

The Independent Commission For People's Rights & Development

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Rayalaseema Regional Level Farmers Coalition Building on Combatting Drought : A Report January - 2003

The Rayalaseema region of Andhra Pradesh consists of four districts - Kurnool, Cuddapah, Anantapur and Chittoor. The entire Anantapur district, major parts of Cuddapah and Kurnool, and parts of Chittoor, are reeling under severe drought conditions. The Rayalaseema Drought Relief Movement (RDRM) (a group of eighteen rural NGOs), and the Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development, (ICPRD), New Delhi organized a two day regional level workshop of farmers for Coalition Building to Combat drought (at Kadiri, Anantapur district). As part of a pioneering advocacy effort, on the issue of drought, the workshop, made a detailed and systematic analysis of the factors / policies leading to the severe crisis and social upheavals. Practical strategies to alleviate the severe economic stress and social turbulence were outlined by multi-stake holders. (67 participants including 20 NGOs from 4 districts of Andhra Pradesh participated in the effort). The major impact of drought as highlighted by the report are given below.

MAJOR IMPACT OF DROUGHT

- Loss of crop - Debt bondage - Suicides
- Distress migration
- Increase in child labour
- Rampant corruption in food for work program
- Fodder scarcity leading to selling livestock
- Trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation, labour.
- Pauperization of farmers

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BACKGROUND

There are many chronically drought stricken areas in the state of Andhra Pradesh with routine and yearly failure of rains. The normal rainfall in the Rayalaseema region varies, from the lowest in Anantapur district with 520mm, to a high of 908mm in Chittoor district. The region has 13 small rivers dependent on scanty and erratic rainfall. Therefore irrigation is insignificant.

The main occupation of the region is agriculture (rainfed). It has little industrial development except a few small existing industries that are agro-based.

In order to obtain water, people who could afford to secure loans or had access to personal resources resort to digging tube wells. The cost of digging tubewells and electricity irrigation has also increased. Erratic and low rainfall has also failed in restoring groundwater. Consequently, the depth of a tubewell has decreased. Presently, it is approximately 300 feet deep in most places. There is the possibility to dig deeper in some areas, but owing to the increase in costs, the availability of water has been unpredictable and insufficient.

Since 1992, groundnut has been cultivated in the region due to profitable returns and, the use of processed chemical fertilisers and pesticides has resulted in high cost inputs. A perennial problem is that remunerative prices cannot be obtained for the produce.

* *And the Centre for World Solidarity, Hyderabad*

** *These include the Tungabhadra, Pennar, Jayamangala, Chitravathi, Vedavathi, Swarnamuki, Papagni, Hundri and Kundu*

The import of palm oil has also provided a competition to the groundnut crop and is adversely affecting the farmers.

Venkat Reddy of RDRM while welcoming the participants, claimed that agriculture had become an unreliable source of income in the four districts of Rayalseema. Yet, people have very few options and often resort back to agriculture, he said. Agricultural inputs are frequently bought on credit but are often lost due to the inability to repay debts. They have to constantly rely on credit schemes for both living expenses and agricultural inputs. Subsequently, the mounting debt is a burden on the families. Though there are rural banks, agricultural cooperative societies and other institutions, credit facilities from these are often low and insufficient. Farmers are forced to rely on moneylenders or access inputs on credit at high interest rates. There are various micro-credit programs facilitated by NGOs but these are not widespread and are currently unable to access large amounts from financial institutions. The inability to pay the necessary loan installments creates additional problems. Bankers and moneylenders visit homes of clients and demand repayment. The social status of the family is threatened. **The continuous failure of crops, coupled with the moneylender's demands and basic family needs generate insecurity and severe stress causing farmers, men, women and children to resort to suicide, he concluded.**

The impact of continuous drought is severe. Not only does drought influence the number of suicides by farmers, it also effects 'distress migration' of all able-bodied men and women to distant places in search of a livelihood. Livestock is sent to slaughterhouses for the want of fodder. **What is more alarming is the increase in the last ten years in the trafficking of women and girl children for sexual exploitation.**

The governments's drought relief measures have been poor and inadequate on the whole, it was opined . The current workshop

evolved as an immediate measure to involve the suffering beneficiaries and grassroots functionaries.

Srinivasalu (RDRM) outlined the objectives, methodology of the two day workshop to the participants. These are as follows:

Objectives

- To draft an action plan consisting of both short and long term activities to alleviate the sufferings of women / families farmers/NGOs in order to combat the drought;
- Ways to effectively access and converge government programs;
- Building people coalitions from grassroots to regional/ national levels.

