

Experience Sharing on Bio-Cultural Protocols for Livestock Keepers

Lokhit Pashu Palak Sansthan (LPPS), Sadri,
Rajasthan

30th November to 2nd December 2012

Documentation



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Acknowledgments

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Program

Day 1 – 30th November

6 pm	Welcome Address Mr. Hanwant Singh, director, LPPS
7 pm	Group Discussion: Forest and livestock keeper: A symbiotic relation?

Day 2 – 1st December

Progress of Bio Cultural Protocols among Communities	
10 am	Field Visit and Meeting
2 pm	Working Groups and Discussion: Development of BCP: Process and Application
5 pm	Presentation of Findings

Day 3 – 2nd December

Learning from Bio Cultural Protocols and How to take them forward	
9 am	Field Visit to Camel herder and Shepherd
11.30 pm	Working Groups: Brainstorming on Future of BCPs
2 pm	Conclusion
3 pm	Vote of thanks

Day 1

Introduction

Mr Hanwant Singh of LPPS inaugurated the two day workshop on the progress so far of the development of the Bio-Cultural Protocols (BCP) from among the communities. He set the agenda for the next two days to discuss the benefits and future of BCP and gave a brief description of what the BCP stands for. He began with presenting an overview of the BCP of the Raika's, camel and livestock herders from around Sadri. He addressed the group present on the status of the BCP of different communities, two completed BCPs of the Raikas' of Sadri and Banni buffalo breeders of Kutch, and two ongoing BCPs of Camel Rearers of Kutch and the Jaisalmer Camel breeders. In addition two representatives of the Kuruba shepherds from Karnataka participated to learn the concept of BCP and share their views on the applicability of the BCP among their group.

This was followed by an introduction of all the participants from the different communities of livestock keepers.

Livestock Keepers

Raikas – Livestock breeders, Sadri, Rajasthan

The Raikas were represented by eight members of the community on the first day. They rear livestock for a living. They are livestock keepers and rear camels, sheep, goats, buffaloes and cows. The group ranged in the economic profile from those being mostly landless to those having upto 25 acres of land but all had livestock. Their community opinion leaders were a part of the group. Most of those involved have been involved in the creation of the BCP for their community. They are also actively involved in fighting for their rights in the use of the forests and other commons for grazing their animals. They have also represented their community at the national level.



Banni – Buffalo Breeders

The Banni buffalo rearers were represented by two members from the Maldhari community. They were livestock keepers and were rearing cows and buffaloes. Their community has been living in the Banni grassland in Kutch for the last 500 years and are still fighting for the rights to graze their animals. The community has made the effort to get the Banni buffalo recognised by the NBAGR. They have completed the BCP for their community and have actively used it for the recognition of their rights by the Gujarat and the National government. In this group also the members were an ex-sarpanch (village head) and another active member of the community who had been representing the community in various forums. They were also involved in the completion and application of the BCP for their community.

Kutch– Camel Breeders

The Kutchi camel rearers also belong to the Maldhari community and were represented by two members. One of them was rearing the Kharai camel which is unique in its feeding habits and feeds on the mangroves and the other was rearing the Kutchi camel breed. They also rear goats and cows. The representation again was very varied in both the economic profile as well as the opinion leadership of the community. They have started preparing the BCP and have a working document.

Kurubas – Sheep Breeders

The Kurubas are traditional sheep breeders from the deccan plateau. They were represented by two members who reared sheeps, goats and horses. Most of them are migratory and spend better part of the year out of their hometowns. As in the other groups they were also key opinion leaders and have represented the community in different forums. They were not yet involved with a BCP.



Jaisalmer Camel Rearers

The Jaisalmer camel rearers are a diverse group belonging to different castes and religions. They were represented by two members from the Muslim and the Hindu Rajput communities. They rear camels, sheep, goat, cows and buffaloes. The BCP for their group is in preparation and a draft document is available.

Others Present

Sahjeevan an NGO from Bhuj (Kutch/ Gujarat) was represented by Mr Kiran Patel, who is actively involved in the preparation of the BCP for the camel rearers of Kutch and the Banni Buffalo and cattle keepers.

Dr. Ilse Koehler-Rollefson of LPP (League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development) was instrumental in the organisation and proceedings of the workshop. She has been promoting the development of BCPs for livestock keepers in India and elsewhere. She discussed the lack of awareness about the traditional livestock keeper rights across the country. The wrong notions among the forest department and the other groups regarding the damage caused by grazing were discussed. She emphasised on the need to impress on these groups the importance of traditional livestock keepers to the economy and to food security.

