



Ecology and sustainable livelihoods

Drought— the absence of rain, or untimely, scanty rainfall— is a calamity that Anantapur has been reeling under since many years. Rocky, uneven terrain, the non-absorbing thin top layer of soil, the lack of vegetation are factors that aggravate the situation. The land yields grudgingly, in an area where 36% are farmers and are mostly dependent on unreliable rainfall.

The Rural Development Trust (RDT), in its mission to promote sustainable, long-term development focuses on water harvesting, conservation and management, use of non-conventional energy sources, diversifying livelihood opportunities and activities that suit the land and can mitigate drought through the Ecology and sustainable livelihoods sector.

The main focus of this sector is divided in three key areas:

1. Environment regeneration

Here the focus is on active intervention that contributes to ecological renewal as also improved quality of life for the local people.

- **Soil conservation measures** such as stone bunding, pebble bunding, earthen bunding, rock filled dams and waste weirs to prevent soil erosion and increase soil fertility.
- **Tank silt application** for better water percolation and soil conservation.
- **Social forestry** taken up with Vana Samrakshana Samithi (Forest Protection Committee), to increase greenery and decrease global warming.
- Barren hillocks are taken up for conservation and plantation under **afforestation activities**.
- **Avenue plantation** along roadsides and pathways.

2. Water preservation activities

Our efforts have been directed towards sustainably managing the existing sources of water that will help to meet the current and future demand for it.

- Construction of **water harvesting structures** such as percolation tanks, check dams, supply channels to conserve rainwater and recharge groundwater.
- **Renovations of old tanks** to enhance their restoring capacity.
- **Promoting micro-irrigation systems** especially through solar panels for judicious and optimum use of available water resources.



3. Agriculture and Husbandry

These activities are implemented to mitigate the effects of drought on the livelihood of the people and expand their sources of income, hence improving farmer's resilience.

- Awareness programmes to promote **alternative cropping patterns** with crop choices that improve yields and are more profitable.
- **Promoting horticulture** to improve area productivity per annum, decrease dependency on rains and provide long-term gains to the farmer.
- **Vermicomposting units and backyard farming** to further the tenets of organic farming.
- **Dairy program** that provides an assured income and reduces dependence on agriculture.
- **Promoting animal rearing** such as piggery, poultry and pisciculture which also provides alternative livelihood as well as nutrition.
- **Installation of solar panels** in fields so farmers can irrigate their crops sustainably and without having to depend on electricity.