

**Community
Forestry
Working Paper 2**

Village Entry

***Haryana Community Forestry Project
Haryana Forest Department***

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Revised August 2000

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BDO	Block Development Office
CE	Community Entry
DRDA	District Rural Development Authority
EPA	Entry Point Activity
HCFP	Haryana Community Forestry Project
HFD	Haryana Forest Department
KVIC	Khadi and Village Industries Commission
MCSS	Multi-Criteria Selection System
NICNET	National Informatics Centre Network
PA	Participatory Assessment
RA	Rapid Appraisal
RDT	Rapid Diagnostic Tool
SDFO	Sub Divisional Forest Officer
VE	Village Entry
VLI	Village Level Institution

1. INTRODUCTION

A participatory approach has been envisaged for implementation of the Haryana Community Forestry Project (HCFP), which is a marked deviation from the traditional systems of forest management. The underlying philosophy of the participatory approach is that the stakeholders will contribute positively toward management of the forest, if they are party to the process of objective setting, planning, decision-making and its execution. This is also the fundamental principle of the HCFP.

The overall objective of the project is: "to build the capacity of rural communities to improve the natural environment and maintain land fertility through sustainable management of natural resources undertaken in a participatory manner, with the expected results of increased wood production, improved productivity of common and private lands and greater involvement of project stakeholders, including women, in planning and management of common property resources."

Towards meeting this end, a separate unit has been set up within the Haryana Forest Department (HFD) for its implementation, and staff has been deployed to the Project for its duration. As the new roles and responsibilities of the staff are at variance with traditional roles, their capacity building for effective discharge of the responsibilities that they are entrusted with is an integral component of the project strategy.

There are eight distinct stages of community development in HCFP:

- I. Village selection
- II. Village entry (VE)
- III. Participatory assessment (PA)
- IV. Formation of a village level institution (VLI)
- V. Microplanning
- VI. Microproject formulation and implementation
- VII. Participatory monitoring and evaluation
- VIII. Project exit

Village Entry, also referred as Community Entry (CE), is the first stage of association of the staff with the village community, and this working paper is an attempt to equip them with the skills and knowledge necessary for initiating the process.

2. PRE-REQUISITES FOR VILLAGE ENTRY

Village selection should be completed before undertaking the process of community entry. Villages for project implementation are selected on the basis of a Multi-Criteria Selection System (MCSS), followed by a Rapid Appraisal (RA). Following are the criteria used in the MCSS:

- Land suitability and availability (stage I):
 - Village ecological condition vis-à-vis intervention models as identified by the project;
 - Availability of common land (for woodlots) in the village;
- Socio-economic (stages II and III):
 - Community mobilisation potential based on village size;
 - Proportion of the marginalised / disadvantaged section/s (scheduled castes and landless) as percentage of the total village population;
- Physical planning (stage IV):
 - Proximity of village sites enabling clustering for operational convenience.

RA methods are used for quick validation of findings based on secondary data and their analysis, in villages shortlisted by use of MCSS. The findings of RA are used for arriving at a final decision regarding inclusion of a village in the sites for project implementation.

For a detailed account of the selection process and RA methods, please refer *Community Forestry Guidelines, Process Stage I - Multi-Criteria Village Selection System & Rapid Appraisal Methods*¹.

3. OBJECTIVES OF COMMUNITY ENTRY

The facilitating team is a stranger to the village community, even if it is equipped with information about the village. It requires an introduction to the residents of the village before it can start working with them. A village entry is undertaken precisely with this primary objective. The village entry process thus serves the purpose of:

- Introducing the team to the village;
- Publicising the project;
- Familiarising the village community with the project and its objectives;
- Ascertaining a positive attitude of the village community to cooperate with the project;
- Ascertaining availability of sufficient common land area for planting.

It lends an atmosphere of transparency to the process of interaction between the team and the local community, by laying bare the motive/s and objective/s of the outsiders, which aids the process of rapport building. It also provides the facilitating team with an opportunity for collection of observational data about the village, and identification of entry point activities.

One of the related objectives of community entry is to initiate the process of cooperative work, and by the end of this stage the team should be able to obtain community commitment for continuation of the participatory process for resource management.

¹ Billing, David W. and Viruthiyel, Joseph, 1999 : *Multi-Criteria Village Selection System & Rapid Appraisal Methods. Community Forestry Working Paper 1, Hayrana Community Forestry Project, Haryana Forest Department.*

4. PREPARATION FOR VILLAGE ENTRY

It is said that the first impression is often also the last impression. In the context of PA, the first impression is created by the manner of conduct of the VE. The time devoted to preparing for it can be an important factor in the community's acceptance of the team. It can also save precious time in future that may otherwise be required to strike a cordial working relationship. A good VE translates into better rapport, and more effective implementation. When equipped with basic information about the village, the team conveys a seriousness of intent that goes beyond mere statement of motive.

4.1 Acquisition and review of secondary data

Secondary data are already existing records or documents that provide information about the area under study. It should be remembered that the HCFP staff are not the first ones to be working in the region. There are a lot of government agencies and other organisations, which have worked or are working with the people in the area. To avoid duplication of effort, and capitalise on the work that has already been put in by some other agency, any information collection exercise should begin with a review of secondary data. This review should be undertaken after the RA yields positive results regarding inclusion of the village in the project.

Review of secondary information not only provides information that one is looking for, but often throws up new perspectives, and also provides interesting insights. These documents should be reviewed and evaluated, and the relevant information collected and stored in a form that is concise, useful and readily retrievable. It is a good idea to have a checklist of focal points on which the information is to be collected.

Documents to be reviewed could be found in the form of files, reports, maps, aerial photographs, articles, books, and so forth. Records of the following agencies will contain relevant information from the HCFP perspective: village Patwari, Block Development Office (BDO), Forest Department, District Rural Development Authority (DRDA), and all other agencies engaged in any kind of development work in or around the village. If photographs of the village are available, they should be reprinted and used as an entry point in the village.

