



FES

FOUNDATION FOR ECOLOGICAL SECURITY

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Our Mission

“As ‘ecological security’ is the foundation of sustainable and equitable development, the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) is committed to strengthening, reviving or restoring, where necessary, the process of ecological succession and the conservation of land, forest and water resources in the country. **”**

To this end FES:

WORKS towards the ecological restoration and conservation of land and water resources in the uplands and other eco-fragile, degraded, and marginalised zones of the country, and to this end to set in place the processes of coordinated human effort and governance, and provide relief to the poor, in particular;

WORKS either directly, or with and through a range of democratic village institutions, their federal bodies, and civil society organisations, set up through initiatives that are ecologically sustainable, socially and economically equitable;

ENSURES the ecological integrity of all efforts by working, as far as possible, with entire landscapes and with all the inter-related communities within it, through a range of arrangements on their land and aquatic resources, whether Commons, Public or Private;

WORKS for and promotes stability of the ecosystems through protection and restoration of biological diversity, including the diversity of species, age diversity, genetic variability as well as that of structural composition;

COLLABORATES with Panchayat Raj and other democratic village institutions, as well as appropriate civil society organisations, in their efforts to fulfil the objectives of the society, and to provide technical and financial assistance to them.



COVER: Commonly called the Pagoda flower, this species of *Clerodendrum* is native to India and Southeast Asia. *Clerodendrum spp.* produce flower heads that serve the vital ecological function of providing nutrition to important pollinators such as sunbirds, which in turn protect their food source fiercely.

Cover Photo: I P Bopanna

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Mahendra Vyas

(Ex-officio Member Secretary)

Sudarshan Iyengar

Usha Thorat

Mr. Ramaswamy R Iyer, former Chairman and Member of the Board of Governors of FES, passed away on 9th September 2015 in New Delhi. We hold in high regard his true appreciation of the life of rivers and his deep concern for the less privileged. FES cherishes the association with Mr. Iyer and will continue to emulate his views and values in our work in rural India.

Our Organisation

Registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI 1860, the Foundation for Ecological Security was set up in 2001 to reinforce the massive and critical task of ecological restoration in the country.

The Foundation strives for a future that is based on a holistic understanding of the principles that govern the inter-relationships of various life forms and natural systems. By working on systemic issues that can bring about a multiplier change, we look forward to a future where the local communities determine and move towards desirable land-use practices based on principles of conservation and social justice.

The FES Signature

The Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) works towards centre-staging ecological agenda alongside priorities of economic growth, reorienting progress from a perspective of nature conservation and social justice.

Working with Panchayats as partners, FES helps decentralise environmental management and demonstrates strength of local communities to collaborate and deploy local knowledge to cost-effectively manage complex problems.

FES brings two fundamental slants to the practice – an ecological leaning to the dominant views of ‘natural resource management’ where ‘nature and natural processes’ are often disregarded and, secondly, a Commons paradigm in governance of shared natural resources such as forests, pastures and water bodies.

In India, FES has played a pioneering role in furthering the concept of Commons both as an effective property regime of local governance, and shared resource systems as an important economic asset of the poor as well as a repository serving critical ecological functions.

FES embeds three fundamental tenets in its approach to sustainably manage natural resources – nature’s potential to heal itself, secure tenure over shared resources, and community institutions for self-regulation.

In its approach, FES

- Works on natural features such as a range of hills or streams and all villages that lie in contiguity, to build on the existing natural, social and cultural landscapes.
- Executes MoUs with governments for long-term lease of common land to village communities, undertaking campaigns and cost-sharing arrangements for programme execution.
- Collaborates with leading international universities and research institutes on areas such as human and nature interactions, adaptation to climate vulnerability, institutional arrangements over shared resources and collective tenure rights on common land. Such engagements are aimed at improving rigour, developing tools and advancing professional zeal.
- Works from local to national level and is well positioned to feel the pulse on the ground, undertake comparative assessments and spread good practices across geographies and influence and disseminate policies.
- Uses high-end Remote Sensing and GIS-based non-spatial data to develop spatial atlases to assist in planning (<http://www.fes.org.in/atlas-of-development-trends-orissa.pdf>). Developed a biodiversity portal (<http://www.indianbiodiversity.org/>) which had 26,000 visitors last year.



Jagdeesh Rao, Chief Executive, FES, received the prestigious 'Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship' for 2015 at the 11th Annual Skoll World Forum at Oxford, England, on 16th April 2015.

Skoll Foundation's Social Entrepreneurship Award

Defined as drivers of change, the Skoll Foundation's Social Entrepreneurship Award chooses those who practise combining innovation, resourcefulness, and opportunity to address critical social and environmental challenges. "Social entrepreneurs dare to change the world. Within every social entrepreneur is an unwavering belief that big, seemingly intractable problems offer unsurpassed opportunities. By instigating seismic change in our society where it is desperately needed – in the education of girls and the protection of resources like our air, oceans, and public lands – these four entrepreneurs are giving us good reason to believe in a radically better future." – Jeff Skoll, Founder and Chairman of the Skoll Foundation.

Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) and Jagdeesh Rao, the Chief Executive, have been conferred the prestigious 'Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship' for 2015 at the 11th Annual Skoll World Forum at Oxford, England, on 16th April 2015. The award energises the ongoing efforts of FES in championing Commons at both national and international levels.





CORNERSTONES

The Foundation for Ecological Security builds on the following three fundamental dimensions:

- Conserving nature, restoring and managing shared resources such as forests, land and water.
- Advancing self-governing capacity of rural communities and their community institutions to promote collective decision-making and inclusion of the poor and marginalised.
- Improving economic opportunities from better management of natural resources.

Rising temperatures, receding forest cover, declining water tables and biodiversity are among the most pressing problems facing the world.

Ecological Restoration

FES works in varied geographical regions and landscapes as diverse as forests, scrublands, grasslands, farm fields and water bodies. We work in areas with a preponderance of common lands and areas adjacent to protected forests.

In restoring degraded lands and stressed ecosystems, our efforts are to emulate natural processes. We assist communities in designing plans for soil and moisture conservation and fostering regeneration, for improving surface and groundwater availability, and for enhancing vegetation and biodiversity.

Typically, these measures have led to marked improvements in soil health, groundwater levels, biomass productivity and biodiversity – and therefrom to improved area under cropping, crop productivity and availability of fodder and water.

We undertake assessments on the availability and use of biomass and water so as to determine ecological thresholds and trigger corrective action on injudicious practices such as growing water-intensive crops in dryland areas and tree-felling beyond regenerative capacity.

Arpit Deomurari



We need to centre stage ecological agenda alongside priorities of economic growth and social justice.

INR 30,000 crores spent annually on NREGA could be used productively to restore 2.5 million acres of degraded ecosystems and create durable community assets such as forests, pastures and water bodies.



Mainstream notions of development undervalue the capacities of local communities in collectively managing shared natural resources.

Community Institutions

By arranging for secure tenure on common lands and channeling public funds, FES assists communities in managing natural resources by building on their existing norms, enabling spaces for women and the marginalised, mapping and inventorying their resources, claiming rights over land and produce, and surfacing attendant duties and responsibilities.

At the village level, though we work with various community institutions, principles of inclusion, access to benefits, sharing of responsibilities and collective decision-making act as a common denominator across the range of institutions. We further assist in nesting such institutions within the Panchayats and Gram Sabhas to gain constitutional recognition to ensure rights and responsibilities.

As women and poor tend to get neglected in collective action and decision-making, we strive to ensure structural spaces that confirm their participation in decision-making to gain equal rights over resources.

We have seen habitations that lie in contiguity coming together on the basis of natural affiliations evolve into larger institutional associations that go beyond settlements. So to build a larger stewardship for governance of natural resources at the landscape level, we promote platforms that bring together representatives of communities, government personnel, NGOs and interested citizens.

Kumar Rupam



Decentralised governance of shared resources with secure tenure and robust village institutions enable Governments to play a larger role in land-use planning.

About 25% of the total geographical area in India, if devolved to Panchayats and community institutions, reduces public expenditure and improves local governance.



In rural areas, infrastructure must be first understood as soil, water, nutrients, biomass and biodiversity as they are fundamental to the rural economy.

Enhancing Livelihoods

In our initiatives on making rural livelihoods secure and resilient, our efforts aim at promoting options that are ecologically sound, socially just and economically rewarding.

In agrarian economies, infrastructure must be understood in terms of soil, water, nutrients, biomass and biodiversity, which are fundamental to the viability of farming systems. Also, the collective action inherent in village life must be considered as a critical social infrastructure with immense potential to embed good local governance.

Our efforts are directed towards rejuvenating natural potential of the ecosystems that render a range of economic opportunities for rural people. Benefits include augmenting food production, multiplying sources of income and reducing expenditure in otherwise cash-starved family economies. The spin-offs from improved collective action are cost-effective management of natural resources, improved leadership, effective use of public investments and reduced conflicts, which together translate into significant economic benefits.

While most of the mainstream efforts aimed at improving rural livelihoods tend to promote an exploitative use of natural resources that is unsustainable, we promote debates to take into account the threshold limits of ecosystems. Moreover, instead of advocating a singular prescription for diverse settings, our interventions are guided to suit local ecological and social contexts.

Mark Katzman



Local management of land and water resources provides a unique opportunity to work simultaneously on poverty, inequalities and ecological degradation.

350 MILLION rural livelihoods in India can be reinforced by restoring common land and water resources and fostering collective action institutions.





OUR APPROACH

FES believes that common pool resources such as forests, pastures and water bodies if managed as common property provides a unique opportunity to work from a single platform on issues concerning poverty reduction, reducing inequalities and improving ecological health. Commons as a paradigm for ecological governance has the potential to unleash transformational change in rural areas.

Instead of working in isolated villages, FES works with range of hills or streams and all villages that lie in contiguity, to build on natural, social

and cultural landscapes. By securing collective tenure on common lands and channelling public funds, FES assists village communities in building on their existing norms and wisdom, creating space for women and the marginalised, mapping and inventorying resources, claiming rights over land and produce,

FES embeds three fundamental tenets in its approach to sustainably manage natural resources – nature's potential to heal itself, secure tenure over shared resources, and community institutions for self-regulation. With its extensive experience of working on forests, grasslands and agricultural landscapes, FES brings to the fore the need to strengthen common property to restore ecosystems as well as the entitlements of local communities to sustain rural livelihoods.

and surfacing attendant duties and responsibilities. FES also helps local communities weigh extraction practices considering the threshold limits of the ecosystems.

FES brings in an improved understanding of nature and the inter-relationships between natural and human systems in the management and governance of natural resources. Aiming to integrate scientific rigour in the efforts of ecological restoration, the information gathered through ecological assessments is shared with communities and validated by existing community knowledge for developing long-term plans for conservation of forest, land and water resources.

Forests in a Landscape

Mark Katzman



Forests provide hydrological supplies to far away cities and resilience to nearby farming systems and local livelihoods. Instead of viewing forests in isolation from the larger physical, social and economic landscape, it is necessary to conceive institutional arrangements that would foster forest conservation, build local stewardship, and highlight economic contribution of forests to farm economy.

In the locations that we engage with, we highlight the importance of systemic drivers such as soil, moisture, nutrients, biomass and biodiversity that link various components of landscape like forests, common lands and associated production systems (agriculture, livestock-keeping and fisheries).

By connecting forests through such systemic linkages to other production systems, we aim to connect communities dependent on agriculture and livestock as stewards of forest conservation. We also foresee the need for an umbrella institutional architecture, spanning forests, land and water; agriculture and livestock; tribal and rural development sectors; and bringing together local communities, scientific/academic/administrative bodies for trans-disciplinary comprehension and decision-making. Locating forests within the larger landscape helps conceive arrangements that offer scope for judicious land-use planning with different areas assigned for preservation, conservation and exploitation priorities.

Dahod (Gujarat): A cadre of village youth initially trained for forest conservation also proved to be a critical link in supporting forest-dependent communities to leverage social security schemes.

Bhilwara (Rajasthan): Building on the strength of contiguous village institutions effectively managing forests and pastures, collaboration with the local milk union helped improve economic opportunities through the sale of milk.

Mandla (Madhya Pradesh): Expanding from encouraging response of conserving buffer areas of Kanha National Park, we are working towards building a larger constituency for restoration of the wildlife corridor between Kanha and Pench National Parks.

Karnataka: Geo-hydrology assessments across Panchayats helped design conservation strategies at a landscape level, delineating areas for catchment preservation and surface storage, and recharge of water.

Chittoor (Andhra Pradesh): Working with all the villages around Sadhukonda reserve forest, resulted in marked improvement of 8,400 acres of forest and conservation of adjoining 13,000 acres of common scrub land.

