

# CASA in Action

S P E C I A L E D I T I O N

MISSION

# STAYIN'

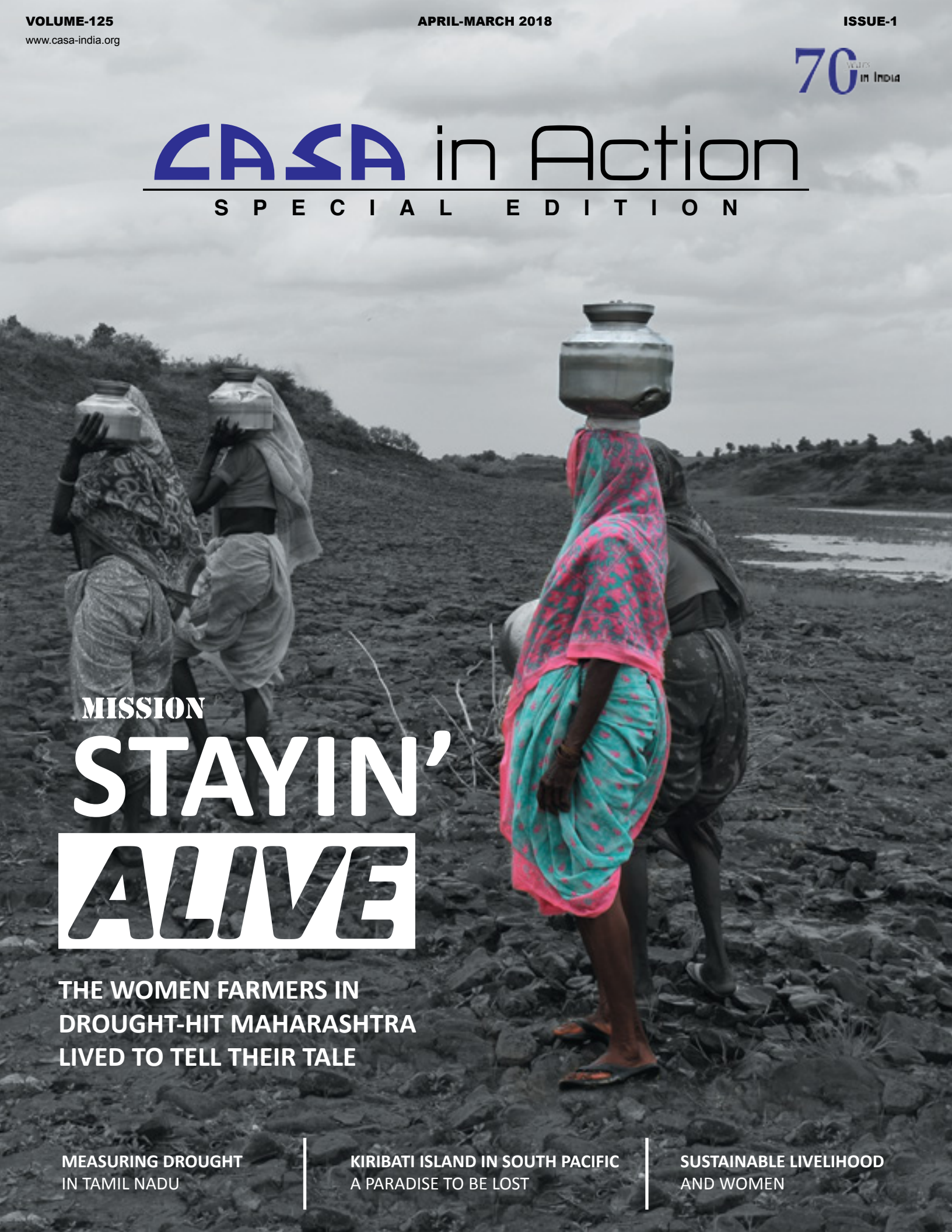
# ALIVE

THE WOMEN FARMERS IN  
DROUGHT-HIT MAHARASHTRA  
LIVED TO TELL THEIR TALE

MEASURING DROUGHT  
IN TAMIL NADU

KIRIBATI ISLAND IN SOUTH PACIFIC  
A PARADISE TO BE LOST

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD  
AND WOMEN





“ Now, I don't miss a single day. Everyday I eagerly wait to go to school ”



**YOU CARE.  
WE SERVE.**

**Sravanthi**  
A CASA Bridge School student

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**BECAUSE EVERY INDIVIDUAL MATTERS  
AND EVERY STORY MATTERS**



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**letters from readers**

Due to the uncertainty of the weather in the hill farming, there is an attempt to reduce the stress among farmers through the automatic weather center and climate farmers school. Henvel Valley's Tipli village is known for farming. Since the year 2014, CASA along with Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan this program was being operated by the participation of the farmers. Here the farmers are having the facilities to understand and read about the change taking place in the weather pattern. Now farmers can overcome their farming problems through technological expertise to increase their crop output. - **Aranya Ranjan, Uttarakhand**

**EDITORIAL**

India is an agrarian economy with about sixty percent of population directly and indirectly involved in agriculture. So it would be right to decipher that agricultural productivity has direct implication on country's economy.

Some called it a 'hoax'. But now climate change is a reality. We are already feeling the effects of weather changes and erratic rainfall in India. And while world leaders are negotiating and re-negotiating to cut a deal, the farmers at the micro-level are still at the helm of climate war.

Our country's lack of preparedness towards irrigation infrastructure and thrust on alternate initiatives in the last few years is causing more trouble for the farmers. Maharashtra has been a victim of drought since 2012 with the state facing its worst in 2013 breaking the record of 40 years. Deficit in rainfall for three consecutive years has caused water crisis in the state bringing down production output and taking a toll on the financial condition of farmers.

Farmers usually do not have surplus money in hand especially if the production is not apt in one season. They borrow from many sources year after year but the consecutive droughts only add up to their debt. The helpless farmers are out of solutions in Maharashtra. Recently, approximately thirty thousand farmers walked bare foot for 180km from Nashik to Mumbai demanding favorable Minimum Support Price (MSP) and loan-waiver.

The drought has caused water scarcity to such an extent that women have to stand in long queues and travel long distances to gather portable water - let alone the water needed for irrigation. Sometimes they are hit by heat strokes leading to fatal health conditions. Looking at the situation, CASA made its way into some worst-hit villages of Marathwada and Vidharbha regions of Maharashtra in 2013.

In this special CASA in Action edition 'Staying Alive' we will take you through some spectacular journeys of Maharashtrian farmers who did not succumb to the stressful situations and sought to fight the drought crisis tooth and nail. During our reporting period on the ground, we came across many women farmers who never believed in the idea of quitting their homeland and joined hands with CASA in bringing change brick by brick.

The stories of how actively they participated in the workshops and adapted alternate options towards crop strategies in their drought-hit regions will amuse you. How a handful of women got together in a group and became supportive pillars for one another at the time of crisis will leave you spellbound. The impact was so - that today these women do not have to knock the doors of moneylenders or banks for loans.

The situation is not conducive in Maharashtra but these women farmers are not ready to give up that easily. ■

It was good to see CASA come out with a Special Edition on 'Climate Change'. At the outset, a very comprehensive approach has been taken in understanding Climate Change, its impact and its manifestations. With India being prone to disasters viz., cyclones, floods, drought, and with threat of shrinking space of the coastline, (seawater intrusion / increase in level) in peninsular India, the repercussions could be unimaginable on resettlements, livelihoods and conflicts. This calls for a concerted action where people should be sensitized in all walks of life. Great to see CASA's efforts in combating Climate Change which are multifaceted in approach. I look forward to seeing many learning in the coming issues. - **Joseph Sahayam, Tamil Nadu**

CASA in Action on Climate Change specifically in Uttarakhand made me understand that technology can really change the face agriculture in India and help farmers to mitigate the impacts of environmental effects. - **Ravi Gaikwad, Maharashtra**

The editions are keeping me updated on what is happening in the rural parts of India. Some of the case stories help me understand how life can be so tough in these regions. CASA in Action on Climate Change was so fruitful in knowing that temperature alterations are also happening at the micro village level. - **Surender, Uttarakhand**





<b>DISASTER RELIEF</b> 	<b>HEALTH</b> 
<b>EDUCATION</b> 	<b>WOMEN EMPOWERMENT</b> 
<b>SKILL TRAINING</b> 	<b>CLIMATE MITIGATION TECHNOLOGIES</b> 
<b>LIVELIHOOD</b> 	<b>DISASTER RISK REDUCTION</b> 

In 1947, a small Relief and Supplies Committee was formed to provide aid and rehabilitation to the partition victims. In another eight years, CASA started to carry out its relief operations with a handful of staff from a rented accommodation in Delhi. In its 70 years of tough journey, CASA organised, re-organised, learnt, changed, expanded and re-structured its relief and development approach to better serve the communities in the changing environment and context. Today, CASA has grown into a premier humanitarian and developmental organisation with its base in 26 states working in 10,000+ villages and reaching out to 6.3 million people. We also support and partner with approximately 500 smaller NGOs in their social welfare efforts.

