



Madurai Symposium 2007
Advancing Development
Building Alliances
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Declarations & Resolutions of Conventions

Launch of Gundar Basin Network of Vayalagam Federations

1. The Gundar basin is the lifeline of farmers in five southern districts in Tamil Nadu. It consists of 2,276 tanks, 1000 drinking water ponds and surface water bodies that are highly prone to droughts and floods. Multi development stakeholders namely the government of Tamil Nadu, Ministry of Water Resources, NABARD, Ministry of Agriculture etc. have to consider the importance of Gundar basin and join hands with DHAN Foundation for continued investment and development of the Gundar Basin.
2. The Gundar Vayalaga Network emerged with Multi-stakeholder Partnership reinforced that Government of Tamil Nadu and/or Central Government have to launch a special programme with 20 years road map in four distinctive basin development phases of five years each so as to develop all the Water Resources of Gundar Basin. This should lead to a concrete development plan worth of Rs. 1000 crore investment.
3. Most tanks are linked hydrologically into cascades and sub-basins and are being managed by different stakeholders including community. As the present tank development programmes are planned by ignoring the importance of hydrologic linkages, that prevents restoration of tanks to its full potential, the convention insisted that watershed development project should be planned based on the concept of chain of tanks not only in the Gundar Basin, but also in other river basins.
4. The convention proudly declared that the Community Organisations like Vayalagams, Cascade Vayalagams and Vayalaga Federations must engage themselves in carrying out Shramdhan to clear the water ways as well as water bodies at least a day in a month.
5. The Government of Tamil Nadu should give priority to promotion of Tank Farmers Associations for implementation of any development programmes in different chain of tanks.
6. Water Resources Development like tanks, ponds and watershed in Gundar Basin should involve an integrated approach through people's organisations formed at different levels such as individual tanks, tank cascades, sub basin and basin and the same institutions have to be involved for effective implementation. The Gundar Vayalaga Network insisted the Government agencies to discontinue the practice of entrusting water resources development works to private contractors.
7. Tamil Nadu Watershed Development Authority and NABARD have to develop special programmes and implement the same at Gundar basin.
8. The convention of people gathered declared that all Vayalaga federations and Vayalagam movement should take promotional role on volunteerism principle to promote new Vayalagam federations in the Gundar basin and thereby it would strengthen the Gundar Vayalagam Federations Network.
9. The convention resolved that the Government of TamilNadu should take stringent action against encroachment in tanks and enforce its encroachment eviction act and create encroachment free water bodies for the betterment of farming community.

Launch of Indian Network of Water Resource Based Farmers' Federations

1. A National level network of Farmers' Federation involved in conservation and development of water resources has been launched. DHAN Foundation would provide needed guidance and support to achieve its purposes.
2. All the eligible farmers' organisations shall enrol themselves in the network with an annual subscription of Rs. 250 and entrance fee of Rs. 100. Membership should be renewed at an annual basis.
3. The development schemes such as National Watershed Development Programme for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRRA) and the Integrated Watershed Development Programme of NABARD should integrate tanks, waterways, ooranis, and ponds in the design and implementation.
4. The watershed development guidelines should be implemented according to the contextual variation of the landscape as classified by our forefathers – Kurinji, Mullai, Marudham, Neithal and Palai with due consideration on location specific development issues.
5. The Government should consider revising the current rates of watershed development works from Rs. 10000 per hectare to Rs. 12,000 per hectare. Also the time frame for implementation should be increased from five years to 8-10 years to ensure completion of development works with higher level of participation and quality.
6. In addition to existing components in watershed development, promotion of SHGs, introduction of savings, credit and insurance services for farmers' families, their crops and livestock, linkages with commercial banks for facilitating credit services should be added to ensure sustainability of these watershed associations.

Convention of Rainfed Farmers

1. Farmers who are practicing rainfed farming need to be organised into Farmers' Organisations to take up rainfed farming as a profitable venture.
2. The primary groups would be federated to take forward continued efforts to increase the family income of the rainfed farming families and advocate for supportive policies.
3. The rainfed farmers' organisations would forge alliance with Tamil Nadu Agricultural University to identify location specific rainfed farming techniques and share across farmers through suitable communication tools.
4. The traditional knowledge of farmers in rainfed farming should be valued, preserved, documented and disseminated among the other farmers.
5. Allied activities such as livestock maintenance, silvi-culture, silvi-pasture and orchard maintenance should be integrated with rainfed farming to make it more remunerative.
6. These rainfed farmers' organisations would work with Government for improving waste lands into cultivable lands through its waste land development schemes. This would be implemented with farmers participation and contribution.

