

# **NO DEMOCRACY, NO FOOD**

Status of People's Access to and Control over Livelihood & Development Resources under PESA



*By Jana Wendler*

**FOOD & DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGN**

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FOOD & DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGN

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## Introduction ■

The 16034 square kilometres of Sarguja, the northern-most district of Chhattisgarh, are an area of contradiction. It is a region full of rich resources, with large coalfields and a variety of valuable minerals such as iron, bauxite and limestone. Around 50% of the territory is covered in dense forest, a source of many forest products. Tendu leaves and sal seed are collected every year as well as many different fruits, roots, and medicinal herbs. The soil receives more than 1300 mm annual rainfall, which contributes to the state's description as "the rice bowl of India". Rich cultural heritage and beautiful natural spots make the area attractive to visitors from nearby towns and beyond.

And yet it is also a region of deep poverty, hunger and exploitation. Nearly 90% of the population are at least partially dependent on agriculture, yet only 26% of the land is under cultivation. The majority of the people live in small villages, often hard to access over the crumbling mud roads. The houses are simple and largely empty; a bicycle is already a luxury for many. The forest cover decreases year by year, forest dwelling communities are forced to move outside the woods to make a living. Most families are dependent on exploitative labour work, while the resources of their villages are taken by outside contractors. The poor of the region struggle for even two meals a day; meals which consist of nothing but plain rice and leaves. Every year, reports of hunger deaths or hunger-related illnesses emerge from the area, although the exact number of these cases lies in the dark. The means and resources for food production increasingly slip into the hands of the powerful few, leaving the poor even more prone to starvation. In short, life is a struggle for the majority of the rural people in Sarguja.

Worst affected of all are the tribal communities. Sarguja has a tribal population of over 50%, with large groups of the primitive Pahari Korwa tribe as well as many Gond, Oraon and Nagasiya families. These tribal communities traditionally lived in the forest which provided for all their needs. Yet since the 1930s, they have been systematically resettled in villages with little usable land available and no other means of income. Removed from their traditional life, they fell into the cycle of poverty, debt and exploitation. Despite various government initiatives over the decades, the situation of the tribals has not improved. They are the victims of the administrative system as well as of local elites; their lack of education and simple lifestyle is exploited from all sides. Yet their plight goes largely unrecognised in the wider public and mainstream media, as their voices are rarely listened to.



The problems facing the tribal people and other poor groups of Sarguja are manifold. Some have a natural origin, but most are manmade. Natural difficulties include the uneven rainfall, which is concentrated in three months of the year and the difference in soil fertility which is very low in some parts and particularly in the areas inhabited by tribals. Wild forest animals also pose a danger to the villages and the land. Yet the people have been living with these adverse conditions for centuries. The real problems come from the state and society. Exploitation and corruption are common, so is the destruction of natural resources, while profits from their use are concentrated in the hands of a few. The poor are consistently deprived of their rights; instead of progress they experience a steady deterioration of their situation. And this all while Article 21-b of the Indian Constitution gives the “right to life” to every citizen, which means that the government has the responsibility to not let anyone die of hunger or suffer from poverty. The state keeps talking about great development goals, and makes whole lists of promises to the poor, yet none of them are kept and development rarely reaches the villages of Sarguja.

#### **Food and Democracy Campaign – Aims and Activities**

The Food and Democracy Campaign takes the stand that food and livelihood insecurity result from the lack of democracy in the rural areas. Its supporters believe that giving the people real power as well as the means to exercise it will decrease many of the problems the poor face or even solve some issues completely. The Campaign wants to raise awareness about these connections of food and democracy and put pressure on the public institutions to improve the situation.

More specifically, it has three aims for the improvement of rural livelihood and food security in Sarguja. The goals are to ensure:

- accountable, responsible and efficient governance in the rural areas
- equitable access to resources and means of food production
- equitable access of the poor to food aid through government schemes

These aims should be achieved not by violence but by peaceful struggle. One main approach is to mobilise the rural community. Once awareness and motivation is created among them, this will put pressure on public institutions to address the issues. Through media outreach and policy advocacy the wider public should also become involved and work on solutions. The findings of this study will lay the factual ground work for these activities and provide points of focus.

