Pasture land development through water conservation and bio-physical method of protection- A case study.

The Community lands in rural India are under severe anthropogenic pressure. The increase in human population and livestock are the main reasons of over exploitation of this common resource leading to ecological imbalance. On account of excessive grazing regeneration capacity of the grasslands are severely affected.

This case is based on the success of a regeneration programme undertaken with community participation in a village panchayat of Kota District of Rajasthan, the land having severe water scarcity. The initiative of conservation of biodiversity and development of pasture land was taken during 2015-20 in 66 ha. of waste lands (Community land) out of available 80 ha land in Dhoti village of Dhoti Gram Panchayat in Kota District of Rajasthan. The land was under illegal occupation by some residents of Khusalipura, Ramnagar and Dhoti villages.

National Centre for Human Settlements & environment (NCHSE) which was promoting Sustainable Agriculture Practices through farmer's Field School model of development in the area felt the need for regeration of community land. A consultation meeting was organized with support from the Dhoti Gram Panchayat, wherein residents of all the three villages including the occupants of the waste land. The occupants and others were made to understand the greater benefits they would get if proper land protection and water conservation measures are adopted. Villagers were informed about the works to be undertaken and the benefit they will get out of this development. On acceptance of the proposal by all with Gram Panchayat playing a key role, the waste land was made available to the project for development. Thereafter two percolation tanks on the upper and middle part of the wasteland were constructed, which resulted in improvement of water levels in the dug well and bore wells of the villages located downstream of the waste land. The project also arranged exposure visit of members of the committee to Bhilwara, Bundi and Jhalawar where wasteland development works have been undertaken successfully under MGNREGA with community participation.

Pasture land before intervention

During 2016-17, works of development of the pasture land- Cattle Protection Trench (CPT) demarcating the wasteland was dug, cactus transported from Jhalawar was planted along the ridge of the CPT and grass seeds were sown for fodder.

In view of the area being rocky, before the next monsoon pits of 1cum size were dug and filled with a mixture of compost, sand and transported soil. Saplings of local evergreen shrubs and trees were transplanted during monsoon. During the dry season, watering was done to make the saplings survive the harsh weather. Plantation continued during monsoon for the next two years to replace the dead ones.

Cactus plantation along courtour trench as bio physical barrier for protection of Pasture land

A group of about 60 persons representing all the villages and all communities and who have been a member of the exposure team were entrusted the responsibility of maintenance of the pasture land. With bio physical protection of land in place and village community in vigilance and taking care, the plants survived the grasses grew to fodder for the cattle. A dry land thus transformed into green oasis. .