

Development

April 2010

Matters

Monthly Development update from DHAN Collective

Voices from Grassroots
Ahar Pyne in Bihar **9**

Collaboration
Water conservation project
in drought prone Gundar Basin **12**

Livelihoods
Masavanatham tank and
its impact on livelihoods **23**



Feature

Electoral Democracy in India



Ensuring the fidelity of electoral rolls is universally recognized as the first and foremost step towards a free and fair poll process. India is a vast country with a population of a billion plus. There is tremendous amount of inter-city, intra-state and inter-state movement of people in search of livelihood options.



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From the Editors' Desk

Dear Readers!

Greetings!

This April issue of Development Matters comes to you with various events and works of DHAN Collective. The feature article is the message of Mr. Navin B. Chawla, IAS, Chief Election Commissioner of India. Gopi Kumar Verma writes about Ahar Pyne and how water is managed by the community in Bihar. Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), DHAN Foundation and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) joined hands for a water conservation project in Nialayur to benefit 20, 000 farmers. Ms. Annerieke Nijenhuis, an intern to DHAN Foundation from Avans University for Applied Science, The Netherlands narrates Chithirai festival in Madurai. Ramkumar writes about the convocation event of Tata-Dhan Academy and Jens Götzenberger writes about the DEWATS established in the new campus of Tata-Dhan Academy. Subhadarshee Nayak describes the benefits realized by farmers with the help of farm pond in Odisha. Balu tells about the Panchayat movement day in Cuddalore district. Amina details about how Masavanatham tank make an impact on the livelihoods of the villagers.

Please share with us your feedback, contributions, comments, critiques, feedback and encouragement to enrich the quality of this magazine.

Happy reading!

Contents

1. Electoral democracy in India	1
2. Ahar Pyne in Bihar	9
3. Water conservation project in drought prone Gundar Basin	12
4. Chithirai festival 2010	13
5. Third convocation of Tata-Dhan Academy	14
6. DEWATS in Tata-Dhan Academy	16
7. Farming with a pond	18
8. Panchayat movement day in Cuddalore district	22
9. Masavanatham tank and its impact on livelihoods	23

Electoral Democracy in India

The 2009 general election – its challenges and opportunities

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is a constitutional body vested with the responsibilities of superintendence, direction and control of conduct of elections. It consists of a Chief Election Commissioner and two election commissioners. The ECs and the CEC are appointed by the President on the advice of the Council of Ministers. They are accorded the rank of an incumbent judge of the Supreme Court.



The ECI has comparatively a small secretariat consisting of about 300 officers and staff, in all headed by three deputy election commissioners who are seconded senior civil servants. It is represented in the States again by a small office, under a Chief Electoral Officer (CEO). Therefore, the Commission is a lean organisation and has limited staff on a permanent basis. However, during elections State officials are taken on deputation to the Commission for conduct of elections on a temporary basis. However, at that point, they are under the discipline and control of the Commission.

The Commission conducts the elections to the office of the President and Vice-President, the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha. The Commission derives its authority from the Constitution. It has the power to register and recognize political parties, and it adjudicates on the disqualification of elected members. In discharge of its functions, it is independent of the executive. Though appointed by the government, once appointed, the CEC cannot be removed without a cumbersome impeachment procedure. Nor can the terms of the office be modified to the disadvantage of the incumbent. The Commission intends to reiterate its pending proposal to government, that the terms of removal of the two

Election Commissioners are made the same as those of the Chief Election Commissioner. The Commission is free and indeed is the sole authority to decide the timings of the elections. Once the election process is set in motion by the Commission, the courts do not interfere with the conduct of elections. Any dispute resolution, till such time as the elections are over, lies with the Commission. However, once the elections are over, the higher courts have the power to entertain election petitions filed by aggrieved parties (candidates) against each other. Normally the Commission or its officials cannot be made party in these cases. Over the years, the ECI has earned the credibility and respect of all stakeholders through impartial, free and fair conduct of parliamentary and state assembly elections conducted on time and successively over the years. Even the courts, in various pronouncements, have upheld the actions initiated by the Commission to cleanse the electoral system of violence, “booth capturing” and other undue attempts to influence voters and the polls.

All the votes cast are counted on one single day. In the case of the general election (GE), 2009, three days after the last phase of polling on 13th May, 2009, the results were announced on the same day, i.e. 16th May,



2009. The formal presentation to the President of India of the results was made at the promised time of 06:30 p.m. on 18th May. The general elections, 2009 to the Lok Sabha, recently concluded, has been generally hailed as a thoroughly successful election both by victor and vanquished and indeed by many as well as in influential sections of the national and international press.

I want to say a little about the preparation of the electoral rolls for this election. The fidelity of electoral rolls is the fundamental prerequisite for a free and fair election. An imperfect roll provides scope for both complaint and impersonation and has been a major challenge facing all Election Commissions. The ECI revises the electoral rolls every year but aware that the general elections 2009 were due, the Commission started a special drive to cleanse the electoral roll (for elections 2009) as early as 2008 itself. In early 2008, the ECI convened a conference of all its Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) each representing each State and Union Territory of the country – all handpicked officers chosen for their integrity. In the conference it was *inter alia* decided to hold the 2009 elections on **photo-electoral rolls** and all the CEOs were assigned the task to prepare and publish photo-electoral rolls for 2008 so that even in case of early elections, the 2009 elections could be held on photo-rolls. Thus began a major preparatory exercise of cleansing the rolls of the names of the dead voters, duplicate names as well as those persons who may have shifted from one address to another, while enlisting all new eligible voters including 18 years olds,

and inserting photographs against voter details. For each polling station of up to 1500 voters, specific officers were identified called **booth level officers (BLOs)**. Their task was to verify the rolls by door-to-door visits and to include the left-out but eligible electors and at the same time to remove the dead or shifted voters names. The cooperation of political parties was an essential, indeed vital, component, and their help was also enlisted in the process. They were requested to appoint a counterpart representative for

each polling station called **booth level agents (BLAs)** to interact with BLOs to further ensure that all eligible persons were enlisted, and that names were not deleted wrongfully or inadvertently. In our experience, some, (especially the larger parties) were able to appoint BLAs, but some smaller parties were not. This intensive work was repeated in 2009 January-February and the rolls further improved. On the completion of this massive exercise, 7.6 million new voters were registered and about 1.2 million names were deleted. The overall registered voters' number rose to 716 million (from 671 million in 2004). The presence of the photograph on the electoral rolls itself further facilitated the identity of voters at polling stations and helped preclude impersonation. As a result of the special campaign, India, for the first time, witnessed a national general election with photo-electoral rolls. 585 million (about 82%) of the Indian electorate had his/her image on the photo-roll itself. Because of this massive exercise, there were far fewer complaints on the grounds of missing or wrong inclusions. This also contributed to the 2009 elections being hailed with a sense of general satisfaction.

The election schedule

As the term of the 14th Lok Sabha (the house of the people in the Parliament or lower house) was to expire in the normal course on 1st June, 2009, in terms of the constitutional provisions, a new Lok Sabha was required to be constituted before the 2nd June, 2009. Though the deadline for delivering elections was known, the exact

schedule of election is always drawn up by the Election Commission of India independently, with no consultation whatsoever with the executive, and after taking inputs on various aspects that the Commission believes to be relevant. This is to ensure a level playing field and deny any undue advantage to the party in power. Designing a schedule and phasing options for a countrywide election in India is in itself an intense management exercise. It involves taking into account the schedules of school examinations in various parts of the country to avoid holding elections during the examination periods. In a plural society every festival and associated holidays needed to be factored in; the harvest season in certain parts of the country was kept in mind and the weathermen needed to be consulted with reference to onset of the monsoons or snow in higher mountain reaches. The conduct of elections in the entire country also requires the mobilization of police forces, including both Central and State police forces. Mobilization, movement, deployment and disengagement of these police forces itself involved a complex exercise and very detailed logistics. Finally, the Commission decided on a schedule for the General Election, 2009 to be conducted in five phases, the first poll day being 16.04.09 and the last poll day being 13.05.09. As the movement of police forces from one phase to another involved long distances, a 28 days gap between the first poll day and the last poll day became inevitable. The counting of votes was scheduled to be done on a single day for the whole country, on 16.05.09. There was a feeling in a section of media and stakeholders that the duration of the election could be shorter. The Commission was acutely conscious of this, but had to balance multiple needs. The need for keeping the election duration as short as possible, while simultaneously needing to factor in geography, climate, special needs of some States, prevailing law and order issues, intense political rivalries in some areas were among a host of issues taken into account. What was non-negotiable however was the commitment to deliver a free and fair election in the country.

The vital statistics

For the sake of record, allow me to recapture some of the data much of it already reported in the media. For the GE 2009, as many as 714 million voters were enrolled; of these 82% or almost 580 million voters were equipped with a photo identity card which we

call the 'EPIC'. 8,34,944 polling stations were established; 1.18 million electronic voting machines mobilized; over 11 million personnel deployed on election duty which included about 8 million civilian staff and 3 million Central and State police forces. But, what is perhaps equally important is that the merit of the Indian electoral system was not sought solely to be built on these numbers, but rather on the value attached to each vote, and the effort taken to ensure that as far as possible every voter could be reached, however remotely placed he or she was. A polling station was set up for a single voter deep in the Gir forest of Gujarat where 2 poll personnel were deputed to facilitate this lone voter to exercise his franchise. Again there was a polling station located at 15,300 ft. in the Zaskar parliamentary constituency of the Ladakh region of the State of Jammu & Kashmir. The Commission celebrated the audacity, grit and commitment of 12 men including polling staff, satellite telephone operators and porters, who dared to trek in knee deep snow to cross a pass at 16,500 ft. before they could descend to reach two inhospitable polling stations located at more than 13,500 ft., an arduous trek that covered 45 kilometers, which enabled 37 voters to exercise their democratic right that we could well describe as the "height of democracy"! At the first polling station Phema, all 14 voters chose to exercise their franchise; at the second five kilometers distant, Ralankung, 22 out of 23 voters chose to vote; one chose to abstain! In a remarkable and pragmatic departure from the routine, the Election Commission used its plenary powers to order counting of votes of both polling stations there itself. The results were communicated by satellite telephone, as the return journey of the polling staff would have taken another three days, which would have delayed the announcement of the final results. But while these two polling stations were the last two polling stations in the country to vote, we ensured that they were counted first. This is but another example of the strength of the election managers, and the ability to walk the last mile even under trying circumstances.

The poll

By May 2009, it was already a grueling summer, and the mercury had shot up. The media wrote that voter turnout could be adversely affected. The Commission did its best to mitigate the situation by making provision for drinking water at polling stations

as also providing some sort of shade wherever possible. As innumerable photographs were to testify, voters, men and women, young and old and the infirm alike, defied the scorching sun to notch up an impressive 58.2% turnout. The Election Commission took some initiative to further mitigate inconvenience to physically challenged voters. Ramps were universally provided for the wheelchair bound, and Braille enabled EVMs were of help to those visible challenged voters who were Braille literate and who



could and did vote independent of assistance. As in previous elections, special mention needs be made about the voter turnout in rural areas, which was more than in the urban areas. When India attained freedom and drafted its 'Tryst with Destiny', many questioned the Constitutional wisdom of giving universal adult franchise to all Indians. India's literacy rate at that point of time was at a dismal 16%. At that point of time there were established democracies that were reluctant to give voting rights to women and who had not addressed the issues of equality of citizenship within their respective multicultural frameworks. Sixty years later, we have reason to celebrate the vision of the framers of the Indian Constitution, who had decided to take a quantum leap forward.