Focal points for query, and the source of information are listed below:

- **Demographic data** - information about the population of the village, and relevant socio-economic parameters, such as, geographical area, livestock population, civic amenities and so forth. Information may be obtained from the census data/ National Informatics Centre Network (NICNET).
- **Land use and cropping patterns** - information about use of cultivable and non-cultivable land, number and nature of crops grown, and extent of fallow land. Preliminary information about this may be obtained from Patwari / BDO records.
- **Extent and use of community land.**

- **Information on households below poverty line.**
- **Spatial information about terrain and resources** - maps (cadastral and topographic), showing village location, farmlands, physiography and forests. Sources for these maps are the Revenue Department (Patwari / BDO), Forest Department (Range Office), and Survey of India (for topographic sheets).
- **Others** - District Gazetteer, books and articles, university libraries for unpublished mimeos, local newspaper offices and so forth, for useful information on village history, current affairs and miscellaneous purposes.

Additional issues of query should be added as and when required.

Not more than two days should be devoted for this purpose; each team should have a Team Leader who will be responsible for this activity. With experience, the time required per village will diminish. For more efficient use of time, collect information on all three villages in the cluster at the same time, as their records and other relevant information are most likely to be found in the same office/s.

4.2 Having the right attitude

Many a project for natural resource management has jumped on to the participation bandwagon in recent times. and implementing agencies are frequently required to execute the same in a "participatory" manner. The aspect of attitudinal reorientation is often either ignored (especially in projects being implemented by government departments) or not sufficiently addressed. As a result, participatory activities are taken up mechanically without a clear understanding of the spirit or the purpose of the same. "Having the right attitude" may sound trite, but that is what is emphasised here. The following are some pointers for developing the same:

- Approach the community with an open mind, with the willingness to challenge any pre-set notions that you may have about rural life and people.
- Have a healthy respect for the rural people and their ways - a judgmental attitude will sabotage other overtures that you may make for eliciting participation.
- Have faith in people's abilities and their intellect; someone has said, "success should be judged not so much by the position one has reached in life, but by the obstacles that one has overcome in trying to succeed." The same applies to rural communities. Make an effort to find out how the community has dealt with difficult situations in the past, or how they handle problems that arise in day-to-day life. You may be surprised to find the degree of innovativeness that people are capable of.
- Educational qualifications, wealth and social status may have become the yardsticks for measuring up people, but remember that there is more to life than this. The challenge of life is in living like an "ordinary" individual, fulfilling the role of the cog in the wheel, and co-existing peacefully with one's fellow beings.

- You (the outsider) are not a provider of solutions for the problems that the villagers face; you are there to learn about the problems, and jointly seek a solution to the same. Correct diagnosis can result in quick remedy (and save costs). In the process of doing so, you may point to the community the possible project interventions, which could alleviate the problem. It has rightly been said "it is easy to suggest solutions when you do not know too much of the problem" Needless to mention, developmental history is replete with examples of projects that failed to deliver because the solutions were often "manufactured" without correct identification of the problem. Your approach to community development process can make HCFP a success!
- You are only a visitor (with some ideas) to the village, and have certain objectives for interacting with the village community. Do not encourage dependency of the people on you, no matter how much satisfaction it brings you (or how easy it makes your job). It is all right to help out the people initially by taking on some of their jobs, but exercise discretion in doing so as you go along. Always strive towards building the capacity of the people with whom you interact.

For communities that appear to be unresponsive, try establishing links with some friendly and/or influential personalities, who may then serve as conduits to the community as a whole. This means saying goodbye to the quick and entertaining approach, and spending more time on thawing the ice. But foremost of all, the team should be aware of its own attitude and behaviour, and send out positive verbal as well as non-verbal signals. Therefore, whenever the team is making little headway, it should first look inward and critically assess its own behaviour and attitude.

4.3 Meetings with key persons

For every village there are certain key persons, who can provide you with more information about the village than most others. There are others in such positions that they can influence your initial meetings with the village community. Meetings with such individuals should be organised as soon as a village gets selected for the Project. Some of the key persons with whom such meetings are almost mandatory are described below.

4.3.1 Meeting with Village Patwari / Revenue Inspector

For information on land and its use, meet the village Patwari, who can also provide you with information about land ownership and distribution, crops grown, irrigated area and area lying fallow. Village maps showing farmland distribution, by ownership, may also be procured from him. Often, the records are only a basis for further query; their validity and reliability should be established after field verification.

4.3.2 Meeting with HFD Staff

The local Range Forest Office will be able to provide you with information about the extent and condition of forest/s around the village/s concerned. They also have year-wise records of plantation activities undertaken, species planted, and their survival percentage. Include a query on the forest

and plantation area in/ around the village, by its legal classification (Reserve, Protected, Undemarcated Protected area, land under section 4 & 5 of the Land Preservation Act, Panchayat land, and so forth).

4.3.3 Meeting with village representatives

The village political leader is almost always the Sarpanch, and the also-ran. Ex-Sarpanches also wield political power in a village. Exceptions to the above two statements are villages where the seat is reserved for women candidates, in which case the spouse of the Sarpanch is usually the political supremo. The Sarpanch can tell you about the village developmental needs, the on-going project/s and those undertaken in the past, village budget for development and other such socio-economic information about the village as is required to be collected for government records.

4.4 Analysis and internal discussion of collected data

The data collected should be analysed as per the information requirements of the Project. Data heads for presentation of this information should coincide with focal points for query, as mentioned in section 4.1.

4.5 Pre-PA meeting of team

PA calls for an amalgamation of different kinds of skills and perspectives and it is generally believed that an inter-disciplinary team is the most effective in the conduct of PA. However, this is not always possible, and the team can improvise by having its members consciously adopt different roles - as per their capabilities and personal inclinations. In this manner, the team can ensure that all members work towards the same objective, but approach the issue under discussion from different angles. The flip side of the coin is that the method can lead to some confusion and even conflict between team members, if the process and the approach are not properly resolved before the meeting. Co-ordination and camaraderie among team members thus emerge as the key requirements for a smooth and proper conduct of other activities. While it is recognised that this is possible only after the members have worked together for some time, the following are some suggestions for starters:

4.5.1 Review of information available/collected

Perspectives depend on information, experience and outlook. While the last two are mainly personal traits, the first one is not. By the process of jointly reviewing the information collected, all the team members can at least arrive at the same platform, enabling smoother interaction. During the process of information sharing, members can also share their relevant experience/s, and develop an appreciation for different viewpoints.

