Sustainable Income Security for the Poor

Consolidated Progress Report
(3 years)

From 01.04.2006 to 31.03.2009

Submitted to:
ICCO & EED

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Code</td>
<td>Page Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>THE GENERAL CONTEXT</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>DIRECTOR’S REPORT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PROGRESS REPORT 2006-07</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>General situation of Anantapur during 2006-07</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Progress against planned activities for the year 2006-07</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PROGRESS REPORT 2007-09</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>General situation of Anantapur during 2007-09</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>The changed program context for AF</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Strategic Re-orientation during 2007-08</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Strategic program priorities for 2007-12</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Implementation of the change process / New strategy</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Progress against planned activities for 2007-09</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Policy Advocacy at different levels</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CASE STUDIES</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>APREGS</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Women’s Initiative</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Jeevamritam</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>PHYSICAL ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 01.04.2006 TO 31.03.2009</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>SOME IMPORTANT EFFECTS REALIZED DURING 2007-09</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>WOMEN’S DAY CAMPAIGNS</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>DISTRICT LEVEL CAMPAIGN ON APREGS</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>ECOLOGY DAYS - 2008</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>FARMERS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AUDIT REPORTS</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### DIAGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The New Strategy of AF Ecology Centre</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Re-organized Staff Structure of Accion Fraterna</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Expansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>AME</td>
<td>Agriculture, Man &amp; Ecology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>AO</td>
<td>Agriculture Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>APMAS</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>APPS</td>
<td>Ananta Paryavarana Parirakshana Samithi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>CEC</td>
<td>Centre for Environment Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>CSA</td>
<td>Centre for Sustainable Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>FFS</td>
<td>Farmer Field School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>GSS</td>
<td>Grama Sasyamithra Samakhyas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>IGA</td>
<td>Income Generation Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>JSS</td>
<td>Jana Shikshana Samsthan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>LEISA</td>
<td>Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>OD</td>
<td>Organization Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>PDS</td>
<td>Public Distribution System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>REDS</td>
<td>Rural Education Development Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>RTI</td>
<td>Right to Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>RUDSETI</td>
<td>Rural Urban Development for Self Employment &amp; Training Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Sustainable Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>SERP</td>
<td>Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>SHG</td>
<td>Self Help Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>Soil and Moisture Conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>SMGs</td>
<td>Sasya Mitra Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>STC</td>
<td>Skills Training Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>WASSAN</td>
<td>Watershed Support Services and Network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

Harsh agro – climate conditions and threatened rural livelihoods:
Located in southern Andhra Pradesh in South India, Anantapur is the second most drought-prone district in India. It receives the least rainfall in the State and the second lowest in India, averaging at 522 mm annually. It has a total population of 3.64 million, of which 2.72 million (75%) are rural and 0.92 million (25%) are urban. About 20 per cent of the population comprises of dalits and tribals, and 60 percent comprises of backward communities. It is one of the poorest districts in the country.

Dry land farming is the primary livelihood option of the rural households in the district. Farmers are largely dependent on rain-fed agriculture. Of the total 0.60 million farming population 90% are small and marginal farmers. Mostly a single crop of groundnut is sown under very harsh rain fed agro-climatic conditions in the cultivated area of about 1.17 million ha. The district’s total geographical area is about 1.91 million ha. Hence the livelihoods and the economy of the district by and large depends on the success of dry land farming.

The soils are predominantly red gravelly, shallow and hard with very poor infiltration and moisture retention capacity. They are almost totally devoid of any vegetative cover. So, the farm lands are subjected to soil erosion year after year, resulting in rapidly declining soil fertility. The absence of vegetation in farm lands has resulted in low soil organic matter and diminished water holding capacity of soils. Moreover, because of the widely pervading mono cropping practices, not only are the soils continuously impoverished but also the pest and disease build-up has become quite acute. Consequently, over the years, the investments on chemical pesticides and fertilizers have increased many-fold, resulting in decreased net earnings. Pollution of soil and water resources with chemical fertilizers and pesticides is causing damage to the environment and health of people.

The agriculture crisis has been worsening and farmer’s distress has been deepening. The indiscriminate and expensive external input use coupled with the neglect of natural resource management has resulted in a degraded environment characterized by declining vegetative cover on arable and non-arable lands, loss of bio diversity, loss of soil fertility, scarcity of ground water, high incidence of pests and diseases and imbalances in microclimate. Collectively, these factors have affected the farm yields and increased the uncertainty in crop production. As a result, the district is chronically drought prone with three drought years out of every five years and many rain fed farmers are forced to give-up farming and turn as daily wage labor.

Irrigation facilities – to little too, too expensive and undependable:
The situation of irrigated farmers is also not encouraging. The district has the lowest irrigated area of about 10%, mostly through undependable tube wells and tanks. Establishment of tube wells is too expensive for farmers. Over-exploitation of already over-
stressed groundwater resources is leading to unsustainable and undependable irrigation even under the 10% of cultivated area. Consequently, (a) the number of crops per annum has come down from 2 crops to a single crop in a large area under irrigation and (b) the total area under irrigation itself is coming down year after year.

**Rural Youth, the frustrated lot:**
Rural youth desperately looking for alternate employment. This tendency is seen more with educated youth as they see neither hope in rain fed agriculture nor any honor left in being farmers. They neither have the required know-how and skills not the capital to take up any alternative livelihoods.

**Indebtedness, hopelessness and despair among the farmers and farm labor:**
Ever increasing risk of droughts coupled with low returns on investment, lack of alternate livelihood options and vicious debt-traps have created wide spread distress among the farmers. With virtually no other industry, Anantapur backwardness and poverty are well indicated in its severe rural indebtedness, very high malnutrition, illiteracy, illness, deprivation, caste and gender discrimination and seasonal migration particularly in rural areas. Added to this, there is, crime and discord between various factions and groups making it all the more difficult for a better living and exercise of democratic rights. All of the above negative impacts have turned Anantapur, into a district with highest number of farmer suicides in the country!
2. DIRECTOR’S REPORT  
(An over-view of progress for the 3 year Project phase - 2006-09)

2.1 The beginning of the program:
The present program, “Sustainable Income Security for the poor 2006-09”, which is jointly funded by ICCO and EED, started on 01.04.2006. The program aimed at the promotion of watershed based diversified and sustainable livelihoods for AF’s target population of 8100 small and marginal rain-fed farmers and farm labor, from its 54 project villages. The core strategy was to, (a) improve the land carrying capacity through (Participatory micro – watershed development) soil and moisture conservation works, rain water harvesting etc, (b) promote Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture, through Non Pesticide Management and bio-fertilizers, (c) promote diversified farming through horticulture, useful forest species plantations, bio-mass plantations and fodder, (d) promote diversified livelihoods through, off-farm and non-farm income generation activities for women etc.

2.2 Progress against planned objectives during first year (2006-07)
The first year of the program (2006-07) was affected by two major events. They are a) severe drought conditions prevailing in the district destroying the rain fed crops b) Introduction of NREGP by Central Government with effect from 1.4.2006. The NREGP had immediate as well as long term implications for AFs program, as it envisaged similar activities to be implemented across all the villages in the district.

In spite of severe drought conditions during 2006-07, and introduction of NREGP the implementation of the program was quiet successful.

- AF formed 1154 farmer and farm labor men and women SHGs, covering 8322 farmers and farm labor families (103%) against the planned 8100.
- AF could only conduct 68% of the planned farmers’ trainings and 29% of the planned gender trainings.
- SMC and rain water harvesting works were achieved more than 200%, because these works were simultaneously implemented both by AF and Govt. during 2006-07.
- LEISA/NPM related activities like bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides and border crops were implemented as planned or even more.
- Diversified farming activities like Horticulture, Forest species plantations, Bio-mass plantations and Fodder development were achieved, more than the planned targets.
- AF also lobbied for and succeeded in including activities like pebble bunding, farm ponds, watering for horticulture plantations under rain fed conditions etc, under NREGP.
- Only the planned number of trainings could not be conducted, because of the time constraint for people and staff, created by the implementation of NREGP.

2.3 The introduction of NREGP and its impact on AF:
Simultaneously from April 2006, the Central Govt of India started its prestigious rural employment program called “National Rural Employment Guarantee Program” (NREGP), which was implemented in 13 districts of Andhra Pradesh including Anantapur. Under this program, there was provision to take up watershed based land developmental works like
soil and moisture conservation, Rain water harvesting etc. At this juncture, it became strikingly obvious to AF that, its land developmental program has become superfluous and almost redundant. AF being a dynamic and learning organization, always responsive to the changing needs of people, decided to revisit its priorities and programs rather than to waste its valuable resources, on activities that can be taken up with Government funds under NREGP.

2.4 The Strategic Re-orientation of AF:
AF accordingly carried out an O.D and Strategic Re-orientation exercise. It was facilitated by Mr. Ajit Mani, a Management Consultant, AFs staff and some select CBOs together re-worked its Vision, Mission, priorities and programs in order to make them more meaningful and relevant to the present context. The change process began in March 2007 and the major change process was over by June 2007.

This process of Strategic Re-orientation warranted mid-course programmatic changes to the 2006-09 program. Initially a Situational Analysis was done taking into account, the changed context, the prevailing conditions and needs of farm labor and rain fed farmers vis-à-vis the Govt programs like NREGP and also RDT’s programs. This brought out the new by emerging developmental needs and gaps which were not addressed by Govt Agencies or RDT. AF further analyzed the needs, constrains and gaps identified vis-à-vis its own strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats.

2.5 The emerging changes for AF:
AF’s strategic re-orientation process necessitated the following major changes in the present phase:

- Shift its focus from watershed development to Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA)
- Expansion of the project outreach from about 100 villages to about 240 villages, targeting about 60000 rain fed farmers and farm labor.
- Changes in program investments from NRM works to LEISA and alternate livelihoods.
- Empower the farm labor and farmers to exercise their rights and make best use of NREGP.
- Formation of large no. of farmers self help groups for participatory planning and implementation by primary groups of farmers and farm labor.
- Changes in staff structure and enhancing staff capabilities to implement the new program.
- Establish Skill training Centers for rural under educated youth and strengthen relationship with Govt agencies like RUDSETI and JSS to facilitate job-oriented skills and non-farm employment for rural youth.

2.6 The change management process:
The staff structure was changed to match the changed program and the extended project outreach. Previously, each STO covered one village, but in the new structure each STO covered a cluster of 5 villages. A new cadre of Livelihood Coordinator was introduced, to
pay attention to alternate livelihoods for women and youth. There are 4 livelihood coordinators in each area, covering about 15 - 20 villages each. **Gender balance has been given due consideration in the new staff structure. 8 out of the 16 livelihood coordinators (50%) (middle level management) are women and 2 out of the 4 Area Team Leaders (50%) (senior management position) are women.**

As part of change management, one full round of workshops and meetings were organized to reorient the staff at all levels. The change process was well designed, participatory and transparent. It started with a systematic reflection of the changing situation in micro and macro context with regard to agriculture, watershed development, livelihoods and poverty alleviation etc., particularly after the introduction of NREGP, RTI and other rural development programs. This reflection process was done in a manner that kept the morale and the energy of all the staff at a higher level. The feeling of a new found enthusiasm among the staff was clearly evident.

**2.7 The support from ICCO&EED:**
AF is immensely thankful to ICCO and EED for their cooperation and understanding in this change process. AF took ICCO and EED fully into confidence and informed them about the changes at all stages. AF assured that these changes were made in the best interest of the community, the organization itself and in pursuance of the long-term goals of ICCO and EED.

**2.8 The revised program:**
The revised program, implemented from July 2007-08 aimed at enhancing the living standards of 60,000 resource poor farmer and farm labor families from 240 project villages. The core strategy is to, (a) Enable the farm labor and rain fed farmers to access and assert their rights Govt Programs & Services, particularly NREGA (b) Intensify and expand campaigning on NPM and LEISA, (c) Promote diversified farming through food crops, useful forest species plantations, bio-mass plantations and fodder and (d) Promote alternate livelihoods for women and youth (Boys & Girls) through, off-farm & non-farm income generation activities, entrepreneurship and skill-based employment.

**2.9 The collaboration with SERP:**
By the end of June 2007, when kharif season was about to begin, AF staff were placed to take on their new roles. Coincidentally, AF’s collaboration with Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), a Govt. agency on Non-pesticide Management (NPM) also began at this juncture. This collaboration provided a timely boost to AF with a lot of useful resource material and educational aids to launch the Sustainable Agricultural Program. The new program was rightly initiated with an intensive awareness campaign on Sustainable Agriculture in the villages.

**2.10 The progress during 2007-08:**
During 2007-08, AF made a reasonably good progress, though the implementation of the revised program was delayed by about 3 months due to change process.. Elaborate awareness campaigns were organized on NREGP at village, mandal and district levels in order to educate labor on their rights under the NREG Act. These campaigns were well attended by about 5700 men & women as against the planned 3900. The campaigns had a visible impact on the labor, as they created awareness on their rights and made them feel
confident of demanding their rights and instilled a feeling of solidarity among them. AF, together with other NGOs like CEC, REDS, Jana Jagriti, organized a District Level Labor Conference a mega event on NREGP. About 1000 labor particularly more women from various parts of the District attended the conference, wherein the rights based approach to NREGP was asserted and a clear direction was set for labor and NGOs for their work on NREGP. AF together with other likeminded NGOs lobbied for and sorted out a number of policy and implementation bottlenecks in NREGP.

The capacity building program, for farmers though very hectic, made a good progress. It comprised a) weekly Farmer Field Schools (FFS), b) awareness campaigns on Sustainable Agriculture, c) NREGP and d) gender trainings as planned. About 83% of the planned families were covered under the program during the year.

The core program of promoting LEISA practices was highly successful. The planned outputs and results were exceeded in:

- NPM/LEISA related activities like mechanical & biological pest control measures, usage of bio-pesticides and bio-fertilizers, growing border crops.
- Crop diversification activities like growing food crops, tree crops, fodder and bio-mass.
- Accessing employment under NREGP (23,180 men labor against the planned 12,600 and 8,935 women labor against the planned 5,400 accessed over 50 days of employment)

AF could not achieve the following planned targets during 2007-08.

(1) Promotion of alternate livelihoods for women (Only 584 women could be covered against the planned 1,200) because it took longer to evolve a livelihood support policy and

(2) Promotion of non-farm skills development for rural youth (i.e) both Boys & Girls (Only 515 youth 167 boys & 348 girls, could be covered against the planned 1500), because the starting of training centers got delayed due to a lot of preparatory work.

2.11 The progress during 2008-09:

2.11.1 Enabling labor to access to NREGP

AF’s interventions during this period have been very strategic and effective. It played an important role in creating an enabling environment for the labor to assert their right to employment under NREG Act. It created a critical mass of educated rural youth to be vigilant and question the authorities, if their rights are violated during the implementation of NREGP. AF together with other NGOs in the district, undertook Social Audit and used Right To Information (RTI), for creating transparency and accountability in the villages. AF also on the other hand has been playing a vital, supportive role to the Govt, in order to address the shortfalls and enable proper implementation of the scheme

Regarding policy advocacy, AF collaborated with other NGOs like CEC (Centre for Environment Concerns), WASSAN, and other state level net works. Issues raised at village, mandal and district levels were taken to state level and represented to the Commissioner,
NREGP. As a result favorable actions were initiated by the Govt. administration. Following are some of the issues taken up by AF and solved recently:

- Certification of Labor medical bills in case of work-site accidents, by local private doctors, thereby reducing delay in payments. (Earlier certification by Govt. Doctors was mandatory)
- Sanction of Rs.100 wage payment to water suppliers on par with wage laborers.
- Customization of tools to reduce the drudgery of the labor
- Successful lobby with the district administration to take APREGS works even in forest lands.
- Inclusion of Horticulture activities for the rain fed farmers under the NREGS.
- An on-going system of Social Audit is introduced involving the educated rural youth.

There are 60,120 families in AF’s 240 Project villages out of which 52,043 families have job cards under APREGS. From the Job Card holder families, 42,680 families worked during the year. A total of 2,048,640 person days were generated by which the families could earn total wages of Rs.180, 280,320/-. Each family worked for about 48 days on an average during this season and earned about Rs.4, 200 at a wage rate of Rs.88/day. 4118 families availed 100 days of employment as planned and earned Rs.8, 000/- to 10,000/- per family during the year.

2.11.2. Formation of Sasya mitra Groups (SMGs)
1,624 Sasya mitra Groups (SMGs) have been formed in 230 villages covering 42,675 families. Each SMG comprises of about 25 farmer families, represented by a woman and a man from each family. In every village about 7 SMGs are formed on an average. Each SMG selects one convener and one co-convener, with at least one of them being a women invariably. The federation of such conveners and co-conveners from all the SMGs at village level is called “Grama Sasya mitra Samakhya” (GSS). The GSS also elects one convener and one co-convener with at least one of them being a woman.

2.11.3. Campaigning and promoting LEISA
AF intensively campaigned on the relevance of Sustainable Agriculture. It trained the village activists from SMGs and farmers on various practices of Sustainable Agriculture, which resulted in a more willing and favorable environment for Sustainable Agriculture among farmers. Thereby the physical achievements under Sustainable Agriculture have by and large exceeded the planned targets. This is just the second crop-season that AF has begun its campaign on Sustainable Agriculture. The achievements have been very satisfying in terms of promoting SA practices – like diversified cropping, farm composting, vermi composting, liquid organic fertilizers, bio-pest management, SRI, crop-rotation etc. The farmers began to show a positive response as it also saves on the cost of cultivation, besides other ecological and productivity benefits.

2.11.4. Promotion of Village Seed Banks:
The concept of Village Seed Banks was introduced in 125 villages. The main aims of the Seed Banks is to a) promote diversified cropping like millets, pulses, vegetables b) to procure quality seed from the farmers locally and supply to the needy farmers in time and at low cost. The idea also is to reduce the exploitation of the farmers by the seed companies.
2.11.5. Promoting alternate livelihoods for women
AF-Ecology Centre has been assisting women from poor farmer and farm labor, to take up non-farm / off-farm income generation activities, under its alternate livelihoods program. Totally 2023 women have taken up various non-farm / off-farm income generation activities during the reporting period like Multi-crop threshers, NPM shops, Garment making, Sari weaving, Brick making, Basket making, Fish rearing etc. In general, women have demonstrated good entrepreneurial skills and succeeded in their ventures. They are sustaining the IGAs well and have been getting substantial income.

2.11.6. Promoting non-farm employment for rural under educated youth
AF has made a big leap forward during the period in providing job-oriented trainings for rural youth, both girls & boys. Two driving schools have been started, which can train up to 240 youth in a year. Further two more Skills Training Centers (STCs) have been started. They have a capacity to train about 600 youth in various trades like computers, hospitality, customer relations and sales, multi skilled workers, automobiles etc., These centers not only train rural youth, but also find employment for them by negotiating with prospective employers in nearby cities. During the year, AF has trained 977 rural youth (682 Boys & 295 Girls) in its Skills training centers and Driving Schools though their annual capacity is 840 only, to cover the backlog of last year. 1. Further AF has supported rural girls to establish 17 village level tailoring centers, wherein about 900 girls have already been trained in tailoring, embroidery work etc. AF has been successful in assisting the rural youth in accessing the Govt. skills training programs meant for them, like RUDSETI, JSS etc. 2) It has mobilized about 150 rural girls for trainings on tailoring conducted by JSS. It has also mobilized 67 rural youth to RUDSETI, 52 girls for tailoring training and 15 boys for electrician course.
3. PROGRESS REPORT 2006-07

3.1 General Situation of Anantapur during 2006 – 07

Severely Drought Hit
During 2006-07 Anantapur district experienced the worst agricultural crisis in the last 35 years. The rainfall was very low and sporadic. Only 240 mm was received during the groundnut cropping period as against the expected district average of 450 mm. As a result about 40% of the cultivable area was left fallow and only about 60% of area was sown against all odds!

The overall average crop yield in the district was a meager 25% of the normal expected yield. About 40% of the farmers did not sow their lands at all and 6% of the farmers faced total crop failure. 14% of the farmers got only 30% yields, 34% of the farmers got 50% yields and only 6% of the farmers got about 70% yields. As a result about 70% farmers didn’t have groundnut seed for sowing in the next kharif season.

Even the situation of farmers with irrigation facilities was no better. Only 50% of the expected rainfall was received and the irrigated area came down by about 15%. The risk of bore well failures and crop losses increased even under irrigation.

Coping with distress
Even in such extreme distress prevailing in the district, the situation was better in AF’s project area because of the timely interventions taken by AF like:

- Enabling the target community to access NREGP
- Implementing AF’s contingency drought management plan.

