



# MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES FOR EMPOWERING THE POOR

Case of GKSSS

*By: Hasrat Arjjumend*

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## Maneuvering the power relations to halt exclusion....

Poor communities in Gwalior area have been facing double stress. Degradation of natural resource base has set a vicious cycle of poverty among these communities. Yet another reason why people are poor is the endless phenomenon of marginalization and exclusion. Society at large in Gwalior area is extremely feudalistic that does not allow the equity to prevail. There is still a large section of society which is forced to live in oblivion and drudgery. It is nothing but an irony that the women of even upper castes are bound to live suppressed and oppressed; it is not simply the dalit women who are the sufferers. The foremost impact of the chronic causes of poverty and marginalization is the inaccessibility of the women to natural resources and thus assetlessness. There is scarce space for the women to augment livelihoods on a sustainable basis.

CFLI/ Canadian High Commission supported GKSSS in time to help these communities overcome/ escape the exclusion process. We at GKSSS attempted our best to intervene in the social processes and catalyze the change equations by manipulating the power relations at village level. This document entitled "Managing Natural Resources for Empowering the Poor" is based on the project supported by CFLI/ICCO. Implemented from January 2003 to January 2005, this project brought in remarkable changes in the profile of society of 3 villages, causing a spill-over to other neighboring villages. The target villages are populated with dalits, upper castes, and minorities. This experiment was revealing and replicable.

GKSSS is thankful to the donor agency and the support agencies. We also acknowledge the support and cooperation of a number of people involved in the project implementation, internal evaluation, documentation, assessment, and encouragement.

HASRAT ARJJUMEND  
*Executive Director, GIT*



## Managing Natural Resources ...

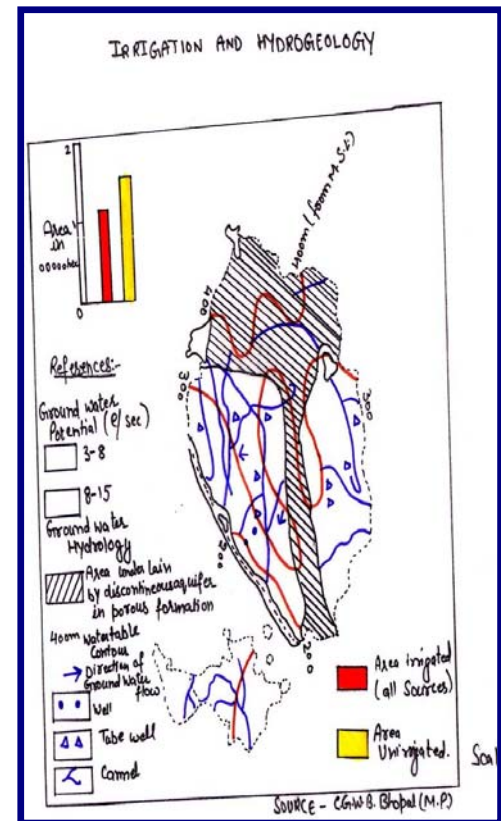
Gwalior division of Madhya Pradesh geo-climatologically befalls in semi-arid zone of central India. Dry spells are common in the region that causes people's sufferings severe especially in summer season. Natural resources have direct bearing on the people's lives as most of the poor depend on agriculture (which again depends on irrigation water or rainfall), biomass for grazing and labor works available. Land is the prime natural resource along with the livestock. But over a period of time the natural resources have been degraded to the extent that the villagers cannot reclaim the degraded lands or biomass without external investments. Once the financial capital and social capital come together in conjoint functioning they can build on the ecological capital to accrue alleviation of poverty and assetlessness. GKSSS understood these linkages of human being and natural resources in surrounding. Only then the interventions were made in order to address the poverty particularly through women of target villages.

With the support of CFLI/ Canadian High Commission the GKSSS undertook several activities related to natural resource management. Gwalior area is drained by Sonerekha and Morar rivers and their tributaries.

### Soil and Water Conservation

Among the degrading natural resources the soil loss is the menace presently uncontrolled even after many projects of the government. It is almost a natural havoc in the target villages — Ramnagar, Sirauli and Vijaygarh. Under soil and water conservation measures the GKSSS undertook the following three interventions:

- Renovation of village ponds
- Construction of farm bunds
- Deepening of open wells
- Construction of check dam



### Essence of Hydrological Cycle

Hydrological cycle starts from evaporation of water from surface water bodies. These vapors condense in the form of clouds and precipitate to fall on Earth's surface in the form of rain, snow, dew or mist. A major part of this precipitation is received by ocean due to its large area and some micro-climatic effects. Of the precipitation received by land substantial portion (33%) goes in the form of evaporation. About 45% of the precipitation on land is contributed to surface water bodies like rivers, lakes, etc., while only 22% seeps underground through porous strata or openings in rock formations. Out of this seepage water less than half only reaches the actual groundwater reservoir. The water which replenishes any withdrawals or causes rise in water table is known as recharge.



## Renovation of Ponds:

Situated in Ramnagar village, the Batwara Tal was once in dilapidated condition. None was to look after the pond, as it was common property. The renovation works started in January 2003 and ended in July 2003. Having a huge size (bund length of 1008 m) the pond has been the lifeline of village. Renovation works thus in one way provided the villagers with new lease of life. Direct and indirect impacts of renovation of pond have been observed as:

- It succeeded in protecting, conserving and improving the land resources for efficient production;
- It now tends to prevent seed and nutrients from being washed away;
- It helps in conserving water resources, reducing up the pond and recharging groundwater.

### Spill over effect

After seeing the outcomes of renovation works done in Batwara Tal, the community (mostly dalits) of Ramnagar came forward to act spontaneously to renovate another pond in the village. The pond, Babulwala Talab, is of 1070 m length. The local community contributed labor, cash and food grains in the pond renovation works.

