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 is 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.

**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.

**Participating agencies:**

- FES
- NGO
- Implementation agencies

**Objectives:**

- Enhancing the “System of Rice Intensification” (SRI) practices, compass design and line sowing
- Strengthening inclusiveness through stronger outreach to women, youth and resource poor communities.
- Enhance the access and use rights and reduce shared interests in resource management.
- Transforming landscape into agricultural landscapes (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.
- 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.

**Conditions for Continuation of SLM Interventions:**

- Simplification of SLM technologies enhances the adoption, “System of Rice Intensification” (SRI) technology was simplified and line sowing is now adopted.
- Universal approach to 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.

**Lessons Learnt Workshops:**

- Women are not included in farm related trainings, i.e. women did not receive training on SRI practices, compass design and line sowing.
- Resource poor and landless farmers are not being included in the extension programmes and agriculture schemes.
- Selective 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.
- Widispersal of Lantana Camara (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.

**Lessons Learnt Workshops:**

- Resource poor and landless farmers are not being included in the extension programmes and agriculture schemes.
- Selective 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.

**Conclusions:**

- 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.

**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.