

Water scarcity - An ever grappling issue for the villages of Anantapuram district. A brief case study of Pampanur Thanda.

AF-Ecology Centre has been working to get the attention of stakeholders on issues of Anantapuram District by raising voice at appropriate forums. AF does not restrict itself just to give details of an issue but also influences policies to a great extent. World water day was conducted on 22nd March 2014 by AF-Ecology Center at Anantapuram drawing around 1200 farmers and other stake holders like environmentalists, CSO, Government Agencies, Writers, NGOs, etc. In this forum the severity of water crisis in Anantapuram district was brought out clearly by Sasya Mithra Groups from 10 different project villages. Pampanur Thanda is one such hamlet whose condition was presented by Grama Sasyamitra Samakhya representative Mr. Suryanarayana Naik. The situation which is similar in many villages of the District could draw enough attention from all the people.

Pampanur Thanda, a tribal habitat that has 172 families is facing a threat that questions its very existence in the wake of serious water crisis. The village has a population of 732 depending mostly on rainfed farming along with cattle and small ruminants. This village has four check dams, 14 farm ponds and one small pond to recharge groundwater in the village. To meet the drinking water needs of people and cattle, one drinking water over head tank was constructed under Satya Sai Water Project.

The rainy season of the year 2013, Pampanur thanda received scanty rain fall less than 300 m.m, mounting severe stress on existing water sources. All the 14 farm ponds did not receive any water during monsoon of 2013. The supplies from water tank could not meet the domestic water needs forcing the villagers to get from other neighboring villages like Pampanur, Y.Kothapalli. The cattle were taken to other villages having water sources to quench their thirst.

Pampanur thanda had 41 bore wells and 28 more have been dug in this year by spending Rs 7,40,000/-. But, at present only 18 bore wells could supply water to irrigate only 18.5 acres with crops like Tomato, Chilli, Banana and Ground nut. Only 16 farming families have adequate water facility to pursue agriculture, forcing all other families to migrate in distress seeking some employment during summer months. Adults belonging to these families go to Anantapuram town every day in search of labor in construction works as daily wage employees.

6 farmers of the village earned Rs 100000 for an acre of Tomato grown in 25 acres during Kharif, triggering an intense urge among other farmers to go for 28 new bore wells in this year alone. Due to receding ground water level, more than 35 bore wells dried up and could not supply any water. Added to this, nose dive in price of Tomato also hurt 30 farmers badly. The earnings as daily wage labor that a farmer could make being the only source of living for farming families depicts the scenario. 100 work days per family in a year under MGNREGA got over soon leaving villagers puzzled for the rest of the year and desperately seeking employment elsewhere.

The villagers are now in a distress and even proposed to abandon the village in near future if no steps are taken in restoring drinking water and water for irrigation facilities. Villagers themselves recognized some potential solutions to overcome these problems. They are 1. Repair and restoration of existing check dams to increase water holding capacities 2. More Farm ponds are to be constructed to increase the level of ground water 3. Storage capacity of the drinking water tank to be increased. 4. Water to be drawn from Jeedipalli Reservoir for irrigating lands during critical periods.

AF-Ecology Center has brought the problem to the notice of the Government, including the solutions suggested by the local community and pursuing further together with Grama Sasyamithra Samakhya.