3.1.1 Enabling the target community to access NREGP:
In these severe distress conditions, emerged a ray of hope, in the form of “National Rural Employment Guarantee Program” (NREGP). This program was introduced by the Central Government in April 2006 to fulfill its commitment towards providing rural employment, for which the civil society and many NGOs in the country had been lobbying with untiring efforts. It came as a boon to the deprived and distressed farm laborers and rain fed farmers of Anantapur district at the most appropriate time. The introduction of NREGP had a direct impact on AF, particularly with regard to its land based programs. AF got an opportunity to mobilize investments from Govt for its watershed based land developmental programs. AF played an important role in assisting the communities and Govt functionaries at village level in planning and implementation of land and water development measures in 130 villages, benefiting 10,840 laborers and 3,640 farmers. In this process plans worth Rs.85 million were taken up. By acknowledging AF’s efforts, the Government issued a certificate of appreciation, which Mr. Malla Reddy received on AF’s behalf, through Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, the honorable minister for Rural Development, Govt. of India. AF utilized the opportunity, and acted timely (a) by conducting a series of campaigns on NREGP in its project villages to create awareness on the provisions, entitlements and rights of laborers under the scheme. (b) by facilitating and organizing the labor in order to across the
employment. As a result, During 2006-07 Under National Rural Employment Guarantee Program:

- 1882 landless labor families (95% of 1986 families in AF’s labor SHGs) availed 50 – 60 days of work and earned about Rs.5,000 – 6,000 per family on an average.

- 1214 small farmers families (30% of the 4103 small farmer families in AF’s farmer SHGs) also worked for 20 – 30 days and earned about Rs.2,000 – 3,000 on an average. For these labor-cum-farmers it was a duel benefit of employment for short-term relief and land productivity development in the long term.

- The medium and big farmers also got benefited from the development of their land by soil conservation, rain water harvesting and tree plantation.

3.1.2 Implementing AFs contingency drought management plan:
AF’s contingency plan for drought management also mitigated the impact of drought on target community to some extent. 282 labor families got 20 – 25 days of employment and earned about Rs.1900/- per family on an average, apart from the earnings from NREGP. 402 small and marginal farmers were benefited from the supply of watermelon and muskmelon seeds and got an income of about Rs.2,000/- to Rs.3,000/- per family on an average. 31 poor and landless families benefited from pisci-culture and earned Rs.4,000/- to 5,000/- per family on an average.

The measures taken up by Govt. and AF were helpful in mitigating the impact of drought on our target community to an extent.

3.2 Progress against planned activities for the year 2006-07
The planned activities were affected by drought and NREGP. In the Capacity building sector, SHG formation was done as planned. But the trainings for CBOs could not be conducted as planned, because of the time constraint created by the implementation of NREGP, both for the people and the AF staff as well. However many of the planned effects were realized during the year.

In the Diversified Sustainable Agriculture sector, the achievements were very high in SMC works and Farm Ponds to an extent of 215% to 279%, because the same activities were also taken up under NREGP. Other planned activities like application of bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides growing border crops, fruit plants, fodder, bio-mass etc. were implemented as planned.

With regard to policy advocacy AF lobbied with Govt and succeeded in including many useful activities, which enhance the dry-land capability and provide some alternate source of income to the drought affected small and marginal farmer families.

3.2.1 Formation and capacity development of CBOs:
Considering the difficulties of farmers and farm labor in attending meetings and trainings because of crop failure and employment opportunity provided under NREGP, the formation and capacity development of CBOs has been quiet satisfactory during the reporting period.
Outputs realized under formation & Capacity building of CBOs:

- 1154 SHGs (107%) of farmer and farm labor men and women have been formed against the planned 1080 SHGs covering. 8322 farmers and farm labor families (103%) against the planned 8100.

- 1063 trainings on capacity building of farmers, farm labor and their networks (53%) were conducted during the year as against the planned 1998. Consequently and the capacity of 15,595 members (96%) were enhanced as against the planned 16,200.

- Only 308 Gender trainings (24%) could be conducted as against the planned 1296. But the coverage of families was better – 10,331 (64%) as against 16,200.

The low % of no. of trainings was because:

- 2 CBOs were combined for trainings.(So, the no. of trainings conducted is less but the no. of participants is more.)

- Time constraint for people and staff was created by the implementation of NREGP. (So, the planned no. of participants could not attend the trainings.)

3.2.2 Promotion of diversified sustainable agriculture:
The progress in promotion of diversified sustainable agriculture has been remarkable during the year. The realization of out puts is to the planned level or even more.

Outputs realized under promotion of diversified sustainable agriculture:

- 5353 ha. of Soil and moisture conservation works (279%) were executed during the year as against the planned 1920 ha. Out of these 4118 ha. (215%) of works were mobilized under NREGP. 221 rain water harvesting structures (246%) have been constructed as against the planned 90, out of which 106 structures (118%) have been mobilized under NREGP.

- 1707 compost making and vermi compost units (81%) were established, as against the planned target of 2106. 10,536 ha. of land (98%) was covered with bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides and border crops as against the planned 10,800 ha.

- 746 ha. of land (153%) was covered with fruit tree crops as against the planned 486 ha, out of which 95 ha. (19%) was mobilized under NREGP. 7023 ha. of land (90%) was covered with useful vegetation and bio-mass, as against the planned 7830 ha. Fodder was developed in 1333 ha. (118%), as against the planned 1134 ha.
234 improved breed calves (87%) were born, as against the planned 270 and 50 cattle health camps (93%) were conducted as against the planned 54.

**Effects realized under diversified sustainable agriculture:**

The following effects were observed in the promotion of diversified sustainable agriculture during 2006-07:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Effect Indicator</th>
<th>Results planned for 3 years (2006-09)</th>
<th>Result achieved during the year (2006-07)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>% of farmers adopting LEISA practices.</td>
<td>▪ 60% of the 6480 farmers families adopt LEISA practices like:</td>
<td>o 64% of the families (4176 families) are partially adopting LEISA practices already. Out of them:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Usage of bio-fertilizer</td>
<td>o 2496 families (39%) are using bio-fertilizer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Usage of bio-pesticide</td>
<td>o 2452 families (38%) are using bio-pesticides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>▪ Growing border crops</td>
<td>o 2027 families (31%) are growing border crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>% of farmers sowing with 2 additional rain-fed crops.</td>
<td>▪ 60% of the 6480 farmer families have 2 additional rain-fed crops sown as pure crop, inter crop or</td>
<td>o 41% of the farmer families (2670 families) have 2 additional rain-fed crops sown either as pure crop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>border crop.</td>
<td>or inter crop and border crops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>% of farmers with fruit tree crops planted.</td>
<td>▪ 70% of the 6480 farmer families have fruit tree crops planted.</td>
<td>o 24% of the farmer families (1574 families) have fruit tree crops planted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>% of women engaged in Dairy / Livestock</td>
<td>▪ 40% of the 1620 women labor have dairy animals or livestock.</td>
<td>o 17% of the 1620 labor women (276 women) have either dairy animals or livestock.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>% of laborers getting employment and number of days of employment availed per year.</td>
<td>▪ 70% of the 1620 labor families avail 80 days of employment in a year.</td>
<td>o 9159 labor and farmer families (planned 1620 labor families) have availed 48 days of employment on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>an average in NREGP and AF programs during the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(The no. of families is so high because small, marginal and even medium farmers were forced to do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>the physical work, because of severe drought conditions).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(The no. of families is so high because small, marginal and even medium farmers were forced to do the physical work, because of severe drought conditions).
3.2.3 Policy Advocacy at different levels:
The issues related to NREGP, Indiramma model village (housing and rural infrastructure and development scheme), PDS and other social welfare schemes have been discussed in the SHGs and their networks. Regarding NREGP issues related to problems in providing timely employment, recording measurements, timely payments, transparency in post office accounts and laborers attendance registers etc., have been discussed and awareness is created. The labor groups are now able to voice these issues and concerns with the concerned Govt officials.

AF also has lobbied and succeeded for the following activities to be included under NREGP. These activities would enhance the dry land capability and enhance resistance to droughts, and benefit numerous drought affected small and marginal rain fed farmers:

- Inclusion of pebble bunding as it is widely needed and most helpful for rain fed small & marginal farmers.
- Taking up small in-situ of rain water harvesting structures like farm ponds, check dams.
- Inclusion of watering for horticulture plantations under rain fed conditions for dry land farmers.

Further AF continued to lobby on the following issues:

- Participatory planning for creating productive assets for the poor under NREGP.
- Taking up afforestation, farm forestry and horticulture plantations under NREGP with continued support for a period of 3 years. Such model has been developed by Accion Fraterna.
- Conducting regular social audit (concurrent social audit) for NREGP and all rural developmental programs.
- Support for dairying and sheep rearing under Indira Prabha Program.
- A no. of other procedural bottlenecks in the process of planning and implementation of anti-poverty programs.
4. PROGRESS REPORT 2007-09

4.1 General Situation of Anantapur during 2007 – 09

4.1.1. Good rain and good crops during 2007-08:

2007-08 was an eventful year for the farmers of Anantapur district. The district received 623 mm rainfall during Kharif season against the normal rainfall of 449 mm. Every month of kharif received more rainfall than the normal. Almost the whole district recorded above normal yields (Above 800 kg/ha ) during the year. The average yield in the district during the year was 1200 Kg./ha. In AF’s project area average yield recorded was 1188 kg/ha.

Also the market price of groundnut touched an all time high of Rs.2600 per quintal during the year from Rs.1800 per quintal during last year. So with good yields and higher market prices the farmers were a happy lot during the year.

4.1.2 Adequate employment for the labor & women earn more:

It was a good year for the farm laborers too. They had sufficient work during 2007 kharif season, as the crops were good. They could get 50% more wages on agricultural labor works @ Rs.80/- to Rs150/- per day during harvesting season as against Rs.50/- to Rs.100/- per day during last harvesting season. During the year, about 44,842 farm labor families availed 47 days of employment at an average wage rate of Rs.87 per day in AF’s 230 program villages,. On an average each labor family could earn Rs.4,089 in NREGP, in addition to agriculture wage labor. 3594 families (8%) availed 100 days of employment as planned, and earned Rs.8,000/- to 10,000/- per family during the year.

The year was good for women also. The farmer women were happy as they had a bumper crop and could realize good market price. The farm labor women were also happy as they earned almost triple the wages in NREGP compared to what they normally used to earn as agri-laborers. This enabled them to save more. Women have started purchasing milch animals and there is a rising trend of dairy development in the villages.

4.1.3 Rural educated youth – frustrated and aimless:

Anantapur district has about 100,000 educated / uneducated, unemployed rural youth in the age group of 18 – 25 years. Out of them about 70 to 75% , who have reached high school level and beyond are highly disillusioned. With their poor educational status they neither get employment in private / Govt sector, nor are they interested in agriculture. They neither have the capital to go for self-employment nor any skill to go for skill based employment. So, many of them have taken to physical wage labor works under NREGP, some have become liabilities to their parents and society, while some indulge in anti social activities. Thus, most of the rural youth are leading futile, meaningless and unproductive lives.

4.1.4 NREGP implementation improved during 2008-09:

2008 – 09 started of well for the farm laborers with sufficient employment during April-June this year under NREGP. Since there were good rains, they also had sufficient employment in agricultural works. They could get decent wages in agricultural labor works also @ Rs.80/- to Rs100/- per day. In AF’s 230 program villages about 42,000 farm labor families availed about 2,184,000 person days of employment under NREGP during the year. On an average each family could avail 52 days of employment at an average wage rate of Rs.94 per day. So,
on an average each labor family could earn about Rs.4900 during this year in NREGP, in addition to agriculture wage labor. In spite of some problems in the implementation of NREGP, by and large it has helped many laborers to avail employment during the critical summer period, when it is most needed.

4.1.5 Green Drought during 2008-09:
This year the Kharif season started well for farmers, with good rains in the sowing time. It rained 548 mm during this season against the normal district average of 449 mm. In each and every month of the season the rainfall was either normal or more than normal. About 85% of the cropping area was sown with groundnut and the remaining 15% area with other crops like Sunflower, Red gram, Castor, Jowar, Bajra and Korra. In spite of the ideal conditions for a bumper crop, the groundnut crop failed miserably. The stems and leaves grew luxuriantly and the plants looked healthy, but the pods did not develop. The farmers and the agriculture scientists analyzed this strange situation. They felt that as there were continuous rains and cloudy weather and less than normal temperature during flowering time, it affected the pod formation process. Because of this, very low yields were recorded this year. This phenomenon is often called by farmers as “Green drought” or “deceptive green”.

Almost the whole district recorded below normal yields (below 800 kg/ha) during the year. The average yield in the district during the year was a dismal 300 Kg./ha (37.5% of the normal yield). In AF’s project area average yield recorded was 380 kg/ha (47.5% of the normal yield). The position of other rain-fed crops is comparatively better. Farmers have got 60% - 70% yields in millets like Jowar, Bajra and Korra and more than 50% yields in Sunflower, Red gram and Castor. So, in general, the situation of groundnut crop in the district during the season is highly disappointing and the farmers are facing a lot of distress.

4.1.6 Coping with drought situation:
There was a high inflation during the year. The prices of basic commodities like groceries, vegetables and farm inputs sky-rocketed and the people were forced to cut down their expenditure even on some of their basic needs!

Some solace came to people from various Govt programs. Some women benefited by getting bank credit under “3% interest p.a. loan scheme” of the state Govt, for taking up alternate livelihood activities. For those, who were affected by serious illnesses, another Govt scheme “Arogyasree” (Wealth of health) came in as a big help. The re-introduction of “Rs.2 a kg rice scheme” by the state Govt came in as a relief for all the poor. These Govt programs along with NREGP have helped the people survive the hardship to an extent.

The number of rural educated/uneducated, unemployed youth has crossed the 100,000 mark and is increasing year after year. The rain fed agriculture is not remunerative and there is virtually no alternate employment in the district. Only about 5% of them have acquired vocational skills in works like masonry, electrical works, tailoring etc. About 40% - 50% of the rural youth are presently doing strenuous physical wage labor works in NREGP. The remaining 45%-55% youth are still loitering around and wasting their valuable lives. Though the Govt. has launched a special skills training program for rural youth called “Udyogasree”, in the district, there are many bottlenecks in its implementation. So still lot of efforts are needed in this sector to come anywhere near the huge demand!
4.2 The Changed Program Context for AF
Accion Fraterna started the implementation of the current 3 year project “Sustainable Income Security for Rural Poor - 2006-09” project in April 2006. The project was to promote watershed based sustainable rural livelihoods in its operational area of 54 villages.

However, since beginning of its implementation, the program context had changed substantially due to implementation by the Central and State Governments the following programs.

- The NREGP (National Rural Employment Guarantee Program)
- The RTI Act. (Right to Information Act)
- The APMIP (Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project) and
- INDIRAMMA housing and rural infrastructure development program

The introduction of these programs had a direct impact on the program of AF, particularly with regard to land based programs, as it has all along been involved in promoting watershed based livelihoods. Also, AF saw an opportunity to mobilize investments from NREGP for its land developmental programs like soil and moisture conservation, rain water harvesting, horticulture etc.

4.3 Strategic Re-orientation during 2007-08
In this changed program context AF felt it was appropriate to have a Strategic Re-orientation and effect mid-course programmatic changes, to be more relevant and meaningful, lest it would only duplicate the activities, implemented by the Govt under NREGP. AF also felt it was a wonderful opportunity to organize and empower the rural labor, so that they can exercise their rights under NREGP and RTI effectively and maximize the benefits from it.

Accordingly AF initiated an organizational change process with a participatory approach, in order to re-defined its Vision, Mission and program priorities. The process involved all its staff and select CBOs. This process was called Strategic Reorientation Process.

4.3.1 Revisiting Vision, Mission and Changes in program Priorities for 2007-09:
AF felt it was appropriate to review its Vision, Mission, Values etc as it is reorienting its programs. So, it carried out an O.D (Organization Development) exercise with its staff and select CBOs and re-worked its Vision, Mission, Values and priorities to make its programs more meaningful and relevant to the present context. The OD process was facilitated by Mr. Ajit Mani, a Management Consultant.

4.3.2 Needs assessment and prioritization of interventions:
A Situational Analysis was done in the context of AF’s programs. The Situational Analysis took into account, the changed context, the prevailing conditions and needs of farm labor and rain fed farmers vis-à-vis the govt programs like NREGP and also RDT’s programs. The Situational Analysis at the village level brought out the developmental needs and gaps for the rain fed farmers and farm labor, which are not addressed by govt Agencies or RDT and the constraints they are experiencing presently. After identifying the needs and gaps, AF
further looked at the needs and gaps identified vis-à-vis its own strengths opportunities, weaknesses and threats.
AF undertook a quick rural appraisal in order to assess the situation and the needs and constraints of various groups in villages and the following aspects emerged:
- Degraded natural resources like land, water, vegetation etc.
- Increased drought proneness
- Increased cost of cultivation and low returns even in good crop years
- Scarcity of groundnut seed due to frequent droughts.
- Lack of adequate and timely credit for farmers.
- Lack of fodder availability in summer months.
- Inadequate employment opportunities because of bottlenecks in implementation of NREGP.
- Frustrated educated youth due to unemployment.

The following needs of farmers, farm labor, their women and youth have to be addressed in order to diversify and stabilize their incomes and make them self-reliant, so that they lead their lives with some self respect and dignity:

- Improving the carrying capacity of their lands through enhanced bio-mass, moisture retention, harvesting surface run-off etc.
- Reducing costs on agriculture through LEISA and promoting value addition of produce to realize better returns on investment.
- Promoting crop diversity in agriculture to make it sustainable.
- Promoting diversity in their livelihoods by:
  - Supporting women for dairy and small ruminants.
  - Supporting women to develop non-farm livelihoods.
  - Supporting women and youth to become entrepreneurs or self-employed.
  - Supporting youth in acquiring various non-farm skills and skill based employment.
  - Supporting farm labor to access wage employment under NREGP.
- Improving their access to basic needs like education, health, food security, housing and other social welfare schemes.
- Improving their awareness and access to existing Govt. programs, Banks etc.
- Lobbying and advocating for (a) proper implementation of existing Govt. schemes, and (b) better pro-poor and agriculture policies.

4.3.3. AF’s strategic re-orientation necessitated the following changes in the present 2006-09 phase of the program:

a) To expand the project area from about 100 villages to about 240 villages in a contiguous area covering 8 mandals.
b) To focus on rain fed agriculture and target rain fed farmers (particularly small and marginal farmers) and farm labor.

c) To shift the core program to Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA) from watershed development,

d) To focus on rural youth and women for promoting alternate and diversified livelihoods (On-farm, Off-farm & Non-farm)

e) To empower the farm labor and farmers and create enabling conditions in order to make best use of the Government programs like NREGP.

“Social equity and gender will be the cross cutting themes in its priorities and programs”.

4.3.4 Emphasis on participatory approach in planning and implementation:

1. Planning and implementation by primary groups of farmers and farm labor instead of representative committees

2. Individual family level Participatory planning, monitoring and evaluation

3. Effect monitoring systems — Both formal and informal.

4. Formation of area and central level SHG net works to support and strengthen the SHGs and play
   Pro-active role in policy issues related to their livelihoods.

4.3.5 Intra- organizational Changes and processes

1. Effect suitable changes in the staff structure in accordance with the changed programs and activities.

2. Retrain the staff particularly in NPM & LEISA, and recruit new staff for job-oriented skills Development.

3. Regular half-yearly performance assessment for all cadres of staff to ensure their adaptability to the changed program and their efficiency and effectiveness and ensure optimum level of performance.

4. Establish systems for assisting farm labor and farmers in planning, implementation and Monitoring of NREGP in order to achieve best results under the program.

5. To start two Skill Training Centers including Driving Schools at Anantapur and Kalyandurg to facilitate job-oriented skills and employment to rural youth.

6. Expand the relations and co-operation with other Govt agencies like RUDSETI and Jan Sikshan Samsthan to access their programs on job-oriented skills development.

7. To study the prospects for processing and marketing of red gram, groundnut, tamarind and mango and to upscale.

4.3.6 Changes in Program Investments:

Given the present context, there is no need for AF to make direct investments in NRM activities like Soil & Moisture Conservation, Rainwater Harvesting, Horticulture etc. AFs
role now in NRM would be to enable labor and farmers to access these investments under NREGP. Therefore AF enhanced its investments on (a) NPM and LEISA for greater outreach,(b) non-farm skill development, agri-processing, entrepreneurship development etc. These investments would greatly benefit farm labor and rain fed farmers, particularly the women and youth.

