

Half-yearly Report of KABIL (April to September 2019)



Summary of activities till March 2019

KABIL was registered as a society under the Societies Registration Act in December 2012. The first year after formation was devoted to obtaining various necessary legal certifications, exploring opportunities for work, and initiating action. The then existing Sir Dorabji Tata Trust - SDTT (now unified with the Tata Trusts) was kind enough to partner with KABIL even though KABIL was just a start-up. SDTT considered KABIL's proposal to work in northeastern and eastern regions to support other NGOs in capacity building for livelihood promotion and set up a pilot project on irrigation. With support from SDTT, KABIL set up a project office near Guwahati. The pilot project was initiated in Assam to help small farmers improve the productivity of their homesteads through appropriate irrigation technology. The project created irrigation facilities for the cultivation of vegetables and plantation crops in the homes of about 400 farmers, mainly in Kamrup Rural district. KABIL also supported eight local NGOs Assam with an operating area in Kamrup Rural, Bongaigaon, Sonitpur, Nalbari, Kokrajhar, Goalpara, and Karbi Anglong districts. The aim was to enhance their abilities for livelihood promotion of the rural poor. These NGOs voluntarily formed a learning group in which KABIL also participated.

Support of KABIL professionals was sought by Tripura State Rural Livelihood Mission (TRLM), and they trained TRLM staff in phases on matters relating to the promotion of SHGs. Elsewhere in the country,

KABIL supported ASA in Madhya Pradesh, Banausodhi Vikas (an SHG federation in Odisha), Kudumbashree at Attapadi of Kerala and Shamayita Math at Dantewada of Chhattisgarh.

KABIL also initiated collaboration in the first year itself with the North-eastern Rural Livelihood Project (NERLP) of the Government of India (supported by the World Bank). The work involved helping the project facilitating teams of NERLP and the local communities to create community development plans as well as capacity building of NERLP staff. The initial work was in Sikkim, which later expanded to Nagaland.

In the year 2016, the Government of Jharkhand invited Kabil to impart orientation training to all the Block Development Officers (BDOs) as well as the Block Programme Officers (BPOs) of Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS). The training events were about how to implement MGNREGS for livelihood promotion using the principles of Integrated Natural Resource Management (INRM). Through a series of orientation training, each of three days' duration, nearly 500 BDOs, and BPOs were trained.

In a unique initiative in Assam, the group of NGOs belonging to the learning group remained engaged in to improve the quality of MGNREGS implementation and strengthen the natural resource management component of the scheme, particularly concerning the creation of water bodies as individual assets in the homesteads of small and marginal farmers. The initiative spread over ten blocks in 7 districts. By the end of March 2018, Rs 3.38 crore worth of funds was sanctioned for individual livelihood asset creation by the government, and 56 farm ponds were completed. However, the initiative could not gather momentum for want of donor support, required to meet the institutional costs of participating NGOs. Efforts are still on to garner support.

A collaborative project at the Udalguri district of Assam (Udalguri project) between Assam State Rural Livelihoods Mission (ASRLM), Axis Bank Foundation (ABF), and KABIL began in April 2018. The four-year project has completed its first full year by March 2019 with some distinct outcomes. The project is significant on several counts. This is the first of its kind collaboration between a state rural livelihood mission, a private donor, and an NGO implementer, initiated through a detailed written agreement. Unlike most other projects being implemented by NGOs and government agencies for livelihood promotion in rural areas that adopt classical extension methodologies, this project has taken entrepreneurship by the local youth as the pivot on which the interventions revolve. Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, which never focused on creating individual livelihood assets for the poor in Assam, is now being extensively used for this purpose under the project. Several new technology applications have taken place through the project, and more are to be applied in the next few years. The project has made rapid advances in reaching households. Out of 15,000 households to be impacted in four years, we reached nearly 6,000 households by the end of first year (March 2019). We could develop an excellent working relationship with the staff of ASRLM at all levels, as well as the local government functionaries and chairpersons of the VDCs.

