

With support from the SCALE Innovation Fund, Udyogini worked in remote areas of Western Rajasthan to strengthen business development skills of women embroidery artisans and enabled them to approach markets with improved bargaining power.



AGA KHAN FOUNDATION

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is a private, non-denominational, development agency, established by His Highness the Aga Khan in Switzerland in 1967. The Foundation seeks sustainable solutions to long-term problems of poverty through an integrated, community-based, participatory approach that reinforces civil society and respects local culture. In India, AKF works essentially in three thematic areas: Health, Education and Rural Development. It also works to strengthen civil society institutions.

AKF acknowledges the support of:



European Union (EU)

For further information

Aga Khan Foundation
Sarojini House,
6, Bhagwan Dass Road,
New Delhi 110001, India
Tel: +91 11 23782 173
Fax: +91 11 23782 174
E-mail: akfindia@akdn.org
www.akdn.org/India

DSC in collaboration with other NGOs and government agencies has developed a resource manual on Livelihood Augmentation for Rainfed Areas. The manual will help practitioners understand watershed development and related strategies, including proven approaches to institution building and enterprise development for rainfed areas. In addition, DSC produces a radio programme "Sajjata No Sangh ... Lave Kheti Ma Rang" ("Joining this group of capable people will green your fields!"). The programme is broadcast weekly by All India Radio and is popular with farmers, agricultural research agencies and the Government of Gujarat.

Outreach partners are also engaged in research on emerging issues in rural livelihoods. A study by AKRSP(I) identified critical components of strategies used to develop community institutions by seven leading NGOs working on natural resource management. APMAS has studied SHGs and SHG Federations, documenting best practices and issues. SCALE has supported production of newsletters, as also documentary and training films on community initiatives in natural resource management and related livelihood improvement activities.

The Innovation Fund

The Innovation Fund supported by SCALE seeks to identify, test and document new approaches to rural livelihood

improvement that are relevant to the changing economic landscape of India, where rapid urbanisation, improved communications and new technologies are changing the way people earn their livelihoods. By the end of 2010, 10 organisations were supported by the Innovation Fund with small grants and technical assistance on a range of issues, including: improving the terms of employment for tribal communities engaged in labour migration; strengthening business development skills of women producers; and, linking entrepreneurial ventures of women's self-help groups across states. Other initiatives supported by the Fund include development of traditional art forms to maintain and strengthen pluralistic traditions of the Kutch Region of Gujarat. and development of business capacities of poor weaver communities in Andhra Pradesh.

Organisations supported by the Innovation-Fund
ARAVALI in Rajasthan
ASSIST in Andhra Pradesh
Development Support Centre in Gujarat
Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan (KMVS) in Gujarat
PRADAN in Madhya Pradesh
Prayas in Gujarat and Rajasthan
Society for the Development of Drought-Prone Areas (SDDPA) in Andhra Pradesh
Udyogini in Rajasthan
Vana Niketan in Maharashtra

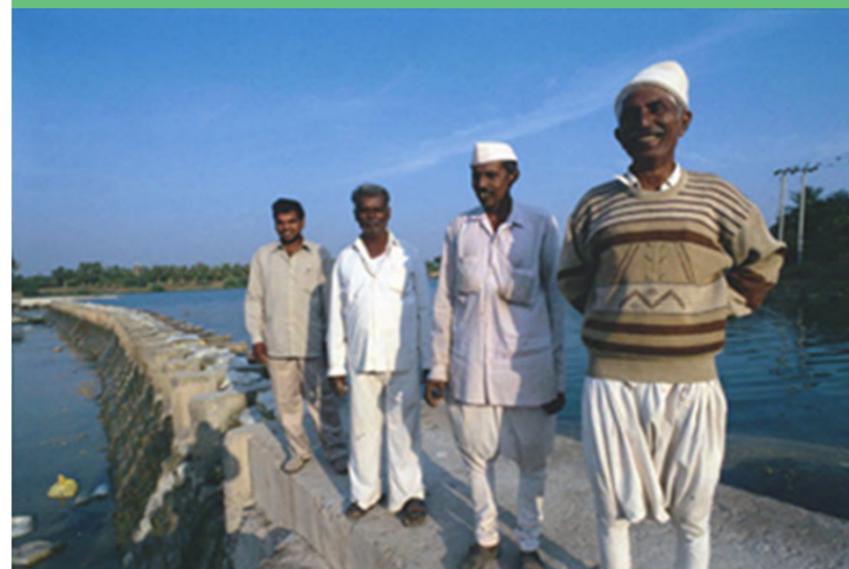
The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is a group of private development agencies working to empower communities and individuals, often in disadvantaged circumstances, to improve living conditions and opportunities, especially in Africa and Asia. Its agencies work in over 30 countries for the common good of all citizens, regardless of their gender, origin or religion. Its underlying impulse is the ethic of compassion for the vulnerable in society.

