

# Soil and Water Conservation for a Sustainable Improvement of Local Agriculture and Living Conditions for Marginal Farmers 2013 - 2017

## Evaluation Report



**Implemented by**  
Resource Centre for Participatory Rural Development Studies (RCPDS)

**Funded by**  
Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)  
Kinder not hilfe (KNH)  
Germany



BMZ



Federal Ministry  
for Economic Cooperation  
and Development



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## 1.1. Project Background

'Soil and water conservation for a sustainable improvement of local agriculture and living conditions for marginal farmers' is a agriculture based livelihood development project for marginal farmer families, women headed families, and children including adolescent girls in selected locations in Viruthunagar district, Tamilnadu, India. The project covered 35 hamlets in nine *Panchyats* in Narikudi and Tiruchuli Blocks in the district, aimed to directly benefit 8,860 farming families with a population of 42,656 including 16,304 children.

The project, implemented by Resource Centre for Participatory Rural Development Studies (RCPDS), from 2013 to 2017, was funded by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Kindernothilfe (KNH), Germany. RCPDS, a development NGO registered in 2000, works on a variety of thematic programmes with a child centric approach. [www.rcpds.org](http://www.rcpds.org)

The overall objective of the project was to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of nine *Panchayats* by means of sustainable resource protection, a more environmentally responsible use of resources, diversification of sources of income, and provision of sanitation equipment.

**The key problems identified are** reduction of cultivation areas, lowered production level, and decreased income of farming families affecting their livelihood security. This also caused nutritional and health issues. Added to this, two other key issues identified through the survey were poor sanitation practices that affected the safety and security of adolescent girls in the area leading to abuse and sexual assaults in many cases and migration affecting the education of children. Irregular and failed monsoons and shortage of water for cultivation were considered as key problems. Moreover, the existing water catchment and management areas with harvesting and storage facilities for surface and rain water were silted as a result of erosion and poor maintenance.

**Project's overall objective:** Improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of nine *Panchayats* by means of sustainable resource protection, a more environmentally responsible use of resources, diversification of sources of income, and provision of sanitation equipment.

### Objectives:

- 1,500 farming families dependent on irrigated farming grow and harvest food crops on a regular basis.
- 4,000 farming families dependent on rain-fed farming grow food crops in ways that conserve water and land.
- 1,600 landless families and women-led households improve their regular income possibilities.
- 2,500 families improve their sanitation equipment and personal hygiene.
- The target communities have access to various state institutions and public services.

The key interventions developed to achieve these objectives included community organisation, capacity building, water shed development, creating access to credit, promoting organic cultivation practices, support for new income sources, and facilitating linkages.

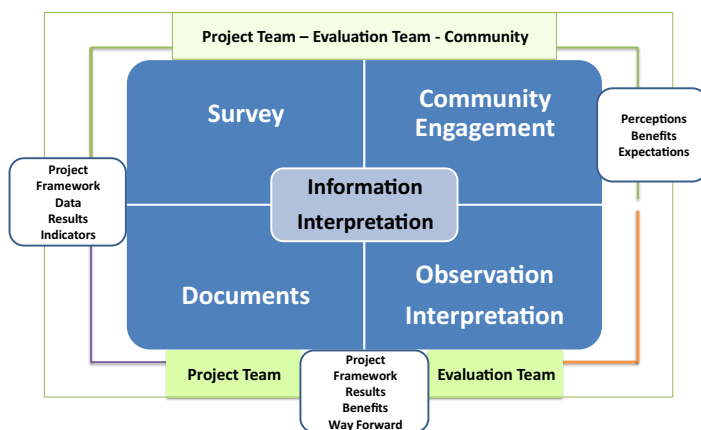
**End Programme Evaluation:** As the project phase offour years, from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2013, ends by 30th May 2017, a final evaluation was carried out to review the project outcome and its impact on the community and other stake holders.

The overall aim of this evaluation was to assess the agriculture based livlehood programme for the farmer families in the project area. This included the overall performance of the project with respect to achievement of its stated objectives, impacts created and its attribution, community ownership and sustainability, learning and good practices from the interventions, and to propose recommendations. Specifically, the evaluation process attempted to answer key evaluation questions as stated in the Terms of Reference (TOR), provide objectively verified findings, evidences, insights and conclusions, and refer findings and recommendations agreed upon from the midterm evaluation.

**Source of Information:** Information required for the evaluation was collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included, different segments of the target communities as explained in the project frame. The secondary sources consisted of project proposal with log frame and budget, baseline study report, progress reports, financial reports, project database/MIS, midterm evaluation report, and narrative reports.

**Methodology:** The methodology to collect information included study of documents, structured survey against the baseline findings and proposed indicators, focused group discussions, interviews, and observation of the evaluators. The survey was done by selecting a sample of 20% from the baseline respondents from all project locations and representing all sections of the target community. The community interaction processes were organized in five Panchyaths with two villages in each PanchyathThe project interventions and its results and the overall impact were reviewed against the evaluation questions of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. Overall the methodology include document and data review, a rapid field survey, focused group discussions, interviews, participatory community interactions, understanding stake holder perceptions, direct observations, and case study.

### Evaluation Framework



<b>Evaluation Process</b>	
TOR	Evaluation Proposal
<b>Study of Project Documents</b>	<b>Evaluation Plan and Schedule</b>
<b>Survey: Planning and Orientation</b>	
Survey	Field Visits-Community Meetings
Finance System review	Programme Team Discussion
Survey and Financial Reports	
<b>Project Results: Community Perception and Case Studies</b>	
Debriefing with Project Team	
<b>Draft Evaluation Report</b>	
Review	
<b>Final Report</b>	

**Report Format and Content:** The report attempts to explain the performance of the project within the project framework on issues, interventions, and impacts; provide a review of the project results against its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability; good practices, lessons, challenges, and a way forward. The report includes an executive summary; an overview of the project under evaluation; assessment of the project results and outcome; a review of the project outcome for relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability; innovations and good practices, learning and challenges, concluding comments, and a way forward.

## 1.2. Project Results

The project primarily envisaged to increase cultivation, promote water conservation, enhance income, improve sanitation, and establish linkages, as major outcomes.

### Key Survey Findings

1.1. Annual average irrigation water from lakes for the command farmers found to be 109 days with a range of 30 to 180 days;

1.2. Though 74% reported that cultivable land has not increased, 72% of the respondents (command farmers) reported that yield has been increased and 9% reported that neither increase nor decrease of yield;

2.1. 44% of the catchment farmers (against a target of 35%) apply any one/many of the following organic inputs (vermicompost, panchakavya, bio-pesticides, general wastes, and cattle wastes) to their lands and doing summer ploughing and field bunds as part of soil improving measures.

2.2. Average yield of crops seems to be increased in cases of groundnut and paddy; instead of black gram and red grams they started cultivating cotton, jowar, and pearl millets as they are more drought resistant crops.

2.3. Average cultivation cost of groundnut reduced significantly against baseline; whereas cost of paddy cultivation has increased by Rs. 1,000 against baseline but an average increased yield of 500 kilos.

2.4. 88% of catchment farmers use organic manures and 88% use goat waste for improving their crop yields and few of them collecting vandak and mudakku, where they use field or tank soil with high level of moisture.

3.5. *Average annual income of all beneficiaries has been doubled from baseline*

**Components of the Project Results:** In addition to the structured survey, the field visits and interactions with people provided insights to identify some key components of the project results. These results, identified directly from the field, leaving aside the project frame, are easily perceivable through community engagement and moreover very much visible in the villages to observe. The community perception on changes in their life is the key indicator to determine the validity of such project results, as these are the markers that people experience and endorse as change agents in their life.

The components emerged as key results of the interventions from the community perceptions are the promoted and strengthened community organisations (CBOs) like Interest Groups at the village level, Water Management Sangams at the regional intermediary/panchyath level; and the Watershed Management Committee at the central/apex level which manages a revolving fund. The Marumalarchy Producer Company (MMAPC) is another entity promoted for market linkages with community stake in the form of share holding. The Watershed Management Committee (WMC) and MMAPC are registered organisations.

The community and staff capacity was built through training programmes, exposure visits, and hands on practical experience on areas such as water resource management, livelihood, organic farming, and hygienic practices.

The community resources include the savings at the IG level, the revolving fund at the WMC level, the community contribution to water shed, toilet, and other infrastructure, and the shareholding contribution to the Producer Company. This also includes the financial support mobilised from government schemes.

1.1. Local resource			
No	Source and Operation	Type of fund	Amount
1	Interest groups	Savings	13,78,000
2	WMC	Revolving fund	61,09,900
3	Producer Company	Share capital	10,00,000
4	Farmer Families	Project contribution	18,81,000
5	Government	Availed from Schemes	82,70,000
<b>Total</b>			<b>1,86,38,900</b>

The local resource comprised the savings amount by members of the Interest Groups, the revolving fund, the construction to watersheds and toilets, and share holder contribution by the members of the Producer Company.

The project also helped to develop community infrastructure such as water sheds, toilets, and children eco learning centre facilities. The other important result is the established linkages with many mainstream organisations and services. 1,31,21,000

1.2. Project reach and results: Overview	
Blocks	2
Panchyaths	9
Villages	35
Farmer Families	8,860
Women headed families	1,600
Families with Children and Adolescent Girls	2,500
Interest groups	57
Interest group Members	846
Water Management Sangam	8
Water Management Sangam Leaders	160
Watershed Management committee	1
Watershed Management Committee Leaders	27
Watersheds	15
Toilets	375
Goat rearing	264
Crop Support	600
Panchkavya	250
Vermi-Compost	100
Joint farming	36
Seed bank	40
Capacity building participants	5,473
Local resource mobilised	1,86,38,900
Direct credit support Amount	66,41,500
Direct credit beneficiaries	1,250
Revolving fund	61,09,900
Revolving fund turnover	1,31,21,000
Revolving fund beneficiaries	1,160

### 1.3. Project Review

The project and its impact are reviewed against their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. The questions under each of these review areas are sourced from the survey results, available data, community perceptions, and observations.

**Impacts:** The key project outcome is sustainable water resource protection, environmentally responsible use of resources, diversification of sources of income, provision of sanitary facilities and facilitation of linkages. The planned interventions aimed to impact on the income of the target families by improving the water availability and water resource management practices, introducing effective cultivation practices specifically organic practices, promoting farm based livelihood activities, improving sanitation, health, and education. Specifically the interventions impacted on the community on the following areas.

- Awareness on water resource and better water resource management practices
- Awareness on sanitary practices and facilities
- Community based organisations and governance skills

- Managing a credit system through savings and a revolving fund
- Organic cultivation practices
- New farm based livelihood activities and business skills

**Relevance:** As the project was designed to bring changes in the specific areas that constrained the communities from improving their income and their living conditions the interventions are specific to these issues which make them relevant. The community and staff expressed that there was a good match between the community needs and the project interventions. “We were desperately looking for some support and when RCPDS came to us with a plan to renovate the lakes, we overwhelmingly welcomed and joined with them”. So there seems a strong element of relevance as this is evident from the high level of community participation and their grateful acknowledgment of the changes that they experienced after the project. “We were in need, realised our limitations, struggling to come out of it. When external help came exactly to fill the gap or to support exactly where we were looking for some help, we enthusiastically participated with lot of hope”.

The level of participation of the community is a key indicator to assess the relevance of the project interventions and strategies. As the project is designed as a strengthening process of what the people are already doing, there is a high level of ownership in all the villages visited and groups met. This is not participation but rather ownership because their life and livelihood are involved.

**Effectiveness:** Based on the progress reports available, and the feedback from the visits, most of the outcome and output are achieved through the planned activities. In most cases the activities generated the desired output and outcome with insignificant deviations.

The planned activities successfully achieved the core outcome of the programme for improved water resource management, increasing cultivation and production, diversification of income activities, and improving sanitary practices and facilities. Identified risks were managed well except that project pace was constrained by the low rainfall and drought conditions. As the drought condition for a farmer is an overwhelming issue, to some extent this made people mostly to discuss about water and related issues often overlooking the other issues related to credit and market which are also critical for farming. The effect of the project is visible in the villages and the communities could easily perceive the changes as ‘before’ and ‘after’ the project. Such tangible changes motivated them to further work collectively by identifying the key issues.

1.3. Barriers and Drivers	
Barriers	Drivers
Remote locations difficult to reach	Local animators an advantage
Low rainfall and drought conditions	Project addressed community needs
Difficult to mobilise men to form groups	Panchyath supported the programmes
Conflict with Microfinance operators	Good community participation
Transport for people and produce	Women leadership is very effective
Migration of people in some areas	Trainings, exposure, and visits
Difficulties with government departments	Revolving fund and credit
Non-participants in villages cause trouble	Visible and tangible benefits
	Promotion of CBOs

**Efficiency:** The efficiency was assessed based on the project management practices with systematic planning, monitoring mechanisms with regular periodic reviews, and alignment with finance and budget. The finance management and accounting practices are well established and all necessary systems are in place for accounting, budget control, cash flow planning, and monitoring. The financial management systems of the organisation are well maintained with all required policies and guidelines. There is a good budget control, as the project is implemented with annual, quarterly, and monthly work plans and review systems for monitoring against the plan. A few variations were observed but they were already reported to KNH Germany and necessary prior approvals have been received for those changes.

**Cost effectiveness:** According the proposal, the total budget for a period of four years , is € 5,13,333. So an amount of € 513333 is spent for 8,660 families. This means around € 59 is spent for a family for the total project period of four years. This is € 119.7 per year per family. This is 1.6 Euro per month. With an average family size of 4.8, this will come to around 42,656 people. This means around €.12 is spent for a person for four years which comes to three Euro per year per person.

Considering the returns for the community in terms of community infrastructure, community organisations, community resources, and community competency, and linkages this is overwhelmingly cost effective and value for the project money invested.

Moreover, the project has generated a local resource of Indian Rs. **1,86,38,900** including community contributions and funds directly availed from government schemes. This comes to an average Rs. 45 per month per family. The project money spent for a family for a month is Rs.108 (1.6 Euro) and the local resource generated by the project per month per family is Rs.45. This local resource generated through the project is above 48 percent of the project fund.

**Sustainability:** The elements of sustainability for enduring project outcomes are inherently built in most of the project results. This includes the CBOs, community credit systems, community competency, watersheds, and linkages. Almost all the project initiatives have recognition from the village communities, local government and other associated government departments. The WMC has gained a brand that will enable them to sustain. Equally, the Producer Company has also generated expectations and hope among the community and staff, and realisation of it much depends upon how it is taken forward from here.

**Innovations and good practices:** The community based approach of the project, local, regional, and central level community organisations and their functioning, creating path breakers to initiate new ventures and lead others to follow, good documentation and data base maintenance, high level of staff and community participation, priority for cost effective methods, participation of children are some of the identified good practices.

**The lessons and challenges include:** staff knowledge in agriculture and associated issues, learning on business skills, difficulty in reaching remote villages, the microfinance companies seeing the project as a threat, drought since the inception of the project, difficulty in realizing the seed bank concept and joint farming as expected, delay and conflicts with some government departments, and difficulty to maintain men groups, are some of the key challenges and learnings.

## 1.4. Concluding comments

Overall, the project has reached the number of beneficiaries and accomplished the envisaged outcome as committed in the project framework with insignificant variations. This is evident from the collected data and the perceptions of the community, which was further validated with the available project data and experiences of the project team through a participatory process

- Many project outcomes have the potential to continue in spite of some inherent limitations.
- One striking impact from the data, community perceptions, and observation is the change in the status of women. The project measures have helped the empowerment of women, especially, in the rural context.
- The programme, though comprehensive by covering all issues identified through the baseline, water gets more attention than the other problems, as it is the primary issue in farming.
- Though water is the primary issue with respect to the farmers in the target areas, there are other issues that emerged where interventions and external support are required for the community.
- There should be more locally potential off-farm livelihood options for communities to choose the best suited for them.
- The significant observation is that people have understood a change in the climate pattern where the rain pattern has changed. As the pattern of climate is changing, people find it difficult to predict seasons which is fundamental in traditional farming. This unpredictable climate changes cause crop failure and loss to farming communities.
- The project management and financial management aspects are worth mentioning as there is a clear planning and review process established in the organisation.
- The documentation processes and systems are well developed in the organisation that is reflected in the project. Database is well maintained, as at anytime any data is available with the team.
- The supportive leadership, participatory functioning, and transparent culture are very evident in the organisation that is reflected in the organisational practices and project management.

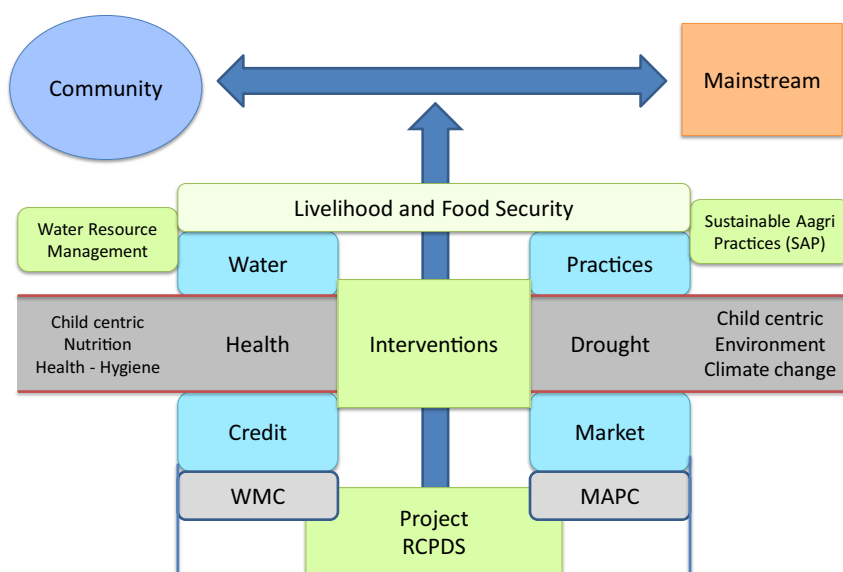
## 1.5. Way forward

The way forward proposes a plan to sustain the current project initiatives and also to plan for a future perspective and direction.

- It is advantageous to restructure the Interest groups as SHG and Farmers Clubs to qualify for linkage and mainstream benefits.
- WMC and MAPC to be further strengthened to serve the community by providing credit services and market access

- The key issues to be addressed are water, sustainable agriculture practices, access to credit and market. Health and drought emerged as two risks the community faced that impact on their livelihood security.
- The proposal to initiate and manage common facility centers with mainstream linkages to rent out equipment and implements
- A bridge arrangement for water was proposed to save crops that require one or two final spell of water. This will save crops from total loss to the farmers after investing.
- The WMC and MAPC could take up their roles and develop as self driven models by meeting expenses from their revenue. RCPDS to more concentrate on institution building and facilitating linkages to develop these community institutions.
- Looking beyond the project frame, the suggestion is to adopt a mainstreaming approach where the role of the implementing organisation is more of facilitating rather than providing.
- The option of integrating the rights approach with market approach could be explored as livelihood is the key human right issue and only in a policy friendly context, communities could develop.

### Mainstreaming Project Approach



The way forward focuses on two aspects. One, what will happen to the project results and how it could be taken forward in the future; and secondly how the approach and lessons could be integrated into the programming process of the organisation in future, and how it could benefit the wider development sector in general.

## 2.1. Project Background

**‘Soil and water conservation for a sustainable improvement of local agriculture and living conditions for marginal farmers’**, is an agriculture based livelihood development project for marginal farmer families, women headed families, and children including adolescent girls in selected locations in Viruthunagar district, Tamilnadu, India.

The project implemented by Resource Centre for Participatory Rural Development Studies (RCPDS), funded by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Kindernothilfe (KNH), Germany, covers 35 hamlets in nine *Panchyats* in Narikudi and Tiruchuli Blocks, Viruthunagar district. The project directly aimed to benefit 8860 farming families with a population of 42,656 including 16,304 children.

The overall objective of the project was to improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of nine *Panchayats* by means of sustainable resource protection, a more environmentally responsible use of resources, diversification of sources of income, and provision of sanitation equipment.

## 2.2. End Programme Evaluation

As the project phase of four years, from 1st May 2013, ends by 30th May 2017, a final evaluation was carried out by Pragma consultancy to review the project outcome and its impact on the Community and other stake holders.

Pragma Consultancy, a pool of development professionals providing services to client organisations for assessing performances, building capacities, and enabling to deliver on their development goals. PRAGMA works with the expertise of a team of development professionals. (Annexure III)

The overall aim of this evaluation was to assess the agriculture based livelihood programme for the farmer families in the project area. This included the overall performance of the project with respect to achievement of its stated objectives, impacts created and its attribution, community ownership and sustainability, learning and good practices from the interventions, and to propose recommendations. Specifically, the evaluation process attempted to answer key evaluation questions as stated in the Terms of Reference (TOR), provide objectively verified findings, evidences, insights and conclusions, and refer findings and recommendations agreed upon from the midterm evaluation.

This is done by assessing the outcome of the stated objectives and estimated achievement of project targets on the basis of the formulated indicators against their baseline values.

The key objectives of this final evaluation were to:

- Collect data from appropriate samples of beneficiaries to determine the outcome based on the indicators
- Assess the project achievements as per agreed plans, inputs, activities, results and outcomes as against end line targets
- Assess the impacts created among key target segments and its attribution to project, likelihood of sustainability of these impacts
- Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency of project implementation and level of ownership by project beneficiaries and other actors
- Propose recommendations based on evidences and insights

## 2.3. Source of Information

The evaluation covered both the programmatic and financial aspects of the projects including the local resource from the community and other external sources. Information required for the evaluation was collected from primary and secondary sources in order to assess the impact and review the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project outcome and to make appropriate recommendations. The primary sources included, different segments of the target communities as explained in the project frame, such as farmers dependent on irrigated farming, farmers in rain fed cultivation, women headed farming families, landless farmers, agricultural labourers and children including adolescent girls. This also included leaders of community organisations such as Interest Groups, Water Management Sangams, Water Management Committee, and the Producer Company.

