

Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India

PERCEPTIONS OF *SANGATHANS* AND NGOs

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Executive Summary

The Harda district of Madhya Pradesh is among the pioneering areas in the country, where participatory forestry approach was first tried on a significant scale. Based largely on the experience in Harda, the participatory forestry approach was extended to most parts of Madhya Pradesh in the form of the Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme. A World Bank supported project with main focus on JFM was also implemented in the 1990s.

While the Forest Department (FD) views the participatory approach followed in Harda as a success, many others, notably a section of *Sangathans* and NGOs working in the area, hold the view that communities have not benefited and their situation has actually worsened due to introduction of JFM. The *Sangathans* have been mobilising people (especially *adivasis*) against the FD and the JFM programme. This difference in perception has resulted in conflict between *Sangathans* and the FD. In 2001, this conflict reached a flash point when a local *Sangathan* organised a public hearing (*Jan Sunwai*).

The present report is part of a larger study coordinated by the University of Cambridge under which perceptions of all major stakeholders regarding the forestry situation in Harda were gathered. This report, however, focuses on the perceptions of *Sangathans*, NGOs and activists working on forestry and *adivasi* rights issues in Harda and surrounding areas.

Madhya Pradesh has a rich history of forest-related social movements. Many movements started in colonial times as a response to the colonial forest policies of reservation and disregard for traditional rights of the local communities. While there was a decline in such movements in the initial years after independence, perhaps due to hope that things will change for the better, these movements re-emerged in many areas focusing on local communities' rights over three critical natural resources *viz.* water, forests and land (*jal, jungle aur jameen*).

In Harda and surrounding areas, two *Sangathans* that are active are Kisan Adivasi Sangathan (KAS) and Shramik Adivasi Sangathan (SAS). Both KAS and SAS are active members of a political party (Samaajwadi Jan Parishad or SWJP) and actively participate in state and national elections. Ekta Parishad, which is a mass-based people's organization active in several states, also has presence in the area. There are several NGOs, which are mainly engaged in rural development activities.

In order to understand perceptions of these groups, a combination of primary and secondary information sources were used. Primary information was collected through checklist-aided interviews, Q-Sort method, and by attending various events organised by *Sangathans* and NGOs. The secondary information was collected from published as well as unpublished documents such as books, booklets, reports, letters, pamphlets, audiocassettes and websites. Checklist-aided interviews were held with 60 respondents while Q sort questionnaire was administered to 35 respondents. As *Sangathans* were the focus of the study, an attempt was made to gather middle level members and village level workers. The following perceptions were gathered.

Major stakeholders in forests

Almost all respondents considered forest-dependent people and the FD as primary stakeholders. Majority of respondents also considered *Sangathans* as important stakeholders, reflecting the key role being played by the *Sangathans* in the area. There was no consensus on the role of NGOs. While majority of the village level members of *Sangathans* felt that NGOs should be involved in

the forestry sector, few top level leaders of *Sangathans* expressed the view that NGOs are generally pro-FD and money oriented, and are not concerned about the rights and welfare of the people. The Revenue Department is also considered to be an important stakeholder in the forestry sector as it deals with issues related to land rights. *Panchayats* were considered to be important stakeholder only by a few respondents.

Forest policies

The top leaders of *Sangathan* and individual activists perceived the existing forest policies as continuation of the colonial legacy of 'exploitation of the poor and state control over forests'. It was strongly expressed that the existing forest policies fail to differentiate between those who conserve the forests and those who actually destroy it. The *Sangathan* members strongly felt that though the government blames the *adivasis* for forest degradation, it is actually the FD, which is responsible for it as it not only carries out coupe felling but also abets illegal felling.

Issue of 'encroachment'

The issues of 'encroachment' of forests and land rights are perceived to be the major causes of conflict in the area by majority of the respondents. The *Sangathan* members felt forest belongs to the *adivasis* as they have resided in the forests for generations, conserved them, they have strong cultural ties with forests and have been using the forest resources traditionally. All *Sangathan* members wanted withdrawal of the "encroachment removal" policy of the government and regularisation of encroached land.

The NGO respondents, on the other hand, felt there is a need to balance both conservation and livelihood needs. While they were sympathetic to the cause of farmers who did not have ownership rights of the land they were cultivating, they did not agree to the demand of regularising all encroachments that was made by the *Sangathan* members.

Joint Forest Management

The NGO respondents felt that the government introduced JFM to make the local people feel responsible for forest protection and to get funds for village development. The *Sangathan* members generally felt that introduction of JFM is merely eyewash – old wine in a new bottle – and it did not change much on the ground. The village level *Sangathan* members mentioned that people had initially accepted JFM because it brought in employment and some usufructuary benefits.

Most *Sangathan* members felt that FD has benefited from JFM programme while local people's condition has become worse. They often compared JFM to a cow, whose anterior part is with the people (to feed) while FD controls the posterior part and gets all the benefits (milk and dung). They also felt that JFM has increased both intra- and inter-village conflicts. The NGO respondents were less critical though both *Sangathan* and NGO respondents felt that Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) are not functioning in a democratic manner and are controlled by the FD staff. Majority of the stakeholders expressed the view that JFM has not improved the condition of the forests in the district.

Regarding the impact of JFM on the relationship between the FD and the local people, majority of the *Sangathan* members felt that JFM has not helped in bridging the gap between people and the FD. It was also expressed that through JFM the balance of power has in fact tilted towards the FD. By having financial control (of *Samiti* funds), they alleged that the FD has become all the

more corrupt and dictatorial. The NGOs and few village level *Sangathan* members, however, felt that after JFM, the power balance between the FD and the people has improved somewhat.

Foreign funding

Strong views against foreign funding were expressed mainly by the top level leaders and active members of the *Sangathans*. They thought that international funding agencies are controlled by rich countries that have vested interest in gaining access to resources of the third world countries. Some of them felt that there is an increasing interest in forests as these can provide raw material for the biotechnology industry, which is becoming a major industry world-wide. The NGOs, on the other hand, felt that donors have been investing in programmes like JFM to ensure greater people's participation in forest management and improved livelihood security of the poor forest-dependent communities.

Forest villages

On the issue of conversion of forest villages to revenue villages, many *Sangathan* members felt that all forest villages should be converted to revenue villages as people in forest villages don't have land rights and FD is not taking care of the people. Some village level *Sangathan* members, however, didn't want conversion due to fear of increased harassment by government officials (as they will have to deal with many other departments as well) and loss of employment opportunities (in forestry works). Some NGO respondents, however, were of the opinion that conversion of forest villages to revenue villages will result in increase in population and lead to greater forest destruction and thus should not be encouraged.

Sangathans' Participation in Politics

Sangathans' participation in the political process was supported by majority of the respondents – both *Sangathan* members and NGOs. The common view was that participation by the *Sangathans* in the political process is essential for bringing about change.

In order to analyse the reasons behind perceptions held by different respondents, an analytical framework was used under which reasons for the perceptions were explored under three broad categories: knowledge of change (empirical context); knowledge of theory (beliefs and ideas); and knowledge of policy. While perceptions of all respondents were influenced by all three factors, certain trends emerged. For example, perceptions of the top level leaders as well as active members of the *Sangathans* seemed to be more influenced by ideological beliefs and their political affiliation. Their perceptions closely match the ideology of their political party. On the other hand, perceptions of village level members were based more on their personal experience and knowledge of the empirical context. In many cases, personal interest (e.g. cultivation on forest land) also seemed to shape perceptions and stance to a large extent. In case of NGOs, knowledge of empirical context and stated policies played an important role in shaping perceptions.

It also emerged that there is significant differences in perceptions of different *Sangathan* members as well as NGOs. Based on the interpretation of the Q sort data, all perceptions can be clubbed into three distinct discourses. The first discourse is anti-JFM, mainly focusing on aspects such as relationship between people and the FD, impact of JFM on lives of local people and the social outcomes of JFM like intra- and inter-village conflicts. Respondents who held these views were mainly active members and village level members of *Sangathans*. The second discourse is

pro-partnership and participation and supportive of FD and JFM. It emphasizes that protection of forest can't be done without local participation and is generally neutral on controversial issues. Most of these views were held by the NGOs (and some active members of the *Sangathans*). The third discourse is highly critical of JFM in matters of ownership of JFM, decision-making, improvement in lives and impact. This discourse is not in favour of community-based solutions, as it does not concur with the option of handing over all the forests to the local communities. The active members of *Sangathans* and the NGOs mainly held these views.

As perceptions of other stakeholders have also been gathered under the larger study, perceptions of *Sangathan* members and NGOs can be compared with them. Using Q Sort, issues over which there is agreement amongst most stakeholders can be identified and these can form the starting point for the dialogue to address the ongoing conflict in the area.

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Chapter One

Project Background and Context of the Study

In the past few decades, there has been an increasing interest in the management of common pool resources. While there have been a number of attempts to build analytical frameworks for the study of common pool resources, there has been relatively less focus on the policy processes, especially in contexts where such resources are subject to contestation among multiple users and there is conflict between multiple uses.

An attempt to take a more policy-oriented perspective on common pool resources was made under a DFID-funded project (R 7973), which was led by the University of Cambridge. Under this project, an analytical framework was developed for understanding perspectives of different stakeholders, who base their decisions regarding the resource on different assumptions, knowledge and goals, which are not always explicit. The crux of the framework is that different stakeholders filter their knowledge of resource dynamics (change), theory and policy to produce particular interpretations of the situation as well as specific ways to deal with it.

The framework can provide a basis for dialogue among different stakeholders as it offers a common conceptual thought process to examine a common problem. In order to field-test and develop this analytical framework further, the current project was developed.

The project focuses on the Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme in India, which is arguably the single largest attempt in the world for joint management of forest resources adjoining villages by the state and the village community. As per latest official figures, there are 84,632 Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) protecting and managing over 17 million hectares of forestlands (Bahuguna *et al.* 2004).

The specific focus of the project is on the Harda Forest Division in Madhya Pradesh, which is well known for the 'Harda Model' of participatory forest management. Under the 'Harda Model', the Forest Department (FD) channelised development funds to wean local communities away from forest dependence and tried to involve them in a meaningful way in forest protection and development. Based largely on the experiences of experiments such as the 'Harda Model', The WB funded a large forestry sector project in Madhya Pradesh in the 1990s.

While the FD views the participatory forestry approach followed in Harda as a success, many others, notably a section of *Sangathans* and NGOs working in the area, hold the view that communities have not only not benefited, their situation has actually worsened. The *Sangathans* have been mobilising people (especially *adivasis*) against the FD and the JFM programme. In 2001, a local *Sangathan* Shramik Adivasi Sangathan (SAS) organised a public hearing (*Jan Sunwai*) on forest rights that highlighted lacunae in the participatory forestry process as well as cases of corruption and exploitation of the local people by the FD (see Annex 1 for report). This difference in perception has resulted in conflicts among different stakeholders, especially *Sangathans* and the FD.

Under the current project, perceptions of different stakeholders regarding forestry situation in Harda are being gathered with a hope of generating policy relevant findings that can be used to formulate an inclusive policy for participatory forest management.

While perception of all key stakeholders are being studied under the project, the present report focuses on the perceptions of only two stakeholder groups – *Sangathans* and NGOs.

The rest of this report is organised into six sections. The second section provides details of methodology followed for conducting the study. The third section provides an overview of forest related people's social movements in Madhya Pradesh to provide a context for *Sangathans'* activities in Harda. The fourth section provides details of *Sangathans* and NGOs operating in Harda. The fifth section details the perceptions of *Sangathan* and NGO members on various forest related issues. The sixth section analyses the reasons for the perceptions. The final sections presents conclusions of the study.

Chapter Two

Approach and Methodology

A combination of primary and secondary information sources was used for carrying out the study. The primary information was collected through checklist-aided interviews, Q-Sort method, and by attending various events organised by *Sangathans* and NGOs. The secondary information was collected from published as well as unpublished documents such as books, booklets, reports, letters, pamphlets, audiocassettes, etc. Information was also collected from a number of websites. Details of the sources of primary and secondary information are provided in the following sections.

2.1 Primary Information

A total of 60 checklist-aided interviews were conducted for the study.¹ Out of these 42 were from *Sangathans* based in Harda and nearby areas, 12 were from NGOs working in Harda, four were from Ekta Parishad (EP) and the remaining two were individual researchers/activists who have studied participatory forestry programmes in Harda. Within *Sangathans*, a distinction was made between top-level (leaders), middle-rung activists, and village level members. Out of 42 *Sangathan* members who were interviewed, 3 were at the top-level (leaders), 14 were middle-rung members and 25 were village level members (see Table 1).²

Table-1 Details of the respondents

Organization	Number of respondents
<i>Sangathans</i>	
Shramik Adivasi Sangathan	34
Kisan Adivasi Sangathan	8
Subtotal	42
NGOs	
Nirantar	2
Eklavya	3

¹ These interviewees are referred to as 'respondents' in the subsequent sections.

² Top-level leaders are also the founders of these *Sangathans*. Middle-rung activists cover several villages and actively recruit new members into the *Sangathan*. They are generally good orators. Village level members are mainly active at the level of one or at best few villages.

	2
Ambedkar Vichar Manch	4
Gram Seva Samiti	1
Subtotal	12
Ekta Parishad	4
Subtotal	4
Individual Researchers/ Activists	2
Subtotal	2
Total	60

See Annex 3 for the complete list of respondents.

A total of 35 Q-Sorts were also carried out for the study. See Annex 2 for the complete list of Q Sort respondents.³

In addition, a few events of *Sangathans* and NGOs (monthly meetings, *gherao*⁴, *dharna*⁵, election rallies, etc.) were also attended.

A number of monthly meetings of SAS held at Chiraapatla, Charwa and Morghadi and those of KAS held at Kesla were attended.

The following *Gheraos* and *Dharnas* were attended:

- June 8, 2003 (SAS): *Gherao* at Chirapatla against lack of medical services and absence of doctor and compounders.
- June 12, 2003 (SAS): *Gherao* of the Betul Police Station against police apathy and atrocities on *adivasis*.
- April 14, 2004 (SAS): Rally and *Gherao* at District Collectors's office, Harda.
- April 14, 2004 (Ambedkar Vichar Manch): *Dharna* in Harda.
- April 18, 2004 (SAS): *Gherao* of Shahpur hospital, Betul, against lack of adequate medical services and dereliction of duty of medical staff.

A number of election meetings in various villages and towns were attended to gain an insight into major issues being raised by *Sangathan* candidates. The election meetings of SAS for parliamentary elections 2004 in favour of Shamim Modi (top leader and

³ No top level *Sangathan* leaders Q sort could be conducted due to their reluctance.

⁴ A form of demonstration where the concerned individual or office is encircled (blocked) until demands are met.

⁵ Sit-in protest.

candidate) held at Sirali on April 10, 2004, at Chirapatla on April 11, 2004, at Timarni on April 20, 2004 and at Harda on April 25, 2004, were attended. Election meetings of Sunil Gupta of KAS held at Pipariya on May 2, 2004 and at Seoni Malwa on May 3, 2004 were also attended.

2.2 Secondary Information⁶

The secondary information was collected from various sources. The major ones are listed here.⁷

2.2.1 Books and Booklets

1. Kisan Ko Mitane Ki Taiyari Hai, Bima Ka Naatak, *Sarkari* Kharidi Aur Kisani Par Hamla by Samaajwaadi Jan Parishad.
2. Madhya Pradesh Vaniki Pariyojna, Hukum Vishwa Bank Ka Muhar Sarkar ki. Jungle Se Alag Karne Ki Vishwa Bank Ki Yojna by Madhya Pradesh Ke Jan Sangathan.
3. Collective Resource Management: An Experience in Harda Forest Division by V K Bhauguna published by RCNAEB Cell Indian Institute of Forest Management.
4. Jungle Me Dungal: Harda Me Sanyukt Van Prabandhan ki Samiksha Van Sarankshak Kanoon Kuch Hakikat By Rahul Banerjee and Yogesh Diwan published by Jan Sangathans of M.P.
5. 1950 Ke Baad Se Bhumi Sambhandi Gambhir Bhoolon Par Ek Nazar by Anil Garg, unpublished document.
6. Azaad Bharat Ke Gulam Nagrik by Anil Garg, unpublished document.
7. Van Vinashak Awam Rakhwale Saman Hai Kanoon Ke Nazar Mein by Anil Garg, unpublished document.
8. Van Gramon Ka Itihaas by Anil Garg, unpublished document.
9. Samaajwadi Jan Parishad: Samaajwadi Najariya Awam Sanghatanik Vidhan by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
10. Operation Clean Yani Adivasiyon Ka Safaaya: Madhya Pradesh Ke Dewas Zile Ke Bagli Tahsil Me Adivasiyon Par Amanviya Atyacharon Ki Dastan by Jan Sangharsh Morcha.

⁶ For details see Bibliography.

⁷ The listing here is not an exhaustive one.

11. When People Organize: Forest Struggles and Repression in Dewas by Peoples Union For Democratic Rights.
12. Aam Logon Ke Mudde by Jan Sangharsh Morcha.
13. Kahan To Tai Tha Chiraga Harek Ghar Ke Liye by Jan Sangharsh Morcha.
14. Bندوق Ki Nok Par Jan Bhagidari by Anurag Modi, published by Charkha Development Issue Network.
15. Van Bhumiyon Ke Nyayapurna Samadhan Ke Bina Virodh Nahin Vidroh Ke Sanket by Brahmdukt Sharma published by Sahyog Pustak Kutir
16. Azaadi Ke Baad Ki Van Niti Aur Adivasi by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
17. Sanyukt Van Prabandhan Ke Dhol Ki Pol by Anurag Modi, unpublished document.
18. Adivasiyo ko Jungle Se Door Karne Ki Antarrashtriya Saazish by Anurag Modi, unpublished document.
19. Samudayik Van Prabandhan Nayi Botal Me Purani Sharab: Sanyukt Van Prabandhan Kitna Samudayik by Anurag Modi, unpublished document.
20. Angrezo Ki Van Niti Ko Dhoti Hamari Sarkar by Anurag Modi, unpublished document.
21. Kafila Luta Kaise: Jungle Ke Choro Ki Jasoosi Kahani by Rahul, published by Disha Sanwad.
22. Kanoon Ka Pinjra: Janta aur Jungle Par Niyantaran Ke Sarkaari Hathiyar by Rahul, published by Disha Sanwad.
23. Jiski Laathi Uski Dharti: Dharti Ko Hathiyane Ki Rajniti by Rahul, published by Disha Sanwad.
24. Jungle Hamaara Hoga: Jan Andolano Ke Taur Tarike by Rahul, published by Disha Sanwad.
25. Vartman Vikas Ki Simayen by Sachidanand Sinha, published by Vikalpa Prakashan.
26. Gujarat Ke Sabak by Prem Singh.
27. Janiye Yogya Pradhanmantri Ko by Prem Singh.

28. *Udarikaran Ka Asli Chehra* by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad and Jan Sangharsh Morcha.
29. *Videshi Mudra Ka Foolta Gubbara, Asliyat, Khatre aur Ghotale* by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
30. *Viswa Vyapar Sangathan, Loot, Gair Barabari aur Vinash Ka Jaal, Khatre Abhi Baki Hain* by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
31. *Joint Forest Management in Harda: A Status Study* by A Sharma and B Ramnathan, published by WWF India.

2.2.2 Letters And Other Documents

1. Wrong and Misleading Information Provided by the Fisheries Minister in Assembly regarding Tawa Matsya Sangh. (Letter to the Chief Minister and the Speaker of the State Assembly) by Tawa Vishtapit Adivasi Matasya Utpadan Awam Vipanan Sahkari Sangh, Kesla published by Tawa Vishtapit Adivasi Matasya Utpadan Awam Vipanan Sahkari Sangh.
2. Suggestions on Forest Policy on behalf of Satpura Kisan Mazdoor Kalyan Samiti (Letter written to the Forest Minister), by Anil Garg.
3. Change in Forest Conservation Act on behalf of Satpura Kisan Mazdoor Kalyan Samiti (Letter written to Chief Minister), by Anil Garg.
4. Letter written to Project Director, M.P. Government Forestry Management Scheme on 7 June 2002, by Anil Garg.
5. Review Report on definition of Forest Land, Based on Land Right Sammelan on Forest Villages and Taungya villages on 27-29 April at Betul under Rashtriya Van Shramjeevi Manch.
6. Summary Report on Jan Sunwai on Forest Rights at village Indupura, Harda District on 26 May 2001.
7. Summary Report on Samaajwadi Jan Parishad activities from May 2001 to January 2003, presented at the Fifth Biennial Meeting at Itarsi.
8. Election Income and Expenses Account for Harda Assembly Election, by Shamim Modi.
9. Annual Report of Tawa Matsya Sangh for 2002-2003, published by Tawa Matsya Sangh.

2.2.3 Pamphlets

1. Videshi Gulami Wa Sampradayikta Ke Khilaf Tatha Garibi Ke Haq Ki Vishal Rally, by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
2. Atal Sonia tak Nahin Simit Hai Yah Desh, Agar Janta Khud Khari Ho Jaaye To Badal Jaaye Parivesh, by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
3. Garib Ki Takat Dikhana Hai, Garib Ki Ijrat Karne Waali Party Ko Jitaana hai, by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
4. Jungle Jameen Par Haq Paana Hai, Apna Eka Banana Hai, by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad and Shramik Adivasi Sangathan..
5. Vishal Dharna Karyakram on 14th April at Narayan Talkies, by Ambedkar Vichar Manch.
6. Garibo Ka Haq Sammelan and Dharna on the occasion of Dr. Ambedkar Jayanti on 14th April at the offices of Collector and Superintendent of Police of Harda, by by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad and Shramik Adivasi Sangathan.
7. Desh Ko Videshi Gulami Se Bachane Awam Chuno Me Hinsa, Dhan Awam Sharab Ka Baddhta Upyog Rokne Hetu Upwaas, by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad and Shramik Adivasi Sangathan.
8. Jameen Do, Kaam Do, Jungle Par Adhikaar Do, by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad and Shramik Adivasi Sangathan..
9. Pet Bharna aur Kathin Kar Degi Bijli Ki Badhti Keemate, Adivasi Kisano Par Ek Aur Hamle Ka Virodh Karen, by Jagrit Adivasi Dalit Sangathan and Jan Sangharsh Morcha.
10. Bhopal Me Aayojit Jan Panchayat Ke Faislo Ka Elaan, by Jan Sangharsh Morcha.
11. Garibo Ki Awaaz Uthane Chalo, Behri Sarkaar Ko Sunane Chalo, by Kisan Adivasi Sangathan and Samaajwadi Jan Parishad
12. Inaami Yojna Balatkar Karo Aur Sarkari Kharch Par Videsh Jao, by Kisan Adivasi Sangathan, Madhya Pradesh Ke Jan Sangathan, Madhya Pradesh Mahila Manch and Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.
13. Vishal Rally Aur Aam Sabha at Sukhtawa and Itarsi: Bijli Bachao, Azaadi Bachao Yatra, by Kisan Adivasi Sangathan, Jan Sangharsh Morcha, Madhya Pradesh and Samaajwadi Jan Parishad
14. Azaadi Ki Raksha Ke Liye Samaajwadi Jan Parishad Ka Ahvaan, by Samaajwadi Jan Parishad.

2.2.4 Newspapers and Periodicals

Newspaper clippings about the forestry issues and *Sangathan* activities were collected and analysed to understand perceptions on various forestry issues. For this purpose, several issues of national, regional and local newspapers were analysed.

The SAS periodical *Barabari Ka Zamaana* (Era of Equality) and SWJP's fortnightly *Samyik Varta* (Contemporary Dialogue) were also consulted to gain insight into views and perceptions of these organisations on various issues.

2.2.5 Websites

A number of websites were also referred to in the course of this study. Some of the websites consulted are listed below:

<http://www.adb.org>
<http://adharshilask.tripod.com>
<http://www.agrnews.org>
<http://www.aidindia.org>
<http://www.ainfos.ca/org>
<http://www.andolan.org>
<http://www.ashanet.org>
<http://www.cgap.org>
<http://www.creativeresistance.ca>
<http://www.converge.org>
<http://www.countercurrents.org>
<http://www.dissidentvoice.org>
<http://www.ekta-parishad.org>
<http://www.flonnet.com>
<http://www.humanscapeindia.net>
<http://www.jhu.edu>
<http://www.lannan.org>
<http://www.narmada.org>
<http://www.newint.org>
<http://www.panchayats.org>
<http://www.pucl.org>
<http://www.righttoinformation.info>
<http://www.worldbank.org>
<http://www.wtowatch.org>

2.2.6 Other Sources

In addition to the above, slogans, cartoons and songs by *Sangathan* members were also collected for understanding their perceptions. An audiocassette “*Ladat Jaa Re*”(Go on fighting) of SAS was also referred to for the study.

Chapter Three

Forest-Related People's Social Movements in Madhya Pradesh

India has a rich history of people's social movements in many fields representing protest, dissent, reform, or reassertion. This section provides a brief overview of forest-related people's social movements in central India starting from the *adivasi* revolts in the colonial times to more recent mass-based movements spearheaded by *Sangathans*.

Box 1: What is a social movement?

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica a social movement is loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective. That is, they result from the more or less spontaneous coming together of people whose relationships are not defined by rules and procedures but who merely share a common outlook on society.

Herbert Blumer (1939) describes social movements as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. Rudolf Heberle (1949) is of the opinion that social movements are collective attempts to bring about a social change. David Aberle (1966) had suggested that "relative deprivation" is a necessary condition for precipitating social movements. However, later research has identified ideology, informal or formal organization, and orientation to change as the other necessary ingredients for the start of such movements.

There have been several forest-related people's social movements since the colonial times. Many of these started as an outgrowth of the colonial forest policy, which disrupted the relationship of forest based communities with the land by radically redefining property rights and imposing on forest a system of management and control whose priorities sharply conflicted with earlier system of local use and control (Gadgil & Guha 1992). Areas of central India under present Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand have witnessed numerous movements against government's forest policies, which have been mainly spearheaded by *adivasis*.

3.1 Pre-independence Period

The forests of the central province encompassing present day Madhya Pradesh have been witnessing people's social movements and rebellions for a long time. The region was under the domination of *Mughals* and *Peshwas* until the establishment of British control in the 20th century. The pressure on forests, especially commercial pressure, was fairly low in the pre-colonial period. Many scholars, for example, Guha and Gadgil, believe that "*In pre-colonial situation village communities had control over management and disposal of forests and uncultivated lands. Demands by dominant landholders and rulers were limited, and never approached the scale they did in the subsequent period of colonial rule.*" (Guha and Gadgil 1989, in Rangarajan 1996)

However, the situation changed in the colonial period. The colonial rulers started clearing the forests either to increase revenue or area under cultivation. The forests of central India had special commercial significance as these had the two most commercially valuable timber species of the country – teak and sal (Rangarajan 1996). Incidentally, Bori forest of Madhya Pradesh was the first reserve forest of India.

The *adivasis* revolted against the oppressive forest and other policies of the colonial government.

3.1.1 Revolts

In 1818, *adivasis* of Betul, Pachmarhi and Chindwara fought along with Appa Sahib of Nagpur against the British. Appa Sahib lost the battle but the Britishers had to sign treaty with Gond Kings accepting that Gonds of Hoshangabad and Narsinghpur will rule in lieu of taxes to the British.

Revolts against British rule were started in 1857 by the King Shankar Shah of Mandla and in 1859-60 by the Korku king Bhabhut Singh of Mahadev hills. The British crushed both these revolts.

There was an *adivasi* struggle in Bastar against the colonial government during 1880s. In 1876, there was a rebellion that was spearheaded by Rajmuria and Bhatra tribes, which was crushed by the colonial army from Orissa (Behar 2002).

One Tantiya Bhil started a fight against the oppression of the British in Jhabua-Nimar region. The Korkus residing in Chiraptla, Betul district supported him. This struggle went on for around 10 years until 1890.

In 1910, the *adivasis* of Bastar again revolted against the forest policy of reservation as it threatened their traditional rights. This movement lasted for a decade before being crushed by the colonial government (Behar 2002).

Stung by regular revolts, the British decided to bring in some outsiders and settle in *adivasi* areas to reduce *adivasis* ' control.

3.1.2 Non-Cooperation Movement

In 1920 there was widespread drought and the *adivasis* of these regions came out in support of the non-cooperation movement. *Adivasis* started breaking the law in an organized manner. They lighted fires in the forest, felled trees and forcibly collected forest products such as *mahua* from reserve forests.