Angul (Odisha): Protecting the forests and channelling the improved water flows through a set of cascading tanks has brought more land under cultivation.

Farming and Farming Systems

Mark Katzman



By choice, FES works in areas where agriculture and livestock production are predominantly rainfed in nature. This is guided by an understanding of interrelationships between natural and human systems, different ecosystems within a landscape, and different elements within an ecosystem.

Rainfed area constitutes about 60% of the total net sown area in our country. With high dependence on natural endowments, such areas exhibit high incidence of poverty due to ecological degradation. Instead of intensive irrigation and fertilisation in such areas, it is important to evolve alternative pathways of diversified cropping and livelihood practices in general and soil health in particular.

A fundamental part of our design is to strengthen crop-livestock integration as livestock integrates pastures with farming by transferring the much-needed nutrients and organic matter. Instead of single crops we promote diversified cropping strategies and sources of income. Additionally, revegetation and better management of Commons add to the production base that could increase incomes under favourable rainfall conditions or at least reduce expenses in drier seasons.

In order to improve soil health, besides channelling public expenditure for restoration, we club action on favourable tenure to communities with devolution of decision-making in managing natural resources.

Rajasthan: Crop water budgeting as a tool to create awareness on water available for agriculture in *rabi* season resulted in farmers adapting less water-demanding wheat varieties, thereby improving the productivity per unit of water.

Ajmer (Rajasthan): Conservation of land and water resources through community institutions that led to an increase in biodiversity, biomass and water levels, in turn increased double crop area by 78% in Thoria watershed.

Angul (Odisha): By promoting collective choice for regulated grazing in 6 Panchayats, local federations played a key role in enabling agriculture in *rabi* season in 47 acres and reducing 13.5 tonnes of biomass used for fencing from Satkosia Wildlife Sanctuary and its extended corridor.

Karnataka: The twin challenges of water scarcity and need for economic returns are being addressed by promoting strategies of improving water supply, efficient usage of available water matched by measures aimed at change in agronomic practices, and adoption of less water-intensive crops and varieties.

Andhra Pradesh: Developing participatory tools/methods to help in understanding mental models of people vis-à-vis Commons, understand mechanisms behind community preferences on decisions related to usage of Commons, and trigger discussions on self-regulation for better economic and ecological outcomes.

Andhra Pradesh: Comparative assessments of bees/birds/spider populations in farm holdings that apply chemical pesticides and those that do not, provided key inputs for highlighting value of hedge plants for pollination and pest control.

Working with Panchayats

Gabriel Diamond



Panchayats are equipped to find locally-suited solutions to natural resource governance but are often distanced from habitations and their viewpoints. Further decentralisation keeping the umbilical link improves communities' direct engagement and accountability. Effective utilisation of NREGS funds improves the organisational capacities of Panchayats and restoration of Commons.

FES assists Panchayats and village institutions to articulate their local development perspectives, draw structured action plans, and devise systems based on customary resource-use regimes. We build a cadre of community youth to assist them in drafting ecologically-sound, socially-just development plans, and implementing government and other ongoing programmes.

Nesting smaller institutions such as Tree Growers' Cooperatives, Grazing Land Committees under the overall governance framework of the Panchayats helps draw on the strengths of both the arrangements – smaller institutions for their role in dialoguing at village level and Panchayats for providing official recognition and accommodating inter-village dependencies.

We promote multi-actor platforms wherein representatives of communities, government personnel, NGOs, academicians and interested citizens at the block level come together to deliberate on issues related to judicious use of natural resources.

Ajmer (Rajasthan):
Collaborating with the local government and milk union in capacitating a cadre of village youth to assist all the 229 Panchayats of Ajmer in mapping, institution-building and planning conservation measures for restoring about 100,000 acres of pasture lands through MGNREGA.

Rajasthan: Influencing judicious use of public expenditure for conservation action planning through ICT-based Composite Landscape Assessment and Restoration Tool (CLART) that helps delineate areas for groundwater recharge, surface water storage and catchment conservation.

Nagaland: Helping Village Councils articulate their Constitutionally-bestowed rights over resources into tangible management plans for conservation of rivers, forests and species through mapping, by ground studies and prioritisation of local aspirations.

Mandla (Madhya Pradesh):
Assist in the formation of Biodiversity Management Committees at the Gram Panchayat level and in inventorying Peoples' Biodiversity Registers to build repositories of traditional knowledge, aid conservation planning, and safeguard entitlements of local communities as envisaged under the Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Odisha: Bringing together representatives of communities, academia, media, NGOs and policymakers from across 2 districts on a common platform (*Krishak Mela*) to celebrate the strength of widespread collective action and debate on developmental initiatives in rural areas.

Karnataka: Transforming functioning of Panchayats to effective governing bodies through management development programmes that shape a long-term plan, assume roles and responsibilities, improve budget utilisation and revenue generation.

Tenure over Common Lands

Gabriel Diamond



Common lands are biodiversity storehouses which contribute significantly to water and nutrient flows and add resilience to farming systems. Unfortunately, over the last half century, common lands in India have shrunk by 31-55% which can be attributed to weak tenure in favour of communities, erosion of local institutions, and a widespread belief that communities cannot manage shared resources.

FES is actively involved in securing rights of access, management and ownership of the local communities over Commons – forests, pastures and water bodies. Secure tenure over Commons is critical to foster collective action and continued commitment towards conservation. In turn collective action enables monitoring and checking of unjust trends in land-use. Our efforts towards establishing secure tenure is an integral part of building democratic institutions based on principles of inclusion and representation, of the poor in particular.

FES is engaged with State governments to lease revenue wastelands on collective tenure to communities on a long-term basis, and enter community lands in Prohibitory Order Books, or the Immovable Assets Register at the Panchayat level, to restrain their diversion to alternate use. The recent recognition of community ownership under the Forest Rights Act, has also importantly acknowledged the capacities of local communities as effective stewards of natural resources.

Gujarat: After successfully managing 'revenue wasteland' leased to village cooperatives for 15 years by the Government, communities showcased their sustained efforts of community management and negotiated renewal of land lease for another 10 years.

Rajasthan: Increased awareness helped 3 Panchayats in Bhilwara present evidence of livestock increase for successfully obtaining conversion of 'revenue wastelands' to village pastures with better property rights, paving the way for wider replication.

Nagaland: Demarcating boundaries of landscapes declared as Community Conserved Areas implied inventorying biodiversity, livelihoods and cultural practices, as 'entitlements' gain their significance from quality of resource systems, use regimes and ownership.

Karnataka: To bolster custodial rights that Panchayats have on their grazing lands with matching institutional arrangements, provisions of the Panchayat Act enabled setting up of 271 habitation-level committees to effectively devolve management and governance responsibilities from Panchayat downwards.

Odisha: Joined hands with NGOs and Peoples' Federations to assist villages having long-standing mechanisms for forest protection in filing claims for Community Forest Rights across 7 districts by conducting training programmes and convening meetings from sub-district to State level.

Andhra Pradesh: Trained local resource persons in mapping 120 villages using GPS technology that reduced laborious nature of conventional method of mapping. This enabled establishment of clearly defined boundaries and secure investment of resources by local communities.

Rights to Employment and Resources

Mark Katzman



Almost 70% of MGNREGA's annual budget of INR 400,000 million is for restoring degraded natural resources. Such financial investments need matching institutional arrangements such as village institutions and secure tenure. The Right to Employment together with the Rights to Access and the benefits from the resources so developed will create durable community assets such as pastures and forests.

FES assists Panchayats in aligning their development visions with those of the Right to Employment Act. We also collaborate with Governments in translating the Act to programmes aimed at restoration of forests, pasture and water bodies, and assist them in undertaking campaigns and capacity-building programmes.

FES trains local resource persons to assume stewardship of the area, assist in planning and implementation, and raise community awareness on the provisions of the Act. We help establish transparent systems for democratic decision-making and effective implementation of the programme.

The Rights to Employment Act has already begun to bring about a long overdue adjustment in rural wage rates, hopefully with an appreciation for the dignity of labour. However, we would need to highlight its value in meeting future challenges posed by food security and climate change, as much as improving the purchasing capacity of the rural poor.

Gujarat: Working with the district administration in Thasra Block (Kheda district), under *Kaam Mango Abhiyan*, participation of Panchayats and demand for employment increased five-fold, leading to almost 57% investments on eco-restoration activities of a total expenditure of INR 40.4 million under MGNREGA.

Rajasthan: Last mile coverage of the enabling Orders of the Government through a comprehensive mass media and community-level programmes to raise awareness on the various aspects of MGNREGA, mobilise local communities to claim and restore common lands and water bodies, and improve availability of biomass, water and biodiversity.

Udaipur (Rajasthan): Collaborating with district administration in implementation of innovative programmes for marginalised groups using MGNREGA for land levelling, building infrastructure for irrigation and vegetable cultivation, providing additional avenues for incomes and improved nutritional security.

Karnataka: MoUs executed with 2 District Panchayats enabled training of a cadre of community youth in 235 Panchayats resulting in marked improvement in their knowledge and skills on executing MGNREGA activities, conducting participatory appraisals, generating jobs, measurement of activities and bookkeeping.

Andhra Pradesh: Collaborating with NGOs/ Government in 5 districts to restore 67,500 acres of common land through Commons MGNREGA programme, prevailed on the Government to issue Orders for entering common lands in 'Prohibitory Order Books' and secure financial investments and restrain their diversion to other land-uses.

Koraput (Odisha): Assisting local communities in Koraput leverage MGNREGA to create durable community assets such as forests/pastures/water bodies and democratising the functioning of Panchayats by collaborating with district governments, reaching out to all the communities at block level and building capacities in planning, execution and monitoring.



STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

FES' strategic ecosystem embeds four interacting subsystems of community engagement, learning and capacity-building, collaborations and networking, and influencing judicious land and water use planning.

Strategic priority areas are:

- Democratisation of local institutions in partnership with village communities committed to restoring ecosystems and landscapes and crafting institutional spaces to safeguard interests of the poor.
- Pursue informed decision-making by building knowledge platforms on

nature conservation, natural resource management, land and water-use practice, local self-governance and rural development, and making available such information to a range of audiences.

- Conduct a range of capacity-building programmes for Panchayat representatives, village communities, govern-

Adopting a socio-ecological approach on landscape management, FES places equal emphasis on ecological well-being, social justice, and access to economic opportunity and the rewarding prospects that such an interconnected world-view offers. FES centrestages community-led governance as a viable and promising property regime to govern shared natural resources at local and landscape levels, and collective tenure rights as legitimate as individual ownership.

ment officials and NGO functionaries to promote local stewardship and an analytical temperament for improved natural resource management in general and governance of Commons in particular.

- Engagement with decision-makers, practitioners, academia, civil society, local elected representatives and NGOs to build a larger constituency for conservation and promote local level dialogue and convergence of interests.
- Build a larger constituency for conservation and highlight the value of Commons to the rural economy and the critical role of community self-governance institutions for managing locally-shared natural resources.

Building Capacities

FES meets the learning needs of rural communities and village institutions, government officials and non-government organisations who can steer local governance processes at local level and assume stewardship of natural resources.

FES helps rural communities build skills and knowledge in managing forests, land, and water resources at local level, helps strengthen rural livelihoods, and assists Panchayats in effective self-governance of natural resources.

FES has set up *Prakriti Karyashalas* (Rural Colleges) which work closely with governments and partner institutions and offer large-scale, cost-effective, quality learning opportunities. The Colleges are designed to evolve as local centres for exchange of ideas and experiences.

During the year, *Karyashalas* in Ajmer (Rajasthan), Chikkaballapur and Kolar (Karnataka) and Anantapuramu (Andhra Pradesh) organised large-scale trainings and entered into collaboration with district administrations and milk unions to expand the reach.

In Ajmer, designed as an outcome-based approach, a cadre of rural youth trained through well-designed modules over six months, held workshops with block-level officials, reached out to all Panchayats of the district and enabled passing resolutions on safeguarding Commons and in identifying restoration measures through MGNREGA.

In Andhra Pradesh, *Karyashalas* conducted intensive training exercises for 17 NGOs engaged in implementation of Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) projects. The NGOs were trained in formation of village-level institutions and preparation of plans for restoration of common lands, which were subsequently approved by the Government. The Government functionaries were also trained on the need to secure tenure of lands so restored by entering in revenue records.

In Karnataka, FES offered the first round of training to more than 7,000 newly-recruited 'NREG Mates/Friends' to improve their skills in the implementation of NREGA. The mates in turn acted as resource persons for conducting Integrated Participatory Planning Exercises for 86 Gram Panchayats in Chikkaballapur and Kolar districts to make effective use of MGNREGA in restoring common land and water resources.

In Gujarat, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Nagaland, similar training programmes are offered to village communities, Panchayats and partner NGOs to improve democratic functioning of village institutions, mapping and gaining formal access to common lands, restoring degraded natural resources and effective use of public funds.

