

Blossom of the Little Flowers

ASSEFA

2009-10

Year of New Initiatives



279, Avvai Shanmugam Road, Royapettah, Chennai: 600 014

E-mail: assefa@md2.vsnl.net.in

Table of Contents

1.0. Back to the Roots	01
2.0. Towards Quality Life	11
3.0. Knowledge Upturn	13
4.0. Seeds to Rejuvenate Feminism	19
5.0. Wealth for All - <i>Healthy Living</i>	25
6.0. ASSEFA, the Banyan Tree	27
7.0. Annexures	28

1. Back to the Roots

1.1. Farming Sector at the Cross Roads:

Agriculture is the prime sector in India. It provides both employment and livelihood opportunities to majority of the population. Impressive stride have been achieved on the agricultural front in the last five decades. The food grains production has nearly tripled from 87 million tons in 1961 to 235 million tons in 2009. The population has only doubled from 452 million to more than 1 billion during the same period.

This remarkable progress in agriculture also enabled India becoming a food secure state in 1984 from a food deficit state, raising its capacity to achieve self sufficiency in food production. Further, the increased contribution from agriculture as well as from Industries also laid a foundation for a significant reduction in poverty level, from 55 percent in 1973 to 26 percent in 1998.

Despite the impressive growth and development, India is still home to the largest number of poor people of the world. With about 250 million below the poverty line, India accounts for about one-fifth of the world's poor. Child malnutrition extracts its highest toll in this country. About 25 percent children suffer from serious malnutrition. More than 50 percent of the pre-school children and pregnant women are anemic. The depth of hunger among the undernourished is also high.

High pressure on land, water and other resources are being exerted to meet the requirements of food and development for increasing population. The massive increase in population and substantial income growth, demand an additional 2.5 million tons of food grains annually, besides significant increase needed in the supply of livestock, fish and horticultural products.

Thus, the millions of the small farmers are faced now with critical position to continue farming practices. Prior to the period of 'Green Revolution', these farmers practiced agriculture through integrating cultivation of crops, animals and trees. Their production was limited to meeting their family and community needs rather than distant marketing. Multi crops were raised in accordance with their needs for food and fodder. It also helped in enriching soil fertility and in maintaining eco-balance naturally.

The tree cultivation supplied the farmers with green manure, fodder, fruits, fuel and timbers. It also played a major role in conserving soil and water besides hosting beneficial insects and birds. Similarly, animals provided manure, food and income and are also used for cultivation and transport economically. Many of these animals were fed on farm wastes efficiently and provided financial security at the time of distress.

This system of integrated agricultural practices got jeopardized, when production for the far off markets was started. The pressure to increase the productivity of the land has made many farmers to use external inputs like hybrid seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Cultivation of cash crops like cotton and tobacco also led to scarcity of fodder. This resulted in farmers giving up animal husbandry, thereby resulting in acute scarcity of farmyard manure and making the use of chemical fertilizers inevitable.

Thus the farmers are at the cross road, as they face many challenges regularly while undertaking farming practices as given below.

- *The dependency on external crop inputs has increased the cost of production per acre. The recent prices shoot up of crop inputs has troubled farmers in undertaking farming on viable basis.*
- *The use of chemical inputs has caused serious health hazardous, besides destroying symbiotic organisms such as earth worm and making difficult to undertake ecological farming practices.*
- *The intensive use of water for irrigation has led to decrease in ground water level due to lack of proper harvesting of rain water. In some areas, improper practices of irrigation also lead to water logging and Salinization damaging the productivity of the irrigated lands*
- *Law of inheritance leads to fragmentation of productive lands. Thus over the years, big farmers become small¹, small farmers become marginal and marginal become landless farmers due to division of lands.*
- *Investment in infrastructure such as irrigation system is becoming a costlier affair for small and marginal land owners and hence affecting productivity directly.*

Thus with agriculture practices becoming increasingly uneconomical, the small farmers are forced to dispose their lands and migrate to the nearest cities for alternative employment.

1.2. ASSEFA in Farming Sector

ASSEFA, a pioneering Development Organization in India, has been working with the rural communities for the last forty-two years. Major thrust is given in developing lands for agriculture since its inception. In fact, ASSEFA's initial mission was to develop the wastelands distributed to the landless peasants under 'The Bhoodan Movement', as ASSEFA started with the blessings of Acharya Vinoba Bhave.

Initially, the intervention was limited to selective areas in Tamil Nadu. Subsequently, ASSEFA expanded its operations to other states for developing wastelands. Gradually, ASSEFA also diversified its interventions from working with Bhoodan allottees to other communities with multi-facet development programmes to realize its objective of establishing self reliant communities envisaged by Mahatma Gandhiji.

¹ *Small farmers own lands between 3 to 5 acres and Marginal farmers own lands less than 3 acres.*

As on March 31, 2010, ASSEFA and its promoted organizations have been working directly with 902,843 families inhabited across 10,198 villages located in 121 blocks across eight states of India. They have been supported with the socio-economic programs such as agriculture development, dairy promotion, micro enterprise, social credit, rural education, community health care and social security for the vulnerable.

In spite of diversifying its activities, ASSEFA has continued to work for the betterment of the farmers via agriculture and allied activities since its beginning. ASSEFA works mostly in the remote and backward rural areas, where majority of the farmers depended upon agriculture for their livelihoods.

1.3. Farming Practices and Immediate Constraints:

ASSEFA in the recent year's discussion with the farmers shows that most of the farmers are not happy with in continuing farming practices. The major reason being that agriculture cannot be undertaken on a viable basis due to the ever increasing cost of crop inputs and shortage of manpower.

The recent govt program on National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREG), has further aggravated the problems of labours for agriculture. The cost of labour has nearly doubled. In addition, the labours preferred to work under NREG scheme for various convenient purposes instead of working in the private farm when needed.

Moreover, the farmers have the feeling that they don't get adequate prices for their products, as middlemen continue to play a dominant role in many areas. Similarly, small farmers, who constitute a major percent among the farming community, are not able to do farming on viable basis, whenever they have problems with or inadequate irrigation infrastructure facility. The investment required for erecting new one is beyond their capacity.

Hence, the farmers, who have no other income sources, find it hard to do farming on economically viable basis. They tend to sell their lands when opportunity arises and migrate to the urban areas for alternative livelihoods.

1.4. Farmers Renaissance - Our Initiatives

In order to mitigate the issues of the farmers, ASSEFA has designed a comprehensive program "Farmers Renaissance Scheme". The main objective of this program is to prevent the migration of the farmers to the urban areas and also stop them from selling their lands for other utility through solving the local issues of the farmers on a collective basis.

This program is being initiated in 23 areas in Tamil Nadu. These areas include dry belts such

as Sivagangai, Kariyapatti, Thirumangalam, Kalligudi, T Kallupatti, Chithamur, Achirapakkam, Madurantagam regions and hill tract belts such as Natham, Sethur and Kottampatti regions

Based on the need, the following actions are framed and being implemented to support the local farmers.

1.4.1. Enhancing Farm Productivity:

Various causes have been identified for the low productivity. These include

- *Use of uncertified/inferior inputs*
- *Insufficient irrigation facilities.*
- *Lack of adopting modern scientific farming practices and*
- *Inadequate care while raising the crops.*

Depending upon the nature of the land and requirement, the following supports have been provided.

a) Supply of Improved Inputs

In order to enhance the productivity, sowing of improved seeds has been introduced in the operational areas. The seeds are, generally, selected based on their resistance to pest or insect attack, adaptability to the local environment and reasonable outputs. To purchase these seeds, the farmers are linked with well-known sources such as Krishi Vigyan Kendra and Horticulture Department. In some areas, the farmers have been encouraged to develop seeds banks to distribute to the surrounding areas.

b) Improvement of Irrigation Facilities

ASSEFA has been working in the semi arid areas where rainfall is scanty. In those areas, irrigating with groundwater contributes significantly in undertaking farming. When ever, there is repair in the existing irrigation system, the small and marginal farmers get affected, as they find it difficult in mobilizing resources for repairing.

