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Sustainable rural livelihood security in the backward Districts of Maharashtra

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Abstract

The paper covers the BAIF led National Agricultural Innovations Project is an initiative by ICAR and supported by the World Bank. (NAIP) (Component 3- NAIP has four component with component 3 on livelihood security) subproject which commenced in 2007 in 76 villages of five backward districts of Maharashtra India with the objective of developing a holistic solution for promoting sustainable livelihoods. Agriculture was the mainstay of livelihood in these areas; however usage of traditional methods, lack of proper irrigation facilities etc led to lower yields causing a 'forced' migration to the nearby urban centers. The sustainability approach involved integrated cluster development comprising of interventions that focused on: improved agriculture methods, livestock development, water resource development and forest based initiatives. This partnership between GO-NGO-people's organizations has positively impacted over 12,000 families in addressing their livelihood needs.

Keywords: Maharashtra; Asia, tribal, sustainable; livelihoods; sericulture; livestock; agriculture; backward; livestock; development; BAIF; NAIP;

1. Introduction

The Millennium Development Goals 2012 report released by the UN state that by 2015, 1 billion people across the globe will live on less than USD 1.25/day. Four out of five persons living in dire poverty will be residents of sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia of which India is a major country. The need to reconcile agricultural production and rural livelihoods with healthy ecosystems has prompted widespread innovation and policy action (Jackson 2002;

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Acharya 2006) Sustainable agricultural development and food security remains a key focus area for India considering that nearly 70 percent of the population is in rural areas and depends upon agriculture as their livelihood source. Farmland is fast shrinking in size. Given the fact that the largest share of employment still continues to be in the agricultural sector, this negative trend has major repercussions from the viewpoints of poverty and inequality. *(For details refer annexure table T1)*

Many technological challenges are riddling the Indian Agriculture. Despite the shrinking share (23%) of the agricultural sector in the economy, a majority of the labour force (nearly 60%) continues to depend on agriculture. About 75% of India's poor people with low purchasing power live in the rural areas and nearly 60% of the cultivated area is under the rain fed farming. Problems such as illiteracy, lack of access to formal sources of credit and the small and marginal land holdings further compound the problem. The phenomena such as soil erosion, nutrient depletion, water scarcity, adverse climatic changes, and intoxication of soil and water pose a threat to the food security of the nation and the livelihood security of farming communities.

2. Objectives

The paper highlights a new paradigm which can help to to combat the typical situation prevailing in most rural villages in India and in other parts of the globe with the help of an actual case study. This unique aspect of this model is the collaboration between the winning troika viz the government, people's organization and a consortium of development institutions having unique specialization areas

1. It aims at making the connection between the fortification of the village economy as envisioned by Gandhi and the 'new' BOP theory propagated by (Karnani, 2005) which calls on corporations particularly those operating in developing nations to view this section as a key business driver and invest in fortifying it rather than merely drawing upon it for opportunistic reasons-making a case for organizations to view this as a strategic rather than an altruistic cause
2. The idea is also to highlight the efficacy of simple solutions (as described in the case study) which have consistent replication possibilities. Hence it also attempts to make a point that it's not an infusion of the latest technology that is required to make a difference but dedicated efforts by the various stakeholders involved that can make the difference.

3. Brief Overview of Related Literature

The 'human footprint' analysis of Sanderson et al (2002) that 80-90% of land habitable by humans is affected by some form of productive activity. More than one billion people mostly agriculture-dependant now live within the world's 25 biodiversity 'hot-spots' i.e. most threatened species-rich regions on earth (Myers et al 2002).Agrochemical nutrient pollution from the US farm belt are the principal cause for the 'dead zone' in the Gulf of Mexico 1500 km away (Rabalais et al 2002) and similar impact has been felt in the Baltic Sea and along the cost of China and India..Tilman at al (2001) predicts that providing food security to a population of approximately 9 billion using the current methods could result in conversion of another 1 billion hectares of natural habitat to agricultural production. Water availability is likely to be serious limiting factor since about 70% of the freshwater being used by people is currently being devoted to agriculture (Rosegrant et al 2002).A declining rate of growth yields in traditional 'foodbowls' such as Punjab(India), Midwest (USA) suggests that most new production may not come from the areas of highest current grain productivity and that some areas are experiencing declining yields or productivity of inputs (Rosegrant and Clien 2003).The US Department of Agriculture have concluded that with each 1^{o} C increase in temperature during the growing season the yields of maize and wheat and rice drop by 10% (Tan and Shibasaki 2003)..Considerable investments will be required to rehabilitate degraded resources and ecosystems upon which food supplies particularly of the rural poor ,depend (UN Millennium Project 2005).The '*adivasis'* (scheduled tribes) population in India constitutes about 8.14%.of the total population or approximately 85 million people (Census of India, 2001). .These households traditionally derive sustenance through forestry, hunting and primitive agriculture practices (Phansalkar and Verma 2005). However fast depleting forest, and natural resources, land erosion, lack of access to basic health and hygiene have made seasonal migration into nearby cities – a virtual necessity. In the cities these landless workers have to live in deplorable conditions and often get exploited by middlemen. Small farms are typically characterized by smaller applications of capital and land augmenting techniques. But smaller farmers also put in more labor and other inputs (Ajwani-Ramchandani 2010).