Green Rameswaram Annual Report 2020-21



"Blessed is the little squirrel; he is doing his work to the best of his ability. I simply want to be like the squirrel in the building of Rama's bridge, who was quite content to put on the bridge his little quota of sand-dust. That is my position".

Swami Vivekananda
 At Shakespeare Club,
 Pasadena, California
 31 January 1900

Preface

Green Rameswaram Trust has brought the stakeholders of the Rameswaram Island, government organisations, community and civil society organisations together through networking to join hands in the transformation for Green Rameswaram Project. This pandemic time has taught the humanity a lot of lessons and this definitely is a big challenge for community organizations like us. In spite of pandemic, Green Rameswaram Project has done extensive work in this year. A few benchmarks are as follows:

- 1. Seeding the concept of Green Finance and Promotion of Green Resilient groups
- 2. Revival and Renovation of two Traditional water bodies
- 3. Our Green Friends work in the field of SWM during the trying times of Covid 19
- 4. E-Vehicles launch in and around Sri Ramanathasamy temple
- 5. Landscaping and Beautification by planting trees
- 6. Green Rameswaram youtube channel has reached out to 14000 general public
- 7. Developing Social capital through various activities

Hope the end of the pandemic will help us to stretch and achieve more in the coming year.

Best Wishes,

G.Vasudeo Secretary Green Rameswaram

Contents

SI.No.	Particulars	Page No.
1.	Green Finance and Promotion of Green Resilient groups	4
2.	Water Management	14
3.	Waste Management	19
4.	Green Health	23
5.	Eco Tourism	24
6.	Landscaping and Beautification	26
7.	Social Capital	27





1. Green Finance and Promotion of Green Resilient Groups

1.1 Background

Rameswaram is a unique island that has a special place in the hearts of Indians. It contains within its shores history, mythology, spirituality, religion, archaeology, natural beauty, bio-diversity, etc. The town is considered to be a sacred place equivalent to Kashi by Hindus. Rameswaram is located in Ramanathapuram, Tamil Nadu, one of the most underdeveloped districts of Tamil Nadu and its one among the two Aspirational Districts in the state categorised by NITI Aayog. The coastal ecosystem is endowed with rich marine resources and is a part of Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve. People in the island depend on marine and agricultural livelihood activities. At least five thousand pilgrims visit the Rameswaram Island every day, according to the City Development Plan prepared during 2009. Present estimates put this figure nearly to 2 crores per year. The numbers are impressive, but it also indicates the level of exposure of the island with relatively smaller area to pollution. The island receives less than normal rainfall leading to prevalence of dry climate. The climatic conditions aggravated by the increasing tourism activities bring about a pressure on the natural resources of the island and affect lives and livelihoods of the people. The fast depleting resources poses risk to the future generation. As per Swachh Bharat Mission rating of clean cities 2017, Rameswaram occupies the lower cardinal order of 262 out of 468 cities in India.

Environmental issues in Rameswaram

Presently, the Island town is undergoing an acute water shortage and salinity problems. The present system is supplying 2.74 MLD of water to the residents of the town against the demand of 7.02 MLD. According to the research studies, ground water in Rameswaram is characterised by heavy inorganic load due to salinity, TDS, TH and chloride beyond the threshold levels. Intrusion of sea water, overuse of ground water sources due to intensified tourism and urbanisation by unsafe discharge of sewage are the major causes of salinity problem. A recent study has found out that 15% of the ground water samples taken in the Island contained fluoride content greater than the limit recommended by WHO. Grey water constitutes 55% to 75% of waste water. It has its own chemical and biological contaminants which is a threat to health and marine biodiversity if not properly used. Nearly 6 crore litre of grey water is left

to the environment without treatment. Some decades back, the island had more than 100 traditional water bodies namely Teerthams, which functioned as natural recharger of ground water. Most of these structures are extinct now.

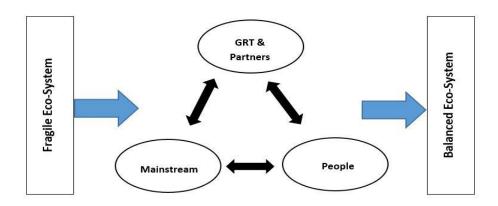
Increased tourism activity in a smaller area coupled with undesired waste management activities has resulted in piling up of huge volumes of untreated waste posing a big threat to the environment. Per capita waste generation in Rameswaram is near about 3,503 g which is significantly high for a town of this size, attributable to hotels, eateries and other facilities established for visitors and pilgrims. Composition of municipal solid waste in Rameswaram is unique comprising more of fabrics, packing materials, plastics and food wastes generated by tourists and households. Unless scientifically handled, management of waste will remain a mere jargon. Solid waste management in Rameswaram Island is often complicated by its isolated geography and tourism - dominated economy and poses a greater challenge than in other places. Intensified tourism activities have led to increased vehicle usage. The increased use of fossil energy sources has caused serious air pollution in the island.

