

SCAD Kitchen Gardens and Fruit Tree Afforestation | Tamil Nadu, India |



OVERVIEW

SCAD (Social Change and Development) is a non-profit organization based in Tamil Nadu, India. Their mission is to support people and communities so that they can be lifted out of poverty.

Tree plantation and establishing kitchen gardens, both of which started in 2008, are among the most important of SCAD's programmes as they are seen to be successful both at fighting the effects of climate change as well as improving the health and nutrition of rural communities. Trees have the potential to satisfy basic needs such as food, fuel, fodder, medicine and provide income as well as safeguarding ecosystems from harmful effects. Trees can improve the soil and improve water retention and fertility, provide shade, and, when planted in numbers, reduce local temperatures and increase the probability of rain. Once they are established, trees are easy to maintain, can withstand most weather conditions and have a long productive life. Thus, by planting more trees and creating organic kitchen gardens, the social and economic conditions in rural communities can also be improved in the long run.



CONTEXT: THE PERCEIVED PROBLEM

Tamil Nadu, where SCAD operates, is located in Southern India. In Tamil Nadu, 35 million live only on approximately 1\$ a day, so both poverty and the satisfaction of basic needs and the effects of climate change (specifically, desertification), pose serious challenges. The people of Tamil Nadu experience the effects of climate change as prolonged droughts, erratic monsoons and resulting fears about food security. Food prices are constantly increasing. SCAD, with input from UNCCD and European partners, set out to find a sustainable solution to fight these challenges and decided upon the establishment of organic kitchen gardens and the planting of fruit trees, both with the involvement of the local community.

INITIATIVE SOLUTION AND PROCESS

SCAD trains villagers – with the help of women's self-help groups – about organic vegetable growing and composting. Apart from gardening, people also learn how to conserve their precious resources through harvesting and using grey water. Every year thousands of packets of seeds, purchased by SCAD, are sold for small amounts of money, and those who cannot afford to pay for them are given some for free.

Similarly to gardening, SCAD also trains people (both individual householders and farmers) prior to distributing trees – which are grown in SCAD's own nurseries – to them. Tree planting is organized with the help of self help group members, youth groups, students, teachers and elected village leaders who are motivated to take an active part in local development using a participatory approach. Their contribution in terms of providing labour, knowledge and skills is essential in order to ensure community ownership and responsibility-taking for managing the trees that are planted.

CONTRACTION AND CONVERGENCE ELEMENTS

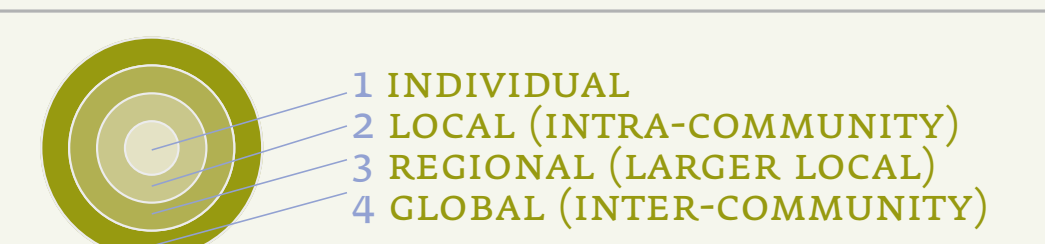
CONTRACTION:

In this initiative there is a clear and explicit recognition of ecosystem limits, and a very clear effort to actively protect and maintain resources. SCAD's organic kitchen gardens and tree planting projects are an excellent example of a poor yet developing region choosing to take a sustainable development path. SCAD uses indicators to monitor their efforts (for example they keep track of the number of trees planted and the amount of CO₂ sequestered), and also the extent to which food miles are reduced through the establishment of their kitchen gardens.

CONVERGENCE:

