

## Phase I Fact Finding Mission

A team of researchers from ASIET visited the adivasi colonies at Kunchipara, Mukalinkudi and Warriam. The details of the study conducted at Kunchipara and Warriam Colonies are given below:

**The Route:** The colonies are located in a forest area of great bio diversity. Kuttampuzha is a rural area situated about 25 km from Kothamangalam. From Kuttampuzha, Kunchipara is at a distance of around 10 Kms. To reach Kunchipara you have to cross the Pooyamkutty river at Blavana using a ferry and then travel 5 kms through the forest. From Blavana the road is not freely motorable. However, with great difficulty jeeps with four wheel drives can be used. There is also a second roundabout way through Pooyamkutty. The road once it reaches Pooyamkutty also is very bad. Three kilometers from Blavana, at Kallelimedu there is a small settlement with around 20 families who run their own rubber and coffee estates. Further at Swamikuthu a tributary of Pooyamkutty river has to be crossed. The tributary is approximately 50 metres wide and the crossing is very near a raging waterfall. Whenever the Pooyamkutty river is in spate the people of Kunchipara find it difficult to get to the village for provisions and even for medicine. Around two kilometres from Kunchipara is Mukalinkudi. From there you have to pass through an area having huge rocks that were amazingly and beautifully arranged by nature called



Bamboo huts - about to collapse

### Ferry at Blavana - the first of the hurdles in getting to Kunchipara

Anamukham. Around Warriam there are various other small adivasi colonies including Kuriyampetty, Mappilaparakudi and Maruthapara colonies.

Range - Kuttampuzha

Station - Pooyamkutty

Division - Malayattoor

Circle - Thrissur

State - Kerala

## KUNCHIPARA COLONY

Kunchipara is a Muthuvan colony. There are totally 70 families in the area with a combined population of about 300 people. The colony is situated in 50 hectares of land which is part of the 2000 hectares forest land under the Vana Samrakshana Samithy(VSS). The houses are mainly made of bamboo and is very primitive and unsafe. The families are left to the vagaries of nature and there are cases of houses either collapsing or being blown away. Only three of the houses have pucca structure. The other structure which seemed fairly strong is the school house.

Toilet facilities are virtually non-existent. Electricity is not



**The researchers with the Kanikkaran and Kanikkarathi**

available and the lights in one or two of the houses as well as in the junction in front of the Anganvadi are lit with solar energy. The other buildings don't have any provision for energy.

Number of families - 70

Number of adults - 156

Number of women - 80

Number of men - 76

Number of children - 144

Kanikkaran - Kochalankaran (dead since our visit)

Kanikkarathi - Thinkalayi

### **Demographics:**

**Employment:** Both men and women are chiefly employed in the collection of bamboo converting it into mats and its sales. Earlier they were selling them to middle men but now they are selling directly to the bamboo corporation which has made things a bit better in terms of value for their work.

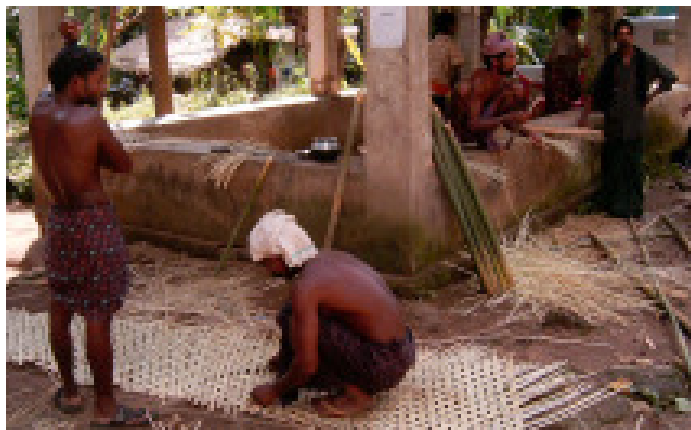


**Sufficient energy for a whole village?**

**Agricultural operation:** They grow Arecanuts, Coffee, Rubber and black pepper in the area under their control.

**Education facilities:** There is an Anganvadi functioning in the colony. There is a single teacher Integrated Tribal Development Project School for students upto the fourth standard also up and running. This 'Badal School' comes under the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Scheme(SSA). The nearest High School is situated 11 km away at Kuttampuzha.

**Educational status :** A total of three people have studied upto SSLC. The educational status of women folk is especially poor. Those students who go to schools in the city are exploited. As they are excellent athletes the schools don't want to lose them and they keep on failing them in each class. What a paradox!



