

Gender- and social- inclusion approach in watershed projects: Insights on gender norms and gender relations in Parasai-Sindh watershed, India

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Daily Theme: Improving Agricultural Water Productivity in Dry areas

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Introduction

- Increased focus on understanding cultural and social norms in a given context for adoption of innovations. Such evidence is limited or lacking especially for watershed projects.
- Highlight the challenges and the opportunities in empowering communities through increased awareness and sensitivity of gender and social norms in a watershed project.



Interacting with women in one of the study villages



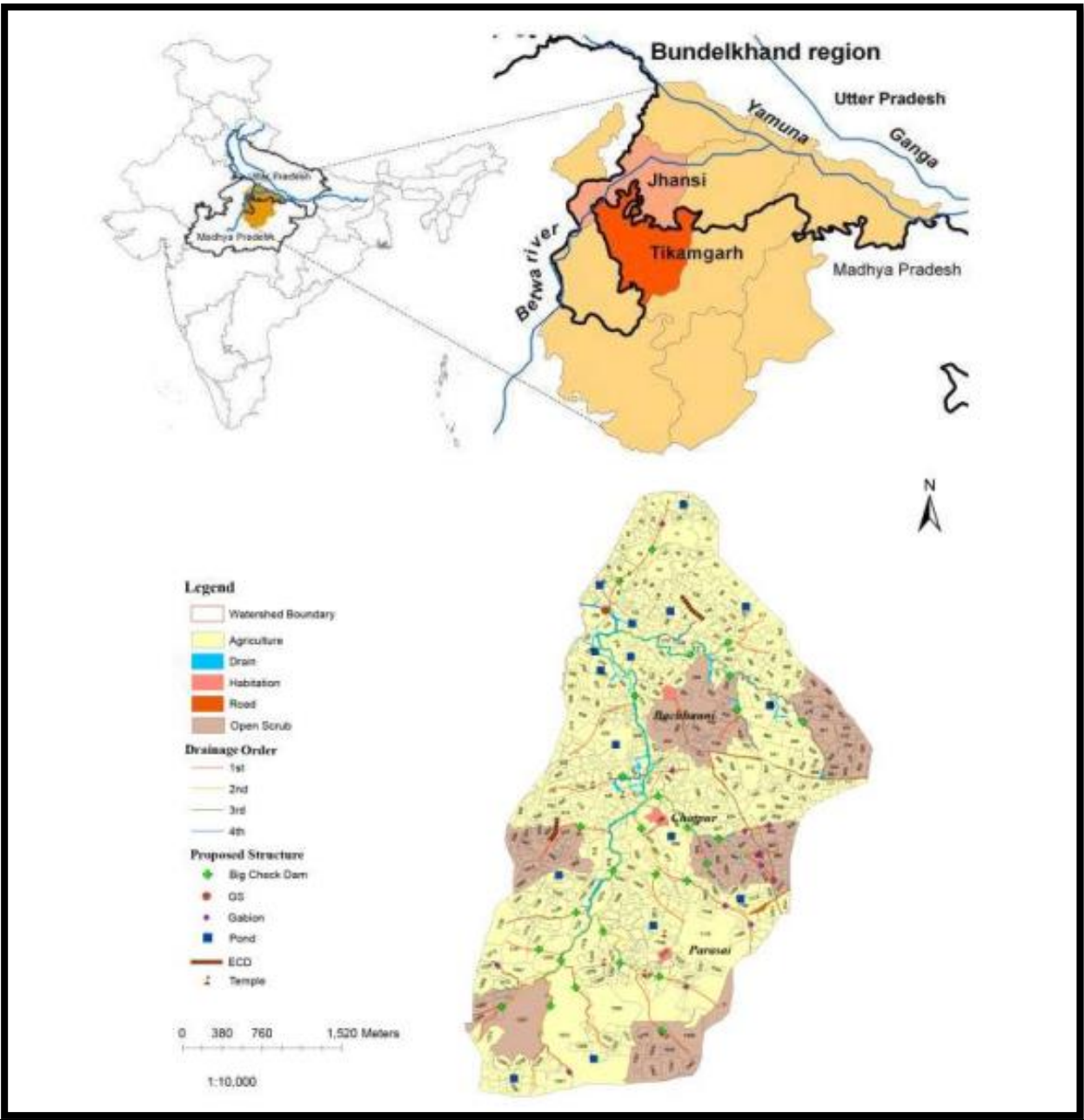
The Haweli, the traditional water harvesting structure in village Parasai



A check dam in Bachhauni village

Objectives and Methodology

- ICRISAT-CAFRI community watershed project - to increase drought resilience of farming through groundwater recharge and agroforestry interventions.
- Three villages - Parasai, Chataarpurn and Bachauni - covering 1250 ha of land, having 210 households with a population of 1068 male and 850 female members, selected as pilot sites
- Watershed interventions implemented during 2011 -2014 – checkdams; restoring existing structures among others
- Post intervention, data was generated through quantitative and qualitative social analysis tools to understand the benefits of the interventions to women, men and the community as a whole.
- 560 individuals in the three villages plus a control village.
- 33 semi-structured interviews including Focus Group discussions (FGDs)
- GILIT tool by “Water, Land and Ecosystems” (WLE) and IWMI piloted



Findings

Gender norms operate through social structure and keeps hierarchies in place

- The labor division of agricultural practices in the villages are guided by the gender and social norms
- Compared to women from upper caste, the women from the scheduled castes (socially marginalized groups) have greater mobility and have less strict norms
- Norms operate through the social structure itself and works in ways to keep these hierarchies in place.

Land for boys, bund for girls – the idea of gender equality

- Based on a felt need by the men and women during quantitative and qualitative engagements with them, teak wood saplings were provided to be grown on the bunds of the fields. Our data suggests that these teak wood trees would be sold of later to pay for dowry for the girls.

Important Insights

- Even if interventions are targeted to support women according to their stated needs of economic support, those can lead to reproducing gender relations of dependence despite being well intended. Focusing solely on economic empowerment excludes the need for social change through which women can become more self-reliant;
- Focus on learnings beyond the initially designed interventions can help develop gender-sensitive project designs in future.

Conclusions

- Intertwining social and technical interventions - increase women’s awareness, their access to and decision-making over resources.
- Mechanisms to be developed and adjusted continuously such that communities – men and women – are empowered to participate in the decision making process at various levels and for different purposes.
- When implementing watershed projects in a highly patriarchal context as in the Bundelkhand region, behavioural change must be recognized as an important outcome of the project
- Sensitization to strengthen systematic and gender-sensitive institution building, social engagement and capacity development.

