



Participatory Action Research for Ecologically Sound Development in a Tribal region of Gujarat

Joint Journey of

**Fenai-Rewakhand
Jaiv Shristi Mandal**

**Aadivasi Jan
Utthan Trust**

HABITAT

Report submitted to

India Friend's Association, America

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The following narration is explaining the progress of the work in the first Half of this year, what is achieved on the ground in the study region.

Goal:

To develop a model for ecologically sustainable development in Chhota Udepur tribal region, which will have relevance to other experiments across the country.

“As per the goal, the social mould is ready to build and shape the proposed sustainable model with community’s engagement in Chhota Udepur. The ongoing process and experiment has shown its relevance in another state and the same work has been welcomed by Govt. of Madhya Pradesh.”

Objectives:

1. To provide a vision of sustainable development to the community, based on the concrete natural and human resources available with the community by effectively using the provisions of law and funds/resources available with the local community including Govt. schemes etc.
2. To engage all the sections of the tribal society including children, youth, women and elders as change makers in the community with a view to understand how this can be made possible in reality.

Objectives achieved till date:

As per the objective 1, a tribal youth team from 5 villages is under training for multi tasking, they are learning the ground process which was first given to Nandukaka and Ditliben. Now this team is working on ground to work in more villages at same time. The local community of Fenai Revakhand Jaiv Shristi Mandal is now ready with understanding on Biodiversity Act 2002 and Forest Rights Act 2006.

As per the objective 2, the continuous process and activities have gathered collective energy of all the sections of the society including children, youth, women and elders

The whole process and its outcomes (refer the pictorial report annexure 1):

Part A. Social & Ecological movement:

Actions undertaken during September - December 2017 (before the fellowship time):

Preparatory phase:

The idea was to break the established concept of top down approach and make people realise the importance of their own knowledge as developed through their engagement with the natural resources.

- Selection of 'UCHEDA' village as primary study village among the 42 villages in the same landscape & dependent on same Forest resources namely – Fenai Mata, Bhandan Deo, Rogiyo Deo & Rani Kajal Mata forests
- Selection & research trainings of 2 para research fellows (fusion of their own traditional-cultural knowledge with new research methodologies) Nandubhai Rathva & Ditliben Rathva
- Children's forest committee at AAJ Ashramshala comprising 346 tribal children
- Forest resource mapping & assessment for Database creation
- Continuous dialogues with community to bring out their views & knowledge with objective of integrated landscape level development plan & CFR.
- Social-cultural-economical-ecological-health data collection of Ucheda and other villages by 2 PR fellows through activities & surveys
- Biodiversity games with children
- 1st Draft report by both PR Fellows (in Gujarati)
- Plan finalized with local panchayat & community of Ucheda for Maha Gramsabha & a daylong - forest festival in January 2018.
- Continuation of activities, survey & assessment at Falaa (hamlet) level
- Jungle safari with children & youth



Ucheda villagers



Children's forest committee



Both PR Fellows with children

- Phyto-Nutrition forest journey with women to celebrate their forgotten Wild & traditional healthy recipes
- Spiritual Tourism plan discussion in Rewa region with local youth
- Local Seed bank discussion and finalization (at AAJ)
- Two monthly reports prepared by PR fellows (in Gujarati)
- Preparation and invitation to all villages of the Fenai region for the proposed Maha Gram Sabha & forest festival in January
- Invitations to all related communities, persons, Govt. Dept. & org., NGOs for the proposed event in January

In meetings at Ucheda, in response to a query as to what the team has to offer, it was pointed out that once the study is complete you will know how much is going out of the village or getting destroyed. True to this prediction, the analysis of two crops cotton and tomato showed that while the turnover may be 3 to 4 crores, about 2/3rd of this is going in pesticide and fertilizer. Apart from this final value at end consumer doorstep is even more. The community is only getting 20% of the output. On the other hand the rich biodiversity in the region and the potential that can be unleashed by strategic use of renewable energy for which ITI graduates can be trained can ensure that most of the value is used in generating local employment and enhancing self consumption against market orientation. Critical development of proposals for use of government funding and that of patrons could help power this development.

Part B. Field interventions and outcomes:

B1. Actions & field interventions during the fellowship period (January – August 2018):

Field interventions during January to March 2018 ...



