

# Policy Responses for Improving Livelihood of Small and Marginal and Women Farmers in Uttar Pradesh, India: A Case Study of Joint Struggle of Gorakhpur Environmental Action, Civil Society Organisation and Small & Marginal Farmers Union

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## What contextual factors were important? (Context?)

For centuries, the agriculture has been a prime source of livelihood of Indian peoples. Specifically in Uttar Pradesh, it holds the place of pride in terms of generating both income and employment for people. Large population of Uttar Pradesh state is primarily dependent on agriculture for its livelihood. It is a way of life, deeply rooted in our social, cultural, festivals and traditions.

In India, after independence (since 1947), the green revolution tackled the problem of food crisis at much extent. Unfortunately, it also adversely affected the agricultural sustainability and livelihood of mainly landless, shared croppers, small and marginal farmers. The green revolution driven practices (modern agriculture) like: intensive use of chemicals (fertilizers and pesticides), mono-cropping, increasing livestock-less farming practices and market dependency etc damaged agriculture and worsen socio-economic status of farming community (mainly of small and marginal farmers). Because these practices had resulted increase in agricultural cost (barrier in maintaining production level), decline in agricultural production and reducing farming net income profit. The continuous declining agricultural income, in lack of appropriate and effective option worsened socio-economic status of low-resourced and poor farming community. Resultantly, this class became gradually poorer and marginalized.

### Brief of Policy Broking Organisation

Gorakhpur Environmental Action, Gorakhpur, India was established in 1975. It works mainly for the cause of small, marginal and women farmers through promoting sustainable agriculture and networking and policy advocacy. It is also actively involved in developing community-based livelihood models to enhance the adaptive capacity of the peoples, getting affected from climatic change impacts.

In its approach, policy advocacy has always been a key approach to sensitize the stakeholders to create an environment of sustainable agriculture and small and marginal and women farmers.

Today GEAG is a well established implementing, resource, consultative and support organization in North India on low external input sustainable agriculture (LEISA), livelihood models, climate change and adaptation issues and gender equity etc

GEAG has been proposed as Member in the State Agriculture Advisory Committee. Though, it is a member in District Level Agricultural Technical Management Agency (ATMA). It is also member of various voluntary organisation.

UNESCO has awarded a special consultative status on agriculture to GEAG in year 2000. (<http://www.jci.cc/about/jcidocs/agreements/List%20of%20NGOs%20with%20consultative%20status%20with%20the%20UN.pdf>)

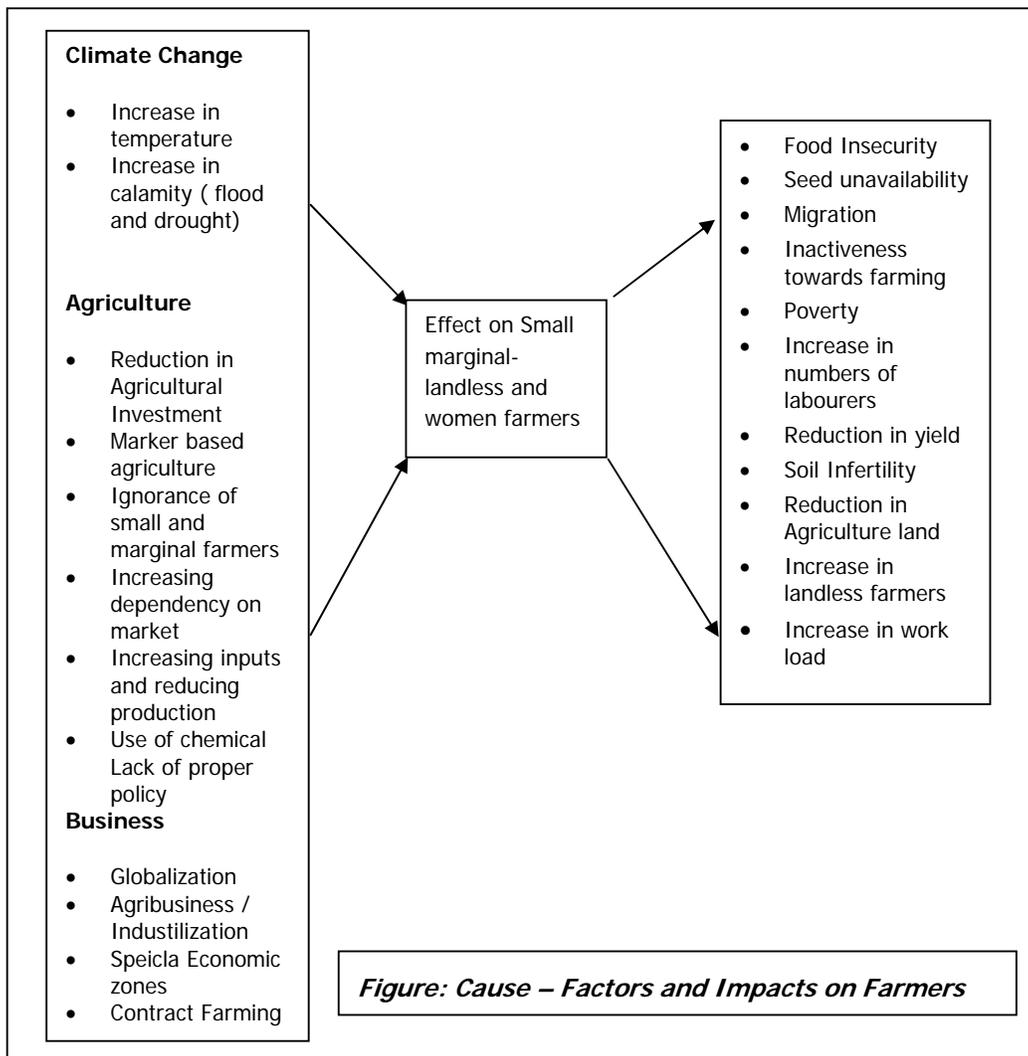
In 1990s, the government had introduced globalization to bring the economic development. This event was the milestone, from where government policies started favouring multinational companies. For the benefits of small percentage of populations (business groups), prime livelihood source of large rural population had been ignored. All the developmental efforts had diverted towards other sectors rather agriculture sector. The reduced budgetary allocation for developing agriculture had contributed to declining agriculture growth and socio-economic status of farmers. The interference of multinational companies on agricultural inputs like seed is a big threat to livelihood of the farmers. The very costly and non-reusable seed reduced their agricultural income and self-independence. As seed is a critical input without which, cultivation is not possible. The market dependency of the farmers has made them vulnerable. Other government unfavourable policies include Special Economic Zone, Contract Farming, Ganga Express Highway, etc. The agricultural land is also reducing because of its transfer into non-agriculture use. Also, the rights of shared cropper and agricultural workers was not protected despite their significant contribution in agricultural development.

