

**Meeting of NGOs Working in Agriculture Sector held on 6th April 05 at NCRC,
Nagapattinam**

Participants:

1. Mr. Vivekanandan, Chief Executive, SIFFS
2. Terry Berger, Project Seed India
3. Ruth Gamston, Project Seed India
4. Sasikala, Kudumbam-Leisa Network
5. Zahir Hussain, CYDA
6. Shajahan, CYDA
7. Azad, CYDA
8. Sudherson Yadav, CYDA
9. Mathew Mattam, CYDA
10. Sivagami, CCD
11. Arun.T.T, CCD
12. Aran Corrigan, Goal
13. M. Revathi, TOFM
14. A. Srinivasan, TOFM
15. Ajai kuruvila, NCRC
16. Annie George, NCRC

Annie George briefed the purpose of the meeting

- Sharing of experiences
- Identifying the emerging gaps
- Understanding expectations
- Identifying and sharing responsibilities and
- Strategizing towards moving forward.

Mr. Vivekanandan delivered the introductory note. He felt that the NCRC had a natural bias towards fisheries as most of the organizational expertise of the organizations that had initiated the NGO Coordination had earlier been involved in the fisherie related issues and had little experience in working with other social groups. Though agricultural people are involved with NCRC, they are busy with their own work. The fact is also that the various issues pertaining to fisheries related livelihood are covered by one single department-ie. The Fisheries Department. When it comes to the Agrarian livelihoods there is little clarity and coordination between the various departments that are involved in agriculture and land based livelihoods. There are many focus areas but no comprehensive idea of what is going on. Thus there is no comprehensive picture available to specify the programmatic content of rehabilitation in the context of the agricultural land affected by the Tsunami. In some of the affected villages good work has already been initiated while in many villages there is hardly any work that is visible. Unlike the fisheries livelihood related issues there is little debate or dialogue to mainstream best practices and evolve a better understanding about how to strategise land reclamation and revitalize agricultural operations. Communities also need to be influenced as they themselves are in a confused state. The introduction was followed by a round of sharing experiences and practices that were being adopted by the various participating NGOs in the reclamation of land.

Covenant Centre For Development- CCD: (Arun)

The CCD team after the two rounds of preliminary assessment swung into action in reclaiming the agricultural land through local knowledge with the help of the farmers and farmer groups from the beginning of January 2005. The team has evolved a 2-phased approach to the soil reclamation process amongst the agricultural communities: the first phase involves the preliminary reclamation process which initiate and facilitate immediate action for the soil

reclamation process by bringing together the community and building confidence through joint activity. This involved deepening of drainage channels, leaching if water availability is high, cleaning and removal of crop stubble from the fields and cleaning up of irrigation tank if salt water deposits are found. Phase two involves organising long-term reclamation process. This is done through formation of village level SHGs with farmers (independent for paddy farmers and g.nut and other farmers) and formation of one federation in each village with the farmers SHGs which will drive the rehabilitation agenda of the agricultural lands that have been affected.

GOAL: (Aran Corrigan)

Goal has its operations relating to land reclamation going on in 9 villages. They initially went through a detailed assessment of each village based on which they prioritized their activities. Of the nine villages one of them had many salt pans that were badly affected. In the other villages the removal of sand and silt from the affected land has been carried out. All activities are done in consultation with the affected community. Water is a big problem in all villages and thus leaching of soil was not an option. There is a need to clean irrigation and drainage canals and this is a major priority. This is the last project of Goal after which they will be pulling out of the Tsunami work (~6 weeks). They are planning to clean 30 kms of canal for which they are awaiting approval from the PWD. 500 acres of land has been cleared of silt. In most areas it was done by a massive cash for work programme and in certain areas mechanized support was used. Goal hopes to systematically transfer the responsibilities of reclamation of land with the Barathi Women's Development Group to continue efforts, but no funding will be provided by GOAL.

Kudumbam Network / LYSA network (Sasikala)

They have three centers in Nagapattinam vis-à-vis Nagapattinam, Vettaikkaraniuruppu and Aakur. In Nagapattinam they are working in 4 panchayats, and in Aakur they are working with 6 panchayats. They are involved in both social and agricultural activities. They have been involved in surveying agricultural land that has been affected by the Tsunami, land reclamation, repairing and providing outlet canals, providing training for agrarian communities in carpentry, tamarind processing, engine repairing etc. They had done a Land Reclamation Survey that has been completed with some government assistance provided for soil testing. They have been incurring a cost of Rs.10,000 /acre in de-silting the affected agricultural land. 5 ponds have been cleaned. 30 trainers have been identified. They have been using cleaned canals to drain salt-laden ponds.

