**Livelihood support in Disaster Preparedness Programme**

**The issues – loose ends – Advocacy to be followed up at different levels**

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***Livelihood:***

Konaseema is a fertile island formed by the irrigation systems on the river Godavari in East Godavari district. SAKTI started working in this area after the November 1996 cyclone prompted by the vulnerability of the weavers and dalits living there.

The skills of weavers are limited due to which they are unable to compete with the outside market. In order to support the weavers SAKTI initially provided yarn and tools in Pulletikurru, KesanaKurrupalem and Vilasavalli villages. Before starting the programme we have contacted Dastakar A.P. (weaving constancy), but did not get proper guidance. OXFAM also engaged a consultant but he could not provide practical help.

We have explored all possible opportunities in the outside market. At last we get the local market, but the demand was for poly cotton sarees where the return is less. If we have to work towards paying better wages we need to improve the skills in better designs and explore the outside market. For change of design they have to spend time, because the loom has to be reorganized. Hence they prefer to work on the same designs, so they are not coming forward. SAKTI has supported 150 weaver families in I.G.P. They are earning s. 300-Rs.400 more with our intervention. 25 families are provided working capital market support they are working on their own rest of 25 families we are providing yarn, training in new designs, marketing.

Now we engaged a professional consultant. Training is organised for the weavers in different designs and we are still exploring the outside market. But with limited funds it is difficult to run the program. If the program has to make more impact, more number of weavers have to be included. For this we need to subsidize the efforts during their transition period so that in future the returns from the newly developed designs will compensate the efforts. We provided a tailoring unit so that weaver diversifies into stitching. Choir rope making machine was provided for value addition of fiber they are extracting.

***Housing:***

We took direct action in the rehabilitation of some weaver villages. Weavers use their houses also as a workplace, so they have to be put in order as quickly as possible. We started with making prefabricated cement poles that form the structure of a design that suits the weaver demand for space for their looms. A good basement and strong attachment of the thatched roof onto the poles, make the house more resistant to next disasters. Palm leaves of Rampa are bigger in size which were provided to these houses. Locally available materials are used, and villagers can themselves do the maintenance repairs. you can say that we are pioneers in A.P. in constructing houses with the retrofitting technique. Total 205 semi permanent houses are constructed in Vilasavalli and Pullitekurru weavers after the cyclone.

The matching grant from the govt. for other building programs came only after almost two years. Moreover the specification of houses prescribed by govt. are not suitable to weavers. They need a larger hall to operate the loom, enough space to die dry yarn outside and a facility to drain the water used for dye that contains chemicals. These aspects are not kept in mind while designing houses and colony layouts.

***Drainage – A major problem:***

In pulletikurru and vilasavalli colony the weaver houses do not have drainage facility. The landlords are not allowing them to drain wasterwater into irrigation channels. This is causing problem of stagnation of water. SAKTI has helped them in providing drainage with pipelines. House sites to weaker sections always are provided in low lying areas. Revenue department threatens to cancel the pattas unless they constructed with in a stipulated time. So these section put up their huts suffer forever.

***Sanitation:***

One of the problems of weavers and S.C.’s is environmental sanitation. There is lack of toilet facilities. We have built seven community latrines and 24 individual toilets in weaver villages. Community toilet is an abandoned sanitation practice. But there is no other alternative for the villagers. It is time that villger are slow in maintaining them.

At a lot of places there is not enough space to maintain the desired distance between the individual toilet and the drinking water well. Here is a probability of the well water getting contaminated. But the govt. is going ahead without caring for these future problems.

Also in some of our villages this problem arose. When we referred the water for testing in a laboratory, it was found to be potable. Sanitation authorities further clarified that since the soil was clay, which is not porous, the water quality was not affected. Regular monitoring is needed, to ensure edibility of water.

***Drinking water:***

Panchayats are responsible for maintaining drinking water sources. But all of them auction the tanks for fish traders, so they get income for their panchayat. The fish traders drop feed to boost the fish production, and release the water whenever it is convenient for them, without any concern for the village needs. The villagers who have other sources such as protected water supply and wells in the backyard, are also not keen on the tank maintenance. But the Dalits, who totally depend on tanks for drinking water, are against this intervention of fish traders and the management of panchayat in this regard.

