



# Madurai Symposium 2011

## Advancing Development

towards Sustainable Livelihoods

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**Bulletin**

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### Knowledge Brief

The Madurai Symposium is designed to be a platform through which different development stakeholders including community institutions, non-government organizations, civil societies, the Government, financial institutions, and academia convene to share their knowledge and experiences with the purpose of advancing development practice. The following brief highlights some of the key lessons learned during the third day of Madurai Symposium 2011.

#### Sustainable livelihoods models

Different livelihood models adopted by different institutions under the INAFI India network were shared. SKDRDP's experience in livelihood promotion brought two distinct models and approaches: farm-based labour sharing model in the context of agricultural labour shortage and organised livelihood system in system of rice intensification initiative under the aggregate model.

IDF's Sujeevana in Karnataka provides a rainfed intervention model with a financial inclusion initiative for farmers. All the joint liability groups of farmers and the women self-help groups together have promoted a federation which focuses on technology transfer and livestock farming.

PREM's livelihood intervention in the tribal part of Orissa includes the value addition through processing and collective marketing of fruits. GDS works on supplementing the seasonal employment of migrant workers by providing skill-based training and placement. NBJK provides livelihood for dalit youths with vocational programmes and placement.

The common problems faced by these institutions include the challenges in sustained financing from the banking system, lack of suitable products for innovative ways of financing livelihoods, and issues of marketing such as the lack of holding capacity until the market situation improves with better prices.

#### Small millets

Small millets are known for their rich nutritional value. They are drought resistant and tolerant to pests and diseases. They are grown under low fertile soils with a minimal cost of cultivation. Nowadays, the area under cultivation and the consumption of small millets has drastically reduced.

### Events

- ✘ People Convention on "Medicinal Plants for Sustainable Livelihoods"
- ✘ People Convention on "Panchayat Raj Institutions and Livelihoods through NREGP"
- ✘ National workshop on "Safeguarding Livelihood of poor through life insurance under 'Janshree Bima Yojana' scheme of LIC of India"
- ✘ Workshop on "Health Intermediation through Community centered behavioural change communication strategy"
- ✘ Workshop on Inland Fisheries and livelihoods
- ✘ Workshop on Tourism based livelihoods: Emerging Opportunities
- ✘ Seminar on "Sustainable Livelihoods - An Experience of Shree Kshethra Dharmasthala Rural Development Project (SKDRDP)"
- ✘ 3C Workshop on Small Millets, Conservation, Cultivation and Consumption

There is a need to create awareness among the people, revitalise the endangered varieties and promote the consumption practices to promote better health among people. Conservation and cultivation of small millets is required in a significant scale. There are initiatives and experiments in developing better processing technologies to reduce the drudgery and for higher grain recovery. There are different recipes available to promote consumption practices amongst people. There is a need for promoting awareness and demonstrations in culinary preparations. However there must be rigour in research on conservation and cultivation. All out efforts are required to bring more people to consume millets consumption even thru PDS supply so that there is match of demand and supply of small millets.

#### Inland fisheries

Categorization of rainfed water bodies based on water spread area and water stagnation period needs to be done. Based on this, the method and intensity of fish seed stocking has to be decided. The methods of fish rearing include extensive, semi-intensive and intensive fish rearing. There is a need for change from manure-based fish rearing to feed-based fish rearing for improving the fish production. The knowledge sharing on this will help in developing assured livelihood of fish rearing.

Advanced fingerlings with 3 to 5 inches size will result in full production within four months. Rearing such advanced fingerlings in most of the rainfed tanks and farm ponds helps in avoiding the failure due to shortfalls in water available period. These advanced fingerlings can be produced in farm ponds as a livelihood activity.

The inland fisheries promoted through tank associations provide additional nutritional supply. The practice of adopting phased harvest can help in ensuring additional nutritional supply for a longer period. Diversification in fishery activity is required. The scope for technological innovation in inland fisheries is high.

### **Rural tourism livelihoods**

The issues in the rural tourism projects include ensuring participation of the village community and synchronising the work done by various facilitators. Hence the involvement of all stakeholders (community, tourists, the government, industry, entrepreneurs, panchayat, travel clubs, academics, including the students) is important for the overall development of tourism-based livelihoods. The experience of the existing rural tourism identifies five areas such as traditional food, craft, green business, folk art and tourism-based micro-planning for increasing community involvement as well as ensuring benefits reaching to the poor communities.