#### Double impacts of renovation works

- ✧ No. of families benefited: 51
- ✧ Increase in water level of wells: 1½ m
- ✧ Area irrigated: 192.11 bigha
- ✧ Increase in son area: 4.9%

### Design Parameters of Batwara Tal

Top width of embankment	2 m
Bottom width of embankment	6 m
Height of embankment	1 m
Cross sectional area of embankment	4 m <sup>2</sup>
Total length of embankment	1008 m
Total earthwork volume	2880 m <sup>3</sup>
Side slope u/s & d/s	1:2

### Design Parameters of Babulwala Talab

Top width of embankment	2 m
Bottom width of embankment	6 m
Height of embankment	1 m
Cross sectional area of embankment	4 m <sup>2</sup>
Total length of embankment	1070 m
Total earthwork volume	4000 m <sup>3</sup>
Side slope u/s & d/s	1:2

### *Batwara Tal gave new lease of life*

- ✧ No. of families benefited through work: 38
- ✧ Area irrigated: 107.88 bigha
- ✧ Increase in total crops yield: 11480 kg
- ✧ Increase in water level of open wells: 1-2 m
- ✧ Increase of crop sowing area: 39-45 bigha (75% wheat, 25% mustard)
- ✧ Increase in soil moisture: 25-50%.

*My 3 bigha land was thirsty all along the past. There was complete dry in our village and we were not able to sow rabi crop. When renovation of pond created irrigation opportunities, I became able to sow wheat and get good quantity of yield. Earlier I had no option but doing wage labor. Now my entire family is engaged in cultivation. I am too happy to explain.*

- Jaswant (Ramnagar)

*What an old man can do? Particularly when one has the land but no water to irrigate lands. I was totally dependent on my sons who were careless. The rains were not enough to grow crops. I was delighted to know that the pond would be reconstructed, but it was dream for me. Ultimately, I got waters .....for life. Organization is our God.*

- Rajaram (Ramnagar)



**What MSc student of Kurukshetra University, Ms. Anita Sharma, wrote in her report on Geological Field Work in February 2004**

In recent past, 1998-2003, the rainfall around Gwalior has been poor resulting in drought conditions and poor crop yield. In Sirauli village a joint meeting of the villagers was held to discuss this problem. Around Sirauli there are two surface water reservoirs viz. Batwara Tal and Babulwala Tal. The Batwara Tal is 200 years old, but no renovation work was done since its construction. In January 2003 the NGO called GKSSS began renovation work of Batwara Tal. Work completed on the embankment of pond having length of 1008 m. Rainwater started storing in the water body, which fulfilled the needs of not only domestic water supply but the irrigation too. Now the farmers are able to irrigate their lands and grow *kharif* and *rabi* crops. The work of GKSSS is praiseworthy and solid in the interests of community at large. Countless people in village have been accruing the benefits.





### Renovation of pond fueled in new life

Cluster of three villages — Ramnagar, Sirauli and Vijaynagar — is situated in the core of Morar block of Gwalior district where dry spells are common every year. Ramnagar and Vijaynagar villages do have majority of dalits, whereas Sirauli village is mix having 40% population of dalits and minority. Residents of villages for last many years have been facing acute crisis of irrigation water due to recurring droughts. Agriculture or farm labor works are mainstay of maximum number of families in the target villages. Low productivity of soils due to lack of irrigation affected the lives of most of the poor directly and indirectly. People had to live vulnerable life. Soils of the villages were also converting gradually into alkaline soils causing further loss of productivity.

In the line to revive the natural agro-ecosystem the GKSSS made intervention with the support of CFLI in these villages. The people of Ramnagar villages sat together to decide what to do to renovate the old water harvesting structures viz. ponds. The villagers discussed that the ponds were quite big in size and had vast catchment area as well as command area. Renovating the ponds might cause storage of high volume of rainwater and could irrigate lot of lands. Simultaneously, they guessed that it would perpetually recharge the groundwater aquifer. People also decided that the overflow of Batwara Tal should go into Babulwala Talab. A local institution, Ambedkar Samudayik Samiti, had anchored the works and management of ponds renovation as also the distribution of irrigation waters.

Previously the farmers had been growing only single crop of mustard; now they are able to grow *kharif* as well as *rabi* crops including wheat. Fortunately, good rains filled the ponds and people got adequate waters for irrigation. Lot many visitors inspected the project site and assisted the works technically. Among them main were Prof. Satya Prakash, VC of Jiwaji University, Dr. Madhumas Khare, HOD of Earth Science Department, Dr. Seraj Khand, Sr. Scientist of Central Groundwater Board, Mr. Aman Singh of KRIPAVIS in Alwar, Dr. Katiyar, Head of CSWCRTI in Datia, Dr. Asha Mathur, Principal of KRG College in Gwalior, Mr. Shariq Noor, Regional Publicity Officer of GOI, and Ms. Veena Singh, Mr. C D Singh, Ms. Vandana Kakkar of AFPRO.