FES partnered with the Tata Institute of Social Science (TISS),

Hyderabad, to launch a post-graduation programme on 'Natural Resources Management and Governance' so as to influence young scholars and build a pool of talent for future. FES contributed to the integration of Commons as part of the curriculum being designed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for State-level Institutes of Rural Development, so as to influence Government functionaries and programmes.

To strengthen community-driven processes to effectively shape and use government policies and programmes for conserving their natural resources, the *Prakriti Karyashala* assists communities in mapping the complexities of natural resource management, articulate their common concerns, and help build local stewardship, knowledge and skills.



Studies and Documentation

Conducted both internally and in collaboration with reputed universities and research institutions, FES undertakes studies to firstly locate its work in the larger social, economic and ecological context; secondly, help design and plan activities that are both contextually grounded and technically rigorous; and thirdly, provide sound evidence of results and impacts over time.

The studies are designed to involve local communities in a search for appropriate solutions, and build on their knowledge base for informed community-level actions.

The broad areas covered are:

- Consolidation of economic evidence on the criticality of Common Pool Resources and associated collective action in diverse production systems.
- Developing spatial and non-spatial databases to capture development trends, and longitudinal surveys to assess ecological, economic and social changes at household, village and landscape levels.
- Measurement of changes in biodiversity, biomass, soil and water resources through a 'biophysical monitoring framework' to assess ecological health and conservation actions.
- Understanding interactions between human and natural systems through a socio-ecological systems framework and developing tools and techniques to guide conservation action based on better comprehension of the systems and underlying drivers.
- Analyses of institutional arrangements for local governance of natural resources at village and inter-village levels.
- Analysing biophysical processes in ecologically-important areas such as sanctuaries and wildlife habitats to help develop appropriate conservation plans.
- Understanding the implications of climate change and mapping community-level institutional adaptations to climate-induced vulnerabilities.



Anil Sarsavan

Over the years, our on-ground experiences have given us valuable insights into the working of the rural minds, to enable us to undertake studies engaging local communities in search for appropriate solutions and building on their knowledge and informed community-level action.

Documentation

Ecological Health Monitoring: Continuing our efforts for detailed ecological health monitoring in select watersheds of pastoral, mixed farming and forest-dominated ecosystems to influence conservation strategies, this year we valued the role that hedges play in maintaining biodiversity in agro-ecosystems, and inventoried herpetofauna and migratory birds to assess environmental changes.

Improving Understanding of Human-Nature Interaction: We continue to improve our understanding of the interactions between human activity and nature and valuing ecosystem services, using International Forest Resources and Institutions (IFRI) protocols and the Natural Resource Accounting System. Designed as a longitudinal study to assess changes in forest conditions and institutional arrangements, we are updating a consistent database to monitor changes in social, economic and ecological outcomes.

Adaptation to Climate and Environmental Risks: In collaboration with the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, we

continue to study the environmental and climatic risks faced by rural households and their indigenous coping strategies. The study covers 250 habitations across the states of Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha to assess the effectiveness of indigenous and introduced coping-strategies and investigate the impact of community institutions for land and water governance on the resilience of rural households.

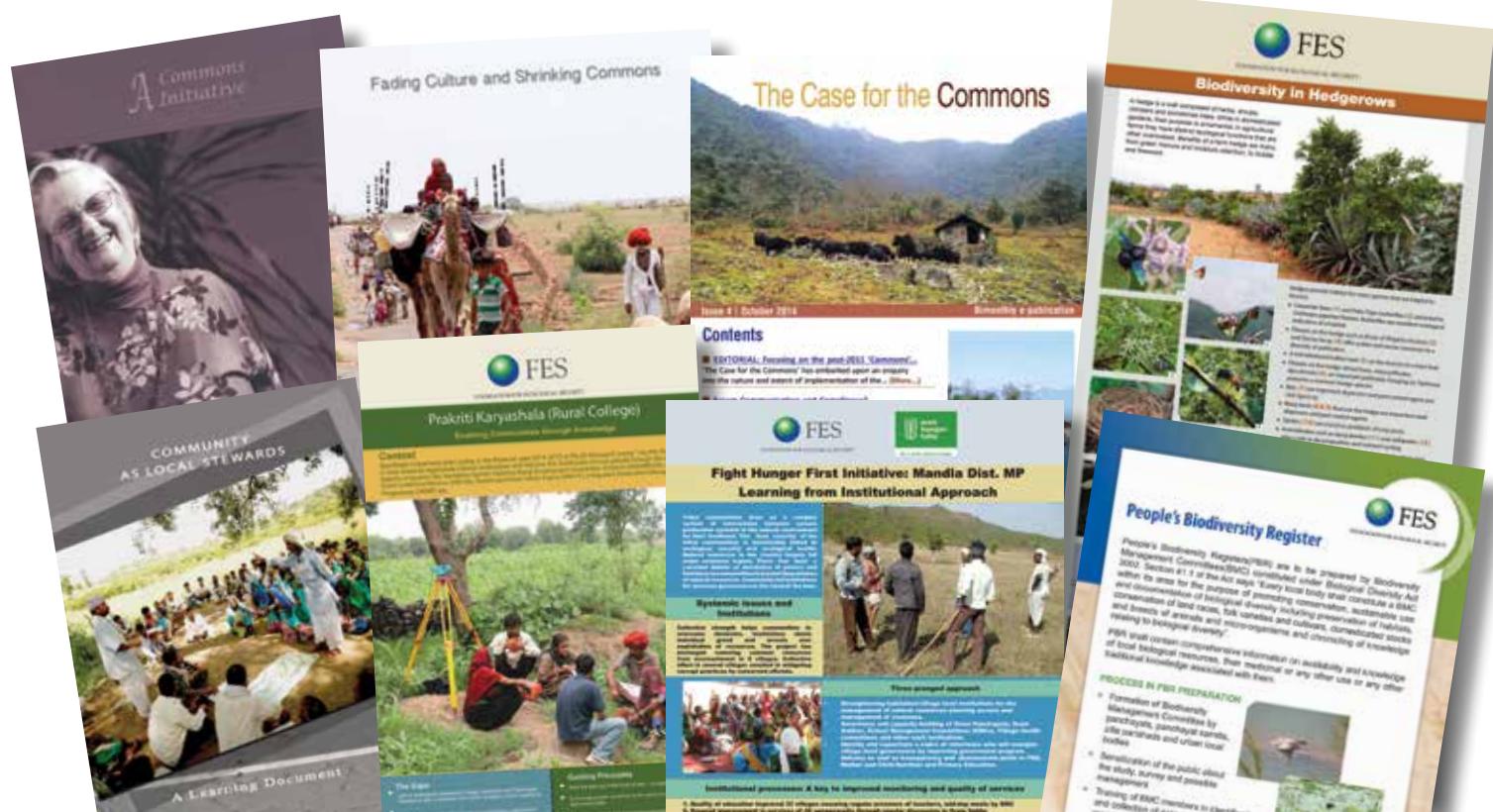
Systems Dynamics and Experimental Games: In collaboration with International Food Policy Research Institute, Arizona State University and University of Andes (Columbia), we continued our efforts to develop a repertoire of games on governance of common lands and water resources to be used at village level for promoting collective action and exploring behavioural changes. Similarly, in collaboration with Washington University in St. Louis, we developed exercises on Community-Based System Dynamics to help village communities diagnose the cause-and-effect interrelationships of complex problems in natural resource management.

Tools for Landscape-Level Planning: FES has developed a 'Composite Landscape Assessment and Restoration Tool' (CLART) which factors in important planning indices like land-use, geohydrology, slope, soil type, rock type, porosity,

permeability and recharge potential to support first order assessments that aid local planning of soil and moisture conservation measures. The tool, an interactive map on tablets or mobile phone, would assist Panchayats, NGOs and district officials in planning and implementation of watershed or ecological restoration efforts.

Mapping Impact and Drivers of Change: FES started employing the Social Return on Investment (SROI) approach to quantify the benefits accrued at community level from the investments made. The SROI exercises along with systems modelling have helped not only to comprehend the rural mindset better but also to highlight to donors and other stakeholders the need to strengthen collective action and ecosystem health, which are usually neglected in conventional approaches for improving rural livelihoods.

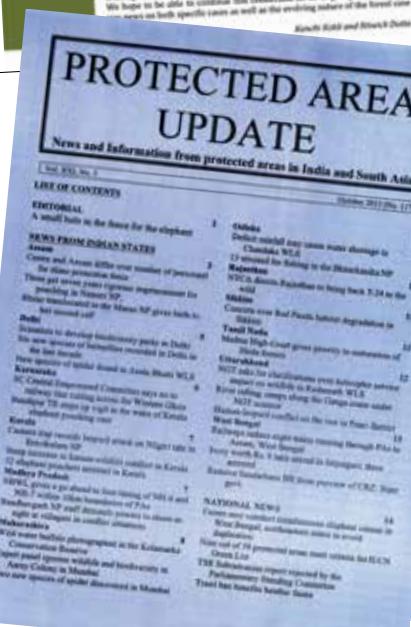
The Case for the Commons: For wider dissemination of the implications of the various judgments and Orders on Commons passed by the Supreme Court, High Court and the State Governments, we brought out a six-series publication of *The Case for the Commons* highlighting the actions taken by the Governments following the 'Commons judgment'.



Networking and Collaborations

FES works closely with several like-minded practitioner and academic bodies and governments engaged in ecological restoration and decentralised governance of natural resources, to further collective understanding and pursuit.

- We have tied up with district-level Milk Unions in Rajasthan and Karnataka to restore common lands and water bodies, and leverage the cooperative architecture from the village to district level to build a larger constituency for Commons.
- Collaboration with State Governments through National Rural Livelihoods Mission-NREGS, besides shaping a purposeful and long-term orientation in implementing MGNREGA, is providing opportunities for better dialogue and coordination with Government officials.
- To support forest-dependent communities in claiming collective tenure rights under the Forest Rights Act, we collaborate with *Odisha Jungle Manch* (community organisation), and NGOs (SEWAK and Nirman, Odisha, and Environics Trust, Himachal Pradesh).
- We collaborate with an NGO network (*Ananta Paryavaran Parirakshana Samiti*) to protect and manage common lands and water bodies in Anantapuramu district under the Common Pool Resources-NREGA programme of Government of Andhra Pradesh.
- As part of MOUs with the district administration of Kolar and Chikkaballapur in Karnataka, we are implementing common land restoration programmes in a phased manner reaching out to around 1,500 villages of 300 Panchayats.
- We continue to collaborate with Dakshin Foundation in bringing out *Current Conservation* highlighting cutting edge research and initiatives on conservation and livelihoods.
- With Kalpavriksh, we bring out *Protected Area Update*, featuring news from protected areas in India and South Asia, and *Forest Case Update*, an information dissemination service for forest and wildlife cases in the Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal.
- We anchor the Rainfed Livestock Network, a consortium of NGOs which seeks to frame an alternative narrative for livestock development in rainfed areas of India.
- We collaborate with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Hyderabad, in offering a Masters level course on Natural Resource Governance with strong emphasis on field-level learning.
- We collaborate with different universities and research organisations such as Collective Action and Property Rights Initiative (CAPRI) to improve our interventions on collective action and design effective capacity-building strategies of the local communities; Washington University, St. Louis, to advance understanding on systems dynamics, energy conservation, coupled human and natural systems; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and Indiana University, Bloomington, on forest resources, institutions and climate change; and International Food Policy Research Institute and Arizona State University, USA, to improve our understanding on the application of experimental games in strengthening collective action.
- We are a member of the International Land Coalition and the UN Economic and Social Council as part of our endeavour to promote secure and equitable rights over community land for the poor. We are also a member of the Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas and Territories Consortium which strives to bring out the criticality of biodiversity-rich natural or modified ecosystems conserved voluntarily by indigenous peoples and local communities.



