

CHENCHUS

in the Nagarjuna Sagar - Srisailam Tiger Reserve

Impact of Interventions made
under Project CHELE
(Chenchu Livelihoods Enhancement)

Vasu.C &
Dr. D. Suryakumari



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Preface

Empowerment and social upliftment of forest-dependent communities has been core area of work for Centre for People's Forestry (CPF). Conservation of resources and enabling livelihood security has been the key goal behind the interventions till now. With this same perspective, the Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve, a protected area, came under the lens of CPF in 2006, to support the Chenchu communities living there.

Titled "Project CHELE (Chenchu Livelihoods Enhancement)", the intervention was initiated in 2006. The project proposed to work for the holistic development of the Chenchus. Implementation was preceded with a baseline study to understand the ground status. It brought out the issues existing in the community and the challenges hindering their socio-economic development. This led to planning the relevant interventions. The first phase, spanning four years, focused on enhancing their methods of harvesting honey, one of the main occupations of the community. The community was introduced to and trained on effective processes of honey harvesting. This phase also laid focus on collection of NTFP.

The second phase began with need-based planning of activities, where the requirements of the community were first understood through a consultation and interventions were planned accordingly. This phase, which was for a similar period of four years, focused on sustaining the development of the community by introducing agriculture as a larger livelihood activity and improving health and education facilities. A multi-pronged strategy was used for implementation. Treatment of lands under MGNREGA was a major activity. Partnerships with government and non-government organisations were an important component in project management, in both the phases.

This report has been put together to share these experiences of processes adopted and changes that occurred, benefitting the community. The results given in this report are an outcome of the yearly and quarterly reporting by the project and of an Impact study conducted. The study was carried out to specifically understand the changes in income generation and access to better rural infrastructure and facilities due to the intervention.

Dr. D. Suryakumari

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Way Forward



CPF has been empowering forest communities to manage and conserve their forests and in the process, gain livelihood security. The approach has been people-centric, building capacities and diversifying skills of the community. Action included microplans, forest diversity registers, and updates to track changes and trends, as well as resource management guidance for sustainable harvests. Treatment of forest land for effective watershed management, balancing livestock needs with responsible forestry, integrated farming, value added forest produce – all meld into one whole harmonious system of managing and conserving both forests and livelihoods.

CHELE Project in NTSR¹

The Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve, a protected area, came under the lens in 2006, to support the Chenchu communities living there, in particular the honey harvesters. Close association with the Chenchus led to working for their holistic development, a trend that extended to other forest communities with whom CPF works. A common thread in all associations is the leveraging of MGNREGS funds for the creation of wages for Chenchus and for community assets based on natural resources.

The Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR) in the Nallamalla forest chain is one of the well-known sources of forest honey in India. Among its tribal communities, the largest group, the Chenchus, derive their main livelihood from the collection of forest honey, but their traditional methods of collection are considered unsafe, harmful to the bees and to the forest and general ecosystems. As a result bee colonies were fewer and the quality of honey poorer, fetching lower prices. The youth were not keen to continue in this profession, and with decimated bee populations, the forest and general ecosystem would suffer, as bees are natural pollinators.



¹ 10 year Report of CPF

To address these concerns, during 2006–2010, CPF capacitated around 1056 available resources, to make them receptive to scientifically sustainable methods of harvest and use. CPF began helping the Chenchus with sustainable honey harvesting. This brought about positive changes in honey harvesting. As a direct result, with increased health safety and quality of the product, Chenchu households had a 20 per cent income enhancement through honey in three years. The techniques of forest honey harvesting were also replicated in a few villages in Vishakhapatnam district and two villages in Nabarangapur district of Odisha. The programme morphed into a holistic one that included land development, agriculture and allied livelihoods, health and education.



The Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve (NSTR) is spread over an area of 3,568 sq km. The NSTR was the only tiger reserve in the former undivided state of Andhra Pradesh, now in the states of Telangana and the residuary Andhra Pradesh. It was established in 1978 and elevated to the status of “Tiger Reserve” in 1983. This sanctuary area falls in five districts viz. Mahabubnagar (Achampet division), Kurnool (Atmakur division), Prakasam (Markapur division) Nalgonda and Guntur (Nagarjunasagar division). The Reserve, with forests of mixed, dry deciduous type, is a safe abode for diverse flora and fauna. The important species found in this Reserve along the river Krishna, are teak, bamboo, Terminias (*catappa*, *arjuna*), Hardwickias (*binata*), Anogeissus (*latifolia*) and many medicinal plants, numbering in the hundreds, at least. Vegetation density in the Tiger Reserve ranges from 0.4 to 0.7. Grazing and NTFP collection is allowed in the Tiger Reserve except in the core (wilderness) area.

Chenchus²

The Chenchus are a primitive tribal group who live in small groups of huts, called *gudem* or *penta*. They were mostly hunter gatherers, who depended primarily on a barter system of economy. The Chenchus are a predominant community here, followed by other tribes – the Lambada and the Erukula. There are 115 Chenchu villages (*pentas/gudems*) in the Tiger Reserve. As per the statistics provided by the ITDA, there are an average of 31 households in each of the 338 Chenchu *pentas/gudems* spread across the six districts of the territorial jurisdiction of the Chenchu ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency) with an average family size of four members per household. The ITDA includes Rangareddy district as well. Among the 115 EDCs (eco-development committees) constituted in the core and buffer zones of the tiger reserve, 50 are exclusive *Chenchu* habitations and the remaining have mixed populations of *Chenchus* and other tribes. From the point of view of livelihoods, up to 70 per cent of the tribal members of both EDCs and VSSs depend on forest produce (NTFP).



² Baseline Study Report

Household Demographics (based on the Baseline study (3009 HHs) conducted by CPF in 2007–08)

Dwellings

Most of the community lives in *pucca* houses (brick and masonry structures), which are currently in a dilapidated state, built under programmes of the state and central governments (Indiramma Pathakam and IAY respectively). As many as one-fourth of the households dwelt in huts and less than one-tenth of the households lived in temporary hutments.

Facilities

- Drinking water facility is ubiquitous in its presence. Barring six households (0.1 per cent) from Achampet and Atmakur forest divisions, all the other households had this facility.
- 90 per cent of the households had a kitchen and 84.4 per cent had the kitchen attached to the main dwelling
- Sanitation appears to be lax as only four per cent reported having toilet facilities and, shockingly, none of the sample households in Atmakur and Nagarjuna Sagar forest divisions had this facility.

- Some households are still without an electricity connection (where the habitation is electrified). However, all households from Nagarjunasagar forest division had a domestic electricity connection.

Material Possessions

The radio is relatively more prevalent, distantly followed by televisions, bicycles and telephones. Other items present in few households include motorbikes. Only a few households had locally made ploughs or iron ploughs.

Livelihoods

Agriculture, business and horticulture are important sources of household income across the study area. At the forest divisional level, agriculture is important in Achampet and Markapur, while business and labour are mostly undertaken in Atmakur and Nagarjunasagar respectively. Despite 73.6 per cent of households participating in NTFP activities, it turns out to be the poorest contributor, not only at the aggregate level but also across forest divisions.





Household Expenditure

For the group as a whole, the total expenditure per month per household works out to Rs 923. This is Rs 11,076 per annum. Expectedly, food accounts for a major chunk (29 per cent) of the total expenditure, followed by clothing (24 per cent), health (21 per cent), rituals (19 per cent), housing (4 per cent) and education (3 per cent). The relatively high expenditure on clothing is difficult to explain. Interestingly, even in each individual district the same pattern is witnessed as at the aggregate level.

NTFP

Most of the community engaged themselves in the collection of various forest produce. Honey is the most important forest produce. Next in importance is *mahua* collection; *tendu*-leaf collection, *amla* collection, fruit collection were other NTFP activities. Most of the households collected such produce from a forest close to the village, signifying the importance of the health of the forests around the habitations of these communities.

