

**INCLUSIVE VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT**  
**(VILLAGE ADOPTION STUDY)**  
**Sirumangalam (Vill), Nallur Block, Cuddalore Dist., (T.N)**

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**1. The Prelude**

The rural poor in India are still excluded from the development path due to their ethnicity, dislocation and inability to access the poverty reduction programs etc. The effects of such exclusion are staggering the development of downtrodden and further deepening the inequality across the country that accentuate the richer become richest and the poor become worse than poorer.

Inclusive development could be a panacea for poverty reduction programs which involve all stakeholders to participate in decision-making and enabling them to share the fruits of development by integrating the standards and principles of human rights, non-discrimination and accountability, that are enshrined in the UNDPs Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and objectives. To enable any village to develop, it is necessary to enhance the basic services through substantial public spending on building roads, constructing schools and health centres, providing access to electricity, potable drinking water and sanitation, creating business to business networks besides effective training of SHGs and youth/volunteers as rural entrepreneurs etc. All of which requires close mentoring with well-designed fiscal policies at the grassroots level that can play vital role in stimulating growth by reducing poverty and accelerating the process of development. With this background, NIRD has launched an innovative scheme for adopting village panchayat for the inclusive development through its action research mode.

**2. Methodology and Study Area:**

The study has been conducted mainly through action research mode to facilitate development processes keeping in view of the needs of various programs/schemes implemented in the area and following the guidelines specified for the purpose. At first, the researcher has conducted baseline survey to identify the problems and resource base in the selected village panchayat. It helped to motivate and coordinate the development officials with the villagers, SHGs, Volunteer, Youth groups & PRI functionaries for implementation of the plans/schemes. Overall, the researcher has adopted Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques to prepare concurrent development paths and actionable plans. The experiences gained in the field could be documented and disseminate the successful models.

Based on its overriding social and economic backwardness, the Cuddalore district of Tamilnadu has listed for recipient of Backward Area Growth Fund (BRGF) in the country. It is also notified as one among the most disaster-prone districts due to its location in the eastern coast of Tamil Nadu. Hence, in consultation with the district level rural development functionaries and local NGOs, Sirumangalam Grama Panchayat of Nallur block in Cuddalore district has been selected for the study. This block has been identified due to its locational disadvantage (remoteness and hardly accessed even by the officials) and dominance of scheduled caste population. The block is considered as dry area as it receives very scanty rainfall and it listed around 52 percent of literates among the SC/ST population.

### **3. Interventions Made:**

To fulfil the prime objective of village adoption scheme which facilitate development processes through various programs implemented in the study area the following interventions are made:

- In order to democratic functioning, a team of seven volunteers/representatives were identified from each ward council including Panchayat President. All volunteers/members were given equal responsibility to coordinate and associate with the village level committees as per delegated powers in the subjects like Education, Health, Sanitation, PDS, Water, Audit etc. The council convenes four mandatory gram sabha meetings on every 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1<sup>st</sup> May, 15<sup>th</sup> August and 2<sup>nd</sup> October in a year. Apart from these mandatory meetings, the council also assembles for emergency issues arising-out in the village as and when required.
- As for as education is concerned, this village Panchayat has three schools of which two are at primary level and one at High School level. The village adoption team has constituted a committee for monitoring the education system in the village under the guidance of Retired Teachers and Parent representative. They hold interactive discussions regularly with the students and teachers for better performance in their academic career. Further the committee has recommended for provision of safe drinking water facility to the students and as well as staff members.
- There are 575 houses shown in total in the village revenue records which consists of 205 thatched houses, 40 tiled houses, 255 concrete houses, 50 group houses and 25 houses with AC sheets. Of the 575 houses, only 186 houses belong to the non-Dalit population and remaining 398 houses are owned by the weaker sections that include the houses constructed recently under Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) and 43 State's sponsored Green Houses scheme in the village.