Methodology

- Presentations
- Group discussions
- Sharing of experiences
- Folk mediums
- Case Studies

Participants

- Farmers (men and women) from 5 districts
- NGOs working with farmers in these 5 districts.

Suicides, trafficking of Women and Children, Naxalism - outcomes of Drought?

Dr Nandini Azad (ICPRD, Member Secretary) highlighted the manner in which the commission had become aware of the impact of drought on suicides of farmers and trafficking of women and children. At an earlier workshop, entitled 'Anti Trafficking Committee Coalitions' held in Kadiri District (December 2002), an ICPRD team visited several tandas (tribal villages) to interview trafficked women. The analysis indicated the alarming increase of the phenomenon in the last ten years in the Anantapur district. During an informal NGO networking meeting following the workshop, **the correlation could be made between trafficking and**

the ten year drought in the area. Women victims of trafficking were characterised by circumstances such as poor/no wages, low social indicators, chronic indebtedness, and debt bondage. **Anantapur is the second most drought prone area in the country.**

She said that, farmers were forced from being owners of assets to becoming pauperized and assetless; having to work often as landless labourers and wage workers from being self-employed.

Dr Azad maintained that there were only four apparent options it seemed for young, unemployed, poor women and men in these areas :-

- To become naxalites i.e. create civil strife;
- To be trafficked for sexual exploitation - a reversal of selling bodies with humiliation from selling agricultural produce with dignity;
- To commit suicide;
- To develop coalitions - create pressure groups, develop alternate livelihoods, and access resources.

ICPRD supports small rural NGOs, such as those networking with RDRM, in order to build local level coalitions as a pressure group to facilitate and develop the agency of poor men and women. To date, 816 NGOs have participated in ICPRD programs in 21 states of India. (Details of ICPRD activity highlights can be obtained in the back cover of this issue). Reintegration of special constituencies such as with bonded labourers, dalits, trafficked women, tribals and vulnerable groups from drought prone areas are also being taken up by ICPRD. A seven-day pro-poor advocacy training with NGOs working on drought (and related issues) and a **National advocacy Campaign on the issue is on the anvil, she maintained. RDRM consists of motivated and deeply dedicated young women/men who are well oriented in social mobilisation and drought related programming.** Thus, a democratic coalition on an emergency issue, such as drought, would be effective due to the experience

and knowledge of RDRM workers, she concluded.

Drought in Rayalaseema : The Current Situation

S. M. Basha (The Human Rights Forum) claimed that distress migration has left many villages almost empty, with the exception of the elderly and young. Those who had not left their *mandal* (smallest administrative unit) were at the vagaries of the contractor. For example, a contractor took a group to Kerala, during which time, three women missed the bus. They resorted to begging in order to survive. Only one woman returned to the village, while the other two are still missing. As they were children of rural folk, they did not know traffic rules of the city and some of the children died as a result of traffic accidents. Language was also a barrier.

For e.g.: Some of the migrants were accused of theft and evicted without receiving remuneration as they could not express themselves in the local language.

Historically, in Anantapur, it is evident from the stone carvings in ancient temples, for example the Laxmi Narasimha Devalayam in Kadiri, and the reports during the British Government that there were many famines in the area. The agricultural conditions were unfavourable. Owing to famines and the scarcity of food grains, many died of starvation. However, there is no indication of suicides during these periods. Why have suicides suddenly become rampant in the area?

In the year 2000, there were 48 suicides; in 2001 there were 93; and in 2002 there were 102 suicides. Of these, 55 were women and 5 were girls. Why are people committing suicide? Has the mental stability of Anantapur farmers weakened and, as a solution, resort to suicide? Agriculture is the only occupation in the area, though precarious, and often manifests loss and liabilities. The continuous loss of inputs and crops engender a quagmire of debts and the pressure from the moneylenders generates hopelessness.

Are the farmers avaricious? Do they want to make rapid profits and hence resort to mono-cropping of commercial crops - i.e. groundnuts? How and why did the farmer fall into this trap of mono-cropping of groundnuts and why are they not able to come out of it? Around 1990, the groundnut cultivation became popular in the district. The government encouraged groundnut cultivation with input subsidies and the price became favourable. The farmers continued the crop due to its ability to withstand low water inputs. Even without rainfall for two to three years, groundnuts can be cultivated. During this time, the government began to import palm oil and created competition, causing the price for groundnuts to fall. It is these policies that provided impetus to groundnut cultivation on the one hand and imports on the other hand - yet played havoc with the lives of the farmers in the area.