The farmers of these categories were identified and supported for improving their irrigation system so as to continue farming. The supports have been provided mainly for constructing new and renovating existing water harvesting structure such as open, bore and tube wells. Pump sets, pipelines and drip irrigation system are provided for efficient use of water.

c) Multiple Cropping Systems

The farmers are encouraged to adopt multi cropping system. In many areas, the practice of mono crop systems, particularly cash crops, led to depletion of soil fertility. The farmers try to compensate for this with chemical fertilizers so as to get better yields. However to avoid such situation, multi cropping systems are encouraged. The farmers are encouraged to cultivate food/cash crops as well as horticultural crops under inter cropping systems.

In the watershed project areas, the farmers are encouraged to take up horticulture farming. In Bihar, the concept of WADI (*small orchard*), has been introduced among small and marginal farmers. These farmers are provided with saplings of mango, citrus fruits, cashewnut and gooseberry. In addition, they are encouraged to plant fuel and fodder plants for fencing with trenching work along all boundaries of the land.

1.4.2. Promoting Integrated Farming Practices

The farmers were encouraged to practice organic farming, as it helps to enrich the soil fertility without causing any damage to the micro-organisms in the soil. Moreover, it also reduces dependence on chemical fertilizers and pesticides and hence reduction in the cost of the production.

In Sivagangai watershed areas, the organic farmers groups are functional actively. In order to get the certification for organic farming, the practices of all these farmers have been recorded, monitored and guided by the Certification Authority from Coimbatore. These farmers also meet regularly and discuss their experiment and the learning.

The supply of quality inputs such as tree saplings, vermi compost have been arranged from the demonstration center at Kandani. Apart from raising saplings, the center at Kandani has established a mini horticulture demonstration farm being raised organically. Similar farms are established at Vagulathupatty, Alagianallur, Thonugal, Vembarali, Sethur and Pooriyampakkam.

Linkages have been established to market these organic products. A member of the Organic Group in Sivagangai has established a marketing outlet at Madurai exclusively to sell organic agriculture products. The farmers in Sivagangai and surrounding areas have started using this shop in marketing their products.

1.4.3. Promotion of Tree Crops

The farmers keep their agriculture lands under-utilized or even unused for various reasons, the common causes being

- *Insufficient sources of water for irrigation*
- *Lack of labours to undertake agricultural activities and*
- *Timely availability of capital to undertake agricultural activities.*

Thus these lands gradually become wasteland over the years. The top fertile soils get eroded during rainy season and the lands become rigid when the lands are subjected to heavy loads. Bringing these wastelands, at a later stage, under agriculture use becomes a challenging task.

In order to overcome these problems, ASSEFA has initiated promotion of tree crops. Based on the agro-climatic conditions and type of soil, the farmers are assisted to raise suitable tree crops mainly horticulture crops. Unlike food crops, these crops require less water and minimum maintenance. When these trees reach the yielding stage, the farmers will get perennial income with minimum maintenance.

Various initiatives have been undertaken to promote tree crop cultivation. These include:

- ***Mass Campaigns*** organized in relatively 'bigger villages'. The workers along with SHG members organize one day campaign. During the campaign, other families in the villages are led to know the importance of planting tree saplings. In the end, tree saplings such as neem are planted in the common place like schools, temples, etc.
- ***Tree crops as Family Health Package:*** Developed a package of trees saplings with papaya, drumstick and goose berry, which are rich in vitamin and mineral. These trees can be grown in the kitchen garden and will start to yield from second year onwards. Supported 1,400 families with this package during the reporting period in Kalligudi and Kariyapatti region.
- Of course, to provide quality saplings, community managed nurseries have been established at Thonugal and Kandani villages. These nurseries have raised a) Pappaya b) Drumstick c) Gooseberry d) Neem e) Coconut f) Casuarina and g) Timbre value tree saplings.
- ***Model Farm Development:*** To convince the farmers in taking up tree crop cultivation, established model farm in the community lands at Alagianallur, Thonukal, Vembarali, and Sethur. These lands, which remained unused, have been brought under use with tree crop cultivations. Based on the soil testing and experts' guidance, coconut trees, banana plantations, Goose berry, etc., have been promoted. On seeing this, the surrounding farmers have also taken up tree crop cultivations.

1.4.4. Security for Productivity Losses

Farmers, particularly small and marginal, hesitate to adopt if any change is proposed in their farming practice. This is because their main source of income is from their lands. Any loss from

their expected production affects their livelihoods directly. In order to overcome their fear through assurance for production, ASSEFA has designed a new initiative, '*Compensation for Production Losses*' to inculcate the scientific cultivation practices.

Accordingly, the farmers are trained and encouraged to cultivate selective crops mainly food crops, scientifically. If the yield from such practice is less than a minimum quantity the farmers will be compensated for the differences in the production. The minimum productivity is fixed based on the agro-climatic as well as production cost.

This has been experimented in Kariyapatti area. On the first phase, farmers have been trained and supported to cultivate groundnut. The farmers cultivated the groundnut in the same manner, as cultivated in the demonstration center at Alagianallur. However, during the cultivation, there was failure of monsoon rain. They did not get rain as expected. Hence, over 50 percent of the total farmers had produced yields, less than the fixed quantity. As an encouragement, the farmer, who produced a maximum output per acre, was given a 'Goat' as prize for his achievement.

1.4.5. Cattle Wealth Promotion

Agricultural activity for small farmers is most of the time not an economically viable proposition. The complimentary source of income derived from cattle wealth, particularly milch animals, has proved to have a great potential for rural development and poverty alleviation. Moreover, there is a well knit relation between cattle and farming. Cattle consumes residue of crops and the muck of cattle is used as organic fertilizers for enhancing the fertility of the soil.

ASSEFA has continued with promoting dairy based livelihoods. The interested farmers, mainly women are brought under dairy groups and helped them in getting breed animals, hygienic milk production and marketing the surplus milk production. For efficient operation, these dairy groups located in continuous locations are federated. During the reporting period, credit assistances were arranged to 4,161 farmers to buy milch animals, of which 1,495 farmers were assisted to promote mini dairy.

In order to address the decline in the cattle wealth, ASSEFA established mini 'Heifer calf rearing centers' in the milk shed areas at Pooriyampakkam, Vembarali, Sethur, Idayapatti, Kandani and Vagulathupatti. During the reporting period, one hundred and ten heifer calves were purchased from the distant markets and reared in these centers. The farmers, who are interested, are allowed to purchase these calves at competitive price.

For disposing the surplus milk in the distant market, bulk cooling units and full fledged dairy plants are established to support one or more federations. As on March 31, 2010, 20,415

farmers have been brought under 1,055 dairy groups across 35 dairy federations. The surplus milk production ranged from 60,000 to 80,000 litres per day.

The dairy groups are encouraged to dispose the surplus milk locally. The remaining milk is sent to the bulk cooling units to chill and then to the dairy plant to be processed, pasteurized, packed and marketed under the brand name of 'Seva' and Sarvodaya'. At present, ASSEFA has promoted eleven bulk coolers and five full fledged dairy plants. Moreover, milk by-products making units have also been established at Uchapatti, Natham and Pooriyampakkam. These units produced by-products such as ghee, butter, curd, butter milk, flavoured milk, paneer, etc., based on the local market demand.

1.4.6. Wastelands Development:

ASSEFA has undertaken to develop vast areas of unutilized wastelands with the support of NABARD, District Rural Development Authority and Friends of ASSEFA, in 22 locations in Bihar, Jharkhand and Tamil Nadu. The total lands undertaken for the development were 17,736 ha. This is expected to benefit 6,959 small and marginal farmers.