3.1.3 Jungle Satyagrah (Forest Protest)

In 1930, meetings were held by *adivasis* in which it was decided that they would cut trees and bamboos and graze animals in the government forests. In a congress meeting in Betul, around 3000 *adivasis* gathered with axes and sticks in their hands to start *Jungle Satyagrah*. Congress leadership was of the opinion that only grass should be cut from the forests and people should not enter forests with weapons. *Adivasis* were, however, not satisfied and again collected on 1st August 1930 with axes and sticks. Congress leader Deepchand Gothi accompanied *adivasis* to Chikhlar forest and cut grass from the forest. He was arrested and was put in prison for a year.

3.1.4 Struggle at Banjaridhal-Sataldehi

Ganjan Singh initiated a struggle at Banjaridhal-Sataldehi on 22nd August 1930. He gave a call for *satyagrah* to the *adivasis* in a meeting. The police tried to arrest him, which resulted in struggle between police and *adivasis*. A policeman died and many were injured in the ensuing conflict. The fight continued for four days. Twenty-three *adivasis* were arrested and punished by sentencing them up to four years of rigorous imprisonment. Ganjan Singh was arrested a month later and was served a life sentence.

3.1.5 Quit India Movement and Police Firing at Ghoradongri

As part of the larger freedom movement, the timber and bamboo depots at Ghoradongri were burnt on 21st August 1942. On 22nd August, Dharakhoh railway station and Ranipur police stations were also burnt. Subsequently, the railway station of Shahpur Barbatpur was also burnt. The police encircled the area between Ghoradongri and Shahpur and open fired on the people collected there. One died and many *adivasis* were injured. Thirtyone of the injured *adivasis* were sent to Nagpur Jail.

3.2 Post-Independence Period

There was a decline in people's social movements in central *adivasi* belt soon after independence but in recent years, these movements have again gained momentum. Kothari (2000) explains the reasons for this:

“In the first two decades after Independence, in anticipation of policies that would change colonial attitudes and practice, there were fewer agitations and revolts in adivasi India. It was not long, however, before disillusionment started setting in with the realization that the brown sahib's governance was largely driven by the same mentality and attitude as those who had colonized them before. There were remarkable exceptions as a few enlightened administrators and community leaders asserted the rights of adivasi communities. Gradually, in a growing number of places, agitations and mass assertions became the emergent culture of what began as mere disillusionment.” (Kothari 2000.)

Most of these movements have been related to rights over local natural resources and a common slogan of these movements is *jal, jungle aur jameen* (water, forests and land). According to noted development thinker Dr. Rajni Kothari, these movements are “to be seen as part of an attempt at redefining politics at a time of massive attempts to narrow its range, different from electoral and legislative politics which has relegated large sections of the people outside the process of power.” (Kothari 1988, in Baviskar 1995.)

The main movements related to forests and *adivasi* rights that have emerged in Madhya Pradesh in post-independence period are: EP, Adivasi Mukti Sangathan (AMS), Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM), Bharat Jan Andolan (BJA), Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangh (KMCS), KAS and SAS. The last two are mainly active in Harda and surrounding areas and are described in a subsequent section. Most of these organizations are part of two loose federations – National Alliance of People’s Movements (NAPM) and Jan Sangharsh Morcha (People’s front for Struggle). Some of them are also associated with SWJP, a political party that represents people’s movements. Besides forests, issues such as land rights and corruption are their other major focus.

3.2.1 Ekta Parishad (Unity Council)

EP was established in 1988 as a mass-based people’s organisation. It is presently working in over 3,500 villages spread over 1,000 *panchayats* in 30 districts of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. It has got over 1,00,000 members. Besides, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, it has also got presence in Orissa, Bihar and Jharkhand. The founder of EP is Mr. PV Rajgopal, who along with Freres des Hommes⁸, BAM⁹ and PIDT¹⁰ registered an NGO named Prayog in 1980s to train rural youth as activists. After training, these youth started organizing people for collective action. Later on, in response to the need for a common political platform to fight against increasing disempowerment of the *Adivasis*, EP was formed.

The main objective of EP is to achieve people-centered development and there is specific focus on issues related to *jal, jungle aur jameen*. It organises campaigns on issues such as illicit tree felling, land rights, rehabilitation, release of bonded labourers, etc.

One of the long-term goals of the Parishad is to develop a new ethos of forest conservation that includes human rights of forest dwellers. Behar (2002) and Ramagundam (2001) provide details of Parishad’s strategies:

- Reorganization of the village economy through fair land redistribution and control of local communities over local resources, including forests.
- Implementation of social legislations e.g., minimum wages and release of bonded labourers.

⁸ The French activists were involved in students’ movement in France and were influenced by the well-known Indian socialist leader Jai Prakash Narayan.

⁹ Brothers to All Men

¹⁰ People’s Institute for Development and Training

- Implementation of Panchayati Raj Act in its true spirit.
- Promotion of women's participation in the process of change.
- Creation and promotion of local leadership, especially youth, that caters to the needs and aspirations of the poor and the marginalized.
- Ensuring the livelihood rights of the forest dwellers and empowering them to fight the exploitative system.
- Striving for value-centred politics with specific emphasis on: a) Decentralisation; b) Practical Democracy; and c) Participatory Democracy
- Protecting the *adivasi* culture and way of life, which is increasingly under threat from the contemporary "mainstream" model of development.

EP is a multi-tiered organization. The village level work is coordinated by one person who is popularly known as *Mukhia* (leader). S/he is responsible for mobilizing people, forming village groups such as *mahila mandlis* (women's groups) or *yuva mandlis* (youth groups). At the second level, an EP activist is appointed to coordinate activities for a cluster of villages. Each activist is paid around Rs 1,000 per month for this. The village level members contribute Rs. 5 as membership fee. The number of such workers in Madhya Pradesh is around 300. The village leaders (*mukhias*) are generally identified by the cluster level activist.

The executive body of EP consists of *mukhias* and activists at a ratio of 75:25 respectively. Above this, committees are formed at the district, Vidhan Sabha, and at different socio-cultural regions. At the state and central levels, the apex bodies are known as State-level Committee and Coordination Committee, respectively. Shri Ransingh Parmar and P V Rajgopal currently head the state and national committees respectively.

EP has a strong association and interaction with other mass-based organizations involved in Madhya Pradesh, other states, and even other countries. Funds for EP's work have so far been mainly generated through external aid. However, currently efforts are on to get Indian funding.

EP has been actively pursuing the issue of rights of *adivasis* over forests as well as that of their exploitation by corrupt officials. Ramagundam (2001) has nicely summed up EP's ideological position on forest related issues:

"The human rights are integral part of conservation ethics means that there is no contradiction between the rights of forest dwellers and needs for conservation...Forest is central to mores of adivasi civilization...Forest conservation, therefore, cannot be seen in isolation from the larger societal context...The real contradiction is between two different civilization paradigms; between the adivasi worldview and the modern mainstream worldview; between life, co-existence, regeneration and conservation, and exploitation, consumption, surplus and profit... in encouraging the villagers to protect forests on their own, EP has a positive agenda. It is introducing the idea of each village having its own village forest, which provide for fencing material and certain items of daily use. The Parishad opposes mining activities in forest areas. If mining is essential in certain areas then EP demands that the right to mine should be given to local

communities. Another significant agenda of the Parishad has been a struggle for the rights of people living in Protected Areas, national parks, and sanctuaries. It is constantly struggling for rights of the adivasis in the Protected Areas, opposing displacement and demanding adequate compensation and holistic rehabilitation.” (Ramagundam 2001.)

EP played an important role in exposing a forest related scam in Bastar district(see Box 2).

Box 2: Malik Makbooja Scam of Bastar

In 1996, Mr. B.R. Naidu, the Collector of Bastar, discovered serious violations of the Forest Conservation Act and Madhya Pradesh Land Revenue Code. On further investigation, he unearthed a timber scam running into millions of rupees. The timber mafia, with the support of powerful politicians and senior bureaucrats, was illegally felling hundreds of trees. Local *adivasis* were being exploited and their resources looted. In this scam, revenue officials first allotted land to *adivasis*, falsely demarcating government land with trees as private land. The wealthy *adivasis* (part of the mafia) then bought the land at extremely low prices. Valuable trees on these lands were felled and sold. Naidu discovered the involvement of his senior officials and tried in vain to expose the scam but he was soon transferred.

In order to expose this scam, EP and S.R. Hiramath of Jan Vikas Andolan filed a court case. The Court ordered a CBI inquiry and *Lok Ayukta* (special establishment police) was also approached. The Supreme Court, through its ruling on 11 February 1997, banned the felling of all trees in the district, irrespective of any permission granted by the local administration, until further notice. The unearthing of this scam exposed the timber mafia and their illegal felling activities. It also made people aware of the nexus between the mafia, bureaucrats and politicians and how they are exploiting the *adivasis* and their forests.

Source: Behar 2002

3.2.2 *Adivasi Mukti Sangathan*¹¹ (Union for Adivasi Liberation)

AMS is a mass-based organization founded by Shri Nikunj Bihari Bhutia, a voluntary social worker of Madhya Pradesh. Its members are mainly *adivasi* landless, agricultural labourers and migrant workers. The objective of AMS is to protect its members' rights related to labour, land, and other natural resources including forests. This *Sangathan* is mainly active in Badwani, Khargone, Khandwa and Dewas districts of Madhya Pradesh. AMS is a petitioner in several cases before the High Court of Madhya Pradesh.

AMS holds a strong view against World Bank (WB) assisted Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project. According to them, JFMCs formed under the WB supported JFM programme have actually deprived people of their rights to the forests for collecting various forest products for their livelihood. Further, JFM has also created a lot of inter-village and intra-village conflicts.

¹¹ <http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Industries-envirn-resettlement/2003/forests-case-adivasi-mukti.htm>.

According to AMS, there have been 66 incidents of firing on *adivasis* killing many of them. Out of these, only the incident of Mehandikheda in Dewas district is relatively well known to the general public. (<http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Industries-envirn-resettlement/2003/forests-case-adivasi-mukti.htm>).

AMS aims for a forest policy that focuses on the symbiotic relationship of *adivasis* with the forest. They believe that it is the sacred duty of the *adivasis* to protect and conserve forests, which has been entrusted to them by their forefathers. Demands of AMS include review of disputed claims over forestland arising out of forest settlement, a review of encroachments on forestlands, conversion of forest villages into revenue villages and settlement of other old habitations.

3.2.3 Narmada Bachao Andolan (Movement to save the Narmada)

Narmada Valley Project (NVP) is one of the India's largest multi-purpose river valley projects, which involves construction of several dams that are going to submerge a large tract of forests and displace of thousands of people, including a large number of *adivasis*. The NBA has been protesting against this project since 1970s.

In 1978, the first protest was started in Nimar soon after the Narmada Water Disputes Tribunal gave its award. Popularly known as Nimar Bachao Andolan, it was mainly organized by the Congress (I) leader Arjun Singh, who was in opposition in Madhya Pradesh at that time. Arjun Singh won the state elections in 1979 but as he did not provide further support, the movement collapsed (Baviskar 1995).

The movement gained momentum again in 1985 under the leadership of Medha Patkar, a social scientist from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences. The specific objective has been to protest against the construction of dams in the Narmada valley and to educate *adivasis* and others who are directly affected by large development projects on the social and environmental impact of such projects. But in general, it aims to struggle against the current development model, which is marginalizing the local communities.

The campaign against NVP has been organized at all levels – grassroots, national and international. Western NGOs, mainly based in USA and Japan, have provided support by lobbying with their governments to stop funding for the project. In India, city-based NGOs have been supporting the movement by disseminating information and generating awareness through press briefings, newsletters and films, by lobbying, collecting funds, etc. Prominent social worker Baba Amte and prize-winning author Arundhati Roy have also been associated with NBA. At the grassroots level, people have been organizing demonstrations and launching relay hunger strikes since 1990. These forced the project authorities to discontinue survey work, delaying construction of bridges and guesthouses and also closing down the project offices at many places. Several project officials, including visiting WB teams, have been mobbed and sent back (Baviskar 1995).

In the beginning the movement was mobilized against the construction of two large dams namely Sardar Sarovar and Narmada Sagar. However, as work on Sardar Sarovar dam

progressed faster than Narmada Sagar, the movement's energies were also largely focused there. The focus and demand of the agitation has changed from proper rehabilitation to a total rejection of the project, voiced in the slogan *Koi nahin hatega! Baandh nahin banega!* (No one will move! The dam will not be built!) (Baviskar 1995).

The movement has attempted to highlight and expose the class character of capitalist development, and appropriation of natural resources by the state serving the interests of national elites and foreign capital (Baviskar 1995).

Although the movement has not been successful in complete withdrawal of dam's construction, it did have an impact. The movement through its partner Friends of the Earth was successful in persuading Japanese government to end funding of the project in 1990. In another instance, three US based environment NGOs namely Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Policy Institute and National Wild Federation successfully stopped funding from the WB for NVP. The movement has got international recognition in the form of the Right Livelihood Award (Sweden, December 1991) and the Goldman Award (United States of America, May 1992). In India, following a writ petition by NBA in 1995, the Supreme Court of India limited the construction of the dam to 80.3 meters. Later, the court sanctioned increase of height to 85 meters in 1999 and to 90 meters in 2000.

The 110m height has already been reached in July 2004. The NBA movement even after the SC ruling is carrying out the struggle. It is bringing to light the lacunae of rehabilitation efforts and carrying out *dharna* and *satyagrah* for effective rehabilitation and resettlement efforts. The movement believes that "*the struggle continues, as it must. To not continue fighting this injustice is unthinkable. It would be a surrender of well-held principles of justice, human rights, democracy, equitable and sustainable development, of all the issues that the movement has fought for and has brought to the forefront of the developmental debate.*"¹²

3.2.4 Chhattisgarh Mukti Morcha¹³

The formation of CMM dates back to 1970s. Under the charismatic leadership of Shankar Guha Niyogi, the CMM has been working primarily in the field of labour rights for iron-ore miners and steel workers in Madhya Pradesh (now Chhattisgarh). However, CMM has also been taking part in movements related to *adivasis'* rights over natural resources. For example, in February 2003 it joined hands with NAPM to fight against privatization of the Shivenath river in Chhattisgarh by Radius Water Ltd, a private company, had been granted a 30 years lease ownership on a section of this river resulting in hardships of local villagers, who were neither allowed fishing nor use of river water for growing vegetables or taking bath. Thus, activists put a demand to the Chief Minister to cancel the lease deal and give back people access to natural resources. During the campaign against

¹² <http://www.narmada.org/sardar-sarovar/>

¹³ <http://www.gci.ch/Communication/DigitalForum/digiforum/ARTICLES/article2003>

privatization of Shivnath river, meetings and protests were held in the Keregaon forest village, which were attended by a large number of Gond and Kamar *adivasis*.

3.2.5 *Bharat Jan Andolan (Indian People's Movement)*

BJA was initiated in 1992, when a meeting of environmental activists, *adivasi* rights advocates, and representatives of social and mass movements was organized to foster coordination and alliance among them. The prominent participants in that meeting were Medha Patkar, Pradip Prabhu, Dr. Vinayan, George Palli, Gian Singh and Dr. B D Sharma. All participants in the meeting pledged their support to the common cause. However, BJA didn't have a clear agenda until 1993 when the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was passed. The 73rd Amendment provided a fillip to the movement and BJA focussed its concentration on the issue of *adivasi* self-rule.

Some people consider BJA to have emerged from the *Lal Topi* (Red Cap) movement, which demanded land reforms and peasants' rights and was widespread in Madhya Pradesh in the 1960s and 1970s (Behar 2002). BJA has strong presence in Raipur and Sarguja districts of Madhya Pradesh and also has presence in *adivasi* areas in Jharkhand, Orissa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

BJA is a non-registered organization with rather loose and flexible structure. The movement is coordinated and guided by coordinators at the national, state and regional (where movement's presence is strong) levels. At present Dr. B.D. Sharma, who was earlier Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, is the National Coordinator. All workers of BJA work on voluntary basis. Unlike EP, BJA, on principle, does not accept any grant or aid.

The main objective of BJA is to establish *Hamare gaon mein hamare raaj* (our village, our rule) replacing the present system, which is perceived to be capitalistic and neo-imperialistic. It wants to rebuild the *gaon samaj* (village society) and fight the forces that are disintegrating it. According to Ram Kumar, a leader of BJA, it is not a struggle for *roti* (bread) but for *izzat* (self-respect) (Behar 2002). BJA also strongly advocates local control over local resources *viz. jal, jungle and jameen*, which has also become the mobilizing slogan for the movement. BJA also campaigns for right to work through 'Jhanda Haziri' movement.¹⁴

To achieve its objectives, Andolan works at micro and macro levels. At the micro level, it works with *adivasis*, peasants and downtrodden to sensitize them and mobilize their mass support. This puts pressure on the government to meet people's demands. However, if there is conflict in the village, BJA withdraws. At the macro-level, BJA tries to influence

¹⁴ Under this movement, BJA aims to implement government's policy to assure 100 days of employment to two persons from each family living below the poverty line during the lean agricultural season. The movement is called *Jhanda Hazari* (flag attendance) because as part of this movement, an attendance register is kept on a platform under the Indian flag where families belong to BPL category sign everyday. This register is then sent to district authorities demanding work for all those who signed. This movement could successfully provide employment to people in Nagari Block of Raipur district.

policies through various channels in the bureaucracy, politics and the government. In this advocacy and networking role, Dr. Sharma's contacts and background are quite useful. The Andolan also organises rallies and *dharnas* in various cities, noteworthy among them is the rally organised in Delhi in 1997 in which over 25, 000 people participated.

BJA campaigns for *adivasis'* rights over forests and also raises its voice against corruption within the FD. Its long-term goal is get complete ownership of forests in the hands of local people and to provide alternative employment opportunities to forest-fringe communities.

BJA spends a lot of effort and energy in establishing its base in the village. According to Dr. Sharma "idea" and not the organization should reach the people first (Behar 2002). Hence, the first step BJA takes in any village/area is to distribute the books written by Dr. Sharma on the ideas, mission and philosophy of BJA. In the village that accepts BJA's philosophy, a *shila lekh* (rock inscription) is placed at the entrance proclaiming *hamara gaon, hamara raaj* (our village, our rule). Subsequently, an activist goes to the village and starts living there. During his/her stay at village s/he identifies young people for training. To groom them as activists, these youths are trained in two carefully designed phases. The first phase of the training is completely led by Dr. Sharma. Among other things, trainees receive an intensive training in the laws and the Constitution of India to equip them to negotiate with the state. This phase follows an apprenticeship period when each trainee is attached with a worker at the field to get first hand experience. On completion of this each worker is assigned a village, which is generally not his own village. The village worker is responsible for mobilizing support for BJA from the assigned village and those around it. *Mahila* and *Yuva Mandals* are also formed at the village to motivate women and youth in various activities. *Mahila Mandal* of Andolan has successfully undertaken anti-liquor movement campaign in many places such as Nagari-Sihawa.

3.2.6 Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan (KMCS)¹⁵

Baviskar (1995) provided a brief description on the genesis of the KMCS

"Around middle of 1980s, two young men who met at the Social Work and Research Centre at Tilonia in Rajasthan felt that engendering social change required direct political action through collective organization and the mobilization of the oppressed against the state and the market. With these objectives in mind, they came to Alirajpur in Madhya Pradesh. After the first rocky months, spent in trying to establish a base among the suspicious Adivasis, they learnt of a contractor who embezzled government money by employing local labourers for wages below the minimum legal wages. Posing as labourers they joined the project and successfully organized a strike demanding full wages. From that beginning, they went on to establish a base in the village of Attha where they organized people against corrupt government officials. The first stirrings of protest against the corrupt demands of the FD resulted in one of the men being brutally

¹⁵ <http://www.narmada.org/nba-press-releases/february-2003/sixthday.html>
<http://www.ieo.org/worldbank.html>

beaten up by a group of Nakedars and forest guards. This incidence greatly touched the hearts and minds of the villagers who felt that someone who was willing to stand by them, regardless of the consequences, deserved their support. This was the start of the Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan – the Peasants and Workers Consciousness Union. At present, the Sangath consists of about ninety-five member villages in south and east Alirajpur.”

Thus KMCS was established in the Malwa region of MP in 1982. This was a local association of the *adivasi* with epicentre in Kakrana and 20-30 neighbouring villages in Jhabua district. This *Sangathan* brought in noted activists Chittaropa Palit, Rahul, and Amita Baviskar among others who joined and worked for the cause of *adivasis*. As Chittaropa Palit (2003)¹⁶ says:

“In 1988, I left to join a group called Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan, the Organization for Awareness among Peasants and Workers, operating in the Narmada Valley adivasi district of Jhabua, in Madhya Pradesh. The Sangathan had been set up in 1982 and was mainly composed of young activists—architects, engineers and so on—who had rejected professional careers and were trying, in some small way, to contribute to social transformation.”

KMCS became an organization of *adivasi* peasants working for economic, political and cultural rights and has been associated with the NBA. KMCS has initiated forest conservation works by the people and the peoples struggle against exploitation by the FD and other departments. Pari Baumann and John Farrington (2001)¹⁷ state *“Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangathan has been leading struggles by adivasis for rights to common grazing lands. These are only a few of the instances of civil society groups, most of them with a grassroots origin that have mobilized around natural resources.”*

At the economic front KMCS began forming grain banks from as early as 1984 and revived the traditional practices of *“uchna”*: and *“parjia”*. Rahul (2003)¹⁸ study elaborates on the works of KMCS:

“The traditional adivasi communities had a fairly efficient support system of credit known as “uchna”. Under this anyone in need of money or grain or pulses could borrow this from someone else who might have some to spare without having to pay any interest. The only condition was that the principal would have to be returned whenever the creditor

¹⁶ Palit, Chittaropa, 2003, Monsoon Risings, Mega Dam Resistance in the Narmada Valley in *New Left Review*, May-June 21 at http://www.freeindia.com/environment/2_june_03_environment.html

¹⁷ Baumann, Pari and Farrington, John, 2003, Decentralising Natural Resource Management: Lessons from Local Government Reform in India, ODI Perspectives, Number 86, June 2003 at <http://www.odi.org.uk/nrp/86.pdf>

¹⁸ Rahul, 2003, (Paper for ICSSR, Unpublished) Sahukars Rule The Roost - Status of Informal Rural Financial Markets in Adivasi Dominated Regions of Western Madhya Pradesh at www.panchayats.org/downloads/Sahukars%20Rule%20the%20Roost.PDF

demanded it. However, since at any point of time there would always be someone in the community with a surplus to spare, it was possible to go on rescheduling the debt by borrowing from one to pay the other until such time as the borrower was able to pay back the loan from his own earning... The members of KMCS in Alirajpur revived and strengthened their traditional practice of “parjia” in which ten to twelve households pool their labour together in routine agricultural operations. They extended this to the construction of stone gully plugs on the nullahs adjoining their slopy farmlands to conserve the soil that is eroded during the monsoons.”

KMCS has mainly been working for the economic, political and cultural rights of *adivasis*. Ideologically against policies of the WB, KMCS has organized protest campaigns against the WB supported Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project. KMCS along with the activists’ forum, “Citizens against World Bank” wrote an open letter titled “WB Quit India” to Mr James Wolfensohn during his visit to India in 1996.

3.2.7 National Alliance of People’s Movements¹⁹

NAPM is a coalition of 200 grassroot organizations. It was formed in 1992 to create a political force for waging war against casteism, communalism and also to assert protest against New Economic Policy of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization.

NAPM aims at “Total Revolution”, as it believes that crises related to land, water, forest, alienation of community, sovereignty and democracy are all interrelated and thus each cannot be addressed through individual movements. Mostly inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, NAPM promotes the model of alternative development based on equity, self-reliance and simple living. Popularly known as *Desh Bacaho Desh Banao Abhiyan*, it has five main objectives (www.aidindia.org/desh/DBDB-Folder_homefont.rtf):

- Village communities’ right to natural resources – water, forest and land.
- Right to life and livelihood of every person. Right to work.
- New paradigm of development based on equality, justice and sustainability, by means of suitable technology, democratic planning, and cooperative enterprises, not reliant on foreign aid. Challenge to WB and WTO.
- Struggle against casteism and communalism and adherence to social equity and secularism.
- Opposing corrupt political practices, striving for right to information, clean and accountable representatives of people and decentralized democracy.

¹⁹ http://www.aidindia.org/desh/DBDB-Folder_homefont.rtf
<http://www.humanscapeindia.net/volun/ngos/napm.htm>

Desh Bachao Desh Banao Abhiyan functions through the following mechanisms:

- i) *Desh Bachao Desh Banao* Committees at the village/ basti/ block/ district/ city/ state level.
- ii) *Yuva Abhiyan* – Youths for Unity, Equity and Transformation – *Jan Vikas Kendra* in each region.
- iii) *Jan Sahayog Manch* – Citizen’s forum with intellectuals, professionals, artists, teachers, entrepreneurs and others.
- iv) *Lok Manch* – a platform for transparency and accountability in politics.

At present, noted environmentalist activist Medha Patkar is the National Coordinator and Sanjay M.G. and P.Chennaiah are the National Co-coordinators. Along with participation in various struggles, NAPM also organizes campaigns, rallies and programmes in major cities. Nationwide tours covering major states and cities is a popular strategy of NAPM for sensitizing and mobilizing people.

3.2.8 Jan Sangarsh Morcha²⁰ (Front for People’s Struggles)

JSM is a forum of mass-based organizations. These organizations work among the *adivasis* in forest fringe villages and among farmers in the plains. They are mainly active in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The main objective of JSM is to fight against privatization and globalization and establish social justice. JSM opposed the World Bank supported Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project. It considered it an attempt of the multilateral institutions to seek control over the vast natural resources of Madhya Pradesh and marginalise and uproot the *adivasis* and deprive them their basic rights.

Another major campaign of JSM in recent years was against a proposed hike in electricity tariff. It organized *Bijli Bachao - Azadi Bachao Yatras* all through the state. The stand of JSM on various issues becomes clear from decisions taken in a Jan Panchayat organised in Bhopal in 2002. These were:

1. OPPOSITION OF FOREIGN SLAVERY

- The peoples of Madhya Pradesh reject the policies of globalization, liberalization and privatisation.
- We will not let the country become slave again.
- We demand that India should come out of WTO and farmers, labours, fishermen, artisans, and small industries of India be saved.
- We oppose the entry of World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Madhya Pradesh and we will not let our state become their fortress.
- We oppose entry of WB and ADB in forestry in Madhya Pradesh.
- We will oppose with all our strength Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project.

²⁰ <http://www.narmada.org/nba-press-releases/november-2002/bijliazadibachao.html>
<http://www.hindu.com/2004/07/01/stories/2004070104680500.htm>

2. PROTECTION OF AGRICULTURE AND FARMERS

- Import of agriculture products should be stopped.
- Farmers should be given true price of production.
- Prices of fertilizers, seeds, irrigation, electricity and pesticides should be reduced.
- We will not accept entry of foreign companies in agriculture.
- The farmers' loans will have to be waived off. Taking compound interest on loans from farmers is wrong. Until the time loans taken by large capitalists to the tune of billions of rupees are not recovered, the government has no right for extracting loans from farmers and poor.
- Agricultural land should not be snatched for purpose of making dams or setting up industries.

3. RIGHT TO ELECTRICITY

- Electricity reform is a farce. This should be done away with.
- The agreement between the ADB and Madhya Pradesh government on electricity reforms is a farce and anti-people.
- Snatching away of electricity from farmers and poor masses by making it costly should be stopped. Farmers will have to be given subsidized electricity and poor be given a single point electricity connections.
- Government has no right to break-up and sell State Electricity Board. It's the duty of the state to give and transport electricity to all people and government should do it.
- Privatisation of electricity is a farce. Schemes like Enron and Maheswar should be cancelled.

4. RIGHTS ON FOREST, WATER AND LAND

- The right on forest, water and land is of the peoples, which no power in the world can snatch. We will not let WB, government and foreign companies take away our forest, land or water resources.
- This is wrong to say that people have encroached upon the forest. *Adivasis* are the real inhabitants who have been staying for thousands of years. The truth is that others have encroached upon the land of the *Adivasis*. We oppose with all our strength removal of *Adivasis* and forest dwellers in the name of removing encroachments. Central Government orders and Supreme Court Committee recommendations are anti-people. These will have to be taken back.
- Removing villages should be stopped at any cost. Those that have been removed before will have to be resettled. Land will have to be given in lieu of land and forests for forests.
- The play of JFM should be stopped. Stop making villagers fight amongst themselves. *Adivasis* and forest dwellers will have to be given total rights.

5. THE FARCE OF *DALIT* AGENDA

- The *dalit* agenda of Madhya Pradesh government is a farce.
- Snatching of *dalits*, *adivasis*, poor and backwards' land in the name of distributing *pattas* be stopped.
- Wherever there is encroachment (*kabja*) by poor the same land patta be given be it revenue land or forestland.
- The land from ceiling should be distributed to poor. The land of landlords, rich people and rich people residing outside village should be distributed among the cultivators.