4.5.2 Leadership

Each team will comprise at least four-five members, which means five brains for analysis and action. The SDO will be the leader of the team.

4.5.3 Agreement on roles and division of responsibilities

The multiplicity of tools for use during the community organisation process, and the roles to be performed by the team members, demands that the team cut out roles for individual members, so that all tasks are accomplished and all responsibilities are adequately addressed. The responsibilities may be static or rotational, as considered appropriate by the team.

4.5.4 Determine the sequence of activities to be undertaken

For the same reason as mentioned above, and for avoidance of conflicts, the sequence of activities to be undertaken in the field should clearly be chalked out, leaving enough room for exercising flexibility, depending on the field situation. The suggested sequence is as described in Section 5.

4.6 Logistics for stay in the village

It is important that the team stays in the village during the entire duration of VE, and even later as necessary. During the meeting with key village persons, enquire about the possibility for stay in the village for short durations - upto a week/ ten days - on and off during the period of interaction with the community. Team members should distribute themselves in the village, so that no single family is put to much inconvenience. It will also provide the members with the opportunity for participant observation.

Clarify politely that you would like to bear your own cost of living and would not want to stretch their hospitality. However, accede to their wish if they continue to differ on such matters. Look for an opportunity for returning the favours in different ways, such as buying grocery at times, bringing gifts for the family you are staying with, taking care of the school fees of the children, or any other way that appears suitable to you. Avoid showering lavish gifts - it may not only put the family in an embarrassing spot, but also appears vulgar or sends out the wrong signals to the community. When staying with the family, adapt to their way of life ("when in Rome, do as the Romans do").

5. CONDUCTING VILLAGE ENTRY

As mentioned in the preceding sections, village entry is about starting off the process of working with the community. Although the activities that may actually be undertaken during village entry are innumerable, and some optional, the following are considered mandatory:

5.1 Convening a general meeting

The team should, in close collaboration with the Panchayat, organise a general meeting with maximum representation of all sections of the village community. It should preferably be conducted in the evening, when participation can be maximised. Give the community sufficient advance notice about the meeting. Engage the service/s of the village Chowkidar or other such person for informing all households about the meeting. Display the same information in prominent places. Use the written and the spoken word for passing the message around. Use graphics to aid assimilation of the message; have the written messages splashed generously with illustrative pictures and colours.

Organise a separate meeting with the village women, at a time when they are relatively free of their responsibilities and household chores. Afternoons are the best time to meet with women. It will be difficult to get a large group of women together, as they are reluctant to leave the house and prefer being within earshot of the same, the venue for the meeting should be a place from where the house (and perhaps the kids) is visible. Informality is stressed when interacting with women, as many of them find formality (meetings, speech, etc) rather formidable.

5.2 Introduction of the team to the village and vice-versa

Each team will comprise the following: Sub-Divisional Forest Officer (SDFO), Forester and Forest Guards assigned to the given cluster.

Introductions are a responsibility of the Team Leader, who should do this at the time of village entry. The most appropriate time / venue for doing so is the first general meeting of the village community. If a general meeting cannot be organised for some reason, introductions should take place at the first available opportunity. Use the opportunity to get to know the community as well. Request the Sarpanch to assist in this process, especially when the group is reticent and unsure about its own opinion on the team and the purpose of their visit.

5.3 Introduction of the community to HCFP and its objectives

This is also a responsibility of the Team Leader and should be done both formally (at a village meeting) and informally (during sub-group discussions or on other occasions) - the latter can be done by all the team members, who should consciously be on the lookout for opportunities to familiarise the villagers with the project purpose and objectives.

For the purpose of introducing the project to the community, the team should make an animated presentation, using graphics, posters and other visually appealing tools. A cautionary note: take care to avoid an information overload, or the audience may lose interest. Avoid use of technical jargon in the presentation. Wait for the people to start asking questions before you start elaborating on the details of project components. Take special care to avoid conveying the impression about the benefactor-beneficiary relationship between you and the community.

5.4 Meeting with the key persons in the village community

This too is a primary responsibility of the Team Leader, but other team members should contribute by identifying the key persons, such as the Sarpanch, ex-Sarpanch, ward member/s, Mahila Mandal representative, Gurudwara Committee representative, Numberdaar/ money lender, school teacher, and so forth. The purpose of these meetings is to (a) keep the opinion leaders informed, and (b) take them into confidence and gain their support. The key persons also generally turn out to be the key informants. so keep them happy!

5.5 Preparation of base maps

Preparation of base maps is a good way to start group interaction with the community. The team

will involve the village community in making simple base maps of the village itself and of its surrounding fields. A village base map depicts the physical and social features of the village, as perceived by its residents. It is useful for the team's understanding of the village community and can also be used for identification of needs that could be addressed through Entry Point Activities. Use of the tool is described in Appendix 1; a typical village base map is shown in Appendix 2.

A village resource and tenure base map depicts the area surrounding the village. A detailed such map will be prepared later during PA. During the Village Entry stage a simple base map will be prepared, following the instructions for preparation of base maps given in Appendix 1. Appendix 3 shows an example of a village resource and tenure base map. The map will at this stage be used to ascertain whether the village has enough land for the various plantation models of HCFP.

5.6 Awareness of the participatory approach to PA

The team should impart to the villagers an understanding of the participatory approach to assessment, explaining the purpose of the exercise, the time required for its conduct and the outcome of the same. It should clearly specify its expectations of the community and explain to the community the manner in which the exercise will/ could benefit both the parties.

5.7 Agreements with the Panchayat

Having introduced the community to HCFP and its objectives, having met with key persons of the community, and after the community has prepared a village resource and tenure base map, it should now be possible for the team to assess if the village can be accepted for project intervention or has to be rejected due to lack of interest in the project and/or non-availability of sufficient land for planting.

In case of a positive assessment, the team should already now, in order to avoid complications and drawn-out discussions later on, try to obtain from the Panchayat a written resolution on its intent to make specified areas of common land available for planting under the project. During Microplanning and Microproject Formulation this resolution will be followed up by a more specific tripartite agreement.

After the community has been made aware of the purpose and likely duration of PA and has been informed of the team's expectations, the team should seek their permission for conducting the same. A formal/ semi-formal agreement to that effect could be signed with the Panchayat.

