



Madurai Symposium 2011

Advancing Development

towards Sustainable Livelihoods

14-18 September 2011



Bulletin

Day 1: 14 September 2011



Madurai Symposium 2011 Global Inaugural Ceremony

The global inaugural ceremony of the Madurai Symposium 2011 on *Advancing Development towards Sustainable Livelihoods* began with a prayer by Mr Vengaiyan and his team followed by a welcome address by Mrs A Umarani, the Director of Tata-Dhan Academy. The dignitaries present on the dais were Mr Sagayam, the Madurai District Collector; Prof. Venkiteswaran, the Director of Thiagaraja School of Management; Mr Natarajan, the Deputy General Manager, NABARD; and Mr M P Vasimalai, the Executive Director of DHAN Foundation.

Mrs A Umarani in her welcome address stated that DHAN Foundation organised the first Madurai Symposium in 2003 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Ford Foundation's development initiatives in India. The Madurai Symposium has since been organised as a thematic biennial event. *Advancing Development* was the theme of the first two Symposiums conducted in 2003 and 2005. The third Symposium focused on *Building Alliances for Advancing Development*, and the fourth was on *Advancing Development towards Achieving MDGs*. The present Madurai Symposium comprises workshops, seminars, and conventions; other features include an exhibition, development film festival, and heritage walk.

The Chief Guest, Mr Sagayam, mentioned that the prerequisite for the development of any country is to develop the people at the grassroots level. In India, a country where the majority of its population lives in villages and are involved in agriculture, there is a dire need to secure the life and livelihoods of its farming community. He added that the government has been implementing several programmes and schemes for the development of farmers. He highlighted the plight of farmers, the importance of

Events

- ✗ Inaugural Ceremony
- ✗ Tank Farmers Convention on Tank-based Livelihoods: Launching of Thirumangalam Vayalagam Federation for Tank-based Livelihoods
- ✗ People Convention on Impact of Financing Livelihoods
- ✗ Visioning and Future Search in People Institutions of RFDP
- ✗ Natural Resources Based Livelihoods Development: DVTF's Experiences of Implementing UPNRM Programme of NABARD
- ✗ Climate Change Adaptation for Sustainable Agriculture
- ✗ People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and Livelihoods

ensuring sustainable livelihoods, and the importance of conserving water resources. He stated that the deliberations in the Symposium would help to strengthen the livelihoods of the poor and improve their living standard.

Mr M P Vasimalai remarked in his inaugural address that experience sharing is the best way to share knowledge to foster development; the Madurai Symposium provides space for the people who are involved in promoting livelihoods, and those who may benefit from livelihoods advancement. He added that the Symposium will encourage deliberations in the areas of skill-building and promoting livelihood enterprises among poor communities.

Mr Venkiteswaran, during his special address, congratulated the initiatives of DHAN Foundation in organising the Madurai Symposium on the topics related to sustainable livelihoods especially from the perspective of achieving inclusive development. He stated that there has been a realisation in the government that pumping money and development schemes without enhancing the capacity of people is not going to help them.

During the event Thirumangalam Vayalagam Federation was launched, and its executive committee members took their oath. In facilitating this launching event, Mr Natarajan, the DGM, NABARD shared the contribution of NABARD in livelihood promotion and its sustainability

Exhibition Time: 4.00 p.m - 9.00 p.m.

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approach. He added that natural resource conservation is very important in the context of livelihoods sustainability and, hence, warrants equal focus.

The ceremony included brief speeches by Mrs V K Padmavathy, Mr A Gurunathan, Mr Singarayar, and Mr Krishnamurthi highlighting the livelihood approaches of each of their programmes and DHAN Foundation overall. They highlighted the contribution to poverty reduction through promotion of sustainable livelihoods.

The event was concluded with the experience sharing of people representatives. Mr Vasavalingam, the leader of the Tank Vayalagam Federation in Ramanathapuram district, shared his experience of how the people with the support of DHAN Vayalagam Federation, renovated tanks and oorani in their villages, assuring them of drinking and irrigation water and leading to agricultural development. Mrs Kokila, a leader of the Sellur Kalanjiam Federation, shared how she successfully enhanced her family's income by undergoing different courses in the Livelihood Institute for Functional Education programme promoted by DHAN Foundation.

