



# Madurai Symposium 2007

Advancing Development

Building Alliances

24-29 September



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## PRESS RELEASE

### Tank based Watershed for Development

Madurai, Sep.25: "Sixty Years since Independence is passed, in the macro environment of globalization and open economy, still the villages in India remain highly integrated eco systems. With explosive growth of population and simultaneously the fast degradation of land, water and other environmental resources, the rural India faces larger section of the population migrating to metros and urban cities in search of livelihoods. Tank based watershed development will be the solution for sustaining farm based livelihoods" - stressed Mr. Panchanathan, Ground Water Expert and Chief Engineer (retd) in the Madurai Symposium, a development convention in Madurai.

Amidst this macro environmental dynamics and with the ever-increasing stress on water resources, watershed development programmes assume greater significance, both for the Government and the farming community at large. In many parts of semi-arid and arid regions of India, low productivity, degraded natural resources and widespread poverty are the major issues to be addressed with sustainable solutions. Watershed development projects therefore designed to harmonize the use of soil, water, forest and pasture resources in such a way that threes resources are conserved besides increasing productivity of crops and improving the moisture level of the delineated area. In Southern India, presence of minor irrigation tanks in plenty numbers (about 1,50,000) and their survival over many centuries with all odds make them relevant to become permanent development interventions in watershed development. As watersheds support both the agriculture and horticulture and also remain the catchments for tanks and reservoirs their productive function is essential for the development of humankind towards prosperity.

In this context, the federations of watershed associations joined together to forge a network at national level to work for inclusive growth through tank based watershed development. The first convention of Indian Network of Watershed Federations held at Madurai Symposium at Thamukkam Ground, has called for multifaceted approach to integrate tanks as a component in the watershed development schemes implemented by various state and central government schemes. Also the convention resolved to sustain the care and maintenance of rehabilitated structures after completion of those schemes.

About 500 farmers' representatives from TamilNadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka attended the convention and discussed and ratified the byelaws for the network. The network has been established to facilitate exchange of best practices and experiences among the tank based watershed associations across these states. Also the network would work with relevant departments of state and central government to advocate enabling policies for safeguarding farmers' interest.



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Mr. Panchanathan, Ground Water Expert and Chief Engineer (retd.) while felicitating the convention reiterated the need for conjunctive use of ground and surface water and the importance of including tanks as an integral part of watershed development. Ilasai Sundaram, retired Station Director (AIR) elucidated the historical legacy of tanks and its role in the socio, cultural and economic development of the rural communities. He called for a concerted and cooperative effort by the farmers to protect water bodies.

The second day of Madurai Symposium was marked by a number of simultaneous sessions such as strengthening e-services in agriculture and allied activities, crop specific issues and strategies, building alliances with neerkattis(water managers) for better water resource management, sensitizing on safe drinking water through youths programmes, building development perspectives in Krishi Vigyan Kendras and community development in slums through JNNURM.

In the evening, cultural programmes by troupes from Andhra Pradesh performed their folk-arts Burrakatha and veerakatha. The third Development Film Festival on Water and People was inaugurated by Ms. Camille Dow Baker, CEO, CAWST, Canada. Four films – woman of dorfak from Iran, winnmem war dance at shasta dam, from USA, the water bearer from Canada, a window facing the sun from Italy were screened to the participants and public. Exhibition cum sale of handicrafts, herbal products, sungidi, kandanki and batik sarees, hand made paper products made by Self Help Group women members is being organized for the public.

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