Serving for **70** years IN INDIA

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Photo above: An elderly woman fills drinking water through a common pipeline in drought-hit Latur district of Maharashtra

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Cover photo: A group of women in Maharashtra's Yavatamal district fill muddy water from a near by river for drinking and other purposes



Why

# DROUGHT ASSESSMENT IS NECESSARY TO MONITOR IMPACT



**Joseph Sahayam**

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Inter Agency Group - Tamil Nadu, which has been tracking impacts of the poor rainfall of Northeast Monsoon 2016, since January 2017 decided to do an Assessment in drought affected district spread across Tamil Nadu. CASA is the Convening Agency for Inter Agency Group.

Tamil Nadu experiences recurrent droughts. As the state normally benefits from northeast monsoon rainfall from October to December, Rabi is the major cropping season. The severe shortage in rainfall in 2016 Northeast Monsoon resulted in hardship for agriculture and animal husbandry related activities adding drinking water woes. The Tamil Nadu government declared drought on 10 January 2017, after 144 farmers ended their lives between October and December 2016.

### Findings of IAG TN's Drought Assessment in Tamil Nadu

The drought of 2016-17 has caused enormous socio-economic and environmental impact in terms of food insecurity, shortage of drinking water, depletion of irrigation water, significant reduction in fodder for livestock, severe losses in livelihood, forcing people to shift livelihood options, deteriorating health & nutrition particularly among women and children, poor sanitation facilities in schools and finally leading to migration.

The process of the drought assessment by IAG TN started since Jan 2017, where various meetings, consultation, workshops were organised, and to carry out the assessments and finally to finalise the draft report. To ensure the process of Assessment is highly participatory in nature, a Working Group consisting of CASA – Lead, World Vision India, CARITAS, Action Aid, IGSSS, CESVI India and UNICEF, CSI SEVA was constituted and alongside the same a Technical Team consisting of World Vision India – Lead, CSI SEVA and CASA was formed to factor in the technical process of Assessment through KoBo Collect which includes uploading the Assessment Tool and Piloting and follow-ups with the Data generated in the Assessment. CASA Additional Emergency Officer Joseph Sahayam was the convenor of the IAG TN.

Agency for the Working Group - which was instrumental in ensuring the process of Assessment is completed and the report for the same is finalized. CASA was also part of the Technical Team which was instrumental in enabling the assessment through KoBo Collect and analysing the Data. Apart from this it has also involved directly in the Assessment in 36 Villages in 2 Districts namely Tirupur and Dindigul.

### Food Security:

The communities have reduced the intake of food and have changed their diet, shifting to cheaper food items also, reduced food intake, SC communities resorted to compromise food compared to the others. The state should ensure distribution of climate resilient seeds to the farming community.

### SOME QUESTIONS RESPONDENTS ANSWERED

**63%** of the communities have reduced the intake of food

**65%** have changed their diet, shifting to cheaper food items

**44%** of the people get water on a weekly basis or erratic

**50%** of the respondents are unable to access grazing land due to the non-availability

**80%** of the people who own land and have reported crop loss

The first consultation on DROUGHT ASSESSMENT was held on 7th March 2017 with the support of CARITAS, MSSS. The second consultation on DROUGHT ASSESSMENT was on 28th March 2017 with the help of CESVI India, during which time the Assessment Tool was ready. During 10th, 11th and 12 April IAG TN Meeting was held to finalise the Districts for Assessment and following the same the questions were uploaded in the KoBo Collect Mobile App and piloted. Further a WORKSHOP ON DROUGHT ASSESSMENT (20th & 21st April 2017 with the support of UNICEF & Thozhamai) was organised, where 65 persons from 35 agencies participated. In continuation of this, the on-field assessment was carried out in 25 districts, 94 blocks, 555 villages in Tamil Nadu which involved 47 agencies. The Assessment process was completed on 13th May 2017 and in the meantime the POST DROUGHT ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP was held on 9th and 10th of May 2017, supported by UNICEF, CSI SEVA and Thozhamai, which saw the first Draft report being completed by the end of May 2017.

CASA being the Convening Agency of IAG Tamil Nadu, actively initiated and participated in the process of Assessment, where since the beginning CASA was leading the process as it was the Lead

### Drinking Water:

A majority of households depend on public water distribution, followed by water in ponds / lakes and with the failure of the monsoons in 2016 and the depletion of water in water bodies, there has been an acute shortage of drinking water, where majority of the community was unable to get adequate drinking water.

“ **Water should be prioritized for supply of domestic purpose rather than for industrial consumption and provided atleast for 5 days a week in villages.** ”

### Water for Irrigation:

The failure of monsoon has depleted surface water and ground water. The assessment gives the fact that of the 18 impacts felt in the village which relate to water, agriculture, livestock, malnutrition, distress selling, employment, livelihood, 25% have said that either they do not have water or less water. Community wells should be constructed in each village and bore wells should be revived with





Above: CASA additional Emergency Officer Joseph Sahayam inspecting the program site  
Below: Joseph Sahayam with (on his right) Prof. Vinod Menon, former member of National Disaster Authority

recharge facilities. Identify proactive CBO members and form Natural Resource Management Group to promote water management and develop natural resources.

#### Fodder for Livestocks:

Little above 50% of the respondents are unable to access grazing land due to the non-availability of the same. Around 40% of the respondents find that fodder is unavailable in the market. There is a difficulty in accessing fodder and therefore veterinary camp could be organized to save the livestock. In the long run to empower the PRIs to develop Grazing land in

Panchayats. To promote indigenous breeds of livestock

#### Livelihood:

Around 80% of the people have reported crop loss. There has been a significant impact on agricultural related activities and subsistence farming, livestock and its by-products have also come down. Around 40% of the people who own livestock have reported loss / distress sale of livestock. The participation of people in MGNREGA has increased from 38% to 42%. The promotion of Drought and climate resilient crops should be promoted. Water Management planning training should be given to the farming community. More focus on organic farming should be stressed with promotion of livestock that would create a cycle by its own

#### Children:

The level of school dropouts will increase due to the poor sanitation levels in schools, where it is noticed that many adolescent girls are dropping out of school in view of no water for drinking and domestic use in schools. Schools have to be well equipped with adequate drinking water facilities. Include millet based meals in the Mid Day scheme to enhance the nutritional value of the meal

#### Migration:

There has been increase in migration in last couple of years. There has been an increase from 6% to 9% in migration from households and amidst this, it has been noticed the people who migrate are landless people and schedule caste. Migration has been going on for the last 2 years and has been on the increase this year. Enhance the livelihood options in the village to ensure that people do not migrate Enable the migrated families people have access to the PDS in the place where they have migrated.

#### Way Forward

The process of the Drought Assessment which was spread across 550 villages of 25 districts of Tamil Nadu has opened avenues of understanding on the issues and concerns of Drought. The simple fact that Drought is a slow onset disaster and it needs substantial assessment study to prove the impacts for response which may not be guaranteed.