© AKDN, December 2011 Information contained in this brief can be reproduced with acknowledgement to AKDN.

Photo credits: AKDN



INDIA



Sustainable Community-Based Approaches to Livelihood Enhancement (SCALE)

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) in India has been implementing the SCALE project through co-financing support from the European Union. SCALE focuses especially on enhancing livelihoods opportunities in rainfed, semi-arid regions of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

Through its direct implementation activities, SCALE is reaching over half a million people, most of them living under difficult socio-economic circumstances. A core aspect of the project's activities has been the formation of a host of community institutions, which have been playing a significant role in enforcing public awareness on participation in developmental activities and sustainable management of local common resources. Also, most of these institutions have been involved

in addressing cross-cutting local concerns including provision of basic services, focusing on gender issues, developing human resources and community leadership and enhancing economic opportunities, especially for the poorest and the most disadvantaged. Other major focuses of SCALE include fostering innovation and informed dialogue on issues and policies important towards building sustainable livelihoods in project areas.

Overview of SCALE Activities

SCALE was envisioned to be implemented from 2002 to 2012 with a two-pronged strategy involving (i) direct implementation of activities in 1,000 villages reaching 500,000 individuals through 3,000 community-based institutions and common interest groups, and (ii) outreach activities aimed at strengthening processes and policies and facilitating wider learning

in project areas on pro-poor community based approaches of livelihood promotion. Field implementation is primarily done through the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP(I)). Outreach activities are undertaken through Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS), Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI), Development Support Centre (DSC) and Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN). In addition, through the Innovation Fund, SCALE supports initiatives of new and innovative approaches to community-based livelihood enhancement across the country.

Strengthening Community Capacity

A major objective of SCALE is to establish and strengthen community institutions in programme villages, helping them to identify, plan and implement solutions to

AGA KHAN DEVELOPMENT NETWORK
www.akdn.org

SCALE works with farmers, entrepreneurs and the Agricultural Departments for promotion of improved agricultural techniques. It also facilitates farmers' access to organised credit, inputs and markets for enhancing agricultural productivity and increasing incomes of farmers.



SCALE FACTS AT A GLANCE

Programme Coverage

- 1,060 villages covered with 111,500 households directly benefited

Community Institutions

- Over 3,600 community institutions formed
- 30 community federations and associations formed
- Engagement with around 250 village *panchayats*

Programme Activities

- Soil and Water Conservation measures implemented across 20,000 hectares of private and public land
- Irrigation facilities extended to over 13,000 hectares of farmland across 625 villages
- Agriculture extension extended to over 30,000 households
- Access to adequate and safe drinking water facilitated in over 150 villages
- Over 4,000 ultra-poor households engaged in income generating activities
- Over 40,000 government and NGO functionaries trained on aspects related to livelihoods and natural resource management

their own development problems. Village institutions are empowered to prepare development plans to manage natural resources better and provide basic services and employment opportunities for their poorest members. Institutions of marginalised groups, such as women and the poorest, are effective platforms for discussion of issues specific to these groups and stimulate action to improve their economic and social status.

Through project support, community institutions are engaged in addressing long-term issues like forest regeneration, coastal salinity and drinking water management. For example, river basin management groups formed through SCALE in Junagadh district of Gujarat mobilised local leadership and community cooperation to revive the Meghal River. As a result, this seasonal, rain-fed river is now perennial and has increased availability of water for irrigation, drinking and agriculture. Institutions also include commercial federations and *Mahila Manch*s (federations of women's groups) that help to bring diverse groups of people together to share experiences, combine their strengths for collective bargaining with government and markets, and develop regional solutions to shared problems.

In collaboration with state forest departments, village institutions are encouraged to develop community-based systems to protect and manage village common lands. These communities are now collecting significant quantities of fuel-wood, fodder and timber from managed wastelands that are shared among member households. Further, the SCALE project works with over 250 village *panchayats* for implementation of programmes related to watershed management, drinking water

and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.

Enhancing Agricultural Productivity

Various initiatives supported by the project contribute to sustained improvements in agricultural productivity. The construction of low-cost structures for soil and water conservation in farmers' fields and village streams helps conserve soil moisture and fertility. Management of canal irrigation systems through farmers' organisations has led to a more dependable supply of irrigation water for a larger number of farmers in the command area. Smaller groups of farmers organised around wells and check-dams constructed through SCALE help to ensure efficient and equitable distribution of scarce water. Promotion of improved varieties and diversification to crops like fruits and vegetables has improved net returns to farmers by 50 percent.

