



SEDS SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT, 2022

Introduction

This project, also described as **Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods with Promotion of Farmers Groups**, is the subject of a new Project Agreement for 2022-2025, which builds on recent past projects.

An MOU between SEDS and PIA was signed in August 2022, followed by a new Partnership Agreement.

Despite disruptions caused by COVID, as outlined below, implementation of the previous project and its successor, has been continuous through the past 12 months.

Local Context

SEDS is a local NGO, founded in 1980, working towards integrated socio-economic rural development in South India's Anantapur District. It is a grassroots NGO in the true sense of the word.

SEDS started its work in this area because families dependent on agriculture in rain-fed areas are among the worst affected by poverty in India. Neither the Green Revolution nor the economic boom have been able to enhance their livelihoods. These farmers and landless "koolies" /labourers are left out of development.

SEDS works in six Mandals in the southern part of Anantapur District, Andhra Pradesh: Roddam, Penukonda, Somandepalli, Gorantla, Chilamathur and Parigi, which together cover an area of roughly 6700 square kms, with a population of some 450 000.

Anantapur district is situated in the middle of the Deccan Plateau, out of full reach of both monsoons. The main issue affecting the area is drought. Inadequate water supply is one of the most significant problems facing farmers in Andhra Pradesh. Rainfall is highly erratic and untimely, and often does not fully benefit farmers and cultivators.

The area is also a man-made desert: decades of deforestation have caused erosion of the topsoil. This process has been the main cause of silting of the traditional village tanks (dams), some of which are over five hundred years old. Tank silt application to farms is an additional cost on an often-tight budget. Consequently, the use of cheaper chemical fertilizers has increased in rainfed agricultural lands.

This project helps fund the machinery to desilt water tanks and apply it to local fields to improve productivity. Each tank desilted is selected in with cooperation by the local village organisation along with a co-contribution of funds.

High demand for tank desilting has continued over the 4 decades PIA has worked in partnership with SEDS.

Goals

Both the new and preceding project aims are:

- to facilitate a strong people's institution responsible for the development process of the rural poor, with a specific focus on women, leading towards this vision through promoting sustainable livelihoods, management of natural resources, community-owned and managed health and education initiatives, and
- to work towards a sustainable environment and enhance and manage natural resources,
 - preventing soil erosion and increasing soil fertility through local inputs,
 - increasing water resources through more efficient catchment, and
 - promoting sustainable agriculture techniques leading to Low Carbon Farming (mixed cropping & farming, attention for food crops, input cost reduction).

Expenditure

The final instalments of the previous project agreement were paid late in mid-2022 due to a number of factors.

The Year 1 budget for the new 2022-2025 project is \$47,900. The first instalment of \$40,000 was paid in August 2022.

Intended and Achieved Actions

The previous project aimed to desilt 2-3 tanks in collaboration with local villages. This was completed in the first half of 2022. It also aimed to continue training farmers in sustainable agriculture and low carbon farming. Fourteen new farmers groups were formed and trained, and their production monitored and recorded.

Risks and Management Action

- An ongoing risk is lack of rainfall or rainfall at inappropriate times which hinders tank desilting and affects crop production. In 2022, rains came on time and were plentiful ensuring tanks were filled, and crops could be planted.
- This risk is managed by SEDS being flexible in timing of tank desilting and working with farmers to adapt their farming practices to follow the climate rather than traditional timing.
- A secondary risk is the imminent retirement of the original and long-standing CEO.
- A succession plan is in place and being enacted to manage this risk.

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