Tamil Nadu highly depends on surface water and ground water for Irrigation, the time has come for agencies to develop Long Term and Short Term Strategies for Drought Response, where the Short Term response necessarily needs to start from the declaration Early Warning. In the context of Climate Change Scenario where erratic rainfall and climate variation takes place the need to focus on Long Term and Short Term Strategy for drought is imminent and agencies have to team up. ■



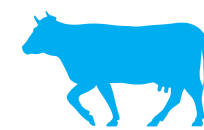
The Food Security for Community Mobilization (FSCM) programme was organized in five villages viz. Andipalayam, Nallampalayam, Ponnivadi, K.T.Valasu and Elugamvalasu of Dharapuram taluk in tirupur district of Tamil Nadu. The programme implemented in 3 years focused on land reclamation, water harvesting, binding land, repairing supply channels and constructing farm ponds. By reclamation uncultivable lands were converted as fertile lands. The lands of 288 farmers were reclaimed in 2016 and overall about 751 acres were reclaimed in 3 years. As part of the FSCM initiatives Human Potential Development activities were carried out. The HPD on sustainable agriculture through government schemes helped farmers in reclamation to cultivate their land and incentives in the form of rice enabled them to invest on agriculture. There were 39 men and 126 women who participated in 5 HPD programmes in 5 different villages. The HPD programme on sustainable agriculture and exposure to established organic farmers federations for 3 years helped them to opt organic farming. It also made the people aware about resources provided by government.

## STORIES FROM SOUTH ZONE



HPD programme - Workshop at Dharapuram

#### CATTLE REARERS' ASSOCIATION



The FSCM programme also organized Human Potential Training on animal husbandry. There were 44 villagers from 5 different villages who were taught and trained on goat and country chicken rearing. This was to ensure sustainable development and increased income. The 24 beneficiaries from the Arundhathiyar community of Nallampalayam were given loans of Rs.260000 from NABARD and Rs.200000 from nationalized bank for cattle rearing.

This program has enlightened the importance of promoting indigenous breeds of cattle and others livestock to ensure they cope up the climate change and can be maintained at low cost. This led to the formation of "CATTLE REARERS ASSOCIATION" and the bye laws for the same has also been developed. The association will focus on promoting indigenous varieties of livestock in villages.

#### MINOR MILLET FARMERS' ASSOCIATION



The community later formed "MINOR MILLET FARMERS ASSOCIATION". The organization began with fifty members of marginal farmers from SC background. They adopted organic farming in support and co-ordination with organic farming federations. The trainings and exposures helped them to understand the need for organic farming. Now these farmers are well aware of method of organic farming and value of its products in the market.

The initial success motivated them to develop the system and structure of the organization. They have now decided to register their association under the Societies Act. The bye-law for registering in the Societies Act was proposed by consulting all stakeholders and completed during this quarter. They have also decided to convert their organization into FARMERS' PRODUCERS COMPANY which will help them to mobilize government resources and open up wider marketing avenues.





Kiribati: The narrow unprotected Island  
Source: DW Documentary



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## KIRIBATI: A PARADISE TO BE LOST

The tragedy is that Kiribati is not responsible for its misfortune. The uncontrollable greed of the western countries are to be blamed.

Environment experts predict that a small island country in the South Pacific Ocean called Kiribati is the first endangered land on the face of earth; it may be wiped out in 20-40 years. The tragedy is that Kiribati is not responsible for its misfortune. The uncontrollable greed of the western countries are to be blamed.

In defense to Kiribati's raising sea level, the government has already purchased land in Fiji to give refuge to its people. Climate change is national priority of the government. Kiribati is an island of 33

atolls of which 20 are inhabited. The narrow unprotected land are scattered and spread between Hawaii and Australia. More than half of the population is concentrated in Tarawa atoll.

These atolls are on average 2 meters above the sea level. The frequent flood and storm surges are devouring the land. The people are building seawalls of corals and concrete but once there is a storm it smashes these walls. The government lacks funds to protect its citizen from indefensible sea anger.

In an exclusive coverage on Kiribati: A Drowning Paradise by DW documentary, Joy Eating - an official climate commissioner in Kiribati since 2010 - talks about the alarming situation. "It is warned that the community has to live in these conditions. There would be sanitation problems and contamination of the drinkable water. Right now we don't really have a king tide but imagine when it does come these little seawall is fully submerged by water," he said.

Everyday Tatawa and his three brothers have to carry a fishing boat into the sea, "as this area is flooded, it used to be a beach. Now we have to move our boat everyday otherwise it would get smashed."

The family defies the rising sea levels with a coral wall that resembles a fortress. "Eventually the land will disappear but we'll stay and float like an island." His family has become symbol of struggle in Kiribati.

The documentary reports that the young people are aware of dire prospect in Kiribati. They are scared but they don't want to leave their motherland, they are proud of their country, culture, identity and they want to preserve it. Besides building seawalls young people are involved in planting Mangrove sapling at sea coasts to protect the land from water invasion. They have planted more than fifty thousand Mangrove saplings.



Drowned houses  
Source: DW Documentary





“We don't want to leave our country. We are proud of our culture, identity and we will fight the climate change”  
Locals

Mother with her child making their way in water  
Source: DW Documentary

“In Tarawa livable land is becoming sparse,” says a climate activist in the video. “Compared to ten years ago people stayed in their homelands but nowadays they migrate for better future. Overpopulation is one of the biggest problems in the city. The government has limited resource, it can't employ everyone.”

In 2014 the effects of global warming on Kiribati attracted international attention. Yoanna made a bid to become the world's first climate change refugee applying for asylum in New Zealand but was not granted. He and his family were deported from New Zealand. “People criticize me for trying to be a climate change refugee accusing that I'm taking my country down but I want to live. It doesn't matter where we live, our culture will survive with us.”

Another place in Kiribati, Abaiang is about 50 km north of Tarawa. Salinity has made the land of this place infertile. It is sparsely populated but the people are unemployed. The government has deployed a man trained from Thailand to teach people how to produce sugar from palm sap. They have plans to export palm sugar around the world.

Women rights activist and nutritionist Tonga Fiji is concerned about fading indigenous recipes of Kiribati. In the documentary she says, “The rate of illness is very high and hospitals are full of patients. The imported rice has high content of sugar which is causing obesity and diabetes.” Tonga Fiji wants to fight the trend and teach people about the usefulness of herbs, vegetables and staple fish. She knows

many traditional ways of cooking herbs, vegetables and she wants to share her knowledge all around the Kiribati.

Water salinization is one of the biggest problems. The regular flooding has contaminated the wells, ponds and underground water. Environmental protection organization Kirikin invites representatives from several villages to seek ways for potable water supplies. Basically the idea is that people get to know about the problems and contribute their opinion in finding solutions, as reported in the documentary.

In Tarawa Marine training center is an opportunity for better life. There are 150 students trained every year to become seafarers, ship mechanics, cooks etc. The drill at the training center is very strict to inculcate discipline. Seafarers from Kiribati are in demand around the world because of their strong connection with water. Shipping companies from Hamburg have offices on Tarawa.

The primary schools in Kiribati begin with morning prayers. Education is compulsory for children of six to fourteen years of age. The children from the very beginning are taught about climate change, the reasons behind it and forthcoming menace due to it. They are taught to confront it and combat by planting Mangrove trees and building seawalls. ■



Coral Sea Walls  
Source: DW Documentary

After struggling for decades, it was on March 10 that a permanent ration shop was set up in Alipurduar district of North Bengal. The shop will cover close to 150 families of the tea plantation who were going through irregular ration supplies and social security after the closure of tea factories in the region. CASA India and its partner organisations submitted an application to regularise ration in the region so that no child dies of hunger. The ration shop was operational from the week before seeking to address the issue of food security.

Some villagers with help from CASA and its partner organizations submitted an application to regularize ration in the nearest shop and a mobile ration shop. There have been 351 community leaders who are identified and directed on different issues. CFC WB Package programme is working in 100 villages in 3 groups with CASA. They have farmers group, women pressure group and disaster



FOR THE FIRST TIME, A PERMANENT RATION SHOP


management task force. Under the initiative of livelihood and food security, CASA and DPGBS have achieved remarkable achievement. The initiatives taken on state level were- livelihood, disaster, justice and entitlement. The organization promoted pisciculture with 129 families getting involved in it. There was also mock drill on the landslide rescue operation organized by State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF). Use of non-conventional energy in the working area was advocated and they also deliberated conceptual understanding on CCDRR (Child Centered Disaster Risk Reduction).