The modern day famine is different from that of the old. Today, a good network of rail and roadways are available and the granaries are full. Yet people are dying of hunger. It is within this context that public interest litigation, positively acknowledged by the judiciary, led to the Food For Work (FFW) program. This emerged as a consequence of the directive of the judiciary. Two lakh bags of grains have been claimed in the district, most of which has been recycled in the godowns. Did not governments, political parties, social activists, NGOs and networks fail to advocate and ensure its access to the poorest? **Anantapur has been declared a “desert area after crores of rupees have been spent on it when it was initially labelled drought prone”.** The failure of civil society organisations in the area is evident, he complained. Approximately 7 crore rupees are provided as input subsidy. However, this has turned out to be a subsidy for suicides as many of those who died were using a harmful pesticide. The State Government's 'Vision 2020' in the agriculture sector is aimed at reducing the number of people dependent on agriculture as a livelihood to 7%. **Mr Basha questioned whether these suicides are a**

means to achieve the goal of decreasing the number of farmers? Downsizing....

He said that it was contractors that mainly benefitted from the Food For Work (FFW) program. The government was able to distribute rice freely and ask the farmers to work in their own fields. Having analysed the effects of the policies and their implementation, Mr Basha claimed that politics has become criminal and questioning policies or asking for transparency led to victimization. There are so many schemes operating in every village; how many news reporters or NGOs know the number of beneficiaries under the *Annapurna* scheme? For a single work, ten bills are often raised and sent; every village has at least ten schemes amounting to approximately two to three lakhs. Mr Basha argued that NGOs and civil society should ensure that the benefits reach the poorest and target groups by using the right to information act.

In the discussions that ensued, Mr Basha said that it is not easy to obtain water from the Krishna River due to a clash of interests. However, solutions in the interests of people from both areas are possible. Some areas have groundwater, but Anantapur does not, he agreed. It is necessary to convince and start discussions amongst people. Mr Basha further explained that the Bachawat tribunal allotments (for water allocations) ended in May 2000 and a new commission is being established. Some of the waters allotted to Andhra Pradesh have not been utilized, Mr. Basha pointed out. This may prove difficult in requesting future quota allotments in terms of higher requirements, he cautioned. Karnataka State has already tried for higher allotments (through Almetti), but the current authorities were not willing to discuss these issues, he concluded.

Drought in Rayalaseema: An Historical Perspective

Vishwesarayyah, an activist journalist from Anantapur (Andhra Jyoti), examined

the history of drought and its linkage to the current crisis of suicides.

An historical assumption of the drought in the region is based on the theory that drought occurs when there is no rain, he said. Through it is not linked directly, yet, if there is no water, there is drought. "What could the government do? It all depends on the rain god; the government is not the cause of the problems of the farmers", claims the general perception, he lamented. The rain in the region, particularly in Anantapur, is less than that of Jaisalmer or Israel. In a period of 124 years, there was a shortage of rain for 64 years. In September 2001, 143tmc of water flowed through Anantapur but did not bring any change to people's lives!.

History speaks of large granaries in the area; pearls were sold on the streets during the time of King Sri Krishna Devaraya. It is argued that during this period, there were no perennial rivers in the area. Gazettes are available in which the expenditure on drought may be found and the severity of the droughts can be estimated. Examples highlight the severe and remorseless nature of the droughts and famines in the area that have resulted in the heavy loss of human lives and livestock. It was these conditions during the British Colonial period that forced Sir Arthur Cotton to take up irrigation projects, he pointed out.

Mono Cropping-Cash Crops

The Technical Mission for Oil Seeds identifies necessary measures to fulfil the needs in this sector. When there was a shortage of oil seeds, the government encouraged groundnut cultivation through a number of inputs and marketing facilities in this area. A higher number of farmers initiated groundnut cultivation. At the same time, the New Economic Policy - withdrawal of subsidies came into force. This increased the input costs of fertilisers and pesticides. Under the Open General License Policy, imports of palm oil were initiated. Even when record crops were grown, there were no remunerative prices. Generally, crop

cultivation depends on local geographical and climatic conditions. However, remunerative prices and market demand also play a crucial role. Where there are irrigation facilities, the farmer can produce crops in relation to market demand. In a crisis situation, farmers are able to rely on paddy due to its market demand and can receive some form of remuneration. Other crops do not have the same effect. However, paddy cultivation in the region is minor; rain-fed crops, such as groundnuts and grams, do not command adequate prices. The dilemma is acute, he highlighted.