The Rainfed-Livestock Network which sponsored the project was represented by Mr Kamal Kishore (coordinator), who has also been involved in the implementation of the BCP. He further discussed the issues brought out regarding the importance of the livestock keepers to the economy. The share of animal products in agriculture has gone up from 12% to 45% in the last 60 years. The small and marginal farmers/ livestock keepers play a key role in the increase of this share. Around 70% of milk and 30% of the eggs (backyard poultry), 90% of non-poultry meat is produced by them. They are the key people contributing to the food security. They have been grazing the animals on the common lands and forests for centuries.

Technical Session

Forest and livestock keeper: A symbiotic relation?

The group had visited the forest department on the first day, in support of the Raikas and also to understand closely the issue of rights to forest use for grazing that they faced. The Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary that bordering Raikas villages is proposed to become a national park. In the process the grazing lands/pasture land where the Raikas have been grazing their livestock for centuries, will now become totally inaccessible to them. The system traditionally known as the 'Godari system', under which the king assigned pasture land to the livestock keepers, would be over. This will result in them being left with insufficient pastureland. The Raikas had appealed under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 and were to meet the senior forest officials and political leaders to discuss their issues.

The organisers had used this visit and ensuing discussion bring forward the importance of BCP for the community. For the groups who had already used the BCP, this was an opportunity to look at additional issues that should be included in the BCPs to make them more holistic. A discussion session took place post this visit. The agenda for the further dwell on the symbiotic relationship of the livestock keeper with the forests, to understand in depth of how to bring out this relationship.

There were several important points /issues came up:

- The taste and smell of the milk varies based on the fodder that the livestock feeds on. Several examples were discussed like the taste of the milk from camels feeding in the mangroves is salty. Similarly when the sheep feed on leaves from the Neem trees, the milk smells and tastes like Neem. The livestock keepers confirm this when the animals throw out the seeds of plants which they ate during the day. This along with the faeces is seen as means of natural propagation of the forests by the livestock.
- The Raikas also believe that the animals feeding on neem and other medicinal plants are less prone to sickness. They are also a source for traditional medicine, for e.g., the urine from these sheep is used to cure cold.
- Another interesting property that was observed among the animals feeding in the jungle was that they do not succumb to snake bite. It was attributed to the diversity in the forage consumed by the livestock. The kurubas had recorded atleast 25 varieties of plants that their animals feed on while in the jungle.
- The interaction with the wildlife was also found to be unique. Historically, the livestock keepers have never done and have not been harmed by the wild animals. Even if an animal falls prey to a wild animal like a leopard, the livestock keepers accept this. It is traditional knowledge that the carnivores only prey when necessary. They don't harm the animal in any way. The Kurubas are known to give a proper burial to the wolves, if they find any dead during their migration.
- The livestock is also a strong indicator of the weather phenomenon for the livestock keepers. The livestock restrict their movements and show behavioural changes when they sense rainfall. There are several plants which sprout when the rain is about to

come. The livestock keepers also find out the possibility of rain by upturning stones/small rocks, to check the level of humidity. The livestock keepers demonstrate deep knowledge in understanding the natural phenomenon around them.

- Their animals have traditionally been a source of food for the carnivores. Even the camel is attacked and fed-on by leopards. The Kharai camel is known to avoid quick sand and swim to and fro to mangroves and coming back only for fresh water.
- The Raikas have also played an important role in the conservation of forests. The Raikas have helped the forest department in extinguishing the forest fires. They help in pouring water and also cutting the grass etc. to prevent the fire from spreading further.

It was thus established that the traditional livestock keepers have always been instrumental in the conservation and propagation of the forests. The relationship has been one where they mutually benefit and any harm to one does negatively impact the other. The BCP by recording these relationships closely can play a major role in elevating the misconceptions about the livestock and their keepers in their role as keepers of forests. It will also help them in securing grazing rights over forest lands nationally.

Day 2

Working Groups - Development of BCP: Process and Application

Dr Ilse Koehler-Rollefson organised the group into various sub-groups based on the community membership. Each group had to discuss the questionnaire (Annexure I) and within the group and present the findings and learning at the end of the session. The findings were presented by a member from the subgroup and were presented to the gathering. The groups were then to answer questions directed to them by other groups. Mr. Hanwant Singh took the groups through the questionnaire and explained the process in greater detail.

The group-wise findings are as below.

Group I – Banni Buffalo breeders

Banni grassland is the world's second largest grassland. The main occupation of the Muslim Maldharis there is that of raising cows and buffaloes and selling milk.