Diagram - 1
Diagrammatic view of the New Strategy of AF Ecology Centre

Sustainable Inclusive Development through Synergies

**Sustainable Income Security for the rural poor in Anantapur District**

**DIVERSIFIED LIVELIHOODS**
Promotion of alternative non-farm livelihoods and entrepreneurship (for women)

**Social Equity**

**INTEGRATED FARMING SYSTEM**
Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture (for small and marginal farmers)

**Collective Action**

**Gender Equity**

**Alliance building with NGOs, CSO**

**Accessing Rights**
Accessing Right to employment and other basic services (landless & small farmers)

**Advocacy & Lobbying**

**SKILL-BASED EMPLOYMENT**
Training in job oriented skills and linking with potential employers. (for rural educated youth)
4.4 Strategic Program Priorities for 2007-12
(Inclusive intervention strategies through synergies)

In view of the Strategic Reorientation Process, AF worked out its Strategic Program Priorities for 5 years to come, i.e. 2007-2012. These priorities would guide AF (a) to develop the programs and activity mix, (b) to raise financial resources and (c) to build appropriate human resource capabilities and staff structure.

- **Enabling the farm labor and rain fed farmers to access the Government Programs & Services**, particularly rural employment and land-based programs for their benefit, in view of NREGP and other programs like Health Insurance, PDS etc.

- **Intensifying and expanding the campaigning on NPM (Non-Pesticide Management) and LEISA (Low External Input for Sustainable Agriculture)** in order to
  - reduce the cost of cultivation and increase the net earnings from agriculture,
  - mitigate the risk of droughts, prevent pollution of natural resources and to make agriculture ecologically sustainable, and
  - enhance the farmers capacity to cope with drought.

- **Integrating additional livelihoods** like Dairy & Livestock Management, to spread the risk and provide a safety net of income.
  - through credit support,
  - linking with banks and other financial institutions and
  - facilitating better marketing opportunities,

- **Promoting value addition of agri-produce and better marketing of agri-produce** by establishing linkages and strategic alliances with government, financial institutions, private sector firms for credit, and other support, in order to maximize the post-harvest returns.

- **Promoting diversification of skill base of Youth**, both girls and boys, in order to gradually reduce the pressure on agriculture, diversify the occupational base and create occupational mobility. This is done by enabling them to join Mainstream (Modern Economy) in the non-farm sector through
  - Job-oriented Skills Training for Youth
  - Entrepreneurship Development

- **Promoting and emphasizing gender and social equity** in the programs and to enhance the role of women in decision making at family and community level and equitable opportunities for socially & economically disadvantaged.

- **Foster and support institutions for the rain fed farmers to operationalize the above program priorities; influence and catalyze change; build democracy and peace in rural areas** by:
  - Organizing rain fed farmers organizations and their federations and developing their capabilities and leadership.
  - Working in collaboration with existing village institutions like SHGs, VOs, Raithumitra groups etc.
  - Coordinating with Govt. functionaries for convergence and effective implementation of Govt. programs.
• Promoting Advocacy and Policy Promotion by working together with like minded, NGOs & CSOs and creating collective voices for people for a favorable pro-poor policy support.

Competencies to be strengthened within AF

a) Strengthen Information Technology Applications
b) Research on Livelihoods Options, which can be scaled up, particularly off-farm and non-farm.
c) Policy Research in order to identify policy gaps as well as gaps in implementation processes.
d) Upgrade knowledge and skills for NPM and LEISA.
e) Acquire competence in non-farm job-oriented skill development, agri-processing marketing and promotion of rural entrepreneurship.
f) Acquire competence in PPME (Participatory Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation).
g) Acquire skills in counseling the rural youth and women.

4.5 Implementation of the Change process/ New Strategy

4.5.1 Reworking of log frame, plans and budgets
PME cell played a key role in all these aspects of change management. In addition to facilitating the change process, they also had to rework the log-frame and plans & budgets and seek the approval of ICCO & EED. These processes were at times tiresome, because such major changes had to be operationalized in a short time in the middle of a project phase. The original plan and budget orientation was of a participatory watershed development with emphasis on Soil and Moisture Conservation, Rain Water Harvesting, Horticulture etc. The changed orientation was on sustainable agriculture, food security, bio-pest control, bio-fertilizers, alternate livelihoods for women and youth and empowering the people for accessing the government programs and basic services.

4.5.2 Changes in the staff structure and roles
The staff structure was also changed to match the changed program and extended project villages. New roles were redefined and reworked. In the previous program, each STO covered one watershed village, and in a few cases another village funded by Government for a specified activity. In the new structure each STO covered a cluster of 5 villages and about 1250 to 1500 families of farmers and farm labor. In total, there are 48 STOs and so the project villages were divided into 48 clusters of 5 villages each. Earlier each Area Team Leader (ATL) and each Agriculture Officer (AO) covered about 20 watershed villages, but now they cover about 60 villages of a contiguous area. There are 4 such areas, 4 Area Team Leaders and 4 Agriculture Officers. Each Area Team Leader has about 12 clusters and 12 STOs in his/her team. Further a new cadre of Livelihood Coordinator was introduced, in order to pay attention to alternate livelihoods for women and youth. They cover about 15 – 20 villages each with 3 – 4 STOs. Thus there are 4 livelihood coordinators in each area.. At the central level, there are sector resource persons for (a) Sustainable Agriculture, (b) Government resource mobilization and Policy Advocacy, (c) Alternative livelihoods for women and youth rehabilitation and (d) PME.
It is important to note that gender balance has been given due consideration in the new staff structure. 8 out of the 16 livelihood co-ordinators (50%) are women and 2 out of the 4 Area Team Leaders (50%) are women.
4.5.3 Strengthening staff capacities
As part of change management, one full round of workshops and meetings were organized to reorient the staff at all levels. These workshops focused on why the change is necessitated and what changes are required and what would be the future outlook of AF. These workshops helped to build commitment for change among the staff at all levels. The training needs were identified for the staff in order to carry on the new program. Accordingly a series of trainings were organized on (a) Concept of Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA), practices of bio-control methods of pests and diseases, biofertilizers etc. (b) Understanding livelihoods, non-farm livelihoods, entrepreneurship development among women and rural youth (c) The policies and programs under NREGS and other Government programs. In retraining the staff the services of CSA, Hyderabad, APMAS, Hyderabad, and WASSAN, Hyderabad were utilized in addition to a few other consultants.

By the end of June 2007, the staff were equipped and geared up to take on their re-defined roles with renewed enthusiasm and vigor.

4.5.4 Launching the change in the field
With all the preparation, finally by the end of June, 07 the staff took on new positions and new roles. July – September was the period of introduction of the new program, in 54 old villages and 186 new villages, which coincided perfectly with the beginning of kharif season. The staff initiated the new program with an intensive awareness campaign on Sustainable Agriculture in the villages, during this period.

Non Pesticidal Management (NPM) program of Govt.: AFs collaboration with Govt. on Non-pesticide Management (NPM) also began during this period. This new collaboration with Govt. gave AF a lot of useful resource material and educational aids to launch the Sustainable Agricultural Program. Thus AF was well equipped to make a very firm grounding of the new program in 240 villages covering about 60,000 farmers and farm labor.

4.5.5 Managing Change – A lively and learning experience
The change process was participatory, transparent, well designed and implemented. It started with a systematic reflection of the changing situation in micro and macro context with regard to agriculture, watershed development, livelihoods and poverty alleviation etc., particularly with the introduction of NREGP, RTI and other rural development programs. This reflection process was done with staff at all cadres and also with the CBOs in the target villages.

The process of change management was a participatory lively and learning experience, though laborious and taxing at times. It was a relatively smooth and swift manoeuvre by AF thanks to its inclusive approach, openness to change, effective communication and high degree of adaptability. During this process, all AF staff have been actively involved in a) Defining the change, b) Working out the changes in structure and roles, c) Getting the necessary orientations and retraining, and d) Re-working the log-frame, plans, budget, monitoring and reporting systems etc.
This change process was relatively less resisted, mainly because the staff saw that watershed program was becoming redundant, and staff also generally felt ‘some’ change is essential for AF to be relevant in the changing context. The change was also smoother (a) because the senior and experienced staff are highly adaptable, (b) it did not have serious adverse consequences for staff.

AF earlier had been part of RDT and has a long track record of a very effective change management, in the past 40 years of its organizations life.

All these changes have been done in a manner that kept the morale and the energy of all the staff at a higher level. The feeling of a new found enthusiasm among the staff was very obvious and evident. However there were still some organizational systems that AF needed to reorganize, like adjusting the Accounting Systems, Management Information System, PME system, Reporting system etc. PME cell and accounts cell worked hard to evolve these systems and synchronize them with field activities.

4.5.6 Support from ICCO and EED for the change process
AF is immensely thankful to ICCO and EED for their cooperation and understanding in this process. AF was conscious that these changes, particularly in the middle of a three year project phase would cause some nagging problems to ICCO and EED. AF took ICCO and EED into confidence fully and informed them about the changes at all stages. AF assured that these changes were done in the best interest of the people, AF and as much in the pursuance of long-term goals of ICCO and EED. AF could not have waited up to March, 2009 as it would have lost valuable time, wasted resources and would have diluted the very purpose. As a result, its high public reputation and staff morale would have been adversely affected. AF also assured that it would do everything to reduce the adverse consequences to ICCO and EED in this regard.
4.6. Progress against planned activities for 2007 - 09

AF’s interventions during 2007-09 have been very strategic and effective in order to address the consequences of the changed situation and the new program. A lot of thinking, planning had to be done and many timely actions had to be taken to implement the new program swiftly. The progress during 2007-09 is presented under major areas like, (1) Capacity building of farmers and farm labor, (2) AF’s role in implementation of NREGP, (3) Diversified & Sustainable Agriculture program, (4) Alternate livelihoods program for rural women, (5) Skills training program for rural youth (men & women) and (6) Policy advocacy on issues related to Sustainable Agriculture and NREGP.

4.6.1 Capacity building of farmers and farm labor:
During 2007-09, AF’s capacity building program was successful in spite of obstacles like (a) Delayed start during 2007-08, (b) New concepts & training methodologies, (c) Time constraint for people and staff created by the implementation of NREGP, (d) Drought conditions during 2008-09 etc.

4.6.1.1 Awareness campaigns on the rights of labour under NREGP:
AF also conducted 16 mandal level campaigns on NREGP, during 2007-09, in the 8 mandals of its program area, as planned. Totally about 13,000 farm labor particularly youth (About 7,000 men and 6,000 women) (135%) attended these campaigns, against the planned 9600 farm labor. These campaigns achieved the important objectives of (a) Creating awareness among the labor on their rights under NREGA, and (b) Facilitating interaction at mandal level, between the labor and the district level Govt functionaries.

4.6.1.2. Gender trainings and International women’s days:
AF also conducted Gender trainings for both men and women farmers and farm laborers. Totally, 1106 Gender trainings (115%) were conducted during 2007-09, against the planned 960 trainings. 32,365 women (112%) and 30,717 men (107%) were covered against the planned 28,800 women & 28,800 men. These trainings dealt with Gender sensitivity, Gender equity, Decision making by women at different levels like Cropping choices, family decisions, village level decisions etc, Sharing of work load by men, Education of girl child, Domestic violence etc.

AF also conducted 16 mandal level Women’s Day Campaigns during 2007 – 09 in the 8 mandals of its program area, as planned. Totally about 10,200 women (106% of the planned 9600) and about 3,200 men (133% of the planned 2400) attended the campaigns. These campaigns achieved the important objectives of (a) Bringing awareness and empowering women by bringing them on to a common platform. (b) Reminding the women about their rights and entitlements and the processes to acquire them. (c) Giving awareness on the new government pro-women laws on areas like anti domestic violence, education for girl child and reservations in different Government programs etc. (d) Providing knowledge on employment opportunities available within and outside their villages (e) Providing awareness on the health problems of the women and methods to prevent and overcome them. (f) Facilitating them to think independently and enhance their
self confidence. (g) Providing an opportunity to have knowledge exchange, awareness and
solidarity on different kinds of women problems and their solutions. (h) Encouraging them
to take part in the decision making related to their family and village. (i) Motivating them to
fight against social evils and atrocities against women.

4.6.2 Promotion of diversified sustainable agriculture:
The deteriorating natural resources, harsh agro climatic conditions, and counter-productive
high cost and high chemical input agriculture practices, together with mono cropping of
groundnut under rain fed conditions, have altogether turned rain fed cropping into a risky
gamble in Anantapur district. To add to this, mono cropping has increased the incidence of
pests and diseases and reduced the yields. Moreover, it is high time, we shake ourselves out
of slumber and take seriously the problem of chemical pollution, of our natural resources
and the slow poison being administered through our food crops.

So, responding to the distress of farmers, AF made Low External Input Sustainable
Agriculture it’s prime agenda, because (a) it deals with bio-fertilizers and biological control
of pests and diseases, (b) it promotes diversified cropping practices, (c) it requires low
investments, (d) it is nature-friendly and (e) it is beneficial to human health.

When AF was set to launch its core program of promoting sustainable agri-practices in
2007, Co-incidentally, just at this juncture, Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty
(SERP) - a State Govt. agency, came forward to collaborate with AF in implementing its
Non pesticidal management (NPM) program. This collaboration was advantageous to AF as
it provided (a) useful training and resource material on NPM, (b) educational aids on NPM
and (c) village activists (Para agricultural workers at village level) to launch it’s sustainable
agri-program. So, AF joined hands with SERP and launched the joint collaborative NPM
program in its total outreach of 240 villages from 8 mandals. AF focused on building an
effective institutional set-up, by enrolling farmers into the Sustainable Agriculture program,
forming primary farmer groups (Sasya Mitra Groups - SMGs), their village level federations
(Grama Sasya mitra Samakhyas - GSSs) and their mandal level federations (Mandal Sasya
mitra Samakhyas -MSSs).

4.6.2.1 The Strategies
• Forming primary farmers groups, called Sasya mitra Groups (SMG) and federating them
  at various levels and Working in tandem with other existing village institutions like
  SHGs, VOs and Raithu mitra groups.

• Capacity building of farmers, farm labor, their groups and networks.

• Implementing the program through SMGs and their federations.

• Collaborating with the Government to complement its own program by utilizing the
  Government resources and programs effectively.
• Building Strategic alliances with other devt. agencies like NABARD, Reaserch institutes like ICRISAT and Resource Organizations like Center for Sustainable Agriculture (CSA) etc

4.6.2.2 The Activities
The progress in promotion of diversified sustainable agriculture was remarkable during 2007-09, considering the fact that the program started only in July 2007. This was possible because AF staff, the village activists and the SMGs took the promotion program as a challenge and worked tirelessly as a team in a planned and systematic way. The farmers also responded positively because the Sustainable Agriculture practices are indigenous, easy-to-practice, save on the cost of cultivation and increase their net returns. So, the physical achievements have by and large exceeded the planned targets.

4.6.2.3 Organizing farmer groups and their federations

Sasyamitra groups (SMGs)
The SMGs (Sasyamitra Groups) have been formed with 25-30 farmer families each based on their affinity or based on contiguous area they cultivated. From each enrolled family one woman and one man are the members in SMGs. For each group one Convener and Co-convener atleast one must be a woman, are nominated unanimously by the group members. Thus, 5-8 groups are formed in a village based on the size of village. Totally, 1624 SMGs (97%), have been formed against the planned 1675 SMGs with 42,363 farmer families, since the inception of the program in 2007. The purpose of the SMGs is to:

a) Ensure food and income security to the farmers, by making them practice LEISA.
b) To get agriculture back into the control of farmers from the clutches of Seed, Fertilizer and Pesticide Companies, by preparing bio-fertilizers, bio-pesticides and producing good quality seeds locally.
c) To promote bio-diversity by saving Mother Earth from chemical poisoning.
d) To increase Agri-production, take-up value addition of agri-produce and improve marketing facilities.
e) To achieve favorable policies for promotion of Sustainable Agriculture by exerting pressure on the Govt.

Grama Sasyamitra Samakhya (GSS)
The GSS (Grama Sasyamitra Samakhya) is a village level federation of SMGs formed with the Conveners and Co-conveners of the SMGs. These members unanimously nominate one Convenor and one Co-convenor (atleast one must be a woman) for the GSS. GSSs have been formed in all the 230 villages during the reporting period. They are involved in (a) enrolment of farmers into SMGs, (b) follow up of SMGs, (c) monitoring FFS, (d) planning and implementation of village level NPM activities and (e) maintenance of village level NPM records (f) financial management and accounts at village level.
**Mandal Sasyamitra Samakhya (MSS)**
The GSSs are federated at Mandal level as Mandal Sasyamitra Samakhya (MSS). MSS (Mandal Sasya mitra Samakhya) is a mandal level federation formed with the Conveners and Co-conveners of the GSSs. The MSS members will nominate unanimous, one Convenor and Co-convener, atleast one must be a woman. Women are preferred for convener’s post. MSSs have been formed in all the 8 mandals of AF’s program area. These MSSs will be federated at District level as Zilla Sasya mitra Samakhya (ZSS). The main purpose of making these higher level federations is to act as forums for bringing out various policy issues and voicing their concerns effectively with Government.

**VO - NPM Sub-committee**
Village Organization (VO) is a federation of women SHGs at the village level and it has been organized and supported by Government. It is an all women body. Since NPM is a Govt. program, VO are involved in implementing the NPM program under SERP. So, a separate sub-committee is set up by the VO to implement the NPM program. It is called VO-NPM Sub-committee.

This VO-NPM sub-committee consists of 7 members, three from VO, who are practicing NPM, two progressive farmers, one village activist and one office bearer. It plays a pivotal role in planning, implementation, monitoring of the program at village level. Following are its main functions:

- It reviews the activities that are taken up in the village
- It reviews the work of village activist
- It co-ordinates with Mandal level sub-committee
- It prepares action plan and budget for the village, for every season.

It is authorized and responsible for managing program finances provided by SERP at the village level

**4.6.3 Building motivation and capacities of farmers in adopting SA practices**

**4.6.3.1 Awareness through village and mandal level campaigns**
Village level campaigns on LEISA and NPM have been organized in all the 230 project villages. The purpose of organizing them is to sensitize farming community in particular and the public in general about the hazardous effects of chemical fertilizers and pesticides on human beings, flora and fauna, ill effects of mono cropping, and about bio-diversity etc. Awareness is being created among the farming community on how best they can utilize the locally available bio-ingredients as substitutes to chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Emphasis is also laid on introduction of new varieties and practices, reduction in cost of cultivation and increase in productivity.

These campaigns are organized jointly by GSS and staff members. The responsibilities are shared between the GSS& SMG members and staff. Education materials like audio, visual
Some women drove bullock carts in the rally to show symbolically that they can also perform the so called superior roles that are culturally assigned exclusively for men.

768 farmers’ campaigns (160%) were conducted against the planned 480 campaigns for creating wide spread awareness on Sustainable Agriculture among the farming community. Totally 45,960 women (128%) and 45,670 men (127%) attended these campaigns, against the planned 36,000 women and 36,000 men farmers. Awareness was given on LEISA/NPM practices like border crops, pest traps, bio-fertilisers, bio-pesticides, crop diversification, seed multiplication etc. Farmers’ participation in the campaigns was very encouraging because the content is very relevant and need-based in the present scenario of high cost agriculture with un-reliable yields.

AF conducted 8 mandal level campaigns on Sustainable Agriculture, in the 8 mandals of its program area. Totally about 3,000 farmers (About 1,400 men and 1,600 women) attended these campaigns. In these campaigns, wide spread awareness was created on Sustainable Agriculture, ill-effects of using chemical fertilizers and pesticides and issues related to practicing of Sustainable Agriculture were discussed with the farmers.

4.6.3.2 Awareness through Rallies
Rallies were organized in the villages with placards and banners on LEISA/NPM practices. In each village about 200 farmers (men and women) participated in these rallies. NPM practicing farmers, Panchayath representatives, VO leaders and concerned SERP staff also participated. Cultural programs, Demonstrations and exhibitions on LEISA/NPM practices were organized. The farmers were impressed and expressed their willingness and commitment to adopt the practices and stop the usage of chemical fertilizers. Rallies were organized in the towns (mandal headquarters) also with placards and banners on LEISA/NPM practices

4.6.3.3 Capacity building through Trainings

Village activist training
AF has organized trainings on NPM & LEISA for 230 village activists in 2007. Following refresher trainings have been organised once in 6 months. These trainings also create a platform for VAs from different villages to share their experiences, which is highly beneficial for their mutual learning. Following are the main objectives of the training:

- To train on non-negotiable practices under NPM.
- To train them on soil fertility management, seed production and seed bank management.
• To train them on composting, vermi composting liquid fertilizers and developing bio-mass in fields.
• To train on organizing Farmers Field Schools (FFS)
• To train on various methods of non-pesticide management for managing various pests and diseases.
• To create awareness on diversification of agriculture and livelihoods opportunities.
• To promote usage of indigenous materials as substitutes to pesticides and fertilizers.

