



LIVES OF MARGINAL COMMUNITIES IN THE DROUGHT PRONE AREAS OF SOUTH INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF ANANTAPUR DISTRICT OF ANDHRA PRADESH

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ABSTRACT

The term 'Livelihood' has different connotations in the development studies after 1980's all over the world. Studies relating to Livelihoods have got prominence during the same time in the developed and underdeveloped nations of the globe. Studies on marginal communities though reflected earlier specific cases on livelihoods have not dealt with before. By using both primary and secondary data sources, this paper points out that shocks and natural causes, such as drought in the South India, particularly in Anantapur District, have contributed to a decline in livestock and crop yields and increased poverty levels in the region. Therefore, alternative livelihood options that can diversify rural incomes from agricultural production need to be identified. In this process government with the assistance from the donor agencies initiated the 'Watershed' development activities which got prominence in the district and received boost and laurels in the drought affected areas of Anantapur district of Andhra Pradesh in South India.

The present paper is an outcome of my project work undertaken in the Anantapur District of Rayalaseema Region of South India. The project work is carried by using participatory tools and techniques in addition to anthropological methods in collecting the information from the respondents and beneficiaries of the scheme 'Watershed Development' in the Study Area. The paper also explains how the livelihoods of the people have transformed due to the new approach and its impact on their daily activities. Further it also explains the nature of development undergone in the study villages.

Key Words: Livelihoods, Marginal Communities, Drought, Case Study, Watershed, Anantapur District and South India.

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I- INTRODUCTION

A majority of development programmes were initiated for improving the situation of the marginalized in the society. There has also been a sizable body of research, which explains about the conditions of the marginalized people and these studies have also tried to explain both the conditions of the marginalized and the development programmes directed at them. Marginalized sections are swelling in number and are in a condition of destitution and living in innumerable conditions.

Traditionally, the discipline of Anthropology has been geared to study the socio-cultural and economic conditions of multiple communities by adopting the holistic approach which primarily differentiates this discipline from other sister disciplines. The primary means of understanding the situation of the marginalized has been through the rubric of deprivation. While this approach continues to be useful, it also runs the danger of reducing the subjects of its study to mere victims of larger processes in the development discourse. In other words, there is a tendency to see the marginalized as totally lacking in agency. It is as an important corrective to this tendency that the livelihoods approach was first taken up by scholars like Diana Carney and Scoons (1998). One of the important features of the livelihood approach is that, it focuses upon people's assets (physical, natural, financial, human, social and political capitals). It also looks at how people utilize these assets and negotiate their problems. Most of the studies conducted in this area of development fail to map the issues of development from a holistic perspective where as the livelihood approach which is dominating the contemporary developmental agenda tends to be more comprehensive and has gained significance in addressing the problems of the marginalized.

The present paper is organised into four parts/sections. The first section briefly discusses the concepts, definitions and scope. The second section of the paper gives a brief sketch of the Watershed development initiative in Andhra Pradesh and in Ananthapur district. The third section analyses the livelihoods in the Village and gives a brief sketch of the watershed and its related activities such as DWCRAs and their role in Women empowerment in the area. The final section concludes with the positive aspects of the watershed programme in the area to control the drought conditions.

There have been many attempts, by different scholars, to define livelihoods. This would give us an idea before going into the empirical understanding of the marginal lives and livelihoods in the context of watershed management in Ananthapur District of Andhra Pradesh. Chambers and Conway defined livelihoods as "the ways in which people satisfy their needs, or gain a living" (1992:5).

Carney offered an elaborate definition of sustainable livelihoods. "A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope up with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base" (Carney, 1998: 2).

Livelihood Security means "Secure ownership of, access to, resources and income-generating activities, including reserves and assets to offset risk, ease shocks and meet contingencies" (Chambers, 1988: 2).

The marginal communities in the drought prone regions of India are overwhelmingly marginalized not only economically but also spatially, culturally, and otherwise. Andhra Pradesh has a significant proportion of tribal population and is ranked fifth in the country. Number of laws promulgated by the pre- and post-British India affected the tribals adversely. These laws have threatened their livelihoods and existence. These groups, who were forest dwellers, have been denied usufruct rights over forest produce. Land reforms have not benefited them in any significant way. Hence, they remain landless and, to some extent, even homeless. The lack of education has resulted in their exploitation by the non-tribals. Government officials have often colluded or remained apathetic to this situation.