The decline of agriculture's contribution to Gross Domestic Product has made government and policy makers to treat it as a profitless business. Moreover, agriculture sector got marginalized. In last 50 years, in comparison to industrial sectors, the agriculture and livelihood improvement of landless, small and marginal farmers have never been focused on issues of government policy makers. The reach of government's agricultural schemes and programmes to farmers is also very poor. In addition, the dominant and resourceful big farmers enjoy these programmes comparatively more.

Rural women form the most important productive work force in the economy of majority of developing nations, including India. In Uttar Pradesh, 89% population of small and marginal farmers comprises of those hard workers, who contribute in more than 70% of the agricultural activities. Despite the key role of women in agricultural activities, their contribution have always been undermined and neglected. They are even beyond the imagination of being considered as a 'Farmer.' To sensitize and get women farmers recognised as Farmers amongst these stakeholders was a major challenge. The social customs and male dominant society has suppressed their key role and importance. Their significant role as women farmers has never been recognized by the society and government department and policy makers. At domestic level, they have no control and decision over domestic resources. Even they have no power to take the decision pertaining to agricultural practices; they act like a worker only. Similarly, in the government agricultural programme, there was no place for women farmers.

For protecting the agriculture and improving livelihood of small and marginal farmers, the major challenges have been to convince the government and policy makers about the adverse consequences of green revolution and their policies. In addition, to sensitize these stakeholders as well as others (like civil society organisations, farmer, media etc) about the sustainable agriculture as alternate option was also a major challenge. Because of green revolution and lack of think tank, there was an inconducive environment for small and marginal farmers and sustainable agriculture. Unfortunately, due to over shadowness of green revolution, as well as insensitiveness and passiveness of agricultural department and

scientific community and policy makers, these damaging aspects could not have been seen. These actors were never receptive to realize the adverse consequences of green revolution.



Because of unfavorable environment and lack of support, these farming communities had become frustrated. The frustration of farmers, those are posed the responsibility of feeding millions of peoples, is self-indicative. It also raises big question of survival of agriculture and farmers. Because of willful ignorance of government and policy makers, this farming community has become poor and marginalized and as VOICELESS. The incidents of committal suicides amongst the farming community is also seen every year, specially in Bundelkhand region. Contrary to the unions of industrial sectors, the issue of small and marginal farmers in Uttar Pradesh has never been issue of unions working on famer's issue. These unions are focussed only on big farmers, those comprise approximately 10 percentage of total farmers. In addition, everywhere, modern agriculture was dominant on all the stakeholders. Even, civil society organisations were not understanding the farmers' problems.

Realizing the problems of landless, small and marginal and women farmers, GEAG had strategically started working for their cause. It had started promoting sustainable agriculture based on its experiment, by sharing its encouraging results with farming community, civil society organisations, media, activities, government department and policy makers, etc. GEAG had also implemented a campaign on Sustainable Agriculture Literacy in 70 districts of Uttar Pradesh. It was intended to create an environment for sustainable agriculture. Otherside, simultaneously it was building the capacity of self-emerged Small and Marginal Farmers Union for the advocacy initiatives. Also, GEAG was networking and lobbying with civil society organisations to create pressure on the government for their cause. Later on, considering increasing unrest amongst the farming community, GEAG, in collaboration with voluntary organizations and farming community, had organized a convention of small marginal farmers on Farmer's Day (23 December 2000) at State Legislative House at Lucknow. The rotatng large event had guided to continue a sustained movement under leadership of Small and Marginal Farmer Union. Since that year, conventions (Jan Sansad, Kisan Sansad, Kisan Jan Samwad etc.) are organised at state, district and block levels. Also, in the support of their demand and issues, demonstrations, dharna etc take place, wherein thousands of farmers participate and made their strategies. These pressure-developing activities give many folds impacts.

Later for giving strength to the voice of small and marginal farmers, on GEAG's initiative, NGOs of Uttar Pradesh had united and formed a network namely Sustainable Agriculture Network in Uttar Pradesh ( SAN-UP). It has total 215 NGOs of Uttar Pradesh. The electronic and print media have great role in creating awareness. Prior to taking their help, their orientations and exposures of experiment sites were carried out. Resultantly, the media covers issues related to agriculture and small and marginal and women farmers. Their publication has been supporting in creating environment for them.

