



Ragunath Veeravel, founder of Aaranya during a Covid-19 emergency relief support activity in Tamil Nadu

## Quarterly Newsletter 2-2020

How the world as we know it has changed over the past 6 months! Every day we wonder what will happen next... There are many questions, and only a few answers. The 12<sup>th</sup> kanthari course was scheduled to start in May, however, due to the Covid19 pandemic, we had to postpone it. When we will be able to start, is not known at the time we are writing this. The past few months have nevertheless been very productive.

How are you? We certainly hope that you are safe and healthy!

'*kanthari in times of Corona*' is the title of the blog that we created to spread awareness about how the Covid19 Pandemic has affected the lives and work of our kanthari graduates as well as their beneficiaries all around the world. We started the blog on the 25th of March 2020, the day the nationwide lockdown in India began. See <https://www.kanthari.org/coronablog/>

Besides the blog, it seems that we have even more work than when a course is ongoing. Once the lockdown was announced, we understood that this would have some severe consequences. Many kantharis live and work in challenging circumstances and/or locations such as slums, politically unstable areas and/or (civil) war affected regions. Suddenly, life for many of them became even more difficult. We therefore decided to raise funds so we could provide emergency relief support. Thanks to your generous help, till date, we were able to support 44 kantharis in 14 countries which resulted in 3,750+ people being supported with food/shelter and/or medicines. In the months to come, the situation in many places will most likely get worse, so we will continue our fundraising efforts and support. If you can help with that, that would be very much appreciated! You can make a [donation here](#). Thank you so much.

### • Preparation of the new generation (BACKPACK tool)

For some selected participants, travelling all the way to Kerala comes with several challenges. Of course, each one receives a scholarship that covers the costs of the course and stay in India, but it excludes travel, health insurance and funds for personal expenses. To help the participants in their fundraising efforts, some help in the form of the BACKPACK kanthari tool was offered to them. (Each letter of the backpack represents a specific action.) Sabriye and our catalyst Chacko Jacob coach each participant so they can start their first fundraising experiences.



- **Creation of a digital guidebook for social change**

Due to the Covid19 Pandemic, online learning has made a huge leap over the past few months. Zoom sessions however cannot replace the experiential kanthari Curriculum. But we are working on a digital kanthari manual that will function as a resource kit for kanthari graduates and others.

- **Environment**

Nature surely had a break from people, and it showed in several ways: air pollution levels plummeted, resulting in cleaner air and increased visibility, cleaner lakes and rivers, and a thriving wildlife. During the lockdown we continued to clean up Lake Vellayani and we have been and are working on a tree planting drive.

- **Activities of kantharis**

kantharis across the world have come up with different ways to continue to work with their beneficiaries:

**Sristi KC** from Nepal and founder of [Blind Rocks](#) shared the following: “I know that to stay healthy and active I need to exercise every morning but as a blind person I only know how to jump and stretch my arms”. This is one of the many comments that I received from my blind trainees. Training in physical exercises is based on visual observation whether it be in person or through videos. Lack of proper accessible information is discouraging blind and visually impaired people to maintain an exercise routine. Therefore, we are initiating a virtual fitness club focusing on audio guided physical exercises for blind youth aged 15-30.”

**Tony Joy** from Nigeria and founder of [Durian](#) started with Covid-19 sensitization of her community, distribution of soap, production of facemasks, installation of hand wash stations and she worked on food support for the most vulnerable members. But soon she realized that this approach would not work in the long term. Without jobs, and people being locked down, there was one asset that suddenly became available: time. To make sure that food will be available at a later stage as well, Tony started to distribute seeds too, so the community members could start growing vegetables themselves. This approach was adopted by several kantharis in other countries as well.

**Sadhana Nayak**, founder of [Sadhan](#) lives and works in a rural area in Odisha, India. Sadhan is an organization that empowers tribal women who have suffered from domestic violence. When we asked her how she is coping personally with the situation, she continued to speak about her beneficiaries. She was especially worried about the tribal women who feel that the virus is nothing more than a myth. “Yes, people are astonished that suddenly everything has come to a standstill, and there is no more work and income. The fact that now families don’t have anything to eat, is somehow not at all linked to this disease.”

“And, how are you?” we insisted, she stopped and after a long pause said: “I am hungry!” Sadhana is divorced, and leads a woman headed household. Under the Food Security Scheme, every household should receive around 7 Euros to buy the most essential goods. But her ration





Film poster



Jayne Waithera (in red) advocates for People with Albinism



Filmmaker Marijn Poels

card is with her divorced husband, so Sadhana and many other women who are in a similar situation, missed out. Thanks to your help, we were able to support not only Sadhana, but many others who were facing existential needs.

### kanthari in the media

Here a few links to coverage of kanthari and the work of kantharis in the media:

- A very informative article about kanthari was published on [YOUR STORY](#)
- How to become a spicy change maker was described in [The Deccan Herald](#)
- [Snehan: Building a Village For Those Without a Home](#)
- [Aaranya: Creating 26 Unique Forests in Tamil Nadu](#)
- Surprisingly, we heard that we are now [Giraffe Heroes](#)
- Watch a zoom session with Rick Guidotti & Jayne Waithera of Positive Exposure and us [here](#).
- an extensive interview with Sabriye can be read at [BeBadass.in](#)

### Documentary KANTHARI change from within now online and free to watch:

KANTHARI – change from within tells the stories of leaders who have been affected by social ill and because of that, took it up to start initiatives to create a positive difference in their communities:

- Monicah Kaguithia fights against female genital mutilation.
- Jayne Waithera risks her life to advocate for the rights of persons with albinism in East Africa.
- Stephen Onyang runs a school for HIV orphans and Ojok Simon trains blind people to become beekeepers. “KANTHARI – change from within” challenges the old notion of aid to developing countries and vulnerable social groups. It sharpens the understanding of the potential of people from the margins of society by a raw, observational style of cinematography and vivid storytelling. Directed by Marijn Poels and produced by Tomek Kozakiewicz, the film premiered at the ‘All About Freedom Festival’ in the European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk Poland. Former president of Poland, Lech Walesa said that this is a ‘must see’ film. [WATCH THE DOCUMENTARY HERE](#)

*Currently the Covid19 cases in India are still on the rise. Besides the pandemic, there also has been a serious Locust attack and the monsoon rains have been more intense than in previous years. So, the time ahead of us and for many in other parts of the world as well, will bring more challenges. We will continue our work, helping those in need. Thank you for your support and for sharing this newsletter with your family, friends, colleagues and within your network! We surely hope that this crisis will be over soon enough. Please take good care, protect yourself and protect others, stay safe and stay healthy! with very best regards from Kerala, India,*

*the kanthari team, sabriye and paul*

You can support kanthari [here](#) – THANK YOU!  
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