"With the rehabilitated pond filled with rain water, we can now take a regular bath and feed our cattle without struggling for water nine months in a year."

Mr Neelamegam, Shanmuga Kumarapuram village, Sayalkudi panchayat, Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu

Context
Coastal areas of South India face frequent droughts due to inadequate water storage facilities. A lack of adequate rainfall results in farmers incurring heavy losses when their crops fail, while villagers encounter difficulties in obtaining water for drinking and domestic use. Climate change and its consequences can further impact on the availability of food.

Objective
- Revive, conserve and develop traditional water harvesting structures in five selected districts.
- Establish community-based tank management associations to effectively manage the water harvesting structures.
- Increase income for small landholders in the five selected districts through better agricultural land use and additional income-generating activities.
- Document lessons learned and good practices, and disseminate them to other stakeholders and interested parties in India and South Asia.

Impact
- 25 community-level tank management associations have been organised since the beginning of the project to rehabilitate village tanks, and 40 women’s self-help groups have been organised in order to excavate 250 new farm ponds.
Harvesting Water for Food and Livelihood Security

Seranthai is a hamlet located in Kothankulam Panchayat of Ramnad district in Tamil Nadu. Agriculture is the major income generating activity of all the 120 families comprising the community (500 people in total). The condition of the original tank was poor: sluices leaked and weirs were damaged, and in the absence of proper conservation measures combined with fluctuating monsoons, the total irrigated area shrunk and the local community began to migrate.

In order to remedy the situation and through this project, Seranthai Tank Farmers Association in cooperation with the families renovated the tank, increasing the water holding capacity to 7500m³. Approximately 80 households with an average of 0.3 hectares of paddy fields are assured with single crop yield. Thus, the storage created is expected to stabilise the crops, in spite of occasional monsoons and droughts. In addition, the tank can now provide extended water availability for livestock in the village.

In another village in the region, Shanmuga Kumarapuram's 430 inhabitants suffered from chronic water shortage for domestic and drinking water use. The women used to walk for miles and spend two hours a day fetching water for household use in summer. An association of villagers was formed and through their efforts they were able to recover one hectare of common land, previously occupied by unscrupulous land grabbers. From then on the ownership, which was under the control of encroacher for decades, ceased, and was transferred to the village community. The association then dug up a new pond for their domestic use with a holding capacity of around 7000m³. With current rainfall levels the pond can cater to the villagers' drinking water needs for about 11 months per year.

Tank Renovation Work - Seranthai Hamlet, Ramnad District