The concept of mangrove seed collection and preparation of nursery as a part of the climate change and disaster risk reduction were part of the discussion. Gender mainstreaming for developing women pressure groups and issues like domestic violence, human trafficking and unsafe migration were also addressed.



A small village in Alipurduar district (North Bengal), of Kalchini block, called Gadadhar forest village. The villagers have to walk 30km through Kalkoot forest to access the Public Distribution System (PDS). In most families, the earning hand is the tea garden worker on daily wage. Young people mostly migrate to other places while women, children and old people stay in the village. CASA with its partner organisation Dakshin Panialguri Gram Bikash Samity (DPGBS) overcame the existing crisis by bringing up a ration shop.

The partner organization DPGBS discussed with the people about their problems and possible solution. People were convinced to demand a ration shop in the village. The community in deliberation with CASA submitted a mass petition. The community submitted an application to Pradhan of Rajabhatkhawa and a copy to Block Development Officer (B.D.O) of Kalchini. The media was too involved and the problem was stated to the District Controller of Food & Supply Dept of Alipurduar District.



CASA along with its partners at Dumarkola village in Jamui District, Bihar has been working to establish link with government organizations so as to ensure that the backward communities get more livelihood opportunities. The main source of livelihood has been agriculture and daily wage earning in the region. Regular training and awareness programs helped the people in giving them more options of livelihood. Community members are encouraged to do organic farming, mushroom cultivation as a result increased source of earning.



**MISSION**

# STAYIN' ALIVE

CASA Reporter Isha Banerjee and Video Reporter Arushi Narchal journeys into India's worst drought-hit districts of Maharashtra and gather some breakthrough insights from farmers living on the edge of agrarian crisis. During our reporting period, we collected striking conversations with farmers bringing us close to their struggles; also a bit closer to women farmers who became motivation for others.



Graphics: *Sanjeev Singh*  
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COVER STORY



Maharashtra appears to be a bit more different today than it used to be several decades ago.

In 2016, Maharashtra government started supplying water train to drought-affected town Latur in Marathwada having delivered 2.79 crore litre water to the region. How did the need for gallons of water arise in a land which was once pitted as fertile and hub of agriculture?

We interacted with a few farmers among who was 45-year-old Rekha Vishnu Jadav. On being asked about the drought conditions in her region and the struggles of women fetching water she said, "There is a well nearby from where the women get portable water. However, as the entire village is dependent on the source the water runs dry during high demand. We carry multiple buckets with us and to walk for kilometres to fetch water. In summers the women go through heat strokes. From legs to shoulders to head, every inch of the body pains. When I take ill, my daughters do the refilling for me because we need water at any cost."

She took us to an exhaustive walk to the nearest water well that was 10 kms from her house and alarmingly almost 150 feet deep running out dry. Over nine-tenths of groundwater in India is extracted for irrigation, according to the Ground Water Year Book for 2014-15 released by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB).

In 2013 Maharashtra suffered the worst drought in 40 years as the region received lower rainfall during the monsoon season June to September 2012. It was a "vicious cycle" that trapped farmers who were finding it difficult to escape. It would be wrong to say that the state never experienced drought in previous years, but right to say it never prepared for it. Changes in weather pattern have caused erratic rainfall across the region forcing farmers to depend excessively upon government schemes, irrigation facilities and money from loans sharks.

"I grew up as a farmer. Back then the only reliable thing we were dependent was nature, received abundant seasonal rainfall. But now we are going through grim farming seasons. The input is huge and the output is unsure. Groundwater has already started

“Earlier the groundwater level was at 70 feet, then came down to 100 feet and now it’s 150 feet deep and that too running dry during summers.”

depleting,” said Madhav Kale, an ex-sarpanch of Sheldara village, Latur. “Earlier the groundwater level was at 70 feet, then came down to 100 feet and now it’s 150 feet deep and that too running dry during summers. We have to fight for water tankers and government schemes because everyone needs water,” said Kale. War isn’t a myth in this region of Maharashtra. It is a sad reality in this part of the state. ■

“I think of *drought* in India, I think of Maharashtra.”



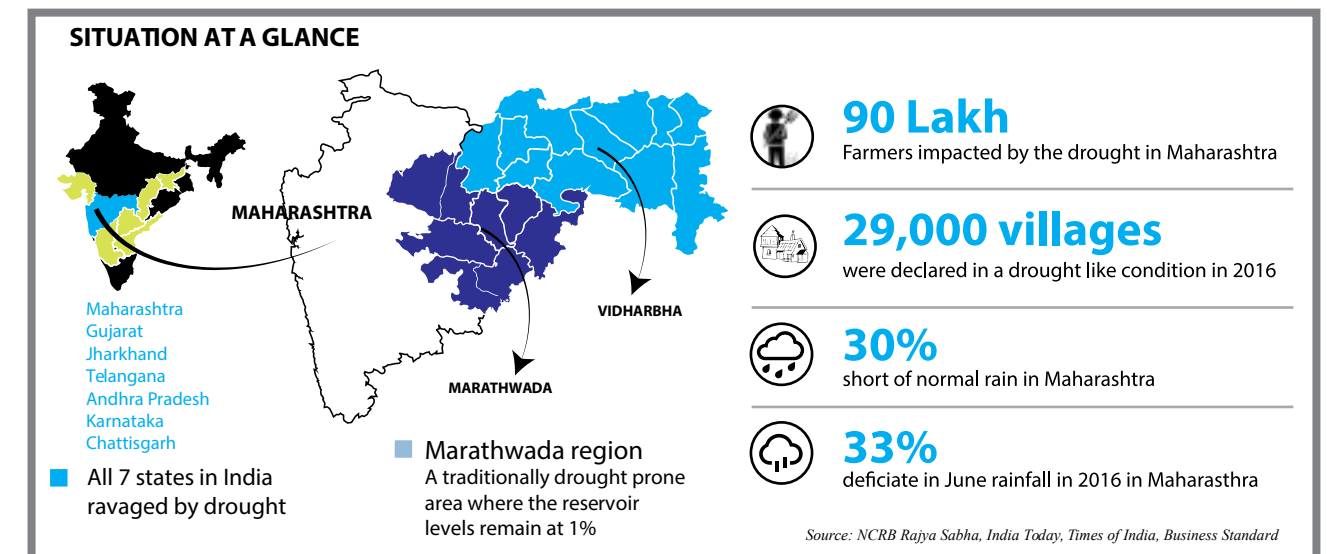
**Isha Banerjee**  
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To find some answers for ourselves, CASA reporting team travelled to the two worst drought affected districts of Maharashtra – Latur and Yavatmal. Both these districts fall under Marathwada and Vidharbha regions that always make their way into newspapers specially during summer and monsoon seasons; all for wrong reasons. To find a few answers, CASA reporting team took on a journey to the worst drought affected districts to understand the problem situation.

It was almost dusk in the lush green farms of India’s western state Maharashtra while travelling from its capital city Mumbai to Latur when we witnessed farmers giving in their last drop of sweat before closing the day. We caught a glimpse of these famers from our window panes. How carefully they were nurturing every crop only to get “better prices in the local market.”

The time was monsoon August 2017 and the rainfall scanty. Heavy monsoon showers needed for better crops hadn’t been met. And we could feel the tension gripping these farmers. They were worried; what if they “don’t even get back the initial amount invested on the season’s harvest let alone the profit, and what if they were unable to repay their debt to the loan sharks.”

Maharashtra - one of the most fertile lands in India. More than 13 rivers cut through this Deccan state that is indeed famous for black basalt soil having properties of moisture retention and rich in humus. While every geography lesson in school teaches us the very fact, the situation in







Above: 40 years old Yashoda Uttam Pawar is one of the beneficiaries of CASA's program for farmers in Yavatmal, Maharashtra

Below: Yashoda shows her house in Yavatmal. She does not have a permanent house yet and lives in a kutcha ghar (mud house) which gets damaged during monsoons and she has to repair every year

### MY HUSBAND DIED BECAUSE RAINS WERE UNTIMELY

The year was 2012 and it was about 9.30 at night when Yashoda Uttam Pawar become anxious about her husband's return. "He was not in the right mood that day. He returned home at six in the evening after slogging the day in the farm and told me he was going nearby for some work. Little did I know about his intentions," she said.