Interventions during April to August 2018

- Data gathering through meetings, discussions, activities
- Continuation of Fala level meetings and discussions with all members of community
- Forest walk and Biodiversity journey with villagers
- Dialogues with different Govt agencies in the region
- Learning visits of tribal group of different areas of Gujarat
- Learning visit of Independent socialist of Uttarakhand
- Invitation to present the process and implications at the international conference organized by Govt. of Madhya Pradesh
- Invitation to implement the process in Biodiversity Heritage Site participatory conservation & management plan development in Madhya Pradesh by MP State Biodiversity Board



Great impact of region level Community involvement

Two major activities helped to bring all the villages of the Fenai Rewakhand Jaiv Shrishti Mandal under one umbrella. This also helped to understand the overall perspective of the local community about their natural resources and keen interest for conservation and management

(1) Forest festival (organized on 19th January 2018)

To celebrate their Natural resources, discontinued best practices, traditional recipes, traditional knowledge, indigenous science, natural crafts and cultural heritage

(2) Maha Gram Sabha (held on 20th January 2018)

- Sharing of report of PR fellows, Sustainable Ecological Dev. Plan & CFR process with villages of Fenai-Rewakhand Jaiv Srushti Mandal.
- Identification of Five villages for 1st Phase process namely – Mandwada, Mundamor, Munglawant, Lalpur, Songadh
- Field visits and implementation of training modules with tribal youth

Glimpse of Forest Festival & Maha Gram Sabha

Banner of Forest festival & Maha Gram Sabha



“Fenai Mata Jaiv Shrishti Mandal Welcomes You”



Preparation going on...

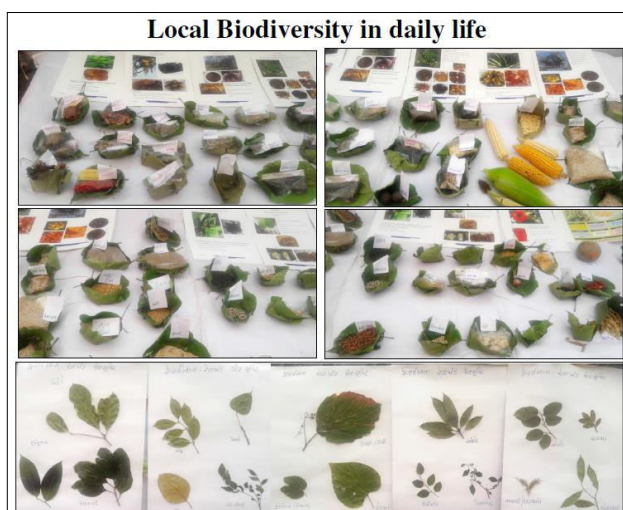


Venue of
Forest festival
&
Maha Gram
Sabha

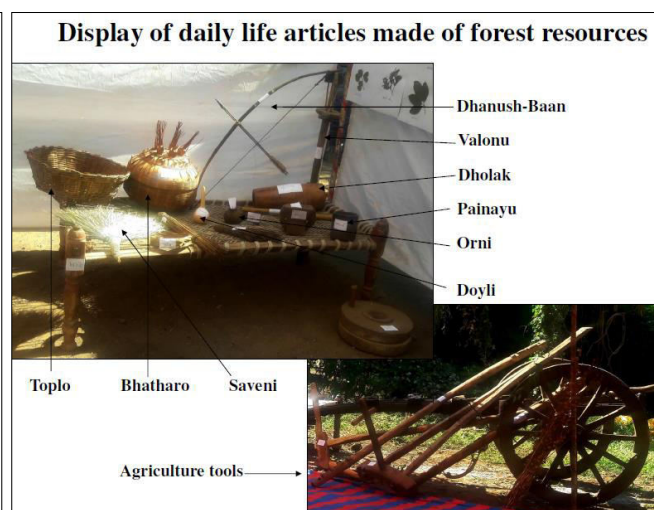
Celebration
of relation
with Nature

Display of local biodiversity and daily life articles made of forest resources

The exhibition included children's herbarium of 70 wild plant species, seeds of different wild foods, medicinal plants (covering more than 300 sp.).



