Annual Report
Extending Drought Mitigation in Bundelkhand (EDMB) project

June 2024 – May 2025

Supported by
PPI

Implemented by
Gramin Vikas Vigyan Samiti (GRAVIS)

1. Introduction

Extending Drought Mitigation in Bundelkhand (EDMB) is an important project covering the drought prone region of one of the most neglected regions of India. The region lays in southern part of Uttar Pradesh and covers more than 12% of state landmass. Agriculture is the main occupation to support livelihood of 80% of population though it is completely rain-fed and highly dependent upon monsoon rains. Gender segregated roles among society are clearly visible and lead to inequality and restrictions for women and girls to take part in social gatherings, seeking basic services of health and education.

Therefore, GRAVIS has come up with an integrated kind of project in this area, which revolves around water security, food security and community development. The project has addressed all cited challenges through an integrated approach of mitigating drought which will capacitate local communities in taking decisions as well as skill them in developing and maintaining community assets on water, food and nutrition. With an equitable approach to development, project aims to address the multiple, overlapping and intersectional social determinants of poverty.

GRAVIS-PPI collaborative projects

After two successful projects in Bundelkhand, GRAVIS –PPI started this new project in 2024 for mitigating droughts in 3 drought hit villages in Mahoba district of Uttar Pradesh in Bundelkhand region. In 3 years, EDMB project will cover 6,000 beneficiaries through various interventions on Water, food and nutrition. The first year of project is completed and the report here is a descriptive presentation of progress made through project in the year. This year project mainly focused on development of women and community groups through trainings of VDCs and SHGs and on locally viable interventions on water and food security to reduce the drudgery of common folk.

Overall goal

The overall goal of the project is to contribute to community development and to reduce poverty by mitigating drought conditions in 3 villages of BK.

Specific Objectives

- Develop local leadership and capacities of the communities
- Empower local women and girls
- Enhance food and nutrition security
- Increase water availability and improve water quality
- Improve health status of communities

2. **Project progress:** Following activities have been organized in the first year of project implementation.

2.1 Formation and training of VDCs

Village Development Committees (VDCs) have been formed in all three project villages namely Bhatver, Bilvai and Barat Pahada. They have been trained about concept of project, planning and implementation in their respective villages. Each VDC is comprised of representatives from all sections of society, caste, groups and both of genders. They received three trainings on matters of functionality of VDC, selection criteria, monitoring of activities. It has been insured in trainings that with improved skills, VDCs are enabled to do regular meetings, select needy families for project interventions and do periodic monitoring of project actions to achieve desired outcomes. In the 3 trainings organized, a total of 46 VDC members participated.

VDC training

2.2 Formation and training of SHGs

Women of project have been organized to form three Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in 3 villages. The objective behind formation was to encourage women to develop leadership and entrepreneurial skills. Three trainings have been organized for these SHGs to train them on importance of SHGs, concept of micro-finance and leadership skills among women to take active role in community development. Women from all three villages enthusiastically participated in trainings and asked many questions related to banking, saving deposit, interest

on saving, selection of enterprise and profit sharing. All these queries were answered by trainers during trainings. In 3 trainings, 49 women took part.

SHG training

2.3 Water quality trainings

Access to safe drinking water is a prime concern in the region. Water received through rains is often contaminated and filled with biological impurities on touching. The consumption of contaminated water leads to health hazards. Poor families are not able to have a purifier at home, therefore simple techniques of purification have been taught in two trainings on water quality. Trainings covered methods like boiling water, use of alum and use of potassium permanganate and the concept of bio sand water filters – their assembling and use. 2 trainings were organized attended by 36 villagers,

2.4 Nutrition trainings

There is a severe need to make women and children in this region aware of importance of nutritive diets. 2 Nutrition trainings have been organized in project. The objective of such trainings was to address the issue of nutrition among community. Importance of nutritive diets has been discussed during trainings. Benefits of having a balanced diet, disorders caused by nutritional deficiencies were a few things that were covered during sessions. It was also discussed that which deficiency causes which disease. And counter diet with available food have been also shared with participants. Project also provide nutrition garden to poor families to meet out their nutritional deficiency. 2 such trainings were attended by 41 villagers.

Nutrition training

2.5 Nutrition gardens

To overcome the situation of nutritional deficiency among families, nutritional gardens have been planned to be established. The nutrition gardens are small units where families would grow fruits such as pomegranate, sapodilla, lemon, plum, bush plum, sweet potato and custard apple. The one reason of establishing these units is to save money from buying fruits and vegetables from outsides. This reduces the burden of poor families and gradually improves their health as well as economical status with sale of surplus produce. The best season for these units is to plant in monsoon, which is July-August in India. Plants in these 10 units of year 1 will be sown in coming monsoon to insure to have best result. The selection of families and necessary procurement has been completed and the earthwork required before plantation is also done.

2.6 Compost pits

Having compost pits not only insures high crop yield but is also one of the local entrepreneurial activity with low cost investment. 10 compost pits have been developed in project villages. These pits are filled with cow dung, leaves, straws and other bio degradable items like fruits and vegetable residues. Over the time these items convert into Farm Yard Manure. The manure will be used in coming monsoon season in farmlands and nutrition gardens to improve the soil productivity. These are chemical free agents thus also promote natural farming which is one of the key component in mitigating droughts.

Compost pit

2.7 Community Seed Banks (CSB)

Buying seeds from outside is a costly affair for families living in distressed regions. Community seed bank helps families to have seeds in exchange to promise to re-fill it post-harvest. Seeds like groundnuts, pulses (*urad, arhar* and *moong)*, sesame are high in demand. One seed bank has been developed in project area with seeds of above crops and more. On job training of preserving seeds with local methods like use of lime, dry ash and *neem* leaf has been given to farmers. It was also insured that the bank should be accessible to all community but most needy should be given first preference keeping the GRAVIS vision of *Sarvodaya* in mind. This intervention not only reduces the dependency on market but also improves bio-diversity in region with introduction of new seeds.

Community Seed Bank

2.8 Farm fencing

Protecting farmlands from cattle and wild animals is an emerging issue in region. These animals often destroy crops and cause financial loss to framers. Four poor families have been selected and fencing materials have been provided to them. Families have protected their farmlands and are happy to receive materials and hope to have good crops in coming season. This year they hope to have real fruits of hardship first time with protected field.

Fenced farm

2.9 and 2.10 Construction of farming bunds and renovation of village ponds

Beneficiaries of 4 farming bunds and the pond site, which needs renovation, have been identified. The work will start after monsoon and will be completed by August-September on pond and in October on bunds.

3. Next year plan

In next year, the project will be continued with planned objectives and cover more needy families in project through designed interventions. The year two will be also overlapped with observing the outcomes of many activities already completed in year 1. Such actions like compost farm manure, community seed banks and farm fencing will give result in year 2. Along with these, following actions will be undertaken at ground in year 2.

- 3 Trainings of VDCs
- 3 Trainings of SHGs
- 2 Trainings on Water quality
- 2 Trainings on Nutrition
- Establishment of 10 nutrition garden along with plantation in 10 units from previous year
- 10 compost pits
- 1 Community seed bank
- 4 farm fencing

- 4 bunds and renovation of 1 pond along with completing 4 bunds and 1 pond from previous year

4. Impact

Over a year, project has contributed in development of community through integrated drought mitigation approach. VDCs and SHGs created under the project are playing active role in project execution from planning to monitoring and exhibiting leadership skills in mobilizing community, disseminating project objectives and addressing local grievances. The impact of agricultural interventions can be observed post-harvest in form of farm produce, soil quality, grown up plants and improved health and nutrition among families.