#### *Water user institution*

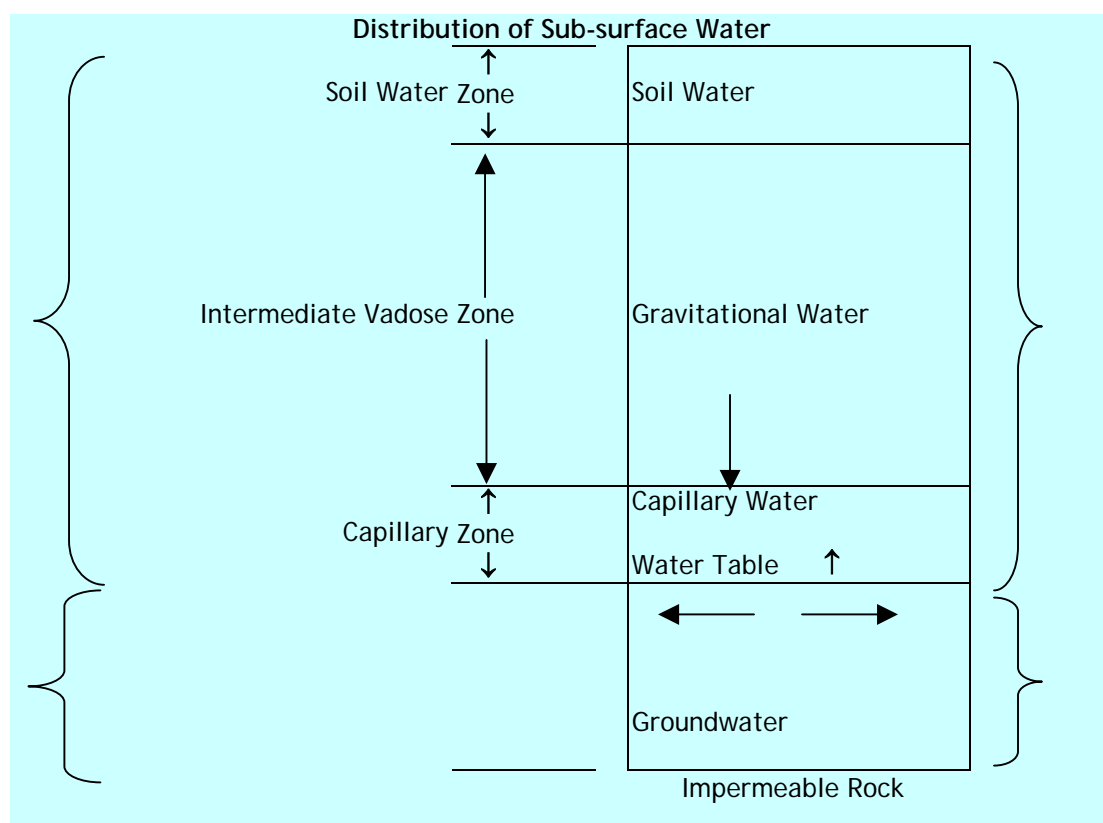
It is evident that plenty of water generated for the irrigation of agriculture lands. When more than one user of water claim stakes over the water resource the disputes and conflicts are necessary to emerge. Keeping several factors in mind the GKSSS facilitated the formation of an institution meant for managing the waters of both the reservoirs. Every member of the water user institution signed on the memorandum binding on the following points:

1. Water of the ponds will be equally used by the water users;
2. Whosoever would use the water will be liable to pay Rs. 25 per bigha to Ambedkar Samudayik Samiti;
3. Samiti will open the irrigation for specific time limit only;
4. Raised fund from fees will be invested in





- 5. GKSSS will provide technical assistance and advisory support to the Samiti so that the ponds could be managed efficiently;
- 6. Collectively the farmers would decide the crop cycle in a way that irrigation water could be saved;
- 7. In case of violation of norms of the institution the culprit will be punished by Samiti appropriately and the person concerned would be liable to bear the punishment;
- 8. This memorandum is valid for 38 families of dalit farmers who are first claimants of irrigation water.



**Women changed the water situations in villages**

Traditional structures of water harvesting in the villages have been facing gross neglect of the community. It is because the values of rural society have rapidly changes over last few decades. Water structures were once the lifeline of village society; now have turned into bins of garage and rubbish. Size of water bodies has mathematically reduced leaving scanty water in the bodies for common use. Similar was the situation in Ramnagar village where people were thirsty despite two older ponds. The women realized the situation when GKSSS intervened under CFLI-supported project. People sat together and finalized the strategy to renovate the ponds and check loss of rainwater they had not ever tried to check. But there was a challenge of generating resources for construction related works as most of poor were resourceless. With the motivation of GKSSS, the women of 7 SHGs of Ramnagar and 2 SHGs of Sirauli came forward to change the scenario. Now the women have been leading the institutional processes around water management.





### Construction of Farm Bunds:

First of all most of the households in target villages have small or marginal landholdings. Yet the lands people have lie in undulating terrain. Farmers despite hard labor are unable to check the erosion of soil and runoff water. There is heavy loss of nutrients. Keeping all such situations in mind and low productivities of soil, GKSSS intervened to bund the farmers' field.

*I was not able to cultivate my 2 bigha land due to lack of irrigation water. From last 3 years I was anxious taking no production in the land. As soon as farm bunding started in village I was the first person to come forward. Resultantly, rainwater stored in the bunded fields and I have started taking wheat in place of mustard.*

- Dayaram (Sirauli)

Farm bunding has taken place on 56.28 ha land of over 63 farmer families belonging to target villages. The length of farm bunds cumulatively comes to 11466 m. The field bunds act as barrier against the runoff flows which eventually reduces the runoff velocity and sedimentation. Rainwater stores within the field, which percolates down and enriches the moisture in sub-surface soil.

### Oral testimony of Mulchand

Brothers, listen! As long as the moisture will remain in the soil, the crops will give harvests. I was aware even before the onset of farm bunding. Since I had no money to make farm bunds, I did not get the work done. When GKSSS people came in the village and educated us about the importance of farm bunding, I accepted that it was noble opportunity for the farmers to reform their agri-practices. In the construction work the members of Kiran SHG were involved. After getting the land bunded I am been able to grow double crops now. Earlier the yield per bigha of mustard was merely 2 quintals, which now has ascended to 4 quintals per bigha. Similarly, I am able grow wheat too in *rabi* season.



### Observation of Central Groundwater Board, Bhopal

After geological and hydrological assessments Dr. Seraj Khan of CGWB opined that the aquifer in Morar block

was dry at 20 m depth. Actually the area's soil is clay mix which reduces the porosity and permeability of sub-surface. However, he suggested the water harvesting structures to recharge the groundwater. So did the GKSSS.





### Deepening of Open Wells:

Particularly Sirauli and Ramnagar villages were bound to face shortage of water — both drinking and irrigation. It was partly because the open wells constructed years of years ago were lying defunct as the groundwater level receded considerably. Under the project supported by CFLI, the GKSSS worked on 2 wells to deepen it. The wells then came in functioning and began fetching the rural needs of drinking water. The wells have thus been supporting the immediate requirements of drinking water.