In all the locations, land development committees were established with the local farmers as members. Initially, ASSEFA with local farmers had undertaken shramdhan works in the limited lands in the above locations, providing free labour in soil and moisture conservation. These works have created positive impacts, which include the following:

- *Enabled the farmers to come together for the common causes.*
- *Farmers able to learn the importance of watershed development activities.*
- *Equipped the farmers to undertake large scale of activities under Capacity Building Phase and Full Implementation Phase subsequently.*

Subsequently, the services were extended to other allocated lands. This program was successfully completed in Kayankulam and Kandani in Sivagangai district. The expert team from NABARD and Agriculture Department also evaluated the program and expressed satisfaction of the works.

In addition to treating the lands to improve groundwater resources, ASSEFA provided other supports to the farmers under 'Watershed development Plus' approach. This includes assistance to promoting irrigated dry crops, tree crops and livelihood support through cattle wealth promotion. In addition, support was provided for improving the irrigation facilities such as deepening of wells, bore-well and distribution pipelines and drip irrigation for efficient use of irrigation water.

1.4.7. Alternative Marketing: Farmers Market yards

The common market yard is a traditional concept in India where buyer and sellers meet at a place for trading at a lower level. During the era of the barter system, people gathered in common places for exchange of goods. Even today it continues in certain villages. But in many villages these market yards vanished over the years and middlemen have emerged.

As part of enhancing the income of the farmers, ASSEFA has reintroduced rural market yards. These yards are managed by the marketing committees established with selected farmers as members. In all these market yards, the sellers pay the fee for using this facility.

The revenue generated is used partly for maintenance and the remaining portion shared among the panchayat and local community organisations promoted by ASSEFA. At present market yards are in operations at Mudukankulam, Mallanginaru, Anaicut and Mandavai Kazhikuppam providing services to the villagers from 39 surrounding villages, marketing mainly agricultural products.

1.4.8. Bridging Knowledge Gap into Reality

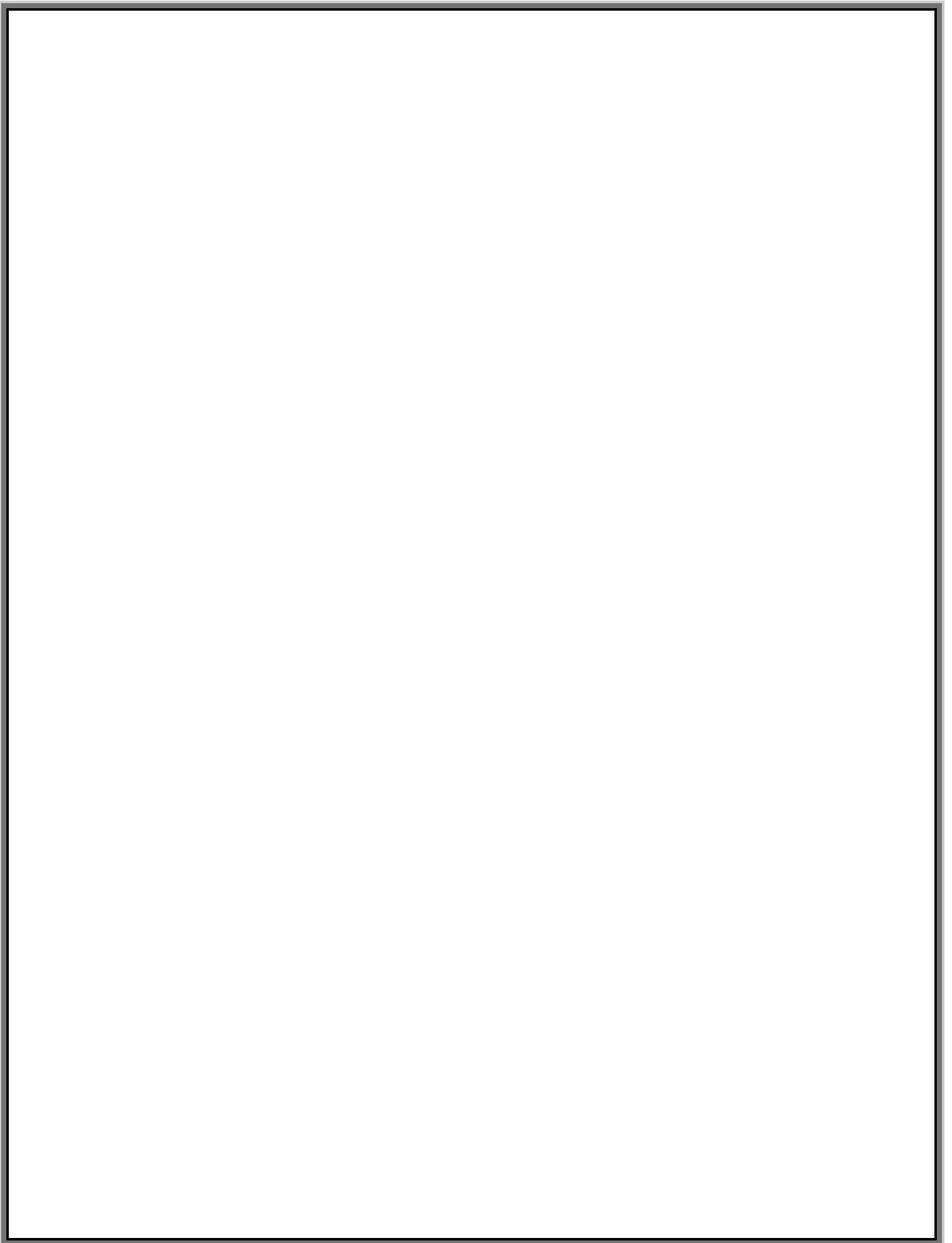
Further to provide knowledge based assistance, ASSEFA has started a Community college in collaboration with Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi. It is planned to start eight courses, for which, the college has already received approval from IGNOU.

To support farmers' initiative programs, the College is planned to offer the following two one-year Diploma courses in July 2010 cycle.

- *1) Diploma in Intensive Farming System and*
- *2) Diploma in Dairy Management*

The Diploma in Dairy Technology will be started in January 2011 cycle.

The College is proposed to enroll progressive farmers for these courses. They will be trained in the selected areas through professionals. In addition, each student will be allocated with 200 to 250 farmers. During the duration of the courses, these students will work with the allocated farmers in identifying their problems, work out mitigation strategies and execute the same. Of course, while evaluating the performance of the students, the changes happened with the allocated farmers will also be considered.



2. Towards Quality Life

Under integrated development approach, ASSEFA started supporting rural communities with non farm activities. This was mainly due to the following reasons.

- *Inadequate income made small farmers to look for alternative opportunities.*
- *Increase of pressure on land due to entry of new workforces every years.*
- *Rise in unemployment rate among educated rural youths, as they did not prefer to involve themselves in agriculture*

Hence, ASSEFA has been supporting the rural communities, particularly individual entrepreneurs engaged in micro-manufacturing or in service sectors to improve their business and absorb additional workforces. Based on the needs, the following services such as skill upgradation, flexible working capital and marketing the finished products have been provided.

2.1. Technical Skill Development

Vocational Training for Educated Youths: Interested educated youths are given training in market driven vocational courses through ASSEFA's Industrial Training Centers. The courses include Electrician, Mechanic in Air conditioning and refrigeration, Wireman, Fitter, Diesel Motor Mechanics, Computer Operation, Tailoring, Embroidery and Needle work. Placement opportunities are offered to these students by arranging campus recruitment. Students, who want to start their own enterprises, are supported financially and technically.

