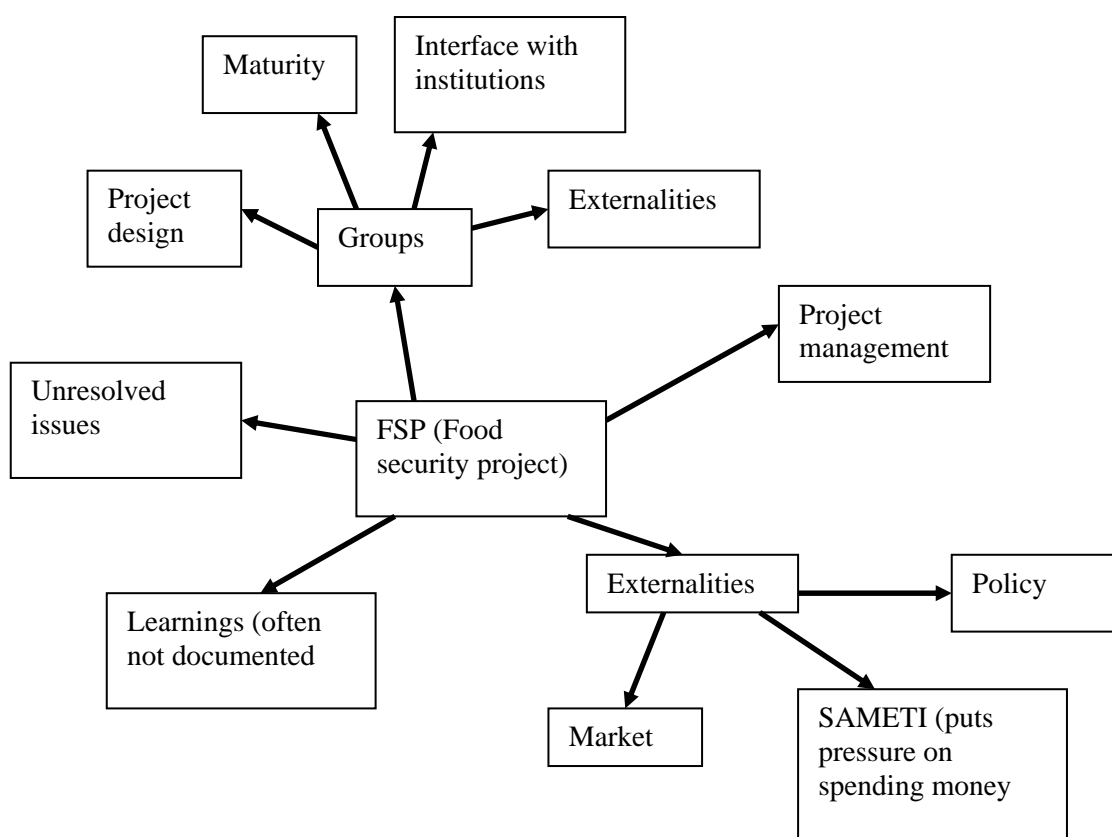


Mind Mapping on Decentralised Food Security Programme

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Mind mapping of the Food Security Project was attempted to understand the issues involved and the thinking of different individuals involved in the project. K.S. Gopal, C.P. Ramam, Jayaraj, and Thimma Reddy participated in the exercise. This exercise was facilitated by Sashikumar of Thinksoft Consultants.

The project was seen as constituting different aspects namely, Project management, Village Women's Groups, Externalities, Learnings and Unresolved issues.



The Project management constitutes of identification of issues around which the project is formulated and the planning of the project. This also involves scheduling of various activities of the project, estimation and procurement of various inputs, both physical and human services needed for carrying out the project. The institutions involved in the project are Natural Resource Institute (NRI), Centre for Environment Concerns (CEC), and Indian Grain Storage Management and Research Institute (IGSMRI). The project management also deals with the roles and responsibilities of these three institutions. The project management also deals with the coordination of the activities of these three institutions around the project. This coordination in turn deals with research, evolving storage technologies and practices and the

corresponding institutions and implementation of the project. The project management encompasses communication among the participating institutions and reporting formats. It is also to be seen that flexibility is built into the project to deal/cope with the unexpected developments.

