

# Global Grants Community Assessment

Village: Semmanatham, Nilgiri District, Tamil Nadu, India

**Describe the characteristics (such as geographic information, main sources of income, population size, and access to education and health services) of the specific community where this project will take place.**

Semmanatham is a village located at 11° 32' 37.31"; 76° 39' 28.88"E at an elevation of 927m. The village has 44 houses adjacent to Sigur River which is perennial. About 53 families live in this village. The entire village is surrounded by agricultural land which is now under the control of the Revenue Department. These 44 acres are used by the villagers for agriculture. Each family uses one-acre land for cultivation. The people do not have 'patta' or land papers for the land they use. They claim that these agricultural lands are traditionally used by the villagers. The soil is mostly red mixed with gravel.

Water supply for irrigation is mainly from Sigur river and water is pumped from the river to two water storage tanks located to the east of the village. The pump, however, is not in use for the past 10 years and requires repair. Also, the electricity charges were met by the Panchayat but now it has been stopped. The villagers are ready to share the electricity charges if the motor and the pump are made functional.

Some of the common trees planted in and around the village are neem, Sapota, Mango, Banana, papaya, coconut and gooseberry. The adjoining village area is filled with weeds such as Lantana, Parthenium, Senna, Opuntia and a few others weeds. The investigation team went inside the Reserve forest area and found it to be fully occupied with *Lantana camara*. One of the reasons for the invasion of wild animals into their village is mainly because of the growth of Lantana. Villagers once used to use the Buffer zone to graze their cattle, but are now not allowed and also there is no grassland available because of Lantana. This is the biggest problem for the people.

The main source of income is agriculture. Ragi (finger Millet), potato, beans, Maize, Ginger, Brinjal, Garlic, Bitter gourd, pumpkin, and bottle guard are generally cultivated. About 4 families are having cows (country cows 20) and goats (10). There is not much income from cattle rearing. These are kept mainly for their personal use. The main source of irrigation is River water. They also depend on rainwater harvest. There is no possibility of keeping well because a motor is required for pumping which is not possible or tried. Two cultivations are done every year.

The village has hoses, water tanks, Anganwadi (crèche), a tuition centre and a community hall. There is no school and the children go to near by villages for schooling. There are two drinking water storages that get water from Masinagudi. There are 5 temples (Sivan temple, Renganathan Kovil, Mariamman Kovil, Vinayagar Kovil, Muneeswarar Kovil) about 100 mts distance from the villages. There is no post office, Radio room, or school in the village. The

village has a well-maintained volleyball ground close to Sivan Kovil. This ground is effectively used by the youths and they have organized teams and are well-trained.

There is a tuition centre in the village which is well utilized and about 20 students spend their time at the tuition centre every evening. They study at Kargudi. About 30 students stay in hostel and study in different schools particularly in Masinagudi and Valaithottam. Students go to Kargudi, Ooty, Maavanalla, Valaithottam, Nanjanadu, and Coimbatore for educational purposes.

The village receives rainfall mainly during June - August every year, March-May will be hot, November, December will be cold. Generally, there is no work for the villagers from March to May because it will be hot and dry. Hence they go to the nearby township in search of jobs. Jobs are not guaranteed and not on regular basis. They take jobs like construction work at Upper Bhavani and Ooty, coolie in agricultural land and other petty jobs. On average, they are paid Rs 400 for women and men get Rs 600 as wages. A couple of people went to Goa, Odisha on contract work related to dog treatment organized by a local NGO called IPAN.

From April - June Foot and mouth disease is reported mostly every year. Veterinarians assist them to treat the animal. If the problem is too much they bring the veterinarians for treatment. After the rain and after the first growth of the grass, goats are generally affected and they suffer due to Dysentery. This happens in May every year. This leads to the death of the goats. Poultry dies due to some disease and this happens any time in the year. During the harvest season of ragi which is cultivated in June and harvested in August, and September, wild animals like elephants visit and damage the crops.

Temple festivals start usually in February with the Amman festival. Other festivals are from June - August. Some people from Karnataka visit the Sivan temple and celebrate in August and September.

**When you conducted the assessment, who in the community did you speak to? At least two different community representatives and beneficiaries (such as teachers, doctors, or community leaders) should be included in the discussions.**

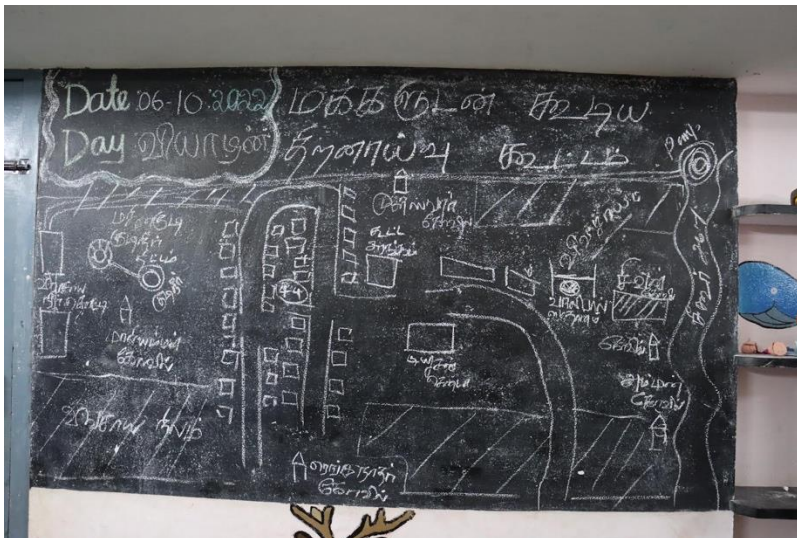
The villagers gathered at two different times, in the afternoon and also in the evening. The reason for the two meetings is to discuss with most of the villagers who are available at different times after work. We did the assessment with the elders of the village, the village head, youth, teacher residing in the village, farmers, housewives and petty shop owners. About 40 people took part in this assessment. In addition, we had observers from other NGO members and Forest department personnel.