This study will shed light on these problems by telling people’s stories and showing the issues on specific examples. It focuses on seven villages of Sarguja, all of which have different problems and experiences with development. The results of this fact-finding exercise will strengthen the Food & Democracy Campaign in Sarguja. This Campaign, initiated jointly by Shri Gandhi Seva Ashram and Grassroots India Trust, believes that it is the lack of democracy that causes hunger and poverty. Further, the investigation explores how far provisions for tribal self-rule have achieved their ambitious aims. It is also an



attempt to present the situation of the tribal people of Sarguja to a wider audience. The results are intended as a starting point for discussion, further investigation and campaigning for all parts of society, and will hopefully contribute to the improvement of tribal livelihood in the future.





## Methodology ■

### 1. THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

The central aim of this study is to show that there is an intimate connection between democracy and the livelihood situation of people in rural areas. More specifically, it seeks to give evidence that the food insecurity experienced by the people of Sarguja is directly and indirectly related to the failure of schemes and legislation introduced by the government and executed by its administrative system. If this connection can be made sufficiently clear, it would have far reaching implications for attempts to reduce poverty and hunger in the region.

Apart from this main overall objective, the study pursues a number of smaller and more specific aims. Firstly, the study is an overview of the problems which will serve as a basis for the Food and Democracy Campaign. For the Campaign to be successful, it needs to be focused and directly address the crucial issues in the region. Therefore, it requires a sound analysis of the situation, which will be provided by the results of this field study. Secondly, it is an attempt to describe the problems at ground level through experience accounts and first hand observations. Using case studies found in interviews with the villagers, this report seeks to create a vivid picture of the grassroots realities, while at the same time giving the people a chance to express their personal experiences. Thirdly, it is a specific criticism of the implementation of the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA). The act, projected as the solution to poverty and exploitation of the tribal population, has not produced the intended results. This investigation seeks to show that the value of the Act is diminished by a general lack of interest in its implementation.

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### 2. THE SAMPLE VILLAGES AND SCOPE OF STUDY

The study comprises seven villages, situated in three blocks of Sarguja district. The villages were selected according to purposive sampling in order to show the variety of issues of the region and also to enable comparison between different stages of development. In three out of the seven villages (Kundi, Sidhma and Banspara), Shri Gandhi Seva Ashram (SGSA) has already been active and initiated different development projects. The organisation also intervened on one specific problem in Ghangri. The remaining three villages (Bheski, Riri and Lalmati), however, have not been subject of any NGO activity and therefore show the situation in villages entirely dependent on government development.



The problems found in the sample villages illustrate the situation of Sarguja district overall; they are examples for issues known in general but rarely investigated in detail. However, each village also has a set of more specific problems, which depend on the unique characteristics of the village and its population. The study includes both these types, but indicates which issues can be generalised. Because of the small sample, it is not a full representation of Sarguja District, but suffices as an illustration of the central problems.