2.2. Tailoring Profession for Rural Women

This program is initiated to support the educated women. These women are identified and given first hand training in stitching dresses for children, girls and women under trained master. At the end of the training, certificate is provided.

In addition, these persons are supported with upgraded sewing machines at a competitive price, offered by USHA International Company. The company also offers free services on request. During the reporting period, 1,360 women were trained and supported with sewing machines across 23 areas in different parts of Tamil Nadu.

The women, who are trained under this program, have been engaged in corporate garment companies. In fact, some of the companies have approached our centers and offered to absorb more candidates in their companies. Others have been engaged in tailoring on their own.

2.3. Promoting Women Entrepreneurs

Similarly, women are encouraged to take up suitable micro-enterprises for income generation. Depending upon their interests and skills assessment, they are supported with flexible finance to start or expand their existing activities. During the reporting period, supports were provided to 102,95 women engaged in activities such as petty trade, selling tender coconuts, having grocery shops, retailing of vegetables, flowers, fruits, textile products, running STD booths and manufacturing and retailing of dry food products.

2.4. Marketing Services

In the present scenario, the traditional artisans and tiny manufacturers, particularly in the rural areas, have problems in selling their finished products. Their production is limited to the local demand and their income is insufficient to maintain their families. In order to support these families, their finished products have been marketed in the semi urban areas through direct sales outlets.

The major products marketed include leather products, khadi and silk products, handicrafts made out of wood, palm leaves, brass, dry food products, processed honey, pooja materials, naturopathy medicines, furniture, bamboo products, etc. These products are marketed through eight outlets with the support of sixteen educated youths.

In addition, pooja products manufacturing unit is established to manufacture products such as incense sticks, camphor, computer sambrani, etc., and marketed under the brand name of 'Seva'. The total turnover for the reporting period is Rs 4.9 millions.

3. Knowledge Upturn

3.1. ASSEFA Education Services:

Educating young generation is essential to promote sustainable development. ASSEFA, in accordance it, has been involved in providing education for the rural children since 1979. Having started with a pre-primary school with just 27 children in a remote village in Vadugapatti, ASSEFA has gradually expanded its education program.

Based on the local needs, the children of different age groups have been supported with different grades of education. These include pre-primary education, *primary education, middle school, high school, higher secondary educations and matriculations*. As on March 31, 2010, ASSEFA supported 17,540 children with regular education across 150 schools established in the backward and remote areas.

To ensure quality education, trained teachers are engaged. As on March 2010, there were 737 trained teachers. Of course, the quality education has helped many students including first generation learners, to settle with good jobs after completing university education, as engineers, lawyers, teachers, etc. With limited scope for employment opportunities in their villages, most of them have migrated to the urban areas.

Similarly, non formal education initiated in different areas, has supported thousands of rural children every year. To sustain this non-formal education program, the entire responsibility of managing this program was handed over to the local women self help groups, promoted by ASSEFA.

The promotion of technical education through Industrial Training Institutes also provided scope for rural youths to get better technical jobs. In many instance, these students settled in the nearby towns/cities, as they had limited employment scopes in their villages.

3.2. College of Education, a new initiative:

Retention of the trained teachers in the rural schools is a major challenge. They often switch over jobs, as there are many schools emerging in the urban areas. In order to address this problem, ASSEFA has started the college of Education at Silarapatti and Teachers Education Training Institute at Pooriyampakkam during the reporting period.

Both these institutions were started after getting the approval from the apex body of the Union Govt, 'National Council for Teachers Education' and affiliation from Tamil Nadu Teachers Education University.

The College of Education offers one year degree course. The students will be trained in mathematics, English, Tamil, science and history. Of course, the minimum qualification for admission is degree in any subject from the recognized university. The first batch was admitted in July 2009. A total of 100 students were enrolled. These students will complete their course in June 2010.

Similarly, ASSEFA has established Teachers Training Institute at Pooriyampakkam, in north Tamil Nadu to train those who have completed Higher Secondary Schooling to teach in the primary schools. It is a two years course. The first batch was admitted in July 2009. A total of 50 students were enrolled. These students will complete their course in June 2011.

In both courses, bright students will be identified. Upon completion, these students will be offered to work in ASSEFA promoted schools.

3.3. ASSEFA Community College – Livelihoods Education

ASSEFA established Community college, with the prime objective of improving the livelihoods of the local rural communities through alternative education programmes. The enrolled students will be trained in specific skills required for rural livelihoods activities.

Prior to this, ASSEFA undertook the assessment study of the local areas in respect of skills required for promoting rural livelihoods. The study has revealed the following.

- *Agriculture is predominant. Farmers concentrate mainly on crop production which is subject to high degree of uncertainty in income and employment. In this context, it is imperative to evolve suitable strategy for augmenting the income of a farm. Integration of various agricultural enterprises like cropping, animal husbandry, fishery, tree crops etc., have greater potentialities in the farmer's economy. These enterprises not only supplement the income of the farmer but also help in increasing the family labour employment throughout the year.*
- *Next to farming is animal husbandry activities, Dairy in particular, is most predominant alternative livelihoods in the rural areas. Potential exists to promote dairy in large scale, as these are milk shed areas. The introduction of cross-bred cattle coupled with avenues for marketing will ensure regular income to the farmers.*
- *Empowering women is the other potential area. The formation of women self help groups, training, linking them with financial institution for credit are carried out everywhere including this area by NGOs, Govt, Financial Institutions, etc. Availability of credit has generated self-*

employed non-farm enterprises in the area. The properly trained youths, mainly adult girls and women have better employment opportunities in NGOs/Financial Institutions.

- *Similarly, with the rapid application of computers in every field, there is a demand for skilled persons in computer sector.*
- *Progress in development cannot be achieved in the unrest society. Communal clashes due to political or economical or social pride/gain hinder not only any development initiatives but also affects the futurity of the children. Hence there is a necessity to build up a cohesive and harmonic society particularly by the members of the local bodies and teachers to build good future citizens.*

Considering the above opportunities in the rural areas, ASSEFA Community College has decided to offer seven diploma courses and a certificate course with the approval of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi. Upon completion, the candidates will get employment opportunities and also enable to start their own enterprise.

a) Proposed Courses:

Based on the assessment of the local areas, the following courses will be offered in July 2010 batch.

- ***Diploma in Dairy Farm Management - DFM (1 year):*** *The course will train the students from selection of breed to animal husbanding to veterinary care to clean milk production. During the course study, each student will be allocated with 200 to 250 dairy farmers. These students will work with these farmers and assess their constraints. Through participatory approach – farmers, students and teaching faculty, alternatives will be worked out and linked up with necessary organizations for any support. Of course, while evaluating the performances of the students, the impacts created among the allocated farmers will also be considered. Students, after completion, will be absorbed in ASSEFA to provide extension services to the dairy farmers. They will also be assisted, in case of starting their own venture such mini dairy farming.*
- ***Diploma in Integrated Farming System - IFS (1 yr):*** *Students will be equipped in IFS including adoption of organic farming. Like in DFM, each student will be allocated with about 200 progressive farmers. The students will work with these farmers during their study period. While evaluating the performance of the students, the impacts created among the allocated farmers will also be considered. After completion, students will be absorbed*

to provide extension services under Farmers Renaissance Initiatives. In case of starting their venture, the college will arrange necessary assistance.

- **Diploma in Women Empowerment and Development – WED (1yr):** This is another area, where there is demand for skilled manpower. These manpower is needed for formation of women self help groups, training, linking them with financial institution for credit, which are carried out everywhere by NGOs, Govt and private firms. The students, after completion, will be observed in ASSEFA's women development program. They will also be linked with other Institution, in case of necessity.
- **Diploma in Computer Application – CA (1yr):** Similarly, with the rapid application of computers in every field, there is a demand for skilled persons in computer sector. Hence, the student after completion will get employed in any firm including in ASSEFA promoted Institutions.
- **Diploma in Non Violence and Peace Making Skills – NVPMS (1 yr):** Any progress in development cannot be achieved in the unrest society. Communal clashes due to political or economical or social pride/gain hinder not only any development initiatives but also affects the futurity of the children. Hence there is a necessity to build up a cohesive and harmonic society through promotion of a basic culture of Peace and Non Violence.