Field staff training
All the field staff including Area Team Leaders are given trainings in 2007, adequately on all relevant aspects of Sustainable Agriculture, including NPM, LEISA, Farming Systems, Horticulture etc. To assess the level of knowledge and skills of field staff in sustainable agricultural practices and to identify their training needs, tests are conducted every year, on sustainable agricultural practices to all the 62 field level workers (46 STOs + 16 LCOs). Based on this assessment, AF has arranged need based training to field level workers every year. These trainings were conducted by Agriculture officers and other subject matter specialists. Repeat tests were also conducted for the under-performers, after giving them training again and all of them fared well in the Repeat test.

AF arranged a 3-day training on Farmer Field Schools to all the field level workers. AME (Agriculture, Man & Ecology) conducted this training in two batches during June 2008 at AF Ecology Centre. AF also arranged a 1-day training on the concept of seed banks to LCOs and Senior staff. This was conducted by CSA (Centre for Sustainable Agriculture) at AF Ecology Centre.

NON-NEGOTIABLES IN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

1. **Summer Ploughing** is done for two reasons:
   - To turn the top fertile soil upside down so that microbial activity in the soil is enhanced.
   - To expose the pupas of harmful insects to surface temperature and Birds.

2. **Putting up Bon Fires** to attract the moths of major pests like Red hairy caterpillar etc.

3. **Pheromone Traps** are installed to monitor the intensity of Pests in the crop fields and also for mass trapping. The male moths are attracted to the lures, with female synthetic pheromones, and get trapped in the receptacles.

4. **Yellow and White Boards** are installed in the crop fields to attract small insects like Jassids, Green hoppers and Thrips, which get stuck to the boards as they are smeared with some sticky material.

5. **Growing Border Crops** like Pearl millet or Sorghum, which grow taller than the Ground nut crop, to ward off the entry of Thrips (small winged insects), which carry viruses, that cause disease to the main crop.

6. **Growing Trap Crops** like Sun flower, Mary Gold, Castor etc, which have bright yellow flowers and big leaves attract the pest moths. These moths lay eggs on the trap crops only, which makes it easy for the farmer to destroy them.

7. **Bird Perches** are installed in the crop fields to allow the birds to perch on them, from where they can easily detect the larvae and feed on them.
4.6.3.4 Organizing Farmers Field Schools (FFS)

Farmer Field Schools (FFS) are organized to promote knowledge and learning of farmers, particularly with regard to bio-pest management practices. It is a practical, on-the-field education program for farmers organized by AF. About 25 – 30 farmers from SMGs constitute a FFS, out of which there are at least 10 – 15 women. The farmers groups are formed based on the crops they grow, and based on contiguous area. FFSs were conducted every week in every village, under AF’s project area. Strengthening of farmers groups (SMGs) and enhancing their scientific knowledge on crop, pests and practices through field experiences are of paramount importance in FFS. The FFSs have the following agenda:

- Agro Eco system analysis: in this crop pattern is observed by the farmers.
- Identification of beneficial and harmful insects and the impact of these insects on crops
- Collection of both beneficial and harmful insects - by which farmers can understand life cycle of insects
- Analysis of activities taken up in their fields.
- Recording the deliberations and observations in their groups during the FFS.

During 2007-09, AF has conducted 17,615 FFS (92% of the planned 19,200 FFS) in it’s 230 villages. Totally, 41,173 women farmers (89% of the planned 46,160) and 58,265 men farmers (84% of the planned 69,240) attended the FFS.

The FFSs, with practical on the field observations, have raised the enthusiasm of farmers in adopting NPM/LEISA practices. They have promoted mutual learning amongst participating farmers. The farmers’ response for bio-fertilizers is positive and encouraging, though the conditions have been not so conducive for readily practicing all the LEISA practices.

4.6.3.5 Promoting LEISA/NPM practices

Promoting bio-fertilizers

**Compost making and vermi composting**

Earlier the farmers were applying farmyard manure (FYM) to their fields. But due to continuous droughts, the cattle population has reduced and farmyard manure has become a scarce commodity. As an alternative, AF is encouraging the farmers to go for farm composting and vermin compost making by utilizing the farm waste green leaf and other available organic matter.

The agricultural waste and other organic matter is used in a scientific manner in the field itself. This is the best source of in situ bio-fertilizer to the seasonal crops and fruit plants.
The achievements have been very satisfying in promoting production and usage of bio-fertilizers. Totally 27,897 farmers prepared and used bio-fertilizers against the planned 25,200 farmers during 2007-09. 20,309 Farm compost making units (106%) were established against the planned 19,200 units, which have covered about 8000 ha. of farm lands. 7,588 vermi compost units (126%) were established against the planned 6000 units, which have covered about 600 ha. of fruit orchards, vegetable crops etc.

**Jeevamrutham**

Jeevamrutham is the cheapest indigenously prepared liquid and solid bio fertilizer concentrate. It had been established beyond doubt as the best alternative to chemical fertilizers. It enhances the healthy microbial population in the soil which supplies nutrients to the plants. During 2007-09, 5171 farmers prepared themselves the Jeevamritham and applied to their crops mostly fruit orchards and paddy crop covering an extent of 7438 ha.

The effect of Jeevamrutham is conspicuous in the crop growth. Many farmers were attracted by seeing this impact and have started using Jeevamrutham on rice, fruit crops and vegetables wherever irrigation is available, besides rain fed crops.

**Promoting NPM practices**

**Mechanical pest management**

AF is against the use of chemical pesticides, as they are detrimental to the beneficial insects and also to human health. The best way to overcome this menace is through non-chemical mechanical methods of pest control. The following mechanical measures have been taken up for controlling the pests.

**Pheremone traps**

In the market synthetic pheremones are available for various types of pests. The male insects are trapped before mating which inhibits the egg laying process. Moreover these traps are indicators of the type of pest that is likely to attack. 10 such traps are placed strategically in an area of one hectare. Totally 37,338 farmers installed Pheromone traps in their 23,667 ha,of land (141%) against the planned target of 16,800 ha. during 2007-09.

**White and Yellow boards**

Mostly sucking pests and small winged insects are attracted to white and yellow colours. These boards are coated with a sticky substance. When insects come in contact with these boards, they get stuck. Totally 37,338 farmers installed White and Yellow boards in their 23,667 ha,of land (141%) against the planned target of 16,800 ha. during 2007-09.

**Border crops**

As groundnut is the mono crop in Anantapur district covering nearly one million hectares, it is subjected to PSND (peanut stem necrosis disease). This is caused by Thrips, which are the carriers of PSND virus. The border crop grows taller than groundnut and functions as barrier to ward off the entry of thrips in to the main field. Millets like Bajra and jowar and pulses like cow pea were grown as border crops by 44,246 farmers in their 108,530 ha.(100%) against the planned 108,000 ha during 2007-09.
Biological pest management

Decoctions of local wild plants and hot spices
Whenever the pest population crosses ETL (Economic Threshold Level) decoctions made from the indigenously available plants, hot spices like chilly, garlic etc., are found to be the best alternative to chemical pesticides. Under biological pest control program, AF motivated the farmers to prepare and apply bio-pesticides. As a result, 28,069 farmers prepared and applied bio-pesticides in their 19,894 ha (166%) against the planned 12,000 ha during 2007-09.

Neem seed extract spraying has caught up in AF’s project area. Now it has become a habit among the farmers to use neem seed extract. This will check the population of thrips. Farmers are convinced that this is a substitute to chemical pesticides.

Neem oil and Extracts
Farmers are also spraying neem oil to control pests. The effect of neem oil in suppressing the spread of LLS was noticed. The fodder was also devoid of chemical contamination. Spraying with neem oil proved beyond doubt that it works as a repellant and does not allow the harmful insects to lay eggs. Neem oil does not have any residual toxic effect on crops and fruits. Similarly, the neem seed extract besides having the above positive effect, supplements nutrients to the plants. About 3900 farmers sprayed 2300 ha, of their cropping area with neem products like neem oil and neem seed extract during 2007-09.

Trichogramma cards
Trichogramma belongs to wasp family. These insects lay eggs in the eggs of other crop damaging insects. There by the eggs of the crop damaging insects get parasitization. These cards were used exclusively in vegetable cultivation in about 70 ha, by 210 farmers during 2007-09. The cost was borne entirely by the farmers themselves.

NPV (Nuclear Polyhydrous Virus).
The NPV solutions are insect specific. They can be prepared in large quantities from the infected insects and sprayed on crops. NPV solutions are eco-friendly and do not have any adverse effect on the flora and fauna. NPV was used exclusively on chickpea crop to an extent of about 120 ha, by 54 farmers, on their own.

Promoting Bio-mass development in farm lands
Availability of adequate biomass is a pre-condition for sustainable agriculture. Anantapur district is almost totally denuded. AF, as a long term measure is promoting vegetation in the crop lands through farm forestry. For promotion of Bio-mass in the fields, plantation of forest species and seed dibbling with Pongamia, glyricidia etc is taken up in all 230 villages. Plantation and direct seed dibbling is done on the field borders, soil bunds and
waste lands. The vegetative cover protects the soil and also provides enough green matter for compost making. The nurseries at village level are raised by SHG women and also saplings are grown in AF’s Central nurseries to ensure timely availability of plants in the month of July. Efforts are being put to see that farmers access wages from APREGS for pitting and watering of these plantations.

Totally 13,320 farmers raised plantations with useful vegetation and bio-mass in their 33,294 ha. of land (173% of the planned 19,200 ha) during 2007-09. The vegetative cover protects the soil and has also provided green matter for compost making.

**Crop Diversification:**

Mono-cropping of groundnut in the district, since long has made the crop susceptible to many pests and diseases. Since many years AF has been creating awareness and motivation among farmers to take up multiple / diversified cropping system. AF has been making efforts to make the farmers take up other food crops other than groundnut, as pure crop or inter crop or mixed crop and vegetable cultivation, to address the issue of food security in the project villages. Food crops like millets and pulses are promoted extensively in AF’s project area. AF is also promoting various types of fodder species like tree fodder, grass varieties etc., to support dairy development.

AF’s crop diversification program was a big success. This was possible owing to rigorous awareness campaigns on sustainable agriculture and food security issues and more importantly because of the involvement of women who were showing interest in growing food crops. Crop diversification was done by (a) 15,820 farmers in their 8,552 ha, of farm lands with food crops (119%) against the planned 7,200 ha, (b) 22,838 farmers raised 24,144 Fodder plots (201%) against the planned 12,000 plots during 2007-09.

**4.6.4 Alternate Livelihoods for Women:**

**4.6.4.1. Impact of farmers distress on women:**

The impact of farmers’ distress is high on rural women. The shortage of food in the family affects women both psychologically and physically. It is unbearable for women to see the starving in the family, particularly of children. Thus the brunt of stress falls on them. They are mostly under-fed. Moreover because of the distress conditions they are forced to do physical labor on daily wages, as that is the only job, they can access. These under nourished women are subjected to strenuous physical work, causing many health problems, which are not being attended for want of money. Some basic needs of women like clothing, children’s needs etc., are also not adequately met properly which is leading to conflicts and turmoil in their families. As a result women’s self-confidence is low and they have a very low estimation of their self worth.

Rural women need financial security to overcome the above miseries. Since agriculture is not remunerative on one hand and is in the control of men on the other, women need some alternate livelihoods which are both remunerative and sustainable, and most importantly in their control.
4.6.4.2. Measures taken by AF to support rural women:

In response to the context, AF worked out a strategy for promoting Livelihood Support programme exclusively for women. The strategy comprised of two components, one with funds under AFs and the other mobilising resources from Government and banks.

- Diversifying the family livelihood base by enabling women to take up viable off-farm and non-farm IGAs, through AF’s livelihood support program.

- Encouraging and facilitating women to access Govt. schemes meant for them and loans from banks & other FIs., to take up dairy, livestock and other IGPs.

Formulation of a livelihood support policy:

To achieve the objective of diversified livelihood base of poor farmers / farm labor families, AF formulated a livelihood support policy. The important aspects of the policy are as follows:

- Only women from poor and marginal farmers and farm labor families are eligible for AF’s livelihood support. SC & ST families to get top priority.

- Only group based IGPs will be assisted, not individual families. Each women group will have about 10 families.

- This IGA group of 10 families prepares a livelihood proposal for the group, with the assistance of AF staff (STOs and / or Livelihood Coordinators)

- The concerned women group should contribute at least 50% of the estimated cost of the proposal, by way labour, material, cash etc.

- AF will provide an incentive of 50% of the estimated cost of the proposal, subjected to a maximum of Rs.7,500/- per family.

- The livelihood proposal should be feasible. The feasibility study will be done by AF’s senior team, comprising of ATL and the senior livelihood coordinator at central level.

- A screening committee was setup to screen the proposals and decide about the financial support.

- The proposal is sanctioned studying based on the Feasibility Report of the senior team, subject to the guidelines of livelihood support programme.

AF has formed a 9 member livelihood steering committee, comprising of Area Team Leaders, PME cell and senior central staff. This committee meets once or twice in a month depending upon the need, discusses the feasibility of the proposals and accords formal sanctions. After this, the incentive amount is released to the group and the IGA is implemented by the Women Group, supported by the field staff.

Role of AF Staff:
AF staff have played an important role in identifying and helping the eligible women to develop additional livelihoods, by:

- Enhancing their awareness and building their capacities through meetings and trainings.
- Motivating them to develop skills by attending the trainings conducted by Govt. and other NGOs.
- Organizing the women into groups and their capacity building.
- Assisting the poor women in identifying viable income generation activities and preparing proposals and arranging incentives from AF.
- Encouraging them to approach banks and other FIs and helping them in getting loans for development of livelihoods.
- Building forward and backward linkages for the IGP.
- Helping them in establishing marketing / business links or alliances.

4.6.4.3. Achievements during 2007-09 under livelihood support for women:

The Livelihood Support Program for farmer and farm labor women was implemented successfully during the reporting period. It took longer for AF to evolve its women’s livelihoods support policy. So women’s livelihood program was started only in December 2007. Still the results achieved are quiet substantial, which are indicative of the need. The backlog of 2007-08 was covered during 2008-09.

2607 rural poor women (109% of the planned 2400 women), forming into 295 groups, have taken up Non-farm/Off-farm income generation activities. Income generation activities like Multi-crop threshers (Agri-processing), NPM shops, Garment making, Sari weaving, Brick making, Basket making, Fish rearing, Dairy etc. were taken up by women. These activities have been well implemented and the women have started getting substantial income. In some cases the rural women have demonstrated good entrepreneurial skills.

On an average each group has about 9 women members from small and marginal farmer families and land less families. Agri-processing, with Groundnut/ Multi Crop Threshers is a successful Off-farm I.G. Activity taken up by women livelihood groups during 2008-09. Totally, 511 women (52 groups) have been benefited by this activity. These units cost between Rs.95,000- Rs.120,000. On an average each group has invested about Rs.50,000 - Rs.65,000 and AF has provided an incentive of about Rs.45,000 – Rs.60,000 per group. The groups are getting about 90-100 days

“I earned Rs.2,500/- from thresher during last season. More over I was able to thresh my groundnut free of cost, which otherwise would have costed Rs.3,000/-. Hence my net income is Rs.5,500/- during this year. I am very happy that I will be getting a continuous income in every season.”

Nagamma, Member Mahalaxmi SHG, Chapiri village
of post-harvesting work of Agri-produce in kharif and Rabi. They are earning a net income of about Rs.600 per day, which means each women member is earning Rs. 60 per day or Rs.5,000 - Rs.6,000 per year. It is an additional income to their earnings from wage employment under APREGS and as Agricultural laborers.

Garment making, is another successful, Non-farm I.G. Activity taken up by AF’s women livelihood groups. On an average each group has about 12 Girls / women from small and marginal farmers and land less families. Totally, 563 Girls / women (43 groups) have been benefited by this activity.

The Garment making units cost about Rs.90,000, (Cost of sewing machines, infrastructure and consumables). On an average each group has invested over Rs.40,000 and AF has provided an incentive of about Rs.40,000 per group. The groups are getting work almost throughout the year, though there are fluctuations in the quantum of work, based on the season, size of the village, skills level etc. Each Girl / women is earning about Rs.1,250-Rs.1,500 per month on an average, which means an average annual additional income of Rs.15,000-Rs.18,000.

Sari weaving is another successful, Off-farm I.G. Activity taken up by AF’s women livelihood groups during 2008-09. Actually, this is a traditional activity, in Dharmavaram mandal for many years. But many women from our target groups had discontinued this activity for want of capital, as there were continuous droughts year after year. So, AF supported these poor women to revive the activity. On an average each group has about 10 women members from small and marginal farmers and land less families. Totally, 406 women have been benefited by this activity. These units cost about Rs.140,000 ( For Cost & Conveyance of raw material). On an average each family has invested about Rs.7,000 and AF has provided an incentive of about Rs.7,000 per family. Each women member is earning Rs.10,000-Rs.12,000 per year.

Tamarind processing and marketing is yet another successful Off-farm I.G. Activity taken up by AF’s women livelihood groups, particularly in Kundurpi mandal, during 2008-09.

“We are thankful to AF for providing us support to start tamarind business.. By joining AF’s livelihood group we are able to solve our financial problems. Now we are in a position to provide higher education to our younger children.”

Ms. Rangamma
- A woman laborer from Elachinta village
an average each group has about 10-12 women members from small and marginal farmer families and land less families. Totally, 169 women have been benefited by this activity. These women groups take on lease, the usufruct of tamarind trees from the owners for a season (Crop). Then they harvest the crop, do some basic processing and sell it in the market. The activity duration is 3-4 months, mostly during Jan-April. The average investment is about Rs.140,000. On an average each family has invested about Rs.7,000 and AF has provided an incentive of about Rs.6,000 per family. These groups have earned a net income of about Rs.50,000, on an average in a season, which means each women member is earning Rs.4,000-Rs.5,000 per year, in addition to their earnings from wage employment under APREGS and as Agricultural laborers.

The top 10 income generation activities and coverage of women during the reporting period are as under:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>No. of units</th>
<th>Women covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Groundnut/ Multi crop threshers (Agri-Processing)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Garment Making</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Sari Weaving</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Brick Making</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Tamarind Processing and Business</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Basket Making</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Fish Rearing (Pisciculture)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Power Tillers</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Construction Equipment (Centering material, Masonry Tools)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>NPM Shops</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>295</strong></td>
<td><strong>2607</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More over AF has also facilitated 3,848 women from small and marginal farmer and farm labor families to access loans from banks for development of off-farm livelihoods, like Dairying and Sheep Rearing.

**Government and Banks resources mobilized for livelihood support during 2007-09**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>No. of animals</th>
<th>Women covered</th>
<th>Amount mobilized from banks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Dairy Development</td>
<td>1216</td>
<td>1160</td>
<td>7,296,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Sheep rearing</td>
<td>6,970</td>
<td>2,688</td>
<td>62,73,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>--</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,848</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,569,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fish rearing reaps golden harvests

In Bommeparthy village of Rapthadu mandal, 15 women laborers from small and marginal farmers and landless families formed into a Livelihood group called “Valmiki Group”. They decided to take up Fish rearing in the tank belonging to their own Valmiki community, during 2008-09.

The group members did meticulous planning, also involving persons who have expertise in Fish rearing and worked out a proposal with the help of our staff. The proposal was to rear 40,000 fingerlings, with an estimated cost of Rs.135,000. The group contributed Rs.75,000 @ Rs.5000 per family. AF provided an incentive of Rs.60,000 @ Rs.4,000 per family. They brought 40,000 fingerlings as planned and reared them in the village tank for about 4 months. The women involved their husbands also in this activity, who took the responsibility of feeding the fish, guarding the tank at night times against thefts and catching fish.

About 7,500 Kg of fish was harvested from the tank during the year in 8-10 spells of harvest. The group sold the fish in Anantapur and Dharmavaram markets and also in the local village market. They could realize an average rate of Rs. 40 per Kg of fish. Totally the group earned Rs.298,000. Each woman labor could earn Rs.20,000 during the year, which means, a net return of Rs.15,000 per family during the year, in addition to their earnings from APREGS and Agricultural labor works.