5.8 Scheduling Participatory Assessment

The Team Leader should fix a suitable date, time, and place for conduct of PA, in consultation with the villagers, and invite them to take part in the exercise.

6. ENTRY POINT ACTIVITIES

An entry point activity (EPA) is any quick-return, low-investment activity, undertaken primarily by the facilitating team, that may not directly be related to the project, but is an immediate and expressed need of the community, and helps establish quick rapport with the community at large, thus creating channels for effective communication. It may require the facilitating team to provide inputs of a financial or non-financial nature, such as access to information, liaison, technical support, speeding up an impending village development activity, conflict resolution, and sometimes mere enthusiasm/moral support/ group organisation.

It is important that the activities identified as EPAs serve the purposes of establishing rapport with the community and getting across the message, through action, of being serious about the welfare of the village.

It should be borne in mind that an EPA:

- Is a need expressed by the people;
- Brings returns to the community within a reasonably short span of time (for the HCFP, this period could be in the range of one day to one month);
- Requires little or no financial investment (for the HCFP, not more than Rupees ten thousand);
- Need not be an activity that pertains to the project components;
- Is a vehicle for creating goodwill and popularising the project;
- Is not the ultimate rapport-building act - rapport may break down during the period of further interaction, or the team may send signals that are unfriendly and create mistrust in the community (guard against such behaviour!);
- Will not always succeed in arousing the community's interest in the project; the village may even have to be abandoned even after the investment has been made.

6.1 Identification of EPAs

The facilitating team has to initiate a discussion and dialogue in the selected village for identification of the needs of the community, which could be addressed by the project through EPAs. The needs to be addressed at this stage should be, to the extent possible, needs of the entire village community, rather than those of any particular class/ section.

EPAs are meant for addressing community needs, based on immediate problems; it is not meant to be a fulfilment of the community wish list. Draw up a list of all EPAs identified by the community and have the community prioritise it objectively, using the paired-ranking method for prioritisation (Appendix 4). It is emphasised that the Project will only consider funding non-religious and non-political EPAs; thus such activities as construction of temples, mosques, gurudawaras or parts thereof will not be funded. Nor will the project support any expenditure on political activities, including hospitality extended to political figures. An indicative list of EPAs is provided in Appendix 5.

6.2 Execution of EPAs

Execution of EPAs may coincide with their identification, or may take place during the coming stages of Participatory Assessment, VRMC/VRMS formation, Microplanning and Microproject Formulation (but before microproject implementation). There are three options for implementation of EPAs, any of which may be chosen:

- a) The implements required for the EPA are procured directly by the project, following departmental rules.
- b) The amount required, upto a maximum of Rs. 10,000, is transferred to the Panchayat, which has to submit to the project a statement on how the money was utilised. (This option should be chosen only if it is envisaged that there will be no problems in transferring funds to the Panchayat.)
- c) If a VRMC/VRMS has already been established and has opened a bank account prior to the execution of the EPA, money may be transferred to the VRMC/VRMS, which has to submit to the project a statement on how the money was utilised.

For additional information on EPA execution, please see HCFP guidelines in the Field Operations Manual.

7. GAINING MILEAGE FROM EPAs

There are several spin-offs from the process of village entry and execution of EPA, some intended (directly) and others that may be derived by a sensitised team, through cashing on opportunities as they present themselves during the EPA. These include project publicity, rapport building and an understanding of the village, its people, and their dynamics - social, economic and political.

7.1 Project publicity

One of the prime objectives of EPA is to publicise the project, so that people start talking about it and develop an interest in the project, thus enhancing participation, both per se and through participation in PA activities. Time being at a premium, the team has to make its presence felt, and its purpose known, in the shortest time possible, and in a manner that vibes positively with the local culture and values and makes the team acceptable to the people (partners in the project).

Several methods may be employed for making a village entry: song and dance show, street drama, video show, health camp, announcement at a village gathering (any social or routine occasion), poster campaign, introduction by the Panchayat members or local staff of the HFD, through some programme organised in collaboration with the local school or any existing formal or informal village institution/ group (such as Mahila Mandal, Youth Club, etc), and so forth.

The team can make use of several media and methods for doing so:

7.1.1 Meetings and announcements

A formal meeting for the Project per se and announcements about the Project and its objectives at other formal village gatherings are means of informing the community at large. The message should be conveyed in a manner that arouses further interest and encourages discussion. Project facilitators could have the meeting convened at the behest of the Panchayat.

7.1.2 Formal and informal talks

Talks with groups as well as with individuals are among the most effective publicity methods available to the extension worker and/or agent of change. The list of places and occasions for doing so is unlimited: at the tea stall (an information goldmine!), around the Banyan (or some other) tree, in the school compound, at the bus stand, or the grocery/ bidi/ cigarette store, at the village well and/or the drinking water tap (especially for reaching out to women), around the village pond, at the Panchayat ghar, and so forth.

7.1.3 Poster campaign

Plaster the village walls with posters and/or paintings proclaiming the project and its objectives. Use illustrations to indicate the project components, and include the village community members as integral constituents of all such posters.

7.2 Rapport building

There are no set ways and means for rapport building, and the process should go on simultaneously with project publicity and EPA identification and execution. Some ground rules for rapport building are:

- Take genuine interest in the affairs of the village community;
- Help them where you can,
- Work with them and try to learn from them their skills;
- Go out of your way to help the sick and/or needy;
- Accept the food and drink/s they offer you, and dine with them;
- Do not be judgmental about anything you observe;
- Give them space to be themselves, and to do things their way;
- Use more of "you" statements, and less of "I" or "we";
- Stay with them where you can;
- Participate in their festivities and sorrows;
- Sit and talk with them.

The team should also sit with different interest groups in the village separately in their unique meeting places (Harijan Chaupal, Mahila Mandal, or within individual homes), discussing their specific problems and needs. While this is being done, exercise caution not to raise people's expectations. As EPAs are supposed to be village unifying activities, rather than conflict causing, specific problems and needs of different groups may be identified / understood during CE, but can only be addressed at a later stage in the community development process.