Rameswaram is a part of Gulf of Mannar in Bay of Bengal. The Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve was set up in 1989 jointly by the Government of India and Government of Tamil Nadu. About 3,600 species of flora and fauna have been identified in the biosphere so far and the fauna is said to be one of the richest in the whole of Indo-west pacific region Biosphere Reserve in Southeast Asia. The Biosphere Reserve comprises marine components like algal communities, sea grasses, coral reefs, salt marshes and mangroves. A wide variety of cowries, cones, volutes, murices, whelks, strombids, tonnids, prawns, lobsters, pearl oysters, sea horses, sea-cucumbers etc., are available in this biosphere. The coral reefs support a variety of ornamental fishes and provide feeding and breeding grounds for a number of edible fin-fishes and shellfishes. Majority of the domestic and municipal wastes in the island is discharged directly into the coastal waters posing a threat to the marine environment. In recent years, fishing activity in the Rameswaram Island has considerably increased. The over fishing causes pressure on marine resources and affect bio-diversity.

1.2 Approach for Development

Inspired by the Eastern wisdom of Sanatana Dharma, our understanding of development goes beyond materialistic and quality of life indicators. Our approach greatly emphasises on development with human face. We have understood that all the developmental issues in the world are attributed to imbalances in interrelations among the elements of the Eco-system. The modern science and economy exploited and tried to enslave the Nature resulting in centralisation and inequalities. It has centralised the means of production, and made impossible the proper distribution of the wealth produced. It has burnt up scarce non-renewable

resources, and has endangered all life-support systems, air, water, soil fertility, bio-diversity etc. To reverse this status, a development approach which is holistic and has a human face is required. Green Rameswaram Trust has evolved a developmental approach that involves multiple stakeholders such as people, mainstream institutions philanthropic institutions and civil society organisations in the process of development.



The model interventions envisage addressing the issues that cause imbalances in the present fragile Eco-system and promoting balances among the Eco-system elements. For overall development of the Island, the model envisages nine verticals namely water management, waste management, renewable energy, new merchandise and livelihoods, landscaping and beautification, green health, heritage, eco-tourism & green transport and marine bio-diversity.

1.3 Green initiatives by Green Rameswaram Trust

Since inception, Green Rameswaram Trust has undertaken different interventions in Rameswaram. The Trust through its partner organisations has renovated 36 traditional water bodies namely Teerthams with the objective of enhancing ground water recharge. A community participated waste management programme is being implemented in association with local municipality. Bio-gas plants have been installed in different parts of the town to demonstrate its benefits to the local residents. Community organisation to promote social capital is undertaken. A school sanitation project has been started.

The Trust has undertaken various schemes to address the above mentioned gaps in promoting green and resilient practices among the people. Educating the people on green and resilient practices is given primary importance in all the interventions. Thanks to the educational interventions by Green Rameswaram and its partners, there is an increased realisation.

Green Rameswaram Trust has established partnership with state government, district administration, local municipality, philanthropic agencies, fellow civil society organisations and academia to promote collective action towards

achieving the goal. The Trust has brought resource agencies on board to provide relevant technological and capacity building support to the local residents. An Island Development Committee under the chairmanship of the district collector to steer the interventions of greening the island town. As an active member of the Committee, Green Rameswaam Trust is representing the needs of the people in the forum. The Trust is also actively involved in advocating with policy making bodies of the Tamil Nadu state and Indian federal governments.

1.4 Social Capital for Green Lifestyle Practices

The initiative proposed revolves around the social capital structure Green Resilient Groups (GRGs) and their network organisations. Having this structure as a base the community will be enabled to adopt eco-friendly lifestyle practices through behavioural change and financial interventions.

The proposed initiative will aim at achieving the following objectives

- 1. Promoting and strengthening Green Resilient Groups (GRGs) and their network organisations
- 2. Educating the community on environmentally sustainable green life style practices
- 3. Providing green finance services to the community to enable them adopt green lifestyle practices

1.5 Methodology

Building Social capital sets, the foundation for other development initiatives, namely behavioural change communication, green financial services and policy advocacy. Propositions for promoting the social capital are as follows

Organising the Unorganised

People serve many functions in people centered development. They are instruments for distributing power within society by strengthening the economic and political power of the marginalised. They are the training grounds for democratic citizenship and the institution building blocks of democratization. They create demands for greater responsiveness to grassroots concerns, providing the collective bargaining that enable to negotiate with the representatives for their entitlements. The focus of organising the unorganized is to create sound local institutions managed by people at slum, ward and at Urban Local Body level, which will link with mainstream institutions.

Design the primary units and build them first

It is very critical to define the size, structure and the details of local governance and management systems of the 'primary units' to begin with. Once these details are worked out, suiting to the local context, a lot of efforts need

to be put to promote and nurture these primary building blocks to develop institutions from grassroots. For e.g.: Green Resilient Groups of 15-20 members at ward/hamlet level are the 'primary unit' for promoting Community Mainstream Institutions in Rameswaram context.

