



GEF The GEF
Small Grants
Programme



Biodiversity Conservation



Land Degradation

COMMUNITY LED PRACTICAL ACTIONS

Combating Desertification for Better Livelihoods
Around Protected Areas In Rajasthan



सत्यमेव जयते
Ministry of Environment &
Forests (MoEF), India



GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY
INVESTING IN OUR PLANET



CEE

Centre for Environment Education



also to restore ecological balance in the periphery of the protected areas (PAs) around the Sariska **Tiger Reserve, Alwar district of Rajasthan.**

PHDRDF has implemented a project in three villages of Gugli, Nirbha and Rada in Thanagaji block of Alwar district of Rajasthan with the support of **UNDP GEF SGP** and **Centre for Environment Education (CEE)** in the last two years. Over the period substantial work has been done in terms of water harvesting structures through people's participation and also raising of sustainable systems for community mobilization and collective bargaining through Self Help Groups (SHG's) in the villages. This initiative has further been scaled up to 5 more village through partnership with DRDA and Burman's the private sector partners.

Project Goal

Improve the livelihoods of the poor communities through water harvesting systems, recharging aquifers and creating self reliance and community ownerships. Keeping focus, on water resource quality, conservation, sustainable use and practices. Local management of biodiversity supporting ecosystems.



- **5000 saplings** have been planted in four nurseries in village Kolesar, Khoh Dariba, Lohsal, Guwaravyas and Nirbha. Species planted included Neem, Ashok Sheesham, Amaltas, Gulmohar, Babool, Keshu Shama, Bhel Patri, Karanj, Paras Peeple, Papaya etc.
- **3 Water harvesting structures** of varying dimension have been constructed namely Bou Ka Nala (Losal Brahmaan), Burjawala (Todikabas) and at Rada leading to:
 - Increase in average availability of water in the villages from five to nine months.
 - Recharge of water table in the wells by 8-12 ft in the first year and subsequent years.
 - Water made available for irrigation in 40 hectares.
- **Agricultural production increased minimum one and half times.** Since the Rabi crop is the main cash crop in this region, this has translated into significant economic gains. In some villages, wastelands have been converted into agriculture lands. In some villages, farmers have diversified into crops such as onion, vegetables like okra, french beans, tinda, tomato, egg plant, chilies, medicinal herbs and flowers (in some cases) due to assured water availability. This will lead to an increase in agricultural income in varying degrees of 25-150%.
- **Villages dominated by animal husbandry as an occupation** such as Nirbha, Rada, Losal, Shyaluta and Nayabaas, the increased water availability and medical camps have caused a significant shift in livestock composition towards more milch cattle, translating into increased income from animal husbandry. Nearly 50% of communities have increased cattle by 100%.
- **Soil testing** done for more than 22 villages balanced use of organic/inorganic manures.
- **Water testing** done for the presence of floride alternates have been developed to address the issues.

Background of the Project

PHD Rural Development Foundation (PHDRDF), the NGO promoted by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry in year 1981 to put poor people first and address their needs, priorities for better livelihoods. The foundation focussed to enable sustainable well being of all, through integrated rural development projects. The many activities in the projects include water harvesting, training mahila panchs, plantations, health and family welfare, adult & non-formal education, social forestry, income generation training for poor women, mobile medical vans, animal husbandry, and wasteland development.

Deficient rainfall for successive years, climate variability along with unchecked harvesting of ground water have lowered the water levels in the area to an alarming situation in the State of Rajasthan and has caused drying up of rivers and other water sources. The women have been the most affected because of drudgery and increased unpaid labour of fetching water and firewood from a distance of 3-4 kms daily.

