



An Analysis of Problem and Prospects of Tribal Development

Satya Narayan Gorain

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Vinoba Bhave University, Hazaribagh

Abstract

The Tribes are quite interested in becoming more attached with agricultural production and are utilizing their lands for their own agricultural activities. They would like to get more tribal members, particularly the youth, develop an interest and assume a more active role in the many diverse agricultural opportunities available on the Reservation. However, in today's technologically-based society, youth have somehow lost the connection and interest in agriculture. In the past, many families functioned small agricultural operations which youth were involved in passionately. However, as agricultural practices have altered to meet growing populations, small family farms and ranches have declined. As a result, tribal youth have not had chances to learn about agriculture or food production. Because of the Tribes' deep knowledge in indigenous agriculture methods, interest and involvement in production agriculture, tribal elders want their youth to become more interested, educated and involved in agricultural practices.

Key words: Tribe, Agriculture, Training and Capacity building, Youth

Introduction

Much tribal youths have sets of skills which are mostly overlooked, marginalized and eventually suppressed by the normal educational system. These comprise detailed normal knowledge of the forest and other ecosystems; cultural traditions around natural resource management and collective decision making; understanding of techniques of traditional sustainable cultivation, wildlife management etc.

Estranging these youths from their cultural and social background is a grave blow to them, to their communities and to the society as a whole. Therefore, skill development programmes intended at retaining youth in agriculture as well as imparting them with hands-on experience in modern agro-technology are a prerequisite for tribal youth. Moreover, despite welfare efforts and schemes, tribal youth in the country find themselves gradually restricted in terms of the kind of employment and chances that they are able to access.

The prevailing agricultural extension system disseminates old-fashioned practices and technologies, and henceforth a barrier to youth who look for prospecting ventures and modern technologies. They also could not get adequate support in the form of credit and market linkage. In this backdrop of high significance Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development and Community Agrobiodiversity Centre of M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Wayanad jointly designed and implemented 'YuvaJyoti'- one-year long project, to hold and retain tribal youth in agriculture. The project was targeted to attract and retain tribal youth in Wayanad towards agriculture by arming them in advanced farming techniques, enhancing managerial skills and ensuring credit linkage for establishing production units.

The project envisaged to give training and capacity building of tribal youth and help to enhance the standard of living of selected tribal families. By forming agro enterprises and value addition



units by the young farmer's project had aided to increase the value of their labour and time. Transfer of technologies in the form of precision farming, scientific cattle rearing helped them to enhance the farm income and tribal youth employment opportunities. Similarly, impart quality preparation and training that equips the young tribal men and women to enhance their income either from farm operations, managing stress, and leading quality life was also considered as long term goal of the project.

The Project

The project is designed and designated as a joint venture between MSSRF and RGNIYD by exchange of resources, knowledge, the expertise that were developed by both institutions in the areas of agriculture, youth development and establishment of agro-enterprises. The project visualized to provide proper training in founding agro-enterprises like precision farming; fruits/vegetable processing; biotech applications in the areas of commercial nursery raising; mushroom cultivation; production of value-added cattle farming; products from pepper, coffee and ginger. The overall goal of the project was to make agriculture a remunerative enterprise and channelize quality human resources into the field of agriculture.

Component of the Project

Training course: Period of a particular training course was 3 days normally. This comprises classroom lectures, practical and hands-on experience, exposure visit, communication with successful farmers and business people, developing business plans for individual enterprise or action plan for farm operations, mobilization of credit, managerial skill managing stress etc.

Resource group formation: As part of this project, MSSRF with the support of RGNIYD had created a resource group to support the members to implement their strategies effectively and to guide them to overcome the hurdles i.e. technological, financial, and marketing.

Profile of the project area and targeted population

Wayanad is considered as one of 250 most backward districts in the country, which receives funds from Backward Region Grant Fund from Government of India (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2006). This district is lagging behind rest of the districts in Kerala in terms of many of the socio-economic parameters. The district is situated in the northeast part of Kerala and sharing boundary with Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Wayanad has the largest concentration of tribal population in Kerala. Tribes are 17.4% of the total population of district. Main tribal communities of the district are Paniyans, Adiyans, Kattunaickans, Kurumas, Uralis and Kurichians.

