.





Testing for diabetes which is one of the more common medical problems. Medical facilities can be many miles away from isolated rural communities. A simple test can lead to early treatment.

Houses can be very basic with no toilet facilities. Housing associations are encouraging the self building of brick houses where toilets can be fitted.



A woman in an area of Cuddalore District affected by the tsunami. Her husband is unable to work due to alcoholism and the family income depends on the small amount of fish she manages to trade in poor villages.

## ANNEX A

### FAMILY PROFILE

The head of this family who are based in Athur in Tiruvallur District is Mr Sivasankar, 35, who is married to Nagamma, 31. They are members of the Backward Caste. They have four children, a boy and three girls, between the ages of 6 and 12: Manigardan, Dhanam, Priya and Malas. The oldest girl, Malas, has never been to school and the others left after a short time due to the father being a migrant worker. Mr Sivankar takes on labouring jobs many miles away and the family will move to temporary, often very poor quality housing for months at a time.

Their one room house has been built on common land and is not owned by them. The walls are made of mud and the roof is thatched using palm leaves which need to be replaced every year or two. Severe storms will severely damage the roof and these types of houses built near the sea were completely demolished by the tsunami. There is no electricity but water is available from a nearby standpipe.

Both adults are currently working in a brick chamber making 1,000 bricks a day for which they are paid 150 rupees (£1.80) a day. The children often work with their parents to help make their quota of bricks although due to labour laws this is now illegal. During the rainy season they go to Hyderabad in the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh for a month. Mr Sivasankar also takes other work such as labouring on building sites. Malas has worked in an appalam (the local name for popadom) factory for two months starting at Rs15 (18p) a day which increased to Rs40 at the time she left.

Nagamma has constant chest pains and has undergone treatment at Stanley Hospital in Chennai which is two hours away by bus.



The children of the family with a friend outside the house they use when their father is working nearby.

## ANNEX B

### RESEARCH PROGRAMME

April – Communicate about the type of research to be undertaken and proposed areas to cover. Allocate responsibilities and finance.

May 12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> – Visit by Oz to both project areas. Meet project staff and community members, visit projects. Agree format for research and timetable. Sign Partnership Agreement.

May 16<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> – Draft questionnaire by Jothi and Rita.

June 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> – Questionnaire revised by Oz after reference to Plymouth University.

June 14<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> – Pilot questionnaire with households in CRUSADE's and Manushi's areas.

July 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> – Modify the questionnaire.

July 15<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> – Prepare and print questionnaire.

July 22 to August 14<sup>th</sup> – Deliver questionnaires.

Aug 15<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> – Analyze results and enter data into report.

Sep 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> – Oz visit (6 days), consult on results, prioritise issues, draft and refine plan. Begin application.

Sep 15<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> – Oz writing project plan and completing application.

Oct 1<sup>st</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> – Oz to consult with Jothi and Rita before submitting plan and application to funders.



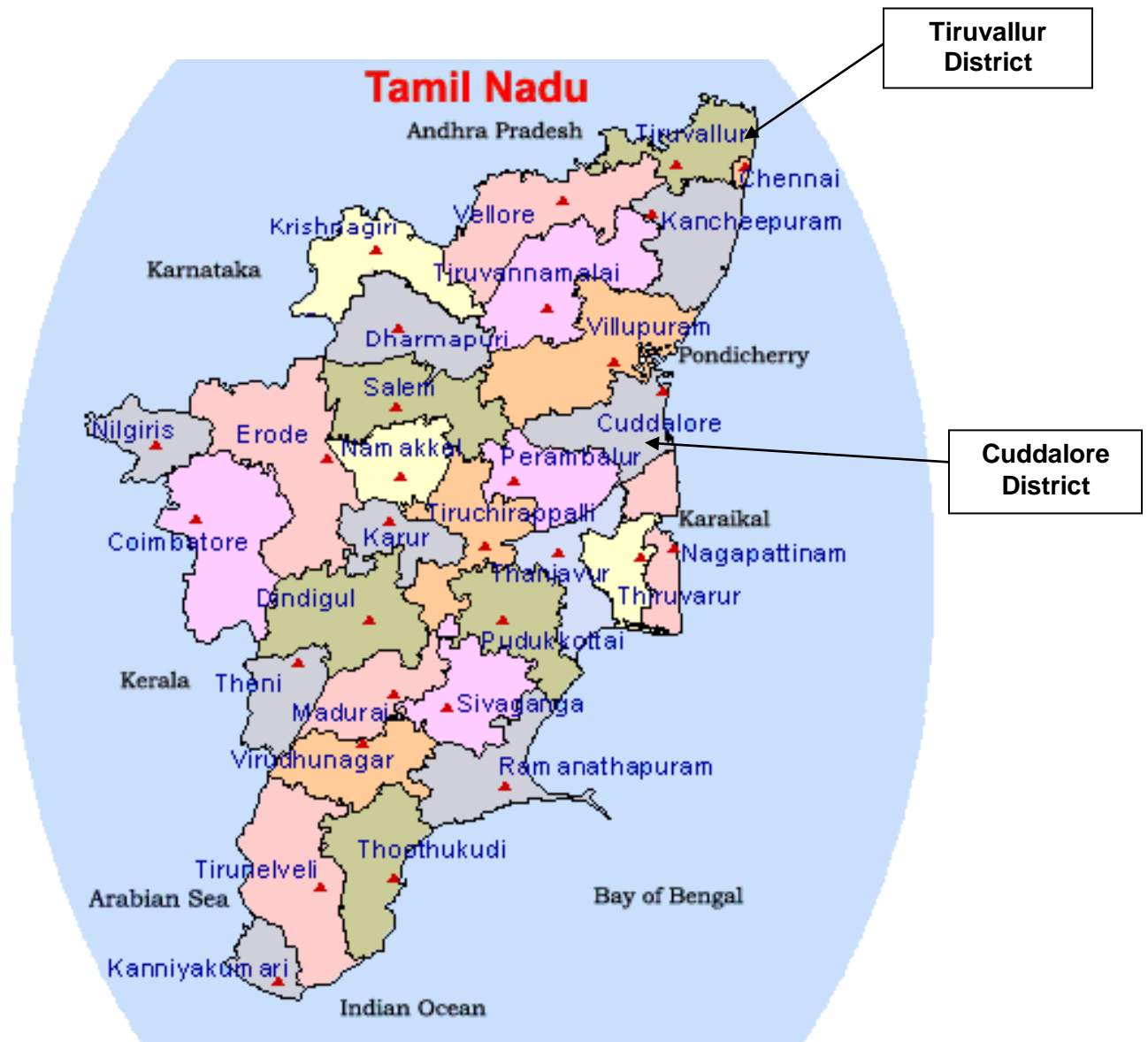
Jothi Ramalingam who organised the research with his office manager. Staff from CRUSADE and Manushi interviewed the sample of families and the data was entered and analysed by CRUSADE's IT expert.

A discussion group arranged to complement the data extracted during family interviews. Some issues such as the extent of alcoholism were impossible to ascertain during interviews.



## ANNEX C

### MAP OF TAMIL NADU



**Tiruvallur** is close to the state capital Chennai (formerly Madras) and bordered by the sea to the east and by the neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh to the north.

**Cuddalore** (literally 'near the sea') is 180km south of Chennai. It was severely affected by the tsunami.

This distance from Chennai in the north of the State to Kanniyakumari in the south is 689km.

The whole coastal area of Tamil Nadu was affected by the tsunami, killing over 8,000 people and affecting the lives of an estimated 2.5 million.

ANNEX D  
SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

# ANNEX E

## SUMMARY ANALYSIS