**Evaluation Report of Project**

**“Poverty & Vulnerability Reduction through Drought Mitigation & Community Action”**

**Implementation Agency**

**HelpAge International**

**&**

**Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti**

**Financial Support by**

**Big Lottery Fund**

**Evaluating Agency**

**HEDCON**

October 2013

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# About HelpAge International

#### HelpAge International is a registered charity in UK. It works to help older people claim their rights, challenge discrimination and overcome poverty, so that they can lead dignified, secure, active and healthy lives.It works through global network of like-minded organizations. We have over 90 affiliates in 60 countries. HelpAge is working with GRAVIS on the project evaluated for last three years. To know more about HelpAge International, please log on to [www.helpge.org](http://www.helpge.org)

**About GRAVIS**

GRAVIS is a development organization working for the empowerment of the Thar Desert communities. GRAVIS is based on the Gandhian philosophy of self-reliance and works towards the rehabilitation of drought affected and marginalized rural communities, enabling village ownership and control over its environment, institutions and relations. GRAVIS is the network partner and implementing partner of HelpAge International for the given project. To know more about GRAVIS, please connect to [www.gravis.org.in](http://www.gravis.org.in)

**About HEDCON**

HEDCON is a technical support and social networking organization working in Rajasthan, India since 1998 to influence, sensitize, capacitate, and support other grass root initiatives and institutions; with a vision of a just and equitable society closer to reality. HEDCON has a vast network of NGOs with whom it works and support through information sharing, trainings, workshops, publications, conducting evaluations, baseline studies and social researches. Expert members from HEDCON have conducted this evaluation. Read more about HEDCON at [www.hedcon.org](http://www.hedcon.org)

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# Acronyms

ADOPT Project “Assimilated Development of Older People in the Thar”

CPMC Community Project Management Committee

NGOs Non-Government Organization

VOPA Village Older People Association

GRAVIS GraminVikasVigyanSamiti
HAI HelpAge International

HEDCON Health, Environment and Development Consortium

PRI Panchayati Raj Institution

PMC Project Management Committee

SHG Self Help Group

TAC Technical Advisory Committee

VHW Village Health Workers

NSS National Sample Survey

CFTRI Central Food Technology and Research Institute

# Glossary

## Nadi: small pond like structure

## Taanka: Underground (normally round shaped) closed structure for harvesting and storage of potable water; traditionally designed and used in Thar Desert region

## Khadin: An earthen embankment in the farm field for increasing soil moisture by harvesting the water run off; traditionally designed and used in Thar Desert region

Executive Summary

HelpAge International and Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS) have implemented the project ‘Poverty & Vulnerability Reduction through Drought Mitigation & Community Action” in two districts of Rajasthan State in India. The project which has completed four years was implemented in ten villages in Baap block of Jodhpur district and five villages in Sam block of Jaisalmer districts. The 48 months long project officially commenced from April 2009 to March 2013. The goal of the project was to improve the lives of 16,000 beneficiaries through provision of safe water, increased crop production, reduced vulnerability to environmental shocks and increased participation in society in the Thar Desert. More especially the project works with health, agriculture, livestock, water security and community empowerment. This evaluation was conducted in September and October 2013 by HEDCON to assess the process and long term impact, the extent to which planned outputs have been achieved, to draw conclusions and learn lessons from past experiences so as to improve the effectiveness of future development undertakings.

The findings of the evaluation are divided into five sections: relevance with regards to strategy, activities and region; the efficiency of the project in terms of its arrangements and capacity to manage the project; the coordination with other stakeholders, including the involvement of local government in the project; the effectiveness and impact of the project; and sustainability of the project interventions.

The findings were drawn from direct field visits and review of the documents and reports provided by HelpAge International and GRAVIS. Interviews were also conducted with project staff to get a better understanding and clear doubts. In addition, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and direct observations also played a key role in understanding the project, its goals and the outcomes it achieved.

*Key findings and conclusion*

The quantity and quality of information received was sufficient and relevant to get an overall picture of the situation and assess the project outcomes. It can be said that project was relevant given the profile of the Thar region, vulnerabilities of older people as defined in the proposal and verified in the field, HelpAge International and GRAVIS approach and planned activities. Through this project, HelpAge and GRAVIS have been able to reach the targeted vulnerable older people and have played a significant role in strengthening their capacity on water and hygiene, food and income security and improving health access.

The project was successful in addressing its goal of improving the lives of 16,000 beneficiaries through provision of safe water, increased crop production, reduced vulnerability to environmental shocks and increased participation in society in the Thar Desert., through direct interventions and advocacy[[1]](#footnote-2). The project was able to reach 900 household through individual/household activities like taanka, cow distribution, khadin construction, horticulture units. Further it reached more than 70% of the target village population through community activities. The project was also able to benefit 733 individuals/households through inclusion in social welfare schemes through awareness, advocacy and linkages; and more than 400 women/households could be linked to SHGs. Most of the project activities were done in the name of older women of the house which helped in addressing the oppression of women to some extent as they felt empowered and in possession of some productive assets.

Decentralized institution building was done through creation of Village Older People Associations (VOPAs) in all target villages which helped in bringing older people together and providing them a platform to discuss issues of community and issues concerning them. It was ensured that all section of the society gets representation in these organizations. It was also ensured that office bearers should have at least 30% of the women as members. The community participation was ensured through these VOPAs which helped in selection of activities and beneficiaries, and monitoring of the project interventions. As targeted, most of the benefits have gone older people and women. This has not only helped in overcoming the social differences but also established their status within the family and in the village.

Access to potable water for older people and their family members has improved through provision of 290 taankas and desilting of 5 community Naadi. This has reduced the expenditure of the target village communities on transport of water. It also reduced the burden of women in fetching water from a distance of 3-4 km. It also helped them in having some time for them and their families.

Target households are able to strengthen food security for them and their families by construction of 190 khadins on their farm fields. It increased the soil moisture and reduced the soil salinity, thereby increasing the summer harvest by atleast two times. At the same time, the increase in soil moisture helped them in sowing seeds in winter, in case there are some rains during December.

The provision of 120 cow and 300 horticulture units improved availability of nutritious food at doorstep. Also, the cow beneficiaries are now able to generate some income from sale of cow milk and horticulture unit beneficiaries from fruits harvested from the horticulture units. 5 seed banks and 5 fodder banks have been constructed by the project to increase resilience of the communities. 534 households have utilized the services of these banks and many have also returned the seed and fodder. This has given confidence to older people about availability of support during hard days especially during drought period.

Total 38 Self Help Groups (SHGs) with 415 women members were constituted in target villages. Income generation activities have been started through inter-loaning and additional money to SHGs by GRAVIS. These SHGs have bank accounts and their funds are increasing every month through collection of money and the interest on loans. This has made the target women socially and financially empowered.

A cadre of para-vets was created in the villages which increased the access and knowledge of locals on minor treatment of their animals, else they were forced to track long distances for treatment of their animals.

54 medical camps were organized during the project period in which 2860 older persons and their family members underwent examination and treatment. The trained Village Health Workers (VHWs) have proved to be better health resource for older people. The awareness sessions on hygiene and sanitation were successful in ensuring that people treat water before drinking. Also, the demand for toilets raised by older people during VOPA meetings show that the beneficiaries want to adopt better sanitation practices.

Recommendations

* VOPAs are functioning well but very few measures ensure their continuation in sustainable manner. Main activities during the project were on project interventions and VOPAs were encouraged to implement other social and welfare activities. The efforts to ensure that they continue sustainably were not sufficient. An analysis of parameters on sustainability of the associations and their progress should be conducted and accordingly, activities should be planned to ensure sustainability of the VOPAs.
* The rules for maintenance of Naadis were not seen properly followed. Although people were confident that they will be able to manage these Naadis through community management system, the evaluation team found it difficult to consider it as sustainable. GRAVIS should consider increasing the community contribution through voluntary labor for future Naadi desilting intervention, to ensure that people are willing and will continue to desilt them for their sustainability.
* The weak distribution and management processes for seed banks and fodder banks on distribution and management may not allow them to be sustainable. The rules established for the banks are also not sufficient for beneficiaries to return seed or fodder. Out of 534 persons who have taken seed or fodder on loan till date, about 290 persons have returned the loan. There was no women’s participation in the whole bank management. To make them sustainable, they could have been given to SHGs. This could have helped in earning by women SHGs and also make them a sustainable preposition.
* Availability of potable water has not only made life easy for older people but has also reduced the instances of water borne diseases. However on the sanitation part lot still need to be done. Interaction with the older people during evaluation revealed that toilet at home is the most demanding thing for older people as they have to walk for open defecation. Toilets for vulnerable household should be considered for the next phase of the project.
* For insurance of cows, it is suggested that in future projects if animal is to be given to the beneficiaries, the project should not insure the animal but should ensure that it is done by the beneficiary households.
* The evaluation team observed that the para-vets were not provided with any promotional support; and the follow-up of the activity was weak. The linkages between these para-vets and veterinary government services are weak. The given factors didn’t allow this activity to provide expected outcomes. Such activity should be followed with persistent follow-up and support.
* The team feels that the health workers could have been provided with a home-care training. That could have provided them with better scope for increasing their health business and also help older people better.
* Monitoring was limited to inputs and completion of activities rather than outcomes. The process normally should start with drafting indicators of outcomes (including for inputs and activities and outputs)at project development stage which helps in creating a monitoring system, for executing in the field. This helps in making required changes in the life cycle of project, in time. It is strongly recommended that project design should include indicators for inputs, activities and outputs and outcomes; and a monitoring mechanism for all projects is designed to help in monitoring and understanding the progress.
* HelpAge has been working with GRAVIS through different projects for last more than 10 years. There is clarity on issues for policy advocacy to some extent within the system. However the projects lack a clear strategy and issues for policy advocacy with the government for the rights of older people. This was suggested in mid term review but was beyond the scope of this project. It is suggested that GRAVIS works with HelpAge and draft a strategic plan with clear long term goals and objectives. This might open up further avenues and plans for both the organizations to work together in India and specifically in Rajasthan.

Chapter 1: The project and evaluation

# 1.1 Introduction to the project

Living in the extreme climate of the Thar Desert is difficult at any age, but it is especially hard for the elderly. High temperatures, lack of food and water, inadequate health services and social marginalization pose severe challenges to the health and well-being of elderly people. To deal with these challenges, GRAVIS implemented the project “Poverty and Vulnerability Reduction through Drought Mitigation & Community Action” with the support of HelpAge International and Big Lottery Fund.

The goal of the project was to improve the lives of 16,000 beneficiaries through provision of safe water, increased crop production, reduced vulnerability to environmental shocks and increased participation in society in the Thar Desert. More especially the project worked on health, agriculture, livestock, water security and community empowerment. The project which has completed four years was implemented in ten villages in Baap block of Jodhpur district and five villages in Sam block of Jaisalmer districts of Rajasthan State.