Building 'Network Structures' of urban poor at multiple levels

Creation of people's institutions at different levels is critical to address the issues of powerlessness and isolation, which are two important causes of vulnerability. These institutions need to be created at different levels managed by the local community through building the local leadership. These network organisations facilitate co-learning, sharing the leadership capacity and worker and gives scale advantage. These institutions created at each level compliment the role of the other and each one acts as independent institutions with interdependence on each other for sustainability. These local institutions could be hosted into superstructures. In addition to acting as local mainstream institutions, these institutions would build a strong demand system at the local level to address the issues of environmental sustainability collectively. They could influence the government system in their favour.

Emphasise on Member ownership, control and decision making

These institutions have to be owned and controlled exclusively by the residents of Rameswaram and benefits are provided only to members. The process of decision making vested with the members only. Members contribute regular savings and equity contributions to facilitate lending operations. The products and services are suited to the specific needs of the members and designed by themselves. For ensuring effective day to day management of mainstream transactions, accounts and book-keeping local people are hired by the members. These 'local bureaucracy' reports and responds to the 'local governance' controlled by members. Due to the local control and ownership, many of the issues related to sanctioning of loans, selection of activity, utilization of loans, ensuring timely repayment and managing mainstream operations profitably are addressed locally in a simpler and effective manner. This would ensure timely and adequate credit, repeat support and designing of need based savings and credit products.

Educating the community on eco-friendly lifestyles

Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) is a multi-level tool for promoting and sustaining risk-reducing behaviours in individuals and communities by distributing tailored health messages in a variety of communication channels. Lack of knowledge about green lifestyle among the target people is the root cause of undesired practices. Unless a person is aware of a particular practice; its purpose, significance, benefits, procedures, side effects etc. s/he will not

tend to adopt it. Increased knowledge about the green lifestyle is a necessary but not sufficient pre-condition for promoting positive dietary practices. If attitudes are negative, the people tend to avoid the desired practice. Promoting 'self -realization' is an effective method to change the negative attitude towards practice of the desired practices. Increased knowledge and positive attitude will not lead to positive practices unless necessary goods and services are not available or accessible.

With the above understanding, the green lifestyle literacy programme is designed combining knowledge, attitude and access interventions that are related to intended practices. A schematic representation of the intervention approach is a presented below

Knowledge interventions		Attitude interventions		Access interventions		Practice		Result	
		Positive attitudes		Increased					
		Individual's believes		Access and availability of goods and					
Increased		Social		services					
Knowledge about		beliefs		Financial					
- Sustainability	+	Peer pressure	+	services Green	→	Desirable practices related to	→	Positive changes in the	
Green lifestyle		Stigma		products		green lifestyle		eco- system	
Native traditions		Customs		Facilitating access to					
		Inclination towards messages from market forces		Services /entitlements of government department	5				

Central message for communication will be 'environmentally sustainable lifestyle practices leads to peaceful life and better eco-system'. It is based the assumption that once a person knows that s/he is suffering from deficiency s/he will voluntarily come forward for practice changes. A variety of knowledge intervention tools such as posters, wall paintings, street theatre, puppetry, educative films, training programme etc., attitudinal interventions like demonstration, exposure visits, cross learning interactions, self-monitoring systems, family counselling, conventions, multimedia, social media etc., and access interventions such as provision of greed finance services, facilitating

access to the green products and their maintenance services and supporting access to services and entitlements from the government departments will be applied.

1.6 Green financing

The concept of green finance is novel. There exists a huge need for green finance yet is unexplored by the development and banking sector. While Green Rameswaram Trust and its partners ensure that the positive attitudes towards green and resilient practices are promoted, many families are unable to adopt the practices primarily due to lack of financial support. For example, installation of domestic rain water harvesting structure requires INR 20,000-50,000 depending on the area of the house building. Unless financial assistance is provided the families cannot adopt the technology at their homes. Hence, Green Rameswaram Trust intends to create a separate line of credit meant for green and resilient practices.

Potential and financial feasibility of this concept is unknown the financial providers including apex financial institutions and commercial banks. Linking GRGs with locally functioning public banks for financial assistance is the potential option in long run. There is a need to demonstrate the effectiveness and business prospects of green finance to the banking community. Hence, we propose to establish a seed capital namely 'Green-Fin' for green financing through which the member families of GRGs will be supported with green loans on a larger scale to attract the attention of the local bankers. Once the bank officials are convinced of the potential of the product and business feasibility of lending they will start lending green loans to the GRGs. To demonstrate the financial viability, a start-up funding is required. Being a novel idea, the concept of green finance at this stage its limitations to mobilise large amounts of funds from the mainstream financial institutions. Hence, we request you to provide seed capital assistance. Green-Fin will act as a catalytic instrument to sensitise the bankers about green finance.

