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AUSTRALIA

SEDS PROJECT
ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2025 AGM

Introduction

This project also described as **Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods with Promotion of Farmers Groups** was the subject of a Project Agreement for 2022-2025. This three year Project was completed in May 2025. A new three year Project Proposal was received, reviewed, and an MOU signed for the period July 2025 to July 2028. This Project continues the successful tank desilting and Farmers' Group management and education with an increased emphasis on the increasingly popular vermiculture program.

This SEDS 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[1], 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.

[1] 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.

High demand for tank desilting has continued over the four 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 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, reduced reliance on chemicals (pesticides/herbicides/fungicides).

Expenditure

Payments for Year 3 of the project totalled $50,780.
$40,000 in Nov 24 and $10,780 in Jun 25.

Intended and Achieved Actions

Tank Desilting. Desilting was done in Feb and March for four tanks, two more than planned – in villages L. Thimmapuram, Lakkasanipalli (2nd desilting area), Budipalli and Upparapalli.

Village	No. of Farmers	No. of Loads	No of Cubic meters (Pit Size)	Water Storage capacity (in Liters)	Month & Year
L. Thimmapuram	28	1165	3500	3,500,000	Feb 2025
Lakkasanipalli	19	750	2835	2,835,000	Mar 2025
Budipalli	28	1085	3672	3,672,000	Mar 2025
Upparapalli	13	480	1550	1,550,000	Mar 2025

The L. Thimmapuram village tank desilting involved 28 farmers/farms - 7 women and 21 men. Their families totalled 101 people.
The Lakkasanipalli village tank desilting involved 19 farmers/farms , 7 women and 12 men. Their families totalled 62 people.
The Budipalli village tank desilting involved 28 farmers/farms , 17 women and 11 men. Their families totalled 112 people.
The Upparapalli village tank desilting involved 13 farmers/farms , 6 women and 7 men. Their families totalled 44 people.
In all, a total of 319 people in 88 households across four 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. At this stage there are 35 Farmer Groups with a total of 563 members; 431 men and 132 women. All are mixed gender except for a newly formed women's group.

The general emphasis is on organic methods and improving soil health. They also include general topics such as Child Protection Policy and nutrition. 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 initial free supply of 2kg earthworms, ensuring affordability. This has shown to be both effective and popular and several farmers have built much larger units and have started selling worms and vermicompost to other farmers/households. To date, 77 farmers have been assisted to set up vermiculture units. SEDS plans to expand this program with evolution to a self funding model.

Site Visit

SEDS was last visited in Feb 2024 with another visit to be completed by the AGM. 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

Identified Risk	*Likelihood*	*Impact*	*Action taken to Mitigate Risk*
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.