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**Experience of Pothakudi Vayalagam (Water User
Association) showcasing Community-driven
encroachment removal in an irrigation tank**

2nd Indo Global Irrigation Summit

24-25 June 2026, New Delhi India

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Introduction & Context

Location: Pothakudi, Sivaganga District, Tamil Nadu

Population: ~421 people, 160 households

Primary Livelihood: Agriculture (121 farming families)

Key Water Resource: Pothakudi Kanmoi (tank) – supports irrigation, livestock, groundwater recharge, domestic use, and fish rearing

Significance: Tank is critical for food security and local economy

Problem Statement

Issues Identified:

- Heavy siltation and dense vegetation in feeder channels
- Encroachment (~1 km length, 3 m width, 0.6 m depth) by ~15 individuals
- Affected patta lands of 5 farmers

Impact:

- Blocked water flow → delayed tank filling
- Water scarcity during critical crop stages
- Reduced agricultural productivity and yield losses

Administrative Response: Petitions filed but no eviction action taken

Conceptual Framework – The Vayalagam Approach

Process – The "CAUSE" Framework:

- Conservation and development
- Agriculture development
- Usufructs sharing through Panchayat linkage
- SCRIPT (Savings, Credit, Remittance, Insurance, Pension, Transaction)
- Encroachment eviction, Endowment & Entitlements facilitation

Core Governance Principles:

- Transparency, Accountability, Participation, Responsiveness

Goal: Empower communities to protect and manage water bodies collectively

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Methodology – Community-Led Resolution

Approach: Dialogue, persuasion, and consensus building (not confrontation)

Process:

- Repeated discussions with encroachers on broader consequences
- Support from Village Administrative Officer (VAO) for boundary clarification

Outcome:

- 5 encroachers voluntarily withdrew
- Remaining 10 removed after sustained community pressure
- Channel fully cleared; boundaries demarcated; fences rebuilt within legal limits

Results & Impact (2017)

Work: Feeder channel restoration

Total Cost: ₹2,12,000

- **ABF Support:** ₹1,59,000 (75%)
- **Community Contribution:** ₹53,000 (25%) – *ensures ownership*

Impact:

- Improved runoff flow → timely tank filling
- Enhanced irrigation, especially for tail-end farmers
- Reduced water scarcity during critical crop stages
- Increased agricultural productivity
- Avoided recurring silt-clearing costs
- Strengthened livelihood security and social cohesion

Scaling Up (2023–2025)

Year	Work	Scale	Cost	Community	ABF
2023	Feeder channel restoration (Pothakudi)	41m x 2m x 2m	₹1,06,000	₹53,000	₹53,000
2024	Supply channel restoration (Oothu Kanmoi)	600m x 4m x 0.75m	₹1,00,000	₹25,000	₹75,000
2025	Oorani deepening (Oothu Kanmoi)	50m x 40m x 0.9m	₹1,63,000	₹40,750	₹1,22,250

Conclusion & Key Takeaways

Success Factors:

- Strong community institutions (Vayalagam)
- Collective action and dialogue over confrontation
- Community ownership through financial contribution (25%)
- Technical and financial partnership with ABF
- Adherence to governance principles (transparency, accountability, participation)

When formal systems fail, empowered communities can negotiate, restore, and manage natural resources sustainably



Thank You

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