

ANNUAL REPORT 2023–2024

Rural Organisation for Social Education (ROSE)

(1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024)

Introduction

The year 2023–2024 marked another significant chapter in the journey of Rural Organisation for Social Education (ROSE). Rooted in the principles of social justice, child rights, gender equality, ecological sustainability, and dignified livelihoods, ROSE continued to work closely with rural and coastal communities in Tamil Nadu.

With over two decades of grassroots experience, ROSE has consistently believed that sustainable development must emerge from within communities. During the year under review, the organisation strengthened community institutions, expanded youth leadership in climate action, deepened child rights interventions, promoted labour rights and safe migration, and reinforced collective livelihood systems through Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs).

The year was characterised by consolidation, innovation, and strengthened partnerships, ensuring that vulnerable children, women, youth, farmers, and workers were not only supported but empowered to lead change within their own communities.

Protecting and Promoting Child Rights

Children remain at the heart of ROSE's mission. The organisation continued its commitment to ensuring that every child enjoys the right to education, protection, participation, and development.

Strengthening Access to Education

During 2023–24, ROSE operated 20 Motivation Centres across 20 villages, reaching 984 children (424 boys and 560 girls). These centres served as safe and supportive learning spaces for first-generation learners, children from economically marginalised families, and those at risk of dropping out.

Regular academic coaching, mentoring, and follow-up with schools helped improve attendance and academic performance. Parents' meetings were conducted periodically to strengthen parental involvement in children's education and reduce early dropout rates.

A significant achievement during the year was the continued support to students pursuing higher education. 51 students progressed to colleges and higher studies, breaking cycles of poverty and limited educational access.

Life Skills and Child Participation

Beyond academic support, ROSE integrated life skills education into all centres. Children were oriented on:

- Child rights and responsibilities
- Gender equality and mutual respect
- Health, hygiene, and nutrition
- Personal safety and protection mechanisms
- Environmental stewardship

Twenty Children's Groups were actively functioning, including girl-led sub-committees that strengthened leadership among adolescent girls. Through child parliaments and community meetings, children actively voiced their concerns and participated in Gram Sabha discussions, marking a shift from passive beneficiaries to active rights-holders.

Women's Empowerment: Building Leadership and Economic Resilience

Women's empowerment continued to be a cornerstone of ROSE's interventions. The organisation believes that empowered women create empowered families and resilient communities.

Strengthening Women's Collectives

ROSE supported 182 Self Help Groups (SHGs) with 2,845 women members across rural and coastal areas. These groups were not limited to savings and credit but evolved into platforms for leadership, collective decision-making, and community development.

Women were trained in:

- Financial literacy and savings management
- Micro-enterprise development
- Legal awareness and labour rights
- Access to social security schemes
- Leadership and negotiation skills

Special attention was given to women farmers and coastal women engaged in fisheries and seaweed cultivation, enabling them to strengthen their economic independence.

Women's Economic Empowerment through Access to Affordable Credit

Access to timely and affordable credit continues to be one of the most critical factors influencing women's economic empowerment in rural and coastal communities. Recognising this, ROSE has consistently worked to strengthen women's collectives and link them to formal and semi-formal financial institutions, enabling them to access low-interest loans for productive livelihood activities.

During the year 2023–24, women's groups facilitated by ROSE actively accessed credit support from Antenna, Madurai, as well as various nationalised and cooperative banks. Through sustained institutional strengthening, financial literacy training, and collective accountability systems, thousands of women were able to secure loans at comparatively lower interest rates.

Unlike high-interest informal borrowing from moneylenders—which often traps families in cycles of debt—these institutional credit linkages provided women with safer, structured, and affordable financial options.

Investment in Productive Assets

The loans accessed were not used for consumption purposes alone but were strategically invested in income-generating activities and productive assets, including:

- Purchase of milch animals for dairy income
- Goat and poultry rearing
- Establishment of petty shops and small retail units
- Tailoring and garment production units
- Fish vending and fish processing activities
- Seaweed cultivation inputs
- Small-scale food processing and value addition
- Agricultural inputs such as seeds, irrigation support, and tools

Women demonstrated responsible financial management by utilising the credit for livelihood enhancement, thereby increasing household income and strengthening economic resilience.

Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

Women farmers were encouraged to adopt sustainable agricultural practices, conserve traditional seeds, and promote organic kitchen gardens. These efforts contributed to improved household nutrition and ecological sustainability.

Women leaders increasingly participated in village-level governance processes and engaged with Panchayat representatives on issues such as water management, public distribution systems, and health services.

Youth Leadership and Climate Action

The year 2023–24 witnessed growing youth engagement in environmental and climate-related actions.

ROSE nurtured youth as eco-literate leaders capable of linking local environmental concerns to global climate discussions. Youth groups received structured training on:

- Climate change and biodiversity
- Sustainable development goals
- Waste management and plastic reduction
- Water conservation and ecological restoration

A core group of trained youth leaders facilitated knowledge-sharing at the village level, reaching hundreds of young people.

Youth-Led Environmental Initiatives

Youth translated learning into action by organising:

- Native tree plantation drives
- Seed ball preparation and distribution
- Water body cleaning campaigns
- Household waste segregation awareness
- Observance of World Environment Day and Earth Day

These initiatives fostered environmental responsibility among communities and positioned youth as leaders in local climate action.

Promoting Labour Rights and Safe Migration

The economic vulnerability of women and young workers, especially in garment and informal sectors, continued to be a critical concern.

During the year, ROSE strengthened labour rights awareness and safe migration support under the BTC-supported intervention.

Awareness and Capacity Building

Women workers and youth were oriented on:

- Minimum wages and working hours
- ESI, PF, and social security schemes
- Workplace safety standards
- Risks of unsafe migration

Participatory sessions encouraged workers to share experiences and collectively reflect on challenges.

Formation of Workers' Collectives

Workers' groups functioned as safe platforms for dialogue, peer support, and collective problem-solving. Women leaders emerged as facilitators connecting fellow workers with legal aid, counselling, and grievance redressal systems.

Youth volunteers actively supported outreach and documentation activities, building their leadership capacities.

As a result, awareness levels increased, unsafe migration practices reduced, and women gained confidence to assert their rights.

Strengthening Livelihoods through Farmer Producer Organisations

Collective economic institutions remained central to ROSE's livelihood strategy.

Pudukkottai Organic FPCL

With 1,364 farmer shareholders, the FPO continued conserving 52 traditional paddy varieties and promoting millet cultivation. Over 100 traditional value-added products were processed and marketed collectively, enhancing farmer incomes while safeguarding agro-biodiversity.

Andakulam Livestock & Millet FPCL

This FPO, with 750 members, strengthened integrated farming systems by improving livestock management and millet-based livelihoods.

Manamelkudi Fisheries FPCL

Comprising 300 coastal members, the Fisheries FPO enhanced fish value addition, hygienic processing, and market linkages, improving incomes and reducing exploitation by intermediaries.

Kadalpaasi (Seaweed) FPCL

The seaweed FPO, with 250 members, supported sustainable marine livelihoods through training, collective marketing, and technical assistance.

Arimalam Nursery FPCL

With 750 members, the Nursery FPO contributed to livelihood generation and ecological restoration by producing quality planting materials.

Together, these FPOs strengthened economic resilience, collective bargaining power, and sustainable production systems.

Disaster Preparedness and Community Resilience

Five Disaster Task Force Groups were strengthened in vulnerable villages. Training was provided on:

- Early warning systems
- First aid and emergency response
- Coastal risk awareness
- Community disaster preparedness planning

Communities demonstrated improved preparedness and coordination during climate-related events.

Partnerships and Solidarity

ROSE's work is strengthened by partnerships with international donors, national institutions, networks, and government departments. Continued collaboration with partners such as TDH Germany, NABARD, Antenna, and various national networks enabled expansion and consolidation of programmes during the year.

Conclusion

The year 2023–2024 reaffirmed ROSE's commitment to building empowered communities capable of shaping their own futures. Through child rights interventions, women's leadership, youth climate action, labour rights advocacy, and collective livelihood systems, ROSE continued to address structural inequalities while nurturing grassroots leadership.

We express our heartfelt gratitude to our Executive Trustees, staff team, community leaders, donor partners, government officials, auditors, and well-wishers whose continued support made these achievements possible.

ROSE remains steadfast in its mission to promote dignity, justice, sustainability, and inclusive development for all.