

VILLAGE FIELDWORK SEGMENT

PRM 38 (2017-2019)

A REPORT on RURAL ACTION COMPONENT

VILLAGE: SHOLAYOOR

GRAM PANCHAYAT: SHOLAYOOR

TALUKA: MANNARKADU

DISTRICT: PALAKKAD

STATE: KERALA

HOST ORGANISATION: KUDUMBASHREE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sholayoor Panchayat of Attappady block is comprised of two villages, Kottathara and Sholayoor. With 4625 households, Sholayoor has a population of 17,207 with 8,579 men and 8,628 women out of which nearly half belong to the ST category. The tribes in the area belonged to the Irula community.

Kudumbashree is present in all the hamlets we visited. However, the levels of involvement of women with the organization varied between the hamlets.

2. OBJECTIVES

- To understand the field level working of Kudumbashree
- To propose a feasible livelihood intervention

3. OBSERVATIONS

3.1 Village Society

- Men

Men are primarily wage labourers and estate workers. They also practice agriculture. However, there are lots of men who do not engage in any livelihood activity. There were many cases where men quit working as women are earning for the family. They work as wage labourers for few days when necessity arises. Other common occupation among men are auto and jeep driving. Men are seen chewing beetle leaves and many are drunk post sunset and some days even when the day starts. As per what the women said, domestic violence post drinking has reduced but is still prevalent in a lesser intensity.

- Women

Women are the breadwinners in many households. They are mainly engaged in agriculture, goat rearing and estate and wage labour. Most women are a part of Kudumbashree. Women were also seen chewing beetle leaves.

- Youth

The youth have a general interest in driving and travelling. They are seen to work for a while, earn wages and get themselves a bike or mobile phone or travel around. They work again for a similar short term goal.

- Children

Most of the children attend school regularly. However, in many cases, reason for absenteeism maybe lack of motivation. Parents are not seen compelling the children to go to school when they are lazy.

Enrolment rates of 11th grade are as good as 10th grade but dropouts are more. Reason for dropout are mostly attributed to the change in medium of instruction from Malayalam to English which the children find difficulty in coping with. Other reasons that were mentioned includes difficulty in obtaining uniform, books, etc. and the need to start earning for the family.

3.2 Agriculture

The main crops grown in the area are cardamom, coffee, tea, pepper, maize, ragi, coconut, arecanut and plantains. Pepper vines grown on nearly every tree. There has been shift in the agriculture pattern. The tribes have shifted from cultivation of food crops and minor millets to cash crops. Irrigation and animal attacks are the major problems faced. Irrigation to farmland on the up hills is an issue and lift irrigation seems to be successful in very few places. Electric fences are done which are not that fruitful since elephants thrash and trespass into the fields. Groundnut cultivation is impossible since the peacocks are the main pests. A lot of the tribes have shifted from agriculture because of poor rainfall and animal attack problems.

3.3 Income, Expenditure, Savings and Loans

The average income of a household comes between Rs.5000 and Rs.6000 and expense is around the same. During the summer months, expense is more than the income generated.

The culture of savings is not prevalent among the tribes. The only savings most of them mention is the Rs.20 per week that they save as Kudumbashree members. Other savings which very few spoke about was Post Office Savings and Chit Funds.

The members find the savings through Kudumbashree very useful as they can avail loans from the same when necessary. As per our household survey, every household who has a Kudumbashree member has not relied on banks or any other monetary source for loan. Kudumbashree is their first option for the same.

3.4 Kudumbashree

- **NGH Meetings**

NHG meetings do not happen regularly in many hamlets we visited across Sholayoor Gram Panchayat. In many hamlets, even though meetings happen, not many are present during the meetings. Women who work as wage labourers and estate workers are usually the ones who are not able to find time for the meetings. The women in the NHGs are not very united and this leads to a difference in opinion. Even though a few would like to start a livelihood together, disinterest from others makes them withdraw.

- **Bridge School**

The Bridge School had teachers who were very keen on teaching the children. One of the parent complained the children aren't serious and wastes lot of time talking.

- **Community Kitchen**

The Community Kitchen run by one or two NHGs in one hamlet has multiple views and opinions. The beneficiaries of the project was to provide one full meal each day to children below six years, adolescents, pregnant women, and those above 60 years of age. However, the kitchen provides food for everybody who asks for the same. This has led to at least few able men quit work and the need to earn their basic necessities as they are covered free of cost. This also adds to their capacity to drink more with the money earned as it need not be used to buy food. Internal conflicts in the hamlets and attitudes of people preparing the food makes few households not like the community kitchen. Some even mentioned people take food and feed the cattle.