7.3 Village close-up

There is more to the village community than meets the eye of an outsider. While an outsider with a rural background needs no training in this aspect, it is useful to review the following and be sensitised to the issue/s for further exploration:

- Being aware of the caste composition, and division of labour;
- Understanding people's attitudes toward different types of work;
- Identification of power centres in the village;
- Identification of the marginalised/ disadvantaged section/s, and their problems;
- Identification of the representatives of different sections and/or stakeholders;
- Perceiving village political dynamics and power equations.

8. RECORDING INFORMATION DURING EPA EXECUTION

The period during which an EPA is being implemented is a potential opportunity for the team to learn about the community and to observe the village dynamics at close quarters. While in the village, visit the workplaces of villagers, their meeting places, and other such spots where you can observe village social dynamics, and record such information as:

- Who are the opinion leaders in the village?
- In time/s of trouble or doubt, whom do they turn to for advice?
- Where do they usually meet? Does the meeting place change according to the issue being discussed?
- What role do the women play in decision-making, if at all? (During your stay with the family, what do you observe about information sharing between men and women? Is the publicly expressed opinion of the men of the household influenced by the women in the family?)
- What are the employer-employee relations like?
- What do you observe about gender division of labour?

During this period, if the community's response appears to be favourable, the team should proceed further with the detailed PA, and start collecting relevant information for the purpose of microplanning. It should be a natural progression from exploratory to detailed PA, with an EPA as the intervening and overlapping activity between the two.

9. CONCLUDING MEETING

At the end of the EPA (or after seven - ten days, whichever is shorter), organise another general meeting of the village and review with the community the tasks accomplished and those pending. Encourage the community members to take on the responsibility for the undone job/s, assuring them that you will continue to guide them as and when necessary. You should also prepare an estimate of the cost and labour input that has gone into the EPA, acknowledging the contribution made by the community. A special word of appreciation should be included for those who have

played an exemplary role during the EPA. If possible, identify educated and interested youth who could become part of the community data collection process in future.

Once again, make a brief visually-aided presentation on the project and its components, and invite the villagers to participate in the planning process and make the village a success story in natural resource management. Describe in some detail what the facilitating team expects from the community during the planning process, and the duration of this exercise. Emphasise how both parties could mutually benefit from the exercise.

10. REPORTING COMMUNITY ENTRY

In order for the project to keep track of the villages where the project is being implemented, and for future reference of the team and the community, the team should prepare a brief report on the process and outcome of CE, giving an analysis of the secondary and observational data collected during the exercise, the tasks accomplished and a brief plan of action for the future. Include in this report any other remarks that you may wish to make about the village community and its potential for further development.



OUTLINE FOR A VILLAGE ENTRY REPORT

1. Village details, including location, geography, amenities

(Basically a Village Base Map and a Village Resource and Tenure Base Map, as prepared by the villagers.)

2. Confirmation/supplementation of RA findings

RA

VE

- Population (No. of households)
- Scheduled Caste population (No. of households & %)
- Landless population (No. of households & %)
- Common land types and use
 - Woodlot
 - Sand dune fixation
 - Tree grove
 - Agriculture/horticulture
 - Grazing
 - Institutional land
 - Temple/religious place
 - Roads/footpaths/dumping ground
 - Disputed
 - Other
 - Villagers' attitude to forestry

3. Potential for project presence in the village

- Villagers' assessment (enclose resolution passed in final VE meeting)
- Field team's assessment with reference to various HCFP models, incl. the team's recommendation whether to accept or reject the village
- Dates for PA
- Important points that need attention during next phases

4. Entry Point Activities

- Description of major problems identified by villagers
- Activities that emerged in focus group discussions
- Activities selected, with their description, justification, budget and village contribution
- Report on EPA activity implemented, if any
- Phasing of activity that is to be implemented during PA/microplanning

Annexes :

- i) Day-wise description of VE activities (summary of main events)
- ii) List of villagers contacted/present in meetings
- iii) Team members
- iv) Questions frequently asked by villagers

PREPARATION OF BASE MAPS

What and Why

A village base map depicts the physical and social features of the village, as perceived by its residents. A village resource and tenure base map depicts land and other resources available to the community, as perceived by its residents. These maps are a means for the facilitating team to understand the village layout, learn about the amenities available, get an idea of the extent and distribution of resources at the disposal of the community and whether there is sufficient land available for planting under HCFP, figure out the social composition of the village, and identify issues for further exploration.

Materials Required

Usually, all materials required for the exercise is locally collected (from the village). However, it is a good idea to be equipped with drawing sheets and/or chart papers, coloured pens, chalk/ chalk powder of different colours, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, and other such stationery.

All team members must carry with them their note pads and pens for recording observations. One drawing sheet and one set of coloured pens are to be carried along for transfer of the map from the ground to paper.

Time Required

One to three days.

Procedure

In the following, the procedure for preparing the two maps has been described as one, although the end result will be two distinctive maps, one for the village itself and one for its surroundings. The two maps may be drawn one by one (beginning with the village base map) or simultaneously.

- i. Select an open space in the village for conduct of the exercise, preferably located in the centre of the village, easily accessible and visible.
- ii. Gather material from around the village for use in the mapping process, at the same time inviting people to join the group (and to have fun!). Collect stones of different colours and sizes, leaves, grass, branches, seeds, wood, sticks, soil of different colours, and so forth. Invite the more enthusiastic ones to do the same.
- iii. Introduce the idea and purpose of the drawing exercise to all present, and clarify any doubts or questions that they may raise: be honest, polite, and patient.
- iv. Emphasise that the purpose of the drawing is for you to learn from them, and to facilitate discussion; it is not to evaluate their drawing or writing skills!

