

C H A P T E R - III

**ROLE OF YERALA PROJECTS SOCIETY
IN WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMME**

CHAPTER III

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3.0 INTRODUCTION: -

This chapter is designed to present the role of Yerala Projects Society in watershed development Programme. The first section of the chapter presents a brief profile of Yerala Projects Society. In the second section, an attempt is made to highlight the role of Yerala Projects Society in the watershed development programme (with the help of photographs of the sites).

3.1 YERALA PROJECTS SOCIETY: A PROFILE

The main office of the Yerala Projects Society is located in Sangli City. However, one office is also located at Kamalapur village; located in Khanapur taluka, the area where this NGO is working. (The photograph, given on the page 52, depicts the office building located at Kamalapur village).

3.1.1 FORMATION OF YERALA PROJECTS SOCIETY:

As pointed out earlier, the seed of the organization was sown in 1972, the year when the operating area (Kamalapur Area) was facing severe drought. A team of volunteers from Sangli joined the villagers to form a group to take up drought relief work. With the help of doner

agency, this group made sincere efforts to help affected families. The relief work continued for 3 years. As the condition improved, the relief operation was phased out. In this process the implementing group gained confidence that they together can take up constructive work to improve the condition of the poor and needy villagers in the operational area. After assessing own potential, the group decided to take up rural development work. Then the organization was formally registered in 1976. The initial image of the organization was like a donor or somebody who has come as a helper or savior. This image was slowly changed and the organization gave more emphasis on the developmental activities. From 1994, after smooth changeover in management, sustainable development became the motto of the organization. During 25 years, the organization internally developed certain characteristics of its own, reflecting the organisations' philosophy, professionalism, work culture and value system.



Figure 3.1 Office of the Yerala Projects Society

1.2 MISSION OF YERALA PROJECTS SOCIETY:

To support deprived families to satisfy their basic needs, build self-sustaining community, and bring all underdeveloped elements of the community in the stream of institutionalized development alternatives at the local level.

3.1.3 VISION:

Yerala Projects Society envisions a society of equal opportunity for disadvantaged section of the society, who struggles for their own development.

3.1.4 OBJECTIVES:

The Yerala Projects Society has set forth the following objectives:

1. To assist people to improve their condition in economic, health, social and educational aspects.
2. To provide extension services in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, artificial insemination, food production and the processing and marketing of local produce.
3. To help farmers in land development and maximum utilisation of land and water resources.
4. To train volunteers in economic, social, health and educational activities relevant to the area.
5. To support self-employment activities of the needy families in the area.
6. To give humanitarian relief and services to people in need.
7. To make the organization financially self-reliant.
8. To support other NGOs, formal/informal groups for the socio-economic development of needy people.

3.1.5 PRESENT AND PAST PARTNERS:

The present and past partners of Yerala Projects Society include the following:

1. German Agro Action (GAA), Germany.
2. Lockhorn Development Fund (LDF), The Netherlands.



3. DESWOS, Germany.
4. Christian Children's Fund (CCF), USA.
5. Catholic Relief Services (CRS), USA.
6. Yojana, The Netherlands.
7. Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA), Canada.
8. German Consulate, Mumbai.
9. Government of India, New Delhi.
10. Government of Maharashtra, Mumbai.
11. Council for Advancement of People's Action and Rural Technology (CAPART), New Delhi.

3.1.6 STAFFING PATTERN: One hundred staff. On temporary basis.

3.1.7 ACTIVITIES OF THE YERALA PROJECTS SOCIETY:-

D) ECOLOGY:

Initiatives in Watershed Development Projects constitute the major activity of Yerala Projects Society in the area of ecology. So far, three watershed Development projects have been implemented on two different rivulets. Total 36 K.T. weirs have been constructed on two streams. This has brought about 1750 acres of land under all season cultivation. People are using this impounded water not only during the winter season but also during early summer. There has been an increase of 5 to 10 ft. in water levels of surrounding wells. This project has benefited 675 families. The local village committees do the regular

maintenance of the dams. The project has benefited mostly the marginal farmers from the catchment area. Earlier, the members of these families were working as farm labourers and now each family is employing 3-4 labourers for carrying out their own farm work.

II) HOUSING:

Housing project is emerged as one of the needful and most successful programme of Yerala Projects Society. The social housing concept has given the beneficiaries a house or shelter for lifetime. This project is planned in such a way that, with an external support of mere 33%, the project participant is able to construct the entire house.

