



The Focus

Saldiha : A step towards fertility

Saldiha, a small tribal hamlet in Purulia, faces problems like acute crisis of water, large tracts of land remaining fallow, low agricultural production and people migrating for food and work. Only a single rainfed crop is possible, the normal food crisis transcends into starvation in the years when there is no rain. In this village, women had to walk 5 km to fetch water from Beladhang river for daily use and drinking and the time spent was 5 hours per day. During lean period, young male members from majority of the households usually migrated for 6 months in a year in search of work.

DRCSC initiated its interventions with a series of meetings with the villagers and Sidhu Kanhu & Mulla Chandu farmer's group. PRA exercises indicated 'water scarcity' as the prime problem of the area.

A suitable land which was jointly owned by four to five persons was identified for excavating the step pond. The ponds have a three or four tier design. Three or four broad steps are made on all four sides to reach the centre. DRCSC staffs and members of the farmers group negotiated with the land owners to give the land on lease to the group of 30 farmers for a period of 30 years. The terms and conditions agreed upon was that on completion of the lease period, the ownership of the

pond will return to its original owners, but the group will retain the rights to utilize the pond water in order to irrigate the fallows they are cultivating presently. Pond excavation started on a plot of about 1.3 acres. The pond measured 180' X 160' and 10' deep. Trenches were dug on all the four sides to channel the runoff from the nearby forest to the pond. The entire pond and trench excavation activity was done by the villagers of Saldiha and also inhabitants of peripheral villages on food for work basis.

The pond bank was utilized for growing different vegetables, pulse crops like pigeon pea and seasonal, semi-perennial, perennial and multi-purpose trees. Fish was grown in the pond for additional income. Water stored in the pond was utilized for irrigating fallows on both sides.

Around 7 acres of land adjacent to the pond are being irrigated and farmers even go for the second crop. In the dry season when the level of water in the pond receded, vegetables were grown on the steps of the

pond. From the bank on all four sides, trellis were made hanging over the pond for supporting creepers yielding vegetables like pumpkin, bottle gourd, bitter gourd, etc.

After assessing the total need of the group, yields from the pond, pond bank and newly cultivated fallows is equally shared among the members of the group. A portion from the remaining harvest is then distributed free among the villagers beyond the group. After this, the surplus is sold in the market and the sale proceeds are deposited in the group's bank account.

Now they are able to get water for a minimum of 6 months. With this water they are able to grow vegetables which has helped to enhance their nutritional requirement. Apart from irrigating the vegetables and fruit tree saplings on the pond bank, it has potentials to irrigate 10 acres of fallow land where as many as 40 different types of vegetables were cultivated through mixed cropping.

The activity was supported by KKS, Germany.



Voices against Bt Brinjal

To protest against the decision of GEAC on approval of commercial cultivation of Bt Brinjal, DRCSC was active in the state to facilitate collective voice against it. we organised a Brinjal festival on 9th of January, 2010 with support from HIVOS/INSAF. During the day, agriculture scientists, brinjal farmers, Government officials, Academicians, representatives of various civil society organisations and



press discussed about the diversity, cultivation practice and pest control mechanism of Brinjal. About 60 indigenous varieties of brinjals and some preparations of those were displayed at the festival. A consensus resolution was made against the commercial cultivation of Bt brinjal.

A press conference was called in the Press Club on 11th January, 2010 to publicise the resolution taken in the festival and firmly protest against the approval of any GM crop in West Bengal.



The consultation with Sri Jairam Ramesh was there in Kolkata on 13th January, 2010 where he organised a public consultation on approval of Bt.



Happenings

- A rally was organised by the Climate Action Group (an Alliance of civil society organisations) to address the issue of global warming and climate change on the day of Climate Action Day on 24th October, 2009.



- On 1st December at 8.30 pm Star Ananda arranged a Talk show to discuss about the Bt Brinjal and its consequences. Our President Sri Ardhendu S. Chatterjee attended the talk show as a speaker.
- 4th Harekarakamba, the education festival to celebrate diverse approaches to learning was organized on 3rd to 6th December, 2009 at BITM grounds.
- Anshuman Das and Tanusree Patra represented Peoples' Coalition on Climate Change on behalf of DRCSC in COP 15 meeting at Copenhagen.
- 5 interventions of DRCSC were selected for presentation in the National Conference on Good Practices in Disaster

Risk Reduction organised by Sphere India in New Delhi. A total of 33 case studies from all over India were selected by a panel of experts for presentation in the conference. DRCSC's presentations evoked sufficient response from the crowd of implementing and donor agencies and also from government quarters.

- About 6 people are recruited in different teams for the smooth running of the project works.

■ This year we participated in the Book Fair.

- Anshuman Das debated against Bt. Brinjal on live debate on Bt brinjal in Doordarshan on 13th February, 2010 .

- Subrata Kundu, a senior coordinator, received 'Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray Smriti Samman' for his contribution to the literature.

New projects

- RKVY, Government of West Bengal has sanctioned a project on Sustainable and Integrated Natural Resource Management for Food & Livelihood Security of the Weaker Community in drought prone regions of West Bengal. In this project a watershed will be taken and work will be done for the holistic development. The project area will be

Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia, West Medinipur.

- A Vocational education and training for vulnerable and marginalised groups in East India states Jharkhand, West Bengal, Orissa has been sanctioned by European Commission through Welthungerhilfe. We will be working in West Bengal for next 5 years under this.
- A project has been sanctioned by Save the Children for mainstreaming school drop-outs from the slum areas of Kolkata.

New Productions

Badle Jachhe Jalabayu

A public awareness booklet on the effects of climate change and the measures that can be taken immediately, has been published in Bengali.



Website on SAS www.sas2.net

DRCSC is updating and maintaining the Bengali version of the SAS2 techniques.



5 issues of RTI newsletter, Sanbad Parisheba have been published within this period.

For information, training, ideas, books, films, techniques on alternative development through natural resource management contact

Development Research Communication and Services Centre
91-033-2442 7311 | www.drcsc.org | drcsc@vsnl.com