While election management bodies are not concerned about electoral outcomes, stocktaking and introspection are inevitable after the polls. We had approached this election in the background of a somewhat difficult domestic, regional and indeed global security context. The aftermath of the 26/11 Mumbai terror strike, and continuing inputs about possible violence, disruptions and attempts at derailing the poll process, were factors that needed to be built into the electoral planning canvas. Within the country were elements who stood for the very antithesis of any democratic exercise. These factors resulted in detailed planning of precautionary security placements. India has often been described in sub-continental terms, which in turn led to detailed planning, with the district and parliamentary constituencies as

units, (there are 626 districts in the country and 543 parliamentary constituencies) as the focus of micro-management. If the GE 2009 has been recognized as peaceful and successful, it was largely because it was tackled as a huge management project as it were. Allow me to provide some details of the innovative management initiatives taken during recent years. This was not the result of a one-off exercise, nor did it happen overnight. Some of the best practices that were employed during the recent general elections had been tried and tested and improved upon particularly over the last decade through GE 2004 to elections to various legislative assemblies of the States, various bye-elections between GE 2004 and GE 2009. Many of these were thus tried and tested methods, scaled up for country wide application. As before there continued to be innovations as well. Briefly some of the initiatives are detailed below:

New initiatives

Initiative 1: Booth level officer (BLO) system

Ensuring the fidelity of electoral rolls is universally recognized as the first and foremost step towards a free and fair poll process. The Commission continued to hold that if it could not get the rolls right, it could not get the polls right. India is a vast country with a population of a billion plus. There is tremendous amount of inter-city, intra-state and inter-state movement of people in search of livelihood options. This has resulted in millions of names of shifted voters being found in

the electoral rolls of any given constituency at any given point of time. In India, the electoral rolls are revised annually. Nevertheless, the accumulation of the names of dead, shifted and absentee voters was all along affecting the fidelity of the electoral rolls. Lack of fidelity is often a recipe for impersonation and other electoral malpractices. There have been occasions where the victory of a candidate has been decided by a razor thin margin of a single vote. In such a situation any scope for impersonation would amount to leaving an inherent weakness that could affect the very fairness of the poll.

The booth level officer is a government functionary given the task of handling between 1000-1500 voters that 'belong' to a particular polling station or booth, and is responsible for the veracity of the electoral roll pertaining to that geographical entity. The genesis of the BLO system can be traced to a small initiative in the eastern State of Orissa during the 2004 general elections. A larger application was made during the 2006 elections to the State of West Bengal, and again during 2007 elections in Uttar Pradesh, India's largest State. Having tested the efficacy of the system, the Commission implemented it in the entire country for preparation of the rolls for the 2009 general elections. The BLO system provided for grass root level accountability for the maintenance of the purity of the roll.

The efficacy of the BLO system which was introduced by the Commission a few year back needs to be assessed in this context. The practitioners of election management in India consider the BLO system to be one of the most innovative interventions made by the Election Commission in the management of electoral rolls in the country. It is relevant to note that during GE 2009 India switched over to a countrywide system of photo electoral rolls. The photo images of about 82% of Indian voters (approx. 580 million voters) have been printed on the electoral rolls for easy identification and they have been issued with electors photo identification card (EPIC). This is by no means a small enterprise. Securing the photo images of all these voters and verifying the details have been made possible largely due to the existence of the BLO system. When the Commission recently insisted upon getting a "zero dead voter certificate" from each BLO in a particular State with reference to a particular date, one of the BLO's

actually persisted with a data entry operator to delete the name of a voter who had actually died earlier that very day. Such commitment in the preparation of electoral rolls appears to have come a long way from the days of finding decade old names of dead voters persisting on the rolls.

Initiative 2: Vulnerability mapping

India is a caste based society. The traditional social hierarchy, based on caste identities is still relevant in rural areas. The threat and intimidation to voters of marginalized and vulnerable communities and voter segments by dominant groups had been identified as a factor that could affect the free and fair poll process in certain parts of the country. In the past such incidents went either unreported or were taken to be part of the 'usual' poll related intimidation, rather than being diagnosed as a pre-existing socio-economic vulnerability for which an institutional response could be designed. The Election Commission of India, for the first time, initiated the concept of "vulnerability mapping" and through a transparent process identified such villages and hamlets that could be vulnerable to intimidation overt or silent. It also identified potential troublemakers who could pose a threat to a free and fair poll process in the locality. Potential 'intimidators' were identified across the country, and action under preventive sections of the law was initiated against potential troublemakers individually. This created a great deterrence on poll day. During GE 2009, as many as 86,782 villages/hamlets were identified as 'vulnerable' and 3,73,886 persons were identified as potential troublemakers and preventive measures were taken against them to 'bind them down'. This exercise was ensured in a transparent and participatory manner involving the local officials, observers and other stakeholders; as a result there were no complaints about any partisan misuse of vulnerability mapping for narrow political ends. The Commission kept a hawk-eyed vigil, so that the core objective of the vulnerability mapping was achieved.

Initiative 3: Communication for election tracking

An efficient election management is about managing information and ensuring mid-course interventions and corrections. Today India has one of the fastest growing

mobile network markets. The mobile reach has improved tremendously in recent years. It is estimated that over 60% of the country is covered by mobile connectivity, a quantum leap since the 2004 parliamentary election. The Election Commission as a constantly innovating institution took the initiative to try to reach out to every polling station in the country, using one or other multimode communication tool. A systematic mapping of communication assets and resources was done with reference to every polling station. Mobile connectivity, landline phones, high frequency (HF) and very high frequency (VHF) communication equipment, and satellite phones were used in the process. Where none of these worked (as in high mountain areas or deep forests), dedicated “runners” were identified to track remote polling stations. Through this system almost all polling stations could be contacted by supervising officials, and different layers of tracking hierarchy were predetermined for each location. To drive home the seriousness to be attached to this initiative, the Commission ordered the conduct of two “dry runs” to validate the numbers, connectivity and efficacy. COMET created a huge psychological presence of the Commission and ensured an extended vigil even in the remotest of locations.

Logistics

The challenges involved in managing logistics for the conduct of nation-wide elections were many. Ensuring the timely movement of central police forces from one state to another state on time involved the most detailed planning and monitoring. For the movement of central police forces alone, the railway board organized 119 special trains and employed as many as 3060 coaches. 6800 policemen had to be specially airlifted, over-flying Bangladesh, and Indian air force planes and were hired as were chartered planes from Air India, to maintain the time-schedule for elections in diverse States. As an unusually large numbers of candidates were in fray this time, in many constituencies additional ballot-units of electronic voting machine (EVM) needed to be deployed to meet a possible emergent need. This then called for the most acute rationalization of use of reserve EVMs and the most detailed plan for the mobilization of surpluses for transporting them to deficit areas. Transporting

approximately 2 million polling personnel, supervisory and supporting staff and police personnel to polling stations on each one of the five polling days, transporting of EVM and other polling materials, tracking the movement till they came back to the strong rooms where the EVMs had to be stored till the counting day, were exercises which had to be done with reference to each polling station in the country. Logistically, even the most difficult and troublesome movements and interventions came under the direct radar of the Election Commission. In fact, the trekking by 12 polling men and porters to reach the glacier bound areas of Zaskar were tracked by the Election Commission headquarters as closely as was done by the control rooms at the District and State levels. In fact, the Commission could have been more casual, for in a parliamentary election as few as 37 votes in the normal course would not have made much difference. But the spirit that pervaded the Commission was that from Kashmir in the North to Kanyakumari in India’s deepest South, each vote did matter, and the effort put in was more than worthwhile.

Micro management principles

Over the last decade or so, there has been a paradigm shift in managing elections in India, with the singular aim of improving the quality of election management. A number of reasons can be attributed to this shift towards micro managing the elections. The challenges involved in delivering a credible election have grown in complexity; the presence of the print and electronic media has increased tremendously, resulting in increased voter awareness; the expectation levels among the Indian voters and other stakeholders have substantially increased, while improvements in communication has empowered citizens to reach out seamlessly with their complaints and feedback at any time. The improved technology in turn has also provided additional scope for constant monitoring and concurrent interventions on the part of election managers. In recent years, India has witnessed a series of general elections to legislative assemblies of various States, almost each of which was hailed as a watershed election. Each election was creating a new benchmark, and further generating the need for excellence. The lessons from each election were internalized and carried forward for further fine-tuning for the next. The 2005 Bihar elections provided

some valuable insights; the 2006 West Bengal election witnessed innovative methods and techniques aimed at complaint-free elections, with many proactive measures tried out to reduce the scope for complaints; the 2007 Uttar Pradesh election received wholesome praise and was widely hailed in the country as a watershed election. The BLO system which was experimented in West Bengal had been further fine-tuned, and the new technique of “vulnerability mapping” was experimented on for the first time in the history of election management in India. As new methods were adopted, the bar was also being raised. Increasingly the Commission was becoming aware that during national elections, the deployment of central police forces which was considered an essential part of effective election management, would suffer limitations, because the available central police forces would necessarily have to be distributed over a much larger area i.e. the whole country, rather than just a State or two. Hence, the Commission, keeping the requirements of 2009 general election in mind, began to consider well in advance the need for “non-force” measures which while reducing dependence on security forces, would address transparency concerns. Looking back and taking stock, we feel some of these non-force measures helped most abundantly in the smooth conduct of elections.

Observation mechanism

India has a unique election observation mechanism. While India welcomes the keen visitor who would like to witness Indian elections, and foreign diplomats do visit States and areas of their choice, the task of observing the elections and giving concurrent feedback to the Commission is left to the election commission observers, who were drawn from the ‘All India Civil Services’, mostly from the ‘Indian Administrative Service’. As these officers themselves have sufficient experience in election related matters, they function effectively as the eyes and ears of the Commission, while also offering valuable guidance to field functionaries. This home grown observation-mechanism has done well in India as evidenced by the constant demand from opposition parties for increased numbers of such observers. The Commission however felt the acute limitation on numbers. During GE 2009 more than 2000 observers were deployed for monitoring

not only the campaign process but also election expenditure by candidates, poll day events, post-poll document verification and finally the counting process. With a view to strengthen this observation mechanism during 2007 Uttar Pradesh elections, the Commission had also experimented with the concept of “micro-observers”, on a somewhat limited scale. The micro-observers drawn from the staff of the Union government, and are not State government functionaries. They were posted by the Commission at select polling stations often considered “sensitive”, for monitoring the election process from within the booth itself. As the choice of the polling stations for such deployment of micro-observer was and is made by the constituency observer (and not the district officials) there is a tremendous amount of objectivity in the process. This method was further fine tuned and extensively used in subsequent general elections in Gujarat, Karnataka and other States. By the time we approached the GE 2009, the concept of micro-observer had taken firm root. During GE 2009 the Commission deployed as many as 1,40,000 micro-observers, who were positioned inside ‘vulnerable’ polling stations or looked after two or three polling stations at a single location, all of which added tremendously to the confidence of candidates, particularly those belonging to opposition or smaller parties.