2.1. Collection of Information from Community			
No	Panchyath	Village	Source
1	Agathakulam	Kuraiyaraivasithan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lake, Sluice, Canal, and Gully Check beneficiaries</li> <li>▪ Families who constructed toilets</li> <li>▪ Families involved in goat rearing, <i>vettiver</i> plantation, joint farming, vermi compost, <i>panchagavya</i>, organic enterprises, and tree nursery</li> <li>▪ Farmers in tree plantation, pond desilting, and introducing organic practices</li> <li>▪ Participants of training programmes and other capacity building measures</li> <li>▪ Children and adolescent girls</li> <li>▪ Members of Interest Groups, Water Management Sangams, Water Management Committee, Producer Company and CMCJ children.</li> </ul>
2		Muthaneri	
3	Pillayarnatham	Pillayarnatham	
4		T.Karisalkulam	
5	Nallukurichi	Puliyandarkottai	
6	Udayanampatti	Udayanampatti	
7	Kuchampatti	Nochikulam	

### The secondary sources comprised of project documents and reports:

- Project Proposal
- Baseline Survey Report
- Annual narrative Report 2013
- Annual Narrative Report 2014
- Annual Narrative Report 2015
- Midline Study Report

### Documents related to finance management:

- Finance Policy
- Staff Policy, including compensation and allowance details
- RCPDS Accounts structure
- Guidelines for Accounting System and Finance Management
- Consolidated Audit Statements
- List of prior Approvals from KNH
- Child Protection Policy
- Guidelines for contracting Personnel
- Procurements Guidelines

In addition, various documents which included, water shed studies, the list of beneficiaries of schemes, financial reports, and organisational policy documents were studied.

## 2.4. Methodology

The first section of the project evaluation assessed the project interventions and generated changes as envisaged in the project framework. This included assessing the project activities and the output, and impact against the agreed indicators. This is the quantitative side of the assessment based on the collected data directly from the beneficiary community through a survey. The findings of the survey were validated by the project data and progress reports.

The second section reviews the project processes, interventions, and impacts, and their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. The concluding part aimed to bring out what the project contributed to the community, livelihood context of the farmer families, the partner NGO and staff, and to the larger development sector. Besides, this part captured lessons and challenges; innovations and good practices; and way forward. Keeping this framework for the evaluation, the methodology to collect information included study of documents, structured survey against the baseline findings and proposed indicators, focused group discussions, interviews, and observation of the evaluators.

Specifically, the first part was done by collecting data through a structured rapid survey by selecting a sample population from all the nine Panchyaths with 20 percent of respondents of the base line survey. The baseline survey was done with 900 families. In this, 20 percent, 180 participant families, was selected with 20 families from each Panchyaths. The 20 in each Panchyath is also divided in to two villages, by selecting ten families from each village. The survey covered 18 villages in nine Panchayaths with ten from each village with a total of 180 families. For the total 8,860 homogenous population with a 10% error margin, the sample could be around 100 participants selected using random methods representing all the nine Panchyath clusters. The 180 from the sample of the baseline, provides ample scope to generate objective results. The survey result was also used to validate the data already generated by the project team as part of the data base. Specifically the first part included the compilation of available data, which was validated by the collected data through the rapid survey.

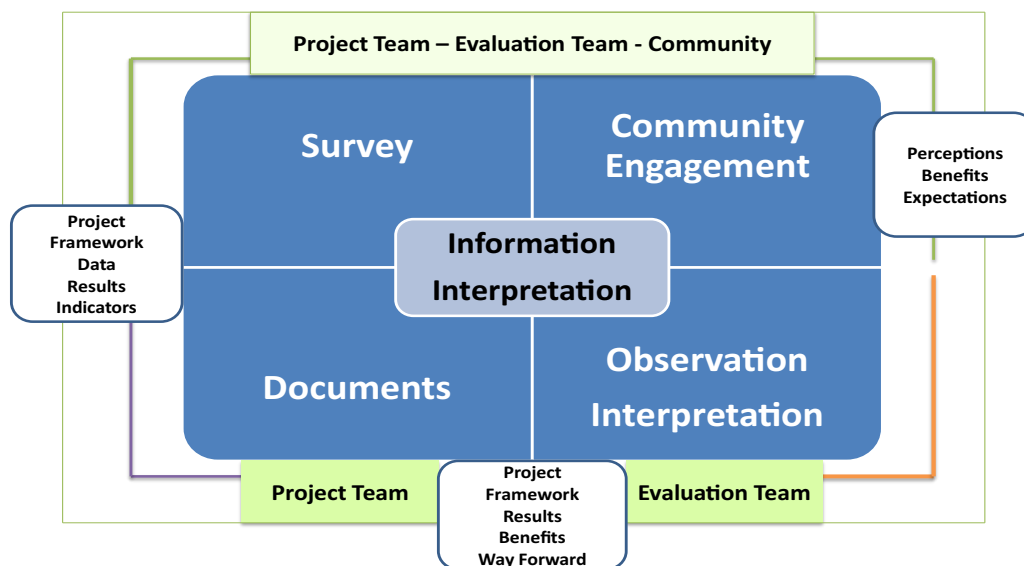
The second part reviewed the project documents and collected information through participatory approaches and methodologies with the engagement of the communities and other primary stakeholders. This was in the form of focused group discussions, and interviews with the community, staff, and other stake holders. People's perceptions and their experiences formed the basis for collecting key results of the project. This is based on how the community experienced the changes from the previous period to the current period, and how they perceive the benefits that brought changes in their life.

The community interaction processes were organised in five Panchyaths with two villages in each Panchyath. This included visiting a variety of project results in the villages and community organisations; and interacting with families and individuals representing all categories of farmer families, women, and children including adolescent girls. A few selected families and individuals representing the community and various benefits generated by the project were profiled as case studies to explain how changes happened at the individual, family, and community levels.

Overall the methodology included document and data review, a field survey, focused group discussions, interviews, participatory community interactions, understanding stake holder perceptions, direct observations, and case study.

Specifically, the observations, interpretations, and conclusions were drawn based on the available documents, accessible data, community perceptions as direct beneficiaries, understanding of the project team, and observations of the evaluators.

## Evaluation Framework



Evaluation Process	
TOR	Evaluation Proposal
Study of Project Documents	Evaluation Plan and Schedule
Survey: Planning and Orientation	
Survey	Field Visits-Community Meetings
Finance System review	Programme Team Discussion
Survey and Financial Reports	
Project Results: Community Perception and Case Studies	
Debriefing with Project Team	
Draft Evaluation Report	
Review	
Final Report	

## 2.5. Report Format and Content

The report attempts to explain the performance of the project within the project framework of issues, interventions, and impacts and provide a review of the project results against its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability; good practices, lessons, challenges, and a way forward. The report includes an executive summary; an overview of the project under evaluation; assessment of the project results and outcome; a review of the project outcome, innovations and good practices, learning and challenges, concluding comments, and a way forward.

## 2.6. Evaluation Team

The evaluation was carried out by Pragma Consultancy, a pool of development professionals providing services to client organisations for assessing performances, building capacities, and enabling to better deliver on their development goals. PRAGMA originates from the development field experience of more than two decades and works with a team of development professionals with diverse educational backgrounds and experience in varied thematic areas. [www.pragma.co.in](http://www.pragma.co.in)

D.T. Reji Chandra, Pragma Consultancy, Madurai, with more than 20 years of development project management and consultancy experience, was the lead consultant, responsible for the deliverables. Mr. A. Francis, practicing Chartered Accountant with specialization in development project audit and assessments; and Mr. B. Rajadurai, experienced in development projects with specialization in data management, MIS, and training assisted in the financial management aspects of the project and field survey respectively.

**‘Soil and water conservation for a sustainable improvement of local agriculture and living conditions for marginal farmers’**, is a agriculture based livelihood development project for marginal farmer families, women headed families, and children including adolescent girls in selected locations in Viruthunagar district, Tamilnadu, India.

The project is implemented by Resource Centre for Participatory Rural Development Studies (RCPDS), and funded by Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Kindernothilfe (KNH), Germany. The project period is from 1st May 2013 to 30th May 2017.

### 3.1. Project Implementing Organisation

Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies (RCPDS), registered in 2000 under Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, is a development NGO based in Madurai. RCPDS is committed to facilitate a conducive environment to enable the least and vulnerable, especially dalit, women and children, to participate in the development process. The guiding policies of RCPDS consider children, women, dalits, natural resource conservation, displacement, and prevention of HIV/AIDS as cross cutting and non-negotiable areas in all its interventions.

As a resource centre, the initial intervention was in the area of building participatory capacity of fellow NGOs, CBOs, and government extension departments. Natural resource conservation, food security, and dry land development are key focus areas for the organisation, as RCPD has expertise and experience in interventions on natural resource management. The core technical expertise of the organisation is in ensuring child rights and approaches.

RCPD promotes watersheds; serves as an affiliate of University of Sussex, UK on participatory methodologies, promotes child led learning programmes, and works on areas of capacity building, research, and food security programmes. Currently RCPD works in Viruthunagar district focussing on land management and food security for children. RCPDS is officially linked to International resource organisations such as Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex and IIED, London as associate fellow on participatory approaches.

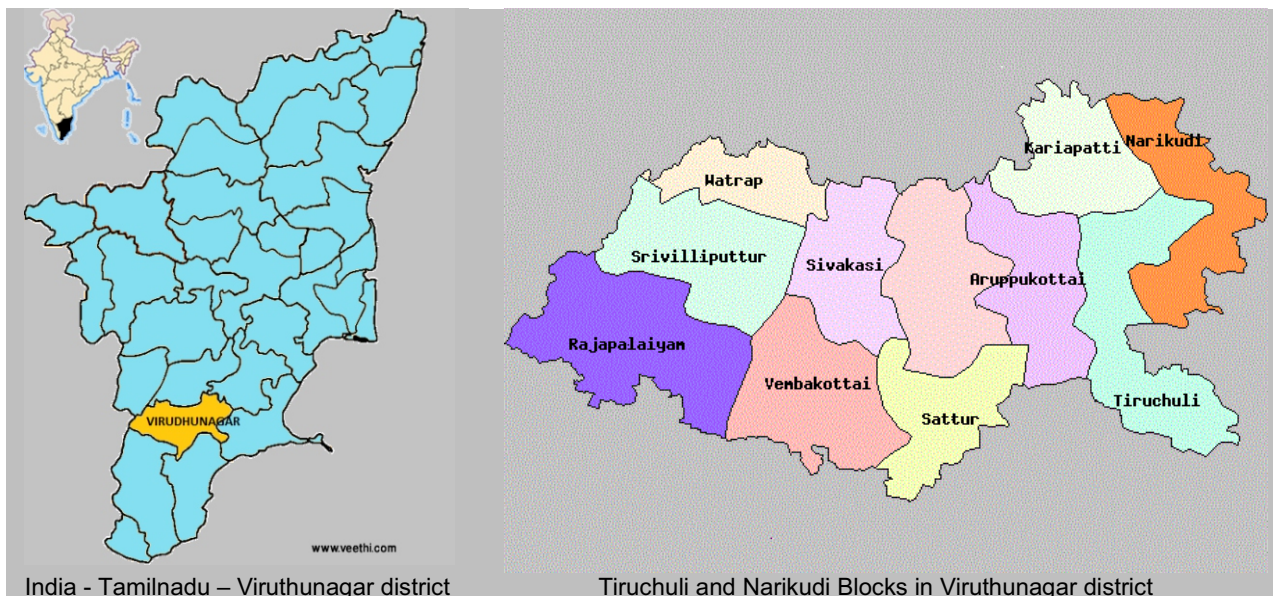
The extension work of RCPDS is with communities and local CBOs, on child protection and building capacity of children from dalit families, especially girl children and physically challenged by providing educational assistance, health support, creating community managed higher education funds, provision of protected water supply, and sanitation. Alongside, RCPD concentrates on institution building at the community levels aimed at sustainability of the initiatives. RCPDS also focuses on migrant population from Virudunagar district to Madurai town dwelling in city slums, since they are assoiated with the village based work. The thrust is on children vulnerable to rights violations and deprived of basic rights and privileges as other children.

RCPDS has a professional staff team with experience in development project management, including child centric interventions, under the leadership of Dr. John Devavaram, as Director, who has wider experience in the development sector. He is associated with the University of

Sussex, specifically with Prof. Robert Chambers, the author of PRA methods, and worked in a Finnish bi-lateral funding project in East Africa on decentralisation process of local governments and peoples participation in local government development measures. [www.rcpds.org](http://www.rcpds.org)

### 3.2. Project Location

The project was implemented in selected villages in Tiruchuli and Narikudi blocks, Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu, (southwest) India. Specifically the project covered 8,860 families from 35 hamlets in nine *Panchyats* in two Blocks of Viruthunagar district, Tamilnadu.



3.1. Project location		
Two Blocks	Nine Panchyaths	35 Hamlets
Tiruchuli	Sennelkudi	2
	Udayanampatti	3
	Kuchampattipudur	5
Narikudi	Agathakulam	7
	Pillaiyarnatham	3
	Nallukuruchi	6
	Nathakulam	3
	Illupaiyur	3
	Veerachozan	3

People in these areas depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood. The selected *Panchayats* are classified as underdeveloped by the Government, as the food production levels are low, in particular in the areas where the project is located. Agricultural productivity is influenced by many factors such as climate, irrigation, soil properties and knowledge about agricultural practices and techniques. One reason for the low productivity was erratic rainfalls of around 640mm per year, normally distributed unevenly over the monsoon season from October to January. Crops fail due to irregular rainfall patterns or drought. The soil in the two blocks are of poor productivity mainly of black loamy soil (*Karisal*), on which cotton, pulses, oilseeds and millet can be grown, which do not require much irrigation. Paddy is grown only where tank or well irrigation is available.

Despite legal provisions for the use of common property resources like surface and rain water, certain groups of people are denied access. The growing local sugar industry favours mono cropping on land earlier used for food crops. As a result, less food is produced, in particular by small and marginal farmers.

The literacy percentage is low in the project area, far below the Indian average. Health services in the communities and sanitation equipment in the families are also of poor quality and insufficient.

A baseline survey taken in the nine *Panchayaths* provided information on the key problems in the location and also the socio-economic status of the communities, who live in these areas.

### 3.3. Key Problems

The area is primarily dependent on agriculture for livelihood. Majority of the cultivation areas rely on rain water. Even in the case of tank or underground water irrigation, rain is the source for recharge. Due to irregular and failed monsoons, shortage of water for cultivation became a dominant problem in all the nine *Panchayats*. Moreover, the existing water catchment and management areas with harvesting and storage facilities for surface and rain water were silted as a result of erosion and poor maintenance. These water bodies were covered by bushes and in dire need of maintenance. The responsibility for maintaining the water infrastructure is with the local government departments (Panchayati Raj Institutions). The functioning of these institutions could not address the water resource availability or its management. Besides such governance issues, the available surface and rain water are also not used effectively and efficiently by communities, as people were not aware of efficient ways of water resource management.

These conditions resulted in reduction of cultivation areas, lowered the production level, and also decreased the income of farming families affecting their livelihood security. This also caused nutritional and health issues. Added to this, two other key issues identified through the survey were poor sanitation practices that affected the safety and security of adolescent girls in the area leading to abuse and sexual assaults in many cases; and migration affecting the education of children. As families migrate to urban centres to look for work during dry seasons, some of the children are also forced to work under hazardous circumstances or deprived from going to school. Marginal and poor families could not feed their children adequately, which affected their physical and mental development.

Even if various government services and programmes are available for marginal families in rural areas, in theory at least, they cannot make use of them, because in reality they are often deprived from accessing them – perhaps it is because they lack information or lack competences to claim their rights.

Specifically the study identified the following issues that required interventions.

- Shortage of water for farming due to erosion and bad maintenance of water bodies
- Poor maintenance of water infrastructure by the local government departments (Panchayati Raj Institutions) due to efficiency and resource limitations
- Lack of Community awareness on responsible use of water resources. Traditional practices are replaced by unethical practices where the poor and marginal farmers are deprived.
- Less land available for traditional food crops
- Part of the land remains fallow and not used as a result of erosion
- Use of fertilisers increased the cost affecting income
- A section of people do not own land for farming
- Malnutrition and under-nutrition as poor people cannot afford to pay the high food prices, especially during the dry seasons
- People's health status affected due to poor nutritional status resulting in lower productivity and poor living conditions.
- Poor sanitary facilities and practices affecting health, safety and security (snake and insect bite, abuses and assault on women)
- Migration happens during dry seasons
- Children dropping out of school during migration
- Lack of awareness and access to existing government schemes

### **3.4. Community**

The identified families in the project locations belong to marginal and small farmers and agricultural workers. The famers are categorised as who cultivate in own land, cultivate in leased lands, cultivate in other people's land, landless farmers, and women headed families. In this, one group of farmers is completely dependent on rain, known as rain-fed cultivation and the other group depends on irrigation systems both surface and ground water sources. But both the groups directly or indirectly depend on rain for cultivation. Among the landless families many work as agriculture labourers or work in other economic sectors.

This project envisaged to benefit at least 8,860 families directly, with around 42,656 people, including about 16,304 children. The identification of families was done together with the

Panchayats and the existing community-based organisations (CBOs), taking into account, among other things, the size of land holding and/or size of leased land, access so far to common property resources and income, as defined in the national poverty line (less than INR 24,000 per year, equivalent to some EUR 358 per year) and unused land in their near surroundings.

Preference was given to 265 women-led households and 100 families with disabled children. Of these 8,860 families, 1,500 live on farming that is dependent on irrigation systems, 4,000 families live on rain-fed farming, and 1,600 families own no land and/or are headed by women.

The community includes the following categories.

- Farmers who earn their living on their own land
- Farmers who earn their living on leased land in the form of peasant farming
- Landless farmers cultivating on other people's land
- Labourers in agriculture and other economic sectors
- 250 women led families
- 100 families with disabled children
- 1,500 irrigation farming families
- 4,000 rain fed cultivation
- 1,600 landless families
- Existing community-based organisations (CBOs)

The study also revealed that the income of the farmers have gone down above 65 percent in comparison with the income they generated five years ago, with minor variations between areas and the type of cultivation. The members of landless families earn their living as day labourers, either in farming or in other sectors like charcoal production, construction, brick manufacturing or textile industry. They are especially vulnerable to all sudden shocks and changes, because they do not have permanent employment contracts.

The indirect beneficiaries are the inhabitants of the two blocks of Tiruchuli and Narikudi, with a population of around 141,000 people.

### **3.5. Development goal**

Food security and poverty reduction by improving soil, water and land management, by protecting livelihoods and by strengthening women's and children's rights in Virudunagar District, Tamil Nadu

#### **Overall objective:**

Improving the living conditions of the inhabitants of nine *Panchayats* by means of sustainable resource protection, a more environmentally responsible use of resources, diversification of sources of income, and provision of sanitation equipment

## Objectives

- 1,500 farming families dependent on irrigated farming grow and harvest food crops on a regular basis.
- 4,000 farming families dependent on rain-fed farming grow food crops in ways that conserve water and land.
- 1,600 landless families and women-led households improve their regular income possibilities.
- 2,500 families improve their sanitation equipment and personal hygiene.
- The target communities have access to various state institutions and public services.

### 3.6. Interventions and key activities

The project activities are designed to achieve the five objectives. The strategy was to address the identified problems in the project area and improve the living conditions of the direct beneficiaries. The families would learn new strategies and methods for diversifying their sources of income and make better use of the available resources. Children and adults also get the opportunity to learn the methods of integrated farming on organic demonstration plots. The following key activities formed part of the project intervention.

- Slope/topography study/watershed mapping
- De-silting of lakes, village ponds, sluices, waterways and feeder channels
- Foundation, training and follow-up of the WMCs
- Soil and water conservation activities to prevent erosion
- Establishment and maintenance of seed banks
- Introduction of organic farming practices
- Training in organic farming and soil and water conservation
- Promoting integrated farming by involving children and youth and improving organic demonstration plots
- Livelihood promotion through agricultural production on collectively used land
- Livelihood promotion through animal husbandry
- Livelihood promotion through socially responsible entrepreneurship related to farming
- Building toilets for households
- Awareness building on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation
- Tree planting and anti-pollution campaign
- Trainings for CBOs in good governance
- Networking of CBOs with banks, government agencies and civil-society representatives

Overall, the project envisaged improving the income of farmers, sanitation facilities for and practices of families, specifically adolescent girls, and education opportunities of migrant children.

The project deliverables include a set of results defined within the project framework at output, outcome, and impact levels. This is structured as five objectives with indicators using a combination of numbers and percentages against the baseline data. These outputs of the project and the progress are also included in the periodic narrative reports and midterm evaluation.

As referred, the project primarily envisaged to promote water conservation, increase cultivation, enhance income, improve sanitation, and establish linkages as major outcomes. The aim was to reach 8,660 families that include 1,500 farming families dependent on irrigated farming, 4,000 farming families dependent on rain-fed cultivation, 1,600 landless families and women-led households, 2500 families with children including adolescent girls. This was to be achieved through a set of interventions that aimed at areas related to water resources, cultivation practices, credit facilities, sanitation, and linkages.

#### 4.1. Survey Findings

The key results were collected from the survey. The baseline survey in 2013 covered 900 families as the sample from the 8,660 beneficiary families, which is 10 percent of the total. The project end survey selected a sample of 20 percent of the baseline sample by covering all Panchyaths and also representing all categories of the beneficiary families which included 54 command farmers, 72 catchment farmers and 54 landless and women headed families, with a total of 180 families wherein health and sanitation, children, adolescent girls, and linkages cuts across all 180 families.

The findings of the survey are given within the project framework against the baseline, proposed and achieved. The context of the baseline in 2013 has changed much at the time of the survey. There had been a gradual change in rain fall pattern, after the baseline and the current year is severely affected by drought which is prevalent all through the state of Tamilnadu. Besides, respondent farmers have stopped cultivating certain crops which were earlier included in the baseline; instead they have introduced certain new crops as well. The survey results were validated with the available documents and also community perceptions and experiences on how they observe changes as a result of the project interventions.