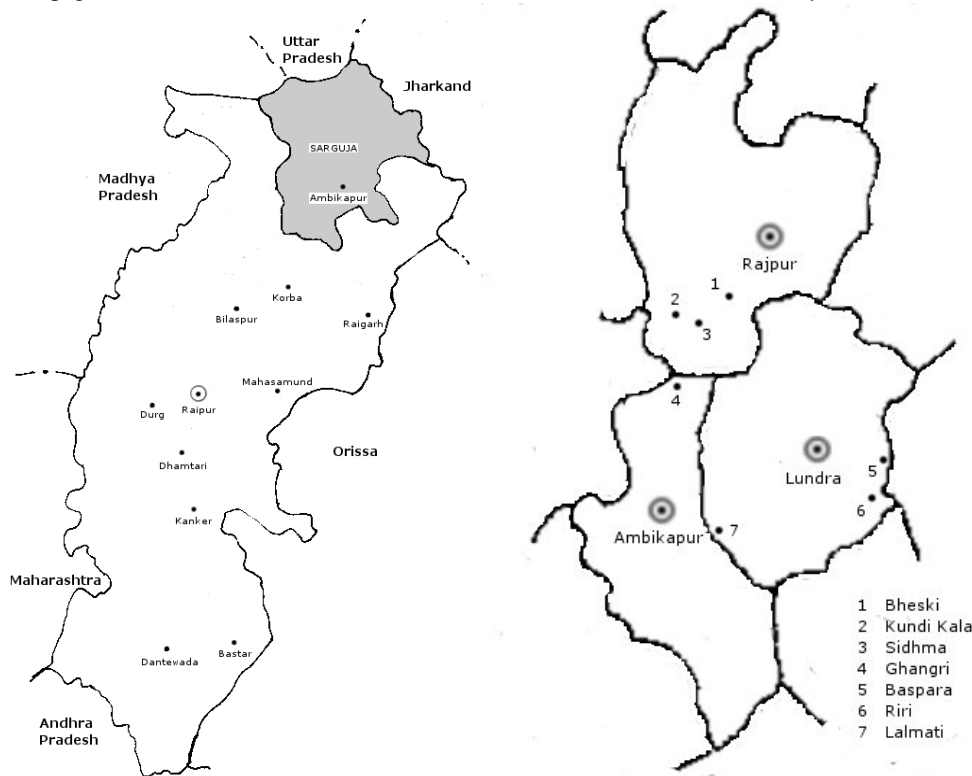


Figure-1: Maps of Chhattisgarh and the Area of the Study

### 3. THE PROCESS OF INVESTIGATION

The study was conducted over a period of 4 months from September to December 2006. This includes the planning stage as well as the collection of material and data in the field and from secondary sources. The plan of investigation was based directly on various sections of the PESA Act relevant to food security and livelihood. These points of interest were then adapted such that investigation was possible. Part of the planning stage included introductory reading on tribal issues, democratic structures and natural resources. The final working plan was a result of this work and extensive discussions with the members of GIT/SGSA, who contributed their field experience and thereby ensured the practicality of the plan.



The field study itself took place from mid-September to mid-December 2006. It largely consisted in visits to the sample villages and discussions with different sections of the population there. Interviews were conducted both in groups and with individuals. It should be noted that these interviews were not based on a rigid questionnaire. Although the same or similar questions were presented to different people and in different villages, the discussions were open in order to give the people a chance to express their problems and experiences. Therefore this study is not a form of statistical survey. Another important aspect of the field visits were the observations made by walks and drives through the villages. These first hand experiences also feature in this report.

The second part of the investigation consisted in the collection of secondary data from government offices and public representatives regarding the expenditure on government schemes and the progress of development projects. Where possible, the data obtained was checked against the ground realities, otherwise it was analysed as such with the help of experienced members of SGSA. Internet research was a further tool used to gain a full understanding of the situation as well as to collect some additional data.

The research findings were discussed with SGSA as well as members of Grassroots India Trust at various stages during the field research, which led to some small changes in the inquiry. Finally, the material was compiled into the present form in early January 2007.

#### 4. CONSTRAINTS

There are a variety of constraints regarding this investigation that need to be made explicit. Most importantly, all interviews and discussions are based on translation from either Hindi or the local Sargujiya dialect into English. Because none of the facilitators had full proficiency in English, inaccuracies in translation were unavoidable and discussion of details sometimes proved impossible. However, attempts were made to minimise this problem by repeating questions in different ways, checking answers and analysing responses with respect to the overall context.

A second significant problem that restricted the investigation concerns the logistics. The bad accessibility of some of the villages and motorbikes as the only mode of transport available made field visits very time taking. Since the facilitators were also occupied with other responsibilities, only two or three visits to each village were possible. Although this was sufficient to obtain the necessary information, it did not allow for any follow up on very specific issues or many individual interviews. The problem of transport further restricted the sample region to an area around Ambikapur instead of covering the whole of Sarguja.



Further, obtaining data and records from government offices and village representatives proved to be difficult. Minute books from village Gram Sabhas were only given out in two cases, one of which took nearly two months and required an application under the Right to Information Act. When visiting offices, the officers were often unavailable, and in one case several four rounds were necessary until any information was released.

Lastly, all the information obtained from the people in an investigation like this should be checked against the records regarding the matter. However, because of the constraints mentioned above, this was not possible in many cases. Hence, the accounts of cases might sometimes lack accuracy or reflect a minor issue rather than a general problem. As far as possible, such cases will be pointed out specifically in the following chapters as to avoid giving a distorted picture.





## Milieu & the People ■

The first part of this section will give an introduction to the sample villages, describing their main characteristics in terms of resources and inhabitants and thereby pointing out relevant differences between them. The following parts are concerned with the findings regarding the food security and livelihood of the study area. Where significant, cases of individual villages will be highlighted; otherwise the results are derived from observations and analysis in all sample villages.