### Construction of Check Dam:

A check dam has been built on seasonal Salawan nala in between Vijaygarh and Ramnagar. This check dam was essential as the community mapped the landscape and selected the site. During the site selection work CFLI executive Mr. Vincent E. Thakur visited the area and was involved in the site identification process along with the villagers (see the picture).



The flow of water in the nala has reduced after construction this check dam. Some water is also stored in the reservoir that recharges the groundwater aquifer in the surrounding. Few families of farmers will get irrigation benefits from check dam.

#### *Technical details of check dam built in Vijaygarh*

Catchment area	80 ha	AHFL	99.5 m
Flood discharge	6.1 cumec	FSL/FTL	99.5 m
Bed of nala	97.5 m	TBL	100 m
Foundation RL	96.3 m	Top width	0.5 m
Bottom width	1.5 m	Length of spillway	8.4 m
Length of stop dam	10 m	Height of stop dam	2 m
Thickness of wing wall	0.5 m	height of abutment wall	2.5 m
Thickness of abutment wall	0.5 m	Storage capacity	30450 m <sup>3</sup>
Discharge per unit width	5.48 m <sup>3</sup> /s	Proposed irrigated area	10.15 ha



**Community fought against mighty outsiders for water**

Depleting water resources in Sirauli village affected the availability of drinking water acutely. The people were restless as they had no source of water. Problem also lied due to receded groundwater. On helping by GKSSS the people lodged complains in the offices of Collector, PHED and Zila Panchayat. But none listened their problem. GKSSS mobilized the officers of CGWB and Jiwaji University who visited the area. The CGWB immediately approved installation of a tube well in

the village. From the tube well it was also the nursery to be irrigated. But there was no land available for tube well construction. Then three persons came ahead to donate their land; Mulchand's land was selected for the tube well construction. Work started on 25 June 2003 and completed on 31 July 2003. ZP President tried to coerce the CGWB and lastly beaten some of the officials. Community reacted on this. He also tried to harass the women of SHGs and torture the GKSSS. Ultimately, tube was installed amid resistance of mighty persons. Tube well is yet to be fixed with motor and pump. Soon it will be operational.

managing natural resources

**Community Awareness and Capacity Building on Natural Resource Management:**

Committed staff of GKSSS regularly held meetings with the community especially women in target villages. During these meetings the women were oriented towards the need of regenerating the natural resources in situ. They were told of their problems in toto and its possible solutions through managing natural resources particularly water and land. Some women came forward to constitute a 'grain bank' in each village. Processes of institutionalization went ahead smoothly and women made groups in each village. In the meetings, orientation sessions and workshops the women were taught the relationship of land, water, livestock and biomass. Additionally, the community was wholly oriented to undertake the natural resource management measures like check dam, pond renovation, etc. All technical details were discussed thoroughly with the community before perusal. This approach accrued in the form of success.





## Promoting Sustainable Agriculture ...

The target villages lie in Gwalior-Chambal agro-climatic zone (no. 7) of Madhya Pradesh.



The state is though divided into 9 agro-climatic zones. This zone is one of the driest regions of the state; rather it falls in semi-arid zone. Agriculture is mainstay of rural economy and rural livelihoods. Those who do not have lands too depend on agriculture for employment. There are a percentage of wage laborers and servicemen in the villages. Water is the backbone of agriculture, which is quite weak due to lack of irrigation facilities in the area. GKSSS, however, made development interventions to create sustainable sources of irrigation in the villages by various means. Once the irrigation is developed the farmers in large number got benefited and developed their croplands to great extent. Many of them became able to grow dual crops in place of previous single crop. Instead, GKSSS intervened to improve the cropping system and farming practices in the villages. Such interventions are described briefly.

### Crop Demonstration:

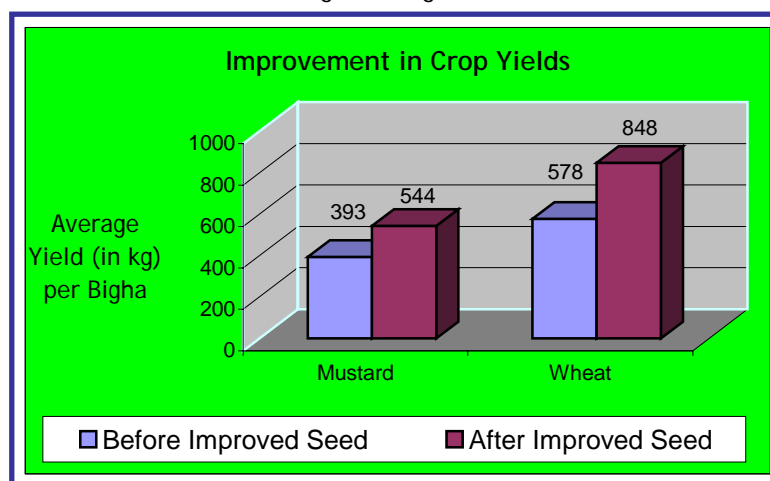
Though the community was farmer from occupational background; but it does not mean that the farmers were practicing improved agro-techniques. Many of the farmers were casual in crop cultivation.

Improvement in yield from improved seeds

Crop	Average yield (in kg) per bigha		Change
	Before	After	
Mustard	393	544	+151
Wheat	578	848	+270

GKSSS called agriculture

scientists of KVK, Gwalior to the field, who guided the farmers. To develop a demonstration site in target villages 20 farmer families were chosen: 2 in Sirauli, 3 in



Ramnagar and 15 in Vijaygarh. Seeds of wheat (Lok-1) and mustard (Pusa Gold) were distributed among them. 13 farmers grew 30 kg seeds of mustard in their 30 bigha lands. Similarly, 7 farmers grew 280 kg wheat in their 14 bigha land. Additionally, one farmer of Ramnagar was provided with NPK fertilizer in order to improve his crops.