# 1.2 Project stakeholders

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Districts | Number of Villages | Older People (OPs) | OP families | Lower caste people (LCPs)  |
| Men  | Women | Men  | Women | Men  | Women |
| Jodhpur  | 10 | 650 | 650 | 3,205 | 3,250 | 1,600 | 1,066 |
| Jaisalmer  | 5 | 350 | 350 | 1,750 | 1,750 | 800 | 534 |
| Subtotals | 15 | 1,000 | 1,000 | 5,000 | 5,000 | 2,400 | 1,600 |
| 15 | 2,000 | 10,000 | 4,000 |
| TOTAL | 16,000 |

Key primary stakeholder groups are: a) older people households; b) women, and c) lower caste

people and d) economically disadvantaged villagers. Category ‘a’ (shown on the table as older people and older people’s families) provide the majority of the beneficiaries and constitute the project’s key focus, covering all 2,000 older people local village residents. Mainstreaming women is a cross-cutting issue, as the project seeks to involve approximately equal numbers of women and men, challenging persistent discrimination and local practices.

# 1.3 Expected outcome of the Project

To achieve the above goal, the project aims to realize the following outcomes:

* At least 60% of Village Older People Associations (hereinafter VOPAs) report local government, partner Non-Government Organization (hereinafter NGO) and development agencies to supporting them to implement activities to sustain the desert eco system to reduce the vulnerabilities of older people from major environmental shocks and stresses.
* At least 290 older people and their family members have own taankas to harvest rain water for household consumption and the 16,000 beneficiaries have free access to clean and safe drinking water throughout the year from the construction and desilting of village ponds.
* At least 31% of the targeted older people and their family members report greater income and food security as a result of increased agriculture and milk production as well as access to fodder for the animals.
* At least 40% of the targeted older people will have improved access to healthcare facilities and sanitation.

# 1.4 Purpose of the evaluation

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the process and outcomes, the extent to which planned outputs have been achieved, to draw conclusions and learn lessons from experiences so as to improve the effectiveness of future development undertakings. The evaluation details the extent to which activities contributed to the programme objectives. Focus was on the interventions and their impact with vulnerable groups primarily older people and women. The evaluation is expected to allow team leaders and project implementers to understand the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. It is also expected to help the implementers in establishing a strategy for future interventions and ensuring that the activities they implement are sustainable.

# 1.5. Evaluation methodology

10 villages of Baap block of Jodhpur district and 5 villages of Sam block of Jaisalmer district are covered in the project area. For the evaluation purpose, more than 50% of the project villages were covered for field visit, i.e. 4 villages of Jodhpur district and 4 villages of Jaisalmer district[[2]](#footnote-3). The selection of the villages was based on coverage of the village, distance from the field center and relations of the available field officer with the villages. Interaction was held with all major stakeholders including beneficiary households, SHG members, VOPA members, Project Staff of GRAVIS and Panchayat Raj members. The beneficiaries for discussions and interviews were selected randomly by going to the village and then selecting the beneficiaries. The method was chosen on based on convenience and practicability to be able to cover more people given long distances between habitations. This method may have its limitations but it provided flexibility to the evaluator to be able to go to the field and randomly select, to avoid risk of selection of preferred persons by the organization. Also, it helped evaluator in understanding the village scenario better through transects. Various project reports and documents were also reviewed during the evaluation[[3]](#footnote-4).

 In addition to observations, following instruments were used for evaluation as per stakeholders’ convenience and time availability:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instrument** | **Stakeholders** | **Focus / key areas of enquiry** |
| Document study | * Programme reports including proposal and progress reports
* Case studies
* Various related GRAVIS publication
* Mid-Term Review report
 | Context, relevance, project components in relation to defined objectives, stakeholders involved and project management  |
| Key informant interviews;Semi-structured discussions and Focus group discussions | 1. programme team
2. Beneficiaries of cow, khadin, taanka, Nadi and horticulture units
3. VOPA and SHG members
4. Community representatives mainly Panchayat members
 | * Programme management
* Community participation
* Outcomes of the activities implemented
* Inclusion of vulnerable groups including women and older people
* Identification of further needs and scope of improvement
 |
| Transect walk | Community members | Outcomes of the activities wrt to community activities like Nadi desilting |

# 1.6 Limitations of the evaluation

* Both the districts are spread in a large area. Even distance between villages of one district to villages of another district is more than 300 km one way. Distances within the villages from one house to another required time as people in desert live in remote hamlets. Although the evaluation covered verification of all activities and discussion with all kind of beneficiaries, the distances allowed for limited number of visits.
* As the project has ended, interaction with entire GRAVIS team could not be done as they have moved to other projects of GRAVIS or some of them have joined other organizations.
* The evaluation is primarily a qualitative exercise and it is believed that the quantitative information provided by GRAVIS is factual
* The time available to accomplish the assignment was the main constraints. A good random sampling of projects was not feasible because selection had to be based on what was logistically sensible and helped in covering majority of activities. With more time and money it would have been possible to visit more people, groups and areas. However, the law of diminishing returns applies quite rapidly.

Chapter 2: Analysis and Findings

# 2.1 Relevance and Appropriateness

The people living in Thar Desert have always lived in difficult conditions because of limited resource base, climatic hardship and livelihood constraints. Along with this, the basic services i.e. road, electricity, education, health and water did not reach to them for very long time (some areas still lack some of these services). The problem becomes more complex when it comes to older age, primarily on food security, livelihoods, health and resilience. The health needs increase to many folds and for poor households ensuring sufficient nutritious food becomes a challenge. Looking at the context, the project for poverty and vulnerability reduction was relevant to the target population and the region.

The activities for the target vulnerable group were focused on improving water access through construction of household water harvesting structures called taanka and renovation of village ponds locally called Nadi. Similarly, the activities targeted to increase food security and strengthen livelihoods through promotion of horticulture, distribution of cows and creation of farm bunds to increase soil moisture for increasing harvest. The activities on health focused on increasing outreach of older people, women and their families to health; and on improving linkages and capacities. ”. Organizing these people in groups called Village Older People Associations (VOPAs) and building their capacity was done to provide a platform for older people to be able to raise issues concerning them and their families[[4]](#footnote-5). Creation of Self Help Groups (SHGs) of older women was expected to empower women socially and economically. This helped also in establishing the importance of older people in the community otherwise they were almost living in negligence. During the visit, one older women name Champa Devi of Jaitdasar village said “I told my son and daughter in law in clear terms that if you do not look after me well, you cannot take water from this *taanka* as it belongs to me”. The activities were appropriate to ensure the needs of two most vulnerable groups, i.e. the older people and women are addressed and their rights are secured.

HelpAge international has been working for the cause of older people by supporting them to secure their rights and live a dignified life. They are working with the like-minded organization throughout the world. GRAVIS is an organization which has been striving for the rights of the people living in harsh conditions like Thar Desert. GRAVIS is one of the partner organizations of HelpAge International and their relations are 14 years old. Both GRAVIS and HelpAge International have been working for the rights of older people and women for a long time and are well equipped to do so.

Although the project was a long term project and was found appropriate in terms of time, the high vulnerability of people in remote desert areas and challenges of social norms and long distances didn’t allow for sustainable VOPAs and mainstreaming of women in the overall community development. A small component of strengthening VOPAs and mainstreaming women is suggested to be considered by HelpAge International. This small component can be considered without any big project planning by HelpAge internal to ensure sustainability of activities implemented, if a small allocation of money can be identified.

# 2.2 Efficiency

GRAVIS has earlier implemented ADOPT project and the support of experienced ADOPT project helped in creating implementing arrangements for the project. Decentralized institutions called Village Older People Associations (VOPAs) were created in order to implement the project in participatory, efficient and transparent manner, at village level. , Project Management Committee (PMC), Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Community Project Management Committee (CPMC) were formed. These committees were providing regular support to the project and were also reviewing the progress of the project from time to time. Visits by senior staff from GRAVIS from time to time to the target field areas also helped in revising the action plan.

# HelpAge international’s time to time visits have also helped in monitoring the project. Regional programme manager from HelpAge’s South Asian Regional Office at Dhaka has provided support on technical issues. Regional finance manager has provided support on financial management and reporting process.

To effectively implement the project in the field, following staff were appointed:-

 Project Coordinator 1

 Area Coordinator 2 (One for Jodhpur and One for Jaisalmer)

 Community Workers 6 (4 for Jodhpur and 2 for Jaisalmer)

 Field Accountants 2( One each for Jodhpur and Jaisalmer)

 Computer Operator 1

Interaction with available project staff revealed that the staff has enough knowledge about the project and was capable in effectively handling the project. They have developed good relations with the target communities and developed cordial relations with the staff of government line departments.

At village level, VOPAs were given the opportunity to take their own decisions with support on the processes and criteria for selection of activities and beneficiary. The monitoring was also jointly done at field level by communities and field staff. It has been found that these arrangements to involve the communities in decision making helped this project in making it a people’s own project. This also helped in smooth implementation of activities, conflict resolution at local level and making VOPAs take charge of the community structure sincerely.

*Scope for improvements*

Project Management Committee (PMC) and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting were mainly confined to Jodhpur city which didn’t allow for effective discussions and direct interactions with the communities. Although, the community representatives travelled to GRAVIS Jodhpur office, the meetings in the field area could have helped in identification of issues better. Furthermore, field visits were especially more confined to Jodhpur as it was the closer region. Regular visits and meetings in the field to both the regions could have helped in better management of the project activities.

Monitoring was limited to inputs and completion of activities rather than outcomes. Although, GRAVIS staff, VOPA members and beneficiaries could narrate how people were benefited but there was lack of clear monitoring mechanism to document the outcomes. The process normally should start with drafting indicators of outcomes (including for inputs and activities and outputs)at project development stage which helps in creating a monitoring system, for executing in the field. This helps in making required changes in the life cycle of projects in time. The evaluator had no access to any such document which defines the indicators in the prescribed manner. It is strongly recommended that project design should include indicators for inputs, activities and outputs and outcomes; and a monitoring mechanism for all projects is designed to help in monitoring and understanding the progress.

# 2.3 Coordination

GRAVIS has earlier carried out a project ADOPT in which village older people’s association were formed (in other areas). The experience was used here and VOPA’s were formed in all 15 villages. Since the people of project villages have never been organized earlier, there was a suspicion in their mind. GRAVIS took help of VOPA members of ADOPT who readily agreed to share their experiences. This helped in formation of VOPA’s in these villages. The VOPA’s have representation of people belonging to different religion and different castes, residing in the village. Representation has been given to each religion and caste in these associations.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Target VOPAs**  | **Jaisalmer** | **Jodhpur** | **Total** |
| Total Number of VOPAs | 5 | 10 | 15 |
| Total Members of VOPA’s | 51 | 96 | 147 |
| Number of women in VOPAs | 23 | 31 | 54 |
| Women office bearers in VOPAs | 7 | 0 | 7 |
| Number of SC/ST in VOPA | 50 | 15 | 65 |
| SC/ST office bearers in VOPA | 50 | 15 | 65 |

Similarly, the project was implemented in close collaboration with local bodies including panchayats and concerned line departments like animal husbandry, public health, agriculture, forestry and Medical and Health Departments. For example, the VHW and para-vet trainings, the administration participated to explain them about the existing practices. Other departments were involved in explaining communities on the social welfare programmes they run and how to access them. VOPA members were trained on the political system and relevance of attending Gram Sabha meetings. It helped village communities to interact with government and panchayat people and get to know about the policies and programmes which can help them in benefiting[[5]](#footnote-6). Through VOPAs the project worked for empowerment of people in negotiating for welfare of other disadvantaged groups like widows, physically and mentally challenged people. The coordination with panchayats and other departments helped 733 vulnerable individuals/households[[6]](#footnote-7) in inclusion in government welfare programmes.

