

**MYRADA**

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## **LOOKING BEYOND THE COW**

### **Animal Husbandry**

**(WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO MYRADA BANGARPET PROJECT)**

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The best of intentions can produce negative results if they are based on wrong assumptions. This is true as much for animal husbandry programmes as for any other programme. We are all interested in improving, on a permanent basis, the socio-economic conditions of the poor people living in our project area. Somebody (let us say the veterinarians, or the bankers, or some farmers from high rainfall, well-developed areas) tells us that if we give good, crossbred cows to farmers in our area, their economic condition will definitely improve. But will it really? Will a cow that is yielding 6 litres in Mandya continue to yield the same 6 litres if it is given to a small farmer in Kamasamudram? Will a full-grown 50% or 60% exotic cow be able to adjust to changes in management, climate, fodder and feed and continue to produce good milk yields? Can a farmer who has never had a crossbred cow before be suddenly able to manage a full-grown crossbred cow that we give him? Does the area produce that much water and fodder? What if the farmer lives in an interior village and his animal suddenly falls sick? What if we give him a high yielding animal and he finds that he is unable to market the produce? What if there is no one who can graze it and the farmer has to do it himself at the cost of his wages?

A cow (or any animal, for that matter, but let us stick to the cow) has many relationships. It is related with the farmer who has bought it, it is related with the farmer's wife who feeds it and milks it, it is related to the farmer's child who takes it out to graze, it is related to the local doctor who cares for it in sickness, it is related with the market, it is related with the shed in which it lives, the land on which it grazes and the pond from where it drinks. The productivity of this cow depends upon the quality of all these relationships. Therefore, a cow cannot be seen in isolation, it will have to be seen in the context of its environment. A healthy cow in an unhealthy environment is of no use to anyone.

Our project staff, especially the veterinary staff, must necessarily look beyond the cow and respond to the environment (including people) around the cow if our programme is to succeed.

Remember, people were already maintaining cattle in our project area before we arrived. On our side we have had experience in upgrading the quality of animals. From our experience on other projects, we have adopted the following strategy:

- Cross breeding of local cows to produce F1 calves.
- Purchasing crossbred (F1) calves (not cows) from outside.
- Purchasing pregnant cows, (i.e. local heifers impregnated with exotic semen) to produce F1 calves.

Yet these options may not be equally relevant elsewhere. In Bangarpet we have already gone ahead with cross breeding local cows with exotic semen. Have we asked ourselves :

1. What was (and is) the cattle economy in the area?
2. Why are we trying to improve the stock of animals?
  - Is it to increase milk production?
  - Is it to produce better draft animals?
  - Is it to produce good calves for selling?

Our strategy for improving the stock of animals will therefore, depend on the reasons why the stock should be improved - and this in turn will be based on the cattle economy of the area. Therefore we first need to know something with regard to the EXISTING SITUATION of cattle husbandry (economy) in our project area.

Feedback obtained from the project staff shows that at present, the reasons why people are keeping cattle in our project area are:

1st : To produce cowdung which will be used as manure and fuel.

2nd : To produce draft power for ploughing, pulling carts, etc.(mostly cows are used for ploughing).

3rd : To produce some animals that can be sold in the market for profit.

It can, therefore, be concluded that for the farmers in our project area, cowdung and draft power are the main products and milk is only a by-product. Further it also tells us what kind of animals the environment can support. Obviously it cannot support milch animals.

So what do we do now?

- Do we improve the cattle to produce better draft power?
- Do we introduce a milk-economy into the area?
- Do we try a combination of both?

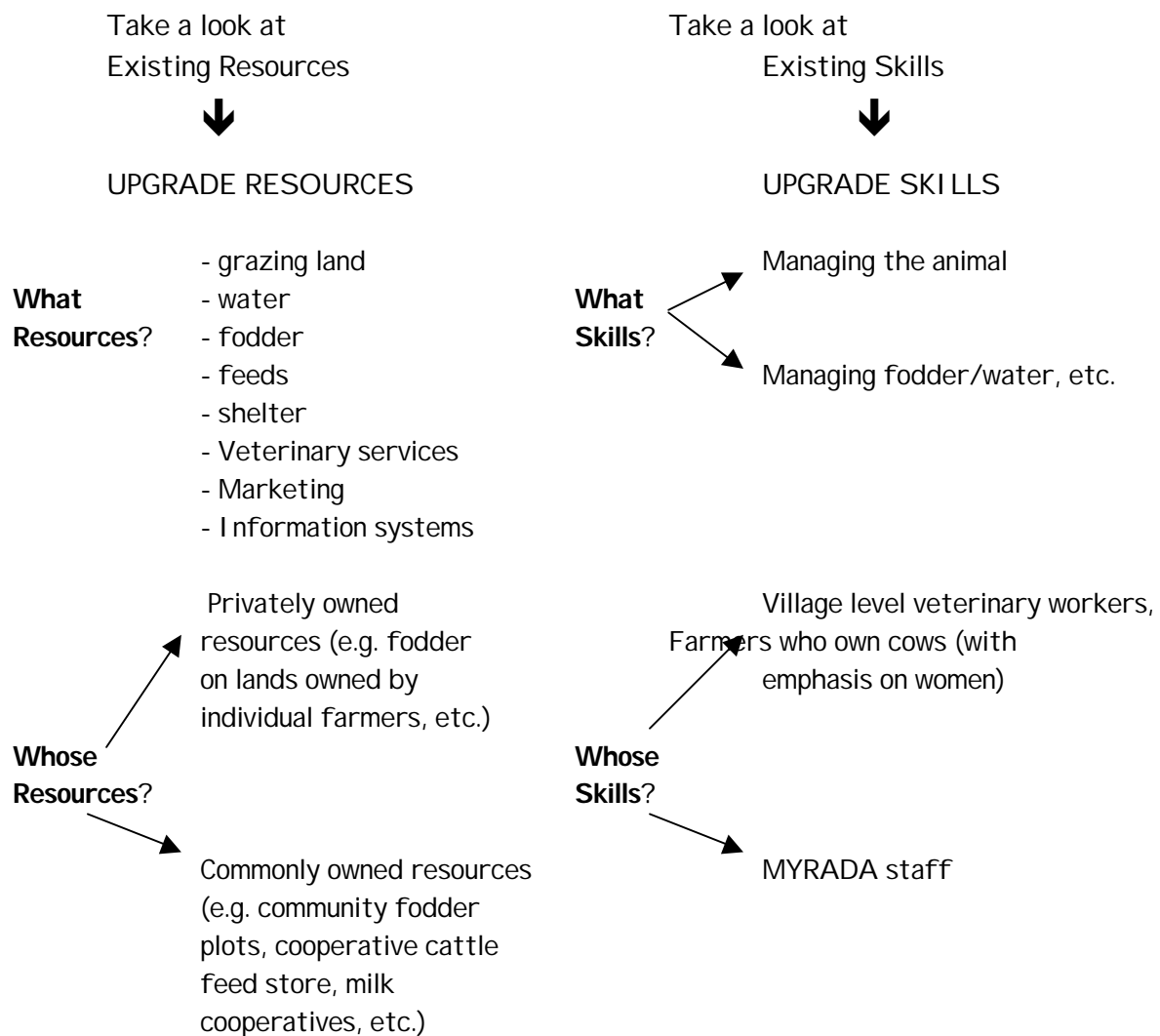
The answer will depend on :

