

KOLLUR VILLAGE PROFILE

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The village Kollur is situated in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh. It is a part of the Jharasangam Mandal. It is situated at a distance of 20 kilometers from the nearest urban centre, Zaheerabad. It is 7 kilometers away from the Mandal headquarters. A three kilometers cart track connects it to the all weather, black topped road leading to Jharasangam, the Mandal headquarter. A part of the cart track is under water for a large part of the year. Besides this, the remaining part of the cart track is in bad shape which deters motorised vehicles to approach the village. It is no wonder that villagers point out the lack of proper approach road as the important problem facing the village.

More than 200 families live in this village. Majority of the households belong to backward castes. There are 100 Golla families, 10 Chakali (washerman), 5 Lingayath families, 4 each belonging to Waddera, Mangali (barber), Sale (weaver), 2 each belonging to Kummari (pot maker), Yerukula, Pakkeera, Bathina, Eediga (toddy tappers) and Tenugu castes. 55 families belong to Scheduled Castes. Though there are only 2 Brahmin families and 4 Reddy families belonging to forward castes they still play important role in the village. Though they account for less than 3 percent of the families in the village they own nearly 15 percent of the agricultural land. A good chunk of the fertile land is under their cultivation, and most of the irrigation wells in the village are in their fields only.

Almost all of the households in this village depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Agricultural land in this village consists of nearly 1200 acres. About 100 acres belong to the government. This is used as pasture land. This land is also not fertile. Out of this 1200 acres only about 400 acres are fertile lands and the remaining are of inferior variety. Given the undulating nature of the land here only about 30 acres are under irrigation, and open wells are the important source of irrigation. Though a small stream passes by the village it is not of much help in irrigating the fields in the village. Only ten acres belonging to a Reddy farmer are irrigated with the stream water, that too only for one crop.

Agricultural operations start from the months of April and May. During these months land is tilled to prepare it for sowing once monsoon rains commence in the month of June. Usually between June and November villagers get enough work in the fields. The agricultural operations come to an end by the month of January. Before June and after January women get very limited or almost no work opportunities in the village. During busy season labourers go to neighbouring villages in search of work. Work in sugar cane harvesting is available in the months of January and February. While male labourers are paid Rs. 30 per day as wages, women are paid Rs. 10 – 15 only. This difference in wage payment is attributed to smaller number of hours worked by women. Some times they are also paid in kind, 4 – 5 kgs of jowar per day.

Sorghum, green gram and red gram are the important crops grown in this village. Under wells sugar cane is raised. Wheat is sown in a small area. Paddy is not cultivated in this village. They buy rice from the ration shop and open market. The villagers usually buy broken rice which costs about Rs. 6 per kg. They buy this rice from weekly market of Jharasangam which is held on Mondays. They don't buy rice according to the price that is buying more when price is low and less when prices are high. They buy according to the money/income in their hands. They purchase sorghum only when its price is lower than broken rice.

Credit facilities are hard to come by. The formal credit facilities are not accessible to them. For credit they have to depend on local money lenders who charge exorbitant interest rates. They have to pay interest of 36 percent, i.e., Rs. 3 per Rs 100 per month, while in the formal credit institutions it will be about 18 to 24 percent.

Though some families in the village belong to service/artisan castes, with the decline of rural artisan occupations they also depend on agriculture labour for their living. The Madiga caste one of the Scheduled Castes, people are traditionally leather workers they no longer depend on it as the industry produced leather goods have entered the villages against which they cannot compete. People from Chakali caste lived on washing clothes. They used to be paid annually for their service by the households who utilised their services. Now this arrangement has come to an end. As a result of drying of this source of income they also turned to agriculture labour for survival. People from Kummari caste who are traditional pot makers have stopped doing this as it no longer met their income needs. They some times sell pots made in other villages. Sale caste households are weavers by caste. They no longer weave cloths. The four Sale families in the village do retail business in cloths. Waddera caste people depend stone/earth work for their living. They still depend on it for their survival. As adequate work is not available in the village theirs is a permanent migratory living. They go to other places including Hyderabad and Mumbai in search of work. Golla families who constitute nearly half of the village are shepherds by profession. They still depend on it for their living. Compared to other families, particularly from the backward castes, they are economically in a good position.

As the avenues of employment are meagre in the village almost all families except those belonging to Brahmin, Reddy and Lingayath castes resort to migration in search of work and livelihood during lean season.