6. RIGHT TO EMPLOYMENT AND FOOD

- Every person be given work. This is the right of the person and duty of the government.
- Minimum 100 days work should be provided to whoever asks for it. Employment guarantee scheme and food for work programme be initiated in each district, each village.
- Everybody will have to be given food grains at cheaper rate. Its better to give food grains to the people rather than let it rot in the granaries.

7. RIGHT TO HEALTH AND EDUCATION

- We reject privatization of health and education. Every child has basic right to school education along with every person's right for healthy life and these are duties of the government.
- Every village and hamlet should have schools in which children can be provided good education. Full quota of teachers should be in these schools.

- Madhya Pradesh's new law on education is incomplete and not applicable on private schools. If government is unable to provide good education and teachers in some villages/hamlets, the government should also be punished and fined.
- We will not let foreign companies entry into education and health. Complete information about schemes being run by foreign assistance should be placed before people.
- Schemes like *Rogi Kalyan Samiti* that are being run in the name of people's participation and decentralization are a farce. This is a tactic by the government to shirk its responsibility and introduce privatization.

8. ISSUES RELATED TO WOMEN

- Disparity of all forms between men and women should be removed. We will not accept atrocities on women.
- We will not discriminate between a boy and a girl.

9. OPPOSITION TO COMMUNALISM

- We oppose dividing people in the name of religion and caste and creating communal disharmony. We oppose all attempts to divide the people and spread hatred.

3.2.9 *Samaajwadi Jan Parishad (SWJP)*

In post 1977 era, when the Janta Party failed, ex-parliamentarian and socialist thinker Kishan Patnaik along with a few others decided to work for the people through a *Sangathan* and formed *Samta Sangathan*. SWJP was born out of *Samta Sangathan* in 1995. It is a registered political party, which has its units in 13 states. Its present national General Secretary (*Mahasachiv*) is Prof. Vinod Prasad Singh.

The two most active *Sangathans* in Harda area – KAS and SAS – support SWJP and its top leadership e.g., Sunil Gupta and Fagram of KAS and Shamim Modi and Anurag Modi of SAS are active members of SWJP and have recently fought assembly and parliamentary elections as SWJP candidates.

SWJP encourages activists and people's movements to join active politics. Its main advice in this regard is that "*either we control politics or politics will control us*". According to SWJP, the country's political system is the midst of a major change. One era has ended while a new era is just beginning. The collapse of communism and the Soviet Union marked the end of the previous era. While the ruling elite is promoting capitalism as the only way forward, outline of a new alternative ideology is also emerging. According to SWJP, there is a need to redefine priorities and goals in light of political developments in across the globe in the past few years. A new "*Kranti Dharm*" (revolutionary purpose) needs to be defined, which should draw upon three pillars of strength *viz.* (1) rich heritage of revolutionary ideology and politics of the previous era; (2) new ideas that have emerged outside the socialist movement e.g., women's emancipation and protection of environment; and (3) experience from people's movements (*Jan Andolan*).

SWJP feels that many problems today are a direct result of European colonialism across the world and establishment of an economic system that is based on materialism and under which raw materials (produced by the poor countries) are undervalued while finished goods (made by companies of rich countries) are overvalued. Similarly, technology and technical expertise is also overpriced. It rejects the current model of

“development” that is based on production and consumption of many unnecessary products as it has led to misery for millions of poor on one hand and rapid destruction of our natural resources on the other.

SWJP stands for equality – not just between people but also between countries. It sees “Social Darwinism” as an attempt by the rich to justify perpetuation of inequality and exploitation. It opposes centralisation of power as well imposition of a uniform structure or system that kills diversity. SWJP considers MNCs as instruments of economic hegemony of the rich western countries over poor third world countries.

According to SWJP, all political parties (including the left parties) have failed to address people’s concerns and there is a need for an alternative political ideology, which it represents. It feels that NGOs or apolitical bodies, howsoever honest and committed, can do only as much. They can at best bring about partial improvement in one sector or in the lives of a section of people. However, if aim is fundamental change in the system then one has to adopt the route of party politics and enter the political arena. As per SWJP creation of an alternative revolutionary political force is acutely needed at this juncture in India’s political history. *“Aaj maun ya nishkriya rehna adharam hai. Aaj Rajniti swayam dharm hai.* (It is irreligious to be silent these days, today politics is religion)

The following are the stated objectives of SWJP:

1. Creation of a society free of inequity where there is no exploitation by one man of another and one nation of another.
2. Remove discrimination (*vishamta*) based on colour, caste, gender, race and class through non-violent struggle and people’s movements.
3. Encouraging creative potential and removal of all types of social, economic, cultural and political injustice and exploitation through democratic means.

SWJP has two types of members – primary and active. Anyone who is above 18 years of age and has faith in democratic socialism and SWJP’s objectives and programmes can become SWJP’s member. Membership fee is Rs. 5 and membership is for two years. A primary member can become an active member after six months if s/he fulfils the following conditions:

1. 60% attendance in SWJP’s programmes.
2. Adherence to SWJP’s code of conduct.
3. Commitment of seven hours or more for party work every week.
4. Drafting in at least five primary members

SWJP’s flag has three colours (green, blue and red) two symbols (wheel and plough). Green represents link between humans and nature, blue represents social justice while red represents revolution. Wheel and plough represent workers and farmers, respectively.

3.3 Conclusion

As is evident from the above account, Madhya Pradesh has a rich culture of people's social movements. Many movements are led by charismatic leaders (Such as Medha Patkar, PV Rajagopal and Dr. BD Sharma) or educated committed young people, who are from other parts of the country but have decided to work in *adivasi* areas.

These movements have provided an alternative to mainstream political parties through which people can voice their concerns and aspirations. Deficiency and disillusionment with existing political process have provided impetus to these movements. Recently, some of these movements have also entered mainstream politics, which seems to be the beginning of a new era in their history.

Chapter Four

Sangathans and NGOs Active in Harda

The following *Sangathans* and NGOs are active in Harda and their members were interviewed for the study:²¹

- ◆ Shramik Adivasi Sangathan (SAS)
- ◆ Kisan Adivasi Sangathan (KAS)
- ◆ Ekta Parishad (EP)²²
- ◆ Aide et Action (AA)
- ◆ Ambedkar Vichar Manch (AVM)
- ◆ Gram Seva Samiti (GSS)
- ◆ Eklavya
- ◆ Nirantar

In the following sections we provide a brief outline of these *Sangathans* NGOs and in Harda and nearby areas.

4.1. Shramik Adivasi Sangathan (SAS)

SAS is working in three districts – Harda, Betul and Khandwa – of Madhya Pradesh and is active in around 200 villages. It has around five thousand members, primarily villagers. Anurag Modi and Shamim Modi in Bargi in Chhattisgarh formed SAS. It shifted its base to Betul around 1996. From there it expanded to Harda and Khandwa. The main objective of SAS is to empower the *adivasis* and other poor and to achieve social, political, and economic change through peaceful and democratic means and in the process empower the marginalized. They fight mainly for 'ownership' and 'access' rights of the local community over '*jal, jungle, jameen*'.

The growth of SAS can be divided into two major phases. In the initial phase (which can be termed as 'nascent phase'), the emphasis of SAS was on establishing its support base among the villagers. When SAS shifted its base from Bargi in Chattisgarh to Betul district of Madhya Pradesh in 1996, SAS founders Anurag and Shamim Modi undertook *padyatras*²³ and went on foot from village to village, met the villagers and discussed their problems. Based on the rapport built with the villagers, they then along with the villagers started organising *dharnas*²⁴ and *gherao*²⁵ etc. to highlight various problems of the people.

²¹ Care -M. P. also works in Harda (on Information Technology and health issues) but its staff members could not be interviewed due to their unavailability during the fieldwork.

²² Details about EP and its activities have been provided in the previous section.

²³ Foot March

²⁴ A form of demonstration where people sit in a public setting in favour of their demands

²⁵ Encircling of government office or officials against wrongdoings to press for action

Subsequently, rallies²⁶ were organised where efforts were made to reach a larger number of people. During this phase, periodic meetings were held, distribution of pamphlets and literature was undertaken, and several press releases were given to the local media. The focus was on creating a mass support base especially in *adivasi* pockets.

The next phase (which can be termed as 'expansion phase') started from year 2000 when SAS started expanding beyond Betul – into Harda and Khandwa. The focus shifted to advocacy and active participation in politics. Apart from continuing with the strategies as followed in the nascent phase (*dharnas*, *gheraos* and *rallies*), election meetings, *jan sampark abhiyan* (people contact campaign) and *anshan* (fast) on political issues are being organised. SAS top leaders have entered active politics as members of SWJP and fought both assembly and parliament elections. In order to strengthen its support base, in those villages where it has a good presence (where it has enough active members), *Sangathan Samitis* are being formed in an effort to institutionalise its presence.

4.2. Kisan Adivasi Sangathan (KAS)

KAS is based in the Hoshangabad district. Sunil Gupta formed it in the early 1980s. The main office of KAS is at Kesla, in Hoshangabad district. KAS is active in around 150 villages and has around four to five thousand members. Its objectives as well as strategies are very similar to SAS.

The only difference between these two *Sangathans* is that while SAS concentrates mainly on activism and mass mobilisation activities (focussing on land rights and empowerment), KAS has also initiated livelihood strengthening activities by promoting the formation of a fishery cooperative of people displaced due to creation of Tawa dam in 1996 named '*Tawa Visthapit Adivasi Matasya Utpadan Awan Vipanan Sahkari Sangh*'. It has around 1250 members from 39 villages and provided 42,435 man-days of work last year (2002-2003). The total annual income of all members in 2002-03 was Rs. 26.64 lakh with the average daily income being Rs. 62.79.²⁷ The members of this cooperative automatically become member the *Sangathan* and get associated with the work of KAS and contribute 2% of their income for *Sangathan* works.²⁸ If one calculates 2% of the total income earned by fishermen, the annual contribution going into KAS comes out to be around Rs. 53,280. The Tawa cooperative thus acts as a financial base for KAS along with cooperative members being hardcore members of the *Sangathan*.

4.3. Eklavya

Eklavya, which is headquartered at Bhopal, is active in Hoshangabad and Harda area and works primarily in the area of education and empowerment of people. Since the last few years, Eklavya has also diversified into village level works and formation of Self Help Groups (SHG's) for micro credit activities. Eklavya has been active in the area since

²⁶ A large meeting

²⁷ Annual report of Tawa fishery cooperative

²⁸ Secretary of fishery cooperative in a village, personal communication.

1988. It has a field office in Khirkiya. In Harda, besides education it works in the area of village resource development and on gender issues.

4.4. Aide et Action

Aide et Action has a field office at Harda. It has been working in the Harda division since 2003. They had selected 20 villages in the first phase for the first year and expanded this year to another 20 villages more for their development intervention. They are working on gender issues, village resource development, and creation of SHGs for micro credit.

4.5. Nirantar

Nirantar is a grassroot level NGO registered in Harda in 1994, comprising of 25 voluntary members. It is currently working in the area of education and health issues and also runs a day care centre for old people. Mr Hari Mohan Sharma, who is the founder of this organisation is a lawyer by profession and has been actively involved (indirectly) on issues related to environment and development since 1986.

Nirantar gives special focus on working with the Pardi and Bishnoi tribes in the area²⁹. Bishnois, however, have a rich tradition of conserving flora and fauna in Rajasthan, their ancestral land. Nirantar used this as a starting point and highlighted the ancestral conservation practices of Bishnois in local media. It made Jambeshwara temple in 'Neem Gaon'(Neem village) as the focal point of its activities and started a dialogue with the Bishnoi community to reduce their involvement in illegal felling of forests of the area.

4.6. Ambedkar Vichar Manch

AVM is an NGO, which has been initiated by Mr. Sunder Singh Kharpe an employee of Eklavya. AVM has been working in the area for the communities dealing in carcasses and for the rights and welfare of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes.

4.7. Gram Seva Samiti

Gram Seva Samiti is a Gandhian organisation that was established in 1953 by Gandhian Mr. Banwari Lal Chowdhury. It started its work on issues such as agriculture improvement, primary health, sanitation, cottage industries, and upliftment of the downtrodden. In 1980s, the organisation spread its activities in the command area of the Tawa dam and focussed on dam related problems. It started organising farmers under the 'save the soil campaign' (*Mitti Bachao Andolan*). Subsequently, it worked on development of rural children with support from the Christian Children's Fund. In 1994, it started a booklet series "*Disha Samvad*" to highlight local problems and to start a dialogue on issues related to rural development and environment. It got support from Oxfam for this activity.

²⁹ Pardis were branded as a criminal tribe in colonial times and Bishnois are immigrants into the area, who have been involved in large scale illegal felling.

Chapter Five

Perceptions of NGOs/ *Sangathans* on Forestry Issues

In this section, we present a comprehensive overview of the perceptions of *Sangathans* and NGOs working in Harda and nearby areas on forest related issues. These perceptions have been collected through the checklist addressed to stakeholders, and based on the reviews of the books/articles/pamphlets/newspaper articles, audio-cassettes, and also attending the rallies, dharnas, and similar other public meetings during the project period.

5.1 Who are Stakeholders in Forests

In Harda, an interesting range of stakeholder perceptions on 'who are the stakeholders in forests' emerged. Both the *Sanganthan* members and NGOs felt that the primary stakeholders in forestry are the people who are residing in or around the forest and are dependent on the forests for livelihood and sustenance. They perceived the FD to be another important stakeholder in forests since they have control over the forest resource (legal and administrative powers). Some of the respondents also pointed out that FD is an important stakeholder as they are interested in forest conservation-this was pointed out by member of a NGO - '*...inspite of corruption that exists in the FD, they are needed. In the absence of FD, forests would have disappeared long ago*'.

A significant majority of the respondents (93%) felt that '*Sangathan are one of the major stakeholders in forest as they are representative of the voice and aspirations of the adivasis and other forest dependent communities*'.

There was a divided opinion on whether NGOs are important stakeholders in forest. About 53% of total respondents were not even aware of the NGOs working on forestry in Harda. Further 15% thought that NGOs do not work on issues related to forests thus they are not important stakeholders in the forestry sector. Interestingly about 32% of respondents (mostly village level members of *Sangathans*) felt that NGOs should be involved more intensively in the forestry sector, as they work on issues like livelihood and empowerment. Views contradictory to this emerged from the top-level members (leaders) of *Sangathans*, who felt that NGOs are '*insensitive to local and specific issues as they mainly work in diverse issues of development and are more involved in implementation of development projects*'. Some of the leaders of *Sangathans* were of the view that NGOs are '*just like shops*' (*dukandari chalte hain*) and are not really concerned about the welfare of the people. (See Figure1).

Another interesting dimension that came across during discussion with the EP members was the perception of NGOs being pro-FD and are hands in gloves with them. EP members felt that '*NGOs are active members of the nexus between politicians and bureaucrats in illegal smuggling of timber from forests*'.

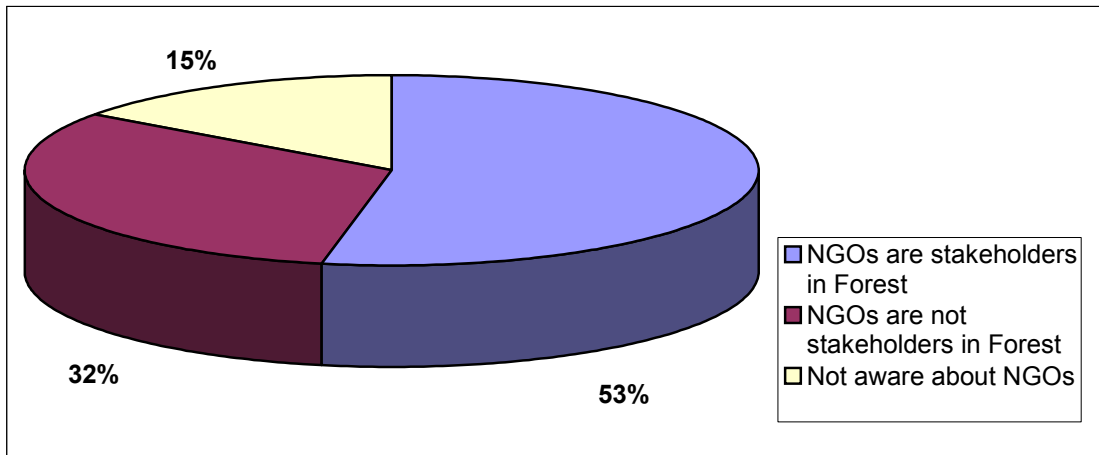


Figure 1: Perception about NGO as a Stakeholder

The importance of the Revenue Department (RD) in the forestry sector was accepted by 52% of the respondents. They were considered an important stakeholder since the responsibility/power to give *patta* (land deed) lies with the RD, and the issue of land rights is the major cause of conflict in the area. Another interesting fact is that 60% of the village level *Sangathan* members and 33% of NGOs (totalling to 32% of the respondents) acknowledged Police Department as an important stakeholder due to their role in disputes related to forestry issues. Some (18% of total respondents) also thought that the District Collector is one of the stakeholders because of the administrative power he/she holds. 40% of the total respondents considered MLAs and MPs (legislators) as important stakeholders as they can influence policies in the forestry sector.

Only 23% of the total respondents considered Panchayats as a stakeholder (mainly by the village level and active *Sangathan* members). This could be due to two reasons- firstly, Panchayats in Harda have not been functioning very effectively and secondly, they are perceived to be corrupt. Figure 2 below shows the stakeholders in the forestry sector as perceived by respondents.

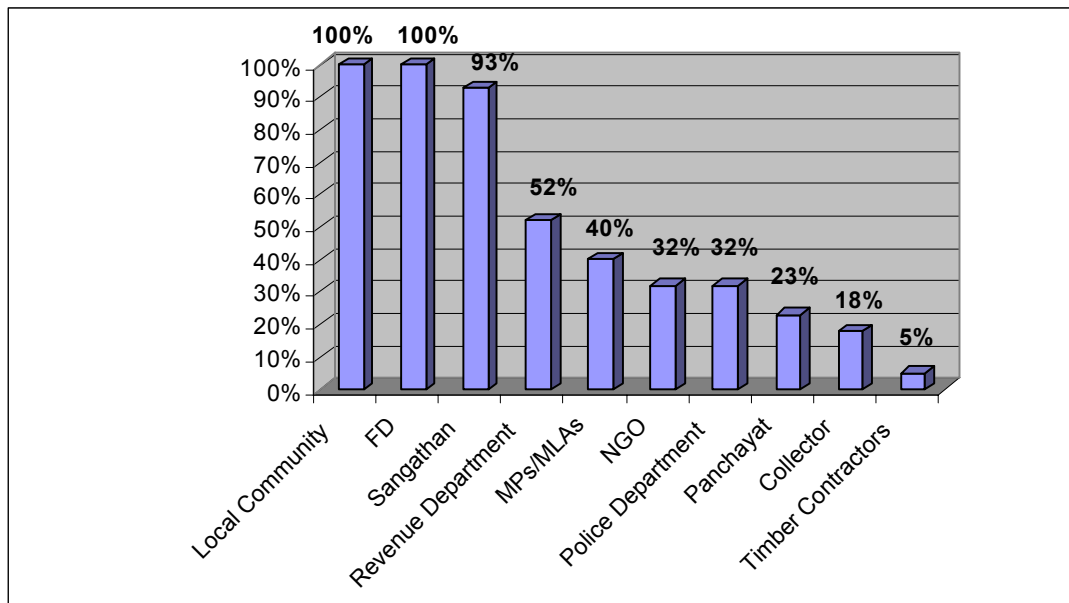


Figure 2: Perceptions of 'who is a Stakeholder' in the Forestry Sector

5.2 Intention and Implication of Existing Forest Policies

It emerged from our discussions that a strong view on the issue of forest polices and their impact/implications are held mainly at the level of educated activists and lead *Sangathans* leaders. Forest policies failed to emerge as a major issue at the village level. Even the NGOs in the area, did not seem to have any view on the forest polices and most of them acknowledged of having very less knowledge about these polices, since they do not work intensively in the field of forestry.

Among the *Sangathans* leaders two very interesting perceptions emerged on the issue. Firstly, the common feeling is that the existing policies continue to reflect the 'colonial legacy' of control over forests, and secondly, the very basic assumptions on which these policies are based are incorrect. One of the activists/authors, while reviewing all forest related polices of the Government of India aptly summarises the overall impressions of the forest polices as perceived by many respondents. He says '*...a review of all forest related policies of the government shows that the main objectives of these policies are and always have been to dominate/control the adivasis. It is only because of lack of unity amongst the forest dependent communities, that even after so many years of independence, the government is able to continue with such oppressive policies*'³⁰. In another book where the Madhya Pradesh World Bank forestry project is critically analysed³¹, the author mentions that '*the fact that most of the forest policies are based on the presumption that the adivasis are responsible for deforestation and degradation, which itself is a wrong base to start*'. Picture 10 and 14 depict similar perception.

³⁰ Rahul (1996 b)

³¹ Anon (1996)

A top leader of *Sangathan*, also reflected the same view point- '*Indian forest policy is useless. They are still continuing with the colonial legacy. It is very disheartening to note that the Indian forest policy starts with the assumption that adivasis and poor villagers are degrading and felling the forests*'.

Regarding the 'intention' of the forest policies, the *Sangathan* leaders, including several other activists argue that since the very beginning, the forest policies have been oriented to exclude the rights of the forest dependent communities from the very resource on which their sustenance is based. Picture 7 very well brings out this perception of the *Sangathan*. To quote another *Sangathan* leader (undated) '*If one strictly follows the 1927 Forest Act (which is even now the existing legal base for all our forest related policies), it will not be possible to light even a hearth fire in the homes of the adivasis. As per the Act, adivasis can be put behind bars for collecting even stones and soil from forests. They cannot even collect fallen dry leaves from reserved forests*'. (Modi, undated e) He also strongly feels that this Colonial Act is the main reason for the atrocities that are being perpetrated on the *adivasis*, who live at the mercy of forest officials, are forced to bribe them, do unpaid work for them and suffer humiliation.

Another author³² while discussing the implication and intention of the 1952 forest policy points out, that though the policy talks about conservation and meeting the requirements of the poor forest dependent communities, but it also promotes commercial forestry. He also observes that after independence, in pursuance of the developed countries industrial development policy, the capitalist and political leaders of the country decided to follow the same route. Since the forests provide important source of raw material for industries, the government initiated a policy prioritizing conservation (to meet commercial demand) as against the importance of meeting the basic requirements of the forest dependent communities. Summarising the impact of the 1952 policy, he concludes. '*Aara machine, kagaaj karkhane, bandh, khadan aur rail lines ke liye saste kimat par lakri kati gayee aur jungle nasht kiya gaya; vanvibagh ka dhanca aur bhari aur tanashahi banaya gaya taki vanvasi ko dabaya ja saken*'. (To meet the demands of industries like paper industry, railways forests were felled and made available at cheap rates and powers of FD were increased). Picture 6 and 14 also reflects the perception.

Another author, in his writings also reflects a common concern voiced at various levels of *Sangathan* members- that the forest policies fail to differentiate between those who conserve the forests and those who destroy it- '*Van Vinashak Avam Rakhwale Saman Hain Kannon Ke Nazroon Main*³³'. (Destroyer and conserver of forest is same before law)

Majority of the village members of *Sangathans* perceived the forest polices 'anti poor' as well as 'anti people'. They also felt that over the years, forest policies have changed only in theory as the powers are still with FD.³⁴

³² Rahul (1996 c)

³³ Anil Garg (2002 b)

³⁴ Active level and village level Sangathan members, personal communication.

5.2.1 Objectives of forest management

Almost all the respondents felt that the main objective of forest management should be forest protection and meeting the needs of *adivasis* and poor people dependent on forests. However it was strongly expressed by majority of the respondents that people need to be given employment through forestry activities and the benefits of protection should also come back to people rather than remain with the government. It was also expressed that forest management policy has to take into account the indigenous knowledge of the people and policy should be pro-people to be successful. These views are also strongly reflected in the books authored by activists³⁵. The leaders of the *Sangathans* stressed upon the fact that forest management should not be done with the sole objective of conservation. They feel that *'people's interests should be the prime concern and focus of forest management'* Majority of the village level Sangathan member reflected similar views and stressed on the fact that proper management of forests implies and necessitates addressing the community needs while at the same time preventing overuse and destruction, therefore it is essential to arrive at a balance between the two.

5.2.2 Ways to influence forest policy

The respondents including NGO members were of the opinion that forest policy could be influenced through media reports, bringing out literature, research works, NGOs etc. About 83% of the total respondents expressed very strong opinion that people movements, political parties, as well as election time are good platforms through which peoples voice can influence policies. Forest policies can be influenced by pressurising the government, by *rallies, dharna* etc. and in words of village level member of KAS *'only by electing new party to power can the existing policies be changed'*. It was also felt that forest policy could be influenced by unity of people and pressure created by it. In this direction, it was opined that *Sangathan* members should become MLAs and MPs, since their participation in legislation process can help in influencing and changing forest policy.

There was unanimity on the point that government has to address key issues either through legislative or executive bodies. It was felt that only the government possesses the authority, acceptance and legality to address these key issues. The process has to be consultative in which *Sangathans* role, as representative of peoples voice, needs to be accepted. 85% of the respondents including NGO members felt that *Sangathan* representatives have to be involved in issue solving process. The FD, as representative of the government, has to take the initiative and *'thinking has to take place at the national level'*. Care has to be taken to incorporate views, which are anti FD also. *"The government has to address these issues speedily else Sangathan's movement will expand more and more. Its just the beginning now, there is lot to do and long way to go"* was the feeling expressed by majority of the respondents.³⁶

³⁵ Banerjee, Rahul and Diwan Yogesh (1995)

³⁶ Middle level and lower level SAS members.

5.3 Land Rights and Encroachment of Forestland

5.3.1 Ownership of forestland

An activist in one of his books, very aptly puts forward the perception and the importance of land rights in the eyes of the people as well as the activists and *Sangathans* who fight for their cause through a poem:

*'pura yakin hain humko,
ek din jaroor ayega,
jab mor jaisa nachne ka,
sara jungle hamara hoga'³⁷*

(We have full belief that the day will come when the whole forest will be ours to roam and do what we want.)

The issue of land rights and related issue of encroachment of forestland is perceived to be one of the major causes of conflict in the forestry sector in Harda by majority of the respondents. It was widely expressed that livelihood rights are an integral part of conservation ethics. The general opinion is that since *adivasis* have for generations exercised traditional rights over forest and conserved the resource, therefore the forestland belongs to them. As aptly put forward by one of the authors '*dharti bhagwan ne banai, hum bhagwan ke bete, sarkaar bich main kahan se ayee?*'³⁸. (God created land, we are also god's creation, and from where the government has come in between us?). Within this backdrop they argue that it is very important to establish local community legal rights over forest resource.

The importance of this issue is reflected by the fact that 92% of the respondents perceived providing land rights to the *adivasis* and poor communities as one of the most effective way of resolving 'conflict' in the forestry sector. However, what is interesting is the difference in perceptions between the NGOs and the *Sangathans* regarding the right way to approach this issue.

The *Sangathans* argue that meeting livelihood and subsistence needs of the *adivasis* should be the first priority as compared to conservation of forests, which in any case will be managed well by the villagers once they have ownership rights over the resource. Citing the example of '*Matsya Sangh*', an active level member of *Sangathan* argued that '*if people are vested with ownership, they manage and conserve resources like they did in the case of Matsya Sangh, where they are earning their livelihood as well as managing the resource (fisheries in this case)*'. On other hand, the NGOs argue that both conservation and livelihood are essential and therefore forest management technique should balance both needs. Picture 3 and 5 brings out the *Sangathans* worldview of symbiotic rather than exploitative relations with forest.

The *Sangathan* members demand that every individual who is 18 years or older should be given five acres of land, and that irrespective of the category of land (i.e. forest land,

³⁷ Rahul Banerjee (1996 b)

³⁸ Sharma, Brahmaddutt (2002)

ceiling land, or revenue land), each individual should be given 'ownership' over the land that he/she is currently cultivating. They argue that it is the duty of the state to provide land rights to the people. All blank forest area or areas where having no large trees be given to the people based on the belief that livelihood of forest dependent communities is intricately linked to the forests and 'ownership' over these lands is vital for their sustenance.

5.3.2 *Government's encroachment related policy*

It was strongly argued by all *Sangathan* members that the recent 'anti encroachment policy' of the government needs to be completely done away with, and that all so called 'encroached land' as declared by the state should be regularised-'*saare kabze waali jameen pe patta de do*³⁹'. (Give *patta* over all encroached land).

