

Case Study: Community Fencing

Name of the Portfolio > Livelihood> Agriculture

Before the intervention

Manpur a small village in the Kota block of Bilaspur district of Chhattisgarh. 80% of the population is tribal with Gonds being the predominant caste. The women self-help group is very active in this village, following more than a year long struggle and hard work. Manpur is one of the active villages, but this village is plagued by many issues like migration, double burden of disease such communicable and non-communicable diseases, childhood malnutrition, lack of livelihood options and problems in agricultural practices.

The agriculture team of JSS is constantly working and conducting awareness sessions and village level training on conservation and preservation of local seed varieties, on various chemical free/ organic farming techniques/methods. In Chhattisgarh for generations people used to cultivate “Dalhan, Tilhan, and Anaj” seasonally. Farmers used to take Utera fasal (a second crop in which seeds are broadcasted in the existing crop of rice) of legumes and oil seeds traditionally. Such practices significantly contributed dietary diversity and good nutrition. Over the years people have stopped these practices due to problems of stray cattle, wild boars, other wild animals and monkeys destroying the crops making it mandatory for people to guard their fields day and night. Policy changes such as MSP for paddy have also impacted the traditional practices in regional agriculture.

The intervention

In the previous year, JSS had started the community fencing in one of the forest villages, and the experience was shared in the farmers meeting of Manpur village. Through the multiple meetings, JSS’s agriculture team discussed the importance and effectiveness of community fencing with key individuals at the village level. Farmers from Manpur village echoed the various problems that affect the second crop and decided to do community fencing for agricultural land. With the help of the JSS team, people from Manpur made a detailed plan of how to complete the fencing, land to cover, and monetary and labour contributions from every household. They formed a village committee to execute this uphill task. The same committee presented the proposal in writing for community fencing along with the help of JSS’s agriculture team members to the MLA of the area. At the same time, they also sent a proposal to their panchayat for fencing. After about 2 months, the villagers received the first instalment of the money committed by the MLA office, but they did not receive the money from Panchayat. After much waiting, the villagers received the small amount of money in the panchayat's account finally. The work got speeded up, and now around half of the fields were covered by a fence. Further, the material was insufficient to cover the complete field area. Again, a series of village meetings were conducted to discuss the issue and find the solution. It was because of the collective thinking of the whole village that some of the economically well-off families in the village community came forward and contributed further, and the villagers resumed the fencing work again. Now everyone was involved even more actively in the work, foreseeing the fruit of their hard work in terms of “Utera fasal”. Everyone was happy that they would be cultivating Utera fasal after so many years and that too without even guarding their fields. A total of around 160 acres of land were fenced through this initiative. The proof of pudding came in the form of every household being able to take the Utera fasal with the help of community fencing.

The after

A total of 160 acres of land was fenced. This was done during paddy cultivation. Around 60-acre land was cultivated for Utera fasal after paddy cultivation. This year villagers in the Manpur have not migrated to nearby cities and states in search of livelihood options, unlike every year. Every household is busy cultivating the Utera fasal, most of them got daily wage work in their own village by working in the fields. Many of them automatically got busy with their field work. With the Utera cultivation there will be an availability of at least 2-3 types of pulses (“Tivra, Batri and Chana”) and oil seeds like “Alsi” (Flaxseeds) in their food basket, which was not the case earlier. Now onwards there is no looking back at least with the Utera fasal, additionally farmers in Manpur foresee a healthy, happy and thriving village in future.

Beneficiary quotes

“Earlier we could not do Utera fasal, cattle, deers and wild boars used to destroy the crop if not guarded. And one person in the family would be compulsorily engaged in guarding the crops. Now, community fencing has helped us beyond our imagination.”

A 51-year-old male farmer and working committee member from Manpur

“Initially, I thought everybody would be meeting for some time and then after a few meetings people would forget. But to my surprise the bhaiya from Ganiyari hospital (JSS hospital) constantly motivated us and sat with us and made us understand the importance of community fencing and it is done finally in our village.”

A 66-year-old women farmer from Manpur village

“In the last many years, we never did Utera cultivation but this year we are very busy cultivating Batri, Tivra and Chana. This really makes me happy”.

A 36-year-old male farmer from Manpur

Key contributing factors

- Collective thinking
- Constant dialogue within community
- Solution approach
- Community participation
- Community contribution
- Community ownership

Infographic

Beneficiaries	Land fenced and cultivated	Items cultivated	Yield in quintals
90 families	160 acres	Paddy and Utera (Pulses and Oil seeds)	1600 quintals paddy and around 200 quintals Utera

7 female SHGs/farmer groups	14 acres	Organic Mustard	70 quintals
1 male farmer group	8 acres	Organic potato and Mustard	30 quintals Potato and 10 quintals Mustard

Goal Impact

- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being):** Dietary diversity and good nutrition will help the community in Manpur village thrive and transform their life help them achieve good health and well-being.
- **SDG 1, 8 and 11 (No Poverty, Decent work within their village, and Sustainable Economic growth and communities):** With community fencing the villagers can take second crops and other traditional crops in Utera. This ensures an easy income along with nutrition and prevents distress migration, as work is available in the village for people in both seasons. The entire process of community fencing in their village has created a sense of collective thinking and community ownership which is the essence of social fabric for sustainable communities.
- **SDG 13 (Climate action):** Organic farming methods and traditional crops with Utera will help rejuvenate soil by enhancing its nutrition through diverse and increased microbial action in the soil.

Images:



Figure 1 & 2 Fencing work done by people of Manpur village



Figure 3 Hirva legume cultivation in fenced land



Figure 4 Community meeting for fencing work