

Impact Study of Development Programmes in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka

The Progressive Research Aids Pvt. Ltd., Pune carried out an evaluation of various development programmes implemented by BAIF in the states of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Karnataka over the last 10 years. The participants covered under the study, represented communities belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, other backward castes and families living below the poverty line, involved in livestock development, watershed development, tribal rehabilitation, and women empowerment programmes for more than 5 years. It was observed that the cattle development programme continued to be the most attractive livelihood programme among the poor. Watershed development was yet another important programme to enhance agricultural production while ensuring soil and water conservation. Agri-horti-forestry, popularly known as *Wadi* was an excellent programme to meet the needs of small holders, although the programme was benefitting only tribal families, because the funding was available only under tribal development. Even though these three programmes addressed the needs of a majority of the poor, some of the sections of the rural poor were left out. Therefore, BAIF thought it necessary to promote a multi-disciplinary development programme known as the cluster development programme. For empowerment of the rural women, BAIF has launched yet another programme with primary emphasis on health, hygiene, drudgery reduction and capacity building.

Under this study, 1482 participant families selected randomly, were interviewed, apart from discussions with non-participants, local Government officials, members of Gram Panchayats and various local organisations. The study compared the present socio-economic status of the participants with their past. Over 87% of the participating families confirmed significant economic benefits from the project. The average income of these participants had increased from Rs.13,500/- in 2002 to Rs.36,465/- in 2007. Among them, the dairy farmers had earned an average income of Rs.51,190/- as compared to Rs.18,900/- in 2002 and who were earning less than Rs.8000/- in the mid 90's before joining the programme. While about 60% of the families in the programme area had participated in dairy development, over 90% of them were successful in operating dairy husbandry successfully. More than 75% of the dairy farmers had two or more cows, which contributed to their sustainable livelihood. Having realised the benefit of crossbred cows, some of the participating families have also been purchasing high yielding crossbred cows from outside, while disposing off their inferior animals. Thus, rearing of crossbred cattle has become a common practice in the operational areas.

The families participating in the watershed development programme had an average income of Rs.38,352/- per annum in 2007, as compared to Rs.12,000/- in 2002. The participants of the tribal development and cluster development programmes had an average earning of approximately Rs.30,000/- as compared to their income of Rs.10,000/- in 2002. In another programme of women empowerment, the participating families had enhanced their income from Rs.10,165/- in 2002 to Rs.28,272/- in 2007.

It was observed that the families who had participated in any one of the above programmes, irrespective of the initial entry, tried to take up other activities related to natural resources management to enhance their income. The study revealed that the livestock development programme gave good economic stability to the families not only to generate cash income from sale of milk and animals, but also to improve agricultural production through organic farming. The programme had a significant impact on women empowerment and health care.

The income of the families participating in other programmes was slightly lower than that from animal husbandry, mainly because of involvement of the participant families for more than 8 years. The other programmes were initiated at a later date where the participants were associated with BAIF for a period of 5-6 years and required some more time to reach the optimum level of production and profitability. The watershed development programme had a shorter gestation period as the benefits from the programme started accruing from the first year itself in the form of intensive cultivation and increasing yields. The income from the wadi programme was slightly low. This was mainly due to the fact that the participants were in the sixth or seventh year of participation and the orchards reached the optimum bearing stage at the end of 9-10 years. The study also revealed that the wadi programme is the most significant programme as it has enabled the tribal beneficiaries to come out of poverty and improve their quality of life.

While the cattle development, watershed development and wadi programmes facilitated only selected farmers having specific interest in these areas, the cluster development and women empowerment programmes provided opportunities for all sections of the society. Under the cluster development programme, the families of a homogeneous socio-economic status were facilitated to identify their needs and to select various income generation opportunities. This enabled more than 90% of the families including the landless, to take active part in the programme. Under the women empowerment programme, although the primary focus was on health and literacy issues and empowerment through training, micro-finance and development of People's Organisations in the initial stage, the women soon identified various livelihood activities as their priority and started selecting various interventions. With such a wide option, the women were able to select the programmes of their choice and as a result, the rate of success was high. Over 53% of the women from the participating families had taken active part in SHG activities which had a positive impact on their income as well as quality of life. The size of the participating families was 5.3 members. However, the size of the tribal families was slightly more (5.8 members per family) compared to the others. It was also very heartening to note that the average number of children per participating family was only 1.1 which reflects the wide acceptance of family welfare programmes by the participants. There was also a significant increase in the rate of literacy. While the average illiteracy rate in the region was 43% for males and 64% for females, there was only 5% male illiteracy and 31% female illiteracy among the project participants. The school drop outs were 16%, although the initial enrollment of children was more than 95%, which indicated a significant increase in the literacy, particularly among the new generation. In spite of being illiterate and not having enrolled in schools, the participating women expressed that men sought their opinion on all household matters, after the families joined the development programme of BAIF. The consultation among the tribal families was higher than in the non-tribal families. Women empowerment had a positive impact on community health, hygiene and sanitation. In villages, the percentage of households using toilets has increased from less than 10% to 53% after BAIF initiated various development programmes.

By and large, after the initiation of BAIF's development programmes, 66% of the families earned their income from agriculture, 9% families from agricultural wages, 4.9% from employment, 3.5% from small business, and 1.9% earned their income as artisans. However, 14.5% families had no assured source of income due to under employment. Out of the total participants, only 4.8% of the families were still living below the poverty line and among them, the tribals had a larger representation as there was no major source of livelihood in the absence of established orchards. The incidence of food security has come down from 27% to 8.7% among the tribals. Initially, over 28% of the tribal families were migrating, which has

come down to 17.1%. It is only the landless and very small land holders and particularly the males from these families who have a shorter period of migration. There has been very significant reduction in women migration resulting in good health and education for the children. The incidences of major illnesses has also reduced from 12.3% to 5.3%.

Most of the families who have enhanced their income, have been spending their earnings on food, health care, education, and improvement of their houses. Improvement of the house is a continuous activity among the participating families. 86% of the families have also invested in various household gadgets. The programme also helped over 70% of the local artisan families to revive their own activities and almost everybody was able to enhance their income.