Just a weak back, Yashoda and her husband Uttam Pawar bought seeds worth Rs. 10,000 from the local market even though the predictions of delayed monsoons were on alert in most districts of Maharashtra.

"My son had started working as an electrician in the nearby city, so we had a little money. We took the other half of the money from a moneylender. I had to give away my marriage jewellery for that loan. It was a tough decision, but agriculture was all we had," Yashoda said.

It was a huge investment risk they were taking together – knowing the fact that the monsoons were delayed and government sounding red alert on drought. However, the hope to "make it through this lean season" does not wash away from a farmer very easily." Every year farmers take risk – success or failure is dependent on variety of natural and man-made reasons.

Unfortunately, for Yashoda's husband the risk was a failure as timely showers did not bless his region. Monsoons arrived late and rainfall was scanty in Niknagar village of Yavatmal district which is dependent on rain and groundwater.

"When I came to know about the incident, I was in denial but then I rushed to my kitchen and confirmed he might have done this to himself," Yashoda said with tears in her eyes.

A 50 ml of concentrated pesticide solution was missing from her kitchen. Her two adult sons hurried to their farm where the incident was reported by the passer-bys. "That was a dark day of my life and I wish I could be with my father in the field to talk him out of this," said Yashoda's son said.

Upon being asked whether she knew why her husband would take his life, Yashoda pats her forehead and replied, "No, I don't know why he ended his life this way. He could have seen his grandkids grow with us. We were under immense pressure to pay back debts and maybe he took the blame on himself for the consecutive failure of crops."

Uttam Pawar is one among several farmers in Maharashtra who ended their lives owing to the agrarian burden and increasing debts. ■



“ We took up a pilot project with three villages in Yavatmal district which was reeling under serious drought conditions. We are particularly looking for sustainable livelihood for the communities. ”

K.V. Thomas  
CZO - West Zone, CASA

### THE INTERVENTION

In a July 2014 report published by globally renowned rural journalist P. Sainath, it mentioned "at least 3,146 farmers committed suicide in Maharashtra in 2013, the latest data of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) show. That brings the total number of farmers taking their own lives in the Western Indian state to 60,750 since 1995. Maharashtra's record finds no mention in the media."

"Agrarian crisis is affecting all of India particularly Maharashtra that has been one of the earliest states witnessing the crisis resulting in stress. In the Vidharbha region of Maharashtra, particularly in Yavatmal district, large number of farmer suicides was reported," K V Thomas, CASA Chief Zonal Officer (West & South), said.

In 2013, CASA started its intervention in Marathwada and Vidharbha with livelihood and Comprehensive Food Security (CFSP) programmes as a response to the ongoing farmers' suicide in these regions. The main motive was to enhance capacities towards adopting low cost sustainable agricultural practices and diversified livelihood resources. The organisation also wanted to improve land and water resources for the distressed small and marginal farmers.

Mr. Thomas has been monitoring the project since its inception and made a "detailed assessment of the issue" in those areas with the communities in stress.

"We came across various reasons which were affecting and leading the farmers to take this extreme step – high debt and lack of institutional credit was among them. It was driving them toward money lenders forcing them to take credit at a higher interest rate. There is a crisis in terms in their produce. Input costs are increasing for the small and marginal farmers because of the cotton cultivation. The credits and inputs are not available from the mainstream government support systems. Therefore, farmers are increasingly depending on the systems which are available and exploitative," he said.

CASA developed a model wherein the farmers – specifically women farmers – could make the most benefit. "We took up a pilot project with three villages in Yavatmal district which was reeling under serious drought conditions. We are particularly looking for sustainable livelihood for the communities. We started to develop land-based and water-borne initiatives and support them in various livelihood options through farming and off-farming activities. We gave them the seed funding and support to help them start various small-scale activities so that they don't have to reel under stress during severe drought," Thomas said. ■

Below: CASA staff Ravinder Dawkare (left) and Sunil Gaikwad (right) interact with farmers in Latur district, Maharashtra.

An exhausted handpump in Yavatmal







Above: One of the strongest women SHG groups in Latur district, Maharashtra

## WOMEN TOOK CONTROL

Not much emphasis has been laid on the role of women farmers in India. Women play a vital role in building this agriculture economy. Rural Women form the most important productive workforce in the economy of majority of the developing nations including India.

Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist, describes that “it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming. While men went out hunting in search of food, women started gathering seeds from the native flora and began cultivating those of interest from the point of view of food, feed, fodder, fibre and fuel. Women have played and continue to play a key role in the conservation of basic life support systems such as land, water, flora and fauna...They have protected the health of the soil through organic recycling and promoted crop security through the maintenance of varietal diversity and genetic resistance,” he said.

What was most striking about the rural women in Maharashtra was their efficiency to manage household chores besides developing multiple livelihood strategies wherein the failure of seasonal farming did not impact her family’s economy - making their survival through at least one lean season.

One of such woman farmer in Maharashtra Golanbai Ganpathi Sasani believes in improving her financial capacity. “I do not own farm. So I go for daily wage to others’ farms. But later I realised that I need to make my financial stand stronger in the society so that I

can survive a season of drought with ease. So I started making earthen pots and sold in market for Rs 20 a pot. Unlike other families, I could easily feed my family at all times,” she said.

We asked her about the role of women farmers in her society to which she replied, “women’s participation in the rural background has always been typically include producing agricultural crops, tending animals, processing and preparing food, working for wages in agricultural, collecting fuel and water, caring for family members and maintaining their homes. We never had the idea that women can get together in a group and self each other morally, physically and financially.”

Joycia Thorat, CASA Project Officer (West Zone), gives an interesting insight on who are these ‘women farmers of Maharashtra’ and how did they become synonym for development in their villages. “Most of the time when we think of farmers, we think only of men. But when we worked in Yavatmal, we found that there were a lot of women farmers and also women who were a part of the agriculture industry. They were doing subsidiary work,” she said. Thorat reiterates that CASA brought these women together in SHG (Self Help Groups) so that they were able to support each other. “They were saving, they were supporting each other when one had a need and that was our biggest success at the time of crisis,” she said.

CASA was trying to diversify their livelihood sources like providing additional goats or additional income sources. “We are in the community with the farmers. They are basically looking at us as a great source of inspiration, as their idols and support for them. Which is what they look forward for and it is necessary for an organisation like this to be among them, to be with them and support them,” Ms Joycia said. ■

## TOOR DAL MACHINE - A TECHIE BEGINNING

How a simple machine changed the economics of the village!

In 2014 through CASA’s intervention, a small group of women in a small Maharashtra hamlet were experiencing financial liberty. Not just they were profiting from their farm production by the end of the year but also gaining additional income from a simple equipment, Dal Processing Machine.

This means – instead of carrying heavy dal baggages to the main town high costing vendors, the women belonging to the village could do it themselves free of cost. This also proved beneficial for women from nearby villages.

Joycia Thorat explains why there was a need for such a machine at the first place, “When CASA India started working in Yavatmal (Maharashtra), we were pained to see how women farmers would carry and walk miles with heavy rug sacks of Toar dal to get it refined (remove the outer coating/polish) at very high prices. This Toar Dal machine managed to not only eliminate the physical exertions on women but also started generating revenue as people from other villages came here to refine their millets at a very low cost.” A lot of women suffered from physical illnesses. Some said that the heavy baggage caused acute Spondylitis (acute pain in neck portion) leaving them bed-ridden for days, while many others said that they had to sell their raw lentils in market at “very low price” in order to avoid going through the physical trauma in temperatures touching up to 45 Degrees Celsius.

Seema Deepak lute, a member of the women SHG which manages the machine, shares her experience: “Farmers here did not make profit. Those were painful days. The lentils had to be taken to the nearby local market and was processed and polished by the third vendor who used to charge hefty money. Our village was already suffering with low income plus these lentils were sold at very low prices if not processed. We were in the middle of nowhere.” At times during high demand for lentils, the women were “under tremendous pressure” as they say. “It happens every year. Those times were hectic. Our children used to fetch water for the house because ran errands to the main town for dal processing,” Seema said.