Soils of several farmers were also testified followed by recommendations to change the composition of fertilizers or to intensify crop husbandry.



When the demonstration sites developed in all three villages particularly in the fields on which farm bunding was done, other farmers saw the crops and its improved yields, who then adopted the new ideas in agriculture improvement.



*Previously we used to sow ordinary seeds which we had to keep from my harvests. We also had no sufficient money to buy seeds because it was complete drought for last many years. GKSSS gave relief to us by providing seeds support. This made us to do farming in improved way. We are happy now.*  
 - Lajjaram, Parmal, Kamlabai (Vijaygarh)

*I had to cultivate my 5 bigha land on traditional pattern. It was not able to sustain my family. Improved seeds provided by GKSSS turned my farming in new direction causing ample production. I cannot believe how much the yield improved and my food deficits abolished. It is effect of my exposure to Datia farm.*  
 - Amar Singh, Vaijyantiu Bai (Vijaygarh)



### Capacity Building on Agriculture:

Addressing the improvement in agriculture GKSSS organized principally two programs; (a) orientation meeting on improved agriculture, and (b) training on sustainable agriculture. Salient features of both the programs are given in two separate boxes.



#### Salient Features of Orientation Meeting on Improved Farming Practices

Date: 22 September 2004

Place: Ambedkar Bagia, Ramnagar village

No. of Participants: 72

Purpose:

- × Awakening the farmers on improved agriculture.
- × Giving opportunity to women to share their experiences.
- × Conserving livelihood resources and ensuring participation of women.

Topics Discussed:

- × HYVs of mustard, wheat, gram, groundnut, etc.
- × Soil types and testing methods and recommended nutrients.
- × Prescribed compositions of fertilizers for different crops.
- × Crop husbandry.
- × Crop protection through chemicals and herbal methods.
- × Seeds sowing methods, de-weeding, watering, etc.

Resource Persons:

Dr. M. L. Gaur, Sr. Scientist, CSWCRTI, Datia

Dr. Dev Narayan, Sr. Scientist, CSWCRTI, Datia



### Salient Features of Training on Sustainable Agriculture

Date: 17 November 2004

Place: Budhe Baba Ka Mandir, Vijaygarh village

No. of Participants: 72

Purpose:

- × Educating the farmers through demonstration of crops.
- × Protecting crops from pests and pathogens through chemicals and herbal methods.
- × Providing opportunities to women for sharing their experiences.

Topics Discussed:

- × Traditional ways of farming practices.
- × Livestock importance in agriculture and its care.
- × Water management in farming.
- × Pesticides commonly used in agriculture.
- × Herbal medicines useful for protecting crops from pests and pathogens.
- × Seeds treatment and preservation, and sowing methods.
- × Neem as universal multi-purpose product of nature usable in agriculture.
- × Soil types and testing methods and recommended nutrients.

Resource Persons:

Mr. U. P. Sharma, Manager, Hotline Production, Malanpur (Bhind)

Mr. G. P. Shah, Agri. Engineer, AFPRO, Raipur

Mr. Ashok Gupta, AMBITIOUS, Gwalior

## Promoting the Agroforestry ...

By the women of target villages the 'nursery raising' activity was selected keeping two reasons in consideration: one, there are very scarce biomass and almost no trees; two, the women had to perform some income generation activities. GKSSS thus introduced a small nursery of 20000 seedlings. The species sown in the nursery were:

- ✧ Mango (*Mangifera indica*)
- ✧ Citrus (*Citrus limon*)
- ✧ Karonda (*Carrissa congesta*)
- ✧ Ber (*Zizyphus nummularia*)
- ✧ Aonla (*Phyllanthus eblica*)
- ✧ Bamboo (*Dendrocalamus strictus*)
- ✧ Jackfruit (*Artocarpus integrifolia*)
- ✧ Imli (*Tamarindus indica*)
- ✧ Bel (*Aggle marmolos*)
- ✧ Kaju (*Anacardium occidentale*)
- ✧ Jamun (*Eugenia jambolana*)
- ✧ Guava (*Psidium guava*)
- ✧ Papaya (*Carica papaya*)
- ✧ Pome Grante (*Punica grantum*)
- ✧ Badaam (*Terminalia catappa*)
- ✧ Teak (*Tectona grandis* treated)

*Poor families of the village have raised nursery and then planted the seedlings in their yards. We have been caring and protecting the plants. It will give fruit one day. The villagers particularly women have developed their capacities as a consequence of project in our Sirauli panchayat. When the plants will be mature the people will get wood, fruits, fuel and cash. This would definitely improve the household livelihoods and economy. Women after this program have been well confident.*

- Mrs. Vaijanti Bai, Sarpanch, Sirauli



When the nursery grew mature, various families of target villages obtained plantlets from nursery. SHGs of respective villages selected the beneficiary families who obtained these plants and grew them in their yards or in the fields. On the occasion of



the occasion of *shivratri festival*, seedlings of bel, guava and neem were distributed. The seeds were procured from Jhansi, Agra and Nagpur.

### Capacity Building on Nursery Raising and Horticulture:

GKSSS organized two separate trainings on nursery raising and horticulture. Details of both the trainings are highlighted in box. Horticulture training was organized on 29 August in



Sirauli village in which 33 women and 26 men participated in Ramnagar. Mr. Mahavir Singh Tomar, Joint Director, Horticulture was the Resource Person.





### Salient Features of Training on Nursery Raising

Date: 6-7 January 2005

Place: Kiran Mahila Nursery, Sirauli village

No. of Participants: 31

Purpose:

- × Building capacities of members of self-help groups.
- × Training the women how to raise nursery of trees and fruit plants.
- × Inculcating skills among women of nursery and plantation management.