Many development programmes have been directed towards the betterment of the marginal communities in Andhra Pradesh. Funding agencies like DFID is associated with the government to implement certain programmes to ameliorate the conditions of the destitute. Thus, DFID's sustainable rural livelihoods approach puts 'people at the centre of development'. Looking at the DFID approach, in Andhra Pradesh, participatory watershed programme is being implemented, where, at present, Andhra Pradesh Rural Livelihoods Project (APRLP) project aims to scale up ongoing watershed programme activities in the State by supporting in the areas of capacity building, livelihood support and convergence of other schemes and services, collectively called 'watershed plus'. The project is expected to assist in macro policy evolution relating to evolving effective and sustainable approaches to reduce poverty in the five drought prone districts of the State. The project adopts a participatory sustainable rural livelihoods strategy, which is based on an analysis of the capital assets (physical, social, human, natural, financial and political) from which the rural poor makeup their livelihoods (APRLP, 1999).

II- WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN ANDHRA PRADESH (A.P):

With a total geographical area of 274,400 km, Andhra Pradesh is the fifth largest state of India. The state consists of 23 districts comprising 1,104 revenue mandals. The economy of Andhra Pradesh is predominantly agriculture oriented. According to the population census of 2001, the population of the state is 75.7 million. The population density being 275 persons per km. almost 75% of the population live in rural areas with 70% depending on agriculture as the main source of living. The importance of agriculture sector is further underlined by the fact that almost 70% of the states work force is engaged in agriculture and allied activities. Due to the high population growth, the share of agricultural labourers shows an increasing trend, indicating that increasing man-land ration lead to severe problems of productivity absorbing the growing rural population in the agriculture sector. Andhra Pradesh has one of the highest shares of agricultural labourers in the total work force of all Indian states. Landless families constitute upto 60% of total households in certain districts of the state.

Though productivity has increased in the last 25 years, the standard of living has not improved. About 54.2 percent of the land holdings are classified as marginal. Recent demographic interpolation estimate that 18% and 4% of Andhra Pradesh population belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. According to the latest estimates,

almost one quarter of the total population of Andhra Pradesh lives the below poverty line.

DROUGHT PRONE AREA PROGRAMME (DPAP):

This is centrally sponsored programme funded by Central and State governments on 50:50 basis aiming at developing the drought prone areas with an objective of drought proofing by taking up soil and land moisture conservation, water harvesting structures, afforestation and horticulture programmes on a comprehensive micro watershed basis. During 1994-95, the programme was implemented in 69 blocks of 8 Districts. From 1995-96 this programme was extended further in 11 Districts with 94 blocks under the scheme and in Ananthapur District 16 blocks under Desert Development Programme (DDP).

While DPAP is targeted towards the semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, DDP designed specifically for improved natural resource management and environmental protection measures in the arid areas of AP State. Besides this delineation of geographical target areas, there are virtually no difference between DPAP and DDP as regard to operational guidelines, eligibility of erosion control and SWC measures etc., except that under DDP the cost norms are higher (Rs. 4500 to 5000 per ha.) than for DPAP projects (Rs. 4000 per ha.). The main criterion for inclusion into DPAP is the share of irrigated land at the block level, the current ceiling being 20%. The total number of blocks covered under DPAP is 94, while 16 blocks have been identified for DDP. These 110 blocks represent one third of the total number of 330 blocks in AP State.

WATERSHED DEVELOPMENT IN ANANTHAPUR DISTRICT:

Ananthapur District is a hot arid district and falls in rain shadow zone with a very low estimated annual rain fall of 520 mm, which is second lowest in the country after Jaisalmar in Rajasthan. In the district, area is fully undulating with ridges and valleys with black cotton soils in certain areas. Out of the total rainfall received only 10-15 percent is utilizable for agriculture the rest is going waste through streams into sea and evaporation. Due to large number of water conservation and water harvesting structures taken up in the district during 1993-94 and 1994-95, 1000 M.cub of additional ground water recharge was made possible.

The entire district is declared as hot arid due to severity of soil erosion, high temperatures, and low and erratic and uneven distribution of rainfall resulting in 'soil and moisture stress', excessive evaporational losses and crop losses as the ultimate effect of drought and high aridity index. Trends of desertification are also seen in parts of district. The district is unfortunately had skipped from drought prone to hot arid district. Ground water levels are alarmingly receding. Further degeneration of existing marginal and degraded forests had happened in the last 4 decades and acute scarcity of drinking water, fodder and fuel is taking place in every alternative year which is a serious drought year. All these factors are creating tremendous concern and awareness regarding the danger that is looming large among the masses of the district.