**Table: 4.1. Objective: 1**

1,500 farming families dependent on irrigated farming grow and harvest food crops on a regular basis				
No.	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Average available Irrigation water from tanks for a maximum period	60 to 120 days	Minimum 120 days	109* days
2	Farming families engaged in irrigated farming have a successful harvest per year.	30 %	60 %	72%
3	User-based water management committees	Nil	8 Committees	100 %

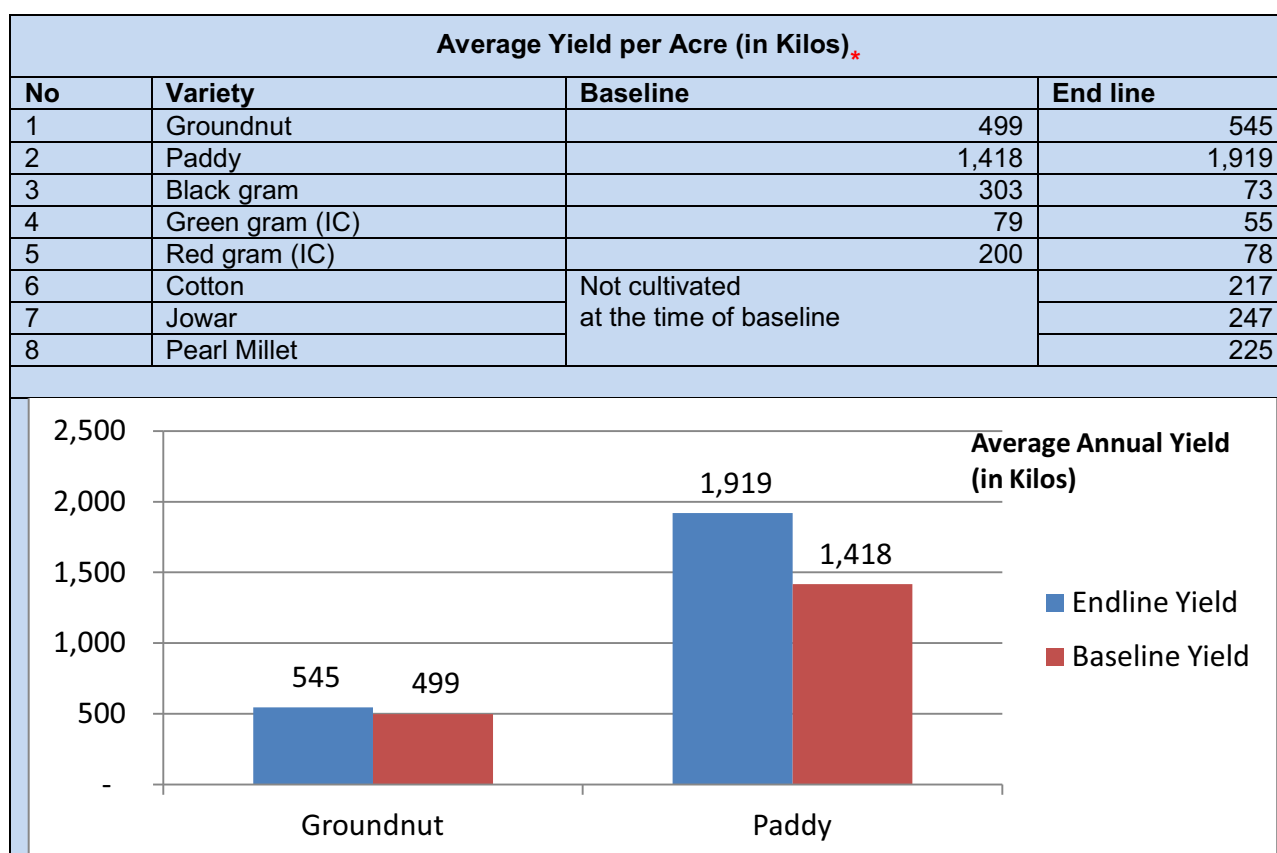
\* 1.1. Annual average irrigation water from tanks for the command farmers found to be 109 days with a range of 30 to 180 days; this is in spite of the low rainfall compared to the baseline time. (Rainfall is 38.35 mm in 2016, compared to the previous three year average of 59.5mm. The current year it is declared as drought)

1.2. Though 74% reported that cultivable land has not increased, 72% of the respondents (command farmers) reported that yield has increased and 9% reported that neither increase nor decrease of yield.

**Table: 4.2. Objective: 2**

4,000 farming families dependent on rain-fed farming cultivate in ways that conserve water and land.				
No	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Farmers engage in organic farming and/or measures to protect soil and water	13 %	35 %	44%*
2	Average yield in kg per acre (some 4,047m <sup>2</sup> ) for the primary crops	Table A-1	30 % increase	Table A1 (34%)
3	Cost of production of major crops	Table B-1	40 % reduced 25 % expense	Table B1 (4%)
4	Farmers use techniques for improving crop yields and water use.	13 %	45 %	47%

**4.3. Table A – 1**



4.4. Table B – 1

Average Cost*			
No	Variety	Baseline Cost	End line Cost
1	Groundnut	13,285	12,716
2	Paddy	11,938	*1,2811
3	Black gram	7,113	4,031
4	Green gram (IC)	1,788	3,140
5	Red gram (IC)	1,438	1,389
6	Cotton	Not mentioned in baseline	9,621
7	Jowar		7,000
8	Pearl Millet		4,500

Crop	Endline Cost	Baseline Cost
Groundnut	12,716	13,285
Paddy	12,811	11,938

\* 2.1. 44% of the catchment farmers apply any one/many of the following organic inputs vermicompost, panchakavya, bio-pesticides, organic wastes, and cattle manure to their lands and doing summer ploughing and field bunds as part of soil improving measures.

2.2. Average yield of crops seems to be increased in cases of groundnut and paddy; instead of black gram and red grams they started cultivating cotton, jowar and pearl millets as they are considered as more drought resistant.

2.3. Average cultivation cost of groundnut reduced significantly against baseline; whereas, cost of paddy cultivation has increased by Rs. 1,000 against the baseline; but an average increased yield of 500 kilos offsets the cost increase.

2.4. 88% of catchment farmers use organic manures and 88% use goat manure for improving their crop yields and few of them collecting *vandal*, the sediment from tanks that contains high level moisture and natural nutrients; and use a process called *mudaakku*, where they fill green leaves around the cultivated plant to retain water for longer time by holding the moisture. This also becomes organic manure later due to continuous soaking in water.

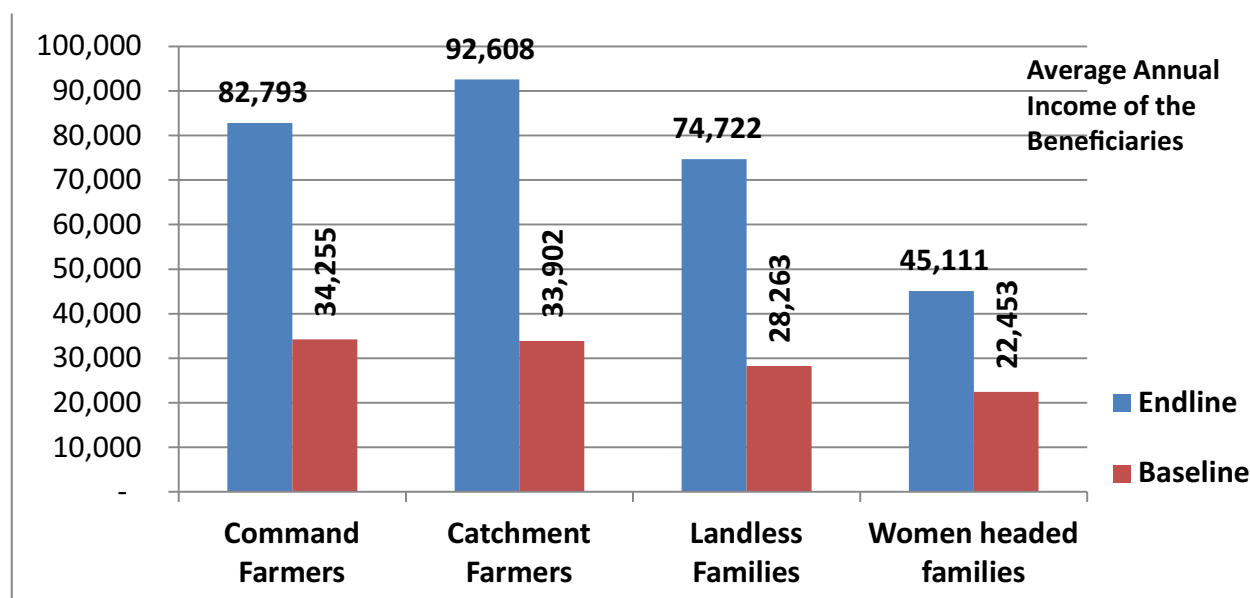
<b>Table: 4.5. Objective: 3</b> 1,600 landless families and women-led households improve their regular income possibilities.				
No.	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Landless families use leased land	Nil	20 %	19%
2	Women-led families are engaged in livestock raising	17 %	40 %	20%
3	Landless households involved in crop processing, value addition and marketing of harvest products	1 %	125 (8%)	39%
4	Landless women have representation in the WMCs	Nil	36	12
5	Average annual net income	Table-C-1	Rs.10,000	Table C-2

**4.6. Table – C - 1**

<b>Average Annual Income Baseline</b>		
No	Types of Farmers	Amount
1	Landless	28,263
2	Catchment farmers	33,902
3	Command farmers	34,255
4	Women headed families	22,453

**4.7. Table – C - 2**

<b>Average Annual Income – End line</b>		
No	Types of Farmers	Amount
1	Landless	74,722
2	Catchment farmers	92,608
3	Command farmers	82,793
4	Women headed families	45,111



\* 3.5. Average annual income of all beneficiaries has been doubled from baseline

**Table: 4.8. Objective: 4**

2,500 families improve their sanitation equipment and personal hygiene.				
No	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Access to own toilet facility	5 % (50)	1700 (68%)	63% (114 out of 180)
2	Families with female adolescents have knowledge on health and health care	90 %	100 %	98%
3	Families report regular infections and snake bites	90 %	20 %	96% reduced
4	Female adolescents report verbal abuse/teasing	90 %	20 %	96% reduced

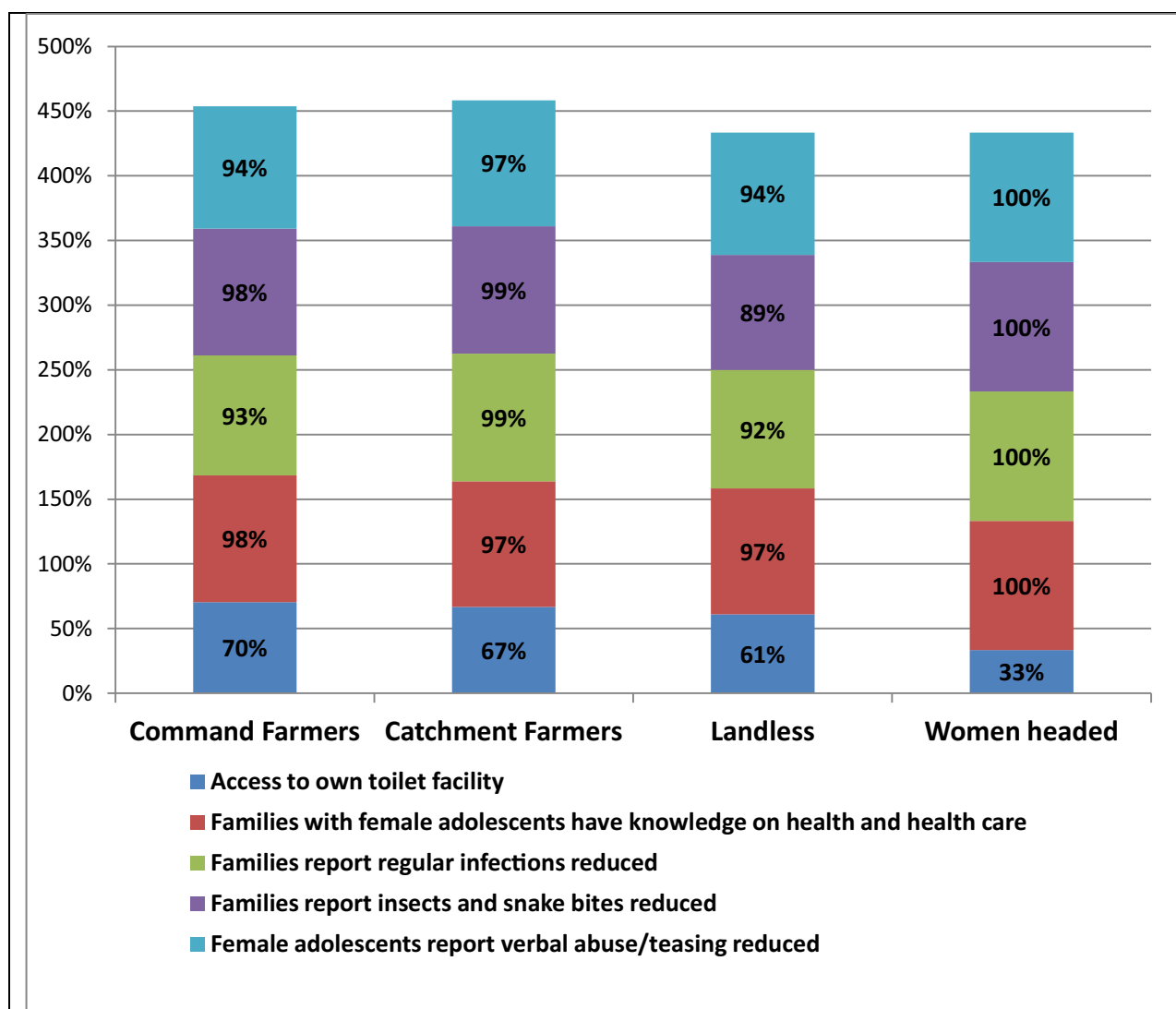
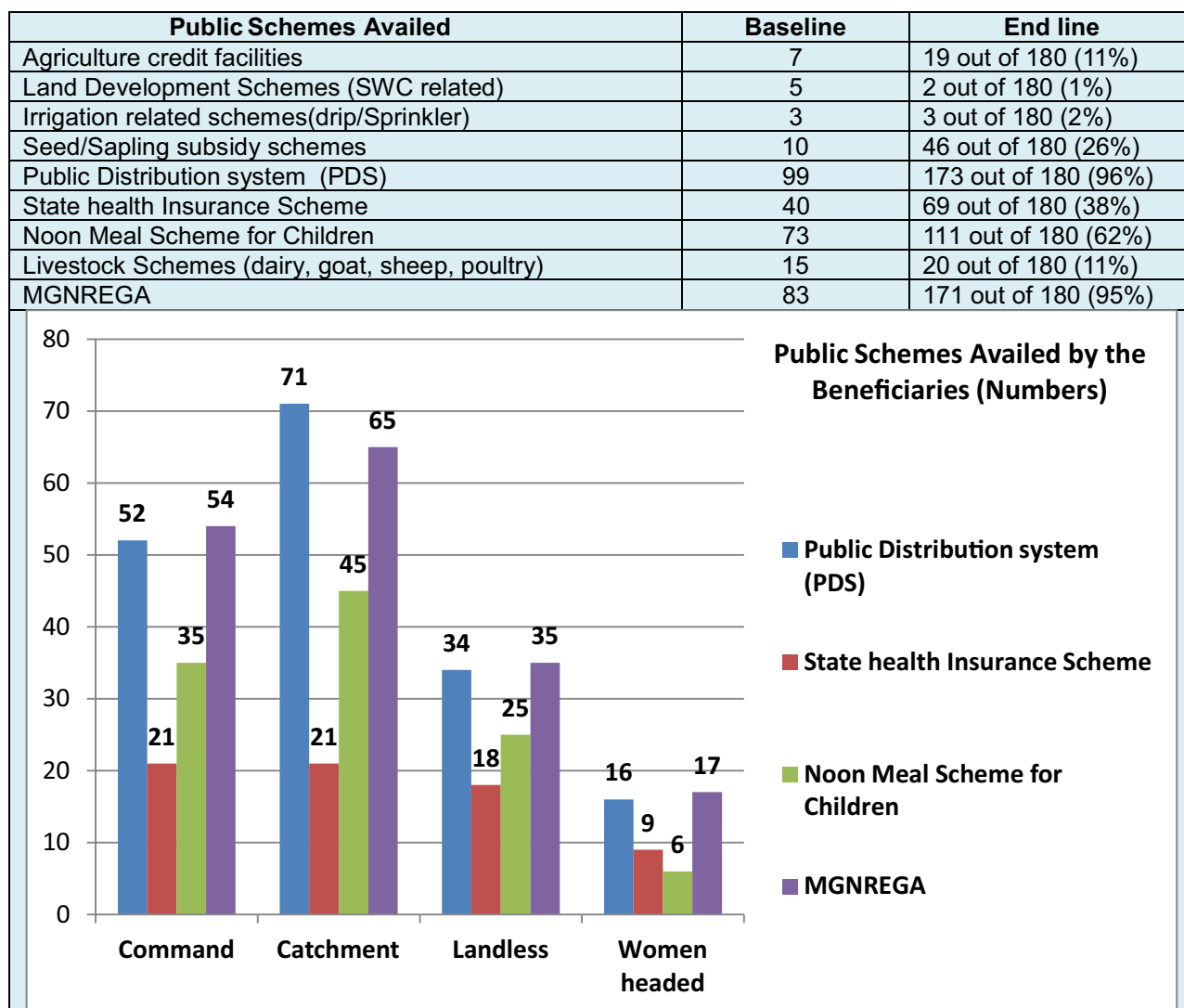


Table: 4.9. Objective: 5

The target communities have access to various state institutions and public services				
No	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Families have awareness, access to public services and programmes	Table D1	25 %	100% Awareness about various Government schemes; 38 % availed various schemes Table D 1 shows the details of schemes
2	Landless persons are able to exercise their right to use common property resources and water and sanitation services.	20–30 %	60 %	22% got water and sanitation; did not mention cases of exercising their rights on common properties
3	Children of migrate parents deprived of going to school	15 %	90 %	100% migration reduction

4.10. TABLE D 1



## 4.2. Key Components of the Project Results

As in any project design, this project results are also well structured into a project framework at the impact, outcome, and output levels with indicators. A review within this project framework is a direct way to assess the project performance against what is envisaged in the project frame and what is accomplished at the end of the project period. Besides this established way of assessing within the framework, it is equally, perhaps more, important to identify key results of the project in the villages as evident changes, enduring structures, and capacities that constantly provide the community the means to aggregate themselves; enable to collectively function; establish formal linkages; and expand and sustain their livelihood opportunities. Instead of looking at the results against what is planned in the log frame, which is essential, the other way to comprehend the effectiveness of the project is from the generated results in the ground and assessing their potential against the overall objective of the project.

In addition to the structured survey, the field visits and interactions with people provided insights to identify such results. These results, identified directly from the field, leaving aside the project frame, are easily perceivable through community engagement and moreover very much visible

in the ground to observe. The community perception on changes in their life is the key indicator to determine the validity of such project results, as these are the markers that people experience and endorse as change agents in their life. Besides, these are the key indicators a visitor like an evaluator could observe in the field, as these results are familiar to the community and easily visible in the small village hamlets.

In this project, a set of achievements in the field qualify as the core results that contributed and will continue to contribute to the target families and perhaps even to the larger village context. The components emerged as key results of the interventions from the community perceptions are the promoted and strengthened community organisations (CBOs), built community capacity, mobilised community resources, developed community infrastructure, established linkages, and newly available livelihood opportunities. It is important to identify the mainstay of what the project has delivered to its client communities that contributed to achieve the project outcome and enabled to retain and sustain such community initiatives.

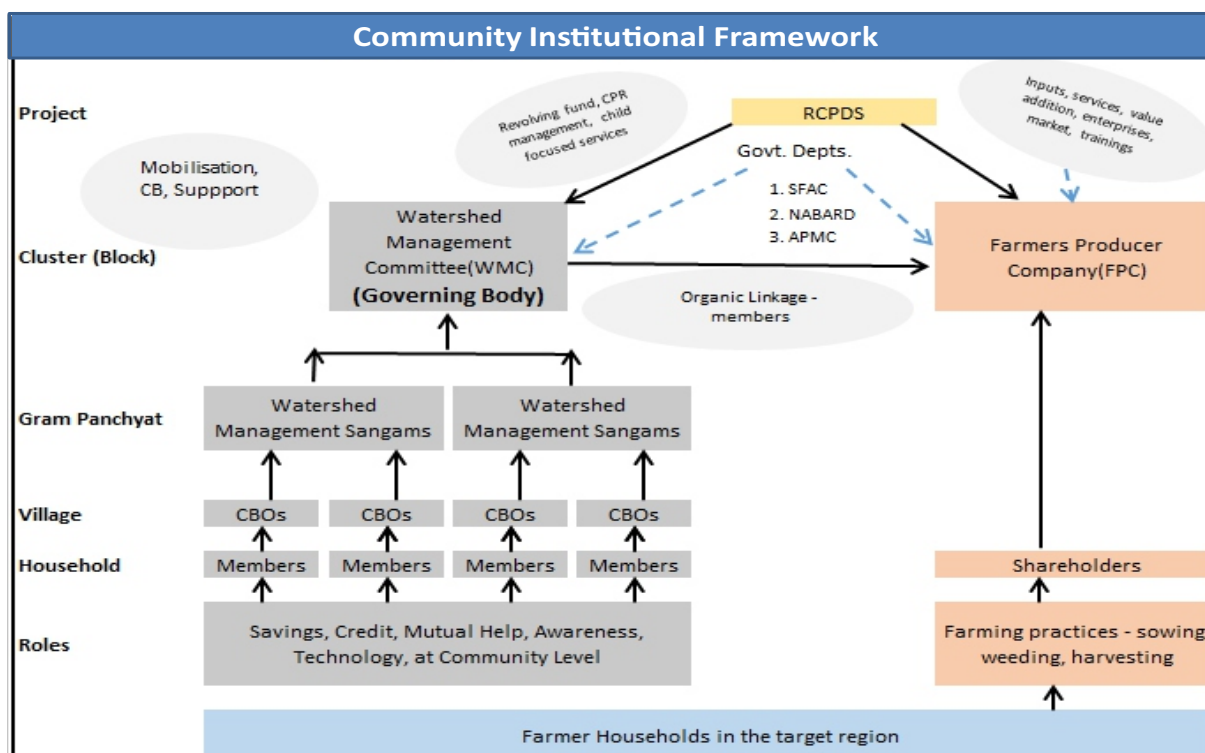
#### **4.2.1. Community Organisations**

The selected communities belong to the low income sections of the society suffering economic marginalization due to lack of access to inputs, technical services, and finance to invest and improve cultivation. Besides, the unorganized communities, living in remote locations they mostly lacked sanitary and health facilities.

