

Policy cum Knowledge Building workshop on Coastal Life

As part of the Voice of Vulnerable project, DHAN Foundation organised a policy cum knowledge building workshop on coastal life with local community in Vilunthamavadi village, Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu, India. Vilunthamavadi is one of the coastal villages where both farmers and fishermen community are living together. More than 50 farmers, fishermen and women were participated in the workshop.

Workshop highlights: Voice of Vulnerable

Voices of Farmers

1. **Coping mechanism:** In coastal farming, orchard cultivation is the major agriculture activity next to paddy cultivation. Coconut, mango, jackfruit and tamarind are some of the major income generating trees in this region. Gaja cyclone during 2018 had completely destroyed these orchard trees. **Hence, as a coping mechanism farmers are cultivating groundnut.** However, few farmers have initiated the orchard plantation too.
2. **Crop issue in groundnut:** Currently, around 5000 acres of rainfed land is being cultivated with groundnut. During the last year, the groundnut yield after Gaja cyclone was considerably good. However, in this year, the pod formation in the roots of groundnut is very poor. Farmers were not able to find the cause and any solution for this issue.
3. **Seeds from local agents & less support from department:** Farmers are dependent on middle men for groundnut seeds and on local agrochemical shops for crop related issues. Even in this worst case scenario, farmers approached local agrochemical shop to improve the pod production. When farmers enquired agriculture extension department office about the issue in groundnut crop, farmers could not receive much support.
4. **Government subsidies:** Apart from groundnut, farmers also cultivate vegetables such as brinjal, bhendi, beans and flowers such as tube rose and marigold. Government subsidies on tube rose cultivation is motivating farmers to move towards floriculture.
5. **Government crop insurance covers groundnut:** Earlier, groundnut is not covered in government crop insurance scheme, recent initiatives on including groundnut cultivation under crop insurance is appreciated by the farming community.
6. **Need for agriculture resource centers:** Farmers emphasised on need for 'Agriculture Resource Centre' as available for Fishing community, where the fishermen are getting information on rain forecast, wind speed, temperature, etc.
7. **Mango FPO:** Women farmers as part of their FPO have initiated a mango juice production unit with the support of International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), however, most of the mango trees has got affected by Gaja cyclone and production was stagnated.
8. **Poor in productivity:** Trees that survived Gaja cyclone are poor in production post disaster.
9. **Voice of Vulnerable:** Crop insurance should be extended for rainfed crops too, with greater flexibility for farmers who lease the land for agriculture.

10. **Investment of migrants:** Migration towards abroad is very common among the farmers of this region, however, the migrants majorly invest on agriculture lands in their own villages.

Voices of fishermen

1. **Influence of natural disasters:** The life of fishermen is being highly influenced by tsunami and subsequent natural disasters. Most of the fishermen who had catamarans and local boats have shifted towards motor boat post tsunami with support from Government and other donors. The Nagapattinam coastal belt is rich in lagoons and creeks but lack in sea grass or cage culture.
2. **Earning & spending:** Fishermen community earn range of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 40,000 per catch. But they spend lavishly.
3. **Farming by the fishermen community:** Severity of cyclone has affected investments of fishermen community. Fishermen, who have invested in orchard crops, have faced huge loss post cyclone.
4. **Violations:** Though, there exists fishermen organisation to regulate fish catch, violations are common.
5. **Fishes from fresh water:** After tsunami and subsequent natural disasters, as the river water rarely drains into the sea, few fishes that hatch in fresh water remains unspotted for a longer period.
6. **GPS instruments and walkie-talkie:** GPS instruments and walkie-talkie provided per boat by Government is very helpful for fishermen in terms of safety and fish catch.
7. **Lifesaving information:** Initiatives taken by Government and NGOs like MSSRF to provide weather forecast data are very helpful for fishermen and have saved many lives and boats.
8. **Insurance for fishermen:** Life insurance policy for fishermen is available and enrolled by almost all fishermen.
9. **Voice of small fishermen:** GPS location of fish availability which is being provided to larger boats has to be shared to smaller boats, which use to travel less than 100 nautical miles.
10. **Buffer Corridor:** Trees that are planted as buffer corridor against tsunami and cyclone did not function as expected.
11. **Voice of vulnerable:** Fishermen are demanding for mini harbours and gabion walls.
12. **Women psychology gets changed:** Frequent disasters have affected psychology of women from fishermen community heavily. Women are willing to shift 2 km away from sea shore to avoid frequent aftershock.
13. **Saline ground water:** Ground water table and soil has become saline post cyclone. Communities are using water filters which needs frequent repair.
14. **Change in climate:** Traditional indigenous knowledge on fish catching transferred over generations is not much helpful post climate change. Earlier, fishermen ancestors were

predicted good fish catch with some sign of stars in sky, however, it is not match now-a-days due to change in climate.

15. **Voice of vulnerable:** Small & marginal fishermen are demanding for recharge focused on small boat fishing and asking for installation of echo-sender cameras in boats to identify availability of fish.

Voices of women

1. **Women Livelihood:** Almost every woman in this ecosystem is productive. Either they involve in agriculture as labourers or sell fish catch locally.
2. **Empowered Women:** Fisherwomen are highly empowered as they are managing the houses and taking decisions on their own.
3. **Technology & Women:** Though, smart phones are widely used by women, the smart phones are used only for communication & infotainment.
