

Older People led Drought Mitigation in the Thar Desert, India



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Gravis

The overview

- India and the Thar Desert
- Older people of Thar
- GRAVIS
- The project
- The outcome
- The future

India and the Thar Desert

- India is home to over 80 million people of 60 years and older.
- By 2025, this figure is likely to reach 180 million.
- 40% of OP in India live below poverty line.
- 75% of OP in India live in rural areas.
- OP in rural areas have multiple challenges.

India and the Thar Desert

- Lies across north-west Rajasthan
- Home to over 23 million people in Rajasthan, it is the most densely populated desert eco-system in the world
- Drought prone, receives less than 20 centimeters of rain in a year
- Main source of Livelihood:
agriculture, animal husbandry
- Impoverished, backward
- Poor health and literacy indicators



India and the Thar Desert

In the Thar, in a century, there are 7 drought years, 27 good rain years and 63 semi-droughts.

And then, there are 3 great droughtsduring which mothers will loose their children never to meet again.....

A Thar Desert proverb

Older People of Thar....

- Remain vulnerable to droughts and are impacted by poverty.
- Are malnourished and isolated.
- Suffer with health problems.
- Are often marginalized from decision making.



GRAVIS, the organization.....

- Founded in 1983
- GRAVIS has 15 field centers across the Thar Desert
- Directly works with the Thar Desert community
- Strongly focuses on older people's issues, including older women.
- Has been working on ageing in partnership with Help Age International.



The Project...

- Is known as Promoting Older People led Community Action (POC) to reduce poverty.
- Supported by the European Commission and Help Age International.
- Covers over 3,000 older people and their families.
- Focuses on poverty reduction through drought mitigation.
- Blends traditional knowledge with science.

The project

Leadership interventions

- Forming Older People's associations. 56 OPAs formed so far.
- Encouraging older women to form Self Help Groups, over 80 groups formed.
- Ensuring that the OP participate in planning, implementation and monitoring.



The project

Water security interventions

- Construction of rain water harvesting tanks under earth. Over 500 tanks constructed.
- Constructing and renovating community ponds. 20 ponds completed.
- Training and capacity building on storing and using water.
- Linking water with health.



The project..

Food security interventions

- Constructing dykes on farming lands. Over 400 constructed.
- Trainings on agriculture, seeds and organic farming.
- Setting up horticulture units. Over 600 units set up.



The project

Animal husbandry

- Setting up fodder depots
- Developing pasture lands
- Animal health services
- Trainings on livestock management



The project

Health interventions

- Advocacy for age-friendly healthcare
- Health education
- Linkages with the government
- Service delivery
- Developing Village Health Workers



The outcome

- Over 50 strong OPAs formed who are willing to take up initiatives on their own.
- Good links with the local government developed.
- Enhanced water and food security for 3,000 older people.
- Leadership development among older women.

The outcome

- Support to animal husbandry through fodder, health and trainings.
- Increased awareness on OP's health needs.
- Age friendly healthcare making its way in the area.
- GRAVIS in the process developing its own understanding and capacity.

The future

- Further strengthening of OPAs.
- More focus on older women
- Replication of drought mitigation work.
- Enhanced capacity on healthcare.
- Continued advocacy with the government and other players on the issues of ageing.

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THANKS!

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