They have their own society known as the Banni Pashu Urcherak Maldhari Sangathan. The society is registered and has 1000 members. They have completed their BCP and were helped in this process by BPUMS, Natural Justice (South Africa), LPP (Germany) and were financed by the Ford Foundation.

The BCP has helped them in recording their culture, knowledge about the traditional work. They have been able to fight for their rights by being with the boundaries of the law. Their efforts have been supported by the government of India and Gujarat for fighting for their rights.



To create the BCP, nineteen panchayats, 48 village heads and pastoralists got together to raise awareness about the BCP. The village community's women and youth were involved in the process. Sahjeevan (NGO) and the Banni panchayat parishad helped them in this process. All members were collected at one place and an understanding and trust was established. They then went to each village and collected the required information and spread awareness.

From their understanding, they are of the opinion that the entire community should be collected at one place and be made aware. Then the process of collating data should begin. They should work together as a family.

They believe that the BCP is very important and that all traditional pastoralists should make their own BCP. They didn't feel that there are any pitfalls of creating the BCP. To take the

BCP to the national level, all state governments should be made aware and then help in implementing the BCPs.

The things that can be added to the existing format according to them are:

1. All communities should be considered (along with livestock keepers)
2. Apart from occupation, the way of life / culture should also be included
3. The children of livestock keepers should be educated in the conventional method and also be educated about their heritage
4. Apart from pastoralists, the artisans should also be considered so that they get jobs
5. Animal breed and traditional treatments should also be captured
6. The way of life should be honoured

Group II – Raikas: Camel Rearers, Sadri

They are also known as the Godwadi Raikas. They believe that they have been created by lord Shiva (Hindu deity) to take care of livestock. They belong to the Sadri in Pali district. They have been fighting for their rights to graze since 2002, since the permission to graze in the forest was completely revoked. As mentioned earlier, they are also trying to get their rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 as the national park once formed will extend beyond the area of the wild life sanctuary and will drastically reduce their pasture land.

They have a registered society known as the Raika Sangarsh Samiti. There group is formed by 85 villages and has 750 members belonging to the Raika, Gujar and the Vishnoi communities. They work closely with LPPS, who helped them in forming the BCP. They were also helped by Natural Justice, SEWA in making their BCP. The women and the youth also participate in the process of making the BCP.



They felt the need for BCP when their gudara land was taken away. This has led to the younger generation losing interest in the traditional profession and moving away to cities where they are doing menial jobs. They also feel that their community and the others need recognition. The BCP process started in 2009. The BCP made by them was presented in Kenya and was adopted by the Kenyan government. They feel that the same should be done by all the traditional livestock keepers in India too. They feel this is important because the livestock is primarily responsible for keeping alive their culture and traditions in the form of clothes etc. In their experience if the issues like grazing land are resolved, even the educated youth adopt this profession.

They have used the BCP in 2012 to defend the rights of the pastoralists against the policies of the forest department. They intend to make use of it to strengthen their claim at the grazing rights and inclusion of the same at the national level.

The Raikas are of the opinion that as the BCP has helped them, it will also help the other traditional pastoralists. They will provide all help necessary to other groups who want to make the BCP. The only they have faced in the process is that it is very time consuming.

The BCP should be taken to a national level by forming a body comprising of all the livestock keeper groups.

Group III – Camel Rearers of Kutch

They are also known as the unt Maldharis. They rear the Kutchi and Kharai camels. These camels are unique in their feeding habits. For three months in a year they swim to the mangroves and feed there.

They too have a registered committee which has 350 members. They are in the process of completing the BCP. They have been helped in this process by Sahjeevan, Natural Justice, Sanskruti and LPPS. For creating the BCP, people from different communities got together and carried out the process.

The BCP has helped them in getting national recognition of the Kharai animal. It would be of further importance in helping in the marketing of the milk from the camels.



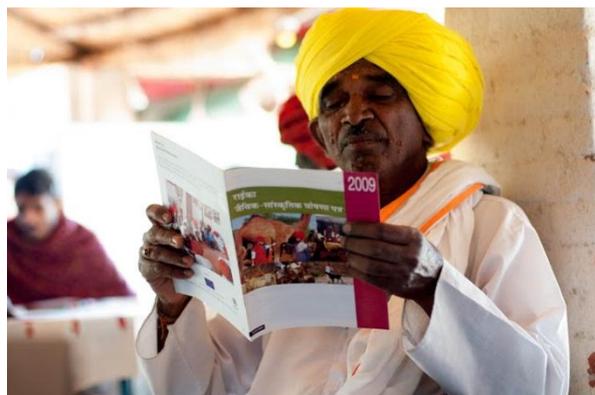
They feel that for creating the BCP the entire community should be together and help in creating awareness. The women and children should be an integral part of this group. They feel that all communities should make their BCP.

