

Success Story of Implementation of Water Conservation Measures in Tiruchuli Block

Virudhunagar district in Tamilnadu is usually characterized as a drought prone district with absence of dependable irrigation sources such as perennial rivers. Recent studies have stated that though 33% of the cultivated area is classified as irrigated area, assured irrigation is available only for 57% through the wells and the remaining area are being irrigated by rain fed tanks. Productivity of agriculture is influenced by numerous factors such as soil, climate, irrigation, marketing and credit facilities and agricultural practices and techniques. Hence, it has always been essential to efficiently manage the available natural water resources to improve the agricultural system of this district in order to improve the people's livelihood.

Tiruchuli Block in Virudhunagar district has dryland agriculture as its mainstay with predominantly millet cropping supplemented by pulses, chili, coriander and cotton. The block is drought prone with the extent of poverty at higher levels than the state and district average. The income from the agriculture and allied activities is continuously decreasing and leading to a distress situation for the farmers to abandon agriculture. The farmers still cling on to agriculture with difficulty but the next generation is shifting jobs to ensure their livelihood. Hence it has always been important to make farming profitable to ensure sustainability of the current generation and to stop migration of the next generations from agriculture.

In an effort to attain a significant progress towards this mammoth goal, HDFC Bank initiated the Holistic Rural Development Program (HRDP) through its implementation partner National Agro Foundation (NAF) in 2021. Under the program a system of interventions has been undertaken to augment the natural resources and take up soil and water conservation activities and to increase the profit generated from the dryland agriculture practiced in the villages through improved technologies and value addition.



During the first year of implementation, significant focus was laid on soil and water conservation and a system of interventions like land treatment by uprooting *Prosopis juliflora*, formation of field bund, desilting and clearing of major channels in the village, excavation of sunken ponds/WATs, construction of Gabion Check Dams, construction of

concrete check dams and rejuvenation of community ponds have been implemented widely in 20 project villages under the program.

During the year 2021, most of project villages received significant quantity of rainfall in the monsoon. As the major water conservation measures that were implemented under the program were in place, the region witnessed a substantial harvesting of rainwater and has led to the rise in water level in the open wells and surface water bodies.



Mr. Subburam of Ramasampatti Village who is currently in his early fifty's and also a beneficiary under the program stated that during his entire life time he has never witnessed the current level of water in his open well and in the surface water bodies. This has enabled him to carry the farming activities in a hassle-free manner owing to the surplus availability of water. In addition, he has planned to carry out irrigated farming (Vegetables) in one of his lands where he was practicing rain fed farming due to non-availability of water in his defunct well. Mr. Subburam expressed his heartfelt thanks to HDFC and National Agro Foundation and welcomed all the future endeavours under the program.

