Affirming Life and Diversity. Rural images and voices on Food Sovereignty in south India

The DDS Community Media Trust,
P.V. Satheesh and Michel Pimbert

Reclaiming
DIVERSITY & CITIZENSHIP

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The Deccan Development Society (DDS) is a two-decade old grassroots organisation working in about 80 villages with women's Sanghams (voluntary village level associations of the poor) in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh, India. The Society has a vision of consolidating these village groups into vibrant organs of primary local governance and federate them into a strong pressure lobby for women, the poor and dalits.

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The Community Media Trust of the Deccan Development Society (DDS) was created to take the images and voices of rural women to the larger outside world and create an alternative media that can be accessed and controlled by the local communities, especially those that suffer continued exclusion. The Community Media Trust (CMT) is made up of twenty women, seventeen of whom are working with digital video and three with radio. The primary engagement of the CMT lies in a horizontal communication with their communities. Since coming into existence in October 2001, the CMT members have engaged with their own communities in debates over food and seed sovereignty, control over natural resources, market and media. The CMT has also established solidarity networks with local communities in South Asian and other regions of the world.

P.V. Satheesh is a co-founder and the current Director of the Deccan Development Society. He is an accomplished filmmaker and development communication specialist, having worked several years as a Senior Producer in Indian national television (Doordarshan) and a professor of communications at various Indian universities. He has been on the Board of several national and international organisations, including the S.N. School of Communication (University of Hyderabad) and GRAIN (Genetic Resources Action International Network), and is a founding animator of SANFEC (South Asia Network on Food, Ecology and Culture).

Michel Pimbert is currently Director of the Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Program at the UK based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). An agricultural ecologist by training, Dr. Pimbert previously worked at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in India, the University François Rabelais de Tours in France, and the World Wide Fund for Nature in Switzerland. His research and writing focuses on food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture and citizenship; the political ecology of natural resource and biodiversity management; participatory methodologies and deliberative democratic processes. Dr. Pimbert has been a Board member of several international civil society organisations working on food sovereignty, sustainable agriculture and human rights.

Executive summary

Since 2001, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) has been co-ordinating an innovative research programme on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods*. Throughout this action research programme, the emphasis has been on doing research *with*, *for* and *by* people – rather than on people – for learning and change. Its ultimate goal is to explore how – and under what conditions – diverse, localised food systems can be sustained in the twenty-first century.

This book describes the way co-inquirers are working together in the drylands of the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh to produce social and ecological knowledge for sustainability and equity. Their collective and empowering experience is vividly captured in the videos which make up the *Affirming Life and Diversity* film series included in this book.

The setting

The action research is mainly being carried out in the Telangana region of the Deccan Plateau in Andhra Pradesh. This semi-arid region is regularly hit by drought, farming is rainfed and marginal, and out-migration by local people is increasing – both seasonally and permanently. Yet, the plateau is home to a rich rural agrarian culture, and it still harbours a very significant diversity of crops and livestock and a wealth of local knowledge about living in and adapting to marginal conditions. External pressures, such as the imposition of genetically-engineered crops, unsuitable food distribution systems and contract agriculture, are eroding this rich diversity and knowledge. But local organisations of marginalised women farmers and urban food consumers are regenerating sustainable and citizen-controlled food systems – for the well-being of their communities and the land. As such they offer many lessons to policy-makers, scientists and members of the international community who seek to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger whilst ensuring environmental sustainability.

The research process

Choosing research partners

The IIED Coordinator has been involved in the region since 1988, and this knowledge, coupled with extensive discussions with local organisations, helped inform the choice of local research partners: (i) the Deccan Development Society (DDS); and (ii) the women's *sanghams* (voluntary village level associations of the poor) with which it works. The DDS is a grassroots organisation working with women's *sanghams* in about 80 villages in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh (AP). The 5,000 women members of DDS are the poorest of the poor in their village communities. Most of them are *dalits*, the lowest group in the Indian social hierarchy. DDS's programmes have evolved over the years into a strong political force for these rural women. What started off as a way of ensuring the simple sustenance needs of the *sangham* members has become a tool of empowerment for them to address the larger issues of food security, natural resource enhancement, education and health. Over the years the leadership of the DDS has increasingly been taken over by these local women.

Ensuring ethical research

Too often, research programmes are imposed on rural people, adding to their already overwhelming burdens. At the same time, much research is undertaken without the sanction or prior consent of indigenous peoples and traditional farming communities. Such research has resulted in wrongful expropriation of cultural and intellectual heritage of the affected peoples, causing harm and violating rights. In this action research IIED felt it was vital to ensure first that the *sanghams* and small-scale farmers working with the DDS had an opportunity to assess, on their own terms and in their own time, the desirability and relevance of engaging in collaborative research activities. Through a process of locally-organised presentations, discussions and debates lasting almost three months, the women *sangham* leaders and DDS staff gave their informed consent for the project to go ahead and also clarified and agreed on the terms of engagement with IIED. These deliberations were the first step in this action research and (i) ensured that the principle of "**prior informed consent**" was upheld, and that (ii) trust, long-term commitment and ownership were built. All participants also felt it necessary to adopt an ethical code to guide the research, based on the International Society of Ethnobiology's Code of Ethics. This requires research partners to recognise, support and prioritise the efforts of indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to undertake and own their research, collections, databases and publications.

One element of this ethical research process was to ensure that the research findings were documented in a way that would be accessible to the many non-

literate members of the community. Women *sangham* members pointed out that the DDS had trained villagers in the use of digital video technology and they argued that locally-filmed video should be used to **document the research and communicate** its findings. DDS's experience had already shown that being non-literate is no barrier to learning to use video. Non-literate women can become excellent video film makers. Their traditional narrative and pictorial understanding of the world around them can find wonderful expression in the videos they make. People felt both respected and empowered in the knowledge that they would be working with and communicating about this action research in their own ways, at their own pace, and with significant control over the entire research process and ways of working.

The research process has been guided throughout by a **Steering Group**. This includes a mix of women and men who were either *sangham* leaders, members of the Community Media Trust, staff of the Deccan Development Society and IIED. The Steering Group also helped establish a gender-inclusive, interdisciplinary and inter-organisational National Learning Group (NLG), consisting of academics, development practitioners, key agency staff, civil society representatives and donors. The role of this group is to reflect with local actors on the strengths and weaknesses of the research findings, and their broader significance for policy and practice.

A shared vision for food, farming and human well-being

Together, the research partners developed a shared vision on outcomes and processes to guide the programme:

- A radical shift is required from external control over the management and end uses of biological and other resources, to an approach which devolves more responsibility and decision-making power to local communities.
- A shift by conservation and development organisations and professionals away from being project implementers to new roles which facilitate local people's analysis, planning and action. The whole process should lead to the strengthening of local organisations and institutions, so enhancing the capacity of people to take action on their own. This implies the adoption of a learning process approach and a new professionalism with new concepts, values, participatory methodologies and behaviour.

What this all means for the research process is that rather than judging the programme by its quantitative "findings", it should be assessed in terms of the degree to which the marginalised communities and local institutions involved can set research agendas and frame policies for food, farming, environment and human well-being.

Participatory video and the Community Media Trust

The Community Media Trust (CMT) of the Deccan Development Society was created in 2001 in direct response to the demands of thousands of very poor, low caste women who wanted their unrecognised voices to be heard and acknowledged by the outside world. It works with women's *sanghams* in about 75 villages of Medak District, where the official media were seen to be dominated by commercial and political actors whose interests conflict with those of rural communities and their environments. The CMT currently is made up of 20 women working with video and radio. Since their initial training by DDS, the women film makers have together made more than 100 short films on various issues of concern to them and their communities, such as the future of food and farming; the bitter harvest of genetically engineered agriculture; water; lives and livelihoods; women's control over media; environment and agricultural biodiversity. Several of these films have been broadcast as news items on national television channels.

Participatory video was an integral part of this action research; the CMT documented the dynamics and outcomes of the research through the eyes of marginalised women farmers and other small farmers. Similarly, the work of the Community Radio group has also contributed to these processes of transformation and empowerment. In the current phase of this action research, radio plays an increasingly important role in facilitating citizen debates on what needs to be done to achieve food sovereignty in Andhra Pradesh.

Films on "Affirming Life and Diversity"

Twelve videos made by the CMT have been brought together as a film series, *Affirming Life and Diversity*. These films are summarised in this book and included on a set of four DVDs:

1. *Onwards to food sovereignty. The alternative Public Distribution System of the DDS*
2. *Peoples' agenda for biodiversity. Mobile festivals of DDS*
3. *Dalit food systems. A new discourse in food and farming*
4. *Backyard bio-fertilisers. A technology brought home*
5. *A millet machine: an example of participatory technology development*
6. *Markets of the walk outs. Sanghams control their market*
7. *Learning from grassroots. National Learning Group meets Sanghams*
8. *From local to global. The long march of DDS Sanghams*

9. *In the lap of Pacha Mama, Bhootalli, Mother Earth. Sangham women visit Quechua communities in Peru*

10. *Why are Warangal farmers angry with Bt Cotton?*

11. *Bt cotton in Andhra Pradesh. A three year fraud*

12. *A disaster in search of success. Bt cotton in the global South*

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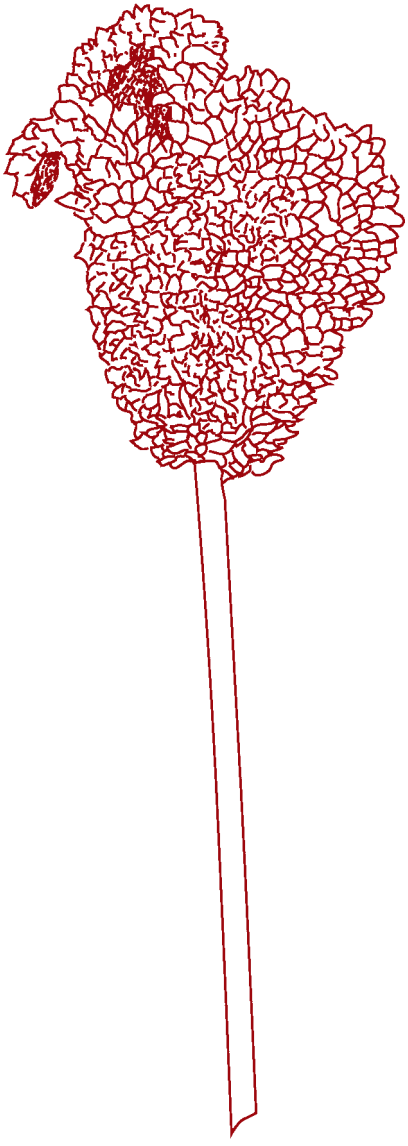

Introduction

How – and under what conditions – can diverse, localised food systems be sustained in the twenty-first century? To what extent can decentralised governance, local institutions, farmer participation and capacity-sharing promote sustainable livelihoods and the local adaptive management of diverse ecosystems and landscapes? How can biological and cultural diversity more fully help societies deal with risks, vulnerabilities and environmental change, including climate change? How can hitherto excluded citizens determine research agendas and frame policies and regulatory institutions for food and agriculture? These are some of the questions examined through the action research project *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods*, facilitated by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). This research adopts an international, action-oriented, interdisciplinary, case study approach that builds on the expertise of small-scale producers[1] as well as national and international partners.[2] Throughout, the emphasis is on doing research with, for and by people – rather than on people – for learning and change (see www.diversefoodsystems.org).

1. Small-scale food producers are those women and men who produce and harvest field and tree crops as well as livestock, fish and other aquatic organisms. They include smallholder peasant/family crop and livestock farmers, herders/pastoralists, artisanal fisherfolk, landless farmers/ rural workers, gardeners, forest dwellers, indigenous peoples, and hunters and gatherers, as well as other small-scale users of natural resources for food production. Among indigenous peoples who live off the land, some are farmers whilst others are hunters and gatherers or pastoralists.

2. The main co-inquirers involved in this action research are: ANDES in Peru (www.andes.org.pe); The Centre for Sustainable Development (CENESTA) in Iran (www.cenesta.org); Farmer Initiatives for Ecological Literacy and Democracy (FIELD) in Indonesia (www.thefieldalliance.org); the Deccan Development Society (DDS) in India (www.ddsindia.com); the Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Progamme at the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in the UK (www.iied.org)

The Deccan Development Society (DDS) and IIED co-facilitate this action research in India with small farmers in the drylands of Andhra Pradesh. The DDS's Community Media Trust (CMT) also plays a key role in this co-inquiry by documenting the research process and its outcomes using digital video and audio recordings. Indeed, community video recordings have been key in making more visible the knowledge, priorities and voices of small-scale producers, most of whom are women.