Ananthapur district mainly depends on South- West and North-East monsoons. Normally South –West monsoon rains useful for rainfed dry crops. But failure of two monsoon hits the district drastically leading to drought. The following physical symptoms are indicative for beginning of desertification trends.

- Hardly 10 percent of land mass available in the district is covered with forest
- Most of the hillocks and hill ranges are barren without any sort of vegetation. The top soils having been washed away due to very strong erosion factor.
- About 30% of hills are declared to be dead hills where nothing can grow because of the fact that there is not top soil on the hills except granites boulders and weathered rocks.
- Levels of ground water are going down year after year owing to low rainfall and over exploitation and not proper use and wastage of water.
- A remarkable and unique feature of the district is the high intensity of winds after experiencing the maximum temperature during summer and at the time of onset of monsoons.

To combat the recurring drought and to bring comprehensive development, the DPAP programme was introduced in the year 1975 covering all the blocks in the district. This programme is implemented on area approach basis with watershed development concept. Accordingly, several developmental strategies were implemented with a view to conserve soil, harvest and conserve rain water bringing out change in cropping pattern, organizing people in Self-Help Groups (SHG's), development of Dryland horticulture, sericulture and promotion of social forestry and integrated rural development.

However, with all the developmental strategies carried out under DPAP upto 1994-95 nearly 2.62 lakh hectares out of 19.5 lakh hectares of geographical area could be covered and about 2.07 lakh individual beneficiaries could be assisted. At this stage trends of desertification were noticed in various parts of the district. It is declared as hot arid district and programme of DDP is introduced in the year 1995 onwards. In this programme a concerted integrated micro watershed development approach was envisaged under Dr. Hanumantha Rao new guidelines of Government of India. According to this, area of watershed would be approximately 500 ha, and programmed to spend Rs.22.50 lakhs in each watershed. Out of which Rs.18.00 lakhs will go for works component and Rs. 4.50 lakhs for community organisation and administrative cost. It is contemplated to execute the works and to implement the programme through NGO's and Government, officials as Project Implementation Agency (PIA).

An integrated action plan for a project period is prepared for the watersheds programmes for the district as detailed below. In micro watersheds the developmental works is being taken up by the watershed committees with the help of SHG's and user groups under the supervision of watershed development team, PIA's and Multi Disciplinary Teams.

Integrated Action Plan for Watershed Programme in Ananthapur District

Batch	Number of Watersheds	Funding Agency	Total Watersheds
1 st Batch	141	EAS	237
1 st Batch	96	DDP	
3 rd Batch	10	DDP	30
3 rd Batch	20	World Bank	
4 th Batch	100	DDP	100
5 th Batch	96	DDP	96
6 th Batch	60	DDP	149
6 th Batch	89	RIDF	
Total			612

Source: Commissioner of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Hyderabad.

PRIORITIZATION OF WATERSHEDS

Taking into priority ranking given by Andhra Pradesh State Remote Sensing Application Centre (APSRAC), SC, ST, population percentage of literacy, percentage of agricultural labour, scarcity of drinking water, quality of drinking water, availability of DWCRA, status of ground water, contiguity with existing watershed, livestock population and community mobilization etc. 3600 watersheds were prioritized very high, high, medium, low and very low categories. The above mentioned programme is being implemented in the Mallapuram village, which is described below along with the related development programmes such as DWCRA and role of watershed programme in the empowerment of women in the area.

III- LIVELIHOODS OF MALLAPURAM

Focused Group Discussion was conducted in the Mallapuram where knowledgeable persons from all communities have participated in the meeting. Following people have been divided into participants and facilitators: The issues that have been discussed are Droughts, migration and watershed programme.

Drought conditions for last 5 years: - People who were attended the FGD have revealed that droughts have affected their livelihood systems. Except last year i.e, 2000-2001, remaining four years, their yielding has reduced drastically. They said that farmers, labourers and petty business people have equally affected from the drought. People who were practicing animal husbandry i.e., dairying have felt that, their yielding was reduced due to the droughts but due to the watershed programme over this area, we could have minimized our losses.

Migration: - With regards to migration, people have told that they were not migrating to other areas i.e, Ballary etc. Labourers are going to Kalyandurg for wage work and

return back in the evening but not staying in the work place. Participants have felt that in spite of severe droughts in other nearby villages; we did not face such severity. They said that due to watershed programme our people use to get minimum wage works in the village. They also felt that because of the Kalyandurg, (Mandal), which is very near to them, they are used to get wage works without any problem.