The rural tourism cluster is an emerging concept in tourism development. The Tourism Ministry, Government of India, has allocated fund for developing rural tourism which has several segments like agriculture, craft, rural cultural programmes and other rural activities. The proposed rural tourism cluster scheme of the tourism ministry shall include Madurai, Tanjore, Sivagangai, and Tirunelveli regions. The People institutions can use this opportunity to promote community-based rural tourism.

### **Livelihoods through MGNREGA**

MGNREGA is a unique and important programme in the nation's history of rural development. It is a significant act which facilitates the "Right to Employment" to all citizens of India. The past six years of experience in the implementation of this project has significantly impacted livelihoods of the rural poor. Due to this programme, migration due to poverty (push factor) got reduced as nearly 20 crore households have gained employment rights.

The most important feature of this programme is its gender equity. Women have come out in large numbers and they have proved their contribution to household economics. In Tamil Nadu, out of the total workers benefiting from MGNREGA, 80% are women. In this perspective, it has contributed towards financial inclusion and women empowerment. To ensure effective implementation of this project, the attitude of "free wages" among the community has to be changed. The focus should be on creation of productive assets for the landless. Additional employment days have to be created for BPL families.

### **Medicinal plants**

Medicinal plant gathering and cultivation are two major livelihoods activities being practiced by the rural people in Tamil Nadu. The state government provides grant support for community nurseries, godowns, and construction of drying yards. There is a great opportunity for the SHGs to sustain the medicinal plant cultivation as they are eligible for support by the State/Central Government schemes of the horticulture department. There is huge fund allocation by the government under capacity building and exposure visits for the SHG members to promote the activity.

A suggestion was made by the people in the convention to facilitate obtaining the farmer identity card to avoid legal issues with the forest department regarding the collection of medicinal plants except endangered varieties. As there are chances of life risks there is a need for promoting suitable insurance products to cover losses. In the convention, a few home remedies on ailments were demonstrated, to promote practices among the people, which shall, in the long run, lead to a sustained demand for the medicinal plants.

### **Safeguarding livelihoods through life insurance**

One-third of Indians are poor but only 20 percent are covered under life insurance. LIC-JBY is the only life insurance scheme for the poor. As per the mortality rate of 2.5 persons/1000 and 1 person/7500, the fixed compensation is Rs 30,000 for natural death and Rs 75,000 for accidental death. But Rs. 75 premium is sufficient for providing for these claims. After a decade since introducing JBY, money value and consumer index should be considered.

Scope exists for increasing the benefit up to Rs. 50000 if the insurance company charges the current premium of Rs. 100. Claim ratio without and with government subsidy is 60 percent and 40 percent respectively. The death of a bread winner leads to income loss and liability of servicing loans, which results in reduced coping strategies. Life insurance plays a critical role of promoting livelihoods to bring back the family of the deceased to a better financial position.

### **Behavioural Change Communication**

Context-specific health intermediation strategies can result in effectiveness. The community owned and managed adivasi hospital; community-based health awareness research, treatment and education; involvement of sahiyas in village health resource centres; approaches for strengthening public systems; and mobilising community for utilisation of services were the key lessons which emerged as effective health intermediation strategies.

Health interventions using BCC strategies are at an early stage. The village health workers (health guides and sahiyas)

are the core staff for implementing community health interventions through BCC. Thus personal counselling proves to be an important BCC strategy. Peer educators are the best sources for lateral transmission of messages.

The relevance of collaborative approach between civil society organizations and mainstream health institutions combating health issues are to be based on a cascade approach. RCH emphasizing a "Bottom-up" approach through various strategies developed based on community needs proves to be very effective. Piloting and demonstration on a small-scale shall help in evolving a model which can be later scaled up.

### Reflections

Madurai Symposium is an interesting concept, where different people participate for development cause.

- Mr Vijayasekar Kalavakonda,  
Consultant, The World Bank

The Madurai Symposium looks like a family function - a social gathering of different development players.

