

## Status Report on THOGAPUR

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In Thogapur village of Mahaboobnagar district six groups are formed by women belonging to socially and economically deprived communities to take up the implementation of the decentralised food security. These are:

1. Lalitha Mahila Rythu Sangham
2. Bhavani Mahila Rythu Sangham
3. Sarada Mahila Rythu Sangham
4. Annadata Mahila Rythu Sangham
5. Anjali Mahila Rythu Sangham
6. Swarna Mahila Rythu Sangham

Each group consists of nine women farmers. Only Swarna Mahila Rythu Sangham has seven members. Members having contiguous fields came together to form in to a group. In total 52 women formers have organised themselves in to groups to take up the food security programme.

Programme in this village is being coordinated by the Velugu/District Poverty Initiative Programme. In the beginning this programme was planned to be implemented by the UNDP supported South Asia Poverty Alleviation Project (SAPAP). But at that time this particular programme was nearing completion and its work is also transferred to Velugu/DPIP. The interchange of organisations caused some delay in grounding the programme.

### FALLOW LAND

Members who have formed in to women farmer groups among themselves owned 107 acres. These families got this land under distribution of banjar lands. These lands are of low quality/fertility. Most of it is lying fallow for want of capital. Because of the interchange of organisations and also because of lack of exposure/acquaintance with the programme there was no agriculture activity in the first year of the programme, i.e., 2000-01. During the first year some of the members of the groups and organisers visited the places like Zaheerabad area where CEC is already implementing this type of programmes to familiarise themselves with the working of the programme. During 2001-02, 39.75 acres were brought under cultivation and during 2002-03, 71 acres were brought under cultivation

CROP	2001-02			2002-03		
	Area in acres	% of area	Output in Quintals	Area in acres	% of area	Output in Quintals
Jowar	27.25	68.55	10.30	24.40	34.37	21.70
Green gram	1.25	3.14	0.15	0.00	0.00	0.00

Red gram	4.20	10.57	6.77	33.45	47.11	57.00
Horse gram	5.10	12.83	5.16	13.15	18.52	14.90
Cow pea	0.45	1.13	0.07	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ragi	1.50	3.77	5.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total	39.75	100.00	27.45	71.00	100.00	93.60

During 2001-02 out of 39.75 acres cultivated by the women's groups jowar was grown in 27.25 acres accounting for 68.55 percentage of the cultivated land. If ragi is also taken in to account land under food grains was 72.32 percent. During the next year the proportion of area under food grains had drastically declined to 34.37 percent. While the total cultivated area increased to 71 acres area under jowar declined to 24.40 acres. Pulse crops, red gram in particular accounted for this change. This may be contrary to the programmes objective of increasing food grain production in the hands of the women farmers and availability of the same to mitigate food insecurity. Members of the women's groups contend that besides food grain they also need some cash in hand to meet other necessities like clothing. Besides this, this area is suitable for red gram and red gram of this area is known for its quality. Because of this also there is preference for red gram and other pulse crops like green gram and horse gram.

During the two years of cultivation nature played spoilsport/havoc. In the first year because of untimely rains at the time of harvests grain was damaged. Grain was soaked in rain water while on threshing fields. As a result grain was discolored and also moulds were formed rendering it unfit for consumption. Some of it cannot be sold even for chicken feed. As a result of this the quantity of grain that reached their houses was far less than expected. During the second year because of severe drought and lack of rains at crucial time of grain formation grain yields declined considerably. Though they received good early rains this advantage could not be captured because of failure of rains later.

## LAND LEASE

Land lease was not taken up in this sample village. The dry land based food security programme was taken up in this village for the first time under the UNDP financed food security programme. The members of the Sangham were taken for exposure visits to CEC field area in Zaheerabad to acquaint them with the issues involved in land lease programme. They were enthusiastic about it. Though there some fallow lands owned by big farmers in this village they could not get any land on lease as these farmers are unwilling to enter in to any written agreement to lease out lands to the women's sangham. In the initial stages when land owners were approached they also had shown interest in it but later they withdrew when asked to enter in to written agreement to lease out. They feared that once they enter in to written agreement their ownership of the land may be affected. In the end sangham members decided to cultivate the fallow lands owned by the members.

## GRAIN STORAGE

Because of the delay in taking up the programme in this village construction of bin was also delayed. The construction of bin was complete only in the early part of the third year. During the first year of the programme there was no cultivation under this programme, and as a result of it no grain was collected for storage purposes.

During the second year grain was affected because of untimely rains at the time of harvest damaging the grain. This damaged grain was not suitable for storage as it could not be preserved for long. Also, by the time of harvest bin was not ready for use.

During the third year because of severe drought crop yields were affected. Added to this area under jowar was limited as the members preferred red gram. Even then the groups decided to store some grain in the bin. They decided to store ragi along with jowar as there are two compartments in the bin facilitating storage of two types of grain. But, decisions about the quantity to be stored and the terms on which grain is to be collected and used are yet to be finalised.

## TEACHNICAL ISSUES

Before deciding on the size and nature of the grain storage bin some members of the women farmers' groups visited the villages where similar programmes are already under implementation. Initially they decided to build the bin using cement bricks as they had the know-how of making the cement bricks, they had the facilities and equipment necessary for cement brick making. Also, they had experience in using the cement bricks in construction as they built the low cost toilets using these cement bricks. Added to this some of them had the experience in working in the construction industry during their migration to Mumbai and other urban centres in search of work during lean season. They thought that this would also add to the work availability and income to some of the members.

Later they decided against cement brick bin and chose cement concrete bin. The main factor that shifted their choice is that cement brick bin can easily be damaged, and it will be easy target to the mischief mongers who are not lacking in this area. They thought that cement concrete bin will be stronger and will last long. They decided to have two compartments in the bin to store two types of grain. The bin has the capacity to store hundred quintals, each compartment capable of storing fifty quintals.

The ten tonne capacity cement concrete bin was constructed with the technical assistance of Indian Grain Storage Management and Research Institute. The total cost of construction of the bin was Rs. 32,000.

Unlike in other two study villages solarisation of grain was not carried out as the groups in this village have not collected the grain to be stored in the bin.

#### INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

A committee consisting of a representative from each group decides on the issues related to the food security programme. These groups are members of the Village Committee and the food security committee reports to the Village Committee on progress of the programme but it does not take orders from the Village Committee. All the decisions about the food security programme are taken by the food security committee only. As there is cross membership in the food security committee and other committees and also in the Village Committee they may not work at cross purposes.

Accounts of the food security committee are maintained by the person who maintains the accounts of the Village Committee and other groups in the village and is paid by the Village Committee. As a result they do not incur any expenditure on this account.

Regular meetings of the women farmers' groups as well as Village Committee are held where all the issues of this food security programme are discussed. These meetings ensure participation as well as transparency. The magnitude of financial assistance to be provided to each member of the women farmers' groups is decided in the presence of the village committee. These regular meetings enable them to share their problems, possible solutions and experiences. As the SAPAP and DPIP laid stress on empowerment of women and proactive activities it drew considerable number of women of this village in to active participation in the group/community activities. This continuing participation will help to sustain the programme.