The only issue faced in creating the BCP is in explaining it to the community. They feel that to take it to the national level, all the government officials should be made aware and make them a part of the process.

Another social issue facing the livestock keepers is the lack of interest shown by youth. The youth see it as affecting their social status. They find it difficult to get a bride if they are only rearing livestock. They feel that the youth should be educated and also learn the traditional knowledge of livestock keeping.

Group IV – Kuruba: Sheep Rearers

They belong to Belgaum in Karnataka. The Kurubas are mainly in areas bordering Karnataka and Maharashtra. They mainly breed deccani sheep and are migratory. They migrate for four months in a year, during the rains (June to September). They sell the animals and wool to outsiders. In the recent years they have started value adding to the wool and increasing their income in the process. The community was very close and earlier if anyone lost their sheep the others would help them out.

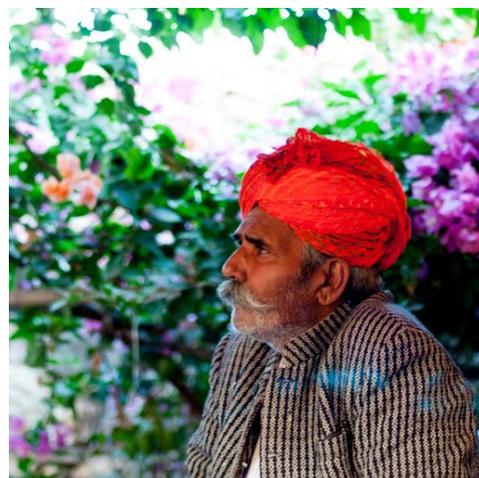


After being a part of the session they want to get involved in the BCP process and make one for their own community. They feel that it would help them in getting their grazing rights, especially when the government officials are forcing them to leave their traditional way of life and move to intensive farming. They feel that all livestock keepers should have their own BCP.

Group V – Jaisalmer Camel Rearers

The Jaisalmer camel rearers are varied in the composition. The communities that are rearing camels are the Muslim, Rajputs, Raikas, Vishnois, Bhils and others tribes. The other animals reared by them are cows, sheep and goats. They mostly rear the indigenous varieties of animals. Traditionally Raikas had been rearing camels since the last 700 years; the Rajputs only started breeding camels in the last 200 years. Their main source of income is from selling four to five year old camels, two year old male goats and sheep. They also sell cow milk. Camel milk is mainly used for consumption.

There registered organisation is called the Jaisalmer pashupalak sanstha. It has around 125 members and 11 members belong to the committee. The BCP work had started recently and still in progress. The women and youth have been involved in the process. The members of LPPS have met with the villagers and collated data for the BCP. The proof of their land-use rights exists in the records of the kings of Jodhpur and Jaisalmer



The need for the BCP was felt when the orans, traditional

grasslands were slowly been taken from them and transferred for commercial purposes. They feel that the BCP will help them in getting their pasturelands back.

They are very happy about the BCP and want everyone to participate in making the BCP. The only issue observed was the lack of awareness and understanding about the BCP among this group.

Day 3

Field Trip

The groups were divided into two. One group went to observe the Bothi sheep breeder and comprised of the Kurubas and the rest of the livestock keepers went to visit the camel breeder.

The two groups discussed their observations.

Camel visit group

The Kutchi group felt that the camels being reared by the Raikas fetched a higher price. The 8-9 month old camel was fetching 15 to 20 thousand rupees. The camels were also allowed to roam freely as compared to those Kutch, where they are herded under guidance.

Physical differences in the camels were also observed. The Raikas camels were found to be shorter. The amount of milk given was also slightly higher, with nearly six to seven litres a day. They used it mostly for personal consumption. The wool of the Kharai camel was softer in texture and taller.

In social differences, the younger generation was found to be more aware and involved in both breeding and marketing,

Sheep visit group

The Bothi sheep visiting group findings were contrary. It was observed that the animals were not being kept properly. The hygiene and health were poor. The lack of a registered organisation of these sheep rearers was an area of concern. The physical features were found to be more or less same, i.e., the height and size.

The sheep were found to sell at a lower price as compared to the deccani sheep. The marketing was found to be very poor. It was found that they are presently selling to middlemen who just touch and decide on the price, which is not up to mark. The wool was also being sold in a similar manner thus fetching them nearly pittance.

The Kurubas suggested that they should form a group which can help them in obtaining medicine, training them in marketing and helping them in other negotiations with the government.

On the social front the education of the girl child was found to be very low.