### 1. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE VILLAGES

**Banspara:** The village of Banspara is situated in a remote part of Lundra block, 60 km from Ambikapur. It is surrounded by dense forest and hills as well as several streams, making it hard to reach during rainy season. Its inhabitants are mainly from the Nagasiya tribe, but the village also includes one Pahari Korwa hamlet on a hillside. In the past few years, SGSA has created one dam for irrigation in the village and has helped with raising awareness among the people.

Table.1: Population of Sample Villages

Block	Village	Main source of livelihood	Total families	ST population
Rajpur	Kundi	Agriculture, forest	198	74%
	Bheski	Stone breaking, labour work	157	84%
	Sidhma	Brick making, migration for labour work	528	69%
Lundra	Banspara	Agriculture, forest, labour work	269	42%
	Riri	Labour work	60	73%
	Lalmati	Agriculture, labour work	167	83%
Ambikapur	Ghangri	Labour work	260	77%

**Bheski:** Bheski village lies close to the main road leading north from Ambikapur. Its inhabitants, Pahari Korwa and other tribals, are very much dependent on the local quarries and stone crushers. It experiences a severe lack of water most of the year. Combined with the rocky soil, agriculture is nearly impossible. The villagers also suffer from the dust created by the nearby stone crusher. It causes problems to health, especially with the respiratory system and further reduces land use by covering fields in grey dust. Further,



during each of the visits to the village, a large number of children in school age were present, pointing to deficits in school attendance.

*Ghangri:* Similar to Bheski, Ghangri is located in an area of very dry, infertile land, making its inhabitants dependent on labour work. However, Ghangri shows extreme differences between different hamlets. While Lambidand, the Pahari Korwa hamlet, is possibly the poorest of all visited places, the main village benefits from a river and shows clear signs of development. While the people of Lambidand were dressed in very simple and often torn clothes, sitting outside their empty houses with no electricity, the inhabitants of the main village wore clean colourful clothes while watching TV or listening to the radio. Outside most houses in the main village one could find animals, some families also owned bicycles or motorbikes. None of these assets are present in a Pahari Korwa family. However, the ration shop, meant to help the poorest, was located in the main village next to the Panchayat Secretary's house. This large discrepancy is particularly troubling as the village is only 8 km away from the district capital Ambikapur.

*Kundi:* The village of Kundi, surrounded by forest and agricultural land, is one of the more developed villages from the sample villages. With agriculture being the main source of income, land is the biggest issue here. The population is mixed tribal. SGSA has been active for several years, assisting the villagers in forming self-help groups and functioning Gram Sabhas. This more advanced stage of development was visible in the open discussion with the people, the active role women played in it and the good relations between the people and the Upsarpanch.



*Lalmati:* The people in this village, close to Ambikapur, live both from agriculture and labour work. Despite easy access, little development has reached this settlement, which has a very high percentage of ST population. An interesting observation here was the difference in appearance between the Panchayat Secretary and one of the families interviewed. Although both described themselves as farmers, the panchayat secretary was well dressed in western clothes with watch and rings; while the head of the family wore nothing but a dirty clothe. This difference in appearance also translated into behaviour, with the panchayat secretary answering the question addressed to the poor man, who seemed very intimidated by the presence of the representative and one forest guard.



*Riri*: Situated close to Banspara, Riri is even less accessible as one has to cross two streams and follow paths barely suitable even for motorbikes. Surrounded by hills and forest, agriculture plays a small role here. There has been hardly any development due to its location and it being the smaller village in the Basena panchayat. Discussion took place with people working in a small roadside quarry. All men, women and adolescents did this strenuous physical work; even whole families were present.

*Sidhma*: The biggest village in Rajpur block, Sidhma displays great differences in development between hamlets. In one of the outer hamlets, many houses were sealed because the families have migrated to the city in search of labour work despite the creation of some opportunities in the village through SGSA. In the main village, on the other hand, a weekly market takes place that attracts sellers from several villages. The hamlet mainly investigated in this study is inhabited by the Bhuinya tribe. Their leader was well informed about rights and was active in improving the situation, which contrasted with the complaints made regarding the Gram Panchayat, whose members all come from the main village.