During the same year, we conducted a study for OXFAM to identify livelihood opportunities for forest dwellers who had received land as an entitlement under the Forest Rights Act. Negotiations were

completed with Rajiv Gandhi Foundation to undertake a policy study in the water sector beginning April 2019.

Activities during the first half of the year

The Udalguri project:

The goal of the project is improving the income of 15,000 households by the implementation of different rural livelihood interventions over a four-year period, which began in April 2018. These households have members in SHGs promoted by ASRLM. By the end of September 2019, The project has reached 8,946 households in 199 villages spread over Udalguri and Harisinga development blocks.

	By March 2019	By September 2019
Villages	122	199
Households reached	5,994	8,946
Male Beneficiaries	2,806	4,784
Female Beneficiaries	3,187	4,161
Transgender beneficiary	1	1

The thrust of this period was to expand the number of livelihood activities with the existing households and include a new set of households with at least one livelihood activity. The activities under farm-based livelihoods comprise improved paddy, cash crop under rain shelter, the introduction of Assam lemon plants as intercropping in Areca nut gardens, monitoring of already transplanted black pepper plants, and transplantation of horticultural crops on the embankment of farm ponds created through MGNREGS fund. Livestock intervention includes the construction of scientific pigsties, gradual replacement of local pig stock with improved breeds, the introduction of quality pig ration, swine fever vaccines and vaccination against Ranikhet disease for backyard poultry.

Simultaneously, Kabil made vigorous efforts to leverage investment fund for the households from both Government and financial institutions. As a result, Kabil could obtain technical sanctions for individual beneficiary schemes (IBS) worth Rs. 2.79 crore under MGNREGS for this fiscal year with which farm ponds, as well as pigsties, are being constructed. The administration has permitted KABIL to initiate IBS in 7 VDCs, which was for 2 VDCs in the first year. There has been a high appreciation of KABIL's work in the entire district, and demand from various other blocks keeps coming from multiple sources. The local MLA cum cabinet minister has given fish fingerlings for all farm ponds excavated through MGNREGS fund from his area development fund. All these developments have helped to bridge the gap between the poor communities and the Government and administration, unleashing further opportunities to exploit such funds for the benefit of needy households.

KABIL needs to work more to influence bank for arranging credit for needy households. Joint efforts made by block unit of ASRLMS and KABIL to motivate banks to fund rural households have not been fruitful yet. KABIL has also explored some alternative options. It has submitted a proposal to the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation for subsidising the construction of rain shelters. The proposal is under consideration. We have also initiated dialogue with North East Small Finance Bank, and they are positive about starting operations in these two blocks. We hope to achieve

better results from these efforts in the coming days.

In the meantime, the immediate tactic KABIL introduced to cope with lack of investment fund for the communities is shifting the households to the less capital-intensive, but remunerative crops like leafy vegetables in the rainy season under a rain shelter. Green vegetable fetches a very high price in the market, they are of shorter duration and less costly to produce. A farmer investing Rs. 200 in this crop could earn Rs. 2000 in a cycle of 20-25 days during the monsoon. To construct rain shelters, Kabil supported the households by providing the cost of the poly sheet (which is 30% of total construction cost), and the rest 70% was contributed by the farmers in the form of the labour and local materials like bamboo. For livestock too, KABIL supported 30% of cost of low-cost pigsties, and the 70% cost was contributed by the households in the form of labour and local materials like bamboos. Further, the pigs like Ghungru, which were housed in open area earlier, are being housed now in the newly constructed pigsties. The farmers are trained in scientific management practices and veterinary care.

The service provider entrepreneurs (SPEs) engaged in both agriculture and livestock activities are expanding their business at a fast pace. A new batch of SPEs comprising of 12 Livestock and 11 agricultural SPEs have been recruited recently in the newly developed areas.