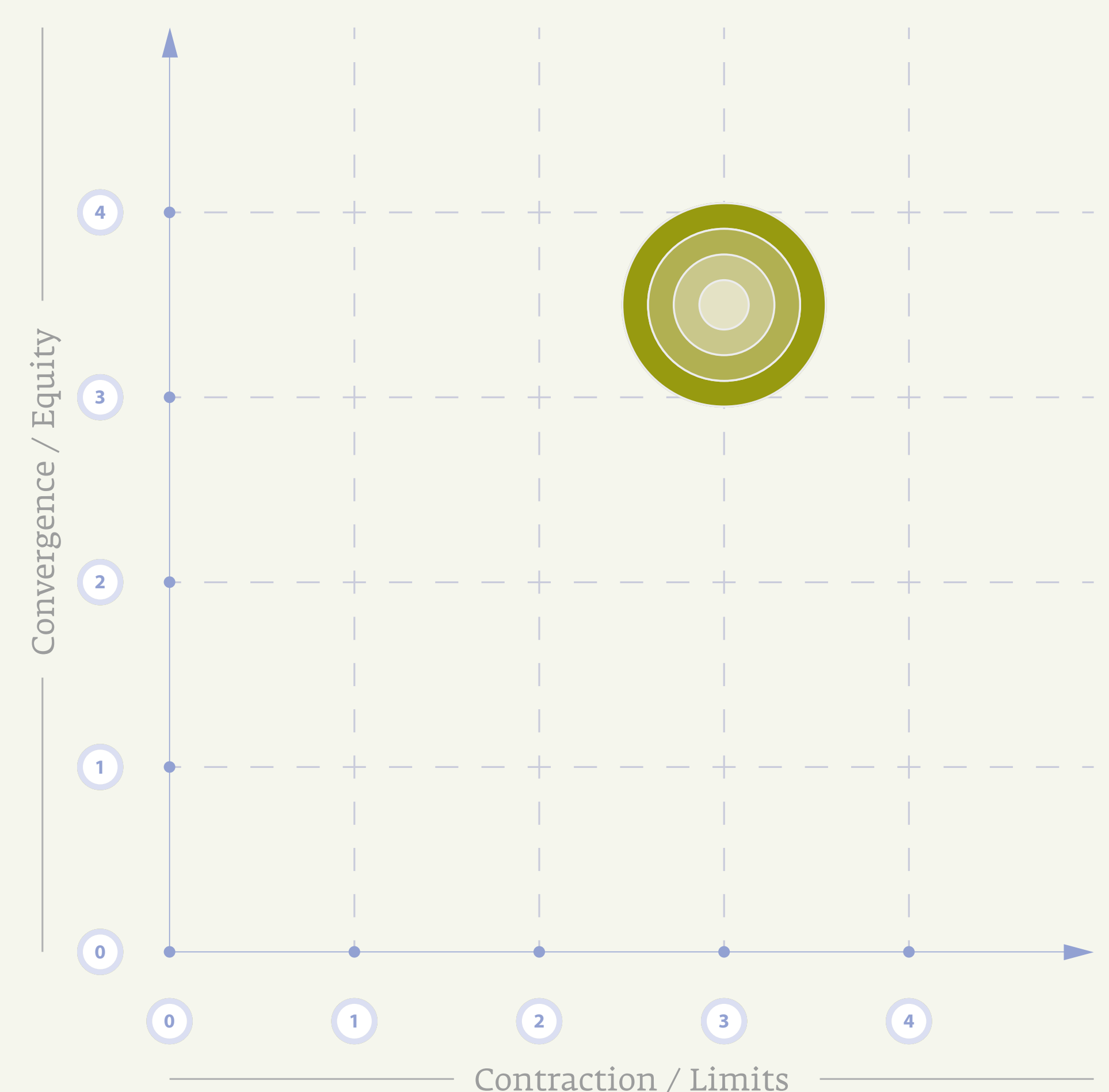
SCAD works towards justice and equity at the individual, local and regional levels through ensuring that the basic needs of people and communities are met. Their vision is to “make society a better place where all people are treated with dignity and respect, affording everybody equal opportunities, rights and recognition”¹. Using a participatory approach, both kitchen gardens and the planting of local trees offer long-term opportunities for lifting people out of poverty and increasing the resilience and self-sufficiency of their communities. SCAD uses indicators to measure the success of their activities (in this specific case, indicator examples include the income earned from kitchen gardens, whether a minimum of 300 grams of vegetable per day are consumed, the results of health check-ups on women and children, etc.).

Scale of activities



Primary theme

AGRICULTURE, LAND AND FOOD



CURRENT STATUS AND IMPACT

SCAD works in and with about 500 villages in the districts of Tirunelveli, Tuticorin and Kanyakumari in Tamil Nadu. Every year, an average of 100,000 indigenous trees are planted and about 50,000 packets of seeds are sown. Every year more than 5000 mini vegetable seed kits are distributed, mostly to women using the help of women's self-help groups, and demand for these is constantly growing. As a result, childhood malnutrition is decreasing and families can afford to eat nutritious food – as well as even selling some to provide an income.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

1. Initiative website: <http://www.scad.org.in>
2. Initiative website with participant stories: <http://www.scad.org.in/what-we-do/health/kitchen-gardens/>
3. Short videos on SCAD projects such as kitchen gardens, tree planting, and more: <http://www.youtube.com/user/SCADcharity>

¹ <http://www.scad.org.in/about-us/vision-and-mission/> (Accessed 25th April, 2012)