



**TRIBAL FUTURES
SEWING PROJECT
TAMWED/ISLAND TRUST
REPORT - May 2018**



Tamwed has been supporting the work of the ISLAND Trust in the Nilgiri Hills of South India for eight years. Activities funded by donors, monitored by TAMWED and managed by the I.Trust range from campaigns to restore land rights of the indigenous tribal population to solar fencing to keep out wild animals.

After each year's programme, an evaluation takes place to check if activities have been successful, learn from issues that arose and to develop a new programme that responds, as much as possible, to those tribal communities in more remote areas with the greatest needs.

In 2017, the I.Trust organised training in tailoring and bought six pedal sewing machines for young women such as Mageswari (right) to use at home mending and making clothes. The scheme proved very successful with recipients who, apart from earning a small amount of income, were able to save money repairing and making family clothes. This also provided a new-found role in their village society which is very important to them. It was decided to extend the project to even more remote villages and to young men if they were keen. We sought sponsorship from Tamwed's kind donors during and after Christmas 2017.



Housing can be very poor, without electricity and barely keeping out the irregular and severe rains that have increased with climate change. It can take up to four hours for women to get to the I.Trust's training centre at Kotagiri. Some villages are a long way from roads and nobody walks through the forest after dark due to the threat of attack by wild animals such as elephants and panthers. Alphonse Raj, the highly respected CEO of the I. Trust says: *"It is the culture of tribes not to send young girls to faraway places for schooling or training. So most of the tribal girls drop out from school after 14. Many have little to do other than helping with*

domestic chores and grazing cattle near their houses. There is no skills training in their neighbourhood. So many of the girls are taken to nearby towns as contract (child) labourers operating looms for the cloth-making industry. Since they are unskilled labourers they do not get basic wages or any other legal protection. Their life is surrounded with so many difficulties. Therefore the vocational training we give in sewing makes them eligible to get legal rights and other privileges. Innocent tribal girls are very happy about this training."

It was agreed that rooms should be rented in five of the larger outlying villages for training. After two months of planning and recruitment, the first training sessions began. All the trainees are from the Irula tribe - Irular means 'dark people' in the Tamil language, from the word irul, meaning 'darkness', referring to their dark skin complexion. Traditionally, the main occupation of the Irulas has been snake and rat catching.

Women undergoing training during May 2018 are:

1. Sholurmattam Training Centre (right):

3 machines Sewing Mistress: Helen
Trainees

- a. Ms. Jothi
- b. Ms. Mythili
- c. Ms. Nithya
- d. Ms. Sindhu
- e. Ms. Sinthamani
- f. Ms. Mayuri
- g. Ms. Santhamani
- h. Ms. Vasantha

2. Vakkanamaram Training Centre:

2 machines Sewing Mistress: Mrs. Suguna
Trainees:

- a. Ms. Dhanalakshmi
- b. Ms. Neelambal
- c. Ms. Sneha
- d. Ms. Manju
- e. Ms. Sivarnajani
- f. Ms. Neeli

3. Mallikoppaiyoor Training Centre:

2 machines Sewing Mistress: Mrs. Jeyamala
Trainees:

- a. Ms. Masani
- b. Ms. Jeyamani
- c. Ms. Poorani
- d. Ms. Kanmani
- e. Ms. Jothika

4. Samaikodal Training Centre: 2 machines

Sewing Master: Mr. Lakshmanan (right)
Trainees: 10 boys and 15 girls. Names are awaited.

5. Kokkode Centre: 1 machine

Sewing Mistress: Mahalakshmi
Trainees: 7 young women. Names are awaited.



Dr Parvathi Nayer and Alphonse Raj of the ISLAND Trust checking on progress.



All this has been possible due to the kindness of Tamwed's donors who have raised £1,500 and the commitment and hard work of our colleagues at the ISLAND Trust.

One of the trainees Neelambal says: *"I am fortunate to have this training in my village because my parents can't afford to send me for any training paying my travel and fees. Moreover there are risks involved in traveling to the nearby towns without public (government) transportation. Now I learn sewing free of cost from a woman who is friendly with us and spends extra time in teaching and helping us during practice. I am very happy about the training".*