



Launching of Gundar basin area water partnership network

Gundar river basin is the primary source of irrigation for farming communities in Madurai, Sivagangai, Virudunagar, Ramanathapuram and Tuticorin districts. It feeds 2, 276 tanks, irrigating 71, 520 hectares of agricultural lands. Encroachments and prolonged mismanagement of water resources have resulted in extensive depletion of ground water table, that led to large scale migration of people. DHAN Foundation's Vayalagam Tankfed Agriculture Development Programme works hand in hand with the farmers of Sedapatti, Thirumangalam, Kallikudi, Thiruchuli, Manamadurai, Mudukulathur, Kadaladi, Thiruppullani, Vilathikulam and Pudur by promoting farmers organisations and their federations. Reviving the Gundar basin and bringing back the cultivable lands under farming would benefit atleast five lakh people living in these areas. As a follow up of an action research conducted by DHAN Foundation with various stakeholders in this basin, the potential for a large scale development plan for Integrated Water Resources Management has been worked out. To discuss on this proposal over 2000 participants from Government Departments, Research Institutions, Educational Institutions, People Institutions, farmers societies, banks and few selected private companies have come together with the Vayalagam federations to meet in Thamukkam grounds in Madurai Symposium 2007, and launched the **network on Gundar basin Area Water Partnership**.

Mr. Rajashekar, Team Leader of Vayalagam Tank Foundation of DHAN Foundation, while presenting the outcomes of the research and plan of action said "Improvement of Gundar Basin area is the need of the hour to prevent migration and bring out socio-economic development among the population who are still living in these areas, which is an important development agenda to be taken up by all the partners collectively." Vayalagam Movement Treasurer, Mr. R. Vasavalingam gave his presidential address. Er. Venkatasamy, retired Engineer in Agricultural Engineering Department gave a special speech on Gundar basin watershed area. Mr. Muthu Santhanam, Tamil Professor of Arulanadar Arts College gave a detailed talk on Improvement of Gundar basin Water base area.

In the inaugural function of Madurai Symposium, Mr. B. T. Bangera, Managing Director of Hi Tech Arai, in his presidential address said, "India will be one among the developed nations by 2020, provided the poorest of the poor are brought out from the exploitation for which the benefits of the information and communication technology revolution happening in the country should reach the poor and needy. India lives among villages – in the words of the Father of our Nation, Mahatma Gandhi; only when all the developmental works would reach every nook and corner of the country".

Ms. Camille Dow Baker of CAWST, CANADA, "Safe drinking water should be easily accessible to the Third World Countries too, which is a big challenge today. In most of the countries people are unable to get access to drinking water within 15 minutes. We



are introducing technologies to get safe drinking water with less cost in Thailand, Sri Lanka, India and etc.”

Director of Environment Department, Mr. K. S. Neelakandan in his address said “Department of Environment works in big cities like Madurai to create facilities for safe treatment and disposal of sewage water.

The department is also involved in working on ways of treatment of waste waters getting mixed in water ways like Coovum river and Buckingham canal to minimise the pollution in them.

Dr. Abhai Kumar, Principal of Thiyagaraja College of Engineering, Mr. Duraisami, Vayalagam Movement Leader, Mrs. Chinna Pillai, Kalanjiam Movement Leader addressed the forum. In the afternoon sessions, farmers and experts were involved in discussing the various problems, issues, possible solutions and action plans related to the Gundar Water Basin were held.

Separate Conferences workshops and seminars were held with members of the community such as farmers, women, technocrats, experts on the following themes – Showcasing JSYS: Role and Relevance of Integrated Tank development in reducing poverty, Provision of safe drinking water through the use of affordable water treatment technologies at household level, Precision farming – a model farmer’s co operative, Issues of water and waste water of Madurai, Pollution abatement in the water bodies of the state coastal zone management, Information need assessment for designing e services in water sector, Showcasing rainfed agricultural technologies of southern Tamil Nadu. More than 750 members participated in these seminars.

At the Madurai Symposium Venue an exhibition with about 100 stalls featuring various products of SHGs, NGOs, government and others was set up for the participants and the public. In the evening the Department of Environment screened films related to the environment and there was a cultural programme featuring the rural folk dances of Tamil Nadu.

The Madurai Symposium, which is a biennial development arena created for facilitating exchange of learnings, best practices, development models by all the development stakeholders across the country is being organised at the Thamukkam Grounds for six days from 24-29 September, 2007.



Notes on photographs

D1P1 – Mr. . K. S. Neelakandan, Director of Department of Environment lightened the ceremony. (from left) Professor, Extension Department, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Dr. Vadivel, Mr. B. T. Bangera, Managing Director of Hi tech Arrai, Mrs. Chinna Pillai, Kalanjiam Movement Leader.

D1 P2 – A section of audience in the Madurai Symposium 2007.

D1 P3 – Book Release – “ Development Conference on Alliance building with NEERKATTIS FOR Water Management” released by Mr. Markandan, Ex. Vice Chancellor of Gandhigram University and the first copy was received by Mr. Anjappa, Leader of Andhra Pradesh, Chittoor District Neerkattis Association, Mr. Gurunathan, Chief Executive Officer of DHAN Vayalagam Tank Foundation is also present.

D1 P4 – Gundar basin area water partnership network launched by Mrs. Chinna Pillai, Kalanjiam Movement Leader.

D1 P5 – Farmers and technocrats in the dais during the launching of Gundar basin area water partnership network.

D1 P6 - Gundar basin area water partnership network launched by Mr. Duraisamy, Vayalagam Movement Leader.