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Participatory Rural Appraisal and Planning (PRAP): the experience of the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP)

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AKRSP was established in 1985 to promote and catalyse community participation in natural resource management through village institutions for increased income generation and productivity for rural communities. AKRSP works with village communities in Gujarat using the following approach:

1. Participatory appraisal and planning for development of natural resources in the village.
2. Formation of village institutions for implementation of a Village Natural Resources Management Plan prepared by the villagers.
3. Implementation of the activities identified in the plan prepared by the villagers through local village institutions.
4. Technical, financial, training and management support for implementing the plan to village institutions by their own team of village extension volunteers, village institution office bearers, AKRSP professional support team and external support. The emphasis is on first identifying the local source of expertise, facilitating its access and then seeking external support whenever required by the village institutions.
5. Development of local village level or federated support institutions for sustaining the development process.
6. Participatory Impact Monitoring and evaluation of the programme by the villagers and the village institutions.
7. Ensuring that villagers' long term resource management plans are incorporated in the

development plans of the government, people raise resources for funding their plans through government, banks and other development agencies and village institutions are able to perform most support functions without external catalytic support.

8. Influencing the government to promote participatory approaches in the development process at various stages - Planning, Implementation, Management and Monitoring and develop policies enabling development of such approaches.

• **Activities undertaken by the village institutions**

The activities undertaken by the village institutions as a part of their village resource management plan are as follows:

Physically productive infrastructure

- water resources development e.g. lift irrigation, community wells, percolation tanks, check dams, groundwater budgeting;
- watershed management e.g. soil and water conservation, water harvesting, land reclamation, ground water recharging, agroforestry;
- wastelands development e.g. afforestation on public and forest lands, pasture development and fodder development; and,
- biogas plants construction to increase fuel (energy) availability and reduce dependence on community lands.

Production enhancement/upgrading

- agricultural input supply e.g. fertilisers, seeds, plant protection chemicals, implements;
- animal husbandry input supply e.g. cattle feed, vaccinations, medicines and improved breeds of animals;
- agricultural extension e.g. irrigated agriculture, dryland farming; and,
- animal husbandry extension.

Commercial activities

- short term and long term credit;
- group marketing of agricultural produce and milk; and,
- community operations e.g. harvesting, ploughing threshing, plant protection, usage of implements.

Other support activities

- human resources development;
- training; and,
- provision of technical and managerial expertise to other village institutions.

• Why Participatory Rural Appraisal and Planning?

Most development programmes have emphasised the involvement of people. Such involvement, though, has focussed on implementation aspects, contribution of labour and resources, availing services and accruing of benefits. This process, although producing short term results, does not lead to a sustainable development process where people develop a long term perspective. AKRSP while working with village communities realised that unless the village communities participate actively in the appraisal and planning process, the development process will not be sustainable. Rural people also have a vast pool of indigenous knowledge and expertise which is generally neglected while planning a development programme.

There was, thus, a need to develop an approach which enables rural people to have a say in what they want for themselves, develop their latent and inherent capacity to analyse and evolve their own plan. Such a plan has a higher chance of being effective, sustainable and being scaled up compared to a plan evolved by outsiders. It is in this context that the approach of Participatory Rural Appraisal and Planning (PRAP) was developed. It is also a very important tool for the outsiders to learn from rural people. AKRSP through its experience feels that the major strength of this approach is that rural people can adapt this approach according to their situation and carry on this process with limited or no external support after initial catalytic support.

