

## Easing the Plough Bullock Labour Constraint for Poor Farmers

### Purpose:

It has been brought out in the initial situation analysis that accessing plough bullocks has been a major constraint for many of the poor farmers. They have to depend on bullocks given by the larger farmers for whom they work, or on hired bullock labor. This often results in delayed sowing and poor crop yields or leaving the land fallow. The smaller size holdings and smaller plots are also disincentives for the hired bullock labour to operate. Tractors are also inaccessible, owing to high demand for them during the season, smaller plot sizes and high costs.



The earlier attempts at providing individual or group loans for purchase of bullocks faced several problems such as:

- The total demand for bullock labour is low and highly seasonal
- Individuals selling away the animals for lack of fodder at a cheaper rate
- Increased indebtedness with each transaction

As a consequence, there is an informal ban on lending for plough bullocks within the mainstream poverty alleviation programs. In effect, the constraint of plough bullocks remained unattended and a reason for poor yields of poor farmers. *In this context, this initiative attempts to innovate on mechanisms of easing plough bullock constraint for poor farmers.*



The purpose of this initiative is to create a facility for the poor in the village, where their lands will be ploughed on a priority basis. This facility will be established at VO level but managed by the group of farmers those who do not own bullocks. The bullocks would be operated by an individual on a commercial basis. Eventually, it is hoped that such a facility could be established under AP REGS as a public service for poor farmers' land development.

The initiative is grounded on a pilot basis in one village in each mandal i.e. 3 project villages. The experience is emerging and is being documented. More villages will be taken up during the next season.

## Process:

1. A situation analysis with the poor farmers hiring plough bullocks and with those who are providing this service
2. The *modus opeandi* is arrived at as the following:
  - a. The farmers who need plough bullocks will register with the VO as a CIG by making an advance payment of Rs.150/-.
  - b. Their names will be entered into a register- the dates for ploughing will be entered into the register.
  - c. Experience sharing and re orientation to persons who have taken bullocks
  - d. VOs selected persons who have experience in providing hired plough-bullock services. The bullocks purchased from the project will be given to this person on an annual hiring basis. The agreement between the VO and the operator covers the following aspects:
    - The agreement is for one year. If management is good, contract can be extended to next year
    - The operator should not deviate from objectives in terms priority for coverage of farmers. If bullocks are not used in accordance with the objective, VO will take back the bullocks giving 3 days prior notice
    - VO should ensure that the bullocks are vaccinated regularly, the service charges are paid by the operator
    - The operator should take care of fodder and health disorders.
    - He/She can sell the FYM
    - Implements which are used in agricultural operations should be arranged by the operator.
    - Bullocks are in the name of VO. VO has to pay premium for insurance. VO will submit the daim.
    - Bullock person should pay Rs.2500 annually as service charge in 3 installments (Rs.600, Rs.1300, and Rs. 600)
  - e. Mandal staff prepared a proposal and after approval of the proposal by the VO, MMS has released the budget to respective VOs. A purchasing committee was formed consisting of VO president, bullocks operator, staff member and the local veterinary assistant surgeon.
  - f. Bullocks are purchased in the local shandy.

Nine bullock pairs were purchased in 3 villages (3 pairs in each mandal) investing about Rs.1.72 lakhs. Each pair of bullocks is to support about 8 acres land. The cost of the bullocks is expected to be recovered in the form of annual rental and the same will be revolved. Two bullocks died owing to disease and a dog-bite, insurance is being daimed. This experience will be analysed to arrive at upscaling strategy, if successful.

The potential risks in the above scheme of things are

- Death of animal (partly covered by insurance)
- Number of wage days employed is less than 50-60 days
- Termination of agreement during the season

- If the village is predominantly rain fed, maintaining bullocks during the off-season might be a liability
- Fodder insecurity
- Seasonal migration of the farmers or the operator

The bullock operators are joining the fodder groups initiated under AP DAI for fodder security. It is also suggested that the members who are accessing the bullock services have to grow fodder and share it with the operator. In case of extreme seasons, the VO may take a decision to sell the bullocks during the un-season and purchase them again during the season.

### **Emerging Up Scaling View:**

The experience is emerging and needs at least a full-cycle to properly establish. Considering several other requirements the following points are emerging:

1. Provision of bullock labour should be seen as a collective facility for land/ livelihood enhancement of the poor and thus, be included in the AP REGS under the category land development.
2. At least 5 bullock pairs with bullock carts be provided for each village; the same modalities as emerged in this pilot can be followed. These will serve the following purposes:
  - a. Ploughing the lands of the poor on a priority basis
  - b. Used in silt-application across the year/ whenever possible
  - c. Transport of manure from homesteads to the rainfed lands (which is proving to be costly)
  - d. Watering the plantations (on bunds or commons) during the dry seasons.
3. It is impossible for poor farmers to hire bullocks for the above purposes individually or even, pay for the full-cost of the services and therefore, it should be seen as an public support for poor farmers.
4. Adequate bullock-labour days can be generated throughout the year with the above works.
5. Summer maintenance of these bullocks (3 months) can be seen as a common-purpose service essential for the agriculture of the poor. Adequate provision can be made as a part of the fodder bank.

The above will be attempted during the year to test run / establish a case example.