Community institutions are now engaged in collective procurement of seeds, fertilisers and pesticides from reliable sources, giving farmers access to good quality inputs at reasonable prices. The mobilisation of farmers for collective sale of agricultural produce has raised prices received by farmers at the local level. These activities are supported by savings and mutual lending within the groups, mainly among women members. In addition, innovative agriculture extension techniques in the form of radio programmes, farmers' groups and training programmes are supported by the project.

Livelihoods of the Poorest

Developing strategies to improve incomes of poorest and most vulnerable groups

has been one of the significant challenges undertaken by SCALE. Financial and technical support (including skill-building) is extended to the poorest in programme villages to initiate income generating activities ranging from household-based enterprises like rearing of milch cattle and goats, brass-bead making and diesel engine repair to group-based activities like fishing and bamboo-craft making.

In keeping with its pro-poor mission, AKRSP(I) has been working closely with, landless families who received surplus government wasteland for cultivation in Gujarat. AKRSP(I) facilitates and supports land development and improvement through activities like land levelling, enhanced access to quality seeds and fertilisers and the provision of irrigation facilities. This has helped ensure food security and enhanced incomes and social status. For instance, the Siddi Women's Federation in the Junagadh, District of Gujarat produces around 200 tonnes of organic compost annually.

Outreach

In addition to working at the grassroots level, SCALE supports partners to gather and disseminate best practices to government agencies, NGOs and community-based organisations. Collaboration with various government agencies and public programmes is an important part of SCALE outreach activities. For instance, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India)[AKRSP(I)] and Development Support Centre (DSC) are involved with the Water and Sanitation Management Organisation (WASMO) in Gujarat in implementing as well as strengthening its programmes on drinking water. Project partners are also engaged

in efforts to implement and strengthen the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, a major national programme for rural development as also the National Rural Livelihoods Mission. Partners are currently involved in various consultative committees of different state governments and of India's Planning Commission.

Under SCALE, AKRSP(I) has established a resource centre for rainwater harvesting in the drought-prone Surendranagar Region of Gujarat and a second centre for livelihood development of tribal communities in South Gujarat. DSC has been training government officers and NGOs in participatory irrigation management and watershed development. In Andhra Pradesh, the Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS) worked with two District Livelihood Resource Centres in Adilabad and Cuddapah Districts to provide capacity building support and information on rural livelihood improvement through self-help. APMAS is now taking these services even closer to village communities through Cluster and Village Livelihood Resource Centres. In Rajasthan, the Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI) works to improve the institutional and technical capacities of NGOs and to promote collaboration between NGOs and the state government. SCALE has worked with Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) in the creation of a National Resource Centre on Rural Livelihoods in New Delhi, which is playing an active role in research, documentation and dissemination of best practices and in facilitating policy dialogue on livelihood-related issues facing poor rural communities.

PROGRAMME PARTNERS

Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India) [AKRSP(I)] is a non-profit, non-denominational development organisation working in the semi-arid regions of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh as also poor regions of Bihar to improve livelihoods of the poor and underprivileged.

Andhra Pradesh Mahila Abhivruddhi Society (APMAS) is a technical support organisation that works towards women's empowerment, livelihoods promotion and poverty alleviation through capacity-building, quality assessment, research, advocacy and communication.

Association for Rural Advancement through Voluntary Action and Local Involvement (ARAVALI) is a support organisation based in Rajasthan that works to strengthen government-civil society collaboration, particularly on aspects of participatory processes in development programmes, through capacity-building, research and policy dialogue.

Development Support Centre (DSC) is a resource organisation that provides knowledge-based support to community organisations, NGOs, government agencies and other stake-holders in the field of natural resource management through training and capacity-building, research and policy influencing activities.

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) PRADAN promotes Self-Help Groups; develops locally suitable economic activities; mobilises finances; and introduces systems to improve livelihoods of the rural poor and sustain their progress across seven Indian states.



A Self Help Group (SHG) meeting in progress in Tavkhedi village in the Khandwa District of Madhya Pradesh. SCALE facilitates formation of SHGs and supports strengthening of financial management and linkages of groups with banks for enhancing communities' access to credit.

Cover photo: Through support from SCALE, communities in Junagadh, Gujarat have constructed this check dam to conserve water for irrigation and domestic consumption.