The collaborative efforts of GEAG, Sustainable Agriculture Network in Uttar Pradesh and Small and Marginal Farmers Unions had created an environment wherein sustainable agriculture and small and marginal farmers are now given due consideration. By acting as pressure and advocacy groups, they affect all stakeholders like famers, government, public representatives, media and civil society organisations. Because of enriched experience and developed calibre, the leaders of these three organisations have been proposed by Agriculture Minister as members of State Level Agricultural Advisory Board. GEAG is also a member in District Level Agricultural Technical Management Agency (ATMA), headed by the District Magistrate. The state government is also taking the members of SAN-UP as member of ATMA in other districts. Several small farmers have also been made members of government initiated schemes and programmes like National Food Security Mission etc.

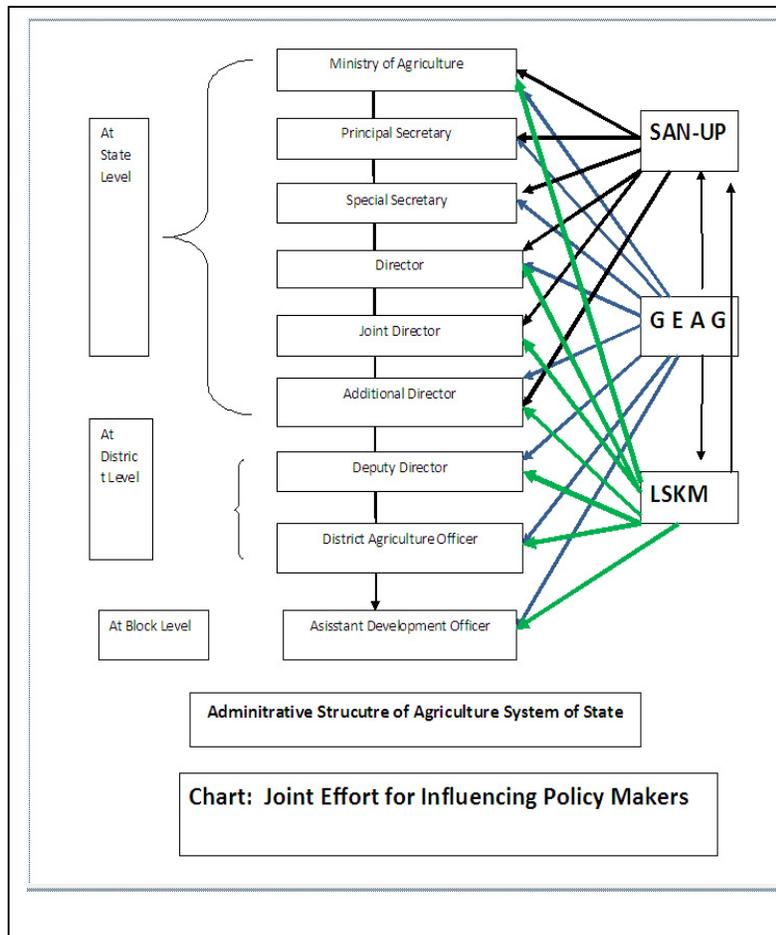
Since inception, people centric approach has always been a key foundation of Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group. In the organisation, well-defined structure exists. The President heads it. It has also policy and decision making group namely Core Group comprising 3 female and 2 male staff members. One women member belongs to community. The group resolves the policy related issues. Any staff can approach core group or president. Even community can also raise their issues without any obstacle. Every staff has own working action plan and strategies, finalized in staff meetings. The policies, developed through

involvement of staff and community, play significant role. These policies and well structure system have contributed in the reputation of GEAG. To work with this organisation is deemed as honour for the staff.

**What parts of the policy system were targeted and what research was relevant? (Of what?)**

India is a well institutionalised country with various ministries and their departments. Under The Constitution, Central and State Governments have been assigned the duties of Welfare State. These jointly and individually work on the assigned working areas and issues. The State of Uttar Pradesh

(specifically Eastern Uttar Pradesh), has been GEAG's main operational area. Since beginning, pathetic situation of the small, marginal and women farmers has inspired GEAG to work for their wellbeing. Because of dependency of the large population of small and marginal farmers on agriculture, the needed focus was on agriculture development. Since, the agriculture is a state issue under the Constitution, therefore agricultural department was mainly targeted. This agriculture department is very big department comprising various sections like soil conservation, extensions, research, plant protection,



statistics, crop insurance and others. For these sections, at each level several officials are deployed. Additionally, other government departments like animal husbandry, land revenue department, financial institutions, etc were integral parts of liaisoning and policy advocacy. As, these government departments, directly and indirectly affect the agriculture and livelihood of small and marginal farmers.

For changing policies for the cause of landless, small and marginal farmers of Uttar Pradesh, through the researches and studies, the given focus was indentifying the problem and their causes determining pathetic status of agriculture and small and marginal farmers. The main thrust was given on analysing the role of government policies. As approximate 70 percentage populations is small and marginal farmers, whose livelihood is mainly dependent

on agriculture. It is noticed that adverse effect of any factor on agriculture, affect this large population directly and indirectly. In this context, the focus of research was identifying the causes and reasons affecting agriculture and farmers. The policy aspect of these problems and solutions had also been considered. The policy aspect include land consolidation and possession, irrigation facilities, agricultural schemes, use of agricultural land for non-agriculture purpose, inadequate minimum support price, hybrid seed, decreasing sugar cane production and cultivable area, agricultural wages, etc.

With the passage of time, according to demand of pressing situation, GEAG had conducted several studies and researches on diverse issues focussed mainly on small and marginal farmers.

In addition, research was carried out to explore the opportunities for sustainable agriculture and low input farming techniques by their mainstreaming into government policies. Under this research, new concept of sustainable agriculture was experimented on new land for testing its viability and replicability. In this approach, focus was given on optimum utilization and development of limited resource; improving agricultural system and promoting own developed utilization of bio-inputs. The joint efforts resulted in poverty reduction and increase in self-dependency.