- Dr Pankajam, Former Vice Chancellor,  
Gandhigram Rural Institute

### Convention on Medicinal Plants for Sustainable Livelihood

The purpose of the convention on medicinal plants for sustainable livelihood was to make medicinal plant gatherers aware of good collection practices for supplying good quality dried herbs, and to impart knowledge and marketing tips to medicinal plant cultivators. Over 200 medicinal plant gatherers and cultivators from Vatalagundu, Periyakulam, Theni, Bodi, Appan Thirupathi, Pulipatti, and Alanganallur, attended the convention.

Mr M P Vasimalai, ED, DHAN Foundation, shared the importance of selecting medicinal plants activities as a livelihood programme for the convention. The number of primary producer groups of medicinal plants should be increased and they should be involved in value addition with the technical guidance of Dr V Ganapathy. The income of the members can increase from Rs 15,000 to Rs 20,000 per year, and prices can be further enhanced by moon drying. Gatherers and cultivators should form a federation for Medicinal and Aromatic Plants(MAP).

Mr K Suresh described the best practices for sustainable harvest and consistent quality supply of medicinal plants. He also spoke of legal aspects related to the activity, and explained the requirements and process for manufacturing veterinary medicines.

Dr S Pradaban, Deputy Director, Horticulture Department, Chennai, explained about the different

schemes available in Tamil Nadu that promote the cultivation of medicinal plants. There are subsidies available for establishing nurseries, processing units, cultivation, and drying yards; in fact, there are 100% subsidies available for drying yards for people organizations if the work is done on government land or wastelands. He shared that training for MAP is being planned and support would be extended for exposure visits and capacity building.

Dr V Ganapathy, Director, Siddha and Herbal Research Institute, Thirunelveli, demonstrated some of the miracles of medicinal plants, showing how traditional medicinal products can be used to address common ailments. He described almost 50 remedies for human ailments that can be formulated from household grocery items. This generated high interest among participants, who keenly interacted with him during his presentation.

Mr P Vivekanandan, SEVA, Madurai, shared some additional ways in which medicinal plants can be used for treating common ailments, but this time, for animals. Thus, not only can medicinal plants provide cultivation and marketing livelihood opportunities; it can also secure other aspects of livelihoods such as providing effective low-cost treatment alternatives for livestock. Dr S Anandan, Associate Professor and Head, TNAU, Coimbatore, explained the scope for cultivating medicinal plants in Tamil Nadu. Dr R Aravindhan, Managing Director, Aravind Herbal Labs, Rajaplayam, reinforced many of the points made, and shared that he is willing to extend his cooperation to the members of primary producer groups in the preparation and use of some traditional medicinal products by themselves.



### 7th Development Film Festival

Three films were screened: The witness of Gumbaga (English) by Mr Yaba Badoe; Delhi bound for work (English, Oriya, Hindi & Kharia) by Ms Reena Kukreja; Ayyanar (Tamil) by Ms Pavithra.

### Heritage Walk

Thirty people participated in Heritage Walk from Thirumalai Naicker Mahal to Meenakshi Amman Temple.

### People Convention on "PRI and Livelihoods through MGNREGA"

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was enacted in 2005 to enhance livelihoods security by providing at least 100 days of wage employment to all below poverty line families. It is designed as a social safety net and has the potential to transform rural India into a more productive and equitable society. Despite uneven performance across the country, the Act has yielded encouraging results.

Six years have passed since the inception of MGNREGA, making this the right time to review the impact. This people's convention brought together Panchayat leaders, rural development practitioners, and development sector experts to review MGNREGA from different perspectives. The convention consolidated the experience of MGNREGA in the context of Tamil Nadu mainly on the following five dimensions: employment security; land and water conservation; poverty reduction; gender equity; and transparency and participation.

The programme started with a welcome address by Mr S Singarayar, Programme Leader, DHAN Foundation. He reflected on the 2003 Madurai Symposium during which DHAN's Working with Panchayats programme was seeded. He also spoke of gender-related issues, sharing that wages for physical work are generally on a differential scale.

"MGNREGA provides equal rights to livelihoods to the people" said Mr Vallinayagam, Additional Director (Retd.), Rural Development Department. He added that this is the only programme that has earned wide familiarity and good participation of the people in rural India. He shared that the Maharashtra state government enacted a similar Act in 1970 that ensured minimum wages and also ensured that women in rural India were able to get salaries at par with their male counterparts.

