

d. Older people and Traditional knowledge:

In Rajasthan, India, GRAVIS noted that older people have invaluable knowledge on traditional water harvesting technologies. 'Storing every drop of rain is the best option that we have to survive in this desert,' says a 75 year old person.

Village elders, living in communities experiencing chronic drought, were credited with the development of simple but effective structures such as the Khadin (dyke), Taanka (underground water storage tank), Beri (shallow percolation well) and Naadi (community pond) – structures which are still in use today. A Khadin helps retain rainwater in agricultural lands and thus increases crop productivity. A Taanka stores rainwater and provides a source of drinking water for humans and cattle for many months. All these traditional technologies have played a very important role in the survival of drought-impacted communities in the Thar – the world's most populated desert.⁹

Understanding flood patterns in the Thar:

In Rajasthan, desert communities used to dealing with chronic water shortages experienced a sudden and devastating episode of flooding in August 2006. As a result, GRAVIS is working with older people, to conduct a research study on the patterns of flooding over time in these desert communities, so as to increase understanding on the timing of events and which communities may be affected. This information will then be fed into the community's flood preparedness planning activities.⁹

Rajasthan, India: a village fund managed by OPAs:

In Rajasthan, GRAVIS works with new OPAs to develop and manage a Village Fund (Gram Kosh). The Fund is community focused and can be used to strengthen the OPA, provide support to OPA activities, provide capital for small businesses/cottage industries, and act as a reserve fund to be used in times of need. The money for the Village Fund is collected from a variety of sources, including membership fees and village events.⁹

Insurance for poorer households:

GRAVIS is working to link desert communities with community based insurance schemes which provide cover for damage to community structures, crops and livestock, so that community members are able to cover their losses. Insurance companies are coming forward to take part in the scheme, however, it remains to be seen whether these companies will deliver when necessary.⁹

Drought mitigation activities in the Thar Desert:

In the Thar Desert, where chronic drought persists, OPAs, with support from GRAVIS, have taken the lead in traditional rainwater harvesting activities. Older people contribute their knowledge and are responsible for the maintenance of rainwater harvesting structures (wells and ponds) in their communities. They also motivate younger people to help dig the wells and ponds. Older people raise awareness on how to conserve limited supplies of water so that communities spend less on purchasing water during times of prolonged drought.

Older people raise awareness in their communities about different types of crops that use less water. This helps maximize the use of a community's limited water resources. Finally, older people are active in maintaining community grazing lands for the benefit of the entire community. OPAs, working with community leaders, earmark land and develop regulations on how to use these lands.

9. Source: Older people's associations in community disaster risk reduction, A resource book on good practice, Registered charity no. 288180

How are Gunis?

Gunis do not practice any discrimination on basis of caste, religion, etc. They treat the patients either free of cost or at very nominal charges. They deem their skill and knowledge as social service and make no efforts to earn profit out of it. Gunis have full information about the name, identity, quantity and quality of medicinal plants and they acquire knowledge only through Guru – Shishya Parampara. Some exceptional Gunis gain expertise after long years of experiments and practice.

**2. Source: Rapid Village Survey to identify Traditional Health Practitioners and streams of their practices
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