India Observatory

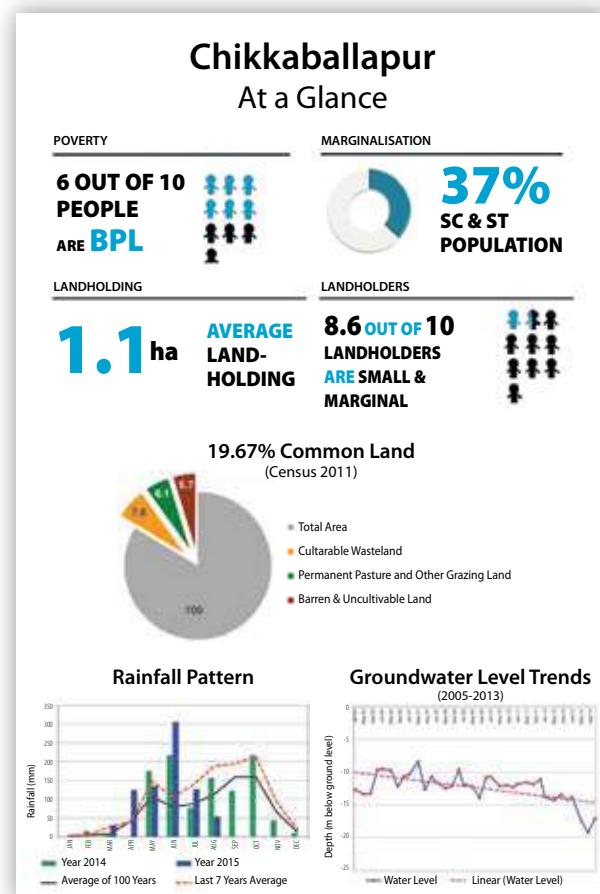
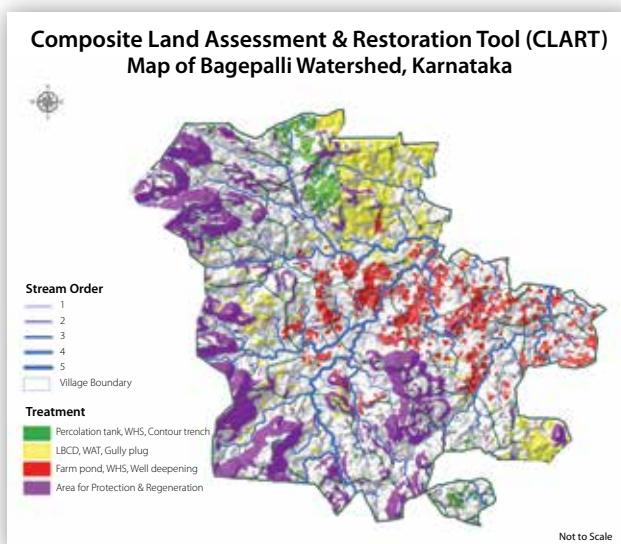
Public investments in restoring degraded ecosystems or alleviating poverty can benefit immensely from well analysed information on location-specific ecological and socio-economic trends, public investments and results of previous interventions. But very often such organised information is neither available nor easily accessible on one platform.

FES has compiled 'India Database', on more than 300 longitudinal 'Spatial and Non-spatial' parameters for all the districts of India, which is utilised in preparing atlases for Blocks, Districts and States, in guiding prioritisation of areas for development interventions and in developing conservation action plans.

'India Observatory' is an initiative on data platform for the rural communities to access reliable and up to date data, for better stewardship of natural resources. Observatory would present, in a demystified form, comprehensive and diverse information on India's biodiversity, ecology, rural demographics, etc., to guide decision-making at local, regional and national levels.

The initiative, decentralised planning with a focus on block and district planning would draw from the expertise of a range of stakeholders to build a robust architecture for free access, sharing, analysis and building collective insights of contexts at different scales.

In the immediate future, our efforts are guided towards issues concerning Protected Areas and dry land farming.



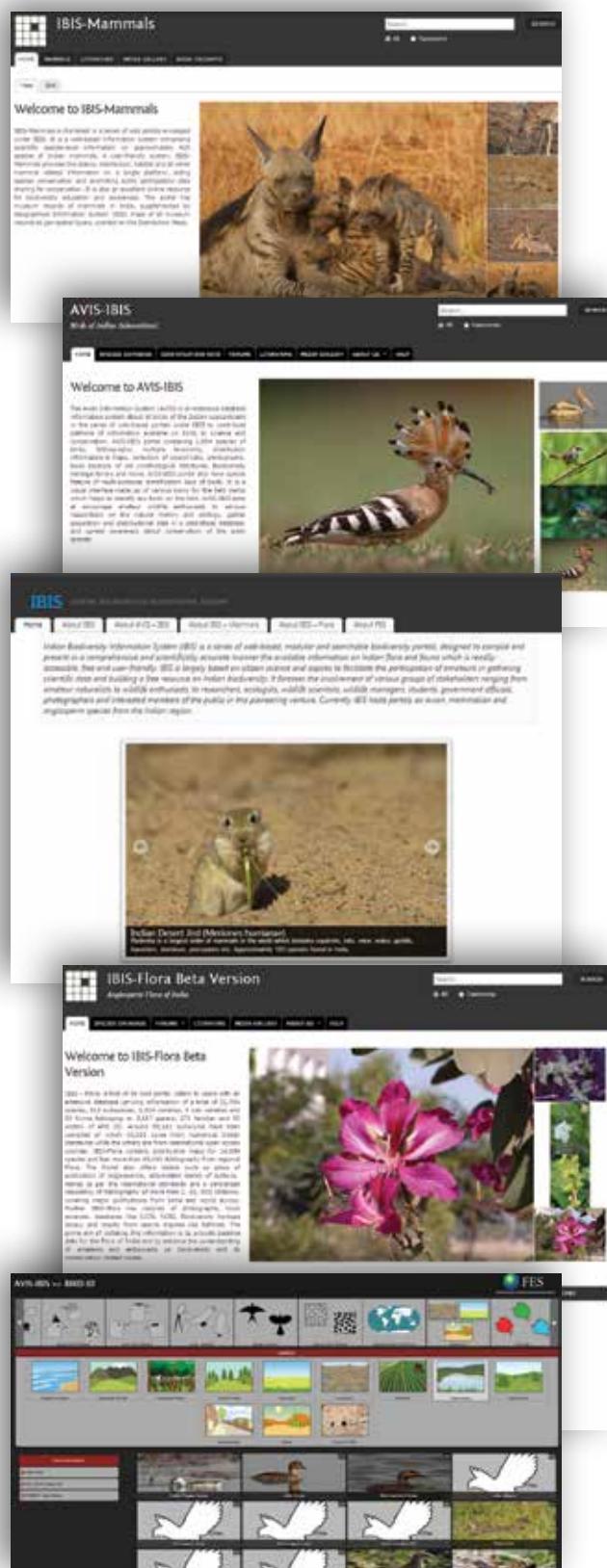
Indian Biodiversity Information System (IBIS)

Indian Biodiversity Information System (IBIS)-Flora portal was launched in the year 2014, with extensive information on a total of 21,764 species, 515 sub-species, 2,514 varieties, four sub-varieties, 58 formas and one sub-forma belonging to 3,667 genera, 271 families and 50 orders. Around 95,161 synonyms have been compiled of which 40,000 are sourced from a variety of Indian literature along with international open-access sources. Approximately 65,000 bibliographies from regional flora have been prepared, while distribution data were collected from various sources, distribution maps prepared for 14,899 species and a centralised repository of bibliography of more than 165,000 citations.

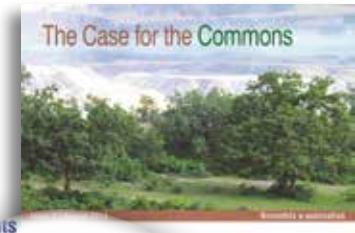
IBIS is a web-based, modular and searchable biodiversity database, initiated in 2010 which provides resource-rich, ultramodern, species-level information on a single user-friendly format and a crucial tool for achieving conservation goals for all groups of stakeholders such as wildlife enthusiasts, serious researchers, conservationists and educationists. IBIS-Flora follows the portals on Birds and Mammals (titled AVIS-IBIS and IBIS-Mammals) while reptiles, amphibians and spiders stand next in line.

AVIS-IBIS carries information on 1,664 species of birds, bibliography of 685,000 records, multiple taxonomy, distribution information including 874,402 locations and maps, 562,608 compiled sighting records, collection of sound, photographs, 23,191 book excerpts from old ornithological literature, and more. The portal has compiled 145,761 museum records from Museum Database which boasts a special radical search engine, an identification tool called Bird-ID with an array of 20 parameters to assist enthusiasts identify any bird of the Indian subcontinent.

IBIS-Mammals provides species-related information of all the 426 Indian mammals on a single platform, aiding species conservation and promoting public participatory data sharing for conservation. The data archives includes general species profiles, excerpts from copyright-free books, a wide range of literature, all indexed on one platform. The portal has 75,000+ museum records of mammals in India, supplemented by maps of museum records as geo-spatial layers, overlaid on the distribution maps.



The Commons Initiative



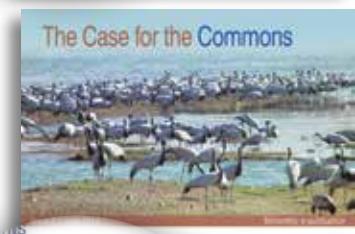
EDITORIAL: Charting an Easterly Course
From the sands of Rajasthan on the Western frontier to the last hills, we've travelled to the Central and Eastern parts of... [More...]

STATE OF AFFAIRS: Jharkhand Administrative and...
The Chief Secretary of Jharkhand wrote a letter No. 3039 dated 19 April 2011 to all the concerned authorities across the state for compliance of the Supreme Court order... [More...]

STATES' RTI STATUS: Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand...
Applications under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, were filed by our publication team to know more about the state/ local-level implementation related to the order... [More...]

CHHATTISGARH: Resources in the Commons Case...
On 29 April 2011 the Government of Chhattisgarh had an affidavit in the Supreme Court in the Jagtap Singh... [More...]

UPDATE: Odisha Implementation, Executive and...
Information and Publication Department, Gopinath Das of the ministry self-assessed the status of the resource. Any document should only apply for a press note on 25 June 2011... [More...]



EDITORIAL: Giving commons a second chance
The idiom, 'getting a second chance', suggests an opportunity to attempt correcting something. The management of the commons too warrants another chance. The Supreme Court order and the requirement of its implementation... [More...]

GUJARAT COMPLIANCE: Administrative Implementation...
This circular was sent to the District Development Officers and District Collectors. Copies were marked to the Additional Chief Secretary, Panchayati, Rural Housing and Rural... [More...]

RAJASTHAN'S STORY: The Tale of Executive and...
On 1 October 2011 the Administrative Reforms Department of the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) issued an order to establish a ten-member state-level committee for evolving policies for the identification, management and development... [More...]

UPDATE: Maharashtra Implementation...
On 12 July 2011 the Chief Secretary, Revenue and Property (MoR) issued an order to the concerned officials to review the accounts of common lands, measure official pasture and grazing areas and take steps for the systematic improvement of common lands before 15 August 2011. Any document may apply for a press note on the date... [More...]



EDITORIAL: Endless yet continuing in common...
Use which you often after an unusually long stretch of time between issues. That is because in this phase of our work on the 'Commons Case', this issue is to be the last of the originally planned... [More...]

Legal Struggles in Delhi
The National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi is spread across 11 eleven revenue districts. In Delhi several cases of unauthorised occupation of common lands have over time been... [More...]

Jharkhand-State's Submission and Administrative...
In compliance of the Supreme Court (SC) order dated 28 January 2011 the Jharkhand Government filed an affidavit before the court through its then Chief Secretary on 22 July 2011... [More...]

RTI Status Table for Jharkhand and the Union Territories...
Applications under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, were sent by the publication team to the states in the pending states covered in the publication so far and the Union... [More...]

Footnote on a Few Union Territories
Please note that the footnotes are not necessarily shared by the publications. The information contained in the footnotes is not necessarily related to the publication or its subject matter. Any document should only apply for a press note on the date... [More...]



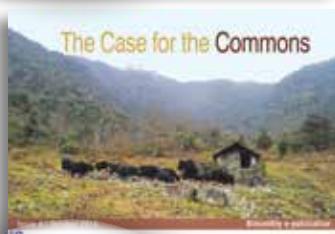
EDITORIAL: Heading Southwards
The state of Kerala was one of the few later states in filing compliance affidavit before the Supreme Court proceeding; Jagtap Singh & Others versus State of Punjab & Others... [More...]

Developments around Commons in Karnataka
In 2012, the Deccan Herald newspaper had reported that the Karnataka Government Land Protection Task Force in its report had highlighted a total of 9,41,548 acres of land... [More...]

Kerala – State's Actions and Legal Struggles
In response to the Supreme Court's 'compliance' order dated 28 January 2011, the Under Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, Government of Kerala, filed an affidavit... [More...]

The Disappearing Commons in Kerala
Illegal encroachments on common lands in villages in Kerala are not a new phenomenon. All over the state, every other bit of government land and panchayat land has been... [More...]

Working Tenth Nalbi's Panchayat Legislation
According to the Office Report of the Assistant Registrar of the State of Kerala dated 26 July 2011, the... [More...]



EDITORIAL: Focusing on the post-2011 'Commons'
'The Case for the Commons' has embarked upon an inquiry into the nature and extent of implementation of the... [More...]

