

# Seruthalaikadu – A dream project

## REGIONAL CONTEXT –

Seruthalaikadu is a small fishing village of about 270 families and is located at the southern tip of Nagapattinam district. The nearest large town is Vedaranyam which is about 14 kms away. The village is on a long strip of an island stretching east-west with salt pans on east, north and west and Vedaranyam Salt Swamp on the south (see Fig - I). The village is at an elevation and the only approach is from the north. This access road passing through low-lying salt pans is currently being made into a *pucca* road. The backwaters of Seruthalaikadu creek are about 3 kms south of the village and this is also the place where the fishermen park their boats.

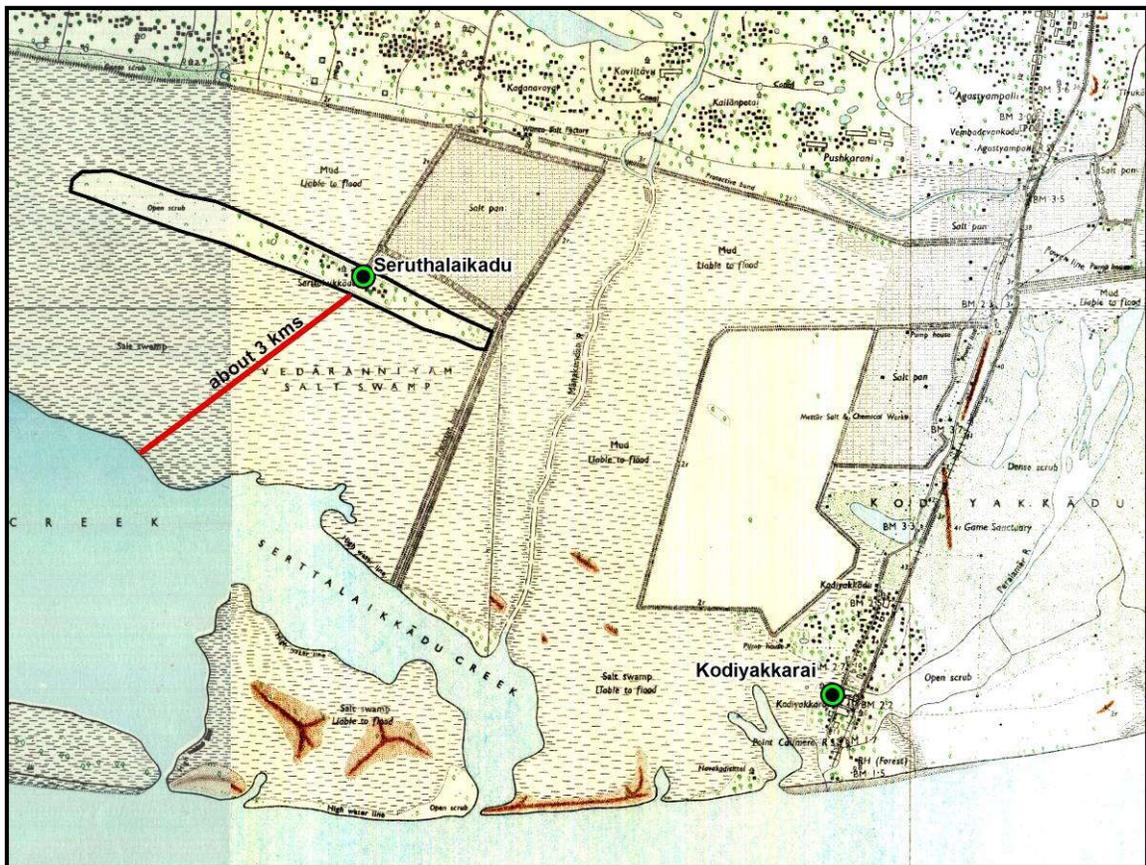


Fig – I – Showing the regional context of Seruthalaikadu village

Most of the salt pans around the village are owned by Gujarat Heavy Chemicals Limited (GHCL – A Dalmia Brothers Enterprise) that has a large salt making operation in the surrounding areas. The ground water is saline and there is no freshwater anywhere nearby. The drinking water is piped from Kollidam river and according to a local villager they get about 2-3 pots per house per day for their domestic use. There are no shops, except a government ration shop (civil supplies outlet) and for all their supplies the villagers have to walk about 5-6 kms to the nearest village. The road to this village is

motorable with great difficulty only in the dry season and so there is no bus service. A *pucca* road is under construction on the portion that goes through the salt pans and this should make the village more accessible.

### **THE PROBLEM –**

The occupation of the villagers here is fishing and it continues despite the hardship the villagers have to face. The coast is about 6-7 kms away and they have to walk about 3 kms in salty-slushy almost knee-deep water to reach the backwaters of Seruthalaikadu creek that is almost halfway to the sea, where they also park their boats and fishing gear. This path is dry for a short period of time just before the monsoons. During our visit we were able to drive all the way close to the Seruthalaikadu creek backwaters on the path the fishermen walk everyday. They carry diesel (for boats), food, etc. with them upto these backwaters and while returning they carry back their fish-catch back to the village. The fish deteriorates during this time and therefore it is only good for processing into dry fish or fish pickle. So the financial returns are also not good. Every night, ten men stay back taking turns in guarding the boats and other fishing accessories. It is a painful task to drag the boats to the village in case of major repairs or overhauling work.

### **THE PROPOSAL –**

It is proposed to improve the economic condition of fishermen families through distress mitigation measures by helping them have easier access to the sea by constructing a canal and providing additional livelihood opportunities to the villagers. This proposal has been submitted to British Gas India for financial support.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL Impact Assessment**

An environmental impact assessment study was done by an external agency to examine the environmental impact, if any, while constructing such a canal.

### **No Objection Certificate:**

The EIA study report was submitted to the District Administration for the ‘No Objection Certificate’. After referring the study with PWD and Irrigation department, District Administration provided NOC on Friday the 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 2007 for implementing the project according to the proposal.