The community kitchen definitely provides meals to those necessary and its benefits are reaped by the community.

The community kitchens we visited provided rice, sambar and pickle. The PDS provides each category a month with 35 kg of food grains per card for free, including 28 kg of rice and 7 kg of wheat (Yellow card holders); 5 kg of food grains per person for free, including 4 kg of rice and 1 kg of wheat (Pink card holders). The necessity of community kitchen for a family getting ration through PDS is questionable. However, a suggestion would be to stick to the plan of providing meal to the beneficiaries as decided by providing them a card or some identification.

- **Bridge Course**

The bridge courses happened at many of the hamlets we visited. In some of the hamlets they complained of not every student attending but the attendance is generally above fifty percentage. The bridge course has a good opinion among people and students who are lazy to go to school attends the course sometimes. However, we noticed poor lighting in all the bridge course centres and some did not even have a light. This is something immediate attention has to be channelled to.

- **NTFP Collection**

NTFP Collection done by Sholayoor Ooru Samiti is working out well even though it is too early to judge if the venture is profitable as it has only been three months into the business. They collect raw produce for Rs.20 per kg and dried ones for Rs.40 per kg. They sell the same to Kudumbashree for Rs.80 per kg. This provides them with quite a good margin and they are happy with their returns.

- **Ragi Mill**

Ragi Mill situated near Anaikatty, Sholayoor is not very popular in the area. The mill can be improved in terms of cleanliness. They also collect vegetables and sorts and sends them for sale. The workers in the mill are happy and contented with working there.

- **Kila Canteen**

The Kila Canteen, currently run by the Vayaloor Ooru Samiti is a successful livelihood provider for the twenty women that work there. The food had good reviews and they are interested in setting up their own hotel as a permanent livelihood.

- **Women Empowerment through Kudumbashree**

Kudumbashree has definitely brought a change in the attitude and the way of living. The change is big and it has an impact in their day to day living. Many of them are willing and able to work out other livelihood options apart from agriculture and estate workers. They are more confident after being a part of Kudumbashree. However, the empowerment is not even among the women. The animators in some of the hamlets are extremely outgoing and has evolved in many ways including willingness to take up responsibilities. Empowerment has been in different level even within the animators. The level of participation of the NHG members in various activities can be attributed to the animator. Some such hamlets and Ooru Samitis have come together to start a livelihood such as NTFP collection, canteen, etc.

The main empowerment women who are members talk about is their ability to talk to others who are not their tribes, which they used to shy away from or was even scared to talk to

before Kudumbashree intervened. Post Kudumbashree, they have and are able to operate their bank accounts.

4. LIVELIHOOD INTERVENTION

4.1 Introduction

Organizing the already existing goat farmers and aligning them to sell their goats in the Goat fairs conducted by Kudumbashree thereby eliminating the middle man and also obtaining Geographical Indication for Attapady Black which would act as a method to conserve the breed. **We can motivate the tribes to rear Attapady Black if the geographical indication is obtained since it would fetch more returns. Later, expanding to the international markets can also be thought about.**

Stage 1: Understanding the Internal and External contexts

1.1 Internal Contexts

Understanding people

1. Livelihood activity portfolio

Minority : Animal Husbandry, NTFP

Majority : Agriculture, Wage labourers and Estate workers

2. Livelihood capabilities

The livelihood of the tribes is mostly based on Agriculture (Coffee and Pepper), Animal Husbandry (Goat rearing and poultry) and collection of Non-timber forest produces other than wage labour and estate works.(Siruvani estate,Varadimala)

3. Livelihood Risks

Sudden price decrease due to unforeseen reasons, sudden animal deaths, Disease attack to the animal (in case of animal husbandry), improper availability of fodder, droughts, Animal attack on the agriculture fields (Elephants and Boar)

Type of Risk	Does it affect the intervention?
Sudden price decrease due to unforeseen reasons	Yes
Drought	No (Attapady Black can adapt to extreme climatic conditions)
Disease attack	No (Attapady Black is resistant to most of the diseases that sicken the other variety of goats)

Improper availability of fodder	No (Attapady black is drought resistant and survives off rough fodder)
Animal attack on the agriculture fields (Elephants and Boar)	No

1.2 External Context

Factor Conditions

The vegetation around the area is scanty but the breed being drought resistant can survive off low quality roughage. The tribes are traditionally involved in goat rearing and the goats have cultural significance in the community. The goats can bear extreme climatic conditions and therefore will not be affected.

