GLOBAL GRANTS COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Use this form to report community assessment findings to The Rotary Foundation when you apply for a global grant.

Assessing the strengths, weaknesses, needs, and assets of the community you plan to help is an essential first step in designing an effective and sustainable global grant project. See Community Assessment Tools for full instructions and helpful tips.

This form will help you report the results of your community assessment, and it's required when you apply for any humanitarian or vocational training team grant. Complete a separate form for each beneficiary community (e.g., school, health care system, or village), using information that is both current and specific to each community. Remember, you can't use global grant funds to cover the cost of doing an assessment, but you can use district grant funds.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

Describe the characteristics (such as geographic information, main sources of income, population size, and access to education and health services) of the specific community where this project will take place.

The Community Assessment was conducted by the NGO Arulagam and the team from Gandhigram University in the villages Moyar (11.6047584 N, 76.7320669 E), Boothanatham(), Vazhaithottam (11.5311N, 76.6968 E), Sokkanalli (), Kurumbapalam (11.315756 N, 76.384854E), Thatkal ($11^0321973$N, $76^0383430$ E), Thottalangi ($11^0323026$ N, $76^0385952$E), between Aug 6-8 August 2022. These are villages adjoining the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve in Tamilnadu. This region is a part of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve and home to Tiger, Asian Elephant, the Indian Gaur, Leopards, Jackals, Spotted Deer, Barking Deer, Sloth Bear and critically endangered Vultures -Indian Vulture, White Rumped Vulture, Red Headed Vulture. These regions outside the protected area have villagers who eke out a living with cattle and rain-fed agriculture. The main sources of income are cattle, milk-related products, and seasonal work in farms, resorts and as migrant labour. The region is facing human-animal conflict issues mainly due to the degradation of the forest with invasive plant species like Lantana, Senna, and Parthenium leading to elephants and other ungulates moving to the farmland and the predation of the cattle by predators like tigers and leopards. The villagers tend to poison bait to avoid depredation and this in turn affects vultures that eat the carcass. We are looking at working with the community in this region to reduce conflict and restore the degraded forest region through community participation.
The community population details can be accessed at Bokkapuram cluster

As well as it is attached to the grant application

COLLECTING COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT DATA

When you conducted the assessment, who in the community did you speak to? At least two different community representatives and beneficiaries who are not involved in Rotary (such as teachers, doctors, or community leaders) should be included in the discussions.

Rotary Club of Nilgiris West employed the services of Arulagam, an NGO and the team from Gandhigram University who carried out the activity. Arulagam will be our partner in executing this Project (arulagam.org)

Stakeholders involved: The current ongoing exercise at the community level involved multi-stakeholders, they are

- Local community including elders, women, and children.
- Elected Panchayat leaders
- Government Departments - Forest, Animal Husbandry

The main focus of the discussions involved

- Removal of Lantana camara - bush clearance and also clearing other weeds
- creating space for grazing space for the bovine population near villages
- Identifying common needs which have a direct influence on their livelihood
- Exploring resource-based livelihood opportunities
- Explore the possible convergence of resources and services from Government

When in the last year did the discussions occur?

- **Date and Period:** Village Camps for community-level Consultation held on 6, 7, and 8 August 2022; 10 am to 5 pm

What methods did you use to collect information from community members (such as community meetings, interviews, or focus groups)?

Methodology: Transect walks, Focus Group discussion, Mapping of Resources, Community Meetings, Meeting with stakeholders like the Forest Department, Animal Husbandry.

Transect Walk:

During the **Transect Walk** along with villagers in the selected habitations helped to understand the prevailing environment in which the people of these villages are living. It also helps to interact and observe the physical resources available, people's living conditions and also the state of the infrastructure in the habitations. It is also observed how far the existing local resources are utilised fully. The Transect Walk in the habitation also paves the way for interaction with the people and also motivates and makes them participate in common efforts.

