



My Words

There is nothing more satisfying than to hear those whose life has been transformed by virtue of our guided action. Such stories are as much encouraging as inspiring, fuelling the immortals to continue pursuing the process of change. For any change to be real, however, it must transform life, lifestyle and livelihoods.

The stories on these pages provide a glimpse of change perceived by those who in conventional development parlance have been considered 'beneficiaries', essential to justify an investment for change. Their voices reflect intangible gains, which could not be perceived when the interventions were designed!

We end the momentous year with such soundbites, allowing such voices to echo in our work as we enter another year unfolding its quota of challenges and opportunities. Not to be let down by any odds, we re-dedicate ourselves with re-newed vigour to face emerging challenges. Our task is far from finished!

- K.G.Wankhede
Chief Executive

**WELCOME
2011**

Your Words

The 'reflections' are in right direction. Congratulations!

- D.K. Bhatt, Vice-Chairman, IFFDC

It is good to see success stories of Ratlam & Shivganga on water harvesting in this issue.

- Dr. V. Kumar, Ex-Chairman, IFFDC

Excellent initiative. Thanks. I look forward to receiving these regularly.

- Manish Gupta, Director, Strategy & JV, IFFCO

Your newsletter is a source of information about what's happening around NRM sector in India.

- Akmal Shareef, Country Director, WCC, Afghanistan

I must congratulate you for appraising us of your efforts towards water conservation. Sensitizing people alone can bring perceptible change in society.

- Pradip Dey, Principal Scientist, CSSRI, Karnal

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Reflections

Insights on the green cushion

Amidst dense canopy of teak trees, a beaming Dina Nath Singh enlists the intangible gains from 265 hectare of forested area. Protected and replanted since 1997, the manmade forest in village Jaitpur Kachhya is an oasis in an otherwise denuded hill slopes all across. Located about 50 km from the district town of Sagar in Madhya Pradesh, the forest cooperative has been effective in regenerating and conserving trees on revenue lands.

While loppings and litter from the forested area have been tangible gains for the villagers, Singh is more concerned about the intangible benefits that the community draws from the greenery. 'The fact that many like me lead a healthy life may have to do with the fresh air we receive as a bargain,' says Singh. Being the founding chairman of the village forest cooperative, Singh reflects a deep personal commitment towards forests and environment.



Dina Nath Singh

During past 13 years, IFFDC has regenerated some 27,000 hectare of degenerated wastelands in as many as 13 districts in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh through 146 Primary Farm Forestry Cooperative Societies (PFFCS). In Sagar district alone, over 4,800 ha of area has been brought under forest cover through 29 cooperative societies. Located in Bundelkhand region of central India, the sloping landscape is aptly suited for regenerating forests with premium species like teak.

As one travels some 10 km further from Jaitpur and approaches Dungariya, the forested hilltop can hardly be missed. An area of 212 ha stands tall, covered with wide variety of trees. Explains Rajneesh Mishra, 'the area only needed protection for the rootstocks to regenerate on its own.' All along the periphery of the slopes, water level in the village wells has improved significantly. A bunch of youth led by Mishra have been protecting the forest 24x7.

The story doesn't end here. The threats to community forests are mounting. While the possibility for being the forest department as a major stakeholder over such community forest may emerge due to the valuable timber. But for the commitment of persons like Singh and Mishra, these woodlots would have long been consigned to the saw mills. The fact that these have survived raises several unresolved issues.

What will be the future of these community forests? While the forest department has legal cover for violations, community forests are bereft of such powers. Shouldn't the state governments provide special provisions for upkeep of such forests in lieu of their ecosystem services? Shouldn't community forests be given a legal status?



Rajneesh Mishra

In the year ahead, the forest cooperatives are gearing to collectively work at district, state and national level to raise such issues. The challenge is to not only convince the respective governments to accord recognition to community-forestry but to provide legal and institutional sanctity for such efforts to replicate across the country as well. The time to act is NOW.

Avadhut and three goats

Lalita Dubdube finds it hard to recall her dreadful past. For her, it is the present that holds promise for a better future. Her elder son is pursuing secondary education at the village school while his polio-affected younger son is looking after the small patch of land that her husband left behind. This is all about life she has been able to gather.

Others in the village knew her real story. She was a mentally challenged widow, barely able to make both ends meet. Her children were exposed to the vagaries of life early in their childhood, the daily ordeal of survival had robbed them of their childhood. The writing on the wall was clear for the family.

That the family has survived and is now doing well is no less than a miracle. Under IFFCO-funded Integrated Rural Development Project in Mogra Dhotra village of Amravati district, the family had received three goats and a buck by virtue of the head of the family being a widow. Within 18 months, the little gesture by the project has turned life around for the family.

The 3 goats have multiplied to 16, giving rare opportunity to the family to pocket their first earning by selling 4 bucks for Rs 9,500. There has been no looking back since then. The polio-affected son, Avadhut, has firmly held the reigns of the family. Not only has he taken charge of goat-rearing, he has brought small farm under cultivation too.

The worst is history as Lalita has won over her mental illness and her elder son has resumed studies. Despite his disability, Avadhut has emerged as a symbol of courage and conviction. His story has indeed been an inspiration in a region that has been known for unending stories of destitution and farmers' suicides.



Lalita with her son and goats

Fruits of Change

Raju Singhad is an unusual name for a woman as she greets us with a bouquet of freshly plucked marigold from the periphery of her half an acre patch of land in village Rajpura, about 10 km from the salty confectionery town of Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh. Not only is her name unusual, her accomplishments are equally striking as well. What a man could not do a woman has achieved with ease.



Raju Singhad with her son

Trees are laden with guava and aonla whereas custard apples are dangling across at several places. Observing our growing temptation, the Sita in her responds: 'eat as much as you can'! There are 40 guava, 5 each of aonla and mango and some 10 custard apple plants on offer. Much before we could devour the fruits, she presented us with some of best from her small orchard.

It was later learnt that these saplings were given to her five years ago by IFFDC as part of the Western India Rainfed Farming Project (WIRFP). That she would not only plant the saplings but nurture them to fruition has come out as a big surprise. Contended as she is, a yearly net profit of around Rs 15,000 does not include the nutritional security to the family. Isn't it a win-win situation?

NEWS UPDATES ...

The Growing Chain



Hon'ble Union Finance Minister, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, inaugurating IFFDC Agro Forestry Service Center

Farmers in remote areas suffer from non-availability of timely agro-inputs, which not only have adverse affect on crop production but on their livelihoods too. Through its Agro-Inputs Supply Programme (ASP), IFFDC with the help of IFFCO makes efforts to supply timely agro-inputs to farmers in far-flung areas.

To add to its existing chain of delivery outlets, an Agro-forestry Service Center was opened during November 2010 at village Ahiron in district Murshidabad (West Bengal) by Hon'ble Finance Minister, Govt of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, in the presence of Dr. U. S. Awasthi, Managing Director and Shri A. Roy, Marketing Director, IFFCO.

The Finance Minister appreciated the efforts being made by IFFCO and IFFDC for serving the rural community.

Wishing You a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year 2011

IFFDC

Preserving Nature . Nurturing Lives

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