**Earning their livelihood through blades of grass - making bamboo mats**

**Health care facilities:** The nearest primary health centre is 10 km from the colony. The current generation doesn't seem to be aware of the traditional herbal medicine systems either.

**Potable water:** It is erratically available but quality has yet to be tested.

## WARRIAM COLONY

Warriam is a colony which has both Muthuvan and Mannan tribes. Mannans are more hardworking and advanced than Muthuvans. They generally send their children to school. There are over 400 people in the colony of which around one third are children. The houses as in Kunchipara are mainly made of bamboo and are very primitive and unsafe. Only some of the houses have pucca structure. Toilet facilities are virtually non existent. Electricity is not available and the lights in a few of the houses are lit with solar energy. They use kerosene for energy in the other houses.

Number of adults - 427

Number of women - 150

Number of men - 142

Number of children - 135

Moopan - Manjappan

Moopathi - Sundari

**Demographics:**

**Employment:** Both men and women are chiefly employed in the collection of bamboo converting



**Feeling insignificant - Rocks at Anamukham**

it into mats and its sales. They also collect honey.

**Agricultural operation:** They grow Arecanuts, Coffee, paddy and spices in the area under their control.

**Education facilities:** There is a school in Warriam and the teacher lives there itself.

**Educational status :** Many are going to nursery school because they get free lunch there. Generally children of the Mannan tribe attend school more than Muthuvans.

**Health care facilities:** The sick are first given herbal medicines and if that doesn't work are carried to the nearest hospital which is kilometres away, sometimes even in Tamil Nadu.

**Potable water:** It is got from the mountain top using black hose.

**Traditional Rituals and Cultural practices :** They seem to have unique and sometimes colourful practices. One is what happens when a Kanikkaran of the Muthuvan tribe dies. His body is taken to the Muthuvan mountain and buried in a trench of six feet depth. He is covered with bamboo so that mud doesn't fall directly on the body and then the trench is filled. Then his wife if alive will go to all the places where they have gone together recently and cry.

There is also a ritual by the name of 'Swamiyoottu'. It is held once in a year (around January) and lasts a week. The first step in the ritual is building a temple. Then a group of four or five youngsters do what is called the Komalikettu. They wear tiny bells all over the body on their dress. Till the festival is over they are not supposed to bathe, clean or even go to sleep. They won't allow others to sleep either. This programme is conducted at a place called Warriamkuthu. They are provided food by all the families during this time. On the last day there is a community meal with people from different houses bringing different courses for the meal. There is also a dance in the Chavadi.

Their marriage also is a unique ceremony where the bride hides herself in the forest and the bridegroom has to find her.

Male youngsters once they reach the age of ten till the time they get married which is around 18 years (15 is the wedding age for girls), are kept separately in the Chavadi. Before delivery the girls stay in a building called Vaalaamapura.

The areas identified for immediate attention are:



**Chavadi where the male kids live till they get married**

1. Public health and sanitation
2. Provision of pucca houses with strong walls, door and roof
2. Basic education and women empowerment
3. Economic self reliance among tribes
4. Put an end to exploitation for want of proper marketing techniques



**Ideal site for a leisurely morning walk? The crossing by the raging waterfall**

6. Construction of a bridge over Swamikuthu.

Based on the findings of the study and the objectives identified the next phase is proposed to be as follows:

