

3. "Watershed Plus" Incomes

Eight years ago, women from the *Banjara* (nomad) community in Madhusudangarh in Guna district of Madhya Pradesh didn't grow vegetables. Today, with the improved water availability in their fields through the Sri Dorabjee Tata Trust Project, the same women not only grow enough vegetables for their needs, they even make a small income by selling them in the local market. Since 2002, ICRISAT and BAIF (an NGO) have been working to implement 'watershed plus' activities through the project, which helped the villagers to make better use of natural resource management (NRM) practices.

"Our health and the health of our family members have improved since we started growing and consuming vegetables," said Samanta Bai. "We use the money to start thrift savings with our self-help group," added Nandita Bai.

According to Somnath Roy, Chief Program Coordinator for BAIF in Madhya Pradesh, when the soil and water harvesting structures increased water retention, the project officials could teach the *Banjaras* about vegetable cultivation. Covering an area of more than 5,000 ha, fifteen villages are part of the Tem river catchment. P Seshagiri Rao, BAIF's Regional Program Coordinator, says that the project has had a positive impact on around 10,000 families.

The project officials lent Sadaram Rs 14,000, to start a nursery to raise seedlings for the project. Sadaram generated an income of Rs 90,000 from this money, returned the loan, and went on to become an important nursery owner in the region. "Though I have only a *bhiga* of land (approximately 0.2 hectare), I have managed to get good value addition from nursery activities," said Sadaram. "We were landless laborers, and today eight members of my family have employment through this nursery. We don't go out for work."

Vegetable cultivation and nursery raising were a few among the portfolio of activities initiated as part of the 'watershed plus' activities. According to SP Wani, ICRISAT's Regional Theme Leader on Watersheds, the activities were designed to optimize the returns from the NRM activities so that the farmers got the best advantage.

Mangey Lal has been successfully using ICRISAT's tropicultor to sow his fields. He also changed from grain cultivation to grain plus vegetables plus fruit cultivation.



Mangey Lal and family with tropicultor.

Vermicomposting, integrated nutrient management, integrated pest management and biodynamic composting are among the other activities initiated. The latest addition is the satellite-linked resource center