Tank Farmers Convention on Tank-based Livelihoods: Launching of Thirumangalam Vayalagam Federation for Tank-based Livelihoods

The purpose of this convention is to discuss how to improve livelihoods in tankfed agriculture areas. The convention started with a prayer by Mr Perumalsamy. Mr A Suresh, DHAN Foundation, explained the importance of livelihood in tankfed regions, and described complementary livelihoods such as pottery, charcoal production, fish rearing and allied activities.

There are approximately 36,000 tanks in Tamil Nadu. Most of them suffer structural damages which are not addressed by farmers or the government; this results in declining production due to water shortages in the cropping season. Since the tank based agriculture supports the allied to farming activities, tanks should be seen as structures which belong to the whole village.

In his special address, Mr Mullai Nadavarasu delivered his message related to agriculture by sharing songs and a speech. His speech focused on the importance of tanks and tankfed agriculture, encroachment of tanks by government buildings, ground water scarcity, and ways to improve livelihoods through the collective action of the Vayalagams.

During the event, a book was released by the Vayalagam movement leaders describing the experiences in various locations and states.

The special address was followed by subgroup discussions on the topics of wage employment livelihood, agriculture based livelihood, and other allied activities.

Several recommendations were made including: a grievance day at the District Magistrate's office could be held to promote tank and agriculture based policy development; regular maintenance

fund should be given to all Panchayat union tanks by the government; tanks should be properly linked to form cascades; Panchayat union tank works should be sanctioned through MNREGS; further research can be done in tankfed and rainfed agriculture areas; and the government should not encroach in any water bodies, not even in the name of development.

Mr Velluchamy, Vayalagam Movement leader from Theni Vattam Vayalagam, gave the concluding address and shared some of the progress made in implementing the declarations made in earlier Symposiums, for instance, progress in raising funds from government and corporate sources.

People Convention on Impact of Financing Livelihoods

The people convention on Impact of Financing Livelihoods shared and consolidated the best practices in financing for livelihoods by SHGs and federations and identified potential areas for enhancing effectiveness of financing strategies and products. The event was organised by Kalanjiam federations from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka; around 375 Kalanjiam members participated.

The guests of the convention included Mrs. Chithra Ganapathy, Managing Director, Kadambovanam; Dr Rajkumari Jeevagan, Vazhai; and Mrs V K Padmavathy, CEO, Kalanjiam Foundation, Madurai.

Mrs Chithra Ganapathi, in her address mentioned that women should always have their own livelihood and savings and value addition in livelihood initiatives should be focused.

Dr Rajkumari Jeevagan in her address emphasised the following points: women have always been the important component of the workforce; each woman, by birth, is an entrepreneur; new innovation skills will come from hard work and practice; women have to play a parallel role in livelihood initiatives; and women need to grow along with the society.

Ms Vasanthamma, Director, Kuppam Kalanjia Samakhya shared many successful experiences of the group members growing from workers to petty shop owners and members with increased income levels.

Ms Munemma Kondamma of SKS was able to take an investment of Rs 5000 on milch animals and convert it to a business that earns Rs 7000 per month.

Ms Vanalaxmi, President of Kailasagilikal Samakhya, is now running a business and employs 10 people. She is able to provide



money to her son for doing an MBA, she has educated her two daughters up to degree and has gotten them married.

The following important points were discussed by the participants: there should be facilitation in branding and marketing; bank should give linkage to the groups based on the activities of members; daily loan from regularly repaying members of group; federations have to facilitate for marketing of members' product; and NRLM funds should be available to groups and members.

Visioning and Future Search in People Institutions of RFDP

DHAN Foundation's Rainfed Farming Development Programme is working with six states in seven districts in which people institutions have been promoted and development process on enabling sustainable rainfed farming is going on. This event focuses on bringing a future search process on planning development milestones towards sustainable rainfed farming.

