



# Drought Duty Field Report

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Report by: Rashid Umer

## Batch Information

Batch Name: **DD TN 30**

Members: **Genjumon Prasannan**  
**Karthik Rao Cavale**  
**Pozhil Ilavenil**  
**Manjupriya**  
**Rashid Umer**

## Village Information

Village: **Pothuravathanpatti**  
Panchayat: **Pothuravathanpatti**  
Taluk: **Krishnarayapuram**  
District: **Karur**  
State: **Tamil Nadu**

## OVERVIEW

Pothuravuthanpatti village is part of Krishnarayapuram Taluk in Karur District, which is about 40 KM away from Karur.

The village has a population of around 2000 people who were highly dependent on agriculture some 5 years back. The village situated some 15KM from Cauvery river bed. Due to water scarcity almost 50% of farm lands were left fallow over past 5 years. They experienced severe lack of rainfall drastically for past 2 years. Due to the consistent decline in water for irrigation and deficit in the crops produce, the agrarian community here by and large forced to take up other works including day labour, handloom/power loom works, Nylon factories and textile units in Karur.



MNREGA scheme seems to function alright on the outset, however, there are certain patterns of mishandling in demand supply management and subsequent project cash flow, which adversely affect the labor wage distribution.

Another highlight of this village is that as many as 3 farmers from this village took part in the TN Farmer protest which gathered national attention in the month of April 2017. The village has shown somewhat positive trends in certain indices such as a relatively low level of bureaucratic exploitation/corruption around farm communities, a somewhat manageable Public Distribution System (We learnt that 60% to 70% of the population gets their ration on monthly basis) and smooth delivery of other government schemes, when studied against some northern states. However, the reluctant and 11<sup>th</sup> hour inclusion of the state into the list of Drought hit landscapes (only after petition of Swaraj Abhiyan) hasn't come as a significant relief as intended to the people since the administrative interferences are found to be lethargically ineffective if not non-existent. Schemes such as crops loss compensation distribution are found to be alarmingly non-transparent. This also amounts to zero efforts in preventive measures from the administration.



### **Irrigation and domestic water sources:**

Only source of irrigation for this area are wells in farm fields. The ground water is completely useless except in rainy seasons. Many farmland owners have bores in their fields which yield no water even beyond 1000 feet now, hence virtually unusable for the irrigation depended crops.

For domestic consumption they have local overhead storage tanks with bore that is supplied to households via pipeline. There are few mini tanks placed in various area of the village (Total 6 out of which 3 functional) with taps where this supply line stores (once a day) for additional usage. Households get the supply for almost an hour a day.

For drinking water, State water supply (Cauvery) pipelines are laid and 2 public distribution taps are installed for the entire village, where supply is limited for 3-4hours once in 2 days.

## **KEY IMPACTS**

- Drinking water scarcity is serious if not fatal. Unlike northern part of country where women carrying water walking miles are not a scene here.
- Most wells have gone dry over the years. Ten years ago, wells even 50 feet deep had plenty of water even during the summer. Today, most wells have dug till 100 feet with no water, with the result that farmers are apprehensive that well irrigation is no longer a viable option for agriculture.
- Water table decline could directly be explained by the large-scale sand lifting in Cauvery river. The state run sand mining mafia relentlessly functioning despite of resistance from environmentalists and concerned citizens for past decade. Gross violation of the environmental norms and intimidation from this mighty profit hungry bloc is adversely affecting the livelihood of poor farmers by contributing greatly to this somewhat man-made drought in this river bed.
- One of the Dalit streets we surveyed do not have public taps of drinking water from Cauvery. They have to fetch water source from a tap in the main hamlet (while this is not a direct impact of drought, it exacerbates their access to safe water for drinking and household use). Additionally, the daily allocation of main pipeline supply is reportedly limited for this area compared to the other streets.

- Bore wells have been dug only in recent times. Five years back, bore wells struck water at 600 feet whereas today, there are instances where farmers have bore wells that go much below 1000 feet, and even these cannot guarantee regular water supply for irrigation. Moreover, the cost of digging bore wells is so prohibitive that few farmers attempt to use bore well water as a regular irrigation source.



- Live stock- The number of cows and goats (primarily breed for meat) in the village is visibly on the decline as the figure for past 5 years is shown as 80%.An important point to note



here was that ,when steady decline of farm output started looming over their heads around half a decade back, many shifted their focus into livestock as an alternative to their farming. Unfortunately, they couldn't sustain this shift due to subsequent challenges such as steep increase in fodder prices and unavailability of hay.

We haven't seen abandoned and half dead cattle around here which was a very common scene in North India during drought. Farmers here are able to sell their non-lactating dairy cattle for meat. Consequently, the recent amendments in the cattle trade ban are surely going to give them tough time ahead.

We had recent cases of people forced to sell off their live stock due to lack of fodder and gathered that this trend is particularly high for past 2 years.

### **Implementation of supreme court directives:**

1. No special ration supply distribution occurred based on ration card. Regular allocation of food grain is reportedly insufficient as only people who reach early for collecting managed to receive their ration.
2. Mid-day meal distribution for school children hasn't happened during summer vacation.
3. MNREGA was not implemented as directed by SC for the drought hit area.

### **Damage Assessment and Compensation:**

Even though we couldn't establish a rough estimate in terms of compensation distributed vs applied, a general understanding we could gather was ,that number of people managed to get the fund (which ,by the way-was ridiculously nominal) was very low.



### **MNREGA Scheme:**

General execution of the scheme is found to be tricky here as people-unlike some other states- never complaints about lack of labor. People who worked are not paid as per the stipulated wages as the allocation of work and budgeting seems to be running in a compromised manner. People awaiting their wages for the work done as early as 6 months is a common scene.

Though people largely believes that they are on an average getting paid for 7 days for 10 work days, overall figure still not tally with the legal wages.

### **Public Distribution System:**

Public Distribution System(We learnt that 60% to 70% of the population gets their ration on monthly basis



**Additional issues:**

- A bizarre mode of exploitation is reported around SBI Kiosk banking, which we were able to substantiate. The village coordinator (Kiosk Officer/KO) under a private agency- who does transaction for illiterate villagers (mainly their withdrawals from MNREGA wages) was reportedly paying them only partially. We inspected his Kiosk (an online banking terminal with printer and finger print scanner outside his house), found a register where each transactions are being recorded and get signature/thumb impression from the account holders while acting on their behalf (the account holder's authentication is taken as their biometric). We understood the modes operandi as after withdrawing the amount, the money is not handed over in full and never given transaction receipt. Some people who tried to visit the branch were driven off by bank authority stating that branch will not be serving them and have to meet the agent for any transactions.
- Fasal bheema insurance: Farmers are not aware of this scheme and we couldn't find any single enrollment in this village
- Much celebrated Kisan Credit card has been distributed among few farmers and they aren't able to use that for any good.
- Many villagers left out of the schemes/ compensations since they were unable to transfer their land documents/Titles from their deceased as the land registration involves hefty stamp duties and a mandatory bribe.
- None of the verbal assurances given by TN Chief Minister or BJP MP in the center after calling off 41 days long Tamil Farmers protest in Jantar Mantar are met till now. Those tired old farmers are literally distressed to digest the fact that a country that boasts intangible pride in virtually everything a showman's' government does in this age of hyper aggressive nationalism, barely listens to their cries about a near extinct condition of their agrarian livelihood and survival.