

Assam Agricultural Competitiveness Project (AACP)

Natural Resource Management and Integrated Livelihood Project (NARMIL)

Objective

Improve sustainable livelihood of the communities through integrated approach of rural development and natural resource conservation in forest fringe communities within the broader AACP through participatory planning and implementation and monitoring.

Geographical Area

Pilot program in Nagaon and Kamrup Districts covering 15 villages (annex z), which are located on the fringe areas of the forest. These have been selected on the basis of a selection criterion given below:

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF VILLAGES

SL.NO	CRITERIA FOR SELECTION OF VILLAGE	WEIGHTAGE FORMULA (MAXIMUM=5 POINTS)				
		1	2	3	4	5
A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	BPL HH Intensity	10-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-80%	80-100%
2	Remoteness (Distance from Dt. HQ)	<20KM	20-40KM	40-60KM	60-80KM	>80KM
3	Proximity to the RF (indicative of forest dependency)	≥800 mts-1 Km	≤600-800 mts	≤400-600 mts	≤200-400 mts	≤200 mts
4	Extent of natural resource base	≤10-20% degraded	20-40% degraded	40-60% degraded	60-80% degraded	Maximum degraded with no tree cover
5	Proximity to DEF establishment for better assistance	≥3 Km	≤2-3KM	≤1-2KM	≤500mts-1KM	≤200-500 mts

Broad interventions (details in annex ?):

- Social mobilization for local institution development
- Address fuel wood (energy), fodder requirements, and increase livelihood support
- Improve forest productivity to strengthen the natural resource base for communities.

- Improve Communication facilities.
- Establishing market support, value addition for forest based produce for enhanced income.
- Capacity building of Department of Environment and Forest (DEF) for improved service delivery.
- Preparation of IEC material

Budgetary allocation: Rs 13. 45 crores

Implementing partners

Communities of 15 identified villages to be constituted into 10 Joint Forest Management Committees

Department of Environment & Forests, Assam (DEF) – Nodal Officer, Coordination of implementing partners, preparation of annual plans, overall monitoring and liaison with PMU.

Divisional Forest Officers, Nagaon South and Kamrup West Forest Division – Coordination of the implementing partners at the district level and liaison with Nodal Officer DEF

Non-government Organizations – Social mobilization, capacity building, local institution development, facilitate participatory planning and implementation.

District AACP Committee - Coordination for sectoral convergence of AACP, monitoring performance of NGOs

State Level Committee – Coordinate at state level.....

Project management Unit

Research Institutes – Improve the technical knowledge and capacity of DEF and communities and its extension.

**SEQUENCING AND SCHEDULING OF THE PLANNING PROCESS
FOR NARMIL**

SL. NO	ACTIVITY	Implementing partners	Target	SCHEDULE
A	PROJECT LEVEL PLANNING			
1	Selection of the Districts	Nodal Office - DEF	Kamrup and Nagaon	Completed
B	SUB-PROJECT LEVEL PLANNING			
2	Selection of Villages	DFO, field staff, participated in the selection of the villages which is based on the criteria (section ???) and established willingness of the community	15 villages	Completed

		to participate in the program.		
3	Orientation program on the project	SMU and external resource people, line departments	DFO, ACF, NGO, Forest guard, forester, range officer, communities	First one month
4	Training on PRA techniques, social mobilization, information dissemination, etc	SMU of PMU	Forest guard, forester, range officer, communities, NGOs	Second month
5	Awareness campaigns – Dissemination of information about the program*	NGOs with Forester and forest guard	Community	Through out the project cycle
6	PRA to collect baseline information	NGOs with Forester and forest guard	Village socio-economic and natural resource	Third month
7	Identify and implement entry point	Community facilitated by the NGOs with Forester and forest guard	Community beneficiaries	Fourth and fifth month
8	Formation of JFM committees	NGOs, forester and forest guard	All inhabitant of the village	Sixth month
9	Apply Institutional Maturity Index	JFMC facilitated by NGO	JFMC	Seventh month
10	Registration of the JFMCs with Conservators	DFO and CF	JFMC	Eighth month
11	Exposure visit to success areas both within and outside the state	Nodal Officer and PMU	Forester, forest guard, DFO, ACF, RO & NGOs, JFMCs	Eighth month
12	Technical training module for preparation of micro-plans	PMU and Nodal Officer	Community, NGOs, Forester, forest guard, RO	Ninth month
13	Preparation of Draft Micro-plans	Community facilitated by NGOs and technical officers from respective line department	10 micro-plans	Tenth month
14	Review of draft micro-plan and send it to JFMC	District AACP	Draft plans	Eleventh month
15	Finalisation of microplan	Community		Eleventh month
16	Submitting micro-plan for Approval	Conservator of Forests after approval by JFMC and forwarded through DFO	10 micro-plans	Eleventh month