Achievements in farm-based livelihoods

Improved paddy

Paddy is the sole crop transplanted by most of the households in monsoon season in this area. Most of the farmers do the cultivation following age-old traditional practices. Hence, the production is as less as 50% of its potential. KABIL has taken up to promote improved paddy among the poorest households for the following reasons:

- Paddy is a crop for which the households have highest emotional attachment; hence good harvest of the same boosts level of confidence for taking up high-value crops
- Improved package of practices can make the production double the current which will add to their annual income
- It will contribute to enhanced food security for the poorest.

Seed replacement and scientific nursery bed preparation were two critical interventions and were adhered to by the intervened households. KABIL along with community cadres of ASRLMS (community resource persons - CRPs) helped the families in finding out the reliable source for certified paddy seed. After that, ASRLMS CRPs on behalf of the community interacted with the seed company and procured the seed at bulk quantities. KABIL, on the other hand, trained the ASRLMS CRPs and SHG representatives on technology of improved paddy cultivation. KABIL jointly with ASRLMS CRPs facilitated concept-seeding meetings in some of the villages through which the later learned the process and did such meetings in other villages on their own. This process has equipped about 50 CRPs with knowledge and skill in facilitating a concept seeding meeting in the village organisations (VOs). Further, they have also earned technical knowhow on improved paddy cultivation. As a result of this, the CRPs could collect indent of about 1250 farmers, and they procured and distributed 13 tons of quality seed to ensure seed replacement in 347 Hectares of land.

KABIL introduced SRI method for two farmers in Swapangaon VDC. The purpose is to demonstrate the technique to other farmers so that it can be extensively done in the coming winter season for summer paddy.



Naveen variety paddy in Lily Daimary's field from Sonaigaon village (VDC: Sonaigaon)

Rain shelter-based vegetable cultivation

Prices of vegetable touch the sky in monsoon season in Assam. The reason behind such a high price is less production due to heavy rainfall. Assam receives 2,500 to 3,000 mm of rainfall every year. The rain shelter is a poly-shed covering a small plot of the area with a polythene sheet. This polythene sheet is made up of 90 GSM thick UV stabilised plastic, which allows light to pass through but resist water. Incidentally, the monsoon months are, the less cash inflow months for the households, as they cannot go for wage-earning due to being busy in their field. Therefore, KABIL planned to introduce this, as this will give an additional source of cash flow. This is done in a small plot of 550 square feet near their settlement, so it is manageable even by the women members of the house. People can also work at night after coming back from their paddy field. The crops selected were the leafy vegetables, which is less capital intensive and can give return within 20-25 days. A household can go for 3-4 cycles in the monsoon months. Investment on crop is only Rs. 200 per cycle, but earning per shelter is as high as Rs. 2000 per cycle. The plastic sheet has a life of 3 years, and these are equally useful in winter to protect

the crops from the dense fog, occasional rainfall and extreme cold.

The vegetables cultivated was done following the organic method, which adds another value to the product. Besides selling, the households also consume these, and it provides nutrients to the family members. 520 such rain shelters have been installed so far in the entire block, and there is massive demand from the households.

Companion crops in betel nut gardens

Almost all rural households in Assam own a betel nut garden near their settlements. This garden has been termed by a few economists as the engine of economic development of rural Assam. However, the gardens are usually very poorly managed. KABIL emphasises on rejuvenation, intensification and diversification of these gardens. As a companion crop with betel nuts, high-quality black pepper and Assam lemon are being introduced.



Leafy Vegetable under Rain Shelter in Dowdi Gaon (Odala VCDC)

For black pepper, about 75,000 pits were dug and filled with organic manure in the last quarter of 2018-19. The transplantation of the same was completed in April and May months of this year. One thousand nine hundred ninety-four households transplanted about 68,000 saplings. Unfortunately, there was massive rainfall in April-May, which continued persistently for about a month. As black pepper is a very water-sensitive plant, nearly half of the saplings suffered damages or death.