Local Biodiversity in daily life



Display of daily life articles made of forest resources

Cultural items included food processing equipments; agriculture tools, animal husbandry, musical instruments, social celebrations (wedding, child birth, etc.) and hunting etc. were displayed in the festival. People from different villages took keen interest in the exhibition.



Ditliben addressing villagers during Maha Gram Sabha

The question related to both assertion of rights on the forest and duty to protect it in the interest of not only meeting the day to day requirements but also in terms of the preservation of the cultural heritage of the region.



Village representatives & leaders sharing their views during Maha Gram Sabha

Through presentation after presentation, it became clear that there is a lot more to their life and culture than what the market makes them believe. There is a need to assert one's own knowledge based on learning from the past heritage related to the life styles based on the natural resource heritage of the region.



Tribal girls - the prominent leaders with gender dimension in CFR & women's role in Ecologically sound sustainable development



Tribal leader reading 'Ghoshana Patra' The Declaration – Conservation & Coexistence



આપણો સંકલ્પ ફેનાઈ-રેવાખંડ જૈવસૃષ્ટિ મંડળ

તા- ૨૦ જાન્યુઆરી ૨૦૧૮

અમે ફેનાઈ-રેવાખંડ પ્રદેશના આદિવાસીઓ સદીઓથી અમારા જંગલ, જળ, જમીન, જનાવર સાથે જ જીવવાની સંસ્કૃતિ સાથે જીવી રહ્યા છીએ. અમારા ખેતી, પશુપાલન, સ્વાસ્થ્ય અને ઔષધિઓ, સંસ્કૃતિ, પરંપરાઓ, રીતી-રિવાજો અને તમામ સામાજિક-આર્થિક વ્યવહારો અમારા જંગલોનાં આધારે જ છે. ફેનાઈમાતા તથા નર્મદા (રેવા) નદી પરિક્રમણી ભાગ હોવાથી આ સમગ્ર વિસ્તાર પર્વોવરણીય, સાંસ્કૃતિક અને સામાજિક રીતે ખુબજ મહત્વનો છે.

અમારા જંગલ અને જૈવસૃષ્ટિની રક્ષા, સમજદારીપૂર્વક ઉપયોગ તથા જાણવણી (વ્યવસ્થાપન) અમે કરતા રહ્યા છીએ અને હંમેશા કરતા રહીશું. જંગલ-જળ-જમીન અને તમામ જૈવસૃષ્ટિ આદિવાસી સમાજના જીવન અને સંસ્કૃતિનો મૂળ આધાર છે. તેથી તેમને બચાવવા અમે સમાજ તથા સરકાર સાથે મળીને જંગલ-જમીન-જૈવસૃષ્ટિ-જૈવવિવિધતાના સંરક્ષણ માટેના કાયદાઓની સમજ કેળવી અમારા તમામ પ્રાકૃતિક સંસાધનોને કોઈપણ પ્રકારના ખતરા ભય કે પડકારોથી બચાવીશું.

આજે અમે ફેનાઈ-રેવાખંડ પ્રદેશના તમામ આદિવાસીઓ સંકલ્પ લઈએ છીએ કે પ્રકૃતિના નિયમ-કાયદા અનુસાર આપણા જંગલોને સદાયને માટે સચાવીશું અને તે માટે જરૂરી સંસ્કારો અને કામો અમારા તમામ જીવન વ્યવહારોમાં અમલમાં ઉતારીશું. અમે સારી રીતે જાણીએ છીએ કે ફરજ અને જવાબદારીમાંથી જ અધિકારનો જન્મ થાય છે. તેથી વન અધિકાર અધિનિયમ ૨૦૦૬ પ્રમાણે અમે દરેક ગામમાં પર્વોવરણ સંરક્ષણ સમિતી બનાવીને સામુદાયિક વન જવાબદારી તથા સામુદાયિક વન અધિકાર ધ્વારા આપણા ફેનાઈમાતા, ભાંડલદેવ, રોજીયાદેવ તેમજ રાણીકાજલમાતાનાં તમામ જંગલોનું સંરક્ષણ કરીશું.