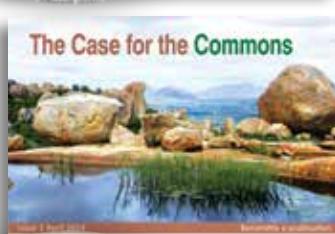
Assam Communication and Compliance?
The State in its submission was hopeful that the above actions would enable the Government to prepare a schema... [More...]

Mizoram—Acts and Actions
In compliance with the 3 May 2011 order of the SC in the 'Commons Case', the Mizoram State Government filed... [More...]

Madhya's Administrative Follow-up
In compliance with the Supreme Court Order dated 28 January 2011 and subsequent order dated 3 May 2011... [More...]

The Sikkim Story, with Inputs
According to the Office Report of the Assistant Registrar of the State of Sikkim dated 26 July 2011, the... [More...]

RTI: Table on RTIs and Information Requests
Under the Right to Information Act... [More...]



EDITORIAL: Putting the Commons in Order
On 28 January 2011 a division bench of the Supreme Court, India comprising Justices Markandey Katju (�ंकhdipal Singh) and Justice Jayanta Bhattacharya (জয়ন্তা ভাট্টাচার্য) delivered a significant ruling related to village commons... [More...]

Supreme Court Ruling on Commons: A SYNTHESIS
On 28 January 2011, the Supreme Court of India delivered a significant ruling related to village commons... [More...]

INTERVIEW with Senior Advocate Sanjay Parikh
In your view how does the Supreme Court order of 28 January 2011 in the Jagtap Singh case add to the jurisprudence on the commons in India? [More...]

STATE OF AFFAIRS: Punjab Village Commons
There are several legal proceedings in the Punjab and Haryana (P&H) High Court that have linkages to the SC matter and in fact arose as a result of the Commons Order... [More...]

UPDATE: Andhra Pradesh Compliance B.G.
According to the Office Report of the Assistant Registrar of the State of Andhra Pradesh dated 26 July 2011, the... [More...]

The Commons Initiative, launched in 2009, stresses the role of two hitherto neglected though crucial components of the rural economy – one, Common Pool Resources such as forests, pastures and water, and two, collective action in concert with self-governing institutions.

FES furthers the concept of Commons as an effective instrument of local governance, as an economic asset, and for the viability of adjoining farmlands. FES believes that 'Commons need Commons' as the institutional principle of managing pasture commons, or forest commons, pasture commons or water commons are similar and in fact help in mutual reinforcement of one another. At another level, such Commons would find resonance with knowledge commons, urban commons, digital commons to name a few.

As members of the International Land Coalition and of the Indigenous Peoples' and Community Conserved Areas Consortium and Territories (ICCA), we strive to promote secure and equitable rights of local communities and indigenous people over forest, land and water resources. In the shaping of the Zero Draft of the post-2015 Agenda on Community Land Rights, as an ILC member, FES played a key role in influencing the inclusion of Community land as an indicator – distinct from a general reference to land indicators.

At the national level, we actively engage with the State and Central Governments,

Subsequent to the Supreme Court judgement asking the State Governments to take punctual action on safeguarding Commons, the follow-up action taken by 17 State Governments and 7 Union territories was captured in six publications titled *The Case for the Commons*.



to highlight the Commons Agenda and to secure financial investments under the Right to Employment Act for developing common lands and water bodies.

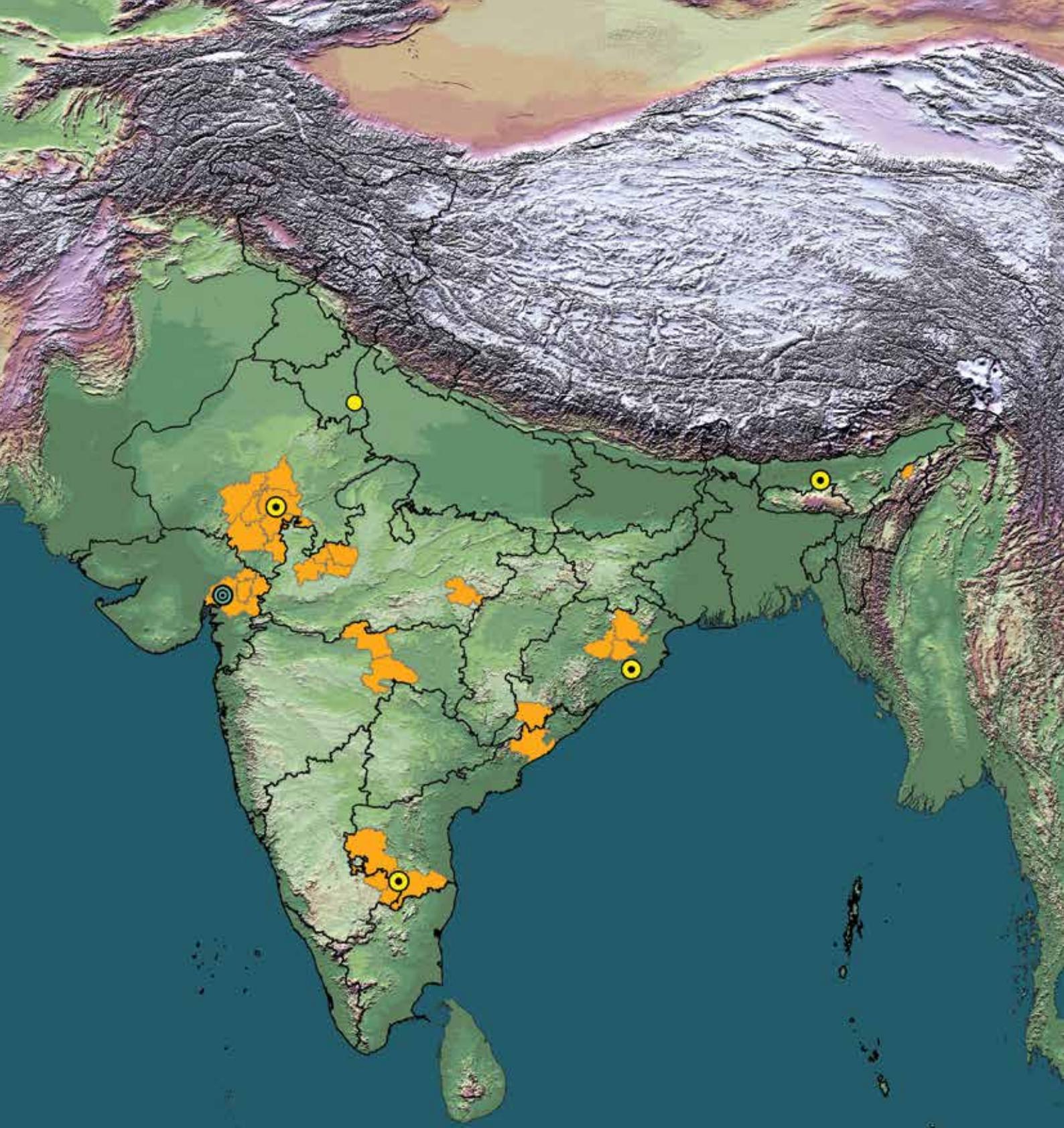
During the year, in order to analyse and facilitate wider dissemination of the implications of the various judgments and Orders on Commons passed by the Supreme Court, High Courts and the State Governments, in a commonly understandable form, we brought out a six-series publication of the *The Case for the Commons*. Each issue focused on three or four States and covered the actions taken by the Governments as a result of the 'Commons judgment'.

In Rajasthan, we continue to work with the government in implementing their decisions on restoring and safeguarding Commons through Panchayats. Taking forward the *Shamlat Abhiyan* – the Campaign for Commons in Rajasthan – this year too we backed government Orders with a comprehensive mass media and community-level campaign that included, letters to Panchayats, SMSs, and newspaper and television advertisements.

In Andhra Pradesh, following the State Government's decision to scale up the Common Pool Resources-National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme through the Integrated Watershed Management Programme to additional districts, we facilitate its implementation through NGOs.

In Karnataka, following the execution of MoUs with Kolar and Chikkaballapur district administrations we assisted the Gram Panchayats in preparing Commons restoration plans under the Right to Employment Act.

FES continues to work with the governments of Rajasthan, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh in taking forward their Orders on restoring and safeguarding the Commons. FES has been conducting regular workshops for local communities, government officials, Panchayat functionaries, other partner NGOs, milk unions, and legal and media fraternity to create maximum awareness on the criticality of Commons.



Our Project Areas

- FES PROJECT DISTRICT
- REGISTERED OFFICE
- REGIONAL OFFICE
- ◎ COORDINATION OFFICE

OUR PRESENCE

Known for its large-scale work on common lands and water bodies spanning across socio-cultural and agro-ecological geographies, FES has been able to carry on the momentum gained in the past years and spread its outreach to 9,743 habitations. As of March 2015, we work towards improved governance and management of 3 million acres of common lands reaching out to over 5.7 million people in 30 districts across eight States.

During the year, we have begun engagement directly with 568 new village institutions and through partnerships with an additional 1,696 institutions for community-based natural resource management and governance. Alongside our engagement on common lands, during the year, we have stepped up our efforts to mainstream water as Commons or community-held resources. After piloting exercises on innovative application of Systems Dynamics and Experimental Games to enrich our engagement with communities and other stakeholders, we have begun integrating them into our day to day work on the ground. While the core field operations were extended to new villages, in order to expand our reach, we advanced on collaborating with like-minded organisations to help build capacities through the Rural Colleges that were set up two years ago.

The broad organisational strategies are:

- Reviving the criticality of forests and other common lands and locating inter-linkages with agriculture and livestock production systems – thereby connecting the farmer constituency with the conservation of forests and common lands.
- Establishing institutional design principles and mechanisms that provide spaces for the poor and that enable village communities to access, share, and conserve common lands.
- Developing linkages between village-level institutions and Panchayats, and integrating natural resource management into their developmental efforts.
- Strengthening platforms for discussion at village and inter-village level by convening meetings of government functionaries, academia and the larger civil society to jointly deliberate on issues of conservation and use of natural surroundings.
- Assisting Panchayats to leverage funds available under the MGNREGA to restore degraded ecosystems and evolve rules and regulations for governing them.
- Assessing the impact of climate change on various natural and production systems, and integrating the traditional coping mechanisms adopted by village communities in the planned adaptation measures.



Falls in Lower & Middle Indus, Ganga Delta & Plain and Narmada-Tapi Freshwater Eco-region
Situated between 23-31°N to 26-58°N and 72-45°E to 75-49°E
Length of Growing Period (LGP) ranges from 90 days in the north to 150 days in the south
The annual average rainfall ranges from 620.32 mm to 1009.3 mm and the no. of rainy days from 29 to 46

Rajasthan

In Rajasthan we work with agro-pastoral communities in the Central parts of the State and with tribal communities in the southern forested areas of the Vindhyan and Aravali ranges.

Considering the strong dependence of local communities in the area on Commons, we assist restoration of degraded forestlands, pastures and common lands, strengthen the functioning of village institutions, promote local federations of village communities, and support securing of tenure over common lands. Our efforts in Ajmer and Bhilwara led to a marked improvement in the availability of fodder and water, in turn improving animal husbandry and agriculture. In the four tribal-dominated districts, we work with communities to strengthen regeneration and management of forestlands by building on existing customary patterns of access and use.

Our work in the tribal-dominated districts is located on the periphery of several protected areas where the communities are supported in developing plans to safeguard and improve their forest Commons – a key component in their livelihoods. We also support village communities in undertaking soil and moisture conservation measures to improve the common lands, water bodies and farmlands. Through *Shamlat Abhiyan* – the Commons Campaign – we regularly reach out to all the 9,000 Panchayats of the State and keep them abreast on the various enabling decisions of the Government on common lands and availing the provisions under NREGS to leverage funds for their restoration.

In Ajmer, the *Prakriti Karyashala* partnered with all the three layers of Panchayati Raj Institutions – District, Block and Local Panchayats, to secure and restore the pasturelands across the district. Through a cadre of trained personnel aimed at reaching all villages in the district in a year, it followed a multipronged strategy of collaboration with the local District administration and the Milk Union, capacity-building of Panchayat and Government functionaries, and community mobilisation in a campaign mode.

Designed as an outcome-oriented approach, it resulted in the formation of Village-level Pastureland Development Committees in about 700 villages spanning 250 Panchayats and preparation of preliminary plans to restore 123,000 acres pasture lands across the district by availing NREG funds. This approach of building a cadre of rural youth through *Karyashalas*, capacitating village representatives, a programmatic approach of channelling NREG funds by working with the Government, building partnerships with NGOs and Milk Unions, weaved together with an outcome-oriented approach, offers promise for replication in other areas and programmes.