Apart from this the Commission made effective use of video cameras and digital cameras to document segments of the campaign process, poll day events and other critical events associated with the election process. During GE 2009, 74,729 video cameras and 40,599 digital cameras were used for this purpose. The use of these cameras, serving as eyes and ears of the Commission as it were, were extremely useful in ensuring that the model code of conduct was adhered to by the participants. Their deployment again was made purely by the observers, except where their use was made mandatory, when the district functionaries were ordered to use them accounting to a pre-determined pattern.

Quick grievance redressal

Election Commission followed a micro management approach. For the purpose, it deployed **observers** and **micro-observers**. Observers are senior and tested officers of the premier civil services of India, chosen

by the ECI to be its eyes and ears during the elections. They were deployed to specific constituencies where they were stationed for a minimum of 3 weeks and reported on the 'happenings' directly to the Commission and to our control room. The Commission took action and gave further directions based on their reports. Each observer was provided with a list of junior government officers of the federal government, available within his/her allotted constituency for being handpicked and deployed as micro-observer. The micro-observers are static observers on the poll day inside the polling stations and ensure the sanctity of poll process inside the polling stations. They report to the observers and are trained and oriented by the observers for the purpose. The institution of micro-observers is a new innovation arising out of closer supervision of the poll process inside a polling station and to provide the Observers with extended reach on the poll day. For the General Election, 2009, 2000+ **observers** and 150,000 **micro-observers** were deployed, directly reporting to the Commission and to our control room 24 X 7 from the field. They were positioned from the last date of nomination till the polls were over (and then again on the counting day). They inquired into and reported on the complaints to the Commission directly. They were the eyes, ears and ambassadors of the Commission in the field. Commission could effectively handle the pre-poll as well as the poll day complaints very quickly and in a reliable manner which enhanced people's belief in the Commission. A national control room was set up, **state level control rooms** were set up and through a communication network, each polling booth, either through a landline or a mobile cell or wireless set or a satellite phone and in extreme cases even through a 'runner' was networked to keep the Commission apprised, on a real time basis, of the election related events at polling stations. Each and any complaint was attended to without loss of time which enhanced the credibility and effectiveness of the Commission. Besides the communication network, all this led to commendation from all corners on the way the Commission went about handling the task in a dispassionate professional manner.

Partnership with civil society

The Commission stretched itself to rope in and forge partnership with reputed civil societies at every stage

for conduct of a free and fair poll. In roll preparation and creating voter awareness NGOs (one billion votes campaign) as well as corporate houses (Tata Tea) and service providers (Googles.com) joined hands to assist the ECI's efforts. National election watch, association for democratic rights and other state level civil societies were motivated and facilitated by the Commission to support and disseminate Commission's works. Non-official election volunteers were allowed to assist voters. All these were new initiatives which created a new synergy for election delivery mechanism.

Incorporating the disenfranchised proposed steps

At the Commission, we have of late made some special efforts to make the electoral system more inclusive and socially sensitive. Women, youth and socio-economically deprived sections must get their due place in the election process. Their active participation is a necessity to strengthen democracy. The Commission is striving to realize this goal.

In the last few months, I have addressed students at a number of campuses, when some of them suggested that the eunuchs or transsexuals should have an independent identity on the electoral rolls. Till now, they had to register either as male or female. I believed the request to be quite legitimate and it also related to the issue of individual freedom and was a human rights issue. We examined the request in depth and permitted the transgenders to register as "Other" or "O", if they wanted so to a follow-up, the Commission revised the format of the electoral rolls, modifying the column head to indicate their sex as 'Other' where they do not want to be described as male or female. Besides relevant forms used by the Commission wherein there is a provisions of indication of sex of the elector, IT based formats and website, have been suitably amended. Necessary instructions have been issued to all the concerned electoral registration authorities in the country to give effect to the above decision of the Commission. Enumerators and booth level officers (BLOs) have been instructed to indicate the sex of eunuchs/ transsexuals/ transgenders as 'O', if they so desire, while undertaking any house-to-house enumeration/verification of any application. ■

Ahar Pyne in Bihar

Gopi Kumar Verma*

Introduction

Ahar-Pyne system is an indigenous irrigation technology, which has been evolved based on the particular natural, geographical and agro-climatic conditions of the region. The ahar-pyne system of irrigation was overwhelmingly more important in South Bihar, where it was irrigating about 35 % of 2.5 mha of cropped land during the first two decades of twentieth century. Compared to it, the irrigation in north Bihar was mere 3% of 3 mha cropped area. During this period of the 0.98 mha area irrigated by ahar-pyne, 0.88 mha area was irrigated in South Bihar, while only 0.1 mha was irrigated in North Bihar.

There are three factors (1. scanty rainfall, 2. rapid slope - reason for quickly runs off rain water and 3. soil which is either stiff clay or loose sand – is equally irretentive of moisture) which are responsible for the wide prevalence of this mode of irrigation in this region. In order to prevent the water being wasted long narrow artificial channels called Pynes are led off from the rivers by means of which the water is transmitted to the fields. Further the same rapid slope would facilitate the wastage of the water if it were not impounded- in extensive reservoirs called Ahar, which are formed by constructing a series of retaining embankments across the lines of drainage. However with the passage of time, the area irrigated by ahar-pyne system in Bihar has significantly declined. The table1 states the irrigated area decline over a period of time by ahar-pyne system.

Table1. Area irrigated by ahar-pyne system

Sl. No	Year	Area irrigated (mha)	Region Covered
1	1930	0.94	South Bihar
2	1971	0.64	South Bihar
3	1976	0.55	South Bihar
4	1997	0.53	Whole Bihar

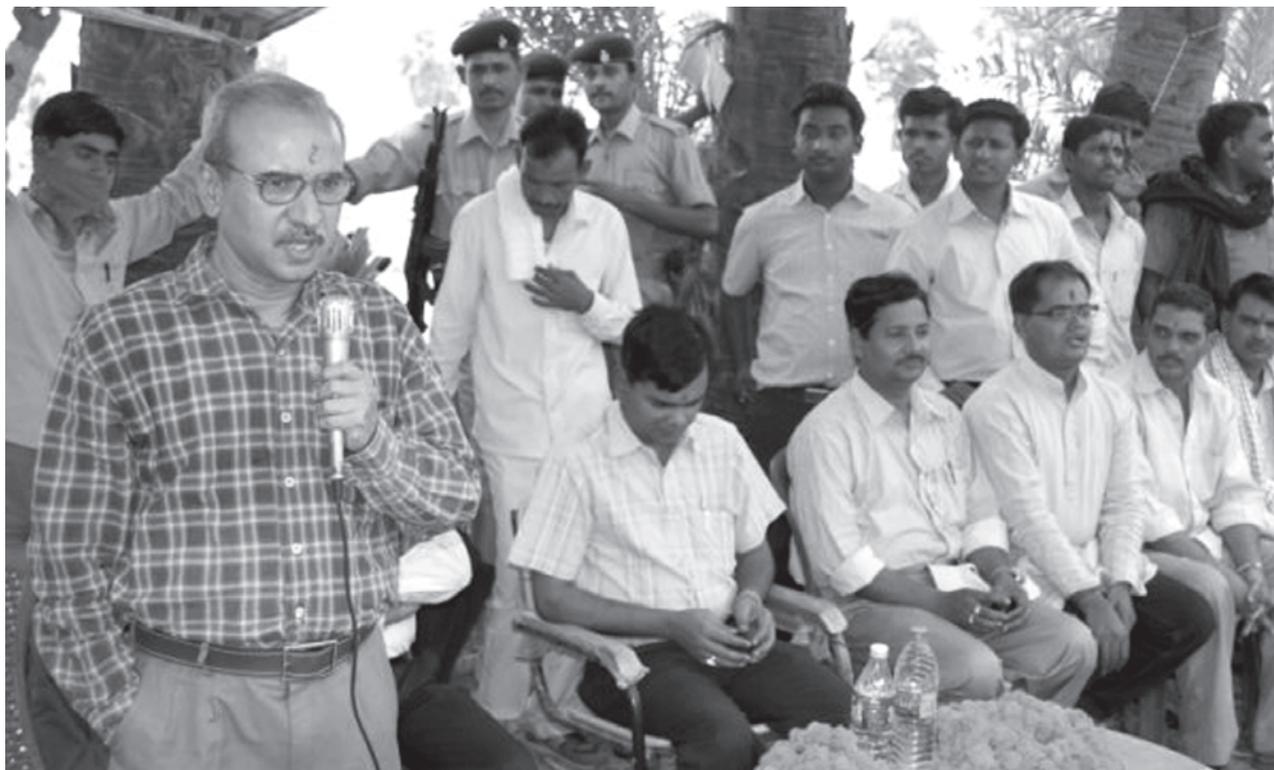
Source: Pant Report(2004)

Need for Ahar-pynes renovation

The farmers' indigenous knowledge of utilization of water for irrigating their paddy fields was based on great understanding of the local topography flow of water and positioning of their fields. The major regions that led to the traditional ahar-pyne being so much prevalent in the region are 1. fragmented land holding and equity in water distribution, 2. cheapest source of irrigation, 3. uniformity in cropping and 4. collective action (*Goam*).

These unique indigenous irrigation systems which were in maintained condition during the Zamindari system are now in decay due to present unavailable centralized management by different government agencies with inadequate funding for maintenance, therefore the region is facing a grave situation. The area irrigated by ahar-pyne system has come down to about 0.53 mha constituting about 12% of all irrigated source, compared to about 18 % in South and North Bihar alone during the first two decades of twentieth century. The situation is causing inadequate irrigation supply for the lands, affecting the crop production and more cost on the maintenance works every year.

Since the ahar-pyne systems could not function effectively due to poor maintenance by the government and lack of co-ordination effort of the community, it has raised the dependency on alternate source of irrigation like bore wells / tube wells fitted with diesel / electrical pump sets. This development has caused a vicious cycle; eroding further the interest of collective action and it has led to disparity among the small and affluent farmers, as the small and marginal farmers have little resource to access these costly gazettes due to the raising cost of diesel oil and inadequate power supply. It is matter of great concern for big farmers also as the expensive irrigation, significantly increases the total input costs of cultivation, and hence results relatively less income for them. So the farmers are looking forward to put back the traditional ahar-pyne system in order.



Some of the problems in relation to present condition of ahar-pyne are identified as follows:-

- ❌ Unstable sandy bunds formed in the river bed every season to divert water from the river into the Pyne.
- ❌ Erosion of river bank and there by widening of mouth (entrance) of the pynes.
- ❌ Silting of pyne bed obstructing free flow of water.
- ❌ Unstable banks of pyne with improper side slopes.
- ❌ Improper bed gradient of pyne caused by negligence of maintenance
- ❌ Silting of ahars.
- ❌ Encroachment in the pyne and ahars.

The demonstration of successful rehabilitation of pynes with the involvement of people institutions with scientific approach is very much essential.