The different forest produce are collected at different times of the year, when they are ready for harvesting. For the Chenchus, April–September is a critical period for collecting forest produce. Nearly two-thirds reported collecting produce during this period, while the rest collected equally during January–March and October–December. However, there is considerable variation in the collection periods between forest divisions.

Most of the households surveyed sold their produce to the Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) avoiding the middlemen. However, there are still a few dependent on the middlemen (*sahukars*).





Coping Mechanisms During Livelihood Crisis

Migration

Migration is one of the important livelihood opportunities explored by rural households. However, in the study, the incidence of migration reported was insignificant (24 households or 0.8 per cent of the total 3009 households) and these households were only from Achampet division. Among these 24 households, 18 migrated to places within the district (in fact two households did so within their mandal) during the period of June–December, prior to the project intervention.³ They worked as labourers at construction sites and their earnings ranged between Rs 7500 and Rs 10,000 in eight cases and over Rs 10,000 for the rest.

Dependence on other Persons or Government Aid

As discussed earlier, the average income from all sources per household was around Rs.11,000, which is just about half of the poverty-line income per household. Many of them would turn to their close kin in times of difficulties. However, at Achampet there were households who would turn to the government. There were some households that could consider mortgaging their assets to meet their obligations.

³ Baseline Study Report





Community participation

EDC

At the aggregate level, 44 per cent of the households reported being members of the EDC. Achampet had the lowest proportion of members (16 per cent), while Markapur registered the highest (58 per cent).

Village committees

26 per cent of the households held memberships in other village committees. In Achampet and Nagarjunasagar, 59 and 78 per cent of households respectively are members of other village committees, while in Atmakur only a lone case of other membership was reported.

Participation of women

When compared to men, the participation rate of women is higher by nearly three percentage points (38 per cent) across forest divisions. It ranged from 96 per cent in Nagarjunasagar to 13 per cent in Atmakur forest division.

Developmental activities

A little over half of the respondents reported they were aware of developmental activities in their village and with the exception of Markapur, this was true for all forest divisions. When asked about their participation, about 70 per cent said they participated in the activities. Achampet and Nagarjunasagar registered larger participation ratios as compared to other forest divisions. Everywhere, participation was by way of contributory labour and by raising queries at village meetings.

Rituals

Members of every household reported that they celebrate traditional rituals.

Challenges Faced by the Community

The following problems in the region contribute to the destruction of forest resources and to the backwardness of the local, tribal communities:

- ✔ Vested interests, people from nearby towns and Hyderabad city lure the tribals into engaging in illegal activities such as smuggling, hunting, etc.
- ✔ People are employed in unsustainable extraction of medicinal plants, by middlemen engaged in the illicit trade of herbs.
- ✔ Landlords of neighbouring villages and towns use the Chenchus to rear their cattle (unproductive cows), goats and sheep. Knowing that they themselves cannot use the forest areas, they encourage the tribals to take their animals into the forests for grazing, this contributing to the degradation of the forest. As a result, even though the tribals do not own many grazing animals, the pressure on forests has increased. Such activity is detrimental to the interests of the tiger population in the sanctuary.

- Though the GCC (Girijan Cooperative Corporation) offers good prices for the forest produce, all tribal NTFP collectors do not get the benefits, as people belonging to the economically better-off segments from amongst the tribals or the BC community and middlemen procure the produce from the tribals under the barter system or at very low prices, and sell it at the GCC centres. Thus these middlemen benefit from the GCC services, while the largely unorganised tribal communities that actually work in the forests to get the NTFP do not benefit, as a result of lack of awareness.





Phase I: Strengthening NTFP extraction and honey harvesting

The CHELE project was implemented in two phases. In the first phase the project looked at strengthening the core livelihood activities of the community. It focused on improving the processes of NTFP extraction, to make it sustainable. It fulfilled this objective through trainings given to capacitate the community members who are involved in collection. Linkages were built with concerned officials and organisations to improve service delivery.

Issues Uncovered

Livelihood status of wild honey collectors

Wild honey collectors belonging to the Chenchu tribe (Primitive Tribal Group) living in the Srisaïlam Tiger Reserve area, earn a substantial part of their annual income by collecting and selling wild honey (about 80 kg/person/year at Rs 80/kg). They have been using traditional methods for honey collection, which are unsafe to the collectors, perilous to the bees, unsustainable for the forest ecosystem and unhygienic for the consumers. The youth have lost interest in collecting wild honey due to the risks involved and the absence of alternative interventions. The fear of Naxals in these interior areas looms large and many field functionaries of government agencies are unenthusiastic to work for the cause of the Chenchus in general and of honey collectors in particular. In addition, there is shortage of (around 25 per cent) of staff in the Forest Department (FD), the GCC and the ITDA. This contributes to the stark reality that most government interventions are generally confined to the fringe hamlets. The imposition of a ban on Naxal outfits by the State Government has led to combing operations by the police, which add to the problems of the people, who are caught between the police and the Naxals.

Sustainable honey collection is important not only in the interests of the honey collectors, but also critical for the regeneration of the forest and for the health of the forest ecosystem, as the honey bees contribute by serving as pollinators for the cross-pollinating species.

It has been proved elsewhere (Maharashtra) that with sustainable harvest practices, potential yields of honey can be doubled (at least). Using safe methods of harvesting honey, the tribal youth can look at honey collection as a lucrative employment option.

As of now, GCC's Srisaïlam division procures about 500 quintals of honey each year. Some honey is also being marketed through informal channels for which no account is available. It is estimated that at least a thousand honey collectors of the Chenchu tribe make a living collecting wild honey in the Tiger Reserve.

Status of wild honey collection at the time of intervention and the consequences of it

- 🌿 The traditional method of collection is destructive to wild flora and the bees, adversely affecting the forest ecosystem as it involves preparation of ropes from barks of trees, burning combustible material and smoke to drive away bees with destructive removal of the entire hive
- 🌿 Squeezing of the bee hive is not desirable as it adversely affects the quality of honey and destroys the eggs and larvae
- 🌿 Destructive collection practices such as burning and smoke kill the bees or drive them away reducing the potential collection of wild honey over time
- 🌿 If honey is not regularly harvested, bees become inactive
- 🌿 Low bee populations, migration of bees and inactivity of bees reduces cross-pollination of plant species, which adversely affects – NTFP (fruit and seed type of cross-pollinated species) production and natural regeneration of wild flora

AP Forest Department and Government's position on the Chenchus in the Tiger Reserve

The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department and the AP State Government recognise the Chenchus, the primitive tribal group living in the Tiger Reserve as the natural inhabitants of the area and have no inclination to relocate them because of the sanctuary. Moreover, they intend to initiate or support any initiative that contributes to the development of the Chenchu community. This has been made very clear to the team that met the Chief Wild Life Warden during the appraisal of the project by the Programme Officer, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT). Interactions with officials of ITDA and GCC too revealed a strong need for a project of this nature in the area.

Project Management – Implementation Processes

- 🌿 Building linkages between local NGOs, GCC, ITDA and Forest Department functionaries for better service delivery
- 🌿 Maintaining baseline database about the 1000 honey collectors (income levels and other socio-economic details); the condition of forests around the 115 intervention villages, number of bee hives, quantity of honey collected and information on collectors
- 🌿 Workshop regarding rock bee honey collection; tiger reserves and PTGs
- 🌿 Post-training follow up
- 🌿 Process documentation
- 🌿 Establishment of Support Service Units at Achampet and Dornala
- 🌿 Impact assessment



Partnerships

Communities (Primary Stakeholders)

The project was intended to be implemented through Common Enterprise Groups (CEGs) formed especially for the purpose, with groups of honey collectors within the EDCs (eco-development committees), which are the existing community institutions created by the Forest Department. All households of a particular *penta* are members of the EDC. Though these institutions were created at the community level, institution building was not adequately attempted and hence they were mostly passive. The project, through its intervention, focused on institution building. This was initiated through the project work with wild honey collectors and slowly included other NTFP-based interventions (e.g. leaf-plate making) by forming activity-based CEGs. In EDCs where honey collectors were not present, an intervention for livelihood enhancement around the predominant NTFP produce was taken up, as appropriate. These CEGs were federated at cluster level as per the need and linked to the state-level structure being created by the Forest Department (to be completed at a later date). This received the agreement of all stakeholders from the Government agencies in the meeting held at the office of the PO-ITDA on 13 September, 2006.

