

## Livelihood security of buffalo rearers through community organisation

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### ● ABSTRACT ●

The present study adopted a participatory action oriented approach for promoting livestock production technologies with smallholding farmers in selected clusters in order to strengthen the livelihood security of buffalo farmers, who were unorganised and have very minimum access to the inputs and services available from various developmental departments and agencies. The approach takes advantage of the capacity of farmers to experiment and solve their livestock rearing problems on their own. The dissatisfaction of the villagers about existing conditions and problems were given expression with the formation of buffalo rearers' groups in each study village. The importance was given to collective work and necessity of the groups was stressed. The villagers also got the benefits of regular health camps and training programmes about improved buffalo rearing practices.

**KEY WORDS** : Community organisation, Livelihood, Buffalo rearers

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### INTRODUCTION

Extension work in India has passed through a series of developments in its philosophy, approach, organization and execution including the development of concept of community organization by the applied sociologists in a parallel manner. It was emphasized that the idea of thrusting technological change upon the rural communities was not sociologically sound. The alternative was to organize, integrate and develop the various natural ways of planning and implementation in the community and help them to proceed at their own pace. It was believed that in this way, the communities could work together, solve their problems themselves and muster external help whenever they felt the

need for it. Ross and Lappin (1967) emphasized that community organization is the process by which the social system of a community provides integration and adaptation within the community. This is a process which continues regardless of the work of community organizer whose function is to initiate, nourish and develop this process.

The buffalo rearing in Bidar is unorganized and rearers' have less access to the various inputs and services like credit support, transport, banking facility, proper marketing channel, health care services, lack of irrigation facility, extension services, artificial insemination etc. So, it has been a non-profitable venture for them. But the buffalo rearing which adopts scientific practices known to provide regular source of income, employment for youth and women, food security for the whole family, social status and asset value.

So, it was realized that the mobilization and organization of buffalo rearers' could help them to have easy access to inputs and pull down the services from various developmental departments and agencies. Keeping this in view, in collaboration with National Agriculture Innovation Project team, buffalo rearers' groups were promoted in study villages.

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Bidar district was purposively selected for the present study considering the fact that Bidar is one of the

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most backward districts in Karnataka and is having high level of rural poverty (above 50 per cent). The study villages are located far away from the district place (Bidar) and respective Taluka places and these villages are deprived of basic amenities like electricity, transportation facility, drinking water facility, health care facility, market etc. None of the study villages were having Veterinary Dispensary or Primary Veterinary Clinic to provide livestock health care services. The farmers, who were interested in buffalo rearing, fall under below poverty line and owning at least one buffalo were selected as the group members.

The study adopted a participatory action oriented approach for promoting livestock production technologies with smallholding farmers in selected clusters. The approach takes advantage of the capacity of farmers to experiment and solve their livestock rearing problems on their own. The approach begins with the detailed analysis of situation of the farming community. This helped the community to define, group and prioritize their main problems. After identifying the major problems like scarcity of fodder and water, poor vegetation, low productivity of buffaloes, frequent diseases outbreaks, distress sale of livestock etc. Various interventions, which were necessary and acceptable were planned and discussed with villagers. During the study, the structure and functioning of the buffalo rearers' group were also studied.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the present study as well as relevant discussions have been presented under following sub heads:

### Establishing support with the villagers:

The work commenced on 8th September 2009. On the first visit to study villages, the key persons of the villages were met. After the introduction, the research scholar explained purpose of study and the idea behind the selection of the particular village for study.

In the next visit, the research scholar accompanied by the NAIP team and other villagers walked on different streets (transect walk) of the villages and was introduced to different people on the way. In the third visit, again an informal discussion was made with the key village persons about the buffalo population and rearing pattern, availability of fodder and other managemental practices.

The fourth visit was done as scheduled and most of the villagers interested in improved buffalo rearing practices had gathered at the meeting place of the village.

The researcher briefed about purpose of study, prevailing situation, possible interventions and expected outcomes of the study. All the villagers showed interest and clarified the doubts over discussions. At the same time, the personal profile of the interested farmers was collected.

### Situation analysis:

- All the villages have good buffalo population.
- Agriculture was the main occupation.
- Most of the villagers were small farmers and the landless who cultivated land belonging to large farmers on sharing cropping basis.
- The main crops grown were sunflower, maize, safflower, black gram, green gram, Bengal gram, groundnut, red gram etc.
- The scientific animal husbandry practices like vaccination, deworming, artificial insemination etc were not followed.

Villages were lacking the basic facilities and infrastructure like Bank, Veterinary Dispensary, Post Office etc. The fifth visit to the villages was very crucial. Based on the gathered information and with the help of the village leaders, selection of the members for the buffalo rearers' group was done.

In the present study, the researchers experienced quite different multifaceted approach than normal one to build up the rapport. This was very much necessary to overcome the suspicious nature of the villagers which was said to be quite natural among the villagers towards strangers. Quite similar effort done was reported by Gangrade (1971), where he started his work by self-introduction to the villagers. He further pointed out that it made him to take a long time to develop rapport in the village. Verahagan (1982) also reported that research officers introduced themselves to the village leaders and started their research work without experiencing any particular problem in the two Srilankan villages. Kanjilal (1984) in his rural development study mentioned that project workers used to visit the village, sit with people of all categories to discuss about their problems and solutions for solving the same.

