

## More about the involvement of the HRF

Huguenin Rallapalli Foundation is based in the US and involved in supporting various development activities that are sustainable and community based. The objective of the Huguenin Rallapalli Foundation is to support causes that will benefit underprivileged segments of society - regardless of geography, gender, ethnicity, or religion. Mr Krishna Rallapalli and his wife Phillipine Rallapalli have set up this Foundation with their own funds. The focus of the foundation is on education, women's rights, and self-help projects geared toward helping communities improve their living conditions.

Mr.Das the India representative of the Foundation exchanged a Memorandum of Co operation with DHAN on the occasion of its 10<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day celebrations on October 2, 2006. He made a field visit to selected villages in Ramanathapuram district in Tamil Nadu to assess first hand the ground situation, the need for the Ooranis and the interest of the communities in safeguarding it for the future.

The Huguenin Ralapalli Foundation (HRF) has exchanged a Memorandum of Co-operation with DHAN Foundation on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> foundation day of DHAN resolving to work. Both of them will work together to solve the drinking water problems of communities through ooranis that are a sustainable solution with the involvement of the community. They would work together on areas of mutual interest which would benefit poor communities in the long term.



Mr. Das on the occasion on the 10th foundation Day Celebrations. *HRF is a foundation founded by Ralapalli Krishna and Philine in California. They have formed a trust helping various projects across India including bio diesel, school projects and water projects. This is the first time we are associating ourselves with DHAN Foundation. I have personally visited most of the projects for the drinking water purpose and I found them absolutely interesting and very exhilarating experience I had couple of weeks back.*

## HRF Field Visit: Reflections with Village Community



Mr. Das, Indian representative for HR Foundation made a visit to the Ooranis supported by HRFoundation at Mudukulathur block of Ramnad district. Before proceeding to field he participated in the General Body Meeting (GBM) of the Farmers Federation on 23 June 2007, The GBM is a gathering where the members representing from all the common interest group shaving memebership in the farmers federation meet to deliberate upon the progress and plan for the future works. The general body has

expressed their deep sense of acknowledgment for the support of HR Foundation for their support in reviving four Ooranis in the Block. Mr. Das mentioned in his address to the farmers that it is important to conserve the existing structures than creating a new structure.

## Neerkundram

Later he moved on to the field to visit the works in field the villagers at Neerkundram accorded a warm welcome to him with the traditional *arathi* and the divine *kulavi* sounds. The whole village was in a festive mood.



**Mr. Sagadevan**, The President of Neerkundram Vayalagam Committee explained about the work execution and its importance to the community.



**Mr. Sagadevan says** .....*The water in the Oorani is like Devamirtham to us*

(A scene in Neerkundram Village during the visit of HR Foundation)

*“.....there was an open well in my village which was the only source of drinking water in the village for quite a long time. Water level has gone down as the ground water level declined in our area gradually. In 2003, the well went completely dry leaving us in thirst and in search of water. The village was completely devoid of drinking water source during that time. We, especially women and children traveled to 5-6 Kms to bring drinking water. After repeated request and negotiation with government, the government has dug a bore well in our village. The water in the bore well was too much salty and not suitable for drinking. Ultimately the bore well has not rescued us from the water crisis. The government insisted a patta land from the village to construct a drinking water Oorani to fulfill our need. We were not able to afford a patta land to construct the Oorani; this was a nagging issue of our village. In this juncture the HR Foundation and DHAN Foundation extended a helping hand to us. Initially we were hesitant to take up the work since we were not confident of mobilizing our contribution for the project. As a result of the constant guidance and hand holding support of DHAN Foundation we gained the confidence and decided to take up the work. We were able to mobilize a contribution of Rs. 51,000 for the Oorani work.*

*With the support of Rs. 1, 87,500 from HR Foundation we started our work and successfully finished the earthwork. Thanks to god, immediately after the earth work we got a rain and our dream Oorani was filled with water. Usually in our area turbidity of water will be very high, whereas our Oorani water is very clean and ready to use for drinking. In earlier days our village was with bountiful supply of water and hence the*

*name Neerkundram. Its name became paradox as there was so severe scarcity of water especially for drinking in our village. Now with this oornai we are confident of resolving our water crisis and slowly regain our old glory of being a bountiful place with water to share with others as well.*

The people from five nearby villages are utilizing the water in Neerkundram Oorani. Thus the water level in the Oorani is reducing day by day and the villagers are expecting the water to stand only for about 20 more days. As they have limited water in the Oorani which is not sufficient to serve their need until they get a rain, we raised a question deliberately to test the practice of mutuality in villages.

*Why don't you charge something from the near by villages for using your Oorani water? In reply to the above question the villagers said, we never charged for drinking water. We know people charge for drinking water in towns where water availability is ensured. Even we (Villages in Ramanathapuram District) known for water scarcity we never thought of charging for drinking water. We have a custom of treating drinking water as community asset for which every one has equal rights to access. In case of scarcity in our villages we have to depend only on near by villages and we have no other alternatives, which is applicable to all. Before constructing this Oorani many time we approached the surrounding village in search of water. Now it is their time, around 6 villagers are taking water from our Oorani and we see it as an honor given by god. Here it is a nature's cycle thus mutual help is most important for survival itself.*

## **Athanakurichi**

Next he visited Athanakuruchi Oorani where people gave a warm welcome to Mr.Das. A village meeting was arranged for thanks giving for the support of HR Foundation and to unveil the marker for Oorani dedicated to the memory of the family members of the HRF.



The President of Athanakuruchi Oorani has expressed his whole hearted gratitude to HRF on behalf of the Vayalagam Committee of the Oorani work.

### **President of Athanakuruchi Oorani in the work spot**



*.....The moment he recollects the words of elders that No water - No world, he says even we learn to live without food for few days but no one have the technology of surviving without water. We know the value of water to survive here. Thus the contribution of HR Foundation is really a life saver to our village.*

## Ulaiyur

While visiting the Ulaiyur Oorani it was the women, the most suffered segment of water scarcity delightfully stated the way the Oorani transforms their life style.

The marker that would be placed on the oorani gate wall once fencing is fully complete.



**Smt. Tamil Selvi says** .....*the most benefited segment of this work is women in this village. We were struggling hard to bring water in time for cooking and other domestic needs. Now with this oorani anyone can fetch water at anytime for the home needs and we don't have to go far in search of water.*

## Nediyamanikkam



**Mr. Periyaswamy the Vayalagam leader of Nediyamanikkam Oorani says**

*“My village would have become deserted in the absence of this Oorani”*

*In the absence of construction of this Oorani, we would have not been able to continue to live here. Our village would have been vacated and all of us would have forced to migrate to near by villages or to town. By extending support to construct this Oorani the HR Foundation and DHAN Foundation have gave new lease of life to our village.*