Local NGOs

The local NGOs were tasked with facilitating work at the community level and coordinating with field-level functionaries. In this project, CPF collaborated with two well-established local NGOs – CONARE and CHRD. The NGOs are involved in integrated development and hence their experience provided additional inputs on personal hygiene, sanitation, etc. to the communities and it was not limited to just the project interventions. CONARE is located in Achampet and has been working with the Chenchu communities for the past 15 years. CHRD is headquartered in Kadapa and has vast experience working with Dalit communities over the past 22 years in Kadapa and Kurnool districts. They have worked in partnership with CPF since 1996 and anchored the Regional Resource Centre for People's Forestry in the Rayalaseema region.

The two NGOs identified suitable individuals from the Chenchu community, who were trained to work as community organisers during the project. Each NGO will have a project coordinator to train, guide and monitor the Chenchu organisers. The CPF team and officials also took efforts to nurture the entire project field team.

Project Steering Committee

The Project Steering Committee was constituted at the Sanctuary level. The members are Mr Benerji (Field Director), Mr Ravindra Babu (PO-ITDA), Mr Manohar (DM-GCC), Dr. D. Suryakumari (CPF), Mr Thulsi Rao (ACF-ERM lab), Mr Sivareddy (CHRD) and Mr Saleem (CONARE). The Committee guides the project team and monitors progress.

CPF

From the beginning, CPF used its existing contacts amongst state-level functionaries of the Forest Department and GCC to involve the local field-level functionaries in the

project. Overall project coordination, coordination with CBD of Wardha, guidance to field coordinators and local NGOs were shared by the Director and Programme Officer of CPF. The Field Coordinator, appointed from the project budget, closely coordinated and monitored the field activities, guided the NGOs and community members in project activities and facilitated documentation.

APFD/ Field Director – Project Tiger

The Field Director is the Convenor of the Project Steering Committee. He and his team guide and support the project team in selecting clusters for initiating interventions and then expanding the work in a phased manner. They help in issuing identity cards to project beneficiaries along with the PO-ITDA, provide financial support for the trainers' training. Moreover, the Ecological and Resource Monitoring laboratory of the project shares its equipment and expertise with the project by training community members in GPS and correlating the data with GIS and helps analyse the same as well. The Field Director takes care of the CEGs created and nurtured by the project, by forming federations and offering required forward linkages in the future as per the need.

GCC

The GCC works in close association with the project team and provides the required support. It procures all the honey collected, even though the yields of honey have increased due to the project intervention. The GCC agreed to give preference to project beneficiaries by imparting training in sustainable extraction of gum, as this would





contribute to the holistic economic development of the members concerned. The Divisional Manager is a member of the project steering committee.

ITDA

The Project Officer, ITDA is a member of the Project Steering Committee. The ITDA, along with the Field Director, Project Tiger, issues identity cards to the project beneficiaries. The PO monitors project progress along with regular reviews of other activities implemented by the ITDA and extends required support to the project.

Centre for Bee Development

CBD provides Trainers' Training for 20 days. The other trainings are imparted by master trainers trained by CBD and resource persons from the NGO.

ATREE Foundation

The ATREE Foundation was invited to train the NGO team and community facilitators on Community Resource Monitoring Systems. The communities monitored the work and follow-up guidance was provided by the project team and Forest Department functionaries. Project Tiger's EMR lab integrated community data (GPS) with GIS and analysed them for the project.

Keystone Foundation

A team consisting of project staff and community members was sent to Key Stone Foundation on a cross-learning visit.





Process

Sustainable extraction of NTFPs

The beneficiaries identified through the Baseline Survey were provided training on extraction of NTFPs. Cultural campaigns and printed material were used to inform the community. Training of trainers to honey collectors was conducted.

Adapting to new practices

Project launch and orientation workshop was organised for NGO organisers who were from the Chenchu community. These organisers guide the new trained members to adapt to new practices. Communities were encouraged to create a corpus fund at CEG or cluster level so that it can aid in continuing support services in the post-project period.

Trained around 500 members on value-addition processes for tamarind, soap-nut and *amla* and 200 women on such value addition for *adda* leaves

Training of tribal youth

Tribal youth were trained to work as sales monitors/facilitators. Youth from villages that have GCC procurement centres were trained in sustainable harvest of other NTFPs and medicinal plants, quality and grading process, and information on prices, weighing, etc.



PHASE 2: Holistic development

For the second phase, the project had proposed to work towards the holistic development of Chenchu community (3009 households) in the 96 Chenchu Habitations. Land development was the core theme along with other interventions that are needed for such development. Besides this intervention, activities for strengthening the initiatives undertaken in the previous phase were also undertaken. The interventions in second phase included

- ✔️ capacitating the community on land development and allied activities using MGNREGs funds,
- ✔️ NTFP based initiatives,
- ✔️ Facilitating for
 - improving the access to services of Anganwadi Centres
 - ensuring enrolment of out-of-school children and their retention in school
 - strengthening involvement of the Chenchu community in preparation of EDC micro plans, to ensure an inclusive EDC plan is prepared.

Expected outcomes from the second phase

- ✔️ Treatment of at least 1200 Ha private lands and common lands in 50 habitations through MGNREGS funds
- ✔️ At least 2000 households continue to practice agriculture
- ✔️ Resource poor livestock rearers from 96 habitations benefit from the livestock schemes and services
- ✔️ Land provided for at least 30 landless Chenchus from the Government's Land Purchase Scheme
- ✔️ Recognition of titles under FRA for both individual and collective rights in 96 habitations
- ✔️ Trained honey harvesters practice safe and scientific honey harvesting
- ✔️ Provision of Giri card and other GCC services for all Chenchu NTFP collectors
- ✔️ Training on Vocational skills for at least 100 Chenchu youth
- ✔️ Integrating Chenchu community into EDC institution
- ✔️ Improving access to services of Anganwadi centres in 96 habitations and
- ✔️ Children of Chenchu community, in 96 habitations, are enrolled in school and attend regularly
- ✔️ Contributing to policy dialogue to bring in holistic development of Chenchu community



Issues uncovered

Based on the interactions held with the community members during the course of the project period, the following issues were identified, which were to be considered while formulating the second phase.

Land alienation

During implementation of the current project, it was discovered that the lands provided to the Chenchus by the government were taken on lease by the other communities [ironically, by those who were brought to that region to train Chenchus in agricultural operations (as mentioned by the Chenchus who interacted with the project teams)]. In the beginning, the Chenchus could not cultivate their lands, as they were not conversant with agricultural operations and now they still cannot do so as they do not own bullocks and agricultural implements.

Current agricultural practices

Most Chenchus do not practise agriculture for want of inputs, though some of them are aware of the practices, as they work on lands leased out to other communities. The agricultural practices are not systematic and scientific in terms of what is required to be done for each crop. These are adopted from others by observation or through 'knowledge' gleaned from pesticide or fertiliser dealers. The crops are chosen based on 'what others are doing', without factoring in soil type or other conditions. The concept of seed treatment or seed storage is virtually unknown, as are organic practices that aid the environment or lower input costs. Chenchus do not own agricultural implements and this works against them. In NSTR, paddy, sorghum, maize, groundnut and cotton are cultivated. But at present farmers are looking to grow cotton as a major crop, as they expect good returns from the cultivation of cotton.





Irrigation

The Chenchus live in areas that do not have many sources of water for irrigation. The rainfall is quite low⁴ as compared to other parts of Andhra Pradesh. Categorically these lands fall under the semi-arid region with highly undulating terrain. The erratic rainfall and utter dependency on rain-fed farming results in successive, large-scale crop failures.

Scarcity of fodder and fuel wood

Since the forest has been degraded, meeting the fodder and fuel wood requirements is becoming increasingly difficult for the Chenchus and other tribals.