ફેનાઈ-રેવાખંડ જૈવસૃષ્ટિ મંડળ

The Declaration

Fenai-Rewakhand Jaiv Shrishti Mandal

We, the tribal people of Fenai-Rewakhand region, culturally living with our forests, water, land and biodiversity for centuries. Our agriculture, animal rearing, health-medicines, culture, traditions, customs and all socio-economic practices are dependent on our forests. Due to the Sacred Circumbulation of Mother Narmada, this region is ecologically-culturally and socially very important.

We have always been protecting our natural & cultural heritage and will continue to do so. Jungle-water-land and biodiversity are the basis of life for Adivasi. That is why we will use all the provisions of law to elicit cooperation from the government and society in order to withstand all challenges and threats.

Today we, the residents of Fenai-Rewakhand Jaiv Shrishti Mandal pledge to protect and preserve our natural heritage and in order to do so we will imbibe all necessary values and culture. We very well understand that rights emerge from responsibility therefore, we will use the FRA 2006 and constitute environmental committees in all villages and through community forest responsibility and community forest rights, we will protect the forests of Fenaimata, Ronjiyadeo, Bhandandeo and Ranikajalmata.

Signed by
Villages of Fenai-Rewakhand Jaiv Shrishti Mandal

B2. Critical Issues:

Following points were critical during Actions

- The first phase process has started in the villages of Mandwada, Mundamor, Munglawant, Lalpur, Songadh who have shown immediate interest to implement CFR and Biological Diversity Act 2002 in their villages.
- Total consensus on all aspects was not possible in the first phase (due to past experience and misinformation spread by vested interests opposing the process of collective leadership).
- Even though AAJ has been working in the region for over 20 years now, the issues faced above make it clear that it is a qualitatively new type of intervention.

Gender and other dimensions in CFR & overall process:

- On issues to engagement and involvement of women, the basic outlook and approach of the society is patriarchal. Strong resistance to equal status for women in decision making. The process therefore required separate engagement with women to build capacities as also to show the relevance of women's concerns and perspective on common property resources and rights issues, which are distinctly different from men. Along with the CFR process, care has been taken to identify and address women's issues at village level.
- Engagement with children apart from other issues is with the objective of finding neutral ground to develop an integrated perspective to sustainable management of natural resources for governance. Children and youth are the key elements to develop a live Natural resource based traditional knowledge bank at village level.
- The relevance and importance of the Biodiversity act 2002 and the need to take this up as a first step in the development of CFR has been underlined till date. Therefore, the social process included the field-based activities to capture the attention of community on the ecological wealth of overall natural resources and their traditional knowledge wisdom for their own existence and legal recognition.
- The ground process gave clarity to understand the autonomous process at village level (local governance) and related external process (dependent on the interest of government officials and internal processes within the government machinery which will unfold as the grass root level process develops). There is a need for the village process to emerge independent of the government unlike what is happening today (and how it affects the collective mindset of the people that depend on 'local leadership'). The relevance of AAJ as local leadership and the process being followed by it to bring about the desired changes.

Part C. Extension of the process:

(1) Engagement with civil society groups:

- The youth leader Mihir Bharadwaj and tribal youth group of Polo forest of Sabarkantha district of Gujarat attended the Forest festival and Maha gram sabha. They learned about the participatory social process and have started creating a similar process in Southern Rajasthan and Northern Gujarat forest regions.
- Retd. Group Captain and independent socialist Pramodkumar Chandola spent 10 days in April. He observed, reviewed and now creating the similar process in villages of Pauri Gadhwal region of Uttarakhand.
- Invitation from Gaushala & Panjarapole Mahasangh of Gujarat for development and management of Pasture resource areas with community involvement
- Process of women cooperative based on local biodiversity based product development



(2) Engagement with State government:

- The process at Chhota Udepur and recognition of AAJ as a partner agency for mass awareness in the process of implementation of the Biodiversity Act 2002. Series of Awareness workshops going on with local forest officials in the region regarding CFR and PBR- Biodiversity Act 2002
- Collaboration with Chhota Udepur forest department and Chhota Udepur district Education department (regarding Nature Education)
- Also AAJ become a partner agency with Gujarat Gauseva Ayog & Pasture Development Board regarding Pasture development and best quality Bulls distribution in tribal belt of Gujarat