In order to do so, this course is designed mainly for teachers and local body members to build as good future citizens. During their study duration, they will be allocated certain number of students studying in ASSEFA schools. They will apply their tools and techniques with these school children and absorb their changes. High weightage will be given for practical assignments only.

In addition, the following courses have been planned to start in January 2011 cycle

- **Diploma in Dairy Technology – DT (1 yr):** High scope due to development of dairy based livelihood activities. The students, after completion, will be employed in ASSEFA promoted dairy programs. They will also be supported to start their own micro-enterprises in dairy by-products making such as ghee, butter, curd, better milk, etc., based on their choices.
- **Diploma in Hill farming and Foundation plants – HFFP (1 yr)** It is exclusively for tribal youths in Palani hills. After completions, students will be assisted to support their fellow villagers (tribal community) in productivity enhancement in farming as well as value addition of forest products for better income generation.

- ***Certificate in Pre School Education - PSE (6 months):*** *There is an urge among parents to send their wards to school for quality education. Many schools are being opened, which requires trained teachers. Hence, after completion, student will be employed in ASSEFA education program based on the needs. They will also be linked to get employed in other schools based on the necessity.*

b) Learning Centers:

Initially, the College was proposed at ASSEFA Training Center at Kottampatti in Madurai district. Due to lot of enquiries for participation from wider areas, various learning centers as given below have been proposed for the July 2010 cycle.



c) Evaluation and Expectation from each Course:

It is planned to conduct regular written and oral tests, preferably at end of every module, in addition to a mid-term test/evaluation in December and final examination at the end of the each course. For practical it is decided to have practical records and students are evaluated at the end of each practical session.

The outcome of the each program is to produce fully trained, technically qualified and well informed persons who are available to provide support services to the community they belong. The table below gives us the evaluation process and expected outcome of the each program. It is also suggested that a professional team could be employed to evaluate the Impact of ASSEFA Community College programs, six months after the completion of course, on the target communities.

Course Code	Course Name	Evaluation Process
DFD3001	Diploma in Dairy Farm Management	<p>Theory Tests At the end of every chapters. Mid-term test the end of December. Final exam In the month of July.</p> <p>Practical Each student will identify 200 families in their allotted area. Weekly review will be done to assess the performance. Practical records will be maintained for technical Classes. Assessment will be made at the end of each practical session.</p> <p>Theory Tests At the end of every chapters. Mid-term test the end of December. Final exam In the month of July.</p> <p>Practical Each student will identify 200 families in their allotted area. Weekly review will be done to assess the performance. Practical records will be maintained for technical Classes. Assessment will be made at the end of each practical session.</p> <p>Theory Tests At the end of every chapters. Mid-term test the end of December. Final exam In the month of July.</p> <p>Practical Each student will identify 200 families in their allotted area. Weekly review will be done to assess the performance. Project report/Assignments for each practical. Assessment will be made at the end of each practical session.</p> <p>Theory Tests At the end of every chapters. Mid-term test the end of December. Final exam In the month of July.</p> <p>Practical Assessment will be made on discipline and orderliness at individual Families. Assessment on Group actions to promote natural and social environment such as tree planting, sharing of responsibilities etc. community level.</p> <p>Theory Tests At the end of every chapters. Mid-term test the end of December. Final exam In the month of July.</p> <p>Practical Practical assignments at end of each chapters submission of Project report at the end of course</p>
DFD3003	Diploma in Integrated Farming System	<p>About 6,000 to 7,000 families will be made dairy as an occupation. Families into groups at Village level. Groups federated at viable, convenient level Legal entity to these structures Linkages to credit & Market. Each student will be a Livelihood Support unit manager for these families.</p> <p>About 7,000 to 8,000 farm families will be imparted technical & professional skills in IFS practices. Families into groups at Village level. Groups federated at viable, convenient level Legal entity to these structures Linkages to credit & Market. Each student will be a Livelihood Support unit manager for these families.</p>
WED2001	Diploma in Women empowerment and development.	<p>About 1500 to 1600 women groups will be formed. Groups will be federated at viable convenient level. Legal entity to these structures Linkages to credit and livelihood promotion. Each student will be field co-ordinator for these groups</p>
NPD3001	Diploma in Peace and Non-Violence.	<p>To impart behavioural changes at individual, among families and community at a large.</p>
CAD2001	Diploma in Computer Application	<p>Imparting skill on software development. Students can be employed elsewhere in software professional company. Start computer enterprise on their own They can be employed as an outsourcing agents/consultants</p>

note: Evaluation of impact on ASSEFA Community College on the whole will be carried out by a professional evaluation team six months after the completion

4. Seeds to Rejuvenate Feminism

The contribution of the rural folks in rural economy has been immense. They play a major role in not only managing the families, but also economic activities, mainly animal husbandry and agriculture sector. A recent study has shown that rural folks play a very important role in animal production and participate actively in areas like animal feeding, milking, breeding, cleaning and providing health care to animals. The study also indicated that women constitute about 70 percent of work force in dairy sector. There are 75 million women, as against 1.5 million men in dairying.

In spite of all these contributions, women in rural areas are subjected to various kinds of exploitation, ill-treatment and violence. Even in the houses, their voices are sometimes ignored. The major root causes for the existing status of the women are due to the following.

- *Uneducated and limited awareness of the outside world*
- *Their social relationship confined with family members and relatives only because of limited mobility.*
- *Income generation and its management not under their control and*
- *Lack of immovable assets in their name*

Comprehending the importance of the rural folks in rural development, ASSEFA has been working with them for the last three decades. Various socio-welfare programs have been implemented towards developing the rural women.

4.1. Organizations for Rural folks

ASSEFA has promoted organizations exclusively with women as members to work for the development of the rural women. The roles of these organizations will be to identify problems faced by the women, discuss with the concern to sort out these problems and assess and implement suitable socio-economic welfare programs.

Towards this, women self help groups with maximum of 20 membership have been promoted at the village level. These group members are capacitated to discuss the problems of the members and to suggest ways and means to overcome their problems. As part of this

strengthening process, village level SHG federation is promoted with elected members from each group in the same village.

In addition, the SHGs are encouraged with savings and thrift activities. The groups have framed their own rules for collecting savings and use it on revolving basis suited to the members' conveniences. Of course, the savings are rotated among them mainly for consumption purpose and to meet their immediate needs.

Similarly, the SHGs are encouraged to identify and implement suitable socio-economic welfare programs for its members. The credit support for income generation programs is mostly linked with Sarvodaya Nano Finance, a micro finance institution promoted by ASSEFA to meet the credit demand of the women SHGs.

However, to identify and address the common problems of the women at the block/area level, these SHGs are federated at block/area level. Each federation covers nearly 200 to 250 women SHGs. These federations are registered under Mutual Benefit Trust Act, so that all activities undertaken by these are under the purview of the existing law. Of course, these Trusts are managed by the elected members of the SHGs.

As on 31 March 2010, the status of these women organizations is as follows:

- *Women covered under SHGs* : 518,363
- *Number of women SHGs* : 32,838
- *No of registered federations (SMBTs)* : 113

These initiatives have been functional in 10,110 *villages* across six states in India – Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu.

As part of empowering these women SHGs and SMBTs, regular awareness and training programs have been conducted in various subjects such as group dynamisms, leadership, governance, income generation programs, financial management, accounts, etc. In addition to this, the trustees of 113 SMBTs (more than 650 members) are regularly apprised the importance of their role, encouraged and guided them to implement the socio-welfare programs, as given below.