Constructive engagement with youth

There are a considerable number of youngsters who have studied to various levels (Classes 7, 8, 10, Intermediate, etc.) and have a good understanding of the current situation. They are not addicted to alcohol like some of their elders and intend to contribute to the process of development of their community. They need support and guidance for the same.

Identity cards

The Chenchus trekking into the forest for collection of honey and NTFPs face problems from both extremists and the police. To address this, the CHELE project proposed the distribution of ID cards signed by the Forest and Tribal departments. Facilitated by project functionaries, such cards could be issued to most project participants. However, the project period was mentioned in the card, limiting the period of its validity. Since the cards were helpful, others not involved with the project and even the project participants are seeking new ID cards. It remains to be seen how this facility can be continued and who could be the signatories from the Forest and Tribal departments.

Marketing of honey and beeswax

Prior to the project intervention, the collectors used to get Rs 80–100/kg of honey, either at the GCC or at other open-market collection points. GCC also procured beeswax at Rs 150/kg. After the CHELE project intervention, because of the improved quality of honey, the collectors now get Rs 150–200/kg in the open market, though there is no increase in the GCC price. However, while GCC does not object if they sell to other buyers, GCC prefers to buy the wax only when honey is sold to them too. The collectors face a problem selling the beeswax as they do not have direct access to the buyers who procure it.

Sustainability of support service centre

The two support service centres established in the project are in the initial stages of operation. Though community members are involved in establishing and maintaining the centres, it needs to be supported for some more time in order to make them self-sufficient.

⁴ The normal rainfall distribution in the three regions of the State differs with the season and monsoon. The influence of South-West Monsoon is predominant in Telangana region (716mm) followed by Coastal Andhra (620 mm) and Rayalaseema (407 mm), whereas the North-East Monsoon provides high amount of rainfall in Coastal Andhra area (324 mm) followed by Rayalaseema (238 mm) and Telangana (129 mm). There are no significant differences in normal distribution of rainfall during winter and hot weather periods among the three regions. Source: Department of Agriculture, Government of Andhra Pradesh

Exploitation by other communities

The Chenchus believe that they are being exploited by other communities in various ways:

- i) Whatever benefits the government proposes to confer on them, are being taken by the 'other communities' because of their 'cleverness' and access to information.
- ii) In residential schools, Chenchu children, 'teased' by children of other communities, opt to drop out quickly.
- iii) Their lands are alienated (given in lease to other communities) and they have to work as wage workers on their own lands
- iv) The other communities also compete with them for the already depleting forest resources, especially gum and other remunerative NTFPs.
- v) Unsustainable harvest of NTFPs by other communities
- vi) Previously the Chenchus brewed alcohol near their homes using *mahua* flowers, which they believe is beneficial to their health. They are unable to do so now, due to a drop in the collection of *mahua* flowers. Hence, they are dependent on the liquor brewed locally by the other communities, which has worsened the health of those who consume such liquor.

Indebtedness

Some of the women SHG members shared that those who took loans to buy goats two years ago, suffered enormous losses as the goats died when they contracted some disease, but they are still forced to pay the EMIs for those goats.

Health

Despite the availability of several health schemes from the government, the Chenchus have not benefited due to the extremely poor accessibility to officials and workers from the departments concerned. The Chenchus complain that the services are mostly





availed by the other communities and they are left out. Tuberculosis and malaria are widely prevalent and take their toll. Scabies is rife in some areas. The Chenchu women are unfamiliar with antenatal healthcare and institutional deliveries, though they ensure that infants and children are vaccinated as per the schedule when the staff visits the village. If there is an emergency they prefer to go to the private hospital at the mandal head quarters.

Education

The tribal areas have Ashram schools (primary schools) in most Chenchu habitations. However, the children do not want to go to school as they do not have proper uniforms. Though the government provides two uniforms per child and books, these materials do not reach the children of these remote habitations. The Chenchu children feel uncomfortable in the residential schools because of the attitude of other children. In the absence of pre-primary education facilities (nursery schools or *balwadis*) they find it difficult to get accustomed to the pattern of study in the primary schools.

Interventions implemented

Treating private lands (FRA) by accessing MGNREGS funds

Community and concerned officials were involved in planning the process of treating lands. Prior to planning, certain formalities that the community needed to go through, like applying for and receiving job cards, were facilitated. Data on households without job cards was taken through village-level meetings. After these processes were completed, training was given on technical aspects of field structures for treatment of land. For common lands, fodder growth and management was facilitated. Quality seeds or slips of fodder plants suitable to the project area were obtained from AHD or Forage Research Institute. A fodder nursery was developed.

The project facilitated 725 Chenchu FRA individual title holders in availing benefits of the 'Chenchu special project' towards land development activities and ensured that 853.101 ha of agriculture land was treated (bush clearance, stump removal, stone bunding, ploughing) and making it suitable to cultivation.



Agriculture

Progressive farmers were identified to encourage agriculture on Chenchu lands. Information on agricultural lands in 96 habitations (FRA and private lands) was taken from the Revenue department. Soil-testing and training at demonstration farms were organised for these farmers. Farmers were organised into informal groups around each of the crops or habitation (as applicable) and links arranged with existing government schemes. Farmers and external experts were consulted to identify crops for the intervention and to develop a common understanding about a package of practices for each identified crop

Governmental land and livestock schemes

After recording the status of livestock in each habitation, information on various schemes was disseminated in the villages. The application process was facilitated. A seasonality calendar of recurring animal diseases was prepared and the community was alerted to visit local veterinary hospitals prior to the commencement of that season. Similarly, a land purchase scheme was facilitated. Landless Chenchus were identified and then the process of purchasing was facilitated. Chenchus received recognition titles under FRA for individual and collective rights.

Safe honey harvesting

Refresher training on sustainable harvesting practices was conducted for honey harvesters. Information was given on entrepreneurs who manufacture the required equipment. Yearly meetings have also been organised for the harvesters.

Giri card for NTFP collectors

The community was motivated to access the benefits accruing from using Giri cards. The application and issuance process was facilitated for them.



Vocational training for youth

Vocational training and tool kits were provided to support self-employment for 100 Chenchu youth. The areas of training included repair and maintenance of cycles, motor vehicles, bore wells, hand pumps, masonry work, electrical and electronic equipment, cleaning and maintenance of drinking water tanks etc. Contacts of prospective employers were provided.

Chenchu community gets integrated into EDC

It was ensured that the Chenchu community is involved in implementation of MGNREGS activities where funds were allocated for forest development activities. Meetings involving EDC and forest officials were organised for carrying out this activity.

