

Kabil

Annual activities Report of Kabil for the Period from April 2016 to March 2017

Summary:

The project “Enhancing abilities of local NGOs for livelihood promotion of the rural poor” as well as the direct action project on “income enhancement through appropriate irrigation technology” (both supported by the Tata Trusts) continued during the period. A major highlight of the project has been the work of NGO coalition fostered by us in Assam in harnessing Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) for livelihood assets creation of the farmers. In the process, we have also established collaboration with the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), an Assam Government institution.

The project with the North Eastern Livelihoods Promotion Project (NERLP, funded by the World Bank) for preparation of “Community Development Plans” around natural resource management in West and South Sikkim districts was successfully concluded during the period. This has led to signing of a new contract for a bigger similar project in Tuensang district of Nagaland. That project is ongoing.

The Department of Rural Development, Government of Jharkhand, has sanctioned us a project to train the Block Development Officers and the Block Planning Officers of all 263 blocks in Jharkhand on sustainable livelihood promotion using MGNREGS. We have completed 5 workshops out of target of 17 events by March 31st, 2017. Around 130 BDOs and BPOs have undergone the training so far and we have good experience of orienting BDOs and BPOs with encouraging written feedback from participants.

With the mediation of Kabil, our professionals are engaging as resource persons with TecnoServe India for their dairy fodder development project in Kenya. They have also acted as resource persons with National Rural Livelihoods Mission and various State Livelihood Missions on a regular basis.

The project supported by the Tata Trusts:

Income enhancement through appropriate irrigation technology:

The project supported by the Tata Trusts aimed at promoting rural livelihoods in North-eastern states, particularly in Assam to begin with, by direct implementation as well as through capacity building of grass-root NGOs. In the direct action project component, the project was to pilot three different (electric, solar and kerosene energy based)

irrigation systems to create irrigation facilities for 250 farmers and support in cultivation of vegetables in homestead of 500 farmers from Kamrup district of Assam.

Till end of March 2017, a total of 336 farmers have purchased and installed pumps in the project villages of South Kamrup district with our facilitation. 112 farmers have been added this year. The farmers have contributed 30% to 40% of the cost in cash during purchase. A total of Rs. 7 lakh has been collected through farmers' contribution. The contribution is being accumulated as 'irrigation development fund' and nested in two local NGOs. The fund is used to provide additional farmers with irrigation facility as well training of farmers in improved crop production on a regular basis. In addition to this, 70 electric pump based irrigation systems have been implemented by two partner NGOs in Karbi Anglong and Sonitpur districts respectively.

Among the three pumps, the electric pump has shown the highest demand among the farmers (89%). The response for Kerosene pump is less (11%). Solar pump has demand but due to its initial high cost, it has become difficult for the farmers to procure. Thus a project proposal has been placed to Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), GoI to support the farmers in purchase of solar pumps and 155 pump sets are approved. However, there is delay in rolling out due to non-disbursement of fund from MNRE.

Before the project started, Kabil had no presence in Assam. Baseline information revealed that there is dearth of livelihood promoting NGOs in Assam, The target farmers of Kamrup had underutilized homesteads, lacks proper irrigation devices and majority of them are subsistence farmers.

We helped farmers with exposure visits, in-house trainings in improved crop production, various innovative irrigation based livelihood activities has been demonstrated in farmers' field to enhance their income. A quick sample study revealed that about 25% of the farmers are able to earn an additional Rs 25000 annually, 45 % farmers are earning between Rs 6000 to Rs 16000 and rest have increased their production of vegetables but use for home consumption.

We are now exploring possibilities of setting up a producers' organization in Kamrup (Rural) district to work for comprehensive development of homestead farming.

Providing irrigation facility in the homestead through small pumps will be a major strategy in homestead development.

Livelihood asset creation by poor farmers using MGNREGS in Assam:

As a part of the project to enhance abilities of local NGOs for livelihood promotion, we took a major initiative during the period involving them for livelihood asset creation of poor farmers using MGNREGS.

In the districts on the banks of Brahmaputra where the partner-NGOs function, farmers typically own some paddy lands and a homestead (average of half an acre). The homestead is used for plantation crops (areca nut, black pepper etc.) as well as rearing small ruminants and backyard poultry. While paddy-land is mainly for meeting consumption needs, homestead provides cash income and buffer.

Rainfall is high in these areas. Ninety percent of the rainfall however is concentrated during the monsoon months causing inundation of the homesteads and loss in the plantations. On the other hand, because the water-holding capacity of the soil is low, absence of rain causes an immediate water scarcity, affecting the flora.

