

FP045: Ground Water Recharge and Solar Micro-irrigation to Ensure Food Security and Enhance Resilience in Vulnerable Tribal Areas of Odisha (NABARD), India

CSO comments on the project given as intervention during the 16th GCF Board Meeting, April 2017

- We are supportive of this proposal, with its social co-benefits to improve water and food security of vulnerable populations. We noted that the crop water budgeting plan, water sharing plan, and livelihood improvement plan would be developed to achieve the vulnerable population's health and well-being through food and water security as described in the log frame. However, we want more attention to be given to community consultation, especially women, as well as their active participation/engagement in all relevant processes, including the implementation and monitoring of the plans. Selection of the community beneficiaries could be focused exclusively on the existing social organisation within tribal communities like clans, padas/sahis or single women groups since the GCF focuses on empowering women and in particular single women.
- In the log frame, the baseline for the increased resilience of health and well-being are: (1) more than 75% of the identified vulnerable people are food insecure, and (2) 70% of the surveyed area report water-borne disease. The mid-term and final targets for the 2 indicators are not stated in the proposal. The targets should be specifically stated. Also, we suggest that disaggregated data be collected (by sex, age, districts, categories of population, etc.) for a more meaningful analysis and interpretation of the data, which would contribute to the knowledge management output.
- We agree with the ITAP assessment that the environmental co-benefits such as improved air quality, soil quality and biodiversity seemed to be insignificant, and there are no elaborated specific activities that aim to improve biodiversity in the catchment areas, soil quality and cultural preservation.
- We note with appreciation that the proposal is keen in sharing how it has engaged stakeholders in community consultations. However, we also note with concern that the project is targeting mostly tribal or indigenous peoples but is silent on whether Free, Prior and Informed Consent has been obtained for this project. FPIC should be a minimum standard for indigenous peoples and should be done before any GCF-funded initiative is undertaken, whether or not the project foresees negative impacts. Further, the proposal does not show who and what kind of community organizations it has reached out to in the process.

- We would like to point out that the regions targeted in Odisha in this proposal have a rich history of very advanced traditional and community-based water harvesting and management practices, which are well documented in a book called 'Dying Wisdom'. It would be extremely beneficial and empowering for tribal communities if their traditional knowledge is taken into account while conducting this sub-component under component 6 (page 9), that is "*Preparation of policy briefs for Odisha ground water management and development regulation, state water policy and relevant facilitation.*" Also, the focus must be on strengthening these existing traditional and local practices while increasing participation and ownership of women through the state policy intervention.
- We would also like to note that one of the risk factors that the proposal highlights is the initial apprehension of the villagers/farmers to the groundwater recharge technology.
- To achieve "*2000 village level para-professionals are certified in operation and maintenance of pumps*" in the sub-component under component 3 (page 8), we welcome the opportunity to train and enhance skills of single or/and adolescent literate and semi-literate tribal women. Repairing solar pumps cannot be rocket science so with continuous hand holding and follow-up or refresher trainings the tribal women would be able to break many patriarchal barriers in tribal societies.
- We would like to bring attention to the sub-component under component 4 (page 9), that is "*Landless and women members covered under capacity building for off-farm initiatives.*" We would like to suggest that it be thought through carefully. Different tribes have developed very different practices around off-farm livelihoods, and it is better to enhance the existing forms of livelihood practices than to introduce new ones since most often new activities do not find much sustainable interest among the tribal populations. We found that the tribal communities have collective traditional practices of animal husbandry and management and these must be respected while planning animal husbandry interventions and promoting traditional breeds that are acclimatised to the local climatic zones rather than introducing expensive alien breeds. We, therefore, recommend a collective approach in farm and off-farm interventions based on values of caring and sharing which we think would find better acceptance among the tribal populations.