- v. Using a stick, make an outline drawing on the ground, showing the road by which you entered the village and indicating the spot where the group is currently sitting. You may also choose to draw what you think is most appropriate.
- vi. Pass on the stick to one of the more interested participants, requesting him/her to take the drawing forward. Reassure the person, if s/he is hesitant, that the drawing does not have to be a work of art, and s/he can do it as well as the next person, who is perhaps educated, because it is based entirely on an individual's perception of reality, and art or education have nothing to do with it. Take care to give the same signal both verbally and non-verbally - for this, start believing what you say, and you will effortlessly sail through a PA exercise.
- vii. If the group is large, a simultaneous exercise could be started off with a different set of people, differentiated by caste, class or gender. The last is advisable, as it is one way to have interaction with women in the absence of interference from men, who often tend to believe that the (village) women are no good for engaging in a sensible discussion requiring use of the brain (!).
- viii. Once the stick is handed over, the team members should carefully take up strategic positions in the group and make themselves unobtrusive, while observing the progress of the map. They should make their presence felt only once in a while to answer queries, or to add that slight encouragement required for involving the reticent participants in the discussion.
- ix. Once the mapping is completed, an interpretation and analysis of the drawing should be attempted, separating the chaff from the grain. Here is an illustrative example of a discussion:
 - Why are some roads made in red and some others in black (or whichever colour has been used)? (kachcha and pucca road).
 - Why are the two human settlements / habitations separated by such a large distance? (different religion).
 - How is the condition of the houses on this side of the main road different from that on the other side? (kachcha and pucca).
 - Why does the farmer on the other side of the road take three crops in a year, while the one on this side manages only one? (irrigated and unirrigated land - dam on the other side).
 - Where is the dam located? When was it constructed? How is use of irrigation water regulated? (details of dam...).
 - Is it possible to irrigate the fields that do not receive any water from the dam? How so? (yes... there's a kool, which used to break down every year, so it hasn't been repaired in the last five years...).
 - How long a section of the kool needs repair? How much would it cost? (details...).
 - Why don't you do the repairs yourself? (finances, lack of technical knowledge, etc....).

And thus begins the discussion on a potential EPA.

Here's another example:

- What is the route you take for entering the forest? (this may then be indicated by the villagers with lines and arrows).
- Why don't you take the short cut? (perhaps because of absence of a proper road).
- Would it make any difference to have the route shortened by making a new road? (affirmative! It would save the women precious time in collection of fuelwood and fodder).
- So why don't you make the road yourself? (finances, permission from the Forest Department...).

(Take off from here on negotiating people's contribution in the EPA, if it were to be taken up - be careful not to raise people's expectations...)

- x. After completion of the process of mapping, the team should transfer the same onto a chart paper for future record and analyse the pictorial details of colour, size and placement of objects on the map. If possible, the picture on the ground should be captured as a snapshot, for records' sake.

Apart from the output produced, the process of mapping is an important learning opportunity for the facilitating team. All team members should individually make note of the following, and the reasons that they attribute for arriving at such conclusions:

- Who dominates, and who draws?
 - Who contributes what? Does it give any indication about their needs and priorities?
 - How do the participants organise themselves as a group? Is there any particular grouping pattern? Which are the groups, and how do they constitute the community?
 - Who are the silent observers, and how do they react to issues concerning them, if at all? How do the others react to the same issue/s? Try to assess the reason/s for the silent ones participating in the exercise (non-verbally!).
 - What is the actual and perceived role of women in the village?
 - Do others in the village join in readily? What is their level of involvement? Does the person drawing the map seek inputs from them? Do the participants invite onlookers to contribute?
- xi. The team should meet for a de-briefing after completion of the mapping exercise in the village, exchange notes and discuss their perceptions about the process. The primary responsibility for preparing a report based on the exercise should be rotational, but all the team members should provide inputs for the same.
 - xii. The team should also evaluate its own performance and behaviour after it has finished discussion about the village and the PA exercise conducted therein. Each team should devise its own method for doing so, depending on the personalities of the members comprising the team. Improvise and improve on the same, as you gain experience.

Remarks

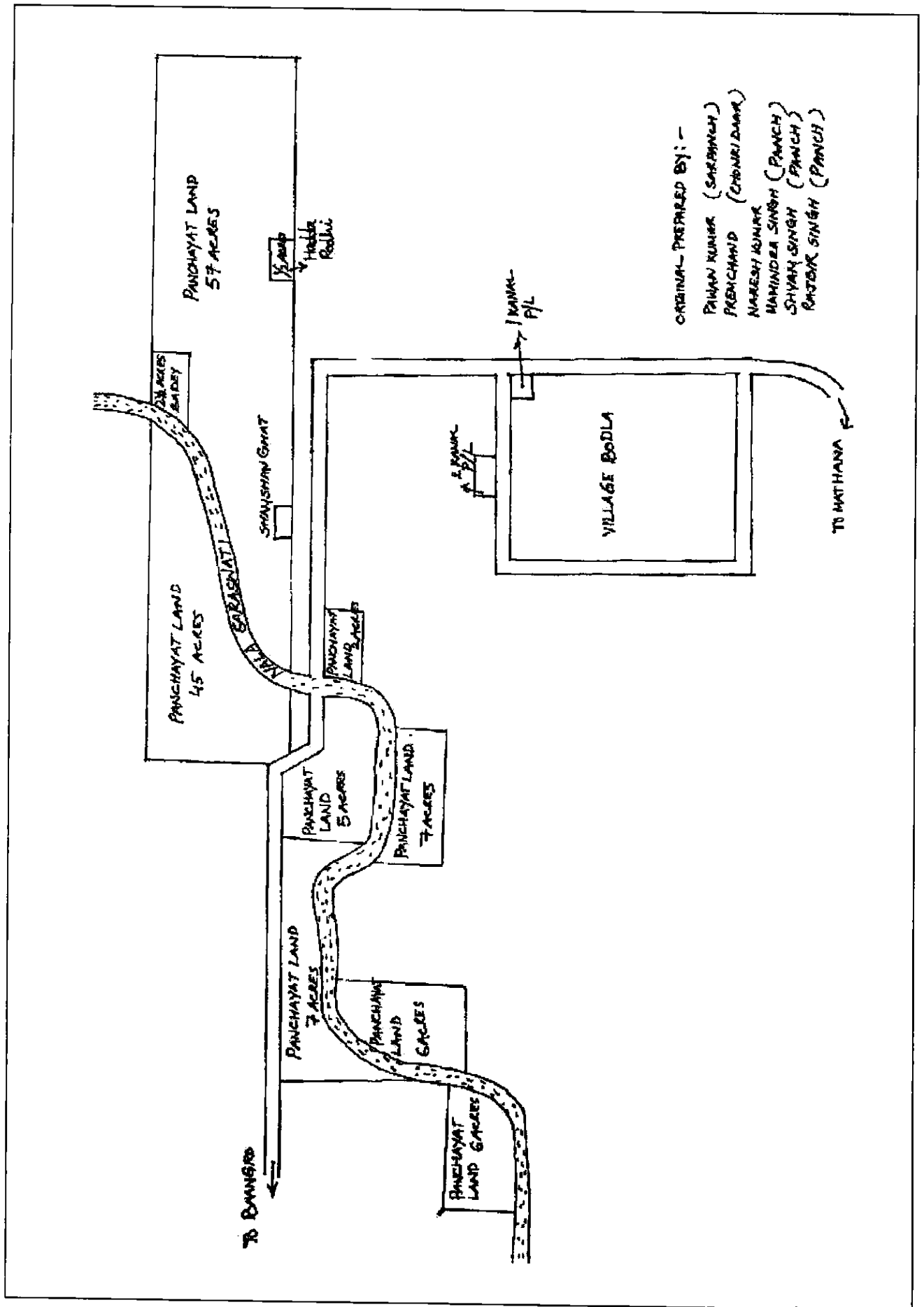
This has been found to be one of the best tools with which to begin PA:

