



## About CIRHEP

CIRHEP (Centre for Improved Rural Health and Environmental Protection) is a legally registered, non-governmental, voluntary organization engaged in promotion of sustainable rural development and natural resource management in the dry land areas Dindigul, Madurai and Theni Districts of Tamil Nadu. It also works for the improvement of the health and nutrition of rural people and protecting the rural landscape and environment through promotion of watershed development and sustainable agriculture approaches. It also supports the rural community by providing environmental education children, nutritional, establishing replicable models on ground, empowering women by promoting entrepreneurial collective actions. Founded in 1994 by Mr. P.M. Mohan and Ms. K.A. Chandra who have well experience and expertise in development alternatives. The organization is governed by a General Body and Executive Committee and Office bearers from various fields with clearly defined roles and functions. The organization is also having a team of well experienced and committed staff members who have technical expertise in the field of Watershed Development, Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Agriculture Alternatives with profound knowledge and understanding on socio, economic, and cultural issues of rural sector.

Over the years, CIRHEP had implemented many collaborative projects both with the support both State as well as Donors from abroad and successfully implemented various programs with significant outcomes and impacts on people's livelihood and empowerment. CIRHEP works with farmers promoting organic agriculture and bio-dynamic inputs in their watershed areas, promoting a sense of responsibility through environmental education, working for women empowerment, working with adolescent girls and children as part of an integrated community development approach with an intention to reduce poverty, improve livelihood and access to enough quality food for the rural to lead active and healthy lives.

CIRHEP is always believe in local takeover of its project initiatives after the project completion and as a result many of its previous projects, especially watershed programs are now being governed by respective local communities in the target villages. CIRHEP is still do a facilitation role with its local committee members by constantly reviewing and supporting them in areas they need back up support. All the project interventions and activities have been planned based on the vision and mission of CIRHEP which are envisaged by its founders with periodical review and analysis of its board members. Having its vision and mission as guiding principle, the projects have been planned in a participatory approach with intensive and interactive consultation and process with target communities. In short, we are building communities before building projects.

## **Vision**

Building the Capacities of the Rural Communities in conserving the Vaigai – Kaveri river watersheds in Dindigul, Theni and Madurai Districts of TamilNadu and making the area sustainable for better livelihood.

## **Mission**

To create a sustainable human – ecology relationship and improve the quality of rural life by striving to alleviate poverty, provide education and conserve the environment with active participation of the rural community.

## **Approach**

The unique Community Driven Participatory Development approach of CIRHEP places communities at the heart of all development activities. We help them build upon their assets, enhance their capacities, and ensure their active participation in all stages of development.

Hundreds of thousands of non-literate rural folks, especially women, have transformed themselves into effective agents of change and emerged as strong community leaders, innovators, seed savers, resilient farmers as a result of relentless capacity building processes.

## **Geographical area of operation**



CIRHEP's geographical area of operation has been spread over in 3 Taluks in Dindigul District, Tamil Nadu, South India. Around 32 villages in Nilakottai Taluk in Kadavakurichi Reserve Forest, 15 villages around Oddanchatram taluk and 7 villages around in Vadasandur taluk.

## **Beneficiaries and stakeholders**

The target beneficiaries of CIRHEP are predominantly resource poor, small and marginal landholding farmers, women, youth, students and their associate groups like farmers groups, women groups, youth clubs, seed producers, farmers producer organizations, network of seed producers. CIRHEP also have a list of stakeholders ranging from various line department, Panchayat leaders, consumer network, policy makers and also elected people's representatives like MLAs and MPs within its constituency.



## **Key projects implemented during the year 2022-2023**

**Project title : STRENGTHENING PEOPLE CENTERIC CLIMATE RESILENT PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE AND EQUITABLE LIVELIHOOD.**

**Supporting Agency:** Future Earth, Sweden



CIRHEP is part of Future Earth Asia Network. The network comprising 11 members in Asia. Through this network, CIRHEP has implemented 3 projects during this reporting year. One is Friend Group project and other two projects are bridge year and common activity projects .Three projects have been planned based on the common program goal evolved by the network for each phase



### **Key activities :**

- Strengthening of existing organic farmers in crop/ production and vegetable production through kitchen gardens.
- Strengthening of bio input & bio pesticides production units in 10 farmers fields
- Creating marketing linkages for organic produces.
- Survey on millet cultivation, consumption of millet food etc.
- Strengthening and management of seed bank
- Support to seed savers and seed producers
- Workshop to consolidate and documentation of best organic agriculture practices