## 2. FOOD ISSUES

In all of the sample villages, the lack of food and bad quality of the diet was reported as the central problem. Although the villages face a variety of problems, food is the most immediate need of the people and hunger affects all aspects of life.

The periods of hardship vary from village to village and from year to year. In general, however, the situation is worst in the summer months before the new harvest comes in and in the winter months when there is little chance for employment. The availability also crucially depends on rainfall. Unusually, little rain during monsoon immediately reduces the crop significantly. Most villages report that they cannot get food for more than two months from their own land.



Only in Kundi, which already has experienced some development through the construction of tube wells, this figure is higher; people can eat off from their land for up to four months. This short period of self-sufficiency is largely due to two factors - marginal land holdings, on average less than two acres, and lack of irrigation. In villages where agriculture is negligible, such as Bheski, the availability of food



depends on employment opportunities, which can vary significantly.

On a normal day, one person would consume around  $\frac{3}{4}$  kg of rice, although the people of Bheski report that they do not consume more than  $\frac{1}{2}$  kg per person. A full meal would consist of rice, pulse and vegetables prepared with oil and spices, with non-vegetarian food reserved for special occasions like festivals. But only in Kundi one can find such a complete meal. Most villagers eat their rice with lakra, a local red plant that is used to make chutney but has little nutritional value. Vegetables are usually eaten when they are available from their own garden; only some villagers buy them from the market as their price is above Rs. 10 per kg, more than half the daily income of some families.

**Case Story.1 :: Debt and Bonded Labour: Basawan, Lalmati**

Basawan, an elderly man dressed in a simple piece of cloth and with unkempt white hair, has experienced the cycle of borrowing and bonded labour. His family, consisting of 3 married sons and 7 grandchildren, struggles for food six months in a year. They have to reduce their meals from 3 a day to 2. Even then, often the money is not enough. Basawan tells about how he had to borrow from a moneylender a few years back. He took a loan of Rs. 2500 (Rs. 500 for food expenses and Rs. 2000 to finance a wedding in his family). Since he only owns 5 acres of land, shared between him and his sons, he was unable to repay such a large loan. As a result, the moneylender made him a bonded agricultural labourer for 1 year. During this year, his own field got neglected. He says that such cases of borrowing happen every few years whenever they need some extra money. However hard the family works, they will never be able to save for bad times as there is always some past debt to be paid off. Basawan's case also illustrates the ruthlessness of the moneylenders. Assuming 300 working days in a year, Basawan would have earned Rs. 9000 in 1 year even if the wage was as low as Rs. 30 per day, which is nearly half the legal minimum but common among agricultural labourers. This effectively sets the interest rate for the loan at over 300%, extracted from the poor to enrich the elites.

But sometimes not even such a basic meal can be prepared. The people respond in different ways when there is not enough food available for the family. One way to avoid hunger is to try and gather edible goods from the forest. The people in Kundi and Banspara reported that they eat Mahua fruit or collect leaves for boiling in times of shortage. Yet the nutritional value of these plants is far from sufficient. Instead of boiling rice, people also create a watery mash from the grains, sometimes mixed with maize flower. Others borrow small amounts of rice from family and neighbours in order to have a meal. But this is rarely enough for more than one day, as other families also have little to give. Sometimes the people simply go without food, especially in the evening. As an old woman from Banspara explained, she just goes to sleep when there is nothing to eat in the house, because then she does not feel the hunger.

Another common response to the lack of food and means to buy it is to borrow. Families that find themselves without money, maybe through an emergency or through expenditures for a marriage, turn to local moneylenders or landlords.



They borrow a few hundred rupees to afford food for some weeks; and immediately they get trapped in the vicious cycle of borrowing and bonded labour. Usually the families find themselves unable to repay the small loans due to high interests, up to 100 percent in some cases. If repayment in cash is not possible, they either have to give away a large share of their harvest, or, more commonly, become bonded labourers for the lender. While working on his field, their own lands get neglected; instead of earning money for the future, they have to pay off past debts. Once these debts have been repaid through labour, the poor find themselves back where they started with no money or food. Hence the whole process will start again. It seems that it is no longer the traditional moneylenders that cause this problem, but rather local elites and landlords who have enough resources to lend out money. But either way the poverty of the people increases.