This book describes the way co-inquirers worked together in the drylands of Andhra Pradesh to produce social and ecological knowledge for sustainability and equity. Their collective and empowering experience is vividly captured in the videos which make up the *Affirming Life and Diversity Series* presented here. The video films show how local organisations of marginalised women farmers and urban food consumers are regenerating sustainable and citizen-controlled food systems – for the well-being of their communities and the land. As such they offer many lessons to policy-makers, scientists and members of the international community who seek to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger whilst ensuring environmental sustainability. The rural images and voices brought together in this video film series also offer powerful arguments for an alternative paradigm for food and agriculture – one that resonates with the emerging concept of "food sovereignty":

> "Food Sovereignty is the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture; to protect and regulate domestic agricultural production and trade in order to achieve sustainable development objectives; to determine the extent to which they want to be self reliant; to restrict the dumping of products in their markets….. Food Sovereignty does not negate trade, but rather it promotes the formulation of trade policies and practices that serve the rights of peoples to food and to safe, healthy and ecologically sustainable production." (www.viacampesina.org).

This multimedia publication is made up of four parts and includes an annex containing four DVDs. The origins, history and work of the DDS and the CMT are briefly described in Chapter 2. A description of the research process, code of ethics and ways of working that guided this co-inquiry is then given in Chapter 3. In the final chapter we introduce the 12 videos that make up the film series, *Affirming Life and Diversity.* The videos were produced by the Community Media Trust to present the main outcomes of the joint DDS and IIED research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods*. All 12 videos can be found on the DVDs inserted at the end of this publication.

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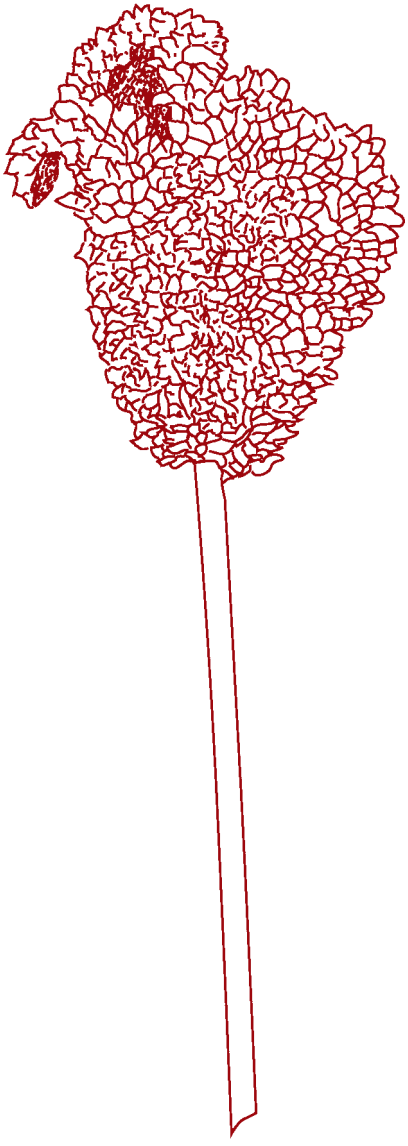


The Research Process

The choice of research partners: The Deccan Development Society

The identification of local partners, study sites and research priorities in South India was based on extensive dialogue between potential partners and the IIED project co-ordinator (Michel Pimbert, MP). The main geographical focus of this initial scoping was the drylands of the state of Andhra Pradesh (Box 1), where MP had done research since 1988.

Village level meetings and interactions in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh ensured that MP:

1. had the opportunity to present and discuss the aims and activities of this action research with farmers and external support organisations.
2. could identify the most promising partners for this action research.

In the final analysis, we chose as our main partners the Deccan Development Society (DDS) and the women's *sanghams* (voluntary village level associations of the poor) with which it works. These were the most suitable partners because of their history of community empowerment, experience with collective action, and commitment to social justice and ecological sustainability.

DDS is a 20-year old grassroots organisation working with women's *sanghams* in about 80 villages in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh (AP). The 5,000 women members of DDS are the poorest of the poor in their village communities. Most of them are *dalits*, the lowest group in the Indian social hierarchy. It is noteworthy that

1

Box 1. The Deccan Plateau in Andhra Pradesh

The action research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* was primarily carried out in the Telangana region of the Deccan Plateau in Andhra Pradesh.

Like other semi-arid areas of India, the agro-climatic conditions of the Deccan Plateau are extremely variable, but share several features: high inter-annual variation in rainfall; prolonged dry spells that increase the likelihood of drought; high rainwater run-off leading to severe soil erosion problems; and inadequate drainage, contributing to soil salinity and waterlogging. The plateau is regularly hit by drought, and is characterised by increasing out-migration – both seasonal and permanent – in search of more secure livelihood opportunities. At the same time, the plateau is home to a rich rural agrarian culture, and it still harbours a very significant diversity of crops and livestock. Moreover, rural livelihood systems in drylands have, by their persistence over several decades, demonstrated considerable resilience in the face of social and ecological change.

Telangana is one of three regions in Andhra Pradesh. Along with Rayalaseema, it falls under the semi-arid tropics. Both of these regions are on the Deccan Plateau, regularly face drought and have high levels of chronic poverty. By contrast, the third region - coastal Andhra - is endowed with a more favourable climate. It has also benefited from large public investments in irrigated agriculture as part of the Green Revolution. The contrast between the state's hinterlands and its coastal belts goes beyond environmental factors. It extends into two essential cultural domains, language and food culture. While sorghum and millets are the traditional staples of the Deccan Plateau, rice is the major cereal consumed in the coastal areas. Millets are strongly associated with the rural identity and the slow, seasonal rhythm of life on the Deccan. This identity is also characterised by its idiom: the Telugu spoken in Telangana is considered to be more "rustic" than that spoken in the coastal region.

Most farmers in the semi-arid Telangana region are small farmers. According to the latest published agricultural data (covering 1995-96), 59% of farmers are marginal farmers owning less than 1 hectare of land and 23% own between 1 and 2 hectares. In other words, 82% of farmers belong to the category of *small and marginal farmers* who own less than 2 hectares of land. Together, they have access to only 43% of the 4.3 million hectares of land cultivated in the Telangana (out of 11 million hectares under cultivation in the entire state in 1998-1999). It is noteworthy that landless, small and marginal farmers own 70% of the livestock raised in the region, comprising of cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, pigs and poultry.

The agrarian scenario of the Telangana region is intimately linked to the history of land struggles. The first land reform followed the 1946-1951 peasant uprisings. It abolished *Zamindars*' (big landlords) monopoly over arable land and established a land ceiling to minimise the state's inequitable land distribution. However, the impact of these reforms was mitigated by the fact that many *Zamindars* proceeded to transfer their land titles to relatives and friends (Appu 1996). Moreover, they retained the most fertile land, only surrendering their least productive areas. This explains why much of the land owned by low caste farmers tends to be of poor quality. The *Andhra Pradesh Land Reforms Act* of 1973 was a further step towards allocating surplus land to landless households. However, the recent development of contract farming[3] in many parts of Andhra Pradesh tends to jeopardise what has been progressively achieved through land reforms. There are reports of small farmers being pressed to either sell or lease out their land to large farmers or corporations engaged in large-scale, export-oriented commercial farming (Chowdry et al. 2000).

In spite of recent socio-economic changes to agriculture and agrarian structures, the proportion of food crops grown has remained high in the Telangana region: 73% of all cultivated land is under food crops. This is compared to only 38% in the neighbouring Rayalaseema region, where commercial crops like groundnut have displaced the traditional millet-based cropping systems. In the Anantpur district of Rayalseema, for instance, groundnut occupies over 70% of the cropped area.

Historically, Telangana was ruled by the Muslim Asaf Jah Dynasty for several centuries. The last of seven successive rulers – known as Nizam – surrendered power over the Hyderabad State in 1952, i.e. after India's Independence, leaving an important historical and cultural legacy. Palaces, forts and mosques are still scattered throughout Telangana districts. In many villages, mosques and *dargah* (the tombs of venerated saints) coexist with temples devoted to Hindu gods and goddesses. Muslim communities play a significant role in village life. They are, for instance, called upon for carrying out animal sacrifices during important Hindu festivals.

3. Contract farming is a particular form of industrial agriculture where a contracting firm provides services and inputs to farmers, including seeds and farm chemicals, financing and marketing.

Medak District, which covers 951,903 hectares, has a fairly large percentage of marginalised *dalits*: 18% of the total district population of 2.4 million.

The early DDS' vision of consolidating these village groups into vibrant organs of primary local Governance has been translated into a number of autonomous trusts such as Food Sovereignty Trust, Healers Trust, Natural Resources Trust, Market Trust and Community Media Trust – each one composed of leaders from the sanghams with different competence and commitment. This action has turned them into a strong lobby for women, the poor and *dalits*. The DDS organises a range of dialogues, debates, educational and other activities with the people as part of this approach.

DDS's programmes have evolved over the years into a strong political force for rural women. What started off as a way of ensuring the simple sustenance needs of the *sangham* members has become a tool of empowerment for them to address the larger issues of food security, natural resource enhancement, education and health. Over the years the leadership of the DDS has increasingly been taken over by local people, both for historical reasons and to ensure institutional sustainability (see Box 2).

DDS has helped re-establish women's leadership positions in their communities, and to help them fight their lack of access and control over their own resources. These efforts, together with earthcare activities and sustainable land use, are also resulting in more care for people by giving women a renewed dignity and profile in their village communities.

At the heart of all DDS's activities is the fundamental principle of fair and equitable access and control over livelihood assets, which leads to the autonomy of local communities. This autonomy becomes far more important in a globalising world, shrinking national boundaries, and disappearing national sovereignties. In this context, the DDS sees it as crucial for local communities to become autonomous in certain spheres to protect themselves from being trampled over by invisible globalising forces. This is the background against which the women of the DDS *sanghams* are striving to regain:

- autonomy over food production
- autonomy over seeds
- autonomy over natural resources
- autonomous markets
- autonomous media

Responding to emerging global challenges and trends that undermine their livelihoods and well being, the DDS communities are now increasingly emphasising the concept of food sovereignty in their activities (see www.ddsindia.com).

2

Box 2. A history of changing leadership in the Deccan Development Society (DDS)

The DDS was created in 1983 by six founder members, all of whom were professionals in various fields: development economy, social science research, management sciences, communication technology, social anthropology and development management. The vision of the DDS then was to give leadership to community groups and transfer technology in a sympathetic manner. As the DDS grew, more people joined from the outside: agricultural engineers, permaculturists, foresters, environmental scientists, psychologists and feminists and others. However, as their fascination with and curiosity for rural work waned, these outsiders slowly began to withdraw.

The gap left in the DDS's management structure is slowly being filled by local people. A large team of farmers, artisans, barefoot agriculture scientists, foresters, watershed specialists, farm engineers, communicators and other experts has emerged. Overarching leadership by some extremely capable women has slowly taken over the day-to-day management of various activities. They also act as a think tank for the DDS's core management team.

This type of leadership is sustainable and long lasting. They continue to prove that their capabilities are beyond the ordinary imagination of the so-called development experts from urban areas. Today these women can negotiate with anyone on any issue: from food security to video production.

The DDS increasingly relies on this leadership. Bringing in outsiders is a harrowing task. A lot of energy and time is invested in them. But the call of the new 'globalisation' in the development sector becomes irresistible for these people. The huge salaries, professional fees and profiles are so attractive that before one has finished sculpting them, they are gone. This is most unsustainable. Therefore relying on local actors in rural areas is not only sustainable but also most satisfying. It also challenges the conventional stereotyped thinking on leadership by facilitating a real rural leadership.

Source: www.ddsindia.com

Free prior informed consent and village level dialogues

Discussions with rural people were by far the most important aspect of this participatory process – particularly with those farmers and women whose livelihoods directly depend on biodiversity. It was important that the *sanghams* and small-scale farmers working with the DDS had an opportunity to assess, on their own terms and in their own time, the desirability and relevance of engaging in collaborative activities with IIED and in a process of co-inquiry with MP.

At a specially convened meeting involving all women *sangham* leaders, MP presented and discussed in detail the overall philosophy and purpose of the proposed action

research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods.* All questions asked by the women *sangham* leaders were answered and/or discussed during a four hour meeting held in November 2000, in Pasthapur village (Medak District).

After these deliberations with MP, the women *sangham* leaders and DDS staff asked for time to reflect, decide and give their informed consent for the project to go ahead (or not) in their area. Village level discussions were then held with all *sangham* members in 70 villages over a period of 2 to 3 months. During this period, *sangham* members argued the pros and cons of the project and whether or not they should be part of a research process that would make demands on their time. Three months after the first plenary meeting held in Pasthapur village, the *sangham* leaders gathered again to inform MP of the outcome of villagers' deliberations, which was to be part of this action research. During this second plenary meeting, the *sangham* leaders and MP also clarified and agreed on the terms of engagement with IIED (see below, key research agreements).