Scanty rains, loss of fertility, and lack of irrigation causes untold sufferings for the Rayalaseema ryots. Further, liberalisation policies and economic reforms have pushed farmers to the verge of suicide, he argued.

During the times of the historical figure and monarch, Sri Krishna Devaraya, digging tanks and building temples were the primary works undertaken. Tanks to store water for irrigation and temples were necessary in order to fight the unequal *palegar* system. The rulers of the period focussed on the needs of the agricultural sector. However, it seems that the major progress made in the agricultural sector was in the 14th-15th centuries. There has been no further progress since this period, it could be said in a manner of speaking! The present day public works concentrate on roads and other types of construction. Emphasis is given to the ten per cent commission system, required by the upper political echelons, (as their share) in terms of public works, he said.

Vishwesarayyah maintained that regional development is directly linked to the proportion of lands irrigated in the area. The state average for irrigated land is 36 per cent, while in coastal Andhra Pradesh the irrigated area is 63 per cent, a meager 14.25 per cent in Anantapur district, 13.89 per cent in Kurnul district, 26.77 per cent in Cuddapah district, and 36 per cent in Chittoor district. However, this irrigated land cannot be compared to the irrigated lands of

Krishna and Godavari districts, as the majority of irrigated lands in Rayalaseema are fed from small tanks and ponds, which are filled once in every three-four years. Approximately 2.67 lakh hectares of cultivable lands are lying idle in Rayalaseema - the highest in the state. **Furthermore, the area of uncultivable land in Rayalaseema is also the highest (6.84 lakh hectares) in the state.** Thus, from 30 lakh hectares of cultivable land in the region, only 5.6 lakh hectares have irrigation facilities. 24 lakh hectares of land is devoid of irrigation facilities.

Another misconception is about the direct linkage between trees and rains. Trees are a crucial part of the environment in attracting the rains. Despite several crores of rupees that have been spent on increasing forest cover, there is a significant lack of trees and deforestation in the area. **The extent of monitoring reports indicate that the available area of the district would not have been sufficient, if all the saplings said to have been planted were alive in reality! CIDA, the donor agency, it is said has stopped funding this program citing the above issues particularly the poor survival rate as a primary reason. In the process, seventy crores of rupees have gone down the drain, he lamented.**

In a discussion relating to watershed projects, it was highlighted that if there are adequate rains, then these could be harvested into the lands. What use are watersheds when there is no rain?, he questioned. A mere nine per cent of rainwater is retained in the soil. Therefore, if rainwater is to be utilised effectively, it should be stored during rains and used later. However, Vishwesarayyah argued that this very concept is misplaced. He claims that through watersheds, corruption is decentralised and vested interests have converged together. In order to permanently solve the problems of Rayalaseema and, in particular, Anantapur farmers, he emphasised the need to provide irrigation sources through the Krishna River water. The government has highlighted the chronic drought situation to the Bachawat tribunal in

order to obtain more water allocation from the Krishna River. However, this should be provided to the Rayalaseema farmers. In the past, people died due to famines but now it is due to the policies of the government;. During the British period, the area was under the Madras Presidency and there still was a supply of grains and fodder to the area, he concluded.

Trafficking of Women and Children

Describing the situation of women in the area, Bhanuja (REDS) said that the conditions caused by drought have played havoc with the lives of women in the rural sector. Women have always been an integral part of agricultural operations. Approximately 55 women from agricultural families have resorted to suicide. Even children have resorted to suicide due to the difficulties faced by their parents. She quoted a case study; Jayalakshmi, a 14 year old girl, was considered a very good student by both villagers and teachers. Considering the difficulties faced by her mother following the migration of her father to earn a livelihood, Jayalakshmi resorted to suicide. **The continuous failure of crops, debt trap, and suicides have all forced women to become sole breadwinners in many families.** Drought has also destroyed supplementary livelihoods by making the maintenance of milch animals difficult.

Bhanuja recalled that many *sugali* women (a tribe) in Lakkireddypally and Galiveedu mandals of Cuddapah district have been trafficked for sexual exploitation due to loss of their livelihood. Personal values have been eroded to such a degree that families have begun to accept this as a livelihood option, she lamented. Many trafficked women have gone to Pune, Bombay and Delhi. Locally they are involved in such activities in nearby towns, highway dhabhas (wayside cafes) and few brothel houses. As a result, women headed families have to carry their children alongwith them. The children are also often perverted from the

child hood in terms of sexual attitudes. A majority of sex workers are affected by the STD, HIV / AIDS, leading often to high mortality rates, amongst this group, she said.

