

Centre for Sustainable Agriculture

Save Farmers: an initiative to Support distressed livelihoods

The agrarian crisis sweeping through the rural areas of the country resulting in poverty, distress migration, and farmers' suicides is creating a new social crisis with increased burden on the women.

Poverty and Hunger: Poverty in rural areas due to growing unemployment and lack access to resources and growing hunger due to lack of physical and economic access to food. Every year hundreds of poor die due to starvation particularly during the summer months (april to june) due to seasonal unemployment.

Distress migration: Price rise and lack of employment has led to increased migration from rural to urban areas and rural to rural areas. This has increased the workload of women as they are often left behind to take care of small children and old family members. Where woman migrate along with their families they have to face the double burden of taking care of the family and working on construction sites, brick kilns etc. We even find more and more women migrating on their own in search of domestic and other work. This makes them vulnerable to trafficking and other kinds of exploitation.

Single Widows: Given the current spate of suicides by farmers in several districts of Andhra Pradesh and Maharastra particularly and across the country in general, it is important to have special redressal programmes for the widows of these farmers. Also to be addressed is the situation of women who have lost their husband due to pesticide exposure during spraying. Cases by case economic rehabilitation programmes have to be evolved for all such cases, and support systems put into place.

This crisis in the rural sector has further been aggravated by the decline in occupations associated with the allied sectors particularly with the privatisation of the commons like forests and water. Corporate farming has been threatening the livelihood of small and marginal farmers and non-farmers in the agricultural sector and particularly of women. Aggravation of conflicts around the commons with diversion of lands for non-agricultural purposes (such as SEZ) may further increase displacement and forced migration. Livelihood of women particularly from tribal, dalit, fishing and pastoral communities will be affected by this. The reduced access to natural resources also means that women have to spend more time and labour for daily domestic work such as fetching of water and collection of fuel and fodder. This is having an adverse impact not only on their health but also on whatever educational opportunities they have.

The entry of Corporate Retailing into agricultural marketing has also led to decreasing incomes for the farmers. Big retailers are squeezing out the primary producers and small retailers from the market. Since women are actively involved in small enterprises selling produce, their livelihoods are adversely impacted by this.

Rising agrarian distress has also led to increase of violence against women. It must be remembered that apart from the problems of livelihood and employment, women anyway have to endure the inequities of a patriarchal system both in the family and in

the world outside. When livelihood and employment have been threatened, the discrimination and violence perpetrated on women as women also tend to increase. The dowry system, female foeticide and infanticide and crimes like witch hunting continue undiminished even in the post globalization era because of these new factors affecting women's livelihood, health and educational opportunities

In this situation CSA has taken a two pronged approach of striving for a policy support from the government and also mobilising resources from the Governments, Organisations and individuals who wish to adopt and support such villages and individual families.

Centre for Sustainable Agriculture is a not for profit Trust with extensive experience in sustainable agriculture and works in Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab helping the farmers to adopt ecologically and economically sustainable agriculture practices. Some of the significant achievements in the last eight years are 'Punukula' the first pesticide free village, 'Enebavi' which is the first Organic Village which have attracted the attention of policy makers, media and farmers from across the world. CSA with Government of Andhra Pradesh has designed and implemented 'Community Managed Sustainable Agriculture' through the women self help groups which is now practiced in more than 35 lakh acres across 22 districts in AP. In Maharashtra, the farmers from a village 'Dorli' in Wardha district who have put up their village for sale after suffering huge losses returned back to farming and could repay most of their loans. Significant decreases in pesticide use are also seen in villages of Punjab where CSA worked with partner organisations.

- a. **Village adoption:** Support to your village or other villages in distress helping them to shift to more sustainable models of agriculture. Our estimation is about Rs. 10,00,000 for a cluster of 5 villages for a period of three years which help them with learning and practicing sustainable/organic farming establishing institutions which can help them to plan, produce and market their produce, and become sustainable.

Activities include

- 200 farmers (max spread over a cluster of five villages)
- One dedicated staff
- Group level production planning
- Group level monitoring and trainings twice a month
- Trouble shooting in crop management
- Quality Management Records
- Forward/backward linkages on paying actual (soil and water testing, soil and water management, inputs, market)
- Will become self sustainable in three years.

Outcomes: Reduction in costs of cultivation by 10%, increase in productivity by 10%

Your share: Rs. 10,00,000/ 3 years (4 lakh in first year and 3 lakh each in the next two years) (Rs. 2000/farmer/year) Details for this year is enclosed.

- b. Grain banks:** Growing hunger is a major concern. Support to poor in the form of grain banks can help to provide food during the lean periods. Food grains would be advanced to the people and they would repay in the form of grains to the village organization when they can earn money in three installments. This would help the poor to tide over the lean periods. Rs. 50,000 as one time support will help to establish a grain bank in a village.
- c. Livelihood support:** The families who wish to continue with farming or allied activities like livestock rearing etc would be supported with trainings, follow up etc. In addition some of them can take up income generating activities, off farm or non-farm enterprises like a. grinding machines, b. powdering units, c. tailoring, d. petty shops etc. These women would be trained in to get technical skills as well as business skills and link up with other supporting agencies and marketing networks. The support would be used partly as grant and partly as a soft loan. The women would be formed into a group and group would be supported. The soft loans given would be repaid over a period of time and would be used for extending to more people. Rs. 1,00,000 one time support will help a family. Supports for large enterprises which can provide livelihoods for a group are also welcome. We are running few such units now.
- d. Supporting young ones:** Children are the major victims of agrarian distress. Support for continuing education and acquiring professional skills. The children are of different ages and in different levels of education. You can adopt the children and provide them education.
- e. Building capacities:** Building confidence and capacities among the village youth and farmers is the utmost need at this point of time. You can support this in the form of sponsoring few training programs, fellowships for young farmers/activists to learn and promote sustainable agriculture in production and marketing. You can donate books on sustainable agriculture or subscriptions to the telugu magazine 'Tolakari' <http://www.tolakari.com> which provides regular information to farmers and policy analysis. The annual subscription is Rs. 150/- including postage.
 - i. Training Programs:** A one day training program on sustainable agriculture for a group of 30 farmers will cost about 20,000. This includes resource material to all the participants and organizing costs.
 - ii. Fellowships:** A one year support to farmers/activists to learn and promote sustainable agriculture in production and marketing will help them to acquire the skills. The fellow would be about Rs. 20,000 including travel/pm + 10,000 contingency per annum total Rs. 2,50,000.

Donations:

CSA will organize this transparently and share the details and progress with the donors regularly. Donations can be for a specific activity/village/family or leave the choice to us.

CSA is Not for Profit organisation registered as Trust in 2004 and has been registered with Ministry of Home Affairs under FCRA: 010230731. All donations to CSA are exempted from income tax under Section 80 G (5)(vi) of Income tax act of 1961 (F.No. DIT(E)/HYD/80G/14(05)/12-13.

Please send your donations in the name of 'Centre for Sustainable Agriculture' or contact Ms. Chandrakala chandrakala@csa-india.org or call +91(40)27017735.

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