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**Community-led water governance:
Experiences of
DHAN Foundation**

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Community-led water governance: Experiences of DHAN Foundation

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Need for Community-led Water Governance

- a. India has thousands of traditional tanks that supported agriculture for centuries
- b. The tanks were sustained not only by engineering structures but also by strong community institutions
- c. Over time many tanks declined due to weakening of collective management
- d. Encroachments, poor maintenance, and fragmented responsibilities reduced their effectiveness
- e. Reviving water bodies therefore requires reviving the institutions that govern them
- f. The DVTF focuses on rebuilding these community institutions for sustainable water governance



DHAN Foundation: A glance

DHAN is registered as a Trust during 1997; has fulfilled all legal compliances related to I.T., MCA, FCRA, other govt. regulations up to date

Mission of DHAN:

“Building People and Institutions with Value-driven Democratic process to enable the poor for Poverty Eradication, Water & Nutrition security and Ecologically Balanced Development”

DHAN Reach Parameters	Reach
No. of States	16
No. of Districts	121
No. of Blocks	766
No. of Villages	31800
Number of Primary Groups	77569
Number of Families (Members)	49.81 lakh

Multiple benefits:

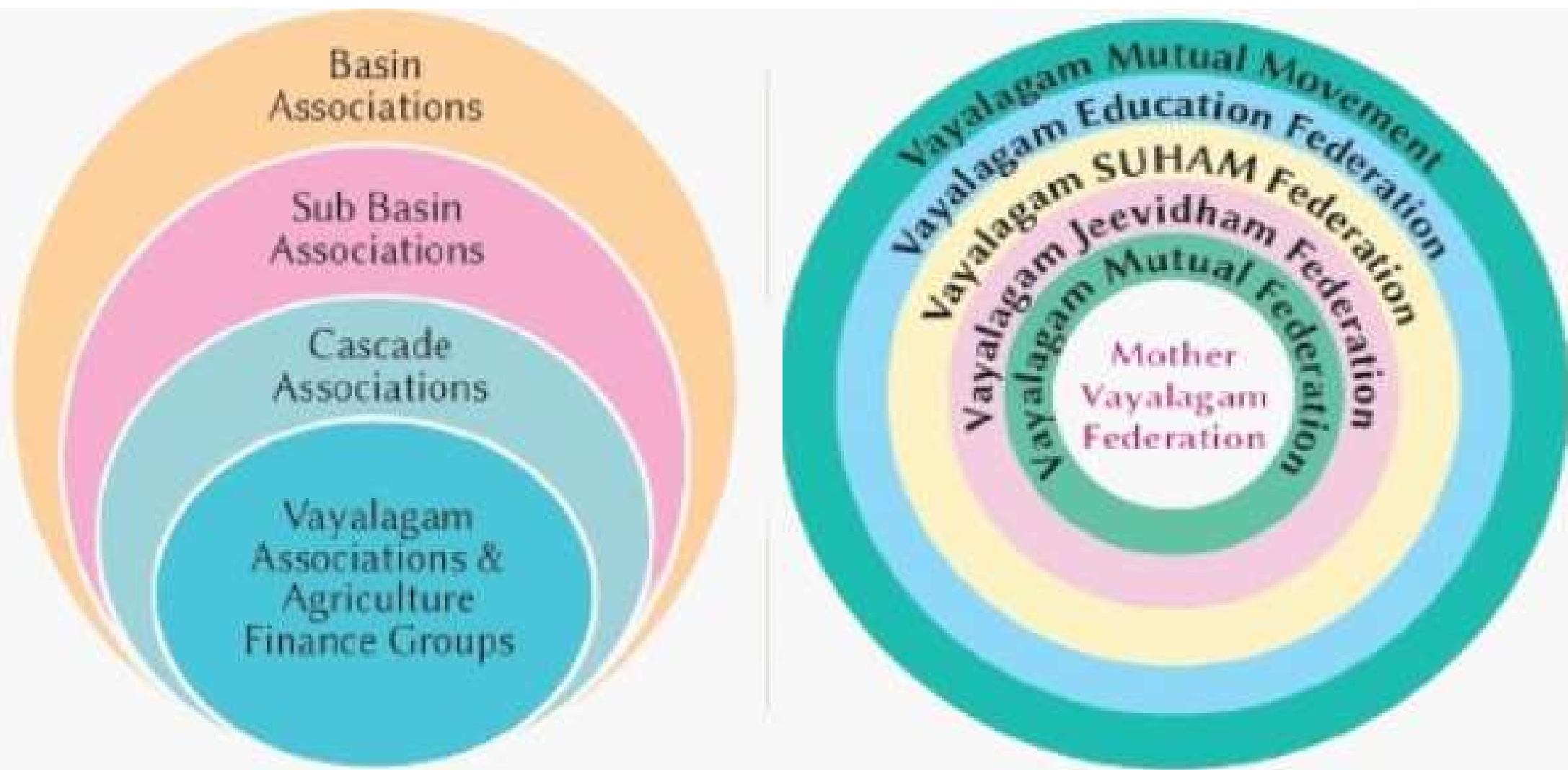
Health care Services	: 9.86 lakh families
Insurance services	: 1.63 Cr. products
FPO membership	: 67,215 farmers

Structure of DHAN Collective



DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation :

Institutional framework in Community-led water governance



DHAN Vayalagam (Tank) Foundation and its approach

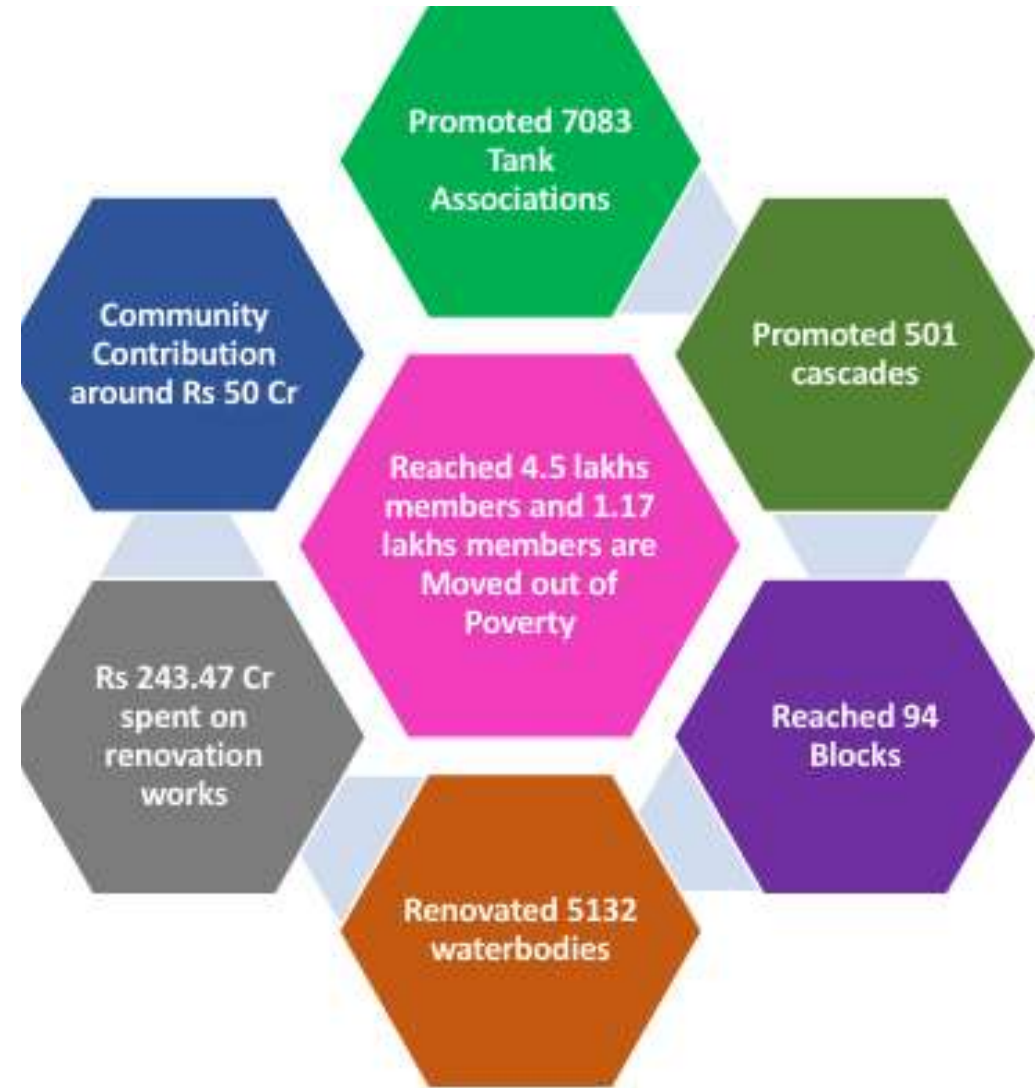


- a. The DVTF promotes community institutions around water bodies to bring collective action for conserving traditional water bodies.
- b. Small and marginal farming families are getting organized at local level as Water Users Association to manage their irrigation tanks and water resources
- c. The members of the water user association do plan collectively for immediate restoration works and mobilises contribution from the community as cash and kind
- d. The leaders of the water user association go through structured training on work implementation and supervises the work collectively
- e. Communities take leadership in protecting their water bodies on a long run through multiple approaches like corpus generation, usufructs sharing, etc



Community achievements towards collective water governance

- a. The community driven conservation mission has promoted 7083 Vayalagam Water Users Association across 7 states benefitting 0.45 million small and marginal farming families
- b. In order to address the conflicts related to water sharing and also to facilitate convergence among the local community, 501 cascade associations are promoted covering 94 blocks
- c. An amount of 2430 Million Rupees has been invested towards restoration of 5132 irrigation tanks, 1430 Drinking Water Ponds and 10250 Farm Ponds wherein the community has invested 420 Million Rupees as cash and kind
- d. As an outcome of the mission, 0.11 Million small and marginal farming families have self-declared that they have come out of poverty
- e. The mission has brought a range of partners from various sectors like government, banks, private, CSR, academic institutions, Panchayat to collaborate and co-create





Lessons and way forward

- a. Strong community institutions facilitate sustainable management of traditional water bodies
- b. Building community institutions around hydrology basis helps in saturation at the earliest
- c. Partnerships with government agencies and multiple partners with basin identity expands convergence
- d. Technology and traditional knowledge complement each other in water management setting new social order
- e. Scaling community led water governance promotes climate resilient agriculture
- f. Strengthening similar institutional framework will be crucial for future water securitys



The Vayalagam Mutual Movement which drives the community-led water governance has stepped into its 25th year on March 7, 2026

The Movement invites everyone to join hands to serve poor at large...



Thank You