About Jagarnathpur-Semaria pyne

The pyne is located in block Tankuppa at the adjoining border area of Fatehpur, Tankuppa and Mohanpur blocks of Gaya district. It originates from river Pymar and ends at ahars at Semaria and Jagarnathpur villages. There are six branches of the pyne and the main pyne bifurcates at Surungubiga about

4.5 Km from the zero distance. One leads to Jagarnathpur via Surungubigha village and other leads to Semaria village. Each bifurcated branch is about 10 Km long. It irrigates five revenue villages namely Dariapur, Pinrari, Jagarnathpur and Semaria of three different Panchayats and one of the Panchayat comes under Fatehpur block. It is made during Zamindari era and used to be maintained by then Zamindars. After the abolition of the Zamindari system, no renovation work has been carried out so far.

Community interaction for pyne renovation

We had conducted meetings in each of the beneficiary villages with the objectives of developing village level common consensus, identifying issues/ concerns in regard to the renovation work of the pyne. During these meetings, a common meeting of the beneficiary villages was proposed by the villagers. Taking forward their demand and suggestions we conducted the meeting.

The meeting is conducted on 10-04-2010 at Surangapur primary school. The meeting started at 10.00 AM with prayer followed by the registration process and ended. The 'Block Development Officer' (B.D.O)



At the end of the meeting, a **proposal was passed** in which it is stated that Dhan Foundation can extend its techno-managerial support in regard to the renovation of the pyne. It was signed by the people representatives of each of the villages. The meeting was called of by vote of thanks to the officials and other respected persons involved n the meeting.

Bagulwa Dasain ahar pyne meeting:

and 'Community Organiser' (C.O) of the block took part in the meeting. The B.D.O appreciated the efforts of DHAN Foundation, organizing the unorganized for a common goal. He also shared the importance of ahar-pyne and its need for renovation work through community. The C.O also stressed on the point of community's collective efforts to achieve development.

A proposal has been made from the respective villages duly signed by the beneficiary farmers to get techno-managerial support from DHAN Foundation in regard to the renovation of the pyne. It has also been proposed that the beneficiary farmers by forming village level ahar-pyne association will contribute 15% of the total expenditure in form of labour or cash. The formation of MFGs is to reach the goal of financial inclusion and training the farmers about system of rice intensification (SRI).

The objectives of the meeting

- ❏ To sensitize the relevance of the ahar pyne system and its ownership by the community
- ❏ To understand the common issues, concerns, needs and demands in regard to the renovation of the pyne
- ❏ To educate the relevance of people institutions like village pyne association (Gram Pyne Samiti), microfinance groups for farmers and landless and its promotion
- ❏ To prepare a road map of the renovation process of the Jagarnathpur-Semaria Pyne.

A meeting was conducted on 18th April 2010 with all members of Gram Aahar Pyne Valagams of Bagulwa Dasain Aahar Pyne Vayalagam at Maher, Tankuppa. It was to finalize the process of the renovation work of Bagulwa Dasain Pyne proposed to carry out from 22-04-2010. The D.D.M (Nabard) and Director (DRDA) attended the meting and made the session a meaningful one. A demand draft of Rs. 5,50,000 was given to the president of the association to carry out the renovation work

Inauguration of the renovation work of Bagulwa Dasain pyne:

A rally of beneficiary farmers was organized from village Aropur (where the pyne end) to Dhibar (where the pyne originates). The farmers with drum marched to reach the destination. Mr. Sanjay Kumar Singh, I. A. S., District Collector, Gaya, inaugurated the renovation work of Bagulwa Dasain Pyne. The Deputy Development Commissioner (D.D.C), Mr. Durgesh Nandan, Mr. Sunil Kumar, Director (DRDA), BDOs, Programme Officers took part in the inauguration process. The government officials have been informed about the work progress and the larger goals of carrying out the work by promoting people's institution. A block level federation associating the pyne level association and then making livelihood interventions. There was a rally with the participation of many members of the association.

Water conservation project in drought prone Gundar Basin

World community is curiously making efforts to address the implications on fresh water ecosystems which are very susceptible and threatened by 'Climate Change' with its changes in run off patterns, increased water evaporation and skewing water distribution for multi stake holders. It is therefore highly imperative to address fresh water eco systems which directly influence livelihoods and food security of small and marginal farming and landless community in different agro climatic contexts in the country. In this crucial juncture, the water experts have given projection that the freshwater consumption in the developing countries will be increasing at the rate of about 30 percent by the year 2025.

Gundar is one of the driest river basins originate in the rain shadow region of Western Ghats in Madurai district and flows through five districts of Tamilnadu. Nearly five lakh families are living in this basin. Among them 70 percent depends on agricultural and allied activities. There are six sub basin in Gundar basin namely Gaundanadhi, Therkar, Kirudhumal, Gundar, Palar and Uthra Kosamangaiyar and Vembar basin. The total area of the basin spreads about 5660 Sq.km. There are 2276 tanks and 43 anacuts. Of which 43,900 hectares land are irrigated by 511 PWD tanks and 27,600 hectares land are irrigated by 1,765 minor irrigation tanks come under the control of Panchayat union. Nearly 14,388 hectare land is irrigated by the anacuts. Over 5,500 ooranies exist in this area are used both for drinking water and for domestic use.

Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL), DHAN Foundation and National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) have through a unique corporate-NGO-institutional partnership launched on April 15th 2010, joined hands towards a water conservation project in Nialayur, one of the project villages in Madurai, Tamil Nadu. Over 20,000 farmers and their families are to benefit by the collaborative initiative. The project aims to renovate over 250 irrigation tanks with farmers' participation in the drought prone Gundar Basin. The project will directly benefit over 20,000 small and marginal farm families and thus contribute towards both environment as well as enhancing livelihoods. This project is based on a unique 'partnership model'. HUL will invest about Rs.5 crore of the project cost with equal contribution from NABARD. One of the unique features of this project is that it would be implemented by organising farmers,



landless labourers and women into an association at each tank level. They will contribute 10% of the renovation cost. The direct stake of the farmers in the project will ensure that the benefits of the project are sustained in the long term. The technical and implementation supervision would be facilitated by DHAN Vayalagam Tank Foundation. This project would help the village communities to organise and undertake repair and renovation of tanks, create endowments for future maintenance and sustain tank based agriculture in Madurai, Sivagangai, Virudunagar and Ramanathapuram districts of Tamil Nadu.

Prominent among those present at the launch event included, Mr. Sridhar Ramamurthy, Chief Financial Officer, HUL, Mr. C.K. Gopalakrishnan, Chief General Manager, NABARD, Mr. M. P. Vasimalai, Executive Director, DHAN Foundation, Mr. Vasavalingam, Leader, Vayalagam Movement, Ramanathapuram, and Mr. A. Duraisamy, Leader, Vayalagam Movement, Madurai, among others. Over 300 farmers were also present on the occasion. Speaking about the project, Mr. Sridhar Ramamurthy, CFO, HUL, said "Water is a very precious resource and availability of water can make a significant difference to the lives of people especially in a drought prone area like the Gundar Basin. This partnership with DHAN and NABARD, we believe, will help translate our small actions into a big difference." Mr. M.P Vasimalai, Executive Director, DHAN Foundation said "It is a creative water partnership to enhance livelihoods and ecosystems of small and marginal tank farmers of rainfed Gundar Basin; a new pathway for renewal of water bodies on a scale with long term alliance of community, state, NABARD, HUL and DHAN Foundation; benefits farmers from drought prone Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai, Virudhunagar and Madurai districts". ■

Chithirai festival 2010

Before writing down my experiences of the Chithirai festival, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Annerieke Nijenhuis, student from the Netherlands. I'm participating in the course, International Business and Management studies, at Avans University for Applied Science, at Breda. At the moment I'm doing an internship at DHAN Foundation and INAFI India. The subject of this internship is policy and regulation in the microfinance sector. I arrived in Madurai in February and I would leave at the end of May, the total duration of the internship is four months.

I'm very lucky that DHAN Foundation, in cooperation with the tourism department of Madurai enabled me to experience the Chithirai Festival. The festivities commenced at Sunday morning (25th April, 2010), when the wedding of god Sundareshwarar and goddess Meenakshi was celebrated at the Meenakshi temple. First of all, I really have to mention the outstanding organization of the tourist department. Special seats were reserved for foreigners, which enabled us to see the wedding ceremony very clearly. The tourism department also provided papers which explained what was going to happen, and what meaning the various festivities have. When we arrived at the temple it was evident that many people were interested to see this ceremony. It made me realize how fortunate I was to experience something this special. During the ceremony, it was great to see how the gods were brought in to the temple with great care. However, it was difficult for me to understand the procedures during the ceremony as the leading language was Tamil. Nevertheless I really enjoyed the ceremony, and I feel very fortunate for this great cultural experience.

The next day, Monday, another festivity took place in Madurai. This is called the "car" festival. Again, the organization was great. The tourist department had organized a special stage for foreigners, from which we had a great view. I was amazed by the immense crowd in the streets, the camels, and the elephants. When the car arrived I couldn't believe my eyes. How is it possible to move a car this gigantic? From experience I can now say that it is possible. But there is a secret, people have to team up and cooperate together

Annerieke Nijenhuis*



in order to achieve this great goal. It was fantastic to see thousands of people working together to move this car. This really creates unity among the people, which can lead to many other great things.

The highlight is the procession of Lord 'Kallazhagar' (Lord Vishnu) the elder brother of Goddess Meenakshi, who proceeds from his abode - Azhagamalai 30-km from Madurai, to give away his sister in marriage to Lord Sundareshwarar. One can witness an ancient legend unfold right before your eyes as Lord Vishnu rides to his sister's wedding on gleaming real-gold horse chariot. The 'Kallazhagar' entering the river Vaigai is indeed a spectacular sight.

On the last day of the festival, Wednesday, the most important festivity took place. On this day the brother (Lord Vishnu) of goddess Meenakshi is believed to arrive at Madurai. He has missed the wedding because he was delayed during his trip from Alagar Koil to Madurai. He is very angry when he finds out that he missed the wedding, and decides to take a bath in the Vaigai river, that runs through Madurai. At the last day of the Chithirai Festival the scene of Lord Vishnu bathing in the river is imitated. The tourist department arranged special places for foreigners on a bridge, which allowed us to see everything that happened below us at the river.

A huge crowd, even more than at the car festival I believe, had gathered where otherwise the river would have flowed. Many people shaved their head in devotion for Lord Vishnu. It was great to see how religion still plays a huge role in everyday life.

Third Convocation of Tata-Dhan Academy

S. Ramkumar*



It was a nice clear weather in the evening on 26th April, 2010 with good shower to cool the environment and to welcome the graduating students of Tata-Dhan Academy (TDA) for the third convocation. It was organized at the new campus of TDA. I had an excellent opportunity to take part in that function. I had the privilege of attending the function as a faculty of TDA as well as the coordinator for arranging the transport facilities for the function. It was a good occasion to witness the convocation of 49 graduates of PDM 5 to 7 batches in a neatly dressed in convocation uniform and a colorful gathering. Members and leaders from Kalanjiam, vayalagam, rainfed programmes were there to bless the graduating students.

The chief guest for the convocation was Mr. Navin B.Chawla, I.A.S., Chief Election Commissioner of India. The leaders of Kalanjiam and Vayalagam Movements, the Director of TDA, the Chairman of TDA and the Executive Director of Dhan Foundation were on the dais to grace the occasion.