The major researches and studies include:

1. Viability and Replicability of eco-friendly sustainable agriculture and low input farming practices involving small landholders as viable and economical option of modern agriculture.
2. Status of Small and Marginal Farmers in Uttar Pradesh

Besides above, several more researches have been conducted and being used in policy advocacy efforts.

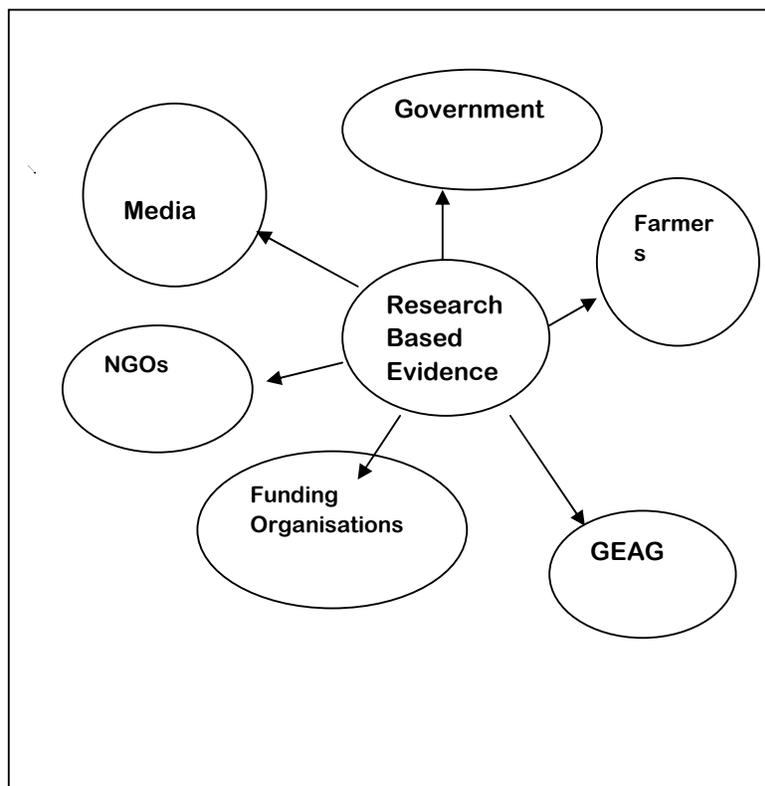
- The logic behind collecting research-based evidences was that without it, neither government departments nor other stakeholders would have been accepting. Thus, previous problem faced in convincing government officials in absence of supportive evidence was major reason for carrying out of the researches.

### **What was the purpose of providing research support to policy and who was intended to benefit (For what and for whom?)**

By enabling government department and agencies (mainly related to agriculture) and policy makers to understand the problems of agricultural development and small landholders towards developing agro-climatic zone-wise and pro-small landholder policies, has been main objective. The ultimate beneficiaries are landless, small, marginal and women farmers of State of Uttar Pradesh as these policy influencing efforts contribute to livelihood improvement of small and marginal famers through creating conducive environment for agricultural development. The researches and studies also benefitted the government and

policy makers to understand the ground realities or myth of green revolutions and gaps of policy formulation and implementation.

Strategic efforts, utilizing research based evidence for sensitising the farmers, civil society organisations, government department, public representatives, media and others worked really. To date, government not only use small and marginal farmers and women farmers in their documents but also pro-small and marginal farmers agriculture system and practices through its programme and schemes. Government has also given subsidy on bio-inputs to this farming community. The bank loan of farmers was also waived off. Women farmers are also getting separate focus by government in its programme and events.



**Who provided the research support and how did they do it? (Who and how?)**

For addressing the key issues effectively, development of organisational capacities on various issues through conducting researches and studies has been one of GEAG’s major efforts. Simultaneously, addressing social developmental issues, it has also equally and actively been focussed on developing own organisational capacities on the diverse issues. These areas include researches, farm based research, developing different types of livelihood models and community based institutions, networking and policy advocacy efforts. Its staffs are regularly provided capacity building exposures on these issues. The long enriched full of ground reality experience and understanding of social aspects of policy impacts have made the organisation recognised as Support Organisation on sustainable agriculture. The organisation is also known as research organisations. All the researches and studies are conducted by its staff. Many experts on various disciplines (college, universities, research organisation, etc) and issues (gender and women empowerment, agriculture, climate change, disaster, policy advocacy, participatory methodologies etc), influenced with GEAG’s commitment and efforts, have been its contributors and resource insights. Their contributions, received from time to time helps in its capacity building. The publication based on researcher, studies and learnings has also great role in its recognition.

The process of influencing policy makers can be seen following ways:

### **a - Evidence Collection through Researches and Studies**

All the researches and studies, mainly conducted by GEAG's staff, were the demand of situation. The landless, small, marginal and women farmers have been the focal point of these researches. The researches and studies conducted by GEAG are as under:

#### **Participatory Research Based Farming System :**

In 1989-90, during implementing Women Empowerment & Environment Project, small landholders (and women farmers) had raised their concerns and problems caused by modern agriculture. The interactions had motivated GEAG to look for solution of farmer's problems. Towards it, before initiating working on research based farming system, several GEAG's staffs had received training on sustainable agriculture. This event was a milestone in promoting sustainable agriculture. Realizing emerging situations, GEAG had beliefs "Sustainable Agriculture with low input farming practices is only and lasting solution of the problem of these poor section as well as deteriorating and environmental conservation". In addition, there was a burning question, whether small land holding farmer can be self-food-sufficient through reducing agricultural cost with application of sustainable agricultural practices.