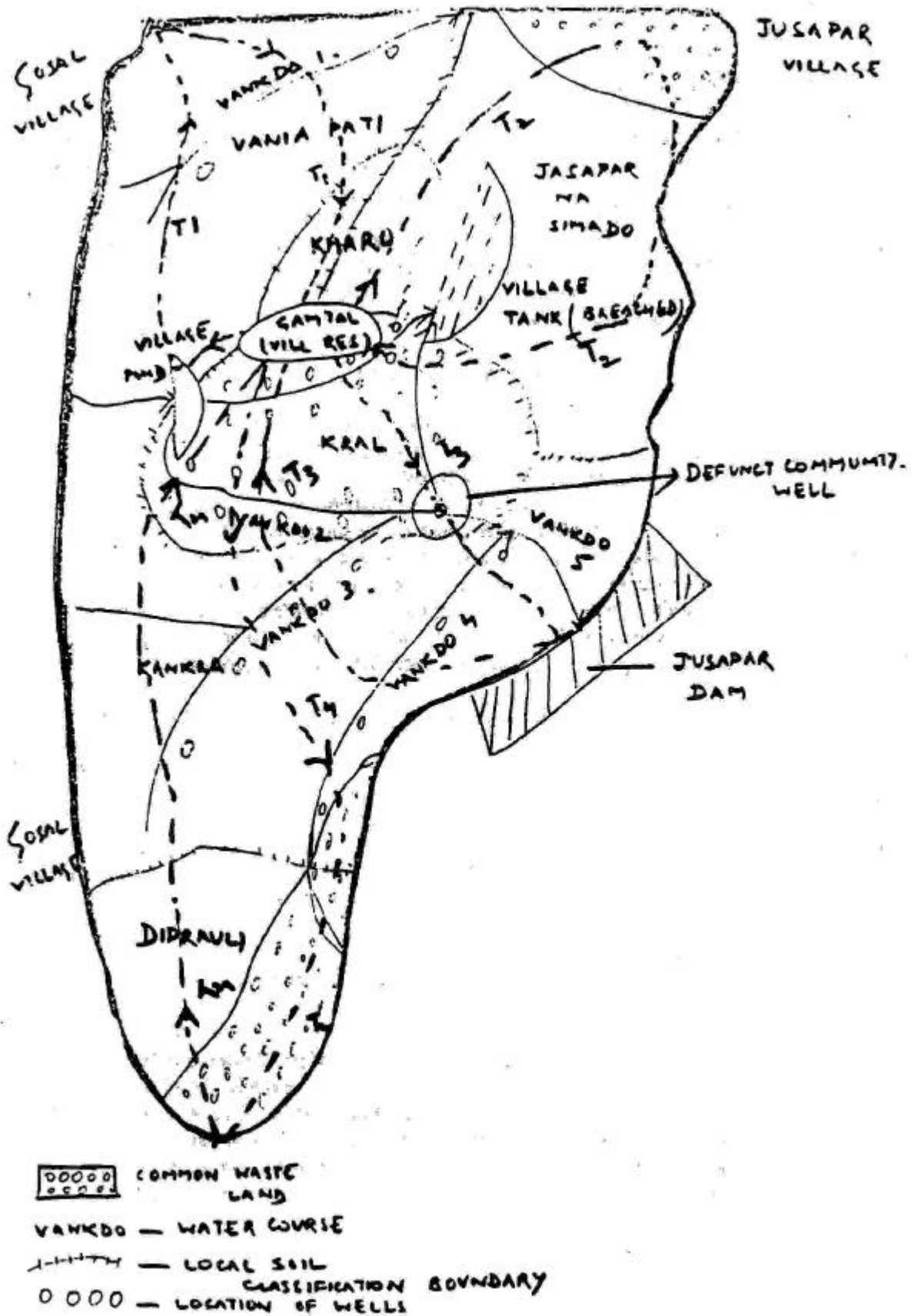
• Approach/methodology

AKRSP has worked with a number of village communities in a variety of social and agroecological contexts-tribal areas, semi-arid areas and relatively well endowed areas in the state of Gujarat. The approach and the methodology followed by the village institutions (initially with AKRSP support and later on their own) is as follows:

i. Deciding the objective of the planning exercise

It is important to clarify the objectives of the exercise for both insiders as well as outsiders. The objectives could determine the methods to be used for the exercise. The objectives could be the preparation of a village natural resources management plan (a whole village exercise) or concerning only one aspect of the programme e.g. evaluating the impact of a percolation tank (a topical exercise focusing on one aspect). This needs to be made clear to all the participants in the exercise (insiders or outsiders). It is often done through a series of group discussions with various members of the village community. PRAP requires a consultative process with the community or a village institution (if it exists) before initiating the exercise.

Figure 17. Ground resource map of Madargadh village, Gujarat, showing natural resources, village boundaries, local soil classifications and drainage points. Used for deciding transect groups and routes. December 1989



ii. Deciding the methodology and who should participate

The proposed sequence or methodology should also be discussed with the village participants before hand. It helps in better planning of the exercise. It does not mean that spontaneous innovations during the exercise are not encouraged. In fact a broad agreement or a consensus is good enough in the beginning. If people know that they are expected to contribute, they think about the issues, plan their activities accordingly and are able to offer constructive suggestions about the methodology. In our experience Transect walks have been rearranged in a number of cases after the discussions enabling a more effective transect to take place. Also when the women and the landless are to participate prior consultation is important to find out the most suitable time when one can meet them. Time and place of the meeting with these groups are often decided unilaterally by the outsiders at their own convenience resulting in an ineffective participation of these groups.

In typical heterogeneous villages it would be very difficult for the people to reconcile if outsiders suddenly said that they wanted to discuss an issue with landless or women or want them to participate in a transect walk. Prior consultation on why consulting the poor, women and the landless is necessary will help in creating an open environment for the exercise. This discussion also helps in sensitising the villagers about the need of the exercise. This process also throws up a number of volunteers for the exercise who become interested in the process and take a keen interest in the exercise. This process takes a couple of days before the actual exercise is undertaken in the village. This is undertaken in both types of villages-villages with past interactions as well as new villages.

This prior consultative process is very necessary for both steps i and ii if we want to have an effective, representative and equitable participation of different sections of the village population in the process.

It would be also useful if discussions are held with a core group of people in the village (by no means an elite group, more representative

group) about the need of the exercise, nature of participation required, methods to be followed and the difference between this exercise and other exercises in which they might have participated earlier. The key aspects of the approach like 'Learning from each other', 'they deciding their priorities' and 'all sections of community and all resources should be covered' should be emphasised. This core group in turn sensitises others about participating in the exercise. Let them suggest methodological changes.

iii. Informing villagers about the programme

This is done by the core group of villagers after the outsiders have left. Often the core group uses innovative means to convey the programme - use of drums, use of a village communicator or a schoolboy, writing on the Panchayat notice board by a chalk (biased towards literates) and in some cases using loudspeakers. It is useful to give responsibility to one of the members from each group - landless, women, lower castes etc to inform other members of the community. This is done a day before the exercise. If the core group is not getting formed during the initial interaction, outsiders might have to undertake this function until sufficient interest is generated within the community. However this process may still remain incomplete as outsiders may not know of all the diverse groups in the village and villagers might be unaware of the equity orientation of the outsiders. Villagers should be free to change timings of the programme as well as the place later if they find them inconvenient or face some crisis or eventuality in the village.

iv. Base map preparation on ground/paper

One of the villagers (a member of the core group) or one of the outsider team members comes early to the village and works with a group of about 10 people to enable them to draw a base map on the ground. This map shows major natural resources in the village, landmarks, boundaries and divisions, drainage points, inhabitation areas etc. (described in detail in the section on participatory mapping). This map helps in developing a participatory environment in the village. It also helps to

understand the diversity of the village resources. The initial group of 10 expands to 20 and further, and a number of other points get added subsequently as different participants take a different perspective.