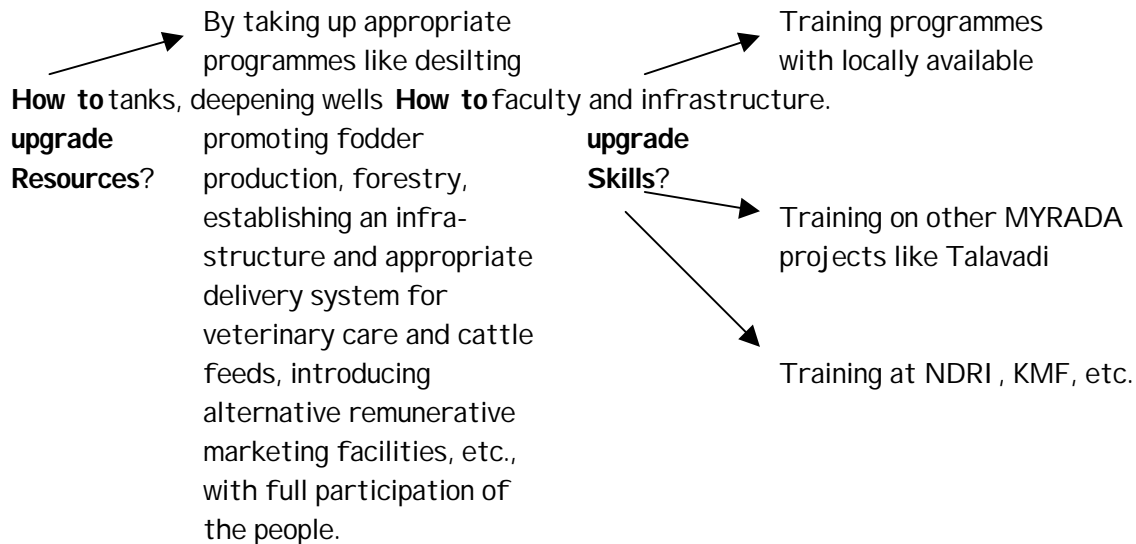
- What the people want
- What the people can manage
- What the area can support

Before we decide to support any decision taken with the people we have to be aware of a few things :-

- Better cattle means more fodder and water.
- Better cattle means better veterinary care and support services like insurance.
- Going in for milch animals means even more emphasis on feeding and health care.
- Milch animals also means milk-marketing.

Let us look at what we have to do in order to ensure that our animal husbandry programme moves in the direction of success :-





What have we done with regard to this in Bangarpet so far ?

We have some animal statistics. We have established a Stockman Centre and two or three veterinary routes. We have hired a couple of staff and have bought a few Artificial Insemination Containers and a thoroughbred Jersey bull. We are training village veterinary workers and are promoting fodder production. Our crossbred calves have started to arrive and we have a plan how to feed them. We are also working on ways to extend the milk route to cover our farmers.

As far as the delivery systems are concerned we are on the right track. Having decided upon the nature of services, we are also involved in training and developing appropriate management systems. But what about the services themselves? We have worked on the assumption that people want a milk economy. If we look at the pattern of insemination we find that our containers only carry H.F. and Jersey straws. Our bull is a Jersey bull. Whereas, the people have expressed a preference for draft breeds like Hallikar. On the other hand our fodder programme has not kept pace with our artificial insemination programme. We have 16 female crossbred calves and the area under fodder has increased only marginally.

What decisions do we take for the future?

- i. Carry this paper in our pockets and go through it each time we want to take up a new programme.
- ii. Purchase 2 Hallikar bulls and place them appropriately on our project.
- iii. Insist that with every successful pregnancy, 8 more bunds will be brought under fodder.

**Note** : Since having these discussions, Bangarpet Taluk has been included under Operation Flood, and Milk Cooperatives have been started.