*Scope for improvements*

HelpAge has been working with GRAVIS through different projects for last more than 10 years. There is clarity on issues for policy advocacy to some extent within the system. However the projects lack a clear strategy and issues for policy advocacy with the government for the rights of older people. This was suggested in mid term review but was beyond the scope of this project. It is suggested that GRAVIS works with HelpAge and draft a strategic plan with clear long term goals and objectives. This might open up further avenues and plans for both the organizations to work together in India and specifically in Rajasthan.

# Coverage

|  |
| --- |
| Table: Coverage |
| S.No. | **Activity** | **Number activities** | Total number of households benefited |
| 1 | Taanka Construction | 290 | 290 |
| 2 | Khadin construction | 190 | 190 |
| 3 | Horticulture Unit | 300 | 300 |
| 4 | Cow Distribution | 120 | 120 |
| 5 | Seed Bank | 5 | 366 |
| 6 | Fodder bank | 5 | 168 |
| 7 | Naadi Construction | 1 | 150 |
| 8 | Naadi de-silting | 4 | 400 |
| 11 | Medical Camps | 54 | 2860 |
| 12 | SHGs | 38 | 415 |
| Total | 5225 |

The coverage here is seen in terms of targeted communities and beneficiaries against the planned number of beneficiaries. The project included number of activities to ensure that almost all older people in the target villages are covered through one or the other activity. The focus was on most vulnerable older people households as detailed above. Here one beneficiary is considered as benefiting this/her own household. Also, community level activity like Nadi is considered to benefit about 100 households which live in the radius of about 3 km, as explained in the two VOPA meetings organized during the evaluation. The seed bank and fodder banks have benefited 534 families through distribution of seeds and fodder on loan. This was first discussed and then verified from the

visited seed/fodder bank. The number of women in the SHGs are considered from different households. The average family size is considered to be of 6 persons. Accordingly, the project can be estimated to cover above 5000 households and 30,000 persons. However, as there are many instances of same household benefited from more than one activity, especially community level activities, it can be said that the project was able to cover 16000 persons targeted the project.

# Effectiveness and Impact

## Organizing Older People

To organize older people, VOPAs were created in all target villages. Although poverty and vulnerability is not restricted to any group, but in general schedule caste and schedule tribe people are seen deprived of resources and hence are found more vulnerable than other groups. To ensure that all different vulnerable groups have representation in the VOPA governance, the governing body was ensured to have all groups represented as shown in the table above in coordination section. In order to equip VOPA with better management capacity and smooth functioning, capacity building programmes were conducted. VOPAs conducted monthly meetings regularly which were minuted by GRAVIS staff in some cases because of illiteracy of older people. The selection of beneficiaries for all the planned activities was done by VOPAs in their respective villages. The selection of beneficiaries by VOPAs was done based on identified criteria of selection. During discussions, the VOPAs could spell those criteria and also explained how they used it to select in the meetings. VOPA members also helped in monitoring the project activities. The VOPA members were also included in Community level Project Management Committee (CPMC) and Project Management Committee (PMC), and they attended meetings to ensure that they have their say in these management meetings. This helped in confidence building and improving the negotiation skills of VOPA members[[7]](#footnote-8). The role of VOPA in implementation of the project helped in ensuring that right beneficiaries are selected, their voices are heard and conflicts are resolved at the community level.

In Jaitdasar village, Meghwals, Rajputs and Muslims are the major community, dividing the village into three parts. A school was sanctioned and every community wanted school near their residence. This created tension in the village and many times the structure when started was broken by other people. Finally VOPA (which has representation of all castes) got into the act and measurement was done. The school was built right at the center of all the communities without any further trouble.

VOPAs were motivated to implement activities beyond the project activities. The activities and the interest depended on the VOPA members and most activities were on conflict resolution, participation of community members in panchayat decisions and inclusion of vulnerable groups in social welfare programmes of government. The leadership of older people helped in securing their own rights and the rights of other vulnerable groups. They also helped in solving many social issues within the village. The trainings on social welfare programmes and advocacy sensitized the older people on the existing social welfare programmes and their eligibility. The regular persuasion by VOPA members with Panchayats helped vulnerable groups in inclusion in the government programmes. The schemes on which awareness was generated were mainly the pension schemes for older, widows and disabled, house construction scheme, bus passes for older and disabled, credit card for farmers and construction of community hall in the village. In total 733 persons/households were benefited through inclusion in welfare programmes.

*Scope for improvement*

VOPAs are functioning well but very few measures ensure their continuation in sustainable manner. During the project period, VOPAs were mainly busy with implementation of project activities. They were encouraged to implement other social and welfare activities also and some of the other activities taken up by VOPAs have shown good results[[8]](#footnote-9). This can be one measure of sustainability of VOPA, but other measures like annual planning, budgeting, fund raising, defining scope of work and problems to be addressed etc, should be taken up to ensure sustainability of VOPAs. A clear roadmap for these VOPAs to be able to continue is recommended.

1. ***Women’s participation and empowerment***

Participation of women into village affairs (through VOPAs) has improved since the project started. Initially there was reluctance of women to join the meeting along with the men folk as traditionally women do not sit with men (or are not allowed to sit). Gradually they started joining the meetings but were not sitting on the same carpet and used to sit at little distance. In the FGDs conducted during the evaluation, women also participated but their participation was still weak.

**SHGs** A self-help group (SHG) is a village-based [financial intermediary](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Financial_intermediary), usually composed

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S.No. | Name of village | Total SHGs | Total Member-ship |
| 1. | Jaitdasar | 6 | 66 |
| 2. | Andasar | 2 | 21 |
| 3. | Boranada | 3 | 33 |
| 4. | SanvaraGaon | 4 | 42 |
| 5. | Degawadi | 2 | 22 |
| 6. | Bhojonkibaap | 3 | 30 |
| 7. | Ghatore | 3 | 30 |
| 8. | Rawara | 4 | 46 |
| 9. | Bandheri | 3 | 32 |
| 10. | Nimbali | 2 | 27 |
| 11. | Kohra | 3 | 32 |
| 12. | Chhipasaria | 2 | 21 |
| 13. | Bhadli | 1 | 13 |
| Total | 38 | 415 |

 of 10–20 local women.  It typically comprises a group of [micro entrepreneurs](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Micro-enterprise) having homogenous social and economic backgrounds; all voluntarily coming together to save regular small sums of money, mutually agreeing to contribute to a common fund and to meet their emergency needs on the basis of mutual help. They pool their resources to become financially stable, taking loans from the money collected by that group and by making everybody in that group self-employed. The group members use collective wisdom and [peer pressure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peer_pressure) to ensure proper end-use of credit and timely repayment. Self-help groups are seen as instruments for a variety of goals including empowering women and developing leadership abilities among poor people. Financial inter mediation is generally seen more as an entry point to these other goals, rather than as a primary objective. The SHGs of older women, created in the project villages are very strong and these groups have in-depth knowledge of SHG management. This was visible from looking at the documents maintained by the SHGs like meeting notes, accounts book, individual accounts passbooks, bank passbook, etc. Normally the SHGs are linked with the banks and they get financial support from banks. In this case, initially banks refused to open up bank account stating that these women are about 60 and banks will not work with them. After pursuance by GRAVIS, they agreed to open up their bank accounts but had refused to provide any loan to the SHGs, but with time they were convinced and now these SHGs get loans from the banks, other than the internal loans. The SHGs have collected till August 2013 end, INR 990850 (about 9910 GBP)[[9]](#footnote-10). The SHGs are taking loan from their own savings and have initiated many activities such as starting flour mills, grocery shop, and goat rearing[[10]](#footnote-11). Till August 2013, 152 women have taken loan from their SHGs and there are no defaulters till now. The loan is also taken for minor repair of houses, purchase of fodder or treatment of family members. GRAVIS provided with some seed money to the SHGs which have been given as loan to members and the seed money have given boost to the SHG activities. The activity has saved beneficiaries from the clutches of money lenders who used to charge huge interest. In the villages visited during evaluation and interaction with the SHGs, it was found that there are no defaulter in repayments. Also, discussions with women indicated that the women have got empowered socially and they now dare to talk in front of men and do not shy away. They also talked about their and their children problems which indicated that they have increased voice at household level because of the project.

*Dawoo Khatun, the SHG leader from Digawadi village said during the visit, “I was the first person who thought about the flour mill because we needed to travel 18 kilometers to Baap for flouring our grain. It was a very costly affair and used to consume entire day. I took money on loan from my SHG and purchased a flour mill. The flour mill in my village has saved us not only from travel but also saved our day. I earn about Rs. 50 to 70 per day from my work”*

*Scope for improvement*

The participation of women is linked to women’s empowerment which is a long term issue and a long drawn process. The project helped women in coming out of the net. However, there are many other aspects which will require attention in coming time with this initiative, like property rights, basic education, marriage after 18, etc. All these issues will require some long term project and strategy.

SHGs have not been created in the villages of Mandli and Kunda. The reasons for the same were not clear.

## Improving Water Access

Access to potable drinking water has been the biggest challenge for the people living in Thar Desert. They used to walk miles to fetch little water. It was hardly fulfilling their minimum requirement, and taking bath was a costly affair. Taanka has been traditionally built in this region at household level to store every drop of rainwater and use it rationally for rest of the time. Similarly, Naadi is a community pond which gets water from the rains as there are no perennial rivers in this desert region. With the inventions of new borewell technologies for supply of water, the traditional systems were gradually fading away. GRAVIS is one of the organizations who realized the importance of traditional system and has been working to revive these traditional systems for more than two decades successfully. In the project, it was planned to construct *Taankas,* de-silting of *naadis* and construction of a new *naadi.* The process of selection of beneficiaries has been found transparent. Each VOPA was informed about the number of *taankas* to be constructed in their village. The selection of *taanka* beneficiary was done by the VOPAs for their respective villages. In total 290 taankas were constructed by GRAVIS under this project.

It was observed during visit that *tankas* have water which is used by the families of beneficiaries for drinking and cooking purpose. The rainwater is collected in the *taankas.* Each *taanka* has a catchment area (it is called *agor* in local language) which is clean, it has slit catcher, wire mash and has an opening lid*.* VOPA of Bhadli village said during FGD that women were walking 3-4 kilometers to fetch water which was saline and hard. Now they feel relieved of the hardship and women don’t have to walk long in harsh conditions. Now on an average they save Rs. 250 per month which they used to spend on buying water through camel tankers. The better water availability at home also ensured that they use some water for hygiene also. The harvested water is not saline and with the trainings on treatment of water, they have less stomach problems than before.

*Hathi Singh, VOPA member and resident of Kohra village said, “Sufficient water in proximity was a dream for us during hard time. Because of project intervention, now our naadi has enough sweet water and it lasts for more than six months in a year. Any repair work which may be needed in future, we shall do it.”*

As the project had the possibility of de-silting of only 4 existing *naadis* and construction of only one new *naadi,* the same was put up in PMC (which has representation of VOPAs from the project area) and most needy villages were chosen. The catchment area was cleaned and plants were grown on it to reduce the flow of silt in the Naadis. Fencing around the catchment was done to restrict animals entering into it. As per visits to two Naadis and discussions with people living around the visited Naadis, de-silting has helped as it is retaining more water. The water availability in the Naadis has increased on an average from 3 to 6 month. This was analyzed from the discussions held with VOPA members, and confirmed from the villagers during transect walks in the village close to Naadis. Water from *Naadi* water is used purely for drinking purpose (for human and cattle). People were carrying water by their camel carts and were also bringing their livestock to drink water from it. As per discussions, the main benefit will be during summer when normally water used to get finished and people had to track long distances. With good amount of water, people now will not have to travel during summer. The water is harvested and is not saline. This also will help them with assured sweet water during summer. Especially for older people, this helped them in better health. For women, it is less time and labour and for children it ensured time to play and study.