Pointing to the several flaws that exists in the way the regularisation process was undertaken, several concerns were expressed by the *Sangathan* members at all levels, and is also reflected in the books authored by several activists. In the book criticising the WB project, authored by the MP Jan *Sangathan*⁴⁰, it is pointed out that '*from almost all the areas, several such 'navtar' or cultivated forest land has not been covered under the Resettlement Survey that was undertaken to regularise all pre 1980 encroachment.*'

Few *Sangathan* members were of the opinion that not all encroachments be regularized, as this will lead to massive encroachments in greed of taking *pattas* so riders should be attached. For example, only bonafide villagers and relatives of villagers settled in the village or out side villagers should get *pattas* and also a particular year be fixed and taken into consideration for settling the claims for *pattas*.

The *Sangathan* members also expressed that in most cases even where *patta* has been given to the marginalized, the possession still rests with the elites in the village. Also in several occasions, *patta* is given over unfertile land, which is not suitable for agriculture, as a result, villagers encroach new (forest) areas to cultivate.⁴¹ An EP member in another article⁴² mentions that '*ten years after the National Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980, the government of India issued an encroachment related guideline in 1990. However, this guideline has several lacunae (Doshpurn hain)*'.

Pointing to the contradictions in government's approach to 'conservation' of forestland, the *Sangathan* members felt that when the government can lease these forestlands for other mega projects like large dams or for coupe felling why do they want to evict villagers practicing traditional cultivation for generations? - '*Logon ke pet ka sawaal hain*'.⁴³ (It is about the existence of people). In-fact several of them also felt that politicians often encourage villagers to encroach new forestland in the hope of raising

³⁹ Top leader of SAS, personal communication.

⁴⁰ Anon (1996)

⁴¹ Members of EP, personal communication. This argument is also put forward by Banerjee, Rahul and Yogesh Diwan (1995) and by Sharma Brahmadutt (2002).

⁴² Garg, Anil (2000)

⁴³ Active level member of *Sangathan*, personal communication.

their vote banks, and FD officials also allow encroachment after taking bribes from villagers⁴⁴.

The NGO commun, which they are presently tilling (mainly forest land), however did not agree to the blanket demand made by *Sangathan* of giving five acres of land to everyone or regularizing encroachments. They felt that amicable solution is required to balance both livelihood needs and forest conservation. Giving *pattas* is a political solution but not a practical one. They also blamed the *Sangathans* for supporting and increasing encroachment in some cases leading to deforestation⁴⁵.

5.3.3 Reasons for encroachment of forest land by adivasis

Interestingly, both the *Sangathans* and NGOs feel that lack of employment opportunities is one of the most important factors that have increased the level of encroachment of forestland. As a NGO member pointed out that *'the plantation programme that were undertaken initially under JFM programme were of commercial species, rather than of local species on which the forest communities depend for their daily needs. Even the 'smokeless chulha' programme of the government introduced to reduce the fuelwood pressure was not viable in the long run, since no thought was given to issues like 'communities ability to afford maintenance costs of the chulhas'*.

Citing another example of the government's initiative to promote alternative income generating activities through introduction of 'jersey cows' amongst agricultural communities, it was felt that often these alternative approaches fail to take into consideration the cultural and locational suitability of the proposed options. Similar example was given by an active member of *Sangathan*, who mentioned that in JFM programme training was given on 'agarbatti (incense sticks) making', while there were no links established for its marketing. As a result these programmes were not successful.

A leader of *Sangathan* reflected the same line of argument and said *'large tracts of forests are being submerged for making dams. In such a situation why can't the people take a little timber/forest produce? After all how much is their need? All adivasi has is a small hut and have few material possessions. They don't have alternative livelihood sources. Unlike the elites, poor people have no food so they don't think of environment. While adivasi are stopped from felling trees even for basic needs, look at the amount of wood panels used to make the WB Forestry Project Office!'*

⁴⁴ During our discussion with villagers in Rawang village, they mentioned that the patwari had taken Rs 1500 from many villagers as fee for 'patta'. However, in the end pattas were given to only a few, and they also realised from the *Sangathans* that in actuality there was no fee as such.

⁴⁵ A NGO member, personal communication.

5.4 Existing Nistar Policy

During discussions in the field, it came out very clearly, that the difference in opinion regarding 'nistar' is one of the vital issues concerning both *Sangathans* and the NGOs.. The importance of the issue can be gauged by the fact that 82% of the respondents felt that conflicts surrounding 'nistar' needs to be resolved. Some other views on nistar as mentioned by the village members of *Sangathans* are listed below:

A middle level member of SAS said “ *Logo ko sukhe ya phir giri hue lakri bhi nahi laane diye jaate hai. Nistar ke liye bhi to rokthe hain. Van Vibhag ke log aur chaukidar bhi ham logo se paisa mangte hain agar sarbhoja le ke aao tab bhi.*”(People are not allowed even to collect fallen or dry wood and are stopped from exercising nistar. Forest watchers and FD staff ask money for even the headloads collected from forest)

Another active level member of *Sangathan* lamented “ *bailgari se lakri lana band kar diya hai ab baar-baar jaana parta hai lakri lane ko aur harek bar van vibhag waale tang karte hai.*”(Bringing wood on bullock carts has been stopped. We have to go many times to bring wood and each time FD staff harrass us)

A village level member of *Sangathan* opined that “ *nistari depot se jo lakri milti hai wo itni achi nahi hoti ki usse ghar bana sake. Upar se wo depot itni door hai ki lane me bahut muskil hoti hai aur paisa bhi jyada lagta hai.*”(The timber that we get from nistar depot is not of good quality and cannot be used for making houses. Moreover, it causes immense difficulty in collecting them and we have to pay more).

The discussions reflected a general feeling of dissatisfaction over the 1996 nistar policy issued by the state. An EP member expressed similar dissatisfaction and said-'*Rajya Shashan dwara 1996 se lagu nistar niti ke anek vivadit pehlu dhikhai dene lagi hain*'. (The new 1996 nistar policy issued by the government reflects several contradictions). The general argument on this is that the government first restricted nistar rights in 1956, which was somewhat restored following the Supreme Court order, when villages situated outside five kilometres from the forest boundaries were also given nistar rights on the adjoining forests. The 1996 policy again reimposed the restrictions of nistar only to villages within five kilometres of forest boundaries as imposed by the 1956 policy, thereby taking away a number of user benefits being enjoyed by the local communities. It is also strongly felt that the new nistar policy of the government is oriented to meet commercial needs from the forests- *nai nistar niti ke piche suddh roop se vyavsayikta pramukh karak raha hain.*⁴⁶(The main intention of the new nistar policy is commercial benefit).

In our discussions with respondents, two related yet distinct point of views emerged. Firstly, it was felt that the villagers are infact paying more when one adds up all fines and the additional transport costs that they have to bear to collect timber from the forest depot. They argue that these costs add up to almost as much as the market value of the same timber (in some cases even more). *Sangathan* members strongly felt that the

⁴⁶ Garg Anil (2000)

existing system of 'nistar rights' actually takes away rather than gives any benefits-*'pehele to hamari thali humse cheen liya aur phir ek roti ka tukda phak diya'*.⁴⁷ (First they take away our food plate and then they throw us bread). In fact it was strongly felt particularly by the *Sangathans* that the government has no right to take away full user rights and impose restricted user rights through nistar- as a leader of *Sangathan* mentions- *"who is the government to give rights to the adivasi? Why is nistar produce brought to the depot? People can't carry the produce on their heads during rains! Collection through bullock cart is not allowed. This is very irrational behaviour!"* The second point of view that emerged during our discussions was that the *"FD is using the 'nistar' system to extort bribes from local communities."*⁴⁸

Most of the respondents opined that the nistari rights be ensured and a convenient system put in place for the forest dependent people. Around 81% of *Sangathan* members (including 93% of grassroots/village workers of *Sangathan*) said that they do nistar directly from the forest without caring about forest guard. As put by a SWJP member, *'unless people's needs are met forest protection cannot succeed'*.

5.5 Conversion of Forest Village to Revenue Village

The issue of 'conversion of forest village to revenue village' has been discussed in detail in several books that have been published by SWJP, EP, MP *Jan Sangathan*, and authors like Rahul Banerjee and Dr. B D Sharma.⁴⁹ These documents discuss and reflect the general feeling of dissatisfaction over the slackness with which the entire issue of 'forest village' has been dealt with by the government.

During our discussions in the field, though it was generally agreed amongst all stakeholders that the issues related to forest village needs urgent attention, yet the stand on this issue differed between *Sangathans* and the NGOs (See Figure 3). As per *Sangathans*, particularly at the leaders level, it was strongly opined that all forest villages should be converted to revenue villages. This demand was however not echoed in totality by NGOs. While 50% of the respondents were in support of this demand, 23% opposed this while 27% were not aware about the issue.

As is evident from Figure 3, the main arguments forwarded for conversion of forest villages to revenue villages can be summarised into four basic reasons- firstly, it is felt that by converting these forest villages to revenue villages, the poor villagers (of forest villages) will benefit, since the monopoly of the FD will go, secondly by converting into revenue villages, the forest villages will get better access to infrastructure and other development schemes of the government, thirdly, the long lasting conflict regarding land rights will be settled and lastly, some also felt that through this conversion, they will be able to get access to various facilities like loans from banks.

⁴⁷ EP members, personal communication.

⁴⁸ Village level member of KAS, personal communication.

⁴⁹ Modi Anurag (undated a), Sharma Brahmdudd (2002), Anon (1996)

Another reason that was often cited to support this the reasoning that FD has not been able to take care of its villagers (in the forest village) and does not show any inclination to take up this responsibility in the near future, conversion to revenue village will be a better off option. As pointed by a leader of *Sangathan*, 'the FD has not been able to perform its responsibility of taking care of the forest villagers- for example, in Banspani village, 17 children died in 22 days due to measles epidemic and the FD did not do anything regarding this'.

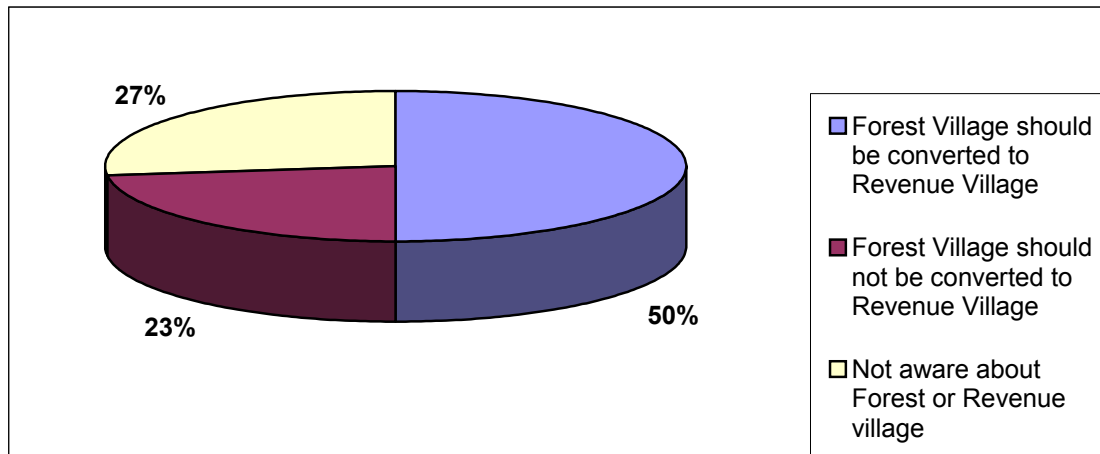


Figure 3: Views on conversion of Forest village to Revenue village

Though at a broader level, the NGOs agreed, that the issue of forest village conversion requires urgent attention, the top leaders of *Sangathan* did not support the demand of 'converting all forest villages to revenue villages'. They infact felt that the forest villages should be resettled outside forestland. Citing the manner in which the Kanha rehabilitation and resettlement plan was implemented, it was mentioned that similar strategy should be implemented in other areas.⁵⁰ Some even expressed concern that conversion of forest villages to revenue villages in forestland will lead to increase in population.

Another interesting viewpoint emerged mainly from the village *Sangathan* members that forest village should not be converted to revenue village as this will bring in more government departments into the village which will increase the corruption - as put forward by a village level *Sangathan* member...! *Abhi to sirf van vibagh ko khush rakhna hain...tub to bahut sare vibagh ko khush rakhna*. (Now we have to please only the FD, if it is converted to revenue village we will have to please several other departments). Village level *Sangathan* members also expressed the fear that they will loose out on the employment opportunities generated through the FD.

It was also pointed out during our discussions with the *Sangathans* that a high degree of politics is involved with the issue of conversion of forest village to revenue village. Some of them even mentioned that '*nothing has moved in this regard in the state, though we are talking about it for a long time, more because of political reasons*'.⁵¹

⁵⁰ A NGO member, personal communication.

⁵¹ Members of Ekta Parishad, personal communication and Modi, Anurag (undated a)

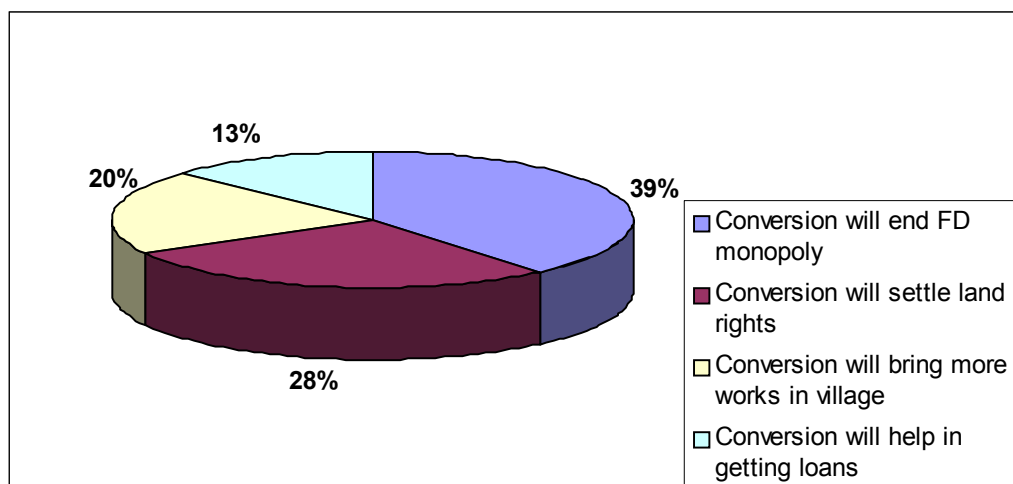


Figure 4: Reasons for supporting conversion of forest villages to revenue villages

5.6 PRIs and Their Role in Forestry Sector

About 77% of the respondents were of the view that the Panchayat is not functioning efficiently and alleged that panchayat officials are 'corrupt'. 23% of respondents were of the opinion that panchayat has done some work for them- for example houses built under *Indira Awaas Yojna*, tubewells installed, schools repaired etc. 25% of the NGOs, 20% of village level *Sangathan* members, and 29% of middle rung *Sangathan* members reflected this view. (see Figure 5)

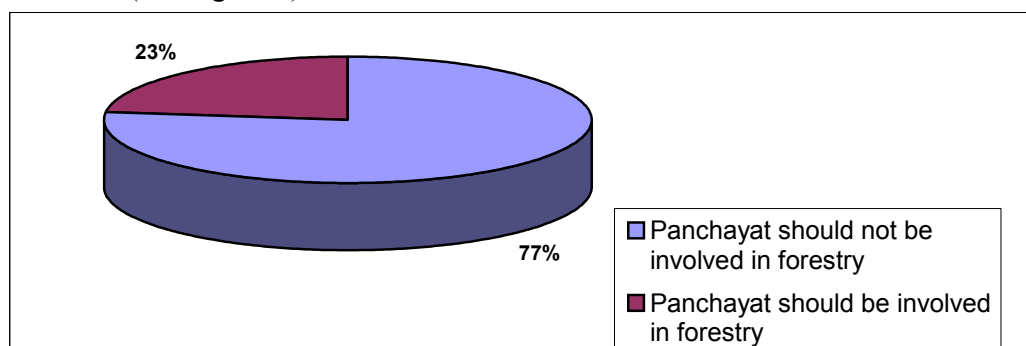


Figure 5: Perception on whether Panchayats to be involved in forestry

On the issue of linking Panchayat with the JFMC, the opinion was divided. As explained above only 23% of the respondents were of the opinion that Panchayat should work more closely in forestry, as they feel that this will reduce the monopoly and exploitation of FD, a majority of respondents (about 77%) however, felt that “*there should be no role of Panchayat, since giving power to Panchayat would lead to more corruption and favouritism.*” It was also expressed that Panchayat should not be involved in forestry, as they are not able to perform well in their existing responsibilities then how will they work in forestry?⁵². Another concern expressed was that Panchayat also includes non-forest villages so by giving the responsibility of the forest to the Panchayat

⁵² Village members of Sngathan personal communication

will mean that the non-forested villages would also use the forests managed by the JFMC. Few respondents opined that Panchayat post holders are not aware of the existing roles, responsibilities, and laws. In that case to expect them to take over new responsibilities would lead to the collapse of the JFM programme.

5.7 Felling and Smuggling of Timber

Illicit felling in forests is taking place at both larger and smaller scale was mentioned by majority of the respondents (75%), and some even claimed that cases are being severely under-reported.

Figure 6 below shows that primarily the FD, rich and powerful people, politicians, and contractors are doing illicit felling and smuggling. To quote a NGO member *'people have saved forests for centuries. Forests have been destroyed by government and contractors, for example there is connivance between FD and the contractors in Chikalpat village, where the people have planted and protected bamboos and other trees, but they are not allowed to harvest, outsiders (contractors) come and take away all the bamboo'*. This view was reiterated very strongly by the leaders of Sangathans. It was also pointed out by leaders of Sangathan that *'even though sometimes the villagers report about illicit felling, the FD does not take any action. For example in Betul there is a saw mill that is encouraging illegal logging, we reported to the FD and filed a complaint with him, but no action was taken against the saw mill'*. However, about 21% of the village level Sangathan members acknowledged that the people also carry out some amount of illegal felling (also pointed out by the NGOs).

While defending the felling carried out by local communities, a village level Sangathan member put forward the argument that *'to extend cultivable land, people do cut and burn the trees, but this is not illicit felling, since they do not sell this wood in the market'*. However, there were few NGOs that believe that *'Sangathan members are predominantly felling trees to extend their cultivable land'*

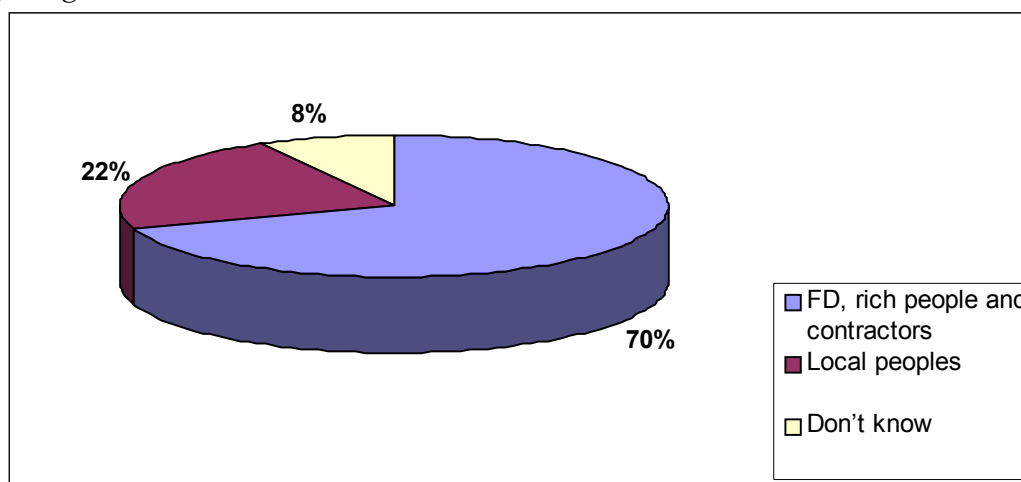


Figure 6: Who is Responsible for Illicit Felling

5.8 Foreign Funding

Several books/articles/pamphlets published by the activists, SWJP, Jan Sangarsh Morcha, and MP Jan Sangathan reflects strong reservations against foreign funding.⁵³ The main arguments forwarded in these documents are: the main cause of conflict in the forestry sector between the *adivasis* and the government is because of the colonial legacy that the Britishers left behind; all over the world, the economic and political systems are dominated by the needs/requirements of the multinational companies; the growth of biotechnology is highly dependent on the forests and it is because of this that the developed countries want to control the biodiversity rich and dense forests of the developing countries and they do this by funding conservation oriented forest management programmes. The United Nations (UN), the WB and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is helping these companies by providing funds for the forest management projects all over the developing world. Picture 1,2,4,9,12,16 and 17 brings out the perception of *Sangathan* towards foreign funding.

An activist⁵⁴ argued that throughout history forest resource management in country has been oriented to meet the industrial demands of the developed countries and this legacy continues even now. All these documents mainly argue against taking any form of foreign funds for development of the country.

Interestingly, what emerged from our discussions is that most of the views on conflicts surrounding resistance to foreign funding exists at the top level members of the *Sangathans*, and are based more on ideological beliefs. While at the top level, one of the main agenda of the *Sangathan* members is to fight against use of any foreign funds and to resist/fight against any use of foreign fund, these views were not unanimously reflected amongst the grassroots members of the *Sangathan*. 81% of *Sangathan* members and 62% of all respondents were unaware of the foreign funding in forestry. Few village level *Sangathan* members were of the view that '*from wherever money comes it should be utilized for the people.*' Even EP members were of the opinion that '*if there are positive results from foreign funding in the forestry sector- like improved forest conditions and better livelihood options for the poor, then taking foreign money is alright.*' However they also pointed out that in the first phase of the WB Forestry project, 40% of the loan was used for foreign tours of the FD and for buying office equipment, which they feel does not make sense.

The NGOs did not find foreign funding in the forestry sector an issue to be concerned about. However they did express the concern that most of the donor projects in the forestry sector are sanctioned without any understanding of the local realities. Impact on livelihood of the local communities is limited and projects success suffers.

⁵³ Rahul (1996 c), Anon (1996), Modi Anurag (undated a), Sunil (2001), Sunil (2003), Samaajwadi Jan Parishad (2004 d)

⁵⁴ Rahul (1996 a)

Box 3: Perception of Sangathan members on foreign funding and the World Bank Forestry Project

'America wants to be superpower, they want to control and dominate all developing countries, and they are using strategies like promoting projects of big dams, forestry conservation etc to achieve this'-A top level Sangathan leader.

'Developed countries are interested in the forests of the developing countries because of this whole business of carbon sequestration' -A Sangathan leader

'Ek din America se jungle main dukan khol denge'- Babulal, member SAS (one day the Americans will open their shops (MNCs) in the forest'.

'Garib logon ko bevkuf banane ki yeh ek bahut bariya yojana hai. (Foreign funding is a very good mechanism to fool the people)(Banerjee,Rahul (1996 b)

5.9 Understanding of JFM and its impact

5.9.1 What is JFM?

There seems to be a common understanding on 'what is JFM' at all levels amongst the range of respondents- that JFM is a programme under which the local people and FD are supposed to work together to protect and manage the forests. They also feel that the increased *Jan bhagidari* (people's participation) through JFM was envisaged so that effective forest protection could be done. Regarding the role of JFMCs, the common understanding that emerged is that JFMCs are primarily responsible for protecting and managing the forest.

5.9.2 Why JFM was introduced by the Forest Department?

Interesting and varied perceptions from *Sangathans* and NGOs emerged regarding why JFM was introduced.

As per the leaders of *Sangathans and activists*, JFM was introduced by the government to ensure peoples' participation by giving few benefits, without compromising the powers of FD. They oppose the government's claim of JFM reflecting a 'policy shift', but contrarily claim that 'it is like old wine in new bottle'.⁵⁵ They firmly believe that the government introduced JFM since the FD was not able to protect the forest on its own and required people's cooperation. They also feel that by introducing JFM, the government was trying to put in place a system where the people are mainly responsible for protection of forests and the accountability of the FD is diluted. So while the people have been made responsible to carry out protection activities, the FD staffs retain all the decision-making powers- administrative as well as financial.

It is also strongly argued by the top level leaders of the *Sangathans* as well as reflected in several other documents that examine JFM⁵⁶, that the government has accepted to

⁵⁵ Modi, Anurag (undated d), Rahul (1996 a)

⁵⁶ Rahul (1996 b), Anon (1996)

implement JFM under pressure from developed countries because of the financial incentives.

The top level *Sangathan* members also expressed that '*It was mainly to loot and to make people fight amongst themselves that JFM was introduced.*' As aptly put forward by one of them. "*Bartan badal diya par pakwaan to wahi raha sirf naam badal diya vyavahar nahin.*" (The plates have been changed but the items on the plates are same, only the name has been changed, the policy remains still the same). An active level Sangathan member very creatively put the above arguments forward "*JFM is like a cow whose front portion has been given to the villagers to feed it while the posterior part is with FD so that they could milk the benefits from JFM.*"

Amongst the NGO community, the common perception is that the government introduced JFM to make the local people feel responsible for protection and to get funds for their village development in lieu of this protection. They also feel that JFM provided a platform for the people and the FD to come together to resolve the decade old conflict that exists. - *Logo aur FD dono ke faayde ke liye banayi gayi thi-* (JFM was introduced to benefit both the local community and the FD)

5.9.3 Why people/communities accepted JFM

The perception regarding why the people agreed to form JFMCs in their villages was that it was expected to give employment opportunities. About 85% of the total respondents said that employment was the major motivation for the people to join the JFM programme. They thought that since they would be involved in the management of the programme, *nistari* and fuel wood collection would also become easy and systemized.⁵⁷

Another point of view that emerged was that in many cases JFMCs were not formed in consultation with the people. The *nakedar* would often organise a meeting and form a committee using his own discretion, therefore the issue of whether people wanted to join or not was never discussed. People did not know much about JFM they thought that government has directed them to make JFMC and so they adopted it⁵⁸.

5.9.4 Why donors fund JFM projects

On the perception as to why donors fund JFM projects, interestingly, 62% of the total respondents were not even aware of the donor's role in JFM, since they thought that JFM was like any of the other government schemes. Majority of the NGOs felt that the donors supported JFM with the objective of ensuring greater role for the people in the forestry sector so that better and equitable benefits reaches the marginalized and poor forest dependent communities.

⁵⁷ Top level Sangtahn member, Anurag Modi (undated), Rahul Banerjee (1996).

⁵⁸ Village level *Sangathan* members, personal communication

The *Sangathan* leaders, independent researchers, EP members and few middle level members of *Sangathans* however had a different point of view regarding donor support. As per their view, they felt that developed countries (mainly the US) want to take control over India's forests and JFM is one of the means to achieve this end. This view is also reflected in several books/articles published on this topic and also in Picture 11. An activist's⁵⁹ observation on this regard, very aptly summarises this perception- '*garib logon ko bewkuf banane ki yeh bahut bhariyan Yojana hain, Is liye Vishwa Bank bhi is Yojana ko itnee dilchaspi ke saath lagoo kar rahi hain...*' he further mentions '*jungalon ko munafa kamane ka sadhan ke hisaab se dekha gaya hain aur eeske liye lagataar vanvasiyon ko thaga, ujara aiur mara gaya hain. Van Vibagh aur Van Kanoon ko iske liye aujaar ke liye estemal kiya gaya. Azaadi ke baad bhi deshi videshi punjipation ko fayda pahuchane ke liye yeh prakriya jari rahi hain. Aaj wapas aisi sthithi ban gayee hain jahaan hamare jungle par bahurashtriya company vishwa bank ke madhyam se kabja jamaane ki phirak main hain...*' (JFM is a good means to fool the poor people, and that is why the WB is so keen to support the programme. Forests became a source of profit and the poor people were always cheated, looted and used. Even after Independence, this policy continues for the benefit of the national and international capitalists. Today, multinational companies through the WB are trying to usurp our forests).. Picture 15 sums up these perceptions very well. See Box 4 for the 'true politics of JFM' as perceived and discussed by the MP Jan *Sangathan*.