CYDA (Mathew Mattam)-

CYDA has been in the field since the 29 of December 2004. It initially met with agronomist and had detailed discussions about what had to be done to rejuvenate the soil. They also had extensive discussions with AFARM and TNOFT. Initially they had a Cash For Work programme to remove the topsoil that was extensively mixed with saline sand deposits. With the assistance from 30 farmers they removed the topsoil in the affected parts of Pushpavanam. CYDA had carried out soil tests and toxicity tests and had sent the samples to Pune for verification. It found that the toxicity in the affected soil was very low. The soil in Pushpavanam is considered quite good. This coming season the farmers plan to plant groundnuts and simply need only sufficient water to make it happen. CYDA has been encouraging vermiculture pits and collaborating with TNOFT to obtain the necessary worms.

Project SEED (Terry)-

It is a freelance group that started to apply a participative model of business analysis tools to micro-enterprise ideas derived from the aspiration of the affected hamlet dwellers. Team composed of members from US, England, and India (Bangalore, Chennai, and Hyderabad, as well as MBA students from Annamalai University). Their intention is to work with agriculturally focused hamlets, with guided assistance from the respective dalit-NGOs, to derive micro-enterprise ideas that are then tested for feasibility. Those that demonstrate efficacy will then be evaluated against the market dynamics and applied accordingly. Subsequent training in business analysis, as well as the specifics associated with the relevant enterprises, will be performed within and across hamlets. The team has experience in Grameen replication models, advocacy work,

business analysis, marketing, project management, organizational development, and participative management practices.

Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers Trust (Revathi)-

Organic farming techniques and package for desalination and land reclamation was explained in detail, discussed and doubts clarified through the case study of T.P Nallur. TNOFT has 100 training centers throughout TN. They base their work on principles evolved from Agricultural scientist working in TN for over 30 years. It was said that the principal affect of tsunami was the increase of salinity. The average EC was at .65 and is now 3.5. People where told by the NGOs that agriculturl operations will not be possible for the next 2 years. The Carbon content in the soil has dropped and there are no living organisms present in the soil as they have all been pickled by the salt water. As the practice of growing cattle was rare there is little dung to organically manure the soil. In about 60 acres of land there has been an accumulation of 4 to 5 ft of silt/sand. The TNOFT has held orientation courses with the farmers about how to apply organic techniques to their land to revitalize their soil at the earliest. Farmers have become very supportive and are willing to cooperate. TNOFT feels that with the help of the community they can reclaim the land within 6 months. EM solution could be used to decrease salinity in ponds. This needs to be done as the option of digging new new ponds and filling the old ponds with the escavated soil was not an option as there is little agricultural land that will be available for agri operations if the same is done. Further as the salt content was so high the use of fertilizers will not be effective for approximately 1-2 years. Disc ploughing of soil, digging of trenches at the edges of plots and burying course material there would help bioactivity in the trenches, via the microorganisms, which breaks down the salt. The soil then needs to be ploughed with Danche seeds for fixing of nitrogen and this fast growing plant after few weeks can then be ploughed back into the soil. The Danche plants produces great biomass in ~3 months; this when ploughed back into the soil will raise the carbon content of the soil. Mulching the soil will help decreasing the water evaporation rate of the soil. Next Biosolutions are poured in the soil to enrich the growth of essential micro organisms. The starter solution takes one day to mix and prepare. The EM solution are applied at a rate of 0.5L/acre. TNOFT is also building 600 vermiculture units (300 have been completed to date).

General background Discussion:

Initially the NGOs working on Agriculture had approached the Govt. departments and couldn't get any useful help or information even in terms of technology from the concerned departments. They had to find ways of desalination by interacting with farmers

The widely known method was leaching which would need a lot of fresh water which is scarce in coastal areas. Hence it was decided that leaching was not a good option. It was proposed that research about the absorption of heavy methods by plants varieties should be done. It was agreed that issues and conflicts between NGOs working in same geographical areas should be discussed and shared solutions be sought. It was agreed that Arun of CCD should also help in the survey along with Revathi who had already initiated the process. As drainage facilities were very poor and most of it was damaged with Tsunami, it is decided to talk to the Govt. about cleaning up the drainage canals with the help of the PWD.

The status of salt pans in general and specifically about two villages – Agasthiyampalli and Maniyantheevu where entire slat pans are owned by one politician were discussed.

Based on the Pune soil testing report it was said that toxicity level were low contrary to the general fears. According to soil experts there is no need to remove the top soil.

From villages it was learnt that fresh water is the main requirement for reset season crops. It was questioned that what is to be done with existing ponds to make fresh water available for reset crops. The ration system followed in cultivation according to water availability was discussed.

Revathi was expected to help with promo of vermin composting and organic farming promotion to see one season of successful crop. The rains that were happening were discussed. It was felt that depending on topography and nature of the soil the rain will affect the silt that had been removed.

It was felt that Agriculture sector lacked visibility and impact through a concept paper on alternative livelihood through participating education schemes in agriculture was suggested.

An accurate map using GPS was proposed. Spite of the many opportunities in micro and macro level nothing is clear. Hence all information should be compiled and one clear picture should be drawn. Based on this a strategy must be devised for micro level planning and implementation.