Topics Discussed:

- × Brainstorming on nursery, plantations and care.
- × Types of nurseries.
- × Soil requirements for nursery.
- × Site selection for nursery.
- × Preparation of bed.
- × Timings in nursery raising.
- × Plant care, thinning, pruning, etc.
- × Plant protection.
- × Seeds treatment and sowing.
- × Layout of beds and polybags in beds.
- × Selection of plant species and procurement of seeds.
- × Ways of keeping plants in beds.
- × Fencing of the nursery.
- × Transplantation.
- × Techniques of grafting, budding, layering, etc.
- × Watering of nursery and seedlings.

Resource Persons:

Mr. J. P. Narayan, Conservator of Forests, Social Forestry, Forest Research & Extension Centre, Gwalior

Mr. S. N. Sharma, Deputy Ranger, Forest Department

Mr. V. N. Sharma, Nursery Incharge, Forest Department, Gwalior

Mr. P. K. Srivastava, Sr. Horticulture Officer, Horticulture Department, Gwalior

Mr. Mulchand, President & Panch, PTA Sirauli





## Empowering the Women for Livelihoods...

Unarguably the development of natural resources induced the income levels of the families. Mere development of irrigation sources from ponds renovation caused sharp increase in cultivation of crops and its yield, hence the economic status of poor dalits. The development of water and agriculture has provided opportunities to the farmers to initiate host of economic and social building activities. Simultaneously, the women of the target villages were organized in the form of SHGs who began economic activities through microfinance and



entrepreneurship. GKSSS actually started an institutionalization process in all three villages. Under institutionalization the women addressed their impoverishment on priority and came forward to act for livelihoods development so that their economic empowerment can take place along with social upliftment. To achieve the results the GKSSS went through a cumbersome process of bringing people together.



### Gender Sensitization:

Each year GKSSS held workshop of self-help groups in which 'gender sensitization' had



been prime agenda. Keeping the pathetic situation of women in consideration the GKSSS



held annual workshop of self-help groups. In the workshop matters related to gender inequality had been discussed at the stretch. The workshop was held on 4 December 2003. The objectives of the workshop were:

~ Reviewing the progress, difficulties and plans of SHGs;



- ~ Encouraging women to come forward and take lead in social life;
- ~ Inculcating self-confidence and self-reliance among the women;
- ~ Integrating the gender into the natural resource management practices.

The workshop traveled through various discussions and analysis of situations and problems while

suggesting workable solutions. Some of them are illustrated below:

- Disparity in economic status of families;
- Lack of self-reliance;
- Disinterest in democratic system;
- Less mutual cooperation and coordination;
- Lack of proper information;
- Rumors and misconceptions.



Chief guest of the program, Dr. Asha Mathur, Member of Core Group of National Women Commission, praised the efforts of local community. She remembered that she saw changes in farming systems, water management practices and employment assets when

she traveled to the village Ramnagar and Sirauli. She spoke on gender inequity in the society and the worse situation of women in general. She invited all the women to come forward and change the conditions. GKSSS chief, Mr. Sriprakash Nimraje, gave account of the status of women at home and outside the boundary. What women face at home and outside is illustrated in the table





below. These problems the women face had been identified by the GKSSS.

At Home		Outside
When woman is daughter	When woman is wife	
Feticide	Eating the left out food	Molestation
Discrimination	Harassment by close relatives in in-law	Harassment at workplace
Less care	Harassment by the husband	Sale-purchase of women
Less food is given	Dowry led harassment	Prostitution
Less love and affection	Separation, divorce	Torture in jail
Girl is deemed as curse in family	Social curse when widowed	Torture in mental hospitals
Infanticide	Social customs	Physical exploitation and assault by powerful feuds
Grieving on birth of girl	No or least cure during sickness	Social and economic exploitation
No cure if girl falls ill	No proper facility during child birth	Social and religious customs
Least attention on girl education	Rape	Physical and mental exploitation by police and foresters
Boundation on going out	Unequal distribution of household responsibilities	Physical exploitation by quarry contractors
Physical and mental exploitation		Physical exploitation by traders
Anti-women social/ religious norms		Unequal wages
Child marriage		Unequal work
More work load on girls		Exploitation by lawyers
Malnutrition		Exploitation by politicians

A range of solutions had been proposed in the workshop by GKSSS.

*I was on the same track as the other villagers were. My husband died of ignorance of the diseases and treatment. I was helpless as I had to look after the sick husband and the family. I was bound to carry on the traditions. Gradually I came in contact of GKSSS in Ramnagar and started organizing the women in the village. I then led the group and linked with the bank. I played active role in keeping the women in the group in difficult times. Now all of us have done lot of work through the group. I have now focused my attention to other villages where women are getting inspired and organizing to form SHGs and to escape the net of poverty.*

- Padma, Secretary, Vishakha SHG (Ramnagar)





## Formation and Stabilization of Self-Help Groups:

From the beginning of the project GKSSS had faced a challenge to organize the people onto a single platform. After perpetual efforts the GKSSS succeeded in forming 11 SHGs of the women in Ramnagar, Sirauli and Vijaygarh villages. As a result of spill over effect 5 SHGs have formed in neighboring villages. 8 SHGs have linked with the bank. Details of the SHGs and their individual savings are given in table below.

