



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF JANA UTHAN POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMME IN INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

Over the long field experience, BAIF has realised that the development organizations approach the rural communities with specific activities, which benefit only a few sections of the community, while the others are left out, due to lack of resources or skills. In this process, it is often the poor who are left out of these development programmes. Therefore to overcome this situation, the new approach – known as 'Jana Uthan Approach' has been developed. Under this approach, the Extension Workers interact with the local community with an open mind and to bring them together to identify the local problems. The community is then encouraged to interact closely and identify the members into 3-4 economic categories based on their income and the access to various resources. Then the local groups identify the resources and the opportunities for the individual families belonging to different categories with objectives of bringing all the sections above poverty. In this process while the marginally poor get smaller support through 1 or 2 development intervention, to come out of poverty, the poorest families having limited resources are given opportunity to participate in multiple activities. Thus the poor have scope to earn their income from several sources and the chances of failure are low. This approach is helpful to maintain transparency of the programme and promotes harmony among the members of different economic categories.

The Jana Uthan Approach also poses a challenge to the development agencies to find suitable solutions to the problems of the landless and resource poor families. This calls for the search of suitable off-farm production and service activities to be undertaken by the poor, particularly the landless. Some of the important off-farm activities are pottery, smithy, carpentry, textile and services such as automobile hire and repairs, electrical wiring and repairs, masonry, production of pre-casted materials, civil construction, consumer stores, etc. While the off-farm activities have serious limitation due to poor infrastructure for input supply and marketing, the success of most of the on-farm activities are dependent on the productivity and management of the natural resources.

Presently, all the important natural resources like land, water, forest vegetation and livestock, which are critical inputs for providing gainful self-employment and generation of GNP are under-utilised. These resources which are the basic assets for providing sustainable livelihood are proving to be liabilities. Therefore, the strategy for sustainable development is to improve the productivity of the natural resources and develop the capabilities of the local communities to make optimum use of these resources for their livelihood. Efficient management of the natural resources can generate secondary resources, which in turn can provide additional employment opportunities. With this background, BAIF has developed a multi-disciplinary programme for sustainable management of natural resources, which include livestock development, watershed development, agroforestry and promotion of post-production and non-farm activities. These activities have good potential to provide employment opportunities even to the landless, small landholders and women, while conserving environment and biodiversity.

Programme Impact

Dairy Development: BAIF initiated livestock development programme through the upgradation of local cattle and buffaloes for milk production as most of the rural families including the landless maintain livestock most of the rural families benefited from this programme. Indeed the poor are more dependent on the livestock than the rich as they do not have adequate land and water resources to engage in agricultural development activities.

Realising the drawback of the local cattle with respect to productive and reproductive inefficiencies, BAIF has taken up the crossbreeding of such low productive, non-descript cattle. The programme also covers the buffaloe improvement by breeding non-descript with improved breeds. Under this programme a cluster of 10-15 villages will be headed by a trained technician who will provide breeding services to cows and buffaloes at the door steps of the farmers, using frozen semen of superior sires. Motivation, awareness about the benefits, delivery of various services, regular follow up, technical guidance, timely health care, supply of critical inputs have been helpful to the farmers to take full advantage of this programme.

Impact on Livestock Production

Crossbred calves born at the door steps of the rural families come to milk production at the age of 28-32 months and yield about 2500-2700 kg milk per lactation (300 days). This programme encourages the farmers to stall feed their valuable animals and reduce the herd size by selling un-productive animals. A crossbred cow is able to contribute a net income of Rs.5000 per year apart from other benefits such as supply of milk for home consumption, particularly for children, dung for biogas and manure and efficient use of various agricultural by-products as feed. The programme provides an excellent opportunity for the empowerment of women and improve the eco-system by reversing the unhealthy trends of stray grazing, inbreeding and spread of diseases. A family with three crossbred cows is able to remain out of poverty and lead a sustainable livelihood.

Presently, BAIF's programme is spread over 40000 villages through 1400 cattle development centres in 12 states. Atleast 2 lakh female crossbred cattle and buffaloe calves are born every year and the value of the milk produced from this programme is over Rs. 1650 crores per annum. Presently at least 5 lakh families have taken advantage of this programme to come out of poverty. This programme has the potential to expend throughout the country, as milk is a staple food for the growing population in the country.

Development of Community Pastures

In drought prone regions of Rajasthan, where rainfall is erratic, farmers are more dependent on livestock than on agriculture for their survival. In such areas the community pastures have been heavily degraded due to uncontrolled grazing. With the degradation of community lands, the other problems such as soil erosion, deforestation and depletion of ground water have been accelerated further affecting the natural resources. Therefore BAIF decided to take up community pasture development on a pilot basis in Bhilwara district of Rajasthan. Initially the work was

undertaken at village Kavlas by identifying 10 ha of pasture land out of 200 ha belonging to a temple trust. The villagers were reluctant as there was a fear of land that the land brought under such development will not be available for their use. Fortunately, as BAIF was already operating a cattle development centre in the village, the villagers had full faith in the organisation and were willing to take part in this experiment.

Project Implementation

The project was initiated with the formation of a pasture committee taking one representative from each of the 10 communities. The major activities proposed were to dig trench cum mould for establishing live hedges, contour bunding, gully plugging, sowing of seeds of forage of legumes and grass species to enrich the quality of forage. Over the next 3 years, the villagers participated in protection, collection of seeds, harvesting grass and trimming of the trees grown in the pasture. The villagers were extremely happy to realise that with the investment of Rs.10,000 per ha they were able to generate output worth Rs.6000-7000 ever year in the form of fodder and fuelwood. Looking to the success, additional areas were brought under the community pasture development not only in Kavlas but also in 15 different villages in the Rajasthan. Apart from the production of forage there were several other benefits such as recharging the ground water, reduction in soil erosion resulting in improved agricultural production in the neighboring areas, rehabilitation of wild animals like blue bulls in the pasture which were damaging agricultural crops. There was good harmony established among various sections of the society and there was a direct benefit on the productivity of livestock in this villages. Looking to this success the Government of India has now provided additional support to expand this programme in about 200 villages.

Water Resource Development: Development of water resources and wastelands are other important activities, having good potential for supporting the livelihood. However, with watershed development alone particularly the small farmers owning poor quality land, cannot take advantage as they do not have the capacity to invest in land development and critical agricultural inputs. Hence they do not take active part in such programmes. Therefore the strategy adopted is to combine watershed management with development of low productive agricultural lands and wastelands owned by the weaker sections of the society. As there is a close link between poor quality land and poverty, BAIF has been taking up the development of private lands on priority to ensure adequate income generation for the poor, before expecting them to participate in community land development. Such a step has helped to motivate the community to conserve the community pastures and forests in the future.

In all the watershed development programmes, involvement of the community right from the stage of planning has been a critical factor, for the success. Mobilising the community through entry point activities and establishing effective communication through SHGs and village level planning committees, participation of the community in resource identification and development have been the important elements of the programme. With watershed development, introduction of the improved agricultural practices such as use of certified seeds, promotion of timely tillage operations, integrated pest management, supply of micro-credit to procure inputs, setting up of grain bank to meet the emergency needs of the poor etc. have played a very significant role in building the confidence of the community and sustain their interest.

Active involvement of the local community in watershed development has also helped in tapping their traditional wisdom and come out with several innovations. In South Karnataka, where the soil is sandy and the annual rainfall is only 750 mm, traditional approach of contour bunding was not feasible and construction of percolation tanks could benefit only a few farmers having their land on lower portion of the grid. Hence the farmers come up with the idea of digging 1-2 farm ponds per hectare to retain rainwater in their own fields.

Introduction of cattle development in the watershed has also played a very significant role in improving the economic viability of

the programme. It has been observed that most prominent and immediate benefit of watershed development is conservation of soil and water, resulting in increased grass production on field bunds, borders and on all the available cultivated and non-cultivated lands. The advantage of this grass output can be harnessed only when the farmers own valuable livestock which can respond suitably through higher milk production. Such Multidisciplinary activities have helped in taking best advantage of the watershed development programmes.

Tree Based Farming: While promoting land development programmes along with watershed development, tree based farming has several advantages. Trees are hardy, capable of withstanding harsh weather conditions and to provide income for a long period. However, crop selection is dependent on the soil productivity and moisture supply. Most of the small farmers prefer fruit crops, as they can earn regular income, although there is high demand for labour.

CONCLUSION

Promotion of tree based farming on private wastelands for food security and income generation is a major programme of BAIF. This programme to promote agri-horti-forestry for food and fodder security and marginal lands also covers women empowerment, community health, drinking water supply, hygiene and sanitation and capacity building. The poor families participating in this programme establish drought tolerant fruit crops such as mango, cashew, tamarind, custard apple, ber, etc. on their marginal or wastelands covering 0.4 to 1.0 ha. The interspace is used for cultivating arable crops, which they have been growing earlier and the field bunds and borders are used to establish hardy shrubs and trees useful for fodder, fuel, timber and herbal medicines.

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