#### **Key Results:**

*The application of eco-friendly sustainable agriculture practices and low input farming practices through use of limited resources have increased their income and reduce their agricultural cost and market dependency. In turn, food sufficiency level throughout the year is enhanced.*

In modern agriculture system, the focus is on mono-cropping patterns (mainly on cereal crops). Its production is highly dependent on mechanisation, increasing dependency on chemical fertilizers, use of hybrid seed, decreasing number of livestock etc. In result, declined quantity of biomass in soil fertility has caused low soil fertility. The joint impacts of these un-favourable practices have resulted low crop production and profit. Thus, a question is raised on agricultural sustainability. In the green revolution period, two ignored aspects are agricultural sustainability and livelihood of farmers. While, contrary to it, sustainable agriculture gives prime focus on these two aspects. Its main emphasis is on improving and maintaining agricultural sustainability and promotion of farmer and geo-graphical area specific interventions. Under sustainable agriculture approach, development and utilization of own limited resources, changing and improving agricultural practices and preparation and utilization of bio-inputs at own field are key principles. In addition, principle

#### **Intervention Methods**

*Based on farmers' profile (baseline status), the following processes were adopted for intervention at the field of farmers:*

- *Participatory assessment of the farm*
- *Farm planning and development*
- *Interventions and capacity building/exposure and sharing simultaneously*
- *Periodic documentation (crop wise)*
- *Shared learning dialogues*

of waste management practice is also equally applicable, helpful in decreasing production cost and improving soil fertility.

During 1990s, the concept of sustainable agriculture was totally a concept new for the people of Uttar Pradesh. In India, it was mainly growing in southern states. The promotion of any new concept and techniques related to agriculture was not possible until and unless its appropriateness is not tested scientifically in new geo-graphical area. Otherwise, it could have been a matter of risk and mocking. Therefore, GEAG had firstly decided to experiment its appropriateness involving small farmers with help of own developed staff and technical experts. The research, started with need assessment based on farmer and area specific needs and principles of sustainable agriculture had been applied. These farmers are called demonstrative or selected farmers. The promoted interventions includes crop rotation, diversity of crop, manure etc had been promoted. The farmers had also been provided capacity-building exposure from time to time.

At every stage, the data was collected and shared with farmers. The purpose of documenting and sharing analysed data with farmers was to collect the evidence and make farmers understand about the occurred changes. All the farmers have one file with all the data. Sharing with visitors (government officials, funding and voluntary organisations, farmers and media) by the farmers itself is the best way to convince them. GEAG had played only the role of facilitator. These farmers have presented their experiences and interventions at several platforms at district, state and national levels. Their credible experiences have also rewarded membership of the government machineries.

Keeping in mind the principles and results of sustainable agriculture, GEAG had started developing research based farming system. For the research purpose, initially one village namely Awadhpur village was selected of Sardarnagar block of Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh. Later on, research field (small landholders) was increased to forty villages of the district. In Sardarnagar and Campierganj blocks, 40 small landholders in 40 villages (one farmer per village and 20 farmers per block) had been selected. The research based farming system was followed up after conducting area and farmers need specific need assessment processes. Through participatory approach, key focus was given on involvement of each farmer in the all the development process. As in the modern agriculture, this aspect was brutally ignored. Applying the principles of sustainable agriculture, given focus was on utilizing their own local resources for development of low cost sustainable agricultural techniques. In this approach, small and marginal farmers had to develop them-self as demonstrative / model farmer to demonstrate

***Major Interventions Adopted at Farmer's Field***

- *Mixed cropping increasing*
- *Addition of organic fertilizer*
- *Increasing cropping diversity*
- *Integrated pest management practices*
- *Selection of community needed crop and tree species for integration*
- *Nursery raising*
- *Mutual learning workshop on composting skills*
- *Non pesticidal management of crop pests*
- *Capacity building of farmers on off and non farm income generation activities*
- *Soil fertility status and evaluation by soil testing*

their agricultural and livelihood sustainability. Thus, GEAG had to test the viability and replicability of the sustainable agriculture in the Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

The promotion of sustainable agriculture and LEISA techniques were approached through participatory farm planning and strengthening recycling of processes and increasing bio-diversity at the farm level. This was further strengthened with experiential learning methodology and participatory technology development wherein the farmers themselves were experimenting with Indigenous Technical Knowledges and other local level successful solutions. Besides, at the farmer level, GEAG had continued to adopt problem solving participatory experimentations and farm system analysis approach. The farm based interventions included participatory planning with selected innovative farmers, intensive data collection and sustainability analysis, participatory technology development, wider dissemination of viable techniques, etc. After continuous efforts, GEAG has encouraging results and experiences. The reports illustrate that these farmers have reduced their agricultural inputs and market dependency by utilizing own local resources through adopting sustainable agricultural practices and in-turn they are now comparatively more food sufficient through out the year.

***The main reasons attributed to achieve good economic gains are:***

- *Organic composting bio-pesticides*
- *Associated with IPM programme*
- *Seed self dependency*
- *Multiple cropping*
- *Vegetable based cropping*
- *Introduced short duration crop*

*GEAG has recognised knowledge and experience of farmers. It has also promoted sharing of their experience for the promotion and adoption of their interventions. Since, the farmers try these interventions on their fields; their sharing with stakeholders is more legitimate. The established farming system models act as innovators and resource person on sustainable agriculture and low input farming practices. Through their experience, these farmers have attracted the attention of stakeholders.*

The main purpose of developing research based farming system was to test the viability and replicability of the sustainable agriculture on small landholding in Uttar Pradesh. So that, these experiences can be shared with different stakeholders at broader level for creating an environment of sustainable agriculture. The purpose was leading to livelihood improvement of the majority of small landholders.