GRGs will be a single window provider of financial services to the member families. The Groups will mobilise loan funds from the public banks etc., and subsequently lend to the needy members. The Groups will be equipped with necessary institutional and financial systems to carry out financial operations such as loan application generation, preliminary appraisal of loan applications, loan disbursal, book keeping, MIS, loan monitoring and loan utility monitoring.

Green-Fin will be created as a revolving fund at Green Rameswaram Trust. The GRGs will identify potential borrowers, generate loan applications and forward the same to Green-Fin. After processing the loan applications, Green-Fin will sanction and disburse the loan to the GRGs. The Groups will subsequently lend the amount to the individual members. Green-Fin being a revolving fund no

interest will be charged to GRGs. However, the groups can fix an interest margin while on lending to the individual members. The interest rate will be fixed in such a way that it attracts the member families to avail the credit product at the same time; it generates sufficient income to cover the cost of operations and earn profits at the group level.

A preliminary list of green finance products that Green-Fin will offer to the members is as follows:

Water management

- Installation of domestic rain water harvesting structure: This product will address the issue of water salinity and scarcity that prevail in the Island. Today, more than 90% of the households in Rameswaram are buying drinking water from commercial vendors. More importantly, the vendors draw water from ground water sources available in some parts of the Island to produce purified water, which depletes the ground water.
- Construction of Ground water recharge structure: In summer months, the ground water table in the Island declines, which leads to water scarcity and also increased salinity of the ground water. The recharge structure will help boost the ground water level.
- Installation of bio-sand filter: This equipment does not require artificially produced energy to purify the water. At the same time, it refines the water with higher efficiency. The bio-sand filter will be useful in places of the Island, where water is less saline.
- Creation of farm pond/percolation pond: This loan product will help households that own farmlands. Farm pond/percolation pond will be useful for life irrigation of crops and recharge of ground water.
- De-silting/repair of open wells: Many open wells in the Island are
 dysfunctional due to silting and poor maintenance. Credit support for repair
 and maintenance of the wells will help in revival of open wells and thereby
 reduce dependence on commercial water vendors.

Waste management

- Installation of bio-gas unit: Biodegradable waste produced from domestic kitchens, restaurants, hostels, community kitchens and vegetable markets could be recycled through this system and energy for cooking could be produced. The energy produced from the unit will help reduce dependence on LPG, fuel wood and kerosene.
- Setting up vermi-compost unit: Waste generated from domestic kitchen, farm lands, fish markets, vegetable and fruit markets, hostels, restaurants

- can be recycled using this technique. This could be a collective venture by one or more GRGs or their networks.
- Installation of micro compost unit: This tool will be useful to recycle the kitchen waste, generated from households, at source. Households having kitchen or backyard garden will be able to use the compost produced to feed the plants.
- Construction of toilet: A significant number of households in Rameswaram Island have not constructed toilets so far primarily due to lack of funds and the practice of open defecation still exists. The loan support will enable safe disposal of the faecal matter by the households in the Island.

Marine bio-diversity/New merchandise and livelihoods

- Capital support for eco-friendly livelihoods: The loan product will help the
 households of the Island to promote or expand livelihoods that support
 enhancement of marine bio-diversity e.g. cage rearing of lobsters, sea weed
 cultivation, ornamental fish rearing etc.
- Working capital for eco-friendly livelihoods: Loans of smaller sizes will help the entrepreneurs to meet working capital requirements of the economic activities that are eco-friendly.

Green health

 Reusable sanitary napkins: Cloth menstrual pads are environmentally friendly and do not contributes to landfill as they are reusable and do not come in or contain plastic packaging. It is less expensive to buy or make by hand cloth menstrual pads. It is claimed that users have shorter or lighter periods or fewer cramps when using cloth pads as opposed to disposable products.

Eco-tourism and green transport/New merchandise and livelihoods

- Investment capital and working capital support: GRGs and their networks will be encouraged to initiate green transport services in the island through the loan support.
- Purchase of electric vehicles: This loan product will motivate individual households to buy electric vehicles such as e-cycle, e-bike etc. This will reduce use of fossil energy sources for transport.

Renewable energy

• Installation of solar panel at homes: This loan product will help reduce dependence on non-renewable energy sources for lighting and other domestic

electric appliances. The year round prevalence of sun shine in the Island will enhance utility of the product.

• Installation of solar water heaters: Solar heaters will substitute LPG stoves and electric heaters that are presently used in the households.

1.7 Anticipated social and economic impact

The proposed initiative will result in increased adoption of green and resilient practices among the families. Benefits that the user families gain through the adoption of these practices will act as a catalyst and trigger other families to adopt the practices in near future. The project will enable developing an economic model for providing financial services for promoting green and resilient practices. This will help scale up the model in other parts of India and other countries.

