Adult Learning Resources for Food Security and Health In Uttar Pradesh, India

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Project Background

Students from Cornell University and G. B. Pant University collaborated on creating and adapting learning resources for adult learners in Chitrakoot and Gorakhpur Districts in Uttar Pradesh State of India. Students spent two months in their respective field sites from June 2009 to July 2009 and worked with the following local partner agencies of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) India:

- Sarvodaya Sewa Ashram (SSA) in Bugarh, Chitrakoot
- Shohratgarh Environmental Society (SES) in Campierganj, Gorakhpur
- Mahuratgarg Environmental Society (SES) in Camperganj, Gorakhpur
- Sarvodaya Sewa Ashram (SSA) in Bugarh, Chitrakoot

Objectives of the Cornell-G. B. Pant summer experience:

- Assessing the context specific challenges related to agriculture, rural livelihoods, health and nutrition in the chosen villages of the two districts
- Working with frontline workers and local agency facilitators to better understand local challenges
- Incorporating adult learning principles into learning materials
- Review of available learning resources (flipcharts, pamphlets, training materials)
- Informal interviews (Partner agency staffs, frontline workers, government officials, community members)
- Observing facilitation by frontline workers
- Field Visits (local markets, agriculture research centers, farmers)
- Adapting learning materials or creating new ones to address context specific challenges
- Field Testing

Local Partner Organizations

Sarvodaya Sewa Ashram (SSA), Chitrakoot, UP, India

SSA has been actively involved in serving the needs of children, women and farmers in the villages around Bugarh, Chitrakoot.

Major areas of work include:
- Agriculture
- Health
- Education
- Women’s Empowerment

Facilities at pre-schools (Bhabadi Centers) established by SSA in villages are active in promoting awareness on education, health and sanitation issues.

Shohratgarh Environmental Society (SES), Campierganj, Gorakhpur

SES started in 1985 initially to deal with water shortage issues. Currently major areas of work include:
- Environmental issues
- Reproductive Health
- Education
- Women’s Empowerment
- Managing livelihood in flood prone areas

Methods

- Review of available learning resources (flipcharts, pamphlets, training materials)
- Informal interviews (Partner agency staffs, frontline workers, government officials, community members)
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Key Findings - Chitrakoot

- Pateri, Bhauthi and Kotowa Villages
  - Rocky terrain makes much of the land unsuitable for farming.
  - Few livelihood activities beyond quarry work and farming.
  - Many of the households in the three villages experience shortage of food during the year.
  - During the dry summer months, there is acute scarcity of water both for farming and consumption.
  - Drinking water sources in the villages are mostly limited to deep wells and tube-wells.
  - Water purification at the source is rare.
  - Poverty and food insecurity is a common experience for majority of families in the three villages.
  - Government establishments such as Anganwadi Centers provide food in pre-school children.
  - Fair Price Shops make food available to households with IPL (Below Poverty Line) cards at an affordable price.

- Rockwell Village
  - A frontline worker from SSA facilitates a monthly health meeting for women.
  - Topics covered during the meetings include maternal and child health, nutrition and sanitation.
  - Most women who attend the meetings cannot read or write.

Key Findings - Gorakhpur

- Campurganj and surrounding villages
  - Campurganj Block of Gorakhpur district consists of 52 villages with a population of 225,222 (Census: 2001).
  - Land under agriculture is around 18,000 hectares and out of which, 85% land is under irrigation.
  - Most of the farmers fall under the category of small and marginal land holders.
  - Campurganj and its surrounding villages are flood prone, experiencing severe flooding almost every year.
  - Lack of storage for excess produce.
  - Poor sanitation: lack of toilets, facilities, villagers defecate in open spaces.

- Shohratgarh Environmental Society (SES) mostly conducts training on disaster (flood) management and reproductive health

Results

- Learning materials were adopted or newly created to address context specific problems in the villages of Pateri, Bhauthi, and Kotowa Villages.

Outcomes - Chitrakoot

- Learning Resources on Agriculture and Livelihoods
  - A local artist helped to create flipcharts that examine agriculture problems from a local perspective.
  - Flipcharts stressed the use of locally available materials and services.

Outcomes - Gorakhpur

- Learning Materials on Agriculture and Livelihoods
  - Pictures were used to project events onto characters and not the learners.
  - Behavioral change was presented as a decision to be made by the learners.

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