### **Status of Small and Marginal Farmers in Uttar Pradesh**

For developing strong pressure on government, lack of adequate evidence (detailed information about the problem of small and marginal farmers and their causes) had compelled GEAG and other supporters to think on it. Later the demand brought a consensus of constitution of an independent commission of to collect the required information.

The responsibility of formation of the commission and coordination was given to GEAG in January 2001, the commission was constituted of renowned expert of various disciplines. The members of commission were:

- Justice V.K.Mehrotra- Retired Chief Justice of Allahabad and H.P. High Courts.

- Mr. Anupam Mishra- Gandhian Environmentalist & Philosopher
- Dr. Utsha Patnayak- Economist, JNU, New Delhi
- Mr. Prabhash Joshi- Renowned Journalist
- Mr. Devendra Sharma- Renowned Ecologist and Agriculture Expert
- Dr. Kamal Bhattacharya- Agronomist
- Dr. Shiraz A. Wajih- Environmentalist
- Mr. Biju Negi- Leader of Beej Bachao Andolan

In July 2001, first meeting of the commission was organized in New Delhi and therein its work plan was finalised. The commission had planned to organize public hearings in all Agro Climatic Zone of U.P. Simultaneously GEAG had collected and compiled case studies and analysed the secondary data to support the work of commission. On the basis of public hearing, case studies and data analysis, the commission prepared a report containing the problems, analysis and recommendations.

The findings of the report were very depressing. As per study, 89 percentages are small and marginal farmers in Uttar Pradesh. Out of total 89-percentage population, 91-percentage population is engaged with agriculture and its allied activities. This class occupies 55 percentage of total cultivable land. About 47% population in rural areas lives below poverty line. Poverty is a result of low levels of assets and low returns. U.P. is less diversified into non-crop activities. Here the agriculture also depends on the vagaries of the monsoon. Only 0.6 percentage of the agricultural population is engaged in non-crop rural agricultural enterprises. Furthermore, the region had a much higher percentage of marginal and sub-marginal cultivators. 82.3% of the landholding is below 1 hectare. The lack of appropriate government policies, poor infrastructure and market facilities, ineffective agricultural extension system make bad impact on agriculture and small and marginal farmer. These impacts include decreasing agricultural production and income and increasing dependency of market. The reducing self-reliance on key inputs (seed) was main impact. The farmers were experiencing the adverse impacts of modern agriculture. The study also highlighted that government focus has been shifted from developing agriculture. Because of frustrating situation, the farmers are also thinking for alternate livelihood option. The commital of suicides by farmers is self-alarming and pathetic situation. Overall, there was lack of unfavourable environment for agriculture development and small landholders.

The findings and recommendations have been detailed below:

#### **Findings of the Commission's report:**

- Agriculture inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and others are not available to farmers when required
- Mechanization and use of combine harvesters compelling landless farm workers to migrate
- Agriculture Credit Cooperatives are almost dysfunctional and Institutional Credit for small, marginal and sharecroppers is difficult to gain access to.

- Large level corruption in supply of agriculture inputs and procurement of agriculture produces
- Most of the irrigation facilities are limited to papers only and tube well irrigation is also difficult due to poor supply of electricity
- Sugarcane producing farmers are not getting appropriate prices of the produce and sugar industries are not clearing their dues
- Farmers are producing for the market and industries and struggling for survival
- Acquisition of agriculture land for urbanization and other infrastructure development projects is increasing
- Farmers and tribes of the Vindya region are worst affected by repeated displacement in the name of development
- Land acquisition and transfer of agriculture land for non-agriculture uses
- Threat on existence of forest villages
- Farmers' indebtedness has been increased to alarming levels and about 2000 suicides are reported during last 3 years
- No security measures for protection of the farmers from natural calamity/ disaster.

### **Recommendations:**

The commission made several recommendations for various segments of government and civil society organization for improving the condition of small marginal & landless farmers.

1. Commission suggested that the agriculture and related policies should be made as per the local needs and conditions and the entire framework of agriculture policies should be farmers centred.
2. People participation should be ensured in formulating policies and programmes the process of liberalization and privatization should be checked and the entry of nation, international, corporate players in the agriculture sectors should not be at the cost of small farmers.
3. For any development project people should not be displaced unless proper arrangement for their rehabilitation has been made.
4. Traditional water resources should be innovated. Maintenance of old canals and public tubewell should be given priority in place of constructing new canals.
5. District level disaster management plan should be made compulsory for the flood prone district of eastern region.
6. Women involved in agriculture should be recognized as farmers and the principal of equal wages for equal work should be enforced.
7. To make agriculture viable, especially for small marginal farmers there is a need to make effort for reducing the cost of input and this requires accessibility and availability of resources closed to the farmers.
8. There is a need to promote mix farming use of local and traditional seeds, organic farming and integrated waste management in place of chemical fertilizers and pesticide.
9. Active participation of civil society organization, intellectual and affected communities should be ensured in planning and implementation of the plan as per ground realities

10. The focus of agriculture research should be viability of agriculture, especially for small marginal farmers.

### **b- Forming and Developing Pressure Groups**

For giving voice to the problem of landless, small and marginal and women farmers of Uttar Pradesh, the formation and development of pressure groups was indeed a demand of the time. In this regard, GEAG initially developed Small and Marginal Farmers Union by providing capacity building inputs and later Sustainable Agriculture Network- Uttar Pradesh.