Name of SHG (Village)	No. of Members	Social Profile of Members	Bank Account	President	Secretary	Treasure
Kiran (Sirauli)	15	Dalits	01170055541	Nasimbanu	Samibai	Ramkali
Kiran (Ramnagar)	10	Dalits	0117005554100	Ombati	Usha	-
Kiran (Vijaygarh)	13	Dalits	0117005654101	Gaya bai	Guddi	Kamlabai
Visakha (Ramnagar)	12	Dalits	01170056280	Mahadevi	Padma	Kamliya
Ramabai (Vijaygarh)	11	Mix	01170055970	Bhagwatibai	Guddi	Sila
Ramabai (Ramnagar)	18	Mix	01170055967	Kalabati	Rajabeti	Javetri
Jhalkaribai (Ramnagar)	11	Dalits	01170055636	Bhagwatibai	Ramrati	Narayani
Nurjahan (Sirauli)	11	Dalits	0110055745	Kalobai	Kishan devi	Badamibai
Veerangna Laxmibai (Ramnagar)	14	Dalits	001100065052	Rajshree	Neetu Koshal	Somanti Bai
Sangmitra (Ramnagar)	12	Dalits	01170065066	Dakkho	Rajeshwari	Ramkali
Savitribai Phule (Ramnagar)	11	Dalits	01170065067	Parvati	Kuntibai	Javitri

SHGs formed during the project implementation grew up to devise their own mechanisms





of operation by formulating managing rules. It was decided by the women members that no external rule will be imposed on the SHGs rather the group itself would follow self-formulated rules. The groups did the same.

### Functioning and Management of SHGs

After the formation of SHGs the women in meetings framed rules and regulations for the smooth functioning of the groups. Groups decided names of SHGs as well as monthly meeting dates. Through the defined rules the SHGs maintained full transparency and participation. The rules are illustrated in nutshell as below.

**Membership:** The number of members in every group would be 10-15. Members would elect the President, Vice President and Secretary. All members should present in monthly meetings. In case a member absents in 3 consecutive meetings, her membership would be withdrawn.

**Bank Account:** SHGs have to open account in State Bank of Indore, Ratwai brach in Morar block of Gwalior district.

**Executive Body:** Executive body of group would be elected by group members in meeting through common consent. Elected persons of the group would be fully supported by group members. Time period of elected person will be two years from the date of election.

**Borrowing Procedure:** The borrower would be charged the interest rate of percent per month. The borrowing incumbent should bring a written request approved by secretary of the group. The Executive Body would give consent about the sanction of loan based on need and priority.

**Record Maintenance:** Responsibility of maintenance of activities would be of the secretary and president. GKSSS field staff will support the group in maintaining the records etc.

**Internal Loaning:** If any member wants some money, a meeting is called and request is discussed among all members and money is sanctioned with defined terms and conditions.





From the savings the women groups collected the needy families withdrew money as per their needs. It not only fulfilled the immediate needs of the poor families but also inculcated the self-reliance among the women who were erstwhile dependent on the male counterparts for petty needs in daily life. Nevertheless, many women initiated some economic activity at home from borrowing money. Thus the inter-loaning had been the main activity of the SHGs. A periodic data of inter-loaned amount is shown in table.

Details of SHGs Saving and Inter-loaning (From January'03 to 15 January'04)

Name of SHG	Village	Total Saving	Total Loaning	Women Benefited
Kiran (old)	Siroli	4240	35,950	15
Ramabai (old)	Ramnagar	3600	17,700	16
Noorjahan	Siroli	2200	4800	7
Ramabai	Vijaygarh	1500	1500	2
Kiran	Vijaygarh	3025	3350	6
Kiran	Ramnagar	3300	2000	4
Jhalkari	Ramnagar	1210	1200	2
Vishakha	Ramnagar	900	1000	1
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>19975</b>	<b>67,500</b>	<b>53</b>

### Confidence revisited after collective savings

Sirauli village lies in Morar block of Gwalior district where the resources other than agriculture are almost absent. Families having small pieces of lands generally migrate out after sowing the crops. The crops in their small landholdings yield meager. Due to other infrastructure and employment-generating assets the majority of families depend on moneylenders for seeking the credits. GKSSS brought in the project and tried to organize the families. The thinking behind organizing the women particularly was to break the vicious cycle of the poverty. Creating permanent and collective assets that may generate sustainable livelihoods in village was challenge in front of GKSSS as well as the CFLI-supported project. Family of Mulchand and Munnibai from Sirauli, Rajeshwari from Vijaygarh and Bhagwati Padma from Ramnagar came forward initially. Families of especially Dalit poor started understanding the importance of collective approach to address poverty. The women assembled into SHGs and grew up in the form of inter-loaning groups. In all 3 villages, 11 SHGs have been working with 136 members. The rules framed by the member women for inter-loaning are strict. The saving of the groups grew in the following way: Rs. 44628 in 2000, Rs. 66275 in 2001, Rs. 72125 in 2002, Rs. 86534 in 2003, Rs. 93972 in 2004, and Rs. 100738 in 2005. Group saving and inter-loaning enabled the poor families escaped from drudgery. The women groups later entered into economic ventures that provided them new lease of life.





## Economic Activities:

From the revolving fund the SHGs got the women undertook several innovative economic activities such as aonla processing, mushroom cultivation, nursery raising and agarbatti making. When the SHGs identified these activities as viable ventures in the local area the GKSSS arranged training of the SHGs on given trades of economic ventures. After the training the women have been doing the income generation activities particularly on aonla processing and marketing and mushroom cultivation and selling.

### Entrepreneurship changed lives

SHGs formed in Ramnagar, Sirauli and Vijaygarh when became mature and graded up to be financed the State Bank of Indore of Ratwai village gave Rs. 5000 as loan to a group. Three women members borrowed this loaned amount from the group and started shop, vegetable trading and buffalo rearing. The women worked hard and soon refunded the money. Subsequently, between 2001 and 2004 the groups were given loan 8 times each. Bank loaning fueled life among the groups and various economic activities began thereafter. In order to enhance the capacities of SHGs the GKSSS did a series of activities such as: facilitation of meetings, trainings, joint workshops, orientation of bank officials (of 80 persons), exposure of SHGs, facilitation of group processes, training the SHGs on record keeping and maintenance, leadership inculcation, setting in the democratic system, building capacities on entrepreneurship, and so on. The women particularly have escaped the sheer poverty after these interventions made by GKSSS with the support of CFLI.



