External Evaluation

Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture & Diversified Livelihoods In Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai Districts, Andhra Pradesh

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Abbreviations

AF-EC	Accion Fraterna Ecology Centre
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALP	Alternative Livelihoods Programme
APCNF	Andhra Pradesh Community Natural Farming
APMAS	Mahila Abhivruddhi Society, Andhra Pradesh
APSSDC	Andhra Pradesh State Skill Development Corporation
ASMS	Apex Sasya Mitra Samakhya
ATF	Any Time Fodder
ATK	Atmakur Mandal
ATM	Any Time Money
BC	Backward Caste
BftW	Bread for the World
BLG	Beluguppa Mandal
CARA	Climate Adaptation and Resilience Agriculture
CBBO	Cluster Based Business Organisation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDM	Clean Development Mechanism
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CRIDA	Central Research Institute for Dryland Agriculture
CSA	Centre for Sustainable Agriculture
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DMM	Dharmavaram Mandal
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FES	Foundation for Ecological Security
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FPO	Farmer Producer Organisation
GP	Gram Panchayat
GSMS	Grama Sasya Mitra Samakhya
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HH	Household
HMV	Heavy Motor Vehicle
HR	Human Resources
HRS	Horticulture Research Station
ICRISAT	International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropic
KLD	Kalyandurg Mandal
KNDP	Kundurupi Mandal
KUD	Kuderu Mandal
LH	Livelihood
LMV	Light Motor Vehicle
MACS	Mutually Aided Co-operative Society

MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MGNREGS	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
MIS	Management Information System
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
MSMS	Mandal Sasya Mitra Samakhya
MSP	Minimum Support Price
NA	Not Applicable
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NF	Natural Farming
NHS	Nithya Haritha Sedyam
OBC	Other Backward Caste
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
PGS	Participatory Guarantee System
RDT	Rural Development Trust
RNFPCL	Rythu Nestham Food Producer Company Limited
ROI	Rate of Investment
RPT	Raptadu Mandal
RySS	Rythu Sadhikara Samstha
RUDSETI	Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institute
SADLP	Sustainable Agriculture and Diversified Livelihoods Project
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SHG	Self-help Group
SMG	Sasya Mitra Group
ST	Scheduled Tribe
STO	Socio-Technical Organiser
STR	Settur Mandal
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Thread
TOR	Terms of Reference
YRC	Youth Resource Centre
WASSAN	Watershed Support Services and Activities Network

Executive Summary

A. Key Framework Conditions

A.1. Project Context

The project is located in Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts of Andhra Pradesh, located in the rain-shadow zone of the Deccan Plateau within the semi-arid Rayalaseema region. The region is characterized by low and erratic rainfall (approximately 550 mm annually), recurrent droughts, declining groundwater levels, and increasing fallow lands. Agriculture is predominantly rainfed (80%), making farming systems highly dependent on uncertain monsoon patterns and increasingly vulnerable to climate variability and droughts.

Rainfed farming systems in the region are inherently fragile due to poor soil moisture retention, low organic matter content, degraded soils, and high exposure to climatic shocks, resulting in frequent crop failures and low agricultural productivity. The dominance of mono-cropping particularly groundnut cultivation on red sandy soils combined with erratic rainfall and prolonged dry spells, has further contributed to declining soil fertility and reduced farm resilience. At the same time, the prevailing high-input, chemical-based agricultural model has increased cultivation costs, depleted natural resources, and become increasingly unsustainable for small and marginal farmers in drought-prone conditions.

Socio-economically, the majority of households are small and marginal farmers who depend on rainfed agriculture and wage labour for survival. Repeated crop failures and declining farm incomes have led to chronic indebtedness, poverty, and seasonal distress migration to urban areas in search of unskilled employment. The population largely comprises SC, ST, and BC communities who face social marginalization, low literacy levels, and limited access to productive resources and institutional support. Gender inequality remains significant, with women contributing extensively to agricultural labour while having limited decision-making power, ownership of assets, and access to resources and services.

Although several government schemes support agriculture and irrigation development, the benefits often accrue more to relatively better-off farmers with assured irrigation access, while small and marginal rainfed farmers remain underserved. Overall, the region reflects a convergence of ecological fragility, economic distress, and social inequity, reinforcing cycles of livelihood insecurity, poverty, and migration.

A.2. Project Statement

The core problem addressed by the project is the **high vulnerability of livelihoods among small and marginal farmers and farm labourers due to recurrent droughts and climate variability**. This vulnerability manifests in the form of persistent poverty, chronic indebtedness, low and unstable incomes, malnutrition, and distress migration. Rainfed agriculture, which forms the primary livelihood base, is highly exposed to erratic

rainfall, prolonged dry spells, and declining soil and water resources, making crop production uncertain and risky. Climate change is further intensifying these challenges by increasing the frequency and severity of droughts and reducing agricultural productivity.

This problem is driven by several interrelated factors. Farmers remain largely unorganised and dependent on exploitative systems involving moneylenders and traders, limiting their bargaining power and access to fair markets. Agricultural systems lack drought resilience due to mono-cropping, degraded soils, and limited adoption of sustainable practices, resulting in frequent crop failures. There is also a lack of alternative livelihood opportunities and skills, particularly for youth and women, forcing households to depend on uncertain agriculture and low-paid wage labour.

Gender inequality further deepens vulnerability, as women despite contributing significantly to agriculture, have limited access to land, resources, and decision-making processes. Male migration increases women's workload and socio-economic burden, while also exposing households to additional risks such as child labour and educational discontinuity.

At a systemic level, existing policies and institutional mechanisms are not adequately responsive to the specific needs of rainfed and drought-prone regions. Most interventions focus on short-term relief rather than addressing structural issues such as water scarcity, climate resilience, and sustainable livelihood diversification.

In the above backdrop, Accion Fraterna Ecology Centre (AF-EC), has been working with rural communities to address the vulnerabilities in erstwhile Anantapur district for the last four decades promoting sustainable development, ecological farming, and livelihood security among marginalized farming communities with the focus on women and youth Currently, AF-EC implements a range of programs including sustainable agriculture, drought mitigation, agroecological farming, climate change mitigation and adaptation, carbon revenue generation for farmers, alternate livelihoods for women, and vocational training for rural youth.

Its core programme, **Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture and Diversified Livelihoods (SADLP)**, supported by Bread for the World, has been implemented in phases since April 2015. The project is presently in its fourth phase and reaches about **21,000 families across 230 villages** in Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts. Out of 21,000 households, around 18,000 are organised into SMGs under the SADLP, while the remaining 3,000 households are covered under the CARA project. Among the 18,000 households under SADLP, nearly 15,000 are farming families, while about 3,000 are landless households dependent primarily on wage labour and other livelihood activities.

A.3. Project Goal, Objectives and Indicators

The fourth phase of the project titled ***"*Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture and Diversified Livelihoods (SADLP)*"*,** supported by BftW, is being implemented by AF-EC from 01.04.2024 to 31.03.2027. This project seeks to address the root causes of livelihood vulnerability by promoting climate-resilient agriculture, strengthening

community institutions, enhancing livelihood diversification, empowering women, and advocating for more inclusive and responsive policies for rainfed farmers.

Development Goal: The small and marginal farmers and farm labourers in Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts lead a life in dignity along with improved gender equity.

Project Objectives, Indicators and Outputs: The current phase of the project has two major objectives, three indicators and 15 outputs which are defined in the proposal.

Objective 1 : Reduce vulnerability due to climate change

Indicator : 50% of marginal farmers (80% women) adopt at least 5+ climate-resilient measures

Targets : 15,000 farmers trained and practicing agroecological farming practices, including crop diversification and intensification, on 10,000 hectares

Objective 2 : Improve livelihood security

Indicator 2.1: 60% of farmers in SMGs reduce costs in agriculture operations by 15%

Indicator 2.2: 75% of 8,000 rural women and youth diversify their livelihoods and earn an additional ₹5,000 monthly

Targets : 2000 youth acquiring skills and linked to employment; 6,000 women diversified into off-farm livelihoods; 1,500 women equipped with entrepreneurial skills; and support for 16 FPOs and 950 SMGs

Reach & Budget: The programme will directly reach 21,000 households (18,000 SMG and 3,000 CARA households) and indirectly benefit 60,000 households. The total three-year budget is ₹23.23 crore excluding reserve, of which 58% (₹13.458 crore) has been utilized for two years.

B. Brief Information of the Evaluation

Evaluation is essential to determine the success and sustainability of projects. An external evaluation has been undertaken to assess the progress made over the past 24 months since the commencement of Phase 4 of the project ***"Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture and Diversified Livelihoods (SADLP)".*** Though the evaluation covers only the last 24 months, the cumulative impacts of the previous phases have also been considered wherever relevant to assess the broader and long-term outcomes of the programme. The evaluation also aims to identify any mid-course corrections required to achieve the project's objectives and desired outcomes as outlined in the project proposal.

The evaluation results are intended for use by AF-EC, the target groups, Bread for the World, and other relevant stakeholders, including potential new donors. The findings will also support AF-EC in future programming and documenting the lessons learned, outcomes, and impacts of the current phase.

C. Evaluation Methodology

The project was evaluated by Ms. Kalamani Arumugam and Mr. M.V. Rama Chandrudu, both independent consultants under the agreed Terms of Reference. The evaluation was conducted during March–May 2026, adopting participatory methodologies and tools to actively engage project communities, secondary stakeholders, AF-EC field staff, and the management team. Participatory evaluation approaches emphasized the involvement of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process, enhancing relevance, ownership, and learning.

Following the kick-off meeting and a comprehensive review of project documents, the evaluation team submitted the inception report on 28 March 2026. This was followed by an inception workshop held on 1 April 2026, during which the evaluation methodology, sampling, and field schedule were finalized in consultation with the AF-EC team.

During the field visits, the evaluation team engaged extensively with primary stakeholders, including farmers, agricultural labourers, and their institutions at various levels. A combination of participatory tools such as focus group discussions and interview schedules was used to facilitate reflection on the project's strategies, activities, outputs, and outcomes. These methods enabled stakeholders to share their experiences, challenges, and learnings, while also providing suggestions for future action. The team also interacted with secondary stakeholders to understand their roles, contributions, and perspectives on the project's implementation and outcomes.

D. Key Findings

The following are the key findings and achievements;

Relevance: The project addresses critical ecological challenges in the operational area, including low rainfall, recurrent droughts, and groundwater depletion, which directly affect 230 villages. It also responds to socio-economic vulnerabilities such as poverty, indebtedness, and distress migration, with a strong focus on women and marginalised communities. This relevance is reflected in the engagement of 21,000 households, and women constituting about 96% of the SMG membership and actively adopting climate-resilient agroecological practices and diversified livelihood options. Men are included into SMGs only in households where women are not available.

Effectiveness: The effectiveness of the project is reflected in the adoption of agroecological farming practices by 15,492 farmers across 10060 hectares of land either fully or partially. The formation and strengthening of 883 women-led SMGs have enhanced community ownership, collective action, and behavioural change at the grassroots level. In addition, 1,919 rural youth were trained in employable skills and supported in securing livelihoods, of whom 74% (1,420 youth) are now employed or self-employed. The project also demonstrates strong evidence of women-led development processes carried out in cooperation and partnership with men.

Efficiency: With 59% budget utilisation over two years, the project has demonstrated efficient use of financial, institutional, and human resources by effectively leveraging community institutions such as SMGs, GSMSs, MSMSs, ASMS, and FPOs. The dedicated project team including Project Coordinators, Mandal Team Leaders, STOs, Agroecology Specialists, Karyakarthas, and central office staff has played a critical role in ensuring timely implementation, strong community mobilisation, effective coordination, and continuous technical support across the project area. The decentralised implementation approach has enabled close engagement with communities and efficient programme management across a large geographical area.

Savings and credit activities within the community institutions have further strengthened financial sustainability and community ownership. The project's cost-effectiveness is also reflected in the multiplier effect of investments in agroecological farming, which have substantially reduced input costs while sustaining agricultural productivity and yields. The project appears to have paved the way for reducing both the cost and risk of cultivation through crop diversification, ultimately contributing to more stable and resilient household incomes.

Impact: The project has contributed to improved soil fertility and increased crop diversification, thereby reducing the risks associated with mono-cropping. The adoption of protective irrigation by 3,920 farmers (98% of the target of 4,000) across 4,200 hectares has significantly enhanced water-use efficiency and strengthened climate resilience. Socio-economic impacts include reduced distress migration, strengthened women's leadership in community institutions, and expanded employment opportunities for rural youth.

Investments of ₹0.96 crore in women's entrepreneurship supported 881 women directly and 1354 women by revolving loans (56% of the target of 4,000), generating additional income ranging from ₹0.4 lakh to ₹1.2 lakh annually. Under youth skill development initiatives, 1247 youth were trained, of whom 748 secured employment, earning an additional income ranging from ₹1.5 lakh to ₹ 3.0 lakh annually. The strengthening of community-based organisations (CBOs), the emergence of women leaders, and the long-term benefits of tree-based farming systems reflect not only the outcomes of the current phase but also the cumulative impact of the earlier phases.