Creation of farm ponds in the homestead and earthing up of the plantations (making them elevated) can stop inundation and provide the required irrigation during water scarcity. This will not only improve the perennial crops in the plantation but will allow intercropping resulting high increase of returns. Additionally, farm ponds can rear seasonal fish. Adequate shelter for small ruminants and poultry is another dire necessity for improved rearing. Scarcity of resources however does not allow farmers to invest for these purposes.

Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) can be very effectively harnessed for creating the farm ponds, earthing up of plantations and creating animal shelters. These are labour intensive activities and approved under MGNREGS. The small/ marginal/ tribal status of the farmers allows MGNREGS to be used for their private asset creation. Yet, MGNREGS is not being used to create such assets. The small and marginal farmers are not aware that they can demand wage work to create such assets under MGNREGS. On the other hand, Panchayats lack human resources as well as capacity to mobilize, plan, execute and meet the administrative requirements of the Scheme.

On the basis of the problem analysis and sensing the possibilities, the coalition of 8 NGOs fostered by Kabil decided to engage with Panchayats to harness MGNREGS for creation of livelihood assets.

Kabil explored with the State Institute of Panchayati Raj and Rural Development (SIPRD), an Assam Government institution, which found the idea worthwhile. SIRD agreed to support the NGO coalition by making available their training facilities free of cost, connecting the NGOs with the Gram Panchayats and also leveraging the goodwill of MGNREGA Commissioner of Assam for the initiative.

Kabil organized three trainings for the NGO functionaries in collaboration with the SIRD in which planning and implementation of livelihood assets using MGNREGS was the agenda. At the invitation of SIPRD the Panchayat Presidents and Secretaries were present in the training events. At the end of the three trainings the NGOs undertook planning exercise in 12 villages spread over an equal number of Gram Panchayats (across 8 districts) involving the community and the Panchayats. The livelihood asset creation/improvement projects (mainly farm ponds, earthing-up of homestead plantations and animal shelters) have an outlay of Rs 2 crore to be implemented in next three years. The panchayat functionaries are fully on board and all the 12 plans have been approved in the Gram Sabhas of the respective Panchayats on 2nd October 2016. However, these were not going to be included in the shelf of projects under the annual action plan for Year 2017-18. We then engaged with different levels in the government (viz. BDO, junior engineer, MIS operator/manager, panchayat president and secretary, VDC and TCLCC chairman in BTDC area) for incorporation of the schemes. We have found that the JEs play very important role in implementation of MGNREGs. Eight orientation cum training events (six for JEs and two for VDC chairpersons) for all the six project districts were conducted by Kabil with active support from SIPRD. Representatives from the concerned NGOs also took part in the events and built rapport with the JEs/VDC chairpersons. Side by side, we also remained in touch with other decision makers like BDOs, GP Secretaries and the Presidents.

We have also observed that a positive communication had been established between the panchayat secretaries (who attended the July 2016 event in SIRD) and the JEs who underwent orientation. Therefore in the month of March 2017, with some further persuasion from the NGOs, the concerned government functionaries completed the process of incorporating the village plans with the main annual action plan.

It is worthwhile to mention here that this has been a major positive movement in the implementation of MGNREGS. This is the first time (probably in the whole of Assam) that plans were incorporated before March-end by following the approved format of MoRD and mentioning beneficiary name, plot number, area, labour budget as well as person-days to be created.

Immediately after incorporation of the plans, we took another initiative of training the MIS operators/managers including their on-job handholding as they had no experience of making MIS entry for individual schemes and clusterise them to create livelihood assets. These trainings resulted in completion of MIS entry of all the schemes of most of the villages within March itself.

We are looking for funding to support the institutional costs of NGOs for this initiative.

The project with the North Eastern Livelihoods Promotion Project for preparation of “Community Development Plans”

To begin with, Kabil had been entrusted by NERLP, supported by World Bank, to prepare village level livelihood plan in 20 villages of two districts in Sikkim. NERLP named this plan as Community Development Plan or CDP.

The main input from Kabil was in preparation of a livelihood-Natural Resources interaction matrix, which analyses the problems in a village and seeks solution for it. The plan is developed with active participation of the villagers. While the project in Sikkim had been completed with submission of twenty village plans (CDPs), NERLP has now engaged Kabil in similar work for Nagaland state in November 2016 by drawing another MOU.