Earlier in the evening at 4.00 pm there was a procession by all the graduating students along with the faculties, board of trustees and guests from the main building of TDA to the convocation venue. They entered into the venue as a gentle breeze and stood in the red carpet at the centre of the venue. Then the chairman took the chief guest and introduced all the graduating students, board of trustees and the faculties then reached the dais. Then the students sat in the place provided to them.

Then the programme was started with a prayer song sung by the graduating students and then the chairperson welcomed the chief guest and others. The chairman of DHAN foundation, Mr. B.T.Bangera declared open the convocation. Then the chairman of TDA, Mr. M.P.Vasimalai gave the welcome address. He referred the great poets Thiruvalluvar and Subramaniabharathiar along with the quotes on education and also for the social reformation.

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Then the chairperson, Mr. H.S.Ganesh called the names of the graduating students to receive the degree from the chief guest. Then he gave his convocation address which focused on the democratic election systems in our country and the role of Election Commission in this election process (Feature of this magazine). He stated many facts related to the total eligible voters in India as 714 million and in the last general elections about 58.5% had voted which was equivalent to the voting in USA. He stated the efforts taken by the Election Commission in organizing and conducting the general election with the examples of various states, tribal areas as well as in the hilly terrains and in the Himalayas.

During his speech he shared that he came to know about DHAN Foundation and TDA three years before and then he could make his visit through this function. He congratulated the graduating students and asked them to be in contact with him wherever they are working now. He wanted to meet him in those places whenever he visits such places and to interact with them. He urged the importance of youth to create awareness among their parents and others in their places to cast their votes during elections and to ensure that every one is



given with the Voter I.D. cards. He wanted the students to do the Ramp Audit in all the school buildings which are meant for the election booths.

The District Collector of Madurai was also in the function. The Chief Election Commissioner had asked the Collector to extend all the possible support to TDA and DHAN Foundation. He also stated that the district collector is the only person who can address the local needs of the institution as well as the society.

Beyond that point if any things need to be done, he is interested to help us.

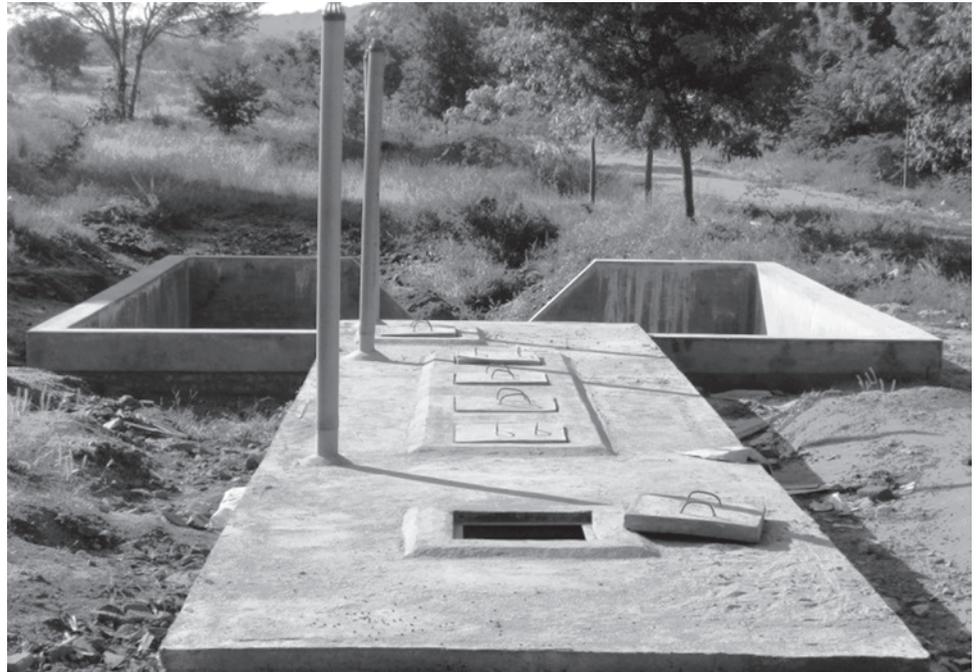
After his speech, the director of TDA, Mrs. A.Umarani gave the vote of thanks. She reiterated the points shared by Mr. Vasimalai and Mr. Navin Chawla and how it is relevant to TDA and the students graduated from TDA.

Finally the function was declared closed by Mr. B.T.Bangera and then the event was closed with the National anthem. Before we dispersed, all students, faculties, Board of Trustees and the guests assembled to take a group photograph to mark the occasion.

DEWATS in Tata-Dhan Academy

Jens Götzenberger*

Tata-Dhan Academy (TDA) is the only development school in India with a mission of creating development professionals to work with the poorest sections of the society. Graduates of the academy work with organizations which work directly with the community. TDA offers Post-Graduation in Development Management for those interested in becoming development professionals. The two-year diploma helps nurturing the skills, values,



and ethics necessary for understanding rural livelihood opportunities and for working with India's poorest communities. They possess multi-disciplinary knowledge, including applied technologies relevant to the context. The focus is on building high quality techno-managerial competencies supported by appropriate motivations, values and attitudes to work particularly with disadvantaged people with a view to "building people's organizations to build people".

On 26 April 2010, the new campus of Tata-Dhan Academy was inaugurated within the scope of the convocation of the third batch of graduates. Mr. Navin B. Chawla, Chief Election Commissioner of India, was the chief guest to issue the degree certificate to the students who completed their "Post Graduation in Development Management". Within the scope of this function, also the two DEWATS units, designed by DHAN's Centre for Urban Water Resources (CURE) and built by DHAN's Housing Department, started operation.

The campus, located 20km outside of Madurai city in Mellakal, consists of an administrative block including the classrooms and offices, a library block, a big hostel complex (including a kitchen and a canteen) in which the students and the temporary staff live, as well a separate boys' hostel for visitors. The complete campus is covered by different decentralized wastewater treatment units. One DEWATS is constructed at the admin cluster to treat the wastewater generated in the admin block and the library. Another DEWATS is connected to the hostel block. Wastewater generated at the boys' hostel is locally treated in a septic tank and is then used for groundwater recharge in a soak-pit.

DEWATS systems

The DEWATS at admin block was designed to treat the wastewater generated by 200 people, including 120 students and 80 staff. The wastewater is mainly generated at different toilets, urinals and from washing activities. The system is designed for a daily flow of 8 cubic meters and consists of a settler (ST), 4-chamber

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Salient features

System:	Admin Block	Hostel Block
Source:	toilets	toilets, bathrooms, kitchen
Design Capacity:	8 m ³ /d	15 m ³ /d
No. of users:	200	100
Peak Flow:	6 hours	6 hours
Influent Quality:	BOD - 150, COD – 300	BOD - 200, COD - 400
Effluent Quality:	BOD – 10, COD – 30	BOD – 10, COD – 30

anaerobic baffle reactor (ABR), 1-chamber anaerobic filter (AF) and a horizontal planted gravel filter (HPGF). The total build-up area is about 55 square meters and the construction cost was approximately Rs. 320,000. The effluent of the HPGF is stored in an underground cistern of 3 cubic meter capacity and is used for landscape irrigation. The overflow of the cistern is routed into a nearby channel.

The DEWATS at the hostel block was designed to treat the wastewater generated by 100 inmates of the hostel. This includes wastewater from toilets, showers, the kitchen, the canteen and general cleaning activities. With an estimated per-head water consumption of 135 liters per day, the system is designed for a daily wastewater flow of 15 cubic meters. The system consists of the same DEWATS modules as used in the admin cluster (ST, ABR, AF and HPGF), however of bigger dimensions. Additionally a polishing pond was provided downstream the HPGF to store the effluent prior to reuse. The treated effluent is used for landscape irrigation. The overflow of the pond is connected to a nearby channel. Additionally to the classic DEWATS modules, a grease trap was installed attached to the canteen and kitchen to avoid that floating materials enter the DEWATS. The total build-up area of the

underground modules ST, ABR and AF is 25 square meters. The HPGF requires about 65 square meters and the area of the pond is 45 square meters. The construction cost for the complete system was approximately Rs. 5 lakh.

Operation and maintenance

The DEWATS modules and the conveyance system is operated and maintained by trained housekeeping staff. A regular schedule will be followed for maintenance, like removal of sludge once every two years in the settler and approximately once every three years in the anaerobic baffle reactor. The filter media in the planted gravel filter will be washed as required, approximately once in five years.



Farming with a pond

Subhadarshee Nayak*

The state of Odisha though is endowed with abundant natural resources yet she continues to be one of the poorer states even after almost 60 years of planned activities by Centre and State government. An important feature of the population of the state is the presence of 38.25 percent (2001 census) of weaker section comprising of scheduled tribes (ST) and scheduled castes (SC). Koraput is one of the 30 districts of Odisha where the presence of weaker section is very high. The district is situated in the



south-eastern region of the state. Rayagada, Nawarangapur and Malkangiri are the neighboring districts of Koraput. 65 percent of the total population of Koraput comprise of SC and ST (2001 census). The district very often comes in news for naxalism, starvation death, death due to eating of roots, kernels, and due to malnutrition etc.

DHAN Foundation started its operation in the district in 2004. The organization stated community banking programmed among the poor of Koraput block. Community banking programme was started in the district as an entry point activity to address the development needs of the poor. The programme aims to organise the poor and links them to mainstream institutions. At present DHAN is working in three blocks, namely Koraput, Semiliguda and Borigumma, of the district. DHAN started its operation in Borigumma block in May 2006. Borigumma is one of the 14 blocks of the district. In fact it is the biggest block in the district. The block is situated on NH43 at a distance of 44k.m from the district head quarters towards Jagadapur. The block is surrounded by Kotpad block in the western side, Dasmantpur in the east,

Nabarangpur in the north and Jeypore at the southern side of the block. There are 30 Grama panchayats in the block. There are 148 revenue villages and 197 hamlets in this block. As per the 2001 census the total household in the block stands at 36099. There is 49.89 percent of the total population comprises of scheduled tribe where as 15.68 percent of the total population comprises of scheduled castes. According to 1997 BPL survey 87 percent of the total household constitute of BPL families. The total population of the block stands at 126728 (2001 census).

One of the peculiar features of Koraput is the incidence of poverty. The district is inhabited by many tribes, and caste groups and abject poverty found in all the communities. Poverty in the block is characterized by illiteracy, landlessness, ill health, unemployment, dependency on seasonal income, exploitation by market forces, loss of forest, no access to institutional credit, poor state of health services, poor communication facilities, remoteness, small size of land holding, poor yield, no irrigation facilities etc. Moreover rampant corruption makes the situation the worst. The poor here depend on series of activities to eke out their living.

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Agriculture and manual labour are the major employment opportunities in the block.

Agriculture in the block provides both employment and bread to the people. Agricultural practices here are very much traditional. Use of modern equipments and technology are very less. Labour here lack specialization. The total agricultural land of the block is 40632 hectares which is 69 percent of the total land of the block. Land again is divided into three categories namely high, medium, and low. Low land is good for cultivation, however low land constitute only 29 percent of the total agriculture land. It is important to note that paddy is the major crop of the block, where as sugarcane is the cash crop of the block. At the same time

sugarcane is not cultivated in all the villages. Wherever there is availability of water farmers grow sugarcane.

