

Environmental Justice



Woman who attended kitchen garden workshop standing in her kitchen garden with yield



Women farmers and agricultural labourers attending a workshop

As we strive to eradicate some of the deep-rooted social, economic, cultural hegemonic values, the new challenges are emerging in the wake of changing socio-cultural and economic situation posing a major threat to the lives of most marginalized as well as the environment. The neo-liberal global economic policies which are emphasizing more on mass-production driven development is not only ecologically disastrous but widening the cleavage between rich and poor. The most marginalized are pushed to further marginalization. In this background, we started fighting for environmental justice.

Focusing on the above objective SPANDHANA is organizing various activities in our working areas and some of which are as following;

- **Organizing agricultural laborers as a union, with a special focus on women laborers.**

SPANDHANA is organizing agricultural laborers with the special focus on women laborers from 2013. The higher attrition rate in agriculture and series of farmers' suicides has resulted in the loss of livelihood for the agricultural labourers, especially the landless women in rural areas. Huge cuts in public spending on agriculture, removal of tariff and unfair trade regulations have made people shift from agriculture to non-agricultural sectors. In addition, as this trend challenges the long-term food security of the country, there is an attempt from the government to promote corporatization of agriculture. Corporate entry to the farming sector is projected as cost effective and beneficial to farmers. However agrarian economy of the West driven by capitalist inputs has proved it as more cost-intensive due to greater energy inputs. Moreover, this trend will eradicate the traditional knowledge, native cultivating methods and becomes detrimental to the innate socio- economic fabric of rural India. This is also environmentally disastrous and unsustainable. When the commons like wetland, lakes, are converted to commercial purposes fertile agricultural land is sold for mega projects leaving very less scope and interest to distribute land to the landless communities.

Therefore in this background, SPANDHANA backed with the experience of organizing agricultural women laborers from past five years is planning to take our intervention to the next level by seeking solutions to sustainable land and environment management and fight against unfair and discriminatory trade and agrarian practices at a macro level.

SPANDHANA on the longer run is also aiming at demanding land to landless and promote an alternative model of collective farming run by women's collectives. The project aims to demand land rights to the landless women and promote collective and community organic farming.

- **'HasiruHengaleyaru' – Activities for Sustainable Developments**

'HasiruHengaleyaru' is a novel initiative started recently by SPANDHANA to promote sustainable environmental intervention and to promote household food security by promoting awareness on environmental justice and assisting rural women specially from marginalised communities to come up with small kitchen garden that will cater to them the essential nutrition requirement specially to fight anemia among rural poor, especially women. This mainly focuses on encouraging horticulture within the available space in rural areas by providing required minimal assistance like seeds and saplings to cultivate iron rich fruits and vegetables.

- **Taking education on sustainable development and environment to children and youth**

We believe the education on environment does not stop at just understanding pollution and planting trees. It needs to be understood from the point of view of development and what it means development for the future generation. A true development should be made more inclusive and environmentally sustainable and promote the concept of leading a decent life by living in harmony with nature. We need a younger generation which thinks on these lines and comes up with ideas that create alternative model of development and seek sustainable solutions. Engagement of SPANDHANA among youth and children is evolved from this objective and all our activities focus on bringing this awareness among them. We have



Women in her kitchen garden



Engagement with youth and children on sustainable development



An activity being conducted in a school to promote kitchen garden

formed green clubs in schools and colleges and take up actions to promote these values. Children in 12 schools have started their own small kitchen garden from which the vegetables for their mid-day meal scheme is also supplied. Youth clubs organize a periodic discussion on several developmental issues which are facilitated by SPANDHANA.



Children of 'Makkala Chavadi' participating in a workshop