In Sikkim, we had trained NERLP field teams during the year. Most of the project facilitation teams (PFT) members in Sikkim are now well versed in the CDP preparation process. However, we felt the need of conducting write shops (workshop to provide training on Word Processing Skills as well as logical writing) for them to improve their report preparation skills. In August 2016, we conducted 2 training programs in South and West districts and came up with **76 prepared CDP**, within the time frame. Further, during February 2017, we supported the NERLP teams of South and West Sikkim at the field itself to draft 100 CDPs by helping on technical application, standardisation of rates, making common formats and calculation sheets to reduce the complexity for the PFTs. We feel that there is a need of an advanced workshop, in which we shall be able to impart more skills on the finer aspects

of writing and skills in spreadsheet use (excel), to further smoothen the process. These skills are important for effective functioning and speeding up the processes in any given project. There also remains a need to demonstrate the implementation process, and we hope to do it in the near future with NERLP in NRM based livelihood promotion that bolsters agro-horticulture and livestock based farming systems.

Work in Nagaland:

With our work being appreciated, Kabil was asked to help NERLP in Tuensang district of Nagaland in CDP preparation beginning November 2016. Tuensang is one of the remotest districts in India lying on the border of Myanmar. The travel time to the nearest block is about 10 hours from Dimapur by road. While physical remoteness is one hindrance, there has not been much progress in effective natural resources management in spite of the huge potential of available natural resources. Kabil has started its work in December 2016, where we **prepared 8 CDPs** in the district. All the CDPs have been submitted to NERLP for sanctioning. The CDP preparation demonstration events were used as field training for the Project Facilitation Teams (PFTs) who are engaged in each of the remote blocks. The objective was to demonstrate, educate, and provide the “do how” support for the Community Development Plan preparation for the Block Project Facilitation Teams. In the initial phase the participants were trained in the process of CDP preparation and community dealing, and drafting of CDPs. The context of Nagaland is very different from Sikkim, where we earlier worked with the NERLP. The high altitude villages have an acute problem of water scarcity and with no proper infrastructure, livelihoods enhancement remains a big challenge. Apart from one CDP on sugar cane extraction and fisheries, all CDPs were based on diversion based irrigation. As the budget is constricted at Rs. 10 lakh, other solutions were suggested to NERLP for consideration with funding from other sources.

In addition, we have conducted a write shop for the PFTs of Peren district of Nagaland in September 2016. 40 participants joined the event.

A step-by-step manual on preparation of CDP field exercise has been prepared and submitted to NERLP. NERLP has accepted the manual and will be publishing it for their use.

NERLP wants Kabil to work in Tripura and Mizoram to share its experience of preparation of CDPs and Institution building. A negation process has begun.

Exposure cum orientation workshops for BDOs and BPOs in Jharkhand on sustainable livelihood promotion using MGNREGS

The Department of Rural Development, Government of Jharkhand, has taken some major initiatives to utilize MGNREGS for taking the poor out of poverty in a sustainable way.

While there are some improvements, the progress has also generated new challenges. Given the re-invigorated effort in Jharkhand to use MGNREGS for natural resource management and durable livelihood asset creation in the hands of the poor, BDOs and BPOs who play a pivotal role in the implementation of MGNREGS, require deeper exposure, orientation and know-how. Many of them are new in the job. In the face of increased complexity as well as volume of work they feel helpless. This has implications on quality and quantity. Unintended delays also cause other problems. The Department therefore thought that a sound exposure cum orientation to the BDOs and BPOs at this stage would be a much needed step to strengthen the re-oriented MGNREGS.

Kabil has been awarded a project to conduct 17 three-day exposures cum orientation workshops for all the Block Development Officers and Block Planning Officers with the purpose of exposing and orienting them with the principles and practices of natural resource management using the MGNREGS.

The project started in January 2017 and around 130 BDOs and BPOs have undergone the training so far. We have good experience of orienting BDOs and BPOs with encouraging written feedback from participants. This project will be completed by August 2017.

Engagement and work with other institutions and agencies:

Kabil was involved in dialogue to work in Kenya in a project supporting fodder production with Masai communities. Kabil prepared and made the budget and held the negotiation process. With unavailability of FCRA, it was routed through Outliers Pvt Ltd, a company engaged in development consulting.

Kabil was involved on a pro bono voluntary basis in facilitating a visit of Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture – IICA, where 6 scientists from Guatemala, Mexico, and Costa Rica visited Bihar, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The focus of the visit was to understand spread of System of Rice Intensification and benefits to small farmers.

Kabil was engaged in training of 15 participants from 8 NGOs sponsored by NFI. The trainings involved value chain analysis, sub-sector studies, business planning and behavioural aspects. The event was conducted in Bhubaneswar.