### **Key achievements**

- Farmers by and large started to realize the climate crisis and as a result around 52% of the farmers switched over to adopt climate resilient practices like millet based mixed farming system, intercropping with pulses and oil seeds for additional income and ecological pest management through cultivation of pest repellent crops like castor on the bunds.
- Around 250 farmers continued the backyard kitchen garden that they started last year. In the backyard kitchen garden they added more greens and vegetables which ensured their family poison free vegetable with sufficient amount of nutritional requirements.
- The farmer producer organization started buying cattle feed in total quantity from the producer and selling to small and marginal farmers at nominal rate. Milk procured from members of the producer organization and encouraged direct selling to consumers at fair price.
- More number of farmers returned their traditional seeds to the community seed bank managed by the farmers. Around 125 women farmers have contributed in the seed saving initiative with 10 species of millets, pulses and oil seeds. 395 farmers are practicing millet based mixed farming system which is eco friendly.
- Information collected and documented from the best practices of farmers. 50 booklets distributed to



the farmers. Importance of the summer ploughing, tank silt application, farmyard manure application, drip irrigation and sprinkler, compost preparation, Panchkavya, Five leaf solution and ginger garlic solution practical documented given in that booklets.

- The farmers continued to explore the government schemes and subsidy through their constant effects with officials. About 90 farmers were received loan amount of Rs. 78,00,000 (Agriculture loan) from primary agricultural credit society. They invested the loan amount on agriculture and animal husbandry which helped them to get additional farm income.

## Booster project

**Program: Strengthening capacity of Kadavakurichi sustainable agriculture farmers producer company in marketing its farm products.**

**Supporting Agency:** Future Earth, Sweden

**Duration** September 2022 to December 2022

The project focused on rebuilding the Kadavakurichi Sustainable Agriculture Farmers Producer company, mainly focus on refreshing for the members. The engagement identified the real issues and evolving concrete action plan resolving the issues

### Key activities :

- Refresher training for the PGS farmers, FPO members and the Board of Directors:
- Health Camp for cattle at Panchayat level.
- Exposure visit to Vagai farmers producer organisation and Agriculture College, Madurai

### Key achievements

- 25 farmers got crop insurance and 32 farmers got animal insurance after this programme
- Linked with Canara bank for the bank loan. 12 women members received the Agriculture loan Rs 50000 per head.
- 25 women purchase flowers in Nilakottai flowers market and sell it in Nilakottai, Batlagundu and Kodaikanal. 5 men are doing flower business at Madurai



## Common activity

**Program:** A basic foundation training course for the leaders of organic PGS Groups in Biodynamic Agriculture

**Supporting Agency:** Future Earth, Sweden



Around 30 women and 10 men farmers from the villages around Nilakottai Block in Dindigul district have been selected for the training. General criteria regarding farmers from PGS groups, farmers who are practicing organic techniques on their farm and gender criteria like equal representation of women were fixed while selecting the farmers. During the first week of October 2022 i.e., from 14.09.2022 to 17.09.2022, a 4-day basic foundation course on the principle and practices of Biodynamic farming was organized at CIRHEP Training centre cum farm. The training was facilitated by Mr. Jaison J. Jerome, a renowned trainer from the Biodynamic Association of India.

### Key activities :

- 2 days Class session training on Bio dynamic Agriculture
- Training on Cow horn manure preparation
- Training on cow pat pit
- Training on Compost preparation
- Training on Fish solution

### Key achievements

- All the farmers who participated in the training have gained the basic concepts, principles and set of Biodynamic farming practices. In specific, their new knowledge are in the BD 500, (Cow Horne Manure) BD 501 (Horn Silica), BD Compost, Cow Pat Pit, Liquid Manure, Tree Pasting, BD mixture application methods in the crop field and the scientific applying using BD calendar for agriculture activities.



- The practical demonstration during the training has motivated the farmers to start to establish BD compost, Cow Pat Pits, Horn Silica and Cow Horne Manure) pits on their forms.
- The farmers have gained knowledge on the application of BD mixture, the quantity, stirring methods and how BD farming practices are magnifying the microbial action and how they could reduce their input cost through the use of BD manure and also cover a larger area. Their understanding on the role of cows in BD farming.
- The farmers have gained a better understanding of the natural flow of nutrients along with the cosmic energies for healthy land and healthy animals which is essential for healthy food.
- 25 farmers have emerged as lead Biodynamic farmers in their respective villages and they also share their knowledge gained in the training and the practices adopted in their farms with other farmers and being a source inspirations.

### **Internship Programme**

From October 2022 to March 2023

Supported by : Future Earth Asia

**Three interns from Sweden : Ms.Amanda, Ms.Victoria and Ms.Embla**

#### **Overall goal**



Person Involved in this programme will get more knowledge about development cooperation and in the future use this knowledge in their Future occupation and voluntary work in Sweden.