This process of ground mapping is a fast way of overcoming inhibitions as people feel more comfortable with the ground. The details shown in a ground map are shown in Figure 17. There are a number of innovations like using rangoli, local colours and other local materials like twigs, tree branches, leaves, flowers, lime, dung, thorns etc. which are suggested by the village participants as well as the outsiders participating in the exercise. These are primarily used to show local diversity of resources. Our experience shows that these maps show most natural resources, state of these resources, local landuse and soil classifications, rivers (nallas), drainage points, boundaries with other villages, status of assets or common infrastructure (like ponds, drinking water wells, tanks and individual wells; functioning or dysfunctional) and the diversity of the village in terms of availability of resources, their utilisation, status and access.

There are always peripheral groups who wait on the fringes for the main group to clear from the scene so that they can have a closer look at the map. Some groups of poor and women initially watch from a distance. It may be possible to have them in the core group a number of times. In most of the cases it is possible to encourage the peripheral group to add their perspectives. The common additions by women include sources of drinking water, fuelwood, fodder, meeting places and their own land in the map. Often they have been able to categorise wastelands based on quality and access to fuelwood and fodder. Tree density perceptions are also indicated by them. Landless include the degraded common property resources, major private lands (major sources of employment), major and minor products from common property resources, sources of drinking water, fuelwood and fodder in the map. This base map can be prepared by the villagers without any external support in time periods ranging from half an hour to two hours depending on the size of the

group and the level of participation. Often outsiders have the tendency to intervene in the mapping process. This should be resisted and mapping should be allowed to develop as a creative process.

This forms the basis for deciding the transect route, number of transects, type of transects, the transect groups in the village and other methods to be used for the exercise. At this stage discussions are held about issues like who are the owners and users of these resources and who is likely to have a stake in them. Transect groups are decided at the end of this process and primarily based on this map.

v. Transect walk

Depending on the local mapping of resources on the ground, transects are decided. Our experience has shown that doing a transect based on the local soil classifications has proved to be the most effective and representative of the diversity of the natural resources and the people affected by them. Each transect team involves 5 to 8 participants who own and use the resources and know the problems related with them. In case of the transect team working on the common lands (forest etc) women and the landless are very important members of the team and it should be ensured that they participate as they are the major users of products from common lands.

However, presence of women and landless is largely determined by the timing of the exercise (mostly they are working during the day when transect exercises are done). It would be useful to have a discussion with the group and ask them to nominate people for the transect. In a very undulating area, Top to Bottom transects or Upland-Lowland transects are helpful in understanding resources and problems related with them. Generally going to a high point is useful because it helps in identifying certain resources and problems which are related with the interrelationship of the resources, which is difficult to visualise or discuss while discussing a particular problem.