Convention on medicinal plants

1. Since most of the primary level herbal collectors are living in poverty, they need to be organised into Self Help Groups to offer microfinance such as savings, credit and insurance for strengthening their livelihoods and bring them out of poverty. Village level associations should be promoted with these SHGs to conserve the rare medicinal plants of the concerned locality.
2. The Government should provide SHGs of herbal collectors with adequate physical and financial resources for smooth running of their business activities. They should be allowed to participate in the tenders offered by the Forest department to collect medicinal plants.
3. The drug companies and related institutions should forge alliance with these SHGs for building capacities of the herbal collectors on curing, preserving and packing of medicinal plants. The herbal collectors should be provided support for establishing seed bank and godown to store their produces.
4. Local commercial banks should link them and issue loans for their business. The Government should design and implement programmes to strengthen their activities.
5. The associations of herbal collectors along with drug companies should train the members about the quality parameters and industrial standards for each medicinal plant.

Convention of Panchayat Leaders

1. The vital components of Panchayat administration such as grama-sabha, panchayat council meetings, working committee meetings, panchayat elections should be given due respect, power and importance.
2. According to the 11th Schedule of Indian Constitution, all the 29 performing areas should be passed on to Panchayat Institutions with fund, functions and functionaries.
3. All Panchayats should be recognised nodal centres for implementing development schemes of the Government. All the village development schemes should be routed through them.
4. Trainings to leaders of reserved category (women and SC/ST) should be mandated, The State should provide conducive environment for them to act independently.
5. People contribution should be mandated in all the development initiatives. The Government should create an enabling environment to make all stratum of community to participate in the Panchayat affairs.
6. Non partisan based electoral processes should be ensured at all three levels of Panchayats through an appropriate legislation.
7. The Government should take into consideration the annual action plan of Panchayats while allocating schemes and funds, so as to enable them to achieve their .
8. Since the Panchayat presidents also function as an Executive Officer of the Panchayats, the Government should arrange for paying salary.
9. Network at block, district and state level with village Panchayat leaders need to be created and regular conferences on PRI should be conducted at district and state level.
10. Autonomous resource centres at each district should be promoted for supporting legal and technical matters to needed Panchayats.

Convention on Community Based Disaster Preparedness

1. Disaster Management Groups to be formed in all villages to handle the natural calamities. These groups will forge alliance with the Government and related institutions to establish all preventive measures in the villages.
2. Disaster Risk Mitigation Fund shall be mobilized and managed by the Panchayats. Biological barriers to be created in coastal areas with active involvement of the members in all coastal villages.
3. All the families in coastal villages to be covered under life and health insurance programmes.
4. Network of Self Help Groups to be promoted in the disaster prone coastal areas to manage disasters collectively.
5. Disaster management trainings, demonstrations, awareness camps to be organised on disaster management to school and college students in coastal areas.
6. Community based Disaster Management resource centres to be promoted in all coastal districts. District level planning on disaster management to be initiated with the participation of all Panchayat Raj Institutions.
7. Concerned research institutes such as National Institute for Disaster Management, Central Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Anna University to research on traditional knowledge available with the local communities for disaster management. The community based disaster management groups to work in collaboration with these institutions to disseminate research findings to wider use.

Convention of women SHG Federations

1. The leaders of women SHG federations should have clear vision on the purpose of the federation, they should work with confidence and courage and inculcate the same among all the members in the groups. They should build next level leadership and lead the group to achieve its visions.
2. Federation leaders should adhere to duties, roles and responsibilities expected of them, they should be punctual, open to learn and impart the same with fellow members. They should become a role model for other members in terms of honesty, sincerity and self regulation.
3. The leaders should lead the group in a democratic manner, committed and experienced members should come forward to take up leadership roles in the groups and next level institutions.
4. Leaders should share their responsibilities with fellow members and they should accept rotation of leadership once in two years. They should in turn provide space to new leaders and guide them to perform their roles.