The beneficiaries contribute locally available material like stones, sand and mud. The family members work as unskilled labour under the mason. They seek help for the material, which they need to purchase. Under this project the beneficiaries are given steel roofing structure, good quality roofing tiles, cement for foundation and plastering, MS doors and windows, lintels and mason wages. So far 1150 poor families which lived in husk goofed risky houses for generations together, are now living in a permanent, structured, all weather proof, maintenance free houses. Beneficiaries are free to decide the location of their house as per their convenience. They generally select the location near their work place. By avoiding use of wood in the construction, the society could save hundreds of trees. Secondly, culture of living in non-wood

house is being developed which will again save many more trees in the future. Thus, in this sense, the society's housing project is eco-friendly.

III) AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS:

About 95% of the villages with whom Yerala Projects Society is working are solely dependent on agriculture. Due to the fragmentation of land, 80% of targeted families are landholders of 1-to2 acres of land. Out of that 70% of the farms are un-irrigated. They get only one crop in a year, which is again dependent on rain. Since this area is drought-prone with erratic rain pattern, these marginal farmers are never sure of their farm income.

Yerala Projects Society along with the farmers did a lot of thinking before starting agricultural activity in 1985. A plan was chalked out to implement various programmes to support the agricultural needs of targeted farmers. Over the years, systematic implementation of various programme have been done and now farmers receive almost every service from selecting the crop, training, demonstration plot, sapling/seed service, plant protection inputs like fertilizers till marketing of their produce. The services provided to the farmers can be listed as under:

A) SEEDLING SERVICE:

For the marginal farmer it is very difficult to raise quality seedling on his/her field. Raising of saplings at farmers level needs high

investment and expertise which is non-affordable to small farmers. To serve this purpose, Yerala Project Society agriculture department provided sapling service to the farmer. Farmer purchases seeds from the market of his choice and gives to Yerala Projects Society's for germination. Earlier the private traders were just handing over money to the farmers without telling them any thing. As the farmers were not having any other option they used to accept the amount. Now with the intervention of this co-operative, the private traders are doing fair and transparent business.

B) AGRICULTURAL SERVICE CENTER (ASC):

Farmers who came together for marketing purpose realized that they could meet their need of seeds, fertilizers etc., if they come together and start a center where they get quality seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides at reasonable price. ASC is helping the local farmers in the procurement of the quality seed, insecticides, fertilizers and much other agricultural input. ASC organizes the camps for local farmers to inform them about new trends in agriculture.

IV) ANIMAL HUSBANDRY:

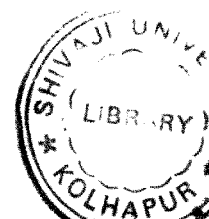
This activity caters services to the small milk-producing farmers. Poor farmers who have 1-2 buffaloes don't have any marketing source. The volume of milk is very small for long distance transportation. Secondly, there is no local (in the village) market to the milk. To

overcome this bottleneck the milk department of Yerala Projects Society collects the milk from these marginal farms, processes the same and market it through it's own distribution network. Daily 600 liters milk is being collected. Milk department functions in professional way. It has got almost all the facilities from fat checking to pasteurization. Because of all these facilities and hard working staff the department functions very efficiently. Ultimately small farmers receive benefit by way of higher prices and other facilities. This department provides other services like breeding, artificial insemination, cattle feed and help to procure milk animals through bank credits.

V) SERICULTURE ACTIVITY:

Yerala Projects Society's sericulture department is working at three levels – 1. Rearing 2. Reeling and 3. Extension of the program. For those farmers who have sufficient water for 9 months and some water for 3 months a year Yerala Projects Society has successfully demonstrated sericulture activity. This crop gives the returns once a month. So the farmers get income at regular interval. Also this is an Eco-friendly activity.

But so far Yerala Projects Society has not got success in convincing farmers to take up this activity. Earlier in every village 4 to 5 farmers had tried this activity but they failed. Of course the failure was because of the problems in marketing. Yerala Projects Society has now



eliminated all these hurdles. To solve the most critical problem of cocoon marketing Yerala Project Society has established silk reeling unit. Modern reeling machinery with capacity of 100-kg/shift cocoon reeling unit has been installed. Again this unit is professionally managed. The silk thread produced here is of superior quality and fetch high price in market.