These dialogues and clarifications were the first step in this action research. They ensured that the principle of "prior informed consent", laid out in various international agreements and declarations, was fully respected[4]. This participatory process was also important in building trust in and long-term commitment to the project. Moreover, it allowed for a more open exploration of the underlying values and ethics that should ideally guide the collaborative activities. Villager complaints about how outside professionals normally behave and work were followed by lengthy discussions on how issues on biodiversity, livelihoods and farming should be approached. What should be the respective roles, rights, responsibilities and rewards of the different actors involved in the action research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods?*

Key research agreements

Video as a documentation and research tool

The adoption of a participatory process for learning and action led to a dialogue on appropriate forms of documentation. The choice of a medium of research documentation that could be understood by non-literate partners and acceptable to other audiences (including scientific researchers and donors) was an overriding concern.

Women *sangham* members involved in the initial dialogues on research agreements were quick to point out that the DDS had trained villagers in the use of digital video technology. They argued that video should be used to document the research and

4. See Posey (1996) for an overview of the international instruments available for the protection of the cultural, economic, human and social rights of indigenous peoples and local communities.

3

Box 3. Participatory video: the DDS experience in India

When an organisation is committed to valuing people's knowledge there is a need to explore ways in which people can communicate with the outside world. In this effort, literacy is not the only choice. Literacy could actually become a constraint for non-literate people whose oral and visual narratives are so powerful. The Deccan Development Society has provided video and audio technologies as a means of expression for disadvantaged rural women. Villagers have been trained in the skills needed to handle this media. Several videos have been produced and edited by the barefoot video producers who formed a Community Media Trust (CMT).

The following conclusions can be drawn from this experience:

- Video can be a very effective tool for non-literate rural people to express themselves and communicate with the outside world
- Being non-literate is no barrier to learning video as a mode of expression. Non-literate women can become excellent video film makers. Their traditional narrative and pictorial understanding of the world around them can find wonderful expression in the videos they make.
- Trainers with a long experience of training professional television practitioners in the Afro Asian region were struck by the ease and quickness with which non-literate women were able to learn and use video.
- In their ability to understand and express themselves through video, non-literate women were in no way inferior to their urban counterparts who come to media education with formidable academic backgrounds.

Source: Satheesh 2003; www.ddsindia.com

communicate its findings. Similarly, PV Satheesh (PVS, Director of the Deccan Development Society) and the DDS staff who facilitated the initial video training also pointed out that the experience gained over the last two years suggested that video film making is particularly empowering for village rural communities (see Box 3). The universal nature of visual literacy (as opposed to formal literacy) also means that this medium is often relevant and appropriate in many contexts.

Given this background, MP and partners in India agreed that research documentation would be based on a combination of digital video recordings and written reports to satisfy the different needs of all actors involved in the project, including donors.

It is particularly noteworthy that from the outset of this action research all co-inquirers agreed on the need and relevance of some form of multimedia output that included text, audio recordings, pictures and film. This research agreement was viewed very positively by non-literate women *sangham* members and by the DDS Community Media Trust. People felt both respected and empowered in the knowledge

that they would be working with and communicating about this action research in their own ways, at their own pace, and with significant control over the entire research process and ways of working. The Community Media Trust also had an opportunity to further develop its skills and equipment by engaging in a long-term process of co-inquiry in which participatory video and radio were centre stage. The CMT's role is described in more detail in the next chapter of this book.

Ways of working and research ethics

During the initial dialogues, most participants acknowledged that much research has been undertaken in the past without the sanction or prior consent of indigenous peoples and traditional farming communities. Such research has resulted in wrongful expropriation of cultural and intellectual heritage of the affected peoples, causing harm and violation of rights. Given this history, the DDS staff, the women's and MP all felt it necessary to adopt clear ethical guidelines for collaborative research.

The code of ethics adopted for IIED's *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* progamme has its origins in the *Declaration of Belem* agreed upon in 1988 at the founding of the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE), in Belem (Brazil).[5] The purpose of this code of ethics is:

1. to optimise the outcomes and reduce as much as possible the adverse effects of research (in all its forms, including applied research and development work) and related activities that can disrupt or disenfranchise indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities from their customary and chosen lifestyles; and
2. to provide a set of principles to govern the conduct of researchers engaged in or proposing to be engaged in research in all its forms, especially collation and use of traditional knowledge and resources found on community lands or territories. Some of the key principles include the right to free prior informed consent, the right to participation, the right to veto, and the right to restitution.

By adopting the ISE's Code of Ethics (see Annex 1), the research partners recognise, support and prioritise the efforts of indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to undertake and own their research, collections, databases and publications. This code is intended to enfranchise indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities conducting research within their own society, for their own use.

5. The International Society of Ethnobiology's Code of Ethics was updated, revised and approved at the ISE congress held in 2006, in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The original and then revised Code of Ethics of the ISE were part of the research contract which IIED signed with local partners in India.

The actors in the research

This section briefly introduces the main actors involved in the action research, and some of the key relationships among them.

The Steering Group

A steering group was set up shortly after the *sanghams* had agreed to take part in this action research. It included a mix of women and men who were either *sangham*

Table 1. The Steering Group members

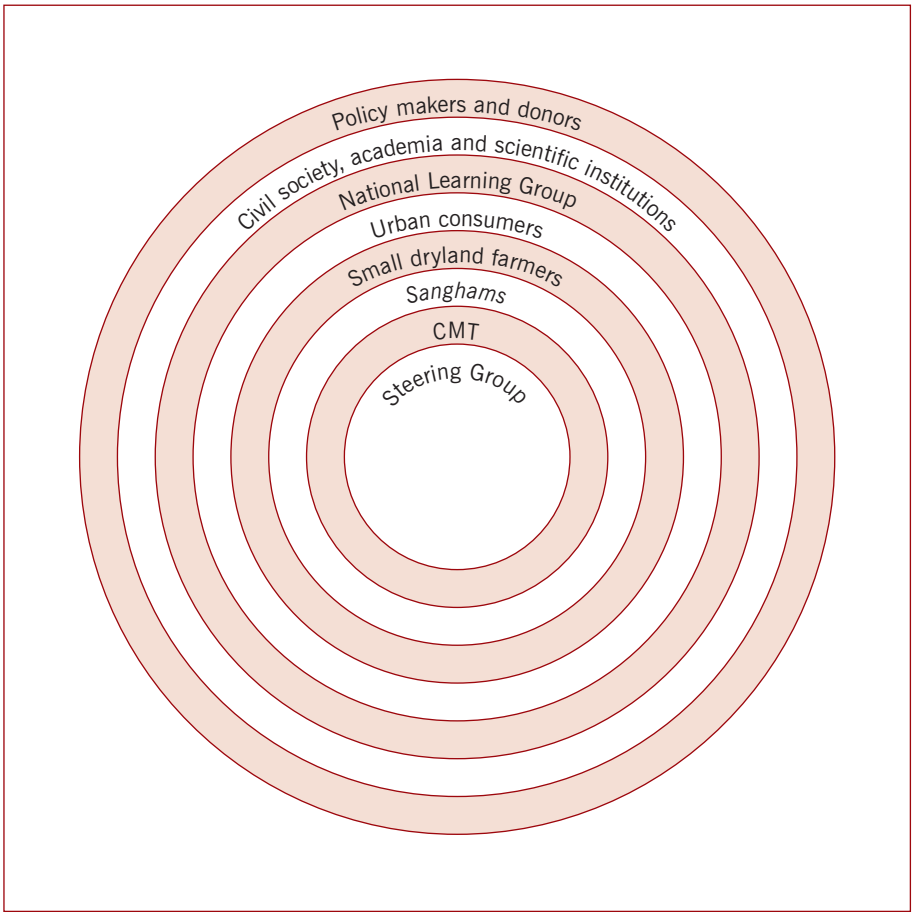
Members	Name	Designation	Duration
1	Ms Humnapur Rathnamma	Sangham leader and policy Group member	2001-2006
	Ms Krishnapur Chilukamma	Sangham leader and Policy Group member	2006-2007
2	Ms Kalmela Narsamma	Sangham leader and policy Group member	2002-2006
	Ms Bidakanne Chandramma	Community Seed Keeper	2006-2007
3	Algol Rathnamma	Sangham leader and policy Group member	2001-2002
4	China Narsamma	Community Media Trust Trustee; Media Coordinator	2001-2007
5	General Narsamma	Community Media Trust Trustee; Community Radio Producer	2001-2007
6	N.J. Reddy	Joint Director DDS	2001-2003
7	Y. Jayappa	Dy Director – DDS	2004-2007
8	A. Giridhar	Joint Director DDS	2001-2007
9	Sharnappa	Assistant Director DDS	2001-2005
10	Ch Suresh Kumar	Dy Director – DDS	2005-2007
11	Balaiah	Assistant Director DDS	2001-2005
12	Ms Manjula	Coordinator – Sanghams	2005-2007
13	Salome Yesudas	KVK Scientist and Convenor of Steering Committee	2001-2006
14	P. V. Satheesh [Invitee]	Director – DDS	2001-2007
15	Michel Pimbert	IIED	2001-2007

leaders, members of the Community Media Trust or staff of the Deccan Development Society. IIED has also been represented on this steering group since 2001 (Table 1).

The mandate and the roles of the Steering Group were to:

- guide and contribute to the action research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* in Andhra Pradesh;
- work with the *sangham* members to facilitate participatory learning and action in villages, farms, common property lands, local markets and in meetings with small farmers and urban dwellers;
- work with the Community Media Trust to ensure that the research process and its outcomes was fully documented on video and audio recordings;

Figure 1. Multiple levels of co-inquiry



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Box 4. An example of feedback received from Steering Group members after they reviewed a draft of this publication

"On the first day we went through the first three sections of Research Process. For every paragraph that I read out and translated, there was a chorus of "Exactly" from the members of the SG. Then we asked each individual whether she/he agreed with the statements made in the document. Each one of them was emphatic that the document reflected their reality and the reality of the *sanghams*, authentically.

Four days later, when we had another opportunity, we sat together again looking at the key relations, following the drawing you had sent. This generated a lot of discussion.

As General drew the figure on the ground with white muggu [powdered stone], the others sat around it and debated each circle and their relationship with each other. Everyone agreed with the way the concentric circles had been placed in relation to each other with the Steering Group at the centre and the policy makers etc as the outer-most circle. But they started figuring their relationships. The consensus was that there was a lot more relationship between several circles directly and indirectly. It was not necessarily that circle one related to circle two and circle two to circle three etc. There were instances when circle one related to circle ten directly and vice versa. There were a lot of dynamic interactions with several of these circles directly which denoted vibrant interrelations that would jump immediate circles, as you can see from the picture below. This I thought was one of the most significant things that came out of the discussion".

Source: Note from PV Satheesh to Michel Pimbert, January 2007

- facilitate an action-oriented and dynamic process of critical reflection, accelerated learning and innovation to deepen and spread positive social and ecological changes.

Throughout this action research, the Steering Group members participated in the planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring, recording, review and evaluation of the studies carried out as part of this joint DDS-IIED research. All key research decisions and methodologies were discussed and agreed by the steering group at their meetings and/or after village level deliberations with *sangham* members. A total of 50 steering group meetings was held over a six-year period (an average of about 8 meetings per year).

The Steering Group was the core research team and as such it interfaced and worked with other actors in this co-inquiry (see Figure 1). Some of these other sets of actors are briefly introduced below.

Throughout this action research the Steering Group members have been fully involved in an iterative cycle of planning, action and reflection. For example, all members of the Steering Group commented on, and validated, the contents of this publication as part of an iterative cycle of action and reflection. And as they discussed this section of the publication (the research process), Steering Group members highlighted new dimensions and understandings generated by this co-inquiry (see Box 4).

The *sanghams*

The village *sanghams*, voluntary associations of poor women, are the basis of DDS. Most of these *sanghams* are basically formed by *dalit* women, but not to the exclusion of poor women from a wide array of castes from Muslims to Gollas, Tenugus to Mangalis and Reddys to Sakalis. Today DDS works in 75 villages spread over four mandals[6] in Medak District: Zaheerabad, Jharasangam, Raikode and Nyalkal. At present DDS *sanghams* include 40 which are 12-15 years old and 35 which are 3-5 years old.

As one of a series of steps towards self-management, DDS has begun to hand-over project funds to the *sanghams*. Over time, the *sanghams* have become increasingly able to conceive, plan and administer their programmes and the funds related to them. Throughout this action research, the *sangham*'s women members have shown deep concern for ecology, sustainability, community control, and equity. They have been active participants in collecting and analysing information, as well as in reflecting and deliberating on the meaning and implications of new knowledge generated through this action research.

6. A subdivision of a district.

The Community Media Trust

The DDS Community Media Trust was created to take the images and voices of rural women to the outside world and to create an alternative media that can be accessed and controlled by local communities, especially those that suffer continued exclusion. The CMT is made up of 20 women, 17 of whom work with digital video and three with radio (see Table 3 in next chapter).