CASA was already working on water bodies and land reclamation activities besides organising SHGs to reduces the dependency on loans from moneylenders in the drought-affected Varud Bhakt village of Yavatmal. We discussed our problem with CASA staff about the problems we were going through – dal processing was one of them. In 2014, CASA gave the SHG a dal machine and seed money of Rs 20,000 from which we purchased dal, processed it on our own and sold it in the local market at good rates,” said Seema Lute.

“Now the women from other villages come to us to process their 10 kg dal at only Rs 200, down from Rs 600 charged in the main town in additional to saving a full day spent just in transportation,” she said. This service further provided an additional income for the village, which is saved in community bank from which women are given very low-interest loans whenever they are in need. ■



“We discussed our problem with CASA staff about the problems we were going through – dal processing was one of them. In 2014, CASA gave the SHG a dal machine and seed money of Rs 20,000 from which we purchased dal, processed it on our own and sold it in the local market at good rates,” said Seema Lute.



## POOR WOMAN'S COW

In villages, goat rearing serves an important purpose. It is due to this reason why goats in most backward parts of India are referred as 'Poor Man's Cow'. Purchasing a goat is cheaper than buying a cow, leave alone the high maintenance required. In as many as 26 states, CASA provides a male and female goat pair to economically weaker families - giving them an alternate income option during periods of low income.



She sells goat milk in the local market and earns around Rs. 350 a day. She also has 3 acres of farm which is looked after her children. She is no more dependent on money lenders for loans. At 70, Narbada Wagmare feels "only if CASA started its work before my husband committed suicide, he would be alive now."

"He did not return that night. There had been several cases in our village and I was even scared to think about my husband committing suicide. I did not even know that he was under so much pressure. He just went to his farm and consumed poison. Somehow I tried to stabilise myself as my children were still dependent on me. My only mission back then was to gather three-square meals for my family," she says. After intervening in the village of drought prone Yavatmal, CASA responded to the farmers' suicide in the region & adopted low cost sustainable agricultural practices to support the farmers in stress.

Goat rearing became a primary livelihood option for the widows & the villagers during periods of low income. Now Narbada is an active member of Self Help Group (SHG) who motivates & mobilises more women specially widows to join the group so as to become self sufficient & free from distress.

"CASA helped me cope up with the burden. Not only counselled me morally but helped me build confidence in myself to tide through this situation. I started speaking proactively against the step towards suicides. We formed an SHG and started supporting each other financially. Widows were mobilised to join our group and we innovated many ideas on alternate modes of income. Many women like me started Goat Milk Corporative and earned good income. Now we can say that we are at a better position. The suicides in the village have come down after we initiated new sources of income generation," said Narbada. ■



## PROTEST THROUGH FOLK SONG

Folk Protest Song is a medium wherein farmers and downtrodden from rural countryside use their traditional songs to express their social situation. It's a non-violent way of protest; sometimes the lyrics are satirical and sometimes blunt. Folk protest song is a traditional art and its uniqueness lies in its rustic melody which deeply connects with native people. It can have elements of happiness, sorrow and anger.

A group of farmer community in Marathwada region are using the same medium of expression to bring their social issues of drought, water management and damages caused to the environment to the notice of authorities and concerned people. The tone and mood of songs vary with different topics. ■



## REJUVINATING WATER BODIES

Farmers in this hilly region of Yavatmal do not use tractors to plough their land because "it's still rocky 5-6 feet down under and on top. The land clearing has to be done by employing labour who makes it usable for farming."

CASA staff Prabhakar Dalvi looks after the programme in Yavatmal and emphasises upon the importance of rejuvenating water and land bodies in drought hit Yavatmal of Maharashtra.

"In the beginning, CASA organised Self Help Groups and educated them about the Government schemes. Secondly, under CASA's CFC programme, seed money was given to Self Help Groups (SHGs) so that they can increase their productivity. Thirdly, the place where I am standing is the land for beneficiaries. In about 100 acres there is area for farms, stone bunding has been done. If we look down from here, that land was like a slope. The fertile soil used to erode which left the farm unusable for farming," he said.

One method of erosion control requiring mechanical measures using engineering techniques is bunding. Bunding reduces run off and helps impound water longer for it to infiltrate the soil.

"Ever since the work done in this part, the soil erosion has stopped and rainwater percolates and accumulates in a small water body. In one or two years, the field that belongs to the farmers will get leveled. They will have a sustainable livelihood and their income would increase," he said.

"Through CASA, at least 30-32 farmers were benefitted through land and water reclamation activities. There has been an income generation of around 50 lakhs by the farmers. Every year they used to migrate in search of work. Because of our intervention the migration has slowed down. And the women are included in SHGs which gives them the power to make decisions and implement. They are now participating in the Gram Sabhas and demanding for the implementations of schemes. They have been taken into consideration how together as one the entire village can succeed," he said. ■

Left: A small pond recreated by farmers in a cotton field to help conserve water for irrigation purposes, which also recharges ground water  
Right: Several layers of bunding done by farmers of Yavatmal to prevent soil erosion and retain soil moisture



Above: CASA video editor Arushi Narchal during her shoot in Yavatmal

## MAHARASHTRA GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR FARMERS

Water pumps under  
**Atal Solar Prushi Pump Scheme**  
to save energy and bills

Irrigated farmlands programs  
**Jalyukt Shivar Abhiyan**

Crop insurance to farmers under the  
**Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna**

Micro Irrigation Scheme under  
Prime Minister's Agriculture Irrigation  
**Pradhanmantri Krishi Sitchai Kendra  
Puraskrti Sachan Sinchan Yojna**

Maharashtra Farm Loan Waiver Scheme  
**Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj  
Shetkari Sanman Yojana**

to enhance the knowledge of the farmers  
**Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay  
Krishi Margadarshak Yojana**

Drought area development under  
**National Shashwat Agriculture Mission**

**Counselling**  
is provided to farmers suffering from depression

In case of crop failure the minimum support price is provided to farmers





# PHOTO STORIES



Right: People align themselves in queue and wait for their turn to fill the buckets in drought-hit Latur district, Maharashtra. Every year the region is hit by acute drought which leads to low production farmers' suicide and huge migration.



Left to Right: Chandrakala and Shobha Jagnare are two bold faces against ban on liquor shops in their villages in Yavatmal. Chandrakala was an ex-sarpanch who was beaten up by liquor makers but she did not put her foot down. Shobha first pitched the idea of liquor ban to her SHG group after she was fed up with her husband who was addicted to alcohol and related domestic violence. Both of them took forward the march and won Rs. 2 lakh price from the government for their initiative on *Daru Bandi* (Liquor ban).



Left: In Maharashtra villages, people store water as many ways as possible.



Above: CASA field staff demonstrates how vermicompost pits function. CASA introduced organic farming in Yavatmal to reduce dependency on chemical pesticides and manure, and encouraged to adapt less water intensive farming in drought-prone areas.



Above: CASA formed Adivasi Youth Groups in large parts of Maharashtra that are hit by drought and unemployment. These groups were given a seed money and encouraged to start a micro enterprise to generate additional income source. The group is now running a full fledged tent house that rents tents, sound system and other paraphernalia for occasion like marriages, anniversaries and parties on a very reasonable rates. The youth group is also encouraged to tap government schemes.



Left: A major water source that caters to the population of Yavatmal and Latur runs dry even at its peak monsoon season. A lot many water bodies had dried up including lesser recharge of ground water posing serious concerns on drought conditions in the regions.



Left: Maharashtra is a major producer of cotton - popularly known as cash crop - because of its black basalt soil having properties of moisture retention and rich in humus. Almost one-third of the farmers grow cotton. Another cash crop sugarcane is also a preferable crop grown by farmers in Maharashtra.



The year 2016 was  
the worst drought

100  
years

in Maharashtra



# BRINGING BACK TO LIFE



**Kasvi Khosla**

Intern - Communications  
@KasviKhosla

When the state of Maharashtra was in the news for repressive condition of farmers, the women however refused to bow to the situation and tackled the problem hands on

Nervous at first, Surekha Raju Yere didn't see the interviewers eye-to-eye. After a lot of discussion her freckled face lifted up a little and very hesitantly she uttered "The agricultural system has failed us".