The fundamental intervention to address any such community issues is aggregation through community mobilization and organisation. Aggregation increases the volume and also makes mutual learning and support possible. So essentially as a first step, the unorganised community was aggregated into village level groups or associations. Aggregation is essential for the effectiveness of any development or business model, because volume increases the bargaining power and reduces the cost of operation. The mobilising, promoting, and strengthening community organisations as the first step enabled the presence of a community institution at the village level for responding to common issues through self-governance. This social organisation process was further strengthened and sustained by promoting representative intermediary/regional and apex community institutions; and by linking their livelihood activities as the driving agenda for these groups which ensured community participation and ownership.

The project interventions are designed well to address this primary and fundamental process and improving community capacity and generating community action. The project goes beyond the traditional understanding that community mobilisation is just making people participate in projects; but rather it is to support communities through project interventions to promote and own institutions to enhance their potential to develop.

Three types of community organisation had emerged in the project process, at the local village level, mid level at Panchayats, and apex level. In addition, a business model Producer Company was promoted with the specific purpose of linking the farmer communities to the value chain.



**Interest Groups (IG) :** The project has mobilised families into Interest Groups (CIGs) at the village level. The number of members varies from group to group ranging from 11 to 20 with an average membership size of 14.8. There are exclusive women groups, exclusive men groups and also mixed groups where men and women are members in the same IG in a few villages.

IGs functions with regular monthly meetings, savings, which they use for emergency loans for needy members. The saving amount also varies as decided by each group ranging from Rs.50 to Rs.200. There are 57 Interest groups in the project area with 846 member families. The IGs are involved in many other collective activities associated to cultivation, goat rearing, revolving loan, and other economic activities and taking up right based issues in particular child right issues and child protection.

### We have money now

Around 70 families live in Puliandarkottai village. As most of the villages, this is also remotely located. The village mainly depends on cultivation of paddy and ground nut. Previously they used to cultivate other intercrops, but now due to failure of monsoon and drought, cultivation has almost come to a halt. Still they wait for rain with a hope that they could cultivate again in the next season.

The village has two Interest Groups (IG); group one and two. The first group has 19 members and this group collects a monthly savings of Rs.50; while the second group has 13 members with a monthly savings contribution of Rs. 100 as decided by the respective groups. Three specific benefits, the group members express are the loans, goats, and toilets. Each member could comprehend and express these benefits that have impacted on their life.

Most of them have own land of small holdings ranging between half an acre to two acres, all marginal farmers; the rest are landless families who depend on agriculture and other labour. Those who cultivate also go for daily wages during off season which is almost six to eight months. At this stage, women go for work under the MNRGA scheme or to other sources of employment in the informal sector with low and temporary wages, without any security and in poor working conditions.

At this context, the savings fund in the group and access to such loans for the members is a great help. Earlier, they borrowed from money lenders paying high interest rates against gold as the security. The unsecured loans, without gold to pledge, cost more due to higher interest rate. The interest rate ranged from 60 percent to 120 percent depending on the type and source of loan. The emergency loan available from the group through the savings fund is a great help and instrumental to manage many emergency situations. They also have access to the revolving fund operated by the Water Management Committee.

Secondly, the goat loans came as a benefit for the family, especially for women. Many members shared that they were benefited by selling the lambs. The money was used to pay for the education of their children, procure cultivation inputs, and for many other family needs and even consumption at times of no income. The earning from goats ranged between Rs.10,000 to 21000 per person.



The third benefit the members of the group expressed was the toilets. The general observation is that though they always felt the need, the options were never explored to have household toilets. Somehow this priority for women was overlooked even by women themselves. This apathy was broken by the awareness programmes and this paved a way for them to build toilets. This was a joint contribution by RCPDS and the beneficiary family. In some cases, government schemes were availed to compliment the construction. Such toilets are prominently visible adjacent to houses in the village when one walks on the village street.

A few members have learned to prepare vermi-compost and sell it as a subsidiary income generating activity. More toilets in the village to cover all households, more amount for revolving fund to increase the loan size, and more water for cultivation is what they look for the future. The members of the group are unanimous by saying, “now we, women have money with us through the revolving loans and goat rearing opportunity”. An indication of women empowerment!

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**Watershed Management Sangham (WMS):** Water Management Sangams are formed at Panchyaths as a regional community institution, with intermediary roles with the local affiliated Interest Groups and the apex Water Management Committee. The WMS is represented by the area IGs. The membership from each IG for the WMS varies from minimum one to maximum three depending on the number of groups in a village. A total of eight WMS function in the project area with an average membership of 20 representatives from the IG. This CBO functions at the Panchyath level representing the concerns of the village level groups and the farming families.

The Interest Group in T. Karisalkulam was initially formed as a men group with 13 members. Later the members invited and admitted seven women who head their families as their husbands are no more. Now the group is a mixed group with 13 men and seven women.

The village has around 150 families in which more than 120 families own small land holding of about two acres. They mainly cultivate flowers and vegetables in this village. There are around 76 wells, dug in earlier years, in which around 35 are functional. The group members expressed that “these days no one dare to dig a well as it is very expensive and no guarantee for water”.



Most of the farmers cultivate depending on rain and lake water, except two families that fully use well water. The members recalled cleaning of the local lake. “This was done after thirteen years because of RCPDS motivation. There were a lot of hurdles even to do this. The approval from revenue department took a lot of time, though we were doing something that the government is expected to do”, said Karunakaran the leader of the group.

According to Karunakaran “lake is the key for the life of the village. If there is rain and the lake is maintained properly water fills in the lake. As a result, nearby fields get water for cultivation, cattle have water to drink, the water level in the nearby wells increase, drinking water level improves. So it is fundamental to maintain the village lake. RCPDS has initiated this move through a project. This should continue”.

Earlier some families cultivated paddy, but paddy is not cultivated this year. According to them, for the last 13 years most of the paddy fields are filled with the wild variety of Prosopis (Karuvelam). The group also found that it was difficult for them to access government scheme as they are located away from the Block office. The members expressed that efficient use of available water and market access are the key problems for the farmers. They have high expectations from the Producer Company for credit and market access, as these are the two key issues that need to be addressed for their development.

**Watershed Management Committee (WMC):** The Watershed Management Committee is the apex body of the community institutions. This was registered in 2013 under Society Registration Act with 27 members, including 12 women, forming the General Council of the Society, representing three from each Panchyath level WMS. As the WMS from Nathakulum panchyath level was not active at the later part of the project period, currently the WMC functions with members representing eight WMS. The executive body of the WMC consists of nine members with five women.

**Producer Company:** The producer company as a business model was incorporated under companies act in November 2016 with a purpose of linking the farmer families directly with the value chain. The company is registered as Marumalarchi Agricultural Producer Company Limited (MAPC). The company aimed to enroll 1,000 members and reached the target with share holding. The collective effort is aimed to reduce expenses, aggregate products, and market them directly to increase the returns. The company has shareholding pattern with 100 shares of Rs.10 from each member. An additional subscription of Rs. 600 was collected to set apart for operational costs.

4.11. Community Organisations						
Panchayat	Village	WMS	Members	IG	Members	MMAPC Members
Agathakulam	Agathakulam	1	20	3	56	56
	Kuraiyarivasi than			3	42	42
	Kamalipuliyankulam			3	45	30
	Muthaneri			9	118	108
	Chittavanankulam			4	49	32
Nallukuruchi	Puliyandarkottai	1	20	2	36	33
	Sullankudi			2	32	20
Veeracholan	Ottankulam	1	20	1	11	11
Illupaiyur	Seelampatty	1	20	4	57	0
Pillyarnatham	Pillayarnatham	1	20	4	75	75
	T.Kariselkulam			4	62	40
Sennelkudi	Kethanaickenpatty	1	20	1	15	15
	Sennelkudi			8	106	110
Udayanamapatty	Udayanampatty	1	20	5	83	83
Kuchampatty	Kuchampatty	1	20	1	13	0
	Notchikulam			3	46	46
Illupaikulam	Puliyankulam	0	0	1	12	12
	Mithalaikuklam			1	12	12
	Shankar Nagar			1	20	20
	Illupaikulam			1	20	20
Karaenthal	Ambaneri			1	20	20
Thulukenkulam	Karaikulam			2	38	38
	Kundukulam			1	14	14
	Kambali			1	13	13
Vedanahtam	Vedanatham			3	53	53
Mettukundu	Arasakudumbanpatti			2	40	40
A.Lakshmiyapuram	A.Lakshmiyapuram			2	40	40
Tamilpadi	Tamilpadi			1	16	16
Total			160	57	846	1000
<b>Watershed Management Committee(WMC)</b> General Body with 27 members from 9 Panchayats with 12 women Executive committee of 9 members with five women						
<b>Marumalarchi Agricultural Producer Company (MAPC)</b> Shareholding members:1000 Board of Directors: 10, including 3 women						

### 4.2.2. Community Capacity

Community competency becomes critical in the emerging context, where income and livelihood options in the agrarian sector are negatively affected by lack of resources, climate effects, as well as changing market trends. So essentially, the second key observation on the result is the capacity building processes. The capacity building activities are well designed to cover all sections of people and their needs as identified in the project formulation process. The capacity building measures focused on the project team, farmers, both from command and catchment areas, women, landless workers, children, including adolescent girls, CBO leaders, and other stakeholders.

The training areas included water shed development and management, organic farming practices, soil and water conservation, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation, good governance for CBO leaders with leadership skills, and management of groups, integrated and organic farming by involving children, collective use of lands, animal husbandry, and business development. The capacity building process also included campaign on tree planting and anti-pollution, and exposure visits to federations, water shed areas, and producer companies.

'Children-led organic farming' is an initiative of the Children Movement for Climate Justice (CMCJ), a RCPDS promoted Child Forum. The CMCJ works on demonstration plot that was already set up by RCPDS in a leased land from the local panchyath, to acquire knowledge on organic farming practices and eco awareness. The learning included, soil and water conservation measures like use of rainwater, various types of compost and biogas, setting up kitchen and herb gardens, bio-intensive gardening and production techniques and methods. This activity also contributes to ensuring the project's sustainability and the functioning of the watersheds and water management areas. The eco learning opportunity for children is extended through the Children Eco Learning Centre established by RCPDS through a demo plot approach where children come and work during week end and learn by doing.

In general, members of interest groups could identify training as one of the key benefits of the project specifically in areas such as organic practices, health and hygiene, and water resource management.

4.12. Capacity building initiatives and beneficiaries			
Trainings Areas	Beneficiaries		Total
	Men	women	
Project Orientation	170	34	204
Watershed development	276	315	591
Organic Farming	975	1,125	2,100
Health and Sanitation	327	367	694
Animal Husbandry	119	137	256
Organic farming practices, climate change mitigation training for children	147	107	254
Group Management training for CBO leaders	196	328	524
Traditional Seed Exhibition for awareness	475	375	850
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,685</b>	<b>2,788</b>	<b>5,473</b>

### 4.2.3. Community resources

The community resource mobilised and contributed towards the project activities fall under three categories.

**Group Savings:** The interest groups regularly save an amount that varies from group to group in the range of Rs.50 to 200 per month. The total amount saved by 45 groups with 707 members comes to Rs.13,78,000 with an average savings of Rs. 30,622 per group. This amount is rotated within the group as loans to the members. Members, especially women, expressed that this amount, though small, helped them for many emergency situations such as health, education, purchase of inputs, and marriages. The groups have developed their own criteria to decide based on the needs and unanimously decide who gets the priority. The amount is repaid in installments with an interest rate ranging from 12 percent to 36 percent. The usual rate from money lenders is from 60 percent to 120 percent. Members felt that they get money for lower than the money lenders and moreover happy to pay the interest as this amount belongs to the community and useful for them in the future also.

**Credit support:** The project extended credit support, especially for livelihood support, to the beneficiary families through the Interest Groups. This included loans for crop support, buying goats, start small farm related businesses, and joint farming. The loan beneficiaries contribute their repayment towards a revolving fund, managed by the WMC.

4.13. Credit support		
Type of Assistance	Beneficiaries	Loan amount
Crop	600	30,00,000
Goat	264	21,12,000
Enterprise	100	6,00,000
Joint farming	36	3,08,000
Small Startups	250	6,21,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,250</b>	<b>6,641,500</b>

**Revolving fund:** The WMC maintains a revolving fund and extends loans to IG members for crop support, goat rearing, joint farming, and small business start ups. The initial loan support from the project is currently managed by the Water Management Committee, which is registered and governed by the community representatives. The Rs.6,641,500 extended as the primary loan amount is revolved with a project end turnover of Rs. 1,31,21,000 in three cycles, which is more than two times of the seed money, supporting 1160 beneficiaries.

4.14. Revolving fund managed by WMC		
Loan cycle	Beneficiaries	Amount
First cycle of loan	514	51,16,000
Second cycle of loan	588	56,25,000
Third cycle of loan	128	23,80,000
<b>Total Amount Revolved</b>	<b>1,160</b>	<b>1,31,21,000</b>

**Project contribution:** The other area of community resources is the community contribution to various programme interventions such as water shed constructions, toilets, and purchase of goats. In both the cases, generally the materials were provided by the project fund and labour and other contributions were made by the local community. The community contribution to the various project measures such as water shed, toilets, and goats comes to Rs.18,81,000. In addition 4,860 families have availed direct financial support under various schemes

<b>4.15. Families availed support from government schemes</b>			
<b>Villages/ Panchayat</b>	<b>Scheme/Work</b>	<b>Families</b>	<b>Amount</b>
Udayanampatti panchayat	De silting of the Pond	120	60,000
Udayanampatti panchayat	De silting of the lake ( 100 x Rs.500 ) ( Seedling, plantation , watering , and protection charge Paid by panchayat)	120	50,000
Udayanampatti panchayat	Tree plantation at bund of Pond	120	60,000
Agathakulam panchayat	Construction of Toilet	30	3,00,000
Nallukuruchi panchayat	Establishment of farm ponds (6 Nos.)	25	10,50,000
Nallukuruchi panchayat	Tree plantation (2500 x Rs.500 ) ( Seedling, plantation , watering , and protection charge- Paid by panchayat)	1,800	12,50,000
Nathakulam panchayat	Tree plantation (500 x Rs.500 ) ( Seedling, plantation , watering , and protection charge- Paid by panchayat)	110	2,50,000
Illupaiyur panchayat	Tree plantation (500 x Rs.500 ) ( Seedling, plantation , watering , and protection charge Paid by panchayat)	90	2,50,000
Kuraiyaraivasithan	Model Solar Agriculture project	75	50,00,000
	<b>Total</b>	<b>4,890</b>	<b>82,70,000</b>

**Share capital in Producer Company:** The other major part of the local resource is the contribution to the producer company. A total of Rs.1,600 was contributed towards the producer company. In this, the members contribute Rs.600 and project fund added Rs.1000. This total amount is set apart as Rs.1000 to share capital and Rs.500 for operational cost and Rs.100 as subscription for the membership for the IG which is retained at the IG level. The ownership of the company with a stake in it ensures sustainability and future development of the farmers in procuring inputs and marketing their produces.

<b>4.16. Local resource</b>			
<b>No</b>	<b>Source and Operation</b>	<b>Type of fund</b>	<b>Amount</b>
1	Interest groups	Savings	13,78,000
2	WMC	Revolving fund	61,09,900
3	Producer Company	Share capital	10,00,000
4	Farmer Families	Project contribution	18,81,000
5	Government	Availed from Schemes	82,70,000
	<b>Total</b>		<b>1,86,38,900</b>

#### 4.2.4. Community infrastructure

**Watersheds:** As a basis for soil and water conservation activities and the rehabilitation and reconnection of the existing irrigation infrastructure, appropriate water sheds were developed. These were done after studies for identification and recording of soil types and soil properties, sloping, etc. of the watersheds which required rehabilitation. Detailed study reports are available for each of the lake. The main interventions included de-silting of lakes, village ponds, and constructing sluices, waterways, and feeder channels

Totally, 15 lakes and the connected waterways and four village ponds de-silted and cleared from bushes, cleaned, and reinforced. Fifteen sluices and three spill-overs were repaired. This was to improve efficient water flow to the farmlands. This activity was implemented with the cooperation of the farmers who own the land in the respective watersheds. All works were coordinated with and approved by the competent authorities and the WMC. The additional amount of water for farming helped to increase the crop yields in the respective areas.

##### The tank that still holds water



While almost all lakes and ponds in the region are dry, a small pond in Udyanampatti village still holds water in the midst of a heavy drought in the area. The 40\*40 meter pond, called Keelapatti pond, was deepened and cleaned by the community with the help of RCPDS project initiatives. This was a joint effort by the RCPDS, local panchyath, village community, and by integrating the MNRGA scheme. This pond with enough water now is the only source for cattle in this area.

The village under the leadership of Mr. Jeyamurugan, the former panchyath president and the president of the Watershed Management Committee (WMC) had completed a series of joint development activities by involving various stake holders in the village. The leadership of Jeyamurugan both in the panchyath and also in the WMC made the collaborations more effective. The pond and the surroundings stand out as a model for effective collaborations and possibility for efficient water resource management even in the midst of low rain fall and drought conditions.

Trees and *vettiver* were used on the lake borders and bunds to prevent soil erosion. The water shed development is a visible and concrete result as perceived by the community as these infrastructure and technical interventions are retained in the village with RCPDS name tag in them indicating the project related infrastructure as perceived by the farmers and others. Farmers clearly articulate the difference before and after construction of these water shed infrastructure and the benefits they experience.

No	4.17. Soil and water conservation work	Target		Achieved
		No	Length	
1	Repair of lakes	15		15
2	Repair of ponds	4		4
3	Rehabilitation of Canals	7	3,000	3,450
4	Extension of feeder channel	7	1,000	850
5	Repair of Sluices	15		15
6	Repair of Earth walls	6	4,000	4,150
7	Vetiver grass seedlings	5,000		6,230
8	Tree nurseries	6,000		6,500

### Water, the lifeline of rural livelihood

The lake looks like a barren land without even a single drop of water. This is called china Kanmai (small lake) as there is another big lake on the other side of the village. Normally, the lake holds water for three to four months. Though the area experienced a low rainfall during the last few years, farmers could manage well compared to the low rain fall, except the current drought situation. Thanks to the intervention of RCPDS by cleaning the lake and constructing the sluice which helped to regulate water flow and also avoid wastage” said M. Veluchamy, a senior farmer and a member of the WMS and WMC, whose statement was endorsed by the few farmers gathered around.

The lake is located at the outskirts of Nochikulam village in Kuchampatti Panchyath of Thiruchuli Block. The village has around 70 families. The land area under cultivation around the lake is 50 acres. This belongs to 20 families with an average two acres per family for the majority of them. A few families hold more than two acres. The main crop is paddy which they could cultivate only once in a year covering a period of four to five months. It all depends on the rain fall and availability of water in the lake.



**Veluchamy,  
the farmer leader**

Veluchamy is a senior farmer who has more than 30 years of cultivation experience and familiarity with the lake. He says, “thirty years back we plant our paddy nursery in the Tamil month of Chithirai and take bath in this lake. There was full of water. We cultivated paddy and many other short-term and intercrops. Now, even one time cultivation is at risk due to rain failure. For more than ten years the rain fall has been gradually decreasing and the last three years it has become worse to the level of a drought. Last year only five farmers benefited out of the 20 farmers due to inadequate rainfall.”

The sluice built by RCPDS jointly with the farmers helped out the crisis caused by low rainfall and drought. The structure enabled improved storage facility and avoided water wastage.

The village has also brought back the lost practice of regulating water delivery from the lake to the land by appointing persons who will take decisions and manage the flow. As rain failed, we could not get more water, but we regulated the use of water efficiently and divided it among us in a proper way so that the benefits and risks are distributed. This regulation has sustained and in some case increased the production to some level.” said Veluchamy.

According to him, water shortage not only reduces their profit but it destroys all their investment in the land in the form of labour and money. Many times, farmers cultivate when rain starts, hoping that they could sustain the crops till the end. In many cases, the crop fails for lack of one or two last spells of water. If an emergency mechanism or source is available to manage the last lap, perhaps loss could be avoided in many cases. Perhaps a common bore well in the lake could fulfill this as an emergency response. This would also give confidence to the farmer to cultivate as there is a guarantee that even if profit could not be taken at least the loss could be avoided.

**Toilets:** Thematically, toilets were considered as part of the sanitation facility associated with health and adolescent girls in farmer families. In addition, they stand as infrastructure in the villages for people to witness the result of the project. Besides its use and relevance in hygienic matters are visibly there in the villages to witness for the members, other village families, and visitors. The toilets for members also motivated other families to approach RCPDS and also try other sources including the local government, to construct for their families. Such infrastructure spread the message more powerfully and sustainably than ~~mass~~ awareness programmes and campaigns on importance and benefits of hygienic facilities and practices.

4.18. Toilet Construction		
Panchayat	Village	Toilet
Agathakulam	Agathakulam	14
	Kuraiyarivasi than	58
	Kamalipuliyankulam	20
	Muthaneri	40
	Chittavanankulam	29
Nallukuruchi	Puliyandarkottai	29
	Sullankudi	21
Veeracholan	Ottankulam	0
Illupaiyur	Seelampatty	0
Pillyarnatham	Pillayarnatham	23
	T.Kariselkulam	2
Sennelkudi	Kethanaickenpatty	5
	Sennelkudi	48
Udayanamapatty	Udayanampatty	38
Kuchampatty	Kuchampatty	16
	Notchikulam	32
Total		375

The families were selected by the members of the local groups. In the selection, preference was given to women led families and families with adolescent girls and disabled children. Moreover, required space should be available behind the house. The families contributed 30% of the cost in the form of labour; and many families also availed government grants wherever possible.

#### **We wanted one but never decided to have one**

M.Rajaselvi lives in Muthuneri village in Agathakulam Panchyath. Her husband, Muthumari is an agriculture labourer. They have five daughters. The village has around 200 families. But there was no toilet in any of these houses. People use nearby fields with risk of snake and insect bites. Young girls and women found it difficult to go out in the night as they fear insect bites and sexual abuses. The condition of Rajaselvi with five girls at home was more difficult. "Though every day we faced lot of hardships, and wanted to have a toilet, we never took any effort, as the whole village lived for generations without toilets. RCPDS explained the health issues and risks related to open defecation and motivated us to build toilets. We started building as soon as the opportunity came, because we were waiting for it. RCPDS provided materials worth of Rs. 15,000 and the family contributed Rs. 6,000 to construct the toilet. Now more than fifty families in the village have their own toilets and many others want to build.



"We feel the difference only after having a toilet and started using it. Our daughters are very much relieved. When guests come home we are no more embraced as we don't have to take them out", said Rajaselvi.

