

Grain Bank

Jalihal area is situated in the rain shadow region. Even though all the parts of Maharashtra and Karnataka region receive good rains, Jalihal area, being in the rainshadow zone received very less and erratic rain! Secondly the land structure is ashly and it neither have water holding capacity nor have nutritional richness to ensure good crop yield. Hence villagers who live in these villages depend on agriculture for their survival. Agriculture is mainly dependent on rain, rainfall is erratic and unsure, local people live with the risk of their survival. Small and marginal farmers are the worst sufferers.

Theoretically the area monsoon starts in the first week of June every year. (As the area is very dry and there is no rainfall during the months November to May, humidity is less, there is almost no moisture in the top layer of the soil, hence the sowing needs to be done only after the first rainfall of monsoon) Farmers sow the seeds of their first crop in the second week of June and they are supposed to harvest the first crop in the month of October- November every year. Bajra is the main crop which is grown in this season. The climatic condition is good to take the Bajra crop if the seeds are sown till July. Bajra is the main food which the local people eat throughout the year. So they grow Bajra mainly for the year round consumption of the families. (Once the crop is harvested, they store the grains in bags, for the family consumption, they take the grains out and grind those to make the flour. This flour is used to make pan cakes to eat in every meal with some vegetables. Every person eats 6-10 pan cakes every day, each cake weighs around 30 grams. The average size of a farmer family is of 6 persons) generally all the family members eat three times a day and Pan cakes made up of Bajra is the main food. Bajra is cheap compared to other grains, for making pan cakes using Bajra there is no need of mixing it with costly oil, only water has to be mixed and then it is to be pressed by hands to make it round and thin! The technique of making Bajra Pan cakes is widely known amongst women and all the women possess the skill. Bajra pan cakes can be stored in open air for 3-4 weeks. Thus this cheap, durable, tasty is the lifeline of local people.

As the area is in rain shadow zone, every year farmers face the risk of insufficient rainfall before July (i.e. during the sowing season of Bajra). When it rains sufficiently during monsoon i.e. till July end, farmers can get sufficient food grains for their yearlong survival. But if it does not rain in time and in the required quantity, then they have no food to eat throughout the year because Bajra can't be grown after August till the next monsoon. Other food grains which are grown after August are costly to bring into eatable form and people are not used to eat those in regular meals. So when the farmers can't grow Bajra in their farm, they have to purchase it from the market. To purchase they need money, which they lend from the local money lenders with high rate of interest! As all the family members eat Bajra thrice a day and that too in good quantity, the family need have sufficient food for about one and half years (i.e. till the next harvest). Here the farmer gets trapped and has to pay majority of this income to repay the lent amount. So they go on becoming poorer. Majority of the families which gets trapped are the poor and small farmers.

YPS is observing this happening every year since last ten years! The monsoon of 2009 was the same! There was some rain in June 2009 but not sufficient to sow Bajra seeds. The rain disappeared after June. And suddenly there was a huge and sudden downpour in the month of October 2009 which damaged all the standing crops. During 2009, first due to the scarcity of rains in June- July the farmers could not sow Bajra seeds. The Bajra seed sowing season was over, then the farmers planted other crops like Jawar, Maize which were washed out by rains.

Yojana and YPS discussed about the recurring occurrence of food scarcity problem and decided to make some permanent arrangement to relieve from the difficulty. Thus the concept of Grain Bank took birth.

As per the rapid study made in the month of October 2009, there are 470 odd

families which suffered a lot because of loss of crop. We have decided to support 360 families with the grain bank concept.

The 360 families which suffered heavy losses first due to no rains and later with excessive rains did one of the following-

- A. Stayed in the village
- B. Preferred to migrate to cities for 6 months in search of work and returning back in the month of April-May.

Out of the families which stayed in the villages 104 families participated in the Grain bank program. But as remaining families preferred to migrate as their needs were more than just food for survival! So these families migrated to cities for sugar cane cutting ,brick making , agricultural work and stayed there for 6 months and they came back to the village in the month of April- May. After coming back they are enrolling themselves to the grain bank.

“Bank”

Instead of giving away the food stuff to the suffering people on non returnable basis , it was decided to give the form of a bank to this activity, processed have been carved very carefully and systematically.

Achievements:

- The Grain Bank have supported 106 families and ensured their food security.
- Systems have been established to cover 306 families and provide food security through the grain bank.
- For feeding the families in any worst food situation in the area the members of Grain Bank need not to worry about their food and also they need not to beg for money to the money lenders.
- Capacities of a group of local youths have been built to run the Grain bank through training and exposures. Now the grain bank is being run by the local youths. They have better understanding of the local situation and families. Thus local people are helping their own people.