VI) POULTRY:

Yerala Projects Society's poultry is a best example of an enterprise entirely run by rural women. There are total 45000 birds, which are managed by a group of rural women. Initially rural women were trained in technical as well as managerial skills for two years. When they gained confidence, they registered themselves with co-operative department and named as "Yerala Kukutpalan Sahakari Sanstha." All the activities, from purchasing chicks to marketing of eggs are done by women. Total 100 women members are actively participating in this co-operative.

VII) GOAT PROJECT:

To give financial helping hand to the poor families, Yerala Project Society has launched the goat project. A revolving fund has been established to run this program on permanent basis. The families which are selected for this project have to undergo training in goat rearing before starting the unit. Then this trained family is given a unit of 5 she

and 1 he goat. Within two years the family has to return 6 goats (newly born) which in turn are given to another farmer. After repaying within two years farmers still maintain foundation stock of 5+1 and about 8-9 kids. Veterinary experts from Yerala Project Society crew provide regular extension service. They also monitor the growth of the unit. Yerala Project Society also maintains a goat central service unit consisting of 150 goats. The performance of this unit has attracted outsiders and they are approaching Yerala Projects Society for guidance.

VIII) PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES:

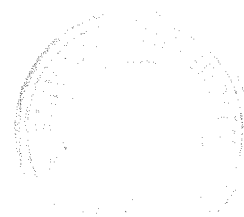
The Yerala Projects Society has undertaken following promotional activities:

A) POWER LOOM:

To give a helping hand to strike hit local weavers returned from Mumbai, power loom activity was started. Many weavers found employment in the unit. Because of recent recession this activity is no more continued.

B) DEPARTMENTAL STORES AT SANGLI:

To provide marketing outlet to rural and other products produced by small producers, Yerala Projects Society has established a Departmental store in a prime area of Sangli (District Place) city. Departmental Store has helped several small producers to display and sell their goods. Marketing problem of many small rural producers is



now solved. This store also gives priority to the produce manufactured by lepers, handicapped persons, and other socially distressed sections of the society. The store is also a good income source for the organization. This store is one of the leading stores in Sangli.

C) VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME:

Yerala Projects Society is conducting vocational and vocational training programme in tailoring, embroidery, computers, electrician, motor rewinding, electronics and TV/Tape repairs, two wheeler repairs and rearing of silk cocoons. The duration of the training programs ranges from 1 day to 1 year. These programs have benefited hundreds of individuals in securing jobs and self-employment. So far more than 1700 girls and boys have been trained in various skills.

D) TRAINING FOR RURAL WOMEN:

Department of Science of Technology has sponsored special training programs for women. These training programmes were in agriculture-improved techniques, poultry cockerel training and environment – smokeless Chula etc. So far more than 1000 women from 19 villages have been trained under the programs.

E) ENTREPRENEUR TRAINING PROGRAMME:

Yerala Project Society in various aspects of business is training every year 300 young entrepreneurs. A batch of 40 candidates is trained for 15 days. This training covers production management, account

keeping, marketing etc. Yerala Project Society is the recognized institute by state Govt. to give entrepreneurship development training. So far 1200 candidates have received training from Yerala Project Society. Despite this, Yerala Project Society is recognized for Govt. of India sponsored “ Golden Jubilee” Rural and Urban Employment programme” to give training for the below poverty line youth in Rural and Urban areas.

F) YASHASHRI WOMEN’S INDUSTRIAL CO-OPERATIVE:

Another group of 500 rural women from operational area is engaged in stitching garments, spice making and papaya cherry production.

This group is also engaged in processing of fruits. They are manufacturing candies and allied products. These activities are not only generating employment but are also providing market to rural produce.

Thus, Yerala Projects Society’s approach to development is an integrated approach to rural development, which aims at sustainable rural development (considered in term of both ecological and socio-economic objectives) which caters to the needs of lower strata of village community

3.2 ROLE OF YERALA PROJECTS SOCIETY IN WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT

It can be easily understood from the variety of activities and programmes (given in the first part) undertaken by the Yerala Projects Society that this NGO is working in the field of rural development. As one of the major activity, Yerala Projects Society has implemented watershed development programme in Kamalapur area (in Khanapur Taluka of Sangli District in Maharashtra).

