

Subgroup members Mr. Anwar, Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Ms. Mary, Timbaktu Collective, Dr. Rao, Grama Vikas and Mr. Ramkumar, IC participated in field visits.

Field visits were made to M.C. Thanda (Jana jagriti/CWS), Mushtikovela village (Timbaktu Collective) in Ananthapur district of Andhra Pradesh and to Putteru, Husekere and Devarasamudram (Grama Vikas) in Kolar district of Karnataka.

Visit to M.C.Thanda watershed (Jana jagriti/CWS)

The team members interacted with the village community and visited the watershed area.

Observations:

- Community organization/mobilization was excellent
- Awareness of the community towards various government programs is very good
- Watershed committee has a good representation of the community (one member from each household is represented in the committee, there are about 90 households)
- Good coordination among the committee members and the committee respects command in the community
- Equal participation of women and men
- Rules and regulations framed for managing water bodies and sharing of water (avoiding water intensive crops such as paddy and sugar cane, no new borewells to be dug, no individual borewells, ceiling on the extent of irrigation etc.)
- Enforcement of rules is mainly based on trust and a simple legal document was prepared with regards to the agreement over ownership and sharing of borewells
- Initially there was hesitation to go for borewells but the villagers felt that even after conserving water and when the water table has gone up, why they should still depend on rainfed agriculture
- Rules and regulations were framed prior to drilling borewells, as a precondition to get the loans for borewells
- Protection and rules and regulations for common property resource management (planting trees on a hillock and monitoring them)
- They managed to keep adjacent villagers away from their CPRs after getting permission from the collector
- Future planning of tasks by the community members is good

Role of facilitating organization: Jana Jagriti

- Community mobilization: Created a vision among the community about their future and planned accordingly
- Brought about convergence among the various departmental activities in the village
- Inculcated the habit among the community, of monitoring the water levels in the bores by a machine that measures the water depth

Uniqueness about the community and the village:

- Strong enthusiasm and motivation in the community to improve their conditions
- Willingness to experiment by the community
- Good leadership qualities among the committee members (belonging to both watershed and groundwater management)
- Good coordination and discipline among members
- Small and homogeneous community
- Strong kinship exists among the community members (Many are related to each other)
- Equal land holdings among the community members (3-5 acres on average)
- The topography of the watershed keeps the conserved water among the lands of the members and does not permit its use by other communities whose lands are away from these lands
- The area is isolated from the lands of other politically strong communities

Visit to Mushtikovela village, Chinnakothapalli mandal (Timbaktu Collective)

The field visit provided a good idea about the development of common property resources (forests, tanks and other watershed structures) and the constraints that are encountered while undertaking of such works.

The major activities undertaken in the villages are:

- Regeneration of forests in common lands (Revenue waste lands and Reserve Forests) to an extent of 8500 acres
- Revitalisation of agricultural lands belonging to small and marginal farmers
- Rejuvenation of traditional water-harvesting structures (tanks, kuntas, wells & other water bodies)
- Developing a relevant banking system with rural women from marginalized families
- Education and organisation of youth and Dalits.

The experience provided a snapshot of the evolution of institutions and the rules and regulations that evolved for:

- Managing and protecting the forest resources that were developed over a period of 15 years

- Managing tanks and sharing of tank water among the land holders in the command area through the Neeruganti system.
- The interlinkages among the various community organizations – the Vana Samrakshana Samithis, the youth associations and the women self help groups that finally resulted in collective and organized decision making processes.

Visit to Grama Vikas, Kolar

Dr. Rao shared his experiences with tank restoration and management practices in Karnataka with the other group members. Andhra Pradesh is planning to start similar community tank restoration project on a pilot scale in Ananthapur and Mahabubnagar districts and the sharing of experiences really helps in this context. Ms. Mary and Mr. Anwar were especially interested in undertaking community tank restoration and management projects in their respective areas.

Some of the salient points in this regard are:

- Issues concerned with silt removal:
 - Desiltation of tank was a neglected aspect and is allowed only to the extent of tank bund requirement (which is almost equivalent to no desiltation) due to cost cutting measures of the respective government department. Official contention regarding desiltation works is that if desiltation is more, water may not reach other tanks, which may not be true since every tank has two catchments, one original and another from surplus of other tanks.
 - Funding for desiltation activities were calculated based on water requirement calculations for the old tank command area (available with the Minor Irrigation department) and not based on current command area, which is much higher. Also the calculations are based on a hydrological model that may not be suitable to Indian conditions and relies on past rainfall data that may not reflect specific local conditions.
 - Another shortcoming in the desiltation activity was that excavation of silt is mainly oriented towards machines (JCB) instead of promoting manual labor. The amount paid for wages also comes to a meager amount making it less preferable for the local labor to come.
 - Most of the lands that are away from the tank are those of dalits and there is no payment provision for transportation of silt to their fields. This resulted in lack of access to silt to these farmers and thereby crop productivity is lost.
 - Catchment area farmers should also be able to avail benefits from tank silt.
 - Not taking up desiltation also affects fisheries, as there is no scope for dead storage in the tank.
- Program needs to focus more on community, women, labor force and environment

- Better involvement of NGOs in the implementation process rather than simply treated as contractors to execute tasks.
- The tank management program lacks linkages with other programs such as watershed program.
- Sustainability of the community organizations is through the linkages between the Tank User Group (TUG) and the panchayat sub-committee. The Panchayat sub-committee comprises of 9 to 21 members including the Panchayat secretary and representatives from the different interest groups such as landless, artisans, livestock herders, fishery, command area farmers and catchment area farmers.
- Issue of encroachments: Resettlement and rehabilitation plan involves compensation to the extent of Rs.25000 per unit (a household member of 18 years and above is considered as one unit), if a farmer loses more than 20 percent of land and belongs to a BPL household.

The team visited Putteru, Husakere and Devarasamudram villages. In Putteru, a system of sharing tank water called “Domasu system” is being followed, in which, the land near the head region of the tank is shared among the community to assure food security to all including the tail enders. Under this system, limited water in the tank is shared among the farming community (during second crop) by asking farmers at farther end of the tank command area to stop cultivation and sharing the land owned by the farmers at the head end. The land allotted to the tail end farmers is based on their proportionate land holdings.

This is a traditional practice and requires trust among the community for successful sharing of water. Farmers at the head region feel that by sharing land with the tail-enders, they are increasing the water availability in the remaining land and hence have better prospects of having a good crop.

The visits to Husekere and Devarasamudram provided useful insights into the processes that go into the tank restoration and management practices. For example, in Husekere, the local youth association and women groups actively contribute to tank management. The tank user group comprises of the entire village and also members from adjacent villages who have land under the tank. The contribution towards the tank management by members is based on the proportion of landholdings. Apart from agriculture, the tank also generates income in the form of fodder (Kasuvu) on the tank bunds that is auctioned and also through fishing.

Activities planned:

The group felt that there is a convergence of issues in terms of water management and that there are underlying commonalities in the processes involved. It was felt that it would be worth to identify the common elements in the successes and also the common constraints and strategies to cope with the challenges.

Products into the next learning event:

Case study by Ms. Mary: The study would describe the events and processes that contributed to the evolution of rules and regulations for management of natural resources in Mushtikovela village of Ananthapur District.

Case studies by Dr. Rao:

- (1) A study that focuses on the rules and regulations that are applicable to tank management (catchment area management and command area management) and the challenges involved.
- (2) A small case study on the water sharing system called “Domasu” in Putteru village.

Case study by Mr. Anwar: The case study looks into the rules and regulations for governing groundwater management and constraints/challenges in enforcing them.

It was tentatively agreed by the members to meet sometime between 3rd April and 8th April for about 3 days. The exact dates and location are yet to be decided depending on the convenience of the other members Ms. Nafisa and Mr. Mattia.