Mr K Selvaraj, Project Executive, DHAN Foundation, spoke on "labour oriented livelihood development" and shared some of the current issues with MGNREGA. For instance, he shared that there are no proper transparency systems in MGNREGA. Also, during the agriculture season, MGNREGA activities should not be conducted; if it is, it leads to a labour shortage problem in agricultural work.

Mr I Balu, Project Executive, DHAN Foundation, presented on the topic of "Infrastructure Development", sharing that 10% of funds should be allocated for maintenance of assets, additional staff should be appointed for monitoring the MGNREGA work, and the usage distribution should be in a transparent manner.

Mr Senthil, Programme Associate, DHAN Foundation, shared that transparency is essential for community based programmes and that social audit should be effectively implemented in MGNREGA. He added that wages should be distributed only through banks.

Participants of the convention divided into four sub-groups to discuss on the themes of transparency, livelihood

promotion, poverty reduction, and infrastructure development.

### National Workshop on Safeguarding Livelihoods for Poor through Life Insurance under Janshree Bima Yojana

Life risk is a prominent risk for the poor as the majority of the poor resort to wage employment in various sectors. Because very few poor households have life insurance, the death of the breadwinner pushes households into the trap of poverty. Janshree Bima Yojana (JBY) is the Central Government scheme for providing life insurance to the poor with low cost premium. This scheme is implemented by LIC of India. Though it provides good benefits to the poor, based on money value and needs during the life risk of the poor family, there should be an improvement in the benefit features of the scheme. The social security fund, from which this scheme is operated, may contribute additional benefits. However, despite the availability of this scheme, the claim ratio for JBY for primitive tribes is zero. The purpose of this national workshop is to have a discussion between implementers and beneficiaries to improve the scheme's benefits and access to primitive tribes. Participants at the National Workshop on Safeguarding Livelihoods of Poor through Life Insurance Under Janshree Bima Yojana Scheme represented the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty, Life Insurance Corporation of India, United India Insurance, and leaders and staff from DHAN Life Mutual locations.

Barely 20 percent of the population of India is covered by life insurance, and only a small fraction of that includes the poor. Mr Meenakshinathan, LIC, presented on the need for insurance to the poor and the features of JBY. Mr John, SERP, described how SERP works towards providing life insurance access to all the poor in Andhra Pradesh. They have set up community organizations and administration systems like Bima-Mitra in Mandal Samakya and a call centre at Zilla Parishad for servicing one crore poor under JBY and Aam Adhmi Bima Yojana (AABY). They made the practice of claim settlement within 30 days a non-negotiable, and have systems for providing Rs 5,000 for funeral expenses within 12 hours.



Mrs J Vijayabharathi, DHAN Foundation, shared that the insured claim ratio of DHAN Foundation is around 75 percent without Government subsidy for JBY; SERP has a claim ratio of around 60 percent for JBY (ABH) and AABY. Thus, there is a scope for improving benefits within the premium set. She also presented the study findings of the impact of life insurance in Kalanjiam families of Salem federations. Poor households incurred income loss at the time of death of a family member; they also had to service the loan liabilities. The study of Salem federation families revealed that half of the claim amount was used for loan settlement, and only then did they consider asset creation. What this means is that the insurance benefits provided to the poor is not sufficient for restoring the family to its earlier financial position.

Mr Piyush, DHAN Foundation, presented about the features of JBY for primitive tribes and the administration issues. Though tribal people are covered under their scheme by the Government, they are not aware of their benefits, and there have been no claims settled in the area. Nodal agencies and Panchayats do not show interest in providing claims to them.

### Health Intermediation through Community Centred Behavioural Change Communication

Community centered behavioural change communication (BCC) has been gaining recognition as an effective health communication and a multi-level tool for promoting and sustaining risk reducing behaviour in individuals and communities. This workshop, organized by Kalanjiam Foundation and Tamil Nadu State Health Society, was designed to share some recent BCC experiences.

Ms Camillus S Juliana, Kalanjiam Foundation, said that "because of higher expenditure on health care, poor people become indebted and cannot expand their activities, even if they have skill". She shared that the BCC approach, which takes more of a bottom-up approach, is an effective risk reducing communication tool. Mr R Rajapandian, Kalanjiam Foundation, explained the governing structure within Kalanjiams, and presented the BCC processes and strategies which need to be followed to achieve sustainability in any health programme.