When enquired about the Society's objectives for undertaking watershed development programme, the officials of the society told following objectives:

1. To bring a large area of uncultivated land under cultivation by providing irrigation facilities with help of watershed development projects and to improve the socio-economic conditions of the farmers.
2. To increase the employment opportunities and to reduce the migration of the people from that region.
3. To help them to initiate the dairying as a secondary occupation.
4. To take steps to improve and preserve fertility of land for longtime.
5. To make them to be able to consume nutritious food items which can improve their health standards.
6. To increase the enrolment of children in schools specially girls.

7. To increase the employment opportunities especially for the landless labourers and help them to raise their income.
8. To prevent or reduce the soil erosion and moisture stress.
9. To ensure sustainable use of available water and land resources in the region.
10. To ensure development without environmental degradation; in other words, to ensure eco-friendly development.

With these objectives, the Yerala Projects Society decided to construct the check dams on the two different rivulets, which were flowing near Kamalapur area.

First, they met the farmers and convinced the importance of watershed development projects. In the beginning, the response of the farmers was very poor. However, the volunteers of Yerala Projects Society worked very hard to convince people about the future benefits of the programme. After some months, when people realised the importance of the programme, they started giving positive response.

The volunteers of Yerala Projects Society decided the 36 locations on two rivulets for constructing the “Bandharas” for storage of water. They made an appeal to the local people to participate in this work. Slowly, farmers joined the Yerala Projects Society volunteers in construction work. Farmers helped the construction of Bandharas by providing required stones and sand while the society provided the

required cement. The society also provided foodgrains and money to farmers as remuneration for participating in the construction work. The Yerala Projects Society volunteers and farmers together constructed total 36 Bandharas within a period of two years. These Bandharas are located in the adjoining areas of Bhalavani, Panchshilnagar, Kalambi and Dhavaleshwar villages in Khanapur (Vita) Taluka in Sangli District. After construction of K.T. Weirs, farmers were fully satisfied with the work of Yerala Projects Society in the project area.

The figure 3.2 shows the village locations of 1) Kamalapur 2) Bhalavani 3) Dhavaleshwar. The 36 Bandharas have been constructed in the adjoining areas of these three villages.

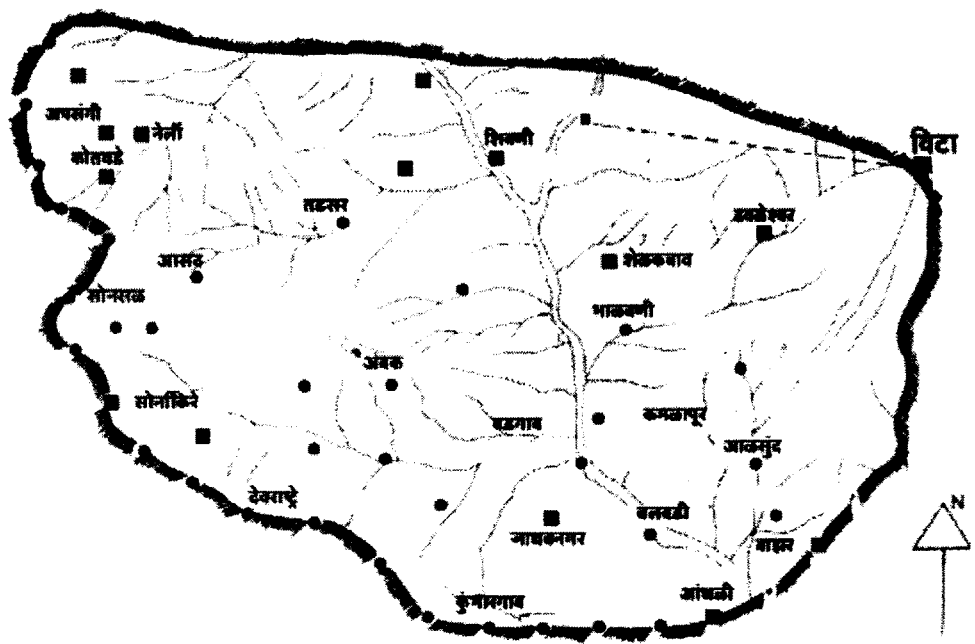


Figure 3.2 Shows village locations

Following photographs show the Bandharas constructed by the Yerala Projects Society.



Figure 3.3 Bandhara in the Bhalavani Village



Figure 3.4 Bandhara in the Bhalavani Village



Figure 3.5 Bandhara in the Kalambi Village



Figure 3.6 Bandhara in the Dhavaleshwar Village

REFERENCE:

1. [Www. Yerala Org.Com](http://www.Yerala.Org.Com)