Figure 18. Local land use classification map, Madargadh village. December 1989

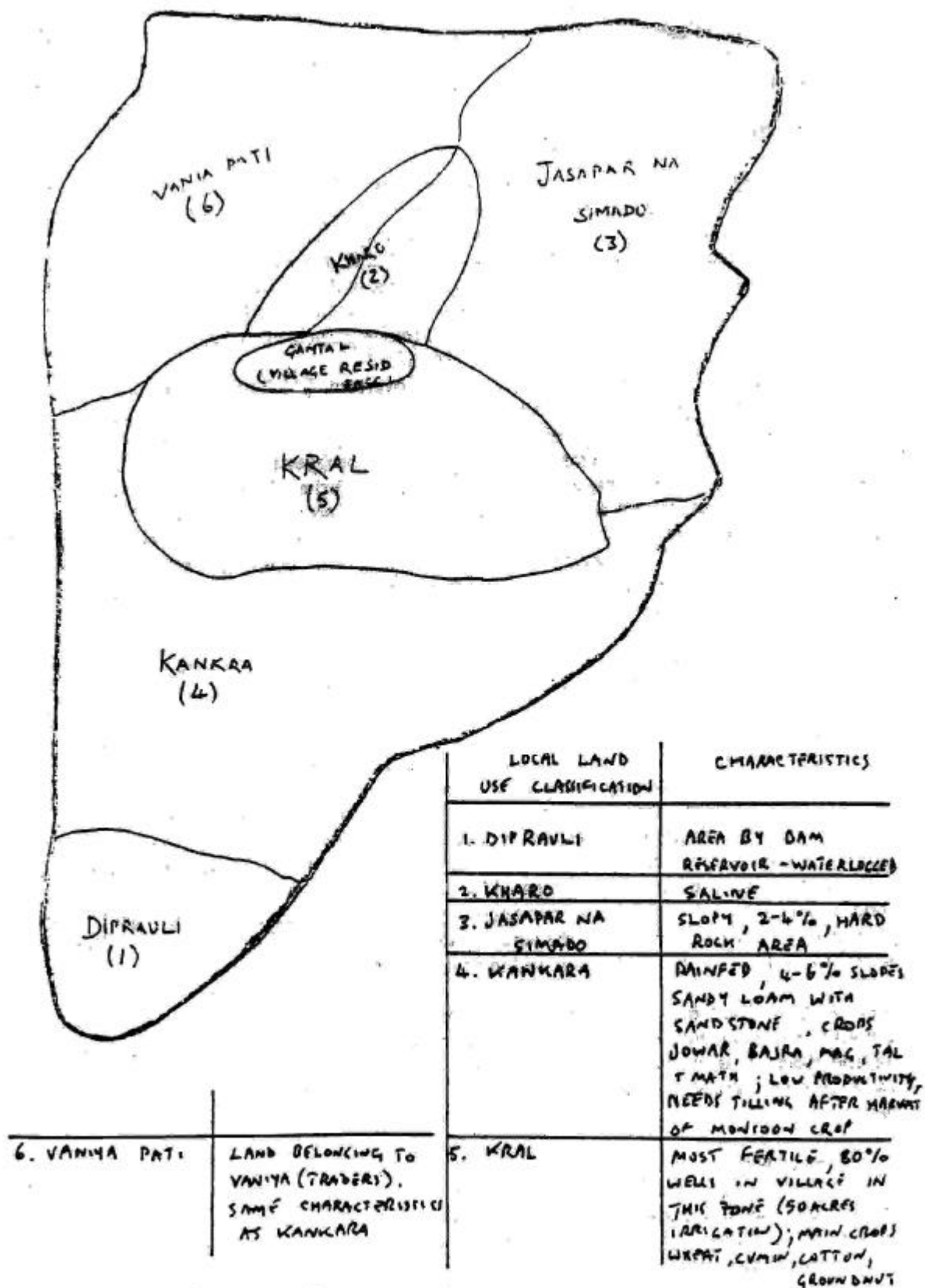
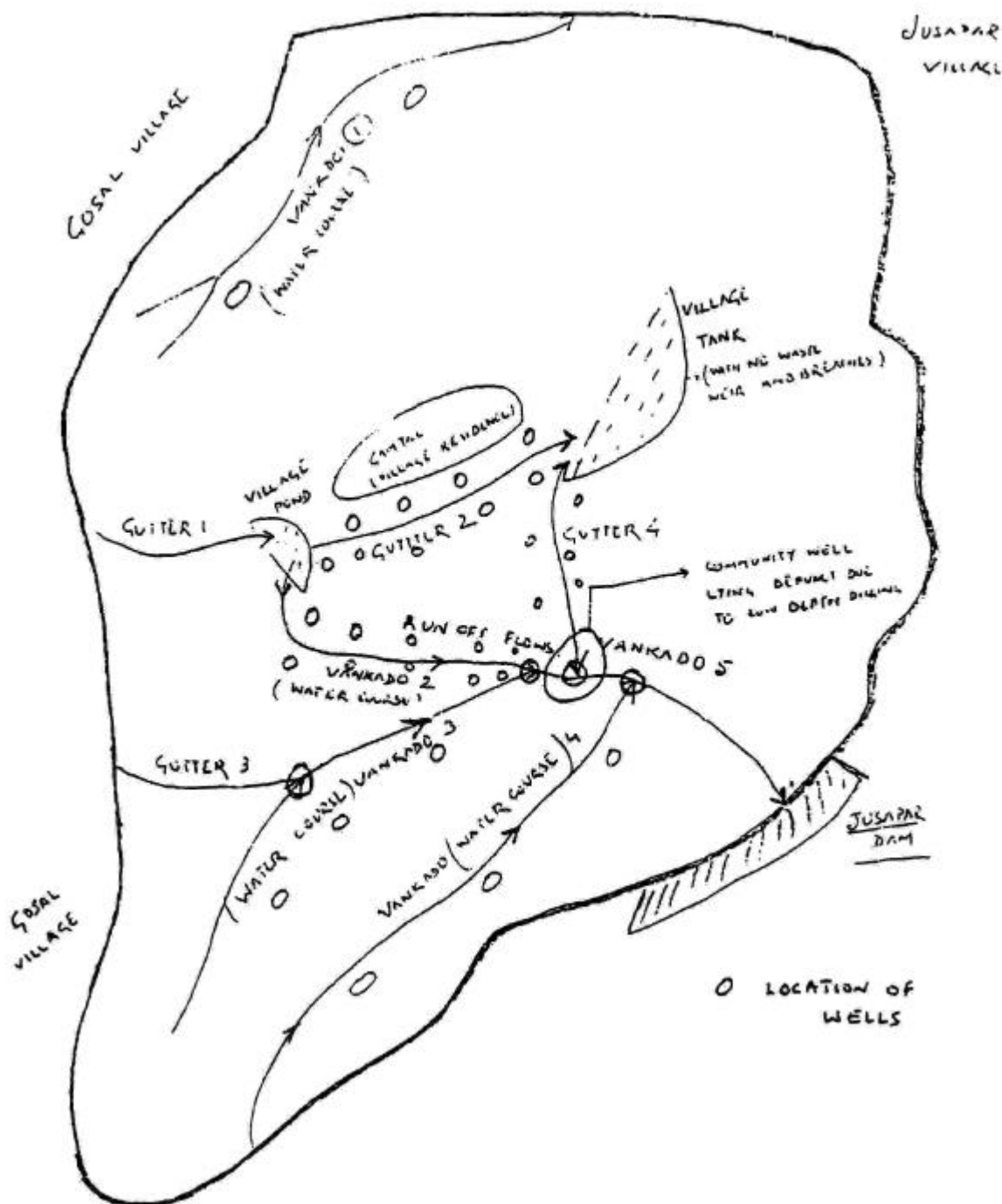


Figure 19. Water resources map, Madargadh village. December 1989



The process of transect involves the following steps:

- observation of physical characteristics e.g. erosion, waterlogging, soil depth, soil type and people's perception on these issues. This is done by walking through various resources i.e. public lands, private lands, forest lands, rivulets, nallas, gullies, local land use and soil types. People are

encouraged to talk about their own land and the problems as they affect them. Physical observations may involve diagramming on the ground and drawing simple maps showing flows of run off, ground water, drainage and showing how various phenomena are affecting productivity and management of resources owned and used by the participants;