The group members utilized this amount for various family needs like (a) Clearing their debts, (b) Crop investments, (c) Education of their children, (d) Health needs of the family and (f) Paying their contribution for INDIRAMMA (Govt. Housing) Scheme, to build good pucca houses.

The group members are extremely happy and said that they have benefited from the IGA in the following ways:

- Substantial additional income for their families.
- Enhanced Credit worthiness.
- Better Unity and Cooperation among them and their families.
- More recognition in the family and in the village.
- Enhanced skills in fish rearing and business.
- Enhanced confidence to manage other feasible business ventures.

4.6.4.4 General Impact of the program on rural women:

- The rural women now have economic freedom to some extent. Their dependence on family heads (Men) for financial needs has reduced.
- Their role in decision making both at personal level and family level has increased.
- As a result of the above, their confidence levels and Self-worth have increased considerably.
- Those women, who were not even getting sufficient food, are getting it now.
- Their leadership, sociability, interpersonal relations and initiative has increased.
- Now they are able to take better care of their Health.
- They are able to provide Education to their children and are looking after the children’s Health needs.
- Their role in family maintenance has also increased.
- Some of them have purchased assets like Sheep, Goats, Dairy animals, Ornaments for their families and themselves.
- Some of them have cleared the debts of the family and got themselves freed of the debt-traps of money lenders.
- They have attained skills required to take up IGAs, Entrepreneurial skills, problem solving skills and Management skills.
- Now they are able to get more respect both at family and village levels.
4.6.5 Job-oriented skills for rural undereducated youth:

4.6.5.1. Impact of farmers’ distress on rural youth

The impact of farmers’ distress has been very severe on rural youth. Every year about 40,000 rural youth are dropping out of high schools and junior colleges, mostly as their parents are not in a position to bear the cost of their education. The number of drop-outs is increasing year after year. Their education (which is general in content) is grossly insufficient to fetch them any employment in Govt. / private sector. They have neither skills nor capital nor entrepreneurial attitude to take up alternate self-employment. So the under-educated rural youth have become aimless, insecure and frustrated, and have become liabilities to the already distressed, impoverished families.

The situation of uneducated rural youth is still worse. There are hundreds of thousands of such youth in the district who have dropped out at primary school level. They are highly disillusioned with rain-fed agriculture. The only employment opportunity they can access in their villages is wage labor works under APREGS and some Agricultural labor works now and then during the season, which are unskilled, physically hard and strenuous works. They don’t have any job oriented skills to opt for less physically taxing jobs. Obviously they are not in a position to raise capital and take up any off-farm / non-farm income generation activities / petty business etc. So, unable to either continue with agriculture or take up any Alternate Non-farm Livelihoods, these youth are continuing to do strenuous physical labor year after year.

Needs and constraints of rural youth:

At present there is no proper system to train, support and guide the youth and rehabilitate them in alternate livelihoods. Their parents are illiterate and ignorant. Their education is not technical and job oriented. They have no financial resources due to poverty. That is the reason why all these years very few rural youth from poorer communities have become entrepreneurs. Presently, Govt is planning to train about 1000 youth per year, whereas the demand is as high as 40,000 to 50,000 per year. In future, the Govt is aiming to train 25,000 youth per year, for which it is seeking support from NGOs, business and industrial sectors. The future of rural youth lies in transition from agriculture to alternate employment or entrepreneurship and self-employment. The institutional infrastructure and mechanisms for facilitating a smooth transition to alternate business or industrial employment for the youth are almost non-existent at present. The need of the hour is to establish appropriate institutions and systems to guide youth, train and rehabilitate them in some remunerative alternate livelihoods.

4.6.5.2 Measures taken by AF to support rural youth and Achievements during 2007-09

Establishment of Skill training centers:

As part of youth skill development program, AF established two skill training centers at Anantapur and Kalyandurg in order to impart technical skills to the rural youth. In this context AF has collaborated with Skill Pro Foundation (An organization specialized in job-oriented skills training). AF and Skillpro Foundation have signed a MoU to impart the technical training for rural youth. The duration of each training is four months. It includes three month class room training and one month on job training. While designing the
curriculum more emphasis was given to practical training than theory. Skillpro was envisaged to facilitate the placements of the trained candidates within and outside the district.

AF and Skillpro first conducted a survey to identify the skilled jobs that are in demand. The survey showed that during ITEs, hospitality, retail sales, electricians, motor mechanics are in demand.

AF and Skillpro Skills Training centers, were established in the beginning of 2008-09, focusing on in-demand trades like Information Technology Enabled Services (ITES), Hospitality Services; Customer Relation & Sales, Automobile Mechanism (Two-Wheeler) and House wiring cum Motor Rewinding. These centers not only train the rural youth, but also find employment for them by negotiating with prospective employers in nearby cities like Anantapur, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Chennai etc.. Totally, it was planned to cover about 600 candidates per year @ 120 candidates per batch at Kalyandurg centre and 90 candidates per batch at Anantapur centers in 3 batches of 4months duration each.

Then, a joint team of AF and Skillpro participated in the mobilization and selection of youth for different trades from the target families in our project villages. During the mobilization cum selection process, the team created awareness on various trades, the prospects and employment of each trade. An aptitude test was also conducted based on John Holland Test paper to identify, suitable trades based on their aptitude. The team members also did one to one counseling of youth as well as with their parents.

- During 2008-09, 450 rural youth (275 Boys & 175 Girls) successfully completed their training courses in AF’s two Skills training centers.
- Out of them 375 have been placed in different Towns and Cities, in various private sector establishments.

**Mobilizing, youth to Govt. Skills training agencies:**
AF has also been successful in assisting the rural youth in accessing the Govt. skills training courses meant for them like Advanced Tailoring & Embroidery, Electrician and computer Hardware from institutes like RUDSETI (Rural Urban Development for Self Employment & Training Institute), JSS (Jana Shikshana Samsthan) etc. AF has been collaborating with these institutes in mobilization of from our target communities candidates for trainings. AF is also providing tool-kits free of cost to the trainees, for whom the government training centers have not provided such support.

- During 2007-08, AF mobilized 515 rural youth (167 Boys & 348 Girls), to RUDSETI and JSS.
- During 2008-09, AF mobilized 592 rural youth (270 Boys & 322 Girls) to RUDSETI and JSS.
- Totally, during 2007-09 AF mobilized 1107 rural youth (437 Boys & 670 Girls) to RUDSETI and JSS.

**Establishment of Tailoring Centers:**
AF has organised 17 tailoring centers for girls in feasible villages in its project area, around 2 per mandal. About 25 – 30 girls are trained in every batch. The course duration is 3 – 4 months.
AF has provided 5 Sewing Machines and one Embroidery Machine to each center, besides some tools like Scissors, Measuring Tapes. The village girls have arranged space for the center themselves. They are procuring the regular consumables like Cloth pieces, Thread, Fasteners etc. themselves. They are also paying the costs of the trainers themselves. Once a training is completed in a village, the machines will be shifted to another feasible village where there is demand from girls.

Already, about 900 girls have been trained in these centers in tailoring and embroidery during 2008-09. Out of them about 100 girls have been linked to small business promoters, who give them piece work on contract basis. About 150 girls are working in tailoring shops and about 250 are working on their own, at home in their own villages.

Establishment of Driving schools
AF conducted a rural youth survey in its project area on types of skills in demand. The survey revealed that about 1500 rural youth are interested in learning professional driving. So AF established 2 driving schools, one at Kalyanadurg and another at Anantapur to cater to the needs of rural youth from its 4 operational areas. The purpose of establishing these driving schools is to impart driving skills and provide gainful employment to the rural, educated, unemployed youth. These driving schools started functioning from the beginning of 2008-09. Both the driving schools are recognized by Government of Andhra Pradesh.

AF has provided training in the following additional subjects to the candidates, apart from imparting driving skills:

- Skills in automobile mechanism for trouble shooting.
- Soft skills like interpersonal relations, communication etiquette, behaving with employers and clients, communication skills and vocabulary development.
- Awareness on first aid and HIV etc.
- Spoken English
- Insurance cover to all trainees against any accidents during training.

During their training the following benefits were provided to the trainees.

- Fee for driving license at the end of the training.
- Transport charges for trainees from their villages to the Schools.
- Post-training follow-up to arrange placements for the trainees in private / public sectors, subjected to availability.

The response for these driving schools has been very positive in AF’s project villages. During 2008-09, AF trained 152 Boys in its Driving Schools. Out of them 145 could get Driving License for LMV. 120 of them have already been placed either as Drivers or Assistant Drivers mostly with private owners. Most of them are placed in or around Anantapur.
4.6.6 Co-operation with Government in implementation of APREGS:

4.6.6.1. Role of AF in enabling rural labor to access APREGS

AF has been lobbying and advocating that NREGP should be effectively implemented with twin objectives of a) providing employment b) creating productive assets for the poor, particularly for the labor themselves and the CPRs. The government policy provided that all such measures as soil and moisture conservation, farm ponds, vegetation development can be taken up under the NREGP. Given AF’s experience in land based development, the Government and the people both sought cooperation of AF in planning and implementation at village level. It was because of the availability of trained and experienced personnel in such land based activities with AF, whereas the Government staff are recruited new and inexperienced. So, AF played an important role in the following areas of planning and implementation of APREGS in our project area of 230 villages.

- Assisting the people and Govt. functionaries at village level in planning and implementation of land and water development measures.
- Removing the bottlenecks and ensuring proper implementation of APREGS in it’s program villages.
- Involving people in APREGS right from the preparatory work stage to planning of works to qualitative implementation and disbursement of payments.
- Creating extensive awareness on the rights and opportunities for labor under this scheme, to make poor farmers and laborers understand and avail the opportunity for improving their livelihoods, in the long term on sustainable basis.
- Assisted the Government field level workers, who are newly recruited and lack adequate knowledge, in technical aspects of works.
- Coordinated the first ever Social Audit of implementation of APREGS in Anantapur district. The Social Audit was conducted by NGOs and the Govt. of A.P jointly.

Dr. Raghuvamsh Prasad Singh, the Hon’ble Minister for Rural Development, Govt. of India, issued a Certificate of Appreciation for AF’s contribution in effective implementation of APREGS, which Dr. Malla Reddy received on AF’s behalf.

4.6.6.2 The APREGS performance improved during 2007-08

In 2007-08, The NREGS program was well utilized by the farmers rainfed and farm laborers alike. Under this program, the farmers could develop their 32,688 ha. of dry land, (151%) as against the planned 21,600 ha. for 2007-08. The farm labor also utilized the program well. 23,180 men labor (184%) could avail employment for more than 50 days during the year as against the planned 12,600 and 8,935 women labor (165%) could avail more than 40 days of employment during the year, as against the planned 5,400.

During implementation of APREGS in 2006-07, there were many shortfalls like low and delayed employment for job seekers, delay in payments, absence of basic amenities at work spots, incidences of corruption and non-payment of wages.
compensation etc. These shortfalls were partly due to improper functioning of Government machinery and partly due to lack of awareness amongst labor community. AF-Ecology Centre has been collaborating with Government and playing a vital, supportive role in order to address the shortfalls and enable proper implementation of the scheme. Following activities were taken up during 2008-09 to improve the efficiency of the program implementation:

- Raising awareness
  - AF-Ecology Centre conducted village level awareness campaigns for the labor on APREGS, particularly on their rights and facilities under the Act. In all the campaigns, involved all the concerned District level government officials as resource persons. Awareness was given on their right to 100 days of employment for each family, ensuring work-site facilities, participation in planning of works, proper quality in implementation, timely payments, systems of transparency etc.

  - AF-Ecology Centre also organized Mandal level awareness campaigns targeting labor educated youth in 8 mandal headquarters. These campaigns covered 2500 men labor and 1500 women labor. Dr. Malla Reddy, Mr. G. Gopal, Project Director, DWMA, Mr. K.S. Gopal, APUHHC President; concerned Govt. officials, Local political leaders etc. addressed these campaigns. Massive Rallies, Photo exhibitions and cultural events were arranged, which gave good awareness to the laborers on their rights and opportunities under the Act.

  - AF also organized face to face meetings between the labor and the concerned Government functionaries at Mandal level in order to redress the grievances of the labor.

- Helping the farmers and farm labor in participatory planning of NRM works in their villages.
- Helping the labor families in applying for employment and getting the receipt for the same.
- Getting work sanctions in time.
- Enhancing the capacities of Govt. field level workers through trainings and assisting them in taking measurements of executed works in time.
- Helping laborers in getting timely payments.
- Helping laborers to raise their voice on the problems they are facing at mandal / district level.
- Policy advocacy and lobby on various policy issues and bottlenecks in the implementation of APREGS at district level and at state level.

4.6.6.3 Achievements of AF in APREGS:
The implementation of the APREGS by the Govt. was reasonably successful, in spite of some problems and bottlenecks in its implementation, during the reporting period. The APREGS, by and large, achieved its main objectives of providing employment to many farm laborers during the critical summer period, and to some extent improving the land carrying capacity of farmers’ degraded lands. The farm labor, particularly labor women are very happy as they have earned almost double or triple the wages in APREGS compared to what they normally used to earn as agri-laborers. It has enabled them a better living. They have used the earnings for their various needs like, (a) Crop investments, (b) Purchase of Dairy...
animals, (c) Purchase of Sheep, Goats (d) Purchase of Agricultural tools, (e) Education of their children, (f) Health needs of their families, (g) Purchase of some ornaments etc.

- During 2007-08, 23,180 men and 8,935 women from 28,842 farm labor families availed 1,355,600 person days of employment under NREGP in AF’s 230 program villages. On an average, each family could avail 47 days of employment at an average wage rate of Rs.87 per day. It is important to note that women got equal wages under the program. On an average each labor family could earn Rs.4,100 during the year in NREGP, in addition to agriculture wage labor. 2314 families (8%) have availed 100 days of employment and have earned Rs.8,000/- to 10,000/- per family during the year.

- During 2008-09, 26,256 men and 10,520 women from 32,220 farm labor families availed 1,643,300 person days of employment under NREGP in AF’s 230 program villages. On an average, each family could avail 51 days of employment at an average wage rate of Rs.92 per day. On an average each labor family could earn Rs.4,700 during the year in NREGP, in addition to agriculture wage labor. 3028 families (9%) have availed 100 days of employment and have earned Rs.8,000/- to 11,000/- per family during the year.

4.6.6.4 Un-intended positive effect of APREGS - Agricultural wages increase dramatically:

Due to the additional employment created under APREGS, the wages the farmers pay for agricultural operations have increased from about Rs.50/- per day to about Rs.100/- to Rs.150/- per day. Women’s wages also increased proportionately for agricultural works, though not yet equal wages. Though, on an average, APREGS has created only about 51 days of employment per family per year, it has enhanced the bargaining capacity of the labor considerably. Incidentally in Anantapur district, over 80% of the labor who work under APREGS are also rainfed farmers themselves! Seasonal distress migration has been fully stopped because of APREGS works. Demand for employment has increased substantially in villages because of APREGS.

4.7 Policy Advocacy at different levels

4.7.1 Policy and implementation issues in NREGP:

During 2007-09, AF conducted 16 mandal level campaigns on NREGP, in the 8 mandals of its program area, as planned. These campaigned advocated the changes required to the policies as well as procedural bottlenecks. Totally about 13,000 farm labor (About 7,000 men and 6,000 women) (135%) attended these campaigns, against the planned 9600 farm labor. In 2007-08, AF also conducted a district level labour campaign on the rights and entitlements under NREGS. About 1400 farm labor (About 700 men and 700 women) participated. These campaigns achieved the important objectives of (a) Creating wide spread awareness on the rights, entitlements and opportunities for the labor under NREGA, and (b) Facilitating a grievance redressal interaction at mandal level, between labor and the district level Govt functionaries and (c) Bringing out the problems faced by labor and the bottlenecks in the implementation of the scheme. The following policy issues came up for discussion during these campaigns:
1. The need for participatory planning for creating productive assets for the poor under NREGP.
2. Provision for raising rainfed horticulture plantations with employment provision for protection and pot watering for a period of 3 years continuously.
3. Provision for raising farm forestry, and watering to arrange the survival of plants.
4. Provision for compost making with green matter and tank silt.
5. Provision for taking up pebble bunding to develop marginal lands which are otherwise uncultivated.
6. Providing tools to laborers and customization of tools to reduce drudgery.
7. Providing work-site facilities like water, shade, crèche etc.
8. Providing crèche facilities for children so that mothers with young children also avail employment.
9. Providing proper worksite facilities like shade and water, first aid, medical help in case of accident etc.
10. Conducting regular social audit for NREGP and all rural developmental programs.
11. A No. of other procedural bottlenecks in the process of planning and implementations.
12. Enhancing the wages from Rs.80/- to Rs.100/- per day.
13. Taking up NREGP works in the degraded forest areas in order to develop the vegetation.

AF has lobbied for and succeeded in including the following activities and provision of worksite facilities under NREGP, which will benefit the labor and small and marginal rainfed farmers:

1. Rainfed Horticulture activities are included in order to create productive assets for the rainfed farmers under the program.
2. Taking up of pebble bunding and rain water harvesting structures like farm ponds, check dams.
3. Laborer’s medical bills in case of any work-site accidents, can be certified by local Doctors now, thereby reducing the delay in medical bill payments. Earlier certification by government doctors was mandatory.
4. Sanction of Rs.100 wage payment to water suppliers on par with wage laborers.
5. Successful lobby with the district administration to take APREGS works even in forest lands.
6. An on-going system of Social Audit is introduced involving the educated rural youth.

4.7.2 Policy issues in Sustainable Agriculture:
During 2007-09, AF conducted 8 mandal level campaigns on Sustainable Agriculture, in the 8 mandals of its program area. Totally about 3,000 farm labor (About 1,400 men and 1,600 women) attended these campaigns. In these campaigns issues related to practicing of Sustainable Agriculture were discussed with the farming community extensively. The emerging issues from these campaigns were discussed in the district level Farmers Conference, organized by AF, in collaboration with a group of likeminded NGOs, like CSA, (Hyderabad), APPS, TIMBAKTU Collective and FES, involved in promoting Sustainable Agriculture during March 2009. The purpose of the Conference was to formulate favorable policy recommendations on Sustainable Agriculture in a participatory process with farmers themselves and to put them before all political parties on the eve of up-coming General
Elections. The Conference was well attended by about 1400 practicing farmers of Sustainable Agriculture across the District. Special efforts were made to bring more women to this conference. Consequently 60% of the participants were women. Besides a no. of Activists, Scientists, and NGOs promoting Sustainable Agriculture also participated.

A draft of preliminary policy recommendations were evolved with progressive LEISA farmers in a series of discussions, prior to the conference and also based on the issues emerged from the mandal level campaigns were put forth for discussion in this District level campaign. Finally the recommendations summarized hereunder were unanimously passed in the Farmers’ conference:

- Appoint a “Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Farmers Welfare” to study the local conditions and recommend appropriate policies for Sustainable Agriculture in Anantapur District, with due emphasis on rainfed agriculture and rainfed farmers.

- Implement integrated, bio-mass intensive, micro-watersheds throughout the District with emphasis on Sustainable Agriculture besides development of natural resources.

- Provide a Rs.3000/- incentive per acre to the farmers towards making their own bio-manures and bio-pest control practices under Sustainable Agriculture for all LEISA practicing farmers.

- Provide long-term and mid-term based additional incentives for diversified cropping systems, particularly for perennial tree crops like Mango, Tamarind, Sweet Lime, Pomegranate etc.

- Ensure remunerative prices and marketing facilities for all crops grown using Sustainable Agriculture practices.

- Provide critical (protective) irrigation for all rainfed crops in case of long dry spells. Provide 100% coverage of micro irrigation facilities for efficient water use.

- Introduce locally grown millets and pulses like Jowar, Ragi, Red gram etc., in the subsidized Public Distribution System (PDS).

- Organize seed production in every panchayat and facilitate seed banks, owned and managed by farmers, with local, non-hybrid and non-genetically modified seed.

- Replace crop-insurance with income insurance for all crops and for all farmers. The sum assured must cover crop investment plus 50% additional, in order to compensate the value of the yield lost and thus provide income insurance to the farmer.

- Organize Sustainable Agriculture Farmers’ Groups on the lines of women SHGs and federate them at Mandal, District and State level, to play a vital role in transforming the conventional agriculture into Sustainable Integrated Farming.