Problems:

It is the absence of good approach road to the villagers that bothers many. The absence of protected drinking water supply and hospital facility are also felt in the village. In other words villagers want provision of infrastructure facilities like road, irrigation, power supply, communication facilities like posts and telephone, protected drinking water, health facilities both for humans and animals. Invariably provisioning of such infrastructure facilities will have its positive impact on the lives of the people of the village. Obstacles in the availability of services crucial to agricultural operation like timely and easy availability of credit, quality seeds, fertilisers and pesticides are felt in this village. Though there is a branch of a nationalised bank and a cooperative credit society in the Mandal headquarter Jharasangam it is not within the reach of the farmers of the village. Without influence it is not possible to obtain credit from these formal credit agencies. Other extension facilities are also not available to the farmers here. As a result of this a proportion of the agricultural land is kept fallow. Once a piece of land lies fallow it is difficult to bring it under cultivation again as it involves more expenditure. Removal of these impediments will go along way in improving agricultural production. Absence of new employment opportunities in the village like absence of training for tailoring and milk centre to cater to the needs of milch cattle maintaining households are also pointed out by the villagers.

Seasonality and food security:

Life in the village hinges on the rainfall. It influences the food security during that agricultural year. Rainfall is spread over a four month period starting from June and extending up to September. During some years there also occur summer showers during May. It helps in land preparation and this will not be of much use for sowing. Sowing follows rains during the month of June. During this season Kharif crops are sown. Crops sown during this period will be ready for harvesting after August. Winter/Rabi crops are sown after September. These are grown using residual moisture in the land as well as winter dew.

Harvesting and crop arrivals commence during or after the month of August. The crops to be first harvested are green gram and black gram. Green gram is the important source of protein in the diet of the villagers. In October their staple crop Sorghum will be harvested. During December Coriander and Red Gram crops are harvested. While Coriander is a spice crop meant for market Red Gram is another important source of protein in the food consumed in the village. Harvesting of Red Gram will often extend into January. In fact crop calendar do not follow this regularity. To a great extent it depends on timely and sufficient rains. Rabi crops Bengal Gram and Wheat are harvested during February.

Work availability in agriculture is closely related to these agricultural operations. Work availability is more during the month of July because of inter crop operations like weeding. Though agricultural operations begin in May they do not offer much scope for wage employment as this work is mostly related to tilling of the land which does not involve much wage labour. Work is also available during August. Work availability will be more again in October which happens to be the harvesting season for Sorghum crop. From this month onwards work availability will be declining gradually till February when agricultural operations come to an end, and along with it scope for employment in agriculture. During the months of March, April, May and June the availability of work in the village is almost nil.

Most of the households in this village belong to the small and marginal farmer class. Some of the households are land less. Small and marginal farmers cannot depend on their lands for their income/food requirements. They have to hire themselves, both male and female members of the household, out for wage labour. This shows that food security of the most of the households depends on the work/income available in the agriculture. Given the agriculture cycle these families will be in a food insecure position during the months from March to June. Again some of these families will be in a precarious position before the harvesting is over as their access depends on the harvesting. This usually happens during the months of August to October.

Though the PDS scheme is there in the village it does not address the food security problem completely/comprehensively. Rice available from PDS outlets meets only part of their total food consumption. Even if rice is available in the outlet if the beneficiary household does not have money in hand to purchase it is as good as no rice.

In the absence of adequate employment opportunities in the village migration to other places like Mumbai and Hyderabad is an important mechanism to cope with adverse food security situation. Paradoxically, migration starts in the month when work availability is more in agriculture i.e., October. This trend will continue up to the month of May when migration will reach peak. In between those who have gone on migration will be returning now and then depending on the work on their own fields. Almost all the families except big landowners resort to migration. The migrants will start returning with the onset of monsoons

in the month of June. As the surpluses available from their own or wage labour is meagre there is no other alternative to migrating during lean seasons.

Apart from migration resort to debt is another mechanism to cope with food insecurity. Though there are two reasons for resorting to debt lack of alternative income sources is the predominant one. The families who have cultivating lands contract debt to meet the input expenditure. This usually takes place during the months of June and July. This again depends on the onset of monsoons. The debt incurred during the months of April, May and September is to tide over the difficult food situation. During April and May work availability is nil. Also it is during these months that occasions like marriage take place. During the month of September work availability is low in the case of those in search of wage labour and in the case of those depending on cultivation they have to wait for one more month before harvesting. In order to tide over the situation they also take recourse to debt. In sum, lack of availability and access are forcing the people in to the debt trap.

Availability of Food Grain:

The availability or source of food grain also informs us about its accessibility, given the precarious income position of the villagers. The villagers buy a substantial proportion of their food requirements from the market. The much talked about government supported PDS plays marginal role in providing accessibility as the food grain made available through its outlets are not sufficient to meet the food requirements of the people. Again only rice is available from the PDS outlets while the staple food here is Sorghum. Through the PDS only 15 to 20 kgs of rice is provided per family per month while requirement is about 60 kgs. For the remaining they have to source them either through own cultivation or through market purchases. Given the smaller land holdings the people have to access the market to obtain their requirements.