The Paniyas and Adiyas are marginal or landless landholders depending on wage labour in agriculture for their existence. The Kattunaikkas and Uralis are forest dwellers largely depending on the collection of non-timber forest produce like honey, gooseberry, and other economically important resources. The Kurichiyas and Kurumas have settled agriculture communities and marginal and small landholders cultivating a number of crops like rice, pepper, coffee, ginger, vegetables, banana etc for both food and market purpose. Cattle rearing are an additional income for most of the tribal groups in the District. Wayanad is mainly an agrarian district. Agriculture is the main source of employment and livelihoods for more than three fourth of its population. Of the total 2131 Sq. km of land, 7878 hectares is forest, forming 37% of the total area. 1142 Sq. km



of the total area is used for agriculture which forms 54% of the total land area of the district. Census data reveals that 47.3 % of the total workforce of the district is involved with agriculture while the figure for the State of Kerala is 22.8%. 30.5% of the total labor force of the district is agricultural labourers. Lack of exposure to modern farming methods and lack of knowledge and infrastructure to produce value-added products are the main reasons for their backwardness. This project visualizes to address backwardness of tribal communities by equipping tribal youths with modern farming practices and technology and skill for taking up potential enterprises.

Tribal Youth and Agriculture

The tribal communities have to live under a punitive economy, the ways of their livelihood are very limited and they have to work tirelessly to get a bare subsistence. Thus, the tribal children from an early age are loaded with a number of economic duties and obligations and they can hardly be spared for school. The amount of dropout is also higher among tribal children. In fact, most of the tribal youth and school going children engage themselves in farming and looking after the economic demands of the family. Youth especially the tribal youth face a number of problems related to cultural, educational, social, economic, vocational development and because of the low level of education, lack of vocational guidance and scientific outlook towards agriculture. The tribal youth selected for the project were educated up to pre-primary and primary level, had medium sized families (except Kurichias), had agriculture as the main occupation, had a marginal size of land holding, belonged to very low annual income group and very low social participation. They also had a medium degree of change-proneness and risk orientation. Almost all of them had not endured any vocational training. The tribal youth in Wayanad had a moderate level of participation in agriculture and allied activities, were limited to manual operations like ploughing, harrowing etc., and meagre participation in operations involving improved farm practices like seed treatment, adopting plant protection measures, application of fertilizers and adopting post harvesting practices.

A snapshot of the project activity

Over a period of one year (September 2015 to December 2016) 30 programmes were organised and major beneficiaries of the programme were Kurumba, Kurichiya, Kattunayikans, and Paniya tribes of Wayanad District. Kuruchiya tribal youth constituting more than thirty-three percent of the beneficiaries who attended the capacity building programme under the project

This project is envisioned to facilitate quality training and learning environment for young men and women belonging to farming communities or intended to opt to farm as their profession.

The project is intended to equip the youths to earn a reasonable income from farming and related agro-Eco enterprises. They will get experience in multiple technologies prevailing/ developed by national and international research and development organizations working in the field of agriculture and rural development. The project visualizes improved the participation of young men and women in farming and related areas. The general aim of the project was to make agriculture a remunerative enterprise and channelize quality human resources into the field of agriculture. A vibrant generation of young men and women can create structural changes in Indian agriculture through innovations. This project is a stride towards modernizing agriculture by enhancing quality human resources.



Approach

Every address in the field of technology transfer will be conveyed by the sharing of experiences by the farmer(s) for effective propagation and transfer of skill sets. Hands on experience and exposure stay are other strategies embraced to transfer technologies. Information Communication Technology (ICT) was related with the transfer of technologies and post-training services. Fascinated youths were being linked with banks for availing credit support.

Subject areas covered

1. Precision farming
2. Fruits and vegetable processing for the export market
3. Biotech application in agriculture, seed technology, tissue culture (Nursery techniques, Mushroom farming)
4. Cattle farming
5. Honey processing and marketing
6. Value addition of pepper, coffee and ginger products

Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development & Youth in Agriculture

As Youth Development is a core component of national development in the context of building human resources in a vast country like ours, it is the role of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development (RGNIYD) to recognize the all relevant aspects of youth motivation and to develop and design programmes for promoting youth welfare. Since its beginning, it has arisen as the professional resource agency and act as a think-tank of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and assists the Governmental and Non-Governmental agencies in youth-related activities. One of the prime mandates of RGNIYD is to stretch the unreached by a more focused approach on integrated skill development programmes including agriculture, traditional skills like carpentry, weaving and honey processing. The training and capacity building programmes of RGNIYD are designed to support and supplement the tribal youth of the country with the required skills essential to have a decent livelihood. Towards this direction RGNIYD designed and implemented the 'Yuva –Jyothi' Project with the association of M.S Swaminathan Research Foundation in Wayanad during 2105-16. Other than financial implications, RGNIYD played a vital and important role in the project by the way of giving technical and resource support through several training modules developed by us to enhance the youth participation in agriculture.

