



## Partners in Aid

AUSTRALIA

### SEDS AGRICULTURE PROJECT ANNUAL REPORT 2024

#### Introduction

This project also described as **Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods with Promotion of Farmers Groups** was the subject of a new Project Agreement for 2022-2025. The project has been supported by PIA for many years. Its current format has evolved over the years based on experience and changing conditions.

#### Local Context

SEDS is a local NGO, founded in 1980, working towards integrated socio-economic rural development in South India's Anantapur District and 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 as 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 covering 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. In Anantapur district, 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<sup>1</sup>, 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 on the basis of 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

##### The project aims :

- To facilitate a strong people's institution responsible for the development process of the rural poor with a specific focus on women leading towards the vision through promoting sustainable

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<sup>1</sup> A Tank is a pool or lake, or an artificial reservoir, dam or cistern, used for purposes of irrigation, and as a storage-place for drinking-water.

livelihoods, management of natural resources, community owned and managed health and education initiatives

- 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
  - promoting sustainable agriculture techniques leading to Low Carbon Farming (mixed cropping & farming, attention for food crops, input cost reduction)

## Expenditure

Payments for Year 2 of the project totalled \$50,780.  
\$40,000 on 19 Sep 23 and \$10,780 on 25 Jun 24

## Intended and Achieved Actions

**Tank Desilting.** Desilting was done in Feb and March for two tanks as planned – the Seshapuram Tank and the Cherukur Tank.

Village	No. of Farmers	No. of Loads	No of Cubic meters (Pit Size)	Water Storage capacity (in Liters)	Month & Year
Seshapura	30	1270	3952	39,52,000	Feb 2024
Cherukur	19	832	3000	30,00,000	Mar 2024

The Seshapuram village tank desilting involved 30 farmers/farms - 3 women and 27 men. Their families totalled 111 people.

The Cherukur village tank desilting involved 19 farmers/farms , all men. Their families totalled 72 people.

In all, a total of 183 people in 49 households across two villages directly benefitted from the desilting. Not only did their irrigation capacity/reliability improve but the silt applied to the land improved its structure and productivity. In addition, the entire area benefits from improved replenishment of the aquafer.

**Farmer Groups.** SEDS continues its village Farmer Group meetings and training on sustainable agriculture practices. The emphasis is on organic methods and improving soil health. Broad topic headings include:

Soil and moisture storage methods

Soil augmentation techniques

Good crop management practices

Biomass

Agricultural allied programs

Control and prevention of pests and diseases

Environment Pollution

The System of Rice Intensification (SRI)

Cattle Feed Production

**Vermicompost:** SEDS provided training on vermicomposting for farmer groups, both theory and practice. They facilitated the establishment of cost-effective vermicompost units with supply of free earthworms for 33 farmers, ensuring affordability. They plan to expand this program.

**Future Directions:** Prior to submitting the next proposal, SEDS would like to discuss integration of composting, afforestation and specialty tree planting with a core focus on carbon sequestration.

### Site Visit

SEDS was visited in Feb 2024. We attended Farmer Group Meetings and participated in the start of the Seshapuram Tank desilting. We were satisfied that the project is meeting its goals. It was also obvious that SEDS continues to have a very positive impact on the community as a whole.

### Risks and Management Action

<i>Identified Risk</i>	<i>Likelihood</i>	<i>Impact</i>	<i>Action taken to Mitigate Risk</i>
Lack of rainfall	Medium	Moderate	Flexibility in timing of desilting. Working with farmers to adapt their farming practices to follow the climate rather than traditional timing
Imminent retirement of the original and long-standing CEO	High	Moderate	A succession plan is in place and being enacted to manage this risk. The CEO has been training senior staff and delegating responsibilities. The senior staff are providing all reports.

**Michael Oates, Project Director**

**November 2024**