The main roles of the CMT in the research were to document its ways of working, the main actors involved, the study locations, the issues raised and the impacts and outcomes for people and the environment. The CMT also used participatory video and community radio to do research on specific topics. Given the key role played by the CMT, its origins, history and activities are further described in the next chapter of this book.

The National Learning Group

The Steering Group, the DDS and IIED helped establish a gender-inclusive, interdisciplinary and inter-organisational National Learning Group (NLG). The role of this group is to reflect with local actors on the strengths and weaknesses of the research findings, and their broader significance for policy and practice. It consists of academics, development practitioners, key agency staff, civil society representatives and donors. These people are from varied backgrounds and interests, for example rural development, low external input and/or organic farming, adult education, land reform, women's rights, academia and government (see Box 5).

In more detail, the NLG's role is to:

i) contribute to the action research by bringing in disciplinary perspectives and insights gained from working at national and international levels with a range of different networks

ii) help review and validate the methodological innovations and findings that emerge from this action research, as part of a process of extended peer review that includes academics, development practitioners as well as non-literate women and small-scale producers

iii) act as a catalyst for organisational learning and the spread of innovations and change in wider policy circles (national and international).

A shared vision for food, farming and human well-being

The dialogues with local communities, the DDS staff, this co-inquiry, and previous work done by the IIED co-ordinator (Pimbert and Pretty, 1998; Pimbert, 1999; 2007) all helped shape shared principles and norms to guide the inquiry. This shared understanding emphasises the following vision and process issues in particular:

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Box 5. The National Learning Group

1. Dr Bina Agarwal, Professor, Institute of Economic Growth, University of Delhi, New Delhi
2. Dr Gopal Kadekodi, Director, Institute for Social & Economic Change, Bangalore, Karnataka
3. Dr A.K. Jena, National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
4. Dr T.N. Prakash, Agricultural Economist, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, Karnataka
5. Ms Sheelu Francis, Women's Collective, Madras, Tamil Nadu
6. Dr Chaya Datar, Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai, Maharastra
7. Dr M.D. Osman, Senior Scientist, Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
8. Ms Madhu Sarin, Development Activist and IIED Board member, Chandigarh, Punjab
9. Mr Oswad Quintal, Director KUDUMBAM, Trichi, Tamil Nadu [Convenor, LEISA Network, Tamil Nadu]
10. Dr S. Bapurao, formerly Deputy Director, National Institute of Nutrition, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
11. Dr. B. Bhattacharya, Centre for Transfer of Technology (NIRD), Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh
12. Dr Ashish Kothari, Kalpavriksh, Pune, Maharastra
13. Mr Ravindra, Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN) Secunderabad, Andhra Pradesh
14. Dr Ilina Sen, Rupantar, Chattisgarh
15. Dr Paul ter Weel, Senior Advisor on Environment and Development (DGIS), the Embassy of The Netherlands, New Delhi

- A radical shift is required from imposed conservation and development which aims to retain external control over the management and end uses of biological and other resources, to an approach which devolves more responsibility and decision-making power to local communities.
- Existing conservation and development organisations and professionals need to shift from being project implementers to new roles which facilitate local people's analysis, planning and action. The whole process should lead to the strengthening of local organisations and institutions, so enhancing the capacity of people to take

Table 2. Sustaining Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods: the contrast between blueprint and learning-process approaches

	Blueprint	Process
Point of departure	nature's diversity and its potential commercial values	the diversity of both people and nature's values
Keywords	strategic planning and trade liberalisation	participation and local definitions of well-being
Locus of decision-making	centralised, ideas originate in capital city	decentralised, ideas originate in village
First steps	data collection and plan	awareness and action
Design	static, by experts	evolving, people involved
Main resources	central funds and technicians	local people and their assets
Methods, rules	standardised, universal, fixed package	diverse, local, varied basket of choices
Analytical assumptions	reductionist (natural and economic science bias)	systems, holistic
Management focus	spending budgets, completing projects on time, market performance	sustained improvement and performance
Communication	vertical: orders down, reports up	lateral: mutual learning and sharing experience
Evaluation	external, intermittent	internal, continuous
Error	buried	embraced
Relationship with people	controlling, policing, inducing, motivating, dependency creating. People seen as beneficiaries	enabling, supporting, empowering. People seen as actors
Associated with	normal professionalism and corporate power	new professionalism and democratic decision making
Outputs	1. diversity in conservation, and uniformity in production (agriculture, forestry,...) 2. the empowerment of professionals and corporations	1. diversity as a principle of production and conservation 2. the empowerment of rural people and citizens

Sources: Pimbert 1999 and Korten 1984.

action on their own. This implies the adoption of a learning process approach (Table 2) and a new professionalism with new concepts, values, participatory methodologies and behaviour.

The quality and validity of this action research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* cannot be judged on the basis of narrow criteria of positivist social and natural sciences alone. The co-inquirers involved here believe that broader criteria need to be included in the overall assessment of the quality and validity of the research process and its outcomes. For example, we suggest that the following evidence can be taken as criteria for valid and good quality action research into food sovereignty:

- Strengthened voices and abilities of marginalised communities to set research agendas and frame policies for food, farming, environment and human well-being.
- Enhanced capacities of local organisations and multi-actor platforms to engage in the local adaptive management of food systems, including the ecosystems and institutions local food systems are embedded in.
- Creation of safe spaces for face-to-face democratic deliberations and innovative participatory processes which put expert knowledge and corporations under public scrutiny.
- Development of new forms of accountability based on extended peer review: a more inclusive and plural process of validating knowledge and policies in the face of open-ended uncertainties.
- Interlinking and federation of citizen spaces as a way of decentralising and democratising governance.
- Emergence of transnational communities of inquiry and coalitions for change towards food sovereignty and active citizenship.

In many ways, the action research described in the videos included here has tried to "shift the dialogue about validity from a concern with idealist questions in search of truth to concern for engagement, dialogue, pragmatic outcomes and an emergent, reflexive sense of what is important" (Bradbury and Reason 2001). Further analysis and critical reflections on these issues are offered in a forthcoming publication (Pimbert et al. 2008).

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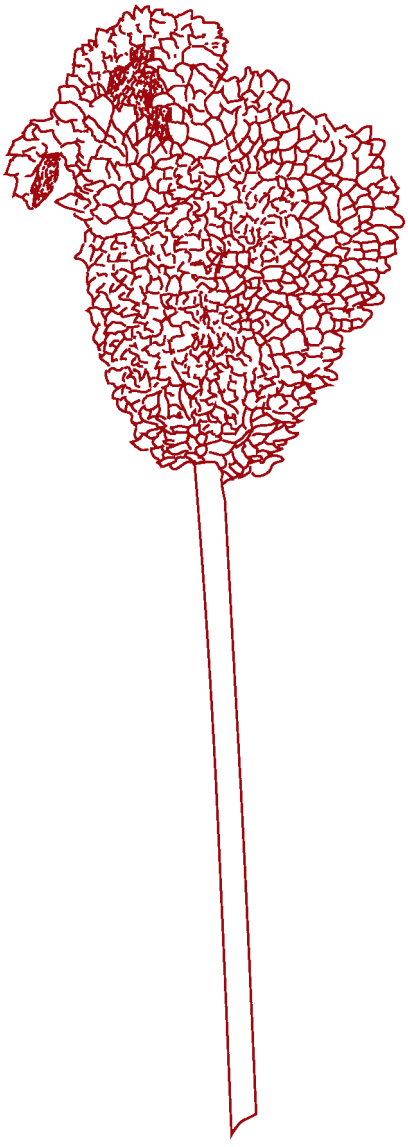

The Community Media Trust

The Community Media Trust of the Deccan Development Society was created in October 2001 in direct response to the demands of thousands of very poor, low caste women who wanted their unrecognised voices to be heard and acknowledged by the outside world. It works with women's *sanghams* in about 75 villages of Medak District, Andhra Pradesh, where the official media were seen to be dominated by commercial and political actors whose interests conflict with those of rural communities and their environments.

The CMT is mandated to hand over the microphones and cameras to marginalised rural women to produce their own images and authentic voices. Moreover, it strives to take images and voices of rural women to the wider world and create an alternative media that can be accessed and controlled by local communities, especially those that suffer continued exclusion. Twenty women, 17 of whom work with video and three with radio, constitute the Community Media Trust (Table 3). The video group operates digital video cameras, portable edit recorders, and computer-based editing facilities to make their films.

The CMT was a response to the exaggerated importance given to literacy in development in India. PV Satheesh, a development communication specialist and Director of the Deccan Development Society, noted at the time that literacy has become a Holy Grail in the world of development:

> "Development groups working in rural areas suffer from a feeling of inadequacy if they are not pursuing literacy programmes. They may be doing excellent work through harnessing people's knowledge in the fields of forestry,

Table 3. The composition of the CMT

	Name	Village	Position
1	Ms Masangari Narsamma	Pastapur	Executive Trustee
2	Ms Begari Laxmamma	Humnapur	Executive Trustee
3	Ms Begari Punyamma	Zaheerabad	Executive Trustee
4	Ms Hyderabad Narsamma	Pastapur	Executive Trustee
5	Ms Nalgindla Chandramma	Algole	Executive Trustee
6	Ms Tammali Manjula	Eedulapalle	Member
7	Ms Musligari Kavitha	Nagwar	Member
8	Ms Yelgoi Sangamma	Borancha	Member
9	Ms Begari Mollamma	Ippapalle	Member
10	Ms Dandu Swaroopa	Edakulapalli	Member
11	Ms Bollaram Ramamma	Edakulapalli	Member
12	Ms Dandu Sangamma	Edakulapalli	Member
13	Ms Dandu Narsamma	Edakulapalli	Member
14	Ms Bollaram Balamma	Edakulapalli	Member
15	Ms Errolla Sooremma	Edakulapalli	Member
16	Ms Bollaram Papamma	Edakulapalli	Member
17	Ms Talari Sakuntalamma	Edakulapalli	Member

fisheries, natural farming, land development, natural resource management whatever. But literacy programmes haunt them. The irony is that in most of these activities literacy has very little to offer. People's knowledge and people's science in all these areas are so strong that they need very little external help in the form of technology. But still the feeling of inadequacy prevails very strongly among non-literacy groups. ..... I would not like to be misunderstood as an anti-literacy person. I value literacy very much. What I am pointing to is in valuing literacy we should not devalue other capabilities and skills present in non-literate people. By doing so, we might kill all the self-confidence in these people. I am itching to tell a story which I had heard in my childhood. I still cherish it for the message it gives:

Three scholars decided to cross a river. They asked a boatman to help them cross the river. The boatman was glad to oblige them. As the boat sailed out, one scholar asked the boatman: Have you read Vedas. The boatman humbly replied "No Sir". He felt very ashamed. The scholar rubbed it in. "A quarter of your life is wasted". After they sailed a little further, the second scholar asked: "Have you read Upanishads?" The boatman felt further small. "No Sir". The scholar said contemptuously: "Half your life is wasted". They sailed halfway into the river. The third scholar asked, "At least have you read Puranas?" The boatman felt totally humiliated. "No sir, not even that". "Then three quarter of your life is a waste". By then they hit a whirlpool. The boat started sinking. The boatman, for the first time, asked the scholars: "Sir, do you people know how to swim?" All the scholars said "No" in total panic. "All your lives are a waste now sir", said the boatman and leapt out of the boat.

What I am trying to say is that in our part of the world there is a generation of women and men, people who are in their thirties and above who are not literate. But they have deep reserves of knowledge in farming, forestry, ecology, natural resource management -- areas where survival knowledge, which is paramount for the human race, eludes us the literates. Why should we discount this rich knowledge and the skills with which they survive in the harshest of environments, and push literacy towards them as THE SKILL? This has been one of the key questions that bothers my mind in my work with disadvantaged rural women in Medak District of Andhra Pradesh" (PV Satheesh 2001).

For PV Satheesh, the possibility of providing video and audio technologies as a means of expression for disadvantaged rural women was an exciting idea. Could video and radio become alternatives to formal literacy programmes in the context where the DDS was working? In an initial experiment led by the DDS, efforts were made to equip a group of 10 women with the skills to handle video film making (see Box 6).

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Box 6. The first video training of non-literate women in Pasthapur (Medak District, AP)

PV Satheesh began a series of video workshops from January 1999. Each workshop lasted four days. Spread over eight months, these workshops trained a total of seven women, four of whom are non-literate. Of these seven women, two were students, four were farm labourers and one was a DDS worker. All of them were *dalits* and aged between 16 and 35. The women chose to learn video production for various reasons:

- We would like to let our issues be known outside (Ippapally Mallamma)
- Our news must go outside (Zaheerabad Punyamma)
- We are working on the Gene Bank in our village. Several times you outside people come to shoot our work. But there are seasons when it is very important to shoot. At that time you people may not be available. Therefore when you people do not come, we can do our own recording and give it to you. (Humnapur Laxmi)
- So that we can communicate with people in other *sanghams*. Whenever some events take place in our *sanghams*, you people come to video it. When you don't come, we have to wait for you. Instead we can do the recording ourselves and take it out.(Pastapur Narsamma)
- To photograph; marriages etc.(Bopanpalli Nagamma)
- When big government people come to our village, we would like to record what they tell us. That becomes a document for us. (Eedulapalle Manjula)

Their expectations of the workshops were also varied.