- The electricity department has provided grid connections to this village panchayat that expected to illuminate 95 street lights. Further it is also observed that all the residential houses in the village Panchayat are electrified, of which all Dalit houses were electrified under various rural electrification schemes and the non-Dalit houses were given connections through private approval as most of them were not eligible for such welfare schemes due to their social origin. However, no electricity is being supplied during the day-time in this village but at night it is given in every alternative hour that accounts for hardly 6 hours of electricity supply to the people. Construction of three houses are completed under the special Green-house Scheme of the state government with the provision of solar lighting system but it is yet to be installed by the Tamilnadu Energy Development Agency (TEDA). However, entire village could be made energy self-sufficient by installing solar photovoltaic systems (either at room-top or homestead areas) through an exclusive and special innovative projects.
- Drinking water is becoming a scarce resource for this village. Despite Sirumangalam village Panchayat is having 16 ponds and percolation tanks in its records but none is useful to reserve for drinking water purposes due to lack of and/or poor water harvesting structure and hence the water runs away during rainy seasons. The village Panchayat has 19 handpumps of which one never works and the other are yielding salty water to the habitations. There are four overhead tanks constructed for distributing the water to the villagers. Two OHTs are facilitating to supply water in the BC habitations and one each distributes to the Arunthathiyar and SC colony areas in the village Panchayat.
- Though efforts were made to distribute available ground water through connected pipelines at the accessible street-points, the taste of water is salty and it could not be used for drinking purposes but people are utilizing it for other household activities. For drinking purposes, the entire village panchayat is depending on a single bore-well that installed in the graveyard which yields very limited quantity of potable water. The expectation of the Sirumangalam People is that their village must be linked with the Combined Drinking Water Scheme (CWS) which is passing through somewhere nearby (Erappavur – 3.5 km) to this village. If the CWS is extended, two more adjacent villages (Erappavur and Kovilur) also get benefitted while trying to remove thirsty of Sirumangalam people.
- Drainage system in Sirumangalam village is still in worst condition as there is no proper draining system is established. The waste water released from the houses is just percolated at their vicinity and becomes a breeding centre for mosquitos. Though this village has 575 houses, only 113 houses

(19.6 %) are provided with toilet facilities, of which 23 toilets were constructed by private owners which are only being used by them. Though 90 toilets were constructed through government sponsored schemes almost all are under-utilized and the people are still adopting open defecation system in the village. An exclusive scheme must be prepared for awareness creation, construction of toilets for rest of all the households and follow-up action through involving voluntary organisations or Panchayati raj institution in the village.

- The Sirumangalam village has one Primary Health Centre (PHC). There are two qualified male doctors, three VHNs, one pharmacist and one compounder working in the health centre. It is observed that all the medical staff are shuttling from Vriddhachalam Town (30 kms away) except one compounder and one VHN who reside in the village.
- A Primary Agriculture Credit Society (PACS) is functioning in this village to cater the needs of local farmers. This society is being managed by a single Clerk as the position of Secretary is lying vacant since five years. This post is expected to be filled after completion of Cooperatives Elections which is to be conducted soon. The Public Distribution System (PDS) is also in operation with one salesperson. Earlier this ration shop was supplying the provisions for 405 registered cardholders but now it is reduced to 397 due to migration and settlement of villagers in other districts.
- Since inception, eleven self-help groups were formed with 171 members for the development of women and their empowerment in Sirumangalam village. As innovative approach, three special groups were arranged exclusively for differently abled members. Further, two male groups also formed to take up group activities as the village is located in the remote area. The activities taken up by these groups are said to be mostly milch animal (cow) and goat rearing. But the fact is that all the groups become defunct after getting their share of assistance given by DRDA. Hence, these groups must be rejuvenated through conduct of awareness programs / meetings and exposure visits to the successful groups elsewhere.
- The state government has also launched a new scheme called 'Pudhuvazhvu' under which 20 members were given financial assistance of Rs.95,000/- towards infrastructure fund for the purpose of milk vending activities. As per village records, 285 cows (country-breed) and 123 goats are available in the village and the villagers felt that they face much difficulties in marketing of milk due to their remoteness and lack of transport facilities to the village.
- **MGNREGS:** Like any other village, Sirumangalam also receives financial allocations under various poverty alleviation programs of both central and

state governments from time to time. As per records, 826 persons were registered for employment of which 413 are men and remaining 413 are women that include 5 disabled persons and all of them got distributed the job cards. Among the registered job card holders, it is observed that 481 persons belong to Scheduled Caste community and remaining 345 persons belong to backward class in the sample village. During this visit, we could notice that 88 persons were attending the MGNREGS works (15 male and 73 female) that includes 3 disabled male workers. The workers at site opined that the share of wage rate is not adequate as they get their share between Rs.45 to 65 per day and number of days of works sanctioned under MGNREGS also very limited to this village.