Thirumangalam rainfed location and other locations have initiated various diverse activities such as microfinance, insurance (for life, crop, cattle), watershed development, tree sapling distribution, NWDPR project implementation, and bank linkage. These activities, however need to be scaled up, and more members need to graduate to the next level.

Mr Nihara shared that the Gangai Federation has earlier worked towards poverty alleviation through different stages of interventions from microfinance (savings and credit) to diversified products such as offering life and health insurance, promoting asset creation, and promoting primary school education. The future search process reveals ideas for working on poverty reduction, brings ownership to the members and encourages the expansion of activities to each and every poor person.

Mr S Singarayar, Programme Leader, DHAN Foundation, shared that the future search process takes place at various levels including the government, the family and people institutions. He added that the process should include the views of all members of the institution, which will bring ownership among them. The plan and actions taken on the process should be simple and easily understandable to all members. Moreover, the plan should be reviewed at short intervals and can change if needed.

At the end of the event, several resolutions were agreed upon including that expansion should occur in all locations with an optimum group size of 250 to 300 members; 80 percent of

lending should be focused on agriculture activities; 100 percent of members should be enrolled with life insurance; and existing activities such as land development, soil enrichment, and provision of land or land leasing opportunities for landless should be expanded.

Natural Resources Based Livelihoods Development: DVTF's Experiences of Implementing UPNRM Programme of NABARD

This seminar sought to disseminate the good practices of natural resources management (NRM) by people in achieving sustainable livelihoods. The delegates of the event included NABARD; DHAN Foundation Federations; Tamil Nadu Agricultural University; PWD, Madurai; Arul Anandar College; CIRHER; ASSEFA; TRUPA; IADF; SKECH Trust; and RFCC.

Chief Guest, Mr S Natarajan, DGM of NABARD, Madurai, remarked that the Umbrella Programme for Natural Resources Management (UPNRM) launched by NABARD enables people to conserve natural resources for their livelihoods and that NRM is the best way to achieve sustainability.

Special Guest Mr R Shankar Narayanan, AGM of NABARD, Madurai, described the UPNRM themes of orchard development, herbal cultivation, organic farming, and tank silt application. The UPNRM has been supporting sustainable NRM focused initiatives to improve the livelihoods of socially disadvantaged and marginalized sections of the population.

Mr N Venkatesan, Programme Leader, DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation (DVTF), shared DVTF's experiences in implementing the UPNRM programme. He described how the livelihoods of about 700 poor farmers have improved and how. Water loss has been reduced. About 500 families have resurrected their livelihoods through their own assets. Mr P Anvesh, Project Executive of DVTF, DHAN Foundation, presented case studies on tank silt application, land development and vegetable nurseries.

Mr U Vellaiyappan, Senior Project Executive of DHAN Foundation, presented the challenges in monitoring the utilisation of sanctioned loans. He insisted on people's participation for successful implementation of NRM schemes. He urged for bank finance, especially in land development, which has a greater livelihood potential.

It was discussed that revenue officials need to be cooperative with farmers for taking tank silt application in their field. Other recommendations included that financial institutions should come out with financial products to meet the needs of small and marginal farmers and banks should pilot products for natural resources development with flexible terms.

Climate Change Adaptation for Sustainable Agriculture Livelihoods

This workshop shared research findings and field experiences related to climate change. Participating organizations included Annamalai University, Tamil Nadu Agriculture University, Madurai-Agricultural College Research Institution, and Tata-Dhan Academy. The programme was chaired by Dr A Baskar, Professor and Head of Department of Soil Science and Agriculture Chemistry, PAJANCA, Karaikal, and included



presentations by Dr R M Kathiresan, Department of Agronomy, Faculty of Agriculture, Annamalai University; and Dr R Babu, Department of Agronomy, AC&RI, Madurai.

Dr A Baskar described how increased greenhouse gas emission leads to rising temperatures which can lead to floods and droughts, and can change monsoon patterns. Dr R Babu stressed that wetland and upland agriculture interventions are needed and that climate resilient farming system need to be developed to enhance livelihood security of farmers.

