

VILLAGE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME OF VILLAGE FOREST COMMITTEES IN BILASPUR FOREST CIRCLE, MADHYA PRADESH - A CASE STUDY

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Introduction

The success of JFM cannot be achieved without developing the resources of the villages in a holistic manner. Therefore the Eco-Development Programme for Village Resource Development is to be taken side by side. The people who were dependent for their livelihood on the forests should be the 'target group' and we have to conceive Eco-Development Programme for these groups. The approach adopted in Bilaspur Forest Circle is aimed for the overall eco-development of the village and to these target groups in particular. The alternate sources of livelihood for these target groups were carefully considered. These are mostly forestry affiliated activities with feasible marketability for the products.

The eco-development activities were started in a planned manner from July 1996 onwards and the results obtained can be said to be for 6 months duration as initially three months were spent in propagating the schemes to the target groups. The descriptions of these activities are given here :

Tassar Cultivation

Terminalia arjuna plantation was taken up in yester years and were lying unutilized. The nearest Village Forest Committee (VFC) was allotted this

plantation and the beneficiaries were selected from the target groups. The naturally existing area of Saja trees in the vicinity of VFC/FPC were also selected. For July crop only 11 committees took up this programme but later on 16 more committees joined the programme for Sept. and Nov. crop. Total number of beneficiaries were 208. The total income generated was Rs. 1.79 lakhs. Notable among these committees (income-wise) are Bhedra Rs. 47100 (22 beneficiaries), FPC Bukna Rs. 24778/- (13 beneficiaries), VFC Dhandari Rs. 8480/- (4 beneficiaries) and VFC Karichhapar Rs. 9160/- (6 beneficiaries). The average income is likely to rise Rs 8000 per year per beneficiary after good training. An ambitious programme of training these VFC/FPC members with the help of Sericulture Deptt. is being taken up during

Fig. 1



Tussar cultivation Karrichapar

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20th June - 20th Aug. 1997 and it is planned to obtain about 1.5 crore cocoons from Sept. crop. The average sale price of cocoon is Rs. 700/- per thousand.

Lac Cultivation

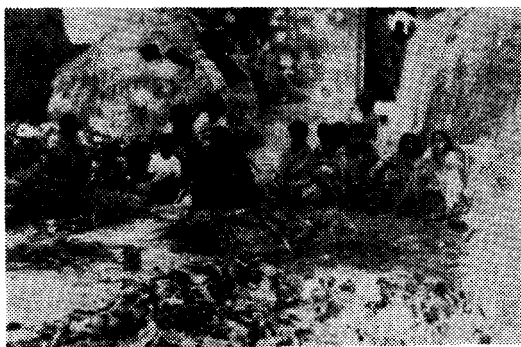
Lac Cultivation was in vogue in the 1950s and 1960s but the people had to leave the cultivation due to slackness in the market. The market has recently picked up. We have introduced the lac cultivation in the committees where it was not being done traditionally and activated the committees which were traditionally doing this job. The guidance from Shellac Export Council, Calcutta was sought and free distribution of lac seed was organised. With the persistent efforts eight committees adopted lac cultivation on community basis while 114 committees took up this work on individual beneficiary basis. A total number of 122 committees have already been brought under this lac cultivation scheme. A total amount of Rs 20.42 lakhs has been generated as an additional income for 88 committees in the year 1996-97. The results of 34 more committees will be available in June 1997. The programme is to be spread in all the committees where possibility of lac cultivation exists. The traditional trees for

lac cultivation were *Butea monosperma*, *Schleichera oleosa* and *Ziziphus* but trials were successfully conducted for *Acacia auriculaeformis* and *Peltoforum* trees. Now we are using the latter two plants as host plants for lac cultivation. The notable beneficiaries among these committees are VFC Sendaripali Rs. 99000/- (20 beneficiaries), VFC Bandandha Rs. 33000/- (9 beneficiaries), VFC Amlidand Rs. 54000/- (28 beneficiaries) and VFC Balidhih Rs. 1,25,000/- (200 beneficiaries).

Bamboo-based Cottage Industries

Bamboo-based cottage industries in both Bilaspur and Raigarh Districts have been taken up for a number of 'basod' families who were traditionally making bamboo crafts. The depleting bamboos in forests have rendered them jobless, forcing them to obtain the bamboo unlawfully from the forests. This causes a lot of damage to the already depleting bamboo forests. In Raigarh District the basod families adjoining the bamboo forests were brought under the umbrella of VFC/FPC and they were asked to produce bamboo crafts at a centre known as 'Basod Kalyan Kendra'. This centre was under the supervision of VFC/FPC and all the basod families work there in a group.

Fig. 2



Villagers peeling out Lac from Palas
(North Bilaspur Forest Division)

Fig. 3



Basod Kalyan Kendra FPC Bangursea
(Raigarh Forest Division)

They are provided bamboos at these centres as per Nistar Policy of Government. VFC/FPC have made an agreement with the intermediaries in this trade to reduce the exploitation of basod families. VFC/FPC purchases the bamboo articles at an agreed price with the traders and hands it over to the trader after charging the supervision fee. The programme was started in the month of Nov. or Dec. and 5 such 'Basod Kalyan Kendra' are working in Raigarh District. The rates which basod families are presently getting are fifty per cent higher compared to what they used to get last year. The supervision charges of VFC/FPC are to the tune of approximately 10% of the price of all articles. In about 4 months time total income generated is Rs. 2.21 lakhs to the basod families and Rs.20,000 has been deposited as supervision charge to the committee. The VFC/FPC which were near bamboo coupes or near to a plantation preparation site where cultural operation in bamboo area are to be done, were engaged in the production of Agarbatti sticks. The raw materials used for this produce was the waste materials from the coupes and unsalable bamboo pieces obtained from the cultural operation of bamboo areas. In this about 5 committees have already produced about 12 qtls. of Agarbatti sticks. The prevailing price of these sticks is around Rs. 800/qlt. The programme is on and may yield good results for the month of April and May. The use of waste material from coupes and plantation preparation site reduces the fire hazards. The basods actively participate in the protection of forests along with other member of VFC/FPC.

Exploitation of old Sisal (*Agave sisalana*) Plantations and allied activities

A number of plantations were raised in

both Bilaspur and Raigarh Districts under Economic Plantation scheme in the 1980s. These plantations were lying unutilized. Under this scheme the plantations were attached with the nearest VFC/FPC and an agreement was made with the trader who used to pay Rs. 40/thousand leaves to the beneficiary as collection charges and Rs. 5/thousand leaves as the supervision charges to the committee. Till March, in fifteen such committees a total amount of Rs. 47,500/- was distributed to the beneficiaries and about Rs. 7,500/- was received by the committees as supervision charges. The members of the VFC/FPC attached to these plantation are now being trained to manufacture various decoration articles from *Agave sisalana* thread. The members of the committees are being trained for running decortier machines and to take out the thread from the leaves so that the role of the intermediaries could be abolished. These committees can either use this thread for manufacture of decorative articles or can auction it. The notable among successful committees are VFC Rahadih Rs. 8750/- distributed and Rs. 1250/- as supervision charge, VFC Dhukupura Rs. 5425/- distributed and Rs. 775/- as supervision charges.

Pisciculture

In each of the VFC/FPC there exists a water body which can be utilised for pisciculture and for increasing irrigation potential to the village. The programme of Pisciculture was started by the Forest Department on its own initiative and a total of 41 Committees were covered under this programme. They have taken up Pisciculture on community basis. Since this is the first year of the programme, the Committees have decided that the profits accrued from this programme shall be spent

Fig. 4

Community fishing VFC Karidogari
(Bilaspur Forest Division)

on deepening the tanks, so as to increase the capacity for pisciculture and increase the irrigation potential of these water bodies for the benefit of the committees. The adjoining fields will get irrigation facility and the farmers can be benefited by growing a second crop within a year. This is not possible at present. The Committees have started selling the fish obtained under this programme and they are likely to get a net profit of Rs. 6.72 lakhs. The programme has been appreciated by the Divisional Commissioner, Bilaspur. Now with his intervention the officers of Fisheries Department have agreed to cooperate in the extension of this programme. It is proposed to cover at least 500-600 Committees in the coming season i.e. July-Aug., 1997. The resource generated from this programme may be of great help to change the lifestyle of the whole village. The few of the successful committees are FPC Lamani (Rs. 1.10 lakh), FPC Achanakmar (Rs. 40,000), VFC Parasware (Rs. 25,500) and FPC Suhai (Rs. 40,000).

Women's Nursery

In Bilaspur Forest Circle with an

Fig. 5

Women's nursery Chamarua
(Jashpur Forest Division)

intention to provide wages to the landless and marginal farmer's women, 42 nurseries have been started in 40 Committees. The average number of plants to be prepared in one nursery is kept as 20,000 and it is aimed that one beneficiary should raise 2,000-2,500 plants. It is proposed that they will get at least a price of Rs. 2.00 per plant by selling it to the farmers or to other departments. The Conservator's rate for sale of plants from Departmental nurseries is Rs 2.20/plant. So it is most likely that they will get @ Rs. 2/plant. After deducting the cost of polythene bags, seeds and fertilizer a net profit of Rs. 1.50 is to be accrued to the beneficiaries. So a woman beneficiary is likely to get about Rs. 4000-5000/- per year as an extra income for which she will be

working only in her leisure time. The easy accessibility to the nursery stock will directly help in the afforestation programme and strengthen the JFM.

Other Works

The above programmes are at a large scale but there are certain localised activities which are to be taken up where potential exists.

(a) *Sabai (Eulaliopsis binata) rope making* : Sabai rope is used for tying bamboos and was being purchased from the contractors. The potential existed in 2 committees of Raigarh District who traditionally used to do Sabai rope making works. They used to sell it at Rs. 4.50/- per kg. The contractors used to supply this rope at a price of Rs. 11/- per kg to the Department. The length obtained per kg from Sabai rope made by the Committee members is little less than the standard length fixed by the Department. So it was decided to purchase the Sabai rope @ Rs. 7/kg from the beneficiaries. The rate fixed by the Deptt. vis-a-vis length of the standard rope shall be decided by the D.F.O. and the rest of the

amount shall be paid as supervision charges to the committee for their resource generation. This year the rate has been worked out approximately Rs. 9.50/kg, so an amount of Rs. 2.50/kg shall be deposited in the accounts of the committee as supervision charges. Till March in these two committees about 53 beneficiaries were given Rs. 35,000 as wages and Rs. 2,200 was given to the committees as supervision charge.

(b) *Phoolbarhi Production* : Another localised activity is Phoolbarhi Production in which 3 committees have been benefited and till March they have earned about Rs. 11,500 as wages and about Rs. 1,500/- as supervision charges to the committees.

(c) *Mat making from Chhind Grass (Phoenix acaulis)* : Another localised activity is production of mats and other articles from *Phoenix acaulis*. In this activity 6 committees consisting of 83 beneficiaries have been given wages of Rs. 95,716 and Rs. 2,900 has been generated as resource to the committee.

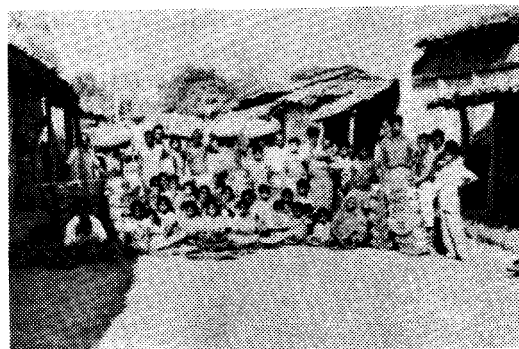
(d) *Dona Pattal from Sal (Shorea robusta)*

Fig. 6



Sawai Rope making FPC Jamavira
(Raigarh Forest Division)

Fig. 7



Dona Pattal making VFC Kenda
(North Bilaspur Forest Division)

Leaves : Another important activity of making dona pattal (leaf plates and bowls) from Sal leaves was taken up in an organised manner. These committees were brought into a agreement with the traders and a price of Rs. 40/thousand pattal was fixed which was earlier only Rs. 25/-. The supervision charges to the committee were fixed at Rs. 5 thousand pattal. In this activity till March 1997, 32 committees consisting of 570 beneficiaries got Rs. 6.54 lakhs as wages and committees generated about Rs. 67,500/- as their resource.

(e) Vegetable growing : As explained earlier the increase in irrigation potential has been given top priority. The stop-dams made under World Food Programme by Forest Department are also being utilised for second crop and vegetable growing. The members of the committees were encouraged to increase their irrigation potential from other sources also. Till March, 11 VFC/FPC took up this work on community basis have benefited by earning amount of Rs. 32,000/-, while eleven other Committees with 145 beneficiaries have been benefited with Rs. 12,800/-. The process has started and they are likely to take a big leap forward. The

results of some other committees who have taken up this vegetable growing programme have also started pouring in. It is worth mentioning that both the Districts are deficient in vegetables and this activity stands a bright future.

(f) Other activities : Training for mushroom cultivation and bee keeping has been imparted in Jashpur Forest Division and with the help of Kadi Village Industries Corporation. This Programme is to be extended so as to generate an extra income to the committees.

Grain Banks

It is a well known fact that the poor villagers migrate for want of food to other areas and the marginal farmers faced difficulties for food as well as for getting the seeds for their agriculture. At the time of sowing they have to acquire the seeds at very high rate. Landless people and marginal farmers always remain insecure for their food as well as for the seeds. A Social Security Scheme has been started in the Circle by establishment of Grain Banks. The grains, mainly paddy in this area, are

Fig. 8



Vegetable growing VFC Bhalwatikari
(North Bilaspur Forest Division)

Fig. 9



Grain Bank, Kenda
(North Bilaspur Forest Division)

obtained by two ways (i) by contribution, (ii) by purchase if the committee has its own resource. For this programme well off farmers are persuaded to contribute to this bank. For example in the VFC Korbi (Bilaspur Forest Division) each of the 157 farmers have contributed 15 kg each, so a grain bank of about 24 qtl have been raised. Some of the committees which have been selected under M.P. Forestry Project have got the money for their Village Resource Development Programme and they have utilised this money for the purchase of paddy.

It has been decided that a needy person may take a loan from this and will have to return 1.25 times at the time of the crop. In the committees, where the paddy has been purchased, it will be sold to the needy persons @ 1.25 times of the purchase price irrespective of the prevailing market price; i.e. if paddy has been purchased @ Rs. 3/kg, it will be sold to the needy members of the committee @ Rs. 3.75 per kg, even if the market price is Rs. 5/kg. Under this scheme 69 Grain Banks have been started this year and a total of 857 qtl paddy has been deposited. Some of the grain banks are having a stock as high as 94 qtl. It is proposed to establish such grain bank in each of VFC/FPC and have a stock of 100 qtl of paddy so even the poorest members of the committee can feel secure for getting a loan from this bank for food as well as for seed.

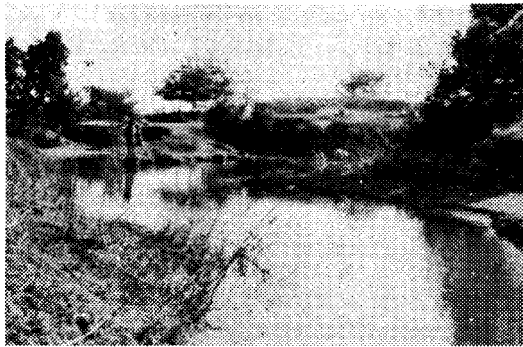
Increase in Irrigation Potential

There is no need to explain that in most of the villages there is a single crop pattern dependent on rain. The increase in irrigation potential may bring a silent revolution in these villages. There is no dearth of water because the rainfall is about 1200 mm in both the districts. The only need is to tap

this water and provide to the farmers for their second crop or for cash crops. Some VFCs were taken up under M.P. Forestry Project and money Rs. 90,000/- per year is given in lieu of protection of forest area and for village resource development. The committees are making good use of this money. Four VFCs in Bilaspur Division namely Paraswara, Karidongri, Bhootkachhar and Korbi, have taken up an ambitious programme of diverting the rain water from catchment areas to the existing tanks. They have made mostly tar-bunds so as to divert the water in lean months. This could be made possible only by infusing a sense of community belonging. The VFC members of Paraswara worked at a token money of Rs.10/- per day while those of Bhootkachhar, Karidongri and Korbi worked @ Rs. 20/- per day and not charging for one day in a week. The prevailing wage rate is Rs. 48/- per day. Working at a token wage could be possible only by infusing the sense of community. These efforts will increase an extra irrigation potential of about 60 acres in Karidongri VFC, about 70 acres in Korbi VFC, about 250 acres in Paraswara VFC and the whole agriculture land of Bhootkachhar VFC. The development of sense of community belonging which is a must for the success of JFM is being seen in these areas.

A low cost technology has been developed by Shri A.K. Pandey, S.D.O Pendra for construction of Janata Stop Dams. If there is a perennial nullah, a 'Janata Stop Dam' can be constructed. It requires 300-500 empty bags of cement. These bags are filled with easily available sand from nullah bed and used as blocks for stop dam. Such a stop dam was constructed at a cost of Rs. 2700/- (Cost of 300 empty cement bags = Rs. 1500 and labour 25 man-days @ Rs. 48/- per day = 1200). The water

Fig. 10



Janta Stop-dam

collected in this stop dam was 5 m wide, 1 m average depth and 1000 m long. This collected water can be used for vegetable growing in the adjoining fields. The cost of labour can be reduced if VFC/FPC members work with contributory labour. It can provide water for 8 months i.e. from mid-October to mid June. After mid-June this dam is to be dismantled and good bags can be again used.

Self Help Groups

The idea of Self Help Group is not new and not much to be told about that, but in this Circle this work has been taken up recently from Dec. 1996 onwards. Till March 1997 a total of 106 VFC/FPC have constituted these groups and an amount of Rs. 78,000/- have been deposited. Few of these groups have advanced loan to their members for e.g. an amount of Rs. 2,000/- was given by Ghotmar Self Help Group of Korba Division and Rs. 500/- was given for sewing machine by Self Help Group Bandhapara of North Bilaspur Division. The programme is picking up and by next year these Self Help Groups may be in a position to advance money for their members for self employment.

Social activities

Apart from the economic development of these committees, an emphasis has been given for their social awakening. Both the districts are tribal dominated and as usual they are habitual of taking liquor which is the big menace for their economic development. With the help of VFC/FPC they are persuaded to take up prohibition. I am happy to report that 44 of VFC/FPC have taken up the prohibition programmes. The committees have fixed up a social fine for the violation of this prohibition decision. In Jiwari Committee of Raigarh Division the ex-sarpanch (village headman) who violated prohibition was fined Rs. 500/-. In another committee of Bilaspur Division, three members who violated prohibition were fined Rs. 200/- each. If this prohibition programme continues then it will enormously help in alleviating the poverty in rural areas.

Another programme being taken up by the committees is literacy programme which they are running from their own resources. This literacy programme is going on in 8 committees. One of the committees Khondra Kanai (Bilaspur Division) decided to make literate all the committee members by 10th May 1997. The programme is being run at 5 centres and within 3 months time they were successful in making the illiterate members literate. This programme shall be extended further.