FACT FILE

From intervention districts of **Bhilwara, Pratapgarh, Udaipur, and other districts (Pali, Rajsamand, Ajmer, Chittorgarh)**

River Basin: Mej, Menali, Khari; Jakham, Mahi, Siwana tributaries of Chambal; Mansi, Wakal, Sei; Luni, Banas

Forest Types: Tropical Dry Deciduous and Dry Thorn; Tropical Dry Deciduous, Grasslands; Tropical Dry Deciduous; Tropical Dry Deciduous

Threatened Species: Great Indian Bustard, Long-billed Vulture; Four-horned Antelope, Lesser Florican, Black-naped Monarch, Fat-tailed Gecko; Aravalli Red Spurfowl, White-naped Tit, *Commiphora wightii*, *Sterculia urens*; Lesser Florican, Great Indian Bustard, *Commiphora wightii*, *Sterculia urens*

Principal Crops: Jowar, groundnut, pulses, wheat, gram; Maize, soybean, sorghum, cotton, wheat, gram; Wheat, maize, barley, sugarcane; Wheat, maize, sorghum, bajra, jowar

% of Common Lands other than Forestlands: 43.45; 23.26; 41.54; 35.15

% of Forest Cover: 2.17; 29.35; 23.25; 8.54

% of Population Living Below Poverty Line: 27; 40; 48; 20.25

% of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes: 26.46; 70.39; 55.85; 25.19

Year in which FES Initiated Work: 1995; 2005; 2000; 2012

Funding Agencies: Omidyar Network, Skoll Foundation, SDTT and The Allied Trusts, Axis Bank Foundation, NABARD-IGWDP, NABARD-WDF, Sunehra Kal-ITC, Government of Rajasthan, NRLM, Rajasthan Forestry and Biodiversity Project, UNDP-Small Grants Programme, Grow-Trees, Fondation Ensemble, GIZ India, Washington University in St. Louis, International Land Coalition, Hindustan Unilever Foundation, IIT-Bombay, The IIED, Sri Aurobindo Society of Pondicherry, The Regents of the University of Michigan, University of Iowa

340 thousand acres
of common land were
brought under community
management

1.5 million lives
were touched upon
through community
institutions

1,794 habitations
have been assisted in
restoring and managing
their Commons

Communities of Dhuwala village have been managing village pastures since 2000. Following a 2011 Government Order that facilitates conversion of 'revenue wasteland' into common pastures, they applied for conversion of 62 acres of the 'wasteland' adjoining their pasture. When around 12.5 acres of land encroached by some individuals was regularised by the Administration, the community represented the case to Siloti Mandariya Manch, a local forum of 72 habitations protecting village pastures. Representatives of the Manch invited the officials to their meeting and made a representation on how the allotment to individuals would disturb local arrangements of collective management of pastures and distribution of benefits. Subsequently during *Ratri Chuapal*, a public forum, the District Collector announced the cancellation of the allotment. This resulted in not only immediate eviction, it also inspired neighbouring villages in successfully seeking conversion of 'revenue wasteland' to community pastures.

“It was impossible to contest singularly. Our collective action made the District authorities evict encroachment, leaving Commons to the community.”

Parasmal Gurjar



Protecting their common land over the years, Dhamangatti village has been a source of inspiration to neighbouring villages in accessing tenurial arrangements for their forest commons. Sustained village specific robust mechanisms have resulted in significant improvement in production systems with increased availability of fodder, fuelwood and improved water regime, thereby strengthening their livelihoods.

S S Singh



May 1998

S S Singh



September 2005

Sunil Kumar



October 2015



Falls in Southern Deccan Plateau & South-Eastern Ghats Freshwater Eco-region
Situated between 12-37°N to 15-13°N and 76-45°E to 80-3°E
Length of Growing Period (LGP) ranges from 120-150 days
The annual average rainfall ranges from 972.56 mm to 2379.5 mm and the no. of rainy days from 50 to 94

Andhra Pradesh

We work in the Papagni river basin across the two semi-arid districts of Chittoor and Anantapuramu, located at the tri-junction of the Deccan Plateau, the Eastern Ghats and Western Ghats. Marked by broken hill ranges and forestlands on ridges, revenue wastelands and farmlands on lower slopes and valleys dotted with numerous irrigation tanks, the area markedly exhibits ecological characteristics of all the three regions. Predominantly rainfed and prone to droughts, the area is also witnessing an escalation in use of groundwater for growing cash crops. Fluctuating market prices and increasing cost of cultivation result in distress migration to neighbouring cities.

Our work in this region is aimed at improving the biodiversity and availability of biomass and water, by strengthening local village institutions such as *Van Samrakshana Samitis* and Tree Growers' Mutually Aided Cooperative Societies, Watershed Committees, Water-Users' Associations and their federations. The institutions are also assisted by a trained cadre drawn from the villages who play a significant role in promoting collective action for judicious use of natural resources. We also join hands with like-minded NGOs in the adjoining districts to address restoration of common lands.

In order to improve the engagement with village communities and build debates around water as a community resource, we have field tested carefully designed Experimental Games in collaboration with International Food Policy Research Institute and Arizona State University. Preliminary results indicate that the games are helping raise discussion on individual choice of water use and how it influences water availability to the larger community and for future use.

In partnership with the District administration and resource persons drawn from like-minded NGOs, we offered training programmes to 5,963 ward members of Panchayats in identifying, claiming and restoring common lands in Anantapuramu district. These were also supported by training the NREG functionaries and Panchayat secretaries so as to include the restoration measures identified by the Panchayats under the NREG fund allocations of the district. Besides collectively working with the Government for the channelling of NREG funds to restore the Commons, we also assist village communities and the Government in securing the tenure over the common land by entering them into the 'Prohibitory Order Book' which restrains change in land-use.

FACT FILE

From intervention districts of **Chittoor** and **Anantapuramu**

River Basin: Papagni; Papagni

Forest Types: Mixed Dry Deciduous, Tropical Thorn, Scrub; Mixed Dry Deciduous

Threatened Species: Yellow-throated Bulbul, Starred Tortoise, *Chloroxylon swietenia*, *Anogeissus latifolia*; Yellow-throated Bulbul, Indian Black Turtle, Woolly-necked Stork, Starred Tortoise

Principal Crops: Groundnut, paddy, chilli, mango; Tomato, groundnut, redgram, brinjal, sunflower

% of Common Lands other than Forestlands: 33.36; 19.64

% of Forest Cover: 16.97; 3.59

% of Population Living Below Poverty Line: 36; 22

% of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes: 22.63; 18.06

Year in which FES Initiated Work: 1991; 2000

Funding Agencies: Omidyar Network, Skoll Foundation, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and The Allied Trusts, RBS Foundation, NABARD-ITDP, NABARD (Distress Districts Programme), NABARD RSO Programme, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Grow-Trees, Hindustan Unilever Foundation, International Food Policy Research Institute, The Regents of the University of Michigan, Washington University in St. Louis

835 thousand
acres of common land
were brought under
community management

1.9 million lives
were touched upon
through community
institutions

2,208 habitations
have been assisted in
restoring and managing
their Commons

The village community of Somarajukunta (Anantapuramu district), an area prone to distress agriculture, has been actively engaged in restoring their natural resources since 2008. They came together to manage their shared natural resources such as forests, pastures and water bodies as well as their individual lands, to address agricultural productivity and improve livelihood economies. Alongside, they collectively formed a 'revolving fund' for lending to the needy. They evolved criteria such as poor first, urgency of need and previous history of repayment.

While shared resources like forest, pastures and water bodies were aiding collective action, the fund played an important role in reinforcing collective action and helped bring together communities across four contiguous habitations. Since 2010, around 550 loans were disbursed towards purchasing farm implements and equipment, cattle and sheep, as well as to meet health care and immediate consumption requirements.

“The fund builds a feeling of collective responsibility. Banks take time and local money lenders charge high interest rates.”

P Sekhar Reddy



Jagdeesh Rao



May 1992

Johnson Topno



September 2006

Saneesh C S



October 2015

Continuous efforts of communities from two tribal hamlets in Bathinagaripalle to protect their common resources have inspired many forest-dependent communities from neighbouring villages to protect their common lands. Collectively-evolved rules and regulations for governing Commons has helped other communities replicate them with any needed modifications for forests governance.



Falls in Southern Deccan Plateau & South-Eastern Ghats Freshwater Eco-region
Situated between 12-45°N to 13-57°N and 77-21°E to 78-35°E
Length of Growing Period (LGP) ranges from 120-150 days
The annual average rainfall ranges from 1068.57 mm to 1935.02 mm and the no. of rainy days from 68 to 93

Karnataka

In Karnataka, we work in the upper catchment region of the Papagni River and three of its feeder streams in the districts of Kolar and Chikkaballapur. The terrain is hilly with rocky boulders and sparse vegetation on hill slopes. Degraded forests and common lands are largely mixed with dry-deciduous, tropical thorn and scrub forests, bereft of indigenous species and infested with invasive lantana. In recent years, the unbridled use of groundwater for raising water-intensive crops at an extraction rate double than that of recharge, has alarmingly depleted the groundwater table.

Taking forward the decision of the Government of Karnataka enabling the local communities to prioritise, plan and implement contextually relevant strategies, our efforts centred around identifying gaps in delivery mechanisms and strengthening the Panchayat structure by capacitating its functionaries and its role in programme implementation. We facilitate formation of hamlet-level sub-committees and undertake capacity development programmes for the committees and for the cadre of village youth. Hydro-geological studies and water audits prepared for the area provide Panchayats sound information on groundwater availability, patterns of current use, and options to regulate and promote judicious use.

Following the execution of MoUs with the Zilla Panchayats of Kolar and Chikkaballapur districts, during the year we developed comprehensive Commons restoration plans across 62 of the 300 Panchayats. We have also been nominated as District Resource Agency for assisting the District administrations in conducting Intensive Participatory Planning Exercise (IPPE) to improve the planning process under the Right to Employment Act.

In order to respond to the larger need of reaching out to the 1,500 villages of the 300 Panchayats in the two districts and assist in restoration of common lands, we executed an MoU with the Kolar Milk Union which has a reach to most parts of the district.

We build the capacities of the Dairy Cooperative Societies and their respective Panchayats in restoring the Commons by integrating the conservation plans under the NREG annual plan of activities. We hope to leverage the village-level architecture of the Milk Union, the mandate of the Panchayats to restore common lands, funds made available under NREG programmes, and the enabling capacity of the District administration to bring about large-scale restoration of common land and water bodies which are critical to the livestock economy of the area.

FACT FILE

From intervention districts of **Kolar** and **Chikkaballapur**

River Basin: Papagni; Papagni

Forest Types: Tropical Dry Deciduous, Tropical Thorn, Scrub; Tropical Dry Deciduous, Tropical Thorn, Scrub

Threatened Species: Yellow-throated Bulbul, Starred Tortoise, Red Sand Boa, Kolar Leaf-nosed Bat, *Wrightia tinctoria*, *Shorea roxburghii*; Red Sand Boa, *Wrightia tinctoria*, Yellow-throated Bulbul, Starred Tortoise, *Shorea roxburghii*

Principal Crops: Ragi, groundnut, pulses, paddy, oilseeds, mango, tomato; Ragi, groundnut, maize, red gram

% of Common Lands other than Forestlands: 24.72; 28.06

% of Forest Cover: 6.05; 9.19

% of Population Living Below Poverty Line: 22; 22

% of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes: 35.45; 37.37

Year in which FES Initiated Work: 1998; 1998

Funding Agencies: Omidyar Network, Skoll Foundation, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and The Allied Trusts, Axis Bank Foundation, NABARD-WDF, Grow-Trees, Hindustan Unilever Foundation, Avantika Foundation, International Food Policy Research Institute

69 thousand acres
of common land
were brought under
community management

159 thousand lives
were touched upon
through community
institutions

346 habitations
have been assisted in
restoring and managing
their Commons

Degradation and frequent drought conditions in Rayalpadu region have severely affected the livelihoods of local communities forcing them to migrate to nearby cities and towns. Govindappa, though a land owner of four acres, migrated to Bangalore with his entire family leaving the land fallow.

With measures aimed at conserving soil and water and for improving vegetation in the 360 acres of common pastures coupled with collective measures of village communities to manage the pastureland, there was a gradual improvement in nutrient and water status of surrounding farmlands. Realising the improved water regime, Govindappa constructed a farm pond for critical irrigation in his farmland bordering the pasture, and started practising mixed cropping of improved varieties of millets, pulses and vegetables. This motivated neighbouring farmers to undertake similar measures and share water resources for optimal use.

