Vision
Women’s Collective’s vision is to work towards building an equal and just society where no one will be subjected to oppression, persecution or be marginalised based on their gender, caste, race, religion, nationality or culture.

Objectives
Women’s Collective is the collective effort of 32 units all around Tamil Nadu working for the realisation of women’s human rights and empowerment. We mostly work with single and Dalit women as they are subject to multiple forms of oppression within society and in their own communities. Our focus areas are saving and credit schemes, collective organic farming, training women in political participation through sanghams, eliminating violence against women, counselling women, children and men and giving children a voice through children’s panchayats. Women’s Collective has a participatory and collective leadership approach enabling all members’ equal voice and participation. Our aim is to train women in taking up livelihood activities in order for them to stand on their own. The livelihood activities introduced are safe, organic and sustainable. Many of the women practice agroecology and grow traditional seeds such as millets. Furthermore, the savings and credit scheme creates independence for the villages as no external and insecure finance is flowing into the village. Women’s Collective also challenges caste oppression, empower oppressed women and encourage production and consumption of low status foods like millet.
Major Accomplishments

- Women’s Collective works in 15 districts of Tamil Nadu consisting of 53 taluks, 63 unions, 248 panchayats and 587 villages. Within Women’s Collective there are 295 Women Farmers Associations with a total of 6001 members. Among these members, 2648 farmers cultivate millets on 1056 acres of land. Moreover, there are 4130 millet seed savers preserving 25 varieties of seeds. Another 2078 members cultivate organic farms with paddy, vegetables and groundnut among other crops, on 2278 acres of land.

- The households involved in millet collective farming are ensured 100-150 days of food and a potential surplus is sold on the market through the WC solidarity network connecting the rural farms with the urban market. Afterwards, the profit from the organic products goes back into the running of the collective farms.

- Women’s Collective carries out extensive work on raising both consumer and farmer awareness on millets. We encourage the consumption of millets at least once a day. We have held 403 trainings in 14 districts of Tamil Nadu with the support of MINI during which 6602 members and non-members have participated. The benefits of millets such as their high mineral content and growth resilience are discussed and millet drinks are offered to induce curiosity among the participants for cultivating and consuming millets.
During World Food Day, on October 16th 2015, a Safe Food Conference was held in Nagarcoil for 52 members. Throughout the conference, the importance of reintroducing traditional foods such as millets was lifted and agreed upon.

To conclude, Women’s Collective believes millets to be the answer to climate change, malnutrition and water scarcity. The use of the traditional crop also means soil enrichment, environmental and food safety and the ensuring of livelihood activities and empowerment of women farmers. The collective organic and millet farms are tightly related to the increased social status and empowerment of women as well as fighting the violence women are subjected to in the villages. Therefore, millets are at the centre of Women’s Collective’s work for food security and for the realisation of single, dalit and farmer women’s human rights and empowerment.

The Story of Tamarai Selvi

_Arulazhi village, Thirunelveli District_

Tamarai Selvi is a widow and mother of three children. She owns 2.5 acres of land, which she inherited from her late husband. Tamirai has diversified her farm from sugarcane and started cultivating organically together with her three sisters who are also widows. Apart from sugarcane, she also grows finger millets, black gram, green gram, red gram and paddy. Furthermore, she raises goats and cows, which contribute to the organic farms with manure. Tamarai continues to cultivate millets, vegetables and paddy for her own use and to sell the surplus through Women’s Collective’s solidarity system. While she earlier cultivated the crops separately, Tamarai now practices multi-cropping, growing all crops simultaneously on her land.