How Harijans or Dalits / landless people affected from the droughts: - People felt that due to droughts they were not affected badly but wage works have reduced comparatively. But then, due to watershed programme and availability of labour in the town (Kalyandurg), we were not affected severely. Scheduled castes people are supported by Rural Development Trust (RDT) an NGO, as said by Hanumappa and Thimmakka. Scheduled castes farmers have felt that very few people have irrigated lands and others have either dry land or landless people. Some of the Landless people are going to non- form activity works to Kalyandurg, where as others are going for wage labour in the village itself.

Backward castes: - Majority of the B.Cs. have the lands both irrigated and rainfed lands. Some of them are maintaining autos (total 10) individually. Three other people are running rented autos. They felt that due to watershed programme, they were not faced the severity of the droughts except reduce of yielding in the cultivation. They said that they are aware of the important programmes like watershed programme etc. People felt that Mallapuram is much adjoined to the town, so their awareness level has also increased. Due to heavy rains, last year their groundnut yielding has reduced according to Ramanjaneyulu.

Women: - Women felt that due to the watershed programme, their awareness has increased enormously. Self help groups and DWACRA groups have increased their savings capacity and women are attending the group meetings and also Mahila Mandal meetings outside of the village.

RISK LIVELIHOODS IN THE VILLAGE:

The risks marginal groups faced during the drought period is also surveyed during our field work, which is explained as in the form of a case study below.

CASE OF LINGAMMA:

Lingamma (female) is the chairman of women's watershed committee, which is situated in the village. She has three sons where two of them, have studying BSc. and working as assistants with doctors. She is maintaining herself all the works, as watershed chairman, household work and also managing petty business shop in the village simultaneously. She has 2 ½ acres of land in village, which is of rainfed in nature.

Lingamma has said that out of three years (1998-2001) only 1999-2000 year she has got the crop, remaining two years she could not get even input cost, so she faced severe financial crises. Another reason for the crisis is that of education of children. She also said that "I could not study even 5th class. But let my children study as much as they can.

Lingamma's main occupation was being petty business in the village all the general store items, are available in the shop, including wheat flour and Groundnut oil. She also said that from the beginning (after her marriage) onwards, they are mainly depended upon petty business. This is because of their separation from her in-laws house, which was around 15 years back. After their separation she could not get even one acre of land from their (her) in-laws. So they started petty business.

Lingamma has said that, year by year, input cost on agriculture is increasing enormously and farmer's livelihoods have not been improving or increasing, as that of input cost of agriculture. Yielding is also very less according to Lingamma.

Lingamma has said that seven years back she has good income both from petty business as well as agriculture (which is her secondary activity). From this time onwards, she was also acted as DWACRA leader, secretary member and now as chairmen to watersheds committee (women's). Though she was the chairman of the committee but financial powers are with Sakranna Goud, who was chairmen of the completed watershed programme in the village.

She said that if good crops means farmers would have spent much more on vegetables and buy new things. If no crops in the season, their petty business would also be very dull. Because of the droughts, they have to go to moneylenders for debt, which made them dependent and ultimately indebtedness as she narrated about the villagers.

She said that her husband was committed suicide 10 years back, due to the allegations made by villagers against him. The reason is that in beerapua temple, which is situated in village, some body has stolen the jewellery items, and the villagers were suspicious about vannappa (Lingamma's husband) and his sister's husband. She also said that her husband was sensitive, sincere, jovial man. His sincerity made him to commit suicide as said by Lingamma. She was also narrated that, whoever (officials) comes to the village, they are not leaving the village with out meeting Lingamma's husband. He was a famous petty businessman said by lingamma. She was also reminded that, when her husband was alive, she had not gone out of the village for any work. She was not aware of anything at that time. After her husband's death, she had faced lot of problems and realized that her children should not suffer the same and decided to send them to school.

Future Livelihood Strategy:- She said that she is already to face the problems and should manage the affairs to achieve the sustainable living.

Lingamma has said that, now she is participating in all the developmental activities of the village and also attending all the Janmabhoomi and DWACRA meetings and able to speak/ talk with officials with out any hesitation or fear/shy. She said because of the DWACRA, now she is able to improve her livelihoods and also aware about all the developmental programmes.

Role of DWACRA in the Women's Empowerment:-

According to the members and two leaders of the groups who were, attended the PRA meeting, there are 9 groups in Mallapuram. They also said that approximately 80% of the people are covered in this programme. Some of the BCs (i.e., Kurubas) were not involved in the DWACRA groups. Women out rightly says that before the introduction

of the DWACRA schemes in the village, they are not aware of outside activities of the village except domestic and agricultural activities.

