

Final Report

This project supported by the Rufford Small Grant started operating from February of 2001. Following is an update for the last one year.

A detailed survey was undertaken in 100 villages of the Kanchipuram district for making an assessment of indigenous varieties of paddy and vegetables available in this area. An inventory of farmers in these villages who cultivate these varieties have been made. This inventory contains reasons for farmers still conserving these varieties, special characteristics of these varieties and mode of cultivation.

This survey was helpful for us to assess the varieties that need to be conserved. It also helped us to identify farmers who would be part of our network and who would also take up indigenous seed conservation work.

Setting up a network of farmers for seed exchange distribution and utilisation.

A network of 100 farmers has been organised in three blocks of Kanchipuram district for indigenous seed conservation, exchange of seeds and exchange of information. These farmers were identified through several group meetings during our survey and also one to one interaction. Of these 100 farmers 50 have been selected for paddy conservation and 50 for vegetable conservation. With the help of these farmers currently, 100 varieties of paddy and more than 50 varieties of vegetables are being conserved.

The vegetable conservation is taken up by women completely. It is being done in their kitchen gardens. On an average every household produces Rs. 300/- worth of vegetables which contributes to the household and nutritional security.

The farmers are provided with an initial supply of seeds. These farmers return twice the quantity of seeds to the community seed bank after harvest. Detailed formats for documentation of the cultivation details of every farmer in our network are also being maintained.

Our field staff closely monitor the conservation work at these farmers' fields. Regular visits are made to these fields for documentation of data. Farmers are also provided the technical knowhow of organic farming through our training programmes and also by regular on farm demonstrations in the respective villages. The characteristics of different varieties are also systematically documented.

Setting up of an in-situ conservation centre for preservation of these varieties

One in-situ conservation centre has been set up in the Kattankalathur block where these varieties are multiplied in-situ. This is in addition to multiplying the varieties in the farmer's fields. This in-situ conservation centre serves as a

demonstration plot. It enables us to multiply the varieties which are rare and also of those which we have seeds in very small quantities. Farmers from other villages regularly visit this in-situ conservation centre to learn about the characteristics of the varieties and also choose suitable varieties for their purpose.

Evaluation, characterisation and multiplication of these varieties involving the community namely farmers

Evaluation, characterisation and multiplication of the indigenous varieties are being done both in farmer's fields and also in the in-situ conservation centre. This is being done by farmers and also by our field workers. Educational material based on the results would be brought out shortly.

Creation of awareness in the community

One of the important components of this programme is to bring about awareness in the community about the diversity of indigenous varieties and their importance.

Towards achieving this objective we have attempted the following:

- Under this programme we have conducted 25 training programmes in the district. These training programmes have focussed on the importance of conservation of indigenous genetic resources, mode of conservation and the importance of cultivating these organically. Through these training programmes we have covered 500 farmers.
- We have also participated in agricultural fairs and festivals and disseminated information about these varieties to the neighbouring areas.

Preparation of educational material

We had undertaken preparation of educational material in the form of slides and poster calendars. More than 150 slides have been prepared. These are being used in our training programmes. We have also produced a poster calendar in Tamil on indigenous vegetable varieties. This has details about six indigenous vegetable varieties with cultivation details, organic manure management and pest management and also special techniques for specific vegetables.