- it brings people together and leads to an animated discussion;
- it gives the team ample opportunity to observe the community and to gain useful insights about their life, priorities, their worldview and community dynamics;
- it gives the participants the time and the opportunity to interact and begin to feel comfortable with each other;
- it continues with the process of rapport building;
- it prevents monopolisation of discussion by any one individual (subject to certain conditions being met), or exclusion of others; thus, it sets the tone for future activities and encourages all to continue participating;
- it is a visual representation of how the community sees itself and its environs, thus making it easier for the facilitating team to gauge its pulse.

There is a tendency among the villagers, particularly the uneducated and the suppressed, to withdraw from a discussion with the "elite" outsiders, in the presence of a powerful or influential village leader. This attitude is reinforced by outsiders who place a high premium on communication skills and continue to direct their questions to the village elite, as they find it easier to get information from the more articulate village spokespersons.

The mapping exercise does away with the standard "I question-you answer" approach, takes the facilitator to the background, and makes all the participants feel comfortable, by not making any demand on special or extraordinary skills. It is, quite literally, a "down to earth" approach, based on the knowledge and skills that are pre-existing in the village. The only things it demands from the villagers are time and enthusiasm, to be part of an exercise that simultaneously generates information, sensitises and empowers.





PAIRED-RANKING FOR PRIORITISATION OF EPAs

What and Why

Need/EPA ranking is a tool used for deciding upon, and arriving at a conclusion about, the most important Need/EPA from amongst the ones listed earlier. Among the many methods of ranking and scoring, the pair-wise ranking method is felt to be the easiest one to handle.

Purpose

This method enables the participants to focus on only two Need/EPAs at a time, and is therefore believed to result in scores that are more a depiction of the real situation than what results with use of other arbitrary methods. This is particularly true when one is working with a group instead of an individual.

Materials Required

Flip charts and marker pens; or a black board and chalk.

Position in Sequence

After Need/EPA identification; in fact, in continuation of it, preferably on the same day.

Time Required

Two to three hours.

Procedure

Prepare a matrix, listing the Need/EPAs (against numbers) in the header row and column, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Need Prioritisation Matrix

Need/EPA number	Need/EPA statement	Need/EPA number				Score	Rank
		1	2	3	4		
1	Repair/ replacement of irrigation pipes						
2	Purchase of public announcement system for the Gurudwara						
3	Lining village pond for water for cattle						
4	Repair of school wall						

Compare each Need/EPA with each of the others (in pairs), until all possible combinations have been exhausted. Begin with Need/EPA no. 1 (repair of irrigation pipes) and compare it, in turn, with Need/EPAs 2, 3, and 4. In the row corresponding with Need/EPA 1, indicate the Need/EPA number which is believed to be more important. Thus,

<i>Need/EPA pair compared</i>	<i>More important Need/EPA</i>
1,1	1
1,2	1
1,3	3
1,4	1

The row corresponding with Need/EPA 1 will, therefore, contain the numbers 1,1,3, and 1, against the Need/EPA numbers indicated in the header row, indicating that Need/EPA 1 is more important than Needs/EPAs 2 and 4, but less important than Need/EPA 3.

Similarly, for the second row, corresponding with Need/EPA no 2 (public announcement system), the following result may emerge:

<i>Need/EPA pair compared</i>	<i>More important Need/EPA</i>
2,1	1
2,2	2
2,3	3
2,4	2

The row corresponding with Need/EPA 2 will, therefore, contain the numbers 1,2,3, and 2, against the Need/EPA numbers indicated in the header row, indicating that Need/EPA 2 is more important than Need/EPA 4, but less important than Needs/EPAs 1 and 3.

Once again, repeat the process with Need/EPA 3 (lining village pond). The result may be as follows:

<i>Need/EPA pair compared</i>	<i>More important Need/EPA</i>
3,1	3
3,2	3
3,3	3
3,4	3

The row corresponding with Need/EPA 2 will, therefore, contain the numbers 3,3,3, and 3, against the Need/EPA numbers indicated in the header row, indicating that Need/EPA 3 is more important than Needs/EPAs 1, 2 and 4.

The resulting matrix will then look like this:

Need/EPA number	Need/EPA statement	Need/EPA number				Score	Rank
		1	2	3	4		
1	Repair/ replacement of irrigation pipes	1	1	3	1	5	Second
2	Purchase of public announcement system for the Gurudwara	1	2	3	2	3	Third
3	Lining village pond for water for cattle	3	3	3	3	7	First
4	Repair of school wall	1	2	3	4	1	Fourth

For calculating the score of each of the Needs/EPAs listed, count the number of times the Need/EPA number appears in the matrix. Thus, Need/EPA no. 1 appears five times, no. 2 appears thrice, no. 3 appears seven times, and no. 4 only once. The rank of a Need/EPA is determined by its score: higher the score, higher the rank. In this case, since the score of Need/EPA no. 3 is the highest, it is assigned the first rank. Accordingly, Need/EPA no. 1 ranks second, Need/EPA no. 2 ranks third, and Need/EPA no. 4 ranks fourth.