**What methods did you use to collect information from community members (such as community meetings, interviews, or focus groups)?**

We used the following methodology:

1. Participatory Rural Appraisal
2. Personal interviews

3. Focal group discussion
4. Transect method
5. Social mapping
6. Mobile mapping
7. Resource mapping
8. Seasonal calendar



**Who will benefit directly from the project? List the groups that will benefit (such as schools, hospitals, vocational training centres, cooperatives, or villages).**

The removal of Lantana will benefit most of the village as it leads to reduced interaction with wild animals that forage on crops. Another benefit is addition of grass in regions where Lantana is removed in buffer regions so there is no ungulates coming on to the farm land. This is a main effect that will be seen by each household. Removal of Lantana also provides a means of income and collection of grass seeds by women also provides a source of employment right at their doorstep. The vulture conservation program by citizens will also give them a steady job with the government once the project period ends.

**Describe the process of how the beneficiaries were identified.**

Beneficiaries are identified by the proximity of the village to the vulture breeding site.

**Describe what members of the community said matters to them during the assessment.**

About 7 different methods were used to do the community assessment. During the process matters related to the project were gathered from elders from the villages, agriculturalists, farm owners, villagers, village heads, youth, students, teachers, NGOs working in this village and frontline staff of the forest department. The main problems faced by the villagers are economic in nature. They are looking for jobs that doesn't lead to migration. The cattle depredation is not the issue here but there is some loss to their agriculture from wild life. Removal of lantana would help with it. They are looking for ways to improve their skills at agriculture and would like to see their children educated. They are also working with the NGO Arulagam here and are aware of the nesting sites of the critically threatened vultures that nest here. The comparative resources of agricultural prosperity when compared with the other villages around here are ready to help with community conservation efforts with vultures. Their main concerns were if there could be any agricultural improvements made

**Describe the community's strengths and resources.**

The **strength** of Semmanatham village is that the village has a young and energetic Village head by the name Mr. Anand who is well aware of all situations of the village, laws and regulations. Some of the initiatives taken by him are successfully running and the people listen to him without any hesitation. The people have minimum cultivable land for each family and this is the biggest strength. They cultivate basic crops such as Ragi required for their family and store them for the year. The villagers' attitude is positive and they want to improve and see their children educated. They do not pay much attention to Human-animal conflict and the focus is on their well-being with the minimum resources that they have. They are ready to spend money to get a few things done in their village along with other organization means, they extend their cooperation if the village is benefited at some point in time. Youth are motivated and they have a good cordial relationship with each other bonded by the volleyball game. This makes this village ideal to set up community conservation efforts for vultures

**Resources** as mentioned, all 44 families have their own cultivable land. The village is located near Sigur River from where water can be taken for irrigation. The season is favourable for two-time cultivation which is sufficient for their living. They have a good road system and a basic bus facility is available.

**Describe any challenges and gaps in the community's behaviours, skills, and knowledge.**

The villagers require updates in modern tools and techniques. They have the learning skills but require guidance on skill-acquiring ways. Since good leadership is there, there is every chance for the community to develop further.

**What issues will the project address, and how does the community currently address those issues?**

The project will address the issue of improving agricultural practices and increasing visits by agriculture outreach and veterinarians. /currently the community continues with traditional

agricultural practices. The NGO Arulagam organizes cattle camps. These will be increased and agroforestry component to provide fodder will be addressed by the project

**Provide the specific details of the project design and how it will solve these issues.**

The project proposes employing some of the youth to be monitors for the community conservation of vultures. The vulture nesting sites are critical to their conservation. The Government of India is in the process of setting up a vulture center here (<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/tamil-nadus-mission-to-save-the-critically-endangered-vultures/article66032370.ece>). These government aided projects take some time to set up. In the mean time by training the youth to be community conservators ensures they get placed in the government vulture program when established. There will be greater periodicity of veterinarians visiting as well as a agroforestry workshops to increase fodder for cattle as well as create bio fencing to reduce incursions by wildlife. Bio fencing with lime trees is a economic feature which will be advocated using micro loans.

**Describe the long-term plan for the project (such as oversight, financial responsibilities, and expected behaviour change).**

This village is more economically stable when compared to other villages. We plan to increase agricultural capacity and increase the participation in community conservation efforts. Given there is year round access water and there is bus access, an intervention to improve agricultural practices will let this village manage their economy much better. A strong leader and camaraderie in the youth will also help launch a successful community conservation leaders who will be able to get employment when the Government Vulture Project comes to effect.

**What are currently the greatest environmental threats to local land, air, water resources, and the ecosystem?**

The greatest environmental threat is the spread of weeds such as Lantana and Partheniam. This has replaced local plants and occupied entire grass lands which lead to many problems for wildlife coming into the farmlands.

**List any cultural practices that are relevant to the project (such as agricultural techniques or traditions).**

**What positive and negative environmental changes do you expect to result from the project?**

We expect to see changes in the agricultural pattern with subsistence farming being augmented with agroforestry and fodder crops. Agriculture can provide employment in home farms and the clearing of village lands of Lantana also provides an additional source of income. The Government has also asked the Forest Department to clear the forest lands of Lantana and other invasive plants. Removal of Lantana involves skill and this guarantees trained villagers of work.