### 3. SOURCES OF LIVELIHOOD

#### Agriculture

Farming is the main occupation of the rural population in Sarguja. However, this has not always been the case for all communities since a large percentage, especially of the poorest, is tribal. Twenty or thirty years ago the tribal groups lived in forest villages, the forest satisfying all their needs for livelihood. But with increasing deforestation and resettlement of the forest-dwelling people they were forced to turn to agriculture as a means to make a living. Because farming is not a traditional work among the tribals, their methods are primitive, while the lands they received to cultivate are often little more than barren wasteland. Yet with few other opportunities available, agriculture is the basis of life for them, too. The large majority of Sarguja's farmers are marginal landholders, with a family owning only one to two acres of land. Because of the uneven rainfall over the year and a widespread lack of irrigation, most of these lands can only be cultivated once a year. This is not sufficient for a family to live. Most farmers therefore depend on other sources of income also, such as NTFP collection and labour work.

The crops that are mainly cultivated in the area are rice, maize, pulses and vegetables. The grains are generally grown for own consumption, while the vegetables are also sold in the market. Where more water is available one can also find wheat and sugar cane, in Banspara and Kundi respectively. The cultivation of sugar cane is a recent development, and since it is a cash crop that requires good irrigation its cultivation is mainly confined to the wealthier farmers.

The farming in Sarguja is done by very basic methods. Most fields are tended by hand; even cattle-drawn ploughs are a luxury. Machinery is not used at all. Often the whole family is engaged in the work on the fields, or if the male members pursue labour work it is up to the women to sow and harvest. Despite



this being strenuous physical work, the people place a great value on agriculture and the ownership of land. Even a small patch of land gives them a certain sense of self-sufficiency and makes them a little more independent of underpaid labour work and badly administered government aid. It is therefore not surprising that land issues and the lack of irrigation are a central concern for the people.

### Forest Products

One of the most widespread activities in addition to agriculture is the collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Although the forest cover of the region has significantly decreased over the last few decades, most villages have some forest area in their vicinity. NTFPs are divided into two different categories, nationalised and non-nationalised products. Nationalised NTFPs, after collection, are sold to Primary Forest Produce Cooperative Societies in the villages, which are under government control, while non-nationalised products can be sold freely in the market by the collectors. The nationalised NTFPs collected in the area of this study are tendu leaves, which are used to make local cigarettes, and sal seed, which is pressed to make oil. Other NTFPs are collected mainly for own consumption or small-scale trade. These include mushrooms, roots, chirongi and mahua, the basis of local liquor.

The edible products from the forest are not basic ingredient of the people's diet; rather they are an addition or a substitute in times of need. Tendu leaves and sal seed on the other hand are crucial as a source of income. The people from Banspara say a family can live off the revenue generated for around two months a year, similarly for the families in Kundi nationalised NTFP collection accounts for 20% of their income. Tendu leaves and sal seed have an even greater significance because of their collection period. The season lasts from April to June, which are months of shortage because little labour work is available in the agricultural sector while the next harvest is still months away. However, the villagers report that collection becomes more difficult every year as resources are decreasing.

Another way in which the villagers make use of the forest is the collection of fallen wood to be sold as fuel. In Lalmati, people collect two bundles of firewood every other day that brings Rs. 80. Since it is illegal to cut healthy trees for sale as a measure to protect the forest, the fuel wood sale is the only method of income generation involving timber products.



### Artisans

Nowadays very few families are engaged in artisan work in the villages of Sarguja. In the past, the skill of pottery or basket making was passed on from one generation to the next, and the families could make a living from selling their products. But with cheap mass production flooding the markets even in the small villages, the artisans



find it increasingly harder to sell their products. There is less demand now for earthen pots, as people use metal ware. Since potters cannot produce anything during the rainy season, they are particularly dependent on good sales the rest of the year. Because of the decreasing demand, the number of artisans steadily falls, and families are forced to find additional sources of income. One potter family in Kundi produces earthen pots only for the village

now; they do no longer sell their products in the market. In order to make a living, they also cultivate land and keep a few animals. But since this work takes time, only one member of the family continues with traditional pottery. So very slowly these skills die out, as they no longer feed a family.