4.2. Livelihoods Support Initiatives:

Earning a regular income is one of the necessities of women to get due recognition from their family as well as others. Understanding this, ASSEFA has been supporting these women for starting a venture or expanding their existing livelihood activities via SMBTs. Accordingly, the major activities with which women have been supported during the reporting period are rearing milch animals, sheep and goats, developing agriculture lands and non-farm activities

such as petty trade, tailoring, mobile vending business, freshment centers, food-products processing units, etc. In case of capital requirements, the members are linked with Sarvodaya Nano Finance Ltd via SMBTs. For marketing, especially surplus milk production, they are linked up with ASSEFA promoted dairy groups. During the reporting period, 147,122 members were supported under livelihood support initiatives.

In addition, these members are guided in investing their surplus income usefully, particularly in constructing new houses with title in the name of the women as well as in improving existing dwelling places. A separate housing company '*Sarva Seva Habitat Promotion ltd*' promoted by ASSEFA has been involved in assisting these women. This Company through collaboration with mainstream Housing Finance Companies works for this noble causes. During the reporting period, the Company has supported 2984 women under improvement of dwelling places.

4.3. Solutions at the Reach:

ASSEFA, based on the study undertaken by SARC, and in consultation with women groups, introduced the following social security schemes via SMBT to benefit the vulnerable and poor women members.

- **Wage Loss Compensation**

The pregnant ladies cannot generally attend to their normal work during the last three months of pregnancy. However, many women attend to their work with no choices, as otherwise they might tend loose their wages. There is a chance that this might affect the health of both mother and child.

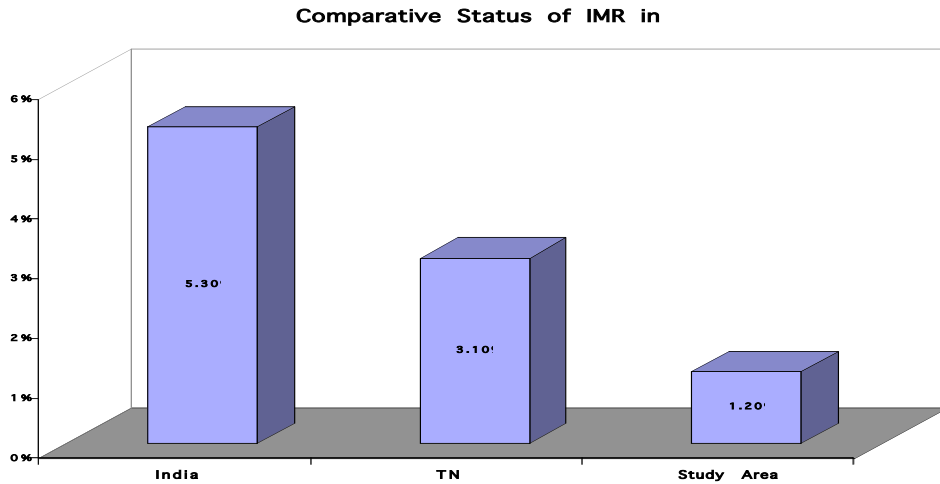
As part of addressing this, pregnant ladies are given wage loss compensation for these months. In addition, on delivery a new born kit with essential materials to maintain hygiene of the new born provided. However, these are provided, only when pregnant ladies undergo Ante Natal Care and give birth in the hospital.

A recent study on the impact of this scheme was undertaken by SARC by collecting data from 27 SMBTs in southern region, covering 26,856 members enrolled from April 2009 to March 2010. The impact was assessed by comparing the three major health indicators. 1) Infant Mortality Rate, 2) Maternal Mortality Rate and 3) Underweight of the new born of these SMBTs with national and Tamil Nadu data.

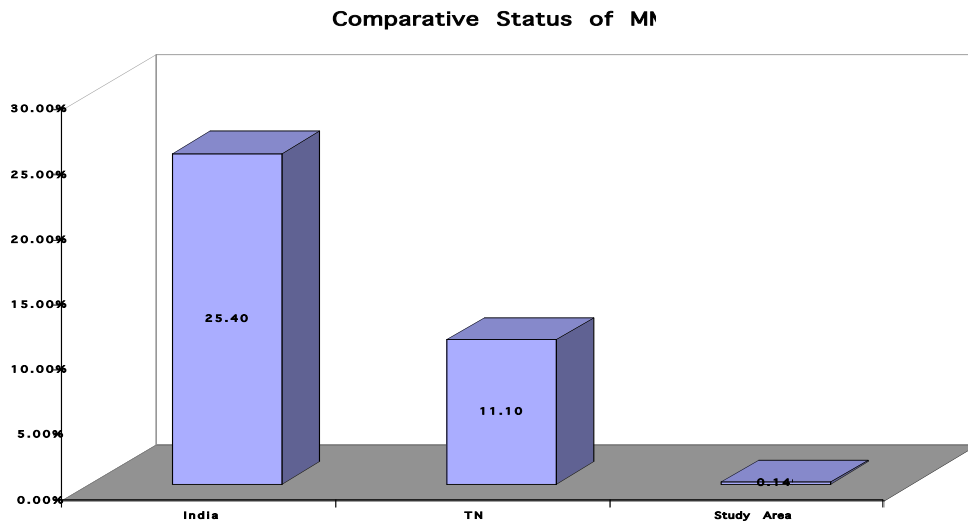
The outcome of this scheme was remarkable. The average of these SMBTs (*all located in continuous areas*) was much lower on all these indicators against Tamil nadu and All India figure. The study also indicated that these impressive achievements were due to ensuring of

proper ANC through trained persons and delivery attended by the trained professionals, etc. under this scheme.

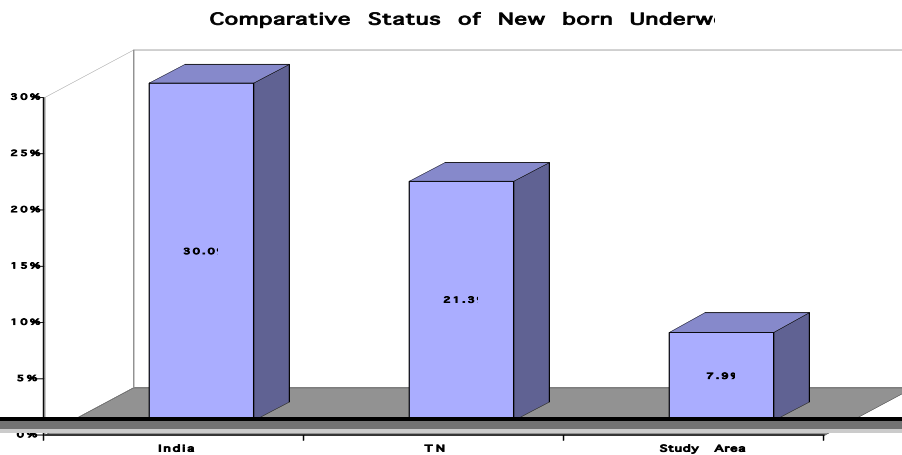
a) Comparison of Infant Mortality Rate:



b) Comparison of Maternal Mortality Rate:



c) Comparison of New Born Underweight:



- **Human Loss Compensation:**

The registered members get the benefit under human loss compensation too. Upon the sudden death of a member due to various reasons, the nominee is paid a lumpsum amount² as decided by the SMBTs. In addition, the Committee members also provide moral support to the family members till the body is buried. Generally, the family members are recommended to invest this fund for the benefit of their children.

These schemes have been implemented in seventy four SMBTs. During the reporting period, 1,10,835 members were covered under this scheme. Of course, to manage this scheme, a separate committee 'Sarvodaya Social Security Committee, consisting of elected members from Self help groups, preferably one from each cluster have been formed at SMBT level.