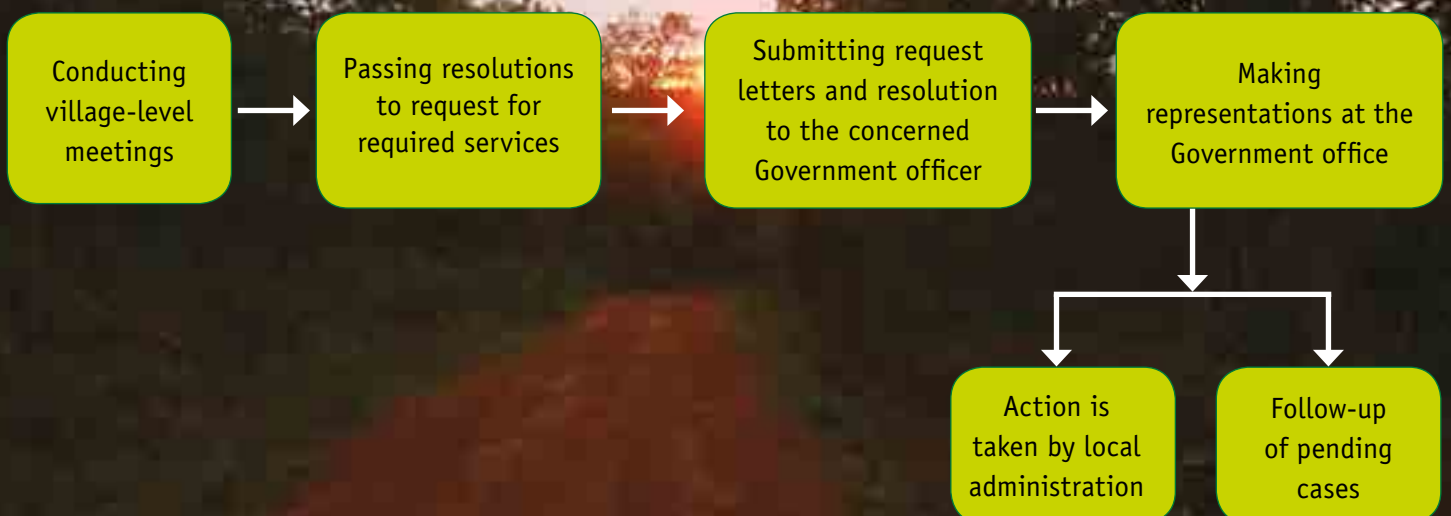
Access to Anganwadi centres

Anganwadi centres accessible to Chenchu *pentas* in NTSR were listed. Lobbying was done for establishment of subcentres. Chenchus were encouraged to access the services from centres or subcentres. There were regular interactions with ICDS officials regarding the gaps in service delivery.

Education for children

Children's education was monitored. Attendance at schools and hostel facilities was checked. Lobbying was done with government departments for providing required education materials for children. School dropouts were enrolled in residential bridge schools.

Steps followed for facilitating village-level interventions





Phase I: Improved Honey Harvesting Processes and Yield

Adoption of practices by harvesters

More honey harvesters have now learnt the correct use of tool kits and the right collection methods. Both in the core and buffer villages, a majority of the honey collectors were aware of the practices and prescribed norms for sustainable harvesting of honey.

- According to the trainees, Project CHELE improved honey-harvesting techniques and hygienic practices. A majority of the members adopted the suggested practices (Table 1). It was also reported that trained members not only follow safety measures and hygienic practices, but are also motivating and guiding untrained members to follow these practices.
- Before the project intervention, the trainees could extract honey only once in a season from each comb. After their training, the members use protective gear and harvest the combs twice in a season (80 per cent) by removing only the ripened portion of the comb (95 per cent). Non-compliance by some of the trainees possibly resulted from a lack of interest and in a few cases it was also due to lack of proper follow-up and handholding support from the CHELE team. In terms of adopting the practices promoted by the project, there is not much variation between core and buffer villages.

Table 1: Change in honey harvesting practices after training

Particulars		Experiment			Control		
		Core	Buffer	Overall	Core	Buffer	Overall
Sting protection dress	Before	0	0	0	0	0	0
	After	94	97	96	0	0	0
Same comb used twice in a season	Before	0	1	1	0	0	0
	After	86	74	81	-	-	-
Same comb used three times or more in a season	Before	0	0	0	0	0	0
	After	3	16	9	-	-	-
Removing only ripened portion of comb while harvesting	Before	2	2	2	0	0	0
	After	94	95	95	-	-	-
Extraction of honey by opening layer in a comb	Before	2	2	2	0	0	0
	After	95	96	96	-	-	-
Wearing of hand gloves while harvesting and extraction of honey	Before	14	2	9	0	0	0
	After	96	97	97	-	-	-

Earlier the collectors used to mainly harvest at night, but with the supply of sting-protection costumes the harvesters have started harvesting during the early hours of the day too. Those not trained (the control group) continued to harvest each comb only once in a season by removing the entire comb and extracted honey by squeezing. It is evident from the table that none of the control group members used sting-protection gear or the other techniques.

Benefits accrued by members

The trainees reported that these practices helped minimise damage to colonies and bees. In the words of those trained, the benefits accrued by following the practices suggested at Project CHELE were: ‘Minimised wastage at the time of collection, improved quality of honey collected through hygienic practices and increase in income by realising better prices for the honey collected.’

The trained harvesters reported an increase in the average number of colonies covered by households in the year after the project intervention (*Table 2*). At the aggregate level, on an average, each household covered a little over 44 colonies in a year before the project, which increased to 54 after the intervention. The increase in the number of colonies covered is higher in core villages as compared to the buffer villages.

Table 2: Colonies covered and honey harvested per annum

Particulars		Experiment			Control		
		Core	Buffer	Overall	Core	Buffer	Overall
Average no. of colonies covered	Pre	39	51	44.49			
	Post	49.65	59.31	54.13	31.05	38.46	33.64
Average no. of visits/ household	Pre	7.89	9.45	8.59			
	Post	6.94	6.21	6.6	9.70	12.0	10.57

Thus, the average number of colonies covered per household in a year has increased by 20 per cent in the experimental group, the percentage being higher in the core villages. On the contrary, in case of the control group, there is a decline of 23 per cent in the average number of colonies covered, a figure that is higher for the buffer villages. It can be construed that promotion of sustainable practices by CHELE has reduced damage to bees as well as to their colonies, which in turn helped conserve colonies.

The trainees also reported that they were now able to cover more colonies in a short duration and hence have reduced the number of visits in a year. They felt that the sting-protection costume and other tools have reduced preparatory work prior to harvesting (collection of combustible materials and lighting fire to smoke away the bees). In other words, the practices promoted by the project not only reduced the drudgery involved in honey harvesting, but also increased efficiency.

Honey yield

Honey is harvested during two seasons annually, viz. June–August and December–January. Accordingly, data with respect to the number of times the honey was harvested, quantum of honey harvested and the corresponding income derived by the households in both the seasons were obtained. In addition, area-wise (core and buffer), disaggregated results were obtained.

Baseline data (for 2007) was not collected separately for the control group, as care was taken to see that the control group matched the experimental group in all respects, except for the fact that the experimental group was exposed to the training under the intervention, but the control group was not. For this reason, when computing percentage changes in the variables selected in respect of the control group, the base figures for the experimental group are taken into account

June–August: At the aggregate level, each household (from the experimental group) harvested more than 14 kilograms before the project intervention. The GGC data (as also a discussion with the community) show that there is a general decline in quantum of honey collected in 2009. Yet each household from the experimental group could collect the same quantity of honey after the intervention by following sustainable practices. The harvesters in the core area are better placed with an average collection of 15 kilograms as compared to the corresponding figure of 13.66 kilograms in the buffer area.

Table 3: Particulars of honey harvesting

Particulars		Experiment			Control		
		Core	Buffer	Total	Core	Buffer	Total
June–August							
Average quantity of honey collected/HH (in kgs)	Before	14.33	14.58	14.45			
Average quantity of honey collected/HH (in kgs)	After	15.05	13.66	14.41	14.02	14.20	14.08
Average rate/kg (Rs)	Before	108	97	103			
Average rate/kg (Rs)	After	160	138	150	129	107	121
December–January							
Average quantity of honey collected/HH (in kgs)	Before	9.95	14.23	11.84			
Average quantity of honey collected/HH (in kgs)	After	13.08	13.13	13.11	12.08	12.73	12.33
Average rate/kg (Rs)	Before	108	102	105			
Average rate/kg (Rs)	After	161	153	158	137	115	129

The price for honey the harvesters get is a function of to whom they sell. The rate at which they sell varies considerably across buyers: Rs 80 in the case of GCC, while for traders or tourists, the price varies from Rs 160 to Rs 300, depending on the time of the year. Independent of the area, each harvester got Rs 103 per kg before the intervention and this figure rose to Rs 150 after the intervention. Similar trends are also in evidence between areas. Further, regardless of the area, the post-intervention period registers higher prices when compared to those in the pre-intervention period.

December–January: In this season, at the aggregate level, collectors in the post-intervention period gained since the pre-intervention period. (Each harvester got 1.27 kg of honey more than the pre-intervention period – the average values are 11.84 kg and 13.11 kg respectively). While the core area registered a significant increase, the buffer area saw some reverses (13.13 kg as compared to 14.23 kg earlier).