Sustainability: The institutional strengthening of 883 SMGs, 218 GSMSs, and 16 FPOs, coupled with continuous skill development, has created a strong foundation for long-term sustainability. Women's empowerment, active youth engagement, promotion of primary and secondary processing, and the establishment of market linkages further enhanced community resilience and supported sustained livelihood improvements. Together, these factors increase the likelihood that the project's benefits will continue and be scaled up.

E. Key Recommendations

The mid-term evaluation highlights AF-EC's strong institutional foundation, widespread adoption of agroecological farming, and significant progress in women's empowerment and youth skill development. The following strategic recommendations are proposed:

Strengthening of People's Organisations

- Extend AF-EC support for an additional five years to consolidate institutions and enable communities to transition from subsistence-based livelihoods to sustainable enterprises.
- Deepen interventions in around 150 villages to strengthen governance systems, accountability, and visible socio-economic transformation.
- Build a strong cadre of women leaders and rural youth to act as community change agents across social, economic, and environmental domains.
- Streamline institutional structures (SMGs, GSMSs, MSMSs, ASMS, FPOs) to improve coordination, efficiency, and decision-making.
- Reposition Mandal-level Sasya Mitra Samakhyas as broader civil society platforms for advocacy, inclusion, and engagement with governance systems.

Programmatic Deepening

- Strengthen Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS) and value chains to improve market access and income for agroecological and rainfed farmers.
- Invest in water security through convergence of watershed development, groundwater recharge, and protective irrigation systems.
- Promote collective irrigation and equitable water-sharing mechanisms for vulnerable households.
- Facilitate graduation from micro-livelihoods to formal enterprises through incubation, credit access, mentoring, and business development support.
- Enhance women's participation through targeted leadership development, skill-building, and access to productive resources.
- Organize trained youth into alumni and mentoring networks to sustain leadership, entrepreneurship, and peer learning.
- Introduce appropriate mechanization and digital tools to reduce drudgery, improve efficiency, and strengthen market linkages.
- Develop and strengthen value chains for key local commodities such as tamarind, groundnut, maize, and mango through aggregation, processing, and branding.
- Promote member equity and in-kind contributions to strengthen financial sustainability and ownership of FPOs.

Collaboration and Linkages

- Strengthen convergence with NABARD, APCNF, watershed programmes, and state skill missions for better resource pooling and alignment.
- Enable FPOs and federations to build structured partnerships with private sector actors for processing, marketing, and value addition.
- Position community institutions to actively engage in policy advocacy on climate resilience, gender equity, and rainfed agriculture.
- Improve coordination between MSMS, ASMS, and FPO federations to strengthen accountability and service delivery systems.

- Link apex-level processing units with village enterprises to build integrated and efficient rural value chains.
- Expand partnerships with NGOs, CSR agencies, and technical institutions to promote innovation, enterprise incubation, and climate-resilient livelihoods.
- Enable and position community institutions to actively lobby at district and state levels for climate resilience, women's rights, and rainfed farming policies and programmes.
- Improve coordination between MSMS/FPOs and ASMS/FPO federations to maximize collective impact, strengthen institutional accountability, and enhance service delivery.
- Link apex-level production and processing units with village-level enterprises to create vibrant rural market systems and localized value chains.
- Build partnerships with NGOs, CSR initiatives, and technical agencies to promote innovation, agroecological farming, enterprise incubation, and resilient livelihoods.

Project Management and Monitoring

- Expand MIS systems to include indicators on soil health, biodiversity, migration, enterprise sustainability, and gender outcomes.
- Introduce digital and AI-enabled real-time dashboards for adaptive planning and timely decision-making.
- Integrate quantitative data with qualitative insights, case studies, and participatory monitoring for stronger learning and accountability.
- Strengthen revolving fund systems with shorter repayment cycles and digital financial tracking to improve transparency and discipline.
- Scale low-cost, high-impact interventions in agroecology, diversified livelihoods, and community enterprises to enhance resilience and incomes.
- Integrate quantitative MIS data with qualitative case studies, community narratives, and participatory monitoring processes to strengthen learning, accountability, and policy advocacy.

F. Conclusion

The evaluation confirms that SADLP/AF-EC is highly relevant, effective, and efficient in addressing the vulnerabilities of small and marginal farmers in drought-prone regions. The programme has successfully strengthened community institutions, promoted agroecological practices, and advanced women's leadership and youth engagement, contributing to improved resilience and livelihoods.

Moving forward, the focus should be on consolidating institutional gains, deepening value chain development, strengthening water and climate resilience systems, and modernising monitoring mechanisms. These steps will enable AF-EC to transition from resilience-building towards sustained socio-economic transformation in rural communities.

Chapter 1: Description of the Project and the Evaluation

1.1. Project Idea

Building on the momentum of Phase 4 of the ***'Promoting Sustainable Agriculture and Diversified Livelihoods'*** project supported by BftW, the intervention adopts a more intensive and deepening approach in the drought-prone districts of Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai, Andhra Pradesh. Located in a rain-shadow region, the area is characterised by low and erratic rainfall, recurrent droughts, declining groundwater, soil degradation, and increasing fallow lands, making agriculture highly vulnerable to climate variability.

The predominance of rainfed mono-cropping, combined with limited access to resources, has led to low productivity, indebtedness, distress migration, and livelihood insecurity, particularly among small and marginal farmers from SC, ST, and BC communities. Gender inequalities further compound these vulnerabilities.

In this context, the project focuses on addressing structural drivers of vulnerability by promoting climate-resilient and agroecological farming, strengthening community institutions, and expanding diversified livelihood opportunities for women and youth. It seeks to reduce dependence on risky mono-cropping through improved soil and water management, crop diversification, and collective action.

The project also emphasizes women's empowerment, youth skill development, and strengthened farmer collectives to improve access to resources, markets, and services. By integrating sustainable agriculture with enterprise development and policy engagement, it aims to enhance resilience, income stability, and dignity for vulnerable farming households in the region.

1.2. Project Target Group

The project identifies both direct and indirect target groups, with a focus on vulnerable rural households while ensuring broader community impact. It directly covers 21,000 households (about 105,000 people) across 230 villages as primary stakeholders. Of these, 18,000 households are organized into 883 Sasya Mitra Groups (SMGs), each comprising 15–22 members. These groups are largely women-led (17,300 women and 700 men) and predominantly include SC, ST, and BC communities. Most SMGs are continuing from the previous phase. Additionally, 3,000 households in 10 villages are supported under the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Agriculture (CARA) initiative, covering all social categories through a village-wide approach.

The target population mainly includes landless labourers, rainfed farmers, and smallholders with limited irrigation. These groups face high livelihood vulnerability due to dependence on monsoon variability and wage labour, resulting in income instability.

Social inclusion is a key feature of the targeting strategy. Among SMG households, 38% belong to SC/ST communities, 56% to OBCs, and 6% to economically weaker sections of forward castes. The project also ensures inclusion of 6% women-headed households and 4% persons with disabilities. Given the relatively smaller presence of SC/ST

households, deliberate efforts are made to ensure their full participation along with other vulnerable groups.

Overall, the project adopts a multi-layered targeting approach that combines group-based mobilization, village-wide inclusion, and a strong focus on women-led institutions. It prioritizes small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, and socially disadvantaged households while strengthening collective structures to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities.

Table 1: Direct and Indirect Target Groups

Direct Target Group			
Sub-Category	**Population**	**HHs**	**Remarks**
SMG Members	90,000	18,000	950 SMGs mostly SC/ST/OBC. women-led; continued from previous phase
CARA	15,000	3,000	10 villages; all farmer categories; agroecological farming expansion
Total	**1,05,000**	**21,000**	**Primary Target Group**
Indirect Target Group			
HHs in 230 villages	3,00,000	60,000	Benefit through diffusion of practices
HHs in district	30,00,000	6,00,000	Policy advocacy & scaling impact
Total	**33,00,000**	**6,60,000**	**Wider Impact (indirect Target)**

1.3. Objectives, Indicators and Outputs

Table 2: Objectives, Indicators and Outputs

Objectives	**Indicators for 3 years**	**Measurement**
Objective 1: Small and marginal farmers in 230 villages of undivided Anantapur District have reduced vulnerability due to climate change	***Indicator 1.1:*** 50% of marginal farmers (at least 80% of women) have adopted at least 5 climate-resilient agroecology measures (out of 10) promoted by the project	5 to 15% individual farmer survey - questionnaire using Google Forms (annually)
Expected Outputs 1. 15,000 farmers including 12,000 women farmers have practical knowhow and essential inputs for adopting agroecology measures promoted by AF-EC 2. 15,000 farmers including 12,000 women practice agroecology farming with low external inputs in 10,000 hectares 3. 15,000 farmers including 12,000 women practice crop rotation with drought resilient crops and crop diversification with native food crops in 10,000 hectares 4. 1,000 women farmers practice agroforestry farming system integrating diversified fruit tree crops & seasonal inter-crops in 1,000 hectares 5. 6,000 farmers including 4,000 women farmers have given protective irrigation to save the crops from moisture stress in 4,000 hectares 6. 15,000 farmers (80% women) sow contingency/ relay crops in 12,000 hectares		

Objective 2: In 230 villages of undivided Anantapur District, the livelihood security is improved	***Indicator 2.1:*** 60% of small and marginal farmers (at least 90% women) have reduced 15% costs in agriculture operations.	5 to 15% individual farmer survey - questionnaire using google forms & validated through FGDs with sample SMGs (annually)
	Indicator 2.2: 75% out of 8,000 trained/supported rural youth (at least 80% women) earn additional monthly income of at least ₹5,000.	Telephone/personal interviews of 5 to 15% project beneficiaries based on a checklist (annually)

7. 200 women Karyakarthas (village volunteers) acquire knowledge and skills on facilitating CBOs and promoting agroecology and diversified livelihoods
8. 950 SMGS and 230 GSMS comprising of 18,000 households conduct monthly savings, credit and mutual cooperation regularly
9. 1,000 women leaders are capacitated to lead CBOs and provide leadership
10. 1,000 CBOs participate actively in project planning, implementation and monitoring
11. 16 FPOs are supported for business development & establishing market linkages
12. 10,000 farmers (70% women) are sensitized on the issues of climate change, drought, gender issues, women rights and related policy issues
13. 3,000 rural youth (20% girls) acquired employable skills and linked to employment/self-employment
14. 6,000 women get financial and technical support and take up off-farm & non-farm livelihood activities
15. 1,500 rural women are equipped with entrepreneurial skills to run their businesses

1.4. Implementation Organisation, Term and Donors

Accion Fraterna Ecology Centre (AF-EC) is a registered non-governmental organisation established in 1982, working for over four decades in the drought-prone districts of Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai, Andhra Pradesh. It focuses on addressing rural poverty and climate vulnerability through watershed development, natural resource management, agroecological farming, and participatory community institutions. Over the years, AF-EC has emerged as a leading institution in dryland development, promoting climate-resilient agriculture, women-led collectives, youth skill development, and livelihood diversification for small and marginal farmers.

An external evaluation of the BftW-supported *Sustainable Agriculture and Diversified Livelihoods (SADLP)* project was conducted between March and May 2026, covering implementation from April 2024 to March 2026. Bread for the World (BftW), a Germany-based development organisation supporting poverty reduction and social justice globally, has been a long-term partner of AF-EC, enabling expansion of agroecology, livelihood diversification, and community institution strengthening. The partnership has supported scaling sustainable farming, women's empowerment, youth livelihoods, and value chain development, contributing to resilience and improved livelihood security in the region.

Chapter 2: Framework Conditions

2.1 Political, Economic, Ecological, Societal & Socio-cultural Factors

The project area reflects a strong interplay of ecological fragility, economic vulnerability, and social inequality. **Ecologically,** it is a semi-arid region with low and erratic rainfall, frequent droughts, declining groundwater, and degraded soils with low organic content. Predominantly rainfed agriculture, combined with mono-cropping (especially groundnut) and chemical-intensive practices, has further reduced soil fertility and long-term productivity, making farming highly climate-sensitive.

Economically, agriculture remains the main livelihood but is increasingly unviable due to rising input costs, rainfall dependence, and low, unstable returns. Small and marginal farmers face chronic indebtedness, limited access to credit, and weak market linkages, often relying on intermediaries. **Socially,** the population is largely composed of SC, ST, and BC communities with restricted access to resources, while gender inequalities limit women's ownership and decision-making despite their high participation in farm work. **Politically,** although government programmes exist, they tend to benefit better-resourced farmers with irrigation access, leaving rainfed farmers underserved. These interlinked ecological, economic, and social constraints reinforce cycles of poverty, distress migration, and livelihood insecurity.

2.2. Risks, Assumptions and Prerequisites

The project faces several potential risks that could affect its success. **Climatic risks** such as prolonged droughts, erratic rainfall, and increasing climate variability may reduce agricultural productivity and adoption of interventions. **Ecological risks** include further depletion of groundwater and continued soil degradation. **Economic risks** arise from market fluctuations, price volatility, and limited access to fair markets, which may discourage farmers from adopting new practices.

Social risks include resistance to change from traditional farming practices, limited participation of marginalized groups, and gender norms restricting women's involvement in decision-making. **Institutional risks** include weak convergence with government programmes and limited policy responsiveness to rainfed agriculture.

The project is based on key assumptions that farmers are willing to adopt sustainable practices, community institutions remain active and functional, and adequate technical and extension support is available. It also assumes a supportive policy environment, continued financial support, and active engagement of women and youth. Critical prerequisites for success include strong community-based institutions, sustained capacity building, effective market linkages, and convergence with government programmes.

2.3. Activities of other Organizations / Private Sector Companies

Multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organisations, state skill development department and private sector actors, are active in the region. Government programmes primarily focus on watershed development, borewell irrigation,

agroecological farming promotion, horticulture and rural employment (such as MGNREGS), aiming to improve soil and water conservation, enhance irrigation access, and provide wage employment.

Non-governmental organizations are engaged in promoting sustainable agriculture, natural resource management, women's empowerment, and strengthening farmer collectives. Private sector companies are increasingly involved in input supply, Agri-value chains, and market linkages; however, their engagement is often limited to commercially viable crops and regions.

Despite these efforts, many interventions remain fragmented and tend to focus on infrastructure development or short-term productivity gains, with limited emphasis on climate resilience, livelihood diversification, and social inclusion. The project addresses these gaps by adopting an integrated approach that combines ecological sustainability, institutional strengthening, and diversified livelihood strategies.

2.4. Role of Government Actors

Government actors play a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for the project. Various departments such as agriculture, horticulture, rural development, state skill development department, and water resources schemes related to irrigation, soil conservation, agroecological farming, and livelihood promotion. Programmes such as watershed development initiatives and rural employment schemes contribute to rural infrastructure, natural resource management, and income support for rural households.

However, the effectiveness of these interventions is often constrained by limited outreach to rainfed farmers, inadequate convergence among departments, and a piece-meal approach with focus on short-term outputs rather than long-term resilience. The project therefore actively engages with government institutions to strengthen convergence, improve access to schemes, and advocate for policies that better address the needs of small and marginal farmers in drought-prone regions.

Through collaboration and policy advocacy, the project aims to influence government programmes towards promoting climate-resilient agriculture, sustainable natural resource management, and inclusive livelihood opportunities. This engagement is expected to enhance both the effectiveness and sustainability of development interventions in the region.

Chapter 3: Evaluation Design and Methodology

3.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

Evaluation is a systematic and evidence-based process that helps determine the merit, effectiveness, and sustainability of development interventions. The purpose of this evaluation is not only to assess whether the SADLP project has achieved its intended objectives but also to analyse how and why changes occurred. In addition, evaluation strengthens accountability to stakeholders and donors while supporting informed decision-making. It facilitates organizational learning by identifying strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of future interventions. Overall, the evaluation serves as a critical tool for continuous improvement and ensures that project outcomes are aligned with the intended development goals.

3.2 Scope of the Evaluation

An external evaluation of the SADLP project has been undertaken to assess its relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, in line with the widely accepted OECD-DAC evaluation criteria. The evaluation covers the implementation period from April 2024 to March 2026 and spans 230 villages, covering approximately 21,000 target households (including 3000 CARA HHs) and the wider community. It examines progress across different components of the project, including convergence with programmes implemented by AF-EC, government and other agencies. The inclusion of convergence analysis is particularly significant, as it reflects a systems approach, recognizing that development outcomes are influenced by multiple actors and institutional linkages.

In addition, the evaluation includes a comprehensive review of project documents such as proposals, donor agreements, baseline studies, monitoring frameworks, progress reports, MIS reports, financial records, and previous evaluation findings. The findings are intended to inform the design of the next phase of the project and contribute to learning for other stakeholders, including NGOs and government agencies.

However, the evaluation did not cover other programmes implemented by AF-EC, including the carbon sequestration initiative, biogas interventions under CDM, NABARD-supported watershed programme, and the CBBO programme. As a result, the assessment is limited to the scope of SADLP interventions and does not capture the broader institutional contributions and outcomes of AF-EC's wider development portfolio.

3.3 Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation objectives are designed to assess the project across multiple dimensions and generate actionable insights. The key objectives include:

1. Assess the level of achievement of the project objectives against the indicators
2. Evaluate the relevance of the project objectives and design vis-à-vis the local context.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the project in aspects of economic, nutrition, gender, social, environmental, and the factors that have contributed to outcomes.

4. Evaluate the efficiency of the project in terms of delivering outputs (qualitatively and quantitatively) in relation to the inputs/costs, timeliness, etc.
5. Evaluate the changes (outcomes and impact) brought by the project directly or indirectly - intended and unintended (changes may be in terms of economic, environmental, nutrition, health, social, gender, human, etc.)
6. Evaluate the post-project sustainability of the outcomes and impact in terms of social, economic, environmental, public health, gender, community institutions, etc.
7. Provide learnings, lessons, and recommendations to improve project implementation and accountability.

3.4 Kick off Meeting

The evaluation process commenced with a kick-off meeting held on 6 March 2026 between the AF-EC team and the evaluation consultants. During this meeting, the Terms of Reference (ToR) was firmed up and key project documents were shared (project proposal, budget, baseline study, and progress reports. After a detailed review of document, the consultants prepared and submitted the inception report on 24 March.

3.5 Inception Workshop

An inception workshop was conducted on 1 April 2026 to finalise the evaluation design, sampling strategy, tools, and stakeholder coverage. This stage ensured that the evaluation was methodologically sound and aligned with project realities. The inception phase contributed to strengthening evaluability of the project, alignment between evaluation questions and tools, and clarity in data collection and analysis.

3.5.1. Selection of Mandals

With the involvement of the project team, mandals and villages were systematically ranked using a structured exercise based on key indicators such as coverage of interventions, intensity of activities, strength of community institutions, adoption of agro-bio models, and promotion of alternative livelihoods. This participatory assessment helped classify locations into Grade A and Grade B mandals. Based on this grading, a representative mix of high-performing (Grade A) and moderately performing (Grade B) mandals was selected for field visits. This ensured balanced coverage, enabling the evaluation team to document good practices from better-performing areas while also understanding implementation challenges in less advanced locations.

Table 3: Ranking Exercise for Selecting Mandals

#	Parameters	KNDP	STR	KLD	BLG	KUD	ATK	RPT	DMM
1	SMGs grading	7	5	2	1	6	3	4	5
2	Agri-bio models	8	6	2	1	5	4	7	3
3	Alternate livelihoods	7	2	1	4	4	6	5	3
	Total	**22**	**13**	**5**	**6**	**15**	**13**	**16**	**11**
	Rank Achieved	**7**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**5**	**4**	**6**	**3**
	Grade Allocated	**B**	**A**	**A**	**A**	**B**	**A**	**B**	**A**
	Selected Mandals	**Yes**		**Yes**		**Yes**			**Yes**

3.5.2 Selection of Villages

A total of 12 villages were selected based on diversity and intensity of interventions, presence of multiple activities and institutions, own means activities, accessibility and representation across grades. This stratified selection ensures diversity in performance and context, enabling comparative analysis across intervention areas. The selection included 5 villages from Grade A; 5 villages from Grade B and 2 villages from Grade C.

Table 4: Selection of Villages

Mandal	Villages Grade A	Selected Villages	Villages Grade B	Selected Villages	Villages Grade C	Selected Villages
KLD	8	Mallapuram	14	Yarrampalli	11	Boyalapalli
KNDP	7	Appilepalli	24	Mahantapuram & Thammayadoddi	4	
KUD	8	Kalagalla	10	P.Narayanapuram	6	Gotukuru
DMM	13	Gotalaru & Tumparuthi	9	Malakuntapalli	6	
4	**36**	**5**	**57**	**5**	**27**	**2**

The selected 12 sample villages covered multiple intervention areas, as given below.

Table 5: Schedule for Village Visits

#	Villages	Farmer & site	Women LH unit	SMG Meetings	GSMS	ALP	NF Models	Tree crops
1	Mallapuram	Yes	Yes				Yes	
2	Yarrampalli	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		
3	Boyalapalli	Yes	Yes	Yes				
4	Appilepalli	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes
5	Mahantapuram	Yes	Yes					
6	Thammayadoddi	Yes	Yes				Yes	Yes
7	Kalagalla	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
8	P.Narayanapuram	Yes	Yes			Yes		
9	Gotukuru	Yes	Yes			Yes		
10	Gotluru	Yes	Yes					
11	Tumparuthi	Yes	Yes	Yes				
12	Malagundlapalli	Yes	Yes				Yes	

3.5.3. Sample Size and Tools

The evaluation adopted a structured sampling framework; however, actual coverage exceeded planned targets in several categories. A total of 817 stakeholders were covered, including 695 primary stakeholders and 122 secondary stakeholders.

Table 6: Sample Size and Actual Coverage

Particulars	Total	Sample	Actual Coverage	Tool Used
Districts	2	2	2	Both districts were selected
Mandals	8	4	8	Selected based on ranking and grading as given in tables 4 and 5
Villages	230	12	21	
Farmers Plots		12	21	Individual Interview & plot visit
Participants - NF Farmers Groups		60	200	FGD check list
Participants - NF Farmers Workshop		NA	50	Interactions and group work
ALP women visited		12	12	Individual interview & LH unit visit
ALP groups (participants)		40	45	FGD & review of records
Youth		69	124	FGD & Youth Centre visit
Karyakarthas	160	20	46	FGD & group work
ASMS	1	1	1	
MSMS	8	2	2	FGD & review of records (*active SMGs and GSMS as on date)
GSMS	218*	2	3	
SMGs	883*	2	3	
FPOs	16	2	2	
Secondary processing unit	1	1	1	Site visit, observations and interaction with the teams in-charge
Primary processing units	4	1	2	
Secondary stakeholders		10	40	Interactions
Project staff		36	36	Group work and interactions

Participation levels were higher than planned in several categories such as farmers and youth. This has important analytical implications:

- Higher coverage improves the robustness and credibility of findings
- Strong participation reflects community engagement and ownership
- Inclusion of diverse stakeholders enables triangulation of data

Field visits were conducted from 6 to 12 April 2026 across 21 villages. The evaluation team interacted with farmers, women, community institutions, karyakarthas, youth, staff, and secondary stakeholders. A total of 817 members were met including primary stakeholders 695 and secondary stakeholders 122 as given in the table below.

Table 7A: Mandal-Wise Villages Covered

#	**Mandal**	**Villages**
1	Atmakur	Atmakur
2	Beluguppa	Beluguppa
3	Dharmavaram	Gotluru
4		Thumparthi
5		Malagundlapalli
6	Kalyandurgam	Yarrampalli
7		Boyalapalli
8		Mallapuram
9		Borampalli
10		Venkatampalli
11		Kalyandurgam
12	Kuderu	Kalagalla
13		Antharaganga
14		Gotukuru
15		Muddalapuram
16		Narayanapuram
17	Kundurpi	Appilepalli
18		Nijavalli
19		Mahanthapuram
20	Rapthadu	Mucchurami
21	Setturu	Lakshmampalli
	8 Mandals	**21 villages**

Table 7B: Primary and Secondary Stakeholders Covered

Primary Stakeholders	**No of Participants**
Farmers	21
Farmers FGD	250
Women ALP	12
Women ALP FGD	45
Youth Skill Development	124
SMG	54
GSMS	28
MSMS FGD	92
ASMS FGD	50
FPO FGD	19
Primary stakeholders	**695**
Secondary Stakeholders	**No of Participants**
Stakeholders (secondary)	40
Project Team	36
Karyakarthas	46
Secondary stakeholders	**122**
Total (695+122)	**817**

3.5.4. Data Collection Methods and Tools

The evaluation adopted a mixed approach and the tools were designed to address key questions aligned with OECD-DAC criteria, including cross-cutting themes.

Primary data collection methods included the following:

- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)** with target groups across gender & social groups
- **Scheduled Interviews** with farmers, women, youth, CBO leaders, and Karyakarthas
- **Key Informant Interviews** with experts and secondary stakeholders
- **Transect Walks and Observations** in the fields where interventions have occurred;
- **Case studies** illustrating significant changes and outcomes

Secondary data sources included project reports and documents, MIS data and records maintained by farmer groups and community institutions.

3.5.5. Evaluation Timeline

Table 8: Evaluation Schedule

#	Schedule	Timeline
1	Kick off meeting	06.03.26
2	Signing of Contract	07.03.26
3	Sharing of documents and reports	Before 10.03.26
4	Review of documents and reports	Before 20.03.26
5	Inception report with key evaluation questions & tools	24.03.26
6	Inception workshop	01.04.26
7	Field visits and data collection	06.04.26 to 12.04.26
8	Data analysis and report writing	13.04.26 to 29.04.26
9	Submission of draft report	30.04.26
10	Feedback from AF-EC	12.05.26
11	Discussion on draft report	23.05.26
12	Revised draft report	31.05.26
13	Feedback from AF-EC on the revised draft report	01.06.26
14	Final report	01.06.26

3.5.6. Evaluation Limitations

Despite careful planning and execution, the evaluation faced certain limitations.

- The study could not cover all eight mandals. Although the selected locations were chosen based on clear criteria, findings may not fully represent all areas.
- The limited time available constrained the ability to verify extensive field-level data, especially where records were maintained manually.
- Additionally, the findings may be most applicable to regions with similar socio-economic and agro-ecological contexts.

These limitations are common in large-scale field evaluations. However, the use of mixed methods, large sample size, and triangulation helps mitigate these constraints and ensures that the findings remain reliable and meaningful.

Chapter 4: Findings and Results

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 Socio-economic Relevance

Local Context: Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts are among the most drought-prone regions, marked by recurrent crop failures, indebtedness, seasonal unemployment, and distress migration. Agriculture is the primary livelihood for nearly 85% of households, but heavy dependence on rainfed farming, limited livelihood options, and poor access to affordable credit continue to keep small and marginal farmers in cycles of poverty. Women, youth, and marginalized communities remain particularly vulnerable due to irregular incomes and limited employment opportunities.

Relevance:.SADLP demonstrates strong socio-economic relevance by addressing livelihood insecurity through women's empowerment, livelihood diversification, and youth skill development. The project strengthens SMGs, enabling women to save, access credit, and establish micro-enterprises such as tailoring, dairy, livestock rearing, vending, and small retail. These initiatives improved household incomes, reduce debt, support education, and enhance women's decision-making and social status.

Youth skilling in areas such as driving, tailoring, electrical work, mobile repair, computer skills and other trades has expanded local employment and self-employment opportunities, reducing migration. Linkages with companies, institutions, and placement agencies have further improved employability and income generation among rural youth. Overall, SADLP effectively responds to the socio-economic vulnerabilities of small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, women, and youth through agroecology, diversified livelihoods, and institution-building.

> ***"Returning to Farming with New Hope" – Santosh and his mother Seshikala from Malagundlapalli village*** *viewed SADLP as highly relevant for youth returning to agriculture. After leaving city life, Santosh, an engineering graduate, took up farming with support from SADLP, adopted agroecological farming practices on two acres. Despite limited irrigation, he has successfully cultivated crops through labour & water-sharing arrangements. Santosh firmly believes agroecological farming is the pathway to sustainable income, ecological well-being, and dignified rural livelihoods.*

4.1.2 Agroclimatic Relevance

Local Context: The project area is characterized by low and erratic rainfall, frequent droughts, groundwater depletion, and recurring crop failures. Rainfed farming predominates, with groundnut monocropping widely practiced, exposing farmers to both climatic and market risks. Over the past three decades, drought-induced crop failures and land degradation have significantly reduced the cultivated area, contributing to farmer indebtedness, livelihood insecurity, and distress migration.

Project Relevance: SADLP demonstrates strong agroclimatic relevance by promoting climate-resilient farming that reduce production risks, improve soil moisture retention, and

strengthen farmers' adaptive capacity to drought. The project promotes mixed cropping, contingency cropping, agroforestry, protective irrigation, and agroecological farming practices that help farmers cope with rainfall variability and climate stress. The project reached 12,995 farmers through mixed cropping, 11091 farmers through contingency cropping in about 10,800 hectares, and 3,920 farmers through protective irrigation covering 4,200 hectares.

The models such as ATM (Any Time Money) and ATF (Any Time Fodder) provide year-round food, fodder, and income opportunities while reducing dependence on single crops. Farmers reported improved soil fertility, better moisture retention, increased fodder availability, and more stable incomes through diversified farming systems. Agroforestry and relay cropping further enhance ecological sustainability and income diversification. ATM mixed cropping was ranked among the most preferred interventions by farmers. The scale of adoption demonstrates that SADLP's interventions are practical, locally relevant, and well aligned with the agroclimatic realities of drought-prone regions.

> ***"Twenty Crops on One Farm" – Narayanappa and Parvati from Mallapuram village*** *found agroforestry, ATM, and agroecological farming highly relevant for both dryland and irrigated conditions. By cultivating nearly twenty crops, they generated continuous income while reducing dependence on a single crop. Natural farming practices lowered cultivation costs, improved resilience, and supported sustainable livelihoods. The family has successfully sustained this diversified farming model over the years since 2018.*

4.1.3 Ecological and Environmental Relevance

Local Context: The project area is a fragile semi-arid ecosystem with degraded soils, groundwater depletion, water scarcity, low forest cover, and declining biodiversity.. Long-term groundnut monocropping and chemical-intensive practices have reduced soil fertility and moisture retention, increasing vulnerability to droughts and erratic rainfall.

Project Relevance: SADLP responds to the ecological fragility of the region by promoting agroecological farming practices that restore soil health, conserve water, reduce chemical dependence, and enhance biodiversity. The use of natural inputs such as Jeevamrutham, Ghanajeevamrutham, neem-based formulations, and botanical extracts has improved soil fertility, biological activity, crop resilience, and soil moisture retention, as reported by farmers.

In addition, promotion of agroforestry, fodder systems, and crop diversification has contributed to biodiversity conservation, fodder security, and long-term ecological resilience. Through farmer champions and peer learning, these sustainable practices are now widely adopted across project villages.

Watershed interventions including farm ponds, check dams, percolation tanks, and tank silt application have strengthened groundwater recharge, improved water availability, and reduced fallow lands. AF-EC has also leveraged government schemes and external support to scale up community-based water conservation and ecological restoration.

"Vegetables that Filled Both Plates and Pockets" *– **Padmavati from Gutluru village** found the SADLP-supported ATM vegetable is highly relevant as it meets both household nutrition and daily income needs. She cultivated ten varieties of vegetables on a 25-cent plot using drip irrigation and local seeds. By selling pesticide-free vegetables in the village, she earns ₹300–500 per day while ensuring safe food for her family. The intervention suited local conditions of small landholdings, limited water availability, and family labour.*

***A Vegetable Shop that Filled a Village Gap – Lakshmi, Gutluru Village** identified a clear local market gap, as vegetable vendors left early in the morning, leaving residents without access to fresh produce for the rest of the day. With support from the SADLP project, he and his wife established a home-based vegetable shop and also began supplying vegetables using a second-hand auto-rickshaw across village streets. The enterprise now generates a steady daily income of ₹500–800, contributing to household stability and improved livelihood security.*

4.1.4 Alignment of Approach and Activities to Objectives

Local Context: The drought-prone regions of Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts face recurring climate shocks, livelihood insecurity and limited institutional access, requiring participatory, context-specific and convergence development approaches.

Project Relevance: SADLP is strongly aligned with its two core objectives: **reducing vulnerability to climate change (Objective 1)** and **improving livelihood security (Objective 2)** through integrated, field-level interventions.

For **Objective 1**, the project addresses climate vulnerability in a semi-arid, rainfed context by promoting agroecological farming, watershed development, and natural resource management. Practices such as soil health improvement, water conservation structures, agroforestry, and reduced chemical dependency enhance soil moisture retention, groundwater recharge, and ecosystem resilience, thereby reducing farmers' exposure to droughts and erratic rainfall.

For **Objective 2**, SADLP strengthens livelihood security through women-led institutions (SMGs), FPOs, and diversified income-generating activities. Savings, credit access, and micro-enterprises, along with youth skill development and market linkages, improve income stability, reduce migration, and expand non-farm employment opportunities. These interventions complement climate adaptation by ensuring that households are economically resilient.

***A Small Shop that Changed a Family" – Meena from Narayanapuram village** started a ladies' accessories shop with SMG loans of ₹15,000 and ₹25,000. The enterprise helped her diversify household income beyond tenancy farming and now generates around ₹15,000 per month while allowing her to manage family responsibilities locally. The intervention highlights the relevance of small enterprise support for women in drought-prone villages.*

***"Daily Income from Leased Land" – Ramanjaneyulu and Janakiamma from Gotukuru village** adopted the ATM vegetable cultivation model on leased land to secure regular income from a small irrigated area. Using micro-sprinkler irrigation, they cultivated cluster beans on two acres and earned about ₹4,000–5,000 per week. The model proved relevant for small and tenant farmers seeking continuous cash flow instead of seasonal earnings.*

The interventions are practical, locally relevant, and responsive to community needs, contributing to greater participation, sustainability, and long-term resilience. Hence SADLP demonstrates high alignment to the local needs and objectives of the project. Field observations and MIS data indicate strong alignment between project objectives and implementation strategies

4.1.5 Cross-cutting Themes: Gender, Inclusion and Environment

SADLP strongly integrates gender, social inclusion, and environmental sustainability across its interventions. Women are central to the project, constituting nearly 96% of SMG members and leading livelihood enterprises and community institutions, contributing to increased confidence, financial decision-making, mobility, and leadership. The project prioritizes vulnerable groups, including SCs, STs, landless households, single women, and persons with disabilities, ensuring their inclusion in livelihoods, institutions, and financial services.

Environmental sustainability is embedded through agroecological farming, watershed development, natural resource management, and diversified farming systems that enhance soil and water conservation, reduce chemical dependency, and strengthen ecological resilience in drought-prone areas. Community-based institutions and mutual support systems further reinforce social cohesion and local resilience.

While the project demonstrates strong commitment to gender equity and inclusion among beneficiaries, strengthening staff gender balance and enhancing MIS with gender-disaggregated indicators on leadership, migration, and nutrition would further improve evidence-based planning and monitoring.

> ***"From Wage Labour to Village Entrepreneur" – Laxmi, Kalagalla Village*** *joined the SMG to address her family's irregular income. Previously dependent on agricultural wage labour, she received tailoring training and established a home-based saree and tailoring business, enabling her to balance household responsibilities with income generation. Her enterprise now earns ₹20,000–25,000 per month, improving household stability and livelihoods.*
>
> ***"From Four Goats to a Growing Livelihood" – Meena, Yerrampalli Village*** *adopted goat rearing through SADLP as it aligned with her traditional knowledge and local conditions. With a ₹20,000 loan from her SMG, she started with four goats and expanded her herd to around twenty within 2–3 years. The enterprise requires minimal investment, relying on common grazing resources, and provides a steady, context-appropriate livelihood for rural women.*

4.2. Effectiveness

4.2.1. Reduction of Vulnerability to Drought & Climate Change

Field observations, MIS data, and stakeholder consultations indicate that SADLP has significantly enhanced farmers' resilience to drought and climate variability. Farmers reported that ATM models provided stable year-round income, while ATF plots improved fodder availability, strengthened livestock-based livelihoods, and reduced distress sale of animals during drought periods. Watershed interventions including farm ponds, check dams, percolation structures, and soil moisture conservation measures have improved

water availability, groundwater recharge, and brought degraded lands back into cultivation. Rainfed horticulture models (custard apple, tamarind, mango) are also emerging as long-term drought-resilient assets.

Adoption data shows that 12,995 farmers practiced mixed and intercropping systems and 11,091 adopted contingency and relay cropping. Many households implemented multiple agroecological practices such as bio-input use, fodder cultivation, protective irrigation, and agroforestry, reflecting an integrated approach to climate adaptation. Farmer feedback and staff assessments consistently identify mixed and contingency cropping as the most effective strategies for managing climatic risks.

Overall, evidence suggests that SADLP has reduced production risks, stabilized incomes, strengthened food and fodder security, and improved adaptive capacity in drought-prone environments.

*"**An Evergreen Field in a Dryland Village" – Muniratnam from Gutluru village** transformed her rainfed land through the "Nithya Harita Sedyam" model. By cultivating pulses, millets, and vegetables using natural farming methods, she now earns ₹60,000–80,000 annually. She reported improved soil quality and stronger demand for her chemical-free produce, demonstrating the effectiveness of the intervention.*

***"Turning Waste into Livelihoods" – Mahalakshmi from Yerrampalli village** established a scrap collection and recycling enterprise with support from SADLP. Starting with a Bolero vehicle purchased through SMG loans, the family now collects and sells scrap across five mandals, generating ₹3,000–5,000 per day and providing employment to five workers. The growth of the enterprise reflects the programme's effectiveness in promoting sustainable and income-generating livelihoods.*

4.2.2. Increase in Incomes

Field interactions and data indicate that SADLP has contributed to increased and diversified household incomes through women's enterprises, agroecological farming, and youth skill development. Women supported through SMGs accessed small loans from group savings to start enterprises such as tailoring, petty shops, goat rearing, dairy, vegetable vending, and small retail activities. These enterprises generated regular cash income, improved financial stability, reduced dependence on informal borrowing, and enhanced household well-being.

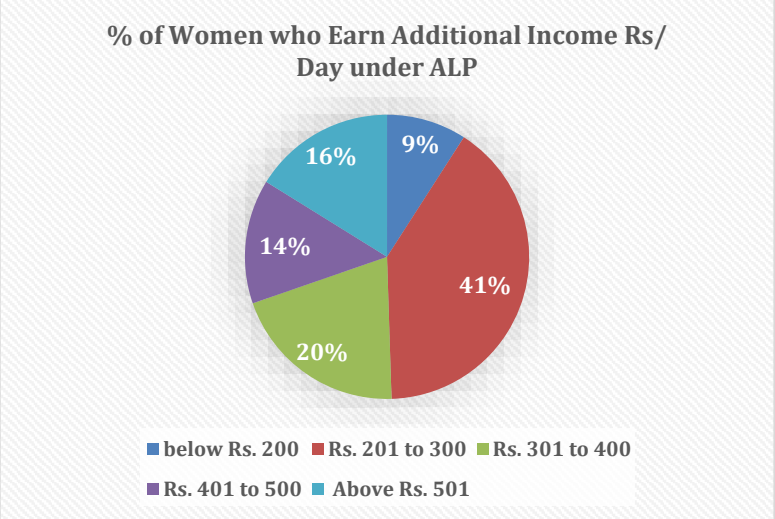
Farmers engaged in agroecological practices reported reduced cultivation costs and better market demand for chemical-free produce. Mixed cropping, vegetable cultivation, and diversified farming systems generated more stable and frequent income flows compared to mono-cropping. Households adopting multiple interventions were able to sustain incomes even during drought periods, demonstrating the role of diversification in strengthening economic resilience.

***From Monocrop to Multi-Income Farming" – Eswar Reddy & Krishnaveni from Borampally village** shifted from monocropping to intercropping with mango, jamun, guava, and vegetables, generated nearly ₹6 lakh over the last two years. The model provides regular income while improving land use efficiency and livelihood diversification rainfed conditions.*

The project also demonstrated significant outcomes in youth livelihoods through the AF-EC Skill Development Centre. During the project period, 1,923 youth were trained against a target of 2,000 in trades such as driving, electrical work, motor rewinding, two-wheeler repair, mobile servicing, computer applications, retail, and Tally Prime with GST. The Centre established strong linkages with CSR agencies, government departments, companies, and skill development institutions, supported through job fairs and an extensive youth outreach network.

"From Training to a ₹2 Lakh Business" – Laxmi from Kalagalla village *effectively used garment-making training and repeated SMG loans provided through the project to establish a diversified business involving garments, sarees, bangles, and accessories. Despite initial family resistance, she steadily expanded the enterprise and now contributes nearly ₹2 lakh annually towards her family's agricultural investments. The intervention strengthened household income, enhanced her confidence, and demonstrated the effectiveness of combining skills training with access to credit for women's entrepreneurship.*

Additional Income: *AFEC regularly conducts studies to understand the changes made at family level – particularly on additional incomes, generated as a result of project interventions under Alternative Livelihoods. The women take up several enterprises and earn a decent income, which is depicted in the graph here. 50% of the women earn about 300 Rs/ Day "additionally", through the interventions proposed by AFEC. This is a substantial income for a poor family that is entrenched in drought induced risky farming.*



4.2.3. Enhanced Livelihood Security

Field observations and consultations indicate that SADLP has significantly strengthened livelihood security by promoting diversified farm and non-farm income sources. Dependence on groundnut monocropping was found to be highly risky under drought conditions, while mixed cropping, contingency crops, relay cropping, fodder cultivation, and horticulture have provided more stable and diversified income streams.

These diversified farming systems have improved food, fodder, and income security while reducing exposure to crop failure. Dryland horticulture models, such as those in Appilepalli village, have emerged as long-term resilient livelihood assets in drought-prone

areas. Integrated practices, including fodder plots and mixed farming systems, have also supported livestock-based incomes and reduced distress sale of cattle during dry periods.

FPOs have further strengthened livelihood security through collective procurement and marketing, helping farmers reduce input costs and obtain better prices for produce such as groundnut. Programme data indicate that mixed cropping and relay cropping are among the most effective and widely adopted resilience strategies, with many farmers integrating multiple agroecological practices.

Youth skill development has additionally expanded livelihood opportunities beyond agriculture, reducing dependence on rainfed farming alone. Overall, SADLP has enhanced livelihood security by integrating diversified farming systems, producer collectives, women-led enterprises, and non-farm employment, thereby stabilizing incomes and reducing vulnerability to climatic and economic shocks.

> ***"One Farmer Inspiring Thirty Others" – Narayanappa from Mallapuram village*** *successfully demonstrated agroecological farming, and ATM practices on 3.7 acres of land. The diversified farming system generated ₹500–600 in daily income along with additional monthly and seasonal earnings, while improving soil fertility and reducing cultivation costs. The success of his model encouraged nearly thirty neighbouring farmers to adopt natural farming practices, turning his farm into a local learning and demonstration site. In recognition of his innovation in promoting year-round income through natural farming, he received the Karmaveer Chakra Award.*

4.2.4. Impact on Local Environment & Ecology

Field observations, MIS data, and farmer consultations indicate that SADLP has contributed to noticeable ecological improvements across the project area. Farmers reported enhanced soil health, increased earthworm activity, improved moisture retention, and reduced chemical dependence through the use of bio-inputs such as Jeevamrutham, Panchagavya, botanical extracts, and other natural formulations. Agroforestry systems have further improved biodiversity, strengthened farm ecology, and stabilized production systems, while watershed interventions have supported regeneration of degraded lands, improved vegetation cover, and enhanced ecological resilience.

Project data further demonstrates large-scale adoption of agroecological practices. Around 12995 farmers adopted mixed and intercropping systems, while 11091 farmers practiced contingency and relay cropping across nearly 10800 hectares. These interventions have improved soil cover, nutrient cycling, crop diversity, and water-use efficiency, while reducing dependence on monocropping and chemical inputs. Complementary biodiversity measures such as border and trap cropping, integration of fruit trees, and promotion of agroforestry have supported pollination, natural pest regulation, and carbon sequestration.

The project also promoted ecological soil and pest management at scale. More than 5,800 farmers adopted locally prepared bio-inputs over 4,300 farmers used bio-repellents, and plant health promoter sprays.. These practices reduced chemical

dependency, improved soil biological activity, enhanced beneficial insect populations, and lowered environmental contamination.

Biodiversity-focused interventions also contributed to ecological restoration. Around 9,111 farmers adopted border and trap crops while 800 farmers integrated indigenous fruit trees into farming systems. These practices supported pollinator activity, natural pest regulation, carbon sequestration, and long-term ecological stability. Water conservation measures, including protective irrigation systems adopted by 3,920 farmers , further improved water-use efficiency and reduced drought vulnerability when combined with watershed development and diversified farming systems.

Evidence from field experiences and MIS data suggests that SADLP is driving a shift from isolated interventions to a broader agroecological transition, enhancing soil health, biodiversity, and long-term ecological sustainability in a drought-prone landscape.

The Farm that Stayed Green in Summer" – Chiranjeevi from Apilepalli village *demonstrated the effectiveness of agroecological farming through diversified cultivation on ten acres with eighteen crop and tree species. After completely shifting away from chemical farming, he developed a resilient agroecological system that remained green and productive even during severe summer conditions. His farm became a demonstration site, inspiring other farmers to adopt diversified farming practices suited to drought-prone environments.*

4.2.5. Enhanced Food & Nutritional Security

Field observations and consultations indicate that SADLP has significantly improved household food and nutritional security through diversified farming systems. Farmers reported that ATM vegetable plots ensured year-round access to fresh, chemical-free vegetables, reducing dependence on market purchases and improving dietary diversity. Women noted increased household consumption of vegetables, leafy greens, pulses, milk, and other nutritious foods compared to earlier cereal-dominated diets. Improved fodder availability also enhanced livestock health and dairy productivity, contributing to greater household consumption of milk and dairy products.

"A Fifteen-Cent Plot Providing Nutrition and Income" – Ramanjaneyulu from Narayanapuram village *demonstrated the effectiveness of integrated farming through a 15-cent nutrition garden combined with sweet lime cultivation and livestock. The model provided fresh vegetables for household consumption and generated about ₹800 per week from the sale of vegetables and leafy greens. Regular mulching and farm pond irrigation helped sustain production under limited water conditions. The intervention effectively combined nutrition security with a steady source of income.*

Field visits highlighted several nutrition-sensitive farming models, including diversified vegetable gardens with multiple crop varieties that provided continuous access to safe and nutritious food while generating supplementary income. The project also achieved substantial outreach under nutrition-focused interventions, reaching more than 15,000 farmers with active community participation. Overall, evidence from field, consultations, and MIS data suggests that SADLP has strengthened food and nutritional security by

promoting diversified, low-chemical, and nutrition-sensitive farming systems that improve dietary diversity, food availability, and resilience in drought-prone rural communities.

4.2.6. Participation of Women & Leadership in CBOs

Field observations and consultations indicate that SADLP has significantly strengthened women's participation, leadership, and decision-making through SMGs, Mandal Level Federations, and other community institutions. Women described these groups as important platforms for savings, financial security, mutual support, and collective action. Many reported increased confidence, mobility, public speaking skills, and social recognition, while women engaged in enterprises such as tailoring, livestock rearing, vegetable vending, and petty shops experienced greater economic independence and improved status within their households.

Women leaders played active roles in group governance, financial management, conflict resolution, and support to vulnerable households. They also contributed to community development activities, coordinated with local institutions, and facilitated collective problem-solving. Women further supported agroecological farming, alternative livelihoods, and collective procurement and marketing through FPOs. Women also highlighted that improved incomes enabled them to invest more in their children's education, particularly for girls, reducing dropout risks and strengthening future.

The evaluation found clear evidence of increased women's involvement in household financial management and agricultural decision-making, including crop planning, livestock management, savings, loans, enterprise investments, and household expenditures. Overall, SADLP has created strong institutional spaces for women's leadership and participation, contributing to economic empowerment, social agency, collective action, and community-level governance.

4.2.7. Effectiveness of CBOs

FPOs improved collective bargaining power through aggregation, collective procurement, and collective marketing. Farmers noted that selling produce collectively enabled them to negotiate better prices and reduced exploitation by traders and middlemen. Field interactions further revealed that CBOs have gone beyond economic functions and increasingly promote mutual cooperation, collective responsibility, and social solidarity. Many groups actively support families in distress through financial assistance, labour sharing, and emergency support systems. The concept of *Ammathathuvam* (motherhood values) promoted was frequently reflected in group functioning through compassion, mutual care, collective responsibility, and community support mechanisms.

Staff assessments and SWOT analysis highlighted strong progress toward self-governance, self-reliance, and leadership within community institutions. Women leaders at village and mandal levels were actively involved in conflict resolution, group discipline, governance, and community welfare activities. Budget utilization for strengthening CBOs also indicates continued institutional investment and expansion of community structures.

Overall, evidence suggests that CBOs under SADLP are functioning effectively as institutions for financial inclusion, livelihood support, local governance, and social cohesion.

4.2.8. Gender & Social Equations

Field observations and consultations indicate that SADLP has strongly advanced gender equality and social inclusion by actively engaging marginalized groups, including SCs, STs, landless households, and single women in community institutions and livelihood programmes. Beneficiaries reported improved participation, social acceptance, and access to livelihoods, with one Dalit woman noting that her household, once excluded, is now actively involved in group processes and decision-making.

Women form the backbone of the programme, taking leadership roles in SMGs, natural farming, enterprise development, conflict resolution, and local governance. This has strengthened their confidence, mobility, and economic participation, consistent with evidence that women-led collectives enhance inclusive rural development outcomes. The programme's emphasis on Ammathathvam (motherhood values) has further reinforced solidarity, mutual care, and support systems such as labour exchange and collective coping during crises.

Adoption data and field evidence show that vulnerable households are actively participating in agroecological and livelihood interventions, ensuring equitable access to programme benefits. Capacity-building inputs provided at multiple stages on gender, equity, and social inclusion have further strengthened awareness and participation.

Overall, SADLP demonstrates strong outcomes in gender inclusion, social equity, and community cohesion, contributing to more inclusive and resilient rural institutions.

> **"*One Cow that Changed a Household" – Parvatamma, Yerrampalli Village*** *effectively utilized support from SADLP to establish a small dairy enterprise. With a loan from her SMG and her own contribution, she purchased a cow that now produces around 12 litres of milk per day. The dairy activity generates a net monthly income of approximately ₹5,000 after meeting all expenses, while also contributing to her household's nutritional security. As a single woman, the intervention enhanced her economic independence and provided a reliable and sustainable source of income.*

4.2.9. Organizational Willingness to Learn

Field observations and stakeholder consultations indicate that AF-EC demonstrates strong organisational adaptability and a well-established culture of learning. Project interventions have evolved continuously based on feedback from farmers, women's groups, and youth, reflecting an adaptive management approach where field experience directly shapes programme design and refinement.

Key models, such as ATM and livelihood initiatives, were progressively improved by incorporating local needs and context-specific adjustments. Similarly, skill development programmes expanded to include tailoring, computer skills, and women-led mobility

initiatives in response to emerging livelihood opportunities. Such iterative adjustments reflect strong responsiveness and experiential learning at the field level.

Consultations with stakeholders, including government departments, NGOs, and technical agencies, confirm that AF-EC actively engages in partnerships and knowledge exchange to strengthen implementation quality. Collaboration with institutions such as NABARD, RySS, CRIDA, WASSAN, CSA, FES, APMAS, and others has enabled technical learning, innovation, and cross-sectoral convergence.

Overall, the evidence indicates that AF-EC functions as a learning-oriented organisation with strong adaptive capacity, continuous innovation, and effective use of partnerships to refine and strengthen its rural development interventions.

4.2.10. Unintended Positive or Negative Impacts

Positive Unintended Impacts: Field observations and consultations revealed several positive unintended impacts emerging from SADLP interventions. A key outcome has been a reduction in distress migration, driven by improved livelihood stability through diversified farming systems, agroecological practices, and local enterprise development. Women reported increased dignity, confidence, and social recognition due to their enhanced income contributions and participation in community institutions, which also strengthened their decision-making roles within households. Informal solidarity systems such as labour exchange, mutual support, and collective action further strengthened community cohesion and crisis coping mechanisms. Youth skill development also created new aspirations and local employment pathways, indirectly reducing migration pressures.

Negative unintended impacts: Some livelihood enterprises, particularly tailoring, saree trading, and petty shops, experienced market saturation, leading to reduced profitability and increased competition. Women also reported higher workload burdens due to the dual responsibility of household duties and enterprise management, resulting in time stress and fatigue. MIS data indicates that non-farm livelihood coverage reached only about 56%, highlighting gaps in diversification outcomes. Staff assessments also pointed to challenges such as weak market linkages, limited price support mechanisms, and continued dependence on subsidies in certain sectors.

Overall, while SADLP has generated strong social and economic gains particularly in reducing migration and enhancing women's agency. The findings highlight the need for stronger market planning, livelihood diversification, workload balancing, and improved MIS tracking to mitigate emerging risks and strengthen sustainability.

Conclusion: The table below and analysis give achievement of the objectives and indicators.

Objectives	**Indicators for three years**	**Achievement in 2 years**
Objective 1: The small and marginal farmers in 230 villages of undivided	***Indicator 1.1:*** 50% of marginal farmers (at least 80% of women) have adopted at least 5 climate-	*54%*

Anantapur District have reduced vulnerability due to climate change.	resilient agroecology measures (out of 10) promoted by the project	
Objective 2: In 230 villages of undivided Anantapur District, the livelihood security is improved.	***Indicator 2.1:*** 60% of small and marginal farmers (at least 90% women) have reduced 15% costs in agriculture operations.	48%
	Indicator 2.2: 75% out of 8000 trained/supported rural youth (at least 80% women) earn additional monthly income of at least Rs 5000.	67%

Objective 1: Climate Resilience
Indicator 1.1: Adoption of climate-resilient agroecology practices
Rating: High Performance

The project has achieved **54% adoption within two years**, already meeting the 3-year target of 50%. This reflects strong outreach, farmer acceptance, and initial behavioural change. Farmers have begun adopting agroecological practices due to visible ecological benefits such as improved soil health and reduced risk. However, adoption at this stage appears **partial rather than comprehensive**, with many farmers likely implementing selected practices instead of the full agroecology package.

Objective 2: Livelihood Security
Indicator 2.1: Reduction in cost of cultivation
Rating: Moderate Performance

Achievement stands at **48% against a 60% target**, indicating slower progress in economic outcomes. This reflects a transition phase where cost reduction benefits are not yet fully realised. Partial adoption and continued reliance on external inputs are likely limiting immediate gains.

Indicator 2.2: Income enhancement for youth and women
Rating: Moderate to High Performance
Achievement of **67% against a 75% target** shows good progress, particularly in skill development and training. However, the conversion of skills into **stable and sustained income streams remains to be achieved.**

The analysis clearly indicates that:

- **Agroecology adoption is the strongest area of performance**
- **Economic outcomes (cost reduction and income stabilisation) are progressing but remain below potential**

This suggests that the project is **effective in initiating change**, but **economic benefits are still emerging and not fully consolidated**.

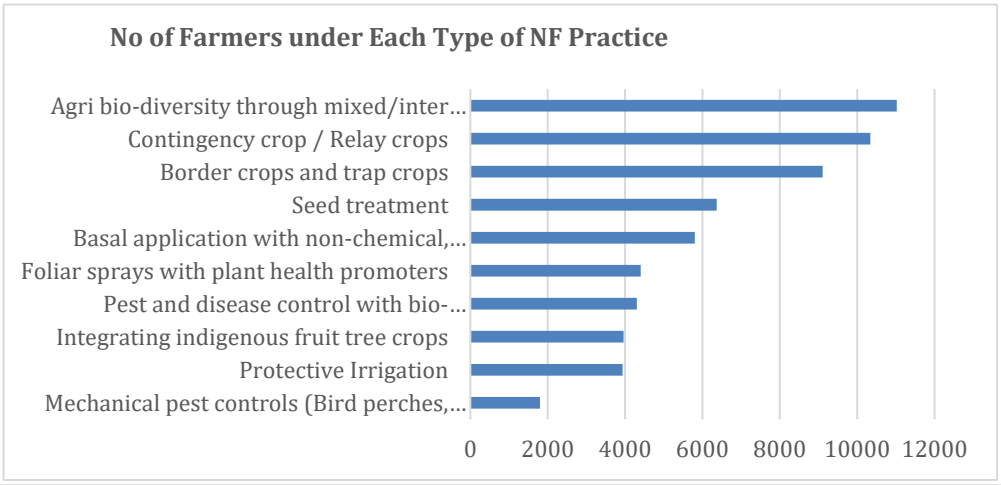
4.3. Efficiency

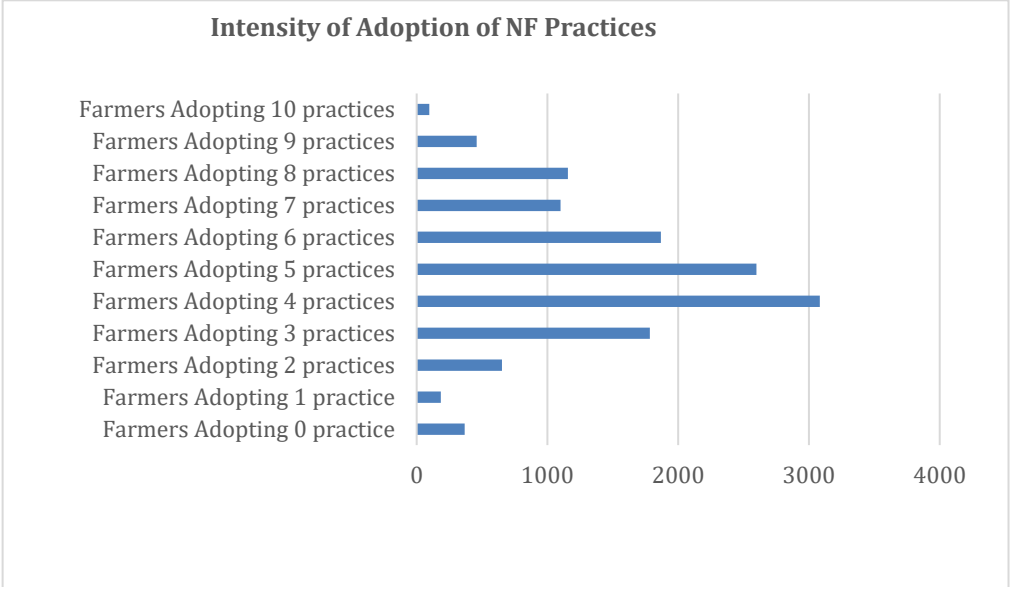
4.3.1. Cost-effectiveness of Activities

Field evidence from Dharmavaram, Gutluru, Tumparthi, and Kalagalla villages indicates that SADLP has improved farm-level cost-efficiency and income outcomes through agroecological interventions. Diversified systems such as vegetable cultivation, ATM plots, and evergreen farming provided regular cash flow throughout the year, reducing dependence on mono-cropping. Farmers reported daily incomes of ₹300–₹800 from diversified systems, while ATM models in Tumparthi generated around ₹1,500 per week along with improved household nutrition security.

MIS data shows that 15,492 farmers adopted agroecological practices either fully or partially by the second year. Many households adopted multiple practices simultaneously, strengthening system resilience. Field estimates indicate input cost savings of up to ₹15,000 per farmer due to reduced chemical use, improved soil fertility, and better on-farm resource recycling. With a total programme expenditure of about ₹1.15 crore, the average investment was approximately ₹746 per farmer, indicating cost-efficient outreach and delivery.

Intensity of Adoption of NF Practices





Farmers also reported higher and more stable net returns from diversified farming systems, particularly during drought years. Integrated systems combining crops, livestock, and mixed farming generated annual incomes ranging from ₹1.1 lakh to ₹1.8 lakh in several cases, demonstrating improved income stability alongside ecological and economic efficiency.

Overall, the evidence demonstrates that SADLP's agroecological model has delivered strong economic, ecological, and social returns at relatively low cost. The programme has improved farm incomes, reduced cultivation costs, and enhanced resilience to drought through diversified and climate-resilient farming systems. While partial adoption has limited the realization of full potential benefits in some cases, the intervention has still generated substantial livelihood and ecological outcomes.

4.3.2. Cost-sharing by the People

Field-level observations indicate that farmers under SADLP increasingly combined project-supported interventions with significant own investments and co-financing, demonstrating strong ownership but also differentiated outcomes based on resource availability. In Dharmavaram, Padmavathi's household invested nearly ₹3 lakh in orchards and drip irrigation without subsidy support. In Tumparthi, borewell-based irrigation enabled sustained diversified farming systems. In Kalagalla, Muniyamma leveraged a small loan to invest in livestock, generated quick returns, and reinvested earnings into a saree business, illustrating iterative livelihood expansion. In Mallapuram, Narayanappa reinvested farming income into orchard development and influenced nearly 30 other farmers to adopt natural farming practices.

There are experiences in the field that cost sharing is practiced to leverage benefits from various sources. In Appileypally village, the local watershed committee got support from NABARD for watershed; MGNREGS (For approach road for the horticulture plantation); Say Trees (For Horticulture plantations); farmer's own contribution towards plantations and protective irrigation. Together with all these sources of funding, a completely rain-fed horticulture plot (mango and others) is thriving in this village.

Small loans from ALP have a significant cost-sharing component by each member of SMG for each enterprise. These investments from the members range from 40% to 80% of the total investments for taking up the enterprises.

> **"*Every Family Member Has a Livelihood Role" – Women from Gotukuru Village*** *efficiently combined fodder cultivation, dairy, goat rearing, tailoring, and wage labour to stabilize household income. Landless women also participated through livestock and skill-based enterprises. Small loans from SMGs enabled diversification without dependence on moneylenders. The integrated livelihood approach improved the efficiency of household labour and resources. While the support from the project is in the form of small loans, each member co-invested from their own resources and shared the total cost of the intervention. Often, the members of SMGs put a higher share of investment from their side, which ensures the investments are productively utilized for the intended enterprise*.

4.3.3. Staff Structure vs Cost Effectiveness

AF-EC has 90 full-time staff, including 16 members in leadership and thematic positions and 74 field-level staff. The team comprises professionals from agriculture, engineering, finance, social work, and related disciplines, with experience ranging from 3 to over 30 years. A dedicated two-member MEL team supports monitoring through a mobile application used by all staff for day-to-day tracking.

The organisation has a significant gender gap, with women constituting only about **31 % of the workforce (28 out of 90 staff)**, while men account for 69 **% (62 staff)**. Women are relatively well represented in agroecology, technical, and administrative roles but remain underrepresented in leadership, management, supervisory, logistics, and field-level positions. Their presence declines at senior levels, indicating limited opportunities for career progression and a continuing glass ceiling effect.

AF-EC has strong institutional capacities in project management, institution building, natural resource management, natural farming, and production systems. However, the organisation identified the need for additional expertise in enterprise development, marketing, processing, branding, and value-chain promotion to strengthen FPO-led business activities.

A major strength of AF EC is its cadre of 160 women Karyakarthas who provide community-level support to SHGs, committees, and project interventions. Their involvement reduces the workload of project staff while ensuring local availability of technical and institutional knowledge. Regular cluster- and regional-level meetings are conducted for planning, review, and coordination of project activities.

Staff costs account for 36% of the programme budget, including 28% for programme staff and 8% for administrative staff. By the end of the second year, staff expenditure had increased to 39%, slightly exceeding the planned allocation.

4.3.4. Monitoring of Activities, Processes and Outputs

AF-EC has a dedicated two-member MIS/MEL team responsible for monitoring project activities and outputs. The organisation has developed a mobile application, with support from an external vendor, to track key indicators such as farmer coverage under natural farming practices, SMG formation, savings, loans, and other project activities. All staff members and Karyakartaas have been trained in its use.

The application enables consolidation of field-level data and supports planning, monitoring, and review processes at the organisational level. Progress and output-level data are being effectively utilized by the AF-EC team for programme management. However, the use of MIS data for decision-making and review processes at the community institution level, such as SMGs and committees, remains limited and requires further strengthening.

AF-EC has also partnered with external agencies to develop a dashboard for FPO monitoring and management. While this system is still evolving, it currently operates separately and is not yet integrated with existing project databases and MIS platforms.

4.3.5. Monitoring Outcomes and Impacts

AF-EC follows fairly standardized protocols across project interventions, including support to SMGs, natural farming farmers, and community institutions. Common processes and monitoring systems are used across locations, ensuring consistency in implementation.

The organisation has developed an MIS-based monitoring system and mobile application to track project activities and outputs. While the system is effective for organisational planning, review, and reporting, there is scope to strengthen its use for reflection, decision-making, and planning at community and field-staff levels. Expanding the use of digital tools and emerging AI-enabled monitoring systems could further improve efficiency and learning.

The existing MIS framework can be strengthened by integrating outcome and impact level indicators such as area under natural farming practices, protective irrigation coverage, productivity changes, income enhancement, and resilience outcomes. AF-EC has also introduced a method for estimating additional household income from project interventions using sample-based assessments, providing useful insights into livelihood improvements.

Overall, there is considerable scope to simplify data collection and retrieval systems, improve integration across platforms, and strengthen the use of monitoring data for evidence-based planning, outcome tracking, and programme effectiveness.

4.4. Impact

The SADLP has contributed significantly to strengthening drought-resilient livelihoods in the operational area through agroecological farming, livelihood diversification, women's empowerment, and community institution building. Evidence from field observations, MIS data, and stakeholder consultations indicates positive changes in farming systems, household incomes, ecological sustainability, and community resilience.

4.4.1. Impact Achieved in Drought/ Climate Resilient Agriculture

SADLP strengthened agroecological farming through refresher trainings, demonstration plots, peer-learning visits, and expanded access to bio-inputs such as Jeevamrutham, Beejamrutham, neem oil, and natural pest repellents. By the assessment period, over 15,000 farmers had adopted natural farming practices in about 10,500 hectares, exceeding programme targets. About 54% of the farmers adopted at least five natural farming practices, indicating deeper behavioural change and system-level adoption.

Farmers such as Padmavati and Muniratnam reported sustained daily incomes ranging from ₹350 to ₹900, reflecting improved economic resilience. Soil health improvements were also widely observed, including higher earthworm activity, better moisture retention, and improved crop quality.

The likelihood of sustained adoption remains high due to regular income generation, stronger local bio-input supply systems, active peer-learning networks, and continued support from FPOs and SMGs.

A visible shift from groundnut monocropping to diversified farming systems has emerged across project villages. Farmers increasingly combined vegetables, fruit crops, pulses, millets, and agroforestry models to reduce climate risks and improve household nutrition. In several locations, natural farming practices contributed to higher crop productivity, while diversified systems generated more stable income streams under drought conditions. Agroforestry and ATM models further strengthened resilience by improving income distribution across seasons.

MIS data indicate that more than 54% of project farmers diversified beyond groundnut cultivation, with 15,492 farmers practicing agroecological farming either fully or partially across 10,060 hectares. Staff assessments and SWOT analysis identified ATM and ATF models as highly effective interventions, supported by strong farmer participation and committed field staff. However, sustaining and scaling these gains will require stronger market linkages, value-addition opportunities, and improved access to protective irrigation.

> **"*Earthworms Returned to the Soil" – Ratnamma, Yerrampalli Village*** *demonstrated sustainability through integrated farming practices. She used cow dung and urine from her livestock to prepare natural inputs for mango orchards and tomato crops. Soil fertility improved visibly, with earthworms returning to the fields. Her farming system combined orchards, livestock, equipment rental, and crop production, creating long-term ecological and economic sustainability*.

Shift from Groundnut Monocropping to Diversified Cropping: The shift away from groundnut monocropping is evident across project villages. In Tumparthi, farmers reported an increase in groundnut yields from 16 to 22 bags per acre after adopting natural inputs such as Jeevamrutham. Seetharama Reddy's five-acre multi-tree cropping model generates annual incomes of ₹60,000–₹70,000 while improving drought resilience. In Gotukuru, cluster bean cultivation under the ATM model provides a steady daily income of about ₹1,000. Farmers in Mallapuram have diversified into mango, sweet lime, jamun, and guava-based agroforestry systems, while Kalagalla farmers cultivate ragi, jowar, pulses, and vegetables, reducing risk and improving household nutrition.

> ***"Building Resilience in a Drought-Prone Village" – Chandrasekhar, Tammaidoddi Village*** *described how agroecological farming, farm ponds, five-layer cropping models, and tamarind orchards created a resilient farming system. Supported through AF-EC and RDT interventions, the village diversified into vegetables, livestock, and traditional crops. Even under drought conditions, the families sustained incomes through multiple interventions and enterprises. The integration of natural resource management and farming practices strengthened long-term sustainability.*

4.4.2. Impact on the Incomes and Livelihood

Across project villages, farmers who once depended on groundnut monocropping are now experiencing more stable incomes through diversified farming systems. Farmers reported daily earnings ranging from ₹300–₹500 from vegetable cultivation, while ATM and ATF models generated regular income, improved nutrition, and reduced vulnerability

to crop failure. In several cases, integrated farming systems combining vegetables, horticulture, and livestock generated annual incomes of up to ₹1.5 lakh. These changes were supported by natural farming practices, reduced input costs, and strong community-level cooperation.

MIS data indicate that household incomes increased by 25–30%, while seasonal migration declined by nearly 40%. Staff consultations identified mixed cropping and contingency crop planning as the most effective resilience strategies, although water stress continues to remain a major challenge in drought-prone areas.

Community institutions have also strengthened considerably. Currently, 883 SMGs and 218 GSMs function regularly, with savings corpus levels reaching ₹2–₹10 lakh at SMG level. ₹10–₹50 lakh at village level and ₹2 –₹3 crore at mandal federation level. More than 1,200 community-based organisations participate in planning and monitoring processes, while 1,300 women leaders have been trained. The sustainability of these institutions is considered high due to strong savings discipline, federated governance systems, and linkages with watershed committees and FPOs.

Women-led enterprises have emerged as an important source of livelihood diversification. Enterprises such as vegetable shops, tailoring units, petty businesses, handloom activities, and food processing have enabled women to move beyond wage labour and generate stable incomes. Monthly earnings from these enterprises ranged between ₹9,000 and ₹25,000, while ALP activities generated daily incomes of ₹300–₹500. Access to SMG credit, enterprise training, and women's willingness to take up new livelihood opportunities were identified as key enabling factors.

"A Saree Business that Blossomed during Festivals" – Parveen, Appilepalli Village *started a saree business using loan from the Sasyamitra Group. After successfully repaying her first loan, she expanded using NABARD livelihood funds. During festivals, she sells sarees worth ₹1.5–2 lakh within a week. Her enterprise demonstrates how small financial support can lead to substantial income growth and entrepreneurship.*

Skill development has emerged as another major area of impact. Youth trained through AF-EC programmes reported monthly incomes ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹25,000 in trades such as driving, mechanics, computer applications, and tailoring.

Driven by Determination: Vannuramma's life in P.Yaleru village *was tied to the uncertainty of daily wage labour for years. Her income was small, and her family's financial future was bleak. Vannuramma enrolled in the Women Auto Driving training program at the AF Driving School, supported by the Rural Development Trust (RDT). Breaking traditional gender barriers, she successfully mastered the driving skill. Recognizing her determination, RDT sponsored her very own auto-rickshaw, transforming her from a laborer into an Owner. Today, Vannuramma is a proud driver-cum-owner. For the past two years, she has reliably navigated the routes between her village and Kuderu, Atmakur, Kalyandurg, and Anantapur. Her monthly earnings have jumped to a steady ₹20,000. With her financial growth, she secured a 1.5-cent government-allocated plot and invested ₹6 Lakhs of her own hard-earned savings to build a permanent home. By taking the steering wheel of her life, Vannuramma has driven her family into an era of happiness, independence, and pride.*

The AF-Youth Resource Centre currently offers 11 vocational courses and has established linkages with 68 organisations for advanced trainings and placements. Staff assessments ranked the Youth Resource Centre highly for relevance and effectiveness, highlighting affordable training, practical exposure, placement support, and institutional mentoring as major factors contributing to improved youth employment and reduced migration.

4.4.3. Impact - Gender Relations, Social Security, Solidarity and Social Strength

Women's empowerment is one of the most significant impacts of SADLP. Across project villages, women reported increased confidence, improved communication skills, greater mobility, and stronger participation in community decision-making processes. In several locations, women have taken up leadership roles in community institutions, participated in panchayat elections, and emerged as local role models. Women in Kalagalla noted that they can now interact confidently with external stakeholders, reflecting enhanced agency and social recognition.

Community institutions have played a central role in strengthening social cohesion, collective action, and financial security. GSMS groups in villages such as Kalagalla and Mallapuram have mobilized substantial savings, with Kalagalla alone building a corpus of nearly ₹60 lakh. Federated structures have strengthened collective decision-making and enabled women leaders to represent community interests in governance platforms.

MIS data show that more than 1,100 women leaders have been capacitated, exceeding project targets. The project has also developed a cadre of 190 women Karyakarthas, close to the target of 200, who support community mobilisation, savings management, training dissemination, and institutional strengthening. Leadership development programmes, exposure visits, and enterprise promotion have further enhanced their capacities and visibility within communities.

> ***"Women Who Stepped into Public Leadership" – Women Members, Mallapuram Village*** *reported that SADLP interventions transformed them from financially dependent homemakers into active entrepreneurs and leaders. Many women diversified livelihoods into livestock, farming, and small businesses while supporting children's higher education and employment. Women also participated in panchayat elections and travelled outside the state as community resource persons. The programme significantly enhanced women's confidence, mobility, and social recognition.*
>
> ***"Women Negotiating with Markets and Officials" – MSMS Leaders, Atmakuru*** *reported that women's participation in procurement, natural farming promotion, and village governance significantly increased their public leadership and confidence. Women now negotiate with markets, interact with officials, and support collective procurement systems. In some families, property ownership has shifted into women's names. The intervention strengthened women's institutional credibility and decision-making power.*

Women-led enterprises have strengthened both economic security and social status. Income-generating activities such as tailoring, saree sales, petty businesses, and alternate livelihood initiatives have increased women's financial independence and

confidence. Political participation has also expanded, with more women contesting and winning local elections.

Staff consultations emphasized that women's leadership has been a key driver of project success. Strong institutional platforms such as SMGs, GSMSs, MSMSs, ASMSs, and FPOs, combined with supportive family environments and targeted capacity-building efforts, have contributed to sustained gains in gender relations, solidarity, and social strength. The sustainability of outcomes is considered high due to strong institutional anchoring, growing women's leadership, and continued livelihood opportunities.

4.4.4. Impact on the CBOs

Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) have evolved into strong financial and social institutions that promote savings, collective decision-making, and community participation. In Kalagalla, 10 SMGs comprising 202 women manage a GSMS corpus of nearly ₹60 lakh, while in Mallapuram, GSMSs have mobilized about ₹35 lakh and contribute regularly to social causes. Apex federations have strengthened women's leadership and enabled engagement with departments, NGOs, and advisory platforms.

MIS data indicate that 883 SMGs (93%) out of 950 and 218 GSMSs (97%) out of 230 remain active, while 1,110 CBOs are participating in project processes, exceeding programme targets. Community institutions are actively involved in planning, implementation, monitoring, and financial management, demonstrating increasing levels of self-governance and self-reliance.

Staff consultations and SWOT analysis highlighted strong institutional systems from village to project level, supported by structured savings and credit mechanisms, effective leadership, and sustained investment in capacity building. These factors have contributed to the long-term sustainability and strengthening of community institutions.

Market Access through FPOs : Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs) have improved farmers' access to inputs and markets through collective procurement, input distribution, and marketing support. FPOs have played an important role in promoting natural farming by supplying bio-inputs such as neem-based products and facilitating access to agricultural services. Collective marketing mechanisms have reduced dependence on local traders and strengthened farmers' bargaining power.

MIS data show that 16 FPOs are being supported under the project, with approximately 500 farmers formally linked to each FPO. Project records indicate that FPO members received 10–15% higher prices for their produce compared to sales through local traders. Staff consultations noted that while market fluctuations remain a challenge, FPOs have strengthened collective marketing systems and improved access to inputs and services.

The key enabling factors include institutional support, farmer cooperation, capacity-building efforts, and continued investment in strengthening FPO governance and business operations.

4.4.5. Impact on Ecology and Environment

The sustainability assessment indicates that SADLP has established a strong foundation for long-term ecological and institutional resilience. Adoption of natural farming practices, diversified farming systems, and community-led resource management has contributed to improvements in soil health, moisture retention, biodiversity, and reduced dependence on chemical inputs. Community institutions, women-led groups, and local resource systems have strengthened the continuity of ecological practices at the village level.

The project has also enhanced climate resilience through diversified livelihoods, agroforestry models, natural farming, and strengthened local institutions. While risks related to drought, water scarcity, market fluctuations, and institutional capacities remain, these challenges are manageable with continued support, stronger market linkages, and improved irrigation access.

SADLP has created a strong platform for sustainable rural development in the drought-prone regions of Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai districts. Agroecological farming and institutional strengthening are the most significant achievements, reflected in high farmer adoption, improved ecological outcomes, and strong community participation. Women's leadership through SMGs, FPOs, watershed committees, and other community institutions has emerged as a major driver of social change and programme sustainability.

Economic outcomes have also improved through reduced cultivation costs, diversified livelihoods, enterprise development, and skill-building initiatives. However, long-term income growth and livelihood security will depend on strengthening market systems, enterprise support, and water resources. Overall, the project has enhanced resilience, reduced vulnerability, strengthened community institutions, and laid the foundation for sustainable and climate-resilient rural livelihoods.

Table 9: Impact Levels & Enabling Factors

Theme	Impact Level	Enabling Factors
Reduction of Drought Vulnerability	High	Livelihood Diversification, crop systems, natural inputs, farmer cooperation, SMG support
Crop Diversification	High	Agroecology training, demo plots, staff guidance, farmer willingness
Household Income	Medium–High	SMG credit, ALP training, women's risk-taking, supportive families
Women's Empowerment	High	SMGs, GSMS, MSMS, Apex federations, supportive men, women-led focus
FPOs	Medium	Institutional support, collective procurement, farmer cooperation
Replication of interventions	High	Success stories, local leadership, public trust, peer learning
Skill Development	High	Affordable training, practical exposure, placement networks, AF-EC support

Institutions	High	Structured savings/credit, strong leadership, institutional investment
Unintended Impacts	Low–Medium	Climate variability, unstable markets, lack of MSP, subsidy dependence

4.5. Sustainability

This section assesses the sustainability of SADLP by examining the continuation prospects of key interventions across agroecological farming, livelihoods, skill development, gender and inclusion, institutions, and ecological systems.