- How can we tell about the work we are doing?
- To know whether it (the video) can record what we talk and say
- To understand what parts it (the video) has
- To know whether it records from a distance; how to make pictures big and small; how to make sound big and small.

The training objective was to familiarise the participants with the grammar of television, with the operation of video cameras, and how to edit their shoots and make their own stories. These workshops were conducted by three people:

1) P V Satheesh, a television producer/director (also Director, Deccan Development Society and an experienced trainer who is familiar with life in rural India).
2) Vijendra Patil, a cameraman/producer who has a variety of experiences in training and production.
3) Yesu, an 18-year old rural boy who had recently apprenticed with a video production house and who was being simultaneously trained on video operations and editing.

The training was done with one DV Camera and two VHS video cameras and a makeshift editing set up. The trainings were conducted using the following methods:

- Group discussion on the motivation of each person to come for the training
- Visual explanation of the various concepts and terms

- Creation of a new technical vocabulary in the local dialect using the women's words and their experiences. This became an exercise in participatory glossary formation in the local language
- Learning games to bring home the concepts. For example, hopscotch was used to teach the principles of varying the image sizes, camera distances, heights and angles when shooting a given object for successive shots
- Hands-on training in using the camera and editing the pictures
- Group analysis of each other's work to facilitate a group learning process

Through these processes the women learnt the following:

- Parts of a video camcorder and how to operate each of them
- Use of a camera tripod
- Shots and image sizes
- Camera frame and simple principles of picture composition
- Camera distance, camera angle and camera movement
- Simple microphones and simple techniques of sound recording
- Shot breakdown for a simple shoot
- Plotting camera positions for a simple shoot
- Logging the shoot and finding editing points
- Executing an edit on a VHS system

The training-cum-learning processes involved were videoed and roughly edited. After learning video skills for 30 days, the women filmed one aspect of their *sangham* work, pre-schools for their children and their significance to their lives. Together these two films highlight the capacities, experiences and communication skills of the village women.

In October there was unprecedented rain in Medak District and crops were severely damaged. The women decided to tell their story on video. The group discussed their ideas and planned the story. Ms Narasamma, a 25-year-old non-literate farm worker, was selected as the reporter. The group also wanted to highlight the fact that this video was being shot by the rural women themselves. Two cameras were taken to the field and the reporter stood in ankle deep water and gave her piece to the camera, briefly but passionately telling the facts about the destruction of *jowar* (sorghum) and the black future of the farmer and the women.

The quality of the shooting, with the play of light and close-ups of the blackened *jowar* (sorghum), was made more poignant as it was these women's own fields that were shown on the video. With help from outside contacts, the story was shown on the regional Doordarshan TV network and on ETV, a commercial television channel. This gave the trainers the confidence that the group could make short videos of broadcast quality. It was evident that the group members had confidence in themselves and was beginning to handle their ideas and equipment and find space on air.

Source: PV Satheesh 2003; www.ddsindia.com

Since their initial training, the women film makers have together made more than 100 short films on various issues of concern to them and their communities. They have brought fresh perspectives into film making. Whilst the primary engagement of the Community Media Trust lies in a horizontal communication with their own communities, their members have also produced dozens of films for other groups and agencies on environment and development issues. These include films about the future of food and farming; the bitter harvest of genetically engineered agriculture; water; lives and livelihoods; women's control over media; environment and agricultural biodiversity. Several of these films have been broadcast as news items on national television channels. They have also been shown in international farmer exchanges for mutual learning, and in film festivals.

Participatory video was an integral part of this action research on the regeneration of diverse food systems and decentralised forms of governance. The Community Media Trust documented the dynamics and outcomes of the research through the eyes of marginalised women farmers and other small farmers. Used in this way video film making:

- transforms the lives of the people involved. But it also transforms the research process in which university-trained professionals and non-literate, marginalised people are co-inquirers, producing new knowledge that challenges the dominance of western science and learning approaches.
- empowers marginalised people – especially women – and facilitates social and ecological change.
- inspires a younger generation of scholars and practitioners throughout the world to find better ways of doing research with, by and for people, not just on people.

Similarly, the work of the Community Radio group has also contributed to these processes of transformation and empowerment. In the current phase of this action research, radio plays an increasingly important role in facilitating citizen debates on what needs to be done to achieve food sovereignty in Andhra Pradesh (Box 7).

Through their films, radio programmes and ways of working, the women of the CMT have engaged with their own communities and other actors in debates over food and seed sovereignty, control over natural resources, market and media. Through participatory communication processes, they have facilitated and recorded critical evaluations of state policies and programmes. They have also established relationships of solidarity with local communities in South Asia and other regions of the world, helping them to develop their own, locally controlled, autonomous media.

Members of the CMT played a central role in the action research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods*. The CMT members not only documented the entire research process and its outcomes but they also

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Box 7. The *Sangham* Radio

The Community Radio which is a part of the CMT has been in existence for nearly a decade as a Women Speak to Women radio. It is owned by the CMT and managed by three young dalit women. In the absence of a broadcast license from the Government of India, the radio group has been recording their own programmes which are narrowcast. Every week they are played back to dozens of the DDS *sanghams* and heard by over 3000 women.

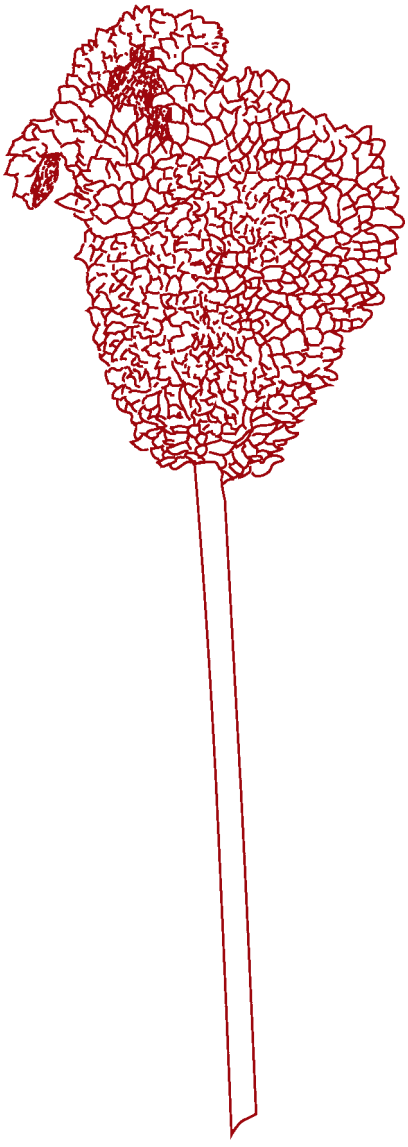
They make programmes on ecological farming, seed keeping, food sovereignty and community control over natural resources, alongside a host of programmes on community-based health systems, community child care, alternative education, gender and violence, and education relevant for rural landscapes.

In November 2006, the Government of India, for the first time, announced a new policy for community radio. Under this policy, the DDS CMT will probably be the first to go on air. Once this happens, the DDS Community Radio (called the *Sangham* Radio) will be a great vehicle to open up new ways of doing research on food, agriculture, environment and human well-being. The normal agricultural agenda and issues of community food sovereignty can be opened up for broad debate with a special niche for the women who listen to and participate in radio programmes. This could unfold exciting new ways of using broadcast media for people-centred agricultural research and food sovereignty.

After years of struggle, the *Sangham* Radio is on the verge of getting the Government nod to start its own broadcasts. Once this happens it will probably go on air in the first half of 2008.

used video film and radio as research tools. The videos made by the CMT have been brought together as a film series, *Affirming Life and Diversity*, and are introduced in the next chapter.

4



Films on "Affirming Life and Diversity"

Twelve video films were made as part of the action research on *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* in Andhra Pradesh. The videos have been grouped together into specific themes (Box 8), and together form the film series *Affirming Life and Diversity*. All films in DVD format and are all to be found at the end of this publication, in the specially designed folder.

An introduction to the video films

Each of the 12 videos in the film series *Affirming Life and Diversity* is briefly presented below.

8

Box 8. Affirming Life and Diversity: A Film Series

DVD 1: AUTONOMY OVER FOOD AND SEED

1. ONWARDS TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
   The Alternative Public Distribution System of DDS
2. PEOPLE'S AGENDA FOR BIODIVERSITY
   Mobile festivals of DDS
3. DALIT FOOD SYSTEMS
   A new discourse in food and farming

DVD 2: CONTROLLING TECHNOLOGY AND MARKETS

4. BACKYARD BIOFERTILISERS
   A technology brought home
5. A MACHINE FOR MILLET
   An example of participatory technology development
6. A MARKET OF THE WALKOUTS
   Sanghams control their market
7. LEARNING FROM GRASSROOTS
   National Learning Group meets *sanghams*

DVD 3: A NEW GRASSROOTS GLOBALISM IN ACTION

8. FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL
   The long march of DDS *Sanghams*
9. IN THE LAP OF PACHAMAMA, BHOOTALLI, MOTHER EARTH
   Sangham women visit Quechua communities in Peru

In recognition of the significant work done by the Community Media Trust in fighting genetic engineering in agriculture, the *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* project decided to include in this video package the following additional three films on Bt Cotton done by the CMT:

DVD 4: GRASSROOTS CONFRONT GENETIC ENGINEERING

10. WHY ARE WARANGAL FARMERS ANGRY WITH BT COTTON?
11. BT COTTON IN ANDHRA PRADESH
    A three year fraud
12. A DISASTER IN SEARCH OF SUCCESS
    Bt cotton in Global South

The research documented in the last three films on Bt cotton, and the films themselves, were supported by HIVOS, InterPares, Misereor, Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED) and IIED.

Film 1. Onwards to Food Sovereignty. The alternative Public Distribution System of the DDS

The video first briefly describes the social and ecological impacts of the Green Revolution in India. Green Revolution agriculture has largely bypassed the needs of rural people and their complex, risk-prone and diverse environments in the drylands of India, which represents 65% of the country's arable land and where the majority of the poor and excluded live. India's Public Distribution System (PDS) has made it possible to re-distribute Green Revolution rice and wheat from well-endowed areas to food deficit regions. However, the video shows how PDS cereals like rice and wheat have displaced dryland farmers from their agriculture, undermined the nutrition and food security of poorer communities, marginalised women farmers, robbed farmers of markets for their cereals (sorghum and millets), and eroded biodiversity important for food, farming and ecosystem resilience.

The video highlights the outcomes of action research designed to rebuild village livelihood assets and local food sovereignty by setting up a decentralised, locally controlled and managed Public Distribution System (PDS) in a network of 77 villages in the drylands of Andhra Pradesh. This alternative PDS is known as the Community Grain Fund by villagers. It is a remarkable innovation by voluntary associations of women farmers (*sanghams*) in Medak District. The Community Grain Fund is based on:

- locally-grown dryland cereals (millets and sorghum) and the biodiversity rich farming systems of which they are a part
- local storage using indigenous knowledge and technologies, with women and village level organisations co-ordinating activities
- local distribution by women's *sanghams*, who allocate food grains according to their own criteria of poverty and well-being, taking affirmative action to support the most vulnerable and hungry in their communities
- local adaptive management and decentralised governance that is better suited to sustaining the dynamic and complex ecology of dryland environments.

The impacts of the alternative PDS on state government thinking and policy are presented at the end of this video film.

Duration: 33 mns

Film 2. Peoples' agenda for biodiversity. Mobile festivals of DDS

The Deccan Region of South India principally supports rainfed agriculture and is home to a fascinating biodiversity of crops. Millets, legumes, oilseeds and wild edible plants produce an incredible and diverse matrix in farmers' fields. Medak District in the south Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, where the Deccan Development Society (DDS) works, has thousands of amazing women farmers who have kept alive a vibrant diversity of plants and animals on their farms and in their fields.

These women, despite being marginalised and working marginalised lands, have courageously preserved and conserved agricultural biodiversity in the Deccan. The diversity sustained by these women is an unbroken tradition stretching back centuries and has inspired the DDS's biodiversity festivals.

Over the last seven years these festivals have travelled a remarkable distance.

- They have moved ecological agriculture from an environmentalist's agenda to a farmer's agenda.
- They have moved agro-biodiversity out of a sanitised laboratory environment into a vibrant community celebration.
- They have elevated agricultural biodiversity from the concern of small farmer groups to become a national concern.
- They have provided a new path and vision for the National Biodiversity Action Plan of a vast country like India.
- Through an exciting community process they have redefined ecology, agriculture, biodiversity and governance.