As is to be expected, the price hike is quite conspicuous in the post-intervention period. Independent of the type of buyer, the harvester gets an income of Rs158 in the post-intervention period, higher by Rs 48 than the figure for the pre-intervention period. This was true for the buffer areas too and in relative terms, the core group appears to be benefiting more in terms of the price differential (Rs 53 increase over the pre-intervention figure).

The trainees performed better than non-trainees, in terms of average quantity of honey collected per household and the average price fetched per kilogram. There was a slight decline in buffer villages during the June–August season as a majority of the households were involved in agricultural activities and made fewer visits during this period. In general, the core villages benefited much more (more so during December–January) than the buffer villages.

At the same time, **the average rate at which honey was sold recorded a 45 per cent increase in the case of trainees and just 11 per cent in the case of non-trainees**, implying that the project inputs towards improving hygiene and quality of honey along with marketing support fetched them better price.

Income from honey harvesting

There is a significant increase in returns from honey harvesting after the project intervention. At the aggregate level, the income earned per household averaged Rs 1379 in the pre-intervention period. The analysis shows that there is a 53 per cent increase in income for trainees and 20 per cent in the case of non-trainees, owing to better prices obtained by the former during the post-project period. Collectors from the core area fared better in this regard, in comparison to those from the buffer area (percentage increases are 70 and 36 per cent in the core and buffer areas).


Table 4: Change in income from honey in core and buffer areas

Particulars	Experiment			Control		
	Core	Buffer	Total	Core	Buffer	Total
Before						
Average income/HH (Rs)	1334	1428	1379			
After						
Average income/HH (Rs)	2268	1937	2116	1739	1494	1651
Incremental impact of the project on average income/HH	70	36	53	30	5	20

Post intervention, on an average, 29 per cent of the sample households got an income that fell in the Rs 1001–2000 per annum range, while 28 per cent were in the Rs 2001–5000 annual income range. However, close to 27 per cent earned less than Rs 1000 (Table 5). The rest of the sample households (16 per cent) earned more than Rs 5000 per annum from honey harvesting.

Table 5: Percentage of households in different annual income brackets (from honey collection)

Annual Income (in Rs.)	Per cent of HHs Core	Per cent of HHs Buffer	Per cent of HHs Overall
Up to 1000	29	25	27
1001–2000	23	38	29
2001–5000	31	22	28
Above 5000	17	15	16
Total	100	100	100
N=	99	88	187
Average income	2268	1937	2116

Capacity building and value addition by the project

S. No.	Category	Proposed in the project document	2006–07	2007–08	2008–09	2009–10	Total	Remarks
1	Master trainers	25	07	07	11	2	27	
2	Field organisers	20	0	20	20 (contd.)	20 (contd.)	20	
3	Sales facilitators	20	0	14	5	5	5	
4	Resource monitoring agents	20	0	6	4	0	10	

S. No.	Category	Proposed in the project document	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	Total	Remarks
5	Honey harvesters	1000	0	213	357	486	1056	120 Chenchu honey harvesters were trained with the support from GCC-TRIFED in NSTR during 2006-07. Total= 1176
6	Value addition to adda leaf	200	0	90	8	-	98	
7	Value addition to tamarind	500	0	34	60	137	231	Total= 524
8	Value addition to soap nut		0	0	0	22	22	
9	Value addition to amla		0	179	92	0	271	
10	CEG formed	Not mentioned	0	14	37	20	51	
11	Service support centre	Not mentioned	0	2	2 are in place	-	2	.





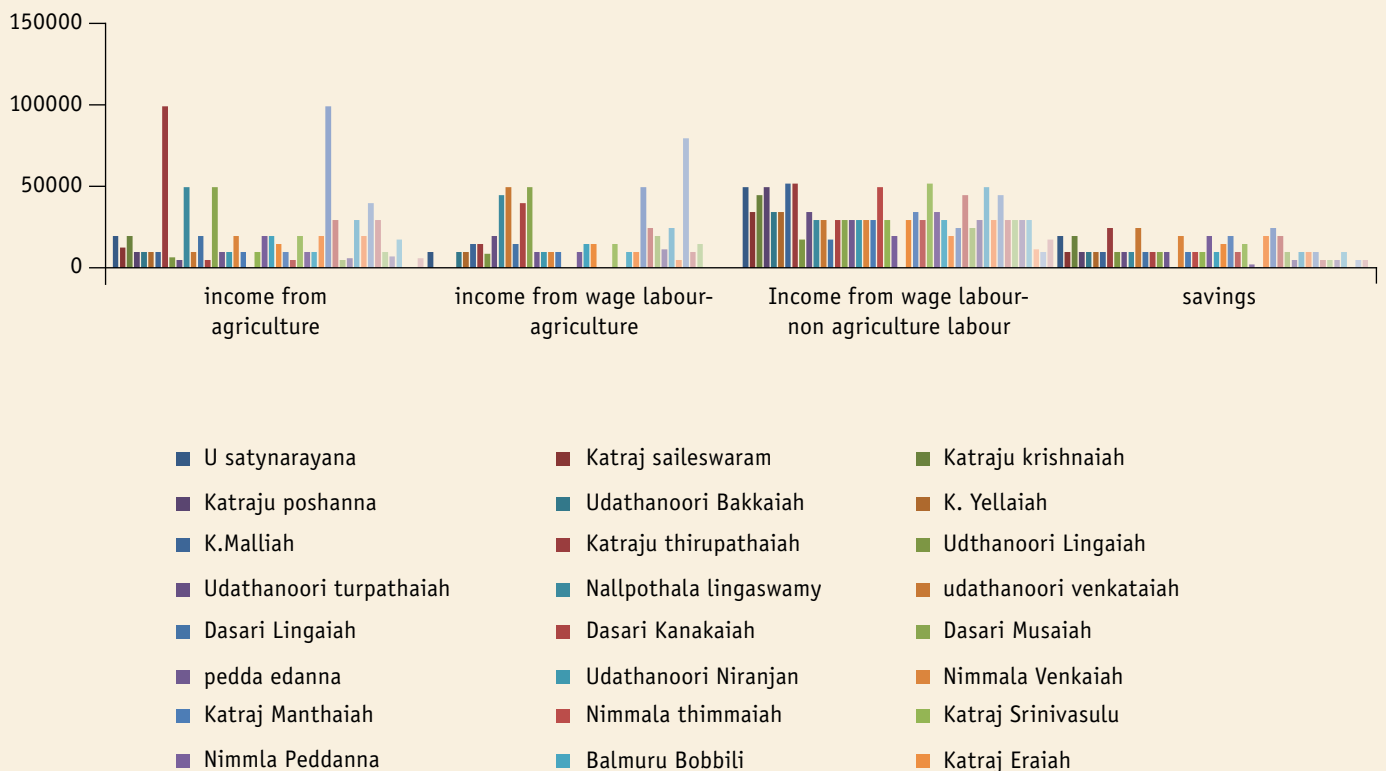
PHASE II: holistic development

Increased income from agriculture and savings

The average annual income from agriculture is Rs 20,000 among the sample HHs. Further, those who own lands and have good knowledge of agriculture also work as agricultural labourers in others' lands, demanding high rates. This fetches the family up to Rs 30,000 per annum. All of the Chenchu HHs make their major earnings from MGNREGS, averaging about Rs 33,000 per annum. An annual income of about Rs 52,500 is observed in those Chenchu families where there is a high number of working members, and Rs 10,000 per annum in HHs with a single working member, whose age is above 60 years. Two Chenchu households have earned above Rs 100,000 from cultivating their six acres of land.

Hence, their dependence on collecting and selling NTFP has reduced, as their financial needs are met through income from agriculture and wage works. This project could ensure that Chenchus are mainstreamed into agri-society. Promotion of the practice of maintaining savings from their earning has influenced Chenchu families where an average of minimum Rs 10,000 is kept as savings, compared to savings of Rs 500 per annum during 2007-08.