Dr R M Kathiresan explained that changing patterns of rainfall globally have led to the overwhelming increase of floods throughout the world. He also shared results of the National Agriculture Innovation Project (NAIP), which he felt supports agricultural livelihood. He described the integrated farming system (IFS) of rice, fish, and poultry, and described the types of interventions required in wetlands, uplands, and coastal agriculture lands.

Dr R Babu shared how rainfall patterns have been changing in the southern regions of Tamil Nadu. While there has been an increase in total rainfall, the distribution has been erratic. Because of the uncertainties, rainwater harvesting is increasingly important.

After the presentations, participants divided into subgroups for an interactive discussion session. At the end of the discussions, the panelists and participants shared that scientists should recommend suitable practices to improve agricultural productivity. They further suggested enlarging the earth's green coverage through tree plantations, and recommended that farming communities implement different strategies such as mixed cropping, intercropping, and organic farming to improve their situation. Finally, it was recommended that traditional practices which were adopted during flood, drought, and epidemic incidents need to be studied and documented; the best practices can be identified and disseminated as climate change adaptation strategies.

People Living with HIV (PLHIV) and Livelihoods

About 2.5 million people in India, many in their productive age, are HIV positive. For them, social stigma, discrimination, and loss of employment are among their major challenges. Efforts are being taken to reduce stigma and discrimination, but more interventions are needed to ensure livelihoods security for PLHIV.

The programme's guests included Dr E S Thangapandian, District Manager, District AIDS Prevention and Control Unit, Madurai; Mr Ramamurthy, Treasurer, Karnataka Network of Positive People; Mr Nagarajan, President, Tamil Nadu Network of Positive People; and Mr G Prakash, Population Services International.

Mr G Prakash, PSI, shared that almost half of India's PLHIV are in south Indian States, and most of them are in productive age. He urged that PLHIV should avail their entitlements by accessing government schemes. Other challenges include economic security, improving self-esteem, improved access to essential services, and enhanced wellbeing.

Mr Ramamurthy, KNP, reinforced that the confidence level of PLHIV should be developed and that prevention treatment, care, and support services need to be enhanced.

Mr Nagarajan, TNNP, explained how SHGs have been formed for PLHIV. These SHGs are involved in savings and credit activities, and intervene in the areas of educating the community about HIV/AIDS and in working against discrimination. The PLHIV networks follow a sustainable livelihoods approach with developing the human, financial, physical, natural and social capital of PLHIV.

The workshop participants reflected that even through PLHIV networks, many people fail to avail basic services. Networks in different states should make PLHIV aware of the government programmes for which they are eligible and ensure the network members have access to such programmes.

Participants reflected that this workshop provides a policy advocacy and facilitating environment so that livelihoods and employment opportunities can be generated for PLHIV. Further reflections included that PLHIV peer counseling programmes can be established and that the Government may create job resolutions for PLHIV or may frame suitable laws for regulating the termination of jobs of PLHIV.

Exhibition

DHAN Foundation has organised the *Handicrafts Exhibition and Sales* for all the five days of the Madurai Symposium 2011. It was inaugurated on 13th September 2011 at 5.00 pm by the Commissioner of Madurai Corporation, Mr. Natarajan. The exhibition has 70 stalls and exhibited products made by self-help group members of NGOs and Mahalir Thittam in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu. The stalls display products made of terogotta, bathik paintings, wooden works, herbal medicines, toys, garments, and sea-shells.

Cultural Events

The Kuttis Rajyam Group presented four cultural events on the first day of the Symposium: 'Thappattam' from Karur 'Psycho' Foundation; 'Karakaattam', a folk dance performed by 17 orphaned children who survived several psychological disorders; Kolattam, and Paraiyaattam.

Film Festival

Three films were screened: Promises (Khmer), by Mr Sebastien Balanger; Being Positive (English), by Mr Ishani K Dutta; and Veettu Kanakku (Tamil), by Mr AV Arun Prasath.