

C E P F Indigenous peoples planning framework

Project title : Grassland and Shola Research and Restoration Project

Implementing agency :Palni Hills Conservation Council

Kodaikanal, District Dindigul

Tamil Nadu

Introduction : The project for research and restoration of grasslands and shola ecosystem was initiated during the month of September . A survey prior to the project start up indicated a settlement of 15 families only at the Polur area close to the border with Kerala. Initial enquiries revealed that the residents often worked in Kerala and only few families worked as farm labor in villages surrounding Poondi and Polur

A consultation was held with them by the grassland research team on 06-11-09

Paliyar Tribal Community Meeting on Grassland Restoration Project

Place: Polur Tribal Settlement

Date:06.11.2009

Organizing Committee: KarthikRaja,Kamalkanth,Parthipan,.Antony,Sheriff,
Kanagaraj – all belonging to PHCC

Village Details:

Village: Polur

Panchayat: Poondi

Taluk:Kodaikanal

District:Dindigul

Ward.No: 5

Ward Counselor: Mr.Ganesan

Village Head: Mr.Paulraj

No of Households:22

Population:66

No of households represented:- 15 by family head

Main occupation of these tribes are working as wage labour, vegetable farming in poromboke lands (lands not used by private farmers) and Honey hunting, They also do some fishing at Pulavatchiyar for carps and catfish.

PHCC staff explained about the research work being undertaken to study grass lands and sholas and asked for their views as to what they felt about present situation with reference to monoculture plantations vs grassland –shola ecosystem

History of settlement according to conversation : Paliyars settled there some 15 decades ago.

Salient points that emerged from the meet are :

- 1.Their ancestors came from Udumalpet and Kerala to settle here where collection of honey and forest produce was good.
2. The plantations have reduced this and now they work about two third of the year as wage labor in farmers' fields for earning. When the season is favorable in the lower area of Manjampatti and Thalangi valley where there are rice paddies owned by their relatives; where they can work for rice in kind; they migrate to these settlements leaving empty houses.
3. After wattle and eucalyptus were introduced they feel that gathering forest produce has come down. Honey and yam tubers (*Dioscorea* species) are not found in wattle plantations where as the Rock bee was abundant when their seniors hunted the wild bee
4. The river Pulawatchiar (literally meaning a river for the Pulaya – another tribe of the hills) used to be perennial with lots of fish and fishing was one of their main livelihood options, but the river has now become seasonal , and they are not sure of the reasons – they do not understand concepts like water use by invasive exotics species etc.
5. The restoration of grasslands and rhododendrons can make life more easy provided the rock bee made more nests, but they were not sure if this will happen. Also they were keen to know if the forest department will actually allow this to happen – that is removal of wattle and eucalyptus plantations.
6. The village head men and ward councilor were given the address of CEPF , and D F O and informed about the grievance addressing mechanism of the project.
7. They were aware of the damage done to farming by gaur and wondered if the grasslands will reduce this as they feel the population has increased , and that is the reason for the Human Wild Life conflict.

Grievance address mechanism

After the meet, the tribes persons were also informed that the meeting is only and introduction and if they are not happy with the proposal to restore grasslands and shola forest they can voice their concern to others like the District Forest Officer , as the Forest Department wide their Palni Hills Watershed Management Plans have indicated the need to remove wattle and restore grassland and sholas.

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Alternatively they have a choice of addressing the issue directly to the CEPF Grievance redressal unit as well.

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