Impact



Access to facilities and implementing farming practices

It was observed from the impact assessment study that through the project support, many of the farmers have applied for bore-wells and at least 50 per cent were constructed and are supporting their agriculture. Major crops cultivated by these farmers are maize, groundnut, paddy, castor and cotton. In most cases, farmers are practising intercropping and have adopted integrated farming practices (use of both bio-fertilisers and chemical pesticides).

MGNREGS

The project facilitated preparation of action plans for the development of private (including FRA title) lands, common lands and other resources that can be developed under MGNREGS by involving 3000 Chenchu households and relevant officials. The approach used not only created opportunities to earn wages, but also helped build assets (water bodies, farm ponds, water-harvesting structures) that will improve livelihood opportunities for the Chenchus. The project streamlined the MGNREGS funding process in the Chenchu area.

Health and Education

The project facilitated posting of Chenchu caretakers in three residential schools, re-enrolment (including of dropouts) and retention of Chenchu children in the Ashram schools. It helped supply uniforms and study material available through various government schemes and improved access to services of Anganwadi centres.





Project Outcomes in phase II

Interventions	YEAR I	YEAR II	YEAR III	YEAR IV
Treatment of lands under NREGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area treated: 77.36 ha Accessing NREGS funds: Rs 60.99 lakh Training progressive Chenchu farmers: 107 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Area treated: 171.166 ha, Accessing NREGS funds: Rs 35.24 Lakh 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of work plans: 287 Chenchu farmers Treatment of agriculture/ FRA lands: treated 292.001 ha in lands of 248 Chenchu farmers, Funds mobilised: Rs 1,06,42,181 Job cards to those who do not have one already: 135 wage seekers (HHs) received job cards Job card documents issued to 37 Chenchu HHs (possessed only card number) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submission of work plans: 5 Chenchu farmers Treatment Extent: 223.49 ha 206 farmers Agriculture and FRA lands: 270.51 ha of 162 farmers. (Funds mobilised: Rs 1,39,07,344) (Funds mobilised: Rs 17,09,030/-) Facilitated submission of application towards obtaining job cards for 147 wage seekers. 2 HHs received cards Fodder management committee (FMC) have initiated managing fodder nurseries
Chenhus practising agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chenhus practising agriculture: 95 HHs (farmers), Demonstration plots established: 13 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chenhus practising agriculture: 61 HHs (farmers) Progressive farmers trained: 91 Demonstration plots established: 39 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chenhus practising agriculture: 148 farmers Demonstration plots established: 28 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chenhus practising agriculture: 544 farmers Demonstration plots established: 16

Interventions	YEAR I	YEAR II	YEAR III	YEAR IV
Benefits from livestock schemes		Access to schemes: 9 habitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised 2 fodder nurseries, Fodder promoted in 7.23 ha of 16 Chenchu private lands, Fodder broadcasted in 375 acres in forest land Access to schemes: 36 habitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raised fodder in 14.781 ha in private lands 18 habitation benefited from livestock scheme
Chenchus getting land from the government land purchase scheme	Identified 77 landless Chenchus from 5 habitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated submission of application under land purchase scheme: 35 Achievement in year: 1 Applications submitted: 151 	103 applications submitted	
Recognition of titles under FRA	11 habitations identified for receiving titles	Facilitating applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individual forest rights (agriculture lands): 50 habitations Individual forest rights (house title): 11 habitations 	Facilitated claim submission 126 IFR agriculture lands, 81 IFR house titles. 63 IFR agricultural land titles approved, 200 house titles approved	Facilitated submission of 23 applications from 2 habitations Facilitated formation of Forest Rights Committees at habitation level in 23 habitations Facilitated submission of community rights (Form-B) at SDLC from 27 habitations 75 IFR titles
Sustainable honey harvesting	75 honey harvesters practise safe and scientific harvesting methods	619 honey harvesters practise safe and scientific harvesting methods	300 honey harvesters practise safe and scientific harvesting methods	326 honey harvesters practise safe and scientific harvesting methods



Interventions	YEAR I	YEAR II	YEAR III	YEAR IV
Giri cards for NTFP collection	28 NTFP collectors received Giri cards, 665 Giri card applications are under process	28 NTFP collectors received Giri cards	80 NTFP collectors received Giri cards	82 Giri cards issued
Integrated in the EDC institution	Work in 6 EDCs were under process	1EDC (forestry works), FD articulated support: 39 EDCs	3 EDCs (mobilised Rs 9,07,070 for forestry works and created 6320 wage days for Chenchu wage seekers)	Works taken up in 5 EDCs, funds mobilised: Rs 2,31,400
Vocation skills training for youth	58 youth identified for training	2 Chenchu youth benefit from the training	28 Chenchu youth benefit from the training	13 youth benefit from the training
Improved access to services of Anganwadi centres	43 habitations covered	57 habitations covered	67 habitations covered	67 habitations (Contd)
Education	70 per cent of eligible Chenchus in 43 habitations are attending school regularly	Schools in 88 habitations	Schools in 67 habitations	Follow-up of schools in 67 habitations

Village-Level Outcomes






BASIC AMENITIES					
S. no	Issue	Type of Issue	No. of villages	Villages	Action taken
1	Pucca houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Huts and hovels (temporary structures) are in dilapidated condition with leakages.  Existing pucca houses in dilapidated condition 	18	Allipalem, Hanumapuram thanda, Mekalabanda, Guttalachenu, Tummalabailu, Hatakeswaram, Shikaram, Alatam, Burugundala, Bomalapuram, Kambalapalli, Appaipalli, Maddimadugu, Vatavarlapalli, Srirangapur, Vadderayavaram, Bapanpadu, Chautapalli	<p>Resolutions have been passed but action is yet to be taken in most of the villages. In one place, Chenchu households personally renovated their houses and submitted the bills to ITDA for reimbursement.</p> <p>In Alatam, Burugundala and Guttalachenu, RDT came forward and initiated construction at slow pace.</p> <p>In Srirangapur, repairs were conducted to 30 houses in the village after one year by IKP</p>
2	Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Lack of water supply  Lack of hand-pumps  Non-functional hand-pumps 	24	Allipalem, Hanumapuram thanda, Mekalabanda, Chinnarutla, Guttalachenu, Sundipenta, Shikaram, Alatam, Burugundala, Botukulapaya, Bomalapuram, Kambalapalli, Appapur, Appaipalli, Vatavarlapalli, Rampur, Mallapur, Farhabad, Pogilla, Pilligundlapenta, Inole, Kudichintalabailu, Bapanpadu, Udimila	<p>Hand-pumps installed by NGO</p> <p>Households selected for bore-well construction.</p> <p>Pipeline was laid to the overhead tank and the existing tank was repaired.</p>
3	Electricity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  No power supply to habitation  Non-functional electricity lines, which need repair 	8	Allipalem, Guttalachenu, Tummalabailu, Alatam, Burugundala, Appapur, Vatavarlapalli, Vadderayavaram	<p>Installation of solar lights.</p> <p>Laying transmission lines to agricultural lands.</p>
4	Toilets	Project officer ITDA assured construction of toilets for each and every household but till date no works have been initiated.	2	Mekalabanda, Sundipenta	ITDA communicated no budget , MGNREGS cells sanctioned 50 per cent budget towards construction, the work is in progress



INFRASTRUCTURE					
S. no	Issue	Type of Issue	No. of villages	Villages	Action taken
1	Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No roads connecting the village 	4	Jendapenta, Mekalabanda, Botukulapaya, Rampur	Out of fear of smuggling, EDC has still not passed the resolution in Jendapenta. In other villages, the case is still pending.
2	Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streetlights are not working 	2	Mekalabanda, Bomalapuram	Streetlights were installed by Devasthanam and bulbs were replaced in some lamp posts. The Panchayat took up installation of two streetlights in Bomalapuram.

