

# Securing Water in Tank Cascades for Agricultural Livelihoods in Gundar basin, Tamil Nadu

September 15, 2011

*Madurai Symposium 2011*

## **The Seminar**

Madurai Symposium is a biennial event being organized at Madurai as a knowledge management platform for development practitioners to share their experiences on various development themes and to advance their collaboration with other institutions and public. The fifth Madurai Symposium 2011 scheduled to be organized during September 14-18, 2011 at Madurai. The focus of the Madurai Symposium 2011 is on integrating livelihoods development with various development interventions and sharing field experiences to address the global issues related to sustainable development. During the Symposium, it is proposed to conduct a seminar on “Securing Water in Tank Cascades for Agricultural Livelihoods in Gundar basin”.

## Background

Twenty first century witnesses and/or started experiencing the growing intensity of 'natural' events and variable weather is a clear sign of climate change, as weather scientists tell us. Increasing trend of very short but intense spells of rainfall is making fresh and usable water scarce in India. This insists about the necessity for increasing capital investments in local fresh water infrastructures and organising the unorganised around them with sustainable institutional mechanisms which ensures livelihoods and poverty reduction. And, that is what Vayalagam promoted by water theme collective of DHAN Foundation, a professional development organisation based at does and keeps on doing for the past one and half decades. For human development and sound economic growth, the proactive policies and strategies facilitating investment in people through sanitation, hygiene, education, climate adaptation, efficient agriculture and in sustainable management of the water resources remain the way ahead.

## Overview of Gundar Basin

Gundar basin originates from the rain shadow region of Westernghats and it spreads over 3000 hamlets in 5 districts namely Madurai, Ramnad, Sivagangai, Virudhunagar, and Tuticorin. Nearly 5 lakh families most of them marginal, landless and small farming families live here for centuries. The total area of the basin spreads about 5660 Sq.km. The basin receives 550 - 900 mm of rainfall. There are 2276 tanks and 43 anaicuts are there. Of which 43900 Ha land are irrigated by 511 PWD tanks and 27600 Ha land are irrigated by 1765 minor irrigation tanks come under the control of Panchayat union. Nearly 14388 Ha land are irrigated by the anaicuts. There are also 5500 ooranies. These ooranies are used both for drinking water and for domestic use.

## Challenges for Stabilising Agricultural Livelihoods

Declining trend in Agriculture based livelihoods is prevalent in this basin because of increasing area of fallow lands infested with Juliflora jungle, low productivity and low income, missing links of water ways, degeneration of tank system, water deficit for agriculture and other related issues. Most of the tanks in this basin are hydrologically linked as cascades. Tank cascade /watershed approach while doing the tank development works will give good results. Since from the establishing of separate

Gundar basin division by PWD (WRO) in the year 1996, various water resources development works like construction of the new anaicuts, new tanks construction, feeder channel clearance, and tank modernization are being implemented in this basin for the tank fed agricultural development. In addition to that various stakeholders like the DRDA, DWDA, NABARD, other line departments, agricultural research stations and NGOs are implementing the tank conservation programmes, watershed development programmes and other agricultural development activities for securing the livelihoods of the farming community in this basin. Social capital at grassroots such as civic bodies, SHG federations, tank farmers associations and other local level people institutions are working for the water resource conservation in the basin.

We, DHAN Vayalagam ( Tank) Foundation with the sponsorship from Hindustan Unilever Limited and National Bank For Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) facilitate effective rainwater harvesting in enhanced local water commons located in hydrologically linked chain of tanks in Gundar basin.

In the present scenario, it demands collective efforts of all the stake holders to address the real development issues of the basin and to accelerate the development process to achieve the livelihood security of the people in the Gundar basin. This seminar will act as the platform for sharing the successful experiences of the cascade development for impacting on the agricultural based livelihoods, efforts of the various stake holders for securing the agricultural based livelihoods in this basin and other related experiences. This seminar will help to discuss the various strategic and policy issues. This seminar will recommend the way forward for future action by all the stake holders.

## Objectives of the seminar

- ❖ To discuss the impact of the tank cascade development through community institution for stabilizing the agriculture.
- ❖ To build the perspectives among the stakeholders and practitioners on “Converged action for the livelihood development of the farming communities in Gundar basin”.
- ❖ To influence the policy at mainstream institutions for integrating the Concept

- ❖ To evolve suitable strategies and action plan for the collective action by various stakeholders like mainstream institutions, NGOs, Research institutions, Corporates and others for securing livelihoods of the people in Gundar basin.

## Participants

The expected participants for the seminar are development practitioners, stake holders such as mainstream institutions, bankers, NGO representatives, leading farmers, Academia and interested individuals who actively involve in implementation of different tank development and watershed development projects. The selected organizations would make lead paper presentation that would be followed by discussion and deliberations on the theme.

## Expected outcome

- ❖ Impact of tank conservation in stabilizing the agriculture.
- ❖ Model building through the Public Private Partnership model
- ❖ Shared understanding on the proposed subject.
- ❖ Developing action plan for mainstreaming the concept
- ❖ Develop policy leads for further discussion action through networks or collaborations

## Programme Schedule

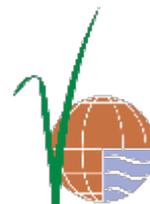
- 10.00 - Prayer and welcome
- 10.15 - Purpose and background of the seminar
- 10.30 - Opening address: Chairperson
- 10.45 - Lead paper presentation
- 11.15 - Discussion on lead paper findings
- 11.45 - Tea break
- 12.15 - Paper presentations by the practitioners
- 13.30 - Lunch break
- 14.30 - Sub group discussion
- 16.00 - Group presentation and synthesis
- 16.30 - Resolutions and concluding remarks

## Venue and Date of the Seminar

The seminar is planned to be organized in Thamukkam Grounds on 15th September 2011

## Registration and contact

Kindly confirm your participation and send your papers if any, along with your travel plan through email to:



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## **DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation, Madurai**

Tankfed Agriculture Development Programme was one of the thematic programmes of DHAN Foundation towards the purpose of reducing rural poverty. For up scaling the tank programme and for enriching the water related development interventions, DHAN Foundation promoted DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation (DVTF) which became operational with effect from October 2, 2006. The DVTF is striving for the conservation and development of small scale traditional water resources such as tanks, ponds, ooranies, supply channels etc in addition to the development of watersheds through people's participation. At present DVTF is working in 6 States with the support of Government, National and International Corporate Philanthropies and other funding agencies.