The space between four adjoining betel nut plants has also been used to plant an Assam lemon plant. The design is to cultivate 20 such plants per household. Each plant can potentially give an earning Rs — 500 from the third year onwards. The variety used is a seedless one, which has a huge demand in the entire North-East region.



Horticulture in the embankment of MGNREGS ponds

The farm ponds created through the use of MGNREGS fund have created enthusiasms among the beneficiaries. The Government has given fish seeds in the ponds at free of cost. KABIL facilitated the beneficiaries to go for fencing and

transplant Areca nuts, banana, Assam lemon plants on the embankment. This will create new opportunities for increasing the annual income of the households in addition to protecting the embankments. The water in the farm ponds will be used in winter for doing Rabi crops as well.

Salient achievements in livestock

Construction of pigsties

Rearing pigs are most common in the villages of this area. Households rear local breeds of pigs following traditional methods. No housing is provided to the pigs, and good feeds are not used. Scientific management practices and veterinary care are nearly absent. These results in inferior return.

To strengthen this livelihood activity, the first need KABIL felt was a scientific pigsty. This means the house should be dry, easily cleanable, have clean water trough and good drainage. Further, it should be connected with a good pit to



dispose of the faeces. KABIL facilitated construction of concrete pigsties in the last financial year. Each of them cost between Rs 10,000 to 15,000. This is not affordable by the poor households. Therefore, KABIL has developed a semi-concrete model, which costs between Rs. 5,000 and 6,000. In this semi-concrete model, the floor of the house is made concrete, and the walls are made of local material, i.e. bamboo. Thus, the basic principle of cleanliness is maintained, and the house is made affordable for the farmer because bamboo is available in abundance with the households. The roof is covered with low-cost tin sheets; such new pigsties have been completed in this period. Each pigsty can be tracked online through NoteCom.

Replacement of local stock with improved breed

The second valuable value addition to the activity is the replacement of inferior breed with improved breed. Two breeds, namely Hampshire and Ghungroo have been identified as suitable for the area. Both these breeds have qualities like good litter size and better feed conversion. In the last six months, 669 of families have replaced 716 numbers piglets.

Replacement of feed

Nutritious feed is the key to the success of any animal rearing activity. The feed also consumes at least 70% of the total investment made by the farmer. Farmers here are using bran as the feed for pigs, but this does not support the essential nutritional requirement for the animals. Therefore, KABIL interacted with the officials of Godrej Company and set up a wholesale shop in Udalguri town. The owner of the shop is none other than an SHG woman from Sonaigaon village. The feed so made available is purchased

by the Livestock SPEs and they do retail selling to the pig farmers. This initiative has reduced the cost of feed to a limited extent, but more importantly, it has made available and accessible quality feed for the farmers in addition to creating business opportunities for the SPEs.

On the part of the farmers, as it is not possible for a hundred percent feed replacement at one go, they have started replacing gradually, starting from 25% in the first cycle.

Introduction of Swine Fever Vaccine

Swine Fever is the most common and deadly disease of pigs in the area. Being a viral disease, no medicine can save animals. So KABIL introduced de-worming and vaccination against this disease. A significant development that has happened about this intervention is building strong linkages with the district animal husbandry department. The vaccines are available now with the animal husbandry department, and KABIL has been procuring regularly the required doses from the department. These are then provided to the SPEs at free of cost and SPEs push the vaccines charging a minimal service charge from the farmers regularly. In the last six months, no swine fever is reported from any of the vaccinated animals.

