

A Decade of Sustenance and Resilience: The Story of *Susthira Vyavasaya Rythu Seva Kendram (SVK)*



In this Good Practice Note, Anil narrates the story of SVK, showcasing it as a model of cooperative entrepreneurship.

CONTEXT

In the heartlands of Telangana, where farming is vulnerable to erratic monsoons and market uncertainties, a quiet yet transformative movement has taken root—Susthira Vyavasaya Rythu Seva Kendram (SVK). More than just agri-input centres, SVKs are community-owned service hubs that restore farmers' confidence through timely access to inputs, tools, information, and peer learning.

The journey began in 2012 when WASSAN initiated watershed development in the Vikarabad district. While soil and water conservation improved the natural resource base, farmers lacked access to eco-friendly inputs and advisory services aligned with sustainable practices. Markets were saturated with chemical products, leaving natural farming needs unmet.

Recognizing this gap, WASSAN supported the establishment of SVKs under farmer cooperatives as one-stop centres for sustainable agriculture. The first SVK, launched in 2014 in Devara Faisalabad, struggled due to competition from nearby private dealers. Instead of shutting it down, the team conducted a feasibility study and relocated it to Gokafasalawad, a village with unmet demand, marking a turning point.

Today, SVKs serve as models of resilient, cooperative entrepreneurship, supporting thousands of small and marginal farmers. Born out of necessity, refined through experience, and driven by collective spirit, SVKs embody a replicable model for rainfed regions across India—empowering communities by making sustainable agriculture viable and locally led.

GOOD PRACTICES

1. From Concept to Practice

The first SVK was piloted in Balampeta and formally launched in Devara Faisalabad in 2014 under the Mandala Raithula Mutually Aided Cooperative Credit Society (MACS). It was envisioned as a one-stop centre providing seeds, bio-inputs, farm tools, and agricultural advisories to promote sustainable agriculture.

2. Learning and Adaptation

Like many bold beginnings, the model faced teething troubles. Its proximity to Maddur town, already serviced by private input dealers, meant low farmer footfall and struggling business momentum. Instead of shutting down, the team chose to learn.

After an honest analysis and feasibility study, the centre was shifted to Gokafasalawad—a larger village with huge demand and no competing input shop. This shift changed everything. Farmers from nearby villages, even from Karnataka, began frequenting the SVK, drawn by quality inputs, affordable tools, and trustworthy services.

Over time, the model expanded to Bommaraspet and Basupally clusters. Each centre now serves 20-30 villages.

If our only aim were to sell chemical pesticides, we could have easily touched crores in turnover. But that's not what we stand for."

says Anuradha, the dedicated SVK operator of Gokafasalawad, with pride.



Anuradha, the dedicated SVK operator of Gokafasalawad

3. A Model of Cooperative Ownership and Women's Enterprise

SVK is not just a store; it is a service support ecosystem for farming communities in regenerative agriculture. Operating under registered farmers' cooperatives, local women entrepreneurs manage all three centres. WASSAN supported the setup for three years, ensuring they were trained, equipped, and on the path to financial independence.

The SVKs address three core challenges: climate variability, volatile markets, and lack of extension services.

Here's how they do it:

Regionally Produced, Affordable Inputs

SVKs stock regionally produced, truthfully labelled seeds, botanical pesticides/bio-inputs, soil and plant nutrition products, pheromone traps—all aligned to agroecological practices. These inputs are not just eco-friendly but also affordable.

Custom Hiring Services

Farmers rent small-scale machinery at rates 20–30% lower than market prices. These tools especially benefit small and marginal farmers who cannot afford to purchase equipment, enabling them to save up to 30% on input costs while ensuring timely farm operations.

Information & Advisory

SVKs established a unique extension support model through a collaborative pool of extension workers from private agencies, agricultural universities, and government departments. Each SVK housed computerized knowledge centres displaying videos on pest management, climate forecasts, and success stories. Real-time weather updates, market prices, and agriculture scheme applications were made accessible. On-the-job training sessions and field demonstrations were regularly organized based on farming community needs.

What made SVK's advisory services stand out was their reliability and availability—always open, approachable, and tuned to every farmer's needs.



Farmers buying inputs form SVK

A Model Worth Replicating

Starting with one, today, there are three SVKs in Doulatabad, Bommaraspet, and Doma, each in a different mandal of Vikarabad district. Together, they serve 2,400 cooperative members and close to 3,500 farmers annually across 84 villages. These centres have become nerve centres of rural innovation, significantly reducing farmers' external dependency.