“I am happy that we moved back to the village. Now, I wouldn’t sell an acre even if you give me a lakh rupees! ”

Govindappa



Sajjupalli along with three other adjoining villages, has been managing about 500 acres of common land in the Yerrakonda hill range for over a decade, by evolving collective rules and regulations for provisioning and appropriating from the common resources. The area is now home to rich wildlife and also records the presence of threatened floral species and medical plants.

Dr Subba Rao



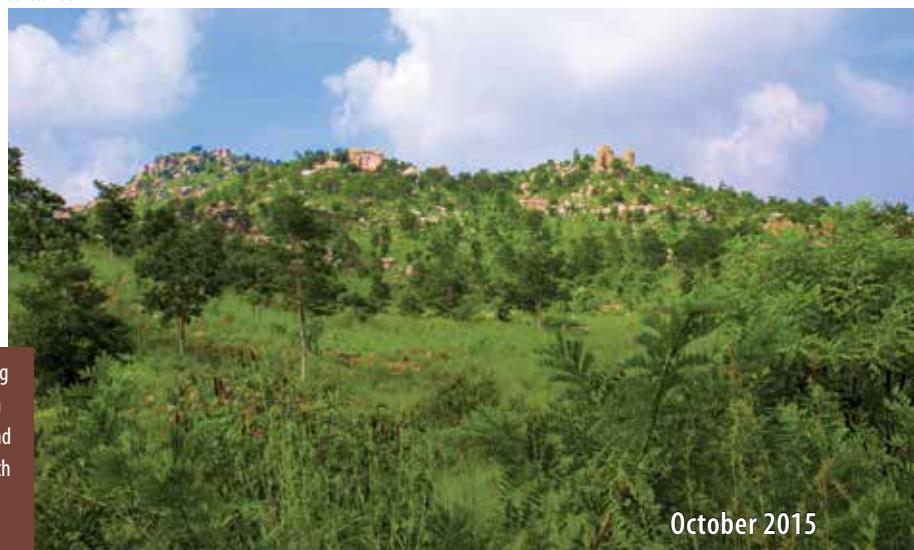
August 2004

Thomas K A



August 2009

Saneesh C S



October 2015



Odisha

In Odisha, our work spreads across the undulating landscapes of Angul, Dhenkanal and Keonjhar districts in Central Odisha, and the tribal-dominated Eastern Ghats of Koraput district in Southern Odisha. Both the areas are endowed with good forest cover. However, the recent expansion of 'developmental' projects in both the regions besides shifting the land-use from forestry and agriculture to industry is also leading to a growing economic disparity between the urban and rural areas.

In Central Odisha, our efforts are directed towards reinstating linkages between forests and farming systems alongside empowering village institutions and their local federations. In the process we work on improving the vegetative cover and restoring the Commons besides formalising customary use patterns and asserting community rights over resources. Working with village communities living in areas adjoining wildlife sanctuaries and forest reserves, we are working on strategies where conservation of nature and rural livelihoods could go hand in hand.

In Koraput, our work with the communities rests on regeneration of degraded forests, and framing rules and regulations to protect and restore their forest Commons. We assisted 197 habitations in conducting Intensive Participatory Planning Exercise to improve the planning process and access funds available under the Right to Employment Act. In order to influence better implementation of Rights to Employment Act we had also brought out 15 editions of *NREGS Update* – a compilation of various government Orders, circulars and guidelines for wider dissemination.

Our efforts at securing tenure rights over forest Commons through facilitation of Community Forest Rights under the Forest Rights Act have gained momentum. In collaboration with Odisha Jungle March, SEWAK and NIRMAN, we supported 672 habitations in claiming community rights. In Rayagada district, community titles were conferred on 54 habitations. Three district-level workshops were organised in Koraput, Kalahandi and Nuapada on issues related to recognition of Community Forest Rights and issues emerging after recognition of rights.

We conducted two studies titled 'High Rate of Rejections of FRA Claims in Left Wing Extremism Areas' and 'Impact of Community Forest Resource Rights as Recognized under FRA' on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme and Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India. Subsequent to the presentation of the findings, the Ministry issued advisories to address the high rate of rejections and improve the implementation of the Act.

FACT FILE

From intervention districts of **Angul**, **Koraput**, **Dhenkanal** and **Keonjhar**

River Basin: Mahanadi, Brahmani; **Kolab;** **Brahmani;** **Baitarni**

Forest Types: Tropical Dry and Moist Deciduous, Bamboo Brakes and Scrub; **Tropical Moist Deciduous;** Northern Tropical Semi-evergreen; **Tropical Moist Deciduous**

Threatened Species: Tiger, Elephant, Gharial, *Barringtonia acutangula*, *Diospyros candolleana*; **Elephant, *Themeda sasicala*, *Strobilanthes jeyporensis*; Pangolin, Porcupine, Monitor Lizard, *Gloriosa superba*, *Albizia thompsonii*; *Diospyros candolleana*, Hyena, Elephant, Barking Deer, Porcupine, *Gnetum ulna***

Principal Crops: Paddy, pulses, oilseeds, onion, potato, mango; Paddy, maize, millets, pulses, niger, ginger, mustard, beans; Paddy, pulses, oilseeds; Paddy, millets, pulses, oilseeds

% of Common Lands other than Forestlands: 30.52; 37.81; 24.38; 43.36

% of Forest Cover: 42.38; 21.89; 31.42; 38.67

% of Population Living Below Poverty Line: 48; 80; 48; 63

% of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes: 32.90; 64.80; 33.21; 57.06

Year in which FES Initiated Work: 1987; 2008; 1987; 2013

Funding Agencies: Omidyar Network, Skoll Foundation, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and The Allied Trusts, RBS Foundation, NABARD-WDF, Grow-Trees, Seva Mandir, Government of Odisha, International Land Coalition, UNDP, The Energy and Resource Institute, National Rural Livelihood Mission, Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay

1.2 million acres
of common land
were brought under
community management

1.3 million lives
were touched upon
through community
institutions

3,510 habitations
have been assisted in
restoring and managing
their Commons

Dumuriguda village of Koraput district is characterised by degraded forests, low agricultural productivity, and regular conflicts between upstream and downstream users. By connecting forests and their hydrological flows to the farm parcels below, the community collectively engaged itself in restoring forest cover and diverted improved water flows to a distance of 1,400 metres through gravity, providing irrigation to far away fields. The village members collectively developed rules for sharing water, collection of contributions proportionate to the landholding for maintenance of the canal.

Improving the efficiency of irrigation in 57 acres of farmland, 38 households have started growing ginger and seasonal vegetable crops in place of paddy and have doubled their farm incomes within a year. Besides, the village community is actively engaged in restoring and managing their 630-acre catchment area of forest uplands to ensure flow of the streams.

“We now grow three crops a year! We are proud of our collective action and take pride in sharing our experience with visitors.”

Biswanath Khillo



Cohesive restoration efforts in Nabkishorepur village have led to marked improvement in vegetative cover and water availability, leading to an increase of 18 acres of area under cultivation and improved resilience of its farming systems in the region. Encouraged by the results, the village has brought an additional 72 acres of common land available in the village under collective management.

Subrata Singh



May 1998

Swapnasri Sarangi



September 2006

Dawa Pemba Sherpa



October 2015



Falls in Northern Deccan Plateau, Ganga Delta & Plain Freshwater Eco-region
Situated between 22-12'N to 24-19'N and 75-8'E to 81-11'E
Length of Growing Period (LGP) ranges from 120-210 days
The annual average rainfall ranges from 1529.59 mm to 2134 mm and the no. of rainy days from 60 to 77

Madhya Pradesh

In Madhya Pradesh, we work with livestock and agriculture-dependent communities in the Malwa region in the west and with forest-dependent tribal communities of the Mahakaushal region in the east. Located in the catchment areas of the rivers Lakhundar, Kali Sindh, Gambhir and Shipra, the Malwa project area is characterised by undulating topography, narrow valleys and shallow soils. In Mahakaushal region, we work across the biodiversity rich zone of Kanha National Park in Mandla district, nestled in the Satpura ranges.

In Ujjain and Rajgarh districts of the Malwa region, we assist village communities in enhancing the vegetative cover by restoring common lands and productivity of farmlands, through soil and water conservation measures. Concerted action amongst community institutions of contiguous villages has led to improved fodder and water availability in the region. The improvement in water availability has also lead to increase in area under double cropping.

Mandla district of Mahakaushal region has a large tribal population, including primitive tribal groups, and is one of the most backward regions in the State. High degradation of forests, low productivity of farmlands and distress migration of local communities to other places characterise the region. Our efforts are aimed at orienting village communities and government officials in integrating livelihood priorities with natural resource management and assisting Panchayats to engage with various departments and access various government programmes.

During the year, we trained 1,773 rural volunteers to support local communities in strengthening village institutions. Another 3,175 farmers were assisted in improving agriculture production and expanding their livelihood portfolio so as to increase the overall household income.

In the Mahakaushal region, we shall build on the strong momentum created by the village communities and the Forest Department in fostering a collaborative effort in managing the buffer zones of Kanha National Park. We shall work towards improving the stewardship by bringing in adjoining villages and areas into such a collaborative effort, improve the economic condition of the tribal communities by working on restoring the soil health and agronomic practices, and lastly, by building strong village-level institutions and Panchayats for effective governance of natural resources as well as access to economic opportunities.

FACT FILE

From intervention districts of **Mandla** and **Agar**

River Basin: Gaur, Balai, Banjar of Narmada; Lakhundar, Garhganga, Kalisindh

Forest Types: Tropical Moist Deciduous; Tropical Dry Deciduous, Scrub

Threatened Species: Tiger, Swamp Deer, Green Avadavat, Vultures (*Gyps bengalensis*, *Gyps indicus*, *Neophron percnopterus*), *Sterculia urens*, *Pterocarpus marsupium*, *Terminalia arjuna*; Indian Wolf, Striped Hyena, *Adina cordifolia*, *Dolichandrone falcata*

Principal Crops: Paddy, minor millets, maize, wheat, red gram, lentil, niger, mustard; Wheat, jowar, bajra, gram, millet, maize, pulses, til, cotton, soybean

% of Common Lands other than Forestlands: 19.95; 28.45

% of Forest Cover: 48.88; 0.47

% of Population Living Below Poverty Line: 60; 26

% of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes: 62.46; 26.22

Year in which FES Initiated Work: 2006; 1996

Funding Agencies: Omidyar Network, Skoll Foundation, RBS Foundation, ICRISAT, Sunehra Kal-ITC, Grow-Trees, GIZ India, Welthungerhilfe, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Hindustan Unilever Foundation, Sir Dorabji Tata Trust and The Allied Trusts, Seva Mandir, New York University, International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources

76 thousand acres
of common land
were brought under
community management

118 thousand lives
were touched upon
through community
institutions

370 habitations have
been assisted in restoring
and managing their
Commons

Bhatgaon in Niwas block of Mandla district is predominantly a tribal village. While the water in a reservoir provides irrigation to 494 acres, the fish in the water body serves as a source of income for the landless. However a contractor was taking on lease the fishing rights by 'managing' some of the more articulate people of the village, as a result, the fishworkers were deprived of that source of income.

A discussion with the entire village resulted in a strong resolve to manage their shared natural resources. A fishworkers' cooperative was formed which secured the fishing rights. Besides distributing the fish within the village, the cooperative earned INR 15,000 in a season from sale of surplus fish in the local market. The cooperative is now aiming at framing rules with a positive bias towards the poor and women-headed households.

“Unlike the past, we now get a share of the fish catch to eat and the village as a whole gets an added income.”

Ramvishal

(Member of the fishworkers' cooperative)



Kumar Rupam



February 2003

D P Singh



September 2006

Dibyendu Mondal



August 2015

Initiated in 2003, unrelenting efforts of communities in Moya Kheda led to a considerable improvement in vegetative cover and increase in the water availability period from six to eleven months, resulting in doubling of area under Rabi crop. A few species of reptiles were also observed besides frequent sightings of wild animals and migratory birds in the area.