The availability of the resources in the villages was satisfactory. Most of the time, researcher used to make the halt at villages whenever he visited the study villages. This helped in gaining the confidence of the villagers.

### Initiation of the group activities:

After the formation of the group, a name was given to the group of each village on the choice of its members. Efficient leader was elected for each group. Monthly

saving of Rupees fifty per member which contributes to group saving of rupees five hundred per month was planned. The group account was opened for each promoted group members at the nearest bank / cooperatives. During the process, the manager of the bank, school teachers and other needful persons became familiar.

During each step of the formation of the group, the village leaders were involved. It was the leader who created a congenial atmosphere for the study in the villages. The study would have been difficult or incomplete without the assistance and involvement of the village leaders. In this context, Veeranna and Kaul (2000) reported that the study in villages should have a multifaceted approach, with ultimate aim to build the rapport with the villagers. Further, the leader of the village also had the major role to play in experiencing the work in the villages. Batten and Batten (1967) studied the case of bee expert keeping to help the villagers without consulting the leader and peoples' interest. As a result, the project failed even though it was thought to be a good one. Further, the interest shown by the villagers was in accordance to their resources, needs and problems.

#### Organization of training programme:

The training programmes both on-farm and on-campus, on scientific buffalo rearing practices were organized for group members. The topics like feeding of chopped fodder, concentrate, mineral mixture, UMMB etc, growing high yielding fodder grasses, regular deworming and vaccination of animals, adoption of AI, value addition to milk and information regarding various marketing channels were covered. The practice of feeding chopped fodder was adopted by the farmers and appreciated the results. The farmers adopted regular deworming and vaccination which was very much evident in animal health camps where farmers brought their animals for vaccination and deworming in large numbers.

#### Integration of animal health camps:

Animal health camps and on-farm trials created

awareness among farmers regarding the adoption of better livestock practices like supplementation of mineral mixture and UMMB. Through farmer-farmer interaction, many farmers realized the economic benefits of improved husbandry practices and came forward to adopt them. Through this, it was evident that the veterinarian has lot to offer to the rural society with his credential. Similar findings were reported by Misra *et.al.* (2006) where he reported that animal camps were the major forums for rapport build up in the villages as everyone gathered at a common place.

#### The personal profile:

The personal profile of members of buffalo rearers groups revealed that majority of the respondents (56.66 per cent) were in upper middle age group and about 63.33 per cent of the members were literate. Members of the two groups belonged to SC and members of the four groups belonged to OBC. Majority of the farmers had the family size of 4-6 members and 75 per cent of the farmers had 2-4 buffaloes. All the farmers were poor (BPL). All the group members were residing in close proximity.

#### The structure and functioning of the buffalo rearers' group:

Six groups were constituted in six villages, out of which 3 were men groups, 3 were mixed groups and each group had 10 members as group strength (Table 1). Out of six groups, 20 members belonged to schedule caste (SC) and other belong to other backward classes. All the members in the group fell under below poverty line, even though some of them owned land. Each group had two office bearers; the president and secretary elected by its members. All the six groups conducted meetings either in community halls or temples. Barring one or two members, others attend the monthly meetings. Usually they were unable to attend the meetings on the days when they have to go to market, when they were ill or not in the village.

The results showed that all the six groups used to conduct meetings regularly on a fixed day of every month. The timings and the days were in accordance with the

**Table 1 : Structure and functioning of the buffalo rearers' group**

Sr.No.	Name of village	Name of buffalo rearer group	Group members	Meeting time	Record keeping	Attendance
1.	Aknapur	Panduranga buffalo rearer's group	Men	7 PM	Updated	8-10 (80-100%)
2.	Ganganbeed	Doodh Ganga buffalo rearer's group	Mixed	8 PM	Updated	9-10 (90-100%)
3.	Ganeshpur	Shree Ganesh buffalo rearer's group	Mixed	6 PM	Updated	8-10 (80-100%)
4.	Devagiri tanda	Laxmi buffalo rearers'' group	Mixed	7 PM	Updated	8-10 (80-100%)
5.	Aleepur	Kamadhenu buffalo rearers'' group	Men	7 PM	Updated	8-10 (80-100%)
6.	Polakapalli	Nandini buffalo rearers'' group	Men	5 PM	Updated	9-10 (90-100%)

convenience of the group members. The findings with respect to frequency of meetings are in contrary with the findings of Kumaran (2002), Samuel *et al.* (2007), who observed that 95-96 per cent of the meetings were conducted weekly which was indispensable to maintain frequent contact with members to discuss about activities, carry out transactions and contributions of their savings. Attendance in the four groups ranged from 80-100 per cent and in two groups it was 90 to 100 per cent. The reason behind the good figure of attendance might be due to the feeling of belongingness, interest to take up income generating activity and also due to the governing rules agreed upon.

### Conclusion:

There is a tremendous potential in the effectively mobilized manpower and ingenuity of the rural people. Everything possible should be done to help the farmers to become effective, confident and aspiring community groups. The professional animal husbandry extension worker required for furthering such mobilization and organization is a person having expertise and practical knowledge of process of group work, community organization and also animal sciences. Community organisation can be effectively used to trigger the series of objectives especially to introduce modern and scientific animal husbandry practices, through which the community becomes self-reliant and takes later action on collaboratively without much intervention.

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