The major responsibility of this Committee is to approve the enrolment of new members, scrutinize and approval for compensation as well as audit of financial transaction for the year ending. They also play key role in spreading the benefits of the scheme to their co-members. This Committee meets once in a month.

4.4. Community Marriages:

Marriages for the rural poor have always been a burden than a happy event. Based on the interactions with the community and past experience, ASSEFA encourages women self help groups to organize Community Marriages to promote communal harmony and inter-religious amity in rural areas. In areas, where communal violence is prevalent, the community marriages help to bring people closer to each other for a better understanding of various issues.

This year also, community marriages have received special significance with women groups in various projects which had successfully conducted community marriages. The marriages have been conducted in nine areas during this year. A total of 202 couples from Hindus, Muslims and Christians, from economically weaker sections of the community have been benefited by this program. The women Self Help Groups, promoted by ASSEFA have been instrumental in conducting these marriages.

Besides providing substantial contribution towards the cost of the marriages, the women group members have taken upon themselves all aspects of these marriages such as purchase of gifts, marriage dresses and household materials and hosting a big lunch for all those who had attended the function. A huge procession of the newly wed couples in their wedding attire

² Compensation ranges from Rs 10,000 to 20,000

followed by thousands of women, children and men, accompanied by the traditional band music was the major attraction, resembling a rural festival.

The presence of leaders of different religions, exhorting the community to promote peace and harmony in each village and blessing all the couples were the other high lights of this program. The preference of women groups for identifying poor and vulnerable couples was very much appreciated by one and all.

4.5. Women Participation in Local Bodies:

Various initiatives undertaken to empower the rural women through self help groups have enabled many women to move ahead in the life mission. It has been observed that the members of ASSEFA promoted SHGs represented significant percent of members in the local bodies, where SMBTs are operating actively.

In the recent survey conducted at the Sankarapuram region, nearly five percentages of the local body members are from ASSEFA SHGs. The confidence and the opportunity to develop wider connect through working under SHGs have enabled these members to overcome all the obstacles in their way to rise to this level and serve a large section of the communities.

5. Wealth for All – *Healthy Living*

Women and children are susceptible to complicated health problems. In rural areas, the health problems are aggravated due to lack of awareness on health care and inadequate health care facilities. These issues are tackled by implementing the following services.

5.1. **Mother & Child Health (MCH) Services:**

A comprehensive package developed over the years has been implemented under MCH services directly with the support of qualified and experienced medical doctor. These include

- *Ante natal care services,*
- *Delivery at the hospital and*
- *Postal natal care services for mother and children*

During these services, the pregnant ladies and new born babies undergo regular health checkup, immunization and intake of nutritive foods. In Gingee and Marakanam, delivery of babies is also performed at the mini clinic with the support of trained workers under the lady doctor.

In addition, health education on personal hygiene, reproductive health care, anemia, nutritive food is provided to the pregnant ladies regularly. The proper advice on family planning and arranging this service for the required women are carried out. On delivery, the mother is provided with 'New born kit' containing all essential materials to keep the baby hygienically.

These services have been provided to the selective villages in Gingee, Marakanam, Pondicherry and Cuddalore areas, benefiting 1194 members during the reporting period. In addition, awareness on the problem of anemia is created among the women and adult girls. They were let to know the root causes for anemic, curative and preventive measures. Under this activity, ASSEFA has benefited 1,561 persons.

5.2. **General Health Camps**

General health camps have been organized in many areas via SMBTs in collaboration with local govt hospitals. During the camps, the general health check and treatment for any minor health problems are provided. In case of complicated problem, the patient is referred to the nearest hospital for long term treatment.

In some areas, special camps such as eye camps have been organized in collaboration with Eye specialist hospitals like Aravind Eye hospital. The patients having cataract problem were arranged for free operation. The total beneficiaries during the reporting period were as follows:

- *General health camps (150 nos)* : 19,211 persons and
- *Eye camps (78 nos)* : 10,669 persons

5.3. School Health

Under school health program, services such as supply of nutritious food, regular health check up, supply of vitamin A capsules and follow ups are undertaken. In Gingee, Cuddalore, Marakanam and Pondicherry areas alone, ASSEFA has benefited 3,879 children under this activity.

In addition, ASSEFA has evolved a new concept of “Kutty Doctor” exclusively to disseminate the knowledge health care and make the students participate in it. Accordingly, the bright students are selected and given training on personal hygiene, first aid and environmental promotion. They are named as ‘Kutty doctors’ means small doctors, whose duty is to maintain personal hygiene among the students and deliver first aid services in the school, at home and at their villages.

5.4. Improved Living Environment

These included hygienic living, improvement of sanitary and water supply facilities. ASSEFA has established drinking water facilities in the remote villages through local panchayats. Besides, water supply system generally becomes the responsibility of the community, for which training on community water management and maintenance are provided to the selected members of the community.

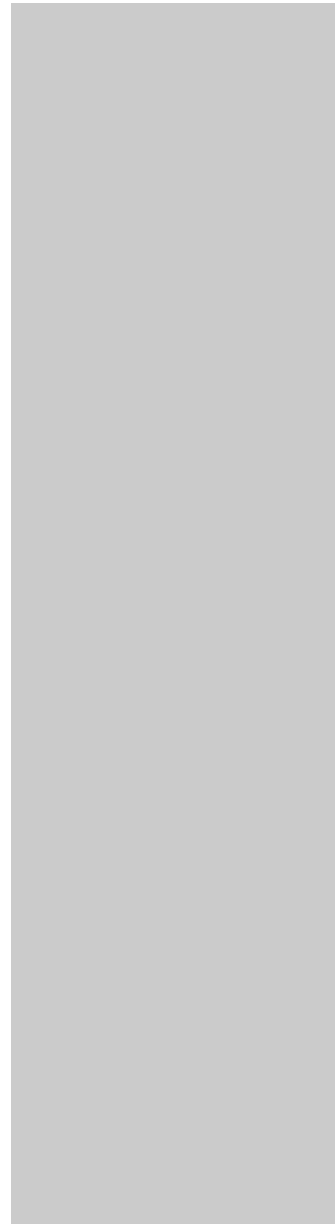
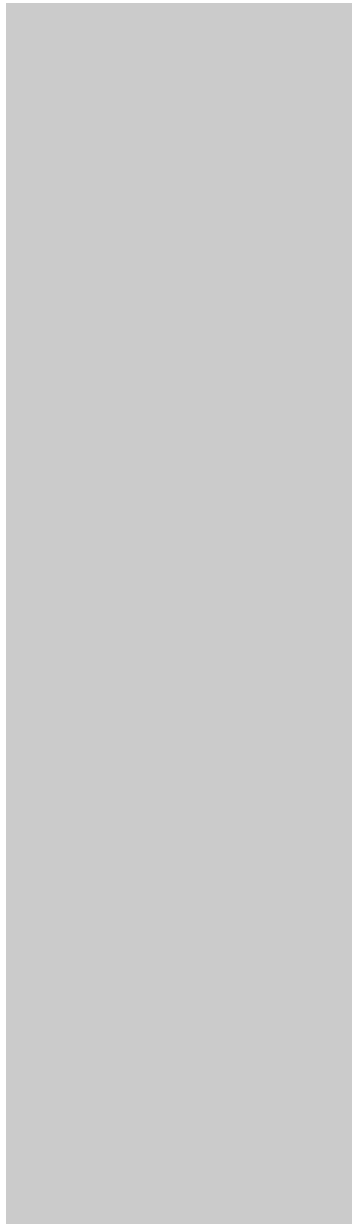
Similarly improvement of sanitation facilities is carried out at schools, households and community. The poor sanitation facilities in many remote areas are the cause for the spread of contagious diseases like malaria among the local communities. In fact, the condition is severe during rainy season.