## **Phase II**

### Participatory Action Programme

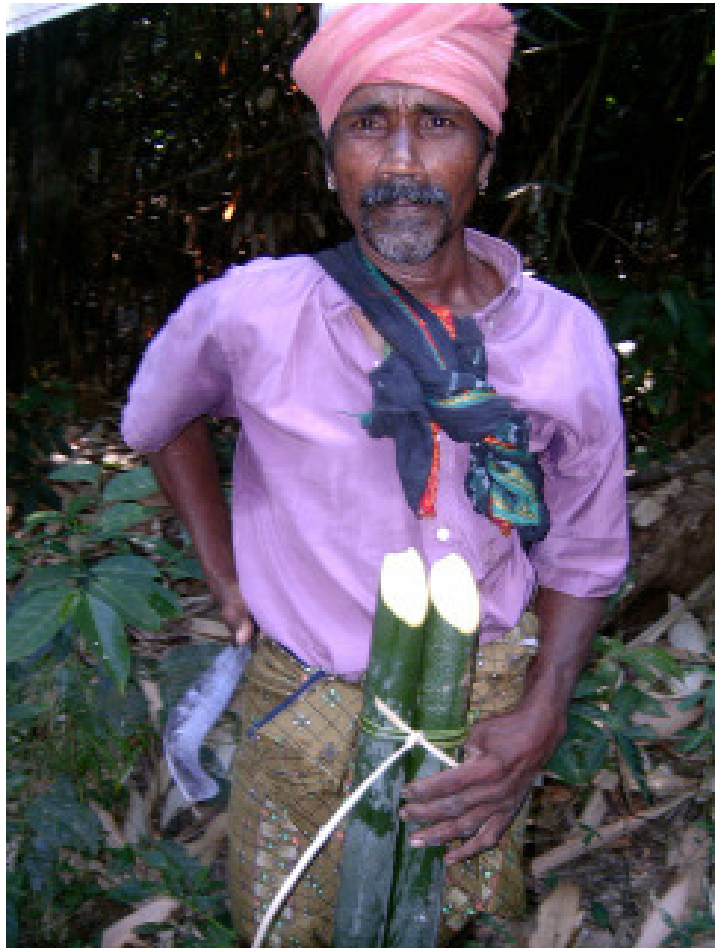
1. **Alternative uses of bamboo:** Can look at alternative uses of bamboo than just creation of mats where value-addition is minimal. Handicrafts using not only bamboos but also unique products made from different natural items like eco-friendly disposable plates and containers from arecanut palm fronds. Can even look at the feasibility of setting up a bamboo board unit.
2. **Cascade training:** It is planned to set up a centralized training facility where representatives from the village can be given vocational training. They will go back to their village and in turn train others.
3. **Ensure supply of potable water:** Provide hand pumps for drawing water. Water can also be pumped from sources available in the proximity by constructing a pond/well and using diesel pumps. The available water can be purified by a method to be finalized after proper study.
4. **Provision of health care facilities:** Try to motivate the concerned authorities to open a primary health center. Train the women folk to undertake basic first aid and midwifery.

**5. Hygiene and sanitation:**

Provision of basic toilet facilities and training in hygiene.

- 6. Counselling centres:** There are social problems like alcohol addiction which is proving disastrous in terms of both economic as well as on the family front. It would be good if a counselling centre can be set up which in time can be converted into a peer counselling one.

- 7. Provide alternate energy sources:** Viability of bio gas plants using waste and vegetation. Also provision for more solar energy equipments. Providing energy efficient and smokeless stoves manufactured using appropriate technology to be provided by Adi Shankara Engineering college.



**Potable water, Warriam style. Mooppan Manjappan off to work in the fields**

**8. Cooperative ventures:**

- a. Sericulture-It is an ideal place to plant mulberry bushes which can be used to breed silkworms.
- b. Horticulture-with special emphasis on medicinal plants many of which are peculiar to the region
- c. Agriculture - Train the people also in the latest agricultural methods, especially on cultivation of good varieties of bamboo.
- d. Cosmetic products-facial packs from arrowroot and 'Rakthachandanam'
- e. Medicines-using traditional formulations which are not available elsewhere besides ordinary herbal medicines

- 9. Literacy programme:** feasibility of starting a primary school to be seriously considered. At least get organizations like NSS (unit of ASIET) or even NGOs to conduct adult education classes

- 10. Group financing activities:** get the villagers to pool money to form a thrift fund. Money can be used in setting up of pucca houses also.

11. **Empowerment of women through self-help groups:** provide special assistance to women to form self help groups and provide them proper training to start different commercial ventures

12. **Marketing products:** A center will be set up at ASIET to plan and help implement the marketing of their products and ensure they get proper value for their products. Market study will be conducted, strategy formulated and hands-on help may be provided to the Adivasis

13. **Cultural activities:** Cultural study center will be set up in the Institute to study different arts and rituals. Proper publicity and exposure will be ensured in mainline media

14. **Bridge:** Whenever the Pooyamkutti river is in spate they find it difficult to get to the village for provisions and even for medicine. According to an



**Discussing the problems of the people - any way we can have pucca houses?**

estimate taken the bridge would take around RS.10 lakhs to build. There are two more small rivulets which require bridges, though they don't pose as much of a problem now.

15. **Reducing the cultural divide:** In order to create in the people an awareness as to what is happening in the outside world so that they won't be exploited check out the possibility of having provision for FM radio or Dish TV or World Space.

16. **Ecotourism:** The possibility of eco tourism in this area can be thought of. Or even participative tourism, where foreign tourists can come and stay with the adivasis on a home stay basis. There is a very beautiful waterfall on Kallelimukkam river near Kallelimedu which is 700 metres deep and rivals Athirappilly waterfall.