1.8 Status update as of March 2021

We have started promoting Pasumai groups and by March end, we have 41 groups and two associates. Other details are as follows:

- Savings mobilized Rs.38600
- Total number of members reached 362
- Subscription amount collected Rs.3620
- ❖ Pasumai subscription amount collected Rs. 2900





2. Water Management

This year we have Revived and Renovated two Traditional water bodies namely Ariyanaatchi and Gaja in Olaikuda

2.1 Ariyanaatchi Teertham

Ariyanaatchi Teertham or Saradha Teertham is named after the mighty protecting Devatha Ariyanaatchi ancestral goddess to many. It was believed that there might be an existence of Ariyanaatchi temple nearby. Due to sand mines it might have disappeared. Naming Girls as Ariyanaatchi is also quiet common in Rameswaram.

Hurdles while renovating the Traditional Water Body

Inside the Teertham area, we found the electric pole. So we requested the Tamil Nadu Electricity department to shift the pole. It took almost one year. Afterwards, Municipality planned underground sewage pipeline in the area. Luckily, Revenue department and Municipality agreed to divert the pipeline.

On 9th November 2020 we restarted the Ariyanaatchi Teertham Renovation with a pooja involving the local stake holders. Shri.Joseph, identified Teertha Mitra attended the pooja. Following works were carried out:

- i. De-silting
- ii. Bund Strengthening
- iii. Wall construction
- iv. Inlet and outlet construction etc.



Renovation pooja of Ariyanaatchi Teertham



During the Construction



Fully constructed Ariyanaatchi Teertham

2.2 Gaja Teertham Renovation Pooja

Gaja Teertham Renovation pooja took place on December 21, 2020. Officials from HR & CE, Rameswaram Municipality and representatives of our partner Hand in Hand India Inclusive Development and Services was present on the occasion. Father of Anthoniyar Church, Olaikuda also attended the function along with few locals.

Green Rameswaram team has been well received by Olaikuda people and our construction workers has been provided a well-constructed hut in the village during construction and occasionally village people served them with tea and snacks.



HR & CE Officials did the pooja



Father of Anthoniayar Church, Olaikuda doing the prayer at the Gaja Teertham



Construction is on side wall



Gaja Teertham - construction in the final stages



Mason colouring the water body after completion of the construction

2.3 Teertham Cleaning

We carried out the cleaning of some of the Teerthams.

Date	Name of the Teerthams	Place	No of persons participated
10/07/2020	Gnanavapi	Erakadu	5
03/08/2020	Ramar	NH Road, Rameswaram	8
12/08/2020	Hara and Panacha	Mankaadu	8
25/08/2020	Agasthiyar	Near Agni Teertham	5
26/08/2020	Kumutha	SK Patty	5
27/08/2020	Parasurama and Hanuman kundam	Bathrakaliamman temple, Rameswaram	5
12/02/2021	Ramar	NH Road, Rameswaram	6
15/02/2021	Kapi / SK Kulam/Papa Vinasaka	Pamban	8
17/02/2021	Runavimochana/Mangala	Thangatchimadam	5
18/02/2021	Jata, Sarvaroga Nivarana and Amirthavapi	Dhanushkodi	6
06/09/2020	Naga	Opp to Sri Ramanathasamy temple	5
11/09/2020	Nakula	Near to sambai	5
22/09/2020	Карі	Pamban	5
15/09/2020	Arjuna and Bhima	Sambai	5





3. Waste Management

Considering inadequate staffing and collection efficiency, Rameswaram Municipality has engaged Hand in Hand India Inclusive Development and Services partner of Green Rameswaram with experience and expertise in handling Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) for waste collection and process in 21 wards.

3.1 Combating Covid 19

140 Green Friends of our partner - Hand in Hand Inclusive Development and Services, Chennai are working along with Rameswaram Municipal Administration round the clock in collecting the waste from house to house as well as helping the administration in other Corona related works such as

- Spraying sanitizers
- Spreading Chlorine powders in all the streets
- Awareness auto announcements in Rameswaram Bus stand which is now converted into Market
- Marking social distancing circles outside shops for regularising the crowd
- Distribution of pamphlets to the general public
- Arrangement of foods to the destitute and pilgrims through the District administration support



Spraying Sanitizers at public places





Model pamphlet Distributed

3.2 Hand Sprayer machine and Sanitary Kit provision

To tackle the COVID-19 virus, two hand sprayer machines were handed over to the Rameswaram Municipality on 18^{th} June at the Municipal Office, to maintain sanitation in the Municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic.



3.3 A Message a Day programme

COVID-19 sensitization programmes were conducted in the Municipality to create awareness on COVID19 pandemic. In this unique programme, one message every day on the precautionary measures was disseminated to the community.