### **4. SOURCES OF LIVELIHOOD - LABOUR WORK**

Although the activities mentioned above are the traditional ways in which people secured their livelihood, there are rarely sufficient for survival now. Most families are forced to engage additionally in unskilled labour work. In some of the villages, such as Bheski and Riri, the people nearly exclusively live off wage labour, and the availability of employment directly determines whether the family will be able to eat in the following week. The work they carry out is demanding physical labour, often under bad conditions. People work as agricultural labourers on the fields of rich people in their own or neighbouring villages or carry out road works, often in other villages and for the profit of a contractor rather than the development of their own settlement. Where available, they break stones in quarries and supply stone crushers and building contractors.

Not only are the people forced to do hard physical work, no matter of their age and built, but they receive a pitiable amount of wage. The agricultural labourers of Kundi and Ghangri get only around Rs. 30 for a full day's work on the field; only in a few cases lunch is provided for them. Further, wages are not equal for men and women even if they do the same work. While a male worker in Ghangri



receives Rs. 35, a female only earns Rs. 25. In Riri, the difference is even more extreme with women being paid Rs. 30, exactly Rs. 20 less than the men. These wages, if they even deserve the name, are striking examples of exploitation of the poor, as the legal minimum wage for Chhattisgarh stands at Rs. 58.83 per day. A further problem with the wages is improper payment and frequent attempts to cheat the people even on these minimal amounts. One case in Banspara illustrates this. Last year a road was built in the village under the control of a contractor from Ambikapur. But the payment the people received from the contractor was faulty in many cases. Only people that calculated their wage and checked the received amount actually got the full minimum wage. All others received only Rs. 58, which is a small but significant loss for the people. It was an attempt to exploit the unawareness and lack of education of the villagers, an everyday problem for the poor of Sarguja.

**Case Story.2 :: Labour Work: Stone Breakers in Bheski**

Driving through the area of Bheski, one notices a large number of quarries and stone crusher facilities, crushing big rocks to small gravel. In the dry and dusty village, the people tell about their daily work in crushers. All year break large rocks simple tools like them into The rocks are then which is the work adolescents as people work on around three days, receive Rs 120 once the stone crusher. person is therefore for this incredibly strenuous and dangerous work, with no safety precautions in the quarry, no rest facilities or drinking water.



these quarries and round, the labourers from the quarry with hammers and split transportable sizes. put on a tractor, of the women and young as 15. Several filling one tractor for for which they only it has been taken to The daily wage per not more than Rs 10

Another aspect of the dependency on labour work is migration. There are few employment opportunities in the rural areas outside the rainy season, since little agricultural activity takes place. This forces many families to leave their village in search for work. They often migrate to Ambikapur, but also to places further away such as Varanasi. Sidhma is one village where migration is common, although some work opportunities have been created in the village with help of SGSA (see Case Story.7). One can see several houses with sealed doors, a sign that the family has migrated for a longer period, usually six to eight months. They only return during the rainy season in order to cultivate the little land they own. This brings a variety of problems. With the working population of the village migrating, only the elderly and weak are left behind with no one to take care of them. Families cannot keep animals or work on projects to develop their village - their work only benefits others. Further,



migration means that children cannot regularly attend school; often they also have to work that in turn threatens their future too. Bajrang, a young man from Sidhma whose family has been migrating for 30 years, experienced all these problems. He goes to Ambikapur to work as a brick maker where he can earn up to Rs 350 a week. But he is very unhappy about migrating. He says that everything is more expensive in Ambikapur, the family has to find accommodation and settle away from their known environment every year, while their house in the village gets neglected. Yet the lack of work leaves no choice, as the family depends on a daily labour income.

### 5. ANNUAL INCOME

The difficulties the people experience in making a living and the hunger that results from the lack of resources and exploitation are particularly clear when one considers the income of rural families. The World Bank set the mark of severe poverty at living on less than \$1 per day. But for many poor in Sarguja, even this is a figure far out of reach.