- observation of crops or any other biomass (if it is the sowing or harvesting season). It is useful to ask people about the relationship between productivity and the characteristics of their land and other resources. Asking people to make a sketch map of their own field on the ground and showing the problems and constraints in the diagram/map is the best way to encourage discussion of the problem and the constraints faced. This becomes a good frame of reference for further discussion and encourages other members to contribute ideas and facilitates interviews with focus groups;
- a number of small thematic maps are drawn at this stage on the paper like the water resources map, local land use classification map, resource utilisation map, cropping pattern map, Aquifer map. These are generally an extension of the ground map and are very useful to understand the resources and the problems related with productive management and utilisation of these resources. Each map is produced by a group of 5 to 6 people during the transect exercise. It is not uncommon to find a source of local expertise on a thematic issue like a water diviner or a local soil expert who is able to contribute towards inventorising of these resources and identifying critical areas requiring intervention. These maps become a basis for use of other methods and discussion. However, it is difficult for illiterate people to participate unless they are encouraged to draw symbols to illustrate various aspects of the diversity, characteristics, problems and solutions. They can draw well and most of them are creative in drawing diagrams. It is always helpful if people can describe the resources, process, status and problem in terms of symbols and colours e.g. symbol of a crop, deforested trees (by black), colour of the soil (by different colours) and numbers by number of grains. Some of the examples of the maps prepared by people are shown in Figures 18, 19 and 20;
- these lead to questions about problems faced/constraints faced in effective utilisation of resources. In fact it is difficult to segregate the problem definition phase and the solution identification phase. Our experience has shown that most people have some solutions in mind when they are talking about the problem and they tend to indicate them along with the problems. During the transect walk observations are made leading to identification of problems. Mapping is done to facilitate analysis of the problem and helps in focusing on the problems and the solutions during the subsequent discussions (both local as well as suggested based on the experience);
- this is followed by an intensive discussion with the transect team on the field itself to take advantage of the visual clarity to the persons asking the questions and answering them. Utmost care should be taken not to ask leading questions. Questions like what more! should be asked again and again. It is important at this stage to ask people to suggest solutions which they have tried out earlier, which have worked and which have not worked and why. It would be also useful at this stage to ask people why they have not been able to try some solutions is very critical to ensure that their feasibility is appraised by both local people as well as outsiders while deciding their priorities. All possible problems and solutions should be identified; and,
- this leads to a transect diagram which is prepared by the local people in form of a Opportunity Identification Matrices. This matrices show all natural resources, local land use classifications, existing state of resources, constraints/problems in productive development of these resources, local solutions tried out by the people and options identified by the people for solving the problems and development of each resource. A typical opportunity matrix is shown in Figure 21. This matrix is subsequently used as a facilitating input to other methods used subsequently.

Figure 20. Forest land users map, showing products used by different sections of village community. Bharuch District, Gujarat. All household names were on the original map

