

Common Property Resource Management in Peri-Urban Villages of Gorakhpur

In Gorakhpur, India, common property resources such as pastureland, water bodies, orchards, etc. are the victims of illegal encroachment by individuals, land developers or even disputed land conversion by government. Unplanned urban growth in peri-urban villages of Gorakhpur is a result of such ignorance of laws governing CPR and weak enforcement of rule by concerned government departments. Many a times, city expansion in peri-urban villages defy environmental norms, over-looking existing rules to victimize natural resources, which in any way are common resources like pond, lake, rivers, forest and pasture land, etc.



Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group (GEAG) has been mobilising communities and working with them on climate resilient agriculture in the peri urban areas of Gorakhpur for increasing city's resilience to flood and waterlogging. The common property resources play an important role in adding to city's flood buffering capacity but unplanned development and unauthorized encroachment by individuals are leading to rapid degradation of these vital resources. This issue cannot be seen in silo but it leads to a nexus of inter-linked problems. The first and foremost is that degradation of common property resources adversely affect agriculture in peri-urban villages making many households to turn to other occupations and adopt different means of livelihoods which comes with newer problems for the small and marginal farmers.

Increasing mechanised farming and untamed urban growth takes a toll on common property resources in peri-urban villages. Disappearance of pastures/grazing land, forests and pond are evidenced by reduced cattle wealth in villages and changing livelihoods from farm to non-farm

occupations. The status of common property resources is worst in GEAG's intervention areas. As per govt. records, only 3.75 Hectare land is available in 5 intervention villages as



common property resource and all these land are either disputed or non-functional. The key issues concerning the common property resources in Gorakhpur are:

- i. Improper disposal of sewer water by Municipal Corporation in village Semra Devi Prasad causing drinking water contamination and related health hazards. Problem of feral cattle and open grazing causing serious threat to agriculture for approx 1850 peri-urban households. Lack of pasture land in villages allows cattle to graze openly during Kharif season.
- ii. Jharwa, Khirwania and Semra Devi Prasad are affected by illegal sand and soil mining activities, hampering agriculture and standing crop in villages.
- iii. Village Panchayat has given lease of community pond to private influential beneficiary for fishing and duck rearing activity.
- iv. Problem of dispute over CPRs restricts implementation of agricultural schemes

The small and marginal farmers of the area are very aware of these critical issues which are hampering their livelihood since decades. The community institutions have been raising their voices for protection of common property resources and has also been advocating with Panchayat Raj Institutions and local government for the same. A recent such event held on 19th May 2015 brought together 200 community members who raised their voices for putting an end to illegal encroachments which can result in protection of agricultural lands and hence, secure the livelihoods of the small and marginal farmers.