The Internship shall contribute to increased understanding between cultures and people and give the participant experience of the organization reality and living conditions in this area. The program should also



give the participants knowledge regarding sustainable development in a south that will serves as base for their own interpretation and values. An important goal is that the participants are to use their experienced gained during the program in Sweden.

### **Key Program Activities :**

1. Sharing of our experience with our Intern.
2. Video documentation of our activities / success stories given to her for learning through reading.
  - a. From chemical to organic farming- Ms.Arockiya Mary (Semmedu village)
  - b. Agro-ecological family farm for sustainable livelihood-Mr. Karuppiah, Musuvanuthu village
  - c. Video Documentation of Difference between two decades in Economic ,Social, Cultural , Education , Health Watershed activities, Sustainable Agriculture ,Women Empowerment , Climate change , Agriculture pattern, Migration and remigration.
  - d. Nature school (Evening School) and Regular School activity
  - e. Nutritional kitchen garden
3. Updating Instagram / face book



4. Documentation of Self help group income generation activities (Milch animal) , meetings and visit their activities (Chill unit)
5. Participated in village visit, farmer's field visit, interaction with school children and also in training programs.
6. Visited MGNREGA or Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme . She learn about the Government Programme for Rural women income opportunities
7. The kind of exposure has helped her to gain more knowledge in organic farming, the rural life in Tamil Nadu, women issues and watershed techniques.
8. Periodical planning and review meeting with interns..

## Watershed Project - Follow-up and maintenance



. CIRHEP has been engaged in watershed programs for more than a decade and as of now it has completed 11 watershed projects, mainly with the support of NABARD and few other agencies like TAWDEVA and some CSR support like Amway. Over the years, our experience tells that watershed development has proved that it enhance the water tables in the project area and also increase agriculture outputs. It has also brought about many changes within families and the village – politically, socially, and culturally. Watershed management is an adaptive, comprehensive, integrated multi-resource management planning process that seeks to balance healthy ecological, economic and cultural / social conditions, within a watershed. It serves to integrate the planning of land, water and community participation. It has been established that watershed management has (i) recharged ground water table (ii) restored soil fertility and helps in soil conservation (iii) restores water for drinking and other human purpose (iv) helps light climate change and promote sustainable agriculture (v) protected biodiversity of the project area.

After the interventions All VWC members, SHG members and Farmers groups follow-up the structures and repairing the damaged parts in the structures

All VWC and other women members cooperate Agriculture college students visit, and Internship programme from Sweden..



- **Agriculture College students visit to CIRHEP.**

Kullapuram 20 Agriculture College students visited CIRHEP on 2nd April 2022. They learnt about Ngo's vision , mission and Impacts of the Projects. Organic farming , watershed area ,Climate proofing area visited by these students.

Discussed with Mr.Suresh Kanna, Kudumbam about common activity at CIRHEP on 29th July 2022.

**Acknowledgement:**

On behalf of the Board, CIRHEP wishes to acknowledge all its donors for their continued support in implementing the project at our target villages. We thank Future Earth International Network, CIRHEP Friends' Ground in Sweden for its support and contribution for implementing the project on strengthening climate resilient approaches through greater agro

biodiversity initiatives. NABARD has been instrumental for CIRHEP to become a resource agency in watershed programs and also extending our watershed development projects to other needy areas through Adaptation Fund Board, USA. We also thank the resource people from NABARD and line departments namely, Agriculture Department, Horticulture Department, Veterinary Department , Gandhigram rural institute for providing their expertise in designing, planning, implementing and also capacity building processes. We also thank Sidhwa Trust for supporting the poor children with healthy food during covid-19 pandemic. The support of LIFE Japan is extremely helpful for the women groups to understand the value of education and it helped them to maintain the seed money to support the needy village people for their children's education.

**Conclusion**

The Indian NGO sector is currently in flux, coping with mandatory regulations and funding shortages. Hence, CIRHEP is concentrating on building institutions like Farmer Producer Organizations, Village Watershed Committee and associating with them to strengthen their ability to grow as a self-dependent organization. It has always been the focus CIRHEP to think ahead and redefine its stance in order to effect visible and long-term change through its activities. There has been a lot of introspection, which has resulted in more result-oriented planning and resource management. With this as a backdrop, the CIRHEP Board of Directors and staff are considering developing a strategy to help them change with the times and develop a SMART plan to take the organization to the next level. Support. Without this collective support, CIRHEP would not achieved the significant outcome of the projects. We also thank the local village watershed committee, local farmers groups, women groups and youth clubs for their immense support and contribution for the successful implementation of various projects during this year. We expect the same kind of support and cooperation from them in the coming years too.