More than anything, SVKs have rekindled the power to dream, especially where farmers had long resigned themselves to distress and debt. By providing timely support, trusted inputs, and dependable advisory services, SVKs have helped farmers regain their agency, dignity, and resilience, restoring both confidence and hope in their farming journey.

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Working Capital Constraints

SVKs operate with limited working capital, with significant credit-based transactions creating liquidity issues. To address this, SVKs established collaborations with vendors who supply products on credit, ensuring timely repayments to maintain supply continuity.

Lack of Owned Infrastructure

Operating from rented spaces poses challenges for stock maintenance and housing machinery. The cooperative has a partially constructed building with plans to complete it using available funds, which will allow better service integration and reduced rental costs.

Technical and Managerial Capacity Gaps

SVKs currently depend on external agencies for bookkeeping, accounting, and inventory management. Capacity-building programs focused on financial management and record-keeping are planned to develop internal expertise and improve sustainability.

"Our journey has been far from easy, encountering challenges that forced us to reevaluate our initial plans. However, instead of succumbing to obstacles, we made a collective decision to fight back. The resilience within our cooperative has been instrumental in overcoming these challenges."

— Gopal, SVK Committee Member

IMPACT: TRUST, NOT JUST TURNOVER

SVK Doulatabad has built deep social capital and financial credibility, serving over 2,000 farmers across 35 villages, including those from neighbouring Karnataka. This growth relies on word-of-mouth, consistent service quality, and farmer trust, not marketing gimmicks.

From 2019 to 2024, SVKs' cycle weeders helped farmers save ₹2.62 lakhs in manual weeding costs, while timely access and guidance prevented 10% productivity loss, adding 7,100 kg of yield worth ₹4.9 lakhs. These interventions delivered ₹7.5 lakhs in total benefits to the farming community.



Farmers consulting with SVK staff

Even during COVID-19, when many private dealers suspended operations, SVKs remained fully functional. MACS Daulatabad now reports an average annual turnover of ₹30 lakhs, totalling ₹90 lakhs over three years—a testament to balancing social impact with economic sustainability.

Farmer Testimonies

"I get fertilizers, vegetable seeds, and other supplies from SVK, only turning to other sources if SVK doesn't have what I need. Prices are similar to other places, but SVK is closer than going to Kodangal or Kosgi."

- Prabhakar Reddy

"I have been buying various vegetable seeds from SVK since they started. There is a noticeable price difference, and the quality is good. I can't find seeds of this quality in Kosgi, so I always buy from SVK."

- Ambaresh

FROM MODEL TO MOVEMENT

As SVKs celebrate a decade of service, they exemplify what's possible when development is anchored in local wisdom, collective ownership, and shared vision. What began as a modest initiative to make sustainable inputs accessible has evolved into a vibrant rural ecosystem, now serving nearly 4,000 farmers across 100 villages annually, with 60% being regular users.

This model has immense replication potential in other rainfed regions, particularly where government services fall short of addressing farmers' real needs. Its strength lies in community-driven planning and need-based service delivery, proving that farmers are active agents of transformation, not passive aid recipients.

In the face of deepening agrarian challenges—climate change, input cost inflation, and market fluctuations—SVK offers a grounded, scalable, and dignified alternative that restores trust in rural institutions.

"Ten years ago, we started with questions—about soil, seeds, survival. Today, we have answers. And more importantly, we have new questions—about scaling, strengthening, and sustaining what we've built together."

— Buggappa, CEO-MACS Daulatabad

LESSONS LEARNED

SVK's decade-long journey highlights key learnings in promoting sustainable agriculture. Success depends on careful location selection, strong community ownership, and participatory planning with farmers. SVKs built trust by providing quality inputs, advisory services, and timely support, reducing dependency on exploitative markets. Despite challenges like limited working capital and technical capacity gaps, SVKs showed resilience during disruptions like COVID-19. Partnerships with institutions like CRIDA and ANGRAU have positioned SVK as a replicable model for agroecological transformation in rainfed regions.

CONCLUSION

SVK's success is built on perseverance, adaptability, and deep community engagement. It has grown from a simple idea—bringing quality inputs closer to farmers—into a functional, replicable model combining business, services, and knowledge.

Despite ongoing challenges like limited working capital, capacity building needs, and infrastructure constraints, the scope for scaling remains substantial. SVKs prove that sustainable agriculture doesn't need grand schemes—it needs local solutions, owned and operated by farming communities, supported by partnerships that trust in their agency and wisdom.

SVK stands as evidence that an honest and dedicated extension system can unlock farmers' full potential, demonstrating clear financial benefits through agroecological practices. The exploitative pricing dynamics of market forces can be significantly mitigated when effective and farmer-centric extension services are in place.

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