- **Rural Industries and Self-employment:** It is interesting to note that though Cuddalore district and surrounding areas of Nallur block has potency and base for handicrafts industries to offer self-employment opportunities, this Sirumangalam people were not inducted in any of such household entrepreneurship or micro industrial activities. They mostly depend on the seasonal agricultural activities to meet their livelihoods and during lean seasons they migrate to the adjacent areas or even to neighboring state (Kerala) for search of employment. Youth and volunteer group in this village must be motivated and trained so as to involve them for appropriate self-employment opportunities through various entrepreneurship development programs such as manufacturing of fly ash bricks, ceramic toys / tiles, terracotta, and even rural technology based enterprises.

#### **4. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS:**

Based on the introductory/pilot visit, a layman analysis has been done by using four major measures and the same is presented as under for future course of action in the sample village.

##### **4.1 Strengths:**

- Strong social cohesiveness among the villagers
- Potency of Agricultural and rural industrial based activities
- Human Resource and willingness to work
- Strong and obliging PRI leaders
- Considerable Education levels

##### **4.2 Weaknesses:**

- Lack of women and youth participation in the community development
- Larger rainfed areas and lack of water storage systems
- Lack of motivation and follow-up action
- Weak mindset to work for community development

- Lack of technical knowhow and exposure on skill development
- Weak connectivity to the nearby urban or sub-urban areas
- Negligence of office machinery due to remoteness

#### 4.3 Opportunities:

- Convergence of RD programs: induct all stakeholders and clientele groups.
- Intensive agriculture and animal husbandry activities.
- Development of indigenous and traditional agricultural practices/systems
- Entrepreneurship based potentials for sustainable employment generation
- Introduce latent technologies to promote rural industries
- Development of self-dependency and financing opportunities
- Better scope for inclusive rural development through various schemes.

#### 4.4 Threats:

- Heterogeneous community or group of people
- Weak water saving structures / percolation systems
- Labour migration for search of job or livelihoods
- Negligence on health and sanitation related issues
- Lack of ownership traits on public utility services

### 5. PROPOSED PLAN OF ACTION:

Assorted welfare programs have been launched by both the union and state governments to benefit the rural people in the country, are diverse in nature and needs to be converged. Enabling the roles of State, District and Block level development functionaries and implementing agencies is also critical for the consolidation of rural development programs in the villages. The proposed 'Village Adoption Scheme will help to strengthen the actors of rural development and management system at all levels by enhancing the skill, capacity and capability of the administrators, executives, elected representatives and Self Help Groups, especially the women and other marginalized segments of the society on overall village development. As an action research mode, the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) will provide necessary input for policy makers, be a nodal centre for training villagers/leaders and be a coordinating agency for the District Administration, NGOs and other stakeholders who involve in the development of model village.

The proposed plan of action may be as follows:

S. No.	Issue(s)	Proposed Intervention
1	Establishing Rapport with villagers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Holding Meetings</li> <li>- Community Feasting</li> <li>- Meeting with Village elders</li> <li>- Health Camp (Entry Point activity or any other suitable activity)</li> </ul>

2	Assessing socio-economic conditions	- Data collection through PRA techniques - Data Collection through Conventional survey method
3	Participatory Need Assessment	- PRA Techniques
4	Livelihood Mapping	- PRA Techniques
5	Dimensions participatory collective action	- Assessing data analysis outcomes - Participatory Mapping
6	Community Mobilisation	- Participatory interaction events on specific interventions - Folk-art events
7	Capacity building and skill development programs	- Conducting capacity-building programs - Conducting skill development programs
8	Facilitating development action through existing resources	- Liaison with local officials and district administration
9	Sustaining the development process	- Strengthening community perception on responsible collective action and strengthening awareness and sensitisation
10	Adopting exit policy and up-scaling to neighbouring villages	- Strengthening local PRI and CBOs with future map of events

#### **MISSION AHEAD – ROAD MAP:**

With the results of preliminary interaction with villagers and local officials, the following specific activities may be taken-up:

- a) Identification of the problems and resource base through baseline survey.
- b) Motivate the villagers, SHGs, Volunteer, Youth groups & PRI functionaries.
- c) Expose them to successful, best practices and knowledge sharing.
- d) Involve villagers in preparation of suitable development and actionable plans
- e) Coordinate with all the authorities for implementation of the plans/schemes
- f) Network with markets and line department officials
- g) Oversee and follow-up of actions from time to time and
- h) Document the experiences on inclusive village development and disseminate the successful models.

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