Falls in Narmada-Tapi Freshwater Eco-region
 Situated between 21°49'N to 23°27'N and 72°20'E to 74°28'E
 Length of Growing Period (LGP) ranges from 120-150 days
 The annual average rainfall ranges from 807.18 mm to 1474.15 mm and the no. of rainy days from 18 to 37

FACT FILE

From intervention districts of **Anand, Dahod, Vadodara, Panchmahal, Kheda and Mahisagar**

River Basin: Mahi, Sabarmati; Valai, Bhe, Kali, Khan; **Mahi, Narmada; Mahi; Sabarmati; Mahi**

Forest Types: Tropical Dry Deciduous; Dry Teak, Mixed Dry Deciduous, Grasslands, Scrub; Tropical Dry Deciduous; Tropical Dry Deciduous; Tropical Dry Deciduous; Tropical Dry Deciduous

Threatened Species: Sarus Crane, Black-necked Stork, Greater Spotted Eagle, Hyena; Lesser Florican, Sloth Bear; **Vultures (*Gyps indicus*, *Sarcoramphus papa*)**, Sloth Bear, Saras Crane, Crocodile, Indian Spotted Eagle; **Vultures (*Gyps indicus*, *Neophron percnopterus*)**, Sloth Bear; Sarus Crane, Black-necked Stork, Greater Spotted Eagle; **Sarus Crane, Black-necked Stork, *Dalbergia latifolia*, *Dolichandrone falcata***

Principal Crops: Banana, paddy, wheat, tobacco, jowar, maize, cotton; **Maize, paddy, sorghum, pulses; Cotton, pigeon pea, paddy, maize; Maize, paddy, pigeon pea, wheat; Tobacco, bajra, rajgara; Rice, cotton, tobacco, maize**

% of Common Lands other than Forestlands: 18.66; 14.53; 17.67; 14.36; 14.45; 20.69

% of Forest Cover: 1.87; 15.94; 8.03; 12.80; 2.36; 8.21

% of Population Living Below Poverty Line: 18; 37; 12; 37; 18; 37

% of Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes: 6.18; 76.27; 32.92; 26.85; 6.62; 40.32

Year in which FES Initiated Work: 1986; 1997; 1992; 1988; 1987; 2014

Funding Agencies: Omidyar Network, Skoll Foundation NABARD-IGWDP, NABARD-WDF, Government of Gujarat, Gujarat Green Revolution Company Limited, Collectives for Integrated Livelihood Initiatives (CINI)

Gujarat

Spread across six districts in Central Gujarat, our work in the State ranges from the saline mudflats of Gulf of Khambhat, the wetlands of Anand, the ravines on the banks of river Mahi and the Central highlands of Dahod and Mahisagar districts.

Our efforts in the ravine-affected areas along the banks of river Mahi for restoring vegetative cover of the area by leveraging funds under the Right to Employment Act are driven by collaborations with Panchayats, Village Watershed Committees and habitation-level institutions. *Mahi Kantha Vikas Manch* – a multi-stakeholder platform – was recently formed by the ravine-affected villages to highlight the conservation needs of the fragile river and its banks. The platform aims to conceive plans of a ‘rural riverfront’ that could bring together the conservation priorities of the area, the changing aspirations of the rural folk and the emerging opportunities arising out of growing tourism in the area to imaginatively showcase nature conservation as a rural economic venture. In coastal Khambhat, village communities are involved in creating a vegetative barrier along the tidal mudflats to boost farm productivity of the hinterland by arresting salt-laden winds from the sea through windbreaks.

During the year we reached out to 30,000 people in the Thasra block of Kheda district through an outreach campaign, *Kaam Maango Abhiyan*, covering 104 Gram Panchayats and 204 villages, for effective implementation of the Right to Employment Act and increase the demand for employment.

More than 440 rural youths and Panchayat representatives were trained resulting in the generation of wage employment to the tune of INR 54.7 million over a nine-month period, twice the employment generated during the same period in the previous year.

In the districts of Dahod and Mahisagar, dominated by a poverty-stricken tribal population, we capacitate the local communities in developing institutional arrangements for judicious use of forest resources and aiding resilience of their dryland farming system. In collaboration with the District administration, we train rural youth in interlinking the delivery of government-aided social security schemes and in exploring institutional innovations to organise themselves as service providers to the village institutions. Our efforts in these districts also include registering community claims over forests under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and guiding perspective planning at the landscape-level.

58 thousand acres
of common land
were brought under
community management

507 thousand lives
were touched upon
through community
institutions

717 habitations have
been assisted in restoring
and managing their
Commons

To maximise the reach and utilisation of social security schemes, the Government of Gujarat initiated the Jan Kalyan Mandal Yojana (JKMY) programme wherein village youth were trained to ensure last-mile connectivity with government services and schemes. Lalitaben, a tribal woman, very shy of speaking in front of others is now a trained coordinator and actively gets involved in presenting and resolving local issues. Like her, around 60 Jan Kalyan Mandal coordinators have been trained to assist 248 habitations in better management of natural resources and availing various sources of funds available with the Government.

Seizing the opportunities presented by the JKMY programme the coordinators have in the last six years helped link 32,231 individuals with 66 Government programmes related to health, education, livelihood promotion, social security, ecorestoration, insurance, etc. amounting to INR 140.60 million.

“I feel very happy and confident as people from my village look up to me for solutions. They believe that I am knowledgeable and caring and respect me.”

Lalitaben



Sustained conservation efforts by communities in Charangam village, on banks of the River Mahi, led to successful regeneration of 197 acres of Commons in the area. It also influenced the Panchayats to take up similar large-scale activities under the Rights to Employment Act and Sardar Patel Sahbhagi Jal Sinchai Yojna.

Dr J R Panwar



November 1987

Ramesh N Patel

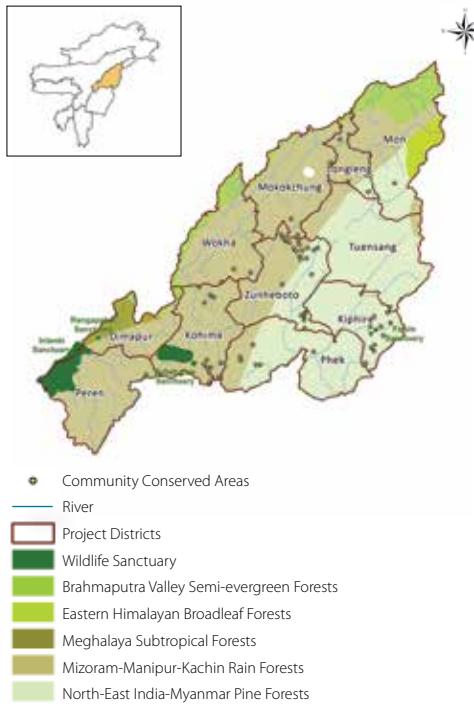


September 2007

Subhash J Purohit



July 2015



Falls in Ganges Delta & Plain, Middle Brahmaputra, Sitang-Irrawaddy Freshwater Eco-region
Situated between 23-10°N to 27-03°N and 93-18°E to 95-15°E
Length of Growing Period (LGP) ranges from 270-300 days
The annual average rainfall ranges from 1634.2 to 2555.56 mm and the no. of rainy days from 111 to 140

Diganta Kumar Gogoi



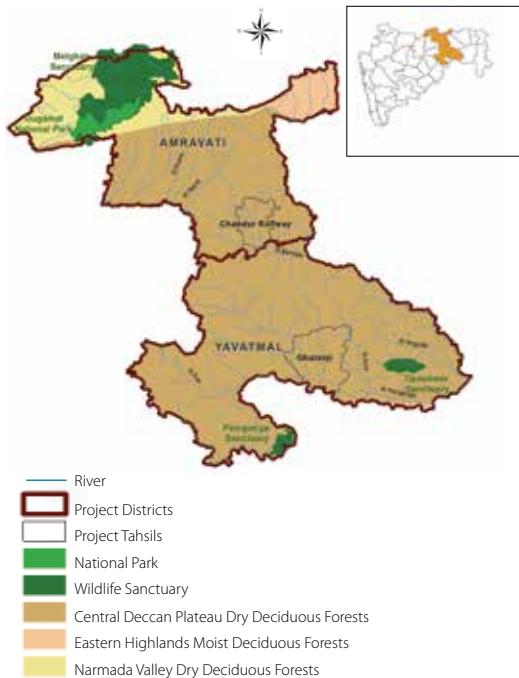
Communities developed conservation management plans by understanding the governance mechanisms, resource-use patterns and from insights gained through river ecology and biodiversity studies. We helped them in conducting exercises using GPS for mapping their Commons.

North-Eastern Region

The North-Eastern region, home to diverse ethnic groups is marked by unique climatic and topographic conditions and harbours the largest number of endemic floral and faunal species as compared to any other part of India. Our initiatives in the region are based on a four-pronged strategy of working directly with communities, partnering with conservation organisations, undertaking studies for better understanding of the area and supporting conservation action through fellowships.

In collaboration with Nagaland Empowerment of People through Economic Development (NEPED) we work towards strengthening the Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) in Nagaland. Members of management committees of CCAs, village councils and local youth are supported in mapping the boundaries of their CCAs and in preparing management plans. We have assisted 17 CCAs in preparation of management plans covering 30,000 acres. Some of the CCAs were also supported in undertaking studies to understand and assess the rich biodiversity of their conserved areas.

Exploring opportunities in Assam, scoping visits have been carried out in three districts of the State. We are further assessing the scope for possible collaborative efforts in Meghalaya and Tripura. With the intent of helping create a larger constituency for 'Communities in Conservation' in the region, we plan to support local youth in mapping their Commons and develop conservation action plans; understand the complexities and add value to local efforts; and partner with local agencies in promoting conservation and local governance in the region.



Falls in Narmada -Tapi & Northern Deccan Plateau Freshwater Eco-region
 Situated between 19-40°N to 21-75°N and 76-55°E to 79-20°E
 Length of Growing Period (LGP) ranges from 120-150 days
 The annual average rainfall ranges from 1469.21 mm to 1522.98 mm and the no. of rainy days from 61-66

P. Sreehari

Maharashtra

We work in Ghatanji taluka of Yavatmal and Chandur taluka of Amravati in Vidarbha region which are tribal-dominated and agriculture-based economies. Compact Deccan basalts which allow very little water recharge, low crop diversification, accumulated loans and rising input costs over the years have led to agrarian distress in the region.

Considering the criticality of soil moisture conservation and revegetation in both the talukas, we have assisted 107 village institutions in preparing perspective plans through Integrated Participatory Planning Exercise under the Right to Employment Act. This year with the convergence of National Rural Livelihoods Mission and the Right to Employment Act, we brought 37,000 acres of common land under community management. Training provided to rural volunteers, para workers, Gram Rojgar Sewaks and Panchayat members helped in supporting the communities to protect and restore common lands. Around 23 village institutions secured Community Forest Rights for around 3,000 acres of forest land this year.

In an area characterised by distress agriculture and insecure livelihoods, we have begun by connecting the farm with the farming system, which is viewing the parcel of farmland in connection with the pastures and forests as a viable larger system. The second element that we are strengthening is the role of effective local governance in improved management of natural resources as well as providing livelihood security. The third dimension of our efforts is to reduce risks by diversifying cropping practices, reducing costs of cultivation, and augmenting supplementary sources of income.



Understanding the complexities of the region and identifying areas to add value to the local efforts, we work with local communities to build parallel conservation of natural resources, and on local self-governance, to secure farm-based livelihoods in the distress-prone district of Yavatmal.



Financial Highlights

The Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) is a Society registered under the Societies Registration Act XXI of 1860, New Delhi. FES is also registered under Section 12A & 80G of the Income Tax Act of 1961, and the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) of 2010.

Sources of Funds

During the year 2014-15, the receipts totaled INR 304.74 million (includes interest on corpus to the extent of utilisation), as against the previous year's income of INR 235.41 million, an increase of 29% over the previous year.

- Of this, domestic sources accounted for INR 178.41 million (59%). The major share of domestic contributions came from private donors, that is, INR 135.11 million (45%), while Government agencies supported with projects worth INR 31.54 million (10%). Interest on corpus to the extent of utilisation and other receipts were INR 11.45 million (4%). Interest and other receipts were INR 0.31 million.
- The balance of INR 126.33 million (41%) is from foreign sources.
 - o Covered by FCRA : INR 120.38 million (39%)
 - o Not Covered by FCRA : INR 5.95 million (2%)

At the end of the year, the corpus fund was INR 215.15 million and reserves and surplus amounted to INR 42 million.

Utilisation

During the year, the total utilisation of funds was INR 266.74 million as against the previous year's INR 225.33 million – an increase of 18%. The major heads of fund utilisation were:

Particulars	INR in million	Percentage
Strengthening Community-based Institutions for Conservation of Natural Resources	145.85	55
Survey, Capacity-Building, Studies, Commons Initiative	78.15	29
Administration and Recurring Expenses	33.37	12
Capital Expenditure	9.37	4
Total	266.74	100

Leverage of Funds

Besides utilising funds sourced from donors and Government agencies, the organisation leveraged funds to the tune of INR 311.35 million from the following sources for implementing various project activities:

Particulars	INR in million
NABARD	38.41
IWMP	92.22
MGNREGA	124.28
Departments such as Agriculture, Horticulture, Forest, etc.	49.18
Community Contribution	7.26
Total	311.35

Sharp & Tannan Associates were the Statutory Auditors for the year 2014-15.

Auditor's Report & Financial Statements for the year ended on 31st March, 2015 are available at <http://www.fes.org.in/balance-sheet-2014-15.pdf>

Acknowledgement

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