A radical decision by the 4 VFCs of Raigarh Division namely Navapali, Binjkot, Dhanuhardera and Ektal is that they will not use the fresh bamboo culms (locally known as karil) for vegetable making or for pickle. This decision was taken by the ladies folk of the village and they refused to make vegetable of karil brought by few male

Table 1

Abstract of Eco-Development Activities in VFC/FPC in Bilaspur Circle (M.P.)

Activity	No. of VFC/FPC benefited	No. of beneficiaries	Aggregate benefit to the Committees (Rs.)	Resource generation of the Committee	Remarks
Tassar Cultivation	27	208	178887	-	Includes 11 new committees got training in Nov. 96 crop
Lac cultivations					
(a) Community basis	08	-	40000	40000	Figures of 34 committees shall be included in June 97.
(b) Beneficiary basis	114	3863	2002852	-	
Bamboo based Cottage Industries	17	243	221040	20187	5 committees have made Agarbatti sticks yet to be sold
Exploitation of old sisal plantation and allied activities.	15	324	47500	7468	Training for decorative articles be given.
Pisciculture	41	-	672500	672500	-
Women's Nurseries	42	-	725000	-	Total 4.85 lakh plants will be prepared and likely profit Rs. 7.25 lakh in July/Aug.
Other Activities					
(a) Sabai Rope making	02	53	35000	2200	-
(b) Phoolbarhi	03	-	11450	-	-
(c) Vegetable growing					
(i) Community basis	11	-	39182	39182	-
(ii) Beneficiary basis	11	145	12800	-	-
(d) Mat making from Chhind Grass	06	83	95768	2900	-
(e) Dona Pattal from Sal leaves	32	570	654800	67445	-
Grain Banks	69 banks	-	857.65 Qtl	-	-
Self Help Groups	106	1389	78625	-	-
Total			4090404/-	851882	
			857.65 Quintals		

members. 5 committees of North Bilaspur Division have decided not to use the green wood at the time of marriage which they were traditionally doing.

Results and Discussions

The Eco-Development Programme for Village Resource Development in a planned

manner has been taken up in the Bilaspur Forest Circle and in a short duration of 7-8 months it has picked up. The abstract of these activities given in Table 1 shows that an additional income of Rs. 40.90 lakhs was generated to the committees and about Rs. 8.52 lakhs has been generated as resource money to the committees which can be utilised for the works like hand pump repair, school building repair and other developmental works. It is needless to mention that for petty community works the villagers used to run from pillar to post. The generation of resource money to these

committees will help them a long way for solving the petty problems and to do developmental works. These activities have picked up and now Commissioner, Bilaspur is whole - heartedly supporting these activities particularly for Tassar Cultivation and Pisciculture. His keen interest in developing the infrastructure for increasing the irrigation potential will also help the Forest Department for improving the lot of these committees. It is hoped that this model of eco-development will yield about Rs. 3-4 crores as additional income to the committees in the year 1997-98.

Acknowledgements

The results shown in this paper for various activities is a team effort from forest guards to Conservator of Forests. The success in implementing the various eco-development schemes of VFC/FPC is due to participation and contribution by all levels of officials.

SUMMARY

The dependence of landless and poor masses of the villages in the vicinity of forests for their livelihood, is a well known fact. An integrated approach for the eco-development of this target group is helping to reduce their dependence on the forest. Other groups are also being benefited by eco-development programmes and their active Co-operation is being sought for JFM

मध्य प्रदेश के बिलासपुर मण्डल में ग्राम वन समिति/ वन संरक्षण समिति के

ग्राम संसाधन विकास कार्यक्रम

जे०के० उपाध्याय

सारांश

यह एक सत्य है कि वनों के आस-पास रहने वाले भूमिहीन एवं गरीब अपनी आजीविका हेतु वनों पर निर्भर रहते हैं। इस समूह के आर्थिक उत्थान हेतु एक समन्वित प्रयास की आवश्यकता है जिससे वनों पर इनकी आश्रितता कम की जा सके। आर्थिक उत्थान के इन कार्यों से दूसरे समूह भी लाभान्वित होंगे तथा संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध हेतु इनका भी सहयोग लिया जा सकेगा।