People's Agenda for Biodiversity faithfully chronicles the journey of the Mobile Biodiversity Festival organised by the *sanghams* and the Deccan Development Society.

Duration: 24 mns

Film 3. *Dalit* food systems. A new discourse in food and farming

The drylands of the Deccan Plateau in India support a wide variety of agricultural crops including sorghum, a range of millets, pulses and oilseeds, all of which grow under rainfed conditions. This rich cultivated biodiversity enables small farmers to deal with the dynamic complexity of their drought prone environments. The symbiotic relationship between these crops provides solutions to a wide range of problems faced in today's Indian agriculture such as management of soils and their fertility, pest control as well as minimising risk and uncertainty.

Many of these attributes are often recognised by agricultural scientists, thinkers and policy makers. In sharp contrast however, the many values of uncultivated biodiversity used by people for food, fodder and medicine have generally been unseen and neglected by the official discourse on food and farming.

This video film highlights the importance of Uncultivated Foods and how they have been an integral part of the Dalit Food System in the Deccan region of South India. As such it offers an entirely new perspective on rainfed farming and on what constitutes food security, women's knowledge systems and common property resources. The film shows how the margin between cultivated and uncultivated biodiversity in dalit food systems dissolves through women's day to day practice of collecting and cooking food, constituting a feminine landscape.

The number of uncultivated foods that are harvested in Medak district (Andhra Pradesh) greatly exceeds the number of cultivated species. Some 80 species of uncultivated leafy greens are locally used as foods and many dozens more species of uncultivated plants including roots, tubers and fruits. This vast array of 'wild' leafy greens, berries and fruits are sources of many nutrients, which are essential for growth and maintenance of normal health. Most of them are rich sources of calcium, iron, carotene, vitamin C, riboflavin and folic acid. Therefore they are a boon to pregnant and nursing women as well as to young children. Since they come at no monetary cost at all, they are a blessing for the poor. Dalits know it and have woven these uncultivated foods into their food system.

Quoting from several studies done by the Deccan Development Society and international partners the film establishes the irrefutable fact that local uncultivated foods top the nutritional charts on a multitude of counts. A number of dalit women featured in the film strongly testify that uncultivated foods offer them not only a variety of health and nutritional advantages but also huge medicinal properties. Above all they are a very tasty food.

Within the premises of dalit food systems which meet the challenges of drought, famine, malnutrition and poverty, Uncultivated Foods play a central role in both local production and consumption. This uncultivated biodiversity provides not just food security but also food sovereignty. It gives people control over a basic human need in food systems that are localised rather than globalised.

Duration: 29 mns

Film 4. Backyard bio-fertilisers. A technology brought home

A video describing the ecological, economic and social benefits of producing nutrient-rich compost using earthworms in locally-managed backyard units. Backyard vermi-composting and soil fertility management are intimately linked and put to effective use through rural peoples' knowledge, local organisations and co-ordinated action in the drylands of Medak District.

The video describes an inspiring example of people's autonomous control over eco-technologies that helps secure:

- income and livelihoods for marginalised small-scale farmers and rural people
- conservation and enhancement of functional biodiversity in farming systems, thereby eliminating the need to buy expensive chemical fertilisers from suppliers of external inputs
- locally-appropriate soil fertility management in dryland environments, enhancing sustainability and resilience in the face of change (climate, markets, government support…).

Duration: 5.45 mns



Film 5. A millet machine: an example of participatory technology development

A video account of a process in which women farmers and small-scale producers identified the need:

- to reduce the toil and long hours of work associated with the de-husking of millets
- for appropriate milling technology to de-husk and process millet grains for the market to meet a major need of the consumers and generate better income for marginalised dryland cereal cultivators.

University-trained engineers and non-literate farmers co-designed and tested new millet processing machines for village level use and repair.

Duration: 9 mns

Film 6. Markets of the walk outs. *Sanghams* control their market

The film begins by highlighting changes in the way food is marketed in India by contrasting traditional village-level markets with newly emerging supermarkets that sell both conventionally and organically grown produce. The film then describes the process that led to:

- the formation of platforms of small-scale producers and urban consumers that created new, locally controlled markets and food distribution networks based on the adaptive management of natural resources and local assets
- the opening of markets for the poor and outlets for organic produce such as the Ethnic Café in Zaheerabad (Medak District, Andhra Pradesh)
- regeneration of internally diverse dryland agriculture, livestock populations and common property resources
- the production of a series of cooking recipe films used to raise consumer awareness on the nutritional and cultural values of local foods
- generation of more income and livelihood security for marginalised small farmers
- improved nutrition for urban school kids through awareness-raising activities

Autonomous, local markets are important citizen spaces for the recovery of culture, healthy food, biodiversity and ecological sustainability. Regenerated local food systems and rural economies connect producers and consumers, thereby helping to enhance mutual understanding, trust and solidarity. Local citizens' control over the food system is also enhanced in this process of transformation.

Duration: 25 mns

Film 7. Learning from grassroots. National Learning Group meets *sanghams*

A National Learning Group (NLG) was set up to encourage critical reflection and action in the participatory research done on local food systems, biodiversity and livelihoods in Andhra Pradesh, India. The NLG met for a two-day long review of the action research in a rural part of Medak District (AP), in September 2004. This video highlights the main findings of this action research and the emerging issues identified for future co-inquiry, as seen from the perspective of local co-researchers and members of the National Learning Group who participated in this review and planning workshop.

Reversals in roles, location and relationships ensured that farmers' knowledge, analysis, presentations and agency were all centre stage in the workshop. The invited National Learning Group members, all university trained and highly visible professionals, were asked to contribute to an inter-cultural dialogue and meeting of different minds. NLG members, marginalised women farmers and small-scale producers engaged in an extended peer review process in which both disciplinary based science and rural people's experiential knowledge were included in the validation of methodologies, research outcomes, conclusions and policy recommendations for food, farming, environment and development.

Duration: 46 mns

Film 8. From local to global. The long march of DDS *sanghams*

Strengthening citizens' voices in policy processes on environment and development was an important objective of this action research. Ways of working aimed to integrate the production of new knowledge, the formulation of evidence-based policy and advocacy as a coherent and holistic process for transformation.

This video follows various strands of this action research that linked local voices with national and international policy-making. Highlights include:

- citizen engagement with the national policy debate on alternative Public Distribution Systems (PDS) and locally-controlled food security
- bottom-up planning and design of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)
- international farmer exchanges for mutual learning in Asia, Canada, the UK and Peru
- the introduction of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) in dryland farming and citizen-led research on risk and impact assessments
- citizens' juries ('*Prajateerpu*') and democratic deliberation on policies on the future of food and farming in Andhra Pradesh.

Duration: 44 mns

Film 9. In the lap of Pacha Mama, Bhootalli, Mother Earth. *Sangham* women visit Quechua communities in Peru

This video film describes a farmer-to-farmer exchange in which a group of eight farmers from the Deccan drylands of Andhra Pradesh (India) travelled to Peru to share their knowledge with, and learn from, indigenous peoples in the Andes. In Peru they moved along the trails of the Inca civilisation and marvelled at the wild and domesticated biodiversity nurtured by their hosts – the Kechua Amaraya communities of the Potato Park in the province of Cusco. The farmers from Andhra Pradesh also participated in the women-controlled barter markets in the Lares mountains and the worship of Pacha Mama. Each of these experiences helped deepen their spiritual bond with the Earth and broaden their understanding of the concept of non-monetary affluence. In turn, the small farmers from Andhra Pradesh shared their knowledge on how to document and record indigenous knowledge on biodiversity using Community Biodiversity Registers, both written and filmed. There was also a rich exchange of experience and know-how between the video film makers of the Andean and the Deccan communities. The Indian farmers and Andean indigenous peoples engaged in a cross cultural dialogue to explore better ways of protecting their rich traditional knowledge. They agreed to continue exchanging and working together in the future to defend their rights.

Duration: 28 mn

Film 10. Why are Warangal Farmers Angry with Bt Cotton?

This film, made by the women farmers of Community Media Trust, Pastapur in Medak District of AP, is a powerful documentation of the trauma that Bt cotton farmers experienced in 2002-03, in Warangal (Andhra Pradesh).

Warangal District in Andhra Pradesh attracted the attention of the world when more than 200 cotton farmers, caught in the vicious cycle of pest attacks, pesticide resistance and mounting debts found no way out but to commit mass suicide. For an agrochemical industry like Mahyco-Monsanto Biotech Ltd., this was an ideal opportunity to promote their genetic engineering (GE) technology. In the 2002 *Kharif season*, this seed company released two Bt cotton hybrids viz., MECH Bt 12, and MECH Bt-162 in Warangal district.

This led the AP Coalition in Defence of Diversity and the Deccan Development Society in Andhra Pradesh to initiate a study called *Did Bt Cotton Save Farmers In Warangal District?* The film *Why are Warangal Farmers Angry with Bt Cotton?* is a part of this larger study and brings alive the story of four farmers, and the roller coaster experiences of others like them, who planted Bt cotton in their fields and suffered severe losses.

To tell this story, the women filmmakers from the *Community Media Trust* returned tenaciously to Warangal, month after month, both in cold winter and searing summer, sought out their farmer focus groups, cajoled them to share their information and opinion on the positive and negative impacts of Bt cotton, and video recorded all interviews and observations.

Independently, as well as a part of its larger parental study (see below), this film is a genuine representation of the experience of Bt cotton farmers in Warangal district. Through its sheer authenticity, this film nails the propaganda lies of the biotech industry and reveals the dangers of genetically-engineered crops for small-scale, dryland farmers.'

Duration: 25 mns

Film 11. Bt Cotton in Andhra Pradesh. A three year fraud

Bt cotton is the first genetically modified organism (GMO) to have entered India. It was introduced in 2002 in Warangal District, in the South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. It has brought in its wake a trail of misery, destruction and death, particularly among small and marginal farming families. While Bt cotton made its entry into Warangal, it was backed up with a massive advertising blitz which promised three things to farmers who grew it: *i) your pesticide use will be less; ii) your cultivation costs will reduce; iii) your yields and profits will increase.*

However, a citizen-led study carried out over a period of three years chronicles the fraudulent promises of the industry and the impacts of Bt cotton in Warangal. While farmers did incur marginally less expenditure on their pesticide use, their cost of cultivation went up. Yields and profits came down considerably.

This three-year study of Bt cotton was initiated by the AP Coalition in Defence of Diversity and the Deccan Development Society in collaboration with the Permaculture Association of India. The study, *Bt Cotton in Andhra Pradesh: A Three Year Assessment*, was published in 2005.

The film *Bt Cotton in Andhra Pradesh: A three year fraud* was part of the study and captured the more qualitative dimensions of the crisis experienced by farmers. The film brings alive the voices and images of farmers who went through a deadly nightmare as they tried to grow Bt cotton. The film vividly brings out the experiences of a number of farmers as they narrate their stories of terrible loss, deep pain, and cold anger, leading to explosive violence and even death.

To make this film, the women film makers of the Community Media Trust have travelled to Warangal month after month, braving the scorching sun, carrying their equipment, walking miles into farmers' fields, talking to farmers, especially women, building friendships and generating insightful interviews. They have filmed the false promises of Bt cotton at every stage and analysed the reasons with farmers. The last year of their filming was led by Eedulapally Manjula and was supported by Matoor Shakuntala, Nagwar Kavita, Ippapalle Mollamma, Humnapur Laxmamma, Borancha Sangamma and Pastapur Chinna Narsamma. Being small and marginal farmers themselves, the media women of CMT have sensitively captured the images and voices of the Bt cotton farmers in crisis. The brilliance and invaluable nature of their effort cannot be adequately described.

Duration: 30 mns



Film 12. A disaster in search of success. Bt Cotton in the global South

Bt cotton is a cotton variety that has been genetically engineered for resistance to some of its key insect pests. The pros and cons of Bt cotton are one of the most hotly debated subjects around the world. The biotech industry has made unprecedented claims and promises about Bt cotton, extensively advertising and promoting the benefits of such genetically modified organisms (GMOs) for farmers and the environment. However, the experience of Bt cotton farmers in many countries of the Global South completely contradict the claims of the industry.

Makhathini region in South Africa has been showcased by Monsanto as the grand success of Bt cotton for small farmers. In reality today, Makhathini groans under the burden of Bt cotton which has totally failed its small farmers. Indonesia kicked out Bt cotton just one year after it began to be grown by farmers in Sulawasi. In Thailand, Bt cotton has been cunningly promoted by the biotech industry by subverting national laws. In India, the industry touted Bt cotton as the panacea for cotton farmers' misery. But within five years of being introduced, Bt cotton cultivation has generated a deep crisis and death among farming communities. In order to avoid a similar fate, a Citizens' Jury in Mali (West Africa) that included different types of farmers rejected Bt cotton's entry into their country. The farmers' jury issued a stiff warning to the Malian government, demanding that no genetically engineered crops be allowed into Mali.