Salient achievement in MGNREGS

KABIL initiated influencing Government and local administration for inclusion of individual beneficiary schemes (IBS) in the district annual action plan. During the last year, the administration allowed KABIL to intervene in 2 Village Council Development Committees (VCDC), and we could obtain the technical sanction of Rs. 1.12 crore. Twenty-five farm ponds and 16 pigsties were constructed. In financial year 2019-20, administration has permitted to expand to 7 more VCDCs and technical sanction of individual schemes worth Rs. 2.79 crore has been obtained so far. Till now, implementation of Rs. 0.69 crore worth of schemes has been completed. The local authorities have highly appreciated the initiative of KABIL and gradually space to include more households is opening up. There is enormous demand for such IBS within and outside the blocks.

Collaboration with ASRLMS

In the first week of July, the state mission director (SMD) of ASRLMS called a review meeting in which KABIL made a presentation covering notable achievements and areas of challenges. The core challenge discussed was about less achievement in availing bank credit for SHG households. The SMD instructed the concerned staffs to negotiate with the banks for motivating them for funding SHG members. After that KABIL developed 21 proposals totaling Rs. 21 lakhs for service provider entrepreneurs and submitted to the ASRLMS block office. After a couple of days, KABIL visited bank officials to submit the application forms, but the response from the bank was negative. Until now, no bank credit could be leveraged in this project.

ASRLMS organised a workshop of the SRLM staff of other districts to share the progress that happened in the project. KABIL made a presentation on progress before the participants.

Lessons:

- Black pepper transplanted in huge numbers has faced severe setback due to heavy and

continuous rainfall in April-May Just after transplanted of saplings, there was heavy raining continuously for 45 days in these months, which have destroyed a large number of the black pepper saplings. This has taught us a lesson that April-May may not always be suitable for black pepper transplanted.

- Growing vegetables in Kharif season are a risky business. Therefore, it is worth considering to start with a low capital-intensive crop rather than the one which requires more capital. The leafy vegetable cultivation also matched with the expectation of quick returns by the vegetable farmers due to which acceptance of the concept was very high. It otherwise would have been difficult to motivate tribal farmers to go for vegetable cultivation in Kharif season.
- As Bank credit from mainstream banks is not easy to avail, the households must be kept ready for another low capital-intensive crop so that the season is not missed out due to unavailability of capital.
- Breeding units of SPEs have been expanded by most of the SPEs by making the size of the farm bigger. The returns are very encouraging. There is a huge demand for piglets produced on SPEs' breeding farms. However, unavailability of capital has been a significant issue. KABIL is trying best to develop alternative credit source or alternative donors.

Explorations with new organisations in the project

We explored with the North Eastern Small Finance Bank (NESFB) for credit to the project participants. NESFB representatives have visited our project area and have shown keen interest to start operations in the area soon. With their background as an NBFC lender in rural areas, it is expected that they would adopt a new way of credit dispensation and at least part of the bottleneck caused by the unavailability of credit will be removed. We also approached the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation to obtain some CSR funds for the project. They have in principle agreed to provide partial subsidy for construction of more than 2,000 rain shelters.

Study to find livelihood options for women survivors of violence in the Azamgarh district

Shri Ramananda Saraswati Pustakalaya (SRSP), an NGO at Azamgarh, has done significant work to support women against sexual and other kinds of violence. On a request from OXFAM India, we undertook a study of the organisation to find out what best the survivors can do to restore their livelihoods, strengthen the existing ones and initiate new livelihoods. We made field visits and studied secondary literature. We spoke to a large number of target women by meeting them in their groups. We concluded that goat rearing, beauty services and vegetable cultivation could be three options that women would like to go for and SRSP has the wherewithal to support.

Water sector study with support from Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies

The Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Contemporary Studies (RGICS), a policy analysis and advocacy institution under the aegis of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, works on how India can engage deeply with the rest of the world to protect its interests and to promote global peace and security. One of the sub-themes is to look at China, particularly in areas of trade and investment.