⁵⁹ Rahul (1996 a,b)

Box 4: True politics of JFM as perceived by MP Jan Sangathan

In today's scenario the sudden love towards environment, forest and peoples participation of WB has hidden reasons. They are:

- In today's world economic order large multinational corporations have emerged as big powers. They foresee three most profitable areas namely telecommunications, computers and biotechnology. For biotechnology raw materials for latest patents and research come from tropical countries. That's why they want to preserve forests and biodiversity in these countries.
- WB and rich countries want to gather information about the world and want to gain control over knowledge and research. In this computers play a vital role *Is udesya ki prapti ke liye sabse upyukt madhyam hai Computer, Jo Jaankarri ko kendrit karne aur button dabate hi hastantrit karne ka kaam karte hain. Is Pariyojna me MP ke Van Vibhag ke daftaro me computeron ka jaal bichane ka kaam aur bhaugolik soochna pranali tatha prabandhan soochna pranali ka srijan is liye karwaya jaa raha hai.* (For meeting this objective the most apt medium is computer, In which by just clicking on a button information can be gathered and transferred. Under this scheme a network of computer in FD's offices in MP is being established along with Geographic Information System and Management Information System are being initiated by international experts.)
- Poor countries were being affected by deforestation since long. However it is only when due to ozone depletion and increasing Carbon dioxide in atmosphere that the rich countries are showing concern for deforestation They are seeing forests and trees as carbon sinks and it does not make a difference if it is natural forests or plantations. In this light cutting and planting trees with short rotation is appropriate thus industrial and commercial forests seem appropriate to them.

Vishwa Bank, Antarrashtriya Mudra Kosh aur Vishwa Vyapaar Sangathan ki tikri puri duniya me mukt vyapar, udarikaran, nijikaran aadi ke madhyam WB, IMF and WTO's trinity through the medium of free trade, liberalization, privatization etc. is trying to scale new heights for loot, explotation and destruction)...Is pariyojna ke gram sansadhan vikas karyakram aur eco-vikas karyakram aise hi karya kram hai jinme gaonwalo ko pralobhan aur rahat di gayi hai. Lekin badle me in gaonwasiyo ko alag karke jungle par se adhikar samapt kiye jaa rahe hai. Yadi Jungle par adivasiyon ka adhikar ya dhakhal raha to bahurashtriya kampaniyon ki swartha purti ek prabal rora ban sakte hai. Isliye unhe jungle se alag karne ki yojna rachi gayi hai. (In this project village resource development programme, eco-development programme are such programmes, which gives concession and incentive to villages in the forests. In lieu of this these villagers are being removed and their rights are being taken away. If the rights remain with the adivasis then they can become big obstacle in these MNC's way. Thus, conspiracy of removing adivasis from forests has been hatched in this programme.)

Source: Anon (1996)

Figure 7 below summarises the views on why donors fund JFM.

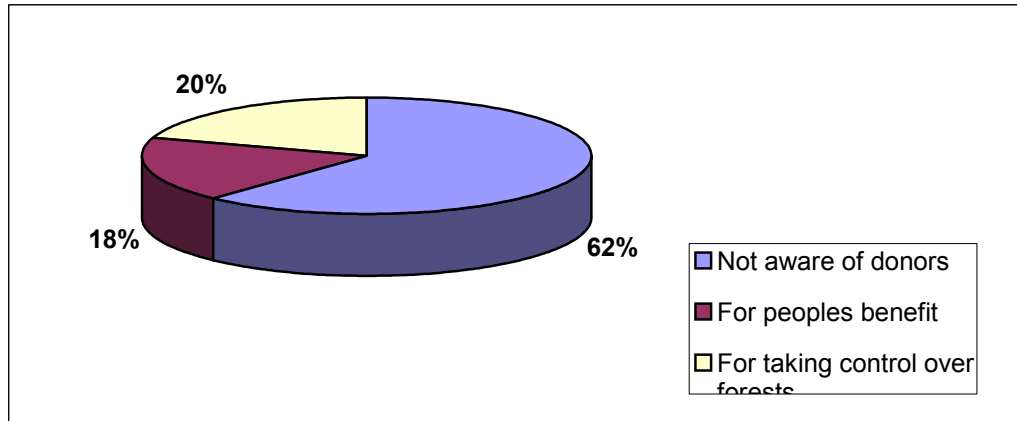


Figure 7: Perception on why donors fund JFM

5.9.5 Functioning of JFM committees

At the field level, 92% of the respondents feel that that JFMCs are not functioning properly. Meetings are not being held democratically and only those few who are favourites of FG are benefiting. Information regarding meeting is not provided in advance and sometimes meetings are held on paper only. People come to know of the decisions when the works starts or when forest guard is questioned. About 73% of the respondents felt that the FG takes most decisions along with few village elites and most are not even aware of the fact that how funds are being utilised. . A middle level member of *Sangathan* (ex-president of a JFMC) said, '*Samiti are using funds according to FG's wish. To make money they have to show some work and that's why they use Samiti funds. Members are just on paper, and that is the reason why most of the Sangathan members have left membership of JFMC*'. See Box 5 for summary of the problems with JFMC as highlighted.

Box 5: Summary of perceptions on JFMCs

- JFMCs are perceived as government creations in which ordinary villagers have little say
- The forest guard is the secretary of the committee and the joint account holder along with the Vice President of the committee. It is alleged that since the vice president is an *adivasi* who in majority of the cases is uneducated, the entire financial authority therefore lies by default with the FG who uses this power at his discretion.
- The fact that these committee can be disbanded anytime by the FD is a major loophole in the programme. All decisions regarding membership and removal/appointments to any post in the committee is left to the discretion of the FD officials.
- All decisions regarding the use of Village Fund are also vested with the FD, and the power to decide where and for what activities this fund will be used lies with the FD Field experience also illustrates that this increased power has led to increased corruption in the FD.
- It is also alleged that villagers are involved in protection only on those areas where the land is degraded since it is very difficult to manage these land. However, while managing good forest areas people are not involved.
- The benefits from plantation/protection, does not accrue to the people.
- Timber is felled by the FD, while protection is provided by the people - *jungle ki raksha karte samay bhi adivais apni jaroorat ki poorti nahin kar payega, jabki aant main uska labh udyog, wyaparpati aur afsaron ko hi milega'*

Source: Rahul Banerjee and Yogesh Diwan (1996), Anon (1996),

The *Sangathan* members advocate for disbanding of JFMCs, since they feel that there has not been any benefit from the programme as such. Infact they are of the opinion that JFM has adversely affected not only the economic but also the social status of the villages, by reducing their livelihood options and by increasing inter-village conflicts. To quote a *Sangathan* leader -'*Deshwasion ko bharmate rahne ke liye sarkar naye naye natak rachti rahti hain. Aise hi ek natak van suraksha Samiti ke naam se chaalaya ja raha hain...*'. (To fool the people, government resorts to several acts. JFM is one such effort of the government to fool the people⁶⁰).

67% of the *Sangathan* members said that since at present most of the JFMCs are non-functional they should be completely disbanded as they do not see any logic in continuing with 'skeletons'. However, there was some degree of difference in opinion regarding the complete disbanding of JFMCs amongst the different level of *Sangathan* members. While majority of the active level members and 48% of the village level *Sangathan* members supported the complete disbanding of the JFMCs, 32% of village level *Sangathan* members said that JFMC should not be disbanded completely but some reorganisation should be done to see that the people have more decision making powers (including financial power), while 20% of the village level *Sangathan* members said that JFMC are working fine. Even activists seem to support reorganisation of the committees rather than complete disbanding. See figure 8.

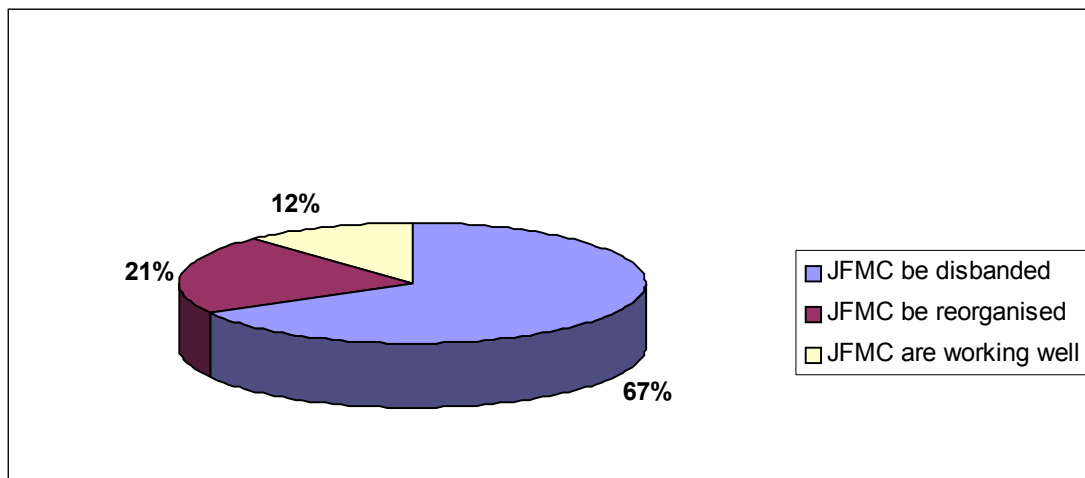


Figure 8: Perception of Sangathan members about action needed in JFMC

The NGOs agreed that the FD staff took most of the decisions rather than the JFMCs-'*log jagruk nahin the*'.⁶¹ (People were not aware of their rights) and reiterated the same view that JFMCs should be further strengthened by giving more powers to the local people and did not agree that they should be completely disbanded.

⁶⁰ Modi Anurag (undated c)

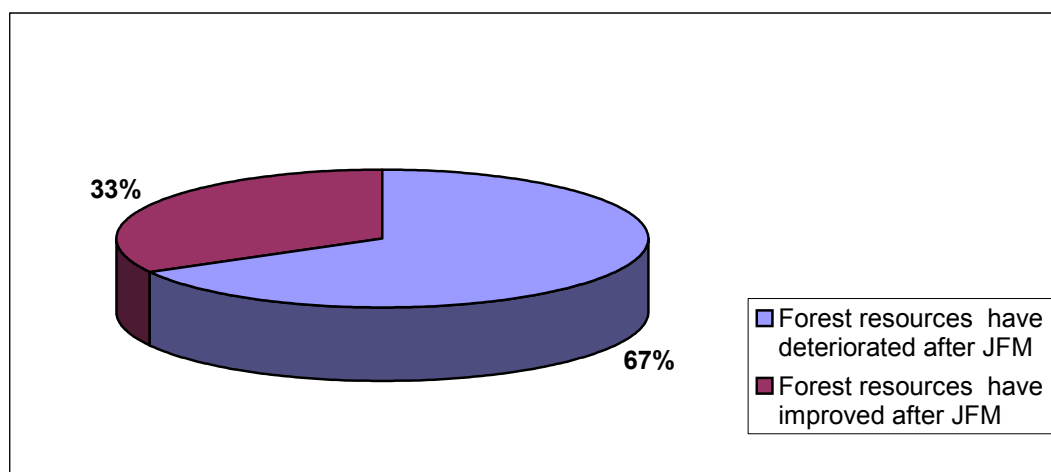
⁶¹ A NGO member , personal communication.

5.9.6 Impact of JFM on forest resource

It was unanimously agreed across all stakeholders that JFM has not had any significant positive impact on the forest condition. About 67% of the total respondents were of the opinion that infact the forest resources have deteriorated. Trees are being felled, and the density of the forests is on a decline. Few species like *aachar*, *mahua*, *mahua gulli*, and some other medicinal plants found earlier, are hardly seen these days. ‘*There is unabated felling of trees as the FD is corrupt and has built FD-contractor nexus*’ opines top leader of Sangathan. Another village level Sangathan member pointed out that the ‘*height of trees and regeneration is becoming less, as natural growth is not being supported by human actions*’.

It was also commonly expressed that one of the reason for the decline in forest cover and forest degradation is increased and unsustainable extraction of forests. This is due to the thought that forest resource is not of the people anymore, and the state will anyway take these away. This was aptly put across by one of the village level Sangathan members- ‘*Lagao hi nahi raha ab jungle se*’.

About 33% of the total respondents felt that the JFM programme has had some positive impact on forests. This view was more strongly perceived amongst the NGOs (about 83% of NGOs), and also somewhat reflected by the Sangathan members (about 28% of village level Sangathan members and 14% of middle level Sangathan members). They also perceived that incidence of illegal felling of trees have declined as compared to pre-JFM days. They feel better protection has happened due to regular patrolling done by people (as watchers). About 43% of the respondents opined that forest fires have increased in the recent past. Various reasons were provided for this. The prominent reasons being people who are angry with FD or JFMC light forest fires deliberately or to do so to extend agricultural land by burning trees. Some were also of the opinion that villages have expanded so close to forest that many fires are caused by smokers who carelessly throw



cigarette butt around the forests.

Figure 9: Impact of JFM on Forest Resources

5.9.7 Impact of JFM on local livelihood and quality of life

As regards the impact of JFM on livelihoods of local people and their quality of life, the *Sangathans* were of the opinion that JFM has worsened the living conditions of people. There was a divided opinion about the beneficial or detrimental impact of JFM. See Figure 10.

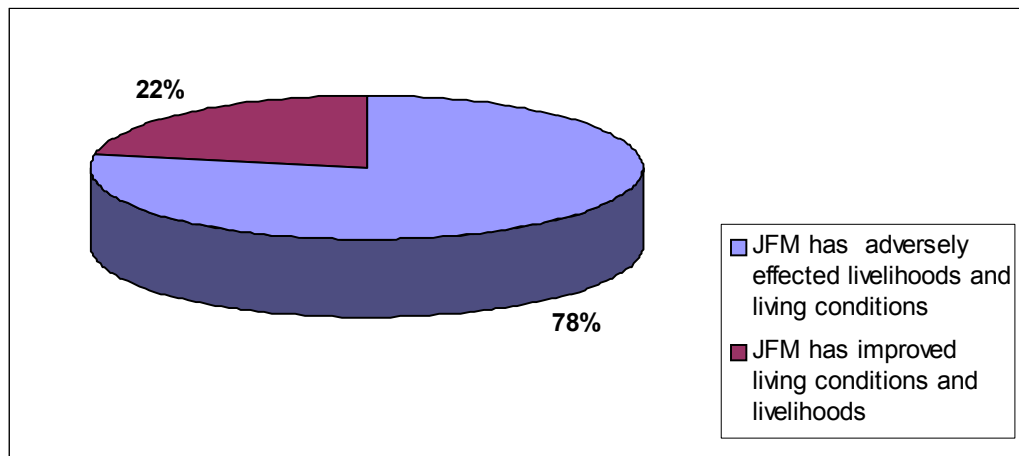


Figure 10: Impact of JFM on Living conditions and livelihoods

About 78% of total respondents voiced the opinion that JFM has deteriorated conditions and affected livelihood adversely. Various reasons were attributed for this- To quote a couple of village level *Sangathan* members-*'poor have not benefited from JFM. In fact their condition has deteriorated, as now nistari and grazing in forests have also been stopped. Poor don't have money of the order of Rs 1000-1200, which frontline forest staffs asks for nistari wood for repairing or making houses. They also stop us from carrying head loads and collecting even dead or fallen branches from forests. How can a man/woman go to 5-6 km a day for bringing in fuel wood on foot to cook food in houses?'* Citing another example, a village level *Sangthan* member mentioned-*'Samiti has benefited few in form of providing employment and livelihood option to only a handful -mainly watchers. In a drought year, village people had asked for some financial support from Samiti fund, instead, police came to the village and people were beaten up'*.

Almost all the respondents expressed that due to the lack of any alternative employment opportunities for the forest dependent communities the dependence on forests is very high, and that JFM will not help in improving the conditions of forest, unless there is significant impact in terms of strengthened livelihood base- *"without alternative employment generation and agriculture being the only option available, encroachment and cutting of trees to cultivate crops will go on unabated. FD neither has the manpower nor the inclination to stop this."*⁶² In fact, it was also alleged that most of the alternative options tried out in the forestry sector are either unviable or are less remunerative as compared to the income earned from major forest based livelihoods such as

⁶² Anil Garg, (2000).

headloading.⁶³ This is aptly reflected in a response⁶⁴ - '*hum log van vibagh ke liye jungle ki aag bujhate hain, pur hamare pet ke aag ki parwah kisi ko nahin hain*'. (We put off forest fires for the FD, but no one is bothered about our life).

The village members of the *Sangathans* feel that it is the responsibility of the FD to generate employment, particularly in the forest villages. As expressed by a middle level *Sangathan member* ' *FD has settled villagers in forest villages and it is their responsibility to provide employment*'. They also expressed that through the FD provides employment during tendu patta season or for works like fire lining, check dam construction coupe felling etc. yet they feel that over the years, the person days of work available, is declining and is currently insufficient to meet their subsistence needs. The NGOs also supported this viewpoint.

It was also mentioned during our discussions, that in places where the FD has taken some initiative to provide alternative employment generation schemes like "*Bans hitgrahi*" (Bamboo beneficiary) or through employment provision to villagers through appointing 'watchers' under the JFM programme, it has been observed that only those villagers who are close to FD are benefiting from these. A village level *Sangathan member* pointed out that '*the nakedar appoints the watchers, and some of the villagers have even bribed the nakedar to get this post*'.

Leaders of the *Sangathans* provided one important angle to this whole debate surrounding 'employment'. They felt that the recent market forces and liberalisation of the economy is also contributing to the pressure of 'lack of employment'. They cite the case of harvestors and other machines like road rollers and dumpers, which are used, for construction of roads, have taken away the employment that earlier local community availed of. *adivasis* and poor villagers are now migrating to places like Hoshangabad for work. Problems have also increased for women, since JFMC members try and stop them from fuel wood collection.

They strongly argue that this also contributed to the pressure on the resource, with more and more people resorting to headloads as one of the common source of employment.

It was felt that the rich and the elite class in the village appropriate the little benefits that have accrued due to JFM. works like building check dams etc. initiated by JFMC have only helped the rich, as it is only the landed class who are able to use the irrigation facilities provided under the programme. A village level *Sangathan member* said that JFM is bad as "*grazing is being stopped and people are fined by frontline staff of FD. A personal loan from JFMC at the time of need is not being given.*" The fact that JFMCs are in total control of FD is a huge concern for not only the villagers, but was also echoed by leaders of the *Sangathans*.

Majority of the NGOs opined that JFM has been successful in providing employment to the local people and brought about some development (mainly roads, school, community

⁶³ A NGO member, personal communication

⁶⁴ Banerjee Rahul and Yogesh Diwan (1995)

halls etc) in the local area. This view was reflected by only 12% of the village level *Sangathan* members. These respondents also felt that the reasons for increased hardships (as argued by the others) are more due to population increase, and that the restrictions imposed in terms of fuel wood collection etc are for betterment of the forests.

5.9.8 User rights given under JFM

The common perception on the 'user right/benefits' as given under JFM is that the government has restricted 'user rights' of the local people on the resource rather than giving them any additional rights. The argument forwarded for this is that the local communities have been enjoying unrestricted 'user rights' on the resource for generations, and by restricting the use to only timber (and that too to be collected from the forest depot) and dry/fallen wood from the forests, the government is in fact taking away most of the rights and privileges that the local communities have been enjoying for generations.

5.9.9 Restricted grazing under JFM

Regarding the restrictions imposed on grazing under JFM, the emerging view is reflect in a question asked by one of the village level *Sangathan* member "*If we do not graze animals in the forest then how will we feed our animals.* Similar sentiments/concerns have been raised by various others of the likes of Rahul Banerjee, Yogesh Diwan in their writings.

Most of the *Sangathan* members said that "*in plantation areas people themselves don't take their animals*" they feel that the FD is purposely closing those areas where the local communities are practicing cultivation. The local communities with the support of the *Sangathans* are strongly resisting this. For example, in Bhanwarwani village when plantations were taking place, a leader of *Sangathan* thwarted the attempts of FD by taking people along and filling the pits dug for plantation. In this incident a police case has also been registered against *Sangathan* leader. '*Plantation is not a solution but is actually aggravating the problem.*' opined a middle level *Sangathan* member. They also expressed the view that in any case, the local communities do not get any benefit out of these plantations since neither they are allowed to harvest or else the species planted are not suitable for meeting daily requirements.⁶⁵

5.9.10 Impact of JFM on inter and intra village conflicts

About 80% of total respondents were of the opinion that JFM has increased both intra-village and inter-village conflicts in the area. It was pointed out that the new rules under JFM (of restricted *nistar*, closure etc), leads to conflicts within the village between JFMC members and non-members. More than 86% of *Sangathan* members opined that the FD, through JFM, has increased the intra village conflicts. They feel very strongly that even their own villagers, who are member of JFMC, are stopping them (non members) from collecting fuelwood, fodder, and NTFPs from the forest. They also said, that since

⁶⁵ Ekta Parishad members, personal communication

introduction of JFM, conflicts with FD have decreased as compared to pre-JFM days, but now intra-village and inter-village conflicts are increasingly being reported. Several cases of inter-village conflicts were reported during our discussions- for example, conflicts regarding grazing by other villagers in protected forestland. It was felt that the manner in which the JFMCs were formed in the village was not democratic, as a result only a few are able to benefit, and the conflict is mainly between these households and the others who have not been able to access any benefits. - *“The institution caters to needs of the few and has vested discretionary financial powers in the hand of the FD representative in the institution. This leads to formation of a coterie around the forest guard who usurp all the benefits at the cost of the majority”* as quoted by a middle level Sangathan member.

In the opinion of the NGOs- *“this conflict is an initial phenomenon, as people have not yet adapted the new system of JFMC in which forest areas have been given under the control of individual committees’*. However, majority of the respondents expressed the view that field reality is far different from what was actually envisaged under the programme. In reality, the programme has not been able to bring about any change in the 'power equations' that existed between the people and the FD. It was also expressed that there is nothing like co-management as envisaged and that real power is still vested in the hands of FD only. Also several flaws within the structure of JFMCs were also pointed out, for example, FG is the secretary of JFMCs, all financial as well as other decisions are taken by him.

5.10. Role of FD: relationship between people and FD

A majority of the Sangathan members (and 56% of the total respondents) argued that JFM has in no way helped bridge the gap between the people and the FD. See Figure 11

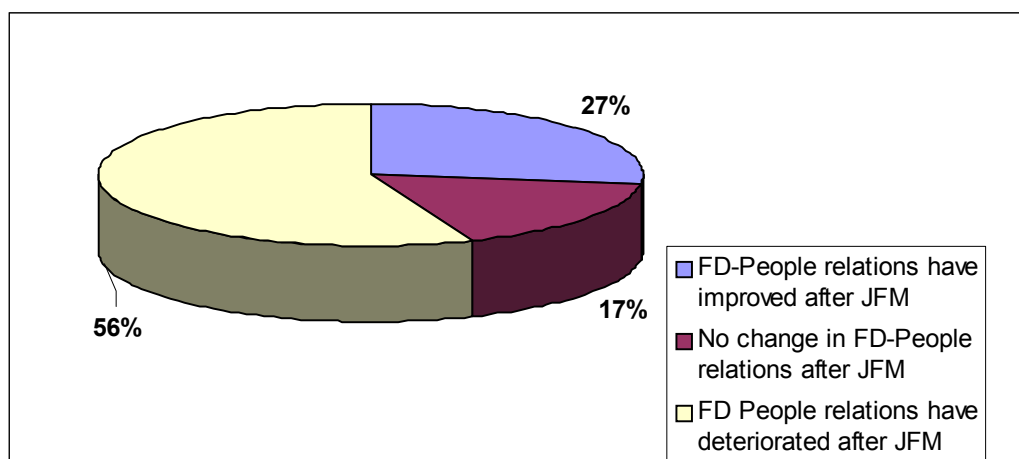


Figure 11: Perception about FD-People Relations

Most of the respondents felt that through JFM the balance of power has in-fact tilted towards the FD. By having financial control (of *Samiti* funds), they alleged that the FD has become all the more corrupt and dictatorial. They also expressed that the FD was using this 'new power' forcing *begar* etc, in the hope of getting some benefits from the programme.⁶⁶ In one of his book an activist examines in detail the FD-People relationship in this context and points out that '...today also the adivasis think that the government, senior officers and the politicians think about the local communities benefit, but patwari, and front line staff of the FD create problems and are the biggest enemies...'⁶⁷. EP members mentioned that '*FD is anti-people and especially anti adivasi, as it wants people to move out from forests*'. They mentioned some examples of the FD anti people attitude-'. *In Razzak village, the FD staff blinded an adivasi. In Putputa village in Kawardha district, the FD broke the huts of people living in the forest. In some areas, FD staff even collects money from people to ease themselves in the forests*'.

On the issue of power balance between the FD and the people, it was felt that power balance is still heavily tilted towards the FD. About 93% of the total respondents agreed that real power is still in the hands of the FD. While about 68% of the respondents felt that the power balance between the FD and the people has not improved, 32% of respondents felt that it has improved. See figure 12. They said that FG is still the *maharaj*⁶⁸ and everybody has to obey him. It was also interesting to note that during our discussions with the village members, the forest guard was always referred to as the '*maharaj*'. Interestingly, few of the respondents also believe that this imbalance is required, otherwise JFMC will become like Panchayat, which is more corrupt.

About 58% of the NGOs, 36% of the village level *Sangathan* members and 14% of the middle level *Sangathan* members (32% of total respondents) expressed that the power balance between the FD and the people has improved as compared to situation before. They opined that people are taken into consideration though final decision is still taken by FD.

⁶⁶ See Jan Sunwai Report (Annexure 1)

⁶⁷ Rahul (1996 c)

⁶⁸ King

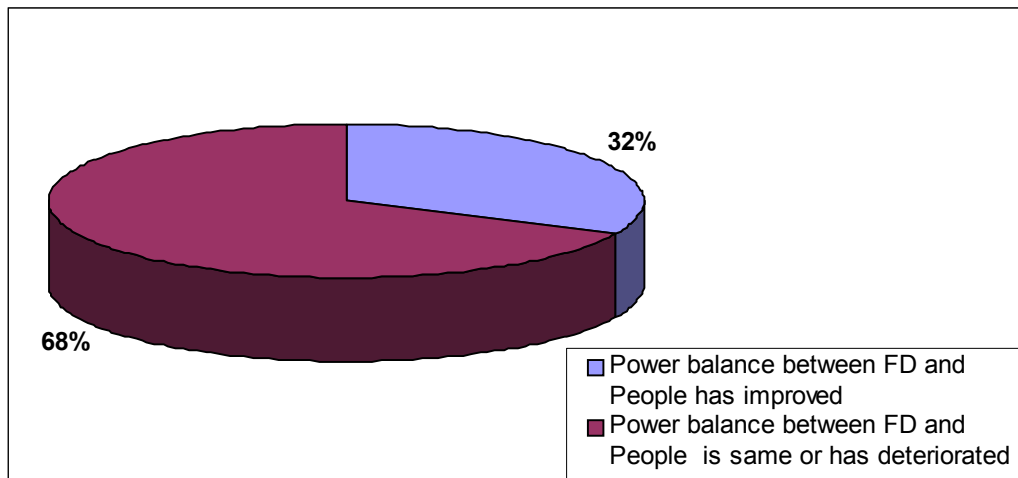


Figure 12: Perception about FD-People Power Balance

It was also mentioned by the respondents that 'corrupt practices in the FD' had in fact increased after the introduction of JFM. The most common allegation against the FD (mainly the front line forest staff) is that they take bribe from the villagers even for exercising their rights- for example nistar. Now, forest watchers are also collecting money from the villagers was the common refrain of villagers. However, it was also pointed out in discussions that at present, that the FD in the name of '*shram daan*' (voluntary contribution), is not paying the villagers their due wages⁶⁹. Moreover, several allegations against the frontline staff of the FD misbehaving with women were also pointed out.⁷⁰ Some of the respondents also pointed out that during the early phase of the programme, the relations were improving only because of the personal drive of the then DFO⁷¹. But this process was not institutionalised.

5.10.1 Role of NGOs in JFM in Harda

The main perception about the role of NGOs in the forestry sector is that these work primarily on livelihood issues and carry out implementation activities. They are seen as implementers of development work (mostly implementing government schemes). However, the village members perceive that they do play an important role in the forestry sector, as they are often involved in training programmes (on livelihood, empowerment etc). They are also associated with generating awareness on forest conservation and protection.

NGOs role in JFM is perceived by the *Sangathan* members to be more 'ornamental' in nature- i.e., their involvement in the programme is more to increase the 'acceptability' of

⁶⁹ Voluntary contribution of labour

⁷⁰ An active level Sangathan member mentioned that a Ranger in Bori Village raped a woman. Top level Sangathan members also mentioned that in Morghadi village, the ranger, and a deputy ranger misbehaved with three women who had gone to the forest to collect fuelwood.