Transect Walk Moyar

Transect Walk Bhoothanatham

Focus Group Discussions:

is another method through which a platform is created for the villagers to express and discuss their issues and priorities among themselves. The Discussion was focused on the needs and priorities of the village and the role and efforts of the various stakeholders, particularly the Government Departments
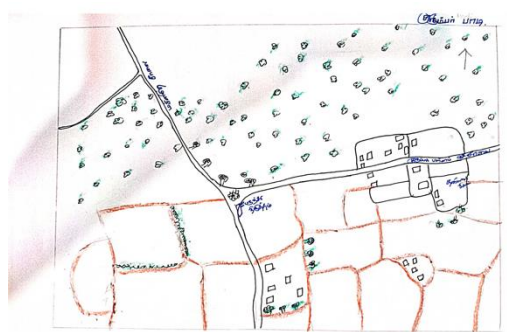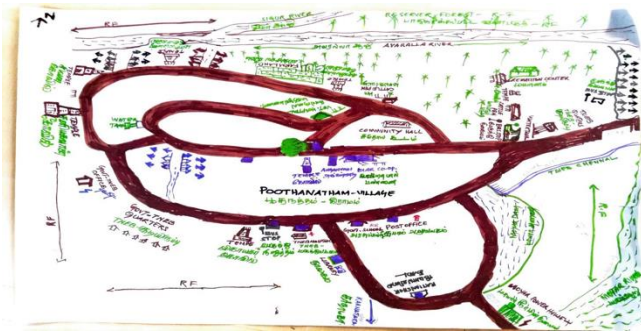
Focus group Meeting in Moyar

Focus Group Meeting Vazhaithottam

Mapping of their village along with their perceptional skills on the existing resources and also various problems of the villages. While mapping, the villagers also discuss and spell out the condition of the available facilities for grazing cattle and agriculture. It is also a tool to understand the willingness of people to

participate and contribute to their development and welfare .

TARGET POPULATION

Who will benefit directly from the project? List the groups that will benefit (such as schools, hospitals, vocational training centres, cooperatives, or villages).

The beneficiaries will be the villages under the Bokkapuram cluster. Some will be employed for the removal of lantana. Women will be selected to collect grass seeds, dry and then distribute them in Lantana removal areas. The villagers with cattle will benefit from access to fodder and there will be periodic cattle checkups along with awareness of insurance and compensation from depredation

Describe the process of how the beneficiaries were identified.

The beneficiaries were identified based on proximity to forest as well as size of cattle

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS, NEEDS, PRIORITIES, AND PROJECT DESIGN

Describe what members of the community said matters to them during the assessment.

The main challenges that the community wanted addressed in

1. Lantana and Parthenium removal- The villagers see the problem of the invasive plants and are ready to get involved at wage to remove these plants. To avoid their regeneration, these have to be removed manually and people trained for the same.
2. Cattle Insurance, Cattle Camps: The villagers here own the cattle but are not very aware when there are camps. The project proposes to organize camps and frequent intervals and also get them to register their cattle for insurance. This helps in compensation claims being processed faster especially in the case of depredation. Cattle camps at frequent intervals organized with the help of the partner NGO Arulagam will keep the cattle in good health and also help reduce foot and mouth disease spread.
3. Alternate feed for the cattle during dry months. The villagers send cattle out to graze sometime into the reserve forest and the sanctuary causing conflict with forest officials. The project aims to look at boundary fodder crops as one component
4. Other issues regarding their interaction with government officials on electricity and old age pensions are beyond the purview of the project but the partner NGO will help as it can on a case-by-case basis

Describe the community's strengths and resources.

The communities are small and in concurrence of their major problems and are willing to work towards economic benefit and welfare of the village. They have some land and know that if the degradation around their village of the forest is restored it helps with their subsistence agriculture without worrying about elephants and deer. They are open to new ideas and are ready to try newer techniques concerning their cattle and agriculture which is predominantly rainfed.

Describe any challenges and gaps in the community's behaviours, skills, and knowledge.

The villagers here are aware of their problems and are lacking in skillset on new agricultural techniques or in using the land in an agroforestry or multiple-use manner. They are open to ideas if they see a change in their circumstances, especially concerning their cattle. The recurrent theme was a way forward to deal with Lantana and stop its regeneration.

What issues will the project address, and how does the community currently address those issues?