Dr Nandha Kumar, ACCORD-ASHWINI, spoke of the need to focus on issues of health, nutrition, health awareness, and sickle-cell anaemia control projects for the adivasi community. He emphasised the establishment of a hospital owned and managed by the adivasis themselves for their development. Work is being done towards analysis, planning, implementation, and evaluation conducted through community organizations for ensuring the health, education, and economic development through tribal executive committees. In order to develop their livelihoods, tea saplings have been given to adivasis.

Ms Priya John, IFIG-CCHN, ICICI Foundation, said that there should be a focus on "the evaluation of the effectiveness of life-cycle-based community level interventions" in reducing the incidence of low birth weight and improving maternal, infant, and adolescent health. She shared the National Rural Health Mission's inclusive project of community mobilization and capacity building of village health committees; state-specific training modules assist with team recruitment; implementing supervisory structures; framing operational guidelines; and distributing effective "information, education, and communication" materials. She added that "This is an important milestone for the unique model of State/Civil-Society partnerships."

Mr Rabi Narayan Pathi, IFIG-CCHN, ICICI Foundation, said that in order to improve child health nutrition, strategies must be developed to address the gaps in the health system and the ICDS programme. Community based determinants of uptake must also be identified, and we must be careful to not erode traditional vocations when "integrating tribal communities with the emerging economic structures." The service delivery system must be strengthened, and communities need to be mobilized for the utilization of services.

The health of Indian women needs to be improved through research, said Dr Vijaya Srinivas, Public Health Research Institute of India, Mysore, particularly with identifying the different issues that emerge for women as they age. She shared that people need to be aware of low cost techniques for screening of cancer, which leads to better treatment and lower expenditures on health. She also described the importance of other services such as no-cost antenatal care clinics at the village level, HIV testing, and prevention and individual counselling for pregnant women and other target groups.

### Inland Fisheries and Livelihoods: Learning from Grassroots - Status, Potential and Challenges for Scaling Up

The fishery sector in India plays an important role in food production, nutritional security, employment and income especially from the export of fish and fishery products. India is the second largest producer of fish through aquaculture next to China. Both inland and marine aquaculture, which has been registering an annual growth



rate of over six percent, and fisheries have become important enterprises in both coastal and inland states. With this, the purpose of the workshop was to: showcase the experience of DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation (DVTF) in inland fisheries development and its incredible impact; and evolve suitable action plans for integrating the livelihood development with the theme of inland fisheries.

The workshop was organised by DVTF, Madurai. Around 65 delegates representing from St. Xavier College, Tirunelveli; District Fisheries Department, Madurai; Fisheries College and Research Institute, Tuticorin; AM Aqua Farm, Madurai; and Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Science, Tanjavur, participated in the workshop. The resource persons of the event include: Dr Sanjeeviraj, Professor (Retd.) Fisheries College, Tuticorin; Mr Ravichandran, Deputy Director of Fisheries, Madurai; and Dr Suresh, TANUVAS, Tanjavur.

Dr Sanjeeviraj mentioned that though the contribution of inland fisheries to the national GDP is remarkable, the success of the sector depends highly on varying monsoon and water resources. He emphasised on the importance of avoiding the wastage of the available water resources, but to use it for fish culture. He further added that the need of the hour is to provide market facilities for inland fisheries.

"There exists good opportunities for development of inland fisheries in Tamil Nadu" said Mr Ravichandran, Deputy Director of Fisheries, Madurai. He also pointed out the limitation that due to short water retention period, advanced techniques could not be followed.

Dr Suresh, TANUVAS, Tanjavur said that "Fish farming is more profitable than agriculture. A shift from conventional to advanced methods of fish culture is required". He expressed that TANUVAS will be happy to extend its support for providing appropriate technology and in capacity building related to inland fisheries.

It was discussed that there is a pressing need for capacity building of the community to scale up inland fisheries by utilising the existing water resources including tanks, village ponds, and farm ponds. Moreover, there is a great potential of making the sector sustainable through women self-help groups (SHGs). It was also discussed that inland fisheries could be a potential livelihood for tribal families. Farm

ponds need to be effectively used for fish rearing in rainfed areas to generate additional income for small and marginal farmers.