"I do not know why we never tried to build a toilet with five girls at home, even though we faced difficulties and wanted to have a toilet. We wanted a toilet, but never decided to build it, till RCPDS intervened", says Rajaselvi. The toilets and promotion of hygienic practices through awareness programmes have improved the hygienic practices and facilities in the village, adds Rajaselvi.

**Children Eco Learning Centre:** This is a child led ecological learning centre in Sankarnagar village, established in the land leased from the local panchyath. The structure was already established by RCPDS which was improved with a well and solar powered motor for cultivation and learning. This is mainly established for children to cultivate minor millets, use alternate energy sources, and rain water harvest, learn environmental issues and climate change impacts. The facilities and practices in the centre, including a local pond inside the land, provide a demo effect to understand the eco system. Children visit the centre during the weekend and are exposed to organic farming practices by involving in cultivation.

#### **4.2.5. Livelihood opportunities**

As increased production and income were envisaged as the primary outcome of the project, livelihood promotion initiatives had a central place in the project intervention. This included training, access to credit, and support for start ups. The main measures included promoting organic practices, livestock, specifically goat rearing, and socially responsible businesses related to farming. Specifically, vermin - compost, collective farming, organic manure like panchkavya, and seed banks were promoted as income generating enterprise. The farmers in the eight watersheds, who were interested in using organic farming methods to bring their fallow land back into use, were supported through training and credit access.

#### 4.19. Livelihood Support

Panchayat	Goat	Crop	Panchakavia	Vermi compost	Joint farming	Seed bank
Agathakulam	67	243	109	60	26	5
Nallukuruchi	32	55	1	3	0	5
Veeracholan	0	16	22	0	0	
Illupaiyur	0	57	23	23	0	5
Pillyarnatham	20	102	36	10	0	10
Sennelkudi	65	61	45	0	0	5
Udayanamapatty	44	43	2	2	0	
Kuchampatty	36	23	12	2	10	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>40</b>

#### Supporting my daughter's education

Pandiammal is from Kuraiyaravasithan village. She lives with her husband Thavamurugan, a construction worker, and two daughters. Pandiammal is a member of the Interest Group, functioning in her village. The group has a savings and loan scheme. She applied and received a loan of Rs.8,500 to purchase goats. Pandiammal bought two goats with that money. She happily said that she sold 14 lambs till now, for a price ranging from Rs. 3000 to 6000 depending on the season and price. Now Pandiammal still has five goats with her.

The amount from selling lambs is an additional income for the family and Pandiammal mostly used this money for her children's education. "Though I decided to take a loan and buy goats, I was a little confused if it will be helpful to me. But now I am happy that I decided to buy. It almost helps me to meet my daughters educational expenses", says Pandiammal.



#### A path breaking farmer, an organic farming initiative

O.Krishnan, a farmer from Muthaneri village, cultivates in his six acre of land that he inherited from his father. There is a well in the land that provides water when rain fails. Krishnan cultivates cotton, castor, red chili and other vegetables. Though both his sons are not willing to take up farming and they work in private companies as they consider agriculture as a high risk activity, Krishnan is enthusiastic about his land and confident and continues to cultivate using new practices and choosing the right type of crops. In fact, he is path breaking as he experiments on new practices and a proponent and practitioner of organic farming.

Both Krishnana and his wife work in the field. With RCPDS support, Krishnan underwent training in organic farming practices. He also had an opportunity to visit a few places, as exposure visits, to learn from where such practices are followed.



After the training, Krishnan successfully prepared panchakavya, a bio-input with a combination of five natural products, on his own and applied it in his farm along with bio pesticides. As it was found effective, other farmers bought from him to use in their field. Earlier, he sold the balance manure after using it in his field, but now as he plans to expand his cultivation area, he is retaining all for him. Krishnan said that he earned good income last year by cultivating onion and tomato. If there was good rainfall, the income would have doubled according to Krishnan

#### 4.2.6. Linkages

To ensure mainstream services and resource and for the sustainability of the project, the families and the CBOs, were linked with government schemes and other institutions. Many farmers directly accessed benefits for these institutions. To encourage the networking process it was made part of all trainings, exchange visits, and regular meetings. The established contacts are capable of lasting even after the end of the project, paving a way for future cooperation.

4.20. Government Linkages	
Target People	Name of the Department
Command farmers	Forest Department, Government Departments, Block Development Department
	Agricultural Department of Government of Tamilnadu
	National Seeds Corporation of Tamilnadu
	Nationlised Banks
	Civil society organisation -Arise, CIRHEP, BOOMI, CIKS, SAFE CR, SEEDS
	Agricultural Engineering Department (AED), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University
	Agricultural Research Station -KVK
	Insurance Company
Catchment Farmers	Forest Department, Government Departments, Block Development Department
	Agricultural Department of Government of Tamilnadu
	National Seeds Corporation of Tamilnadu
	Nationlised Banks
	civil society organisation -Arise, CIRHEP, BOOMI, CIKS, SAFE CR, SEEDS
	Agricultural Engineering Department (AED), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University
	Agricultural Research Station -KVK
	insurance company
LL&WHH	Animal Husbandry
	Local Government Departments
	Nationlised Banks
	Block Development Department
	civil society organisation -Arise, CIRHEP, BOOMI, CIKS, SAFE CR
	Agricultural Research Station -KVK
	Goat Insurance
Children & Adolescents	Education department

#### 4.21. Reach and Results - Overview

Blocks	2
Panchyaths	9
Villages	35
Farmer Families	8,860
Women headed families	1,600
Families with Children and Adolescent Girls	2,500
Interest groups	57
Interest group Members	846
Water Management Sangam	8
Water Management Sangam Leaders	160
Water management committee	1
Watershed Management Committee Leaders	27
Watersheds	15
Toilets	375
Goat rearing	264
Crop Support	600
Panchkavya	250
Vermi-Compost	100
Joint farming	36
Seed bank	40
Capacity building participants	5,473
Local resource mobilised	1,15,29,000
Direct credit support Amount	66,41,500
Direct credit beneficiaries	1250
Revolving fund Loan amount	1,31,21,000
Revolving fund beneficiaries	1,160

#### They are very supportive

Chellathai lives in T. Karisalkulam village and a member in the village Interest Group. The group has both men and women. Her husband, Karuppiyah, died ten years back and after that she had been managing her family. She owns half an acre of land in which she cultivates jasmine flower.

Chellathai recalls that they had enough water and good yield ten years before. "We spent Rs.1000 to 1500 per acre and sell the flower for Rs.20/30 per kilo. Now we spent Rs.30,000 to 40,000 and sell the flower for Rs.70/80. The price varies from Rs.50 to Rs.1000 depending on the demand. Market access is very important for flower cultivation. Now we sell it in the nearby Aruppukottai town where flowers are sold through auction.

"Being a member in the village Interest Group, I get support from the members both at the time of cultivation and marketing", says Chellathai.



The review assessed the recommendations of the midterm evaluation of the project and the impact of the changes based on the recommendations. Following this the project implementation, finance management, project results, and impact were reviewed against their relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability. The key elements under each of these review areas were matched with information from survey results, available data, community perceptions, staff interactions, and observations.

### 5.1. Recommendations of midterm evaluation

The mid-term evaluation provided a set of recommendations. This comprised a few strategy changes in areas such as seed bank, availing government schemes, promotion of microenterprises, sustainable natural resource management practices, and intensifying sanitation programmes. The project could follow up these strategic changes and achieve the target at the end of the project period. In addition, the recommendations included proposals to develop sustainable institutional models by strengthening the community institutions, promotion of Producer Company, and linkages with market and mainstream services.

The report also suggested a strategic pathway for the Project to ensure strengthening of the community institutions into strong institutional structures, with clear functionality, legal form, roles and a formal network with RCPDS as the key resource agency for long term support. Specifically this included promotion and strengthening of two community organisations and a set of suggestions more as future strategic directions. It was suggested that both these community organisations along with RCPDS enter into a Memorandum of Understanding for working together and link with mainstream support organisations for the benefit of communities.

1. **Watershed Management Committees** that focus on land and water investments; continue to be a society to handle revolving credit with very low or no interest, but look for long-term investment in common property and social investments, with government entitlements as a federated structure, under Societies/ Trust Act.
2. **Livelihood focused Agri Producers' Company** to be formed under Companies Act for inputs, marketing, credit, value addition.
3. **Strategic directions:** Intensifying and deepening work in existing BMZ-KNH Project supported areas; Expanding base, both new areas and project institutions, so that reasonable scale is reached for sustaining future community initiatives in marketing, credit and advocacy; RCPDS – continues to be a support institution, with a tripartite agreement – People- Professional Partnership with MOU between RCPDS – WMC - APC, with a part of the profits flowing back to the child development work; and Establish strong linkages with SFAC, NABARD, NABFINs, FWWB, Etc. – for continued support for the initiative, directly or through established resource/ support institutions

In this the first two are achieved by the project end and discussed in detail in the evaluation report, while the third set of suggestions are discussed in the way forward, as the formation of the first two has happened during the project period, which is essential to follow it up in the future.

Recommendations and response from project team	
Mid line Assessment - Recommendations	Action taken by Project
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Accelerate the work on promoting micro-enterprises and small start-up for the landless and marginal farmers.</li> <li>2. Remove the barrier of uptake by looking at appropriate per-unit financing by increasing it from Rs. 2,500 per unit to practical levels.</li> <li>3. A change in the strategy, team expertise and allocation is required to ensure that this component is delivered well.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The project team identified interested landless and women headed families in doing agriculture and allied activities for training.</li> <li>• Per unit cost is revised by making joint sharing of two members in the family to make it Rs.5000/-</li> <li>• Based on training attended, few beneficiaries started production of organic manure; develop organic model plot, organic pesticides and vermi-compost and transferring knowledge to other farmers.</li> </ul>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Revisit and revise the strategy on seed bank, as this is one of the critical inputs at the farm level to ensure higher productivity and incomes. Linkage-model is the best way forward, with National Seeds Corporation (NSC), seeds certification department of the government, NABARD and Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) to facilitate the same.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers were linked with the National seed corporation official counter at the district headquarters and through WMC farmers were linked to the National Seeds Corporation and received certified seeds.</li> </ul>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Scale up and explore new opportunities in accessing government schemes and programmes, with particular focus on irrigation equipment, seeds/saplings subsidy schemes, land development schemes</li> <li>6. Setting up a 'social protection facilitation desk' at the cluster/ federation level in which each family access to civic identity and schemes.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Farmers in organic farming were linked to Department of agriculture to avail subsidies, timely technical support and low cost machineries for drip irrigation and sprayer.</li> <li>• Staff enabled families to become eligibility compliant and access such schemes.</li> </ul>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Increase the uptake of the sustainable natural resource management practices by farmers by modifying and improving current awareness building strategies.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved knowledge on sustainable natural resource management and practices introduced with ICT materials supplied by Government of India supported KVK centre.</li> </ul>

<p>8. Intensify work to reach more households for sanitation, particularly construction and use of toilets. Continue and accelerate the linkage with the government programs, through Swachh Bharat Program. Facilitate policies to prioritize credit in the federations for construction of toilets by households, without depending on external schemes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuous campaigns intensified to raise awareness on sanitation</li> <li>• Families motivated and linked to undertake sanitation initiative under Swach Bharat Abiyan.</li> <li>• Families were linked to local credit facilities to take up the sanitation intervention.</li> </ul>
<p>9. Stop pursuing joint farming as it is faced with a number of challenges, such as inadequate returns for leaseholders hence not willing to lease their lands, inability of the lessees to make additional investments to bring back the lands for cultivation as most lands leased out are unsuitable for cultivation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beneficiaries, who started this initiative at the start of the project continue with minimum returns</li> <li>• Based on the recommendation, necessary approvals were taken from KNH to support the other beneficiaries under goat rearing program instead of joint farming.</li> </ul>
<p>10. Initiate market engagements through communities as this is the aspirations emerging, and without the market engagements deriving more incomes from the value chain is impossible.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Agriculture Producer company is legally registered with 1000 farmers as share holders. Legal formalities already fulfilled and the farmers were able to sell their produce, in spite of acute drought, through the company.</li> </ul>
<p>11. Develop a long-term sustainable institutional plan integrating variety of community institutions that are promoted by the project, to ensure that different roles envisaged are performed by different community institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCPDS had made plans, as a future focus, for continued support to the APC and WMC both CBOs promoted with an advisory and handholding support levels. The training sector of RCPDS is officially linked to both CBOs in government liaison.</li> </ul>
<p>12. Ensure full-scale implementation of the Project Management System, going beyond the basic input-activity monitoring. Process quality monitoring system is critical and this needs to be done once a quarter at least.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project management System is in place for monitoring of WMC. Once in three months, the members of WMC review the financial status and program activities jointly with respective WMS. Legal compliance for WMC with Government Registrar of Societies and accounts audited by Chartered Accountant in given pace and an ongoing system is established.</li> </ul>

## 5.2. Impacts

The key project outcome is sustainable resource protection, environmentally responsible use of resources, diversified sources of income, and provision of sanitary facilities. The planned interventions aimed to impact on the income of the target families by improving the water availability, water resource management practices, introducing effective cultivation practices specifically organic practices, promoting farm based livelihood activities, improving sanitation, health and education.

All the five objectives of the project are community based, specifically aiming at different categories of farming families. The objectives and interventions were specifically designed to address specific issues relevant to a specified section of the community of catchment and command farmer families, women headed and landless families, and children including adolescent girls.

The key interventions planned for the desired impact included community organisation, awareness generation, building community competency, promoting effective water resource management and cultivation practices, enabling access to credit, introducing sanitary practices and facilities, and facilitating linkages.

These interventions, focused on specific needs of the community, generated the required results impacting on the issues the project envisaged to address. The key impact areas that emerged during the survey and interactions are mainly around developed competencies, created facilities, promoted practices, and established linkages.

**Awareness on water resource and better water resource management practices** In the context of declining/irregular rain fall year after year, it is important to retain the available water and also effectively use it by water conservation and utilization practices. This awareness and adopted new practice enabled the farmers to better use the water resources even in the midst of a drought in the current year. Community has adopted new practices learned through various training and exposure to other areas, and also revived some of the traditional practices that they had not practiced in the recent years. The awareness and acquired practices increased the availability of water for cultivation, resulting in production and income. These changes are attributed to the project interventions by the beneficiary families.

**Awareness on sanitary facilities and hygienic practices:** Though people had been experiencing lack of sanitary facilities they never planned to build toilets as a priority. The awareness programmes, and motivation and support to build toilets have brought in a response from the community to improve sanitary practices and interest to build toilet facilities. Especially women have taken up this cause. Those who could not avail the project benefit from RCPDS, as the toilet numbers are restricted by budget limitations, started moving to government and other sources for building toilets. This is because of the improved awareness level on hygienic practices and sanitary facilities.

**Community based organisations and governance:** The basic nature of rural communities is there unorganized, isolated, and remote nature. Organisation of the community and aggregation of their products is essential to bring change into their life to access mainstream benefits and

also procure inputs and market their produces. The promotion and strengthening of CBOs such as Interest groups, Water Resource Sangams, and Water Resource Committees, have given the community an opportunity to get organised and also learn how to manage these CBOs for collective functioning that strengthen their bargaining power. Community leaders have emerged though the experience of governance and management of these CBOs.

**Managing a credit system through savings and revolving fund :** Both the Interest Groups and the WMC manage credit funds at their levels. They operate the credit scheme with criteria to select beneficiaries and decide on priorities for lending. While the savings amount at the IG level provides emergency loans at the local level, the WMC operated revolving fund supports livelihood loans. The two credit systems that are operated by the community, in addition to the loan benefits for those who availed provide experience and expertise to people for efficiently managing a community based credit system. This impact has the inherent potential to graduate the system into a more structured community micro finance operation. Moreover, this also relieved the community from sourcing credit from the informal money lenders at a high interest rate which was a prevailing practice prior to introducing the credit system.

**Organic cultivation practices:** Interested farmers to explore and experiment different cultivation practices were trained and exposed in organic farming methods. This expertise in the form of cultivation practices and also preparing farm inputs such as vermin-compost and panchakavya are available with the community now. Some farmers even do this as a business opportunity by selling the product after using in their field. Panchakavyam is an organic concoction prepared by mixing five products of cow that promotes plant growth and resistance from pests. A few farmers have changed to such organic practices from conventional practices and found it effective. This will be a lasting process and such path breakers influence communities around to change as they witness the effect of organic practices in cultivation.

**New farm-based livelihood practices:** A set of farm based livelihood opportunities were created in the project location and many farmers have started earning from such initiatives. This included livestock, organic products, and collective farming activities in leased lands by families who do not own lands. The livelihood promotion by new farm-related income sources have resulted in improved income and enabled to establish linkages.

Overall, the results in all the impact areas such as capacity, production, income, nutrition, sanitation, women empowerment, and linkages, are tangible as they are related to the life and livelihood of the people.

Significant level of awareness has been created and practices and facilities introduced among the community on issues that the project aimed to address. As these impacts are directly linked to the livelihood of people, the changes are directly experienced and expressed by them. Besides the survey and interactions, in the small village hamlets with a few hundred families, many of these changes are visible.

### 5.3. Relevance

The relevance of the project was assessed based on the matching between the project components with the target community and their problems.

As the project was designed to bring changes in the specific areas that constrained the communities from improving their income and living conditions, the interventions are specific to these issues and relevant to the community.

Both the community and staff expressed that there was a good match between the community needs and the project interventions. The relevance of the interventions to fulfill community needs helped the staff to easily gain community acceptance and cooperation. Staff felt that they did not experience much rapport building issues at the beginning of the project as the interventions well matched with the needs of the community. Moreover, the animators are from the same locations familiar with the local communities and the local issues.

“We were desperately looking for some support and when RCPDS came to us with a plan to renovate the lakes, we overwhelmingly welcomed and joined with them”. As many farmers express this, there seems a strong sense of relevance as this is evident from the high level of community participation and their grateful acknowledgment of the changes that they experienced after the project.

“We were in need, realised our limitations, struggling to come out of it. When an external help came exactly where we were looking for some support, we enthusiastically participated with lot of hope”. Perhaps one reason for the high level of matching between the needs of the communities and the objectives of the project is due to the intensive study conducted at the project area to specifically identify issues and develop interventions and related impacts.

The project area, especially remote and climate vulnerable locations, is affected over the years by poor unpredictable rainfall. According to the farmers, they have not had adequate rain and water for cultivation since 13 years. The situation in the current year has also changed much from the baseline year. This year it is a total drought, not only in the project area, but all over the state of Tamilnadu. It is timely and relevant to introduce water storing, conserving, and efficient use of it in the context of decreasing water sources. The project was timely to introduce water management practices as the water source is decreasing and this is the only way to sustain cultivation and associated livelihood opportunities.

As the communities belong to marginal and small farmers living in remote vulnerable areas, and unorganized, they are depending on the informal sector services. They were highly vulnerable to livelihood risks due to lack of resources, capacity and marketing facilities, remote and drought prone locations, and small volume productions.

Though location specific differences exist, the primary products are paddy, groundnut, pulses, cotton, vegetables and flowers. The interventions were developed to help all the sections of farmer families such as irrigated cultivation, rain-fed cultivation, landless and women headed families, and children including adolescent girls.

The project is more appealing because the communities selected are from subsistence level families and a livelihood project is very much a need for such families as the project had the potential to enhance their income and lead them from subsistence to sustaining level.

The level of participation of the community is another key indicator to assess the relevance of the project interventions and strategies. As the project is designed as a strengthening process of what the people are already doing, there is a high level of ownership in all the villages visited and groups met. This is not participation but rather ownership because the project is about their livelihood and life.

#### **5.4. Effectiveness**

The effectiveness of the project is assessed by the project deliverables and the evidences available for assessing the outcome. This also included the key conducive and constraining factors.

Based on the progress reports available, and the feedback from the visits, most of the outcome and output are achieved through the planned activities. In most cases, the activities generated the desired output and outcome. In some areas such as seed bank and collective farming the expectations did not work for reasons that emerged during the interventions. But this did not affect the overall project result, as alternate arrangements were done in the case of seed banks, by linking the farmers with the mainstream government certified seed providers. The seed bank required more technical and certification processes than assumed at the project planning phase.

Though the community level activities are well designed to achieve the desired results, certain outcome expected such as the government and market level required more activities and follow ups.

The other area that could not be reached as expected is that 'landless persons are able to exercise their right to use common property resources and water and sanitation services'. While water and sanitation facilities were utilised by many families, the utilisation of common land by landless families has not worked out as expected, as it is a long process involving legal implications and time consuming procedures.

However, the planned activities successfully achieved the core outcome of the programme for improved water resource management, increasing cultivation and production, diversification of income activities, and improving sanitary practices and facilities. Though the rainfall level was low than the baseline time, the water availability was increased by introducing effective water management practices.

Identified risks were managed well except that project pace was constrained by the low rainfall and drought. As the drought condition for a farmer is an overwhelming issue, to some extent this led people to discuss mostly about water and related issues often overlooking the other issues related to credit and market which are also critical for farming.

The effect of the project is visible and the communities could easily perceive the changes as 'before' and 'after' the project. Such tangible changes motivated them to further work collectively by identifying the key issues. Many proposals came from the community for a way forward

based on what they have learned and achieved through the project. The outcome could be validated by information collected through the survey, project database, and community experiences and observations.

There are a set of constraining and conducive factors as identified by the staff, community and observed during field visits that influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the objective.

Barriers and Drivers	
Barriers	Drivers
Remote scattered locations difficult to reach	Local animators an advantage
Low rainfall and drought conditions	Project addressed community needs
Difficult to mobilise men to form groups	Panchyath supported the programmes
Conflict with microfinance operators	Good community participation
Transport for people and produce	Women leadership is very effective
Migration of men in some areas	Trainings, exposure, and visits helped
Difficulties and delay with departments	Revolving fund and credit
Non-participants in villages causing trouble	Visible and tangible benefits

## 5.5. Efficiency

The efficiency level of the project is assessed based on the project management systems, finance and accounting management, cost effectiveness, local resource mobilization, and cooperation with other stake holders.

**Project management:** The project management is strongly based on a well developed planning and monitoring cycle. This includes collective planning; preparation of annual, quarterly and monthly work plans; and monitoring through periodic reports and review meetings. The integration of finance and programme planning is also well structured in the organisational level. The programme team is well aware of the budget details, which indicates transparent operation that ensured proper programme planning.

The experienced staff team, supportive leadership, transparent organisational culture, and structured project management practices are very effective, as all such planning, monitoring, and evaluation practices are visible and related documents are available to ensure project management efficiency.