## Lessons Learnt from CFLI Project...

While implementing the CFLI project in Morar block major lesson learnt is the change in attitude of community. As consequence of the community being exploited by outsiders for centuries the people had not to trust any external person. And GKSSS people were also the outsiders for one reason or the other. GKSSSS took it as the challenge and started working for the confidence building of local community. Infusing a belief and confidence among them was really a difficult task. Once the GKSSS built the rapport, the people started believing in GKSSS and considering the project as prophetic input. So the confidence was won, but again the organization had a challenge to maintain the people's faith.





Secondly, the deprived people and their dismantled institutions were recovered by organizing the communities; thereby, resulting into multidimensional action of the people. People now have started thinking and acting on many core and peripheral issues concerning their life and livelihood such as food security, food rights, land related entitlements, water management, forest management and conservation, collective social development and reform, abolition of exploitation and official ignorance, and so on.

Hence it was felt that the villagers cannot be kept attending the meetings or workshops full of speeches unless there is an activity giving them some options of livelihood. The people in the village are mostly hungry and poor who need first the food, so the activities that may generate food now or in future became the central point of attention instead of merely teaching them of how to lead a life. So the GKSSS engaged them in productive activities so that they could ensure food security in the long run and can escape the drudgery.

Above changes within community perhaps also gave some teachings to conserve the resources and its proper use. There are some specific lessons learnt, which could be applied in other project:

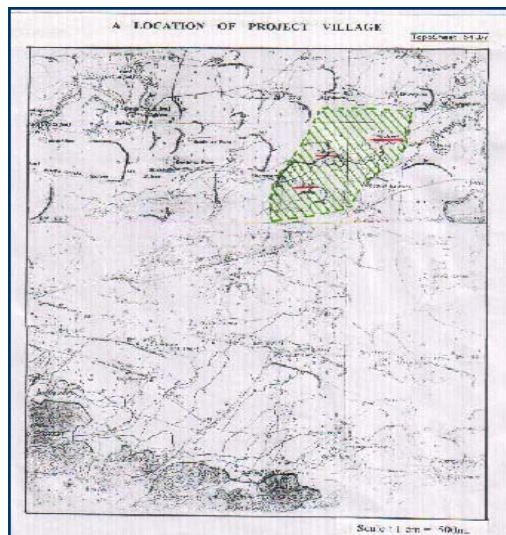
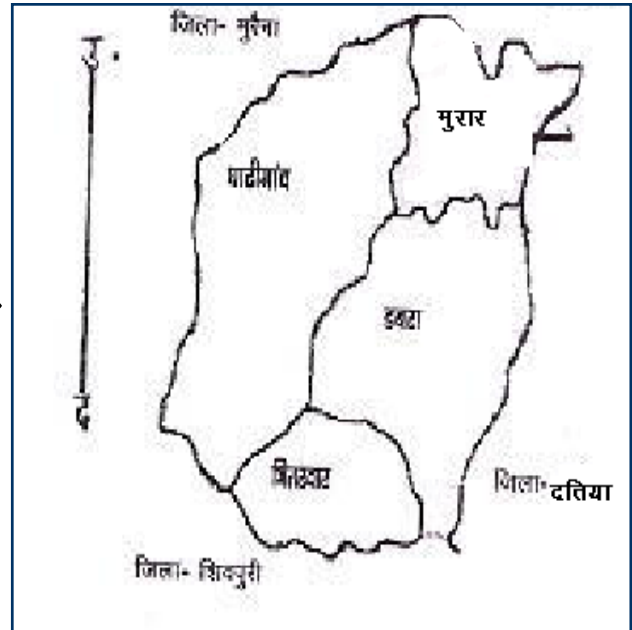
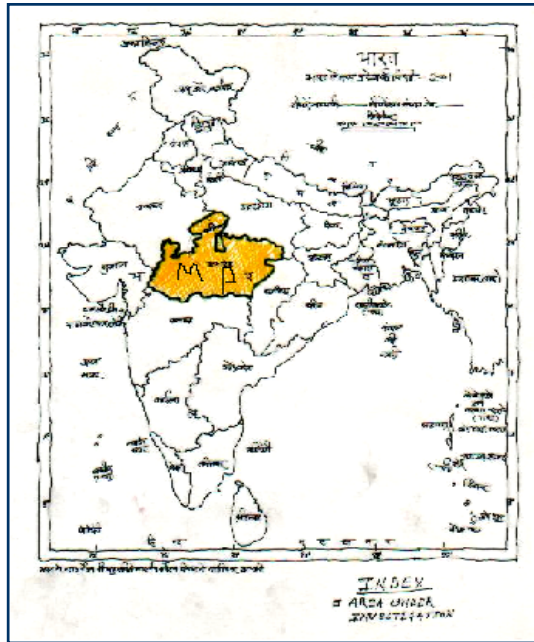
- ✧ Taking challenge and making the program successful amid all odds.
- ✧ Give some more emphasis to illiterate women through informal educational activities and always address the common issues of the group people.
- ✧ Women lack organization but they might have been so aggressive and confident to take more opportunity/responsibility to improve their economy condition.
- ✧ The relation and confidence building with the community is essential, which gives mileage to the organization and community comes forward with creativity to solve problems, then they manage and conserve the assets or resources judiciously.
- ✧ SHGs can play a vital role for developing and managing the resources.
- ✧ The community participation is mandatory to sustain the project and achieve viabilities.
- ✧ Revival of traditional water structures and local technologies can accrue best results in terms of alleviating poverty and ensuring food security at household and village level.

## Concluding Remarks...

Such models of resource management based on community participation and institutionalization are sporadic in the country where the poor and dalits have really acquired self-reliance. This model developed by GKSSS is replicable in similar geo-climatic and socio-economic conditions. The approach applied by GKSSS had been unique in the sense that handling dalits was always difficult for other organizations in this region of central province. In the local area the spill over effect of the model is immense as many villages have adopted such things their own. GKSSS expects other organizations to draw lessons from such a model developed with the assistance of CFLI/Canadian High Commission.

# MANAGING NATURAL RESOURCES FOR EMPOWERING THE POOR

## Location of Project Area



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