There is a greater role of suitable technologies in inland fishery, which enhance fish production and in turn increases the income of rural poor farmers. Besides, there should be decentralization of capacity building and promotion of institutional credit for the fish farmers. The potential of promoting ornamental fish culture as livelihood could be harnessed. There is a need of intensive fisheries extension services similar to agriculture extension services to promote this as a livelihood.

### Tourism based Livelihoods: Emerging Opportunity

"Tourism at the global level accommodates around four crore workers", said the Chief Guest of the seminar on Tourism Based Livelihoods, Mr Shyam Prakash Gupta. He added that the tourism sector has been endowed with the greater potential of employment. In this regard, the role of heritage sites is vital in promoting tourism. He mentioned the commendable supports of CII, Madurai in promoting tourism in and around the city. There are many emerging opportunities for generating livelihoods in tourism sites. This workshop was designed to sensitize participants on the need to sustain development of existing tourism-based livelihoods, clarify the roles of different stakeholders in promoting such livelihoods, and build partnerships among stakeholders.

Mr K P Bharathi, DHAN Foundation, spoke about organizing poor families around livelihoods which highlight regional cultural arts and crafts. He shared that globally, responsible tourism has been growing, and a survey revealed that village cultural innovation has been improving.

Dr Vasudevan in his address pointed out that tourism has touched everybody irrespective of socio-economic differences among people. In the arena of globalisation, the world became a village and travelling is no longer a big issue. He emphasised the crucial role of the domestic tourists in the development of the tourism sector and consequently in poverty reduction. Handicraft enterprises have a greater potential to flourish with the promotion of



rural tourism. Besides, the other types of tourism including agricultural tourism and eco-tourism have ample opportunity to grow.

Ms Chitra Ganapathy shared her experience of promoting handicrafts along with cultural tourism and ecosystem in Kadambavanam. She mentioned that language is not a constraint in ensuring hospitality to tourists. Moreover, cultural immersion gives happiness to tourists. Through this process, we not only contribute to the livelihoods of poor people, but also create an ambience through which people from different villages visit us to know our art forms and handicrafts.

Ms Umadevi in her address mentioned that tourism plays an important role in getting foreign exchange. Overall 740 million tourists come to India annually and India got 68th place in tourist arrival. She pointed out that "we need to protect heritage sites, artisans and crafts to ensure sustainable livelihoods".

During the workshop, several issues with Government rural tourism were identified including ensuring participation of the village community from the start, synthesizing the work done by different facilitators, the need for public-private community partnership, and the continuation of tourism activities beyond the project duration.

The need for support from mainstream financial institutions, and identifying meaningful roles for the village community in tourism activities were two main issues identified in private sector rural tourism ventures.

Livelihood options include tourism-based micro enterprises, revival of traditional occupations, and tourist hospitality arrangements. It was recommended that to decide what types of tourism activities to promote, we should try to imagine ourselves as tourists and design activities based on our expectation.

During the programme, Dr R Venkatraman and Dr Vethachallam inaugurated the website of Tourism for Development (<http://www.developmenttourism.in>).

### **Sustainable Livelihoods: An Experience of SKDRDP**

In the arena of microfinance, development interventions involved in promoting, supporting, and advancing the livelihoods of microfinance clients are largely from the SHG eco-system. The kind and the depth of intervention in livelihoods is diverse and broad, ranging from enabling financing livelihoods, linking with markets, guidance and counselling in the choices and scaling up of livelihoods, skill and capacity building for livelihoods, organising livelihood systems including supply and value chain, and supporting and strengthening enterprises. With this background, the workshop focuses on bringing out experiences on sustainable livelihoods by various development organisations; particularly, the experience of SKDRDP of Karnataka in livelihood was taken as a model.

It was also focused on the livelihood initiatives and models taken up by the INAFI partners and other development organisations especially to enable cross learning and bring out the relevant way forward.

The seminar was organised by INAFI India. The delegates from different development organisations including SKDRDP, Initiatives of Development Foundation (IDF), PREM, PEDO, GDS, NBJK, and Urmul Trust participated in the seminar. Mr M P Vasimalai, Executive Director of DHAN Foundation and Chairman of INAFI, India, encouraged the innovation among NGOs in evolving their own methodologies in development interventions.