17	Implementation of the microplan	JFMCs		Twelfth month onwards
18	Procurement of the materials	Nodal Office / JFMCs		As per the Project design

* Awareness campaigns

This would be an ongoing exercise, inputs varying with the corresponding stage of the project implementation.

1. Pre PRA:

The communities, DEF staff as well as the associated NGOs would need to become aware of the philosophy behind this participatory means of working, objectives of the project, major benefits for communities, mutual roles and obligations, mode of implementation, flow of funds, other partners of AACCP etc

2. During microplanning

The need for carrying out the microplanning in a participatory way. The communities, especially the women, would be encouraged to fully understand each component of the project and their stake in it. The importance of the microplan as the documentation of the communities' needs should be reiterated. The policies governing the resource base should be explained to the people and the associated stakeholders to avoid any conflicts as time progresses. Everyone should know that this is not just another "wage earning Govt. programme" Instead each member of the community has a definite role and stake in it right from the planning to the utilization/ deriving benefits for improved economic base.

3. Post finalisation of microplans and actual beginning of development activities

The various sub components had already been explained during the pre project awareness campaigns. Now the actual implementing agencies would have to be made known to the communities so that maximum advantage for enhanced livelihood support could be obtained. Awareness regarding the importance of saving and contributing to a common fund, which would serve as a source of credit for the community in the future, should be explained. The "what after the project" stage has to be explained and capacity built up during the project period so that the communities and DEF (or even communities alone) are able to continue as partners to manage their livelihood needs and maintain the natural resource base in a sustainable manner.

Fund Flow pattern:

Fond flow chart is annexed as (annexure-w)

Procurement:

The respective JFM Committees, as per the micro-plan, will do the procurement of the materials required for the implementation of the NaRMIL program.

Roles and responsibilities of DEF, NGOs, Communities, line department etc. :

- Role of communities of 15 identified villages to be constituted into 10 Joint Forest Management Committees- social mobilization, Group formation, collection of baseline data through PRA exercise, identification of entry point activities, formation of JFM committees, formulation of micro-plan and its implementation.

- Nodal Officer, Department of Environment & Forests, Assam (DEF) –Coordination of implementing partners, preparation of annual plans, overall monitoring and liaison with PMU.
- Divisional Forest Officers, Nagaon South and Kamrup West Forest Division – Coordination of the implementing partners at the district level and liaison with Nodal Officer, DEF, up gradation of infrastructure of the dept. for improved service delivery systems.
- Non-government Organizations – Social mobilization, capacity building, local institution development, facilitate participatory approach of planning and implementation.
- District AACP Committee - Coordination for sectoral convergence of AACP, review of draft micro-plans and monitoring performance of NGOs

Annexe ?

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

Stakeholders Broad Categories of Activity	DEF	NGO	JFMC	Universities/ research institutes/ other organisations	Consultants	Other sectors of AACP
Social mobilization, conflict resolution	*	*	*			*
PRA household survey	*	*	*			
Trainings/capacity building (technical)	*			*	*	
Natural resource inventorisation	*		*	*		
Microplanning	*	*	*	*		
Forest based livelihood supports	*	*	*	*		
Additional income options		*	*			*
Enhancing natural resource base	*		*	*		
Market studies	*	*		*	*	
Monitoring and Evaluation	*	*	*		*	*

Details of Sector wise Investments (annex ?)