A Message a day is a unique programme with which the team has reached out to the general public with a message likes:

- 1. Wear a mask
- 2. Social Distancing
- 3. Breaking the chain
- 4. Be safe in the house
- 5. Washing hands
- 6. Importance of sanitizing
- 7. Importance of Vaccinating
- 8. Prevention is better
- 9. Healthy immunity building foods

3.4 Door-to-Door waste collection

Door-to-Door waste collection carried out on a daily basis by G reen Friends in the Municipality area during the entire year.





3.5 Source Segregation Demonstration

36 Source Segregation Demonstration programmes were conducted at Rameswaram covering 200 households in 21 wards





3.6 Sanitation Activities in Containment Zones

The MSWM team conducted sanitation activities in the Containment Zones of the Municipality due to COVID-19 pandemic throughout the year.







Bio Gas Plant Case Study - March 14, 2021

Smt. Uma, resident of Rameswaram is a proud owner of Kitchen Waste Based Bio Gas Plant which she received in the year 2016. She says that the bio gas plant supports her in cost reduction. As LPG cylinder is costing almost Rs.800/- In addition, Biogas plant helps in disposal of kitchen waste.



Smt. Uma cooking in the bio gas stove





4. Green Health

Yoga classes' are conducted regularly in Green Rameswaram Building. Morning classes for gents, start at 5.30 A.M., while ladies attend in the evening. On an average 20 gents including children and 30 ladies come for the yoga classes.

Apart from loosening exercices, Surya Namaskars, Yogasanas and Pranayama forms the part of the session. People having ailments are taught specific Asanas as a therapy.

Because of pandemic, classes were held by observing the standard protocol, like social distancing etc. A few volunteers took classes online from home.

International Yoga Day Celebrations

International Day of Yoga was celebrated online. We organised competition under two categories, one below 20 years and the other above 20 years. We asked the participants to upload the video after performing any five Asanas.

136 yoga practitioners participated in the event on 19^{th} of June.

The three judge panel examined the videos and announced the first three prizes for both the categories, for men and women separately.

On seeing our efforts Doordarshan Podhigai, Tamil National Channel came to our office and did a special coverage - https://youtu.be/9sxTYywAeR8









5. Eco Tourism

Green Rameswaram launched the E-Rickshaws to run in the Four Ratha Veethis of Sri Ramanathasamy temple. It is a big stretch of area and especially aged people and conveniently life styled pilgrims cannot walk the area and they suffer because of lack of transportation. Keeping this in mind our District Collector permitted us to run this service.

Ten vehicles were given by the Municipality. We started with 4 e-vehicles from 3rd March 2021. We charge Rs.10/- per pilgrims, while senior citizens; differently-able people and children below 8 years are given free ride.

Positives

- 1. Green Rameswaram have served 5609 pilgrims since the launch
- 2. 284 Senior Citizens were served
- 3. 216 Handicapped pilgrims were given free ride
- 4. 6 Emergency cases attended and admitted pilgrims in the General Hospital
- 5. Convenience for the pilgrims

However there are a few issues such as poor quality of service by the vendor and non-utilisation of 5 vehicles of out 10 because of policy issues related with the District administration.







Every Tuesday Green Rameswaram conducts the E-Rickshaw drivers meeting to discuss their operational issues.





6. Landscaping and Beautification

This year, because of Covid-19, we could not take up much plantation work. However, we planted 50 saplings during different events in and around a few Teerthams. Trees planted by our partner Dr.APJ Abdul Kalam International Foundation on both sides of the highways from Abdul Kalam Memorial to Pamban - a stretch of 5 kms, are also coming up very nicely.



Planting of Saplings near Panacha Teertham



Shri.Rajamanickam, Driver, Taluk office digging the hole for planting the saplings





7. Social Capital

7.1 Awareness programme during Covid 19

Mask Distribution

Shri.Abdul Jaffar, Tahsildar, Rameswaram requested us to arrange for Masks for the public servants who are combating Corona. Following Green Rameswaram Volunteers worked for this assignment.

- 1. Smt.Gopilakshmi, Teacher, Sri Parvathavarthini Amman Girls Higher Secondary School, Rameswaram
- 2. Smt. Ganga, Proprietor, Peacock Dance Academy, Rameswaram
- 3. Smt.Mariyammal, Teacher, Sri Vivekananda Vidyalaya Matriculation school, Pamban
- 4. Smt. Hema, Associate, Hand in Hand India
- 5. Smt. Sankareswari, Associate, Hand in Hand India

220 Metres of non-sanitized cotton cloth was purchased and masks were stitched. Around 1200 Masks were prepared and distributed to the public servants for immediate use.



Masks preparation is on



Sister Saraswathi handing over the prepared masks to Shri. Abdul Jaffar, Tahsildar, Rameswaram and his team

Supplying Food through our volunteers

District Administration has done extensive work in catering the destitute in and around Sri Ramanathasamy temple, Bus stand and stranded pilgrims. However, Green Rameswaram volunteers also served deranged people roaming in and around Dhanushkodi area. This heart touching work was carried out by our Green Rameswaram Volunteers - Shri. Muthuramalingam, Auto Driver and Sister Saradha, House wife from Ramakrishnapuram. They regularly prepared lunch and gave to 15 people every day along with water bottle, who are not aware about Corona or any other aspects.