Sorghum is the staple food in this village and also the important food crop. There are two varieties of sorghum. While a good proportion of yellow sorghum is obtained from own fields, some more quantity is purchased from the market. Most of the white sorghum is obtained from their own fields and only a small quantity is purchased in the market. This also shows the preference of the villagers. They prefer yellow sorghum to the white one. As the paddy crop is not grown in this village the entire amount of rice is to be obtained from outside the village. While a small proportion of rice is procured from the PDS outlet in the village for the remaining quantity they depend on the open market. From the open market they normally buy broken rice but not whole rice. They go in for broken rice, as it is cheaper than whole rice. Further, their preference for broken rice depends on the relative price of sorghum in the market. Wheat production and consumption in this village is negligible. A small quantity is produced under irrigated condition. A small quantity is purchased from the market. Wheat is not supplied through PDS outlets in the village.

Among the pulses the villagers mostly consume Green gram. Most of it comes from own cultivation. Another important pulse variety that they consume is Red gram. While a part of it comes from their own fields, another part they purchase from the market. They also consume Bengal gram, but in a very small quantity. It is consumed mostly during festivals or important occasions. Most of the Bengal gram produced is sold in the market. Pulses are not made available through PDS outlets.

Given the fact that farmers have debt burden both because of input requirement during cropping season and because of food requirement during lean season, they have to sell a proportion of the total yield to repay their debts. Proportion of the grain varieties retained for household consumption show their food preferences. In the case of yellow jowar, which is a native variety, more than 50% of the output is retained for self consumption. In the case of white jowar, which is high yielding variety, less than 50% is stored for self consumption and the remaining is sold. This retention proportion also reflects the proportion of land used for these crops. Land allotted for yellow jowar is less than the land allotted for the white variety. In the case of red gram nearly 80 percent of the output is used for self consumption. In the case of green gram 50 percent of the output is sold. The difficulty in storing it for long time is also one of the reasons for disposing it off in the market. The proportion of land under green gram is also more than that of red gram. Only 20 percent of the bengal gram output is retained for self consumption. The question of retaining wheat or rice did not arise as there is a little or no local production of these cereals.

Food Consumption:

Normally the villagers consume a mix of Sorghum and rice, and this mix depends on prices of both of these cereals. If price of rice, particularly broken rice is lower than sorghum they will go for rice. Yellow sorghum is consumed mostly during winter, i.e., following harvesting. Its availability in market is low. On the average a ten member family consumes 5 kgs of yellow jowar and 2 kgs of rice during winter. In the case of 6 member family it could be 2.5 kgs and 1 kg respectively. On the average a ten member family consumes 3 kgs of rice and 5 kgs of sorghum during summer. In the case of 6 member family the consumption would be 1.5 kgs rice and 1.5 kgs white jowar. During rainy season also household consumption would be on similar level.

Seasonal variations in work/income would have its impact on household consumption. During the months of April and May during which work or avenues of income generation is low the cereal consumption will also be low.

Storage Practices:

At present the predominantly followed practice in storing grain is in jute bags. If the quantity to be stored is small mud pots are used. Given the size of the pots up to two quintals can be stored in a pot. In the case of jowar of both varieties mostly jute bags are used for storing. In case quantity to be stored is say less than one or two quintals then they will be stored in mud pots. Pulses are mostly stored in the mud pots. In the case of rice as the quantity to be stored at a time is small mostly pots are used for its storage. There are also indications that the use of pots is on the decline. One of the reasons is that the people from the Kummari (potters) in the village had stopped making pots and they have to purchase pots from outside the village. Another reason for the decline in the use of pots is their increasing cost. In the past big baskets made of split bamboo which are locally called as 'Gumme' were used extensively for grain storage. Over the period its use has stopped. Its costs has become unaffordable. Also grain stored in these were prone to rodent attacks as rodents can easily make holes in this bamboo basket, and once whole are made these are not of any use. All the investment made into these will become infructuous.

The villagers follow traditional methods in securing the grain against pest attacks. They keep neem leaves in the bags and pots to repel pests. They also use ash for the same purpose.

These days they also started using pesticide powder to act against pests. They use these methods both for the seed grain and the grain meant for consumption. Important pests that attack stored grain are weevils and Bag worms. The villagers whenever come across infestation of pests they dry it in sun. In the case of dampness and termite attack also they dry grain in the sun.

According to the villagers' experience usually pest attack starts after two or three months of storage. As a precaution against infestation grain need to be dried in sun ones or twice in a three-month period. Even when dried in sun the pests move to a shade and try to come back again. When grain is not properly cleaned also the prospects of pest attack is more.