



Capacities for managing development

The benefits of co-operation

Narrator

The GTZ funded Indo-German Changar Eco-Development Project based in Kangra region around Palampur in Himachal Pradesh started in 1994.

Changar developed a village-based approach to participatory natural resource management, by building capacity through village animators - dedicated front-line staff who help communities to develop basic sustainable skills.

The micro-planning techniques, which were used in the Himachal Pradesh Forest Sector Reforms Project and later incorporated into Himachal's Forest Policy, were originally developed in Changar.

T.D. Sharma - Project Director

Indo-German Changar Eco-Development Project:

It was a village-based approach in the project; we framed some teams in the field. Teams used to go to the villages, the hamlets. The meetings at hamlet level, at small user group level, meetings were conducted just to sensitise them to motivate them and this was simply a PRA tool which was introduced in the field. We tried to make some VDCs some Village Development Committees at the grass root level, and those Village Development Committees were the institutions, which we expect that they could just imbibe some capacities, they could develop some confidence in managing their natural resources, and along with the formations of these Village Development Committees, then the Village Development Maintenance Fund was initiated in those VDCs by which they could just see that works, structures and other assets could be managed even in the post project period also.

Narrator

One such village was Khun Kas, which received assistance under the project to build a dam to store water for a lift irrigation system. But after a couple of years the dam started to silt up badly and its storage capacity has been reduced. One of the Changar Project's NGO partners, Winrock International India, offered assistance to the village to help tackle this problem. Early investigation discovered that opinion in the village about how to tackle the siltation problem was divided.

Satya Prasanna – Environmental Consultant

Winrock International India:

Generally people's perceptions about the silt problems are in two ways. One set of group of people are thinking about changing the engineering structure in the dam site, then we will control the silt, few peoples, some of the peoples in the VDC are thinking that they need to do something in the upper-catchment, but what they don't know.

Narrator

Without clear-cut evidence of whether the solution might lie in changing the dam or controlling erosion in the upper catchment, Winrock commissioned a hydrological survey up-stream and invited the scientists to share their findings with the village.

Satya Prasanna:

There's group meetings at the village level we're showing maps and explaining everything. At that meeting we called scientists also to explain that, if there is any counter thought from the villagers from the local peoples, that should be debateable and if there is some solid argument by the local people then scientists is also learning lots in that meetings. So this is the way we have corroborated the local thought and the scientists' thought, scientists also

learn lots from the locals and locals also learn from the scientists. This is a kind of interactive meeting we have organised at the village level.

Narrator

The survey data only provided a snap shot of the situation, but couldn't show how that situation may have changed over time; through removal of tree cover, or over grazing for example. So it was essential to complement this scientific knowledge with farmers' local knowledge. But there are risks involved.

Satya Prasanna:

There is some myth also in the traditional knowledge like there is some drastic change, something is happening that we don't know, so it's very difficult because when you are talking about traditional knowledge they will collate this myth and traditional knowledge together to explain you, so you have to separate that.

Narrator

Once a common understanding had been reached with the community that the cause of siltation was erosion in the watershed upstream, they advised the VDC on measures they could take for themselves to reduce it. Having suggested that a solution could lie in erosion control higher up in the watershed, Winrock set about facilitating a meeting with the upstream village of Aoch Kallan.

Satya Prasanna:

We have facilitated between Up-stream and Down-stream. We have two options to organise the negotiation meeting, one is we have to organise a big seminar from all people from down stream and all people from up stream to have a big meeting and to have tea and all, that should cost, there is transportation cost, there is capital cost. If we choose that strategy my feeling is there is never going to be any further negotiation in the future but we have used very natural process.

Narrator

By facilitating informal meetings between the two VDCs, without the need for a big cash outlay and invitations to local dignitaries, the villagers feel freer to organise such meetings for themselves in the future.

Satya Prasanna:

So if you introduce that natural process what is possible in the community, that should be good to sustainability because they know they can do in the future, and they have done also.

Kumer Chand Rana – Pradhan

Aoch Kallan VDC – (subtitles):

There was a meeting between the two villages of Khun Kas and Aoch Kallan to develop an understanding. Through this we agreed to work together. In our VDC we would do whatever we could to reduce the erosion that is affecting their water levels. They offered to give us some seedlings to plant in our fields and asked us to plant some grass so as to stop the silt from filling the dam.

Kattar Chand – Pradhan

Kuhn Kas VDC – (subtitles):

We met and talked. We told them that we would give them seedlings, but that they needed to stop their animals from grazing in the area. They agreed, they said: "We will stop our animals from grazing and stop other villagers' animals as well." In this agreement the seedlings must be protected for eight years. However, if the seedlings are destroyed within the eight years, then they must refund half the cost.

Kumer Chand Rana – (subtitles) :

We'll try to keep our animals out, but we can't watch over them day in, day out. We don't have anybody who can sit there and ensure that animals don't enter. But I hope that animals don't get into the area, that the seedlings stay healthy and the erosion is stopped.

Katar Chand – (subtitles):

The benefit for us is that there will be more water and erosion will stop. And for them there'll be more vegetation, which can then be used for grazing for their animals, and there'll be more firewood available. So this will improve people's lives.

Kumer Chand Rana – (subtitles):

I think this will succeed if everyone supports it. If we stop our animals grazing in that area then we will have achieved our goal.

Narrator

By getting the two communities to draw up their own self-financed agreement, Winrock hope that their intervention will be more durable than if they had provided the resources.

Chetan Agarwal – Senior Programme Officer

Winrock International India:

We decided that we would not spend any money in the catchment because otherwise if we spend hundred thousand rupees in the lower village and the lower village turns around and gives two thousand rupees up stream, then they are still better off by 98,000, so we wanted that 2,000 to be a pure contribution from them to the upper village in cash or kind. As it turned out it was in kind. The chances of this succeeding we think at much higher than a normal project. We can't predict it of sustaining in the future but the communities are planning a series of activities for this monsoon and pre-monsoon period, and they are doing it on their own and we are just helping them to think it through.

T.D. Sharma:

They now realise that yes, we have the ownership of such and such an asset, what ever assets have been created during this period, there are, and let me admit also that this thing, it's is not always that 100% you will be successful in everything, but there are at least now 40-50% VDCs which are very active VDCs.

At their own they are trying to bring in more programmes implement more programmes with the help of the government and other institutions. So that is the major impact which the project has made.