

One lakh people out of Poverty- DHAN Foundation's achievement



The Sixteenth Foundation day was celebrated on 2nd Oct, 2012 by DHAN Foundation, in its new office premises. DHAN Foundation was involved in the process of poverty reduction through its thematic institutions and has reached over 10 lakh people in the process. The ultimate impact of this program is the beneficiaries moving out of poverty and DHAN efforts were successful in relieving more than one lakh families out of poverty. This was declared in this event and the members who moved out of poverty were honored which remained as the highlight of the event.

The event was presided over by Mr. Shanmugham, IAS, Chief Secretary, Finance, and Tamilnadu who delivered a scintillating speech, drawing his own experience on poverty. He said that in his early life he experienced how cruel is the hands of poverty, when good food was out of reach of his family, though they owned three acres of in. He felt glad that many have come out of the clutches of poverty through the efforts of poverty. But he shared that in Tamilnadu, inequality prevails in the extent of poverty across different districts. Kanyakumari district is better off, with only 10 % of the people below poverty line, while districts like Ariyalur, Perambalur and Dharmapuri have higher percentages of people in poverty even above 45 %. "This disparity should be removed" he said. "Financial support, health and educational services coupled with efficient delivery of such services with special attention to such backward districts, will help people to come out of poverty. I strongly believe that even a slight difference in approach of the existing government policies can do wonders in making Tamilnadu march ahead of others in reducing poverty. Inclusive development is possible only if agriculture and allied activities were given due focus in our policies and programs. Adequate infra structural facilities should be created in rural areas for agricultural growth. Though growth of a country is measured in GDP, the real growth is when a country says proudly that it has revealed considerable percentage of its people from poverty. I feel personally glad that DHAN Foundation was able to bring one lakh people out of poverty out of 10 lakh people it works with" Mr. Shanmugham added.



M.P. Vasimalai, the Executive Director of DHAN Foundation in his speech said that "DHAN Foundation has achieved the target of reaching its development works to 10 lakh poor families. We have used different type of tools and did family level study, which revealed that around one lakh families have come out of poverty because of our efforts, which brings immense satisfaction to us. We have planned to reach another five lakh families in the next five years.

DHAN Foundation knows very well that success is not possible without coordinating with relevant stake holders and hence we are constantly working with other stake holders so that we can increase the efficiency of our operation. Hitherto we have limited our works to tanks and cascades of tanks. Now we

have planned to renovate 2000 tanks under Gundar river basin with the support of Government and banks. We are also planning to integrate our efforts with Tamilnadu government and establish District level counseling centers for Poverty reduction, which will have a family based approach. We were able to reach more number of peoples by developing people leaders, who were selflessly involved in the process. More number of such leaders will be created and they will be made to lead the people institutions promoted by DHAN.

The members of the people institutions promoted by DHAN Foundation, who had their life changed from poverty to self-sustained living, shared their experiences and how they used the support of people institutions to come out of poverty. They also took a pledge to relieve others those who are clutches of poverty by providing desired support. Mrs.Shanthi Maduresan of DHAN Foundation explained in brief about the efforts of DHAN Foundation to guide people to come out of poverty.



Mrs.V.K.Padmavathi, CEO of Kalanjiam Foundation appreciated the poor people, whose support made possible the substantial growth of Kalanjiam movement in the past decade. Kalanjiam now operates with 245 people institutions promoted across different contexts viz Urban, Rural, Tribal and Coastal contexts. She also said that DHAN changed its strategy to involve more number of partners to reach out to poor across 12 states in the country. The fund support by the

people is very much commendable as they meet the cost of operations of the people institutions by themselves in most of the federations. The Senior program executive Mrs.Jothimani of AIR, Madurai spoke on the topic “ Poverty Reduction and Empowerment of women” and lauded the Kalanjiam women who are showing the way for others for making a positive change in their lives.

The DHAN Staffs who newly joined the institution to support its socially responsible activities took pledge to work for the noble cause of poverty reduction. Mrs.Gene Watson, from New Zealand who even being in her eighties, was providing her support to destitute children in DHAN-Karunai Illam was appreciated for her untiring efforts and for the book she wrote with social concern during the event .Ms. Annette Houtekamer, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager, ACHMEA, Netherlands was also lauded for her efforts to ensure micro insurance to poor.