Assistance is also given to the rural women to use the improved chullas instead of the traditional three stone stoves, which often caused respiratory diseases among women and children.

As the demand for such facilities including upgradation of dwelling places, was high, ASSEFA promoted two companies exclusively for these activities. During the reporting period, these companies have supported 2984 families for construction of toilets, improvement of sanitation, roofing, flooring, etc.

6. ASSEFA, the Banyan Tree

Sustaining development initiative is one of the major objectives of ASSEFA. Towards this, various activity groups have been established at the village level to manage the respective programs. These activity groups are federated at the area level for co-ordination, external linkages and collective action. An Apex body with a proper legal entity has been created with professional expertise for each program to coordinate and provide professional support. As on date, 156 apex bodies have been promoted, which functions actively and vibrantly in serving the rural communities.



ASSEFA Mission

ASSEFA, a pioneering Organisation in India, has been working for the development of the rural communities for the last forty-one years. It was started with the blessings of Acharya Vinobha Bhave, the father of the Bhoodan Movement in 1968. The initial noble mission was to develop the wastelands distributed to the landless farmers under Bhoodan movement.

Gradually, ASSEFA diversified its intervention and supported wider communities with multi faceted socio-economic welfare programs to realize the Gandhian philosophy of 'Gram Swaraj'. Its mission is:

'To improve the economic, social and cultural status of the rural communities and enhance their skills and self-management capacity. ASSEFA also aims at uniting the rural communities without any kind of discrimination and work for the upliftment of the social, cultural and economic life of all and to establish self-sufficient, self-reliant and self-managed communities based on the principles of freedom, economic equality and social justice'

Development Approach

ASSEFA operates in remote and backward areas. The small, marginal and landless farmers constitute the major sections in these areas and their main occupation is agriculture. However their earning is meagre from the agriculture due to various reasons. The lives of many farmers become miserable when monsoon fails. Under economical constraints, the farmers migrate in masses to the cities for menial works, as there is no alternative in their areas.

Considering the existing situation, ASSEFA has been giving priority to livelihood support in its development approach. Apart from this, other socio-economic welfare programs are also introduced.

A) Economic Development

- *Agriculture Development:*
- *Dairy Promotion:*
- *Micro-Enterprises Development:*
- *Social Credit*

B) Socio Welfare

- *Rural Education:*
- *Rural Habitat Promotion*
- *Community Health Care and*
- *Social Protection for vulnerable sections*

To enable the local communities to take up development initiatives and to become self-reliant communities ASSEFA adopts various strategies of “Mobilizing the local communities” and “Building up of community-based institutions” simultaneously through interventions as given below on the basis of Gandian Trusteeship model.

C) Mobilizing Local Communities

- *Organizing meetings, seminars and conferences*
- *Event celebrations and*
- *Community marriages*

D) Institution Building

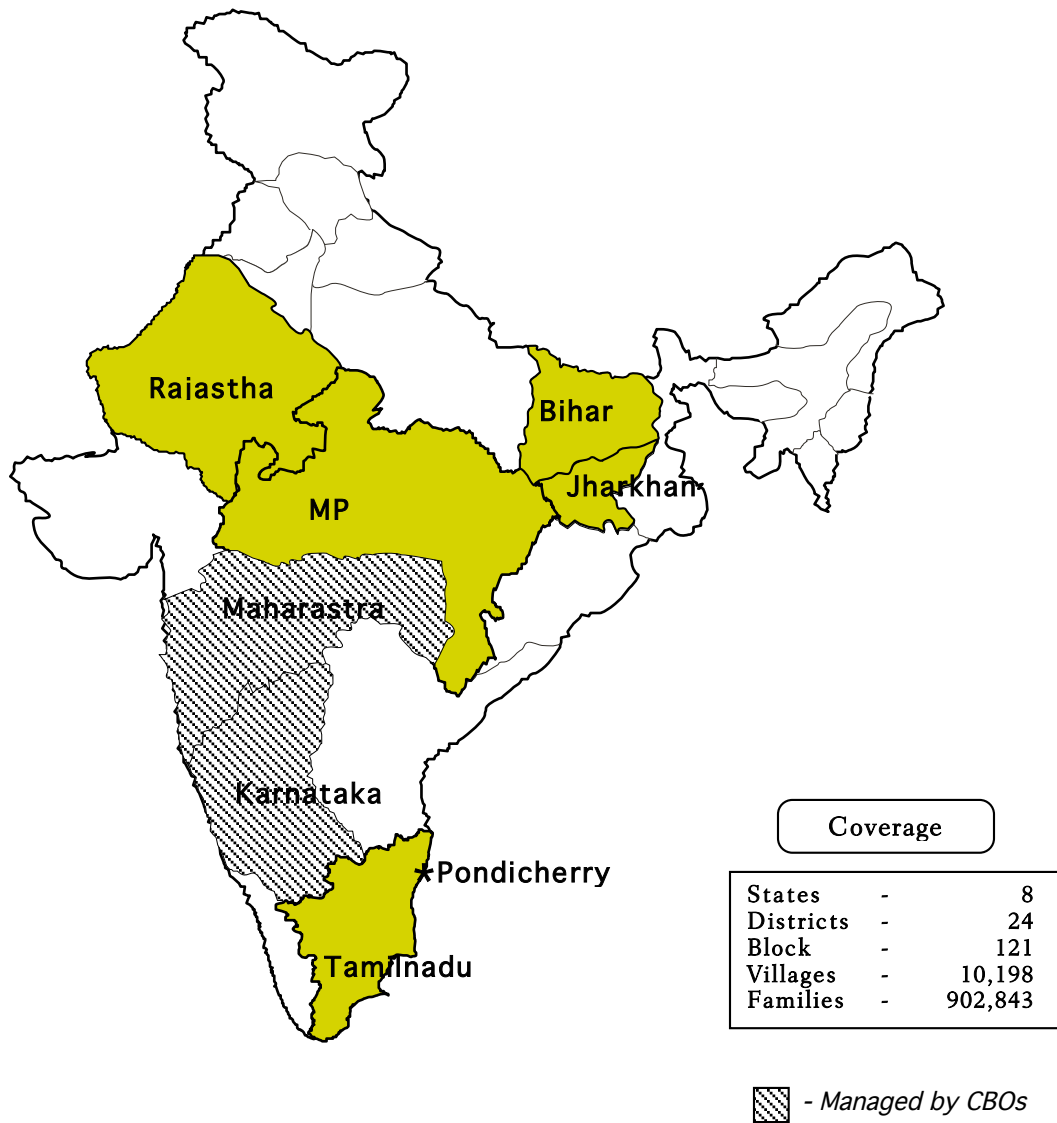
- *Establish activity groups, at village level*
- *Promote federation of activity groups, at area level, to guide and co-ordinate the respective activity groups under its fold.*
- *Establish apex bodies with suitable legal entity to provide professional support and mobilize resources to continue the programs.*

In order to strengthen these institutions, ASSEFA provides the following services based on the needs assessment.

- *Capacity building at various levels to manage the respective institutions and*
- *External linkages to avail necessary support services*

Coverage and Outreach

As on March 31, 2010, ASSEFA and its affiliated organizations had brought in 902,843 families under its fold across 10,198 villages in 121 blocks across eight states of India.



Sector-Wise Coverage

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

Human Resources

The total manpower strength in ASSEFA development activities is 6,984. This includes both workers and volunteers involved at various levels. The participation of female workers/volunteers accounts for 67 percent of the total workforce in ASSEFA. For efficiency improvement, capacities building at various levels have been organized regularly. This includes class room training, handholding training, exposure visit and experience sharing. The present strength of Human Resources of ASSEFA classified cadre-wise and gender-wise is given below.