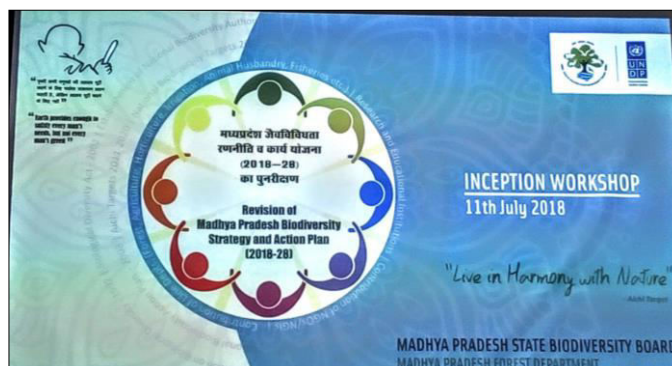
DFO Puvar, Chhota Udepur



Dr Kathiria, Gujarat Gauseva & Pasture Dev.Board

(3) Engagement with Govt at National level:

- The Ministry of Woman & Child Welfare of Govt of Madhya Pradesh is interested and invited to implement the similar process in the tribal region of Burhanpur district of Madhya Pradesh
- The State Biodiversity Board of Madhya Pradesh has invited to implement the PBR process under Biodiversity Act 2002 in Patalkot and Bhadola region of Madhya Pradesh



(4) Presentation of the visible results of the process at the International conference organized by Govt. of MP (14 – 16 May 2018)



(5) Presentation of the process and result by community leaders at National Convention, Ranchi (August 2018)

- Fenai-Rewakhand Jaiv Shrishti Mandal team presented the process, struggle and result at Second National Convention of Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti held at Ranchi. In his address to the gathering (from nine States of the country namely Rajasthan, Gujarat, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Odisha,

Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh) lasting 45 minutes Ratan Bhagat outlined the Ten year long journey questioning the current form of development as usual which destroyed not only the natural resource base but also the culture and integrity of the tribal system while not being able to deliver on essentials like jobs and basic necessities like health, food security and education. He was critical of an education system that destroyed the confidence of the tribal in his own knowledge while not providing anything substantial in return.

- A team also visited Ulihatu the birthplace of Birsa Munda along with a group from other States. The meeting was a fitting affirmation of Adivasi solidarity on World Adivasi Day.



(6) Leadership of upcoming State level workshop (October 2018)

In collaboration with All India Forest Forum for Rights struggles, AAJ has taken responsibility for organizing a State Level workshop at Vadodara on October 13th and 14th with the following agenda

- Draft forest Policy 2018.
- Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act and rules
- Post Community Forest Rights agenda along the lines being worked out by AAJ and Habitat with fenai Mata Rewakhand Jaiv Shristi Mandal.

Activities of Habitat during January-August 2018

- Series of Ecological farming workshops in North Gujarat to spread agro forestry-natural farming practices
- 14 soil kitchens developed with 82 marginal farmers
- A total of 3287 ecological farmers joined to improve and increase agro diversity and agro production. The emergence of a 'model farmer' for agroecology in Visnagar – Jayesh Patel (photo).
- Indigenous Seed bank preparation started for North Gujarat region
- 2 Kisan nursery started
- 6 Nursery process going on for Kitchen gardening saplings in urban area.
- 19 Agro forestry workshops done with farmers of North Gujarat region.
- Collaborations with other institutions- My New India Trust, Sanjivani, Gauseva & Pasture Dev. Board, Gujarat; State Biodiversity Board Madhya Pradesh, ICDS of MP
- Presented the learning of the process at Fenai-Rewakhand at various conference, seminar, tribal groups, and forums.
- 12 workshops done on 'Medicinal plants & sustainable health' in Visnagar, Jamnagar, Vadnagar, Palanpur, Bhopal.
- 2 MSc students joined as volunteer in ongoing action research.
- Medicinal plants based healthy food product making trainings given to 14 orphan women at HABITAT.
- More than 68 posters and banners developed for mass awareness campaigns
- More than 20000 indigenous tree saplings plantation done in 6 ecorestoration workshops in North Gujarat region with the help of children and local forest department. Out of 20000 saplings, 4000 saplings were prepared in HABITAT nursery.