A book “Handbook for Panchayat Raj and Governance” in Tamil written by G.Palanithurai, K.Vallinayagam, N.S.Chidambaram and K.Subramaniam was released during the event by Mr.Shanmugam, IAS, Chief Secretary, Finance, and Tamilnadu. This book was brought out with the support of Panchayat program of DHAN Foundation. This book was the first book published by Reflection Books, a publishing

unit promoted by DHAN which aims to capture the knowledge and experiences of grass root development works in all its books. SUHAM Trust, the Health arm of DHAN Foundation which is implementing various health programs and has promoted SUHAM Hospital, launched another initiative “SUHAM Institute of paramedical Sciences” which offers various nursing courses. The launch was done by Mrs. Annette Houtekamer. Mr.Rajapandian, CEO, SUHAM Trust, briefly explained progress of health program over the years. Another project “Vaanam Thoduvom” aimed at creating a platform for youth to exhibit their talent in short film making by providing technical support and also channelizing their efforts through proper media got launched. The morning session ended with the vote of thanks given by Mr.Gurunathan, CEO, and DHAN Vayalagam Foundation.

In the afternoon there was two separate dialogue sessions- one for people functionaries and other for professionals from various fields. In one session Dr.K.Ramasamy, Vice chancellor of Tamilnadu Agricultural University with rich academic experience and two post-doctoral degrees delivered a lecture on Agricultural Biodiversity and Agricultural prospects. He said India was blessed with diverse varieties of agricultural crops, which underpins agricultural productivity and hence responsible for agricultural sustainability. He said crop diversity is important for both functioning of ecological systems and functioning of vast array of ecosystem services. Agricultural biodiversity offers immense potential to meet the food requirements serving as a natural resource capital. The flow of services through the farmers, research institutions and scientists are the interest gains received through this capital. The sustainable management of these resources, however is the global concern as increasing population and global technological advancement are putting pressure on these plant genetic resources. He also narrated the efforts taken by the university to conserve these genetic resources and admitted that more crops are to be included in future. Currently gene banks exist for paddy, sugarcane, banana and few millets and it has to be extended to other crops including fruits and vegetables. As a future thrust, collaboration at local, national and international level is much needed to preserve the germplasm since all nations are interdependent on plant genetic resources. K.Ramasamy expressed is concern on decreasing involvement of youth in agriculture, which currently remains as a threat to entire sector and the urgent need to protect the village economy by providing suitable infra structural facilities to suit the local needs.



In another dialogue K.Palanisami, Principal researcher and Director, IWMI-Tata water policy research program presented on “Water resources management and Tank irrigation: challenges and opportunities”. He said the demand for water for both agricultural and domestic needs in Tamilnadu is 57725 Mcm whereas the supply is only 46450 Mcm, leaving us a shortage of 24 % in the current situation. The Major and Medium irrigation projects though incur a high cost can’t cater only to meet 15% of the annual water potential through the existing 79 reservoirs. Whereas minor irrigation projects by way of tanks ensures 21% of the annual water potential through 39000 tanks spread across the state. But he expressed that the biggest challenge is that the net irrigated



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area by tanks in Tamilnadu has declined by 46% in 2009 since 1960. The frequent failure of monsoons, lack of maintenance of tanks, existence of defunct tanks, encroachment and risk in tank fed agriculture has led to this decline. He also suggested some of the best bet options available to address this issue like assessing the actual tank irrigation potential in the state, mapping tanks (storage/filling/of WPA to C area), and prevention of tank encroachment, re-establishing tank chains and exploring possibilities of piped water supply, integrating tank and watershed programs with NREG. The audience responded well to the dialogue session by asking questions which was clarified by the guest speakers.

Another parallel dialogue on “Organic farming: Challenges and opportunities” was held in which farmers and people functionaries participated in large numbers. Mr.A.P.Azagarsami, Natural Moringa Nursery Farm, Pallapatti, Dindukal shared his experiences in natural farming and is research with Moringa to develop a high yielding variety. A constant struggle to breed a high yielding variety by crossing local breeds, resulted in developing a variety called PAVM



(Pallapatti Azagarsami Vallimalai Murugan) which he currently propagate in large numbers through air layering. This fetches him an income of around Rs.3 to Rs.6/ lakh every year. He encouraged the participants to do natural farming which will reduce cost of cultivation, retain the fertility of the soil and also enables to produce outputs free of pesticide residues. Mr.V.Anthonysamy, Progressive Organic farmer, Puliyanakudi, spoke about “Benefits of Organic farming” and explained how he could reap the benefits by practicing organic and natural farming in his own land. Mr.R.Vasavalingham, President of the Vayalaga Movement spoke about the Gandhian approach of the Vayalagam Institutions in water management. He narrated how vayalgams and its nested institutions were formed, their approach towards conservation of tanks, formation of farm ponds, planning and implementing tank renovation works with the support of the people and the resultant benefits they are enjoying at present as the fruits of their collective work.