Technically these *naadis* are much better than *naadis* constructed/de-silted through various government initiatives (e.g. MNREGA[[11]](#footnote-12)) where bed of *naadi* is broken and rainwater seeps down very fast. The *naadi’s* work in the project is appreciated by government functionaries (as was revealed during interaction with block level officials of Baap block).

They say that they are taking these *naadis* as model for their work in other areas.

In terms of coverage, the project outlined outcome to improve the access of 16,000 beneficiaries. As defined in the coverage section, the project could increase the access of 790 households (290 for taankas and 500 for Nadis), which means about 5000 beneficiaries.

*Scope for improvement*

The rules for maintenance of Naadis were not seen properly followed. Animals were wandering on the catchment and polluting the water. Most of the young in the villages normally migrate to work. Although rules were drafted for management of these Naadis, gathering volunteers to work even for predefined dates was found difficult by VOPAs. The easy availability of labour through employment scheme called MNREGA which depends largely on displacement of soil may also keep the whole system dependent on external sources. Although people were confident that they will be able to manage these Naadis through community management system, the evaluation team found it difficult to consider it as a sustainable.

Availability of potable water has not only made life easy for older people but has also reduced the instances of water borne diseases. However on the sanitation part lot still need to be done. Interaction with the older people during evaluation revealed that toilet at home is the most demanding thing for older people as they have to walk long distance for open defecation.

**(c) Income Security**

Agriculture has been traditionally the main source of livelihood for the rural community in the state of Rajasthan and project villages are no different. Repeated droughts clubbed with agriculture practices which are common in the area has resulted in degradation of soil, destruction of pasture land and forest land which ultimately led to more desertification. *Khadin*(a farm bund) is a structure which is built in the field to retain rainwater at maximum. 190 *Khadins* have been constructed in the field of poor farmers who do not have any other source of irrigation rather than banking on rainfall.

 During FGDs with VOPA members, 7 of the 22 persons in these meetings were Khadin beneficiaries. All the beneficiaries of Khadin in the meeting appreciated the *khadins* in their fields. According to them, these *khadins* helped farmers in not only retention of moister for longer period, thus doubling their crop but also as a tool to tackle salinity of the soil. The evaluator could see khadins of about 6 beneficiaries and could organize detailed discussion and visit to two of the khadin beneficiaries. Both of them confirmed increase in area of cultivation, increase in productivity per unit of land and at least double the harvest for household from the previous years. One of the khadin beneficiary said that he used to grow only *bajra* (pearl millet) in his field and that too was not enough for the year. Some other beneficiaries who were present during the interview confirmed that the harvest is even three times more than what they were getting before. There was also sufficient fodder for the cattle. The evaluator has been working in these desert areas for more than a decade and has himself done technical studies on these khadins. That also confirmed the overall benefit of khadins to the beneficiaries. The increase in production helped the poor targeted

households in ensuring the basic food security and also some extra cash for other household purposes by sale of the harvest.

|  |
| --- |
| Average income and expenditure from a cow |
| Head  | Income |
| Milk 3 liters @ Rs 20 for 8 months | 14400 |
| Milk sold 3 liters @ Rs 20 for 8 months | 14400 |
| Ghee (pure fat from the cow milk) average 10 kgs (for consumption and selling ) | 3000 |
| Butter milk | Free distribution |
| Gross income | 31800 |
| Expenses |  |
| Feed (Rs 400 per month for 12 months | 4800 |
| Fodder for about 2 months (500 per month) | 1000 |
| Total Expenditure | 5800 |
| Net income per annum | **26000** |

Rajasthani rural community has been keeping cow at their home traditionally. This not only gives them a status symbol but it is also religiously accepted norm. In the project, cows were distributed to the poor people along with the calf. The cows were of local variety which is habitual of living in harsh conditions of Thar Desert. In total 120 cows were distributed in 15 project villages. Provision of milch cows was found to be a good way to ensure food by providing a source of livelihood to older people who are unable to perform hard work. It provided them daily nutrition in the form of milk and milk products, and they derived additional income from sales of the milk products they do not consume. According to the rough estimates by the review team an average income from a cow is Rs. 1200 (GBP16.5). This income is generated by beneficiary for the period the cow gives milk (about 7 months in a year), and for the rest period, the expenditure on the cow is about Rs. 400 (GBP 5.5) per month. The total annual income from the distribution of cow comes to around Rs 26000 (Approx 260 GBP) which is about 70% cost of a cow in the region. This can be considered as one of the most successful intervention in terms of increase in nutrition at home and cost benefit analysis. The beneficiary older people met were happy and confirmed that their health is better with consumption of milk and its products and they get some cash

 also from this activity. Also, this provides them some productive work and keeps them engaged for some time during the day.

It was interesting to note that other than nutrition and economic benefits, the cow distribution helped in bringing the separated families together. As Mr. Hanumant Singh, VOPA chairman of Kohra village in Jaisalmer district said that those family members who were living separately brought back these people to the older people once they came to know that cow has been distributed to their elders[[12]](#footnote-13).

*Masturo Khatu is a 70 yrs. old widow. She received an orchard with Gunda, lime and ber plants. A net fence was constructed around the orchard for protection against animals and other trespassers.  Masturo Khatu waters the plants daily and takes care to keep them healthy. Masturo Khatu is quite happy and proud of her plants. She uses Gunda and lime raw for preparation of food and also prepared pickle. She sold 180 Kgs of Gunda this year and could earn Rs 3600.  She proudly says “I have been able to create a space for myself in the family. and I am perceived as someone worthy. I am sure I will be able to sell lime and Ber also from the next year if it rains sufficiently”.*

People living in Thar Desert have very little liberty to have fruit in their food basket because of harsh climatic conditions. Even the fruits grown in the region were out of reach of older people. The project created horticulture units at the door steps of older people. These units were also provided with wire mesh fencing and people created double protection by thorn bushes. Fruit trees like *ber* (Ziziphusmauritiana), Pomegranate (Punicagranatum), *Goonda* (Cordiagheraf), aloe Vera, lemon and date palm were selected owing to their tolerance to excessive heat, survival in salinity and less water requirement. In total 300 horticulture units have been created in the project villages. During evaluation it has been found that *ber* and *goonda* have grown in each unit. It was reported that lemon has grown in some villages but it was not seen in the villages visited during evaluation. Ber and goonda plants have given fruits to the beneficiaries in last two years which have been mostly consumed by the older people and their family. Out of 8 families met, in two cases it was reported that they could also sell out the additional fruit thus giving them additional income[[13]](#footnote-14).

In the far flung area of the project, services of veterinarian are difficult to get as veterinary hospitals are very less and doctors do not stay in rural areas. In the absence of veterinarian, animal develop complexes of small ailments and die. The project developed a team of para veterinarian who were trained to treat minor ailments and give first aid to cattle. In total three training programmes were organized during project period and one para vet from each village was created. The services of Para vet have increased knowledge of beneficiaries as these para vets disseminated the knowledge to the villagers. They also treated minor ailments and provided medicines.

The project could improve the income and food security of about 810 households (190 khadin, 300 horticulture beneficiaries and 120 cow beneficiary households), which means about 5000 persons. This is almost the same number of beneficiary individuals targeted in the outcome statement for improving the income security. Also, 534 household were able to take fodder and seed from the banks and benefited from it, which exceeds the number of targeted beneficiaries for the given outcome on income security.

*Scope of improvement*

Cows were distributed after training programme and project did insurance of animal for first year. It was expected that the beneficiary will henceforth do insurance of the animal in future. In second year many beneficiaries did so but then they stopped ensuring due to their reluctance and unawareness. Interaction with the people also revealed that many beneficiaries have understood that insuring animal is the responsibility of GRAVIS and they have nothing to do with it. It is important that stakeholders should contribute their share in some form. It is suggested that in future projects if animal is to be given to the beneficiaries, the project should not insure the animal but should ensure that it is done by the beneficiary households.

The evaluation team observed that the para-vets were not older people in many cases. Also, these vets were not provided with any promotional support; and the follow-up of the activity was weak. The distances within the villages are big which also restricted people in promoting their practice as para-vet. The linkages between these para-vets and veterinary government services are weak. The given factors didn’t allow this activity to provide expected outcomes. Such activity should be followed with persistent follow-up and support.

**(d) Improving Health through Linkage and Capacity Building**

It is hard to get health care services in the project village as these are remotely located and health services are very poor in the Thar Desert. The existing Village Health Workers (VHW) who are working in the project area were identified to strengthen their understanding of health management and geriatric support. After training these health worker has been provided with a medicine kit with basic medicines, blood pressure measuring instrument, bandages and antiseptic. The meeting with two VHWs and FGD revealed that these VHWs are better equipped than before to understanding some geriatric health problems. Some anecdotal in the meetings narrated incidences also show how they were able to identify problems and refer older people to hospital for treatment.

Health camps have provided a great relief to the older people of the project area. In total 54 camps were organized in the project area in which 2860 older people and their families benefited. It has also provided older people a linkage with GRAVIS hospital and now they are availing services of GRAVIS hospital. The project could improve the access of almost all 16000 people (2660 HHs), against the targeted 40% of the targeted beneficiaries. Although, sustainability of the access to health facilities can still be questionable by provision of direct health access. In terms of health improvement the water and food access have played a significant role (as explained in the respective sections) and this outcome overall can be considered to be achieved.

*Scope for improvement*

The team feels that the health workers could have been provided with a home-care training. That could have provided them with better scope for increasing their health business and also help older people better.

**(e) Drought Mitigation through community Initiatives**

The State and especially the Thar region faced regular droughts at least one in three years. Folk songs on drought and famine, therefore, are not uncommon in some parts of the State. People of the project area said regular droughts which is local language called  *Akaal*; the conditions which denotes the shortage of three things - water, fodder and grain. "*Paani nahin, chaara nahin, dhaan nahin*". In the projectall three problems were addressed through community and household activities.

The problem of water was addressed at household level by increasing the storage and harvesting capacity through construction of taankas for vulnerable households. The community water access was improved through renovation and construction of Naadis. To improve food security, the project helped in construction of khadins and hence in increasing the soil moisture for increasing the farm harvest. Similarly project provided the vulnerable households with an opportunity to develop small horticulture units and increase their nutrition base. The provision of cow has also helped in increasing the food basket with provision of milk and other milk products. Inclusion of vulnerable in social welfare schemes has also helped in increasing resilience of those households. All these interventions are detailed in water and income security section above.