The women's groups in the study villages constitute very important part of the decentralised food security programme. Again the participation of the groups in the project is defined by the project design. The design deals with the groups' access to grain and pricing of grain. Jowar is the grain that is central to the project design. The grain to be stored in decentralised fashion at the village level comes from the lands of the members of the women's groups and the land leased in by them from the villagers. Depending on the yields of the crops they may go in for purchase of grain from the open market/ weekly rural market shandies. Important component of the project design is the storage bin. This aspect includes location of the bin, its size, and the technology/material choice for construction of the bin. These will be decided by the groups with inputs from participating institutions. An important aspect of the women's groups within the project that prominently influences the success of the project is its maturity. This maturity will be understood in terms of its size of membership, its leadership, articulation, conflict resolution within the group, emergence and role played by the leadership, compliance with the decisions of the group, and internal and external communication. Another important aspect of the position of the women's groups within the project relates to its interface with the participating institutions. This interface deals with its communication with these institutions and its entitlements vi-a-vis these institutions.

At the same time the functioning and performance of the groups will be influenced by certain external influences. These external influences in the context of the present project will include availability and affordability of food grain, particularly jowar, outside the project.

The project as such will also be influenced by certain external forces/players. In the context of the present project the important external forces are SAMETI, markets and public policy. The present project is taken up in the context of UNDP supported dry land based, women centred decentralised food security system. All the three villages selected for the study are part of the UNDP supported project. This project is being coordinated by SAMETI of the state government of Andhra Pradesh. It constantly puts pressure on the participating institutions on spending money. In other words it is more interested in achieving budgetary milestones rather than the process involved in securing decentralised food security. Other important external influence is the public policy related to food security like functioning of the Public Distribution System (PDS)/Fair Price Shops meant for distribution of the subsidised food grain, issue price, quantity of grain issued per each family, etc. The recent controversy on mounting food stocks with FC and starvation deaths has opened up a debate on the current food security policy followed by the central government. Another important external influence is the market. Availability of cereals in the market, their prices, fluctuations in demand for food grain, and unpredictability of demand and prices among others constitute these influences. In the recent past market arrival of the irrigated jowar and the consequent availability of cheaper grain in the market had its impact on the decentralised food security programme. During last year women's sangam in Mirzapur could not sell grain from bin. But CEC was bearing the loss. As this is still at the experimental stage; CEC took the responsibility. During this year India had overproduction. Sugarcane farmers produced sorghum, so there was irrigated sorghum available in May. Last year it came from Maharashtra, but this year it is even in Zahirabad. In the case of sorghum, there is no market stabilisation and prices fluctuate a lot.

An important part of the project is the leanings/observations on the progress of the project. These leanings are categorised into four categories:

1. Things that are most frustrating:
 - "gate keeping" at the village level - they don't want others to join
 - conflicts between members
 - lack of clarity between team members (within CEC) especially role clarity
 - project scheduling - many things are time bound
 - project gets very technically driven / technical matters take over
 - reporting requirements of project
2. High point:
 - There is grain - people can store and manage their own grain
 - lots of zeal for the project (own staff and villagers)
 - sangha members have enhanced their status vs other village members
 - institutional energy at CEC and IGMRI level - policy involvement
 - Asset has been created in the village
3. Problem solving:
 - Bridging between communities and researchers; IGMRI has moved a lot
4. Changes in attitude / lessons learnt / changes in priorities.
 - Considerable change in our thinking (all actors) due to circumstances on the ground

Another experience in the recent past is that the strategy of land lease and fallow land cultivation for food security is inadequate - need to face challenge from the market. Cannot succeed on its own.

An important part of the exercise is to figure out the unresolved issues. These unresolved issues pertain to technology, research and implementation. In the case of technology it is related to materials and methods used in the construction of the bin, pest control methods, whether this is to be chemical or non-chemical and grain quality. Other related issue is: What is the cost? We are always driven by costs. Economics of scale. No compromise on quality. The grain quality has faced a lot of problems. We thought there is a moisture problem, but this does not seem to work. Grain bank is used continuously, so there are frequent withdrawals / no sealing. If bin is not full, there are more problems. In the case of research whether it is capture the incremental changes or substantial changes achieved over the period. This research issue also refers to whether to focus on grain only or issues related flour also need to be addressed. The implementation issue is largely centred around decentralisation: Panchayat need to be empowered, otherwise there can't be a decentralisation. In the case of dry land agriculture covering the risk of dryland farmers is an important issue. CEC is making an effort to evolve an insurance programme for dry land farmers.