

DOWN MEMORY LANE

THE TAMILNAD CHRISTIAN COUNCIL ECONOMIC LIFE COMMITTEE

Backdrop

India is an agricultural country in which 80% of the total population is living in rural areas depending on agricultural income. Illiteracy among the rural masses is one of the main factors that hamper development. High population growth is another factor that affects economic development. The Government and individuals were making concerted efforts to bring about radical change in the rural economy by bringing in “Green Revolution”. High yielding varieties of seeds are being made popular among the farmers to improve their income.

In the 1960s in Tamilnadu hardly 40% of lands were under cultivation under irrigation schemes with the aid of motor pumpsets from individual wells. The rest of the cultivable lands had to depend on monsoon rains. The government was focusing all its attention to bring about Green Revolution by improving irrigation schemes such as lift irrigation, dam irrigation, tank irrigation and irrigation through wells and pumpsets.

As 60% of the lands depend on monsoon rains, cultivation was confined to one crop extending from three to four months a year. Most of the farmers were holding 3 to 5 acres of lands. Almost all the farmers had poor standards of living with the annual income approximately ranging between Rs.3000/- to Rs.5000/-. If modern scientific technology is introduced and the farmers could utilize it, then more income could be raised. Therefore the Government as well as the Non Governmental Organizations was concentrating on Green Revolution.

Farmers who were holding 3 to 5 acres of lands were finding it very difficult to dig wells and to install pump sets. They were getting loans from the local money lenders at a very high rate of interest and losing their lands as well if the loans could not be repaid. At this stage the Economic Life Committee of the Tamilnad Christian Council came forward and started the Wells Pumpsets Department with the objective of assisting farmers to utilize their lands fully by using wells and pumpsets, to earn better income, and repay their loans quickly.

Milestone-one

Wells Pumpsets Programme - Year 1966

The unprecedented drought hit many parts of Tamilnadu during 1965-66 and the sufferings of the poor farmers kindled the feelings of the Rev. Joseph John of Deenabandupuram. He himself has opted to live in the rural area, sharing the sufferings of humanity as a true Christian with Gandhian ideals. He was determined to alleviate the sufferings of farmers by digging wells and installing pumpsets so that dry areas awaiting monsoon



Mr. Mithra (left) Progr. Officer with Dr. POSER, Director Central Agency and Dr. HISS of Central Agency in Varanasi in Feb.1975.

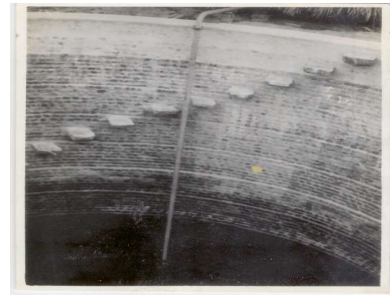
rains could be immediately cultivated. With this in mind, a programme was chalked out to dig 150 wells and install 100 pumpsets to the poor and marginal farmers.

The Wells and Pumpset Department of the Tamilnad Christian Council commenced operations in 1966 to relieve the sufferings of the poor farmers caused by the drought due to the failure of the monsoon by digging wells for them. The first scheme was started in 1967 to dig 150 wells and install 110 pumpsets. It was sponsored by the Bread for the World, West Germany, and United Church of Christ, USA respectively. Mr. Luder Luers a good friend of Rev. Joseph John did a wonderful work with valuable assistance of the Pastors for the upliftment of the poor farmers. They completed the first phase of 150 wells and 100 pumpsets successfully in 1969.

Milestone - Two

Wells-Pumpsets – Phase II -1969-1970

The second phase of 100 wells and 150 pumpsets sponsored by the Central Agency, West Germany started in 1970. Since Mr. Luder Luers wanted to concentrate in his work with Kindernothilfe, he handed over the Agricultural Department to Dr. Mithra Ebenezer, who was an Agricultural Graduate in 1972. When he left in March 1972 Mr. Luers had almost completed the task, leaving the final stage of completion to Dr. Mithra Ebenezer.



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The Central Office when Mr. Luder Luers was Head was situated in Deenabandhupuram. After Mr. Luder Luers left in April 1972; the office was shifted to R.K. Pet about 5 miles from Deenabandhupuram. In October 1972, the office was shifted to Madras for administrative convenience.

Wells-Pumpsets Programme – Phase III- 1973

The third phase of 120 wells and 120 pumpsets was started in April 1973 sponsored by EZE, West Germany.