Ms Manorama Bhat, Director, Centre for Rural Excellence, SKDRDP spoke of the importance of facilitating the farmers to develop five year plans for their farm, which helps them to have a vision and set goals for their livelihood development. She stated this from her experience with small and marginal rainfed farmers in Karnataka on agriculture and off-farm activities. She mentioned that SKDRDP promoted livelihood based SHGs and individual member wise farm plan for five years, which facilitates the livelihood condition of member farmers. In off-farm activities, they extensively focus on skill building of women in various areas such as tailoring, and soap and powder making.

Mr Srikanth from Initiatives for Development Foundation (IDF) shared about IDF's initiatives on promoting sustainable livelihoods in dry land and rainfed areas. Their approach in sustainable agriculture include fostering community seed bank, IFS, local production of organic inputs, SRI, watershed development, labour sharing, and exposure visits. They also promote animal husbandry and collective marketing. In non-farm activities, they focus on skill building such as computer, garment, and driving.

Mr Dwivedi, Executive Director, Grameen Development Services (GDS) focuses on CBDRR and livelihood aspects. The livelihood initiatives of GDS mainly concentrate on rainfed agriculture and livestock through the SHG federation model. They also promote micro enterprises at cluster (village) level called as Primary Producer Company (PPC) to mainstream livelihood initiatives. He mentioned that GDS integrates gender in livelihood activities.

### **Advancing Conservations, Cultivation and Consumption of Small Millets for Ensuring Food Security**

"Nutritionally amazing millets can effectively contribute to the health and nutrition of our country" said Dr Parvathi, who described the potential of small millets to mitigate diabetes, reduce obesity, and reduce the likelihoods of heart disease. They also have advantages from a farming perspective: they require less water for cultivation, less fertilizer use, are drought tolerant and adaptable, and can be grown under dryland conditions throughout the year.



Despite these advantages, millets cultivation and consumption has been declining. Also, there is a lack of processing facilities in the market.

In his lead presentation, Mr Karthikeyan, Rainfed Farming Development Programme (RFDP), DHAN Foundation, said that "It is well known that small millets are more nutritious than the more widely consumed cereals like rice and wheat, and also that the area cultivated under these crops and the consumption of these crops have come down drastically over the years." This is despite the knowledge that a large number of families in India lack dietary diversity and face under-nutrition issues like anemia. Keeping this in mind, the logical conclusion is to promote the large-scale consumption of small millets, but any organization taking this action faces the challenges of trying to change both production and consumption patterns.

As such, promoting small millets to address nutrition while sustaining livelihoods is a big challenge as it goes against current trends. New "outside the box" courses need to be chartered, building on earlier developments. In order to achieve these objectives, systematic advancements in conservation, cultivation, and consumption are essential.

The advancements can be on researching currently unaddressed issues; adapting research outcomes to local requirements; levelling the playing field for small millets over other competing crops; and creating a conducive policy environment for small millets cultivation.

Mr Vedyappan, Project Executive, DHAN Foundation, spoke on the finger millet cultivation practices of farmers in Anchetty. The indigenous knowledge and use of local farm machinery has been documented, and it was observed that use of these local machineries reduce labour and time inputs while increasing efficiency and output. Dr GSP Paril, Consulting Scientist, RFDP, DHAN Foundation, described the Guli method of ragi cultivation started in northern Karnataka. This method has been shown to be suitable in either irrigated or rainfed areas.

Dr Kiran, WASSAN, Hyderabad, described a World Bank funded pilot programme by Andhra Pradesh Drought Adaptive Initiative which tried to introduce millets in the public distribution system (PDS). It was found that acceptance by the younger generation is still an issue, but that reducing the price resulted in increased purchases in PDS shops.

Mr M N Dinesh Kumar, Earth 360, spoke on advances in the processing of small millets. He shared that the challenges ahead include developing techniques yielding more than 95 percent recovery, increase in the storability of small millets, and reducing the price of millet processing from Rs 10 per kilogram to 40 paise per kilogram, as in rice.

Ms Poomalai, CORONET FOOD Pvt Ltd, shared that CORONET food has developed over 500 varieties of millet food products, and said that it is necessary to brand and package processed millet foods in order to effectively market them.