Meeting the immediate needs of the people - fuelwood, fodder, communication, etc

- ✓ Extensive studies on energy situation and grazing
- ✓ Introduction of alternate fuelwood and grazing options
- ✓ Pilot project to demonstrate bio-energy production (gassifier)
- ✓ Renovation/repairing of forest roads by the communities themselves
- ✓ EPA to be identified and implemented with communities

Enhancement of natural resource base for increased livelihood support

- ✓ Improving forest productivity for enhanced livelihood support
- ✓ Raising of people's nurseries
- ✓ Preparation of community base maps

Establishing market support for forest based produce for enhanced income

- ✓ Market studies for specific forest products
- ✓ Demand-led small business training of self-help groups through NGO
- ✓ Missions by DEF for other stakeholders to trade fairs, workshops, etc
- ✓ Research and development of prioritised timber and NTFP species
- ✓ Demonstration of additional income options
- ✓ Local trade fairs and market promotion activities with communities, NGOs
- ✓ Specialised training of community market extension workers
- ✓ Exposure visits by community members to other states
- ✓ Training of communities
- ✓ Integration of field demonstrations, advisory work within AACP communities

Social mobilization

- ✓ Joint forest management activities have been formally launched in the state and a series of training cum awareness workshops have been organized in Guwahati as well as throughout the state for both DEF staff as well as the communities. Hence the forest fringe dwellers are already well aware of the concept and are keen to take on the activities in a formal fashion. What needs to be strengthened is the linkages with the other line departments which should be achieved with most of the depts. working under the umbrella of AACP.
- ✓ Integration of field demonstrations, advisory work within AACP communities
- ✓ Exposure visits of other AACP communities to pilot forestry communities
- ✓ Extension material in the form of a field handbook on the participatory mode of managing natural resources (in English as well as Assamese) has been prepared and widely circulated.
- ✓ Legal literacy workshops for raising awareness among DEF and communities
- ✓ Demonstration modern root trainer based nurseries to show how to generate high quality planting stock for improved productivity for enhanced returns.
- ✓ Operational silvicultural field guides
- ✓ Technical microplanning handbook for DEF staff and communities
- ✓ Production and distribution of field manuals for specific forest products
- ✓ Integrated package of knowledge cutting across all sectors for enabling fullest advantage to accrue to the communities

1. Operationality of the project

Planning and Implementation Schedules

Annexure 2

Monitoring and Evaluation

Data for monitoring and evaluation will be derived from the monitoring, evaluation and information management sub-component. This sub-component will strengthen the ability of the Department in mapping and information management functions needed to support broader rural development in forest fringe communities, micro-planning, as well as follow-on monitoring and evaluation programs in the pilot districts. Accordingly the project will support improvements to the department's GIS and M&E capacity/systems both at HQ and in field offices in pilot areas. National consultants with experience in these areas will provide technical assistance to the Department. An independent organisation may be tried out for M&E for an unbiased reporting, in addition to the conventional monitoring by district level Committees of DEF and AACP.

2. Roles and responsibilities of stakeholders – Annexe 3

i. Department of Environment and Forests

Through the Nodal Office will be responsible for outlining the TORs and selection of various consultants to help frame guidelines, study and build capacity of the DEF staff as well as the communities for better service delivery and livelihood status respectively. In addition the Nodal Office together with the DFOs and staff would be responsible for subcomponents related to upgradation of infrastructure, establishment of GIS systems, forest resource inventory,

The Nodal Office would also be responsible for arranging trainings through own staff, NGOs and other institutions for building the capacity of the communities in additional livelihood options, optimally addressing market needs, knowing, inventorying and mapping their forests. Exposure visits would be arranged in line with different sub components, to witness success stories in other states. Alternate fuelwood and grazing options would be established to cater to an area which is highest in priority of forest dwellers.

ii. Joint Forest Management Committees

JFMCs would be responsible for planning, implementation and management of all developmental works at the community level including renovation of roads, enhancement of the quality of the natural resource base, raising people's nurseries and other issues identified by the communities during microplanning. Some individuals would be trained to work as community market extension workers. The members would also monitor the progress of works and be at liberty to point out erring Govt. staff

iii. Panchayats

Representatives of the panchayat / local institutions will be designated members of the JFMC. They would play a role in decision making regarding the needs of the people which may be fulfilled through the pilot. They would be one of the key persons to motivate the people to switch to sustainable use of the natural resources so that the degraded resource base could be rejuvenated for the common good.

iv. NGOs

Grassroot NGOs are going to be key players in the AACP, being assigned the role of the link between the people and the Govt. functionaries. These NGOs would be able to work across all sectors of AACP for total integration and synergy of project components. They would also be responsible for PRA and household surveys for supplementing the preparation of microplans in association with the DEF staff. The market studies across all sectors is envisaged to be carried out by

an NGO through the PIU of AACCP. This NGO would work in liaison with the market advisors in other departments who in turn would build up the capacity of the DEF person identified as well as members of the JFMC to work as community extension workers.