Because of the DWACRA programme, they (women) have a role in Household decision making process, aware of cleanliness of surroundings and they are also contributing to school building construction etc. Women members also said that their husbands are allowing them to attend the meeting and whenever teacher is not coming to school, they are giving complaints to higher officials. They also revealed that, now they are able to talk with officials with out any hesitation and we are demanding them about our benefits/ programme or schemes etc.

Some women faced problems while receiving the benefits by means of running around the officials and offices for sanctioning of grants and other funds. Women have complained that Sarpanch is delaying for sanctioning of funds by means of not signing the form.

Present Women member who were attended the meeting have told that there are 9 self help groups in the village. Because of these groups women felt that they were able to go outside of the village to participate in the discussions with officials, banks etc. and they have a role in decision-making process in the household's activities. They also said that their husbands now believed that women are also could become the bread earner of the family. They are giving importance to their children education and increase of thriftiness as said by the informant. For example, Lingamma (B.C Kuruba) newly elected chairperson of the women water shed run by RDT (PIA), said that she is aware of all the programmes and used to attend all the meetings creating awareness about education (including children education) and representing problems to the officials.

Five years back:- Old Women has narrated that one official visited the village and met 6. C.Nagaraju CBT Obulapuram old women and informed them about savings and also availability of the loans. Later few women members divided to start the groups, like wise two groups have been formed. They felt that only 30% of them (women) were aware of the groups/ programmes at that time.

Women members were felt that, they were not aware of any programmes, schemes, meetings etc. but one old women by name Savitri, DWACRA Group members replied that there are several programmes, policies and schemes during Indiria Gandhi period, for upliftment of poor. But there was not much focused or advertised, like as of now.

10 years back:- According to the Lingamma, there are no groups or SHGs at that time. Women are not aware of the any benefits or programmes, which are meant to their development. She has said that due to RDT, some people in the village are aware of these outside activities and people are interested to form groups. She has narrated that roughly 10% of women are aware of the outside activities of the village.

15 years back:- Majority of the women felt that, their knowledge is nil except to hear their mother in-law and go for agricultural operations

Reasons for awareness:

Women felt that, they got awareness about their lives due to the initiatives of Government and Non-government agencies. More so because of the efforts initiated in the region by the Rural Development Trust, an NGO, working in the area for the last 25 years. They also felt that charismatic leaders like Indira Gandhi, they came to know about politics and local level politics.

IV- POSITIVE IMPACT THROUGH WATERSHEDS PROGRAMME:-

People felt that before watershed programme their lands were not in good condition. Everywhere they could found stones, rocks etc. Farmers felt that their yielding also reduced drastically. Labourers were unable to get the wage works, so they used to migrate to other areas for works. Irrigated area acreage was less before watershed programme in the Mallapuram. Dairying people have felt that their milk yield also very less before the watersheds in Mallapuram. Farmers used to go to distant places for grazing purposes. People felt that after watershed programme, bunding works have done in the lands. By which both farmers and labourers were benefited by means of getting more number of wage works to labourers and soil rejuvenation has increased which resulted in the crop yielding to the farmers.

Horticultural crops have been given to the farmers through which changes have come in the cropping pattern. Due to the watershed programme, ground water table has increased to 110 feet from 80 feet according to the sarpanch. According to Venkatesu, who is practicing Dairying, milk yield has improved drastically from 60 litres to 300 litres over a period of three years. People have also felt that forestland has increased. According to the farmer by name Ramanjaneyulu, crop yield has gone up from 5 to 6 bags per acre to 8 to 10 bags after watershed programme.

Non –form activity has also increased after watershed programme in the village. There are 3 hotels, 3 petty business shops in the village which were not there before watershed programme. Some of the people have maintaining autos and running between Mallapuram to Kalyanadurg. They said that due to watershed programme, self employment has been improved according to Chandrasekhar.

Wage rates have increased compared to other areas as said by the Sakranna Goud Ex. Watershed chairman. Due to the equal wage rates system followed in the watershed programme, women labourers felt happy and agricultural labour rates have also increased according to Hanumappa.

Due to watershed programme, women's position has improved and savings has increased drastically. Lingamma, who is the chairman of the watershed committee, has said that watershed programme has brought changes in their livelihoods systems. Thus, it is seen from the study that watershed development programme has immensely changed the lives of the marginal communities in the drought regions of the Andhra Pradesh.

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