Perhaps, she was reluctant in speaking her heart out in front of other women in the community meeting. The women informed us that Surekha is quite submissive when it comes to raising issues at the meetings. However, she did open up to CASA reporters and shared some of her insights on how she struggles to make her needs meet having lost her husband to debt burden and managing the agriculture all by herself.

2013 was the year of worst drought to have hit Maharashtra in 40 years. As the drought and debt continued to drive farmers towards suicide in the state, women farmers had to take the fate of their families in their hands.

Surekha has three children, a girl who is 16 and two boys who are 14 and 12 years of age. She still does not clearly understand the cruel motive behind what drove her husband to end his life in 2016. However, she believes that it was the "tremendous pressure of drought-hit farms and huge burden of debt from the landlords that made him believe that ending life would be much more peaceful than going through the torture."

Since then, life for Surekha has not been able to stabilise. "I am a daily wage worker and my household survives on the income. But I do not get paid on the days when I have to travel miles to fetch water," she said.



Maharashtra is once again staring at a severe water scarcity

Out of 153 days of monsoon, about 94 were dry last year

The region received only 86% of its average rainfall

Food grain production and water is less than 50%

"Having lost my husband it becomes extremely difficult for me to feed three children. Due to my working hours at the field, I am been unable to take care my household chores. My children have stepped up in my shoes to help me in household chores like fetching water in my absence," she adds gravely.

The drought has made water - the basic necessity inaccessible. Women have to stand in long queues and travel long distances to get water and are often hit by a heat stroke that could result in death. They do not have taps everywhere in the village and they have to walk and fetch water from the wells around their villages. Surekha is one of the women in the village who have to travel kilometres in the heat and stand in lines to get water.

When the drought hit their village, people migrated to find work because agriculture was not giving them profitable outcomes due to lack of water for irrigation.

Another woman farmer in the village, Sumitra Bhagwat - a mother of two - says, "The agriculture has massively failed due to the persistent drought." Her husband was a farmer but now he works as a cobbler in a nearby city. Sumitra thinks that being a cobbler is better as it provides them with "some money than nothing".

Sumitra, with the help of CASA, formed a Self-Help Group (SHG) in the Chera Village of the Latur district of Maharashtra with 20-25 women in the committee. These women farmers were given orientations on how can they tackle the situation of drought within their regions.

The CASA staff in Maharashtra held workshops for them on the benefits of organic farming which recharges the nutrients within the soil organically and helps retain moisture even during the drought seasons.

"CASA has shown us a way to fight the drought in their village. We started with the land reclamation activities. Ponds were made to collect rainwater that could be used by us and a similar strategy was recharge other water bodies in our village," Sumitra says."The practice of vermin-compost gained momentum in the village wherein they no longer invested money on purchasing chemical manure and pesticides.

Farmers suicides in Marathwada have grown exponentially in the last four years

Year	2012	2013	2014	2015
Number of suicides	198	207	574	1133

Source: survey conducted by first post

"The women had come together as one and were fighting alcoholism in their village. Due to lack of income opportunities and pressure in agricultural sector, the men were driven towards drinking consumption leading to more responsibilities on the women," Sumitra said boldly.

"CASA provided us with goats so that they could sell goat milk. It helped them meet the basic necessities of life. One goat would cost around Rs 10,000," she explained how the initiatives by CASA sought to make their lives more easy.



**I do not get paid on the days  
I have to travel miles to fetch water.**

Surekha  
Women farmer in Maharashtra



The self help groups could now provide loans to the women in stress so that they do not have to "beg from landlords or banks to get loans that were needed to be paid off at a very high rate of interest." They had a community bank that would lend them money.

The women farmers now developed an understanding that fighting drought wasn't that difficult. Growing crops that weren't water-intensive and less dependence on cash crops like sugarcane and soybean were welcomed with open hands. "When there was sufficient for their families, they sold the extra produce in the nearby markets to earn money and get out of their debt," said Surekha.

It was not a revolution started by them but getting the old traditions back. The women had limited water and resources but managed to grow enough for their families and to make some profit by selling them. ■





**Joycia Thorat**  
CASA Project Officer  
@JoyciaThorat

CASA realized majority of rural women are engaged in agriculture and its allied sector. Though engaged in farming, they were not recognized as farmers. In the larger policy scenario, in discussions, plans and implementations they are left out which further affect their sustainable livelihood.

**Sustainable livelihood and Women**

**“THE EARTH HAS MUSIC FOR THOSE WHO LISTEN”**

Sustainable livelihoods means different things to different people. To put it simply, livelihood which can sustain every single human life specially the poorest and the most vulnerable, at all times and generation, locally and globally, long term and short term can be termed as sustainable. This development jargon, used mostly by social scientist and development workers, was first introduced by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development. In 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development expanded the concept, advocating sustainable livelihoods as a broad goal for poverty eradication.

In 1992 Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway proposed the composite definition as “livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term”

**Sustainable livelihood & Women**

Seventy percent of the 1.3 billion people in the developing world who are living below the threshold of poverty, are women. India ranks 87th of 144 in the gender gap report of 2016 which covers health, education, politics and economy. India is 3rd from bottom of 144 countries in health. These deprivations are directly and indirectly connected to sustainable livelihood and vice-versa if one understands sustainable livelihood in a comprehensive manner. For poor to achieve sustainable livelihood, their knowledge, perceptions, and interests should be heard. Economic growth does not automatically bring livelihood opportunities for poor as it depends on the capabilities to take advantage of economic growth. Poverty is not just a question of low income, but also includes other dimensions

such as bad health, illiteracy, lack of social services, etc., as well as a state of vulnerability and feelings of powerlessness in general. As they know their needs better, it is important to involve the poor in the design of policies and project intended to better their lot. How often women are consulted on matters as important and basic as livelihood by policy makers or even at household.

**Sustainable Livelihood as a Transformative process**

Sustainable livelihood is a holistic combination of

in Yavatmal. In the eventuality of the death of their husband they took full control of the family needs and livelihood. In the CFSP women farmers who never had opportunity except moving between their farm and home were exposed to different types of opportunities available, by participating in the inings at different villages, taluka, district and even states. This exposed them to many new ideas and provided the capacity, mobility etc to change the fate and take control of their lives .



Above: An almost dry water body during the rainy season on way to Yavatmal district

Left: Daily wage workers clearing a farming land in Maharashtra's rocky Yavatmal district

physical and natural resources, also social and human capital. Many a time it is denied to poor due to the power relations. Achieving sustainable livelihood is a “transforming process” as it assess and questions the power relations. Gender is one such aspect of social relations and as a great extent the relation between men and women are characterized by marked inequality and social domination, they obviously form part of the problem. We can add class, race, religion , ethnicity to this list.

Sustainable livelihood which raises quality of life is not a matter of simply improving the incomes of the poor. It means increasing people’s capacity to provide for themselves and lift themselves out of poverty. Complementary action from different sectors, along with active participation of the poor communities can bring the desired result .

**CASA’s Experience**

CASA in all it’s programmes uses the transformative approach. The Comprehensive Food Security Programme in Yavatmal District of Maharashtra to combat farmers suicide is an excellent example. Women faced farm distress more boldly than men, we learnt

Mobility gave them new lease of life. There are numerous such example which helped women to choose sustainable livelihood over resigning life. Model Livelihood which are sustainable are promoted by these women who along the way sustain many more lives of such vulnerable women. This is real and meaningful sustainable livelihood.

**“ Sustainable livelihood which raises quality of life is not a matter of simply improving the incomes of the poor. It means increasing people’s capacity to provide for themselves ”**

Nature and Earth always remain the centre in all the efforts of these women, earth being mother of all creation. CASA has witnessed women sustain livelihood very comfortably aligning them with the earth and not by exploiting nature. But nurturing it like a mother nurturing a child which is key to sustainable livelihood. ■



## STORIES FROM WEST ZONE

### WORLD FOREST DAY

To promote an eco-friendly environment and combat climate change, World Forest day was celebrated at Dediapada in Maharashtra on 3rd March, 2017. People learned about the forest and ways to preserve it. They also shared their thoughts and strategy to combat climate change. The primary school children were asked to plant saplings in the school and home.