*After becoming aware of the farming practices, being promoted by GEAG through participatory farming system, thousands of farmers and representatives of NGOs, Government department and funding agencies visit these farming systems. The visiting farmers try these interventions and experiences in their field and after having good experience, they also promote in their local areas and quote examples before others.*

### **(i) Genesis of Small and Marginal Farmers Union**



The development of farming based livelihood models for the livelihood improvement of small and marginal farmers is GEAG's key strategies. In this regards, self help groups have been formed (around 300). The process of formation of these groups was started during beginning of 1990s. The women members of these self help groups constitute 87 percentage. The groups are for not only saving and credit purposes but also adopting and promoting sustainable agriculture and low input farming practices. These farmers in year of 1997 aggrieved from in-effective implementation of government schemes and arrogant attitude of government officials in Gorakhpur district had united and agitated against them. This small unionization and

agitation was a milestone for the advocacy initiatives. The union was called Small and Marginal Farmers Union. Later, through the efforts, large numbers of landless, small and marginal and women farmers of surrounding districts had become its members. The developed confidence through unionization had motivated these farming communities to fight for their struggle as well unite for their cause. Now small group comprising 35-50 women farmers of 2-3 villages have become a giant group comprising 2 Lakhs members of 55 districts. The union has now gained the recognition as dominant pressure group by government departments. It has now own registered office and sought legal status by registering itself under Trade Union Act.

Being first union of small-marginal farmers in U.P.- initiated by GEAG and collaborating NGOs is registered under Trade Union Act 1926 and has operating bank account in nationalized bank. It now works as independent organization. GEAG and other collaborating Network of NGOs help the Morcha from outside and support through research, documentation, networking, resource mobilization and other such support activities. GEAG also helps Morcha in developing its capacities on leadership, negotiation skills, policy influence mechanism etc.

For the interests and rights of its members, Small and Marginal Farmers Union regularly draws attention of government machineries, media persons, networks of NGOs, activists etc through organizing different activities on the issues those are relevant for their survival and existence. Following are some major issues raised in previous years:

- Farmers Suicides in India especially in Bundelkhand region.
- Problems in issue of Job Cards and employment of villagers under National Rural Employment Guaranteed Scheme.
- Contract farming
- Minimum Support Price
- Women farmers rights, Women Violence
- Land reform issues and possession of Patta land and land consolidation in U.P.
- Pollution issues (caused by Asian Fertilizers, Sardar Nagar and Aami river )
- Primary education and mid-day-meal.

**Major Achievement in year 2008:**

- *Withdrawal of Agriculture Policy ( Contract farming )*
- *Govt.'s serious efforts on raised issues on Crop Insurance scheme*
- *Subsidy to small and marginal farmer on bio-manure / fertilizers*
- *Adequate efforts in implementation of National Rural Employment Guaranteed Act*
- *Special Care of small and marginal farmers in Govt Schemes (like Food Security mission, Kisan Mitra etc.)*
- *Morcha's members in Govt Machineries ( like ATMA etc)*
- *Regular highlights in Media.*

The public hearings and legal camps are major awareness activities facilitated by legal and subject matter, expert on issues –related to land, women and farmer’s rights etc.

**(ii)-Genesis of Sustainable Agriculture Network (SANUP)**

For the cause of small and marginal farmers, sensitization of civil society organisations had created their collaboration namely Sustainable Agriculture Network in Uttar Pradesh ( SAN-UP). The network has more than 215 NGO members and this membership is increasing slowly. It is now a registered body under the Society Registration Act. The main role of this network is to carry out advocacy activities on raised issues by small and marginal farmer union at state level. By sharing concerns and issues with voluntary organisations and other stakeholders, it tries to make a pressure on government department and policy makers. Their interactions with these policy makers are a common process. The capacity building inputs are regularly provided by GEAG.

**c-Alliances and Networks-**

GEAG, apart from doing advocacy activities at its level, is also influencing government departments, public representatives etc through collaborative efforts with alliances and networks.

These are some major alliances and networks with GEAG:

### **Government Agricultural Department:**

Because of extensive efforts, not only an environment on Sustainable Agriculture is developed in U.P. but also Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations (including farmers, media, actives) now deem sustainable agriculture as lasting solution of major problems related to (agriculture sustainability and well being of farmers specially of small-marginal and women farmers). It reflects from their actions i.e. incorporation of sustainable agricultural practices and viable model and extension mechanism in their programme.

#### ***GEAG and ATMA- A Model of Public Private Partnership:***

*The collaborative initiative of Govt. Agriculture Department with GEAG towards agricultural sustainability and well-being of poor framers is now being seen as successful Model of Public Private Partnership by Govt. and CSOs. Because of successful experience, Govt. department is now collaborating with GEAG's partner of other districts (Like Grammonati Sanstahn, Mahoba) for the same purposes.*

*In the present situation, such public-private partnership is the demand of hour for the cause of farmers (especially small, marginal and women farmers) as well as tackling with problem of food crisis.*

In this context, the agriculture department of Gorakhpur district has taken first initiative by introducing ATMA Programme in the district. It is implementing this programme with the support of another small network, established by GEAG. Under this programme, mainly demonstrative small land farming model concept has been adopted for promoting Integrated Pest and Nutrition Management and organic farming. This programme is also building the capacity of this network NGOs.

### **National Campaign Committee on Land:**

GEAG is one of the core team member of National Campaign Committee on Land (NCCL ), initiated by EKTA Parishad. GEAG had organized a state level rally titled Sandesh Yatra in support of basic ideology of the Ekta Parishad in context with the Rights of the small and marginal farmers.