- Establish a region-specific and farmer-centric extension service system including farmers extension institutions for propagating and nurturing Sustainable Agriculture.
• Establish a University of Sustainable Agriculture in order to develop appropriate local specific, low cost and eco-friendly technologies and practices; and accordingly train human resources for research, development and extension of sustainable agriculture.

5. CASE STUDIES

5.1 APREGS comes as a boon to prevent Distress Migration

Pampanur is a small village, situated at about 7 kms from Atmakur mandal headquarters. Totally there are 274 families in the village, out of which 239 are farm labor families. Among the labor families, 19 families are landless. All 274 families in the village have job cards under NRREGP. Totally, there are 384 job cards in the village and 327 SB accounts related to APREGS in the village post office. There are 419 laborers in the village (234 women & 185 men).

Earlier these families were either un-employed or under-employed and under-paid. The laborers were working very hard in Agricultural works at very low wage rates of Rs. 40 - 50 per person per day. During droughts when they could not get employment in their village they used to migrate to far off towns and cities in distress. They used to leave the old people and children at home, who suffered a lot without support and care until their return.

In this situation, APREGS came to their village, as a boon from the blues, in February 2007. Now it is a different story for them altogether. These labor families attended the Village level and Mandal level campaigns on NREGS organized by AF, wherein awareness was created on their rights and entitlements under NREGA. AF has been extending support to the Government staff in identification of works, Village level planning, sanction of works, recording measurements of work done and timely disbursement of payments to laborers etc. During 2008-09, AF staff along with the gram panchayat VO leaders and the concerned Govt staff facilitated the process of village level planning for NREGP with farmers and farm laborers.

NRM works like earthen bunding, stone bunding, de-silting of small ponds, excavation of farm ponds, pitting for horticulture, jungle clearance etc., covering

“Because of APREGS we have stopped migrating to other towns and cities and now getting enough work within our village through out the year. From our earnings, we could able to take up ram lambs rearing apart from making crop investment for our 5 acres of rainfed land” said Dhanamma W/o Kese Naik, a tribal woman.

“Our 5 acres of assigned land was left uncultivated for many years because of rock out crops all over the field. I and my family members worked hard and cleared the rock out crops under APREGS. Last year we raised ground nut crop and got good yield. Now we are very happy” said Lakshmamma W/o Thippe Naik, a women farmer from tribal family.

In this situation, APREGS came to their village, as a boon from the blues, in February 2007. Now it is a different story for them altogether. These labor families attended the Village level and Mandal level campaigns on NREGS organized by AF, wherein awareness was created on their rights and entitlements under NREGA. AF has been extending support to the Government staff in identification of works, Village level planning, sanction of works, recording measurements of work done and timely disbursement of payments to laborers etc. During 2008-09, AF staff along with the gram panchayat VO leaders and the concerned Govt staff facilitated the process of village level planning for NREGP with farmers and farm laborers.

NRM works like earthen bunding, stone bunding, de-silting of small ponds, excavation of farm ponds, pitting for horticulture, jungle clearance etc., covering
180 farmers were identified in a participatory planning process. The estimates were submitted to Government and got sanctions for Rs. 2,924,083/- . The total laborers (419 members) were formed into 10 groups for the execution of the above works. 4 Overseers (Metis) and one Field assistant were appointed to monitor the quality of work, maintain the muster rolls and to assist in recording measurements and making timely payments. Totally, 24,300 person days of work was generated during the year and these 419 laborers could avail 58 days of work on an average during the year at an average wage rate of Rs. 80 to 100 per day. That too equal wages for men and women! On an average, each labor family could earn about Rs. 5,200 during the year. Another important consequence of NREGP, the agricultural wages which were @ Rs. 40/- to Rs. 50/- per day have also gone upto Rs. 100/- to Rs. 150/- per day! This has brought a big change in their lives -both socially and economically. It has changed the power relations between the labour and the big farmers who employ them.

The poor labour families are very happy now and are all praise for APREGS and AF. They are united in acknowledging the fact that APREGS has saved them from the hazards of distress migration and has enabled them to live with some dignity. The poor families could meet their basic needs with the earnings from APREGS. 16 families could purchase sheep and goat, 58 families could meet the education and health needs of their families, about 120 families could make crop investments and 8 families could purchase trinkets for their children.

On site facilities were not completely provided as promised. Some facilities like shade for the labour, drinking water supply were provided. Tools like Iron rods, spades, pick axes, baskets were provided to some laborers. Money was also given for honing of the tools in some cases. But still facilities like crèche, medicines were not provided. Most importantly, compensation is not being provided to those who have applied for but did not get employment. This is a big challenge for AF to lobby with Government for these facilities as per law!

"We, 4 members worked regularly in APREGS and earned about Rs. 20000 since last year. We are able to continue the education of our 4 children who are studying at Atmakur (High School) and Anantapur (Inter & B.Ed). APREGS made our life easy, as we could also meet our family expenditures to a great extent from our labour earnings" Said Narayanamma and Salakka, women from a SC family
5.2. Horticulture – “The right alternative to gambling with groundnut”

- A case study of Groundnut farmer turned horticulturist.

Accion Fraterna has been promoting horticulture (fruit trees) as a partial alternative to the groundnut crop in Anantapur district as it creates safety net to the farmers and enhances farmer’s capacity to withstand the routine crop failures. From an ecological point of view it creates sustainable greenery and bio-mass in cultivated areas which are otherwise denuded and parched. Horticulture diversifies the agricultural production from the mono crop of groundnut to perennial tree crop. When horticulture promoted on a sizable scale across the district, it has potential to change the economic and ecological face of Anantapur district.

The case of Mr. Rama Mohan Reddy of Yerraborepalli village proves the point and he is one among the thousands of farmers who have been successfully doing crop diversification with alternate fruit trees.

Mr. Rammohan Reddy is a poor farmer from Yerraborepalli project village. He has only 4 acres of dry land and had been cultivating groundnut for ages, until AF started its watershed programme in his village in 2002. The high initial investments on groundnut crop and the continuously recurring droughts had left him high and dry. His indebtedness started growing year after year. In 2002, with AF’s support, he planted 256 mango trees in all his 4 acres of land. Mango grafts were planted in the month of September 2002. Mr. Rammohan Reddy and his family took utmost care in maintaining spacing, planting, staking, watering, weeding and protection. In the absence of any crop returns, he had to struggle hard for 3 years. AF provided him with monthly incentives for pot - watering the mango plantation. However in the third year he managed to install a drip irrigation system for his plantation with AF and Government support.

This year the plantation has started yielding and he got an average yield of 20 Kgs., per tree from his 256 mango trees. He has earned Rs. 52,000/- during the first year itself and the yields are expected to multiply many more times in next few years. He has also cleared most of his debts and his family is very happy now.

“AF helped us and we worked very hard all these years. Now some annual income is ensured” said Mr. Rammohan Reddy to AF Staff.

Mr. Rammohan Reddy, Farmer, Yerraborepalli
5.3 Women’s initiative solved the poor farmers’ seed problem
- A case study of Manirevu village.

The farmers of Manirevu village were having acute scarcity of Groundnut and Red gram seed. They had to purchase seed from the town market or from the middlemen. They had to pay a high price. Moreover, there was no guarantee of quality. AF staff noticed this problem and motivated the representatives of the existing 20 women groups (SHGs) from the two Village Organizations called ‘Sai’ and ‘Sailatha’, to establish a seed bank in the village itself which could also be a seasonal livelihood opportunity for them.

Later AF staff and group leaders organized a meeting for the farmers and discussed with them, and identified the farmers in need of seed, particularly the poorest farmers. They were formed into a seed user group. The V.Os.(Village Organisations) are village level federations formed by the leaders of all women SHGs in the village which are organized by DRDA, a State Level Government Agency. The VOs provided Rs.3,00,750/- credit to the group for starting a seed bank. (The group purchased 23,200 kgs. Of Groundnut and 400Kgs. Of Red gram from the co-operative society). AF’s agriculture officers helped them to buy good quality of seed. Then they supplied the entire seed to 48 needy poor farmers of Manirevu for a fair price. The planning and implementation of this activity was monitored by the Village Organizations. As a result:

- The needy farmers got quality seed, for a fair price and in time, on credit.
- They could repay the credit after the crop is harvested and sold.
- The group also made a reasonable profit from this activity.

The farmers would have faced the following consequences in the absence of the seed banks:

- Falling prey to the money lenders
- Inability to diversify the crops with food crops
- Inability to sow the crops in time
- Decreased returns on investment

The women groups representatives in the Sanghas expressed their happiness for gaining reasonable profit in this process, while fulfilling the seed needs of poor farmers in the village. The farmers were immensely happy as they got good quality seed at a fair price in time on credit. They were happy to repay the credit.
5.4. **Jeevamritam – “A high quality liquid bio-fertilizer”**

- *A case study of Malakapuram village*

Ms. Kamalamma is a poor woman farmer from Malakapuram village in Dharmavaram area. She has 5 acres of dry land, where in she has planted mango trees in 3 acres last year and is cultivating groundnut in the remaining 2 acres. During the last season, the groundnut crop started becoming yellow for want of nutrients in the soil, and leaves started drying-up. The mango plants also had stunted growth and leaves started turning yellowish and getting dried-up. The chemical fertilizers needed to save her crops were costing around Rs. 2500 @ Rs. 500/- per acre. She could not afford to purchase them. So with no money left, she was in despair and was losing hope of saving her groundnut crop and mango plants. AF staff explained to her about the Sustainable Agriculture Programme and showed her how other farmers are adopting LEISA / NPM Practices. Ms. Kamalamma was also and decided to adopt the LEISA /NPM practices on groundnut and Mango crops.

Then, she applied Jeevamritam – A high quality liquid bio-fertilizer in her field. Jeevamritam was prepared by mixing Cow dung, Cow urine, Jaggery and pulse flour, which were locally available. Moreover, it was very economical and cost only about Rs. 60/- per acre. After 10 days of application, she was amazed to see wonders happening on her field. The pale mango and groundnut crops started looking fresh green and healthy. New leaves started appearing on the mango plants.

Her groundnut crop is comparatively better than her neighbor farmers’ crops who applied costly chemical fertilizers. She spent only about Rs.300/- on Jeevamrutham. She achieved better groundnut yield (8 bags/acre) than her neighboring farmers (5 bags/acre). She is a happy person now and has decided to follow Jeevamritam and other LEISA practices to her crops in future. Like Kamalamma, thousands of farmers are coming forward for LEISA and abstaining from the use of hazardous chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

“I could not believe my eyes, when I saw my groundnut crop and mango trees, 10 days after application Jeevamritam. Jeevamritam of really gave life to the crop in that critical time. We are grateful to AF staff”.

- **Ms. Kamalamma, Woman farmer**
6. PHYSICAL ACHIEVEMENTS FROM 01.04.2006 TO 31.03.2009 IN AF'S PROGRAM VILLAGES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Planned for 2006-09</th>
<th>ACHIEVEMENTS</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Achievements 2006-07 2007-08 2008-09 Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Farmers’ trainings(*)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>4,860</td>
<td>799</td>
<td>-            -           799</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Farmers’ campaigns</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>480</td>
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<td>282          486</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Labour trainings (*)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>-            -</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mandal level campaigns on NREGS and Sustainable Agriculture</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>8            8</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>PGN trainings (*)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>-            -</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gender sensitization trainings.</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>2,256</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>368          738</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Women’s Days</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>48           6</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ecology Days</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-            -</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Grama Sabhas (*)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>-            -</td>
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</tbody>
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* Denotes activities that were subsequently replaced or added as per the revised log frame.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Planned for 2006-09</th>
<th>ACHIEVEMENTS</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>2007-08</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Farmers’ trainings on LEISA (*)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>2,160</td>
<td>341</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Farmer Field Schools</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>19,200</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,640</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Soil &amp; Moisture conservation measures (Bunding)</td>
<td>Ha.</td>
<td>5,760</td>
<td>5,353</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Rain Water Harvesting Structures</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Bio-fertilizers application</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Vermi Compost units</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>6,486</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>2,662</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Farm compost units</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>20,820</td>
<td>1,338</td>
<td>9,666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Bio-pesticides application</td>
<td>Ha.</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>4,904</td>
<td>14,990</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Border Crops</td>
<td>Ha.</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>4,054</td>
<td>104,476</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Pest traps</td>
<td>Ha.</td>
<td>16,800</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16,605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Horticulture</td>
<td>Ha.</td>
<td>1,458</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Plantations (Fodder, timber, bio-mass)</td>
<td>Ha.</td>
<td>22,710</td>
<td>6,531</td>
<td>7,510</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Crop diversification (Food crops)</td>
<td>Ha.</td>
<td>7,200</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sl. No.</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Unit</td>
<td>Planned for 2006-09</td>
<td>ACHIEVEMENTS</td>
<td>Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>2007-08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Fodder plots</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>13,134</td>
<td>1,333</td>
<td>12,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bio-gas units</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>377</td>
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<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Smokeless Chulhas(*)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>474</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Improved breed calves born</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>5,070</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>2,967</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Cattle health camps(*)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Non-farm IGPs (Livelihood support)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Youth trained in Skills</td>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Employment generation under NREGs.</td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>25,200</td>
<td>6,687</td>
<td>23,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>10,800</td>
<td>3,601</td>
<td>8,935</td>
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<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>PGN trainings on Policy Advocacy (*)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>District level campaigns on NREGA</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 7. SOME IMPORTANT EFFECTS REALIZED DURING 2007-09

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Effect Indicator</th>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Base line value as on April’ 06</th>
<th>Results planned for 2007-09</th>
<th>Result achieved during 2007-09</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>% of 48,000 farmer families adopting NPM/ LEISA practices</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>13,440 (28%)</td>
<td>38,400 (80%)</td>
<td>44,246 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Border Crops</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>13,440 (28%)</td>
<td>38,400 (80%)</td>
<td>44,246 (92%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Pest traps</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>1,962 (4%)</td>
<td>28,000 (60%)</td>
<td>37,338 (78%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Bio-fertilizers</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>4,920 (10%)</td>
<td>33,600 (70%)</td>
<td>35,716 (74%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Bio-pesticides</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>19,200 (40%)</td>
<td>28,069 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>% of 48,000 farmer families with land development measures (Under NREGS)</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>2,422 (5%)</td>
<td>14,400 (30%)</td>
<td>22,465 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>% of 48,000 farmer families with diversified cropping (Food crops, fodder and biomass)</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>3,840 (8%)</td>
<td>28,800 (60%)</td>
<td>42,158 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>% of 48,000 farmer families with either dairy animals or small ruminants</td>
<td>Families</td>
<td>3,368 (7%)</td>
<td>14,400 (30%)</td>
<td>11,242 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>% of 36,000 men and 36,000 women from labor families, accessing employment under NREGP.</td>
<td>Men (50 days per year), Women (40 days per year)</td>
<td>No., No.</td>
<td>--, --</td>
<td>25,200 (70%), 10,800 (30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men (50 days per year)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25,200 (70%)</td>
<td>34,124 (95%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women (40 days per year)</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10,800 (30%)</td>
<td>16,746 (47%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Women labor with either non-farm livelihoods or their own enterprises</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>2,400</td>
<td>2,607 (109%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Labor youth trained in non-farm skills</td>
<td>Boys/Men, Girls / Women</td>
<td>No., No.</td>
<td>103, 128</td>
<td>1,500, 1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys/Men</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>697 (46%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girls / Women</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1397 (93%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. WOMEN’S DAY CAMPAIGNS

8.1. Introduction:
AF has facilitated the celebration of Women’s Day involving the women and men of its project villages. AF together with the women leaders played active part in organizing the campaigns. The women leaders included the active members of the women groups, SHG leaders, Sasya Mithra Group, (SMG) IGP groups, NPM village activists, V.O. leaders and PRIs in planning and organizing the Women’s Days. Some interested women groups from the villages took initiative in cooking and serving lunch to the participants at the campaign. The AF staff campaigned and mobilized the women and gave them the awareness on the Women’s Day and encouraged them to participate in the campaigns, being held at the mandal head quarters. Thus 6 campaigns were organized covering women from 230 villages of 8 mandals, viz Kalyanadurg, Beluguppa, Settur, Kudair, Rapthadu and Dharmavaram. In Kalyandurg and Dharmavaram areas two campaigns each were conducted at mandal level where as in Settur and Kudair areas one campaign each was conducted at area level covering people from two mandals of the areas. It is interesting to note that 20% of the total participants have been men, who participated voluntarily and expressed their solidarity with women.

8.2. Objectives of Women’s Day campaigns:
The rural women are still facing gender discrimination in many aspects. They are not getting equal respect and opportunities on par with men. Their status in the family, work place, and in the society at large is lower. Generally they are denied their due role in making important decisions such as family finances, marriage, property, child birth etc. The girl children are being discriminated in the aspects of property, education, nutrition etc. Moreover social evils like child marriages, dowry, domestic violence and alcoholism still exist to some extent, which have a profound impact on the lives of rural women.

The main objective of Accion Fraterna in conducting women’s days is to sensitise women & men and to bring awareness and empower women by bringing out their inner abilities and tapping out their inner strengths. These campaigns are utilized to give self strengthening positive messages and awareness through people particularly eminent women from different fields to thousands of rural women.

8.2.1 The working objectives:
1. To remind the women and men about their rights and entitlements and the processes to acquire them.
2. To give awareness to women and men on the new laws passed by the Government in the favor of women like anti domestic violence, scholarships for girls’ education and reservation facilities in different Government programs and their effective utilization.
3. To provide knowledge of employment opportunities that is available within and outside their villages.
4. To give awareness on the importance of the education of the girl child.
5. To give awareness on the health problems of the women and methods to prevent and overcome them.
6. To facilitate them to think independently and enhance their self confidence.
7. To provide an opportunity to have knowledge exchange, awareness and solidarity on different kinds of women problems and their solutions.
8. To encourage them to take part in the decision making related to their family and village.
9. To motivate them to fight against social evils and atrocities against women.
10. To encourage and demonstrate the existing women leadership in SMGs, GSSs, MSSs which are the CBOs having 50% of women membership.

8.3. Participation and events:
During this year, women’s day celebrations were conducted in 6 mandals of AF’s project area covering people from 8 mandals in the month of March, 2009. AF encourages men also to participate in the women’s’ day campaigns. In each campaign about 700 to 800 women and men from about 30 villages participated enthusiastically. From each village about 20 women and 5 men participated in the campaigns. Many women participated for the first time from BCs and others. In the 6 campaigns conducted in the project area totally 4255 women and 1495 men attended enthusiastically and made the celebrations a great success.

8.3.1 Women Rallies:
Each campaign began by an impressive women’s rally through the main roads of mandal head quarters. The objective of the rally was to create awareness on Women’s Day to people at large. About 750 women and men participated in each rally. They took out a procession through the main roads of the towns holding banners, placards, singing songs and raising slogans against discrimination and owing to fight for equal status of women in the society. Their problems of discrimination, social evils affecting them were highlighted during the procession. Some women drove bullock carts in the rally to show symbolically that they can also perform the (so called superior) roles that are culturally assigned exclusively for men.

8.3.2 Public Meeting:
Eminent personalities particularly women from different fields like, Doctors, Lawyers, Police, Women and Child welfare association members, officials from panchyath raj, Zilla Parishad, IKP, DRDA, teachers political leaders, MMS leaders, Women group leaders and some Journalists were invited as guest speakers in these campaigns.

Following are the important issues discussed in the campaigns.

1. Parents should treat both girls and boys alike and provide equal educational opportunities to them. Girls should be provided either higher education or skills training to make them economically self-reliant. Boys should also be grown in such a way that they should learn to perform roles assigned to girls and the girls should be grown to perform roles assigned to boys. So that the culturally assigned roles for boys and girls are broken.

2. All the women present took oath to get their girl children educated at least up to 10th class.

3. Child marriages should be completely stopped in order to reduce many problems women face due to early marriages. The boys & girls should be married only after they cross 21 years of age when they are in a position to earn and are mature enough to manage their families responsibly.

4. Women should collectively exercise their rights to avail the Government schemes like Arogyasri, NREGP, PDS and other social welfare schemes.

5. Pregnant women were advised to take nutritional food and access AN & PN care facilities by the Govt. without fail.

6. Women should develop alternate livelihoods by taking help from Government and non-government organizations. They should also save some amount in order to have some economic freedom and respect in the family.

7. Women should not hesitate to take legal action to fight against the atrocities done to them.

8. Women should take active part in CBOs like SMG, GSS, MSS in promoting Sustainable Agriculture, Food security, Nutrition security. They should try to solve their problems collectively in the family and in the community.