Similar situations are occurring and increased in other areas of Kadiri in the past five years. Approximately 78 trafficked women were identified in a single place. Some women were promised jobs as housemaids in distant cities but were sold to brothel houses in the metros mentioned above. Some women were sent without the knowledge of their parents. Using the abject poverty of the families, some men, on the pretext of love, have eloped and sold the girls to brothel houses. Lack of livelihoods and marriage difficulties (dowry) in such poverty stricken conditions have forced the girls to elope; often, falsely lured and trapped into the sex work net. Bhanuja lamented that the right to a decent livelihood is being eroded in the face of the severe challenges to survival.

Day Two

Thus the issues of suicide, mono cropping, the increase in use of fertilizers and pesticides, and the lack of alternate livelihoods have a direct linkage to the policies of the government. The impact of the severe drought in the area was detailed as follows on day two of the proceedings.

Impact of Drought

- Trafficking of women and children (sexual exploitation, labour)
- Increasing sexual harassment of minor girls.
- Increased number of sex workers (ultimately increasing the number of STD/HIV/AIDs positive cases)
- Higher expenditure on health
- Children forced into child labour
- Distress migration
- Ecological imbalance (no change in seasons)
- Decreasing of rare species.

- Deforestation
- Decreasing of water levels
- Scarcity of drinking water
- Increasing of dacoity cases
- Increasing of suicides
- Increasing dropout rate from schools
- Farmers being converted as labours
- Decrease in celebration of community festivals
- Late marriages
- Less contacts with the relatives and friends (social solidarity)
- Change in food habits
- Increasing of loans and borrowings
- Low purchasing capacity
- Decreasing livestock
- Fodder scarcity

Program Watch: Government Schemes

When considering the activities of the government during the drought, all groups opined that Food For Work program has been taken up in their districts. However, unanimously they stated that the scheme was of no benefit to people who were in debt due to its reliance on utilization of machines (mechanization vs labour choices), the involvement of contractors and politicians. Suggestions included forming people's committees to initiate works instead of assigning them to contractors. Other issues considered included the input subsidy that reaches only a limited number of people, the waiving of interest loans to farmers, crop insurance, fodder supply and fodder seeds were also taken into account. Some groups claimed that all farmers affected by the drought did not receive crop insurance. This was limited to a small number of farmers.

NGOs at the workshop provided an understanding of government schemes, micro-credit through SHGs, and the implementation of Rice Credit Lines in very small areas through illustration. Farmers have taken to growing fodder and, to a small extent, tending milch animals in order to make ends meet. However, producing dairy products in a drought is difficult. Groups argued that more regular incomes were earned by sending cattle to slaughterhouses.

In relation to long term measures to combat drought, the groups agreed that the government should provide a permanent source of river water for irrigation, dig new water bodies, and, more importantly, repair and desilt all old water bodies. A people's coalition should be formed from the grassroots to regional level for advocacy, as well as to act as a pressure group for irrigation. Farmers should be oriented on crop rotation, intercropping, sprinkler usage and drip irrigation for effective water use. Short-term crops should be adopted and fodder growth in common property lands should be implemented in order to address its scarcity. Identifying viable alternate livelihoods and providing skills and financial assistance to facilitate such alternatives is an important measure to be adopted to address the severity of the situation. Protection and judicious use of existing water bodies and other natural resources is essential.

A deliberation on the food security of the people affected by drought raised the following suggestions:

Food Security Strategies

- Provide free grain to all affected;
- Provide wage work (works related to water bodies);
- Provide rice as wages and allow the farmer to work in his own fields;
- Rice Credit Line (RCL) i.e. lending rice to farmers. Repayments are made when they obtain work/crops.

Discussing the immediate relief measures, the groups opined that the introduction of one or a combination of the above measures is necessary to ensure food security. However, as many medium farmers cannot work as labourers, a combination would be required. Supplying drinking water, fodder, fodder seeds, nutritious food for children, and crop insurance payments (not less than one thousand rupees per acre) as

compensation to all affected farmers were also considered.

Farmers from Chittor recalled that, in a recent meeting, their MP rebuffed the severity of the drought stating that: “We are born, brought up and die in drought, what is new?” He was not sympathetic to the farmers’ predicament, they maintained.