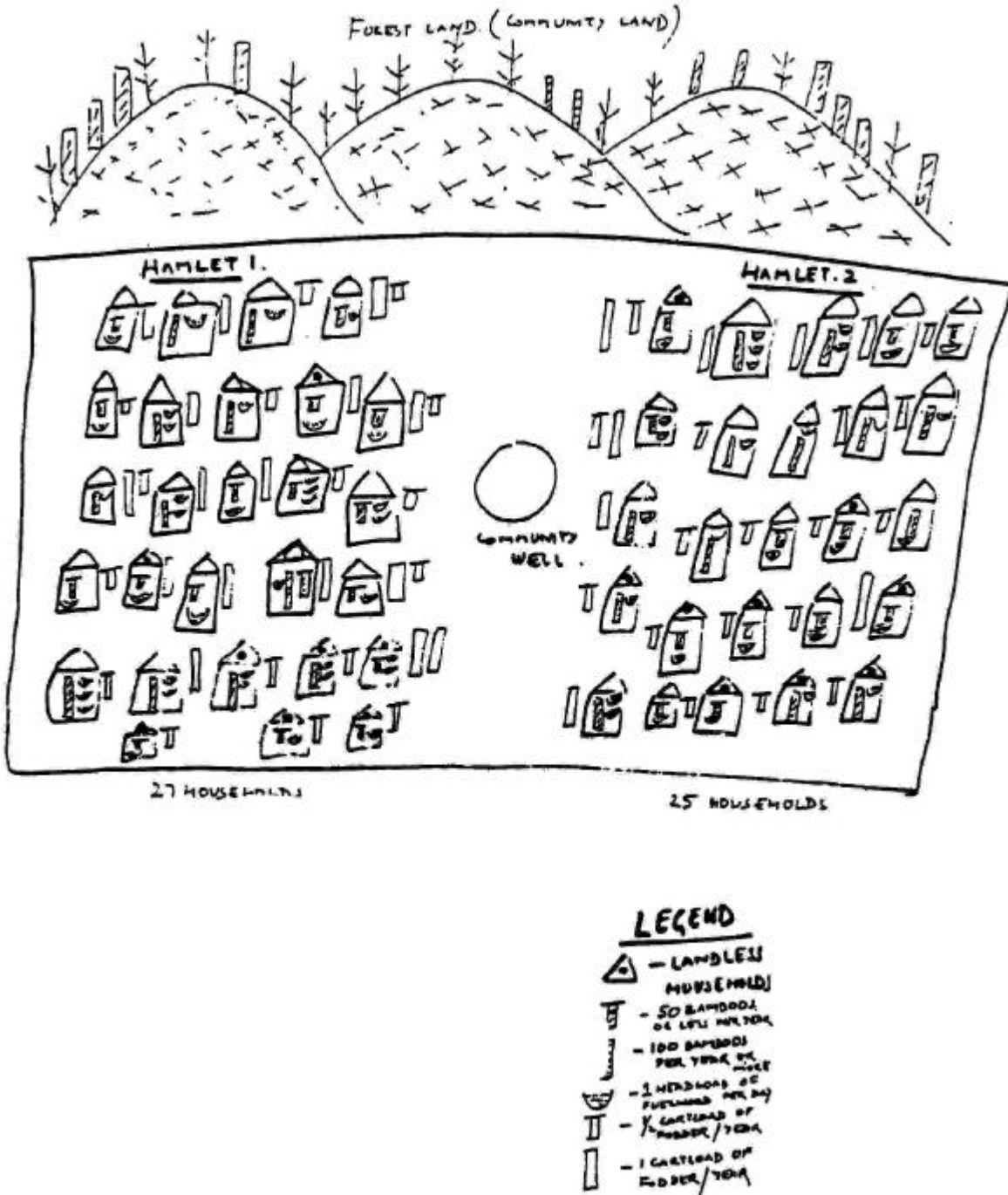


Figure 21. Opportunity identification matrix prepared by transect 1 team in Kral region of Madargadh village in Surendranagar District

LOCAL LAND USE CLASSIFICATION AND ZONE	CHARACTERISTICS OF ZONE	LAND USE	CROPPING PATTERN	APPROX. AREA
KRAL	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Most fertile part of village 2. 80% of land less than 2% slope 3. Soil from Kankaria zone deposited here leaving a good layer of soil 4. 80% of the village wells in this zone 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Irrigated 50 acres 2. Rainfed 150 acres 3. Bardi (fruit trees) on borders of irrigated fields (20-100 trees) 4. Prosopis bushes on boundaries of rainfed fields 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> → Wheat Cumin Mustard Lucerne → Bajra Jowar Cotton Groundnut 	<p>200 acres</p> <p>50 irrigated</p> <p>150 rainfed</p>



NATURAL RESOURCES IN ZONE	EXISTING STATUS OF RESOURCES - PROBLEMS	LOCAL SOLUTIONS TRIED OUT	SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED
 VILLAGE POND	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Breached + silted 2. Very low storage capacity 3. Leads to flooding of nearby lands 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repairing of earthen embankment on voluntary basis 2. Not completed due to insufficient + incomplete work in subsequent rainy seasons 3. Difficult to mobilize all people at same time 4. Needs additional material investments 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Desilting of pond + repairing 2. Repairing of waste weir + gutter from pond
 GUTTER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Silted up + loss of depth 2. Poor water recharge to wells 3. No use of silt 	-	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Desilting + deepening of gutters 2. Building ground water recharge structures for better well recharge 3. Community management of silt in gutter

Figure 21 a




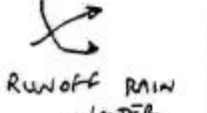
NATURAL RESOURCE IN ZONE	EXISTING STATUS OF RESOURCE - PROBLEMS	LOCAL SOLUTIONS TRIED OUT	SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED
 <p>VILLAGE PERCOLATION TANK</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Breached earthen embankment 2. Waste weir poorly designed 3. Flow is not channeled into tank 4. No provisions for overflow 5. Poor percolation due to siltting 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Petitioned to government for repair. Not repaired for at 6. years 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Renovation of percolation tank 2. Redesign + construction of waste weir 3. Repair of all gutters leading to the tank 4. Desilting as part of renovation 5. Lift irrigation from tank
 <p>WATER COURSE 2</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Run off flow being wasted to Jasapur dam. Village making no use of run off water 2. Poor percolation of wells in area 3. Number of wells becoming dysfunctional is increasing 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Earthen recharge structures 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Earthen embankment with stone spillways near to wells so as to enable recharge
<p>0 0 0 0 0 WELLS (25)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 16 wells are functional 9 are dysfunctional 2. Water table 35-55 feet 3. Wells not recharged from Jasapur dam reservoir due to difference in elevation 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Earthen recharge structures 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Groundwater recharge structures (farm ponds, stone or masonry dams) 2. Deepening of some wells to enable higher discharge + recharge.
 <p>COMMUNITY WELL</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. TOO LITTLE DEPTH (DUE TO POOR DISCHARGE + BEING DYSFUNCTIONAL) 	-	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deepening and construction of bore well (well capable of irrigating 80 acrs)
 <p>RUNOFF RAIN WATER</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. More than 80% of run off lost to Jasapur dam 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Small earthen structures (but do not last long) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a grid of conservation structures across all water courses to ensure all run off percolates to ground

Figure 21 b

21b

NATURAL RESOURCE IN ZONE	EXISTING STATUS OF RESOURCES - PROBLEMS	LOCAL SOLUTIONS TRIED OUT	SOLUTIONS SUGGESTED
<p>PRIVATE LAND</p> <p>RAINFED 150 ACRES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Poor soil + water conservation of land No use of run off water (damages the soil rather than benefits it) Lack of draught power leads to poor + untimely tillage Insufficient inputs + credit 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Small bunds in the fields. But washed away during floods 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> In situ SWC Watershed development Community purchase of inputs Construction of water harvesting structures for support irrigation Credit for deep ploughing with traction or purchase of bullocks Rainfed horticulture by planting Borji trees near all SWC structures Borji grafting
<p>PRIVATE LAND</p> <p>IRRIGATED 50 ACRES</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Low yields of Cumin crop + wheat due to pest incidence 	<p>-</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Trials on most cost-effective pest control through community action Farmer experiments on new varieties Community thresher
<p>CAMTEL</p> <p>VILLAGE INHABITATION</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Drinking water well dysfunctional 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Government has repaired twice. Does not work 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Technical feasibility for repairing existing well + constructing new well for drinking water to be carried out