Deranged nomads receiving food packets

Kapha Sura Kudineer

Kapha Sura Kudineer - A siddha decoction made from (i) Nilavembu, (ii) Kanduparangi, (iii) Dried ginger, (iv) Thippili, (v) Llavangam, (vi) Adathodai, (vii) Cirukancori, (viii) Seenthil, (ix) Karpooravalli, (x) Koraikizhangu, (xi) Kostam, (xii) Amukara, (xiii) Vattathiruppi and (xiv) Kadukkaithol, suggested by Government of Tamilnadu as one of the preventive as well as supportive medicines for treating corona. We had a good contact with Shri Maha Panchamukha Prathyankira Veda Dharmashektram at Manamadurai. They were preparing Kapha Sura Kudineer in 25 gms and 50 gms packets and were distributing to general public in several Districts free. For Rameswaram we procured 25 gms 1000 packets and 50 gms 500 Packets. The same were distributed free to the people of Rameswaram.

- 1. Pamban 500 Packets
- 2. Thangatchimadam 200 packets
- 3. Karaiyur 300 packets
- 4. Town- 200 packets
- 5. Rameswaram Municipality 100 packets
- 6. Green Rameswaram 200 packets

Distribution of Kapha Sura Kudineer Kashayam in Green Rameswaram Building

Green Rameswaram team prepared Kapha Sura Kudineer on a daily basis and distributed it to the people between 7 AM to 9 AM at Green Rameswaram Building.





Distribution of Kapha Sura Kudineer kashayam in front of Green Rameswaram Building

Volunteers also distributed to 100 houses in Sallimalai and Sivagami Nagar and gave to Green Friends who are maintaining the cleanliness of Rameswaram town.



One of our Volunteer distributing Kapha Sura Kudineer

Kapha Sura Kudineer to Rameswaram Municipality

We gave 100 packets to Rameswaram municipality for giving it to Amma Unavagam. They in turn prepared Kashayam and distributed it free to the public.



Shri.Ramar, Commissioner, Rameswaram Municipality receiving the Kapha Sura Kudineer

Maintaining crowds at Banks

As per the request of Shri.Abdul Jaffar, Tahsildar, Rameswaram, Green Rameswaram volunteers helped the banks in managing the crowd at two places - Union Bank of India, Rameswaram and Indian Overseas Bank, Thangatchimadam. Volunteers also helped in filling up the forms related with the banking activities.



Filling up the forms and guiding the crowd to get the money in UBI, Rameswaram

7.2 Teertha pooja

Revival of Teertha poojas is the major contribution during the reporting period. Due to lock down and pandemic situation, less number of people participated. Regular Teertha puja is organised at Agni Teertham and Kapi Teertham on full moon days.





Agni Teertha pooja

7.3 World Environment Day Celebrations

Due to Covid 19 pandemic, this year we celebrated World Environment Day by organising online competitions in (i) Drawing (ii) Essay and (iii) Elocution. Details are as follows:

SI.No.	Competition	Subject	No. of participants
1.	Drawing	Bio-diversity	236
2.	Essay writing	Bio-diversity	64
3.	Elocution	Bio-diversity	16

Highlights

- Competitions were held on 3rd June
- 3 prizes were given in each category
- E-certificates issued to all participants
- Prizes were sponsored by Gandhigram Trust, Dindigul
- Prize distribution ceremony was held on 5th June the World Environment Day.
- The function organised by Rameswaram Municipality, Hand in Hand India and Green Rameswaram Trust
- District collector, Shri.K.Veera Raghava Rao, IAS was the chief guest. He addressed the gathering and distributed prizes to a few winners
- Students took the Oath of protecting the environment along with the Dist. Collector
- Function ended by District collector serving food to the Green Friends and planting of trees.

Drawing Competition



Elocution Competition











Distribution of prizes by the District Collector



Oath taking - protection of Environment

Distribution of prizes - Gandhigram Trust function

Local students who participated in competitions but could not receive the prizes from the District Collector due to want of time were given the prizes at Green Rameswaram project office. Shri.Chandrasekar of Gandhigram Trust was the chief quest



Sister Saraswathi giving away the prizes

7.4 Bhagavad Gita Jayanthi

On 25 December, 2020 Geeta Jayanthi was organised at Green Rameswaram Building in a grand manner. More than 75 people attended. Children participated in the cultural programme by dressing like Krishna, Radha and Aandaal etc.



Glimpses of the cultural event by the Children

Shri.Sarvathamananda from ISKON, Rameswaram was the chief guest. He gave a very nice talk on Karma yoga and advised the audience to surrender to Lord Krishna so that he will give strength to solve all the problems.