⁷¹ Also mentioned in Banerjee, Rahul and Diwan, Yogesh (1995)

the programme by the people-as quoted by MP Jan Sangathan⁷² -'*jan bhagidari ke saath NGO ko shamil karna, vishwa bank aur anya antarashtriya sansthya ka naya nara hain. Es pariyoajan main bhi anek karyakram main NGO ko shamil karne ki baat ki gai hain. Par NGO ki bhumika kisi nitigat ya niyojan ke star par nahin hain. Matra pariyojana ko ek lok prathishtha dilwane aur akarshak jama pehnane ke lie hi NGO ko jorne ka ho halla kia ja raha hain*'. (Involving the NGOs in the participatory process is a new policy of the donors. They are being involved in the JFM programme also, however their involvement in the programme is mere eyewash).

It is also perceived that because of the money that is involved in the programme, there is an obvious fear of NGOs being co-opted by the government.⁷³ -'*kai gair sarkari sanstha aur karyakarta ache irade hote hue bhi pariyojana ki laffajiyon ke jhanse main aakar isme phans jaenge. Isse vanvasion ke vastavik adhikaron ke liye sangarsh aur ek sahi vanniti viksat karne ka kaam aur piccharne ki ashankha hain*'⁷⁴. (Many NGO members in spite of having good intentions will fall in the lofty traps of government schemes. This might result in further lowering of struggle for rights of forest dwellers and correct forest policy development) It was also mentioned that the NGO methods and approaches take much longer time to bear fruit, and that they cannot denounce the government. '*wo murdabad nahin kar sakte*'.⁷⁵

5.10.2 Role of Sangathans in forestry

The *Sangathans* are perceived to be playing an important role in the forestry sector in Harda. It emerges from our discussions that the *Sangathans* role as perceived by majority of the respondents is that of 'supporter of rights of the poor'. Picture 8 depicts the peoples demand for rights largely due to *Sangathan* activities. They are perceived to fight for the people- mainly the marginalized and the voiceless. They are also thought to have facilitated in empowerment of community and brought about transparency in JFMC functioning. *Sangathans* are also credited to have increased the knowledge of the local communities on national and international events. Through the books/articles/pamphlets in local languages circulated by the *Sangathan* members, the impact of *Sangathan* can be gauged by statement that-'*jungle me kheti karne ki samasya ko lekar shuru hua ek andolan sujhbhuj ke saath aaj aisi stithi main pahuchi hain jahan log sirf jungle hi nahin balki puri duniya ko nachaane ke bare main soch rahee hain*'⁷⁶. (A people's movement that started on the issue related to problems of cultivation has today progressed to a movement on broader issues).

To quote an activist -'*...logon ko khud ko malum par gaya ki sarkar ka daman jhelne ki unme kitni takat hain; Ucchatam Nyaylaya main arji kar itni takat rakhne wali sarkar ko bhi jhukane main Sangathan safal raha; logon main atma vishwas bahut barh gaya aur*

⁷² Anon (1996)

⁷³ Anon (1996), EPmembers, personal communication.

⁷⁴ Same view was also reflected by EP members, personal communication.

⁷⁵ EP members, personal communication, NGO members, personal communication.

⁷⁶ Rahul Banerjee, 1996.

virodhi logon ke hausle pash ho gaen'.⁷⁷ (People are now more empowered to withstand government suppression. Through the *Sangathan*, people have developed confidence to even approach the Supreme Court against the government).

Most of the respondents felt that because of the pressure from *Sangathan*, there is less corruption (and exploitation) in FD, and *begar* has been abolished. It was also very strongly expressed that 'the government is scared of people' only because of the unity and support among *Sangathan* members. Though the NGOs share similar views on the above, but some of them also mentioned that *'the Sangathans take an extreme rather than balance stance on various issues. If all their demands are met, forests will not survive'*⁷⁸. It was also perceived that the FD does not like *Sangathans* as FD does not like any emerging political organisation, which mobilises the people and agitates against them.⁷⁹

It was also expressed that due to the *Sangathans* strength, people are more aware and empowered. That the *Sangathan* has given voice to the people as now they ask about the funds utilized by JFMC. The *Sangathan* has other manifestations also as "FD is now wary of acting against *Sangathan* members."⁸⁰ This has resulted in *Sangathan* members indulging in cases of felling and burning of trees and encroaching upon forestland at places (like in village Dhega). Another impact is that the check put on forest guards earning illegally through bribes and misappropriation of JFMC funds, has resulted in FD staff's decreased motivation to work in JFMCs. Almost all the respondents expressed that *begar* and other exploitation by the FD has almost been wiped out from the region, and they attribute the support of *Sangathan* towards this. As mentioned by a village level *Sangathan* member-'*now people don't do domestic chores of nakedar like washing clothes and dishes. Villagers have also stopped supplying chicken to him...we are not afraid anymore*'.

5.11 *Sangathans* Participation in Political Process

Sangathans have recently forayed into political arena by contesting assembly and parliamentary elections. About 88% of the respondents supported *Sangathans* participation in political process. They were of the belief that "*participation in elections is must to bring about change*." The reasons put forward for this were that participation in election shows *Sangathan's* strength thereby pressure is created on the government. Moreover, more people also come to know about *Sangathan* works and get associated. According to middle level member of *Sangathan* "*Fighting election is important as this gives us an opportunity to present our views and reach out to people. Election participation is our strategy to create pressure on government*".

Sangathan members also expressed hope of winning elections someday resulting in solving all their problems. This can be described by words of a village level *Sangathan* member, "*One day Sangathan will win and that's why we say dada wake up, come with*

⁷⁷ Rahul (1996 d)

⁷⁸ A NGO member, personal communication.

⁷⁹ EP members, personal communication.

⁸⁰ A village level *Sangathan* member, personal communication

us. When we will win all our problems would be over. We have to come to politics as the ones who loot adivasis will go if we win. Exploitation and corruption will not be there because of us in politics.”

SWJP argument as to why *Sangathans* should actively participate in the political process is that all political parties (including the left parties) have failed to address people's concerns and there is a need for an alternative political ideology, which SWJP represents. It feels that NGOs or apolitical bodies, howsoever honest and committed, can do only as much. They can at best bring about partial improvement in one sector or in the lives of a section of people. However, if aim is fundamental change in the system then one has to adopt the route of party politics and enter the political arena. At this juncture in India's political history, creation of an alternative revolutionary political force is the need of the hour- to quote SWJP (1999)-“*Either we control politics or politics will control us*”, and concludes “*Aaj maun ya nishkriya rehna adharam hai. Aaj rajniti swyam dharm hai*”. (It is must to participate in politics these days)

Only 12 % of respondents didn't support decision of *Sangathan* venturing into politics. They opined that fighting elections could be counter productive, as political parties may get annoyed and victimize the *Sangathan* members. Benefits to the village decline if it is identified as supporter of *Sangathan*. Moreover, agitations by *Sangathan* are losing its steam as it is identified as a weak political force. “*Sangathan work is good but standing in elections is giving others chance to mock us. Moreover, our votes have also decreased in Lok Sabha elections as compared to Vidhan Sabha election*,” lamented a village level *Sangathan* member.

Chapter Six

Reasons for The Perceptions

In this section, reasons for various perceptions of *Sangathan* and NGO members are explored using the analytical framework, which was mentioned in the first section of the report (see Figure 13 for the diagrammatic representation of the analytical framework). Under this framework, the reasons for the perceptions are explored under three broad categories: knowledge of change (empirical context); knowledge of theory (beliefs and ideas); and knowledge of policy. Examples from primary as well as secondary sources are used to illustrate various reasons of perceptions.

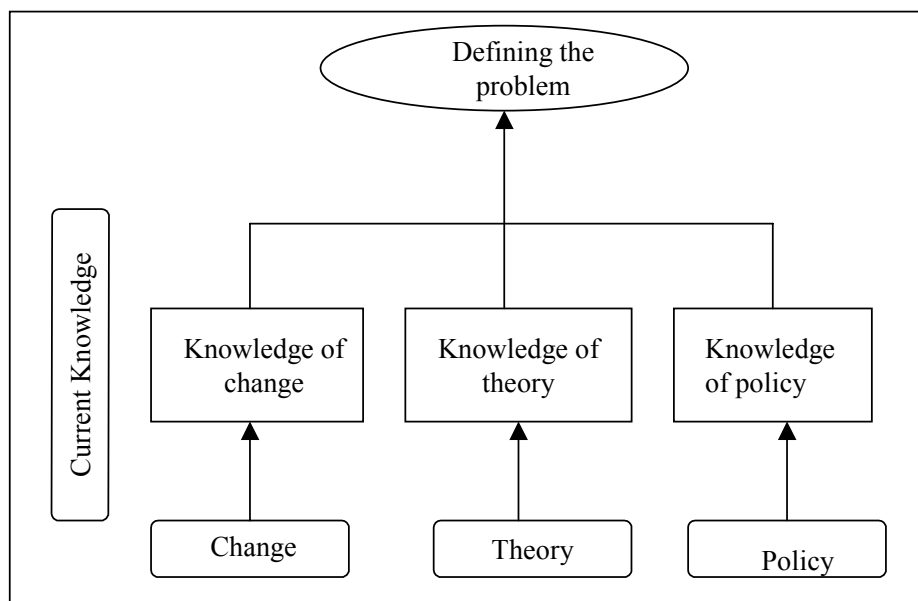


Figure13: Analytical framework for understanding the process of perception formation
 Source: Bill. et al. 2002

6.1. Knowledge of Change

The knowledge of change (empirical context) is gathered from various sources. The major ones are listed in this section.

6.1.1. Personal experience

Personal experience has played an important role in shaping perceptions on various issues such as role of FD and other departments, impact of JFM, etc., especially of the village level members of *Sangathans* and NGOs.

➤ ***Illustrative examples:***

Corruption among revenue officials

According to a village level *Sangathan* member of Bhimpura village, he wanted to get the title of his agriculture land mutated from his grandfather's name to his name but the patwari asked for a bribe of Rs. 2,000 from him.

Corruption in FD

A top level *Sangathan* member said that she once reported to the FD about a sawmill in Betul that was encouraging illegal logging but instead of taking any action against the sawmill, the PCCF asked her to bring photographic evidence.

Anti-people policies of FD

An active level member of *Sangathan* narrated an incident in a village near Pachmarhi where FD had broken some huts (*Tappars*) and when he went to enquire, the police and FD officials misbehaved with him.

Lack of benefits from JFM

A village level *Sangathan* said that JFMC has benefited only a handful of people in the village (i.e. watchers, who have got employment under the JFM programme). In a drought year, when village people asked for some money from the JFMC fund, they were not only denied the money but some also beaten by the police.

An active level member of *Sangathan* thinks JFM is a failure because in his native place (Handia Range), JFMCs are themselves engaged in illegal felling.

Reasons for forest destruction

Certain NGOs work with *Bishnois* and based on their interaction with that community considers them to be the major reason for forest destruction in the area. According to them, *Bishnois* often 'use' *adivasis* for felling forests.

➤ ***Specific Incidents***

Certain specific incidents in the area have also shaped the perceptions of *Sangathan* and NGO members on various issues.

Illustrative cases:

Corruption among revenue officials

Few village level *Sangathan* members narrated an incident highlighting corruption among revenue officials. In 1998-99, there was a scheme for regularization of some *pattas*. Patwari took Rs. 1500 from many people but in the end many *pattas* were given to people other than those who were cultivating that land. In total, about 40 *pattas* were given and 3-4 families were forced to vacate land that they were cultivating.

Poor condition of people in forest villages

According to one top leader of *Sangathan*, FD's indifference towards dwellers of forest villages is evident from the incident in Banspani village where 17 children died in 22 days due to a measles epidemic.

Anti-people policies of the FD

According to EP members, FD is anti-people and especially anti-*adivasi*, as it wants people to get out of forests. In case of Razzak village, one *adivasi* was even blinded. In Achnakmar sanctuary, FD burnt food crops of the people. In some areas, FD staffs even collect money (one Rupee) from people to ease themselves in the forest. FD exploits *adivasi* and in Kanha national park FD has even trained elephants to scare people so that they do not enter the park. "*Adivasi are more scared of the FD than even a tiger.*"

According to top level *Sangathan* members, FD staff stripped one woman in Morgadhi village on the pretext of searching for axe, when she was collecting some forest produce. One woman was raped in Bori village by the FD staff.

Poor people pay a high price for "development"

According to an active level *Sangathan* member, 44 villages were uprooted for the Tawa dam, 26 for the firing range and 9 for the ordnance factory. A top level *Sangathan* member said that oustees from Punasa dam have not been rehabilitated even now.

Unilateral decision making by the Government

According to an active level *Sangathan* member, all decisions are taken at higher levels and only a "booklet" comes to the field level. For example, Satpura National Park was created without any consultation with the local people.

Formation of JFMCs has led to more conflicts among people

EP members mentioned an incident in Putputa village in Kawardha district, where FD attacked the village and broke huts allegedly built on "encroached" forest land with the help of members of six FPCs.

Some village level *Sangathan* members mentioned about a conflict in Dong village under Timarni *Tehsil* that has emerged due to JFM.

Total control of FD over the JFM process

According to an active level member of *Sangathan*, in Bhumkapura village, FD felled the forest without even consulting the JFMC. Similarly, in Chanagarh village (Kesla Range), people don't know anything about finances of the stop dam built in their village under JFM. One person worked for 10 days but was paid wages for only 8 days. When he asked for full wages, FD staff threatened him by saying that he will not be employed in forestry works again.

Top leader of *Sangathan* mentioned the case of Chuurni village, where people wanted a particular person as JFMC President but *Nakedar* appointed someone else.

FD is responsible for forest destruction

FD staff are themselves involved in illegal felling e.g. in Beehmuri village where *Nakedar* was himself involved in teak felling.

According to a NGO member, in Morgarhi village, commercial exploitation of forests is continuing even under JFM. In Chikalpat village, people planted trees and bamboo but they are not allowed to harvest these. Others are felling trees and taking them away without consulting villagers.

Futility of engaging with the WB

Top level member of *Sangathan* said, “*we agreed to be on a joint task force with the WB (to assess the impact of the WB project) but we are disappointed with the WB. Their representative came here and saw the reality himself but didn't do anything.*”

Sangathans are playing a positive role

A NGO member narrated an incident highlighting positive of *Sangathans*. In Morgadhi village, general caste people usurped tribals' land and complaint to the Collector also didn't bring any succour for the affected people. Subsequently, *Sangathans* intervened in the matter.

In Rawang village, one *Nakedar* reportedly threatened some villagers with a gun and demanded a bribe of Rs. 4,000. *Sangathan* helped in the matter and *Nakedar* was transferred and he even returned the money.

➤ ***Indirect Indicators***

Many indirect indicators have played an important role in shaping the perceptions.

Reasons for forest degradation

EP members said that *adivasi* haven't destroyed forest. In fact, they worship trees and their requirements are also minimal.

Sangathan leaders said that one could go inside the tribals' huts and see that they have very few material possessions. They are not responsible for forest destruction. While the FD, for collecting even subsistence products, stops people large tracts forests are submerged for making dams. Coupe felling is continuing even in JFM areas and JFMCs are never consulted.

Impact of regularisation of encroached lands

According to a NGO member, if regularisation is allowed, others will grab land in the name of *adivasis*. For instance, many shops were allotted to *chamars* (scheduled caste community) in New Market of Bhopal but most of these are now in the possession of others. In Khandwa, bamboos provided for *Bansods* (bamboo artisans) end up in the Indore market.

Role of FD

According to a NGO member, in spite of corruption, FD is needed. In the absence of FD, forests would have disappeared long ago. For example, there is lot of difference in the protection status of PFs and RFs. RFs are in much better condition than PFs because in case of RFs protection started much earlier than PFs. FD also does good work in some areas. For example, the FD at half the cost built Hoshangabad Girls College building

Corruption in FD

According to an active level member of *Sangathan*, up to 25% funds are misappropriated. For example, In Ozapura village in Kesla Range, stop dam broke after just two years.

Hidden agenda of foreign funding agencies

Leaders of *Sangathan* said, "We know DFID agenda. Privatisation of health and education has wreaked havoc in Orissa".

Impact of JFM

According to a NGO member, JFM doesn't seem to have had much impact as (1) forests are still getting degraded, (2) people still go to money lenders and (3) there is still lot of distress migration.

Impact of Sangathans

Village level Sangathan members of Rawang village felt that *Sangathan* leaders were very powerful as they even got 2-3 District Collectors transferred.

➤ **Events**

Various events such as rallies, election meetings and *dharnas* have also shaped the perceptions, especially of village level members of *Sangathans* and NGOs. *Sangathan* leaders often discuss cases of exploitation of people, cases of *begar*, corruption of FD, etc. in these events. For example, the *Jan Sunwai* organised by SAS in Indupura village in May 2001 highlighted several specific cases of atrocities of the FD and was attended by several *Sangathan* members. Many village level members of *Sangathans* often reflect views and positions they have heard from their leaders in such events.

Illustrative example:

Plight of adivasi due to “development projects”

A village level Sangathan member of Dhega village visited some Punasa dam oustees as part of a rally and got convinced about dangers of such projects.

6.2. Knowledge of Theory

Ideas, ideologies and beliefs of the stakeholders play an important role in shaping their cognitive framework, and, in turn, their perceptions. In the section below we try and understand the sources of various beliefs and ideas that seem to have shaped the perceptions.

6.2.1. Educational Background

The educational background of the person often has a profound impact on the person's ideology as well as outlook towards life.⁸¹ Most of the top leaders of SAS and KAS have studied in institutions such as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and Jawahar Lal Nehru University, New Delhi, which are known for socialist/leftist leanings. This could have played a role in shaping the cognitive framework of these *Sangathan* leaders.

6.2.2. Books

Books have a major impact on a person's thinking as well as beliefs and ideas. During the course of our interaction with various *Sangathan* leaders, it became clear that they are deeply influenced by socialist (anti-capitalist) literature.

⁸¹ Ideology signifies the matter of how the dominant institutions in society work through values, conceptions of the world, and symbol systems, in order to legitimize the current order (Leye 1997).

➤ ***Illustrative examples:***

Adivasis are exploited everywhere

This perception is strongly influenced by the book “Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West” by Dee Brown. Many *Sangathan* leaders as well as NGO members mentioned this book.

This book has also shaped the perception of top level *Sangathan* members who said “all rich nations have become prosperous by colonising others.”

WB is Anti-Poor

This perception is influenced by the book “How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger” by Susan George.

Disha Samvad, Hoshangabad, has published a Hindi translation of this book “Aadhi Duniya Bhookhi Kyon?”.

➤ ***Specific Incidents and Media Reports:***

Specific incidents and media reports also influence ideas and beliefs and thus perceptions.

Illustrative example:

Government is not serious about forest protection

The large-scale destruction of forests due to construction of dams on Narmada river and media reports on this issue have led to this perception among a large section of *Sangathan* and NGO members at different levels.

➤ ***Ideology:***

Both the active *Sangathans* in Harda (KAS and SAS) are members of SWJP. The ideology of SWJP seems to have influenced perceptions of many *Sangathan* members, who all are also members of SWJP.

Box 6: Ideological beliefs of SWJP

SWJP believes that for true development, in place of urbanization and large industries, small industries, and agriculture should be emphasized.

In place of computers, large-scale mechanisation and huge capital investments, labour-intensive and local resource based technologies should be adopted.

Adequate provision for each citizen should be made for food, shelter, drinking water, education, and health. Poor and weak need to be provided these services free or at an affordable rate.

Country has to be made self-dependent by getting rid of foreign loans, funding, technology, and companies. The exploitation that happens due to foreign trade has to be reduced and poor countries should trade on their own conditions.

Forest, Land, Water and other natural resource management should be given to people and people's needs have to be prioritized.

It's the responsibility of the government to provide adequate road connectivity for the common man. Government will have to formulate a decentralized system to lower the burden on transportation system.

Corruption is prevalent everywhere. The reasons for this are

- The colonial legacy of a bureaucratic and centralized system.
- The electoral expenditure of candidates runs into millions and to recoup these expenses incurred by them, they indulge in corrupt practices. Parties take election donations from large corporate houses and industries and indulge in corrupt practices to benefit them.
- The market economy and unlimited consumptive tendencies promoted by consumerism lead to corruption. Globalisation has led to a value system in which money is everything and anything can be done for this.

SWJP believes that villages and agriculture should be kept at the center of development and top priority should be given to these.

SWJP believes that Panchayati Raj and true devolution will take place only when panchayat rules and legal procedure be made so simple that bureaucracy can't come in between.

The central and state intervention should be decreased and role of panchayats in rural areas and that of municipalities in urban areas should be increased. These institutions should be provided all the responsibility catering to people's daily lives. They should have enough and sufficient resources of their own.

Along with political devolution economic devolution should also take place and economic and social inequities should be reduced.

SWJP believes that in the name of *dalit* agenda without taking away land of government land under the control of big landlords, the government is taking away land under control of the poor and is redistributing it.

Government's policies have raised a question mark on lives of adivasi and dalits. A number of adivasi are becoming landless as they are being removed from forests. In the garb of forest laws, subsistence use and nistar are being stopped. SWJP gives prime importance and vows to fight for rights, employment and respect of adivasi. SWJP believes that adivasi and other forest dwellers have the first right on forest.

Box 7: Extracts from the SWJP's code of conduct

Extract from the code of conduct for active members

1. Member shall not work for an NGO that is mainly dependent on foreign funds.
2. Member shall regularly provide at least 1% of his/her personal income to the party.

Extract from “*Maryada Sutra*” for members:

1. Member shall boycott products made by MNCs and will mostly wear handloom made clothes.
2. Member shall not enrol his/her wards in elite English medium schools.

If one analyses the reasons for the perceptions of the NGOs in the area from the angle of ideologies and beliefs, it is apparent that while agree with the *Sangathans*’ perceptions on issues like corruption of FD, *begar* system, and JFM, they differ substantially from the *Sangathans* in terms of the 'approach' towards solution to problems. While *sangathans* take extreme positions and work in a 'confrontationist' manner (e.g. complete disbanding of JFMC, full legal ownership of land to cultivators), NGO take less extreme positions and believe in 'collaborative' approaches (e.g. strengthening the JFMCs). This could be attributed to the fact that the NGOs usually work more closely with the government and are not closely involved in the political process.

In this context it also needs to be mentioned that though EP also belongs to the socialist ideologies, their approach is less 'confrontationist' in nature than *Sangathans* like KAS and SAS and they have even participated in committees and task forces set up by the government. The EP’s ideology and approach is reflected in its handling of the “Orange Areas” issue (see Box).

Box 8 : Orange areas case

Ekta Parishad has been campaigning for the past several years to settle the issue of so-called “orange areas” in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. There has been considerable confusion over the legal status of these lands and many such lands are disputed between the both Forest and Revenue Departments. In fact, Revenue Department has issued several *pattas* (land deeds) on these lands.

The need for settlement of this issue gained urgency when the Supreme Court broadened the definition of forests to dictionary definition in its interim order in Writ 202/95 in December 1996. According to Ekta Parishad, livelihood of over 1 million families (mostly adivasi) got threatened as they faced the danger of eviction.

Ekta Parishad used several strategies to settle the issue in the favour of poor cultivators. In December 1998, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Shri Behar, Advisor to the Chief Minister, in which Ekta Parishad presented its position and several supporting documents, especially highlighting the anomalies in the 1994 survey process. In 1999, such a presentation was again made by the Ekta Parishad in a meeting organised by the state Forest Department at the State Administrative Academy. However, when no concrete actions were taken, Ekta Parishad’s national convenor – Shri P.V. Rajgopal – undertook a foot march (*padyatra*) from Sheopur to Raigadh covering over 3,000 Kms. The information collected from the people during the *padyatra* was documented in a booklet titled “*Padyatra ke Sandharb*”.

In 2000, a task force was constituted by the Government of Madhya Pradesh to look into issues related to land and water. Ekta Parishad provided significant amounts of information on the issue of “orange areas” to the task force. On 23.02.2002, Ekta Parishad again presented information related to “orange areas” at a meeting held at the residence of the state Minister of Forests. On 31.11.2002, another meeting was held under the Chairmanship of the Chief Minister that was attended by the state Forest Minister and senior officials from the Revenue and Forest Departments. Ekta Parishad again presented its viewpoint in this meeting but there was considerable difference of opinion between Ekta Parishad and Forest Department officials.

Due to lack of action on its submissions at the state level, the Ekta Parishad also filed a petition before the Central Empowered Committee constituted by the Supreme Court.

Source: Petition filed by Ekta Parishad before the Central Empowered Committee in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 202 of 1995

6.2.3. *Networks and Associations*

Networks and Associations also influence the cognitive framework of their members, thereby affecting their perceptions. Many *Sangathans* in the state (including SAS, KAS and EP) are active members a network called 'Jan Sangharsh Morcha'. The JSM also includes members like Medha Patkar and Arundhati Roy of NBA, eminent jouranalists like Kuldip Nayyar, Yogendra Yadav etc. The JSM has clearly articulated its views on various issues including foreign funding and people's rights over resources such as water, forests, and land. It is possible that some of perceptions of *Sangathan* members, especially their top leaders, have been influenced due to their association with JSM.

6.2.4. *Personal Experience*

Many a time, personal experience also affects a person's cognitive framework and thus his/her perception.

➤ ***Illustrative example:***

People can successfully manage natural resources

Fagram of KAS cited the experience of Tawa Matsya Sangh as a good example of people successfully managing a resource.

➤ ***Filtering-down Effect***

It seems that many ideologies, beliefs, and ideas that emanate from the top-level leaders slowly filter down to middle rung and village level members also. This perhaps happens due to repeated mention of these ideologies, ideas and beliefs in events organised by *Sangathans* as well as literature published by them. In events organised by *Sangathans* like *rallies, morcha, pradarshan* etc. speeches are made by leaders, revolutionary songs are sung, stories are told and literature reflecting the *Sangathan* ideology is also distributed amongst participants. This perhaps helps in filtering-down of certain perceptions from top leaders to village level members.

➤ ***Illustrative examples:***

All benefits of JFM go to the FD while costs are borne by the people

The comparison of JFM to a cow whose anterior part (cost) is with the people while posterior part (benefit) is with the FD was made by top leader of *Sangathan* as well as a village level member of *Sangathans*). He probably heard this example in speech made by a *Sangathan* leader.

Exploitative nature of foreign funding

A village level *Sangathan* member said that it is likely USA's market forces will reach his village soon. "*Amrika ki dukaan gaon tak bhi pahunch jayegi*". He probably heard this argument from a *Sangathan* leader.

Slogans, Songs and Stories

Sangathans extensively use slogans, songs and stories during their events, which not only reflect their perceptions on various issues but also influence perceptions of attendees. Some of the common slogans used during *Sangathan* events are:

Ladenge, Marenge

Jeena hai to larna seekho, kadam kadam pe marna sekho
Lootne wala jayega, kamaane wala khayega

Some of the songs and stories used in *Sangathan* events are given in Boxes 11 and 12.

Box 9: songs played by Sangathan members

Loot Liya Re

Loot Liya Re

Loot liya re hamka loot liya re,

Dekho din ke dufere me loot liya re.

Deputy bhi loote hamka ranger bhi loote,

Lootan ka lagya kalya nakedar re. Dekho din...

Thanedar loote hamka hawaldar loote,

Lootan ka lagya police kalakar re. Dekho din...

Patwari loote hamka RI bhi loote,

Lootan ka lagya tahsildar re. Dekho din...

Court bhi loote hamka kachari bhi loote,

Lootan ka lagya hamka sarkaar re. Dekho din...

Teli bhi loote hamka mali bhi loote ,

Lootan ka lagya sara bazaar re. Dekho din...

Tappar Tappar

Tappaar tappaar ghoom re, nakedar thanedar,

Daru murga mange re, nakedar thanedar.

Ballar Bhutta Mange re nakedar, thanedar,

Nakedar thanedar, police wale hawaldar.

Murgi ka anda mange re nakedar, thanedar,

Jopari hamre tore re nakedar, thanedar.

Jungle ko katwaye re nakedar, thanedar,

Nakedar thanedar, policewaale hawaldar.

Jel kachari bheje re nakedar, thanedar,

Jurmana hamse mange re, nakedar, thanedar,

Chamki dhamki kare re, nakedar, thanedar.

Kanoon ka danda mare re nakedar, thanedar

Begari hamse karawe re nakedar, thanedar

Ghi doodh mange re nakedar, thanedar.

Source: Ladat Jaa Re, audiocassette by SAS brought out by Abivyakti Media For Development, Nashik. (English Translation of these songs is given in Annex 5)

6.3. Knowledge of Policy

Knowledge of policy also plays an important role in shaping perceptions. The level of knowledge as well sources of information regarding policy vary widely among *Sangathan* as well as NGO members.