Note : Similar exercises were done by other transect teams and collated for presentation.

vi. Equity aspects

Until now the process has involved concentrating on the resources (primarily physical aspects) the next phase of the approach involves looking at the equity aspects in the village. This is particularly important if one is working in heterogeneous villages. Although care is taken to ensure that representatives of all sections are involved in the transect exercise any transect and mapping exercise cannot involve more than 25-30 people with 5 transect groups. In order to ensure that wider consultation is carried out and the poorer and less articulate sections of the village community are involved it is necessary to develop a simple wealth grouping/ranking exercise to identify the major economic groupings in the village community. The more important aspect of this exercise is the finding of the criteria used by the village community to group themselves according to wealth. This helps in identifying different sections of the village and identifying the groups which have been left unrepresented in the mapping or transect walks tried earlier. It also helps in identifying focus groups for further discussions. Also if priorities identified in the opportunity identification matrix have overlooked certain sections in the village it is an indicator of the need for giving more careful attention to equity aspects in using all other methods in the village. Wealth grouping is generally done in form of a diagram. This is done with a group of persons representing different localities in the village.

Another exercise undertaken at this stage is Social Mapping. This involves mapping different social groups within a village. This is particularly important for heterogeneous village communities. In number of cases social mapping and wealth grouping have been combined to understand the relationship between social groupings and the wealth status. In some cases social maps have also been extrapolated to find out the correlation between resource ownership, resource management and the social groups in the village. It is possible to identify the resources which need interaction between various social groups for managing or developing them. Based on this process groups which have not

participated in identifying the problems and solutions related to them are identified.

vii. Focus groups

Based on the outputs and the process generated earlier focus group discussions are conducted with the different groups separately. These groups could be the following:

- Resource owners;
- Resource Users;
- Resource non owners and users;
- Resource non owners and non users;
- Groups facing a common problem related with a resource;
- Women;
- Socially disadvantaged communities; and,
- Groups left out of the initial appraisal process.

This list is just indicative of the possible ways of organising focus group discussions. Depending on the local situation focus group discussions could be organised. The process followed during the focus group discussion is as follows:

- Those members of the group who have participated earlier during the mapping, transect walk and the subsequent identification of priorities explain the process of collecting information in a narrative form and explain the outputs produced by them (maps, diagrams etc). They also explain the opportunity identification matrix prepared by them related with their commonly identified problems. All the intermediate outputs like small maps are also displayed to facilitate focussed discussion. A local villager and an active participant of the group acts as a facilitator for the discussion.
- Each problem is discussed and the group indicates if the problem has not been defined correctly e.g. group working on common property resources identified replanting of certain species as a possibility for development of that resource. During the focus group discussion, women participants identified protection as the priority and not planting

as identified by the original group. New problems are also identified at this stage by the group and new solutions generated as a result of the discussion. People also indicate the likely conflicts in implementing solutions, inconsistencies, their past experiences with some of the solutions when they were tried out earlier, areas of agreement and some sense of prioritisation.

- At this stage seasonality and livelihood analysis involving variables like rainfall, fuelwood and fodder availability, employment etc. is carried out to find out the major constraints to adoption of certain priorities identified by the people, (it is very difficult for the local people to establish a casual relationship between priorities and trends for planning purposes. This method i.e. still more important for outsiders who have a limited knowledge of the implications of seasonality on the choice of priorities identified by the people. (However, this method is very important during the implementation phase of the plan to maximise the impact of any activity on the livelihoods of the people).
- Often within a small group also there is considerable discussion between the members of the group before any consensus is reached. It has been our experience that the outputs produced as a result of the mapping and the transect walk stimulate discussion by other members of the group (inarticulate as well as illiterates) and enhances their participation in the focus group discussion. It has been our experience that even larger group community meetings are more participatory and effective if they are preceded by an interactive process involving mapping and transect walks by a smaller group. This process leads to a modified listing of priorities and indication of a disagreement within the group on some priorities and the reasons for disagreement.

viii. Village meetings

Since already group interactions have indicated priorities of a particular group having a common problem and agreed set of solutions, the next step is having a village meeting where most residents in the village participate and most groups in the village are represented. The group nominates a representative who represents the group in the village meeting and presents their problems and priorities to the village community. At this stage a number of outputs produced earlier are used to explain various solutions identified by the group. The group helps the facilitator and produce outputs on charts in a creative manner so that they can use them for discussion with others. People use colours, symbols and numbers. This process is very critical as they have to make presentations to their own people. People generally went to make a good presentation when they are making presentations to their own people.

Questions on the solution and the likely problems which may arise are encouraged at this stage. However, the interactions need to be managed in such a manner that discussions are healthy and do not become very acrimonious (this does not mean that discussions are not going to be heated as the solutions involved have different implications for different sections of the village community). During this whole village presentation the inter group dynamics becomes more clear. If there is a strong resistance by a group towards a priority identified by the other group, there is a need to explore the relationship between the group and the resource deeply and understand the reason for a potential conflict. It could be discussed in the meeting itself or subsequently in smaller groups over a number of interactions. Conflict situations should be handled through persistent dialoguing. In this meeting areas of agreement should be noted and strong areas of disagreement should be also noted. In the meeting the group should agree to a time frame for coming to an agreement on a list of priorities.

