

Good Practice Brief

Community Ownership and Institutional Mechanisms to Develop CPRs' and Enhance Livelihoods

The Kavalas Way

Common property resources (CPRs) are important for the livelihoods of the rural communities, especially poor. Various INGOs, NGOs and Government organisations have facilitated and successfully demonstrated the model for development of common lands by developing village institution mechanisms to bring in a bottoms-up approach to development with providing access to common resources that enhanced sustainable livelihood of the rural communities

The Good Practice shows:

- Increased biomass availability in terms of quantity and quality, thereby improving the overall year around fodder situation.
- The improved feed and fodder situation led to more output per animal – increased milk production – thus leading to more income from milk sale and improved family nutrition.
- Community led development of Common Property Resources through local ownership and an institutional mechanism greatly enhances livelihoods of livestock keepers especially the poor and landless.
- The practice has helped to improve the environment by reducing soil degradation and increasing soil moisture and vegetation.



What was the problem and Where?

Common lands play an important role in the life of the people as they support the livelihoods of the rural population, primarily that of poor and landless livestock keepers. Kavalas, in Rajasthan (India) is one such village where families below the poverty line derive 20% of their income from Common Property Resources (CPRs). The village *Panchayat*¹ has pasture lands of 180 ha. All community members have traditional rights to use it for grazing their animals. The village livestock population is over 3000 heads of animals of which 54%

¹ Local government at the village level

are sheep and goat and 46% are large ruminants. Rearing of animals is the most important source of livelihood towards improving economy of the villagers (Census 2007). Community pastures are often the only basic resource for the village livestock. With semi-arid environmental conditions, minimalistic rainfall and recurring droughts, the fodder availability from these lands is very limited.

The percentage of families dependent on mixed farming of the crop and livestock is 78% where as only 27% of land is under crop cultivation which resulted in the shortage of feed resources in terms of crop residues and greens. However, over the years large proportions of these common lands have degraded and lost their green cover due to overgrazing of the pastures. Moreover the decline in the CPRs is also due to illegal encroachment and unbalanced policies² which reallocate the pasture lands for other purposes. Shortage of fodder due to reduced areas of CPRs, degraded lands and overgrazing led to malnutrition in livestock. The decreasing pasture lands and consequent decrease in the feed availability for wild animals like the blue bull, has in-turn led to their damaging cultivated crops. In order to address problem of fodder shortage, INGO's (SDC, IC)³, and NGO's (BAIF, RRIDMA)⁴ together with the village community joined hands in 1991. The aim was to develop CPRs and village institutional mechanisms to respond to sustainable common land development.

How did the Good Practice Work?

During 1991, BAIF (henceforth mentioned as NGO) initiated work in selected villages of Asind and Mandal talukas of the Bhilwara district on a Sirohi goat development pilot project. Kavlas was one of the villages in this district. The project's focus was on improving goat productivity through breed improvement and augmenting feed resources. In this situation of shortage of fodder, the only option available to meet feed requirement was to convert degraded and poorly maintained common lands into valuable assets. To address this problem, the NGO's field staff and villagers promoted the concept of participatory common land development. All the stakeholders including the village community collectively decided on developing the village common land and managing it through local institution. The efforts to motivate and empower community for the development helped to generate ideas and modus operandi for pasture land development and management. Initially, the work started on 10 ha area during the year 1992-93, and subsequently 40 ha of village common land was covered by the year 1996.

The facilitating agencies provided financial and technological support while the village level Community Pasture Management Committee (CPMC) was promoted to implement, monitor and manage the CPRs. Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI's) were involved in supporting the initiative, endorsing the decisions of the CPMC and allocating land for the silvipasture development. The District Rural Development Authority (DRDA) supported the Cattle Breeding Centre (CBC) in the area that provided artificial insemination services, health care support and advised on feeding and management practices.

The essential component of the work focused on **institution building** by involving villagers in the process of regeneration of common land. Keeping in mind the need for over all skill development, the NGO's team was placed for overall coordination and monitoring of village activities. The team consisted of resource specialists from diverse backgrounds such as agriculture, livestock, and social sciences. They focused on promoting appropriate practices, taking into consideration the interest of different livestock keepers. The team mobilised and empowered the local community to form the CPMC which had the Gram Panchayat, livestock owners, landless people and village representatives from each caste along with the BAIF program officer its members. The CPMC played a pivotal role in the upkeep and maintenance of the silvipasture, equitable distribution of proceeds and in establishing linkages with the government.

The whole process started with **initial dialogue with the community** to come to a **consensus on area of grazing**. Since some sections of the society resisted, it was started with developing a small portion of 180 ha of pasture lands. The initiative was launched with the **formation of the CPMC** and there was an agreement on sparing a day every week for contributing voluntary labour-*Shram Daan*. PRA⁵ and RRA⁶ were commonly

²For example – promotion of bio fuels – like Jatropha, introduction of special economic zones etc

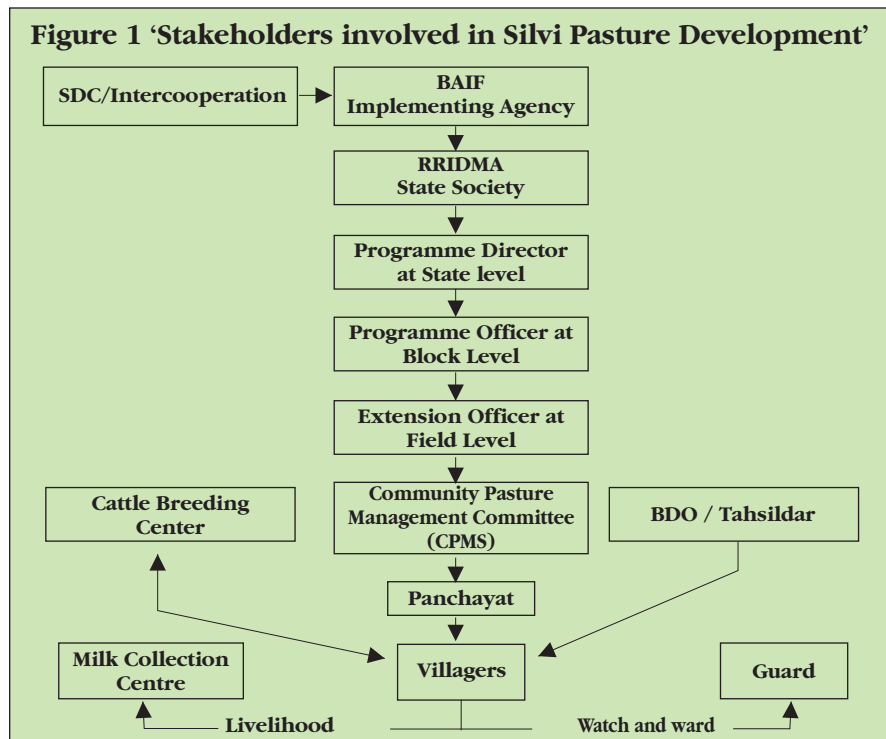
³Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation and Intercooperation

⁴BAIF Development Research foundation; Rajasthan Rural Institute for Development Management

⁵Participatory Rural Appraisal

⁶Rapid Rural Appraisal

used techniques to mobilise the villagers. The land to be developed was demarcated and enclosed by planting live hedge fence and forage grasses were sowed. **Conservation measures** like gully plugging, contour trenches, digging pits for tree plantation, mulching and preventive measures for pest control were taken. Challenging issues like stray grazing were tackled by charging fines which became the basis for the common corpus fund. Over a period, with land acquisitions and community playing a greater role, the role of the NGO changed from a community mobiliser and project implementer to that of a facilitator to ensure continuous technical support.



The development efforts made a big impact within a period of five years of starting the project. An abundance of better quality grass as well as tree fodder improved the microclimate, while establishing green cover to prevent soil erosion. Families have also learnt about the benefits of stall-feeding of livestock and preventive health measures to improve livestock productivity. The direct and indirect impact of developing is summarised below:

- **Biomass increased** from 160 kg/ha to 2,500 kg/ha in the 5th year. During the project period, a total of 310 tons of fodder biomass was produced and used by the families from 50 ha of regenerated common. In monetary terms, this was valued at Rs. 310,000 benefiting more than 90% of the families. The **increased fodder availability** was in the range of 15 - 20% of the total feed requirement of the livestock in the village. This has minimised the dependency on outside fodder collection as well as purchases.
- An estimated 31,657 cubic meter of **water has been conserved** and recharged which has improved sub soil moisture to support good plant growth.
- Soil treatment measures have prevented soil loss to the tune of 200 tons from the entire common land of 50 ha per year and **prevented soil erosion and degradation** of the commons.
- **Employment generation** of over 100 man days per ha due to activities like plantations, soil and water conservation, providing enclosure, grass seed collection and grass harvest.
- CPR development has contributed in the **growth of livestock in numbers and shift from low producing indigenous cattle to high producing cattle (crossbreed) and buffalo**. Subsequent **increase in milk production has led to** establishing of three dairy cooperatives in the area resulting in steady source of income.
- Indirect impact has been in terms of **community empowerment, improved nutrition and changes in the livestock management practices**.

Key Learnings

This good practice showcases how investment in building robust community systems and institutions impacts on sustainable management of CPRs resulting in improved tree and fodder biomass availability. It also showcases how an NGO can effectively facilitate transfer of technology in an iterative manner that assures its absorption and incorporation by village institutions. Other lessons learnt from the entire process is that

participatory approaches involving community and developing institutional mechanisms can lead to better management and development of CPRs.

The practice also taught that local communities play a key role in rehabilitation of common land development. The role of informal groups and local dynamics in sustaining /destroying the local management systems needs to be acknowledged. It also showcased that secure access to common land and rights to its benefits is a pre-condition for community based rehabilitation, development and maintenance of common land. Laws and policies that ensure access and benefits to the communities are needed if long term investments are to be made. For practices to be successful, it is important that the facilitating organisation should be well rooted in the village and community leadership be involved. Finally, the practice showcases the complexity of CPR management wherein multiple users come with multiple needs, thus signifying that 'building synergy within the common pool' is critical for sustainability.

What and Where Next?

This good practice is worth replication as its an organised method of regenerating and making use of common lands to enable a year round supply of fodder and tree biomass. The practice is environmentally sound and beneficial to the entire community. It illustrates mobilisation of community through appropriate technical support that empowers them to regenerate degraded village common lands to produce sufficient fodder for livestock as well as enhance livelihoods. Since the development efforts have been successful under semi arid conditions where livestock is a major source of livelihood, it has potential for replication. Acknowledging the success and benefits of the community pasture development, the state government has provided financial support under the SGSY⁷ scheme to replicate CPR development in 76 villages spread over an area of 2,520 ha in Rajasthan. Under the District Poverty Initiative Programme (DPIP) of the Government, work on 200 ha of common land has been completed in the Jhalawar district. Furthermore, 320 ha of community land spread over 9 villages in Bhilwara district were also regenerated. As a result, a total 3000 ha village common land was replicated under CPR development.

Since the last decade, the NGO has withdrawn from the project and the community is managing it successfully. This sets an example that although this model of silvipasture requires support at the onset in the form of community mobilisation, capacity building and institutionalisation, it is sustainable. This good practice also proves to be a perfect example of a bottoms-up development by poor as it has focused on capacity and institution building by involving villagers in the process of regeneration of common lands.

⁷ Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana

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