11   Site description for Kolli Hills, India

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11.1 Context

Kolli Hills is unsurprising another Indian community with strong cultural inheritance. The community traditionally cultivated a large diversity of millet species but approximately 30 years ago significant socio-economic changes resulted in the decline of millet conservation and use. The introduction of government distribution centres which offer food items at considerable discount, and the introduction of cash crops to the region were significant driving forces. MSSRF began working in the site in 1994 initially surveying the traditional knowledge, agricultural practices and natural resources management of the community. This survey later developed more of a focus on studying the biodiversity within scared groves, which display a fascinating link between cultural practice and biodiversity conservation.

11.2 Institutional and project setting

The two latter described projects in the previous chapter (Chapter 10: Jeypore site), funded by the SDC and IFAD respectively, were also involved to some or more extent in Kolli Hills. The SDC funded project consolidated the work initiated in Kolli Hills on millets, with the purpose to achieve higher productivity as well as to bridge the gap between supply and market demand of millets by facilitating market linkages. The IFAD funded project was also, in addition to the Jeypore site, implemented in Kolli Hills with the same objectives and key activities as outlined in Chapter 10.

11.3 Key project activities

Please see comments above and refer to Chapter 10 under the same section heading.

11.4 Social and institutional organization

Most farmers have legal ownership of land but some are landless and rely heavily on the forest for resources. Although not formally registered, land in the forest is cleared for cultivation. Some farmers are attempting to develop agroforestry systems and form an organisation with the idea of establishing a nursery.

The creation of community organizations with institutionalised working modalities has been achieved through the formation of farmers' self-help groups (SHGs). One in particular has been very successful in the marketing of organically produced pineapples with the support of private organic certification agencies and export companies. There are a number of other SHGs which are also involved in value-addition activities; including, the 'Natural Food Shop', established and maintained by a local woman's group. Several SHGs manage a millet processing mill which is used predominantly for home consumption but does generate income for the organization. The Kolli Hills Agrobiodiversity Conservation Federation (KHABCOFED) was established in 2009 with the aim of scaling-up community collective actions and for consolidating community roles in planning and implementing CBM. The KHABCOFED encompasses all farmer SHGs, coordinated by two committees and a general assembly.

MSSRF has been successful in generating awareness on the benefits of *in-situ* conservation of landraces for food security and the value of production of minor crops for home consumption, which has led to participatory approaches in millet conservation and genetic characterisation. Furthermore, input-based trials and demonstration plots have been started in association with knowledgeable farmers. The community is actively promoting local landraces for traditional agricultural production, for home consumption and also in the preservation of cultural aspects. Community seed banks are well organized, autonomous and keep the community's register of germplasm documentation. The community is also concerned about the protection of natural resources; for example, the sacred groves. An ecotourism orientated group has been given the responsibility to manage a touristic site. There is a waterfall at the site and the group generates good income from visitors.

11.5   Plant genetic resources

Traditionally, communities cultivated a wide variety of millet species but many are being reintroduced now after a significant decline in the conservation of these over the past 30 years. Cash crops were introduced roughly 30 years ago, which resulted in the diminished orientation towards minor crops. Cassava, pineapple, coffee, black pepper, banana and clove were among those introduced commodities. More recent interests in agroforestry have brought about the increased cultivation of pineapple, pumpkin and jackfruit.

11.6   CBM practices

This list serves to enumerate all the different activities taking place in the Kolli Hills site which pertain to community-based conservation and sustainable utilization of agrobiodiversity.

1. Generating awareness and an understanding of local diversity:
    -   MSSRF survey and documentation of community biodiversity, traditional knowledge, agricultural practices and natural resource management;
    -   4C's approach (conservation, cultivation, consumption and commercialization) to community awareness raising and resource management;
    -   participatory characterization of millet germplasm.

2. Establishing community institutions, developing their capacities and consolidating CBM in their working modalities:`
    -   formation of community self-help groups and institutionalization of working modalities;
    -   establishing KHABCOFED and electing committees to coordinate, monitor and consolidate collective community action.

3. Developing conservation practices (including entrepreneurship and marketing of agrobiodiversity), monitoring and evaluating practices, promoting social learning and scaling-up:
    -   value-addition through processing, certification and branding;
    -   input-based trials, diversity blocks and demonstration plots;
    -   managing village seed banks and keeping a register of germplasm;
    -   providing diversity kits to farmers for the multiplication and replication of millet landraces;
    -   payment to farmers for participating in landrace multiplication and distribution;
    -   introducing new crops through agroforestry schemes;
    -   generating income from ecotourism for the community.