Points for Advocacy:

The compensation announced by Govt- GO dated 23/2/05 (The 17 crore rehabilitation package which ensures Rs.12,300 per hectare for 3 years which the farmers would get in installments) was discussed. The GO was felt to be too generic. It does not break down calculations of compensation into specifics based on crop types, loss, etc. The compensation announced was felt to be hardly sufficient as reclamation process and its expenditure varies from place to place depending on the nature of the soil and the amount of inundation and soil accumulation. Further the Agricultural Departments pre-tsunami and post-tsunami packages for the reclamation of salinated land are not aligned.

The second G.O that proposed Rs.1000 per hectare for rain fed and Rs.25,000 per hectare for irrigated lands and in horticulture crops calculation for crop loss based on number of crops in land saw criticism.

There is no lobbying pressure from the side of the farmers as there are lot of in fights amongst themselves and as a community are not organised. Further the farmers are still waiting for earlier drought subsidies and indicate they will take up tsunami subsidies issue after overdue compensation is delivered.

The common experience of crop loss and live loans needs to be looked at for strategizing advocacy steps for a more meaningful compensation. It was decided to workout a scientific method of calculation for compensation package, based on facts and actual nature of loss. It was agreed that CCD would do the calculations for Paddy and Groundnuts. The general crops of the region were listed out for calculation and each NGO was expected to bring calculation details for crops of their working area.

Projects could be drawn for Cash / Food For Work schemes that could be used to revitalize canals and agricultural land.

There is a lot of ambiguity about which department actually is responsible for this sector of wage labourers. Clarity on the compensation that could be given to Agricultural labourers was discussed.

For mapping of all these it was proposed that all NGOs should collaborate, compile list, cost of cultivation and cost of loss.

As there are many NGOs present in few villages (for example 19 NGOs in Pudupettai) and none in many it was decided to identify the NGO interested to work in those villages were little has happen and map it in its entirety.

It was decided to invite more organizations who are involved in agricultural operations to participate in the coming core group meetings on Agriculture.

It was decided to have the next meeting on the 21st at 2:30pm at the NCRC.

List of Organisations Attended the Meeting on 10th February 2005 on AGRICULTURE
At the Conference Hall, Collectorate of Nagapattinam

Sl.No	Name of the Organisation	Address	Contact Person	Phone/E-mail
1	Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA)	Mariamman koil, Pushpavanam, Vedaranyam(Taluk) Nagai	Mathew	09373308126
2	GOAL	Sikander palace,56,new street,Nagapattinam-611001	Aran Corrigan	9865619271 goalindia@vsnl.net goal@sancharnet.in arancorrigan@yahoo.co.uk
3	Tanjavur Multipurpose Social Service Society(TMSSS)	Boomercomplexstres, Nazhukal mandabam, Nagapattinam-611001	Fr.Antonyraj	9443350270 04365-240560 tajmsss@rediffmail.com tmsstanjore_tsunami@rediffmail.com
4	Tamilnadu Organic Farmers Trust(TOFT)	66, Thiruvanaikovil post,Trichy – 620005	M.Revathi	9443343336 revathi73592@yahoo.co.in
5	KUDUMBAM – LEISA Network	No:17,Highways colony, Subramaniapuram, Trichy – 620020	Oswold Quindal	kudumbamtry@eth.net v_gandhimathi@vsnl.com tedetrust@rediffmail.com sasikala24@rediffmail.com
6	Institute for Social Education and Development (ISED)	ISEDNDAG, 1/98,Karpagam street, Thiruvankadu post – 609114 Seerkali(Taluk) Nagapattinam.	Kannathasan	9443853636 04364-2566014 isedndag@rediffmail.com isedndag@hotmail.com kltalm@hathway.com
7	Dhan Foundation	South chetti street,Near middle school, Velanganni.	Babu	9443832861 04365-264974
8	Covenant Centre for Development (CCD)	Perumal kovil street,Mainroad, Poombukar(Post) -609105, Seerkali(Taluk) Nagapattinam.	Sivagami	04364-253649,260220. bhuvanakannan2003@yahoo.com
9	CASA	HA3,Maraimalai nagar,Nagapatt	David, Rajkumar	9444140791 9444142321 04365-247175

		inam – 611001		casanagai@sancharnet.in
10	Sevalaya	Thirukuvalai (post)-610204. Nagapattinam.	Ganapathi	9865780714 sevalaya@rediffmail.com
11	Rejuvenate India Movement	Main Road, Near Indian Bank, Tharangambadi -609313.	Rangarajan	09444208635 09444382062 044-22235133,22235556. alrangarajan@yahoo.co.in
12	Bharathi Women Development Centre.	Kattur& Post, Via Manakkar iyampettai, Thiruvarur – 610104	M.Nagarajan	9443361566 04366-244377. bharathingo@yahoo.co.in
13	League for Education and Development(LEAD)	8/40,1 st Street,Sri Ramapuram (Rayar Thoppu), Srirangam, Trichy-620006.	N.Radha	98424-51234, 0431-2432803. radha_lead@hotmail.com radha_lead@satyam.net.in radha@leadindia.net.in radha_lead@rediffmail.com