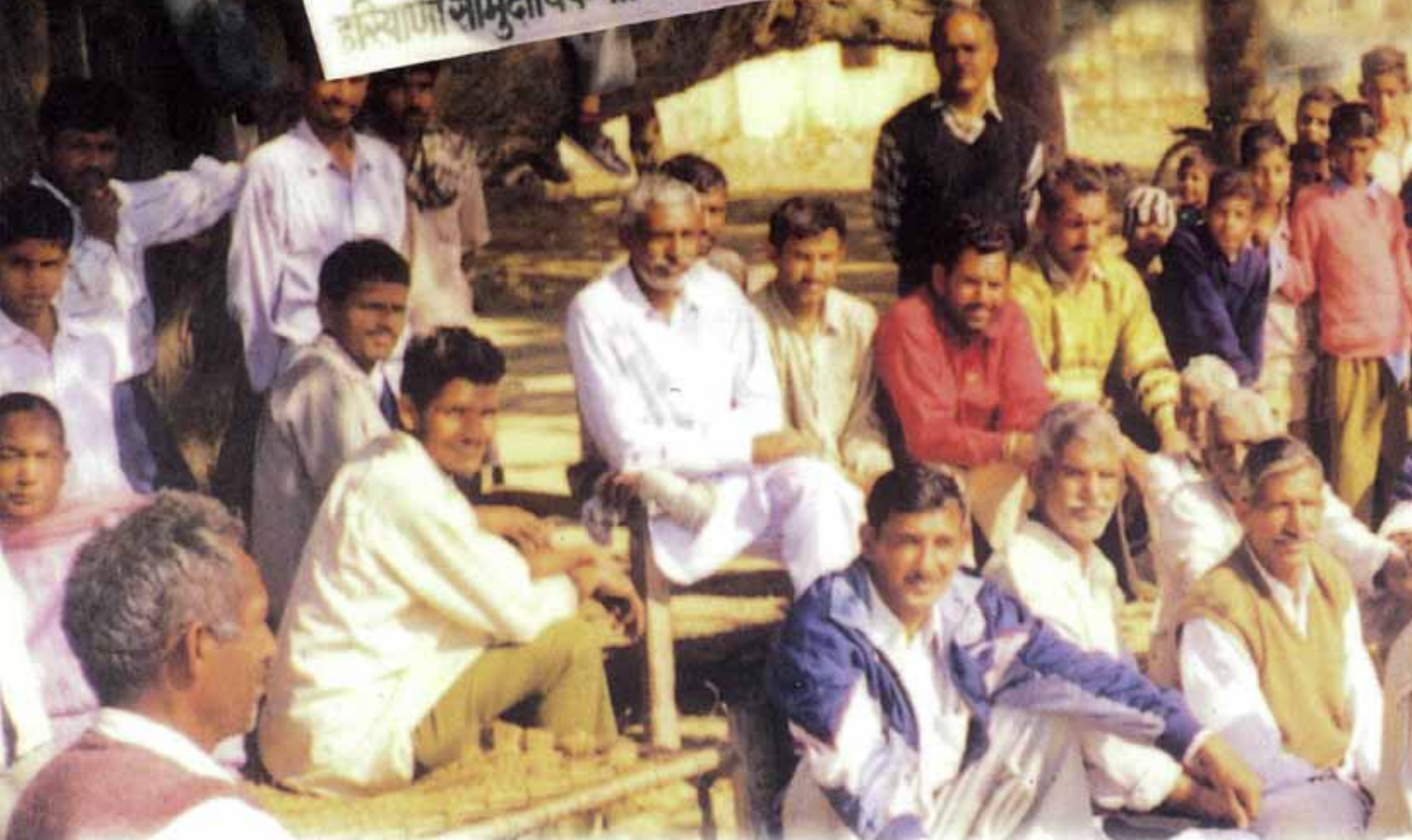


ENTRY POINT ACTIVITIES: SOME EXAMPLES

Following are some examples of possible EPAs (this list is only indicative, not exhaustive):

1. Lining of the village pond for drinking water for cattle.
2. Installation of a lighting system in the school.
3. Provision of necessary furniture and other accessories for the village school.
4. Purchase of a Dari and/or chairs for the Panchayat ghar.
5. Mobilising voluntary labour for de-siltation of the village dam.
6. Repair and replacement of the irrigation pipes.
7. Repair of the kool for irrigation.
8. Providing necessary information about useful agriculture/ health/ sanitation schemes of the government, and helping the village leverage funds from other government/ non-government agencies.
9. Liaison with government line departments.
10. Mediating for peaceful resolution of intra-village or inter-village conflict/s.
11. Construction of a shed for Gaushala.
12. Helping the Mahila Mandal access marketing services of the KVIC.
13. Negotiating with contractors on behalf of the village.
14. Taking necessary action for regularising visit of health workers to the village.
15. Having the nearby industry clear its garbage dump from near the village.
16. Helping SHGs register themselves, and providing them the necessary information and other support for completion of various procedural requirements.
17. Hospitalisation of the critically ill in the village (rare).
18. Preparation of technical and financial estimates for repair of the village dam, for requesting funds from other agencies.
19. Provision of a cycle / torch to the village Chowkidar.
20. Checking out the discrepancies in the electricity bills received by individual households.
21. Repair/ deepening of the well for drinking water, and construction of a concrete structure around it.
22. Procurement of improved pulleys for drawing water from the well.
22. Procurement of improved/ pest-resistant variety of crop seeds for agriculture.
23. Provision of funds and technical know-how for micro-nutrient composting.
24. Construction of a concrete platform at the village meting place.
25. Acquiring permission from the Forest Department for (legal) felling of trees on farmlands, for bona fide consumption.
26. Preparation of accounts for the Youth Club, and helping them raise funds for a cause.
27. Meeting with the fish or grass contractor, and helping the village recover dues from him.
28. Filling up the water puddles in the village with pebbles/ stones, and spreading awareness about prevention of spread of water-borne disease/s.
29. Providing market information for better returns on agriculture produce.

ग्राम सभा
नटवाल
हरियाणा सामुदायिक वानिकी परियोजना, अम्बाला मण्डल



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