People here are mostly illiterate. The literacy rate of the district stands at 33 percent and that of the block is 34.26 percent. Women literacy is as low as 11 percent. Hence dependence on manual labour is very high. People depend on different set of activities to earn their bread. Typically a family depends on different activities according to the availability of a piece of work in a season. The following table gives in brief the seasonal availability of major livelihood and employment opportunities in the block. Apart from the listed livelihood opportunities many families migrate to earn their bread.

Table No.1 Livelihood and employment opportunities in Borigumma block

S.N	Months	Livelihood and employment opportunities
1	January, February, March	Sugarcane harvest, jiggery making,
2	April, May	Collection and sale of Tamarind, Tendu leaves, cashew kernels
3	June ,July, August	Land preparation for paddy cultivation, transplantation
4	September, October	Weeding , vegetable cultivation
5	November, December	Paddy harvest , vegetable cultivation

Source: participatory rural appraisal.

DHAN's Kalanjiam Community Baking Programme (KCBP) aims to organize poor families and in the first phase of growth, in the initial three to four years, it enables them to have access to institutional credit and build their institution. KCBP was started in Borigumma block in May 2006 with 13 panchayats initially, however to reach all the poor of the block another 12 panchayats were covered under KCBP. Hence two federations are to be promoted and the locations are named as Borigumma and B.Singpur.

The Kalanjiam programme in B.Singpur location was initiated in May 2006. When KCBP was initiated in this location the local wage rate for women in the block was Rs. 20 for women and Rs.35 for men per day. The Kalanjiam programme in B.Singpur location as on March 2010 has reached 1909 families and mobilized Rs.25 lakhs from Kalanjiam members as saving, at the same time the programme has provided access to institutional credit to the tune of Rs. 40 lakhs from State Bank of India and Kalanjiam Development Financial services (KDFS). At present the total loan out standing at federation level is Rs. 39 lakhs.

Agriculture is the major occupation in the panchayat, however land remains unutilized after paddy harvest due to lack of water. Agriculture land of this place is rainfed. The average rainfall in the block is 1300 mm in 82 days. Though the average rainfall in the district and block is very good there are no water harvesting structures to support agriculture after Kharif. Farmers heavily depend on monsoon to eke out a living from agriculture. Though there is good rainfall in the district, however due to unavailability of water harvesting structure and irrigation facilities the farmers of the block as a whole, is not able to harvest two crops per annum.

It is important to note that Upper Kolab is the major irrigation project in the district providing irrigation to 37.29 lakh hectares in Jeypore, Kundra, Borigumma and Kotpad block. Of the total agricultural land 35 percent is irrigated in the district. In Borigumma, 31 percent of the net sown area is irrigated. Sources of irrigation in the block are major and minor irrigation projects, wells and other sources. Again in Borigumma block all the panchayats are not covered by the major

irrigation project. Few panchayats like Sasahandi, Jujhari, Sanporia are covered by the major irrigation project. None of the panchayats coming under B.Singpur location are covered by any major irrigation project. In this place a local and affordable source of irrigation has much relevance.

During our course of work we found that there was a possibility of increasing the income of a family if water is made available. DHAN's Rainfed Development Programme (RFDP) helps Kalanjiam families to increase their income through introducing low cost and local technology in agriculture. It is in this context that we organized a workshop on rainfed agriculture with all the cluster associates of B.Singpur location. Cluster associates are the grassroot level field staffs who are appointed by federation and who writes the books of account of groups and facilitates various processes at group to address development needs. It was decided in the workshop that farm pond would be promoted at least among five farmers as a low cost and local technology to increase the farming period of a farmer and earn an additional income. Normally a farmer would be engaged in agriculture activity from July to January i.e. from preparing land to the harvest of the yield. After harvest of paddy many depend of various government sponsored of work i.e. construction of roads, earth work, etc. Few migrate to neighboring districts like Rayagada and Nawrangpur or to neighbouring state like Andhra Pradesh to work in brick kilns or to Jeypore, an adjacent block, to get coolie work. Many would borrow money from local businessmen or moneylenders by mortgaging some part of their yield at a very cheap rate. It is here we felt farm pond may be an important low cost technology for a farmer to enable him or her work in his or her field and not to fall into a helplessness situation and not migrate.

Farm pond can be defined as a pond in a farm. Unlike a tank it does not have any supply channel or sluices. It collects water during rainy season and stores it. It depends on the farmer to decide the size of the pond. It is dug in and around an arable piece of land. And the earth so dug is used as bund for the pond. A farm pond is an effective water storage unit and it works as small irrigation structure. The villagers of Koraput districts are very much familiar with a small water body called *chuaon*. *Chuaons* are dug in wet land where through out the year water will be available. These *chuaons* are used for taking bath and in some cases for drinking

water. In some case, farmers have dug *chuaon* and used it for irrigation. These *chuaons* are dug between five to six feet depths and are well protected from silting through stone bonding. A *chuaon* will have some features of a well and pond. It is neither a well nor a pond. When we introduced pond as irrigation structure farmers could easily comprehend the usage of a farm pond. Farm pond has certain advantages as an irrigating structure. It is affordable. Any farmer can use it. Technology is very simple. Moreover it is locally accepted. It is possible to grow some vegetables and spinach on the bund of the pond. However while digging a farm pond one must take care of the following things. Particularly in Koraput district farm pond can not be an effective irrigation structure in up land. Care must be taken to prevent silting. Grass must be grown on the bund of the farm pond to prevent soil erosion. The bund of the farm pond can be strengthened with stone bunding.

After the workshop with associates, it was left to the associates to find out interested farmers, during group meetings, who would voluntarily come forward to dig a farm pond. It was also decided that RFDP would provide Rs. 5000 as revolving fund assistance to the group. Few farmers of Baghabhodra village showed interest in digging farm ponds. We organized an orientation with all the farmers of the villages. And Mr. Bhagaban Gouda is a farmer who has successfully demonstrated the usage of farm pond. He is the husband of Ms. Devika Gouda. Devika Gouda is a member in Maa Kaleswari Kalanjiam in Baghabhadra village of Benasur Panchayat. The village is 10 km away from the block headquarters. She comes from Gouda community which takes care of cattle and sheep in villages. However in course of time the family has adopted agriculture as the major livelihood option. There are ten members in the Kalanjiam. The Kalanjiam was formed on 10th September, 2007. The members of the Kalanjiam came together and formed an SHG with a view to helping each other come out of poverty. Members of Kalanjiam save a little amount in the group and internally lend the so saved money among them to meet their various needs. The total saving of the group as on 31st March 2010 is Rs.11698, the total loan out standing of the group is Rs. 8350, and the group did not have any liability with any bank. The group has availed a loan of Rs. 15000 from State Bank of India (SBI) which the group has repaid within a year.

The cluster associate of Benasur cluster discussed farm pond concept in the regular monthly meeting of the Kalanjiam. Devika Gouda found an opportunity to cultivate vegetables in her land. She discussed this with her husband and father in law. Both of them showed interest in digging farm pond. Bhagaban Gouda and Devika Gouda lives in a joint family comprising of Bhagaban's mother, father, wife (Devika) and their only son. The family owns five acres of land. Out of the five acres of land one acre is upland and the rest is low land. However Bhagaban is not economically well off. He still looked for manual labour to support his family after paddy harvest. Through this farm pond he wanted to grow vegetables in his field. He had a very small *Chuaon* in his field. However it was not big enough to support vegetable cultivation. They decided to convert the *chuaon* into a farm pond. Devika discussed this in the Kalanjiam meeting. She approached the leaders of the Kalanjiam. The Kalanjiam decided that only persons with good repayment and good performance record would be given the special loan. Devika Gouda is a member in her Kalanjiam. Her attendance in group meetings and repayment was prompt. Hence the group approached RFDP to provide them revolving fund. The location integrator along with RFDP team visited the group and interacted with the members. The team also visited the land to find out the feasibility of digging a farm pond. The group showed interest and confidence in availing the revolving fund. After the field visit it was finalised that revolving fund could be released. After the meeting we gave an orientation to Bhagaban Gouda regarding digging farm pond. The farmer decided to avail himself a loan of Rs. 5000 to dig 20''X20''X4'' farm pond. It was agreed that the assistance would be released in two phases after reviewing progress of work. The family members of the farmer were also advised to participate in digging the farm pond so that ownership would be increased. Bhagaban started the work and after seven days of work he approached the location integrator to release assistance. The location integrator along with RFDP team visited the group and field. After the field visit the team interacted with the farmer and Kalanjiam. It was estimated that the farmer had dug a farm pond of 20''X16''X3''. Family members of the farmer also

worked in digging. The farmer was given Rs.2500 as a loan from the group as per his calculation at one percent interest per month. And the farmer decided that he would not dig further as rainy had started to rain.

Devika Gouda's family has successfully demonstrated the usage of farm pond. She is happy that she decided to take the loan from the group. The benefits are many. Last year it did not rain on time after transplantation of paddy seedlings. Bhagaban irrigated his transplanted land with the water of the farm pond; again it did not rain during flowering of paddy crop. With the water of the pond he irrigated his land and that of his cousin too. He did not have to bother much when it did not rain. After the paddy harvest, Bhgaban decided to grow vegetables. He cultivated tomato, pumpkin, onion, spinach. So far he has earned Rs. 1200 by selling of tomato, he still has to harvest and sell pumpkin. He is very much hopeful that he would get back this year what he has invested. Everyone in his village appreciates his effort. And encouraged by this result 13 more farmers from the same panchayat have applied to grama panchayats to dig farm pond under NREGA and another 30 farmers have availed revolving fund assistance form RFDP programme to construct farm pond. During this financial year (2010-11) we are hopeful of linking at least 50 farmers to NREGA to dig farm pond in their field. Kalanjiam community banking programme in B.Singpur location is hopeful of bringing smiles to many more of such farmers in the coming year.



Panchayat movement day in Cuddalore district

Balu. I*

The Panchayat movement was launched in this year, 2010 by Panchayat programme of DHAN Foundation. It is being the first year, so we planned to celebrate the panchayat movement day in a good manner. In cuddalore district, the location team decided to celebrate the Panchayat movement day with the objective of creating awareness about movement among 1000 members and to enroll 1000 members in Panchayat movement. The location team has planned to achieve the above goal through celebrating movement day in three days.



Events

To celebrate panchayat movement day three major events and two minor events were planned.

1. Scholarship distribution
2. Micro plan launching
3. Women rally on NREGP
4. Worksite campaign on Panchayat movement
5. Household campaign on Panchayat movement

The Silampimangalam panchayat provided scholarship to the 200 students. Kayalpattu Panchayat launched their micro plan in Ayyampettai village. Andarmullipallam panchayat was planned to conduct the rally with NREGS workers to create awareness on NREGS. In C.Puthupettai Panchayat we conducted a movement awareness campaign in NREGS worksite. Alappakam panchayat conducted a household campaign on Panchayat movement.

Participants

All the events were conducted successfully with effective participation of community as well as panchayat members. In the scholarship distribution event, two hundred students and their parents participated. In the micro-plan launching event around

50 members participated. In Andarmullipallam panchayat the rally was cancelled because of poor participants. Only 30 women participated in this event so it was decided to conduct as a movement day meeting on that day instead of rally. NREGP worksite campaign was effectively conducted and around 500 workers took part in that. In house hold campaign we reached around 100 households. In each event the movement day speech played a critical role and it helped to provide information about the programme, sensitize the people and to enroll members in Panchayat movement.