Thar Desert faces regular droughts which results loss of crops by the people living in this area. This also means that people are not able to keep seed for next year’s crop and they buy seed next year in hope of rain and some yield. The similar situation occurs for fodder as they are not able to grow fodder for their cattle. The poor are forced to take loans on high interest rates to buy these things. At times, they are forced to sell their cattle at very low price or just abandon them. Loss of animal by a family is not only loss of asset but also loss of nutrition for the family which they have been getting from milk and milk products. The creation of seed and fodder bank were planned to increase the resilience of the poor community members to be able to get these things on loan from the fodder and seed bank and return after the harvest next year. Creation of fodder bank has given people confidence that in case of failure of monsoon they have fodder bank which they can bank upon and need not to sell/abandon their cattle population. In consultation with GRAVIS, VOPAs decided management system of fodder and seed banks. Selection of people who can borrow seed and fodder was also decided by VOPAs. 534 households were able to take seed and fodder on loans from these banks, and could save themselves from taking loans on higher rate of interest.

*Scope for improvement*

The weak distribution and management processes for seed banks and fodder banks on distribution and management may not allow them to be sustainable. The rules established for the banks are also not sufficient for beneficiaries to return seed or fodder. Out of 534 who have taken loans, only 290 have returned it. The loans were taken every year whether it was a bad or good harvest year, although the banks were planned for bad periods. There was no women’s participation in the whole bank management. To make them sustainable, they could have been given to SHGs. This could have helped in earning by women SHGs and also make them a sustainable preposition.

**2.5 Sustainability**:

Interaction with the beneficiaries and VOPA members during evaluation reveal that some of the activities undertaken during the project will sustain for longer period but some of them will need support to sustain. The VOPAs are strong enough to demand their rights by government officials at block level. However clarity on their operations and fund raising with little support by GRAVIS (A visit by GRAVIS staff at least once in three months) can ensure that they continue the good work which they have initiated and same is the case with SHGs. The household activities like provision of taanka, horticulture unit, and cow, and construction of khadins on the individual land are going to sustain as these are giving them direct benefit and are in direct control of the beneficiary households. Village pond structures called Nadies have been desilted or constructed will continue to provide water for atleast 5-6 year, upon which they will require more desilting. It will depend on the motivation of community groups after this period if they want to do it themselves or government comes to support the work. Other community works on resilience building for drought like seed and fodder bank were supporting during evaluation. However, due to weak documentation process and rules defined for its management, they might not be able to continue for long, if its management is not regulated. The one time training of para-vets work will not be able to sustain in most cases due to weak support by project for promotion of their work, limited training support, weak institutional linkages inability of older vets to track long in desert and marginal income from the work. The training of health workers has helped the VHWs to expand the scope of their work and now they are attending older people also. Traditionally they were looking at common ailments and some gynecological work only. Their support to older people is expected to continue for long. Overall, it can be said that the project activities were implemented keeping in mind their benefits to the beneficiaries and their sustainability. Most of them are expected to sustain except for few activities like community seed and fodder banks, and veterinary services.

Chapter 3: Conclusion and recommendations

This section provides the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation undertaken in September and October 2013 of the project ”Poverty & Vulnerability Reduction through Drought Mitigation & Community Action”implemented by HelpAge international with its local partner in Rajasthan name GRAVIS across two districts of Thar region in India. During the field visit, the findings were discussed with the accompanying staff to get the holistic view of the results achieved and also to understand their opinion. GRAVIS was also giventhe opportunity to discuss the findings and provide their feedback to make relevant changes in the report. For sake of brevity and ease of further use, the conclusions and recommendations have been depicted below according to the four result statements agreed in the project proposal:

**Result 1: At least 60% of VOPAs report that local government, partner NGO and development agencies are supporting them to implement activities to sustain the desert eco system leading to a reduction in the vulnerability of older people to major environmental shocks and stresses.**

In all the target villages in both the districts, VOPAs are constituted. The information shared by GRAVIS shows about the membership which was verified by organizing meetings in two target villages. They have a documented constitution and governing board members of the VOPAs are selected by older people in their respective villages themselves. VOPAs were found to conduct regular meetings and beneficiaries for all the activities implemented were selected by them. VOPAs were also involved in monitoring of the activities of the project which were implemented by GRAVIS. VOPAs have also collected some money which was reflected in their account books. The money is deposited in the CPMC’s account which is the federation of at district level. The total amount of money which CPMC’s of Jaisalmer and Jodhpur have collected is INR 162250 (Approx 1600 GBP). VOPA members were given trainings on management of the association along with some other training on welfare schemes announced by the Government. Some VOPA members have started attending PRI (Panchayti Raj Institution) meetings and raising issues for their village were able to extend benefits of the schemes announced for them. The schemes on which awareness was generated were mainly the pension schemes for older, widows and disabled, house construction scheme, bus passes for older and disabled, credit card for farmers and construction of community hall in the village. This helped 733 individuals/households to be able to benefit from the social welfare schemes. The support to vulnerable households through VOPAs shows that VOPAs in all the villages are created and in 100% villages government agencies have supported them in taking their objectives ahead. In all, it can be said that, VOPAs in all the target villages acted as a good model for older people to provide them a platform for coming together, and to be able to find a productive engagement; and thus help community at large.

Recommendations

* VOPAs are functioning well but very few measures ensure their continuation in sustainable manner. During the project period, VOPAs were mainly busy with implementation of project activities. They were encouraged to implement other social and welfare activities also and some of the other activities taken up by VOPAs have shown good results. This can be one measure of sustainability of VOPA, but other measures like annual planning, budgeting, fund raising, defining scope of work and problems to be addressed etc, should be taken up to ensure sustainability of VOPAs.

**Result 2: At least 290 household *taankas* are constructed in 15 project villages for older people and their family members to harvest rain water for household consumption and the 16,000 beneficiaries have free access to clean and safe drinking water throughout the year from the construction and de-silting of village ponds resulting in up to 40% reduction in incidence of water-borne diseases.**

290 *taankas* have been constructed in these 15 villages and as a household intervention, the chances of these not being used are very low. Also, all visited cases of taanka beneficiary confirmed its use. One new *naadi* has been constructed in Rawra village and 4 naadis have been de-silted in the villages of Bandheri, Boranada, Kohra and Nimbali villages. The project outlined outcome was to improve the access of 16,000 beneficiaries. As defined in the coverage section, the project could increase the access of 790 households (290 for taankas and 500 for Naadis), which means about 5000 beneficiaries which is about 30% of the targeted beneficiaries for improving water access. Increase in water availability which is not saline is expected to reduce the water borne diseases, but no evidence could be gathered to prove it. Taankas have benefitted older people and their families as safe drinking water is available at their doorstep which they were otherwise fetching from far distances. Even it has saved money which they were otherwise spending on buying water. The water is not saline. The taankas are built on the name of older women or the older men, and it has given them importance in the family. De-silting of *naadis* or construction of new naadi has increased the capacity of reservoir and more quantity of rainwater is collected and access to the community living nearby is for longer period. The catchments are better maintained resulting reduction is possibility of silt accumulation.

Recommendations

* The rules for maintenance of Naadis were not seen properly followed. Rules were drafted for management of these Naadis but gathering volunteers to work even for predefined dates (as per the management rules defined), was found difficult by VOPAs. Although people were confident that they will be able to manage these Naadis through community management system, the evaluation team found it difficult to consider it as a sustainable. GRAVIS should consider increasing the community labour contribution to ensure that people are willing and will continue to desilt them for their sustainability.
* Availability of potable water has not only made life easy for older people but has also reduced the instances of water borne diseases. However on the sanitation part lot still need to be done. Interaction with the older people during evaluation revealed that toilet at home is the most demanding thing for older people as they have to walk long distance for open defecation. Toilets for vulnerable household should be considered for the next phase of the project.

**Result3: 31% (620) of the targeted older people and their family members report greater income, and food security as a result of increased agriculture and milk production as well as access to fodder for animals**

190 *khadins* have been built in the project area. The *khadins* have helped in retaining the soil moisture and increased the productivity to more than double which did not happen to beneficiaries till they had *khadins*. The beneficiaries were growing only *bajra* (millet) before they had *khadins*. After construction of *khadins,* they are able to sow other desert varieties and fodder. Even during the low rainfall periods, the beneficiaries could grow some grasses for fodder. This helped in increase in availability of food at home and increase in income for the target households. Similarly, 300 horticulture units have been developed for older people and their families. Most of the horticulture units visited and found during the village walks were successful and have started providing local fruits like *Ber* and *Gunda* fruits to older people and their families thus giving them additional nutrition. Some of them have been able to even sell the additional fruits. 120 cows have been distributed to older people along with calf. This has helped to have better nutrition for older people and their families. Some of them are selling milk products and getting additional income. This also provided positive engagement to older people and increased respect in the family. In many cases, the separated older people were joined by their sons and their families to get benefit of the support provided to them, thus helping older families to have family members around them for better care and psycho-social health.

Total 38 Self Help Groups (SHGs) with 415 women members were constituted in target villages. These SHGs for older women have given them a status in the community as they proudly say that they have their own money. Many income generation activities started through inter-loaning and additional money to SHGs by GRAVIS. These SHGs have bank accounts and their funds are increasing every month through collection of money and the interest on loans. This has made the target women financially empowered.

5 seed banks and 5 fodder banks have been constructed by the project to increase resilience of the communities. 534 persons have utilized the services of these banks and 290 have also returned the seed and fodder. A cadre of para-vets was created in the village. As indicated by these para-vets, there is an increased access and knowledge of locals on minor treatment of their animals, else they were forced to track long distances for treatment of their animals.

The outcome expected for this activity was to see an increase in income and food through livelihood interventions of about 620 households. The project could potentially influence the livelihood of 610 households through direct household interventions. Also, it supported more than 400 women and their households through SHG support. The seed and banks also helped people in securing their livelihood and strengthen it further by providing seed and fodder during difficult periods. In all, the evaluation can claim this outcome to be fully achieved.

Recommendations

* Cows were distributed after training programme and project did insurance of animal for first year. It was expected that the beneficiary will henceforth do insurance of the animal in future. In second year many beneficiaries did so but then they stopped ensuring due to their reluctance and unawareness. It is suggested that in future projects if animal is to be given to the beneficiaries, the project should not insure the animal but should ensure that it is done by the beneficiary households.
* The evaluation team observed that the para-vets were not provided with any promotional support; and the follow-up of the activity was weak. The linkages between these para-vets and veterinary government services are weak. The given factors didn’t allow this activity to provide expected outcomes. Such activity should be followed with persistent follow-up and support.
* The weak distribution and management processes for seed banks and fodder banks on distribution and management may not allow them to be sustainable. The rules established for the banks are also not sufficient for beneficiaries to return seed or fodder. There was no women’s participation in the whole bank management. To make them sustainable, they could have been given to SHGs. This could have helped in earning by women SHGs and also make them a sustainable preposition.

**Result 4: At least 40% (800) of the targeted older people have improved access to and the awareness/ knowledge to use, healthcare and sanitation facilities.**

Access to potable water and livelihood opportunities have good impact on the health of older people, as elaborated in the respective sections. 54 medical camps were organized during the project period in which 2860 older persons and their families could undergo examination and treatment. Apart from availing services of these health camps, older people were linked with GRAVIS and government hospital. The trained Village Health Workers (VHWs) have proved to be better health resource for older people. The awareness sessions on hygiene and sanitation were successful in ensuring that people treat water before drinking. Also, the demand for toilets raised by older people during VOPA meetings show that the beneficiaries want to adopt better sanitation practices.