In relation to the effects of drought on women and children, the groups agreed that large-scale migration of able-bodied persons were taking place in all areas. Women must endure sufferings at the place of migration due to the lack of shelter, lack of toilet facilities, exploitation by the contractor, and language difficulties as a result of not knowing the regional language. Women are troubled by the deteriorating economic situation that leads to an inability to feed children and marry off marriageable girls; lack of opportunities forces some women to take up sex work as a means of livelihood, which is on the increase. There is also an increase in dropouts, child labour, and malnourished children and women.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AN ACTION PLAN

Group presentations identified the following six issues for an Action Plan. The issues were:

- Land & Water
- Migration & Livelihoods
- Trafficking of Women for Sexual
- Exploitation
- Forestry
- Livestock
- Agriculture

The participants were organised into six groups and issues of relevant interest was selected by each group. Each issue was considered in relation to its problems and/or issues, the course of action to be taken, and the responsibility, method and timeframe for

the activity. The reports of the six groups in brief are provided below in sequence .

LAND & WATER

The group deliberating on the 'Land & Water' issue stated that a permanent solution to the chronic and severe drought would be to provide permanent sources of irrigation. The State and Central governments need to discuss the ramifications; and link the perennial rivers in the north and south. Equitable distribution of water for irrigation throughout the various regions is imperative. The formation of a people's coalition from the village to regional level is necessary to act as a pressure group and advocate for water irrigation. Furthermore, water body desilting and repair work should be prioritised. Preventing land reclamation from water bodies and digging new tanks wherever possible should be given importance. Water harvesting processes and preventing soil erosion through soak pits, dam checks, rock fill dams, and by maintaining an ecological balance by planting trees of local species, particularly on the banks of all water bodies, is essential. In order to address the drinking water problem, rainwater harvesting and storage tanks is recommended for all villages in the area. The judicious usage of available water through drip irrigation and sprinkler systems was also recommended.

With regard to issues related to land, the group maintained that there is an excessive usage of chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The government and NGOs should enlighten the farmers to these issues and highlight the advantages to organic farming, bio-fertilisers and bio-pesticides. The government should encourage alternate farming methods by framing policies within this context. People should also be given rights to natural resources in an equitable manner ie. land, water, trees and so forth.

MIGRATION & LIVELIHOODS

The 'Migration & Livelihoods' group stated that large-scale distress migration is due to the lack of alternate livelihoods. Labourers

and small farmers migrate to other villages for agricultural labour, competing with the local labour force. Migration to cities was for rag picking, rickshaw pulling, construction labour and other activities. Providing alternate livelihoods in the rural sector is the only alternative to migration. Stereotyped recommendations such as pickle manufacturing and incense stick manufacturing do not provide adequate or specific means for an alternate income. Studies are necessary to identify viable cottage industries based on local resources and demand in order to provide such livelihoods. Financial assistance and facilitating marketing opportunities should be part of the package program. During drought conditions, appropriate maintenance, repair of water bodies and digging newer water bodies should be initiated to facilitate alternate work opportunities.

TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

The group on 'Women & Trafficking' argued that to prevent the trafficking of women, the provision of livelihoods for women in their local areas is necessary. With the exception of regular handicrafts, pickle manufacturing, poultry and dairy, and matmaking, further non-traditional viable income-generating activities should be identified in relation to the area; studies regarding marketability and availability of local resources should be taken up. Capacity building for women, such as entrepreneurship development and skill generation, were recommended by the group. Similar activities for women rescued from trafficking are required. For the members of the Van Sanrakshana Samities (VSS), extraction of *nannari* (a root used for soft drinks), extracting components from medicinal herbs and marketing facilities should all be given preference. Micro-credit facilities for groups should be broadened and simplified to facilitate women undertaking micro-enterprises. NABARD, SIDBI, RMK should be approached for quotas and concessions to target / reach this vulnerable group. Women's groups in drought prone areas should be provided with rice on credit so that members may take rice

on credit and repay their loan after procuring wage work., Grain Banks could also be started. Strict implementation of relevant laws and exemplary punishment for people involved in trafficking were also discussed.

FORESTRY

The 'Forestry' group highlighted that Andhra Pradesh state did not have adequate forest coverage. The coverage should be raised to 33 per cent. Developing revenue lands and hillocks into forests, with support from NGOs and the people, would increase forest cover.

The prevention of smuggling and natural and man-made fires should be improved and strengthened. The laws and their implementation should be more rigid.