The main issues :

1. Lantana, Parthenium Senna spread to be controlled. Right now this has reduced grazing land and the community lets periodically cattle graze in reserved forest land which leads to conflict with the department. The project envisions training and setting up teams of Lantana and other invasive removal and using the Lantana as raw material to make particle boards that can be used for packing or décor. This causes the removal of Lantana to a higher value component which will make this lantana removal exercise sustainable
2. Lantana spread causing human-animal conflict: The villagers are aware that removal will increase grazing for their cattle and reduce elephants and deer in their fields. Also, it will reduce depredation on their cattle when grazing is available. Depredation in some cases leads to poison baiting the leopards and tigers and also the vultures who pick

the carcass. The vultures in this region are critically endangered and the villagers are aware but it requires a more sustained approach

3. Cattle Insurance and Cattle Camps: The villagers right now haven't got most of their cattle insured. Therefore depredation insurance takes a long time to be compensated. This causes conflict with authorities. The project will address this along with the partner NGO carrying out awareness campaigns and insurance camps. Foot and mouth disease camps and periodic camps will also be organized.

4. Fodder crops: Right now the villagers let their cattle out to graze in the summer months and these inevitably stray into the forest land. The project envisions training the villagers to grow boundary fodder crops and also look at growing grass. This will add sustainability to their cattle grazing and also avoid conflict

5. CattleBy-product: There is a lot of manure. The community right now doesn't do much with it other than use in their small land holdings. The project also plans to train them to make organic biofertilizers like Bokashi which can be sold as well as a cash product

Provide the specific details of the project design and how it will solve these issues.

1. Lantana Removal: Training of villagers in lantana removal and supply of specific type of implements to aid in the removal. This will be carried out by Junglescapes a partner NGO which has been working on Lantana Clearing for ten years in the neighboring tiger reserve. The training will last a week to ten days based on availability of trainers in that season.
2. Grass seeding: As soon as the Lantana is removed, grass seeds are distributed to take over that space and avoid regeneration of invasive species. Women collect grass seeds and then dry and preserve them. They are then dibbled in lantana cleared areas just before the rains.
3. Lantana Repurposing: A unit with a shredder is stationed in Vazhaithottam village at a property which belongs to a club member and will be allocated as a lease where the lantana will be shredded and that will be used with a binder, put on a form and dried to form the board. This method is designed by our club member Binish Desai and the skill level required to make the boards is minimal. The boards can be sold just as pallets for packing or it

can be made into décor which can be sold. This will be a unit that can see a ROI in two years making this Lantana removal process economically sustainable.

Cattle Fodder, Insurance, Cattle Health:

The project will teach villagers how to grow fodder crops along with the animal Husbandry Department. Ideas of boundary crops like- Living fence of lime trees will be advocated for avoiding human animal conflict. Along with the partner NGO, Arulagam there will be periodic veterinary camps as well as camps on cattle insurance, the procedures for applying compensation.

4. Describe the long-term plan for the project (such as oversight, financial responsibilities, and expected behavior change) after Rotary's involvement ends.

The partner NGO, Arulagam will continue the work after the period of Rotary involvement ends. They will take over all aspects of the project from Lantana removal, to Lantana processing and the cattle health as well as agricultural practices introduction. The Lantana repurposing unit will be able to support all these activities. Financial responsibility of continuing the work will be transferred to them including any equipment bought.

We hope to see similar units spring up for Lantana processing and removal of the invasive throughout the tiger reserve propelled by the Forest Department with the success of this project. A combination of Forest Department involvement with a dedicated NGO partner will be a win-win situation of clearing Lantana and job opportunities which could reduce migration, human animal conflict.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (FOR ALL ENVIRONMENT AND WATER, SANITATION, AND HYGIENE PROJECTS)

What are currently the greatest environmental threats to local land, air, water resources, and the ecosystem?

The biggest threat in this region is the degradation of the land in the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve and surrounding areas with extensive spread of invasive species like Lantana, Parthenium and Senna.

These cause reduction in grazing land for ungulates in the tiger reserve and causes human conflict when they graze in farm lands. In conjunction, predators also move to the farm areas and this causes depredation of cattle. This region is a habitat for critically endangered vultures and the spread of invasive species causes depredation of cattle by predators as ungulates are not available. This in turn has villagers setting bait traps. This causes vulture deaths. Bait traps also cause death of predators. This causes conflict with the forest department.

List any cultural practices that are relevant to the project (such as agricultural techniques or traditions).

What positive and negative environmental changes do you expect to result from the project?

We expect to see in three years restoration of atleast 100 acres of buffer region and forest land in and around Mudhumalai tiger reserve. This will increase range for the ungulates as well as the tigers and leopards.

We do not expect any negative changes to the environment.