6.3.1. Specialised study/ research

Several *Sangathan* top leaders have a good understanding of forest laws and policies by virtue of studying these in detail and writing about these. Some documents on forest policy and laws written by *Sangathan* leaders and activists are as under:

Angrezon ki Van Niti Ko Dhoti Hamari Sarkaar by Anurag Modi

Van Sanrankshaq Kanoon: Kuch Haqiqat by Anil Garg

Kanoon ka Pinjra: Janta aur Jungle Par Niyantran Ke Sarkaari Hathiyar by Rahul Banerjee

6.3.2. Media and networks

Information regarding many policies is also obtained from media reports as well as through networks. A large amount of information on policies at the international level (e.g. WTO) is widely shared within networks.

6.3.3. Government officials

Some information on policies is also gathered from government functionaries. Many NGOs get details of policies from this route.

Many village level members also obtain information regarding various policies and policy change from field officials of various agencies operating in their area.

6.3.4. Events and literature

Many village level members of *Sangathans* obtain information regarding policies from *Sangathan* events and literature.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions

Based on our discussions and from the results of the Q sort, it emerges that differing perceptions among stakeholders on forestry in Harda has played a major role in shaping the 'nature of conflicts' surrounding the sector in the state. What also comes across very clearly is the fact that even within the broader category of NGO/*Sangathan*, there is not only differences in perception between the NGOs and the *Sangathan*, but also within the NGOs and the *Sangathans*, differing perceptions on issues emerge. Based on their perceptions, each of these stakeholders approaches the issues of 'conflict' with different level of understanding.

Within the stakeholders, perceptions differ at different levels- for example, the perceptions of the top level managers of the *Sangathans* seem to be more influenced by ideological beliefs and political affiliation and also due to their personal experience of specific incidences. On the other hand, at the next active *Sangathan* member level, the perceptions seem to be largely influenced by the beliefs of the top-level members. It is also interesting to note that these active *Sangathan* members are also politically active members of SWJP, and their perceptions therefore largely reflect the party beliefs and ideologies. At the village level, perceptions of issues are shaped more because of empirical experience of instances that they have witnessed. It was also our observation that the village level perceptions are largely 'need' based, i.e. in most cases their perceptions reflects their needs- be it in terms of anti-establishment views, ownership of land (*patta*), etc On the other hand the NGOs are largely influenced by the empirical context of events that shape their perceptions on conflicting issues.

It is also very important to note that though the NGOs and *Sangathans* may share similar perception on several conflicting issues, the approach to solving the problem is different. The *Sangathans* confrontationalist attitude is quite in contrast to the collaborative techniques suggested by the NGOs.

The interpretation of the Q sort done with NGOs, activists, active and village level *Sangathan* members reveal three distinct discourses- the first discourse is anti JFM, mainly on aspects regarding relationship between people and the FD, impact of JFM on quality of life and the social outcomes of JFM. Respondents who reflected these views were mainly active members and villagers; the second discourse is pro-partnership and participation and supportive of FD and JFM. It emphasises that protection of forest can't be done without local participation and reflects neutral leanings, most of these views are reflected by the NGOs (and some active members), who work with the government in various programmes; the third discourse is critical of JFM in matters of ownership of JFM, decision making, improvement in lives as impact This discourse is not in favour of community-based solutions, as it does not concur with the option of handing over all the forests to the local communities, and these views are mainly reflected by the active members and the NGOs.

Though there is no doubt that the perceptions shaped by the three factors of knowledge - 'change, theory and policy' are adding to the situation of conflict in Harda, however it will be interesting to contrast these perceptions to the perceptions of other stakeholders like the FD, to understand the issue in a broader perspective to arrive at a discussion on the probable means of conflict resolution.

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ANNEXURE: 1**Summary Report****Jan Sunwai (Public Hearing) On Forest Rights At Village Indpura, Harda District, 26 May 2001**

A Public Hearing was organised by Shramik Adivasi Sangathan at forest village Indpura, Timarni Tahsil, District Harda on 26th May 2001 to provide a platform for local villagers to voice their problems concerning access to forests and exploitation by forest department staff. The meeting was attended by about 400 villagers from 12 villages in Harda Forest Division: Indpura, Banspani, Dhega, Jhiri, Guthania, Jamnia, Roothuburra, Bitiya, Singhoda, Gangadadhana, Unchaborari. In addition some villagers from Betul district, representatives of different organisations including Kisan Adivasi Sangathan, Kesla; Jagrit Dalit Adivasi Sangathan, Badwani; Narmada Bachao Andolan; Prayas, Rajasthan; Abhivyakti and journalists from Down to Earth and local papers attended the meeting. The panel for the public hearing consisted of Ms Madhu Sarin, Dr. Nandini Sundar and Rakesh Diwan.

Despite this being an open public hearing for people to exercise their democratic rights of free expression, concerted attempts were made to prevent the villagers from participating. For 4-5 days preceding the meeting, Forest Department staff went around the villages in jeeps, tractors and motorcycles threatening dire action against those who dared to participate. Residents of Indpura village were told that there would be a repeat of police firings which took place in Dewas on April 2 (in which 4 villagers were shot dead) and dead bodies would be littered in the village after the hearing if they gave evidence. The villagers were scared of giving evidence against Forest Department staff for fear of such threats being carried out. Local intelligence men and four persons with video cameras turned up and started recording the proceedings. On being asked their credentials, the cameramen beat a hasty retreat. The panel has a list of those who gave evidence and if any cases are filed against them or their families, it will be a clear case of intimidation and victimization.

In part due to such intimidatory tactics, representation of the Forest Department was not sought and their views could not be heard. In that respect, the assembly was more in the nature of a public meeting than a classic public hearing. The hearing panel regretted not being able to meet any forest official or staff.

A summary of the submissions of the villagers is given below:

Exploitative Relations:

Contrary to the highly acclaimed 'success' of the 'Harda model' of JFM, there has been no change either in the behaviour or exploitative power relations between forest staff and local *adivasis*. Reprehensible practices like *begar* (forced extraction of unpaid labour), officially abolished since independence, continue to permeate the relations between forest department staff and the *adivasis*, particularly in the 45 forest villages in the division.

Begari: Several women from Dhega village told the panel that till 2-3 months ago, one woman from every household had to spend eight days in turn doing unpaid domestic work at the forest guard's house. This included fetching water, cooking, washing utensils, sweeping and mud washing the house. On the women complaining about this to the Conservator of Forests when he visited Dhega on April 10, the forest guard accused the Shramik Adivasi Sanghatan (SAS) of spoiling his relations ('*aapsi rishta*') with the women.

Molestation: Exploitation of women is not confined to *begar* but includes molestation and attempted rape. The panel was given a copy of a written complaint lodged by the elected panches of Gangradadhana village with the District Collector against the beat guard (Kamal Singh Thakur) for attempting to rape a pregnant woman of the village in her house in broad daylight. There have been many other cases of molestation which were not raised at the public hearing but which the panel was told about on the side.

Bribes: In order to exercise their *nistar* (collecting forest products for subsistence needs) rights, every household has to supply one cartload of firewood, one chicken, 4.5 kgs of grain and other goods to the forest guard every year. In addition, to collect bamboo for making panels, mats and other household necessities, they have to give the forest guard one *tatta* and one *jhinja* (two types of bamboo panels) every year. This seemed uniform across villages.

For cutting timber for house building/repair or agricultural implements, bribes ranging from Rs.500- Rs.5000 have to be paid. 45 impoverished forest villages in Harda Division are paying an estimated minimum of Rs.45 lakhs per year to the forest staff in such bribes for their *nistari* timber and other requirements.

The forest guard has even taken away one quintal grain from Roothuburra village's grain bank set up by the government to loan seeds.

Situation in Forest Villages

Due to the forest villages still not having been converted into revenue villages, the Forest Department is responsible for most development functions in them making the villagers dependent on it for most of their needs. Barely 10 percent of the households have 15-year pattas to their agricultural lands as no new pattas have been issued since independence.

In Indpura village itself, two children had died of sickness during the two days preceding the hearing and 35 other children were suffering from acute diarrhoea and vomiting. In forest villages, the forest guard is the depot holder (nodal officer) for medicines but none of the guards had taken any steps to deal with the children's sickness. Instead, they had been spending their time on threatening and intimidating the villagers against participating in the public hearing. 17 children had died of chicken pox in village Banspani last year, as the forest department had made no effort to organise medical attention for them.

The school teacher in village Dhega takes 2 pai chana (grams) from every child and gets the children to catch fish and collect firewood for him besides engaging in money lending at 10% interest per month. He is often absent for fifteen days at a stretch. In Indpura, the teacher comes to the school only once a month and no one has had more than 3 years of schooling. The villagers want an additional teacher because there are at least 70 children of school going age in the village.

JFM

The villager's feelings about JFM can be gauged from the fact that all the villagers present said by voice vote and a raise of hands that they do not want JFM. They want the JFM committees to be disbanded, as these have become a means of increasing the exploitation of *adivasis*, rather than benefiting them. The following reasons were given against JFM in Harda:

JFM committees are perceived as '*sarkari*' (government) creations in which the ordinary villagers have little say. The forest guard is their member secretary as well as joint holder of committee accounts with the president. Their formation has created conflict within villages, dividing them into pro and anti-Forest Department camps and turning villager against villager. A minority of better off forest department supporters impound cattle caught grazing in the forests (the forests have been closed to grazing for 8 months of the year) and send them to the guard's pound where bribes have to be paid to get them released. Despite JFM, the villagers are not allowed to collect fuelwood and small timber for their own needs without paying bribes.

JFM has also created conflict between villages. For instance, Indpura forest village is with the Sanghathan, but the neighbouring villages of Lakhadev, Barjiri and Choorni are with the forest department. However, even villagers from Lakhadev admitted to Sanghathan members that they have to bribe the beat guard for accessing their nistar.

The DFO toured the area from 16-26 April after the Sanghathan took out a rally in Harda to look into people's complaints and ask villagers whether they were with the Sanghathan or the forest department. He is reported to have instructed the beat guard for Banspani to give villagers what they needed for timber on application. However, as soon as he left, the ranger threatened villagers for complaining to the DFO.

Work for which villagers used to receive wages prior to JFM has now been converted into *begari* (unpaid labour). For the last ten years since the formation of JFM committees, no wages have been paid for cutting and cleaning fire lines and pruning tendu bushes on the pretext that their wages are being deposited in the samiti accounts. This, however, is being done against the villagers' will. Depending on the forest area, the work can vary from 2 to 15 days labour per household at Rs.62 per day adding up to lakhs of Rupees every year. It is only after the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan organised two protest rallies in Harda in February and April this year that the villagers were paid wages for this work after several years. Even these payments, however, were made on a piece rate basis calculated by the forest staff. In Dhega village, 90 persons worked for 4 days each but

were paid a total of only Rs.4500/- (Rs.12.50 per day) when the daily wage is Rs.62.00. In Banspani village, only Rs.68/- were paid for 2 days coupe marking work and only Rs.80/- for 6 days of fire line cutting work. No back wages for the past 10 years or so, however, have been paid still.

Although the above wage money is supposed to have been credited to the samiti accounts, none of the villagers know whether this has actually been done. The villagers have no idea how much money has come into their account from any scheme and how it is being spent. Pleas for release of some of their own money even for emergency needs have been rejected on the grounds that they will waste it and should save it for their children. In Dhega, the beat guard refused to show the villagers their samiti's passbook. Although on April 10 the CF said that the JFM committee accounts would be made public, as of date no accounts have been shown to any village. Banspani's samiti account is supposed to have Rs.2, 30,000/- in it but the villagers have heard that only Rs.65, 000/- is left in it. The beat guard has employed 2 watchmen with samiti funds saying that the money belongs to the government.

Not only do the villagers have no control over their own funds but also these have been used for funding activities against them. Villagers of Dhega were intercepted by forest staff while they were on their way to a Sanghatan rally in Harda and deceptively taken to an anti-Sanghatan rally organised by the Forest Department to add numbers. They later learnt that drawing Rs.2500 from their samiti accounts had financed the transport and snacks for the rally.

Contrary to the provision for election of Van Samiti executive committee members every year (in MP's 1995 JFM order), no elections have been held for 8 to 9 years after their creation. Banspani villagers, who are members of the Sangathan, elected a new President of their choice on the death of the first President. He is refusing to permit the forest guard to withdraw any money from the samiti account unless at least 3 to 4 other villagers approve the same, which has led to tension between the guard and the President joint account holders. No money has been withdrawn from Banspani's VSS account since then.

Villagers of Dhega, also Sangathan members, similarly selected a person to be the *phad munshi* (collection agent) for collecting Tendu leaves in their village. However, the beat guard appointed his own person against the villagers' will. 23 out of 28 tendu leaf collectors are refusing to deposit their tendu leaves with the guard's appointee in protest.

The villagers said the forest staffs co-opt some villagers by patronizing them with appointments as firewatchers, *phad munshis*, watchmen, etc. Only such 'beneficiaries' are cooperating with the department staff in exploiting other villagers. Only a handful of similarly selected villagers have benefited from other development schemes such as new wells, Indira Awaas Yojana houses, irrigation schemes, etc. When asked whether such development inputs had not been significant benefits, the gathering's response was they are of little use when they benefit a few at the cost of the majority.

The villagers vehemently asserted that they are not enjoying any benefits of improved access to forest products under JFM. In fact, they said that now they were worse off than before as the Forest Department now has some co-opted villagers in each village depriving them of even their traditional rights of forest access. In Banspani, they are not permitted to collect even fallen wood. While JFM has reduced the villagers' access to forest products, the forest department itself is continuing with coupe cutting for commercial exploitation. This is in clear violation of the 1988 forest policy.

The villagers have repeatedly told the forest department to use axes instead of saws during coupe cuttings as stumps cut by saws collect rain and don't regenerate. But the forest department does not listen. The villagers feel that this, rather than their use of the forest, is the major cause of forest degradation. Since these are interior villages, there is not much outside pressure in the form of smuggling, and the forest department's responsibility for deforestation becomes even more apparent.

The villagers said that if the forests are to be saved, they should be allowed to make rules for management and be consulted on working plans. They gave the example of village Kochamou in Betul, which had started fining people Rs. 101 for cutting wood without permission.

No Action Against Forest Staff

Two protest rallies organised by the Sanghatan against gross corruption and exploitation of the villagers in February and April this year have led to some reduction in bribe taking and the women said that they had stopped doing unpaid domestic work for the forest guard. For the first time since the formation of JFM committees, the villagers have also been paid at least some wages for fire line cutting. Only minor action has been taken against the guard, deputy ranger and range officer in whose area Dhega village falls in response to the villagers' complaints against them. No punitive action has been taken against any of the others indulging in corrupt and exploitative practices. On the contrary, forest department staffs are continuing to threaten villagers against providing evidence.

The Naib tahsildar conducted an enquiry in Dhega village on the basis of a petition by the Sanghatan and found the complaints to be true. Instead of taking action against the concerned staff, the DFO ordered a raid on the Naib tahsildar's court in retaliation to search for stolen wood. This has led to some tension between the forest and revenue departments, providing an indication of the forest department's functioning in the area.

Demands of the villagers

1. The JFM Van Samitis should be disbanded, as they have become tools for increasing oppression and exploitation of poor *adivasis* of the area.
2. The villagers' nistar and forest based livelihood needs must be at the centre of any meaningful JFM capable of generating a genuine sense of ownership towards forests among them.

3. Forest villages must be converted into revenue villages at the earliest to enable their residents to gain access to regular development schemes and to reduce the forest department's total control over every aspect of their lives.
4. The villagers must be provided complete accounts of their Van Samiti funds and the expenditure made by the forest department from these in their name. Control over their own funds must rest with the villagers.
5. Punitive action must be taken against all those who have taken bribes, not paid the villagers their due wages and otherwise harassed them and molested women.
6. The villagers must have a decisive say in how to save the forests and their indigenous knowledge about them must be respected (for instance about the use of axes instead of saws for ensuring good regeneration).
7. Repression and victimization through filing of false cases against them for attending Sangathan meetings or going on rallies must be stopped.

Observations of panel members

Unmasking of the reality of bribery, corruption, intimidation and increased exploitation of adivasis under the much acclaimed success of JFM in Harda through this hearing points to the need for a systematic and independent review of the functioning of JFM not only in Harda but in the whole of MP before a loan for the second phase of the World Bank Forestry Project is sanctioned. The team was not in a position to actually look at JFM committee accounts as the passbooks are in the custody of forest department staff. The investigations need to be done through similar, open public hearings organised by mass organisations such as the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan and neutral third parties who can generate courage among intimidated and impoverished villagers to speak up. 'Consultation' meetings organized by the Forest Department alone, to which handpicked 'representatives' of villagers are invited to convey the villager's viewpoint, are clearly incapable of unearthing the kind of reality, which emerged during this hearing.

Rakesh Diwan
Madhu Sarin
Nandini Sundar

Annexure: 2

Details of the strategies followed by the Sangathan with examples

Formation of Sangathan

Anurag and Shamim Modi initiated Shramik Adivasi Sangathan (SAS). They started working for the *adivasi* cause at Bargi in Chattisgarh and later shifted to Betul where SAS was formed around 1996. In year 2000 SAS expanded to Harda district and recently to Khandwa.

In the initial stages of SAS top leaders Anurag Modi and Shamim Modi went on *padyatra* to villages. During these they stayed in the villages and conducted village meetings detailing *Sangathans* thoughts and ideology to the villagers. During the stocktaking of people's grievances certain issues cropped up. These issues varied from complaints about removal of villagers from their encroached land by FD⁸²; individual cases of harassment by FD, *patwari*, police or other government officials⁸³; bribery by government officials⁸⁴; *begar* by FD frontline staffs etc.

SAS leaders took these cases to the concerned authorities or followed other strategies like conducting *dharna*, *gherao* or *rallies* to further publicise these issues. These activities broadened SAS membership base, with more and more villagers joining in by paying membership amount of Rupees five in return of membership receipt. A monthly meeting was initiated which was held on a fixed day of the month where all the members could come and apprise others about their problems and grievances. Leaders made it a point to attend these meetings regularly.

The sequential process of *Sangathan* expansion followed this initial stage. The people whose problems were solved or who got a temporary reprieve from FD or other departments became active members of *Sangathan* and the trust was built in them. This case can be observed in village level members of villages like Uncharbarari, Dhega, Morgharhi and many others. Amongst these village level members some were early starters who became active and took upon themselves the task to expand *Sangathan*'s reach to many more villages and make new members.

The SAS uses *padyatra*, *gherao*, *rallies*, periodic meetings, *dharna*, *jan panchayat*, *jan sammelan*, *upwaas* and *anshan*, media publicity, active participation in politics etc to expand the membership base of their organization as well as issue expansion. These have been detailed in subsequent sections.

⁸² As was the case of a village level Sangathan member in Uncharbarari village

⁸³ As was the case of a village level Sangathan member in Morgharhi village

⁸⁴ As in the case of a village level Sangathan member in Morghadi village

Padyatra

This is a strategy mostly used in the initial phases, when the *Sangathan* is in the process of broadening its membership base or during election campaigns. In these *padyatras*⁸⁵, founder members like Shamim Modi, Anurag Modi or middle rung members (active level members) of SAS go to villages and conduct meetings at night. In these meetings, ideology, belief and working of the *Sangathan* are shared with the villagers and they are requested to become members. This is a very effective strategy of making new members as 69% of the SAS member said that they became members after hearing ideology of *Sangathan* in meetings conducted during *padyatra*. The *padyatra* is also arranged as part of the membership drive or election campaign.

Periodic Meetings

These meetings are organized on a fixed day of the month at predecided venues. *Sangathan* leaders generally attend the monthly meetings. Members residing in the nearby villages come together and attend these meeting. The meeting spans for around three to four hours in which following points are discussed and deliberated upon:

- Collection from membership receipts and contributions from each of the villages.
- New members added to *Sangathan*.
- The problems faced in the villages, by the members and non- members.
- The cases of corruption or exploitation by government officials.
- The stocktaking of *Sangathan* works.
- Finalization of future programs of SASlike *rallies*, *dharnas* etc.

In these meetings the decisions are taken by consensus and each one is free to express his or her opinion. Women also attend these meetings in large numbers. In cases when *Sangathan* leaders can't make it to the meetings, active level members conduct them. The participation in these periodic meetings is very high. At least one person from the village in which *Sangathan* member are there attends these periodic meeting. 80% of the respondent from village level said that they have attended all the monthly meeting in their area after becoming members. Listing of the venue and date of these meetings have been given below.

- 3rd of every month-Chirapatla
- 4th of every month-Charwa
- 5th of every month-Sobhapur (Khandwa)
- 6th of every month-Morgharhi
- 7th of every month-Sirali
- 8th of every month-Magardha

⁸⁵ Foot march

Public Hearing

This is the strategy, which *Sangathan* uses to bring out the viewpoints of *adivasi* and villagers in front of the common public. Eminent personalities are called to be judges in these public hearings, which help in the issue expansion. Media coverage and reporting is ascertained. Ekta Parishad, SAS and likeminded *Sangathans* use this to highlight the plight and hardships of *adivasi*. A summary report of Jan sunwai organised by SAS is given below as an example.

A *Jan sunwai* (public hearing) was organized in village Indupura in Harda district by SAS, Betul. The panelists were Dr Madhu Sarin, an expert on participatory forestry, Dr. Nandini Sundar, of Jawahar Lal University, Delhi and Rakesh Diwan, an activist. The hearing acted as a platform for local villagers to voice their problems concerning access to forests and exploitation by FD staff. About 400 villagers attended the meeting from 12 villages from Harda along with some villagers from Betul district. Representatives of different organizations including KAS, Kesla; Jagrit Dalit Adivasi *Sangathan*, Badwani, Narmada Bachao Andolan; Prayas, Rajasthan; Abivyakti and journalists from Down To Earth and local papers attended the panel. The hearing brought into focus issues like *begar*, molestation, bribery as the examples of exploitation by FD frontline staffs, were brought to focus by the villagers. The people demanded to debunk Harda model and *Van Samitis* be disbanded. The demands of the villagers that came out were-

1. The JFM *Van Samitis* be disbanded, as they have become tools for increasing oppression and exploitation of poor *adivasis* in the area.
2. The villagers *nistar* and forest based livelihood needs must be at the centre of any meaningful JFM capable of generating a genuine sense of ownership towards forestry among them.
3. Forest villages must be converted into revenue villages at the earliest to enable their residents to gain access to regular schemes and to reduce the FD's complete control over their lives.
4. The villagers must be provided complete accounts of their Van Samitis funds and their expenditure. Control over these funds must rest with the villagers.
5. Punitive action must be taken against all those who have taken bribes, not paid the villagers their due wages and otherwise harassed them and molested women
6. The villagers must have a decisive say in how to save the forests and their indigenous knowledge about them must be respected.
7. Repression and victimization through filing of false case against them for attending *Sangathan* meetings or going in rallies must be stopped.

This public hearing attracted not only attention of FD, local people, funding agencies and media but also had impact on dynamics of JFM in Harda.

Rallies

This is one of the most frequent strategies followed by *Sangathans* for getting their demands accepted. The *rallies* are held on issues, which span from local to national level. Major issues discussed in these rallies are lack of health and electricity facilities to the poor; giving land right to peoples; removing corruption and exploitation of poor; lack of irrigation facilities, increasing cost of electricity; people's right over forest land; lacunae in the World Bank funded forestry project; communalism etc.

People are informed about these *rallies* in periodic meetings of *Sangathans*. Four or five days before the *rally* middle rung members roam about in the village coaxing the villagers to attend the event. Pamphlets are distributed and read out in the village. From each family one male or female member is requested to attend. Those attending are supposed to arrange for own transportation to reach the venue of *rally* and also for food. To keep people involved people bring with them “*dholak*⁸⁶” and sing *adivasi* liberation songs. These songs have been recorded in cassette named “*Ladat Jaa Re*”(Go On Fighting). When the *rally* is at far off places like Bhopal then *Sangathan* leaders arrange for train fare.

The typical *rally* starts with moving around of people in the town or tehsils carrying banners and flags. Slogans like “*Ladenge, Marenge*”(Will fight and die), “*Jeena hai to Larna Sikho Kadam Kadam pe Marna Sikho*”(If one has to live learn to fight at each step), “*Lootne Waala Jaayega, and Kamaane Waala Khayega*”(The looters will go and earners will eat) are raised in these *rallies* or *pradarshan*⁸⁷. *Sangathan* address the people at the *rally*. These *rallies* also result in *dharna* or *gherao* of erring officials. In these rallies, memorandum of demands to collector, SDM, SP or other relevant government officers are also given. These officials are intimidated in advance so that their presence for accepting memorandum and arrangements of security etc. are ensured. Some of the issues discussed in these rallies are summarized below:

- The *rally* held jointly by SAS and KAS under the banner of SWJP on 15th March, 2004 discussed issues of not getting kerosene oil, lack of access to irrigation facilities of *adivasi* rehabilitated under the Tawa dam project, land right issues, corruption and exploitation etc.
- A *rally* at Chiraapatla village dispensary was held on 8th June 2003 on the issues of lack in civic and treatment facilities, ambulance, and absence of doctor and compounder. The other was held at Betul Police Station against police apathy and atrocities on *adivasi* on 12th June 2003.
- The *rally* held on 28th November 2002 at Sukhtawa and Itarsi in the name of *Bijli Bachao, Azaadi Bachao Yatra (Save electricity, Save freedom march)*. Issues such

⁸⁶ A kind of musical instrument

⁸⁷ Démonstration

as increase in electricity rate, and reasons of not taking ADB loans were discussed.

- The *rally* held in Hoshangabad on 13th June 2002 discussed issues of communalism and foreign funding.
- The *rally* held on 11th March 1999 discussed the issues of -Giving *patta* to peopletiger project be withdrawn; royalty of Tawa dam be lowered; doing away of World Bank forestry project; right on *hal, jungle, jameen* be given to people and removal of corruption and exploitation of people.

Dharnas

These are held to highlight anti *adivasi* activities or oppression by government officials. These are generally issue-specific and are organized to exert pressure on government officials. These *dharnas* are also used as a medium to gain media coverage. In some cases rallies get converted into *dharna* or *virodh pradarshan*. These *dharnas* are held against issues like corruption etc., like a *dharna* was organized against electricity department employee Babu Ravishankar Parashar at Charwa. Around 50 SAS members sat on *dharna* and subsequently did *gherao* of electricity office Charwa. SAS members took back Rs 200 that the erring official had allegedly taken from Ramjivan, village Jatpura on 22nd November 2003⁸⁸. A Sangathan leader said about efficacy of this strategy as “*dharna creates pressure and provides tangible results and mostly erring officials don’t indulge in asking for bribes again.*”⁸⁹ Similarly a *dharna* was organized by KAS at Sohagpur on 9th February 1999 against exploitation by FD officials. This *dharna* aimed at exposing the nexus between FD officials and timber smugglers, which according to SAS has resulted in illegal felling of forests.

NGO like AVM also organize *dharna*, though their motive is different. These are organised to put forward their demands to the district administration. A *dharna* was organized by AVM on 14th April 2004 on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti.⁹⁰ The demands put forward in this were:

- Immediately stop exploitation of SC/ST people in Harda.
- Dr. B. R. Ambedkar statue be constructed at the district headquarters.
- Carrying of *excreta* should be stopped and improper toilets be removed.
- Creation of hostel for students at Harda.
- In *Utkrista Vidyalaya* board of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar be there.
- Provide employment to people who indulged previously in unclean work.

Gherao

This is a very effective way of getting results and actions initiated against erring officials.⁹¹ In this the members of *Sangathan* collect around a government office and don’t go till the action has not been initiated against the erring officials. These are held at

⁸⁸ A report in local news paper, *Satpura Samiksha*, 4th December, 2003

⁸⁹ A Sangathan leader, personal communication

⁹⁰ Pamphlet of AVM

⁹¹ An active level Sangathan leader, personal communication

health, electricity, forest, police department, or district administration offices. These can be instantaneous or planned. If the *Sangathan* members come to know about the case of misdeed or injustice and there are around thirty forty members around then they instantaneously group together and indulge in *gherao* of the concerned officials or offices. Similar case was observed in case of getting back the bribe amount from electricity department officials at Charwa⁹² These instantaneous *gherao* are very effective and mostly get desired results .

The planned *gherao* are done along with *rally* or *sabhas* (*meetings*). In this number of issues are raised. The government officials are intimidated in advance about these planned *gherao*. In few cases threat of *talabandi* (Lockup) of non-performing government offices are also given. Few instances of these *gherao* are given below.

A *rally* at Chiraapatla village dispensary was held on 8th June 2003 on the issues of lack in dispensary facilities and ambulance, and apathy as well as absence of doctor and compounder. In this *gherao*, SAS threatened to lock up the dispensary. After the District Magistrate gave the SAS members the word that the arrangement for ambulance be made and the absence of doctors, compounder and their indulgence in private practice will be probed only then the *gherao* ended.

