



Reflections

My Words.....

Our endeavour to fight poverty over the past two decades has been in line with the national and international development agenda that features poverty reduction strategies aimed at 'targeting the poor'. Yet, poverty and inequality remain intractable foes. It is now increasingly being felt that unless institutional reforms and political environment are supportive of grassroots initiatives, making the most of such efforts towards upscaling would remain elusive.

With a substantial portion of the country's population being poor, it makes sense to link poverty with the dynamics of development. Inclusive development is the key that may help connect the poor as active partners and gainers in the pursuit of development. However, the challenge is to convert such 'good intentions' into 'smart actions'. The task would remain far from being complete as long as a vast majority remains below poverty line and till income inequality gets appreciably reduced.

The short glimpses on our efforts in this newsletter reflect one part of the story, the other part has yet to be fathomed.

Dr. K. G. Wankhede
Chief Executive

Your Words.....

I am expecting that after the formal partnership with your esteemed organization, we will come out with lot of success stories like the one in your newsletter. We need to speed up the collaboration as we look forward to working with IFFDC in Sindri.

- Pradeep Ghosal, ACC Limited

Thank you for sharing with us the success stories through 'IFFDC Reflections'. Please accept our greetings and best wishes for future.

- Dr. R.K. Gupta,
Dhara Division, MDF & V Pvt. Ltd.

I agree, we have to do lot of things, small states have been carved out but we should work diligently to achieve the goal. Wish we had corporate culture to achieve *ramrajya*.

Swami Krishnananda Maharaj
Senior Social Worker, Karnataka

It is good that IFFDC has moved to other states from its original states - UP, MP & Rajasthan. The case study of Jaswant Nagar is appreciable.

- Dr. Virendra Kumar
Former Chairman IFFDC

Managing the Commons

Systems are up and running.....

In 2006, the democratically-elected water users' committee took it upon itself to maintain the imposing water-harvesting structure and run a system of equitable distribution of stored water. Four years later, the news is that the institution and the systems are up and running.

Chhayan, a village of 104 households, has lived up to its image of being a community of disciplined people. Not only have they shared resources amongst themselves, they have built friendly alliance with neighboring Panawala. Of the total 64 members on the water users' committee, 23 come from village Panawala with whom stored water is shared on mutually agreeable terms. Between two communities, water acts as a



Committee Members Closing Anicut Gates

bridge for peace and harmony. The erstwhile animosity between the two communities is history!

It was in the summer of 1999 that the village was identified for works under the DFID-supported Western India Rainfed Farming Project in Pratapgarh district of Rajasthan. Named *Varli Ghat Anicut*, 45 meter long anicut was built across the Eraw river at a cost of Rs. 6 lakh. Given that a large majority of households in the village may not get served by the limited amount of water stored in the structure, as many from outside the command area were compensated through engagement in construction work as possible. Further, wells were deepened in non-command area and a range of entrepreneurial activities were initiated too.

Implemented by IFFDC, the community was empowered to form user group for operation and maintenance of structure. The farmers whose land came under the command area formed WUC. The 64 member general body has elected 11- members executive committee to operate and maintain the anicut. Not only are there well-developed regulations but records are maintained efficiently too. The rules have been framed taking into account the issue of equity in water distribution.

Prior to the construction of the anicut, rabi crop was literally non-existent in the village. Assured irrigation has brought 24 hectares under wheat crop. Fodder has been an unintended gain. The net impact of this transformation has been on seasonal migration and upkeep of milch cattle. The actual impact, computed over the years, is several times the investment made in the village. The water charges levied on the users help support repair and upkeep of the structure.

Each year, the committee takes initiative to close the gates timely. The meetings of the WUC are regularly held and the accounts are properly maintained. There is a sense of ownership amongst the members that has kept the systems up and running. Chhayan is a interesting case of community managed institution for managing the commons.

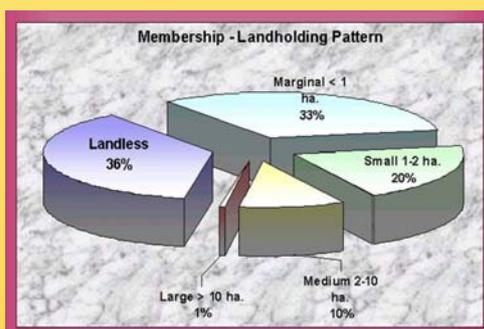
Right to Inclusion guaranteed

As reported in earlier issue of this newsletter (Aug 2010), IFFDC has created 146 Primary Farm Forestry Cooperative Societies (PFFCS) in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh to manage as much as 27,000 ha of afforested wastelands during last two decades. A question has often been raised whether cooperatives ensure inclusion of the weakest.

To respond to the query, available data from each of the societies have been analysed. The results are indeed startling. Records indicate that 89% of the members are landless, small and marginal farmers. Less than 1% members have large hand holding. It clearly demonstrates that the cooperative societies provide adequate space and scope for the poor and the marginalised to be partners and beneficiaries in the institutional mechanism at the grassroots.

PFFCS membership according to the land holding size is depicted in the following diagram.

Total Membership 28287



In terms of women representation to the societies, the results are no less impressive. Women membership is close to 40 per cent of the total membership. Women are the most disadvantaged section of the society and to provide opportunities and a strong platform for women empowerment has been a significant achievement by PFFCS.

Women representation in PFFCS

S. No.	Particulars	No.	Per cent
1	Male	17,764	62.8
2	Female	10,523	37.2
Total		28,287	100

While inclusive growth has become a buzzword only recently, PFFCS were designed to be inclusive from the start. The executive committee of the PFFCS is responsible for planning, execution and monitoring

of the annual plan approved by the general body. In the bye laws of the societies, a provision has been made to have at least 2 persons from scheduled castes/tribes and 1 woman member into the executive committee consisting of 9 members. The EC holds the right to select its chairperson. Interestingly, some 30 per cent of chairpersons to 148 EC's belong to marginalised communities. Right to inclusion has been guaranteed in PFFCS.

NEST

King Bruce and the Spider

The 14th consecutive but unsuccessful meeting with a group of 25 tribal families in Sagoona village in Kabirdham district of Chhattisgarh reminded the team of the famous story of King Bruce of Scotland who didn't give up even after facing repeated defeats in the battlefield. Inspired by the attempts of a spider, which the king had spotted while in the hiding, that had successfully scaled the height of the beam on the frail thread in her seventh attempt King Bruce had made one last attempt to win the invincible war.

The leader needed to be inspired and in Guoter was the most admired figure in the village. Having witnessed failed attempts by development projects in the past, Guoter was one amongst those who were apprehensive of any fresh move. A three pronged strategy was developed: one team for social mobilization; second team for organizing exposure visit and the third for participatory planning and subsequent implementation. That fruit trees take time to fruition was another hurdle to cross.

Guoter made it clear that without water there could not be any development. A bore well was the easiest and the quickest solution but for the fact that the district administration had forbidden sinking any new bore well. It took weeks of convincing before a 'go-ahead' was received for a bore well. The leader in Guoter was inspired who convened a meeting of the village to be supportive of IFFDC's efforts in establishing backyard fruit farming under its 'nutritional and ecological security program'. Rest, as they say, is history.

What began in 2008 as a humble effort is now a successful program wherein 25 acres of land along the slopes has been protected to yield rich dividends. While the *mango* and *aonla* plantations have yet to yield fruits, 38 quintals of arhar and 42 quintals of gram alongside a reasonable harvest of seasonal vegetables through inter-cropping have paved way for a successful intervention, worthy of emulation. 



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