### **d. Communication and Advocacy Activities**

The lack of favourable environment for small farmers and insensitivity of government department and public representatives had compelled GEAG to think and raised issues strategically and differently. Learning from own previous experience, GEAG had sensitized all the stakeholders by organizing workshops, conferences, training, exposures, orientations, networking, press conference, demonstration, rallies, correspondence etc. These events were taken place at block, district, state and national and international

#### ***The advocacy efforts have significantly helped in:***

- *active involvement of government functionaries on agricultural sustainability*
- *developing active partners in media, research and academic sectors, government and the civil society at large*
- *creating an atmosphere in the state for the causes of small-marginal farmers and agricultural sustainability*
- *forging alliance with large networks, resource institutions and academic communities*
- *convergence of efforts (community-NGOs-Government)*

levels. GEAG had also sensitising the stakeholders in the programmes organised by other organisations. Also, on national and international days, agitation, demonstration, orientation and press conferences had been organised. At state level, every year, large farmer's parliament is organised and all the stakeholders' participation is ensured. In this programme, more than 1000 farmers' representatives participate. It also involves senior government agriculture officials and agriculture minister.

In these programme, not only published report and findings are shared and but also review of government policies and actions is done. It helps in finalizing future strategies and actions.

### **What was the outcome? (Outcome?)**

Now, continuous joint efforts (research , networking and advocacy, interpreting social aspects of government policies, etc) have brought the changes and results. These major changes and results can be seen as mentioned below:

- Previously, small & marginal farmers (who own less than 2 acres) and women farmers were not the entity in any UP government document for considering "farmers" and now the UP government has recognized them in the State policies and through government orders. 'Kissan (farmer) credit cards' are now issued in the name of women as well as men though the land may not be in the name of women but in terms of liability or gain both men and women hold it. Kisan Credit Card is

### **Major Achievements of GEAG: AT A Glance**

#### **At Government level:**

*State level recognition as leading NGO working for the cause of small, marginal and women farmers.*

*Department of Agriculture frequently participates in GEAG's programmes*

*Government is ready to form an advisory committee on agriculture on the demand of GEAG and has assured to include GEAG, SAN UP and LSKM as members of the proposed committee.*

*Agriculture department and UPCAR have recognized GEAG's research outcomes, methodology and documents on agricultural practices and have decided to organise a sharing programme on research with government officials and research institutions.*

*New Agriculture policy in which more emphasis was on contract farming and private companies interventions, has been withdrawn by state government*

*Government has recognized women as a farmers and now giving recognition through various provisions like-mandate membership in ATMA, Issuing Joint Patta of land, etc.*

*Government has started promoting organic agriculture through giving subsidies on bio fertilizer. It has also been announced that five organic product producers (farmers) will be honored at state level each year.*

*GEAG and it's partners are also being recognized by district administration due to credible efforts.*

#### **At Civil Society Organisation Level:**

*GEAG is being recognized as support agency on Sustainable Agriculture issue in the state through its campaigning, networking and institutions building.*

*SAN –UP's emergence, increasing pro-active participation of grass root level NGOs, is increasing offers by different networks for issue based alliance. Active participation of prominent activists is one of the indicators of GEAG's increasing credibility at state level.*

#### **At Media Level:**

*Print Media has come up with a pro-active approach on GEAG's effort.*

*It also expose the best practices and cast stories on the cover page.*

*Sustainable agriculture, Women farmers, Crop insurance and Compensation, Land right issues KCC are some of the major issues*

*(Source: Annual Report submitted to Oxfam Novib for Year 2007-08)*

a scheme through which farmers can take loan for agricultural purposes from the financial bank.

- In the 'minimum support price' for the share croppers: Share croppers though not owners of the lands but they were literally producing it but coming to selling in the 'procurement centre' of the agriculture produces they were not allowed as per the earlier government instructions. It is now changed to include the 'share croppers right' to also sell in the procurement centre of the government. This changes was happened when documents with recommendation was sent in year 2004.
- The "Uttar Pradesh Diversified Agriculture Support Program (DASP)" was a mega project supported by the World Bank. In first page, this project was implemented in 32 districts of the State. The major components were bio composting, Self-Help Groups, horticulture, livestock, linkages for marketing and link roads. The program ended in 2005. It is important to note that the program took many of the livelihood system and experience of the GEAG into their programmatic components and implemented. It was also indicative of inclusion of bio-farming promotion in the agricultural policy of the State government. Later in Second phase, 38 new districts (almost all new) have been taken.
- It also became policy to include NGOs in the apex body of government like Agricultural Technical Management Agency (ATMA) dealing with the small & agriculture farmers. GEAG became a member of the governing body of ATMA – the apex body of the government of India dealing with small & marginal farmers. Selected farmers are also in the ATMA and these farmers were the trainees of GEAG at some time or the other in the past. The major programs of ATMA were with micro planning, technical inputs, budget allocation etc. It was an effort towards the decentralized plan of the agriculture development in the State. It operates at the Block, District and State levels.
- 'Women' was non-legal entity for the government to consider as farmers or equal partner in owning or holding the household / agriculture assets. It has now become a written policy in the UP State like in many other States that the land given by the government for landless has to be given in the joint name of the husband and wife. There was also a policy concession that a subsidy was provided in the registration fee i.e. a less registration fee (25% reduction) if it was registered in the name of women.
- Farmers Commission Report on National Agriculture Policy 2006 (October) had the influence of GEAG's experience in sustainable agriculture and the livelihood of small & marginal / women farmers. One important component recommended in the commission report was on Farmers Field School. The commission recommended the importance of the Farmers Field School in every village for sustainable agriculture practice and for the advantages of the livelihood of small farmers. It is claimed that the model referred in the Report was taken from the GEAG's model.
- Government has issued an order that small and marginal farmers are entitled for a subsidy of 50 percentage on purchasing of bio-inputs.

- Agriculture Minister, Central Government has announced construction of a WOMEN FARMERS HOSTEL at Agriculture Minister at Indian Agriculture Research Institute (PUSA), for the women farmers coming for the trainings and other events. This is a great development towards recognizing the role of women farmers. It is not only a hostel costing Rs 60 crores but a significant step towards involving women farmers in the country's agriculture extension processes.

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