The necessary 4-A's for any factor condition is

- **Asset:** The goats are the main assets of the intervention and they exist in the area.
- **Awareness:** The farmers are aware of the goat farming opportunities the intervention just aligns the process properly and aims to obtain GI.
- **Ability:** As Goat farming is traditionally associated with the community the ability is passed on to the generations.
- **Access:** The farmers have access to both grazing lands and the breed.

Demand Conditions

The goat's meat and milk is believed to have high medicinal properties so with proper marketing the demand for the meat can be increased. Reared in the hill tracts of Attapady the goats are in high demand because of their resistant nature to diseases and extreme climatic conditions.

Stage 2: Problems (bottlenecks)

- The population of the goat has drastically come down and steps should be taken to conserve the breed. Crossing of inter-breeds may cause loss of the original characteristics associated with the breed.
- The cost of labour for goat rearing is high if it's not done by the family labour.

Stage 3

Promotion and sales

In the short run

- We could try to organise weekly goat fairs to completely eliminate the middle man.
- The farmers could bring their goats to the fair and a temporary shed for housing the goats for a maximum of 7 days could be made.
- Kudumbashree could help the farmers with the needed fodder for the temporary stay period.
- The fodder provided could be collected by the some ooru samidhis as this would also be a livelihood option.
- The buyers could come and purchase the goats and bucks within the allotted seven days.

In the long run,

- **Though**, more research about the nutritional and taste characteristics of the meat should be done before applying for GI.
- Kudumbashree can obtain geographical indication (GI) for the goat meat since it's claimed that it possesses medicinal properties and high nutritional content and is also claimed to be tasty.

Initiating and Initializing operations

- The operations would be initiated after the necessary resources are mobilized.
- Funds for the lodging of goats and fodder should be taken care of initially by Kudumbashree, which later can be withdrawn.
- The people should have necessary social capital and be motivated enough to come and join the livelihood organization.

5. Other livelihood options

5.1 Glory Lily : *Gloriosa superba*

- Common names **include** Glory lily, kanvalipoo, kanvalikizhangu, kandhalmalar, karthigai kizhangu
- Its flowers are fascinating and its tubers and seeds are medicinally used
- The medicinal properties of the drug are due to the presence of alkaloids, chiefly colchicines and colchicoside
- Colchicine is used in the treatment of gout; a common disorder in the temperate parts of the world.
- Gout is caused by the deposition of microcrystals of uric acid in the joints.
- In addition these alkaloids are also used as polyploidizing agents in polyploid breeding in crop research.
- The crop is grown mainly for its seeds which are in great demand within the country **and in the international market.**
- In Karnataka, it is commonly found growing all along the Western Ghats.

Processing of economic parts

- When planted in June it starts bearing flowers after 55 days and continues to flower and fruit till October.
- After picking, the capsules should be kept in the shade for 7 to 10 days to facilitate the capsules to open up, displaying deep orange-yellow coloured seeds.
- The seeds and pericarp are separated manually and dried for a week in the shade, by spreading them uniformly over any clean, dry floor or any platform specially erected for the purpose.
- At the later stages, the seeds are moved to the sunlight for a week till they dry completely.
- The dried seeds are then packed in moisture proof containers and stored until exported or extracted for the alkaloids.

Yield

The yield of seeds differs greatly, depending upon the vigour and age of the plant which in turn, depend on the size of the tuber. The yield in the initial year will be low, but it gradually increases in the subsequent years. After three years, from a well managed field, we may get about 200-250kg/ha of dried seeds.

5.2 Tree borne oil seeds

- Cultivation of tree borne oil seeds like *Jatropha curcas* (*bio diesel plant*), *Pongamia pinnata* (*Pungam tree*) and *Azadirachta indica* (*Neem*) which are of high potential can be done.
- These are the alternatives available for the rehabilitation and utilisation of the vast expanse of lands which are attacked by animals if they are used for food cultivation.
- The use of wastelands (lands attacked by animals) to produce tree-borne oilseeds can realise the twin objectives of rehabilitation of a vital land resource and obtaining an energy substitute.