9. Women should try to unite and collectively fight against social evils like alcoholism, child marriages, dowry, domestic violence etc. Many examples were quoted from the villages on how unity and co-operation among women brought significant changes in the society.
8.3.3 Women group leaders conducted the public meetings:

SHG leaders of 8 mandals took initiative to organize preside and conduct the entire public meeting. Some women from the villages came forward and shared their observation on the changing mindset of the rural women, for better.

The women participating in the campaigns took the following resolutions unanimously, that:

1) They will encourage their daughters to study higher education.
2) They will try to stop Child marriages and Alcoholism in their families and villages completely.
3) They will make sure that, their daughters have equal share in healthy food along with their sons.
4) They will get united and make efforts to solve the problems in their families and villages.

8.4. Role plays & fun games:

Songs and role-plays on issues of women and their development were performed by RDT cultural team. Through a role play called “GOAL’ it was shown, how the life of a girl was made miserable by her own family and society right from the beginning to the end of her life and how she could overcome all those hurdles and proved herself as a successful woman. Both the roles of men and women were played by the women. It attracted the participants very much and it was observed that the women watching the play were immersed in it. They have responded well with positive answers to the questions asked by the girl character, at the end of the play.

Some fun games were also organized for the participating women during these campaigns, which provide some entertainment and comic relief to the participants. The participants responded positively and felt very happy that it was as if, they re-lived their childhood again. Mementos were presented to the winners of the fun games and a small memento has thrilled the winners as it was first time ever they were rewarded and honored in that manner.

8.5. Exhibitions:

An exhibition was arranged at the venue with the (a) Photographs of successful women in different fields. (b) Income generation activities and the products like silk sarries, work sarries, bangles, petty coats etc, (c) NPM methods and products etc. The idea was to create interest and enthusiasm among women and to motivate them to strengthen Sustainable Agriculture and develop alternate livelihoods.

8.6. Arrangement of a festive meal:

Campaigns came to a close by serving good festive meal to all participants. Meal with vegetable fried rice, lemon rice, curd rice, snacks, sweet and fruits were arranged at the meeting place to all the people who attended the meeting.
8.7. Conclusion:
The general response for Women’s Day Campaigns was overwhelming. The enthusiasm, excitement and happiness were budding on the faces of women. Following are some of the feedback comments made by participants:

8.8 Participants’ response:

1. “Some women have achieved the impossible through unity. We can take them as role models and fight for our rights.”

2. “We will fight against the discrimination & harassments we are facing.”

3. “I understood the importance of education for girls. I will try to make my two daughters settle in life first, and then only I will think about their marriages.”

4. “We understood the problems of child marriages.”

5. “We learnt about the laws that are helpful to women.”

6. “Interacting and celebrating with many other women gave us happiness and a feeling of strength, solidarity and security.”

7. “We were reminded of our childhood by playing games.”

8. “Participating in the rally was a great experience to us.”

9. “Real enjoyment of celebrating women’s Day will come when we adhere to the resolutions taken during Women’s Days.”
9. DISTRICT LEVEL CAMPAIGN ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF APREGS ON 20th December, 2007

9.1 Introduction:
NREGA (National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) was passed by the Government of India in the year 2005 in order to empower the rural laborers with a right to get employment of 100 days per year per labor family during off season. It was launched in Anantapur District on Feb 2nd, 2006 by the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, and came into effect from 01/04/2006, in 200 drought prone and backward districts in India. Accordingly the Government of Andhra Pradesh formulated the scheme called APREGS.

9.2. Start up – problems and the role of NGOs:
During 2006-07 (ie), the first year of its implementation, there were many shortfalls like low and delayed provision of employment for job-seekers, delay in payments, absence of basic amenities at work spots, incidences of corruption and non-payment of compensation etc. in the implementation of APREGS. These shortfalls were partly due to improper functioning of Government machinery and partly due to lack of awareness amongst labor community. Keeping that in view AF along with some other NGOs like APPS, REDS and APUHAC (Andhra Pradesh Upadhi Hakku Amalu Committee) arranged an awareness campaign on 20th December, 2007 at Lalithakala Parishad, Anantapur. It was a joint initiative of like minded NGOs and CSOs, who were actively involved in lobby and advocacy work at District, state and National levels for proper implementation of APREGS. The Government functionaries at District and state levels have extended good cooperation to the NGOs and CSOs by responding in a positive manner to implement the recommendation made by this joint forum. Mr. Gopal, Director of Center for Environment Concerns (CEC) who is also working as State Committee member of APREGS took good initiative in the arrangement of the campaign at Anantapur. The entire expenditure on this campaign was borne by AF and APPS together. This team set up with the active staff members as a joint forum for organizing the event. They worked hard in giving awareness to the rural farmers and laborers about the campaign and mobilized people to attend the campaign. And they also took the outcome of the campaign to the District Collector, Project Director and Principal Secretary, APREGS.

9.3 AF’s role and participation in the campaign:
The Resource Mobilization and Advocacy cell of AF played active part in organizing the campaign along with other NGOs and planned all events like distribution of pamphlets in the villages, selection of place for the campaign, food arrangements for the laborers etc. The District level steering committee conducted three meetings for the NGO members to plan and design the entire program.

9.4 A massive labour rally in Anantapur town:
AF staff campaigned and organized the agricultural laborers in the villages, gave them awareness on the campaign and helped them to attend the campaign at Anantapur on 20th December.
Nearly 1500 laborers from AF program villages and another 1500 from programme villages of other NGOs from different parts of Anantapur District participated in the campaign. The rally was flagged off by Mr. K.R. Venugopal, (Retd. IAS), former Secretary to the Prime Minister, a committed human rights activist and a designer of many anti-poverty programs in the country, and Dr. Y.V. Malla Reddy, Director, AF and State Committee member of NREGS. The huge gathering of 3000 members participated in the rally, started at 11.30 a.m. from the city center (Clock Tower) of Anantapur city to LKP, the venue, demanding effective implementation of the Andhra Pradesh Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (APREGS) with all entitlements granted under National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). The rally, by raising slogans on proper implementation of REGS attracted the attention of thousands of onlookers.

9.5 Main demands voiced out from the labour rally:
1. Work for not less than 100 days should be provided to all job seekers.
2. Works should be decided in the Grama Sabha with full participation of all stakeholders.
3. Muster roll should be read aloud every day in the presence of the people.
4. Wages should be fixed in such a way to allow a “living wage”.
5. Tools must be supplied to every village. Minimum basic amenities like water, shade, crèche etc; should be provided at the working place.
6. Crèches should be organized for every 10 children in order to help the nursing mothers to participate in work.
7. Funds should be released to the Post Offices before hand and weekly payments should be made to the laborers, regularly every week.
8. Ceiling of Rs.100 per day per person should be lifted.
9. Stringent and immediate action should be taken on the findings of Social Audit, in cases of corruption and undue delay in payment.
10. Receipts should be given to the labor who applied for work.
11. If anybody is injured in the work place, medical expenses should be paid.
12. Unemployment compensation should be paid within 15 days after application.
13. For the works done by women, especially single women, payments should be made for 30% more rates than proposed in the SSR.
14. Funds released and the works taken up should be made public in the village.
9.6. The Public Meeting:

The rally was followed by a public meeting. The following persons participated in the campaign and in the public meeting:

1. Mr. K.R. Venugopal, Retired collector, Ex. Secretary of PMO, as the chief guest,
2. Dr. Y.V. Malla Reddy, Director, AF, State Committee member of NREGS,
3. Mr. Minar Pimple, Asia Millenium campaign,
4. Mr. K.S. Gopal, CEC convenor, AP Upadhi Hakkula Amalu Committee,
5. Mr. K. Srinivasulu, Ex. M.P (Member of Parliament), Ananatapur.
6. Ms. Bhanuja, Director, REDS (A NGO from Anantapur)
7. Mr. P. Balaram, APPS, (A NGO from Anantapur)
8. Mr. Jeevan Kumar, Human Rights leader,
9. Mr. Murali, Director APREGS Programme, Government of AP.
10. Ms. Kalpana and Mr. Avinash from WASSAN.

Ms. Hestor Foppen from ICCO who came to visit the watershed villages also attended the campaign.

The Anchor of the public meeting, Mr. Balaram of APPS welcoming the gathering pointed out that, in the district wage seekers encountered many difficulties at different levels of the scheme like getting the job card, allotment of work, measurement of the work done and finally in wage payment. He said that in the District wage seekers obtained only 25 days of work on an average during this year, as against targeted 100 days. He said that the campaign was organized to voice the problems encountered in accessing the entitlements under the act and place them before the district administration. He also brought to the notice of the gathering assurances given by the minister for rural development and principal secretary at a meeting in Hyderabad to address the problems of the wage seekers.

Dr. Malla Reddy, Director AF/RDT, emphasized that rural laborers particularly the youth themselves had a very crucial role in making the scheme a success. They should point out the mistakes in the implementation of the scheme at different stages individually, group wise and village wise, and actively participate in the process of its planning and management. They must be the main actors in protecting their rights and accessing the benefits in full. Otherwise the fruits of the scheme would not reach the intended beneficiaries. They should improve the productive assets in order to enhance the productivity of the existing community lands and the lands belonging to the poor who are the labor themselves. He expressed his concern that, the wage they get just to fill their stomachs is not just. They should get an adequate wage amount which enables them to live with human dignity, avail medical facilities and education for their children. He also said that particular concern has been that women with infants and small
children were not able to avail themselves of the wage opportunities under this scheme as there was no facility to take care of their children. Finally, he gave a call to the wage seekers to voice their demands to the Government functionaries and make the Government receptive.

**Mr. Malla Reddy made the following important suggestions for the forum to consider:**

- The labour youth, particularly the educated youth have a crucial role in APREGS.
- The names in the daily muster rolls must be verified by the labor themselves, so that no manipulation takes place in the muster rolls. This can easily be done by the educated youth among the labour.
- The wage seekers should see that their voice is heard in choosing works and they should bargain for such works, which create productive assets for themselves in the long-term.
- The existing ceiling of Rs.100/- as daily wage was unjust and insufficient to meet the basic needs of food, shelter, clothes, health and education of the rural families in the background of increased cost of living and widening income disparities. A concept of living wage of at least Rs.150/- should be adopted in the place of a minimum wage of Rs.80/-.
- The farmers should participate in the implementation process and ensure the quality of works done in their fields themselves.
- The laborers must raise their voice and concerns at village level, to enable NGOs and CSOs to take their demands to District and State levels.

**Mr. K.R. Venugopal** said that the right to work was not because of somebody’s mercy, but it was already enshrined in the Indian Constitution. He explained that the basic and highlighted right to work is contingent on a group of other enabling rights. And in order to access the basic right to employment, first the other rights must be realized. He pointed out that the present NREG Act is a downgraded version of an earlier Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). While in the EAS each family was guaranteed 200 days of employment per family, the present Act guarantees only 100 days.

He opined that delay in wage payments extending to more than two months was defeating the very purpose of the Act. The delay in payments may be because of the fact that, while the scheme is being implemented in more than fifty thousand villages, Post Offices are present in only thirteen thousand villages. He pointed out that the toiling people had a right to demand “a living wage” for leading a life with dignity and that it was enshrined in Article 43 of the Indian Constitution. He said that in India 220 women out of every 1000 are living on daily wages, whereas in Andhra Pradesh a massive 400 women out of every 1000 are living on daily wages. The nursing women are facing a lot of problems in attending to wage labor works. When the Balwadis are implemented effectively then only they would be able to participate in work...
without any anxiety about their children. Without such enabling conditions, these many needy women would not be in a position to obtain any benefit under this guarantee of employment.

He pointed out that there were lacunae in the Act itself and without addressing them its objectives could not be achieved. He said that wage payment procedures should be to the convenience and needs of the wage seekers.

**Mr. Venugopal made the following important suggestions:**

- In a family both husband and wife should get 100 days of work each, so that the family is assured of 200 person days of work in a year.
- The delay in making payments should be avoided, because it is this delay that is forcing wage seekers in to debt traps.
- Balwadi Centers in the villages have to take care of the children from 6 months to 6 years of age and they should operate in accordance with the women’s work timings.
- Balwadi Centers should also provide nutritious food to children twice a day.
- In order to create food security, each family shall be given different food grains in quantities sufficient to them at PDS price and the remaining amount could be paid in cash.

**Mr. Minar Pimple** of United Nations Millennium Campaign said that Employment Guarantee Act was first implemented in Maharashtra since 80s. He said that the Government of India in last two years has taken up two revolutionary actions. One is provision for RTI (Right to Information) and another one NREGA. They are very progressive measures enacted in the country. He said that the Government of India is bound by international agreements to provide its citizen some basic rights like right to food, right to shelter, right to education and right to work. He said that the laborers should safe guard their rights to lead a dignified life in the society. He said that the toiling people had a right to demand effective implementation of the Act.

**Mr. Kaluva Sreenivasulu**, former MP observed that there was non co-operation by some people in the villages during the social audit, and many of the laborers complained on the nonpayment of bills. He pointed out that the laborers in the district were yet to receive the full fruits of the Scheme though it was launched with much fanfare in this district by the Prime Minister himself.

**Mr. Murali, Director APREGS**, Government of Andhra Pradesh acknowledged that there were many problems that need to be solved, and listed the steps being taken to solve some of them. He said that the government was able to reduce the delay in wage payments. As a solution he said that the state government was planning to introduce Smart Cards. He said that 780 crores worth of works were implemented in 30,000 villages in the State of AP and 5 lakh 72 thousand laborers have worked. In the programme 13,000 post offices were engaged in the bills payment. Also he said that this time Government is planning to see that,

- One mate will be there for a group of every 50 laborers,
- Muster rolls will be completed by Saturday of every week,
- Muster rolls will reach the Mandal Office by every Sunday,
- On every Monday payments will be finalized and sent to respective post offices.

**He added that some of the highlights of APREGS were:**

- Equal wage for men and women.
• Comparing to other states the minimum average wage in Andhra Pradesh is high @ Rs.80/- where as in other states it is less.
• Minimum wage is followed correctly only in our state.
• The Middlemen are totally excluded.
• Direct payment to the labor through Post Office.
• 70 lakhs savings accounts were opened in the Post Office.

All the speakers called laborers to be united, to access the rights provided by the Government. They said that it must be the labor that can control the corruption and overcome the bottlenecks in the implementation of REGS.

9.7 Suggestions and observations by the labour:

Mr. Narayanaswamy of Mallepalli, a wage seeker said that if the fruits of NREGS should reach the laborers properly, the SHGs and VOs should be involved actively.

Ms. Nagalakshmi of Manirevu village felt that poor farmers and farm laborers are benefitted by APREGS. Their economic position is improved to some extent. However to plan the works and to see their proper implementation there were no efficient CBOs between the people and the Government. She suggested labour groups should be farmed and empowered.

Ms. Gangamma from Kalagalla village said that four members from their family worked under APREGS but they were unable to get the minimum wage for their working days. Because of the change of the Field Assistant the wage payment was not done for them till now. She demanded that the officials would take necessary steps while changing the Field Assistants to avoid such problems.
10. ECOLOGY DAYS – 2008

10.1. Introduction:
Two Ecology Day celebrations were organized during 2008, by the MMS (Mandal Sasyamitra Samakhya) MSS is Mandal level federations of farmers practicing Sustainable Agriculture. There are 8 MSS organised in the 8 mandals in AF’s program area. The first Ecology Day was organized at Kalyandurg on 5th June, covering about 1800 farmers (About 800 women and 1000 men) from 125 villages of Kalyandurg, Beluguppa, Kundurpi and Settur mandals. The second one was organized at Anantapur on 16th June, covering about 1200 farmers (About 500 women and 700 men) from 105 villages of Dharmavaram, Rapthadu, Atmakur and Kudair mandals. The MSS members of the above mandals, together with AF staff planned meticulously about Ecology Days including selection of venue, awareness to be created, items to be exhibited, cultural items to be presented and guests to be invited etc. The venues looked like big festival fairs, with women and men pouring in happily, wearing eye-catching colorful attires.

10.2. The Objectives:
Following are the main objectives of organizing Ecology Day:
• To create awareness on ecological imbalances through over exploitation of Natural Resources, use of chemical in agriculture etc., and to increase the role of farming community in restoring ecological balance by conserving natural resources.
• To motivate the rural community to protect the whole eco-system and bio-diversity including Human beings, Animals, Birds, Insects, Trees and Nature as a whole.
• To create awareness on (a) Pollution of Soil, Water and Air through the indiscriminate use of poisonous chemicals in the form of pesticides and fertilizers in Agriculture and (b) The hazardous effects of chemical pollution on the total eco-system and human health.
• To motivate the farming community (a) to stop using chemical fertilizers and pesticides totally and (b) to adopt the totally eco-friendly and cost effective Sustainable Agriculture practices.
• To motivate the farming community (a) to stop using the Hybrid seeds marketed by the greedy MNCs and (b) to regain control over Agriculture by using only the traditional, indigenous seed varieties produced locally.

10.3. The events organised during the Ecology Day:
10.3.1 Awareness building through Exhibitions
Interesting exhibitions, with attractive stalls were arranged at the venues to attract the attention of the participants.

The stalls exhibited about 20 - 30 kinds of different varieties of food grains, oil seeds etc, which was possible only because of the painstaking efforts put in by the MSS members and
AF staff. The stalls also exhibited various Agricultural tools and some weapons used in olden days. The purpose was to refresh the old farmers' memories and create awareness among the young farmers on (a) Traditional and some extinct varieties of food grains, which have high health and nutritional value and which were used to be consumed by our fathers and fore-fathers, (b) Traditional Agricultural tools and Weapons.

There were also stalls exhibiting charts on (a) Non-negotiable practices in Sustainable Agriculture, (b) Life cycles of harmful Pests and Farmer friendly Insects, and (c) Preparation of various Bio-pesticides (Decoctions prepared from locally available herbs and material) and liquid fertilizers. The idea was to drive the farmers away from the poisonous Chemicals and to attract them back to the eco-friendly Bio-pesticides and manures under Sustainable Agriculture practices.

Models of Multiple Cropping were displayed on ground. The idea was to generate awareness, interest and to motivate farmers to stop the disastrous practice of Mono-Cropping of Ground nut and to adopt different successful Multiple Cropping models. These models spread the risk of Crop failures and droughts on one hand and improve the Soil fertility on the other.

Some stalls displayed water saving equipments like Drip, Sprinklers and models of SRI paddy, to motivate the farmers to practice water saving technologies.

There were also stalls displaying a variety of vegetables, fruits, Greens and some food grains produced organically. Apart from this, a variety of flowers, medicinal plants were also displayed. The purpose was to motivate the farmers to take up diversified crops and follow methods of organic farming.

Various local and improved breeds of Bullocks were also brought in to create awareness on the local breeds and to motivate farmers to improve the breeds of their own cattle, rather than exotic varieties of cattle like Murray, Jercy Heifer etc.

A variety of wild animals like Deer, Snakes, Mongoose, Peacocks etc. were also exhibited to create a thought among the participants that these wild animals, which are gradually becoming extinct, also have a right to co-exist and have a friendly role to play along with us, as children of
our mother nature and we should not destroy the forests.

Some stalls sold pillow covers, hand bags, purses and handicrafts prepared by women IG groups. These stalls were arranged to create interest among women to take up skill-based non-farm IGAs.

People have watched all these stalls with great curiosity and interest as they were educative and informative. The people were seen discussing among themselves about the various interesting exhibits, which roused their curiosity. Some of the elder people were happily reminiscing and explaining about the extinct varieties of traditional food grains, their methods of cooking and consumption and boasting how strong they were compared to, to the youngsters, with a touch of pride. Men farmers were totally engrossed in seeing the traditional agricultural tools, used by their fore fathers, weapons of olden days used for hunting, and the multiple cropping models and charts on Sustainable Agriculture. The women folk were attracted to the wide spectrum of food grains, the various products of IGAs, the animals and birds and various Bio-pesticides (Decoctions), bio-manures and liquid manures. There were lively discussions all-round the stalls and we were quiet content that the purpose of setting up the exhibition was fulfilled.

10.3.2 Awareness building through messages by eminent persons

Many officials from different sectors and departments like Agricultural University, Weather Research Center, Forest Department; Horticulture Department besides MPDO, MRO and RDT staff attended the campaign. They addressed the gathering in different aspects of ecology, environment, agriculture etc. There were very interesting messages on (a) the ecological imbalance, its causes and effects, (b) the over exploitation of natural resources, (c) the usage of poisonous chemicals in agriculture and its hazardous effects on people, animals and environment, (d) the usage of hybrid seeds and its disadvantages, (e) the depleting bio-diversity, particularly cattle population etc.