v. Producers (JFMC beneficiaries/SHGs) cutting across all sectors

After thorough demonstrations, trainings, exposure visits, it is hoped that the communities would have the capacity and the will to form SHGs and avail of micro credit facilities. They would be responsible for deciding the particular products, value additions required, market systems to address, etc. A cross sectoral support would be required to be given to the communities in this regard.

vi. University/academicians/Research Institutes

The major part of the trainings pertaining to enhancement of forest related skills both of DEF and communities would be forthcoming from this group of stakeholders. The preparation of other technical and not so technical field guides would also be done through consultations with them and based on the priority issues identified in the microplans.

vii. Consultants/experts

The consultants to be appointed in the various sub components would be responsible for extensive studies and review of the existing way of working of the Dept and communities. They would also suggest ways and means of improving the present situation to make for the shift in service delivery systems.

Annexe ?

Selection Criteria of Pilot Villages for NARMIL

1. **THE POVERTY INDEX OF THE TARGET COMMUNITIES:** The first and foremost criterion used for the selection of the target villages for the NARMIL component is the percentage of the population lying below the poverty line. In one of the pilot districts viz, the Nagaon, out of the four villages selected, as per the preliminary studies it is estimated that in one village 98% of the total households are BPL Households and in rest of the villages 100% of the households are BPL Households. In case of the Kamrup district, the percentage of the population lying below the poverty line ranges from 40 to 96%.
2. **THE REMOTENESS OF THE TARGET VILLAGES:** Most often it is observed that the degree of the economic development is directly proportional to the proximity of the village to the district HQ. Precisely for this reason, the remoteness of the villages that is their distance from the district HQ is considered as the important criterion for selection of the villages for livelihood support under this component. In the Kamrup district, out of 11 target villages, 3 villages are located at a distance of 42 km from the district HQ and the rest are located at a distance of 70-80 km from the district HQ. In the other pilot district all the 4 target villages are located at a distance of 43-83 KM away from the district HQ.

3. **FAIR REPRESENTATION OF VARIOUS COMMUNITIES IN THE TARGET VILLAGES:** As this is a pilot project, it is desired to have a fair representation of various local communities among the target villages, and thus one important criterion used for selection of the target villages is the coverage of various communities. Care was taken to include villages having minority communities, communities belonging to the weaker sections (SC, ST & OBCs) etc. In Nagaon district, two villages have been selected with a minority community as the predominant inhabitants and other villages have weaker sections predominantly. In Kamrup district, almost all the 11 villages have a strong representation of the Tribal communities. This would certainly help in studying the relative impact of the pilot project over various communities, in terms of implementation of the various sub components, the response from the communities, the extent of rapport building between the DEF staff and the communities as also integration with other Departments and agencies. This is important since the outcome of the pilot would guide the future direction of the participatory management of natural resources in other parts of the state.
4. **DEGREE OF FOREST DEPENDENCE OF THE TARGET COMMUNITIES:** There will be less disagreement, to state that any sound development strategy needs to be both ecologically and environmentally sustainable in the long run. The main emphasis of NARMIL is to wean away the fringe communities from their present near total forest dependency. Lifting of the economic status of the communities living in the fringe areas of the reserve forests, by introducing alternate means of meeting their daily demands as well as additional income options is the only viable strategy to minimize their dependence on the forest resources. Some of the indicators used to estimate the degree of forest dependence are the Proximity of the target villages to the Reserve Forests, Extent of natural resource base, Energy consumption patterns, Economic development etc. In the Nagaon district the target villages are mostly situated within 200 meters of distance from the nearby Reserve Forest. Similarly all the target villages of the Kamrup district are situated within 500 meters of the Reserve Forests. The preliminary studies indicated that majority of the target population cannot afford to use LPG for domestic purpose and are invariably dependent on the firewood illegally removed from the nearby Reserve Forests. The daily requirement of firewood in the target villages is mostly removed from the nearby Reserve Forests causing immense damage to the fragile forest cover as well as the associated hardships caused to the communities. Another indicator of the degree of forest dependence is the economic status of the villages. As referred earlier, all the target villages have majority of the households below the poverty line and most of the villagers depend upon forest resources for their daily sustenance which is diminishing over time and measures need to be taken at a war footing to restore and enhance the forest productivity to make it suitable for providing livelihood support to the fringe dwellers in a sustainable way.