5.2.1 *Jatropha curcas* (Bio diesel plant)

Biology

- It is a small tree of about 6.0 m height belonging to family Euphorbiaceae. It has a short trunk with thick branches spreading into a crown of dark green leaves. *Jatropha* thrives under a wide range of soil and climatic conditions.
- *Jatropha* comes into flowering during September to December and fruits mature 2-4 months after flowering. However, in irrigated or high rainfall areas, a main harvest in October and a second harvest in March/April are possible.

Planting material

- *Jatropha* can be established with seeds or cuttings. Seeds can be sown directly at the onset of the rainy season or seedlings can be raised in polybags and transplanted.
- Branch cuttings grow vigorously when used as planting material. Cuttings of 45-100 cm in length and 3-4 cm in thickness taken from the base of the stem are the best for vegetative propagation.
- Plants raised from cuttings start bearing within one year whereas those propagated from seeds bear in 3-4 years.

Economic Importance

- Apart from the use of seed oil for biodiesel production, parts of *Jatropha* have several other uses.
- The latex, oil, twigs, wood and leaves have medicinal value.
- Leaves are used as a fumigant for bed bugs.
- A dye extracted from leaves and tender stems is used for colouring cloth and fishing nets.
- Tender foliage and oil cake of *Jatropha* can be used as organic manure
- In most farms where it is grown for live-fencing, *Jatropha* is planted as a single row.
- Extracts of its bark can be made into a wax.

- Tannin or dye can be extracted from leaf and root of *Jatropha*

5.2.2 *Azadirachta indica* (Neem)

- *Azadirachta indica* (neem) is native to dry forests of South and Southeast Asia.
- It has been receiving wide publicity because of the pesticidal properties of azadirachtin and other such constituents in its seeds.
- Neem can also fit into agroforestry systems as it is a multipurpose tree. It can grow on a wide range of soils and climatic conditions.
- Neem trees usually flower in April and the fruits mature 2-3 months later.
- The kernel contains about 30-40% oil, which has the same range of uses as that from other TBOS. The seed cakes can also be used as manure.
- The wood is strong and can be used for furniture, implements and construction. Seed, leaves, bark and fruit pulp have medicinal properties.

5.2.3 Lemon grass

- Lemon grass was widely grown by the Mallaya tribes in Sholayoor years back. It is heard that they used to conduct distillation and sell the lemon grass oil.
- Lemon grass is a perennial plant and is grown along the Western Ghats.
- It requires warm humid climate with full sunshine and a rainfall from 200 to 250cm well distributed throughout the year.
- Lemon grass survives in wide range of soil from loamy to poor laterite soil. But sandy and red soil with good drainage and good organic matter is best suited.
- No serious insect and pest disease attacks the crop.
- It is a major source of citral, used in perfumes, beverages and cosmetics.

5.2.4 Castor (*Ricinus communis*)

- Castor can be used to cultivate in lands that are not used for commercial farming. Castor can come up well in soil that are not fertile and those that get less annual rainfall. It can be grown on soil that are fairly deep and well drained and pH ranging from 5.0 to 8.5.
- Castor has wide range of uses including manufacture of soap, transparent paper, printing ink, varnishes, etc. It is also fed to silk worms.

5.3 Eri culture

The rearing of eri silkworm *Samia ricini* is known as ericulture. It is the only domesticated non-mulberry variety. Eri fabric is commonly known as poorman's silk. Among the food plants for eri, castor is much preferred host due to higher water content, ash, nitrogen percentage, acidity and crude protein.

And since Castor (*Ricinus communis*) can be easily cultivated in Attapady this is a very feasible intervention.

- Ericulture is an agro based rural industry with large labour involvement and higher income generation potential **suitable for small and marginal farmers** also.
- All the ericultural activities are village based and hence **prevents migration** of people from rural to urban areas in search of jobs.
- Ericulture gives income 5 to 6 times a year.**
- Ericulture provides **self-employment opportunities** to the educated unemployed youth in the varied sectors.

5.4 Handloom

Basic handloom does not require a lot of skill and the women can find employment if a unit is set up.

5.5 Tailoring

A basic course in tailoring will provide a livelihood for women. Since it can be done from home, there might be takers for the course. Setting up a tailoring unit and starting