Outcome

The outcome of movement day celebration was enormous. The scholarship was distributed to the 206 students. The micro-plan document was released in two panchayats. The Panchayat movement concept reached around 1000 people. Totally 536 members were enrolled in panchayat movement. Altogether the movement celebration was a great excitement to the staff and members of the people institutions. All the events were conducted with the partnership of fishermen village leaders. It was very much helpful to understand the activities and roles of village leaders. I could understand the fishermen traditional panchayats are good example for governance.

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Masavanatham tank and its impact on livelihoods

K. Amina Bibi*

Introduction:

Tank based watershed is a natural unit. Its boundaries are defined by the topography. Watershed is a living system governed by the natural laws. Watershed development is the conservation and regeneration of the entire catchments area of drainage line through different physical and vegetative measures. The goal of the watershed development is to prevent soil erosion, increase the soil moisture raise the ground water level, conserving the tanks and ponds and increase the biomass cover of the



area. It results in increasing the productivity of the land, ensures the availability of water for protective irrigation and for drinking, increases the availability of the fuel, fodder and fiber. It also helps in adopting proven the new technologies, crop diversification and other new innovations. It also helps for the landless people to upscale their livelihoods. Watershed development ensures chances of better return on a sustainable basis. Tanks play a vital role in the watershed because the tank system like feeder channel, tank water spread, tank catchments and surplus course of the tank itself is the watershed.

Masavanatham Venkidasamuthram tank is a PWD tank that plays a vital role in the livelihoods of Masavanatham village. Nearly 155 families residing in Masavanatham village, of which 75 are of the SC community, depend on this tank for their agricultural needs. It gets its water from the calingulah of Kurayur Big Tank, which is situated nearby Mochikulam village, as well as from its free catchment area.

Prelude:

There was good agriculture in this village as there was good flow of water to the tank and ponds of the

village and regularly recharged the wells. There was no need for bore-well to pull the water as the water table level was high. Manual mechanism could irrigate the fields. Agriculture was successful, profitable and all went well till the Chennampatti anaicut was constructed in the year 2000. Government built the anaicut in order to supply water to 48 tanks in both Virudhunagar and Madurai districts. The canals supplying water from Chennampatti anaicut interrupted the feeder channels to Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram tank. To remedy this, the government additionally constructed a causeway so that water could pass through the feeder channel of Vengidusamuthiram tank. However, due to the poor quality of construction, the water did not flow freely through this causeway. All water came through the Masavanatham feeder channel flowed through the Chennampatti anaicut canal that is situated below the bed level of the Masavanatham feeder channel. The heasreach of the feeder channel was also encroached on both sides. Because of the repair in the calingulah in the Kurayur Big Tank, it was not possible to get water to Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram tank from Kurayur Big Tank.

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Villagers of Masavanatham were expecting the chennampatti anaicut to bring more water to village but were shocked to see there is no water reaching the tank due to the poor quality of construction of causeway, which passes the water from Kurayur Big Tank calingah and its free catchment area. This blow affected the entire livelihood system of the village. Those who had fertile land had to leave their land fallow due to lack of minimum required water for rice cultivation.



Prosopis shrubs grew in the fertile lands. Most of the lands were left fallow and those who had wells and motor pumps irrigated the field to cultivate rice, cotton and rice fallow cotton. Other farmers had no other option but to cultivate minor millets like Sorghum (red), Thinai, Ragi and Varagu.

Some farmers wanted to improve the cause way which affected the village and approached the PWD officials and the district Collector but their efforts were not materialized. In the year 2005, command area farmers of Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram tank have been organized by DHAN Foundation as Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram Kanmoi Vayalagam. The association met various levels of government department officials to do these works.

DHAN's Intervention:

As a follow up of our action research on Co-Management of tanks for renovation and maintenance in Gundar basin in collaboration with Institute of Water Studies (IWS), Water Resource Organisation (WRO) it was decided to expand the Vayalagam Tankfed Agricultural programme in other blocks of Madurai district. In 2002, DHAN Foundation started working on Gundar basin head reach areas. District administration selected DHAN Foundation as one of the project implementing agency to implement NWDpra watershed development scheme in 10 watersheds in the year 2002. Among these 10 watersheds, 8 watersheds come under Thritumangalam area. Masavanatham comes under Kurayur watershed.

When DHAN staff approached Masavanatham village for watershed works, they were very reluctant to join for the purpose. So the team went ahead to Kurayur, a neighbouring village just 2 kms away. There the people were showing enthusiasm and could complete a new supply channel to the Kurayur Big tank. In 2003, there was good rain and the tank filled twice in the year due to supply channel work. The work of DHAN was widely appreciated by not only Kurayur people and many surrounding villages. This made the village leaders of Masavanatham village think about joining hands with DHAN to improve the village. Women Microfinance Groups (MFGs) were first promoted by Vayalagam with the pioneering efforts of Ananthavalli, still she is an active member encouraging many to join Vayalagam. During 2004 – 2005, there were only MFG and dryland farmers group. The members of the association are also doing the microfinance activities mainly to fulfill their credit need for enhancing of their livelihoods and also for their sustainability of the association. In 2005, Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram Kanmoi Vayalagam was promoted with the efforts of farmers like Mr. Adhiyan and Mr. Malaisamy, Mr. Chandran and Ms. Leelavathi were the field associates and Er. Devika, Project Executive under the guidance of Mr. Rajasekaran convinced the farmers to form Vayalagam and do the watershed development activities. DHAN believes in the principle of people contribution so emphasized one third of the water bodies work should be paid by the villagers either in the form of cash or labour. The team was responsible in completing the survey, prepared the

estimated of various works and speaking with the government officials.

In 2007, PWD repaired and reconstructed the calingulah of Kurayur Big tank after repeated efforts made by Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram Kanmoi Vayalagam. In the year 2008, some repair works of the causeway was done by the PWD and the survey was done by the revenue department with the request of Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram Kanmoi Vayalagam. The channel clearance work was completed from the Kurayur Big tank Calingulah to the Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram tank water spread area to the length of 2.2 kms and a width of 7 – 12 m. during the summer rain of April and May 2008, the water freely flowed through this channel and Masavanatham tank got filled to ¼ of its capacity after a long gap of seven years. The people of the village are very happy that water is finally flowing to Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram tank. After seeing the impact of the work, the villagers were inspired to do more water bodies renovation. They completed the sluice repair works, field channel clearance work, renovation of Malai Oorani and created a new cattle pond through Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram Kanmoi Vayalagam. The details of each work and its impact are given in detail. In the coming years, the Masavanatham farmers will be able to cultivate paddy crop in the entire 110 acres of the tank command area. All these works were possible through DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation in collaboration with PWD, agriculture department (NWDPPRA) and philanthropists.

Livelihood status of this village:

Most of the people are living in the poverty condition in this village. Their livelihood activities is as follows-

- Tank command area cultivation with paddy and cotton. Paddy is used for their food security.
- Rainfed lands are cultivated with cotton, pulses and shorghum
- Wild medicinal plant collection by the women of this village
- Goat rearing
- Charcoal making

- Seasonal migration for the wage labour to the near by urban area and for the Dam command area of Madurai, and Theni district.

Supply channel clearance:

The tank farmers association decided to do the channel clearance work through the national watershed development project area, which was implemented in this area at that time by DHAN Foundation and district watershed development agency, Madurai. In the year 2007, the survey was done by the revenue department with the request of the association and DHAN Foundation location team. Then the encroachment in the channel was identified and it was evicted during the work implementation. Then the feeder channel clearance works was completed to the tune of Rs. 1,19,500 and Rs. 20,000 was people contribution. The channel clearance work was completed from the Kurayur Big Tank calingulah to the Masavanatham Vengadasamuthiram Tank water spread area to the length of 2.2 km and a width of 7-12 m. To complete this work, the villagers had to face many problems from the encroachers. With the help of revenue department officials and village leaders it was tackled. During the summer rain of April and May in 2008, the water freely flowed through this channel and Masavanatham Tank got filled to ¼ of this capacity after a long gap of seven years. The people of the village are very happy that water is finally flowing to Masavanatham tank. As there was water in the tank, almost all wells in the village were recharged as a result many farmers whose land



was near the tank cultivated paddy. Rice was cultivated in 80 acres out of 110 acres of wet land available in the village. With the residual moisture, rice fallow cotton was also cultivated in 90% of the fields. Seeing the impact of the work the villagers decided to take up many such initiatives to get more water for agriculture.

Field channel clearance of Masavanatham tank:

There were three field channels in the village but remained neglected for the past seven years. Now the water was available in the tank and the need for the field channel arose. Field channels were 400 meters each. It was possible with the people contribution and National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPR). The total cost of the work was Rs. 29,750 and Rs. 5,000 was people contribution. Field channel and supply channel works were done simultaneously. The rice cultivation was possible only because of the field channels which brought them from tank to field

Rice and Rice fallow cotton cultivation:

Mr. M. Adhiyan aged 52 is a post graduate in Economics, is living with his family comprising his mother, wife and one daughter and two sons, all three are school going children. He is a member of Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram Kanmoi Vayalagam since its initiation. Though he is a post graduate he decided to do farming and earn his livelihood through agricultural activities. He and his family members actively do the farm works with much involvement. He has 1.5 acres of wetland and 5.0 acres of dryland. In wet land he cultivates rice and rice fallow cotton. In his dry land he cultivates cotton, green gram, red gram, Sorghum (red chollam) and other millers. He is involved in agriculture for the past twenty years. From his experience he says rain was good and water was available throughout the year. After storing 20 bags of 72 kgs of rice for household consumption, they were selling 20 bags. After the Chennampatti anaicut works



there is water deficit till date and rice cultivation was almost stopped. Many years the land was left fallow. Thanks for the supply channel and field channel works in 2008 which irrigated the rice cultivation and there were no water for final irrigation, so pumped out water from the pond. After many years there was harvest of just 8 bags. This year (2010), I raised nursery and decided not to transplant and go for main land preparation to cultivate rice, as there was no rainfall and hence no water in the tank. The wetland remains fallow now. However he cultivated cotton, pulse and pearl millet (Cholam). His dryland crops were profitable which helped to balance the loss incurred by the wet land. Cotton did not yield much this year but green gram cultivated in two acres as a single crop yielded 102 kgs and fetched good price and there was yield of 400 kgs (4 quintals) this year and the yield of the previous year was 8 quintals. Similarly cotton yielded well last year but this year it did not yield well. This year it was halved due to lack of water. He sold all the produces to the middlemen available in the village.

Renovation of Malai Oorani:

This is domestic water oorani. Excess water of the fields used to collect in this oorani. In older days it was functional but it was closed and leveled. People of this village requested DHAN to revive the water body and soon people contribution of Rs. 10,000 was also collected as people contribution. The total estimate of the work was Rs. 39,500. After the renovation works,

oorani was half filled. People used it for the ritual purpose of the temple located in the bund of the oorani. Some farmers whose land is near the oorani get their wells recharged and with that water they could cultivate vegetables.

