

SAMVARDHAN SAMAJVIKAS SANSTHA

Annual report 2010 – 11

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Project office

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1. Clarification

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In year 2009-2010 Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT), Mumbai awarded a small grant to project designed by secretary of the organization, Dr. Nilesh Heda. As per grant policy of the SDTT, SAMVARDHAN was not eligible to host the project as it was new at that time. Thus, SAMVEDANA SAMAJ VIKAS SANSTHA, Karanja hosted the project officially. All the project related activities of the SDTT project were carried out jointly by the SAMVEDANA and SAMVARDHAN.

In January 2010, Rufford Small Grant (RSG) foundation, London, awarded small grant to Dr. Nilesh Heda for the conservation of the riverine resources in the Adan river basin. All the project related activities of the RSG project were carried out by the SAMVARDHAN.

Two members of SAMVARDHAN have benefitted from the CFL (Centre for Leadership) programme of CORO to build the capacities of potential grassroots leaders on issues of women's empowerment.

They received an Award of fellowship for one year to work on a project developed by the fellow. The selected fellows were provided with extensive training and exposure opportunities. Apart from training, a fellow receives financial support for grassroots activism & exposure that is part of her/his fellowship project. A senior member of Vacha is a member of the core group of mentors in this project.

2. Activities performed

3. Regular study group meetings are going on with the villagers in various villages. Fishermen and labours of the Dhamani village are agreed to set up Fresh Water Protected Area at one site along Adan River.
4. Field visit arranged to Bhan Doh (Future site for Fresh Water protected area) arranged with local fishermen and students.
5. To make partner in the fish culture program one day workshop arranged with the fishermen of Wai village of Akola district.
6. Using toposheets and satellite imagery complete map of the Adan river basin prepared.
7. Discussion meeting arranged with the concerned government officers. The important aim behind these meetings is to build rapport with the concerned line department so that they can participate in the conservation endeavour and local people can benefit.
8. Popular speech delivered at Murtizapur and Kamargaon.
9. Water analysis done at selected sampling point at Adan river basin. Due to dumping of the untreated water by sugar mill in the Adan river at Bodegaon village the river becomes polluted.
10. Through discussion with the local people and outsider experts a complete, long-term and holistic plan of the Adan river conservation has been prepared. The concept note of the plan is attached.

10.1.1 Towards the preparation of Status Report

Data collection for the preparation of the status report has been almost completed. The data mainly includes survey of the fishermen community, documentation of the traditional knowledge, fish and habitat identification and threats to riverine ecosystem. The writing work of the status report is underway.

10.1.2 Literature generated:

1. News Letter *JAL-SAMVARDHAN*:

For the advocacy of the various issues immerging and for information dissemination a monthly newsletter (*JAL-SAMVARDHAN*) has been started in MARATHI language. So far, 9 issues have been circulated widely throughout Maharashtra. Mean while a Hindi issue also published. *JAL-SAMVARDHAN* is becoming popular and positive remarks are coming from common people as well as from scientific communities. Along with the printed version, the issue is published as E-Publication also and can be downloaded from: <http://jal.samvad.googlepages.com/home>.

JAL-SAMVARDHAN means water conservation in Marathi language. The main problem in the conservation of aquatic biodiversity and equitable sharing of the benefits is lack of the awareness among common people. There are lot of issues need to be spread among local people. The *JAL-SAMVARDHAN* is spreading it with great care. Important soul of news letter is its scientific and holistic approach, grass root information and regularity.

2. Data Base of the water bodies:

Information collected from District Fisheries and Irrigation Department by using RTI and inputs from the field survey, has been entered in the data base prepared in the MS Access. Due to the lack of expertise about MS Visual Basic the work is under construction. The database was prepared keeping in mind local people. The data base can be used as a tool to understand water bodies present in the village area so that people can know which water body is available for fish culture.

3. Website:

A website has been developed and can be access at www.samvardhan.page.tl. Since its publication the website clicked about 2000 times from throughout the world.

4. Slide shows and popular lecturers:

Project director is involved with the students of local K.N. College degree students. He has appointed as visiting lecturer for the environmental studies. A slide show and popular speech developed by him was performed at many places in the Vidarbha.

5. News Paper Article:

Regular news and articles in various newspapers has been published during project period.

11.Capacity building

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Capacity building about rights of various environment dependent people, various environment problems, fish culture and government functioning was key objectives of work. The area is virgin to various positive social interventions thus initially there was a kind of suspicion in the mind of people regarding usefulness of the program. Considering the lot of issues following target groups has been selected for the capacity building programs although there are overlaps among different groups in various capacity building programs. Main events of the capacity building program are shown in the following text.

12.Linkages with the other levels:

Close contacts has been maintained with following groups and networks.

- 1) **Vidarbha Pani Pariwar (Vidarbha Water Family):** Informal group of people working for the issues of water conservation.
- 2) **Maharashtra PBR group:** E-group of people working for environmental issues.
- 3) **NGOs:** Lot of NGOs throughout Maharashtra (e.g. Vidarbha Nature and Human Science Centre, Nagpur, Vrikshmitra, Chandrapur, Bhandara Nature Club, Bhandara, Aamhi Aamachya Aarogyasathi, Kurkheda etc).
- 4) **National level:** Jal Biradari, Tarun Bharat Sangh.
- 5) Association with Lower Painganga Dam Opposition Committee.
- 6) College: K.N. College, Karanja.

Association with above linkages is two way process of learning for us as well as for them. Thus, '*Vidarbha Pani Pariwar*' constitutes a group of various NGO doing substantial work related to water body conservation, sustainable livelihood of fishermen. Joint process of water body study and conservation is started with *Pani Pariwar*.

13.Impact

13.1 Outcome of the project

Initially the project has been started considering the livelihood of local fishermen through scientific fish culture and data generation about the various components of the wetland ecosystems. This year due to severe drought in the study area, in the latter part of the project, we have shifted our attention on the livelihood of the local people through NREGA. There are 2 important impact geographical areas of our project viz. one where the drought intensity is low (*Savali*) where scientific fish culture was possible while in other area where the drought intensity was high thus all the water bodies were dry and fish culture was not possible (*Dhamani*).

13.1.1 Poverty alleviation:

Considering the short span of the project visual effects on poverty elimination can be seen after some time. However, in this direction following important advances have been made.

A) Registration of fisheries cooperative society: Registration process of the fishermen's cooperative society has been initiated at *Dhamani* village so that in near future local people can lease water bodies for fish culture and can lower poverty.

B) Fish culture: In *Savali* impact area direct fish culture has been initiated thus definitely impacted on the alleviation of the poverty. Detail report of this initiative is waiting.

C) Small saving Groups (SHGs): SHGs can play an important role in the safe guarding of the financial security of the local people by not only providing them secure source of the money in their hard time but also escape from the money lenders. In this direction a SHG has been established at *Dhamani*.

D) Implementation of NREGA:

This year, there is a severe drought in the whole project area. In *Adan* river valley, due to severe drought the river becomes substantially dry. Due to these climatic changes, there is a shortage of the livelihood options in the area. Government of India has formulated NREGA to ensure secure employment of 100 days to unskilled labours. In addition, Government of Maharashtra formulated Maharashtra Rural Employment Guaranty Act (MREGA) which gives guaranty of 365 days employment in one financial year.

The procedure to secure employment through this scheme includes registration for work by labourer. Once registered, people should get JOB CARDS within 15 days. After receiving job cards labourer can apply for job. As per law, after registration, people should get employment within 15 days; otherwise they can be eligible for the unemployment allowance. 307 people of *Dhamani* village registered for job cards on 22 Jun 2007. Even after one and half years, they have not received their job cards.

Due to unavailability of the employment in the area large number of people migrating to mega cities for the employment. Fishermen communities of the *Dhamani* are land-less people, completely depends on *Adan* River for their livelihood. Due to present drought fishermen community lost their livelihood and there is a wide spread hunger in the area. Agriculture labour is another alternative livelihood option for the fishermen of this area but this year, agriculture also severely affected and there is no employment in the agriculture fields.

Considering this situation, we have made informal union of the 400 labourers from the *Dhamani* village. Through this informal union we have sent a letter on 26 November 2008 to *Sarpanch* (village head), *Gramsevak* (representative of government in the village) and collector of the district, stating the present scenario. The letter has been sent by post but there was absolutely no action has been taken from the concerning authority.

Considering the inactivity of the concerned officials behalf of *Samvardhan* we have sent a letter to member of Parliament, member of state assembly, collector of the district, chief executive officer (CEO) of the Zila Parishad, Tahasildar and Block Development Officer (BDO) of the *Karanja Taluk*, *Gramsevak* and *Sarpanch* of the *Dhamani* village on 5 December 08. Interestingly no action has been taken by these people.

Using website of the Central Government regarding NREGA (<http://nrega.nic.in/>) we have downloaded list and Job Cards of registered people for scheme.

On 10 December 2008 we have personally met BDO and Gramsevak and enquire about the issue. As people got their Job Cards from website we have asked for the form number 1 (essential for the registration under NREGA) and form number 4 (essential to ask for work). Interestingly there were absolutely no such forms available in the Panchayat Samiti. Thus, people printed the forms from website. Response to people's query about Job Cards from concerning officers was many and contradictory. Initially they told that, the Job Cards has not issued from collector office, when people told them about the date of issue of job cards, they told that, job cards issued but those are in Panchayat Samiti. Another answer was considering the large number of Job Cards they have no time to prepare those Job Cards.

Using downloaded forms people tried to submit the forms to Gram Panchayat. But concerning authority has not ready to receive the forms from the labourers. Thus on 5th January 2009 people sent a letter to DBO and Tahasildar for this injustice. Along with this an enquiry application has been submitted under the RTI.

At last, team has contacted news papers and on front page of popular news paper (DAILY LOKMAT) news has been appear on 07 January 2009. In response to this on 7th January 2009 BDO along with Gramsevak visited Dhamani and issued Job Cards of people.

On 19 January about 400 labours got their employment on the sanctioned 11 tanks along river side.

13.1.2 Gender Equity:

In the latter part of project, work with women of the fishermen community has been started at *Dhamani*. We have male dominated society and women's role in the decision making is limited. At *Dhamani* women of the fishermen society has gathered and took direct part in the NREGA related work. Also, liquor consumption by male members of society is an important problem women are facing in our area. Thus, we have started our work considering this problem as a focal point. Soon, along with this problem women participated in the river conservation and livelihood issue. Although women's participation is needs to be strengthen in the future.

13.1.3 Human Rights:

Conceptually we have decided that, the employment is fundamental right of the local people and equitable sharing of the wetlands for fishermen and employment through NREGA can substantially change the situation. But the wide spread corruption and careless attitude of government officials is basic cause of the violation of the human right in this area. Thus, local people have registered for NREGA before 18 months but until we have demonstrated they have not received their job cards and employment. Also, many times people went to submit the application for the job, local authorities refused to take the same. Through the capacity building done by our project, now people are pursuing for their rights.

Registration of the fishermen's cooperative society is mammoth's tasks for the local poor people due to wide spread corruption. However local people without giving any bribe trying to register the same. The positive effects of this intervention will be seen in near future.

13.1.4 Democratic functioning:

Right to information act is an important tool by which local people can get information from government departments through democratic way. Lack of knowledge about the availability of the water bodies for the aquaculture is an important factor which prevents local people to take water bodies on lease. Only those people who have access to information get the water bodies. In this direction using RTI we got information from fisheries departments, irrigation departments of the two districts viz. Yavatmal and Washim.

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13.1.5 Environment:

Sustainability of the environment, especially river, is essential for the sustainable livelihood of the local people. Still large population of the fishermen depended on the natural water courses. Environmental impacts of the project can be summarise into following points-

a. Awareness generation –

Awareness generation regarding various environmental issues and their impact on the Peoplescape of the area is an important activity of the project which effectively addressed during project period. In this regard, local people, students, government officials and members of the main stream society has been sensitized through news letter, news paper articles, workshops, popular lectures, village meetings and group discussions. In long run this will create positive impact on safe guarding of ecosystem goods and services.

b. Data generation:

Data has been generated regarding wetland ecosystem Adan River and associated water bodies and biodiversity. This generated data will be utilized in the future for the effective management of this ecosystem.

c. People's Freshwater Protected Area (PFWPA):

This concept has been evolved during the middle phase of the project. FWPA declared by the local people are the area where minimum intervention has allowed and some positive intervention performed. In this direction a pool along Adan river called *BHAN DOH* has been selected and process of the creation of the PFWPA has been started. It is expected that in coming six months the area will be declared as PFWPA.

d. Renovation of the traditional Water bodies through Student's Participation:

This area is famous for the traditional water bodies. In past, these water bodies were an important source of domestic and irrigation water. But due to catchment disturbances, siltation, encroachment and use of such water bodies for dumping domestic wastes deteriorated these traditional systems. As a case study during this project period we have chosen *Sarang Talaw*, a traditional water body of the Karanja city for its renovation. Student of the local K.N. College has participating in this process. The positive effects will be seen in the near future.

e. Creation of the tanks in Adan river basin:

Through the implementation of NREGA construction of 11 tanks (Up to 1 February 2009) has been started in Adan river basin. This will help in halting siltation and to increase water table of the area.

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