

IASS ACCOMPANYING RESEARCH: SOIL PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION FOR FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA

Under its special initiative “One World, No Hunger” (SEWOH), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is prioritising efforts to deliver food security and enhance the management of natural resources. The protection and rehabilitation of agricultural land managed by smallholder farmers are central to this dual agenda and form the objectives of a GIZ programme implemented in five countries. Seeking to explore new forms of development cooperation, SEWOH mandated the Global Soil Forum (GSF)

to accompany the work of the GIZ through transdisciplinary research. The accompanying research project focuses on the socio-economic and cultural factors that constrain the uptake of sustainable land management (SLM) techniques by smallholder farmers. The GSF’s approach stresses co-development and the pursuit of research themes with local partners, including researchers, policymakers, development cooperation actors, civil society organisations, and farmers.

2015

September 2015 – January 2016: Exploratory missions to Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra; field visits, focus group discussions with farmer groups, implementing actors, academic research institutes in GIZ intervention areas.

2016

February 2016 – May 2016: Developing research agenda for stock-taking exercise on post-project sustainability in collaboration with local research partner “Foundation for Ecological Security” (FES) in Madhya Pradesh.

June 2016 – August 2016: Stock-taking on post-project sustainability with FES. Inventory of past interventions on SLM through different government programmes, NGOs, international agencies. Detailed analysis of six projects in twelve villages through focus group discussions with farmers and implementing actors.

August 2016: Four lessons learnt workshops with male farmers, female farmers, NGOs and government actors in Mandla, Madhya Pradesh.

2017

September 2016 – December 2016: Sharing the results of lessons-learnt workshops on post-project sustainability with stakeholders; developing action research agenda in close collaboration with FES, communities and government agencies (Agriculture and Forest Departments).

Stock-taking and lessons learnt workshops on post-project sustainability:

Objective: Drawing joint lessons with farmers, government and non-government actors, academics about past experiences with promotion of SLM and post-project sustainability in Mandla, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Partner: Foundation for Ecological Security (FES).

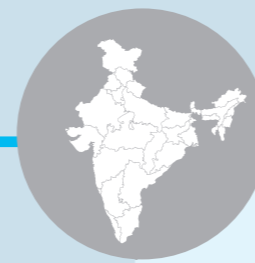
Guiding questions:

- Which SLM technologies were implemented and what lessons can be learned?
- What were the positive experiences, challenges encountered, and strategies implemented about SLM in Mandla, Madhya Pradesh?
- What are the socio-economic and institutional enabling conditions for continuation of SLM technologies that contribute to “post-project sustainability”?

Method: 12 villages representing 6 SLM based projects implemented by various CSOs, Government departments. Focus group discussions in the villages with farmers ranging from beneficiaries, political representatives, village committees, non-beneficiaries, resource poor families.

Lessons-learnt workshops: 4 workshops with men and women farmers, implementing actors (CSOs), government & administration actors.

Focus Areas: Selection of target groups and SLM technologies, extension approaches, access to agriculture inputs and credit, village level community based organisations, benefits of agriculture schemes.



Conditions for Continuation of SLM interventions:

Contextualisation of SLM technologies:

- Simplification of SLM technologies enhances the adoption. “System of Rice Intensification” (SRI) technology was simplified and line sowing is now adopted.
- Landscape approach is not coherently applied: application of inorganic fertilizer in upper catchment areas while in lower catchment organic farming is promoted, technical aspects such as hydro-geological information was not included in the watershed design.

Beneficiary Selection and Extension:

- Women are not included in farm related trainings, i.e. women did not receive training on SRI practices, compost preparation.
- Resource poor and land less farmers are not being included in the extension programmes and agriculture schemes.
- Beneficiary selection for different government programmes is influenced by social networks and political processes. The government has limited information and control on the selection of beneficiaries.

Tenure security

- Unclear boundaries and tenure arrangements on commons including forest and land resource create inter-village conflicts over access and management rights and reduce shared interests in resource management.
- Widespread *Lantana Camera* (indicator of land degradation) on common lands was effectively managed by the farmers after the demarcation of common lands and tenure arrangements, thereby increasing reforestation and grazing lands.

Village level community based organisations (CBOs)

- The outreach and participation in different committees varies strongly, e.g. some types of committees do not interact with women at all.
- Overall (continued) attendance and participation in the committees is a problem.
- Villagers are not aware of the roles and responsibilities of different CBOs. Lack of information flows and coordination among the CBOs is affecting the village level decisions.



Participants’ anecdotes

Male Farmers:

- “We do not understand the absence of committee members in the meetings. Maybe that is one reason why the village by-laws are violated by own community.”

Female Farmers:

- “We experience skin infections after being exposed to chemicals in the fields. It is obvious to us that they might also affect soil health. We need to take control to care for soil health and fertility.”

NGOS:

- “Sustainable interventions are those which are inclusive in approach; build upon existing institutional processes; which cultivate ownership of community and are context specific”

Implementing agencies:

- “Multi-stakeholder platforms are good sources of information to learn about other department activities and explore the possibilities for convergence”



Preliminary outcomes on enabling conditions for post-project sustainability:

1. Institutions:

- Continuation and long-term vision of implementing actors is a success factor; with efforts to include local perspectives to increase trust and ownership.
- Flexibility in project design and “extra-mile” target motivations are needed to reach out to the resource poor communities.
- Extension agencies annual action plans shall be revisited to include the farmers’ experiences with SLM technologies.

2. Project implementation:

- Women, youth and resource poor need to be included more widely; either through specific training programmes or via extending the outreach of interventions and services.
- Common lands demarcation creates benefits to enhance the access and use rights and also contributes to landscape level management interventions.
- Participatory needs assessment, target/outcome definition, monitoring of the impacts of interventions and participatory feedback processes are required.
- Motivation to maintain physical structures after project was higher in NGO implemented areas than in government implemented watershed areas.

3. Potential further research themes:

- Strengthening inclusiveness through a stronger outreach to women, youth and resource poor in projects and extension services.
- Community based organisations involvement in monitoring and feedback processes to implementing agencies, dialogue among the CBOs (support federation building) to resolve the tenure challenges over common resources.
- Contextualisation of SLM technologies through integration of local needs assessments, monitoring and evaluation in design and implementation at district level.