Our experience has shown that in most of the villages villagers have an intensive meeting on these issues and come to an agreement on the conflict issues. This is facilitated by the

realisation that they can put their plans to practice and their is a likelihood of their plans being implemented in the same manner in which they are proposed. However in highly stratified situations more number of interactions are required before arriving at a consensus. It may be possible that consensus is not possible in a village. This shows that the village is not yet ready for preparing a village resource management plan. In such villages initiatives are left to the group which showed more interest in participating during the appraisal phase to convince others about agreeing to a village plan or initiating the implementation of the plan (those components on which there was agreement between the groups). The appraisal gets equity oriented in the process.

ix. Management plans

Villages which have an agreement at this stage are able to identify activities they will be able to take as a part of the resource management plan. They are also able to identify the likely participants for each activity. At this stage discussions are initiated with the community on prioritisation of the options identified under the resource management plan. This leads to conducting shorter but intensive topical appraisal exercises with the community. These involve transect walks with the focus groups concentrating in detail on the local solutions identified by the people. The focus is on the technical, management and financial aspects. New maps are prepared in some of these exercises resulting in critical analysis of the options available. It is often seen that within the options identified by the people as an option under the village natural resources management plan there are a wide range of possibilities depending on the location, technology, management aspects, scarcity of resources and the viability of the activity e.g. a soil and water conservation programme could be undertaken entirely using techniques tried out and adapted by the people at a low unit cost and higher contribution from the community both in terms of management as well as financial resources. Based on these exercises, villagers are able to prioritise the various activities identified as a part of the natural resources management plan. At this stage appraisal is done on the following aspects.

- whether the local solution found out is appropriate or it needs further investigation by outsiders;
- what are the various financial components of the activities proposed;
- what are the likely costs of taking up such an activity. Villagers are able to prepare reasonably accurate estimates of the costs if they have a prior experience of undertaking the activity. In some cases where the choice involves a new or a complex technology the outsiders might have to help in making a cost estimate;
- what are the likely benefits from these activities. How are the poor going to benefit. To what extent. Can the activity be redesigned in such a manner that it benefits the poor more;
- does the activity require high external investment. How much can the community contribute. In what form, labour, cash, kind or credit. Can community first take up activities which are low cost and are dependent on the internal expertise;
- if the resources available are limited what choices should be made. What are the total resources required. How much will the community contribute;
- what would be the village institution framework for implementing the village natural resources management plan. How would the institution function and operate;
- what would be the management responsibilities taken up by the village community and the village institutions; and,
- what training inputs the villagers would need and in which areas the village community is going to train the outsider professionals.

This process takes place in different villages at varying speed. There have been certain villages where the participatory appraisal and planning process takes less than a month and in some cases it can take six months after the village has gone through a number of intensive discussions between the community. These discussions are mostly carried out by the insiders who are interested in such a process

taking shape and getting completed in their village.

This leads to a prioritised work plan of the village community and is always used by the community as a reference for any future discussion about the specific options.

x. Community proposal

Depending on the activities identified by the community a simple proposal is generated by the community which indicates most of the aspects indicated earlier. This proposal is then shared with the external agencies which want to fund the implementation of the plan e.g. AKRSP, Government, Banks etc.

This village natural resource management plan also becomes a future reference for monitoring and evaluation of the programme subsequently after the programme is implemented.

• Output from this approach

There are several outputs from this process:

- maps;
- baseline information;
- listing of priorities;
- involvement of different groups of the village in the process;
- opportunity identification matrix;
- village natural resources management plan;
- understanding potential conflicts between various groups in the village in implementing these priorities;
- prioritised plan and proposal for identifying these priorities; and,
- a common frame of reference for implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of the programme.

• Current problems being faced in PRAP

- excessive collection of information and a significant amount of qualitative information not being put to productive use;

- there is no effective mechanism for filtering data in the process of collection so that the data collected can be put to effective use;
- the methods used need continuous innovation, otherwise they tend to generate problems related to structured questionnaires. PRAP is extremely useful for generating a participatory environment in which people are able to articulate their priorities and generate local solutions. This leads to an intensive process of community action. PRAP is essentially a catalytic process and should not be considered as the only process for community participation. It has to be integrated with the community interaction process and other processes;
- mapping is more interesting for both insiders as well as outsiders. This may lead to a lesser focus on interviews, group discussions and other methods. A higher degree of integration between these methods is required to be maintained;
- intensive efforts need to be made to introduce equity orientation towards women and the poor in this method also to avoid distortion; and,
- PRAP focuses more attention on the physical resources and lesser degree of emphasis is placed on the social aspects such as the social conflicts and their likely implications on the community action and the options identified by the people. This needs to be developed further in the PRAP approach. PRAP methodology at present is not helpful for conflict resolution which is very important for the development process in heterogeneous societies.

• Points for trainers

- trainers should first find out about the attitudes of the participants (villagers, NGO staff or other outsiders). Initially some exercise should be initiated which enables change of attitudes. Without this working on various methods will not be very effective;
- trainers should ascertain the existing methods currently used by the outsiders

and compare the quantitative and the qualitative aspects;

- more time should be spent on field exercises and learning. Without doing this innovations would not be possible. The trainees should be encouraged to innovate and experiment until they develop their own framework for trying out this approach;
- we should not get carried away by sticks, rangoli and seeds. Focus should be on local innovations and people should be encouraged to develop local adaptations; and,
- emphasis should be on the process observation in the training programmes both in the field exercises as well as during the mock exercises during the discussions. Once the process becomes learning oriented the techniques, methods and the approaches become more meaningful and effective.

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