

PROJECT VIDIAL
SALEM, TAMILNADU





Before the initiative could be launched, it was necessary to objectively identify the exact needs of the local population and identify the gaps that need to be plugged. For this purpose, a committee of all stakeholders (members of local population, representatives of locally active NGOs, officials of various Govt. departments like Forests, Tribal Welfare, Rural Development, Cooperatives, Agriculture, Banks, Health, Education etc.) was constituted. The committee was tasked to prepare a project blueprint through interactions, house surveys and consultative meetings while ensuring a robust participation of women in all consultations.

The outcome was a comprehensive project plan comprising of 230 sub projects aimed at enhancing livelihoods and social infrastructure of the region. The sub-projects were sanctioned with a total outlay of Rs.66.74 Cr. pooled through innovative and effective convergence of various existing schemes like MGNREGS, SBGF, PMKKKY etc.

To ensure effective execution, 23 capacity building and training sessions were conducted with the help of specialized agencies like TNSRLM, Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Tamil Nadu Veterinary University, NABARD, INDISETI, Forest Department, District Legal Aid Society and various dedicated NGOs. These also included sessions aimed at sensitising officers too towards the needs and aspirations of the tribal populations.

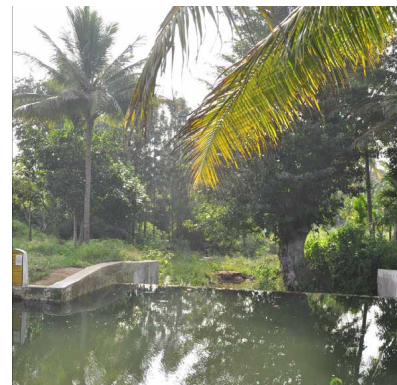
Overall estimate of project costs was around Rs. 80.27 Crores, which was broken into various small components targeting various sections of the society. These included a 19 Cr. outlay (Kalyanram) for income generation activities, fully funded by government, and encompassing 256 individual ventures with a credit support of Rs. 7.56 Crores. The examples of these ventures are millet based cookies; processing of

Myrobalan (*Terminalia chebula*) known for its medicinal value and in high demand for Ayurvedic/ Siddha medicines; bamboo furniture, honey production; poultry farm and animal husbandary. 123 Self Help Groups (involving 1871 women) have been playing a pivotal role in various activities envisaged under the project. These SHGs have also been supported by a credit line of Rs. 4.61 Cr. and two transport vehicles for moving goods from one place to the other.

A bulk milk cooling and processing plant has been set up at a cost of Rs. 94 Lakhs for doorstep procurement and processing of milk produced by the milch animals provided to tribal families under the project. Loans worth Rs. 2.93 Cr. under various Government schemes like Modra, PMEGP, UYEGP have been disbursed to 133 tribal entrepreneurs to facilitate their business ideas. Agriculture has got share in the arm with disbursement of crop loans worth Rs. 10.21 Cr. All weather BT roads, revamp of weekly market place, electrification of houses, augmentation of water resources by construction of check dams and open wells and augmentation of 3 Public Health Centres with required modern clinical and diagnostic facilities are other important dimensions of the project.

OUTCOMES

Project Vidyal has resulted in a holistic development push for 9340 households (~31000 persons) of 99 habitations located in the region. 5973 tribal families are now earning enhanced monthly incomes ranging from Rs. 8000 to Rs. 30000 through 39 types of livelihood generation activities initiated under the project by converging efforts of various departments and agencies in a coordinated manner.



While infrastructure works have created a conducive economic environment and employment opportunities for locals, other benefits are also evident. Infant mortality rate has come down to 7.4 per million (from 8.4) while Maternal Mortality rate has dropped to zero. This has been made possible by ensuring that all deliveries happen under medical supervision. Gross Enrolment Ratio in high secondary schools is now at 34% and the dropout rate close to zero (0.99%). GER (Gross enrolment Ratio) in Higher education of Scheduled Tribes stands at 34%, very high.

Project VIDYAL has touched lives of more than 6000 women (54% of the total beneficiaries) organised into SHGs by giving them financial independence and social recognition. Every sub project has been formulated to conserve the fragile eco system of this region with water conservation structures and plantation of local plant species to help conserve and nurture the natural ecosystem. Overall, Project Vidyal has created a significant positive impact on the living standards of the members of the tribal communities. ●

Livelihood activities under Forest Department

Kalyan (Kalyanram) hills are a part of the Eastern Ghats in the State of Tamil Nadu. They are spread across three districts of the state, namely Salem, Villupuram and Thiruvannamalai. This hilly area is densely populated and the tribal people of this region are called "Malayalis". Malayali tribal folk have traditionally depended on vast floral biodiversity of this region for various purposes such as food, construction, household & agricultural implements, fuelwood, religious customs & rituals and decoration. A large number of Malayali tribals live in the Karumandurai Hills area of this region, located at an average altitude of 2770 feet and spread over 19,372 hectares.

Karumandurai area has, over the years, seen a steady out migration of local population to towns and cities in search of jobs. This is primarily due to the inadequacy of local economic opportunities. Rapid outmigration of people made creation of local livelihood opportunities an urgent policy imperative for planners and administrators in the region.

PROJECT VIDYAL (Project NEW DAWN) was conceived, formulated and executed by Salem District Administration by systematically identifying the requirements of the main stakeholders viz. more than 30,000 Malayali tribals of Karumandurai hills. This was done through an innovative and effective convergence of various existing central and state government schemes rather than wait for any special allocations.

The strategy was to create sustainable livelihoods and then seamlessly integrate them into the daily life of the local population by creating forward linkages for marketing of local products while also conserving the fragile ecology of this unique ecosystem.



Infrastructure under Rural Development Department

OBJECTIVES

- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.
- SOLID INFRASTRUCTURE.
- IMPROVING PUBLIC HEALTH.
- PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION.
- TO MAKE TRIBAL WOMEN FINANCIALLY INDEPENDENT AND SOCIALLY EMPOWERED.
- ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION.