

# e'Links

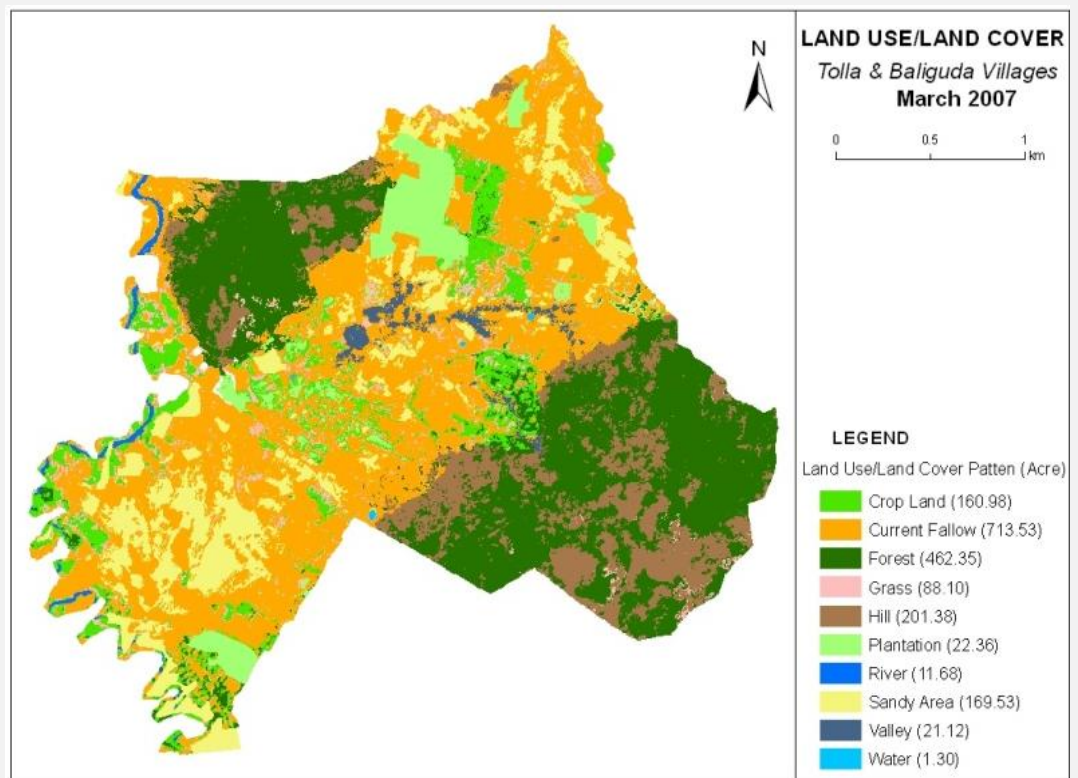
AN IN HOUSE NEWSLETTER OF THE J.R.D. TATA ECOTECHNOLOGY CENTRE, M.S. SWAMINATHAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION

## Editorial

The J.R.D Tata Ecotechnology Centre was established on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1996 and last July it has completed 15 years of dedicated service for improving livelihoods in the rural areas. The Centre continues with its initial activities built around eco-aquaculture, Integrated Pest Management, Integrated Nutrient Supply, wasteland and watershed development, Integrated Intensive Farming Systems, and agri-processing and post-harvest. The Biovillage Paradigm, considered as 'Ecotechnology in Action', which also provides the framework for implementation of the development activities has also evolved from implementation at a village level to a watershed level. These 15 years of experience and learning have helped finding solutions in a holistic and integrated manner and would help in introspecting and guiding the future course of action with the same dedication and vigour.

## GIS and Remote Sensing as a Project Monitoring Tool

In continuation of the support provided by the GIS team to BIWS project. The satellite image data IRS-P6, LISS-IV False Colour Composite (FCC) image of 2007 has been procured from the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA) to study the land use and land cover for Tolla and Boliguda villages at Koraput. The satellite image was processed for



digital classification of Landuse / Landcover using ERDAS imagine. This was further refined with inputs from field visits. 10 major land use categories have been identified.

Land Use Categories	Area (acres)
Current fallow	713.53
Forests	462.35
Hill	201.38
Sandy area	169.53
The Cropland	160.98
Grassland	88.10
Plantation	22.36
Valley	21.12
River	11.68
Water bodies	1.30

The total area of the Tolla and Boliguda is 1852.33 acre and the extent of various land use categories are as follows:

The map reveals that the current fallow land covers 38% of the Tolla and Boliguda followed by 35 % of forest and hill. The fallow lands is spread in the central part of Tolla and Baliguda and along the river course of the eastern region. Opportunity exists for developing the fallow lands along the river course with appropriate conservation

such as agro-forestry crops.

*GIS Lab, Chennai*

### Farm based Vocational Training for School Students

The Training and Demonstration Centre at Bidyapitha School Campus, Madhusagar, provides vocational training and demonstrations to school students on agriculture, horticulture, dairy, poultry, biodiversity related activities, health & hygiene awareness programme, natural resource management and other skill development to empower the students through training and demonstrations. Through this the students also get an opportunity to learn about ecological balance, environmental pollution, global warming, biodiversity among other subjects. Farm produce of training centre received from ongoing activities like agriculture, horticulture, poultry, dairy, etc. are supplied to the school at a subsidised rate to ensure the students get adequate and balance diet.



During 2010 – 2011, on participation in Biovillage activities students got food, vegetables and animal protein worth of Rs. 49,794 and fulfilled their nutritional requirements from school campus of which 50% of sale proceeds kept in revolving fund. The revolving funds will be used in procuring inputs to carry out the programme and sustain Biovillage activities in school campus by the students.

Other on going activities are to create awareness among the students on the benefits of (1) plantation programme, (2) programme on biodiversity, (3) awareness programme on health and hygiene sector, (4) computer learning (5) DNA club activities and (6) skill on micro-enterprise development.

*Biovillage Programme, Kendrapara*

## Promoting System of Rice Intensification

As part of intensifying the practice of System of Rice Intensification (SRI) among the farming community, the BIWS project has been training farmers in SRI techniques through the Farmers Field School and with the guidance of Kudumbam, an NGO. A mass awareness programme, Farmers Field Day, was conducted on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2011 to communicate the advantage of SRI farming techniques, wherein over three hundred women and men farmers participated.



The SRI farmers shared their experience in SRI cultivation and the benefits derived. Mr. Rajendran, Panchayat President, Thalini; Dr. RSS Hopper, Principal Coordinator, MSSRF, Dr. M. Nageswaran, Principal Scientist, MSSRF and Mr. Oswald Quintal, Kudumbam also spoke on the advantage of adopting SRI mode of paddy cultivation. Mr. K. Balan, Deputy Director, Agriculture; Mr. N. Surputhin, Assistant Director, Agriculture; Mr. Nadarajan, ADO, Mr. Vetrivel, Soil Health Department, Kudumianmalai; Mr. Natarajan ADH,

Horticulture, were also present and had appreciated work done by SRI and the lead farmers. The Assistant Director, Agriculture proposed that his department will utilise the knowledge and experience of the lead farmers in training other farmers in the district.

The programme was interactive and the doubts of the farmers were cleared and they were encouraged to take up SRI technique for paddy cultivation which would enable them to efficiently utilise the resources and increase productivity. At the conclusion of the programme 200 non SRI farmers took an oath that they would adopt SRI practices in the coming *Samba* season.

*BIWS Project, Illupur, Pudukkottai*

## Face to Face with Key Stakeholders and Innuyir Grama Sangam Leaders

A stakeholders' meeting was held on 12 July 2011 at Saraswathi Marriage Hall, Villianur, Puducherry, with the objective of creating awareness among the SHGs and stakeholders the financial inclusion strategies, role of revolving fund, capital subsidy, bank linkages, convergence and partnerships with line department, civil society organisations, industry associations, academic institutions and on the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. Participation was invited from experts to give an exposure to the SHG members on the current developments in their respective sectors. The participants were welcomed by Ms. Krishnaveni, Secretary, Innuyir Grama Sangam (IGS). Ms. Rajalakshmi, President, IGS, gave an account of the Federation and its activities. Mr. Santhamurthy, Coordinator, Mentoring & Capacity Building of SHGs, MSSRF spoke about MSSRF initiatives for the development of the rural community.

The topics covered by the key speakers were, women's empowerment, women's right (Ms. Sagunthala, Project Officer, Puducherry Municipality), SHGs functioning, hand-holding of SHGs by DRDA (Mr. Ravi Prakash, Project Director, DRDA, Puducherry), income generating schemes, loans and subsidies available with Khadi Board for SHG members (Mr. Dinesh, CEO, Khadi Board, Puducherry), NABARD's initiatives for development/strengthening SHGs and farmers (Mr. Sreepathy Kalkura, AGM, NABARD, Puducherry). The interactive session between the SHG leaders and Banks represented by Mr. Joyce Mal, District Coordinator, SBI, Puducherry and Mr. Sakthivel, Chief Manager, Indian Bank, Villianur, Puducherry, gave an opportunity discussing the difficulties faced by members in availing bank facilities. The bank officials assured them that these could be resolved on a case by case basis with appropriate recommendation and suggestion. Scientists from KVK, Puducherry, Dr. Vijayalakshmi, Subject Matter Specialist, and Dr. Vijayakumar, Entomologist, also participated in the discussion and explained the various trainings available to the farmers and SHG members at KVK. This was followed in the afternoon 2 hour session on Enterprise Development Promotion (EDP) orientation for the SHG leaders by Mr. Lawrence, EDP Consultant, who spoke of enterprises, skill development, natural resources, market trend, market access, etc and supported his talk with interesting examples and anecdotes. Ms. Kathanayagi, Treasurer, IGS, delivered the vote of thanks.



Dr. Sudha Nair, Senior Director, Dr. Vidya Ramkumar, Head, Biocentre, MSSRF, Pondicherry, Dr. Rengalakshmi, Principal Scientist, Executive members from Kulumai Federation & Reddiyarchatram Seed Growers Association, Dindigul District and 500 IGS's SHG leaders of 230 SHGs from 50 villages from IGS also participated in this meeting.

Stalls were also put up for this function to exhibit and sell the products made by the SHG. The products for display and sales were, areca nut plates, sanitary napkins, vermicompost, eatables, snacks and pickles, fruits and vegetables, mushroom and mushroom products and papier-mâché dolls. During the event goods worth Rs. 3,000 were sold. NABARD provided the support for organising this meeting.

*Biocentre, Puducherry*

### **Glimpses from Dr. Geeta Mehta's Visit**

Dr. Geeta Mehta, President, Asia Initiatives (Friends of MSSRF), New York visited the Puducherry Biocentre on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2011. During her visit she had a discussion with the Executive members of Innuyir Grama Sangam (SHGs Federation of Biovillage Programme). She also met the SHG members and women farmers from Rural Community Trust, Mugaiyur, Villupuram, Tamil Nadu, who were undergoing hands on training on fodder cultivation and vermicompost production at the Biocentre.



*Biocentre, Puducherry*

Newsletter Team: Dr. Vijay R. Subbiah, Dr. R. Rengalakshmi, Dr. C. Manjula & Dr. R.S.S. Hopper

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**J.R.D. TATA ECOTECHNOLOGY CENTRE | M.S. SWAMINATHAN RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

Third Cross Street, Taramani Institutional Area, Chennai – 600113, INDIA

Phone: +91 – 44 – 2254 2698, 2254 2699 | Fax: +91 – 44 – 2254 1319

Email: [ecotech@mssrf.res.in](mailto:ecotech@mssrf.res.in) | Web: [www.mssrf.org](http://www.mssrf.org)