



## Community Initiative for Rejuvenation and Management of Environment Degraded Salaita Ravines for Sustainable Development. "Swasti II"

### Project Objective:

- Increase agricultural returns by arresting and reversing land degradation through restoration of the eco system approach.
- Undertake measures for augmentation of water resources with focus on recharging sub-soil reserves by building water-harvesting structures, along with optimizing utilization of water through community initiatives and local ownerships.
- Arrest erosion of topsoil cover through greening of exposed areas.
- Capacity building of the community, especially women, around issues of environment, livelihoods, conflict management and sharing of resources.
- Facilitate formation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and train them for alternate income generation activities.

### Project Rationale:

Large areas of land along the rivers such as the Yamuna, the Chambal and the Mahi and their tributaries have been badly eroded and transformed into ravines. The march of ravines is progressing unabated; lack of vegetation helps rainwater sweep away the upper portion of the land. The fast-flowing water creates nallahs (rivulet), big cracks and fissures, which develop slowly or quickly, depending on the rainwater, and become ravines. In the context of these in Chambal Region, the light and alluvial kind of soil, coupled with deforestation, increasing population pressure, faulty irrigation projects and short-term developmental schemes seemed to have fuelled the formation of ravines, resulting in loss of productive lands. About 3.5 million acres (1 acre = 0.4074 hectare) in Uttar Pradesh and about 800,000 acres each in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Gujarat are badly affected by ravine erosion.

Ravines are gobbling up many villages and communities in, Etawah and Jalaun of Uttar Pradesh destroying their houses and washing away the soil. Salita village in Etawah district is being gobbled up by the ravines so rapidly that all the land around it has turned into deep pits. The village is now divided into 18 parts. What could be the life of any person when his place is divided into so many parts, when there is no land to till, no pastures and no work? The streets and roads have been destroyed and it takes a tough walk across three kilometers to cover all segments of the old village. The ravines are eating into the social life of the villages.

In the Chambal Division, which has an area of 16.14 lakh hectares, around 20 per cent of the division, i.e. around 3.107 lakh hectares are ravines. The ravines have spread along the main rivers of the region. The worst ravines are in the vicinity of Chambal River and are expanding faster than ever before.

### Project Strategy:

Ravines can be challenged with the help of new policy perspectives and with the active support of villagers. The key approach, however, pursuing the idea of reclaiming the ravines using contour bunding and vegetative measures was not easy. People had a strong feeling that the only way for developing lands is 'land leveling', which would have been quite a costly affair. Only after seeing the results of work done by few progressive farmers, people will come forward for taking up conservation measures. Approach of the GEF, UNDP, Small Grants Program project followed was to build capacities



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Name of SGP Partner	:	Sainik Foundation
Geographical area	:	Village Salita in district Etawah
No of Beneficiaries	:	400 Families in two main villages of Jabrapura & Salaita
SGP Grant	:	Rs.19,94,500
Co Financing	:	Rs. 77,000 (Cash), Rs. 11,51,477 (Kind)
Project Time Period	:	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2005- 30 <sup>th</sup> September 2007

# SGP The GEF Small Grants Programme



## Project Activities:

- Using participatory approaches of regular village meeting and local kinship based groups a range of activities were undertaken.
- Village action planning and baseline development.
- Regular village meetings.
- Activation of Self Help Groups.
- Planning of field areas.
- Survey and field to field marking of Gully plugs on revenue maps.
- Developing plantation plan with village task force for Nursery, establishing links with IGFR, Grass Research Institute CAZRI, nominating planting teams and prepare timetable, and prepare fencing plan.
- Soil investigation and sample analyses.
- Planning of check dam.
- Gully plugging.
- Tree/grass planting and fencing.
- Installation of solar tube well.
- Provision of toilets for sanitation.
- Training for SHG formation, bee keeping, establishing nurseries, hand paper making.
- Rural workshop for community towards education and awareness of Himalayan Environment.
- Establishing Field meteorological data station.
- Monitoring and evaluation.

## Project Output

- The project interventions of water harvesting structures and processes have arrested 80% run off from 40 hectare of catchments feeding into the Yamuna from its north bank.
- Two surface water points have been created bringing five ridges or 20 hectares under grazing grass/ tree cultivation with 5000 trees in two planting seasons.
- Top soil erosion has been arrested by creating grazing grounds on 10 hectares of reclaimed ridges and gullies over two seasons introducing new grasses and income generating plants/ foliage.
- The subsoil water table has increased by over 20-25 meters and the level is being sustained.
- The interventions have reclaimed 30% gullies for arable land and created a core of trained community members with some experience in rural technologies in the field of Agro Forestry planning and execution of micro projects in villages.
- Community participation created lean season income generating activity for farmers who earned nearly Rs. 200,000/-
- Model toilets were build in the area to improve the health and hygiene condition.
- Sainik Foundation also developed a central village treasury by the name of 'Village Gram Kosh' towards increasing self dependence among the community.
- Recharging of water table by the check dam increased water moisture content in down stream land thereby accruing a saving of upto 50% in cost of preparing soil before cultivation.

## Project Lessons

- Building low cost, community owned structures are effective method of recharging the receding water table and rejuvenate surface reserves such as wells.
- Soil can be arrested by restoring surface moisture through vegetative measures.
- Reclaimed wasteland can be converted to grazing pastures and for other agro-horticultural based income generating activities.
- Brick masonry check dams are more economical in silt terrain where bricks are easily locally available.
- Involvement and participation of 'local communities' lead to robust measures to reverse desertification and drought issues.
- Local forums necessary for consultative processes.

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