A group of farmer-filmmakers from the DDS Community Media Trust, all women, have travelled to all these countries and documented their experiences in *A Disaster in Search of Success.* This film is a scathing indictment of the biotech industry's machinations and manipulation of information. Through the voices and images of farmers from South Africa, Indonesia, India and Mali the film A Disaster in Search of Success unmasks these intrigues and brings forward the more authentic perspectives of farmers harmed by this new technology.

This film is a direct outcome of the Joint Advocacy Project on *GMOs: a threat to Food Sovereignty* by the partners of the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), Germany. This film was funded by the EED with co-funding from the Sustainable Agriculture, Biodiversity and Livelihoods Progamme of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), UK.

Duration: 50 mns

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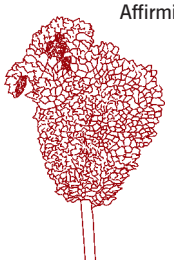


Annex 1. Research Agreements and Code of Ethics

The Code of Research Ethics adopted for IIED's *Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods* has its origins in the Declaration of Belem agreed upon in 1988 at the Founding of the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE), in Brazil (see http://www.diversefoodsystems.org/wowcode.html). The original and then revised version (2006) of the Code of Ethics of the ISE was included as part of the research agreement between IIED and the local partners in India. This Code of Ethics was annexed to the contract signed between IIED and the DDS.

International Society of Ethnobiology Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics of the International Society of Ethnobiology (ISE) provides a framework for decision-making and conduct for ethnobiological research and related activities. This Code of Ethics has its origins in the Declaration of Belém agreed upon in 1988 at the Founding of the International Society of Ethnobiology (in Belém, Brazil). It has been developed over the course of more than a decade and is the culmination of a series of consensus-based discussion processes involving the ISE Membership.

The Code of Ethics is comprised of four parts: (i) Preamble, (ii) Purpose, (ii) Principles, and (iv) Practical Guidelines. The Code of Ethics reflects the vision of the ISE as stated in Article 2.0:

The ISE is committed to achieving a greater understanding of the complex relationships, both past and present that exist within and between human societies and their environments. The Society endeavors to promote a harmonious existence between humankind and the Biosphere for the benefit of future generations. Ethnobiologists recognize that Indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities are critical to the conservation of biological, cultural and linguistic diversity.

All Members of the ISE are bound in good faith to abide by the Code of Ethics as a condition of membership.

Preamble

The concept of 'mindfulness' is an important value embedded in this Code, which invokes an obligation to be fully aware of ones knowing and unknowing, doing and undoing, action and inaction.

It is acknowledged that much research has been undertaken in the past without the sanction or prior informed consent of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities and that such research has caused harm and adversely impacted their rights and responsibilities related to biocultural heritage.[a]

The ISE is committed to working in genuine partnership and collaboration with Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to avoid perpetuating these past injustices and build towards developing positive, beneficial and harmonious relationships in the field of ethnobiology.

The ISE recognises that culture and language are intrinsically connected to land and territory, and cultural and linguistic diversity are inextricably linked to biological diversity. Therefore, the ISE recognizes the responsibilities and rights of Indigenous, traditional and local peoples to the preservation and continued development of their cultures and languages and to the control of their lands, territories and traditional resources are key to the perpetuation of all forms of diversity on Earth.

Purpose

The Purpose of this Code of Ethics is to facilitate establishing ethical and equitable relationships:

i. to optimise the positive outcomes and reduce as much as possible the adverse effects of research (in all its forms, including applied research and development work) and related activities of ethnobiologists that can disrupt or disenfranchise Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities from their customary and chosen lifestyles; and

a Biocultural heritage is the cultural heritage (both the tangible and intangible including customary law, folklore, spiritual values, knowledge, innovations and practices) and biological heritage (diversity of genes, varieties, species and ecosystem provisioning, regulating, and cultural services) of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities, which often are inextricably linked through the interaction between peoples and nature over time and shaped by their socio-ecological and economic context. This heritage includes the landscape as the spatial dimension in which the evolution of Indigenous biocultural heritage takes place. This heritage is passed on from generation to generation, developed, owned and administered collectively by stakeholder communities according to customary law.

ii. to provide a set of principles and practices to govern the conduct of all Members of the ISE who are involved in or proposing to be involved in research in all its forms, especially that concerning collation and use of traditional knowledge or collections of flora, fauna, or any other element of biocultural heritage found on community lands or territories.

The ISE recognises, supports and prioritises the efforts of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to undertake and own their research, collections, images, recordings, databases and publications. This Code of Ethics is intended to enfranchise Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities conducting research within their own society, for their own use.

This Code of Ethics also serves to guide ethnobiologists and other researchers, business leaders, policy makers, governments, non-government organisations. academic institutions, funding agencies and others seeking meaningful partnerships with Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities and thus to avoid the perpetuation of past injustices to these peoples. The ISE recognises that, for such partnerships to succeed, all relevant research activities (i.e., planning, implementation, analysis, reporting, and application of results) must be collaborative. Consideration must be given to the needs of all humanity, and to the maintenance of robust scientific standards, whilst recognizing and respecting the cultural integrity of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities.

A commitment to meaningful collaboration and reciprocal responsibility by all parties is needed to achieve the purpose of this Code of Ethics and the objectives of the ISE.

This Code of Ethics recognizes and honors traditional and customary laws, protocols, and methodologies extant within the communities where collaborative research is proposed. It should enable but not over-ride such community-level processes and decision-making structures. It should facilitate the development of community-centered, mutually-negotiated research agreements that serve to strengthen community goals.

Principles

The Principles of this Code embrace, support, and embody the concept and implementation of traditional resource rights[b] as articulated in established principles

b Traditional resources rights is defined by Posey and Dutfield (1996:3) as follows: "The term 'traditional' refers to the cherished practices, beliefs, customs, knowledge and cultural heritage of indigenous and local communities who live in close association with the Earth; 'resource' is used in its broadest sense to mean all knowledge and technology, aesthetic and spiritual qualities, tangible and intangible sources that together, are deemed by local communities to be necessary to ensure healthy and fulfilling lifestyles for present and future generations; and 'rights' refers to the basic inalienable guarantee to all human beings and the collective entities in which they choose to participate of the necessities to achieve and maintain the dignity and well-being of themselves, their predecessors, and their descendants."

and practices of international instruments and declarations including, but not limited to, those documents referred to in Annex 2 of the ISE Constitution. The Principles also facilitate compliance with the standards set by national and international law and policy and customary practice. The following Principles are the fundamental assumptions that form this Code of Ethics.

1. Principle of Prior Rights and Responsibilities

This principle recognises that Indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities have prior, proprietary rights over, interests in and cultural responsibilities for all air, land, and waterways, and the natural resources within them that these peoples have traditionally inhabited or used, together with all knowledge, intellectual property and traditional resource rights associated with such resources and their use.

2. Principle of Self-Determination

This principle recognises that Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities have a right to self-determination (or local determination for traditional and local communities) and that researchers and associated organisations will acknowledge and respect such rights in their dealings with these peoples and their communities.

3. Principle of Inalienability

This principle recognises the inalienable rights of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities in relation to their traditional territories and the natural resources (including biological and genetic resources) within them and associated traditional knowledge. These rights are collective by nature but can include individual rights. It shall be for Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to determine for themselves the nature, scope and alienability of their respective resource rights regimes.

4. Principle of Traditional Guardianship

This principle recognises the holistic interconnectedness of humanity with the ecosystems of our Sacred Earth and the obligation and responsibility of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to preserve and maintain their role as traditional guardians of these ecosystems through the maintenance of their cultures, identities, languages, mythologies, spiritual beliefs and customary laws and practices, according to the right of self-determination.

5. Principle of Active Participation

This principle recognises the crucial importance of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities to actively participate in all phases of research and

related activities from inception to completion, as well as in application of research results. Active participation includes collaboration on research design to address local needs and priorities, and prior review of results before publication or dissemination to ensure accuracy of information and adherence to the standards represented by this Code of Ethics.

6. Principle of Full Disclosure

This principle recognises that Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities are entitled to be fully informed about the nature, scope and ultimate purpose of the proposed research (including objective, methodology, data collection, and the dissemination and application of results). This information is to be given in forms that are understood and useful at a local level and in a manner that takes into consideration the body of knowledge, cultural preferences and modes of transmission of these peoples and communities.

7. Principle of Educated Prior Informed Consent

Educated prior informed consent must be established before any research is undertaken, at individual and collective levels, as determined by community governance structures. Prior informed consent is recognised as an ongoing process that is based on relationship and maintained throughout all phases of research. This principle recognises that prior informed consent requires an educative process that employs bilingual and intercultural education methods and tools, as appropriate, to ensure understanding by all parties involved. Establishing prior informed consent also presumes that all directly affected communities will be provided complete information in an understandable form regarding the purpose and nature of the proposed programme, project, study or activities, the probable results and implications, including all reasonably foreseeable benefits and risks of harm (be they tangible or intangible) to the affected communities. Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities have the right to make decisions on any programme, project, study or activities that directly affect them. In cases where the intentions of proposed research or related activities are not consistent with the interests of these peoples, societies or communities, they have a right to say no.

8. Principle of Confidentiality

This principle recognises that Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities, at their sole discretion, have the right to exclude from publication and or to have kept confidential any information concerning their culture, identity, language, traditions, mythologies, spiritual beliefs or genomics. Parties to the research have a responsibility to be aware of and comply with local systems for management of knowledge and local innovation, especially as related to sacred and secret knowledge. Furthermore, such confidentiality shall be guaranteed by

researchers and other potential users. Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities also have the rights to privacy and anonymity, at their discretion.

9. Principle of Respect

This principle recognises the necessity for researchers to respect the integrity, morality and spirituality of the culture, traditions and relationships of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities with their worlds.

10. Principle of Active Protection

This principles recognises the importance of researchers taking active measures to protect and to enhance the relationships of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities with their environment and thereby promote the maintenance of cultural and biological diversity.

11. Principle of Precaution

This principle acknowledges the complexity of interactions between cultural and biological communities, and thus the inherent uncertainty of effects due to ethnobiological and other research. The precautionary principle advocates taking proactive, anticipatory action to identify and to prevent biological or cultural harms resulting from research activities or outcomes, even if cause-and-effect relationships have not yet been scientifically proven. The prediction and assessment of such biological and cultural harms must include local criteria and indicators, thus must fully involve indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities. This also includes a responsibility to avoid the imposition of external or foreign conceptions and standards.

12. Principle of Reciprocity, Mutual Benefit and Equitable Sharing

This principle recognises that Indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities are entitled to share in and benefit from tangible and intangible processes, results and outcomes that accrue directly or indirectly and over the shorter and longer term for ethnobiological research and related activities that involve their knowledge and resources. Mutual benefit and equitable sharing will occur in ways that are culturally appropriate and consistent with the wishes of the community involved.

13. Principle of Supporting Indigenous Research

This principle recognizes and supports the efforts of Indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities in undertaking their own research based on their own epistemologies and methodologies, in creating their own knowledge-sharing mechanisms, and in utilising their own collections and databases in accordance with their self-defined needs. Capacity-building, training exchanges and technology

transfer for communities and local institutions to enable these activities should be included in research, development and co-management activities to the greatest extent possible.

14. Principle of The Dynamic Interactive Cycle

This principle recognises that research and related activities should not be initiated unless there is reasonable assurance that all stages can be completed from (a) preparation and evaluation, to (b) full implementation, to (c) evaluation, dissemination and return of results to the communities in comprehensible and locally appropriate forms, to (d) training and education as an integral part of the project, including practical application of results. Thus, all projects must be seen as cycles of continuous and on-going communication and interaction.

15. Principle of Remedial Action

This principle recognises that every effort will be made to avoid any adverse consequences to Indigenous peoples, traditional societies, and local communities from research and related activities and outcomes. Not withstanding the application of standards set out by this Code of Ethics, should any such adverse consequence occur, discussion will be had with the local peoples or community concerned to decide on what remedial action may be necessary to redress or mitigate adverse consequences. Any such remedial action may include restitution, where appropriate and agreed.

16. Principle of Acknowledgement and Due Credit

This principle recognises that Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities must be acknowledged in accordance with their preference and given due credit in all agreed publications and other forms of dissemination for their tangible and intangible contributions to research activities. Co-authorship should be considered when appropriate. Acknowledgement and due credit to Indigenous peoples, traditional societies and local communities extend equally to secondary or downstream uses and applications and researchers will act in good faith to ensure the connections to original sources of knowledge and resources are maintained in the public record.