Officials from the Forest Department and local Police Departments were invited as Chief Guests. They talked about the importance of planting trees and joined hand in planting saplings.



### MICRO PLANNING WORKSHOP AT MANDAVE

State Forum Secretariat staff and GVKP (GVK Power and Infrastructure Ltd) organized Micro planning process at Mandave village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra on 23rd March 2018. Sarpanch of Gram panchyat Mandave and other leaders participated. CASA State Coordinator Mr. Sunil Gaikwad shared the importance of Micro Planning in developing strategic action plan of villages.



### STATE LEVEL WORKSHOP - AHMEDNAGAR

Lokshahi Janhaque Andolan Maharashtra organized a program at Ahmednagar in Maharashtra from 27th to 28th November, 2017, concerning the current challenges faced by NGOs. CASA, GVKP (GVK Power & Infrastructure Ltd), CSRD (Central for Studies in Rural Development) Ahmednagar, Fight Hunger Foundation were the participants.

The agenda of the program was to discuss the role of NGOs in development process and its challenges. In the meeting: SWOT analysis (strength, weakness, opportunity and threat) on NGOs, review on the status of Maharashtra State forum, legal compliances of CBOs and NGOs were elaborately discussed.



### AWARENESS BUILDING ON GOVERNMENT SCHEMES FOR TRIBALS

Gramin Vikas Karyakarta Parishad of Dediapada organised two days exhibition in April, 2017 at Devmogra and Dediapada in Maharashtra to build awareness about government welfare schemes.

Nearly 2500 tribal families from Devmogra and nearby area visited the exhibition to know about the process of applying for schemes brought by the government for tribal and women.

### REGIONAL INTER-AGENCY PARTNERSHIP (RIAP) EXPOSURE VISIT TO CCDB, BANGLADESH

The program was organised by RIAP for the participants of CASA India, Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB), National Christian Commission Sri Lanka (NCC) and United Mission to Nepal (UMN) on 12th October, 2017.

The participants learnt the initiatives taken by RIAP in addressing Climate Change and also visited the areas where RIAP partners completed an action research to deal with disasters due to climate change. They also learnt how retained rain water can be used for integrated farming along the embankment.

### Combating migration:

## HOW A CLIMATE INITIATIVE IS REVIVING A GARHWALI HAMLET

*Indo-Asian News Service (IANS) is a premier news agency in India. This story was published on June 5, 2018 to mark World Environment Day. Story is based on CASA project Climate Farmer School in Uttarakhand.*



**Kushagra Dixit**  
IANS Correspondent



*Pic: The farms of Tipli village in Uttarakhand*

Tipli (Tehri Garhwal), Jun 4:

Ramveer Rauthela, a farmer in this small hamlet in Uttarakhand's Garhwal region, points towards a house with a rusting lock on its front door and sighs: "Earlier, they would often visit home; later, they returned during the harvest; now they even skip festivals."

Villages across this region have many such deserted houses overlooking vacant step farms as agriculture struggles to exist and families migrate to the plains searching for a better life.

However, what makes Tipli distinct are its efforts to bring those families back. Their hope: A micro weather station and a school that gives farmers lessons on climate change. This has managed to successfully revive step farming over the past few years and bring people back to their farms.

Rauthela, 58, who left for Delhi some years back, is among those who have re-migrated.

“People migrated because agriculture did not have much to offer and the changing weather and irregular rains make it more difficult”

“People migrated because agriculture did not have much to offer and the changing weather and irregular rains make it more difficult. People had no clue about how to cope... and this is where this farming school and weather station have helped,” Rauthela told this visiting IANS correspondent.





Pic: The residents of Tipli village explaining the functioning of weather recording station to IANS correspondent

His family is among 45 farming in the 55-family village. They undertake step farming on around 15 hectares of land and few new polyhouses. Tipli also has a pair of bullocks and plough that can be hired by the farmers at Rs 600 a day.

“Almost vacant three years back, our fields are now cultivated,” said Makhani Devi, head of the Tipli panchayat. “We grow tomatoes, capsicum, cucumber, beans and pulses and we recently harvested wheat.”

**“Climate change and its effects altering the crop rotation is a reality... farmers are often clueless, don’t get a proper harvest and often quit. The weather station here has changed the idea of cultivation. Just a little help through consultation and they are already moving towards high-end cash crops.”**

According to the villagers, once the weather station and school came up, more help followed, as it caught the attention of farmers.

Currently, scientists and experts from Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), the Agriculture Science Centre of the College of Forestry at Ranichauri in Tehri Garhwal district, visit the village every alternate Friday and guide the locals with

emerging trends as gauged by the weather station.

“It’s unique for a village to have its own micro weather station... It has increased their interest and perhaps this is the reason they are returning to their farms. It gives information about hail, rain, etc., so that farmers can plan their activities accordingly,” Sumit Chaudhary, Assistant Professor of Agronomy at the College of Forestry, told IANS, after conducting a detailed meeting with the farmers at the school.

Agricultural scientist Dr Tejpal Singh Bisht from the College believes there is an urgent need to replicate this model of a school and micro weather station in other villages as it has “re-defined” the idea of agriculture and horticulture in the hilly hamlets.

“Climate change and its effects altering the crop rotation is a reality... farmers are often clueless, don’t get a proper harvest and often quit. The weather station here has changed the idea of cultivation. Just a little help through consultation and they are already moving towards high-end cash crops,” Bisht said.

Explaining to the villagers about pests, how to deal with them and the crop they should sow next, Bisht asserted that the KVK is planning to convert Tipli into a seed producing village.

“We want to make an example out of the village so that it is replicated... government aims at doubling the income of farmers over next few years; how would that be possible if there are no farmers here,” Bisht said.

Apart from the micro weather station and school, which was built by Church’s Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), a social organisation, on the request of the Indian government, Tipli village also has a 0.5 KW power station, which currently lights up about 50 hamlets — some inhabited by only one or two families — around Tipli, and a sand water filter.

“Several villages like Sunarkot, Utkhanda, Than, to name a few, are virtually vacant as most of the families have migrated... through this weather station and school, we did an experiment and it was successful; step farming has revived,” Isha Bannerjee, executive program associate-communications at CASA told IANS.

According to social activist Aranya Ranjan from the Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan, while re-migration is not impossible for Garhwal, more efforts are needed to revive and bolster the farming sector.

“The village now needs a disease forecasting unit for stronger crops. CASA and KVK are mulling on that and we are sure that this would happen. But what’s more important is to replicate it at other villages as well,” Ranjan said. ■



Above: The automatic weather recording station installed in Tipli village that monitors weather patterns and gives accurate data based on which scientists conclude their predictions

Below: (left to right) Uttarakhand Jan Jagriti Sansthan’s Aranya Ranjan and IANS correspondent Kushagra Dixit with Krishi Vigyan Kendra expert Dr. Tejpal Bisht taking questions from the Tipli farmers







CASA Project Officer Joycia Thorat (third from left) with women gender constituency members at United Nations Climate Change Conference CoP23 held in Bonn, Germany in 2017



CASA Senior Coordinator Dinesh Vyas participating in a campaign and bilateral meetings in CoP23 in Bonn, Germany in 2017



CASA India, UMN Nepal, CCD Bangladesh and NCC Sri Lanka on field exposure visit in Nepal

CASA staff along with Director Dr. Sushant Agrawal at India CSR Summit in which CASA pitched its projects to corporates



CASA Additional Emergency Officer Joseph Sahayam along with Director in ACT India Forum General Body Meeting held on 24 April 2018 in Allapuzha, Kerala



Below: CASA Director Dr. Sushant Agrawal addressing the gathering on the occasion of CASA completing its 70 years of service in India at The Cathedral Church of the Redemption, New Delhi



Below right: CASA Emergency Head Mr. Nirmal Singh accompanying former CASA Director Major Michael at the event in New Delhi





5th June was #World Environment Day

● Uttarakhand



**Let's Keep Mountains  
FREE FROM PLASTIC**