**ICRISAT’s unique contribution to the global knowledge base on better understanding of constraints and pathways to agricultural development and poverty alleviation in the dryland tropics**

**Overview**

The ICRISAT Village Level Studies (VLS) started in 1975 by surveying panel households in six villages in semi-arid tropics (SAT) of Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra states of India.

The studies were initiated to enhance availability of reliable household, individual members, field-specific high frequency, and time-series and spatial data to better understand farming systems and socioeconomic constraints of SAT farmers.

**Objectives of VLS**

- To provide a socio-economic field laboratory for research, teaching, training and outreach
- To track changes in the farm activities, farming systems, socioeconomic and biophysical constraints, and livelihood options of the rural poor
- To understand response of rural women and men to changing markets, policies and technologies
- To understand women and men farmers’ response to agro-climatic variability, and their coping mechanisms against risks and vulnerabilities
- To understand dynamics of rural transformation, poverty and drivers of change
- To provide feedback for designing policy interventions, setting research priorities and refining technologies.

**The innovation**

- The Economics Program (now known as RP-MIP) gradually expanded survey scope from farming systems to technology adoption and impacts, poverty analysis, livelihoods, risks and vulnerability, and coping mechanisms.
- The ICRISAT VLS data bank is equivalent to a biological “gene bank”. It provides a “field laboratory” to undertake multi-disciplinary research on farming systems on a variety of topics by integrating biological, technical, social and economic approaches.
- ICRISAT VLS provides a unique set of high frequency longitudinal (since 1975) panel data of farm households that are International Public Goods (IPGs).

**The impact**

- VLS have attracted many scholars globally for path-breaking research in rural economy. VLS data sets are considered as International Public Goods (IPG), and rank among the most valuable contributions of the CGIAR to global communities.
- The VLS data reveal many valuable facts of the farming systems and livelihoods, and was termed as the ‘goose that lays golden eggs’ in the World Development Reports of the World Bank (2006).
- Over 150 research papers and over 40 doctoral dissertations have already been completed using the VLS dataset, resulting in over 10,000 citations of the VLS data (Google Scholar, June 2011).

**Partners**

NARS and State Agricultural Universities, NGOs, advanced research institutes, and many other partners have greatly contributed in surveys and conduct of the field research and documentation.