Corruption among the forest officials should be eradicated by making the procedures more transparent and punishment stringent. Drinking water sources for animals should be developed in the forest and political interference should be eliminated from the VSS. Usufruct rights for villagers and skills in identifying and manufacturing medicines from medicinal plants on forest fringes should be developed so that people may earn a livelihood based on forests. Poaching and its prevention were also considered by the group.

LIVESTOCK

The 'Livestock' group stated that drinking water for livestock has become problematic. Small water bodies should be developed with the establishment of tanks to alleviate this particular problem. In relation to the fodder issue, the group recommended that the panchayat should earmark specific lands for fodder growth and farmers should be informed of this facility. The government should supply fodder seeds for this purpose. The animal husbandry department and NGOs should orient the farmers on minimising fodder wastage and urea treatment. During acute fodder shortages, the government should supply fodder and veterinary centres should be available in all grama-panchayats. The group maintained that familiarising the youth on veterinary practices would benefit the villagers.

Nutritious fodder, such as oil cake, brawn and maize flour, should be subsidised and provided by the government. Insurance for animals should be made compulsory and adequate compensation (100% coverage) for animals killed by protected species in and around sanctuaries should be provided for, by the government. The group also recommended an increase in milk-chilling centres.

AGRICULTURE

The group on 'Agriculture' observed that a permanent source of irrigation projects, tanks and lakes should be adopted for a lasting solution to the challenges of drought. Frequently resorting to a single crop and using chemical fertilisers and pesticides erodes the fertility of the soil. Regenerative methods, such as rotation of crops (cultivating a crop which uses nitrogen followed by another crop which fixes nitrogen in the soil), intercropping (simultaneous cultivation of different crops using different nutrients from soil), and agro-forestry (planting trees and shrubs which results in accessing nutrients from deeper layers of soil) should be practised. Accordingly, mobilisation of social opinion amongst the farmers is necessary. The group recommended that NGOs take on this program. Better agricultural practices, in terms of ploughing (time and appropriate practice), short-term crops, seed purification, compulsory crop insurance, and adequate power supply for agriculture were also recommended by the group.

A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN ON DROUGHT AND A INTERNATIONAL COALITION

The ICPRD advocates the need to build national opinion on the havoc caused by drought through a national campaign leading to a building of an international coalition on this issue. The campaign is required in several areas in the country as they are facing the specter of haunting Drought.

Immediate remedies to pressure / advocate with Government for emergency measures are imminent. Furthermore, civil society groups would have to be mobilized for taking

up measures outlined in the action plan as immediate short term measures to alleviate sufferings, tragedies and prevent suicides, or trafficking of women and children. ICPRD welcomes advocacy, media networking, information, personnel and financial resource support to initiate this campaign

ABOUT US

The Independent Commission for People's Rights and Development (ICPRD) was initiated in 1997 as a national pro-poor advocacy coalition (non-profit sector). Its various programs are:

- Coalition and Networking Building Workshops
- Pro-Poor Advocacy and Micro-Finance Training
- Marginalized Constituency Advocacy and Training Programs.
- Advocacy Tools and Information Aids, such as directories, documentation, database, special reports, news letters/bulletins, surveys, media advocacy.
- Website development
- Consultancy

- ICPRD has had 816 NGOs participating in its 57 events from 21 States and 118 districts of India since its inception.

- 42 MPs/MLAs and political executives have participated in ICPRD programs/round tables (including Union Ministers, Chief Ministers etc.)

- In 2002, in ICPRD's various activities, 1166 constituents participated. (Including 343 NGOs). Other constituents were media persons, development managers (bureaucrats, bankers), eminent citizens opinion makers, and intellectuals.

- ICPRD retains a detailed database of several of the above constituents on a state- wise basis.

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ACTION PLAN

The following tables shows the activities planned in terms of short term (less than a year) and long term activities (more than a year) drawn up by the RDRM/ ICPRD Workshop on **Rayalaseems Regional Level Farmers Coalition Building on Combating Drought**. Activities involving demonstration projects are to be taken up at least in one Grama Panchayat by each NGO while activities involving training, orientation, are being planned to be taken up in at least one mandal by each NGO. Resources for the activities and collaborations are being planned and sought.