Another *gherao* was held at Betul Police Station on 12th June 2003 against police apathy and atrocities on *adivasis*. The *gherao* continued till the city SP assured that probe would be ordered and action taken against erring officials.

Hundreds of villager's *gheraoed* Shahpur hospital, Betul on 18th April 2004. This was done on the claim of SAS that Block Medical Officer (BMO) Dr. Athanare's irresponsibility led to death of an *adivasi* of Mokha village. SAS members alleged that BMO uses foul language; ill treats *adivasis* and has usurped the money that came for hospitals construction. The *gherao* ended when *Sangathan* members were assured by district administration that the issue would be looked into and actions taken.

Jan Panchayat

This is variance of *Jan sunwai* as in this the villagers themselves are the judges rather than bringing external ones. Speakers put across their viewpoints, collectively debate and discuss problems and solutions along with deciding on future course of actions. This *Jan panchayat* can be termed as *sabhas* (meetings) also but here local as well as national issues are discussed and a charter of demand is outlined. The *Jan panchayat* are generally coupled with rallies organized by *Sangathans* or *morcha*. A *Jan panchayat* and *rally* was organized by SAS, JSM and SWJP at Bhopal on 2nd and 3rd of October 2002. The demand put forward in this *Morcha* were⁹³

- Evicting peoples from forests should be immediately stopped
- People should be given *pattas* on forestland

⁹² A report in local news paper, *Satpura Samiksha*, 4th December, 2003

⁹³ Pamphlet of *vishal jan panchayat* and *rally* in Bhopal, 2-3 October, 2002

- The conspiracy of snatching *jal, jungle* and *jameen* from *adivasis* and giving it to foreign companies should be stopped.
- World Bank forestry Project should be stopped.
- Increasing the price of electricity be done away with.
- Evicting people in the name of dams, national parks or mines should be stopped.
- All WB, ADB and WTO projects should be stopped.
- Stop the drama of *dalit agenda*.
- Stop the exploitation of *dalit*, women and *adivasis*.
- Stop the free import of food grains and increasing the cost of production for farmers.
- Stop making people fight in the name of caste and religion.

Jan Sammelan

These Sammelan bring together members of *Sangathans* and issues relating to marginalized, poor and *adivasis* are discussed. This is very similar to meetings or *sabhas* but different from *jan sunwai* or *jan panchayat* as rather than eminent persons (internal or external to *Sangathans*) judging the issues or cases the people attending the event judge the issues. A *jungle jameen haq sammelan*⁹⁴ (Meeting on rights over forest, land and water) was organized on 12th February 2004 at Chirapatla, Betul. In this a *sankalp*⁹⁵ on the following points was taken -

- Every person who is above 18 years of age should be given minimum of 5 acres of land.
- Blank forestland should be distributed equally among the peoples.
- People should be given complete *nistari* rights from forests.
- FD officials who indulge in illegal felling should be punished
- Government's promise of giving each family in the village 180 days of work should be fulfilled.

Upwaas and Anshan

This is a strategy used by *Sangathans* for specific issues like against liquor consumption and are held on specific dates associated with great leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, B. R. Ambedkar etc. These great leaders thoughts are used to integrate the ideology of *Sangathans* with theirs. On the occasion of 30th January 2004(Gandhi's martyrdom day) a collective fast was organized in front of Gandhi statue at Harda and call was given to save the country from foreign slavery and fight against use of money and liquor in elections.

Taking up individual cases

This is the major strategy to make new members or to convert passive members into active ones. During periodic meetings, *dharna, gherao, sammelan* etc. people gathered

⁹⁴ Pamphlet of SAS on jal jungle haq sammelan.

⁹⁵ Resolve

are asked about their problems. Any person can put across his/her case in front of others. These cases are primarily related to corruption, exploitation by government officials, police inaction or stopping people from doing *nistari* from forest. Other issues like dispensary or hospitals not functioning properly, FD threat to remove encroachments, mortgage by cooperative bank against nonpayment of loans, electricity and water availability are also dealt with. *“These days Sangathan is also involved in taking schoolteachers to task who do not teach in the schools and take private tuitions instead”*⁹⁶. A top-level member of SAS said that *“Sangathan does not takes cases that are unjustified as we follow principles and do not resort to unethical means, whatever is justified is dealt with and that too with urgency.”*... *“The cases narrated by members or non members are noted down and application is made to concerned authorities for action. If the action is not taken then Sangathan resorts to pressure tactic such as dharna, gherao, pradarshan etc. Dharna, rallies etc. are held not just on a specific case, but a list of cases of inaction or unjust action by government departments is made, and then dharna, rally or gherao of the concerned officials or a particular department office like police station, dispensary etc is done.”*⁹⁷ All these cases of individual injustice, inequity, harassment, or exploitation are the issues that have resulted in mass actions was opinion of the majority of *Sangathan* respondents.

The effect of taking up individual cases by *Sangathan* has many effects. The first and foremost is the trust building and expanding membership base of *Sangathan*. The other reasons are evident from response of Gangabishan. He said, *“Taking up the individual cases brings in trust among the members and feeling that they are not alone. The feeling of unity and not being powerless creeps in. This also brings reprieve from harassment or trouble from government officials. Though there have been members who have left us as their problems could not be solved instantly or they were interested in direct benefits. Around 5-10% of members who joined us have left. But the new members are far outnumbering those who are leaving us.”*⁹⁸.

Publications

The publications by *Sangathans* can be classified into four heads

1. Pamphlets, banners, posters etc.
2. Books or booklets
3. A newspaper titled” *Barabari Ka Zamaana*” published by SAS
4. Newspaper articles written by *Sangathan* members

Pamphlets etc.

The pamphlets, banners, posters etc. are printed and distributed among the members before any event like *dharna, gherao, rallies* etc. In the pamphlets the issues on which the event is being organized, date, time and venue of the event and information about the prominent personalities outside the *Sangathan* who are likely to join the event are

⁹⁶ Area Président SAS, personal communication

⁹⁷ An active level member of Sangathan, personal communication

⁹⁸ Area Président SAS, personal communication

provided. These pamphlets are distributed in periodic meetings or are sent to active *Sangathan* members in a particular area. These active members then go on foot or on bicycle to the nearby villages and distribute these pamphlets. In each village the *Sangathan* members conduct a meeting and read out the pamphlet or stick banners/posters at a visible place.

Books or booklets

Sangathan leaders write books or booklets themselves or distribute those, which are authored by persons adhering to socialist ideology. *Sangathan* or SWJP publishes these books or booklets. Few of these books and booklets that have been brought out have been discussed below in brief.

Hukum Vishwa Bank ka, Muhar Sarkar ki, Jungle se adivasiyo ko alag karne ki Vishwa Bank ki yojna has been published by Jan Sangathan's of MP and deals with the *Sangathans* viewpoints towards World Bank forestry project. This booklet raises issues of control of forest in hands of FD, adverse impacts of the project on local livelihood like introducing high breed of domesticated animals, private investment in forestry and the resulting impacts. The book concludes that the project is anti people and pro rich.

Virodh Nahi Vidroh by Dr. Brahmdeo Sharma deals with rights of forest and argues that benefits accruing should be given to the *adivasis* and people residing around forest has been advocated. The book also advocates regularization of encroachments, giving total benefits accruing from forests to people residing in it, and recommends minimal role of government and FD in forest management.

Operation Clean Yani Adivasiyo Ka Safaya published by Jan Sangharsh Morcha brings out the inhuman exploitation of *adivassi* in Bagli Tehsil, Dewas district of MP. This is a report by the team sent by Jan Sangharsh Morcha after the police-firing incidence in Mehandikhera village on 2nd April 2000.

Jungle me Dungle, Harda me Sanyukt Van Prabandhan ki Samiksha by Rahul Banerjee, Yogesh Diwan is an assessment of JFM in Harda by Gram Seva Samiti. This concludes that JFM has been unsuccessful, people are not happy with this system, benefit are being taken by few, and problem of nistar and grazing are being faced by villagers. This book calls for doing away with JFM.

Aam Logo Ke Mudde published by Jan Sangharsh Morcha has essays on peoples rights over resources, problems of farmers and farming, need of rural employment, grains rotting in graineries, reforms in electricity sector, women bearing the brunt of imperfect policies, globalization and education and Gujarat and communalism.

Vartmaan Vikaas Ki Simaye by Dr. Sachidanand Sinha is a collection of essays. The essays are on problems of civilization, consumerism, pollution and limits to resources, science and technology, centralization, free market system, India and its market system, direction of development and alternatives, socialism in changing contexts. In these essays

opposition to free trade and market system, the opposition to western ethos and civilization, people oriented use of resources rather than mechanization, and faulty developmental policies followed by the government has been brought up and socialism as the new order to bring about equity and justice has been promulgated.

Kahan to Tai Tha Chiraga Harek Ghar Ke Liye published by Jan Sangharsh Morcha is collection of essays on reforms in electricity sector. This includes another conspiracy to make country slave by Alok Agrawal; *Na Maya Mili Na Raam*: questions arising from electricity reforms in Madhya Pradesh by Sunil; electricity consumers of MP: In clutches of ADB by Chittarupa Palit; people have cut electricity and are burning kerosene by Alok Agrawal; What are you giving in return of raised electricity tariff by Shripad Dharmadhikari and Need for electricity and big dams by Alok Agrawal.

SWJP has also brought out a booklet titled *Hoshangabad Aur Betul Jilo ke Adivasiyon ka Sangharshsil Itihaas* detailing various *adivasi* uprisings against British in the region.

JSM and SWJP have published *Udarikaran ka Asli Chehra* written by Sunil. In this political essays written on liberalization or eradication of industries, death notice for small industries, mirage of foreign capital, acquisition programs of foreign companies, electricity reforms or bane, story of Enron, *loot* of foreign exchange, globalization in terms of statistics and misleading wordlist of globalization are there.

Political essays by Prem Singh of SWJP have been published as *Janiye Yogya Pradhanmantri Ko* targeting Atal Bihari Vajpeyi and *Gujrat Ke Sabak*, which have essays on mishandling of communal riots, by the Gujarat government.

Apart from these issue specific publications like publication against governments anti farmer policies, increasing unemployment, new policies of farming etc are also brought out. *Tawa Adivasi Matasya Utpadan Aur Vipanan Sahkari Sangh Maryadit, Kesla* brings out annually its progress and annual report to give details about its working in a year.

Newspaper and journals

SAS brings out a newspaper titled *Barabari ka Zamaana*. This newspaper brings out the list of activities of *Sangathan* impending and the newspaper reports about the events organized by *Sangathan*. This also gives national, local as well as village level news. Wrongdoings of government officials are also brought out along with articles on health and education. Kishan Patnaik of SWJP also brings out a periodical *Samayavik Varta* containing political essays and propagating socialist ideologies.

Sangathan top leaders, Anurag Modi, Sunil etc. also write articles in Hindi newspapers like *Dainik Jagran*, *Dainik Bhasker*, *Navbharat Times* etc. These articles are later accumulated and published as a book by Jan Sangharsh Morcha or SWJP. (See box 13 for articles on *Sangathan*.)

BOX 11: Examples of newspaper articles on Sangathans

JFM failed to help tribals, say experts, *Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, May 29,2001.
Can this save the forests? *The Hindu*, Delhi edition, February20, 2003.

Regional Dailies

Mehandikhera Firing

Tribals become target of bullets for no fault, *Free Press*, Indore, April 5,2001.
They retaliated to oppression... *Free Press*, Indore April 4,2001.
Oppressed tribals narrate their tale of woes, *Free Press*, Indore, April 4,2001.

Rally, Dharna and other strategies of Sangathan's

150 Arrested during anti-WB, ADB rally, *Free Press*, Bhopal, January 18,2001.
Jan Sangathano Ne Rally Nikal Kar Kiya Pradarshan: Girafaar, *Dainik Jagran*, Bhopal, January 18,2001
Videshi Poonjiyo ke Khilaf Girafatariyan, *Dainik Bhaskar*, January 18,2001
Jaan Se Maarne Ki Dhamki Par SJP Ka Dharna Aaj, *Nayi Duniya*, Indore, December 2,2003

Jan Sunwai at Indupura, May 27,2003 by SAS

Adivasi Auraton Se Ghar Ka Kaam Karate Hain Van Karmi, *Dainik Bhaskar*, May 25,2001
Van Vibhag Ke Adhikariyon Par Gramino Ke Dhamkaane Ka Arop, *Dainik Sandhya Prakash*, May 27, 2001
Indrapura Me Bhi Mehandikhera Jaisi Taiyari, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, May 27,2001.
Van Vishesagyon Ne Maana Prabandhan Ki Vifalta, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, May 28,2001

MP Assembly Election ,2003

Jan Sangathano Me Vishwasniyata Ki Jaroorat, *Dainik Jagran*, Bhopal, September 9, 2003.
Majloomo Ki Awaaz Uthaane Jan Andolano Ki Shuruaat Hui : Shri Yadav, *Nayi Duniya*, November 17,2003.
Kulhari Waali Bai Ka Jan Sampark Avam Aamsabha Ko Bhari Pratisaad, *Satpura Samiksha* , November 28,2003.
SJP Pratyashi Ka Anshaan Doosre Din Bhi Jaari Raha, *Rajya Ki Nayi Duniya*, Bhopal , December 4,2003.
Azaadi Ke Baad Pahlī Baar Utari Chunao Me Mahila, *Dainik Jagran*, Bhopal, December 5,2003.
Anshanrat Shamim Ki Girafatari, *Dainik Jagran*, Bhopal, December 5,2003.
SJP Ke 11 Karyakarta Girafaar, *Dainik Jagran*, Bhopal, December 6,2003.
SJP karyakartaon Pe Court Ne Zurmaana Kiya, *Dainik Jagran*, Bhopal, December 7,2003.
SJP Pratyasi Ne Abhaar Maana, *Nayi Duniya*, Indore, December 10,2003.

Parliamentary Elections

Feel Good Sif BJP Ke Liye, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, February 28,2004.
Congrees Ne Aachar Sanhita Ka Ullanghan Kiya: Modi, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, March 13,2004.
Ghooskhori Va Atyachar Karne Waalo Ko Adivasiyon Ki Chetawani, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, March 14,2004.
SJP Ne Vajpeyi Se Pooche Bees Sawaal, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, March 15,2004.

Peoples issues

Van Raksha Samiti Adhyaksha Par Mamla Darj, *Navbharat*, Bhopal, August,1, 2002.
Vankarmiyon Ne Adivasiyon Ki Fasal Charayi, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, September,3, 2003.
Zameen Gayi Gaon Bhi Chorna Para, *Dainik Bhaskar*, Bhopal, July 16,2003

Newspaper article by Anurag Modi (SAS)

Adivasiyon Aur Junglee Suaron Ke Bich Jeevan Sangharsh, *Dainik Bhaskar*, April 16, 2001.
Angrezo Ki Van Niti Ko Dhoti Hamaari Sarkaar, *Dainik Bhaskar*, June 23, 2001.

Sangathan Publication (Barabari Ka Zamaana)

Mahilaon Par Atyachar Karne Waalo Ko Bachati Hai Hamaari Sarkaar, *Barabari Ka Zamaana*, Vol.6, Baitul
Kanoon Ke Pandrah Sao Rupaye Ne Bharat Singh Ki Jaan Li, *Barabari Ka Zamaana*, Vol.6, Baitul
Aam Logon Ko Rajniti Karna Hoga, *Barabari Ka Zamaana*, Vol.5, Baitul

Slogans

Adivasi, in general, participate in *Sangathan* activities in-group, as entire lineages or villages, rather than individually. The collective identity of *Sangathan*'s members is also manifested through the exchange of a greeting special to the *Sangathan* of the likes of *Zindabad* that is used by SAS and KAS. When people of different villages but belonging to same *Sangathan* meet, each raises a clenched fist and calls out a particular hearty slogan like “*Ladenge Mareng*”, *Jina hai to Marna Sikho, Kadam Kadam Pe Marna Sikho* signifying the struggle and fight against oppression. *Sangathans* also use *adivasi songs* consisting of short melodies. The improvised words of these songs make them ideal for adaptation by the *Sangathan*. Following this SAS has brought out collection of songs in a cassette form under title of “*Ladat Jaa Re*”.

Media Publicity

The *Sangathans* also use the media intensively for publicity of its work. They maintain cordial relations with the local newspapers like *Dainik Bhaskar* and *Dainik Jagran*. They also ensure that the media is intimated in advance about the *rallies, dharnas*, or other events that organized by *Sangathans*. These newspapers on the other hand provide coverage of these events. The media is also used to publicise the cases of bribery, exploitation etc. raised by *Sangathan*. At regular intervals, press briefings (and sometimes detailed articles) are also provided by the leaders to the media. See Box 11 for examples of type of articles/ media reports related to *Sangathans*.

Active participation in politics

The *Sangathans* in Harda area are now actively participating in politics under the aegis of SWJP, which was formed in 1995. In the last MP assembly elections there were four candidates in the electoral fray from SWJP. Fagram from KAS contested from Itarasi, Ajay Khare from Rewa, and Shamim Modi and Mangal Singh of SAS contested from Ghodadongri and Harda electoral constituencies.

In the parliamentary elections in May 2004 Shamim Modi and Sunil Gupta – founder members of SAS and KAS respectively – contested from Harda-Betul and Itarasi-Narsinghpur constituencies. The reason/logic for participating in politics was narrated by Shamim Modi of SAS⁹⁹ as “*The thought process that led to our entry into politics was based on the recognition that for the last eight years we have been leading dharnas, morchas and rallies on a range of issues. But, as soon as the elections come around, the support that we have created on these issues gets fragmented and taken over by the mainstream political process. In fact, we feel that we were creating a forum, which the mainstream parties are simply taking over. So, the mainstream parties were capitalizing all the power that we had created from the movement. This is when we realized that the politicization of our support was very necessary.*”

⁹⁹ Towards an alternative politics: People's movements join the electoral process By Girija Godbole and Bhaskar Vira

Anurag Modi, her husband and co-worker in the *Sangathan*, argues¹⁰⁰ that it is the democratic process itself, which demands participation from those who are practicing an alternative strategy at the grassroots. He says: *“We believe in the democratic system. Then how will people get empowered until we enter politics? You cannot stay away from politics and expect it to be clean at the same time. How will the poor govern unless the politics reflects their priorities?” When elections come around, people need political options that reflect their own priorities, especially the issues of water, forests and land (jal, jangal, zamin) that are core issues for rural livelihoods. The mainstream parties tend to co-opt these issues into their broader strategies, so it is important for the Sangathans to enter the political fray to ensure that these issues remain central during the election period.”*¹⁰¹

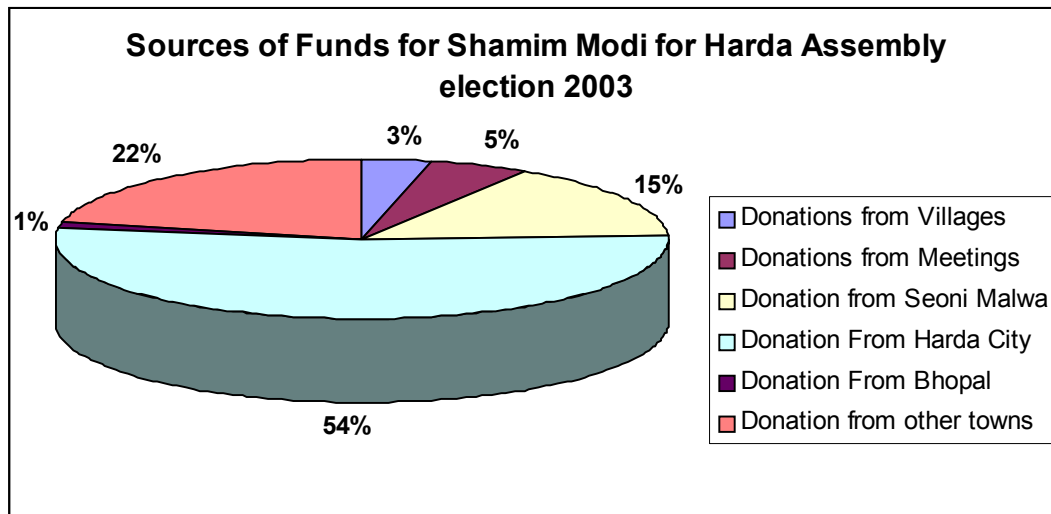
The financial requirements for contesting the elections was provided through the contributions made by the *Sangathan* members, who contributed Rs 5 to 20 as election contribution in cash and also two kilograms of grain in the election fund. The *Sangathan* members say that they did not have enough resources to campaign for the elections, and that they managed all parliamentary constituency by just two jeeps. *“Our members moved around in villages on foot and did election campaigning for us. We had limited pamphlets, posters also so we used our resources judiciously. In each of the villages we sent two posters and limited pamphlets. We requested our members to read out our pamphlets to others so that maximum people can be reached to. We were not fighting elections on ideology and beliefs but also against corrupt practice of distributing liquor and money on the election eve. Wherever, we went we requested the peoples to reject the liquor and money being offered to them.”*¹⁰²

However, the mandatory income and expense statement submitted to the Election Commission by Shamim Modi of SAS indicates that main source of funds for fighting elections is primarily donations from towns. Only 3% of the income generated was from villages and rest coming from towns and cities. Thus, while membership of *Sangathan* is primarily rural and *adivasi*, the fund support is mostly urban.

¹⁰⁰ Towards an alternative politics: People’s movements join the electoral process By Girija Godbole and Bhaskar Vira

¹⁰¹ Towards an alternative politics: People’s movements join the electoral process By Girija Godbole and Bhaskar Vira

¹⁰² Shamim Modi, personal communication



Source: Shamim Modi (2003) *Election Income and Expenses Account for Harda Assembly Election 2003*, (Unpublished Document)

Sangathans use *padyatras*, *jansampark* and regular meetings as the campaigning strategy even during the elections. NBA leader Medha Patkar, SWJP founder Kishan Patnaik and renowned political analyst Yogendra Yadav, Prof. Prem Singh of Delhi University, Prof. Aflatoon Desai of Banaras Hindu University and eminent newspaper columnist Kuldeep Nayyar came out in support of SWJP candidates and canvassed for them by addressing public rallies.

Fagram and Shamim managed to get more than 9,000 and 3,000 votes in Itarsi and Harda constituency respectively while the other two candidates Mangal Singh and Ajay Khare got 2,712 and 789 votes respectively in the assembly elections while in parliamentary elections Sunil got 8289 while Shamim Modi got 9428 odd votes.

The defeat in the elections has not disheartened the *Sangathan* members- as Shamim says '*elections are a long-term strategy to bring about change*'. She said that elections for us are a four-step process. First step is to generate awareness amongst the electorate (*pahchaan banane ke liye*), second is to lose (*harne ke liye*) third is to make others lose elections (*harane ke liye*) and then the final will be to win (*jeetne ke liye*). We have got so many votes signifying our support base.' Encouraged by electoral response she is shifting her residence to Harda from Betul and has decided to diversify their base to now include urban constituency as well.

Table 3 shows the polling stations where Shamim Modi got over 5 % votes indicating the areas where SAS / SWJP is strong.

Table 3- Booths where Shamim Modi got over 5% of the votes polled in Parliamentary Election 2004.

Polling Station	Votes in favour of Votes Polled for Shamim Modi	Total Valid Total Votes	Total percentage of Percentage Votes Polled for Shamim Modi
Banspani	86	206	41.74
Sonpura	171	439	38.95
Jamnyakhurd	35	117	29.91
Bhawanpura	97	388	25.00
Bichpurimal	99	463	21.38
Kaili	137	647	21.17
Kadolaradha	70	341	20.52
Temlawadimal	91	464	19.61
Bataya	51	278	18.34
Latpuramal	40	250	16.00
Khudiya	89	562	15.83
Badwani	59	396	14.89
Temrubahar	73	499	14.62
Gomgaon	50	373	13.40
Anjarad raiyt	31	233	13.30
Chandrakhal	58	442	13.12
Makdaikila	16	145	11.03
Debrabandi	40	364	10.98
Sohagpur	45	428	10.5
Samradha	31	303	10.23
Babdiya	51	506	10.07
Kanpura	43	444	9.68
Kothami	26	273	9.52
Sukharas	59	655	9.00
Dhupkarn	41	471	8.70
Harda 22	28	338	8.28
Kachnar	53	680	7.79
Khidki	31	424	7.31
Palasner	41	579	7.08
Kelanpur	26	386	6.73
Sanval	26	411	6.32
Panchazalai	17	271	6.27
Balagaon 103	30	481	6.23

Perceptions of *Sangathans* and NGOs

Jhadbida_119	22	372	5.91
Javarda	10	175	5.71
Somgaonkala	27	508	5.31
Patalda	19	380	5.00

Source: Election Commission of India

ANNEXURE-3

Hindi and English Translation of Songs in Audiocassette Ladat Jaa Re brought out by Abivvakti Media For Development, Nashik.

Loot Liya Re

Loot Liya Re
Loot liya re hamka loot liya re,
Dekho din ke dufere me loot liya re.
Deputy bhi loote hamka ranger bhi loote,
Lootan ka lagya kalya nakedar re. Dekho din...
Thanedar loote hamka hawaldar loote,
Lootan ka lagya police kalakar re. Dekho din...
Patwari loote hamka RI bhi loote,
Lootan ka lagya tahsildar re. Dekho din...
Court bhi loote hamka kachari bhi loote,
Lootan ka lagya hamka sarkaar re. Dekho din...
Teli bhi loote hamka mali bhi loote,
Lootan ka lagya sara bazaar re. Dekho din...

Go on Fighting

We have been looted, we have been looted,
See we have been looted in the broad daylight.
Deputy ranger loots us, and so does range officer,
Even black forest guard is busy looting us. See we...
Police sub inspector loots us and so does hawaldar¹,
Police is busy looting us. See we...
Patwari loots us and so does revenue inspector,
Even tahsildar¹ is busy looting us. See we...
Court loots and so does the offices,
The government is also looting us. See we...
Gardener loots us and so does oil vendor,
The whole market is busy looting us. See we...

Tappar Tappar

Tappaar tappaar ghoom re, nakedar thanedar,
Daru murga mange re, nakedar thanedar.
Ballar Bhutta Mange re nakedar, thanedar,
Nakedar thanedar, police wale hawaldar.
Murgi ka anda mange re nakedar, thanedar,
Jopari hamre tore re nakedar, thanedar.
Jungle ko katwaye re nakedar, thanedar,
Nakedar thanedar, policewaale hawaldar.
Jel kachari bheje re nakedar, thanedar,
Jurmana hamse mange re, nakedar, thanedar,
Chamki dhamki kare re, nakedar, thanedar.
Kanoon ka danda mare re nakedar, thanedar
Begari hamse karawe re nakedar, thanedar
Ghi doodh mange re nakedar, thanedar.

Hutment hutment

Forest guard and police sub inspector roams around our hutments,
Forest guard and police sub inspector ask for liquor and chicken.
Forest guard and police sub inspector ask for maize and grains,
Forest guard, police sub inspector and hawaldar of police.
Forest guard and police sub inspector ask for eggs of hen from us,
Forest guard and police sub inspector breaks our hutments.
Forest guard and police sub inspector make us cut forests,
Forest guard, police sub inspector and hawaldar of police.
Forest guard and police sub inspector sends us to courts, offices and prison,
Forest guard and police and sub inspector ask for fines from us.
Forest guard and police and sub inspector threaten us and create problems from us,
Forest guard and police sub inspector beats us with the stick of law.
Forest guard and police sub inspector and hawaldar of police,
Forest guard and police sub inspector makes us do begar.

ANNEXURE -4**List Of Abbreviations**

AA	Aide at Action
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AMS	Adivasi Mukti Sangathan
BAM	Brothers to All Men
BJA	Bharat Jan Andolan
BMO	Block Medical Officer
CMM	Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha
CFM	Community Forest Management
DFID	Department for International Development
EP	Ekta Parishad
FD	Forest Department
GSS	Gram Seva Samiti
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JFM	Joint Forest Management
JFMC	Joint Forest Management Committee
JSM	Jan Sangharsh Morcha
KAS	Kisan Adivasi Sangathan
KMCS	Khedut Majdoor Chetna Sangathan
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MNC	Multi National Corporation
MP	Member of Parliament
NAPM	National Alliance For Peoples Movement
NBA	Narmada Bachao Andolan
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NVP	Narmada Valley Project
PCCF	Principal Chief Conservator of Forest
PRI	Panchayati Raj Organisation
SAS	Sharamik Adivasi Sangathan
SC	Schedule Caste
SHG	Self Help Group
SP	Superintendent of Police
ST	Schedule Tribe
SWJP	Samaajwadi Jan Parishad
UN	United Nations
US	United States
VSS	Van Surakhya Samiti