Youth in Agriculture

As a steady feature of its functional activities, the Institute has propelled a number of research projects and training programmes to excavate the potential in the Indian Youth which possibly remains untapped. Rural youth are the future of food security in India. Yet around the country, few young people see a future for themselves in agriculture. Youth in agriculture is such an effort by RGNIYD to permit the rural and tribal youth to realize the benefits of modernization happening in the field of agriculture and allied sectors.



The first and foremost test in enabling youth in agriculture is their inadequate access to knowledge, particularly in our country, there is a discrete to need to retain rural as well as tribal youth otherwise prone to migration in agriculture. To accomplish this objective, the Department of Local Governance, RGNIYD had established a short course module on youth in agriculture in 2011 with the support of experts in the field. The two-day module includes of both theoretical and practical components in the form of field exposure to institutions working towards the betterment of agriculture in India. RGNIYD used this module with some modifications to suit the objectives of the Yuva-Jyothi project.

Report of the Project Monitoring committee (Yuva- Jyothi)

The PMC deliberated the subjects covered under one-year long project and witnessed that 960 tribal youth were skilled on various agro-related subjects viz; Precision farming, fruits and vegetable processing, seed technology, Biotech applications in agriculture, tissue culture, nursery techniques, Cattle farming, honey processing and value addition of pepper, coffee and ginger products. Trainees were given learning journey to the following institutions; a) Kerala Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, Wayanad b) Regional Agriculture Research Station(RARS), Wayanad c) Kerala Milk Marketing Cooperative Society (Milma), Wayanad d) Brahmagiri Meat Processing Unit, Govt of Kerala, Wayanad Besides this, exposure visits were also made to individual farms with small landholders' success stories. This experience as well as learning journeys provided trainees with necessary motivation and confidence to undertake into an agro-related livelihood. Committee also studied the post-training support provided to the training completed tribal youth. MSSRF has buttressed the following activities under post training components and found to be effective among young farmers. Besides this, exposure visits were also made to individual farms with small landholders' success stories. This exposure as well as learning journeys provided trainees with necessary motivation and confidence to venture into an agro-related livelihood. Committee also reviewed the post-training support provided to the training completed tribal youth. MSSRF has buttressed the following activities under post training components and found to be effective among young farmers.

Resource support: Provided necessary expertise and experience to young farmers to innovate new seed varieties and crop care.

Networking; Enabled networking of farmers with local researchers and implementers such as KVK, RARS and KVAU

Farmer clubs: to ensure that training completed youngsters are engaged in livelihood activities related to agriculture

Bank linkage- Canara Bank the lead bank of the District is benevolent to the tribal youth and supporting them through bank linkage programmes.

Observations

1. The programme has helped largely to the plain tribal communities, landless and forest dweller tribes were not swayed by the training programme.
2. More push to be given for the training and capacity building of Katunayikans (forest dwellers) and Paniyas (landless tribes) in Wayanad with a superior focus on Katunayikans in Mushroom cultivation.



3. Training need of Paniya tribal youth are dissimilar from other tribal groups in Wayanad, they need more support in terms of education and livelihood.
4. Among the tribal youth, group-based livelihood activities are more operational rather than individual-centric capacity building.
5. Capacity building on cattle farming is one of the decent options for skill development among the landless tribes.

Following the PMC meeting, RGNIYD organized face to face meeting in tribal settlements and interacted with training completed tribal youth, and noted that more than two third of the beneficiaries are engaged in agriculture and allied activities. The training covered nearly all major tribal groups in Wayanad and the participants were seemed to be happy and pleased with the capacity building programme and the exposure they received from the same.

Impact of the Project over tribal farmers

The project envisioned to provide training and capacity building of tribal youths will help to increase the standard of living of selected tribal families. By founding agro-enterprises and value addition units by the young farmer's project had helped to upturn the value of their labour and time. Transfer of technologies in the form of precision farming, scientific cattle raising will help them to increase farm income and rural employment opportunities. Hence, the attainment of this project is that it helped to attract a more vibrant young population towards agriculture and thereby lead to the modernization of agriculture.

The Way Forward

Unreachable areas where tribal groups such as Katunayikans have concentrated this kind of training programmes are not successful or to be effective. And the predisposition among less mainstreamed tribes is that once the agency withdraws they also tend to remove from the activity. In this scenario, tribal youth need agriculture-based livelihood training programmes, which may help them to produce their own food supplements, and this will decrease nutritional deficiency among them. The sustainability of activities and programmes are one of the biggest challenges confronted during tribal training programmes, therefore a local specific and need-based training programmes entrenched with marketing strategies are necessary for this sector



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