Vegetable cultivation:

Mr. V. Malaisamy, 63 years old farmer lives with his mother, wife and three daughters (married and living with their husbands) and three sons. He is a member of Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram Kanmoi Vayalagam. The eldest son got married and working as a supervisor in a hotel, they are living in Ooty. The second son is married and is having a shop and the third son is helping him with agriculture. Their land (one acre wet land and five acres of garden land) is near Malai oorani. He cultivates brinjal, ladies finger, chillies, tomato, greens, and also cotton in his crop through out the year. Before 25 years, we used to harvest 100 bags of rice, 60 bags of ground nut (1 bag of 36kgs) in his six acres of land. We cultivated rice even in the garden land with irrigation from wells. After the Chennampatti anaicut works, there was a big set back of agriculture; the village became very drought prone. The spark of renovating Malai oorani rose in his mind.

He remembers his childhood days when there was a big oorani of 1.5 acres and it was a source of water not only to this village but also to neighbouring villages, there was fish rearing activities. There was 1.5 acres of wetland belonging to the temple. The then elders of the village decided to close the oorani and extend the area of wetland. As there was abundant water throughout the year, they never realized the water availability was due to water stagnation in the water bodies like Malai oorani. The income from the extended land (3 acres) will be auctioned for cultivating crops for which they would pay the village leaders and the income can be used for temple and village development works. He also says, "In my school days I have witnessed the oorani was elevated by putting sand from all sides."

"As I heard, DHAN Foundation would contribute three times of what we people contribute is the encouragement I found and discussed the idea with the village elders. All decided to discuss with the DHAN

staff and at last it became a reality" he says. His land is situated in close proximity to the oorani; one part of the land is located in the bunds of the oorani. He could foresee the benefits if the oorani was revived and hence he stood in forefront to complete the task. The total expense was Rs. 39, 500 and people contribution (all villagers) was Rs. 10,000. After the oorani was dug, 15 wells got recharged and the entire village gets benefit from the oorani and tank. The villagers were so happy that they celebrated a festival in the temple near the oorani. All cattle of the village and neighbouring village drank from this oorani. This year, there is failure of monsoon and there is no water stagnated. He also has an open well in his land, when the Malai oorani was filled the well had water and there was no need to use pumps to draw water, now the water table is below 40 feet. If there is monsoon rain / summer shower, Malai oorani would recharge and water will be available easily. If the oorani is filled once it is enough to recharge all wells for two years.

With the help of Malai oorani and Masavanatham Vengidusamuthiram tank, he cultivated rice and harvested 50 bags of rice of which he stored 20 bags for household use and sold 30 bags. In his garden land, he cultivated many vegetables. Brinjal gave him good income. It was harvested once in five days, it helped him to manage the daily needs of the family. Ladies finger was cultivates and it was sold to Virudunagar market. It was harvested every alternate day, each day there was a harvest of 50 kgs. Each kg fetched Rs. 8 – 10. He sold bitter gourd and greens to the villagers itself. Snake gourd, ribbed gourd, bottle gourd were sold in Viruthnagar market. He harvested eight quintals in 2 acres (4 quintals per acre) of cotton and it was profitable. His 29 years old son Suresh (third) took care of the marketing of the vegetables. The income of the vegetable cultivation was very useful to meet domestic expensed and agricultural expenses of vegetable cultivation. Ultimately it was a profitable because of the Malai oorani and tank work. He is one of the twenty farmers benefitted from this oorani.

Creation of new cattle pond:

Masavanatham village is blessed with numerous cattle. On par with agriculture, cattle rearing are one of the important livelihoods of the village. There are more

than 2000 goats, 10 cows (milch animals), and a pair of drought animals, more than 500 hens are seen here. One can see a minimum of two goats and 2-3 hens in each house. The villagers felt the need for an exclusive oorani for the cattle in the village. As there was no such ooranis, the villagers requested to dig one. They selected the land which is in outskirts of the village. Selection of land was due to two reasons. The first reason, it is near the grazing land for the cattle and even the cattle from neighbouring villages can also get the benefit out of this. The second reason was availability of the grave yard of the village. People who go for the cremation had to go to the river for bathing but there is no water there. If a new pond was created for cattle feeding it can serve bathing purpose too.

Mr. Palani and Jamunabari goat rearing:

Mr. Palani is one of the 18 members of the Vengidasamudram Kanmoi MFG, where he saves Rs. 52/month. He currently owns 75 cents wetland and 2.5 acres dryland. He cultivates rice and cotton in wetland. Rice and cotton cultivation was not done this year due to lack of water. In dryland he cultivates Sorghum (red), vegetables and red gram. There are six members in his family including himself and his wife, son and daughter-in-law, and two grandchildren. He and his wife look after the grazing and bringing grass, watering and feeding the cattle. His wetland was left fallow because of the feeder channel problem of the Masavantham tank. However, because the feeder

channel was cleared under the watershed’s NRM works, he will now hopefully be able to cultivate his lands in the following year. Through his group, he received a Rs. 5000 loan for fodder cultivation and land preparation. His 50 cent dryland was infested with Hariyali weed so he was not able to get proper yield. The cultivated crop was suppressed by this weed. Under the FPS component of the NWDPRRA program, Mr. Palani has also received 2-4D weedicide and sprayed in his 50 cent land for Hariyali weeds that were suppressing his field crops. He successfully removed 75% of the weeds, but the remaining 25% he will have to tackle in the following year.

When the Masavantham tank was filled his concentration was on agriculture and he cultivated in both wetland and dryland. But when the water was not available for agriculture he was forced to find an alternative source of livelihood to support his family. He chose goat rearing which still want water for goats to drink and grasses for their grazing. After the creation of the new cattle pond, his search to find water availability has decreased and helped his cattle rearing process a successful one. The pond helped him to concentrate in agricultural activities and goat rearing simultaneously.

Previously Mr. Palani only had 40 local breed goats. Upon hearing about the benefits of the Jamunabari goat, he was interested in obtaining this new breed as these goats are bigger, have more weight, more vigor, and

come to full size much faster than local breeds. They also yield high milk yields for its kids. However, pure Jamunabari doesn’t grow the best in local climates, so he opted to make cross breeds by breeding the local variety with the new Jamunabari breeds. Mr. Palani bought one Jamunabari ram with FPS funds in Madurai and brought them back to his village. The total cost of a male Jamunabari goat was Rs. 8000, he contributed Rs. 4000 and he received another Rs. 4000 from



NWDPRRA. The Jamunabari male goat is usually kept for about five years for breeding but has high maintenance, where injections must be given at Rs. 30/week. Mr. Palani then began breeding the goats. In April 2010, Mr. Palani has over 40 goats (34 goats and 6 kids), most of which have the long ears which signal the trait of a crossed Jamunabari breed. It took three years for changing the local breeds to hybrid breeds. He realized the growth rate of the crossed breeds is high when compared to the local breeds. Thereafter, Mr. Palani became sought out as the local breeder, as every week, he crosses about one or two goats for other members, of which he charges about Rs. 50 per crossing and has to spend Rs. 30 towards injecting with needed medicines to the eve came for crossing. He learned the skill of crossing and injecting from the veterinary camps and from veterinary doctors out of his curiosity. He crosses for at least 1000 goats/year which gives him an income of Rs. 10,000 – 15,000 in a year. While selling the goats, these crossed goats weigh more than local breeds, and he can get increased income from the crossed breeds. Previously, he sold his goats at Rs. 4,000 each but now, he can sell the crossed bred goat for Rs. 5,000. Per goat, he is able to get Rs. 800-1000 as extra income by selling them to others in need. In this cattle rearing process he loses 10 to 15 goats every year due to unexpected diseases.



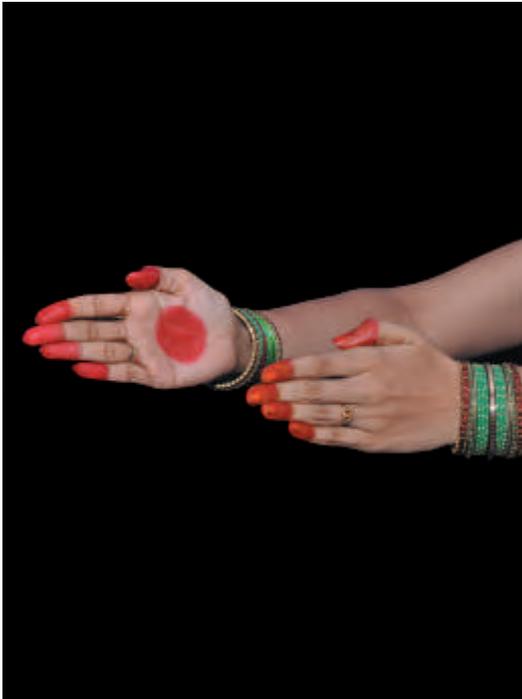
the bank on their own, etc. Before the formation of the group, the men typically would not allow them to accomplish these things on their own. In this way, the members then chose her to be president. The group members are encouraged to bring up their problems immediately within the meetings and discuss amongst themselves so the problem can be addressed immediately. She insists upon attendance of the members in the group meetings, punctuality, and other disciplines among the group members.

Women's empowerment:

Mrs. Anandavalli of Masavanatham village has been a leader among her fellow female villagers. She has been the president of the Malligai Vayalaga Kurunidhi Kuzhu group of fifteen members for the past three years. Three years before, she helped to form the group by discussing with the women about the benefits of the group and convincing them to join. Mrs. Anandavalli encourages the women in her group to maintain their activities in the group as she feels that with the loans the women can take more control of their lives, make financial decisions, be economically independent, go to

Most of the loans in her group go towards agriculture and activities that will improve the members' livelihoods. Prior to joining the group, none of the members had any form of life insurance. Mrs. Anandavalli helped to secure Birla Sun life insurance for most of the members. Mrs. Anandavalli also organizes the women to attend events and functions. In 2007, she encouraged her group in Masavantham village to participate in such events as DHAN Foundation's annual Madurai Marathon and in DHAN's biannual Madurai Symposium. She finds enormous pleasure and takes great pride in her group and does not find it difficult to manage. The only challenge is now maintaining her full-time duties as president with her housework but she has found a good balance between the group and her housework. Mrs. Anandavalli is also a regular participant in Kurayur Watershed meetings every month. She saves about Rs. 50/month and personally took out a social obligation loan of Rs. 10,000 for her daughter's wedding through the group. ■

Shared Goals & Vision for Sustaining Grassroots Democracy



Through future-search mechanisms, goal setting and benefit realisation exercises, the Peoples' Organisations enable members' families to set milestones for their development. Reviews and celebrations reinforce the goals and vision that they have set for themselves.



DHAN believes that shared vision stimulates peoples' aspirations and builds resilience to rise to the challenges of poverty and inequality. The primary groups and network institutions share a vision of poverty reduction and self-reliance that places people at the centre. This vision is driven by values of self-help and mutuality that commits everyone to deepening independence and inter-dependence as means of advancing grassroots democracy and good governance. It develops homogeneity in thinking and opens new vistas to the members to identify, generate and act on their development goals. Also it reinforces their personal responsibility to generate, manage and conserve resources for collective wellbeing.

Deepening Grassroots Democracy

DHAN's Way



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