

SRI in Gaya: Promotion Strategies

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Introducing and promoting SRI involved phased training, detailed planning and handholding of farmers who were only used to traditional ways of cultivation.

Low productivity in paddy and wheat has had an adverse impact on the food security of households. The average paddy yield of small and marginal households belonging to Self Help Groups (SHGs), formed by JEEViKA, ranged from 0.8 to 1.2 tonnes per hectare, which could meet only 4–5 months of the rice consumption needs of a household.

Professional Assistance for Development Action (PRADAN) piloted the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) in 2007 and SRI-Wheat in 2008, with support from Bihar Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (BRLPS), Patna. It then scaled up SRI-Paddy and SRI-Wheat under BRLPS, and Shri Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT), Mumbai.

The project piloted SRI in 2007 with 128 smallholders belonging to SHG households in 30 ha of land. The average paddy yield was nearly 10 tonnes per ha, which was significantly higher than the existing productivity. Following the success of the pilot, the project scaled up SRI in the subsequent 3 years with 5,146; 8,367 and 19,911 smallholders (Colloquium on SCI)

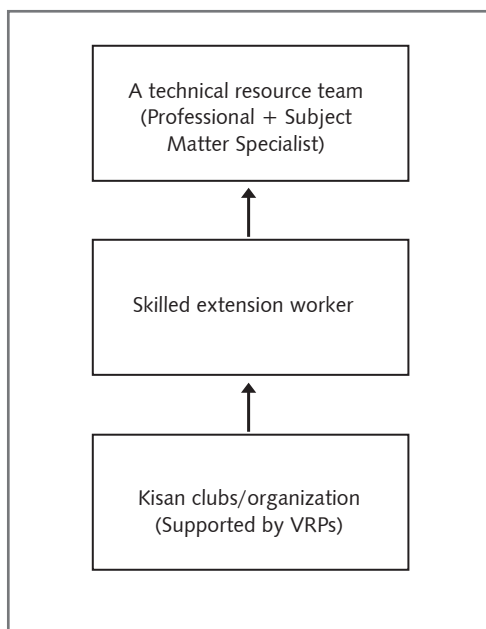
BRLPS and PRADAN intervened in the area by forming SHGs, each an informal body of 15–20 women organized for saving and credit activities. With these women members of the SHGs and the marginal farmers in the region, PRADAN piloted and scaled up the SRI project in the following years. A team comprising a professional, with more than 10 years of experience, a young and dynamic Subject Matter Specialist and a group of Skilled Extension Workers are implementing the project in Bihar.

STEPS TO PROMOTE SRI

1. **Campaigning in new areas** using vehicles/extension material/mike/SRI songs: The women SRI cultivators along with Village Resource Persons (VRPs) campaign in new areas and share their experiences of using SRI.

2. **Exposure** of new villagers to SRI villages: Whenever there is a plan to expand in the following year, exposure visits are organized for farmers to expose them to SRI plots. The identification and selection of VRPs also start at the same time.
3. **Phase-wise** training to identify VRPs of new areas:
The farmers of the villages are trained in different phases. Usually the training is conducted in 3–4 phases.

Fig. 1: Structure for SRI Promotion



4. **Weekly Meeting** of VRPs
Reviewing and planning for the coming week is done regularly. This meeting is attended by the Skilled Extension Worker. Occasionally it is also attended by the SMS.

STRATEGIES

Between the training of SRI facilitators and

participant farmers, a large number of small and marginal farmers became willing to take up SRI. The facilitators, fully involved with the rural community, used the following strategies.

PHASED TRAINING ON SRI

THE FACILITATORS:

- Identified rural youth as VRPs, cum-facilitators
- Imparted hard-core training—in-house and in the field
- Applied the standard scanning process to know the social, intellectual and emotional maturity, giving priority to EQ than IQ.
- Assigned responsibility for 30–100 families, based on the capability
- Held weekly review and planning meetings with facilitators in the unit headquarters and sub-location meetings with programme co-ordinators.

TRAINING AND AWARENESS BUILDING IN COMMUNITIES

- Used audiovisuals and flex extension material
- Used experienced SRI farmers of the previous year to campaign in villages, using manuals extensively in April and May.
- Organized big meetings attended by programme co-ordinators and facilitators in villages, to motivate and create awareness among farmers.
- Associated with government extension officers and KVKs at all levels.
- Participated in *kisan melas* organized by government departments.
- Offered better training and hand-holding honorariums to facilitators/VRPs associating themselves with landless SC families.

Table 1: Year-wise Progress of SRI in the Project

Particulars/Years	2007	2008	2009	2010
No. of SHG members/smallholders	128	5,146	8,367	19,911
SRI land in hectares	30	544	786	1,412
SRI yield in tonnes/hectare	10	7.75	6.5	3.22*
Traditional paddy yield in tonnes/hectare	2.2	2.36	2.02	1.66*
Highest SRI yield in tonnes/hectare	18.8	19.3	14.2	6.5
State average paddy yield in tonnes/hectare	2.3			
Climatic conditions		Water stressed condition	Drought	Extreme drought
*Data of 74 villages analysed				

(Source: Concept note on National Colloquium on SCI—BRLPS)

ROLES

The teams at various levels played different roles.

Technical Resource Team (Professional SMS):

- Developed package of practices (PoPs)
- Trained Skilled Extension Workers and equipped them with skills and robust PoPs.
- Developed strategies and approaches and developed plans of action
- Reviewed systems and processes to maintain quality
- Established various linkages

SKILLED EXTENSION WORKERS:

- Trained VRPs with SMS
- Built the skills of VRPs and farmers
- Ensured and facilitated campaigning, exposures and village farmers clubs
- Build the capacity of common farmers on the SRI method of crop cultivation
- Piloted new initiatives on the SRI

method of crop cultivation with SMS and professionals

- Ensured recording of data of SRI farmers in the field
- Attended weekly meeting of VRPs, reviewing and planning
- Provided training and handholding support to common farmers with VRPs

THE ROLE OF VRPs:

- Provided training and handholding support to farmers
- Participated in campaigns and exposure visits with SRI cultivators
- Helped farmers in following PoPs for the SRI crop
- Entered and recorded data pertaining to SRI cultivation
- Ensured meetings of SRI farmers at the village level
- Trained state and district officials when asked for by the government