Health					
S. no	Issue	Type of Issue	No. of villages	Villages	Action taken
1	Access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health workers do not visit this village on a regular basis. Village community health workers, ASHA health workers are not being provided with necessary medicines by the Health Department Anganwadi centre was not delivering the food supplements properly. 	23	Allipalem, Jendapenta, Hanumapuram thanda, Chinnarutla, palutla, Tummalabailu, Hatakeswaram, Shikaram, Botukulapaya, Bomalapuram, Kambalapalli, Appapur, Mannanur, Maddimadugu, Pullaipalli, Billakalu, Srirangapur, Mallapur, Farhabad, Pogilla, Pilligundlapenta, Bapanpadu, Udimila	Ensured health workers are visiting the village. Alternate arrangements made by supplying nutrients. Ensured that medicines and treatment are given in time

Education

S. no	Issue	Type of Issue	No. of villages	Villages	Action taken
1	Quality of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">  Teachers do not attend the primary school on a regular basis  No appointments of teacher and volunteers (staff) for the vacant posts in the primary school  School dropouts  No follow-up on vocational courses  Non-appointment of teachers in Ashram school 	13	Allipalem, Hanumapuram thanda, Mekalabanda, Chinnarutla, Tummalabailu, Botukulapaya, Appapur, Appaipalli, Chenchugudem, Saarlappalli, Kudichintalabailu, Bapanpadu, Udimila	Ensuring school is in operation. Chenchu children are attending school. Cases of teachers' vacancies are pending in many villagers. Panchayat is using local persons to run the school.



Livelihoods					
S. no	Issue	Type of Issue	No. of villages	Villages	Action taken
1	Poor implementation of MGMNREGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Embezzlement of funds 🌿 Farm tractors are not being provided towards ploughing operations in FRA title lands with the excuse that the measurements of the ploughed (tilled) lands are not in accordance with the standards prescribed by the MGNREGS guidelines (& software). 🌿 MGNREGS works stalled. In an attempt to promote NTFP collection ITDA and GCC stalled all the MGNREGS work. Defunct SHGs, who disburse the wages, is cited one of the reason for stalling MGNREGS work. 🌿 MGNREGS works were not allotted 🌿 Due to disturbances from the forest animals, farmers demand works of fencing etc to be done here 🌿 No job cards provided 	19	Allipalem, Chinnarutla, Palutla Hatakeswaram, Sundipenta, Shikaram, vajralapaduthanda, Kambalapalli, Appapur, Mannanur, Maddimadugu, Saarlapalli, Rangapur, Thatigundala, Mallapur, Farhabad, Pogilla, Bapanpadu, Udimila	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Works allocated to Chenchus in others lands in nearby village 🌿 The issue is addressed and the link between the NTFP and MGNREGS works has been dismissed 🌿 Works sanctioned, and Chenchu participating in wage works but some of the Chenchus were reluctant to participate in works allocated outside their village 🌿 Stone bunding-fencing under MGNREGS completed in the village 🌿 Some households were provided job cards, others are still pending

Entitlements

S. no	Issue	Type of Issue	No. of villages	Villages	Action taken
1	Ration cards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Ration cards not given to newly married couples 	4	Mekalabanda, Tummalabailu, Thatigundala, Farhabad	HHs received ration card in 2015
3	Other Government schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 🌿 Giri cards not provided 🌿 Officials preventing Chenchus from entering their land 🌿 Seed distribution from ITDA not happening on time. 	7	Kambalapalli, Thatigundala, Appaipalli, Mannanur, Chenchugudem, Maddimadugu sarlapalli	Chenchus received entitlement to land and Giri cards.



The twin concerns that the project set to address were the decline in number of honey harvesters and also the decline of yield from honey hives. The trainees pointed out that the training courses have helped bring the youth, who shied away from this occupation, back into its fold. While it is possible to improve yield from the hives using sustainable practices, it is also necessary to encourage plantation of suitable plants, cropping practices and ecological conditions for conservation and protection of bees. The project must take into account the following aspects while designing future interventions.

Decline in number of honey collectors

The number of honey collectors reduced in a majority of the villages where FGD was conducted. There is, however, an increase in the number of harvesters in Appapur. The youth from this village were trained under the CHELE project and the master trainer motivated and sustained the interest of the trained members in honey harvesting. The number of harvesters remained the same in Vadderayavaram. The reasons cited by the people for the decline in number of honey harvesters are:

- Reduction of members involved in honey collection in some households, after the project. Six members discontinued either due to health problems or did not want to take a risk and lacked interest.
- Experienced and well-informed harvesters have either died or become old and are incapable of climbing trees and harvesting honey in a majority of villages.
- Some members discontinued honey harvesting due to harassment and problems created by the Forest Department and police.
- Somehow youth are not interested in honey harvesting due to availability of other easier options and due to discouragement from elders.
- The decline in honey harvesters is also due to reduced collections of honey that possibly occur because of climate variability (droughts, low rainfall) and the effect of human activities on the environment.
- It was reported that of late, the Chenchus have been participating in AP-REGS activities, which has marginally reduced the time available for collecting forest produce.

Decline of honey yields

The decline in the average honey collected per member was due to reduced yield from honey hives. It was reported that climate variability has a negative influence on flowering. In such circumstances, bees either migrate or travel to agricultural fields in search of pollen. In the fields, bees often get killed because of the high doses of chemical pesticides used. There is every possibility of a reduction in bee populations, thereby resulting in a reduction in yields per comb. The average honey collected by a harvester depends not only on the number of combs covered, but also on the yield rate per comb. As a result, the average amount of honey collected by a member has reduced despite an increase in the number of colonies covered from the baseline period.

Firming up practices

It is not clear from the discussions had so far with the collectors whether yield rates per comb increase with the number of trips (single collection or double collection) made in a season. This aspect needs to be studied in detail by systematically gathering data for selected honey hives.

Accessing MGNREGS Funds and other schemes

The sanctions of works are delayed, due to absence of concerned authority (PO-ITDA). In Mahabubnagar, since the PO-ITDA for Chenchus is not in place, the whole process of land purchase scheme was getting delayed in Telangana. For village level development, even though requests were submitted to government officers, some works were not executed due to lack of funds.

There is lack of convergent action for an issue. For landless Chenchus in Bommalapuram village, the request letter is at MRO and RDO chamber. MRO-Dornala's response was that the land selected for this scheme falls under two revenue mandals and therefore he sent the file to the other mandal, MRO-Y.Palem also. He did not reply within the time frame. When the PO-ITDA was asked about this, he informed that they cannot do anything until the survey and the cost estimations were provided by the MRO and he promised to talk with the MRO regarding this and solve this case as soon as possible. These situations delay the grievance redressal processes.





The low economic status among the small farmers is due to lack of financial and institution support extended by the government/institutions, forcing them to continuously and completely depend on local moneylenders for agriculture input cost till the harvest. Further, the harvested agri-produce is also given back to moneylender against their repayment amount, after which they are left with a meagre amount of grains for themselves (unless there is high yield/productivity). As a result, even the government schemes, government market yards for the farmers, are not benefiting small farmers but are advantageous to the elite community.

To address the major concern prevailing among farmers, the project proposes to bring together the farmers at village level forming a farmers' group. A set of farmers' groups will be clustered at cluster level and federated at district levels as 'small farmers' federation'. In the process, the village-level farmers' group will avail financial and institutional support from the Department of Agriculture, ATMA (Agriculture Technical Management Agency), NABARD and IKP, towards input costs (seed, bio-fertilisers, pesticides, capacity building of farmers on technical aspects, purchase of implements. At cluster level, farmers' groups will be engaged in ensuring government market yards at mandal HQ are farmer-friendly and will also lobby farmer-related issues and concerns at mandal level, and will manage the market information centre supported by the project. The district-level apex body will represent/lobby the concerned district and state administration on issues and concerns prevailing among 'small farmers'. This would lead to each individual farmer being strengthened to practise sustainable agriculture and sell his/her agri-produce at the market yard with good market rates, and be free of the clutches of moneylenders.

Hence, small farmers are strengthened through their institutions and enhance their income levels. Further, the communities with similar conditions elsewhere in the NSTR will be the indirect beneficiaries as the experiences of this action will be fed into the mainstream processes.

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