*Recommendations*

* The team feels that the health workers could have been provided with a home-care training. That could have provided them with better scope for increasing their health business and also help older people better.
* Although outreach health camps were able to provide people with immediate health access, this activity is not a sustainable solution to improve health access of older people. The capacity of institutional health system and their outreach still remains a major issue. The evaluation suggests drafting a strategy for policy advocacy on the issue.

**Annexure 1 Terms of Reference**

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| --- | --- |
| **INTRODUCTION** |  |
| **Name of the project**: Poverty and vulnerability Reduction through Drought Mitigation & Community Action**Implementing organization**: GraminVikasVigyanSamiti (GRAVIS); Jodhpur**Financial support**: Big Lottery Fund (BLF) and HelpAge International**Type of evaluation**: Final Evaluation |  |
| **OVERVIEW OF PROGRAMME** |
| **Project goal**: To improve the lives of 16,000 beneficiaries through provision of safe water, increased crop production, reduced vulnerability to environmental shocks and increased participation in society**Project period**: 1st March 2009 to 28th April 2012**Project area**: 10 villages of Jodhpur District and 5 village of Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan State**Expected outcomes*** At least 60% of VOPAs report local government, partner NGO and development agencies supporting them to implement activities to sustain the desert eco system to reduce the vulnerabilities of older people from major environmental shocks and stresses.
* At least 290 older people and their family members have own taankas to harvest rain water for household consumption and the 16,000 beneficiaries have free access to clean and safe drinking water throughout the year from the construction and desilting of village ponds.
* At least 31% of the targeted older people and their family members report greater income and food security as a result of increased agriculture and milk production as well as access to fodder for the animals.
* At least 40% of the targeted older people will have improved access to healthcare facilities and sanitation.
 |
| **PURPOSE OF THE EVALUATION** |
| The purpose of the evaluation is to assess the process and outcomes, the extent to which planned outputs have been achieved, to draw conclusions and learn lessons from experiences so as to improve the effectiveness of future development undertakings. The evaluation will allow team leaders and project implementers to understand the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the project. It will detail the extent to which activities contributed to the programme objectives. Focus will be on the interventions and their impact with vulnerable groups primarily older people and women. The evaluation will also establishing if the implementation partnership strategy was appropriate and effective in delivery of results.  |
| **SCOPE AND FOCUS** |
| **Major issues and questions the evaluation team should address** **Impact:**What has been the impact of the project at different levels, such as the direct project beneficiaries, indirect beneficiaries and the broader local community, implementing and partner agencies, **Relevance:** Was the project relevant in addressing the identified needs?Did the project provide equal opportunities for both women and men? **Equity**: How did the project address the social differentiation (e.g. by gender, ethnicity, socio-economic group, disability, etc)?How did the project ensure equitable outcomes (recognizing social differences according to sex)?**Efficiency**: Did the input of resources achieve the desired outputs? **Sustainability**: How sustainable and replicable is the project?**Accountability**The evaluation should also provide an assessment of HAI’s Accountability in areas such as beneficiaries’ participation in the project and to evaluate also how their feedback have been integrated.**Lessons Learned and Recommendations**Identify lessons relevant to planning, implementing or evaluating the project – capturing achievements as well as challenges and gaps. Where possible, combine them with action-oriented and specific recommendations that can be taken forward. |
| **EVALUATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY**  |
| Programme area covers 2 regions. Hence, the following sample were good for the present evaluation:* Programme team members
* District level officials
* Four village sites, two in each of the target regions

In addition to observations, following instruments were used for evaluation as per stakeholders’ convenience and time availability:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Instrument** | **Stakeholders** | **Focus / key areas of enquiry** |
| Document study | * Programme reports including proposal and progress reports
* Case studies
* Various related GRAVIS publication
* Mid-Term Review report
 | Context, relevance, project components in relation to defined objectives, stakeholders involved and project management  |
| Key informant interviews;Semi-structured discussions and Focus group discussions | 1. programme team
2. NGO partners (if any)
3. Community members mainly Panchayat or CBO members and SHG members
 | 1. Programme management
2. Community participation
3. Outcomes of the activities implemented
4. Inclusion of vulnerable groups including women and older people
5. Identification of further needs and scope of improvement
 |

 |

# Annexure 2: Documents reviewed

* Project proposal
* Regular progress report
* Mid termreview report
* SHG documents in the field
* VOPA meeting minutes in the field

**Annexure 3: Activities implemented during the project**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.No.** | **Activity** | **Bandheri** | **Boranada** | **Jaitdasar** | **Andasar** | **Ghatore** | **Mandali** | **SanvaraGaon** | **Bhojonkibaap** | **Degavadi** | **Rawara** | **Kohra** | **Chhipasaria** | **Bhandali** | **Nimbali** | **Kunda** | **Total** |
| 1. | Taanka Construction | 65 | 35 | 12 | 10 | 15 | 15 | 15 | 09 | 20 | 19 | 11 | 14 | 10 | 11 | 29 | 290 |
| 2. | Khadin construction | 54 | 30 | 10 | 09 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 10 | 8 | 5 | 10 | 12 | 14 | 190 |
| 3. | Horticulture Unit | 50 | 43 | 10 | 09 | 20 | 17 | 18 | 10 | 17 | 23 | 15 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 42 | 300 |
| 4. | Cow Distribution | 22 | 15 | 8 | 5 | 10 | 3 | 4 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 12 | 120 |
| 5. | Seed Bank | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| 6. | Fodder bank | 1 | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | 5 |
| 7. | Naadi Construction | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| 8. | Naadi de-silting | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | 4 |
| 9. | Monthly Meetings of VOPA | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 54 | 810 |
| 10. | Awareness Camps | 10 | 09 | 10 | 09 | 08 | 07 | 09 | 10 | 07 | 09 | 10 | 05 | 08 | 09 | 10 | 130 |
| 11. | Medical Camps | - | - | 4 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | - | 54 |
| 12. | Pasture land | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | 3 |
| 13. | Village Health Workers | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| 14. | Para Vet | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 15 |

**Annexure 4: List of capacity building trainings**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.No.** | **Capacity Building Programme** | **No. of Programmes** | **No. of Participants** | **Total** |
| Male | Female |
| 1. | VOPA capacity building programme | 20 | 107 | 74 | 180 |
| 2. | Training on rights of entitlements | 05 | 85 | 40 | 125 |
| 3. | SHG Capacity building programme | 16 | - | 380 | 380 |
| 4. | Taanka beneficiary training | 15 | 197 | 178 | 375 |
| 5. | Horticulture beneficiary training | 13 | 164 | 98 | 268 |
| 6. | Cow beneficiary training | 13 | 125 | 129 | 254 |
| 7. | Para-Vet training | 03 | 16 | - | 16 |
| 8. | VHW training | 01 | 12 | 04 | 16 |
| 9. | Medical Camps | 54 | 1490 | 1370 | 2860 |

# Annexure 5: Field cases and reports

# 5.1: VOPA meeting Jodhpur District

Village: Jaitdasar,

District: Jodhpur

Issues discussed: VOPA and other social and community issues addressed

*Introduction*

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss an issue of interest to the VOPA members. Through the discussions, the review team could assess the understanding of the VOPA members of the project, their involvement in the processes of the project, the results of the interventions and the sustainability of the VOPAs. The meeting was organized in the village. The meeting started at 2.30 pm and lasted for two hours.

## Discussion on VOPAs

The VOPA members were very happy that the organization had initiated the project to improve the poor conditions of old people in the village. Most importantly, the decisions concerning the project were taken by the VOPA members increased their say in the community. The members told that the VOPA was responsible for the selection of the beneficiaries and members were always present during payments. They also took an active role in resolving disputes concerning payments. They felt that they are engaged in something important for community and as people approached them with their problems, a feeling of helplessness has vanished, which had stuck them for long. VOPA member Amka Ram said that the organization has worked for four years and has done more work than what the Panchayat has done during the last 40 years.

According to the VOPA members, the initiation of VOPA is a useful activity. They were convinced that the VOPAs would sustain after the completion of the project. One member remarked that after this project has ended, surely another project would come.

The funds of VOPAs in Jodhpur district are managed by the Community Project Management Committee (CPMC), however, the members were not clear on the total funds available with CPMC. When asked what they will do with the money they have got in the CPMC fund, the members said that they would use it during a calamity. They indicated that they would not give all the money, they would spend part of it and will ask for more money from the people.

Meetings of this VOPA are regular. The minutes were maintained by the GRAVIS staff. When the evaluator asked who will document the minutes now, the members said that VOPA will request somebody from village to continue with recording the minutes.

This VOPA has also undertaken other activities than those related to the project as given below:

In (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) MNREGA programme in village, young persons were appointed to provide drinking water to the people working in MNREGA and also young women were appointed to run the crèche. VOPA members and SHG members raised objection because they can also do these works and for hard work, young people can be appointed. Mate and Secretary of the gram panchayat did not pay any attention to the objection of older people initially. Finally VOPA and SHG members went to block office and talked to block development officer. He immediately ordered that only older people will be appointed for providing drinking water and to run the crèche. This helped older people in their inclusion in MNREGA and opportunity to earn.

Meghwals, Rajputs and Muslims are the major community, dividing the village into three parts. A school was sanctioned and every community wanted school near their residence. This created tension in the village and many times the structure when started was broken by other people. Finally VOPA (which has representation of all castes) got into the act and measurement was done. The school was built right at the center of all the communities without any further trouble.

## Other observations

* It was visible from the interaction of the VOPA members that they had received training on management of VOPAs.
* They had adequate knowledge of the project and their participation in management and monitoring was visible.
* The persons selected in the VOPA governance are very old and it is difficult to expect them to give reasonable time for managing the VOPAs in a sustainable manner.
* It will be difficult for VOPAs to organize meetings every month as people in the village live at a distance from each other. There are no transport facilities even to organize the meeting or to send out information to members. It is expected that they can be organized once every three months.

**5.2: Case studies- Women SHGs**

1. *Dawoo Khatun and her mission for education*

Dawoo Khatun is SHG leader from Digawadi village. She has taken the lead in creation of 11 SHGs in her village. She went home to home to convince why SHGs are required. It was hard as older women thought what they can do at this age when they have not been able to have any independence all their lives before. However, her efforts could create good SHGs in her village and she was first to initiate any income generating activity through SHG loaning. She says, “I was the first person who thought about the flour mill because we needed to travel 18 kilometers to Baap for flouring our grain. It was a very costly affair and used to consume entire day. I took money on loan from my SHG and purchased a flour mill. The flour mill in my village has saved us not only from travel but also saved our day. This has also given me some earning. I earn about Rs. 50 to 70 per day from my work. Its not sufficient but atleast I contribute to the family’s income. The loan has been repaid by me. Now another flour mill has come up in the village after looking at my success.”

She continued, “I have realized that if all women are educated they can lead a better life. I have made up my aim. I am travelling from village to village to propagate importance of education, especially girls education and ensure that children get into educational mainstream. I also educate women about importance of coming together. My SHG has provided me this opportunity.”

1. *Embroidery work of Kohra village women*

When the evaluator was taken to the village, around 60-62 years old woman with her granddaughter was found doing the embroidery on bags. When she was asked about her work, she said, “Just because of GRAVIS’ efforts, I am able to do this again in my life and earn some money.” The other women of the same SHG were asked to come to the same place to continue the discussion on the work they are doing. Later on many other women from nearby came to the place and started sharing their experiences.