**Finance management:** The financial management systems of the organisation are well maintained with all required policies such as Finance and Staff policy and many other thematic policies and guidelines. The accounting structure and process are developed into flow charts for easy understanding and practice. Staff benefits are mentioned in the staff policy and paid as stipulated in the budget.

Cash basis of accounting with the double entry system is followed. Accounting is computerized, currently using Tally accounting software 9 ERP with monthly back-ups. Designated FC account is maintained and money is transferred from the FC account to specific project accounts based on a weekly cash flow statement developed from a monthly work plan. Bank account is operated by Project Director jointly with either Secretary or Treasurer. Proper systems are

established for cash management, advance management and budget control. Monthly budget monitoring sheets are prepared and placed before the Project Director and programme staff to review the expenses against the activities planned. In this way there is a good level of financial integration with the programme and financial data are also used as indicators for programme monitoring.

There were a few deviations for which prior approvals are received and there is no change noted in the expenses without budget approval or special approval from the funding agency. The requested changes, the budget details, amount, and approval received are well maintained for internal monitoring and external verification. Audit is regularly done with a management letter from the auditor.

Budget allocated to each category of expense and specific activities are transparent to all programme staff which enable them to prepare a realistic work plan. This practice enables to maintain good budget control, as the project is implemented with annual, quarterly, and monthly work plans and review systems for monitoring against the plan.

Overall the financial management and accounting systems are good and realistically linked to planning and implementing programme activities, which in turn helped to maintain good level of budget control.

**Cost effectiveness:** According the proposal, the total budget for a period of four years, is € 5,13,333. So an amount of € 513333 is spent for 8,660 families. This means around € 59 is spent for a family for the total project period of four years. This is € 119.7 per year per family. This is 1.6 Euro per month. With an average family size of 4.8, this will come to around 42,656 people. This means around € 12 is spent for a person for four years which comes to three Euro per year per person.

Considering the returns for the community in terms of community infrastructure, community organisations, community resources, and community competency, and linkages this is overwhelmingly cost effective and value for the project money invested.

Moreover, the project has generated a local resource of Indian Rs. **1,86,38,900** including community contributions and funds directly availed from government schemes. This comes to an average Rs. 45 per month per family. The project money spent for a family for a month is Rs.108 (1.6 Euro) and the local resource generated by the project per month per family is Rs.45. This local resource generated through the project is above 48 percent of the project fund.

Though the project fund is utilised to some extent to develop part of the revolving fund, this amount is used only after generating the desired project impact. Such amounts, after the project activities, are added in to these community funds for continued and sustained operations.

The project attempted and succeeded to mobilise resources and services through mainstream linkages wherever available and possible. This helped to complement the project results and individual family benefits and also to sustain the impacts.

The cooperation from the local government (panchyath) and elected leaders had served as a vital feature for effecting project deliverables. Specifically, the support was very evident and

crucial in the cleaning of the lakes and construction of watershed structures. Besides the cooperation, this required clearance at the panchayat level, from the Block Development office, and revenue departments of the government.

## 5.6. Sustainability

The sustainability element is basically assessed based on the community related project outputs and impacts, which covers sustainability of the community organisations, financial sustainability and that of the proposed business models.

The elements of sustainability for enduring project outcomes are inherently built in most of the project results. This potential for continued existence is high in the case of promoted CBOs, especially the Interest Groups; Water Management Committee, and the Producer Company. All these three entities have an economic activity as the driving agenda and high level of community participation and ownership. While in the case of village level Interest Groups the savings scheme and the credit facility for the members serve as the drive, the WMC is registered as a legal entity operating the revolving fund for loans. In the case of the Producer Company, though in early stage, has the potential to function as a self operating organisation by procuring inputs and marketing produce of the members. The share holding in the company ensures community ownership. In addition, the project has impacted on the local livelihood context of the farmer community with changes in the water management, cultivation process, and alternate farm based livelihood options. The community has high expectations on the Producer Company that the company along with the other small businesses will support financial sustainability by offering services and income to the farmers and also to other non-member farmers in the region.

Many project activities serve as measures for capacity building. The capacity built at the community and project staff levels ensures sustainability of many initiatives, as people have developed capacity to retain and manage certain level of operations. The infrastructure developed as part of the project outcome will also continue as the CBOs are willing to manage them. The community owned CBOs; the community competency, the watershed infrastructure built; and the established linkages during the project period would be retained permanently.

The Producer Company perhaps might require further hand holding. In the case of Producer Company, though the potential is high, it is complex to operate and more a centralized structure which requires professional support with more specialized inputs and time to mature into a business. There is a general expectation among the people and staff that RCPDS will continue its association and support in some form. "We will take care, but we want continued support in some areas" is the expression in general.

Almost all the project initiatives have recognition from the village communities, local government and other associated government departments. The WMC has gained a brand that will enable them to sustain. Equally, the Producer Company has also generated expectations and hope among the community and staff, and realisation of it much depends upon how it is taken forward from here.

## 5.7. Innovations and good practices

- **Community based approach:** The project with a purpose of improving the livelihood of selected marginalized farmer families opted for a community mobilization and aggregation approach. Many agriculture based livelihood projects focus on individual families or members of the family with an emphasis on technology and value chain. But in a rural setting, the collective approach is fundamental for aggregation of people and their produce. Such aggregation only will empower communities to avail benefits and ensure reasonable returns. Collectivization of people through a community based approach and aggregation of products is a first and relevant step in economic strengthening. The mobilization and organisation of communities into CBOs have become the essential component for livelihood intervention of marginalized communities. Moreover, such organisations ensure the sustainability of the initiatives beyond the project.
- **Local, regional and central level approach:** The project connects communities with CBOs at a local, intermediary, and apex CBO structure, with defined roles at each level. While the IG functions at the local village level, the WMS functions at the regional (Panchyath) or intermediate level. The WMC and the Producer Company, both registered, functions at the apex or central level.
- **Dissemination through Path-breakers:** Farmers were introduced to sustainable practices through training for learning and exposure visits for direct experience. A few of them have ventured into adopting the new ideas and practices. Such path breakers who came forward to experiment eventually became the disseminators of the practices and their field functioning as an informal field schools for local farmers to visit and witness that such practices work in their areas too.
- **Documentation and data base:** The project documentation and data base are well maintained. The problem identification and proposal process were done based on a comprehensive baseline survey. Such field studies and documentation practices continued all through the project with organised data readily available with the project team.
- **Building on what exists:** The project to the maximum utilized what already existed in the field and built on what the community already had. Such an approach of 'building on what is already there' has become a need based and effective interventions. This also includes, in some cases, reviving the traditional practices that were not followed in the recent times.
- **Local participation:** Participation of local leaders, especially panchyath leaders is a good practice and enabled to achieve and broad-base the project results. Though there were difficulties with some government department in the process of obtaining permissions and approvals, in almost all villages the local government representatives have extended good cooperation. Even the initially difficult collaboration and understanding with the government departments improved over a period of time.

- **A sense of belonging** Animators are selected from the local villages which helped to establish rapport and made mobilization easier for the formation of village level groups. The local presence of animators also helped them to understand local issues and also be available in the project area for longer time. Working for their own village also resulted in ownership and a sense of belonging to the animators and local leaders associated with project activities.
- **Cost effective methods:** The project introduced a few cost effective methods to arrest soil erosion which are new to the area. Specifically, the introduction of vetiver plantation, which is a medicinal plant; trees whose leaves could be used as organic manure in fields; and a few grass varieties that could be also used as a fodder for cattle.
- **Participation of children:** Children are not only beneficiaries of the project results, but they are participants of the programme in various ways. A children cultural team functions for awareness generation on environment, health and hygiene and climate change mitigation processes. The Children Eco Learning centre is also used to promote climate change awareness.

## 5.8. Lessons and challenges

- **Basin approach instead of selected lakes in villages.** The project plan included selected lakes in the nine selected Panchayats. In some villages there is more than one lake. In many such cases these lakes are interconnected, though they serve different set of lands and farmers who own land around these lakes. The project team felt at the time of implementing that it would have been more effective if a basin approach was taken to cover all the lakes in a village instead of developing one in the village, though the selection of one lake was done after intensive studies and deliberations.
- **Staff learn agriculture and business practices:** Project team was well trained to take up the project. They have gained good working knowledge on agriculture, watershed, and organic farming practices, and issues around marginal farming. Special trainings and exposure visits helped them further. This learning, according to the staff, has given them a confidence to understand issues, relate with farmers, and manage the project activities confidently. Secondly, along with agriculture related issues, staff could also learn some business dynamics and business management skills which were not available in other types of programmes.
- **Tangible results and participation:** Most of the staff expressed that the results are very tangible in such a livelihood programme. As the interventions are so close to the life and livelihood of people and also participants could experience concrete changes within a short span of time, this motivated the communities to involve. Their participation level was very intense. In fact, communities owned the activities that motivated the staff also to involve.
- **The remote nature of villages** While selecting the villages utmost care was given to choose the right and deserving villages. But while implementing the project, what was considered as the deserving locations became a challenge due to their remoteness and

low income families who struggle to subsist. Mobilising them with a hope to improve was a real challenge. As the animators were selected from the local villages this was addressed, but still it was a challenge and learning that care has to be given in choosing the villages with limited staff strength and travel budgets.

- **The microfinance companies:** Some microfinance companies had their operations already in a few villages selected for the project interventions. They lend high amount of loans to families with a high rate of interest. The attempt to organise people and establish a community credit scheme irked some of these companies who tried to break groups so that they can continue their business as they feared that a low interest rate loans from the project might disturb their business.

**Drought since the inception of the project:** The major challenge was the decrease in rainfall after the baseline survey. According to the data from the Regional Research Station in Aruppukottai, the project area had an average rainfall of 54.53 mm in 2013 at the time of the baseline. In 2016, it was 38.35 mm. The current year, when the project ends the whole area is facing a severe drought. As the location is totally dependent on cultivation, people seem to be helpless without rain. “What to do without rain” is the repeated question from people with a hope that things will improve. This was a challenge to improve cultivation and increase income in a drought context, in spite of many interventions helping to limit the damage.

- **Seed banks.** Seed banks were started with lot of enthusiasm; soon it was found that these seeds had less moisture and low germination rate. The hybrid seeds could not be preserved using traditional methods of storing as it was done with traditional seeds. Due to this limitation, the attempt to develop seed banks could not be continued as this would affect the productivity of the farmer. This challenge was overcome by linking the farmers with government certified seed units to purchase seeds instead of storing on their own.
- **Approval from government departments:** Though local government leaders are very supportive of the project activities and many Panchayaths and leaders participating in the project, there were difficulties to get approval and mandatory sanctions from government departments for some activities such as cleaning the lake or construction of a watershed structure in a government managed lake. This is due to the complex procedures and negative opinion of the project as a threat to expose the functioning of the departments. In spite of the full cooperation and involvement of the farmers in the village, this continued in many places as a challenge, though towards the end this changed after the officials witnessed the work done in other villages.
- **Difficult to sustain the men groups.** Though 57 Interest Groups were promoted, and all are functioning, only 45 are more active and vibrant. The other groups, mostly men groups, are not active compared to these 45 groups. Though initially all groups were active, it became difficult to sustain men groups as they were not much interested in savings but rather interested in developing water sources and cultivation practices. Spending time in group meeting is another constraint.

In a review process, it is important to assess and understand the outcome of the project by looking within the 'project frame' as what is achieved against what was proposed. But it is equally, perhaps more, important to understand the changes from the ground as how the community perceives, experiences, and expresses the changes in their life relating to the project interventions. So an end programme evaluation of a project is not limited to the project framework only, which is basically a tool for planning and monitoring, but rather the process goes beyond to the larger issues and changes. This assessment covered both these aspects to arrive at certain conclusions and propose a way forward.

Overall, the project has reached the number of beneficiaries and accomplished the envisaged outcome as committed in the project framework with insignificant variations. This is evident from the collected data through the survey and the perceptions of the community, which was further validated with available project data and experiences of the project team through a participatory process.

The project aimed to address certain problems, identified as the key causes for the socio economic conditions of the client communities. The list included the following: shortage of water, low level of awareness and poor maintenance of water infrastructure, soil erosion, reduction in food crop cultivation, increased cost of production, landless and women headed families, malnutrition, poor sanitary conditions, migration, and lack of access to government schemes.

Based on the available data and community perceptions, changes have happened in all the above areas resulting in better water management, organic cultivation practices, new income generating opportunities, access to credit, improved sanitary conditions, and access to government schemes and resources. These changes have also resulted in increased production, income, and improved nutrition, in spite of low rainfall and a drought in 2016-17. Besides, the interventions have become instrumental for women empowerment as women who function in CBOs have emerged as community leaders, and also created more opportunity to generate income and manage money.

**Potential to continue:** The community organisations, infrastructure and other economic activities initiated by the project have the potential to continue. However, this has to stand the test of independent functioning in future in the event of decreasing external support from the project. The collective models though have community ownership and potential to function independently, also have the risk of suffering from conflicts in the absence of an external support and conflict resolution mechanism. Such conflicts in future, without an option for moderation, could lead to dissolution of the groups. However, the project initiatives and outcome, in general have potential for a high success rate even in the absence of any support system. This is because many of the project outcomes inherently have the key ingredients of sustainability such as community ownership, community resources, community infrastructures, community leadership, and mainstream linkages.

**Women empowerment:** One striking impact from the data, community perceptions, and observation is the change in the status of women. The project measures have helped the

empowerment of women, especially, in the rural context. Though women empowerment is not defined prominently as a project outcome, except the selection of women headed families and adolescent girls for certain interventions focusing on them, considerable changes have happened in their life. In fact, the number of women leaders in the CBOs is defined as an indicator in the project frame. Perhaps gender issues are considered as an underlying cross cutting theme in all interventions and impacts. In addition to the benefits to the women headed families and adolescent girls, high participation in CBOs, access to credit, training and financial support to start economic activities, and money they hold have really empowered women. Women saying, “now we have money in our hands”, is a valid empowered statement.

**Water the lifeline:** The programme, though comprehensive by covering all issues identified through the baseline, water gets more attention than the other problems, as it is the primary issue in farming. Moreover, farmers express rain as the main reason for their livelihood crisis. Water, seems to be the lifeline of livelihood in rural areas as expressed by communities. In most of the villages, people equate water with rain, as the only source of water an indication of fertility. They state that rain and drought directly determine their wealth and poverty. Lack of rain, due to the gradual decreases in rainfall over the past thirteen years, is perceived as the primary reason for failure of agriculture, low income, and migration. In this context, people in general, discuss about water management concepts and practices that RCPDS has introduced through this project.

**Beyond water:** Though water is the primary issue with respect to the farmers in the target areas, there are other issues that emerged where interventions and external support are required for the community. The key issues that emerged are: access to credit, promotion of sustainable agricultural practices including water resource management practices in the context of decreasing water and increasing cost of cultivation; and access to market. The two main risks the community faces are health issues including nutrition, and drought as a disaster that strikes very often. Direct mitigation measures are required because these two have the potential to disturb community livelihood options.

**New livelihood options:** The project focused to add value on farm based livelihood opportunities. Or rather, the beneficiaries were selected who are involved in farming and associated activities. Though this is an advantage to work on what the community already had, this was also a challenge as people could not be exposed to other livelihood opportunities which have potential in the area. If such options were made available, perhaps some people would have chosen the new options. Perhaps, there should be more locally potential livelihood options and models available for the communities to choose the best suited for them.

**Climate change:** The significant observation is that people have understood a change in the climate pattern where the rain pattern has also changed. Drought according to them, which was rare in the past, is now happening periodically as a cycle. Rain during off seasons is another changing phenomenon that in turn disturbs cultivation patterns. As the pattern of climate is changing, people find it difficult to predict seasons which is fundamental in traditional farming. This unpredictable climate changes cause crop failure and loss to farming communities.

**Project and financial management:** The project management and financial management aspects are worth mentioning as there is a clear planning and review process established in the

organisation. The integration between the programme and finance sections are evident in the knowledge level of programme team on budget and other project related financial aspects, as well the finance section is aware of the programme plans and implementation. Many financial data are available with the programme team, ensuring an integration and transparency in operation.

**Documentation and database:** The documentation processes and systems are well developed in the organisation that is reflected in the project. Database is well maintained, as at anytime any data is available with the team if not easily retrievable. Project decisions are always taken based on studies, surveys and technical assessments for which end documents are available to support.

**Supportive leadership, participation, transparency as development values:** The supportive leadership and transparent culture are very evident in the organisation that is reflected in the project management side also. The financial and programme planning practices reflect strong elements of participation, transparency, and supportive leadership. Many staff continuing for many years in the organisation and the continuity of the project team for the total project period, without much attrition, is an evidence for this.

## 6.2. The way forward

A way forward is an attempt to look at the future through the project learning, specifically with reference to the sustainability, strengthening, and replication aspects of the project outcome. Besides, it aims to review the potential of the project in bringing changes in the life of marginal people and their livelihood context and also to contribute to the wider development efforts. The way forward includes a plan to strengthen and sustain the project outcome and also plan future interventions based on the learning and emerging needs in a changing context.

### 6.2.1. Sustaining the project initiatives

The project assumed that the community organisations, community capacity, established linkages, and all business models that generate income - individual or collective, would continue beyond the project period. The Watershed Management Committee and the Producer Company which are registered and have clear roles to play in operating the revolving fund and creating market linkage respectively could continue to function with the money generated from their operations.

In principle, as the project envisaged, the model has the potential to sustain, as the project outputs contain fundamental elements required for sustaining a development initiative. The two key existing ingredients are the level of community ownership, and the revenue model of WMC and MAPC.

Communities expressed hope and high level of confidence that their initiatives will continue. "We will continue" is what in general they convey. But almost all believe that RCPDS will continue to support them, perhaps even play a larger role. This thinking might change or people might face difficulties once the project support is tapered or completely stopped. It is to be seen, when it happens. However, as of now, the potential and community resolve is there to sustain initiatives which are part of the project results.

- CBO models such as IGs, promoted as part of project initiatives, normally function in many places even after the project period. However, over a period of time many groups get dissolved due to internal conflicts. Experience reveals that even after the project team withdraws an economic activity for the group as a driving agenda, and an external support mechanism for arbitration or mediation are necessary to resolve emerging conflicts in the group. Strengthening the existing CBOs is a key follow up, necessary for another period of time to sustain them.
- Moreover, it is essential to explore the possibility of changes in the Interest Groups into Self-Help Groups (SHG) or Farmers Club formats, following established guidelines to link and avail benefits from entitled schemes. It will be difficult to link the groups with the mainstream resources and services in the current format, specifically with NABARD and Banks. This restructuring will improve access to mainstream linkages and benefits, and also sustain the groups. Mainly this would require changing the names, and fulfilling other stipulated functional and governance practices for SHGs and Farmer Clubs.
- The Producer Company requires further support in mobilizing resources and offering professional management. This requires a realistic business plan as the company formation process is completed towards the end of the current project period. Resources could be mobilised by raising share capital from more members, and approaching financial institutions and government schemes for funds. RCPDS could continue to extend capacity building and initial operating support. If the company becomes successful, the income would take care of its operation.
- It is also important to realise that aggregation, which is essential for any business model for reaching adequate volume, should have to be limited to the manageable level. When collective processes move beyond the manageable size, then aggregation becomes centralization, making it more complex to manage.
- Water Management Committee, which is the other registered entity, manages the revolving fund which would continue. Now the loan amount is restricted to the availability of funds limiting the number of people who access credit and also restricting the individual loan amount. The loan amount needs to be increased; otherwise people will be borrowing from multiple sources including money lenders. As other lenders follow rigorous collection methods, the loan repayment to the WMC could be compromised. Moreover, if people could not access adequate fund for an economic activity, it is difficult to start that activity; and even if they start, it ends up in cash flow issue leading to the collapse of the unit. Though this will mostly apply to business models, it is essential to increase the loan amount by rising the revolving fund reserve. As internal funds are not adequate to meet the credit needs of the community, it is necessary to mobilise from other sources by linking with mainstream banks and financial institutions. Linkages with socially motivated Micro Finance Institutions are also an option to explore.
- The project measures helped to increase water retention in the lake in spite of low rate of rainfall, with the current year facing severe drought. Many farmers are looking into the options of bore well to extract ground water for cultivation. Intensive use of ground water, in a few years time, will deplete ground water reserve causing severe water shortage in the area, including drinking water shortage, as it has happened in a few locations in Tamilnadu where intensive ground water cultivation has led to severe water shortage.

## 6.2.2. Planning for future interventions

The future plan is proposed based on the learning from the project, community responses, identified key issues through the assessment process, and the development approach and role the implementing organisation decides to choose. This also includes the structure and role of the promoted institutions, especially the WMC and the MAPC.

### Issues for Intervention

**Water:** In general, people express their concern about low rainfall and repeated droughts in recent years. They specifically mention that rainfall has been gradually coming down during the last ten years period and the water bodies in villages are ignored or encroached. This is a direct cause for the gradual decrease in cultivation in many villages. According to villagers, they get adequate rain only once in five years on an average, which has almost become an established pattern in recent years. People are aware that low rain and drought cause a chain of events that result in migration to other places for jobs.

6.1. Rain fall Data (mm)					
Tamil Nadu Agricultural University					
Regional Research Station, Aruppukottai					
No	Month	2013	2014	2015	2016
1	January	3.8	6.4	0	0
2	February	15.8	2.5	0	0
3	March	29.1	0	37	4.6
4	April		17.2	116.4	4
5	May		196.6	53.6	83.4
6	June	48.1	13	43.8	6.2
7	July	0	47.8	76	0
8	August		27.6	13.4	73.4
9	September	53.8	70.6	66.4	82.8
10	October	138.4	127.9	91.4	132.2
11	November		135.6	254.2	16.6
12	December		9.6	82.2	57
Total		654.37	654.8	834.4	460.2
Average (Yearly)		54.53	54.57	69.53	38.35
Rainfall (raining Seasons)		163.59	163.7	208.6	115.05

The monthly rain fall data for the area from 2013 to 2016 reveals that in general except the year 2016 which is almost 50 percent less than the previous years, the other years from 2013 to 2015 the annual average is almost the same. But vast difference of more than five to ten times between the same months of different years is noticed. This is a clear indication that the rain fall pattern has changed rather than the rain has failed. As the pattern has changed, it is difficult to predict the season and cultivate. According to this data, during some years, the rain fails at the required months, rather than decreased annual rate.