4.5.1. Project Contribution to Long Term Goals

The project has significantly strengthened agroecological systems through refresher trainings, expanded bio-input supply (Jeevamrutham, Beejamrutham, neem products), demonstration plots, and peer learning. By this stage, **15,000 farmers in about 10,500 hectares** have adopted natural farming, with **54% practicing at least five techniques**. Farmers such as Padmavati and Muniratnam report stable incomes of **₹350–₹900 per day**, along with improved soil health and moisture retention.

The probability of continuation is **high (75–85%)**, supported by regular incomes, strong peer networks, local input systems, and institutional support from SMGs and FPOs.

Watershed interventions done in 1800 hectares in CARA villages have improved water security through farm ponds, check dams, and tank-based activities. Continuation prospects for watershed interventions are **moderate to high (60–70%)**, though water scarcity and climate variability remain key risks.

4.5.2. Project Contribution to Livelihoods Security of Target Communities

Alternative Livelihood Programme (ALP) interventions have expanded through SMG loans, revolving funds, NABARD support, and training. So far:

- **881 women** received direct financial support
- **1,354 women** accessed revolving loans
- **1,250 women** were trained in entrepreneurship
- **1,919 youth** were trained and linked to employment/self-employment

Enterprise incomes include vegetable shops (**₹22,000/month**), dairy (**₹6,000/month**), goat rearing (**₹3,000–₹5,000 per sale**), and scrap trade (**₹4,000–₹6,000/day**).

Sixteen FPOs support input supply and collective marketing. Farmers reported **10–15% higher prices** through FPO channels. Continuation prospects are **high to moderate (70–85%)**, driven by credit systems, demand-driven enterprises, and institutional support, though market volatility persists.

4.5.3. Contribution to Empowerment of Women, Gender and Social Equity

The cadre of women Karyakarthas has grown to 190 trained leaders, nearing the target of 200. Training programs, exposure visits, and leadership development have enhanced their capacity as extension agents. These women continue to manage savings, loans,

and training dissemination, with incomes from tailoring (₹22–28k/month) and saree sales (₹2.5 lakh turnover during festivals). Political engagement has increased, with more women contesting and winning panchayat elections.

The probability of continuation is moderate to high (70–80%), influenced by strong institutional anchoring within GSMS federations, recognition and leadership roles fostering sustained involvement, and income from enterprises reinforcing confidence. Remaining cadre gaps and the need for ongoing incentives are noted risks.

Women's leadership has expanded to 1,300 trained leaders, exceeding targets. Their role in GSMS and federations has strengthened collective decision-making and enhanced social equity. The sustainability of these institutions is very high (85–95%), due to deeply embedded savings discipline, robust federated governance structures, strengthened linkages with watershed committees and FPOs, and expanded women's leadership.

4.5.4. Mutual Cooperation and Support, Solidarity and Social Strength

Community institutions have matured into disciplined financial and social platforms. Currently, 883 SMGs and 218 GSMSs operate regularly, with savings corpuses growing and reaching ₹2 to ₹10 lakh at SMG level. ₹10 to ₹50 lakh at village level and ₹2 to ₹3 crore at mandal federation level.. Over 1,200 community-based organizations actively engage in planning and monitoring. Apex federations enable women leaders to engage with government and NGOs, while CBOs actively participate in project planning and monitoring.

External linkages have been deepened through convergence with NABARD, MGNREGS, donor agencies, and FPOs. Watershed committees and federations maintain strong links to external stakeholders, enhancing sustainability prospects. The probability of continuation is moderate to high (70–80%), supported by FPOs providing aggregation and market access, watershed committees ensuring water resource development, and embedding sustainability within larger ecosystems through convergence. Market volatility and coordination challenges remain.

4.5.5. Conclusions and Risks in Sustainability

Risk analysis highlights climate shocks, market volatility, institutional weakening, and resource constraints as primary threats. Drought and water scarcity remain inherent risks despite investments in conservation and irrigation. Alternative livelihoods face challenges of opportunities, skills, and outreach. Market fluctuations impact enterprises, while institutional capacity requires continuous strengthening. The probability of these risks materializing is moderate (45–55%), with contributing factors including increasing climate variability, market instability, and resource limitations. Transformative interventions could reduce risks if public investments build on lessons from SADLP.

The sustainability assessment confirms the project's strong foundations and positive trajectory across multiple dimensions. Natural farming practices, community institutions, and livelihood activities exhibit high continuation potential, while Karyakarthas and local resource systems show moderate to high prospects. External linkages provide critical

support despite ongoing challenges. Risks related to climate, markets, and institutional capacity remain moderate but manageable with sustained attention and reinforcement. Overall, the project is well-positioned for long-term sustainability by addressing identified gaps, strengthening market linkages, and enhancing institutional capacity.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

The mid-term evaluation highlights that AF-EC has built strong institutions, achieved large-scale adoption of natural farming, and significantly strengthened women's leadership. To consolidate these gains and ensure long-term resilience, the following recommendations are proposed.

5.1 Organizational Strengthening

Extended Support Horizon: AF-EC should continue engagement for at least **five more years** to consolidate institutional gains, strengthen community systems, and support the transition from micro-livelihoods to sustainable enterprises. A longer support cycle will ensure stability and resilience beyond project boundaries.

Consolidation Strategy: Instead of spreading interventions across 230+ villages, AF-EC should focus on about **150 villages** for deeper convergence. This will enable saturation of interventions, stronger institutional outcomes, and creation of **model clusters** for replication.

Leadership Development: Sustained investment in **women leaders and youth** is essential. These groups should be further developed as community change agents capable of engaging not only in project activities but also broader issues such as education, health, gender equity, and governance.

Institutional Streamlining: Multiple institutional layers (SMG, GSMS, MSMS, ASMS, FPOs) currently have overlapping functions. Clear role definition and streamlined mandates will reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and strengthen accountability.

Civil Society Orientation: Mandal-level federations should gradually evolve beyond project-linked functions to become **civil society platforms**. They can play a stronger role in advocacy, social equity, and influencing local governance, ensuring community voices shape broader development processes.

5.2 Programmatic Deepening

Natural Farming Expansion: Strengthen natural farming through **PGS certification systems, value-chain development, and market linkages**. Prioritise **dryland and rainfed regions** to ensure relevance for vulnerable farmers. Expand FPO-led supply of bio-inputs and strengthen aggregation and marketing systems.

Entrepreneurship Transition: Support households to move from **micro-livelihoods to structured enterprises** through incubation support, business mentoring, and improved access to credit. Focus on scaling viable enterprises rather than subsistence activities.

Youth Alumni Networks: Organize trained youth into **structured alumni networks** to enable peer learning, mentoring, and community engagement. These networks can

support farming systems, entrepreneurship, and link with the “India for India” initiative. Strengthen tracking of alumni contributions and enhance support in **bank linkages, business development, and enterprise growth.**

Gender-Responsive Strategies: Ensure women’s continued leadership in natural farming, skill development, and enterprise systems. Focus not only on participation but also on enabling women to become **model farmers, entrepreneurs, and institutional leaders**.

Technology for Drudgery Reduction: Introduce appropriate **low-cost mechanization and digital tools** to reduce women’s workload and improve efficiency. Priorities include solar dryers, oil expellers, and mobile-based market information systems.

Value Chain Development: Systematically strengthen value chains for **millets, pulses, fruits, vegetables, tamarind, and groundnut**. Focus on **processing, packaging, branding, and market access** to enhance farmer share in value addition and improve local retention of income.

Water Conservation: Strengthen watershed interventions through **farm ponds, check dams, soil-moisture conservation, and protective irrigation**. Emphasize **equitable water access** through collective systems and crop-water suitability planning. Prioritise small and vulnerable farmers in water allocation.

Farmer Contribution: Encourage **member-based in-kind contributions** (e.g., 20 kg groundnut per farmer) to build working capital for FPO operations. Promote a **risk-sharing collective business model**, where members participate in profits and losses, strengthening ownership and reducing dependency on external grants.

5.3 Collaboration and Market Linkages

Leverage Schemes: AF-EC should systematically converge SADLP interventions with key government and institutional programmes such as NABARD, APCNF, agriculture, horticulture, watershed development, and skill development missions. This convergence will optimise resources, reduce duplication, and expand outreach.

Market Partnerships: Strengthen FPOs and federations to build **structured market partnerships with private sector actors, processors, and aggregators**. Focus on value addition, branding, and collective marketing models to ensure farmers capture a higher share of value and reduce dependence on intermediaries.

Policy Advocacy Platforms: Enable community institutions to engage in **evidence-based policy dialogue** on climate resilience, gender equity, and rainfed agriculture. AF-EC can facilitate district and state-level platforms where community leaders present MIS-backed insights for policy influence.

Cross-Project Synergies: Strengthen coordination between MSMS/FPOs and ASMS/FPO federations to ensure **complementary roles and avoid functional overlap**. Clear role definition and joint planning will improve efficiency and collective impact.

Linking Apex Bodies: Develop backward and forward linkages between apex-level production units and village enterprises. Products such as millet-based foods, ready-to-

cook mixes, neem-based products, and value-added agri-products should be locally produced and marketed through federations. This will strengthen rural enterprise ecosystems, create local employment, and retain value within villages.

Stakeholder Collaboration: Expand partnerships with NGOs, CSR initiatives, research institutions (such as ICRISAT and Horticulture Research Stations), and agri-tech organizations. These collaborations can bring innovation, technical expertise, and additional investment for scaling successful models.

5.4 Project Management and Monitoring

MIS Strengthening: MIS currently captures key activity and output-level indicators, but several critical areas such as **soil health, biodiversity, dietary diversity, migration, enterprise sustainability, and gender-disaggregated data** remain under-monitored. Expanding MIS coverage at least through sample-based tracking will strengthen evidence generation and enable outcome- and impact-level analysis.

AI-Based Monitoring Tools: AF-EC should progressively transition towards **AI-enabled, real-time monitoring systems**. Integrated dashboards at village, mandal, and organizational levels can support predictive insights, improve responsiveness, and enable adaptive programme management.

Evidence-Based Reporting: Strengthen the integration of **quantitative MIS data with qualitative field narratives** to produce more comprehensive and credible evidence of change, particularly on outcomes such as income improvement, soil health, and livelihood resilience.

Revolving Fund mechanisms should be further strengthened with **shorter repayment cycles and improved transparency systems**. Piloting digital repayment platforms can enhance efficiency, accountability, and inclusion of vulnerable households.

Efficiency & Cost-Effectiveness: Low-cost, high-return interventions must remain central to approach. Scaling agroecological farming and diversified livelihoods ensures maximum resilience per unit investment. AF-EC should document cost-benefit analyses to demonstrate efficiency.

5.5. Conclusion

These recommendations emphasize **consolidation, deepening, and modernization** of AF-EC's work. With strong institutional foundations and high community ownership already in place, the next phase should focus on institutional streamlining, value chain development, water security, enterprise strengthening, and digital transformation. This transition will enable AF-EC to move from **resilience-building to sustained rural transformation**, ensuring long-term dignity, stability, and improved livelihoods for vulnerable households in drought-prone regions.

Chapter 6: General Conclusions

The two-year journey of the SADLP project has unfolded in the challenging context of the drought-prone districts of Anantapur and Sri Sathya Sai. Despite fragile soils, erratic rainfall, and persistent rural poverty, AF-EC has effectively leveraged its long-standing experience to design interventions that are both context-specific and transformative. By focusing on climate-resilient agriculture, livelihood diversification, and women's empowerment, the project has addressed immediate vulnerabilities while laying a strong foundation for long-term resilience.

A key strength of the project has been its inclusiveness. It has directly reached around 21000 **households across 230 villages**, with a deliberate focus on small and marginal farmers, landless labourers, SC/ST communities, and women-headed households. Women-led Sasya Mitra Groups have emerged as strong community institutions driving savings, credit, agroecology adoption, and livelihood diversification. The benefits have extended to nearly **60,000 additional households**, and the project has begun influencing district-level discourse on climate-resilient agriculture.

Agroecological adoption has been central to the project's impact. Farmers have increasingly adopted crop diversification, natural farming, soil and water conservation, and contingency cropping, significantly reducing risks associated with monocropping and chemical-intensive agriculture. Protective irrigation and moisture conservation have helped stabilise production in drought conditions, while natural farming has reduced input costs by around **15%** and improved soil health. Rural youth and women entrepreneurs have also begun generating additional monthly incomes in the range of **₹5,000–₹12,000**, strengthening household income diversification.

The social impact is equally significant. Women's leadership has expanded across SMGs, GSMSs, and local institutions, while rural youth have reduced migration through local employment and entrepreneurship opportunities. Community solidarity, mutual support systems, and financial discipline have strengthened, contributing to reduced indebtedness and enhanced confidence among marginalised groups. These outcomes demonstrate that integrated ecological, economic, and social interventions can jointly build resilience.

However, challenges persist. Climate variability continues to threaten agricultural stability, requiring sustained investment in adaptive practices and water security. Market volatility and limited access to institutional credit constrain full livelihood potential. Scaling adoption beyond organised groups and sustaining outcomes without continued facilitation remain critical concerns.

Despite these challenges, the probability of sustainability is high, supported by strong community institutions, women's leadership, and the ecological orientation of interventions. Overall, SADLP represents a significant step toward building dignity, resilience, and equity among vulnerable farming communities in drought-prone regions.

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