In the summer of 2010, GRAVIS presented the concept of SHGs in Kohra village. Initially women refused the concept. One of the reasons was majority of women were not allowed to come out of their home and do such activity because of the tradition of veil (purda). Also, women doubted what they can do in this old age. But after convincing, making them understand about what benefits it can provide them and asking them to give it a try; a SHG named Champanath was formed with 12 women. Women deposited Rs. 50 per month per member. During the regular meeting of SHG, GRAVIS’ field staff found a woman doing embroidery work on her Stoll. When she was asked; she told, “I had learnt to do it in my youth.” Other women nodded collectively and told that they too know embroidery a little bit. GRAVIS organised a training in which they could refresh their skill. Some younger women too showed their interest in learning and joined the training. They were taught stitching and doing embroidery on pillow covers & bags in training.

After the successful completion of the training, when they started using the taught skills very well, GRAVIS linked this self-help group to KRIYA (In 2005-2006, GRAVIS launched a new venture called Kriya, which has brought together under a single brand all of the income generating activities of women's Self-Help Groups (SHGs). It helps the women to establish micro-businesses and gain access to market for their products) and local handlooms so that they can earn some money by their skilled labour.

When asked about their earning, one woman said, “Every woman of SHG usually does embroidery on three to four bags in a day and earn Rs. 100 to 125 everyday from working at home. Simultaneously we can do our chores and family caring”. According to them, they are now able to earn about Rs. 3500 a month, which is a good amount to make their survival easier in their area.

At the time of review, they had the collective amount of rupees 3000 in their bank account. Apart from gaining the financial stability, they have felt more respect from their family members.

**5.3 Case-study-Taanka**

Name: Bhikhon Khatun

Age: 72

Gender Female

Caste/religion Muslim

Marital status Widow

Village Jaitdasar

Family 6 (herself and her youngest son with family)

Assets (land, livestock etc.): 6 goats, 12 bigha’s of land

### *Introduction*

Bhikhon Khatun lives in the village with her youngest son. She is now too old to earn her bread and her livelihood is the responsibility of her youngest son, who takes good care of his mother. Although, this was not the case before the intervention and she was all alone and all her sons were living separately and supporting her sometime depending on their own condition.

### *Before the intervention*

Bhikhon Khatun used to have one big problem: water. She used to get up early morning at 4’o clock and walk 3 km to fetch on pitcher of water. It was difficult for her to walk back with full pitcher so most of the time it used to be either half or even less than that and she was dependent on it for entire day. Sometimes neighbours were kind enough to give her some water. Also at times, her sons also helped her with water when they paid for their own water through camel tanker.

During the interview her son was also there at home. He explained, with his family he used to spend Rs. 50 every 6 days to get a camel tanker filled in his small water storage tank. On average, he with his family used to spend about Rs. 300 per month on water.

*The intervention*

The *taanka* was constructed close to her house. Her contribution was through labour. She asked her sons to help her and all her four sons helped in digging the hole for construction and assisting the mason.

### *Impact*

Bhikhon Khatun is happy that now she does not have to depend on her sons or neighbours for water and she can use water as she wishes. The ownership of *taanka* is in her name. This has obvious implications. She says, “I am happy that the *taanka* I own gives water to my son’s family, who has returned now to live with me. In this way I have contributed by reducing the burden of water on them.” Her mental stress caused by water insecurity and the feeling of being a burden to the family is reduced.

*Taanka* has taken care of the family and their livestock water needs for 4 months after rains. The rainy period was also of 2 months when they did not purchase any water. Now they spend Rs. 150 per tanker tractor of 5000 liters, which lasts for about two month. So the improved storage capacity saves money. The camel tanker water is costlier and tanker tractor water is cheaper. People with less water storage capacity are bound to buy camel water, which is costlier.

The hygienic conditions of herself and her family have also improved. She used to take a bath only once every ten or twelve days. Now she takes a bath every three days. The water collected from the rain is non-saline and of good quality, which means improved health for the family.

### *Technical issues*

* The *taanka* was well built with silt catcher to prevent silt going into it.
* It has wire meshes on both inlet and spillway to prevent unwanted material from entering the *taanka*.
* The size of the *taanka* is sufficient to take care of the family needs for almost 8 months, if water harvested properly.
* The water filled in it was harvested about a month back.
* There are no stairs in the *taanka* to get in it.

**5.4: Transect walk on Naadi**

Village: Kohra

District: Jaisalmer

## About the transect walk

The review team has conducted walks in the project areas with interested community members in order to get an idea of the surroundings, to see impact of the project activities. In this transect, the focus was on the impact of Nadi desilting work. Initially the team reached at Sadik Khan’s hamlet called Mulanio ki Dhani. A discussion was held in a small hut of about 10 square meters. During this discussion a few beneficiaries of the project were also present: The team took a round of the village and went to closeby houses and to the Nadi to see its condition.

#### The Nadi

The main source of household water in the village is groundwater, which is saline. The government had built a Ground Level Reservior (GLR) which was supplying water through a distant pipe from a ground water pump. The water pumped was not regular and was supplied once in two days for about 3-4 hours. The water was not of good quality and the quantity was also not sufficient. Close to the GLR, government has constructed a small tank for livestock to drink water which was not sufficient. For the livestock they had to go far places. All the *naadi*es of the village were dry and filled with mud.

The selection of the Nadi was done by VOPA depending on the population within a radius of 2-3 km. Around the visited Nadi there were about 150 households living in the proximity. The *naadi* desilting in the village was one initiative that provided them water for livestock and drinking.

At the time of the visit, the Nadi was filled to its full capacity. Hathi Singh who is a VOPA member also walked to the Naadi with the team. Recalling the status of Naadi before the project was initiated he said that lot of silt came into naadi over the years and it was hardly able to retain water even for 15 days after rains. He further said, “Sufficient water in proximity was a dream for us during hard time. Even the Gram Panchayat had passed resolution for desilting but nothing was done. When discussions were held in the meeting about de-silting of naadi, we requested to support us which was readily agreed by the project. We all worked together. Now our naadi has enough sweet water and it lasts for more than six months in a year. Any repair work which may be needed in future, we shall do it. I sit over the bank of naadi every day in evening and probably this is the best time of my day.”

*Other observations*

Although the village has a *naadi* that has been desilted under the project, the households during the walk indicated that they want to have it desilted further when it is dry.

When the evaluation team asked about the rules of maintaining Nadi, people were not sufficiently aware of them. Also, the written rules were not available in the village and the VOPA members told that the register in which rules are written is with GRAVIS.

**5.5 Case-Study- Khadin**

Name Phuli devi

Age 65

Gender Female

Village Boranada

Caste Meghwal SC

*Introduction*

Sixty-five year-old Phuli devi, is enthusiastic that she is now able to grow enough to eat and also sell some to earn extra money from her fields. Her wealth and health has improved after construction of a khadin. Now she is in a position where she can think about others, and does not focus solely on her survival needs.

Phuli Devi recalled how difficult it was to raise her seven sons and three daughters in those days of dry land and no harvest. Poor economic conditions forced her to marry five children together at a very young age in a very simple ceremony

*Intervention and impact*

In 2010 Phuli devi’s khadin was constructed. As a result of the khadin, 75% of the water was retained whereas before the khadin, only 25% of the rainwater was retained. The increased moisture helped in increasing the output of the cultivated land. She said that she could get more than 2000 Kg *Bajra (sorghum)* and up to 160 Kg *til* since 2010. They sold 50 Kg *til* and 20-25 Kg *moong-mooth* in the year 2011. She explained that they do not need to purchase food grains and they stock the grains for the whole year. For livestock, fodder is easily available for 16 months.

Since the khadin was built, the production of fodder has increased so that the family was able to care for more animals. Today she has six cows, 10 goats, one ox and 37 sheep.  She gets up to 240 Kg milk and 12 Kg ghee every month.

Looking back at her life during before the khadin, Phulli devi explained that the BLF project came as a beacon of light in her otherwise difficult world.  It gave her family hope to get through tough days. Tears came to her eyes when she remembered how difficult life was, but at the same time she smiled thinking about how much her life has progressed since those times. She proudly showed-off her new earrings “*2 cows*, which she purchased after the khadin construction.

### *Technical issues*

* *Khadin* is built technically well, on a sloppy land with a cemented waste wear and stool gate on the zero point to release the unwanted water in the *khadin* area.
* The height and width of the bund are also proportionally constructed.
* The trees or grass grown on the farm bund to increase its life, were not sufficiently take care of.

*Other issues and observations*

* It was difficult to identify the age of the beneficiary, as they do not hold any document proof.
* The construction of such structures provided opportunity to other farmers to understand about the *khadin*. It also provided labour to some local poor persons.
* Asking about the beneficiary contribution in construction of *khadin* was bit difficult as they have worked in construction for their own self and they considered natural to work on their own lands.

**5.6: Case-study- Cow distribution**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name | Sawai Singh |
| Age | 62 |
| Gender | M |
| Caste | Rajput (general) |
| Village | Kohra |
| Marital status | Married |
| Household size | 10 (three sons and 5 daughters) |
| Assets (land, livestock etc.) | 6 goats, 24 bigha’s of land |
|
| Intervention  | Cow with calf |

### *Introduction*

Sawai Singh lives in a remote hamlet with his family. He has a small plot of land and regular droughts have had a great impact on the family. They are very poor and land is not sufficient to give enough food for the family. The only source of livelihood is livestock rearing and agriculture. They have 6 goats that provided the family with milk only for making tea.

### *Intervention*

Sawai is an active community person and has also attended meetings of VOPA. His name was recommended by the sub-committee of the village for selecting him as the beneficiary for a cow. He was asked about the availability of land for fodder and water. His house is ½ km away from a community pond. He brings water from there on a bullock cart. Fodder was not a big problem but the feed is supposed to be purchased. After understanding about his ability to feed and provide water to cow, he was given the cow with a calf.

*Impact*

He said during the visit, “poor like me never thought that one day we will have the luxury of having cow at our door step. 12 cows were to be distributed in our village and I am one of the proud beneficiaries. When my family saw cow along with calf on our door, our joys cannot be expressed in words. Now my family has something to depend on for food.

Sawai was very happy and thankful for the help the organization has provided him and his family. The cow has increased their nutritional status. They get milk fat, milk, butter, and buttermilk from the cow. Earlier they used to eat Chapatti (bread) with chillies, now they eat with buttermilk, which is more nutritious. They also get cow dung as fuel and fertilizer.

Sawai Singh said, “We get milk for almost 7-8 months in a year. We can’t consume all the milk as the cow provides about 6 liters of milk every day. We sell about 3 liters which provides us about 1800 Rs per month. But we also have to buy some feed for the cow which costs us about 600 Rs per month.” The productivity of cows keeps on changing with its pregnancy, age of calf and feeding. The cow once got ill and was treated locally by the paravet.

Sawai’s health problems like joint pain and acidity have reduced since he received the cow. He now has two calfs, one male and one female. Within one year the second cow(the female calf) will also start producing milk.

*Other observations*

* Because of his old age, it is impossible for Sawai to take the animals for grazing in the fields. His son has to spend 3-4 hours daily for cattle rearing.
* In drought periods fodder also becomes a problem.
* His understanding of the project was adequate.