Drinking water tanks are renovated in 9 villages. This helped the dalits who are dependent on these tanks for drinking water. For the construction SAKTI spent ¾ of the total cost. For revetment of the Banks the stone should be transported from Patthipadu which is more than 100 kilometers to the tank site. Most of the money is spent on the stones and the transport. Equal amount, the labour contribution comes to more than both these amounts put together. But wherever SAKTI did not take up the work, the situation got from bad to worse. How many tanks can SAKTI take up for renovation? What we have done is not even a drop in the ocean.

After completing 2/3 work of disilting, revetment, steps, sluice construction, We encouraged villagers to approach the District Collector for further support. When people approached the Collector, he directed them to obtain permission from MLA to release the constituency development funds, where from funds are released for plastering, fencing etc. The amounts sanctioned by him are Rs. 1,50,000 to Jaggarajupeta, Rs.45,000 to Wirepeta, Rs. 85,000 to Yelubanticheruvu and Rs. 35,000 to Kamarajupeta villages.

***Disaster Preparedness:***

SAKTI is training the villagers in disaster preparedness. PRA exercises were conducted and contingency plans were worked out. Squads are formed which will look after care of vulnerable people, storage of foodgrains, evacuation, etc. Disaster drills are conducted in the villages. We proposed training in Ham radio operation, but this did not materialize. Nine organization participated in the FAO programme. But not only 4 organizations are in the network. Reorientation training has to be conducted for these groups, since the trained staff left some of the organizations.

This squads are asking for raincoats, shoes, torchlights etc., Villagers also feel that this preparedness work is the responsibility of the squad. Squad feels that this as unpaid responsibility.

The disaster preparedness training should be part of the school curriculum. Only then this will have impact. We tried to computerise the contingent plan coupled with multimedia to popularize in the schools.

# *Housing – sites without houses*

1. Six acres of land was assigned to weavers in Cheyyeru village, but the landlords did not vacate it. We mobilized the community during the Janmabhoomi programme after which the revenue officials forced them to leave the land. But still a problem remains – most weavers have no money to build their house.

***Housing Sites in Inappropriate places.***

1. TheErukala tribe of Jagannadhapuram, who rear pigs for livelihood, were assigned housing sites in the midst of village. The villagers are not allowing them to occupy the site, as pigs are a nuisance and source of cerebral malaria epidemic. Some farmers are willing to exchange the land but the revenue people are not co-operating.

# *The Ignored:*

1. The Rollapalem Chenchus, an aboriginal tribe, is residing on the edge of roads. They need total rehabilitation. We regret missing them during our survey in planning the rehabilitation.

# *The Duplications:*

1. In Vilasavilli village we constructed community toilets. But the Government started construction of another toilet, which is not necessary. The neighboring Samanasa villagers who needed such toilets convinced the officials and the proposed toilet was constructed in their village. There are many such duplications in the rehabilitation work taken up by govt. as well as NGO’s.

# *The Alternatives:*

1. We are propagating alternative medicine (homoeo) for filaria (elephantiasis). It works. This longterm effect of this medicine should be validated clinically. We provided assistance to the weavers suffering with hydrocoel for surgical operation. By and large, these villagers are under nourished and vulnerable to all diseases.

# *The Human Resource:*

1. This year we want to admit students in weaker section residential hostels and assist them to continue education.

# *The Neglected & Threatened – Development for whom?*

1. In 1990 the govt. has borrowed from the World Bank and repaired the drainage systems of the Godavari Delta. In clearing the debris the canals after cyclones, the govt. has removed the encroachments of poor. We have rehabilitated few such families. But thousands of such families are facing threat of eviction and submergence.

# *Sensitization at Macro Level:*

1. In addition to monitoring the programme, the lessons should be carried to the national and international level to change the perception of governance. Except evaluation reports, No literature is produced on the ground level situation with a macro level perspective for effective campaign.