17. Principle of Diligence

This principle recognises that researchers are expected to have a working understanding of the local context prior to entering into research relationships with a community. This understanding includes knowledge of and willingness to comply with local governance systems, cultural laws and protocols, social customs and etiquette. Researchers are expected to conduct research in the local language to the degree possible, which may involve language fluency or employment of interpreters.

Practical Guidelines

The following guidelines are intended as a practical application of the preceding Principles. Recognising that this Code of Ethics is a living document that needs to adapt over time to meet changing understandings and circumstances, if guidelines have not yet been articulated for a given situation, the Principles should be used as the reference point for developing appropriate practices.

Similarly, it is recognized that Indigenous, traditional or local peoples conducting research within their own communities, for their own uses, may need to comply with their own cultural protocols and practices. In the event of inconsistency between such local requirements and these guidelines, all parties involved will commit to work collaboratively to develop appropriate practices.

The Practical Guidelines apply to any and all research, collections, databases, publications, images, audio or video recordings, or other products of research and related activities undertaken.

1. Prior to undertaking any research activities, a good understanding of the local community institution(s) with relevant authority and their interest in the research to be undertaken, as well as knowledge of cultural protocols of the community shall be developed. A thorough effort shall be made in good faith to enhance such understandings through ongoing communication and active participation throughout the duration of the research process.
2. Educated prior informed consent must be established prior to undertaking any research activities. Such consent is ideally represented in writing and or tape recording, uses language and format that are clearly understood by all parties to the research, and is developed with the persons or deliberating bodies identified as the most representative authorities from each potentially affected community.
3. As a component of educated prior informed consent, there will be full disclosure to potentially affected communities and mechanisms to ensure mutual understanding of the following, based on the reasonably foreseeable effects:
    a. The full range of potential benefits (tangible and intangible) to the communities, researchers and any other parties involved;
    b. The extent of reasonably foreseeable harms (tangible and intangible) to such communities;
    c. All relevant affiliations of the individual(s) or organization(s) seeking to undertake the activities, including where appropriate the contact information of institutional research ethics boards and copies of ethics board approvals for research;

d. All sponsors of the individual(s) or organization(s) involved in the undertaking of the activities.

e. Any intent to commercialise outcomes of the activities, or foreseeable commercial potential that may be of interest to the parties involved in the project, and or to third parties who may access project outcomes directly (e.g., by contacting researchers or communities) or indirectly (e.g., through the published literature).

4. Prior to undertaking research activities, the following must be ensured by research proponents:

   a. Full communication and consultation has been undertaken with potentially affected communities to develop the terms of the research in a way that complies with the Principles.

   b. Approval is granted in the manner defined by the local governance system of each affected community.

   c. Permissions and approvals have been granted from government as well as other local and national authorities, as required by local, national or international law and policy.

5. All persons and organizations undertaking research activities shall do so throughout in good faith, acting in accordance with, and with due respect for, the cultural norms and dignity of all potentially affected communities, and with a commitment that collecting specimens and information, whether of a zoological, botanical, mineral or cultural nature, and compiling data or publishing information thereon, means doing so only in the holistic context, respectful of norms and belief systems of the relevant communities. This includes supporting or creating provenance mechanisms to ensure collections are clearly traceable to their origins for purposes of due credit and acknowledgement, establishing "prior art" in the event of future ownership claims, and facilitating a re-consent process to develop new mutually-agreed terms for further use or applications of collections or derivatives of collections.

   Researchers are encouraged to register collected information in local databases and registries where they exist, and explore mechanisms such as community certificates of origin linked to databases. Researchers are encouraged to support and build capacity for community-based data management systems to the extent possible.

   Any intellectual property ownership claim or application related to the knowledge or associated resources from the collaboration research should not work against the cultural integrity or livelihood of communities involved.

6. Mutually-agreed terms and conditions of the research shall be set out in an agreement that uses language and format clearly understandable to all parties. The agreement will address and adhere to the following standards:

   a. Will be represented in writing and or tape recording if permitted by the community, using local language whenever possible. If writing or tape-recording are culturally prohibited, the parties shall work in collaboration to find an acceptable alternative form of documenting the terms of the agreement.

   b. Will be made with each potentially affected community after full disclosure, consultation, and establishment of educated prior informed consent regarding mutual benefit and equitable sharing, compensation, remedial action and any other issues arising between parties to the research.

   c. Will address the elements outlined in (6b) above as related to all foreseeable uses and property ownership issues of the research outcomes, including derivative forms they may take such as biological and other samples, photos, films, videotapes, audiotapes, public broadcasts, translations, communications through the electronic media, including the internet. This includes clear agreement on rights and conditions related to who holds, maintains, uses, controls, owns, and has rights to the research processes, data, and outcomes (direct and indirect).

   d. Will specify attribution, credit, authorship, co-authorship, and due acknowledgement for all contributors to the research processes and outcomes, recognizing and valuing academic as well as cultural and local expertises;

   e. Will specify how and in what forms the resulting information and outcomes shall be shared with each affected community. and ensure that access and forms are appropriate and acceptable to that community. Community data and information management systems, such as local registries and databases, shall be supported to the greatest extent possible.

   f. Will represent what understandings have been reached regarding what is potentially sacred, secret or confidential and how such will be treated and communicated, if at all, within and beyond the direct parties to the research.

7. Objectives, conditions and mutually-agreed terms should be totally revealed and agreed to by all parties prior to the initiation of research activities. It is recognised that collaborative research, by design, may be iterative, emergent and require modifications or adaptations. When such is the case, these changes shall be brought to the attention of and agreed to by all parties to the research.

8. All members of the ISE or affiliated organizations of ISE shall respect and comply with moratoriums by communities and countries on collection of information or

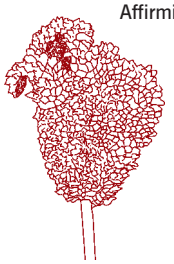
materials that they would otherwise intend to include in their research, unless such moratorium is lifted to allow the research.

9. All educational uses of research materials shall be consistent with a good faith respect for the cultural integrity of all affected communities, and, as much as practical, developed in collaboration with such communities for mutual use.

10. All existing project materials in the possession, custody or control of an ISE member or affiliated organization shall be treated in a manner consistent with this Code of Ethics. All affected communities shall be notified, to the extent possible, of the existence of such materials, and their right to equitable sharing, compensation, remedial action, ownership, repatriation or other entitlements, as appropriate. Prior informed consent shall not be presumed for uses of biocultural information in the "public domain" and diligence shall be used to ensure that provenance or original source(s) of the knowledge and associated resources are included and traceable, to the degree possible, in further publications, uses and other means of dissemination.

11. If during the cycle of a project it is determined that the practices of any parties to the research are harmful to components of an ecosystem, it shall be incumbent upon the parties to first bring such practices and the impacts thereof to the notice of the offenders and attempt to establish a mutually agreed conflict resolution process, prior to informing the local community and or government authorities of such practices and impacts.

12. ISE members shall in good faith endeavour to consider and ensure that project proposals, planning, and budgets are appropriate to collaborative interdisciplinary and cross-cultural research that complies with the ISE Code of Ethics. This may require prior consideration of elements such as: extended timeframes to enable permissions, development of mutually-agreed terms and ongoing communication; additional budget categories; research ethics and intellectual property ownership considerations that are in addition to or even inconsistent with policies of sponsoring institutions; additional reporting requirements and sharing of outcomes; and mechanisms and forms of communication with parties to the research activities, including the potential need for language fluency and translation. ISE members shall also endeavour to raise awareness among funding bodies, academic institutions and others about the increased time and costs that may be involved in adhering to this Code of Ethics.



Annex 2. Affirming Life and Diversity: a film series on four DVDs

The 12 films that make up the Affirming Life and Diversity series are grouped on four DVDs as follows:

DVD ONE: AUTONOMY OVER FOOD AND SEED

1. ONWARDS TO FOOD SOVEREIGNTY
   The Alternative Public Distribution System of DDS
2. PEOPLE'S AGENDA FOR BIODIVERSITY:
   Mobile festivals of DDS
3. DALIT FOOD SYSTEMS
   A new discourse in food and farming

DVD TWO: CONTROLLING TECHNOLOGY AND MARKETS

4. BACKYARD BIOFERTILISERS
   A technology brought home
5. A MACHINE FOR MILLET
   An example of participatory technology development
6. A MARKET OF THE WALKOUTS
   Sanghams control their market
7. LEARNING FROM GRASSROOTS
   National Learning Group meets *Sanghams*

DVD THREE: A NEW GRASSROOTS GLOBALISM IN ACTION

8. FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL
The long march of DDS *Sanghams*

9. IN THE LAP OF PACHAMAMA, BHOOTALLI, MOTHER EARTH
Sangham women visit Quechua communities in Peru

DVD FOUR: GRASSROOTS CONFRONT GENETIC ENGINEERING

10. WHY ARE WARANGAL FARMERS ANGRY WITH BT COTTON?

11. Bt COTTON IN ANDHRA PRADESH
A three year fraud

12. A DISASTER IN SEARCH OF SUCCESS
Bt Cotton in Global South

Affirming Life and Diversity
A video series

Produced as part of the initiative
Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods
a collaborative project of the Deccan Development Society (DDS) India
and
International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), UK.

The activities described in these films were supported by
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Sustaining Local Food Systems, Agricultural Biodiversity and Livelihoods
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and

Dr Michel Pimbert, International Institute for Environment and Development

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Punyamma, Zaheerabad
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Binoy Samuel

a film series by the
DDS Community Media Trust

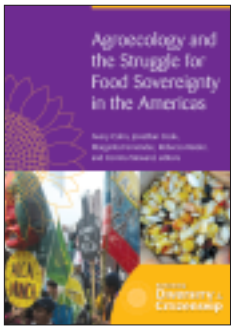
Related publications from IIED

Prajateerpu: A citizens' jury / scenario workshop on food and farming futures for Andhra Pradesh, India

Michel Pimbert and Tom Wakeford

Prajapeertu ('people's verdict') was devised as a means of allowing the people most affected by the Andhra Pradesh government's Vision 2020 for food and farming to shape a vision of their own. The members of the jury, drawn from communities of small and marginal farmers, interrogated a range of witnesses from government, civil society and the private sector, and compared alternative development models for the rural economy. They rejected land consolidation, displacement of rural people, contract farming, GM crops, and mechanisation, all of which formed part of Vision 2020, and instead called for self-reliance and community control over resources and recognition of local knowledge and institutions. This report covers the methodology and rationale for this deliberative process, and how the latter can be used to further citizen empowerment and political change.

Published by IIED, 2002. ISBN: 1 84369 191 4, 80pp

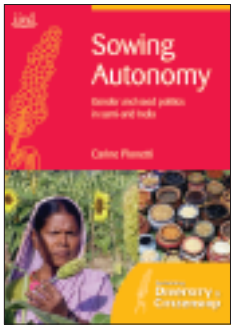


Agroecology and the Struggle for Food Sovereignty in the Americas

Avery Cohn, Jonathan Cook, Margarita Fernández, Rebecca Reider, and Corrina Steward, editors

This book examines the political, economic, cultural, and ecological dimensions of food sovereignty. It addresses a recurring question on how to build stronger relationships between academics and practitioners, including farmers and NGOs, working at the intersection of food, agricultural, and environmental issues. The book grew out of a workshop at Yale University on "Food Sovereignty, Conservation, and Social Movements for Sustainable Agriculture in the Americas". In the spirit of this unique workshop, the organizers have compiled this book, which synthesizes the proceedings, expands on insights derived there, and provides concrete recommendations to academics, policy-makers, farmers' movements, and other audiences.

Published by IIED and CEESP/IUCN, 2006. ISBN: 1 843 69601 0, 224pp



Sowing Autonomy. Gender and Seed Politics in Semi Arid India

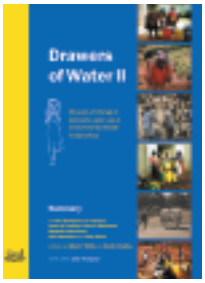
Carine Pionetti

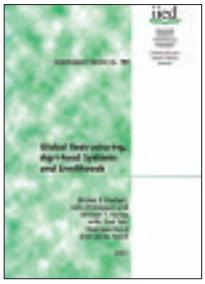
Women, through their multiple roles as farmers, livestock herders, cooks, gardeners, keepers of culinary traditions, seed custodians and healers, have played a major role in shaping biodiversity important for food and agriculture. The author of this book looks in particular at women's roles in agriculture and especially the important part women play in saving and reproducing seed in the drylands of the Deccan Plateau, in South India.

The author argues that a radical re-orientation in public policies is needed to support autonomous seed production in the drylands of South India. Poverty alleviation and biodiversity conservation both directly depend on a) the strengthening of diversity-based farming systems, b) institutional support for decentralised seed systems, and c) reversals in policies for technological and legal developments.

Published by IIED, 2005. ISBN: 1 84369 485 9, 162pp

Other publications from IIED





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