

Empowering Women One Community at a Time



PROMOTING A MULTI-FOCAL APPROACH TO BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION IN INDIA



Project Description

The project aims to involve women in self-help groups (SHGs) to address their livelihood needs, reduce hard labour and conserve the environment through forest conservation and the mitigation of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

The goal of the project is to strengthen community institutions in biodiversity conservation and climate change mitigation while producing sustainable livelihoods through land and animal husbandry.

Women are encouraged to participate and improve their livelihoods by developing skills in natural resource management, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation. In particular, the project has the following objectives:

- Conserve forests and reduce fuel wood demand through the use of biogas for cooking
- Strengthen skills and knowledge
- Organize women in rural areas to preserve the environment and improve their sources of livelihood
- Build the community's, and especially the women's, capacity to increase their income from animal and land resources
- Establish mechanisms to improve cattle health care and productivity
- Improve credit mechanisms to facilitate the purchase of high-quality animals
- Create local skills in animal care by training women to become para-veterinarians
- Facilitate institutional linkages with government and other service providers



Implementing Organization: IBTADA

Location: Ramgarh & Umrain, India

SGP Contribution: US\$ 38,460

UNDP Contribution: US\$ 19,230

In-cash contribution:

CAPART: Rs. 147,982

Community: Rs. 245,125

Deewan Foundation, KDFS, Banks: Rs. 10,971,000

Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT): Rs. 533,725

In-kind contribution:

Community (Labour): Rs. 102,176

Number of Beneficiaries: 2,567 people

Duration: December 2005 – March 2010

Awards and Recognition:

- Outstanding Woman Working on Climate Change Award to Ms. Sarifan, Chairperson of the Sangharsh Mahila Manch Federation
- World Conservation Union 2007

Background

India's population is predominantly rural. Agriculture and the raising of livestock are the primary livelihoods in rural communities. The pressure on land for breeding livestock increases daily. In most areas, water resources for irrigation are dwindling. Though women play an important role in the household, the value of their contribution is not recognized. They are usually illiterate and society does not see their role as extending beyond the household.

The community encountered the following challenges, which resulted in the inception of this project:

- Increasing pressure on forests and biomass
- Inordinate labour and time required for fuel collection
- Need for improving livelihoods
- Reduced organic matter content in soil due to use of dung for fuel
- High cost of fertilizers for crop production
- High mortality rate in animals
- Low productivity in buffalo

Implementation

Key activities undertaken during project implementation are the following:

Institutional Strengthening

The organization of both self-help groups was strengthened so that they could manage the project. These groups initially had limited involvement, savings and credit mechanisms, and awareness of

women's issues. When the project commenced, these groups were organized and taught to plan, implement and monitor the livelihoods project. Community contribution and an improved credit scheme for beneficiaries were also arranged.

Training of Trainers

Female community leaders received training in project cycle, project objectives and outcomes. They were taught to ensure sustained outputs over a period of time. These leaders also played a role in setting up institutional mechanisms in the village. A total of 15-20 leaders were trained, enabling them to share knowledge and skills learned with other counterparts within the network.

Construction of Biogas Plants

IBTADA built 41 small-scale biodigesters, which help reduce GHG emissions from fuel wood consumption. To enhance soil fertility, organic manure in the form of biogas slurry was used instead of chemical fertilizer.

Technical Training

- A total of 33 women were selected as Community Animal Health Workers, of whom 25 are successfully working in the field. They provide advice and capacity building regarding vaccination, de-worming and first aid. The community animal health workers also sell feed in their villages. More than 5,000 households in 60 villages benefit from their services.
- Biodigesters are an innovation in the local community. Local masons and technicians received technical training (construction, installation and maintenance) to ensure that the biodigesters run smoothly.
- IBTADA trained 1,837 farmers, using four crops (bajra (coarse millet), onion, mustard and wheat) as prototypes, which increased productivity from 30 to 50%.

Credit Scheme

The availability of credit is a critical requirement for the promotion of livelihoods. Rs. 10,971,000 were mobilized to purchase buffalo. The self-help groups, federations, banks and other financial institutions have provided loans to members.

Environmental Impact

In three years of project implementation the total consumption of fuel wood, crop residue and dung has been reduced by 187,390 kg due to the use of 41 biodigesters as an alternative to fuel wood. This has resulted in an annual reduction of 47,000 kg in CO₂ emissions.

There has been a reduction of 20% in animal mortality and an increase between 20 to 30% in milk production. Similarly, the agricultural production increased by 30-50%.

Socio-Economic Impact

The average household income has increased by Rs. 18,000 annually. The communities have improved and sustained their livelihoods.

Around 200 families have expanded their livelihoods to include buffalo raising as a source of income. Both agriculture and livestock productivity have increased by more than 25%. This increase in income has enabled the community members to upgrade their homes and to construct sanitation facilities for women.



Gender Empowerment

Women have greater self-confidence and the organization of the self-help groups is improving. They were involved at all stages of the project, from planning to implementation and monitoring.

Twenty-five women were trained to be animal health workers, which proved to be a significant contribution to the community. They have also been more vocal in addressing their concerns (such as the delivery of services) vis-à-vis the local panchayats and government units. The role of women in society has been recognized as extending outside the household. 2,500 women enthusiastically participated in training related to agricultural and veterinary practices and the maintenance of biodigesters.

Sustainability

Women's participation and overall involvement in the project (planning, implementation, monitoring, etc.), in self-help groups and in federations, with the support of IBTADA, will sustain the project. Federations have also developed an environment fund to ensure future activities.

Replication and Upscaling

The possibility of the full replication of this particular project is limited because the project is rooted in the local context, with specific local issues.

Nevertheless, replication of the construction of biodigesters and training in agriculture and livestock management are entirely feasible and could benefit up to 5,000 people. The project has not been scaled up, although knowledge and skills have been shared with other self-help groups.

Contribution to the MDGs



- Rs. 18,000 increase in household income per annum
- Expansion of livelihood for 200 families
- Construction of new houses and sanitation facilities for families as a result of increased income
- Availability of budget for food, clothing and education for every family



- Creation of self-help groups for women, providing credit and livelihood
- Increased confidence among women to be more proactive and vocal about their concerns on various issues (e.g., vis-à-vis local government for delivery of services)
- Provision of training for women in para-veterinary practices, plantation of fodder crops, application of bio-pesticides, biogas plants maintenance and good agricultural practices.



- Reduction of about 187,390 kg in use of fuel wood over the past three years
- Reduction of 47,000 kg of CO2 emissions annually
- Decrease in pressure on forests for firewood

Sources Consulted

Project Record SGP/GEF/IND/OP2/02/RJ04. SGP Project Database, <http://www.undp.org/sgp>

Project Record SGP/GEF/IND/OP3/1/05/RJ16. SGP Project Database, <http://www.undp.org/sgp>

SGP Questionnaire filled up by IBTADA. Email communication, June 2010



Lessons Learned

The project should strongly focus on micro-finance, as this requires much time and interest from the community.

It is necessary to have an effective campaign to raise awareness and to ensure commitment from the trainees. Of the 33 para-veterinarians, eight dropped out from the training due to insufficient interest or greater understanding of the specific challenges of the task. Education about related issues is also necessary, even if only a minority of members have benefited. Advocacy of the long-term benefits

of horticulture did not enjoy much response, as these benefits pertain chiefly to farmers who have wastelands and some source of irrigation.

Hands-on training and technical support are necessary to motivate farmers to adopt new agricultural practices. Farmers welcomed this mechanism, as they felt that their concerns and inputs were being heard and that support was available.



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