In such a context, it is important to improve water storing facilities and water management practices, and adopt sustainable agricultural practices. Cleaning of lakes, and water shed development with a basin approach is an essential intervention in the target area instead of only a limited number of lakes are renovated and improved. Along with the project support and community contributions the options of mobilizing funds from government and other agencies like NABARD could be explored for this intervention. Water being a key issue at the village, this requires working towards efficient water management measures and also address water related policy issues.

**Bridging with ground water:** To improve water availability and avoid crop loss, an option of using bore wells as a 'bridge arrangement', was proposed by the farmers. This model is not to cultivate using ground water but only to save the cultivated crops in times of emergency where the crops are in the verge of failure due to one or two final spells of water. This could be done by digging common wells in the lakes and managed by a neutral person appointed by the local community/WMS. This is an arrangement only to manage emergencies to save the crops and avoid total loss, when a crop could be sustained with a final spell of water.

**Sustainable Agricultural Practices(SAP) :** Agriculture and related occupations are the dominant livelihood source of the target area, though some people work in other sectors mostly when agriculture work is not available. Farming has become a non-remunerative activity in recent times due to many reasons. The water shortage due to seasonal changes and cost of external inputs make agriculture expensive. Besides, the focus of farming is on the crop and its yield ignoring the sustainability of the soil. This leads to low production that in turn requires additional input of chemical/macro nutrients. This is a cycle that needs to be broken at a point to revive sustainable agriculture. Current conventional farming practices contribute to 28% of GHGs in India which contributes to climate change and lead to food insecurity, income instability, and higher vulnerability.

There is a need to enable farmers to use appropriate agricultural practices to make farming as a viable livelihood option that also contributes to food security and environmental sustainability. Promoting sustainable agriculture practices, which do not exclude organic practices, could be a way to manage water shortage and cultivate efficiently within the available resources.

**Equipments and implements:** Appropriate introduction of equipments and implements increase production and reduce work related drudgery. Farmers from certain villages expressed access to use of agriculture equipments. As these equipments are expensive there was a proposal to develop common facility centers from where farmers can hire them for a rent. This could be a revenue activity for the Producer Company or individual entrepreneurs could be trained to manage these units as an enterprise serving the community and generating income. There was a request from a few farmers group for the need to support using equipment. Though on one side introduction of equipments reduces labour opportunities, from a production side this reduces labour time and production cost.

**Access to Credit:** Access to formal and timely credit is crucial for any livelihood activity and economic security. In case of agriculture, credit input is crucial because timing is critical in farming. Credit emerged both as a benefit availed by many members and as a dominant issue in all villages, though the borrowing from informal money lenders has reduced. Since asset

creation is negligible and savings are limited due to low income, rural families depend on credit for meeting emergencies and even consumption expenses during off seasons. The community request is to increase the current loan amount. This has to be done by increasing the revolving fund reserve, and creating access to formal sector credit by linking the community with banks and other schemes. WMC that manages the revolving fund credit system could be strengthened and supported to manage the credit system and broaden its scope.

**Market:** Whether small or large farmers face challenges to cultivate and market their crops. There is a consistent disparity between price for the produce and the cost of inputs. From a development point of view, the solution is by establishing direct linkages and value addition at the farmer level. Direct linkages to market are widely acknowledged as a means by which small farmers can gain an advantage against depending on the intermediary based traditional marketing practices. Both the traditional and emerging marketing mechanisms and prices are not in favour of the farmer as they lack adequate volume.

“Linking farmers to markets” or value chain approach involves capacity and a range of activities. The low volume products and remote locations are the primary barriers for accessing the market. Aggregation helps to overcome these constraints. Producer Company, with farmers as members, is a good option for addressing the low volume and high marketing cost of a product. Establishing and improving linkages with buyers and suppliers as a ‘community collective’ such as a producer company has numerous advantages.

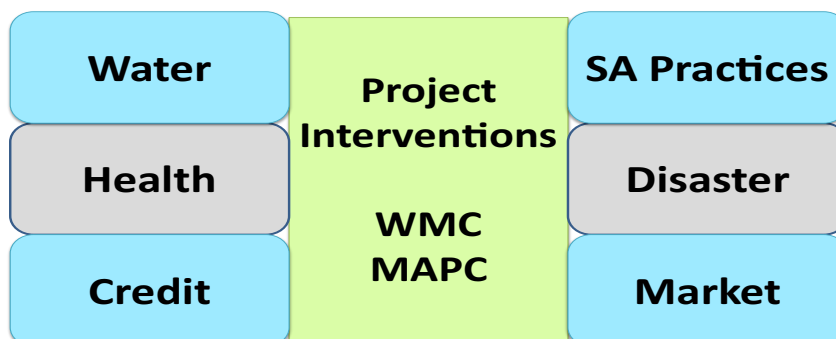
### **Livelihood risks**

The two major risks that affects rural livelihood in general and farmers in particular is health issues and disasters, especially in this location drought.

**Health:** Health is reported as a major risk among rural low income families, directly affecting them and causing malnutrition and exposure to infections among children. Health problems reduced productivity, caused loss of wages and medical expenses for many families. Lack of availability of and access to health care facilities due to remoteness are explained as reasons. Moreover, people have low health seeking behaviors due to lack of awareness and also financial constraints. Promoting health awareness, improving access to health care services, and hygienic practices and facilities are essential interventions to mitigate the risk caused by health issues on rural livelihood. Enabling families to enroll in State Health Insurance Scheme and accessing other health security measures are possible options.

**Disaster – Drought:** The project area is prone to drought which is a risk that needs to be addressed. Drought is a common phenomena reported to happen on regular intervals in these areas. People observed that they are affected by intense drought once every five years. According to them this is above the regular water shortage and loss of crops. Drought is the root cause for low income and migration that mostly affect children. Migrant families have problems in sending their children to school. Families could be linked to mainstream security measures such as crop insurance and government benefits during drought.

### Proposed Intervention Model



#### The role of WMC and the Producer Company

The two registered organisations with specific roles to play in the future intervention plan are the WMC and the MAPC. The WMC continues to operate the revolving fund by increasing the fund volume, loan size, and number of beneficiaries. WMC could grow by accessing credit from mainstream and MFI sources. A nominal service charge and/or the interest charged on the loan should be able to manage the operations of the entity. If the operations are expanded and professionally managed, the option of WMC becoming a Community Finance Institution or a Micro Finance Institution in future could be explored to serve the community better.

The Producer Company will take care of the marketing areas. The company on one side could procure and produce inputs and supply to the member farmers and others. On the other side, it could procure the produce from farmers and market for higher prices. These backward and forward linkages will ensure cost reduction for cultivation and increased income in marketing. Along with this, as requested by many farmers, MAPC could establish common facility centers for renting out agriculture equipments and implements to members. This could be also done by the MAPC as a unit of its own or by motivating small entrepreneurs at panchayat level to run this as an enterprise service to the community. Creation of such revenue models will ensure the service beyond the project period. This requires a business plan and initial financial and capacity support through the project till the organisation is sustained.

Linking the CBOs with agencies like NABARD and government departments will ensure quality service and sustainability of the company.

#### Mainstreaming and role of RCPDS

Project initiatives aim to directly impact on the life of a specific number of people in a selected location within available resources and timeframe. In addition to such attempts of bringing changes in the life of selected target families, it is also important to demonstrate workable models that could be disseminated for wider impacts and policy influences benefiting the entire farming communities. In addition to serving a number of families, building models and

developing innovative approaches in a limited location, focusing on an issue or specific problem with mainstreaming linkages, generate larger and lasting impacts.

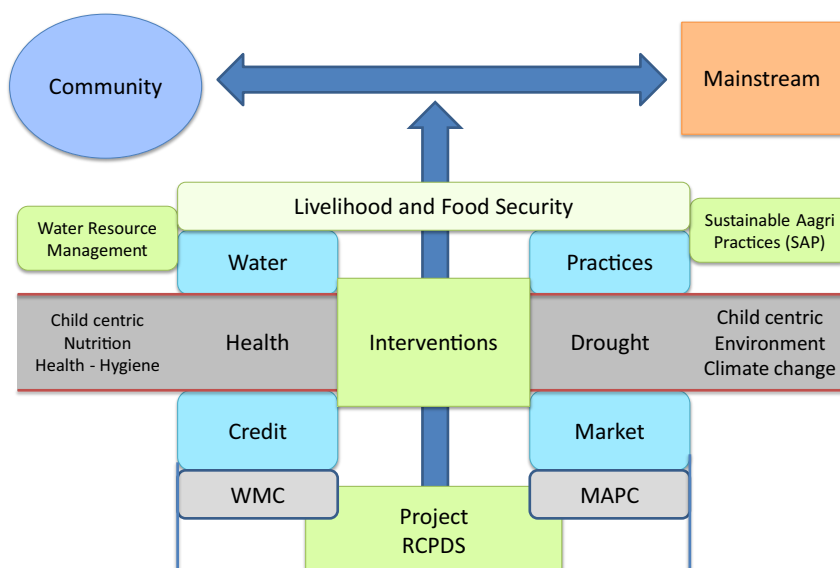
Mainstreaming is the key for sustainability and influencing policy changes. Conducive policy framework and access to mainstream services and resources are fundamental for sustaining community initiatives. This applies to all areas such as building infrastructure, promoting sustainable practices, and access to credit and market. Addressing health and drought related issues also get sustained if mainstream linkages could be established.

This mainstream approach to sustain community organisations and community services also impact on the project approach and the role of the implementing organisation. Instead of providing inputs directly from the project, the mainstream approach facilitates the community and community organisations to access mainstream services and resources as entitlements. The project role is limited and focused to facilitate the linkages through a set of activities such as capacity building, and bridging the gaps wherever necessary.

The MEALS strategy works well in this model which includes **M**otivating, **E**quipping, **A**ccompanying, **L**inking, and **S**ustaining as five steps.

In a mainstream approach, though still the community is the main beneficiary, the focus of the activities will be on the 'thinking processes' of the community with mainstream resources and services. In this approach, the project interventions primarily serve as processes to prepare, build, and utilise a formal working linkage between the community and the mainstream resources and services. Mainstreaming includes preparing and equipping all stake holders, including the mainstream players, linkage building through viable models, and policy work. The role of the implementing organisation also changes from a provider to a facilitator.

### Mainstreaming Project Approach



## Looking beyond the project framework and project locations

### *Epilogue from the evaluator*

Efficient natural resource management and reviving and promoting traditional agricultural practices is a current and relevant project approach in development as rural poverty, climate change impacts, and over exploitation of resources affect marginal people more. Besides, this is in a way denying the resources for the future generations.

But, such project initiatives that work for sustainable water use and enhanced production operate in very limited but scattered geographical locations targeting a small number of selected families. In this project, the affected geographical area is large, but only 35 villages in nine Panchayaths could be selected as the target area. In this selected locations only 8,860 families are identified as the beneficiary community.

From a project mode, it is relevant to report that, the project mobilised, trained, and linked so many farmers to better water use and organic practices. Watersheds are developed in eight villages. A good number of project beneficiaries accessed credit, constructed toilets, and started small businesses associated with farming to develop new income sources.

But measurement of achievement in this way, limits the development efforts to a small section of farmers with a short-term time horizon. Moreover, the process of achieving measurable “results” in the project, often overrides the need for long-term sustainable development plans and changes in the livelihood eco system. Given the relatively small number of farmers able to benefit from direct project interventions, it becomes relevant for the end project evaluation to assess how the development sector could apply the project learning at a broader and long term perspective that is beyond, not excluding, the project frame and measurable project results. Such a move requires using learnings from projects to evolve programming processes with long term perspectives aiming at larger impacts.

Secondly, the present emphasis on the, ‘natural resource management and associated activities for aggregating farmers into producer companies and other community based structures and linkages, is seen as a sustainable model. This approach appears to offer a higher possibility of success than some previous development initiatives that involve more of direct delivery to selected beneficiaries.

In this background, any project learning should pave the way for two key aspects. One is devising ways and means for scaling up to avoid the impacts and learning being only limited to the project location and targeted families. The second way forward option is to work for an enabling environment with supportive policies, institutions, services, and infrastructure for the communities to effectively manage their livelihood practices.

**Working on the livelihood context:** Livelihoods form part of social, economic and political contexts. Institutions, social relations (consider here that majority of dalit families are landless), governance, and policies and policy practices such as markets, social norms, land ownership, access to resources, and other practices affect the ability of a household to access and use resources for beneficial results. All these factors are interlinked and capable of creating

obstacles or opportunities for livelihood. Communities and all the other players, including the market - both the traditional and emerging, operate in this wider livelihood eco system.

The Producer Company and value chain or market linkage approach, which is currently considered as a better approach than the previous ones to improve the life and livelihood of marginal farmer families, may lose its preference soon in the sector, if the learning from such approaches are not broad-based.

In this background, possible future direction is equal focus on community competency, mainstream linkages, and the livelihood context; perhaps working more on the livelihood context, that include policy environment, legal and regulatory framework, and the infrastructure. This is imperative as the mainstream resources and services are primarily determined by the existing policy context.

**Integrating livelihood support with the rights approach:** Market solutions for social problems or 'making market work for the poor' are apparently considered alien to the right based approach to livelihood. A right approach to livelihood and the market approach, though understood as conflicting positions are in reality integrally connected to each other. In fact, community competency and market linkages in a hostile policy environment have limited development scope. With all efforts on competency building for increased production and market linkages, it is imperative to develop public policies, within human right framework, to address the imbalance.

The danger is shifting from one approach to the other, rather than integrating both from past learning. Instead of enriching the process through emerging experiences, the tendency to change from one to the other creates a dichotomy that causes conflicts; while by integration these two approaches could complement each other.

In fact, in livelihood development interventions, the right approach could not exclude the market solutions. Only such an integrated approach and interventions will enable and ensure a secure livelihood beyond the project impacts. Instead of shifting from one approach to the other, integrating the project learning of both the approaches into the programming processes is the challenge facing the development sector. Livelihood project learning should pave the way for enrichment and integration instead of creating parallel approaches.

Livelihood is the most relevant and central issue around which the right and market issues could be integrated, as there is no other important agenda for excluded communities than achieving their livelihood rights. In a way, such an integration effort could sustain the project impacts and also facilitate lasting changes in the livelihood eco system. It is critical to develop such a supportive environment, where communities, markets, linkages, and consumers work better to benefit all.

## Baseline indicators and project result

<b>Objective: 1</b> 1,500 farming families dependent on irrigated farming grow and harvest food crops on a regular basis				
No	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Average available Irrigation water from tanks for a maximum period	60 to 120 days	Minimum 120 days	109 days
2	Farming families engaged in irrigated farming have a successful harvest per year	30 %	60 %	72%
3	User-based water management committees	Nil	8 Committees	100%
<b>Objective: 2</b> 4,000 farming families dependent on rain-fed farming cultivate in ways that conserve water and land.				
No	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Farmers engage in organic farming and/or measures to protect soil and water	13 %	35% of the farmers engage in organic farming and 60% use measures to protect soil and water	44%
2	Average yield in kg per acre (some 4,047m <sup>2</sup> ) for the primary crops	Table A-1	30% increase	Table A-1 (34% )
3	Cost of production of major crops	Table B-1	40% reduce 25 % expense	Table B-1 (4% )
4	Farmers use techniques for improving crop yields and water use.	13 %	45 %	47%
<b>Objective: 3</b> 1,600 landless families and women-led households improve their regular income possibilities.				
No.	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Landless families use leased land	Nil	20 %	19%
2	Women-led families are engaged in livestock raising	17 %	40 %	20%
3	Landless households involved in crop processing, value addition and marketing of harvest products	1 %	125 (8%)	39%
4	Landless women have representation in the WMCs	Nil	36 women participation	12 women
5	Average annual net income	Table-C-1	Annual Income increases by Rs.10,000	Table C-2 Rs.40,000 in an average

**Objective: 4** 2,500 families improve their sanitation equipment and personal hygiene.

No.	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Access to own toilet facility	5 % (50)	1700 (68%)	63% (114 out of 180)
2	Families with female adolescents have knowledge on health and health care	90 %	100 %	98%
3	Families report regular infections and snake bites	90 %	20 %	96% reduced
4	Female adolescents report verbal abuse/teasing	90 %	20 %	96% reduced

The target communities have access to various state institutions and public services

No	Indicator	Baseline	Target	Achieved
1	Families have awareness, access to public services and programmes	Table D1	25 %	100% Awareness about various Government schemes Table D 1 shows how much they availed it. (38%)
2	Landless persons are able to exercise their right to use common property resources and water and sanitation services.	20–30 %	60 %	22% availed water and sanitation; not responded on cases of exercising their rights on common properties
3	Children of migrate parents deprived of going to school	15 %	90 %	100% migration reduction

Table A – 1 Average Yield per Acre (in Kilos)				Table B – 1 Average Cost in Rs			
No	Variety	Baseline	End line	No	Variety	Baseline Cost	Endline Cost
1	Groundnut	499	545	1	Groundnut	13,285	12,716
2	Paddy	1418	1919	2	Paddy	11,938	12,811
3	Black gram	303	73	3	Black gram	7,113	4,031
4	(IC)	79	55	4	Green gram (IC)	1,788	3,140
5	Red gram (IC)	200	78	5	Red gram (IC)	1,438	1,389
6	Cotton		217	6	Cotton		9,621
7	Jowar		247	7	Jowar		7,000
8	Pearl Millet		225	8	Pearl Millet		4,500

<b>Table – C - 1</b> <b>Average Annual Income -Baseline</b>		
No	Types of Farmers	Amount
1	Landless	28,263
2	Catchment farmers	33,902
3	Command farmers	34 255
4	Women headed families	22,453

<b>Table – C - 2</b> <b>Average Annual Income – End line</b>		
No	Types of Farmers	Amount
1	Landless	74,722
2	Catchment farmers	92,608
3	Command farmers	82,793
4	Women headed families	45,111

<b>TABLE D 1 Public Schemes Aailed</b>	<b>Baseline</b>	<b>End line</b>
Agriculture credit facilities	7	19 out of 180 (11%)
Land Development Schemes (SWC related)	5	2 out of 180 (1%)
Irrigation related schemes(drip/Sprinkler)	3	3 out of 180 (2%)
Seed/Sapling subsidy schemes	10	46 out of 180 (26%)
Public Distribution system (PDS)	99	173 out of 180 (96%)
State health Insurance Scheme	40	69 out of 180 (38%)
Noon Meal Scheme for Children	73	111 out of 180 (62%)
Livestock Schemes (dairy, goat, sheep, poultry)	15	20 out of 180 (11%)
MGNREGA	83	171 out of 180 (95%)

### Objective 1

1.1. Annual average irrigation water from tanks for the command farmers found to be 109 days with a range of 30 to 180 days;

1.2. Though 74% reported that cultivable land has not increased, but 72% of the respondents (command farmers) reported that yield has been increased and 9% reported that neither increase nor decrease of yield;

### Objective 2

2.1. 44% of the catchment farmers applying any one/many of the following organic inputs (vermicompost, panchakavya, bio-pesticides, general wastes and cattle wastes) to their lands and doing summer ploughing and field bunds as part of soil improving measures.

2.2. Average yield of crops seems to be increased in cases of groundnut and paddy; And instead of black gram, red grams they started cultivating cotton, Jowar and pearl millets as they are more drought resistant crops

2.3. Average cultivation cost of Groundnut reduced significantly against baseline. Whereas cost of paddy cultivation has increased by Rs. 1,000 against baseline but for an average increased yield of 500 kilos; also cultivation cost of certain drought resistant crops is not available at the baseline which is why we are not able to compare at the end line; Not able to reduce significantly due to drought and increase in input cost.

2.4. 88% of catchment farmers use organic manures and 83% use goat waste for improving crop yields

### Objective 3

3.5. Average annual income of all beneficiaries has been doubled from baseline. This is not the surplus after the expense. The input expense also increased

# TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR FINAL EVALUATION STUDY OF THE PROJECT

## SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT OF LOCAL AGRICULTURE AND LIVING CONDITIONS FOR MARGINALISED FAMILIES

Implementing Agency	Funding Agency
<i>Resource Centre for Participatory Rural Development Studies (RCPDS)</i> , Plot No: 7, 6 <sup>th</sup> Street, Park Town, P&T colony, Madurai 625017	<i>Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Kindernothilfe (KNH)</i> , Germany

### Introduction

Resource Centre for Participatory Rural Development Studies (RCPDS) and its German partner organization Kindernothilfe e.V. (KNH) are looking for a qualified consultant or team of consultants to conduct the final evaluation of their project Soil and water conservation for a sustainable improvement of local agriculture and living conditions of marginalized families. The proposed assignment is expected to take place in April 2017 and the final report should be submitted no later than May 15th, 2017.

The project is funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and KNH during the period 1st May 2013 to 30th May 2017. A baseline was conducted at the start of the project to establish the baseline values for the identified indicators. The midterm evaluation took place in August 2015.

### Project Background

The project is implemented in the Virudhunagar District, Tamil Nadu, (southwest) India. Round about 141,000 people live in the project area, in the Tiruchuli and Narikudi blocks. The two blocks consist of pan-chayats (administrative units at the community level). The measures take place in nine of these pan-chayats (Agathakulam, Illupaiyur, Kuchampattipudur, Nallukuruchi, Nathakulam, Pi Ilaiyarnatham, Sennelkudi Udayanampatti, Veerachozan).

The project aims to benefit at least 8,860 families directly, with at least 42,656 people, including round about 16,304 children spread across two blocks viz. Narikudi and Tiruchuli of Virudhunagar district, Tamil Nadu, India.

**Rationale:** Because of irregular and failing monsoons, the selected 9 panchayats are regularly affected by a shortage of water for farming. A part of the existing water catchment and management areas with harvesting and storage facilities for surface and rain water are silted as a result of erosion and bad maintenance; they are covered by bushes and in dire need of rehabilitation. Their storage and conveyance functions are not good enough to ensure that all fields are supplied with sufficient water. The responsibility for maintaining the water infrastructure is with the local government departments for agriculture and agricultural engineering together with the local self-governing units (Panchayati Raj Institutions); some of them favour other development priorities or do not react correspondingly because of their limited funds. These institutions also act independently and in uncoordinated ways when it comes to maintenance and assignment of water use rights. For example water use rights are allocated randomly, often to the detriment of marginalised families.