Shri. Hegdeji honouring Shri. Sarvathamananda

Sister Saraswathi gave a vote of thanks followed prasadam distribution and presentation of Geeta books to 30 students by IKSON, Rameswaram.

7.5 Swami Sankaracharya Visit to Green Rameswaram

His Holiness Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakodi Peetham visited Green Rameswaram office on 25th February 2021. He was welcomed with the Poorna Kumbha.

Visit to Prayer room and offering flowers to Varuna pooja

Jagadguru Shankaracharyaji visited prayer room and then blessed the varuna pooja where Teerthams from 36 renovated water bodies were kept.



Blessing the 36 Teerthams water - renovated by Green Rameswaram

Blessing the Green Rameswaram Staff members and well wishers

Swamiji blessed the Teertha Mitras (Friends of Water bodies) and other well wishers during his visit by blessing them in Tamil.

Gist of Jagadguru Shankaracharya's Speech

Namashivaya Vaazhga! Naathanthaazh Vaazhga!

Rameswaram Island is one of the popular heritage cities in India. Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari took up the work of "Green Rameswaram" project with the intention to revive the older and glorious Teerthams for public utility and pilgrims benefits. This project was inaugurated by the son of the soil Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and was recognized and encouraged by the Prime Minister of India and is supported by Government and fellow NGOs.



Green Rameswaram project has done many notable good works in Rameswaram. It has revived the 36 Teerthams and 11 are yet to be revived and many more Teerthams are to be identified. They need local stakeholders support. If Teerthams are maintained without garbages in a healthy way, the water will not be contaminated and will have the following benefits: (i) Natural springs will have a regular flow (ii) The water will be sweet in taste (iii) Water scarcity will be reduced due to recharging of water (iv) Pilgrims will also utilize the water. In addition, because of improved flow of pilgrims to the renovated Teerthams, it will help livelihood for the local community.

Rameswaram is known as a Teertha sthalam. Pilgrims from different states and countries are visiting here for having a dip in the Teerthams. Hence all the Teerthams to be preserved and maintained properly for the visiting pilgrims. Government has given this beautiful heritage building for carrying out the work of 'Green Resilient Rameswaram'. In a way, it is a recognition for the good work carried out by the team of Green Rameswaram project. It seems, earlier this building was a Choultry for the yatris and was in a highly dilapidated condition. The organization has renovated it in a traditional method without changing original architecture. This organization is running several programmes and is giving good service to the general public and pilgrims. At present the work may look like "Drop in a Ocean". However, in the coming days, hope this drop will become a big well which will help the local community as well as outside pilgrims.

Our Efforts should be to make Rameswaram Island a spiritual center with the cooperation of all the stakeholders including locals, pilgrims, state and central government.

Jaya Jaya Sankara! Hara Hara Sankara!

7.6 Award of Best Social Worker - Recognition of Green Rameswaram Contribution

Award of Best Social Worker - Recognition of Green Rameswaram Contribution In order to encourage the Green Rameswaram team's contribution, District Collectorate announced the Best Social Worker Award to Sister Saraswathi on the Independence Day occasion. She has excelled in Water Body Renovation in Rameswaram and created the awareness among the locals about ecology and environment.



Sister Saraswathi getting the best social worker award from Shri.K.Veera Raghava Rao IAS, District Collector, Ramanathapuram

7.7 Webinars an effective way to reach out to the people - Youtube channel

Due to lockdown, we have initiated regular webinars to interact with the people and to reach them out in their houses. Same webinars were also uploaded in the youtube for general public. Every Tuesday Shri.Krishnamoorthyji of Vivekananda Kendra, Kanyakumari has given 52 webinars on different topics. His talks were split into 2 minutes videos and has been produced as Daily thoughts and uploaded on a daily basis in youtube. Dr.Ganapathy gave 12 Lectures and separately shared videos on home remedies and the same were shared across in different WhatsApp groups. In addition, every Saturday Shri.Pakshi Siva who is a Literature researcher gave 16 talks on Rameswaram Island Archaeological and historical importance.

As on date we have uploaded 524 Videos which has been viewed by 14074 people and the total hours of viewing is 610 Hours.

7.8 Anna pooja - March 7, 2021

Anna pooja was conducted by Vivekananda Kendra's Rural Development Programme at the office of Green Rameswaram project.





7.9 Shri.Nandakumar IAS Visit to Vivekananda Kendra NARDEP

On March 14, 2021 Shri.Nandakumar IAS, Secretary, Tamilnadu Public Service commission, Government of Tamilnadu visited Vivekananda Kendra, Rameswaram office at Sannathy street.





Shri.Nandakumar IAS visiting Vivekananda Kendra, Rameswaram office



Green Resilient Rameswaram Project

Executors







Associates







Vivekananda Kendra - Nardep











Partner



Technology Partners



