



Action Research
In Five States
Completed
P2



Interview
With
Dr. Jayant Kumar
P4

NEWSLETTER



Dr. Indira Naidu
A True
Philanthropist
P6



Farmer Fight
Impact Of
Climate Change
P7

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MF CONDUCTS WORKSHOP ON ORGANIC FARMING



Jhabua (MP): A workshop on organic farming in the backdrop of impact of climate change was held here in the first week of July. The exercise is a prelude to regional and state consultations following the research action on climate change and its impact on sustainable agriculture. More than 50 farmers from Jhabua and Ranapur blocks participated in the workshop and shared their experiences.

Speaking on the occasion, Benedict Damore, member, Madhyaanchal Forum, said that the phrase “Organic Farming” was coined by the scientists to distinguish between chemical fertilizers induced current agricultural practices and India's traditional sustainable agriculture practices which used only organic manure. “Before independence the Indian farmers practiced organic farming without using chemical fertilizers. But to boost the production of agriculture crops chemical fertilizers made inroads into agriculture. This phase was called green revolution. Though this raised the agriculture production many fold, it completely devastated the top soil resulting in countless health hazards”, he said.

Mr Damore said that during green revolution certain crops such as wheat, barley and maize got tremendous boost. Till the onset of green revolution the use of chemical fertilizers per hectare was only 2 kg which alarmingly increased to more than 100 kg per hectare.

Mr SS Chauhan assistant coordinator, department of agriculture, Jhabua, said that overdependence on chemical fertilizers has posed new challenges for humans and the agriculture. Mr Azharullah Khan presented the key features of the action research.

MF DELHI STRATEGIC MEET: ACTION RESEARCH, FUTURE PLANS DISCUSSED

New Delhi: The representatives of MF partners from all the six states- Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh- participated in a strategic meeting held in Delhi on June 23. The major focus of the meeting was to present the status of the research studies being conducted in these states on climate change and its impact on agriculture, nutrition, policies and entitlements, and other issues related to marginalised communities and diminishing tribes.

While the research studies have been completed in all the states, data analysis and compilation of all the reports are in full swing. The participants also discussed the challenges being faced in the process. Most of the participants agreed to have national and state level consultations on these studies. The tentative dates for the presentation of reports at state level have also been finalised beginning August till mid-September.



ACTION RESEARCH IN FIVE STATES COMPLETED

Findings point at vulnerability of the marginalised on socio-economic indicators

Climate change impacts livelihoods in HP, UK while illiteracy, malnutrition, unemployment and inaccessibility to government schemes emerged as major findings in other states

The action research initiated by Madhyanchal Forum (MF) in May in five states on socio-economic conditions of the marginalised, poor and the tribes has been completed. These states are - Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. In Chhatisgarh the study is still going on and will be completed soon. The findings of the studies have shown their vulnerabilities to economic shocks arising out of loss of livelihoods, mainly due to climate change, malnutrition, illiteracy, migration, unemployment and inaccessibility to government schemes. Here we present the broad findings of these studies.

Uttarakhand & Himachal Pradesh

These two Himalayan states have borne the brunt of the climate change in the recent years

A total of 125 HHs were selected for the interview among 3935 households having a total population of 14913 from the selected 13 villages in both the states.

The findings of the study showed that at least one member of each respondent household migrated to other places for education and employment opportunities or for some other reasons due to impact of climate change on human life and livelihoods, mainly agriculture. The average household income in villages of Uttarakhand was found to be lower than the average income per household in Himachal Pradesh.



Irrigation is a major challenge in these two states. Of the total cultivable land (excluding barren land) per household the irrigated lands accounts for 14.75%, 17.75% and 7.93% in Pahi, Raithal and Dhatmir villages of Uttarakhand. In Himachal Pradesh, the total irrigated land accounted for 45.11%, 40.94%, 37.04% and 44.56% of total cultivable land in Kibber, Sangla, Kufri and Dewari villages respectively.

The average production of traditionally cultivated crops declined drastically due to changes in climate (especially temperature and rainfall), reduced soil productivity, decreasing cattle population (major source of manure to the fields) and increasing migration. Shrinking landholdings due to developmental activities, bifurcation of households (increasing trend of nuclear families replacing joint families), lack of manpower (working population migrating to nearby towns in search of education and employment leaving behind the old/aged person) have adversely impacted the agriculture. Traditional millet crops such as Mandua (Ragi), Jhangora, Kauni, Cheena, Chulai, Kuttu, etc. are now on the verge of extinction in the project area exposing people to food crisis.

The annual temperature has been forecast to increase from $0.9^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0.6^{\circ}\text{C}$ to $0.6^{\circ}\text{C} \pm 0.7^{\circ}\text{C}$ in the 2030s. The net increase in temperature ranges from 1.7°C to 2.2°C with respect to the 1970s. Seasonal air temperatures are also forecast to rise in all seasons. However, winter temperatures (during October, November and December) are likely to decrease by 2.6°C in the 2030s with respect to the 1970s.

Rajasthan



In Rajasthan too, the compilation of action research on climate change and its impact on sustainable agriculture is nearing completion and the preparations are afoot to hold regional and state level consultations. The consequences of climate change on agriculture are quite visible across regions, arid and semi arid areas. The study reveals that climate change is kind of double whammy for the farmers with recurrent drought spells, unpredictable floods, hail storms and attack of insects causing immense damage to the crops. The study also brought to light the poor access of the marginalised to the government scheme for the rural households. As far as the minimum support price (MSP) for the crops are concerned, it does not match the input cost as even after a recent hike by the government, farmers may not benefit much from it. Many feel that MSP was already so low that the hike is not going to make much difference. There is lack of awareness on the insurance of the crops. Only a select few who are aware can avail of the insurance scheme, the study reveals.

According to the 4×4 assessment, the annual rainfall in the Himalayan region may vary between 1268 ± 225.2 mm and 1604 ± 175.2 mm. The precipitation that has been forecast shows a net increase in the 2030s with respect to the simulated rainfall of the 1970s in the Himalayan region by 60 to 206 mm. The increase in the annual rainfall in the 2030s with respect to that of the 1970s ranges from 5% to 13%.

Uttar Pradesh

In Uttar Pradesh the study focused on the socio-economic conditions of the marginalised and socially excluded musahar, nut and lona communities. The major issues emerged in the survey were-illiteracy, food crisis and inaccessibility to the government schemes for the poor. The survey revealed that 61 % of them are illiterate, 26 % studied up to primary, 8 % up to middle level, 1 % up to high school and +2 levels. Only 0.2% managed to reach the graduation level. Only 47% possess voter id and 34% aadhar card. The average monthly income of the people belonging to these communities is 20k to 30k with 90% of the community dependent on wage labor, the only source of income. The income is just enough to offer food

All seasons in the Himalayan region are forecast to have an increase in rainfall, with the maximum increase in rainfall forecast to be in the monsoon months of June, July, August and September is 12 mm. The winter rain in the months of January and February is also forecast to increase by 5 mm in the 2030s with respect to the 1970s, with the minimum increase being in October, November and December.



security for 6 to 8 months. Nearly 5% are dependent on begging. Only 10% possess some agriculture land but only 2% of them have title of land. As far as the entitlements are concerned 4% of them had primary ration card and 40 % of them had antodaya ration card. Sixty five percent of these families reside in kuttcha houses on gram sabha land.

Madhya Pradesh

The survey on the socio-economic conditions of the Korku tribe in 10 villages covering 300 families in Khandwa district of Madhya Pradesh is over. The compilation is in final stage. The major challenges, according to the study, are distress migration, malnutrition, poor health delivery system, food insecurity, endangered Korku language and lack of dietary diversification.

Distress migration due to growing unemployment and rain fed farming has turned out to be the biggest issue during the survey. Then there is a change in the cropping pattern with farmers preferring soybean over traditional millets with the former being damaged

by the insects due to lack of awareness. The study also revealed that most the children (Up to age 5) are subject to abject malnutrition. The major chunk of Korku tribe is suffering from protein energy malnutrition due to lack of dietary diversification. Earlier, the people would depend on hunting for daily protein, but now that is thing of past. Setting up household poultry unit is an expensive affair. There is only one doctor (block medical officer) available for 140 villages. Immunisation is pathetically low. The tribe lacks scientific temperament and highly superstitious. On the education front, the children are taught in Hindi in schools and the Korku language has become endangered.

Interview With Dr. Jayant Kumar

Dr Jayant Kumar's immense contribution to strengthening of civil society over three decades in India makes him one of very few social development experts who command respect from peers and those bracing up for achieving new heights in social sector. Dr Kumar, a former chairperson of Voluntary Action Network India (VANI) and the present Chair of Credibility Alliance, spoke to MF over a number of issues confronting the marginalised, poor, especially the tribes.



Q. As a renowned social development expert who has a vast experience of engagements with poor and the marginalised in the rural spaces, how do you look at their socio-economic conditions now?

A: The socio-economic conditions of Indian population in the past couple of decades have been a curious mix of aspiring and burgeoning middle and lower middle class in the cities with upper class traditionally having a fair share in the country's growth story. The real concern is that this phenomenal growth story has always eluded the poor and the marginalised in the villages of studies in terms of equality and dignity. They include SCs (dalits, maha dalits) and tribes. One can also put the small and the marginal farmers into this category. As far as tribes are concerned, groups

like PVTGs (particularly vulnerable tribal group) or diminishing tribes do not reflect any notable dynamism. Thus from a macro perspective there appear to be significant changes, but at the micro level there been stagnation or deterioration in the social and economic conditions of certain communities. The gap between the well off and the poor is increasing despite several experiments of social engineering by successive regimes.

Q. There are certain tribes, particularly in central India, whose population is shrinking due to variety of reasons. What are these reasons and how can their conditions be improved?

A: According to the Government classification, PVTGs are smaller reducing (diminishing) tribal groups which lack resources for

survival. Besides, there are other more vulnerable tribes but not categorised as PVTG. A majority of them are forest dwellers and sustain their livelihoods through various forest produces and government welfare schemes. The reasons for their deteriorating condition are manifold. Some of the key reasons are lack of resources, skills and capacities in the family and community, diminishing forest resources, forests being turned into sanctuaries, inadequate health facilities, nutrition and education facilities. The government schemes do exist but are either inaccessible or are poorly implemented. Worse, the misdirected welfare programmes have failed to improve their conditions. Various boards and authorities created for such special categories have not been able to deliver the desired

results. The special purpose vehicles such as “Baiga Development Authority” etc. have not been utilising their resources optimally nor implementing a well conceived feasible plan. Yet on the other hand dominant tribes especially in the eastern and northern belt of India are the ones who have benefited significantly in terms of education and reservations in the education and employment sector. There is a need to especially carve out a focused strategy and plan to improve the quality of life of these vulnerable communities.

Q. Dalits too are confronted with lot of challenges, particularly on nutrition, health, education, health and livelihood fronts. How do you look at this?

A: The socio-economic conditions of dalits are even worse. If we talk about certain categories within dalits in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, they are more vulnerable and are almost on the edge. Today, the communities such as Mushahars, Nuts and Kanjhars in these states are struggling for bare survival. Within the Dalit dynamics they all are at the lowest strata and are devoid of resources and capacities and continue to be exploited by the dominant classes.

Q. Do you think that the government policies for this large chunk of population are adequate to address these problems or should they be complimented by pro-active civil society interventions?

A: It is the responsibility of the State to implement policies and focused programmes for the poor and other vulnerable groups. The critical aspect is the proper implementation of the policies and plans. While the primary responsibility rests with the State, the civil society has a very important role to play and has to

complement the states by informing the communities about the policy and plan changes, challenges and implementation and pro-actively engaging in changing the quality of life of such groups.

Q. If we talk about small and marginal farmers, they are the worst hit by agrarian crisis. The situation has been aggravated by the climate change and unpredictable weather conditions forcing a large number of famers to move out of villages. How do you look at the impact of climate change on agriculture?

A: The agrarian crisis has aggravated their vulnerability of small and marginal farmers manifold. Unprofitable agriculture, small land holdings, high input cost, lack of investment in agriculture sector, lack of agriculture labour oriented policies favouring small and marginal farmer have led to further worsening of the situation. The policies of the state in terms of agriculture have been primarily skewed towards big farmers. This group which has a

voice and makes a huge vote bank always get the attention. But the current agrarian crisis has severely impacted them too. As far as climate change is concerned, it impacts all the farming and allied communities. The coping capacities of this group vary. While the big farmers with large land holdings and resources are able to address issues through creating access to irrigation, use of modern agriculture practices and other methods/use of techniques etc., the small and marginal farmers have no option but to abandon their small holdings to work as agricultural labourers. While the impact of climate change is severe it is small and marginal farmers who suffer most. Each day they add to the swelling urban slum population. So, there is a need to have a comprehensive agriculture linked climate change policy to address these issues and reduce its impact on the farming community as a whole with special focus on small and marginal farmers and allied sectors.



Dr. Indira Naidu A True Philanthropist



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Dr Indira Naidu is a true philanthropist who dedicated her life to empowerment of the poor and the marginalised.

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Dr Indira Naidu is the president of Madhyanchal Forum

At a time when tuberculosis was considered to be a fatal disease and its prevalence was much pronounced in the country with very few having the access to even primary health care units, she worked with TB patients in the tribal regions of Madhya Pradesh. When women had no voice, she fought for them. She worked for the poor, marginalised, orphan, and the poorest of the poor throughout her life.

Dr Indira Naidu's undying passion for empowerment of the derived still continues even at the age of 75. In her childhood she was inspired by her philanthropic grandfather who was a medical practitioner. So, she too decided to become a doctor and follow his path. While growing up she saw her mother's dedication and hard work for the underprivileged from close quarters. Her mother was a renowned social worker.

So young Indira became a perfect blend of these two personalities. After finishing her MBBS in 1971, she joined a local nursing home for few years. But the destiny had something else for her in store. Soon she realised that she must reach out to those who lack even bare minimum amenities.

When Dr India Naidu was doing her internship in Manorama Raje TB hospital she would often wonder about the lack of medical facilities for TB patients in the country. In 1971 she joined Dhani Catholic Hospital where every day around 50 TB patients would come for screening. There was no X-Ray machine in the hospital. Four years later she joined Damoh Missoin Hospital which used to offer free treatments to the poor, tribes and the people belonging to lower castes. Thereafter, she worked for Roshni Catholic Hospital and tirelessly treated people belonging to Korku tribe and scheduled castes. That was the time when there was no hospital in the vicinity of 100 kms.

But there is another side to her journey of life. She has been working with Bhartiya Vidya Pracharini Sabha which was founded by her mother. She has been its secretary since 1980. The organisation actively worked with national and international charities such as CASA, CBEMO, HelpAge International, Afro Care and many government projects such as adult education, Harijan Balwada, gramin Balwada and legal counseling for distressed women and children. Apart from this, she passionately worked for the people living in Indore slums.

CROP DIVERSIFICATION:

UTTARAKHAND FARMER FIGHTS IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Vijay Singh Rana, a 48 year old farmer in village Raithal, one of the remotest village of Bhatwari block of Uttarkashi District, Uttarakhand, has shown how introducing new crops can minimize the impact of the climate change. Agriculture is the main source of income in the village.

Like other farmers, Rana's family too was suffering losses due to erratic rain fall and insects that would often spoil the traditional crops rajma, potato and soayabeans. Raithal is a high altitude village (2193 meters) and has been in the past vulnerable to climate change impacts.

The recurring losses forced the village farmers to start thinking of growing new crops. Though the idea of diversification of crops was gaining ground in the village, no one came forward to experiment with the new crops. The only exception was late Chanddan Singh Rana who tried pea cultivation 14 years ago with the help of a wholesaler from Dehradun Mandi.

But the 2013 floods once again compelled the farmers to do some rethinking about new crops. Around 20% households took to pea cultivation. Though the number was small, it provided an opportunity for the farmers to think out of box.

In 2015, Vijay Singh Rana showed the way. He sowed peas in 10 nalis



(0.2 Hectare) following the help from integrated livelihoods support project (ILSP) through which he received 30kg pea seed and just for the sake of diversification. To the surprise of many, he harvested 600 kg (6quintal) green pea. And that too during festive season of October and November. Rana sold his crop directly to Dehradun mandi. Now he is continuously growing pea for last 4 years. In year 2017 he expanded his crop area to 50% and grew pea in 15 Nali (0.3Ha.). Though this year due to heavy production the rate was little below expectations but it still fetched him Rs. 60,000. ILSP also provided him LDP tank to strengthen the irrigation facility.

Earlier, in the year 2016 Singh decided to start home stay as Raithal is the base village of world famous Dayar bugyal trek. He also got financial support from ILSP for renovation of toilet and interior decoration. ILSP also deployed

marketing consultancy agency for one year. Last year he earned approx Rs. 20,000 from home stay.

Now Raithal is one of major pea producer areas in Bhatwari block and around 75% households commercially cultivate the crop in the monsoon season. Singh is planning to add some more area in this year for pea cultivation and also some value in terms of local food in his home stay.

Mr. Vijay Singh Rana, a father of three says that pea has changed his economic condition and his home stay is additionally contributing to the household economy.

”Support from various organization always helped him to cope up with the challenge of non-accessibility, identification of niche product, timely input supply and market linkage”, he said.