RGICS aims to develop practical and sustainable solutions to address the water crisis in the water-starved areas of the country. It intends to thus study the successful experiences in China and India and utilize the lessons for addressing the imminent water crisis in India. China, where the context is somewhat similar to that of India, is known to have addressed the issues of water shortages with success improving the lives of millions of population dependent primarily on agriculture. RGICS thus has signed up Kabil to study the policies, institutional arrangements, and interventions in China and India for successful water conservation. The objective is to identify and suggest scalable and sustainable solutions, including policy-level interventions relevant to the Indian context.

The objectives of the study are:

- *To understand the key innovations and solutions at the policy, legislative, institutional, technical and operational, and local initiatives levels* that have addressed the water crisis successfully and sustainably in the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) and India. From the study, it is envisaged to identify and highlight those interventions which are high on efficiency, equity, and sustainability.
- *To prepare useful recommendations* that offer effective solutions in addressing water crisis through policies, laws, and programs, by *drawing relevant lessons* from successful interventions and innovations in PRC and India.
- To suggest actionable steps (at the policy, legislative, institutional, technical, and local management levels) for addressing the water crisis in India.

To achieve the above objectives, analysis of policies, laws, institutions, technologies, and local management related to water resource management was done to understand their effectiveness in terms of efficiency, equity, and sustainability. Both countries were studied separately to analyse the trend of water management with different interventions and their impacts. A comparison between the two countries is made to suggest the reforms that can be undertaken in India to meet its water challenges at present and in the future.

As a part of the process secondary literature review, expert consultations, and field visits were done on the themes of Water Policy, Water and laws, Water Institutions, Water technology, and the Political economy of it. The experts are policymakers, government officials, academicians, implementers, and community users, among others.

A study was conducted in Madhya Pradesh, to explore solutions to ensure equitable, sustainable, and efficient use of water with the of objectives to a) Study the situation of Shahdol and Betul districts of MP and suggest options to ensure adequate water for all; and b) Study the urban water supply system of Bhopal and suggest the potential of improvement. Another field visit was made to the Gram Gaurav Sansthan, Karauli, to understand the local measures on water conservation in the local villages. This visit has provided with insights of designing the recommendations based on the needs of the people.

A contact was established with the Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences (CRAES: <http://craes.cn/en>), and the consultation is scheduled in the first half of October.

The Rajiv Gandhi institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS) and the Indian National Association of the Club of Rome (CoR) conducted a workshop titled “Regeneration of Natural Capital: Land, Water and

Forest' in collaboration with Water and Land Management Institute (WALMI) in Bhopal on 27 and 28 August 2019. It attempted to reflect on issues related to the degradation of Land, Water, and Forest. The workshop also tried to come up with policy recommendations for the regeneration of natural resources in Madhya Pradesh.

Recognising changes in the ground realities (role of governments, capital market, innovation, technology and complexity of human and ecological problems), the workshop discussed the idea of *Panchmukhi Samvaay* (Collaborative Pentagon) as a framework of sustainable community development. The objective is to bring social, economic and cultural change without exploiting nature. These five segments create five corners of the pentagon or five faces (Panchmukhi). These five segments are (1) Government, (2) Corporate Sector, (3) Civil Societies; (4) Capital Market and (5) Knowledge Institutions. The collaborative action by these five segments is the *Panchmukhi Samvaay*. Kabil is actively considering working in Bundelkhand region with the support of local institutions by providing *do-how* support and accessing resources with the *Panchamukhi Samavaay* principles. Collaborative talks are underway with Government, CSI, community and other knowledge partners.

Human resources and capacity building

Two executives left KABIL during the period, and three have been newly recruited. Total full-time functionaries on KABIL's payroll are now fifteen. 13 of them are placed in Assam, and the rest two are in Delhi. Three more part-time personnel (either as part-time staff or as retainer consultant) function from the Head Office. Another retainer consultant functions from Kolkata.

The newly recruited staff has been undergoing process awareness and sensitivity training in phases. A Retreat is planned in December, and a couple of more trainings will be organised during the latter part of the year.