

Participatory natural resources mapping: A case study of Bhitara Panchayat in Banni grassland, Kachchh (Gujarat)

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SUMMARY

The information of this paper is based on nine months field survey at Bhitara Panchayat villages *i.e.* Bhitara Mota, Bhitara Nana and Udhma. Organization of series of meetings were held at various levels with local stakeholders and data were collected on natural resources like existing natural resources and their distribution, grassland status with salinity classes, participatory restoration methods and socio-economic status of each family. Based on participatory exercise (or participatory rural appraisal) with various groups, The conclusion was drawn to recommend site specific strategies for conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources. Overall findings revealed that *Jat* muslims is the most dominant community in selected Panchayat villages with livestock rearing activities as the main occupation. In addition, local inhabitants were using charcoal as main source of energy to fulfill their daily requirement as well as had also adopted *Prosopis*-based charcoal making as business to earn surplus money for their livelihood. Natural habitats have been lost through invasion of *Prosopis juliflora* (locally called *Ganda Bavar*) and had resulted in significant loss of wetland area, degradation of remaining natural resources and a consequent decrease in the diversity of native land use type and species. People admitted that they did not have adequate knowledge of government developmental schemes and programmes so they were not able to avail the full benefits of such programmes. Participatory natural resources mapping supports the sustainable management of natural resources in an ecologically sound and socially sensitive manner. However, the resource use potential of local people has not been planned scientifically for sustainable development of the Banni region. The present study was planned and carried-out in one Panchayat of Banni region to develop an innovative management practice, which supports sustainable use and multiple natural resources benefits.

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