PHDRDF contacted **Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Small Grants Programme (SGP)** for initiating a project, focussing on rainwater harvesting and revival of traditional water resources through watershed technology and practices. The focus was

GEF Thematic Area: Land Degradation

Project Area: Kolesar, Losal-Brahmanan, Losal-Gujran, Khirat Ka Baas, Nirbha, Rada, Nayabaas and Dabla Villages

Beneficiaries: 1000 House holds

Total SGP Grant:

INR Rs 19,38,755

(US\$ 43,744)

Total Co-financing:

Rs 2,70,87,990

Project Time Period:

16th February 2007 to August 2010

Partnerships:

Rotary Club; Dabur India Ltd; Commerical Banks; and Govt of Rajasthan

Project Objectives

- Recharge ground water and water level in the wells, leading to provide drinking water, available to community during summer months.
- Assure irrigation in summer months and better vegetation cover leading for local biodiversity conservation.
- Reversal of rural migration through local enterprise management.
- Promote an environment of savings and self-help and to enable the groups access to timely and cheaper credit through banks.

Project Activities

- PHD has promoted **25 Self Help Groups (SHG's)** with nearly 450 women and 65 men as members, SHGs have been formed in the villages of Khoh Dariba, Dabla, Nayabaas, Khatujala, Lohsal Gujran, Guwaravyas, Lohsal Brahman etc. **Three village level water committees** are also formed. 17 out of 25 groups have received loan of **Rs 7.50 lacs for productive purposes. Although, Communities have also used it for meeting Consumption and Strategic needs.**





- **Installed drip irrigation system** with the help of an American company.
- **Establishment of a milk dairy** where SHGs and villagers sell the milk and get the appropriate amount (minimum Rs 20 per litre and maximum Rs 30 per litre) on the basis of the fat content. Nearly 500 litres of milk collected everyday.
- **Health and Sanitation activities:**
 - 6 health check up camps have been organized in villages Kolesar, Nirbha, Rada, Dabla, Losal Gujran. Regular health facilities created.
 - 85 individual household toilets have also been constructed.
- **Education:** Non school going and drop out children are attending non formal education centres run by PHDRDF with the support of GEF/UNDP for non-formal education under the Innovative Education Programme A b o u t two batches of 75 children have benefitted from these schools. PHDRDF was guided regularly by **Centre for Environment Education (CEE)**

Results and impacts in project

1. Self Help Groups formed, has been a motivating factor in bringing about participation of women. Women are now coming forward and assertive in managing their resources effectively, putting across women related issues in Gram Sabhas and committee meetings. Women groups have also been motivated to fight against social evils such as alcoholism, child marriage, illiteracy among girls, female foeticide etc.

Women are mainly in the focus of the project resulting in the following direct benefits	
Employment generation	75% of the labour work has been done by women in the construction purpose of check-dams. Equal wages were given to men and women.
Agriculture	Women get benefited by information sharing about the new techniques and use of better seeds, oraganic fertilizers and pesticides etc for their farm lands.
Education	Girl child below the age of 5 get educated, in the primary schools initiated by PHDRDF. This has brought a new 'Self Belief ' in the women
Trainings and Enterprise	Various trainings have been provided like sewing, embroidery, agarbati making, papad making, pickle making, candle making, card making, soap manufacturing etc.

2. The NGO adopted the approach through community led communicators. The two persons, Banwari and Govardhan created use the much needed **rapport and trust** between different stakeholders. The Communicators were socially committed, culturally sensitive, empathetic in inter personal relationship. Motivated by the desire to contribute towards sustain able development. They were regularly trained and guided by the NC and CEE team in participatory planning and gender sensitive technologies More so, they were psychologically prepared for social action, encouraging group action for problems solving.
3. Construction of water harvesting structures has increased the availability of drinking water for humans and livestock in drought periods in the years. This is a great boost to the economy of the locals.

The NGO village facilitators have done more than 250 village meetings in 10-15 villages to establish the much needed mutual trust. This is leading to spending nearly 15,000 hours of discussions to ensure local ownerships. Most of the meetings are documented by Banwari and colleagues.

Lessons

- Villagers have been keen to learn new ideas and approaches for better land management , soil testing, water testing, watershed adopting eco-friendly agricultural practices like organic farming, vermin composting, animal husbandry. Once involved as 'partners in program'!
- The villagers although one facing electricity problems. Women still face social stigma and village norms. This is being addressed through SHGs mutual exchange of ideas, peer influence and 'learning by doing' approach. There are still many villagers who do not have any access to toilets, so more community toilets need to be constructed overtime.
- 'Participation in Actions'. How small, easy to adapt technologies can increase incomes and mutual respect.



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