Following were the excerpts from the speeches delivered during the Ecology Day:

- Ecology is the study of how living creatures like human beings, animals, birds, insects, micro organisms. The natural environment is inter-dependent on one another and co-existed in a natural and harmonious way. It includes all the living and non-living creatures in this world.
- The five important elements in ecology are land, water trees animals and air and these precious elements should be protected. Land is the most important one among them.
- The human can survive only by allowing the nature to survive. We have to carry forward the nature’s wealth to our future generations.
- Now a battle is going on between ecology and humans. People are working against the nature.
- We should protect the ecological balance, in the same way as we protect our own families and children.
Over exploitation of natural resources like, land, water and trees has led to a severe ecological imbalance.

The disasters, that are awaiting in the future, because of the misuse of the natural resources, were highlighted during the campaign.

Forest is like a mother’s lap to all the living creatures. If we protect the forests today, they will protect humans and other ecological elements in the future.

The deforestation process sets up a cycle of perpetuation of ecological degradation adversely affecting and causing extinction of bio-diversity and all forms of flora and fauna.

Overgrazing, deforestation, encroachment for agricultural crops and general improper management of land and water resources lead to ecological imbalance and because of these things a quarter part of earth’s surface has now turned as desert or degraded.

The deforestation has caused wild animals like tigers and elephants to enter into the villages and cause damage to the fields and people. It has also resulted in increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, low infiltration of rain water into the ground and increased run off, frequent flooding and a gradual extinction of bio-diversity.

Because of the air and water pollution many animals and insects are vanishing.

Water is one of nature’s most precious resources that is being exploited indiscriminately by man’s thoughtlessness and greed. Systems for optimum harvesting of rainwater have either not been designed or not being put to use efficiently. Traditional surface water bodies like tanks have been neglected. Overexploitation of groundwater resources by indiscriminate sinking of tube wells has resulted in lowering of the water table.

If we go on continuing like this, the day is not too far, when we will have to get water as payment for work and security will be needed to take it safely to home.

We know that prevention is better than cure. But we don’t apply this wise adage. We should think and utilize the precious natural resources systematically and nurture them for future generation.

India uses nearly 100,000 tones of Chemical pesticides annually. Pesticide use in India has multiplied 20 times between 1960 and 1980.

A WHO study, which analyzed food samples across India, found that 50 per cent of the food samples were contaminated with pesticide residues.

In Punjab state, urea, mono-chrotophos and DAP residues were found in human blood, as Punjab user high level of chemicals in agriculture.

Many small children below 5 years are suffering from Asthma. Most people are living by taking medicines and they die with adverse effects of medicines”.

Pollution of water causes several health problems, such as diarrheas, amoebic dysentery, cholera, typhoid, hook worm, round worm and infective hepatitis.

10 years back purchasing bottled drinking water was viewed as a luxury, but now it is viewed as a need.

The quality of the air that we breathe in is polluted heavily by smoke from domestic cooking fuels, thermal power stations, industries, vehicles, and mining activity.

“If we don’t give importance to the atmospheric pollution, we will have to carry oxygen cylinders on our shoulders in the near future.

The Green Revolution introduced the trend towards hybrid and high-yielding varieties of seeds which replaced our traditional seeds. The newer varieties required large quantities of chemical fertilizers, pesticides and large volumes of water for irrigation. Even small and marginal farmers who do not have, either capital for seeds and fertilizers
or water for irrigation were also lured by the promises of phenomenal yields, and landed in debt traps.

- Without the required water, the strong chemical fertilizers and pesticides destroyed the productivity of their already degraded lands. The micro organism which helps the fertility of the soil were destroyed by the use of chemicals. The farmers lost not only the productivity of their lands, but also their rich pool of indigenous varieties of seeds. Nutritive diets available from traditional food crops grown earlier have been largely replaced by weaker diets based on non-traditional foods and imported grains.
- The need to go back to the cultivation of traditional food grains was stressed and the memories of the people were refreshed as to how healthy and strong were the foods prepared with traditional food grains like Arikelu, Samalu, Ragi, Bajra and Jowar.
- The villagers are selling away their cattle indiscriminately in distress. This has caused shortage of milk and animal dung which are vital in improving human health and soil fertility.
- Cattle population has decreased due to mining (Hillocks & growing land) also. Mining results in removing of all vegetation and topsoil leaving the land barren and devastated. This has affected milk production, the production of bullocks for farm operations and production of animal dung which has affected soil fertility very badly. The overall impact is a collapse of food production system.

10.3.3  Awareness building through Cultural Programs

The speeches were interspersed with lively and highly enjoyable as well as educative Cultural Programs. The situational songs sung by RDT’s cultural team highlighted the program content in a lucid manner. The songs described the importance of Forests, Rains, Protection of Soil fertility, Protection of Trees, Planting trees and NPM practices. These songs attracted the people very much and it was observed that the participants were totally engrossed and enjoyed very much. Traditional plays like Bayalu natakam (Open air Drama), Tholu bommalata (Puppetshow), Kolatam (Stick Dance), and film song dances were performed, which kept the audience enthralled.

All the people relished the simple but delicious luncheon arranged at the venues. They returned back to their villages by evening or late night, discussing about the events and feeling happy about the day.
11. FARMERS CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE
- Held at Lalitha kala Parishad, Anantapur on 06-03-2009

11.1 Introduction:
A big conference of farmers involved in Sustainable Agriculture was convened by the “Anantha Sustainable Agriculture NGO’s Forum” - A forum of likeminded NGOs, involved in promoting Sustainable Agriculture. The conference was held on 06-03-2009 at Lalitha kala Parishath, Anantapur. The conference was well attended by about 1400 practicing farmers (about 50% women farmers) of Sustainable Agriculture from across the District and reputed NGOs like Centre for Sustainable Agriculture - Hyderabad, AF Ecology Centre -Anantapur, Ananta Paryavarana Parirakshana Samiti - Anantapur, TIMBAKTU Collective - C.K.Palli, REDS - Kadiri and Foundation for Ecological Society - Madanapalle. Besides, a number of Activists and NGO personnel, who are promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Scientists also participated in the conference. Mr. Nammalwar a well known organic farmer and a strong proponent of ecological farming gave the key note address. The purpose of the Conference was to highlight the importance of Sustainable Agriculture, formulate favorable policy recommendations and present them to all political parties on the eve of General Elections for State Legislature and for Lok sabha.

11.2 Proceedings of the Conference
The conference started at 11.30 AM and the Presenter, Mr. Balaram, welcomed the following dignitaries on to the Dias:

1. Dr. Y.V. Malla Reddy, Director, AF
2. Dr. Nambalwar, Scientist cum Farmer as chief guest from Tamil Nadu state.
3. Mr. Rajasekhar, CSA, Hyderabad.
4. Mr. Sekhar, FES, Madanapalli
5. Dr. Ramalingam, SERP, Hyderabad.
7. Mr. Kiran, Hyderabad.
8. Mr. Prabhakar, AGM, NABARD
9. C. Bhanuja, REDS, Kadiri
10. Mr. Gangi Reddy, Chaitanya, Lepakshi
11. Mr. Narayana, APPS, Anantapur

Dr. Y. V. Malla Reddy presided over the conference. In his inaugural address, he made the following comments related to the present agricultural crisis:
• Dry land agriculture in Anantapur district is in severe crisis and farmers are living in severe distress. Now the farming is not any more in farmers’ control, as it has gone into the control of companies who produce fertilizers, pesticides, seeds etc.
• Soil, water, crops, food, everything is polluted with chemical pesticides and fertilizers including the breathing air is polluted.
• The lives of the farmers are mortgaged to fertilizer and pesticide shops. The farmers have gone into a debt trap and vicious cycle of poverty.
• To produce one bag of urea, the production cost is Rs. 2500/-. The companies are supplying the urea bag @ Rs.300 / bag to the farmers. The remaining amount of Rs. 2200/- is paid by the Government as subsidy, which is benefiting more the private companies.
• 90% of the rain fed farmers, who can not use urea and toil to make their own manure get no incentive or subsidy from the govt. Why is this? Why the Government is not giving incentives or subsidies to the farmers who do not use chemical fertilizer pesticides? Dr. Malla Reddy stressed on the need to discuss this issue in the conference.
• Farmers have to regain control over agriculture. Farmers’ particularly small and marginal farmers here to have security of income, human dignity and honorable living conditions. The farmers and the nation have to be endowed with food security, free from chemicals. The environment and bio-diversity must be restored.
• He assured to extend total cooperation and take all the recommendations and resolutions passed by the conference to the notice of Govt and political parties. Finally he thanked and appealed to the participating farmers to make the conference a grand success.

Later Dr. Nambalwar in his key note address shared his valuable experiences, ideas and suggestions. Dr. Nambalwar, said he has a close relationship with the farmers of Andhra Pradesh, as he has been visiting the state frequently during the past many years. He opined that now the world is facing two major problems – Global Warming and Food Insecurity. After the Second World War, due to enhanced industrial development and chemical based agriculture many companies came in to existence in the name of development. The consumerism and industrial growth expanded rapidly and resulted in damage to ozone layer and caused global warming. Unfortunately India has also followed the same path of developed countries; the pollution caused by factories is contributing largely to the green house effect. Ice is melting in high mountains, Glaciers and Polar regions due to rise in temperature, resulting in high run-off in rivers and consequently the sea level is increasing. As a result there have been calamities
like more frequent droughts and events like the “Tsunami” in the year 2004. Due to Global warming 70% of the population might face drinking water problem. The coastal habitual would be submerged. Rich countries would not be affected immediately, but the impact on developing and poor countries would be immediate. And the damage to the World environment and livelihoods will be irreparable.

Dr. Nambalwar listed the 3 major factors contributing for global warming and food insecurity, viz (1) Pollution from factories (2) Cutting of trees and (3) Conventional chemical based agriculture. He said that about 47 Universities in India are promoting chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Modern Agriculture is not good. Everything – Seed, Fertilizers, Pesticides, Food grains and Knowledge is being is being imported. Farmers are using 100000 tones of chemical fertilizers and pesticides every year. Bio diversity is lost and whole environment is affected due to chemical agriculture. Cropping system has been changed because of wrong and lopsided Government policies. All eatables are poisoned and even mother’s milk is also poisoned. People are spending more money on health. Use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides has caused for farmer suicides. Half of the global populations (3 billion people) are taking only one meal per day. In 1996, the UNO had resolved to reduce the poverty by 50% by 2015 but when it was reviewed in 2005, it was found that it has not moved even an inch forward! In America and many other countries food crops like Maize, Soya Bean, Sugar cane and Wheat are being converted into Bio-fuels. Lands are converted into Bio-diesel plantations and 33% of food grains are being converted into cattle feed for piggery, dairy poultry etc. He estimated that 50% of the Food produced will be converted into Bio-diesel by the year 2050. The big companies are grabbing fertile cultivated land for SEZs. The world is going to face severe food insecurity because of all the above factors. And so NGOs have to take cognizance of all these things and work for reversing this trend. Dr. Nambalwar gave many suggestions to the NGOs and farmers to face the upcoming issue of food insecurity:

**Suggestions:**

1. The NGOs should aware and awaken the communities in order to fight against the causes of agriculture crisis, food insecurity and farmer’s distress.
2. The farmers should take the organic farming forward by practicing the simple natural principle that farmers take the top of the crop (grain) for their living, cattle take the middle portion of the crop as fodder, while the lower portion (root) is taken by the soil as manure.
3. Banks should be kept open to the farmers all the time and give loans for sustainable agriculture.
4. Farmers have to widely practice and propagate the NPM & LEISA methods like Panchagavya, Amruthapani, Jeevamurtham, Beejamrutham, SRI etc.
5. All farmers should practice the “Mulching” since it is best practice for protecipating the soil moisture, controls weeds, helps in developing earthworms and improves soil fertility.
6. All agriculture related research institutions have to work for serving the interests of farmers’ bio-diversity and environment but not for the companies.
7. Government should give subsidies directly to farmers but not to the multinational companies.
8. NGOs, Activists and Scientists have to work together for the farmers. They all should put forth the specified demands to politicians and the Government.
9. Farmers have to follow the methods/practices, developed by Mr. Fukuoka, of Japan (perma culture) Mr. Bhaskar Save, Gujarat and Mr. Subhas Palekar of Maharashtra as they have done many experiments in organic agriculture.

Finally Mr. Nambalwar expressed his thanks to all the participants, especially to women for they have listened to his prolonged speech patiently.

Later Dr. Ramalingam expert on Sustainable Agriculture from SERP, Hyderabad shared his valuable experiences and ideas in promoting sustainable agriculture in the state. First of all, he appealed to the farmers to excuse him as he has done harm to them when he was working as Joint Director of Agriculture in the Government by issuing licenses for selling chemical fertilizers and pesticides. But after his retirement, he joined SERP and has been playing a vital role in promoting the practices of organic farming. Dr. Ramalingam demanded the Government to give subsidy of Rs. 6000 per acre to organic farmers instead of giving it to companies who are producing chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Afterwards the organic farmers on the dais shared their opinions and demands.

- NPM practices were introduced in the crops of cotton and chilli in the villages of Warangal district and it resulted in reducing the crop investments from Rs. 20,000/- to Rs. 2000/-.
- In India, organic farming is being practiced in 2 million acres of land in 22 districts.
- Mulching is one of the essential practices in organic farming as it helps in retaining moisture and developing earth worms.
- Azolla in paddy fields controls weeds and supplies nitrogen to the crop.
- Application of tank silt increases the soil fertility. Optimum crop yields can be obtained by using panchagavya and Jeevamurtham”.

Dr. Ramalingam demanded the Government to give subsidy of Rs. 6000 per acre to organic farmers instead of giving it to companies who are producing chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

Afterwards the organic farmers on the dais shared their opinions and demands.

Ms Jayamma, Woman Farmer from K.Kuntlapalli shared that she has been practicing NPM practices with locally available material. She has been giving awareness to other farmers and motivating them to take up organic farming. The NPM farmers are selling their products at higher rates in the market. They have planned to form a society of NPM farmers.

Mr. N.V. Narayana, Farmer from Chinna jalalapuram village said that he has been doing agriculture since 1992, using chemical fertilizers and pesticides. He was cheated by the shop owners during all these years and had debts to an extent of Rs.150,000/- . Now with the cooperation of RIDS an NGO, he has been following organic farming in his 7.5 acres of land. He got an income of Rs.48000/- from his farm land by investing Rs.3500/- only. He demanded Government to give subsidies to the farmers directly and it should also see that NPM shops are arranged within the reach of farmers.

Mrs. Lingamma from Mallapuram village explained about the FFS, (Farmers Field Schools) where in men and women farmers are participating from 7.30 am till 11.00 am. She said that many farmers in her village are practicing LEISA / NPM practices and are not using any chemical fertilizers and pesticides. The green matter developed on the field bunds is being used
as green manure. The solution of green chillies and garlic has proved very effective in controlling the ‘Aphids’ on groundnut crop. She appealed the conference to take the demands of small and marginal farmers to the notice of Government and Politicians for favorable policy decisions.

Mr. Sreenath, from Kuntimaddi village expressed that there is no support to farmers from Government. LEISA / NPM practices will save the farmer from committing suicides. He appealed the farmers to grow 9 kinds of crops called “Navadhandalu” and change from chemical farming to organic farming. He opined that by eating all varieties of food grains, people will be healthy and free from all kinds of diseases.

Ms. Pushpa, from Timbaktu Collective explained the NPM activities practised by the farmers in their “Dharani Society”. She added that farmers are able to reduce the investment by Rs. 1000 – 1500 per acre by practicing organic farming. The society was formed with 900 farmers in the year 2007. The society is buying the organic crop produce from farmers, processing and marketing it at Bangalore, Chennai and Local markets for higher rates. The farmers are following the PGS system certification for making the processed agri-produce.

Mr. Mohan Reddy, an activist from Hyderabad narrated his experiences with the farmers of Warangal district. He appealed the farmers to follow the recommendations made by an eminent Water Management Specialist Mr. T.Hanumantha Rao. He also explained about 3 mantras, (1) Retaining the total rain water in the crop land by making small bunds in the field (2) Increasing vegetative cover on the crop land and (3) Ploughing the crop residues back in to the soil. If these 3 methods are followed, the production will be 3 times more when compared to the normal yields.

Mr. Narayana, farmer from Mallipalli village expressed his gratitude to AF/RDT for promoting vegetative cover on soil bunds by dibbling seed and planting plants about 20 years back under watershed development program. The green matter is now being used for composting. He appealed that every farmer should follow LEISA/NPM practices and discourage chemical agriculture in the district. He demanded the Government to declare Anantapur District as “Sustainable Agriculture District” and give more subsidies to NPM practicing farmers.

Mr. Thippeswamy, from Thippanapalli village opined that farmers are adding ‘poison’ to the soil in the form of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Farmers should change from un-Sustainable Agriculture to Sustainable Agriculture by adapting Palekar models.

Mr. Prabhakar, AGM, NABARD appealed farmers to take up more horticulture and vegetable cultivation under Sustainable Agriculture Program since Govt is giving more subsidies. He added that NABARD is also giving funds to the farmers through “Rythu Clubs”. There is possibility of getting subsidies and loans from NABARD through the farmers groups.

Mr. Kiran, Hyderabad explained about the “Farmers Manifesto”. He opined that farmers should get the opportunity to demand their rights so that the politicians respond to farmers. Efforts are being made to put forth the farmers’ demands before the Government.

Finally Mr. Gangi Reddy and Mr. Narayana Swamy put forth the policy recommendation to the farmers one by one and took the consent of the farmers for the recommendations. The recommendations are summarized and as follows.
11.3 Policy Recommendations

11.3.1 Development of institutional infrastructure for Sustainable Agriculture.

♦ Appoint a “Commission on Sustainable Agriculture and Farmers Welfare” to study the local agro-climatic conditions and recommend appropriate policies, institutions, practices and incentives for Sustainable Agriculture in Anantapur District, with adequate emphasis on rainfed agriculture.

♦ Establish a University of Sustainable Agriculture in order to develop appropriate local specific technologies and practices; and accordingly train human resources for research, development and extension of sustainable agriculture.

♦ Establish an effective local specific and farmer centric extension service system including farmers extension institutions for propagating and nurturing Sustainable Agriculture.

11.3.2 Development of local ecology and environment in the District, suitable for Sustainable Agriculture.

♦ Implement an integrated bio-mass intensive micro-watershed development covering the whole District with emphasis on in-situ soil and water conservation, farm forestry, development of CPRS, (water bodies, forests, commons etc), fodder development, rainfed horticulture etc.

♦ Promote intensively cattle and livestock development for the benefit of rainfed farmers with suitable Indian varieties of cows, buffalos, sheeps, goat etc which can survive and yield better under drought-prone conditions. And develop institutional infrastructure for Animal Husbandry, Processing and Marketing of Milk, Fisheries etc.

11.3.3 Incentives for farmers practicing Sustainable Agriculture.

♦ Provide a Rs.3000/- incentive per acre under Sustainable Agriculture for all LEISA farmers towards preparation and application of organic manures and non-chemical management of pests and diseases.

♦ Provide incentives for diversified cropping systems, particularly for perennial tree crops like Mango, Tamarind, Sweet Lime, Pomegranate etc.,

♦ Ensure remunerative prices and marketing facilities for all crops under Sustainable Agriculture.

♦ Provide crop-income insurance for all crops and for all farmers. The sum assured must cover crop investment plus 50% additional, in order to compensate the value of the yield lost and thus provide income insurance to the farmer.
Introduce locally grown millets and pulses like Jowar, Ragi, Redgram etc., in the subsidized Public Distribution System (PDS).

Organise seed production in every panchayat and facilitate seed banks, owned & managed by farmers, with locally suitable non-hybrid and non-genetically modified varieties.

Organise Farmers Groups of Sustainable Agriculture on the lines of women SHGs and federate them at Mandal, District and State level. These CBOs to be the instruments of transforming the conventional agriculture into Sustainable Integrated Farming Systems.

Provide critical irrigation for all rainfed crops in case of long dry spells affecting crop prospects, using the surface water and river waters and using mobile sprinklers systems.

Provide 100% coverage of micro irrigation facilities for efficient water use under bore wells, open wells, tanks, canals etc.

Establish bio-gas units in all households having 3 or more cattle.

Ms. Bhanuja thanked all the men and women farmers, dignitaries, guest speakers and the media for making this meeting grand success.

The conference came to an end by 5.00 pm.