Plenary Session – Future of BCPs

The session was held to discuss how the BCP should be taken forward. The groups were seated as per the community and a common questionnaire (Annexure 2) was given. The groups discussed this as a whole. The findings are as follows:

Increasing awareness about the BCPs

To increase the awareness it is important to get the village leaders and the opinion leaders on the same platform and the concept should be explained to them. They should then be given the task of taking the discussion to the other groups. The villagers should be gathered and also a door to door awareness should happen.



To take it further the government should be reached out to through an organised body of the community representatives. The community should also get involved in the gram sabhas and other bodies.

Furthermore the lack of younger generation's participation is being felt. To remedy the same the education levels among this group need to increase. The village adults need to understand and let the youth lead the way. Their increased involvement will generate more interest in the occupation and also the related issues.

Taking BCP to the national level

The group was of the opinion that a committee at the national level comprising of members across the communities should be made. The committee can use different media like rallies, press conferences, print media etc. to increase the awareness among the government and people alike.

Suggested Hindi Translation for the “BCP”

Javik Sanskritik

- Adhikar Pehchan Patra
- Adhikar Pechan Prapatra
- Sandharb Dastavez
- Dastavez



Conclusion

The workshop was concluded on the note of positivity. It was felt that important steps have been taken in the progress of the BCP but still work needs to be done. The communities having seen results from using the BCPs inspired the other groups to take it up with more interest. Having learnt from each other, the groups felt that they could contribute more to their BCPs.

An important takeaway was the need to validate the BCPs by the community itself and proof wherever possible to be provided. The gaps that were found would have to be fulfilled. Additional sections on the forest and livestock keeper interaction needs to be added.

Motivating the youth to take up the traditional occupation and to preserve the knowledge was the need of the hour. Also generating more awareness among the community was required.

Closure and Word of Thanks

Mr Hanwant Singh concluded the session by again emphasising on the learning and the need for the community to stand up in solidarity to achieve the goals. He appreciated the contribution of all participants and thanked them for their valuable insights.

Dr. Ilse closed the workshop by thanking all the participants and expressing hope in the continuing support of all the groups towards the BCP.

Annexure

Annexure I – Questionnaire I

Questionnaire -1

1. Give a brief introduction to your community: name, area where you live, what animals you keep and any particulars
2. Are you also organised as a registered/voluntary society? If yes, how many members does your association have
3. Who initiated the BCP?
4. What were the main reasons for developing the BCP?
5. How – at what occasions – were you planning to use the BCP?
6. What is the expected response? In the community and with the outsiders?
7. What is the process of developing the BCP? Who is involved? Do women and youth take part? Who does the main work? How will the BCP be validated?
8. Any suggestions for improving the process?
9. What would be your advice for other communities to develop BCPs? Should they do it? Could you give them help to do so?
10. Do you see any danger in developing BCPs?
11. Do you have any questions about BCPs?
12. Any suggestions on how to take the BCPs forward at the national level?

Annexure II – Questionnaire II

Questions

1. How to make more people better understand the concept of BCP? How to raise awareness about it?
2. Several groups mentioned the need for a national level association of livestock keepers. What would be the steps towards that?
3. Suggest an official Hindi name for BCP.

Annexure III – List of Participants

	Name of Participant	Organisation/ Community
1	Mr. Hanwant Singh	LPPS
2	Dr. Ilse Koller-Rollefson	LPP
3	Dr. Kamal Kishore	RLN
4	Mr. Dinesh	
5	Ms. Dipti Desai	
6	Mr. Kiran M. Patel	Sahjeevan
7	Ms. Kanika Chandel	Consultant
8	Ishabhai Mathia	Maldhari (Buffalo)
9	Kamalsha Saiyad	Maldhari (Buffalo)
10	Noor Mohammad Jat	Maldhari (Camel)
11	Bhikabhai Rabari	Maldhari (Camel)
12	Neelkanth Nagappa Kuruba	Kuruba
13	V. P. Demannaver	Kuruba
14	Mangilal Raika	Raika
15	Adaramji Raika	Raika
16	Dailibai Raika	Raika
17	Kalyan Singh	Raika
18	Tolaram Raika	Raika
19	Lakma Ram	Raika
20	Pemaram Raika	Raika
21	Harjiram ji Raika	Raika
22	Hakmaram ji Raika	Raika
23	Parbat Singh	Raika
24	Babulalji Raika	Raika
25	Bheraramji Raika	Raika
26	Ravta Ram	Raika
27	Ila Ram	Raika
28	Bhava Ram	Raika
29	Bhabhita Ram	Raika
30	Boon Singh	Jaisalmer Camel Rearer