**5.7: Case-Study- Horticulture unit**

Name: Martro Khatu

Age: 70 years

Gender: female

Village: Bandheri village of Baap block, Jodhpur district

Intervention: Horticulture unit

Introduction

Masturo Khatu is a 70 yrs. old widow residing with a son and a daughter in law in Bandheri village of Baap block. Four of her sons have migrated in search of work. She has two daughters who are married. The son staying with her is a labourer.

Intervention

She received an orchard with Gunda, lime and ber plants. In total she received 16 plants. She underwent a training also, for nurturing the plants. A net fence was provided to her for fencing for protection against animals and other trespassers.

Results

Masturo Khatu is quite happy and proud of her plants. Masturo Khatu waters the plants daily and takes care to keep them healthy. Most of her time is spent in her orchard. She uses Gunda and lime raw for preparation of food and also prepared pickle. She sold 180 Kgs of Gunda this year and could earn Rs 3600.  She proudly says “I am sure I will be able to sell lime and Ber also from the next year if it rains sufficiently”.

Besides this, she has planted Aloe Vera in between her fruit plants. GRAVIS provided these plants on the advice of Mr. Hari Singh Champawat from TAC (Technical Advisory Committee). These Aloe Vera plants are now flourishing in Masturo Khatu’s orchard with other fruit plants. Other people from the village also come asking for Aloe Vera. They use it in different ways, specifically as an application for relieving pain in the joints.

*Other observations*

* The growth of the garden is good and was fenced properly
* Masturo was very positive towards her home garden and was sure that in the coming years it will bear more fruits and will help her in raising her income.
* The family had faced the problem of termite in the unit which was solved by the organization by providing Eldrin (Termite resistant solution).
* She had little knowledge of the project. She knew that a village committee is constituted to support the project and that committee had selected her as beneficiary.

# 5.8: FGD with VOPA on fodder bank

Village: Kunda

District: Jaisalmer

Issues discussed: Fodder bank in the village

Place: Outside the fodder bank place in Chairman’s house

### *Introduction*

As decided in the review, the evaluator attended a VOPA meeting in each region. The evaluator had accordingly requested the Project Coordinator and the Centre Coordinator to arrange for the same. The VOPA members took this as an opportunity to organise their monthly meeting at the same time. The meeting was held outside the fodder bank location in Chairman’s house. The meeting started at noon. The review team requested the VOPA members to hold their regular meeting first. This gave a fair idea of how the meeting proceeds and of the understanding of the VOPA members of the project and its development.

### *Proceedings of the meeting*

The meeting started with reading of the minutes of the previous VOPA meeting. Amar Singh (Field Staff, GRAVIS) asked specific questions to the members on the status of project interventions like catchments of *taanka*s, bushes on *khadin* bund, stool gate, and their problems etc. The members answered by discussing the issues like cleanliness of *taanka* catchment and about collection of water by it. Then they discussed about the cleanliness and care of home gardens. Somebody told that against termites, beneficiaries are using Eldrin given by the organisation. Somebody else told that how much fruits they were able to take from their gardens.

Other than the project, the members discussed about the absence of the school teacher in Rajeev Gandhi Primary School. They had already sent a letter to Panchayat Samiti and now they were planning to give a letter to the District Collector to demand the appointment of another schoolteacher.

### *Discussions with the review team*

As it was previously decided, the discussion with the evaluator was focussed on fodder bank. The VOPA members discussed as given below:

A fodder bank was initiated in their village. The fodder was purchased from the villagers three years ago, as it rained good and people had enough to keep for their animals and also sell it. It provided the opportunity to villagers to sell it without taking it to other places and hence save the transport expenses.

The fodder was placed in open on a higher platform and was covered with the plastic sheet. The fodder bank had about 200 kg of fodder left during the visit. Overall people in the meeting were happy and almost everybody present had taken fodder on loan. In discussions, the members of VOPA were able to tell that about 80 people in the village have taken fodder on loan so far in last two years. The fodder bank has received fodder back from only about 20 beneficiaries. On asking about the records, the members looked at each other and were not able to share the documents with the evaluator. Evaluator also enquired about the rules defined for the management of fodder bank and the lead members could narrate some. No display of those rules could be found close to the fodder bank and also not everybody was aware of the rules defined for management.

### *Observations*

* The discussions were led by the Gravis Field staff and not by the VOPA members.
* The participation of the members was good.
* VOPA members have good knowledge of the project.
* The VOPA members told that they were responsible for the selection of the beneficiaries and they selected beneficiaries on pre-defined criteria.
* They took care of the constructions in their hamlets and also guided the beneficiaries.
* The payments concerning project interventions were paid in the presence of VOPA members.

# Although there were three women in the meeting, their participation was very weak. They couldn’t speak at all about the fodder bank.

* No proper documentation and less return of the fodder by the beneficiaries, raises a serious concern on the sustainability of fodder banks

Annexure 6: Inclusion of vulnerable people in social welfare schemes

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S.N. | GOVERNMENT SCHEMES | Rawara | Ghator | Mandali | Sanvra Ganv | Bhojo ki Baap | Anadasar | Jaitdasar | Degavadi | Mandali | Chhipasariya | Kohra | Nimbali | Boranada | Banderi |   |
|
|
| 1 | Old Age Pension | 18 | 17 | 12 | 16 | 3 | 15 | 12 | 10 | 16 | 5 | 18 | 19 | 9 | 16 | 186 |
| 2 | Widow Pension | 3 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 42 |
| 3 | Handicapped Pension | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 18 |
| 4 | Indira Housing Scheme | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 31 |
| 5 | Chief Minister Housing Scheme | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 18 |
| 6 | Public Toilet | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 23 |
| 7 | Bus Traveling Pass | 35 | 30 | 20 | 21 | 26 | 28 | 38 | 20 | 17 | 19 | 25 | 10 | 20 | 15 | 324 |
| 8 | Ashtha Scheme | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 9 | Kishan Credit Card | 6 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 10 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 3 | 7 | 72 |
| 10 | BPL Electricity Scheme | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 17 |
| 11 | Public Meeting Hall | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
|   | Total | 72 | 60 | 39 | 51 | 40 | 55 | 73 | 41 | 53 | 41 | 69 | 55 | 40 | 48 | 737 |

**Annexure 7: SHG details**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.N.** | **VILLAGE** | **NAME OF SHG** | **TOTAL MEMBER OP MEMBERs** | **TOTAL SAVING** | **Number of micro-businesses through loans** |
| 1 | Jaitdasar | Mohammad | 13 | 40223 | 13 |
| 2 | Jaitdasar | Allah | 13 | 40224 | 13 |
| 3 | Jaitdasar | Allah samuh | 10 | 30086 | 3 |
| 4 | Jaitdasar | Vismilla | 10 | 30086 | 2 |
| 5 | Jaitdasar | Ruksana | 10 | 37218 | 10 |
| 6 | Jaitdasar | Bhole Shanker | 10 | 9780 |   |
| 7 | Anadasar | Akbar | 10 | 15000 | 3 |
| 8 | Anadasar | Madina | 11 | 28430 | 6 |
| 9 | Boranada | Barkhat | 11 | 23495 | 7 |
| 10 | Boranada | Makka madina | 11 | 23495 | 7 |
| 11 | Boranada | Allah Rahamtulla | 11 | 32896 | 3 |
| 12 | Sanvra gunv | Sachchiyay Mata | 12 | 35604 | 3 |
| 13 | Sanvra gunv | Tulsi kripa | 10 | 18250 | 6 |
| 14 | Sanvra gunv | Jagdamba | 10 | 14736 | 6 |
| 15 | Sanvra gunv | Karni Mata | 10 | 18200 | 3 |
| 16 | Degavadi | Rahamtulla | 11 | 31277 | 7 |
| 17 | Degavadi | Mehar | 11 | 31660 | 7 |
| 18 | Bhojo ki baap | Madina | 10 | 40375 | 4 |
| 19 | Bhojo ki baap | Rubiya | 10 | 37825 | 4 |
| 20 | Bhojo ki baap | Sai Baba | 10 | 16880 |   |
| 21 | Ghator | Makka madina | 10 | 35975 | 3 |
| 22 | Ghator | Shiv sakti | 10 | 6220 | 2 |
| 23 | Ghator | Ram Rahim | 10 | 8825 | 1 |
| 24 | Rawara | Balaji | 10 | 13365 | 2 |
| 25 | Rawara | Aaima | 10 | 13065 | 3 |
| 26 | Rawara | Akta | 10 | 13880 | 3 |
| 27 | Rawara | Tanot Mata | 16 | 30010 | 5 |
| 28 | Badheri | Gulsan | 12 | 27875 | 6 |
| 29 | Badheri | Jagdamba | 10 | 21880 | 3 |
| 30 | Nimbali | Kuldevi Nagneli | 16 | 45181 | 2 |
| 31 | Nimbali | Baba Ramdev | 11 | 30117 | 1 |
| 32 | Kohra | Champa Nath | 11 | 29308 | 3 |
| 33 | Kohra | Shri Sindh Baba | 11 | 29308 | 1 |
| 34 | Kohra | Tanotrai | 10 | 12315 |   |
| 35 | Chhipasariya | Baba Ramapeer | 11 | 23476 | 2 |
| 36 | Chhipasariya | Devi | 10 | 21360 | 2 |
| 37 | Mandali | Karni Mata | 13 | 48575 | 2 |
| 38 | Badheri | Laxmi | 10 | 24375 | 4 |

Annexure 8: Fodder bank

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | **NUMBER OF HHS benefited**  | **NUMBER OF HHS returned**  |
| **S.N.** | **VILLAGE** | **STARTED IN YEAR** |
| 1 | Degavadi | 2009 | 46 | 34 |
| 2 | Ghator | 2010 | 48 | 36 |
| 3 | Kunda | 2011 | 23 | 17 |
| 4 | Bandheri | 2011 | 29 | 20 |
| 5 | Boranada | 2012 | 22 | Awaited |
|  |  | Total | 168 | 107 |

Annexure 9: Seed bank

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.N.** | **VILLAGE** | **STARTED IN YEAR** | **NUMBER OF HHS benefited**  | **NUMBER OF HHS returned**  |
|
| 1 | Ghator | 2009 | 82 | 48 |
| 2 | Nimbali | 2010 | 96 | 45 |
| 3 | Bandheri | 2012 | 74 | 36 |
| 4 | Kunda | 2012 | 66 | 32 |
| 5 | Boranada | 2011 | 48 | 22 |
|  Total | 366 | 183 |

1. Please read the section on coverage for more details [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Bandheri, Jaitdasar, Boranada and Digawadi villages of Jodhpur district; and Bhadli, Kunda , Kohra and Neemli villages of Jaisalmer district [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Field visit schedule is given in Annexure 2 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Read more on VOPAs and its work in section 2.5 (a) and annexes 5.1 and 5.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. For details read VOPA meeting report in Annex 5.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. For details please read table in Annexure 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. For details and evidence, please read VOPA meetings during evaluation in Annexure-- [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. Read Annexure 5.1 on FGD with VOPA members for more details [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. Amount of money collected by SHGs and the number of women who have taken loans is given in annexure 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. For details on the enterprenour activities initiated by SHGs, read case studies in Annexure 5.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Read case study on cow distribution in Annexure 5.6 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Read case-study on horticulture unit in Annexure 5.7 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)