| Dry Land Agriculture | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|--|---|--|-------------------------|------------|
| Sl. No. | Problem/ Issue | Activity | Strategy | Collaboration | Area | Duration |
| 01 | Mono cropping | Shifting to other crops; Rotation of crops; intercropping Dry land horticulture: Demonstration Plots | Sensitising the farming community Distribution of seeds/saplings Seed banks Create common fund | Department of Agriculture, Horticulture, college of Agriculture; Banks | 1 Mandal Village | Short Term |
| 02 | Usage of chemical fertilizers & Pesticides | Propagation and practices of Bio-fertilisers, vermin-compost, compost pits, integrated and non-pest management | Sensitisation/ Training to the farmers and exposure visits | Department of Agriculture; Banks | 1 Village | Short term |
| 03 | Crop loss | Crop Insurance | Sensitising the farming community | Insurance Companies | 1 Mandal | Short term |
| 04 | Economic usage of water | Drip/pot drip/sprinkler irrigation | Sensitising the farming community Facilitating loans from banks | Department of Agriculture, Horticulture; Banks | 1 Mandal | Short term |
| 05 | Spurious seeds Fertilisers | Monitoring for good seeds/fertilisers; purification process of seeds | Sensitising the farming community on the examination of seeds; on seed purification | Seeds corporations and companies | 1 Mandal | Short term |

| Improvement of Natural Resource Management | | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|---|---------------------------|------------|
| SL. No. | Problem/Issue | Activity | Strategy | Collaboration | Area | Duration |
| 01 | Water & soil Conservation | Desilting of existing tanks and ponds Strengthening of tank bunds Construction of check dams, soak its, New tanks Linkage of tanks | Identification of tanks and desilting Identification and strengthening through peoples participation Identification of areas and digging through peoples participation | DPAP, RWS Minor irrigation Grama Panchayats | 1 Mandal 1 Village | Long Term |
| 02 | Deforestation | Protection of forests through Van Sangrakshan Samiti Regeneration Top hill plantation for attracting rains Afforestation of Revenue lands & hillocks Usufruct rights to the people | Seed dibbling/seed broadcasting/sowing Social fencing, Peripheral trenches Building people's Organisations | Grams Panchayats, Department of Forests, Revenue, School children | 1 Village | Long term |
| 03 | Fodder Scarcity Drinking Water | Procurement of fodder from other places; Plantation of trees | Sensitising the | Animal Husbandry Forestry department | 1 Mandal | Short term |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|---|-------------------------|--|--|
| | | useful as fodder Raising fodder in tank beds/ waste lands; Minimising fodder wastage; Construction of water tanks for livestock near tube wells/ water taps | farmers and VSS. Sensitising farmers on urea treatment and chopping fodder Lobbying | Grama Panchayat MPDO | | |
|--|--|--|---|-------------------------|--|--|

| Livelihood/ Migration / Trafficking /Convergent Community Action | | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|--------------------|------------|
| Sl. No. | Problem / Issue | Activity | Strategy | Collaboration | Area | Duration |
| 1 | Lack of food Security | Ensuring food Security | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Implementing Rice Credit Line - Improvement of Food for Work program - Annapurana - Antodaya as per Supreme Court order - Grain Bank Grain Storage bins | DPIP, DRDA District & State Administration AGRMI AFPRO | 1 Mandal Do | Short term |
| 2 | Creating Alternative Livelihoods | Viable Income Generating activities Providing skills Micro- Finance delivery- SHGs (Financial Assistance) Marketing Assistance | <p>Conducting studies (by an expert organization) for identification of viable income generating activities with market potential</p> <p>Mobilizing women into SHGs- Creating Access to micro-credit Capacity Building</p> | SC/ BC/ Minority Corporation / DWCW DPIP/ APRPRP / Drought Relief Commissioner ICPRD | 1 Village | Short term |
| 3 | Trafficking | Prevention | Building peoples coalition (including rescue) | Police/ Womens Groups Mytri Sanghams | 1 Mandal | Short term |
| 4 | Stay . Shelter After rescue ./ return | Providing shelter and feeding | Providing shelter in shelter homes, short stay homes of Govt. / NGOs Facilitation for new homes | | 1 Mandal | Short term |
| 5 | Many similar activities being taken up individually by programs of different government department | Coordination between departments, projects of Government; Convergence | Lobbying with the district administration for a coordinated approach by the various departments and projects | District administration projects | 1 Mandal | Short term |

1 Mandal = Average of 70 – 100 Hamlets

DPIP – District poverty initiative project; AFPRO – Action for Food program; DWCW – Department of Women & Child Welfare; APRLP – Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project; MPDO – Mandal Parishad Development Officer ;RWS – Rural Water Supply.