India: overcoming drought & debt

- Emphasis on cash crops in drought-stricken areas have created hunger and debt in Andhra Pradesh
- Up to 10,000 farmer suicides in past 6 years
- Rediscovery of indigenous farming systems and local seeds has saved lives and livelihoods in 65 villages; and prevented malnutrition
- Low-caste *dalit* women held key to resilience through their knowledge and control of local seeds
- **Lesson:** Complex disasters require long-term, developmental solutions, based on local knowledge
FARMING HOPE

STORY OF DDS
SANGHAMS
Nature of communities

• Multiple marginalisation
• Rural
• Poor
• Dalit
• Women
“Their” agriculture

- Semi arid area
- Totally rainfed
- Ecological and diverse
- Low input
- traditional knowledge
“Others” Agriculture

- Driven by “new” policies
- Monoculture
- Totally chemical
- High external input and knowledge
The crisis & Disaster

- Cash crop dependence
- Debt ridden
- Collapse of small farmers
- Over 10,000 suicides
The Contrast

- Externalised agriculture collapses, despair
- Community controlled, autonomous farming flourishes, generates hope
OUR SOVEREIGNTY

OUR KNOWLEDGE

Seed Sovereignty
SEED SOVEREIGNTY

• EVERY FARMER HAS OWN SEEDS AT HOME
• WORKS WITH OVER 15 VARIETIES
SEED SOVEREIGNTY

• OVER 100 VILLAGES ESTABLISH OWN SEED BANKS: COMMUNITY GENE FUND; NO NEED FOR OUTSIDE SEEDS

• SUPPLIES UNAVAILABLE VARIETIES

• STORES FOR FUTURE
THE CONTRAST

• CASH CROPPING FARMERS ARE DESPARATE FOR EXTERNAL SEEDS
• RUSH TO GOVT DEPOTS; FIRED UPON; TRAMPLE EACH OTHER; SEVERAL DEATHS
• SEED SOVEREIGN SANGHAM WOMEN TOTALLY SELF SUFFICIENT; LEND SEEDS TO OTHERS
OUR CROPS
OUR KNOWLEDGE
WOMEN LED FARMING
WE WILL PRODUCE FOR OURSELVES
OUR KNOWLEDGE CAN FEED US
LOCAL PRODUCTION, STORAGE, DISTRIBUTION
SELF PROVISIONING COMMUNITIES

• 52 COMMUNITIES PRODUCE ALL THE FOOD & FODDER THEY NEED
• PROVIDE FOR THE LANDLESS, POOR AND THE DESTITUTE
• CREATE A SELF PERPETUATING COMMUNITY GRAIN FUND
• NO DEPENDENCE ON OUTSIDE FOOD
IN THE YEAR OF DROUGHT

• HIGH TECH STATE OF A P BORROWS 500,000 TONNES OF FOOD EVERY MONTH TO FEED ITS HUNGRY

• IRRIGATION, FERTILISERS, H Y V s FAIL TO PRODUCE FOR POPULATION

• WOMEN IN SEMI ARID, RAINFED DECCAN REFUSE OUTSIDE FOOD; SAY WE ARE SELF SUFFICIENT
FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

INDIRECTLY WORK WITH OVER 10,000 COMMUNITIES
BIODIVERSITY FESTIVALS
CELEBRATORY CULTURAL CAMPAIGN
BIO DIVERSITY
FESTIVALS
DIALOGUED WITH OVER
200,000 FARMERS
SOME LESSONS

• COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO COPE ARE ENORMOUS

• POOR AND THE WEAK CAN LEAD US OUT OF DISASTERS

• THEIR KNOWLEDGE ROOTS ARE STRONG, LIFE AFFIRMING
SOME LESSONS

• GLOBALISED AGRICULTURE IS A LOOMING DISASTER

• GOVERNMENT POLICIES MUST PREVENT THIS DISASTER BY BEING ENABLING FOR AND STAND BY SMALL FARMERS
SOME LESSONS

• FARMING MUST BE ALLOWED TO BE LED BY WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES

• LOCAL FARMING SYSTEMS MUST BE RESPECTED, STRENGTHENED & SUPPORTED THROUGH FISCAL AND AGRICULTURAL POLICIES