In addition, the available surface and rain water is not used effectively and efficiently. Technologies and good-practice examples for the efficient use of water in farming are not sufficiently known in the project area. Less and less land is available for traditional food crops because of mono cropping, in particular sugar cane. In part, land remains fallow and is not used by its owners, because it has become less fertile – as a result of erosion; while others have no land for farming. An attempt has been made to use more fertilisers to fight the loss of fertility of farming land, but that boosted production costs. The families who were unable to cover such costs had to put up with lower crop yields as well as lower revenues and were forced to buy additional food.

Since poor people cannot afford to pay the high food prices, especially during the dry season; the consequences are malnutrition and undernutrition. According to data of the government's lunch register and the primary health care centres, more than 20% of the children and mothers are malnourished or undernourished and show signs of anaemia and/or scurvy. The deterioration of the nutritional status has also affected the people's health status, entailing lower overall productivity and a deterioration of individual living conditions.

Only few households have sanitation equipment in place, while some of them cannot be used or can only be used to a limited extent because of the bad design and the lack of connection to the public disposal system. Some people wait a long time before they toilet in public, often until it is dark. This is conducive to infections of the urinary tract, for example. In addition to health aspects, darkness is also a problem for reasons of safety and security, because especially women and children are at risk of being bitten by snakes and other animals and, in particular, female adolescents become victims of sexual assaults and abuse by third parties. In combination with inadequate nutrition, the lack of knowledge about required and regular hygiene measures leads to a strong incidence of avoidable diseases like diarrhoea.

The a.m. problems also result in various child right violations: Children from families who depend on farming for their livelihood must work hard in the fields and are thus prevented from going to school. As families migrate to urban centres during the dry season to look for work in industrial production centres, some of the children also have to work there under hazardous circumstances or are deprived from going to school because of the temporary migration.

Marginal and poor families cannot feed their children adequately or provide them with food of the required quality, so children are poorly fed or malnourished, which is an obstacle or hindrance to the children's physical and mental development.

Even if various government services and programmes are available for marginal families in rural areas, in theory at least, they cannot make use of them, because in reality they are often deprived from accessing them – be it because they lack information or because they lack competences to claim their rights.

Through the project with its planned interventions the direct target groups will be enabled to solve the described problems in the project area and to improve their living conditions. They will learn new strategies and methods for diversifying their sources of income and will make better use of the available resources. Children and adults will also get the opportunity to learn the methods of integrated farming on organic demonstration plots. To be able to increase the effectiveness of the demonstration plots, sufficient water supply is required here as well.

The overall project framework is annexed to the ToR

**The key activities under each of the specific objectives are listed below**

***Specific objective 1:***

- 1.1 Slope/topography study/watershed mapping
- 1.2 Rehabilitation and de-silting of lakes, village ponds, sluices, waterways and feeder channels
- 1.3 Foundation, training and follow-up of the WMCs

***Specific objective 2:***

- 2.1 Soil and water conservation activities to prevent erosion
- 2.2 Establishment and maintenance of seed banks
- 2.3 Introduction of organic farming methods
- 2.4 Training in organic farming and soil and water conservation
- 2.5 Promoting integrated farming by involving children and youths and improving organic demonstration plots

### ***Specific objective 3:***

- 3.1 Livelihood promotion through agricultural production on collectively used land
- 3.2 Rehabilitation and de-silting of lakes, village ponds, sluices, waterways and feeder channels
- 3.3 Livelihood promotion through socially responsible entrepreneurship related with farming

### ***Specific objective 4:***

- 4.1 Building toilets for 250 households
- 4.2 Awareness building on personal hygiene and environmental sanitation
- 4.3 Tree planting and anti-pollution campaign

### ***Specific objective 5:***

- 5.1 Trainings for CBOs in good governance
- 5.2 Networking of CBOs with banks, government agencies and civil-society representatives
- 5.3 Tree planting and anti-pollution campaign

For detail information; the soft copy/hard copy of the baseline report, soil study, project proposal and the granted amendments to it as well as the midterm evaluation report will be provided to the winning consultant.

Given the requirements, a robust M&E system is inbuilt with the project and the evaluation design focuses on measuring the outcomes and impacts as well as its attributes to the project through a before-after-control-treatment study. Baseline study was conducted by the project at the start using this method and benchmark for all the key performance indicators were set out.

Two evaluations were envisaged during the project implementation cycle to provide information about the project's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The mid-term evaluation was designed as a self-evaluation, accompanied by external consultants: it has made specific proposals for improving the project implementation.

As per the project design and learning requirements for future programmes, the key stakeholders of the project (RCPDS, KNH, BMZ, and target communities) wish to undertake a final independent evaluation study to understand the extent of achievements of project objectives, impacts on key target segments, its attribution to project, sustainability and inform ways forward.

The end-term evaluation will specifically look into the issue of sustainability and identify proofs of the project's benefit at the project objective level and, if applicable, the benefits for the target group at the

level of the overall goal (cp. BMZ's understanding of the results chain); the purpose will be to summarize lessons learnt for the project-executing agency, Kindernothilfe and, not least, the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development so as to guide them in implementing similar projects in the future.

### **Purpose and objectives of the Evaluation**

The purpose of the independent final evaluation is to assess the overall performance of the project with respect to achievement of its stated objectives, impacts created and its attribution, ownership of communities and sustainability impacts, extract learning and good practices from the intervention and provide recommendations. This includes the implementation of recommendations agreed upon from the midterm evaluation.

The assessment on achievement of stated objectives should estimate the achievement of project targets on the basis of the formulated end values (compared with their baseline values) for each indicator.

Therefore, the independent final evaluation report needs to be a substantial document that

- (a) answers all key evaluation questions as mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR),
- (b) provides findings, evidences, insights and conclusions that can be objectively verified
- (c) where necessary supplements the project's own data with independent research findings

The key objectives of this final evaluation are to.....

- Collect data from appropriate samples of beneficiaries to determine the project-end values of project indicators
- independently assess the project's achievements as per agreed plans– inputs-activities, results and outcomes (as against end line targets)
- Assess the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency of project implementation and level of ownership by project beneficiaries and other actors
- Assess the impacts created among key target segments and its attribution to project, likelihood of sustainability of these impacts
- Assess the impacts of the changes made based on the findings of the midterm evaluation.
- Recommendations based on evidences and insights

### **Methodology and Scope**

It is suggested that the evaluation study shall adopt mixed method design using both qualitative and quantitative tools and covering adequate number of samples. However, the consultant / team of consultants is/are encouraged to propose an evaluation design which they feel best suitable to achieve the

purpose of the mission. It is recommended that the evaluation team should ensure extensive participation and involvement of the primary and secondary stakeholders of the project throughout the study processes

## **Evaluation questions**

The evaluation study should respond to the following questions:

### **Relevance**

- To what extent were the project objectives, strategies and approaches relevant to the needs and priorities of the target communities?
- Have there been any changes in the context of the project during project implementation and what have been the steps taken by the project to accommodate those changes?

### **Effectiveness**

- To what extent were the inputs-activities carried out by the project in line with agreed plans?
- Have there been any deviations from plan, if so how did these affect project implementation, achievement of results?
- To what extent has the project achieved its intended results and outcomes; what are the evidences?
- What were the key drivers and barriers affecting the delivery of results for the project?

### **Efficiency**

- To what extent did the project understand cost drivers and manage these in relation to performance requirements?
- How efficiently have the resources been utilized to achieve the objectives, have there been any deviations from the planned budget and actual spending, if so, can that be justified?
- How well the project adopted gap-funding approaches by efficient use of BMZ/KNH resources and avoided duplication of efforts?
- In how far has the project succeeded in harnessing local resources? Have communities and stakeholders made adequate contributions to the project (in terms of local labour, materials, provision of land...)?
- Has the project made use of available cooperation with other actors to avoid doubling of efforts, use synergies and ensure complementarity through a targeted use of funding?

### **Sustainability**

- Are there any evidences that the benefits delivered by the project will be sustained after the project ends?
- What are the means or institutional support system established by the project and how strong are they to ensure continuance of project activities?
- To what extent have the project beneficiaries and local stakeholders owned the project and are willing and capable of sustaining it?

## Impact

- What have been the impacts on key target group - their livelihoods, women and children?
- To what extent can these impacts be attributed to the project, and what are the other facilitating factors?
- Are there any significant impacts on the secondary stakeholder groups – their attitude, policies, support to communities etc.?
- Are there any unintended positive and negative impacts?
- Are there any signs that one or more of the project's results have been taken up by local actors to be further developed or replicated?

## Learning

What are the lessons learnt from the project implementation in terms of

- new approaches/strategies adopted, new innovations,
- reducing inequalities with respect to gender ensuring children rights,
- good practices and models that can be up-scaled and replicated,
- assessing the implementation of recommendations of the midterm evaluation,
- identification of potential gap areas to reach the unreached within the panchayats or need for further collaboration to strengthen or sustain the impact?

## Timeframe and Tasks for the evaluation

The overall timeframe for the evaluation will be 30 days from start of April 2017 and should comprise the following tasks:

- Review and validation of project reports and other secondary data available with the project (project proposal, log frame, baseline and mid-line reports, annual reports etc.)
- Finalization of evaluation design, development of tools, sharing with project team and incorporation of suggestions
- Evaluation of project impacts with target population (field work) and other key stakeholders
- Identification of potential needs and recommendations
- Debriefing meeting with project team to share the findings and submission of draft report
- Submission of final report

## Experience/Expertise of the consultant or team of consultants

The consultant / team leader should have the following expertise:

- A minimum of ten years of experience in development sector
- A minimum of five years of experience in conducting evaluations of development projects, preferably for international donor organizations
- Project planning and management
- Log-frame and use of results based management approaches
- Development of evaluation design and frameworks
- Conduction of evaluations with specific to watershed management, livelihoods, agriculture and children
- Design and development of rigorous impact evaluation designs
- Use of participatory approaches in impact evaluations
- Analytical and Documentation skills, presentation of reports
- Excellent command of English and fluency in Tamil
- Familiar with and sensitive to the local culture

## Deliverables

- Final Evaluation Report (in English)
- Study tools
- Datasets (complete and organized)

## Report Structure

The main body of the report (draft and final versions) must be limited to 30 pages (this can include or exclude annexes). The report should be in English.

The suggested report structure is,

- 1) Executive Summary
- 2) Introduction
  - a. Purpose of the evaluation
  - b. Logic and assumptions of the evaluation
  - c. Overview of KNH and BMZ funded activities

### 3) Evaluation methodology

- a. Evaluation plan
- b. Strengths and weakness of selected design and research methods
- c. Summary of problems and issues encountered

### 4) Findings

- a. Overall performance
- b. Coherence
- c. Effectiveness
- d. Efficiency
- e. Sustainability
- f. Impacts

### 5) Lessons learnt (where relevant)

- a. Project level - design, implementation and management
- b. Policy level
- c. Sector level

### 6) Conclusions and Recommendations

- a. Summary of achievements against evaluation questions
- b. Possible way forward
- c. Recommendations

### 7) Annexes

- a. Independent final evaluation terms of reference
- b. Evaluation framework
- c. Data collection tools
- d. List of people consulted
- a. Details of the evaluation team

### **Mode of Payments:**

Payment will be made only through Cheque or Online money transfer. The schedule of payment is given below

- 30% on signing of contract
- 30% on submission of draft report
- 40% on approval of the final report

### **Roles and responsibilities of RCPDS:**

- Provision of all key project documents to the evaluation team for reviews
- Support in finalizing the design, methodology, scope and sampling criteria
- Feedback on study tools
- Coordination support for organizing meetings, workshops for field study processes
- Logistical support for field travel, accommodation, food (if needed)
- Release of funds as per payment schedule.

### **Contacts:**

For any clarifications on the ToR, the consultant can approach Dr. John Devavaram through mail [rcpdsmdu@gmail.com](mailto:rcpdsmdu@gmail.com)

## About Pragma consultancy

### About Pragma consultancy

**Pragma Consultancy**, a pool of development professionals providing services to client organisations for assessing performances, building capacities, and enabling to deliver on their development goals. PRAGMA originates from the development field experience of more than two decades and works with a team of development professionals with a variety of educational backgrounds and experience in diverse thematic areas. PRAGMA, with its human resource base, network organisations, infrastructure linkages, and capacity to work with NGOs and communities, is qualified and experienced to undertake such evaluation and deliver. PRAGMA provides services to client organisations for improving efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability; and better delivering on their development goals. PRAGMA originates from the development field experience of more than two decades. PRAGMA works with the expertise of a team of development professionals. PRAGMA, with its human resource base, network organisations, infrastructure linkages, and capacity to reach NGOs and communities, offers development consultancy and accompaniment services.

### **Key service areas of PRAGMA include.....**

- Building collaborations and partnerships with private sector
- Designing, and implementing CSR initiatives through network of NGOs
- BoP innovations for addressing social issues and community livelihood promotion
- Developing CSR projects to improve core business with sustainable social gains
- Joint programmes to build capacity of communities and NGOs
- Exposure programme for executives to understand social/rural issues and strategies to address
- Facilitating working linkages with local NGOs for implementing CSR based services to neighbourhood communities on specific thematic areas
- Establishing rural marketing channels for socially valuable products
- Strategic planning and organisation development process
- Facilitating workshops and participatory planning sessions
- Conduct series of evaluations using participatory and scientific approaches
- Website content development, designing, hosting, and maintaining
- Facilitating network promotion and developing coordination systems
- Integrated PME systems and processes for effective project management
- Project proposal formulation process with the engagement of community, staff, and other stake holders

**RESOURCE CENTRE FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT STUDIES  
(RCPDS)**

No 6 & 7, Park Town, 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Post & Telegraph Colony, Madurai – 625 017.  
Ph. 0452 – 2642172 – Email : rcpdsmdu@gmail.com

**Project : Soil and Water Conservation for Sustainable Improvement  
of Local Agriculture and Living Conditions for Marginalised Families**

**Project No. : 21682**

**STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS  
FOR THE PROJECT PERIOD  
MAY 01, 2013 TO JUNE 30, 2017**

**Funding Agency : KINDERNOTHILFE e.V., 47249 Duisburg, Germany**

**GOPAL & MURTHI**

Chartered Accountants

New # 48, Old #.157, Luz Church Road, Mylapore, Chennai – 600 004.  
Ph. : 044 24990060/24992908 - E-mail : gopalmurthi.ca@gmail.com

## GOPAL & MURTHI

Chartered Accountants

Partners:  
A.GOPAL  
A.VIJAYAKUMAR  
A.MURALIDHARAN

No.48, Old No.157, Luz Church Road  
Mylapore, Chennai – 600 004  
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E-mail : gopalmurthi.ca@gmail.com

### AUDITORS' REPORT

**To the Members of  
Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies, Madurai**

1. We have examined and audited the attached Statement of Accounts of Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies, ('RCPDS') Plot No. 6 & 7, Park Town 6th Street, Post & Telegraph Colony, Madurai - 625017 for the project period May 01, 2013 to June30, 2017, in respect of the project "Soil and Water Conservation for a Sustainable Improvement of Local Agriculture and Living Conditions for Marginalised Families" ('the Project'), Project No. 21682 prepared in conformity with the accounting policies stated in schedule 5 to the financial statements. These financial statements are the responsibility of the RCPDS management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. However, we have relied on the documents furnished by RCPDS and taken into consideration of the Management's decision in the manner of utilisation of funds for the appropriateness and the contractual obligations of RCPDS.
2. We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in India and in accordance with accounting principles with the "Guidelines for Financial Statements of Projects funded by Kindernothilfe (KNH)". Those Standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.
3. The Management of the M/s. Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies, of the project "Soil and Water Conservation for a Sustainable Improvement of Local Agriculture and Living Conditions for Marginalised Families" ('the Project'), Project No. 21682" ('the Project') is responsible for:
  - a. Completeness, consistent and accuracy of the underlying data and complete disclosure of all material and relevant information and explanation to the accountant
  - b. Maintaining adequate accounting and other records and internal controls and selecting and applying appropriate accounting policies;
  - c. Preparation and presentation of financial statements in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations, if any.
  - d. Establishing controls to safeguard the assets of the entity and preventing and detecting frauds or other irregularities.
  - e. Establishing controls for ensuring that the activities of the entity are carried out in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations and preventing and detecting any non – compliance.



## GOPAL & MURTHI

Chartered Accountants

Partners:  
A.GOPAL  
A.VIJAYAKUMAR  
A.MURALIDHARAN

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- f. We have relied on the receipts and documents / vouchers submitted for the expenditure incurred by RCPDS.
- g. The Expenditure are in conformity of the Financial Plan and the Project executing Agency have been specified wherever necessary.

The compilation engagement was carried out by us in accordance with the Standard on Related Services (SRS) 4410, "Engagements to Compile Financial Information", issued by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India.

#### 4. We report that:

- a) **We hereby certify** that we have audited the statement of accounts of "Soil and Water Conservation for a Sustainable Improvement of Local Agriculture and Living Conditions for Marginalised Families" ('the Project'), Project No. 21682" ('the Project') - Resource Centre for Participatory Development Studies, ('RCPDS') Plot No. 6 & 7, Park Town 6th Street, Post & Telegraph Colony, Madurai - 625017 in respect of the financing of the project "Soil and Water Conservation for a Sustainable Improvement of Local Agriculture and Living Conditions for Marginalised Families" ('the Project'), Project No. 21682"

**We state that, while conducting the audit the following documents were made available to us and have been verified by us**

- Books of Accounts and Vouchers together supporting documents for receipts and payments.

**Following are further documents made available to us in relation to the above project**

- i. Project Agreement,
- ii. Project Proposal,
- iii. Quarterly Narrative & Financial Reports,
- iv. Special Approvals Obtained,
- v. Programme Reports,
- vi. Measurement Books for feeder channel, lake desilting, sluice repair,
- vii. Material Procurement and Disbursement Records,
- viii. Fixed Assets Register,
- ix. Project Revolving Fund Disbursement Mechanism,
- x. Agreement between WMC and RCPDS on Revolving Fund Management,
- xi. Documents related to Agricultural Producer Company

On the basis of verifying the above documents and records, **we further report that**

- b) The Statement of Accounts have been drawn up to correspond with the entries in the books of account as submitted to us;
- c) The expenditures, for which evidence has been supplied, are in keeping with the appointed purpose as set out in the Financing Plan and that there has been NO deviation from the financing Plan and as such the question of explanation for deviation does not arise.



## GOPAL & MURTHI

Chartered Accountants

Partners:  
A.GOPAL  
A.VIJAYAKUMAR  
A.MURALIDHARAN

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- d) The Society has complied with the terms and conditions specified in the Memorandum of Understanding relating to the Project, between the Society and Kindernothilfe e.V. ('KNH').
- e) Proofs of receipts and expenditure have been properly furnished in the form of vouchers.
- f) The amount and origin of income which is accounted for as counterpart contributions made by the project executing agency - RCPDS is "NIL" and that the target group and/or other agencies in the project country have been specified as a " Local Contribution (Monetary Contribution by the Beneficiaries - In Kind)" are as per Project Proposal and they are specified in an annexe to this report
- g) The Compiled accounts agree with the records maintained by RCPDS.
- h) We have received all the information and explanations wherever necessary and they are adequately distinguishing the restricted funds.
- i) The terms stated in the Project Agreement which were set by the donor have been observed.
- j) Special Notes : Excepting those that are specifically stated herein above there are no other special notes.
5. This report is intended solely for use in connection with the requirements referred to in the auditing contract dated March 14, 2014 in respect to the Project and should not be used, referred to or distributed for any other purpose without our prior written consent.

Place : Chennai  
Date : 03-07-2017



For Gopal & Murthi  
Firm No. 000952S  
Chartered Accountants

A.MURALIDHARAN  
Partner, M.No.019387

**RESOURCE CENTRE FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (RCPDS)**  
No. 6 & 7, Park Town, 6th Street, Post & Telegraph Colony, Madurai 625017

**STATEMENT OF APPLICATION OF FUNDS**  
**FOR THE PROJECT PERIOD - 1st MAY 2013 TO 30th JUNE 2017**

Funding Agency : KINDERNOTHILFE e.V., 47249 Duisburg, Germany  
Project Title : Soil and Water Conservation for Sustainable Improvement of Local Agriculture  
and Living Conditions for Marginalised Families  
Project No. : 21682  
Project Period : 01.05.2013 to 30.06.2017

(In Rupees)

Code	Activities	Budget	Actuals	Deviation %
<b>I. EXPENDITURE</b>				
4.1.1	Investments	1,81,71,067	2,45,46,891	135.09
4.1.2	Operational Costs	66,50,235	65,01,822	97.77
4.1.3	Staff	51,12,046	55,43,095	108.43
4.1.4	Project Follow-up Travel	2,83,500	-	0.00
4.1.5	Evaluation Study	20,21,895	12,72,968	62.96
4.1.6	Cash Reserve (For unforeseen additional Exp.)	10,78,515	-	0.00
4.1.7	Administrative Cost	13,32,720	-	0.00
<b>Total Expenditure</b> (Excludes Local Contribution in Kind)		<b>3,46,49,978</b>	<b>3,78,64,776</b>	

<b>II. RECEIPTS</b>				
4.2.1	KNH Grants	3,46,49,978	3,69,72,854	106.70
4.2.2	Other Donors	-	-	0.00
4.2.3	Additional Resources (Savings Bank A/c Interest)	-	8,91,922	0.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>3,46,49,978</b>	<b>3,78,64,776</b>	

**III. Financial Statement as of 31-05-2017**

Opening Balance as of 01-05-2013	-
Receipts during the Period 01-05-2013 to 31-05-2017	3,78,64,776
Less : Expenditure during the Period 01-05-2013 to 31-05-2017	3,78,64,776
Closing Balance as on 31-05-2017	(0)

The Management has confirmed that no funds are available for the financing of the project other than the receipts detailed above. The Management has confirmed that : a) all expenditure are necessary for the project; b) funds were utilised efficiently and economically; c) information given conforms with the books and vouchers.

<p>For RESOURCE CENTRE FOR PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (RCPDS) No. 6 &amp; 7, Park Town, 6th Street, Post &amp; Telegraph Colony, MADURAI - 625017.</p> <p><i>D. Buela</i> BUELA Treasurer Place : Madurai Date : 03-07-2017</p>	<p><i>John Devavaram</i> JOHN DEVAVARAM Project Director</p>	<p>For GOPAL &amp; MURTHI Chartered Accountants Firm Regn. No. 000952S</p> <p><i>A. Muralidharan</i> A.MURALIDHARAN Partner, M.No. : 019387</p>
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Page 1 of 3

## *Some of the Visuals from Project*



## *Some of the Visuals from Project*



# Evaluation Report