#### Case Story.3 :: Income of Bhadai of Ghangri Village

Bhadai, who lives with his wife and eight children in a small mud hut in Ghangri, lists what he earns during a year: (figures for 2005)

Labour work: 2 days per week at Rs 35 per day	- Rs 3640
Sale of fuel wood: 3 times a month at Rs 50 each	- Rs 1800
Collection of nationalised NTFP:	
300 kg sal seed at Rs 3 per kg	- Rs 900
500 bundles tendu leaves at Rs 50 per 100 bundles	- Rs 250
<b>Total:</b>	<b>- Rs 6590</b>

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This gives the entire family a daily income of Rs. 18, less than half a dollar. With 1 kilogram of rice costing Rs. 10 in the market, one can clearly see how dire their situation is. The family is completely dependent on government aid just to be able to feed them, and even then the meal consists of little more than plain rice. This leaves no resources for school, medical help or other expenditures.

Bhadai's case is no exception in the area. The income of many families interviewed during the study was below Rs 30 per day. Savings or the acquisition of assets is an unthinkable luxury. Although the estimates given by the people might not be completely accurate, as no one keeps a proper record of their earnings, they vividly show the daily struggle for survival the people face. Any day without employment or even small fluctuation in the harvest mean that the family will go hungry for days. The situation is made worse by the fact that families are large with many children, all of which need food and



care. Yet since poverty forces them to take up work at a young age without proper education, they have little chance of a better life in their adulthood.



Status of People's Access to and Control over Livelihood & Development Resources under PESA

**NO DEMOCRACY, NO FOOD**



## People’s Control Over Livelihood Resources ■

The basis of development, secure livelihood and economic independence lies in the natural resources of an area. The sustainable, fair use of these resources is one of the aims often recited by the government in connection with the reduction of poverty and the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA) reflects this importance. However, as the following will show, reality is far from the theory. After outlining the clauses of PESA relating to minor resources, this section will look at the ground level problems concerning each of them. Because of natural differences, these issues only apply to a few or even only one villages in each case.

### 1. PESA PROVISIONS FOR RESOURCES

The Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 is an important piece of legislation regarding tribal self-rule and opportunities for development. It effectively places the control over natural resources in tribal areas in the hand of the people, by strengthening the role of Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats. The use of resources should be decided collectively by the village population, thereby ensuring that their interests are the primary consideration. More specifically, PESA mentions four types of resources that should be under the control of the people.

#### Water

Clause 4(j) of PESA states that

*“planning and management of minor water bodies in the Scheduled Areas shall be entrusted to Panchayats at the appropriate level”*

The appropriate level here depends on the size of the water body. With an area of under 5 acres, the control lies with the Gram Panchayat; water bodies up to 10 acres fall under the responsibility of the Janpad Panchayat while all bigger ones than 10 acres are under Zila Panchayat’s control. Most of the ponds and streams in the area of study fall into the first category; therefore, the Gram Panchayat is the crucial institution for the management of water here. Water management concerns questions of fishing rights and rights to use water for irrigation, as well as control over common usage such as for washing and bathing.

#### Minerals

The prospecting and excavation of minor minerals is addressed in clauses 4(k) and 4(l) of PESA. The clauses state that



*(k) "the recommendations of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall be made mandatory prior to grant of prospecting licence or mining lease"*

and that such recommendations are also required

*(l) "for grant of concession for the exploitation of minor minerals by auction".*

The term "minor minerals" refers to minerals of lesser economic value; the government retains full control over minerals of major economic value such as iron, bauxite and copper. Nevertheless, the commercial use of minor minerals is an important source of revenue for the village, as rocks and minerals are in high demand. Further, the excavation of minerals is one source of employment for the villagers; so the question of control will have a large impact on people's life.

### Forest

Clause 4(m) emphasises that Panchayats must be endowed with power that let them function as proper institutions of self-government. It specifically mentions the

*(m) (ii) "ownership of minor forest produce"*

as one of these powers. Considering the significance of the forest for the livelihood of rural communities, this is indeed a very important point for ensuring self-rule in the Scheduled Areas. Minor forest produce refers largely to Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), the cutting and sale of wood is a separate issue with complex legal provisions. Giving ownership of the minor forest produce to the people allows them to set own rules for collection and sale as well as giving them the right to monitor trade activity with the government.

### Land

In the same clause, the PESA Act mentions that the local self-governance institutions should have

*(m) (iii) "the power to prevent alienation of land in the Scheduled Areas and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land"*

Alienation here primarily refers to the illegal appropriation of tribal land by non-tribals as has been the practice for many years. However, it can also apply to other forms of alienation within a village community, since the ownership of land is a crucial issue for livelihood. It is also important to notice that the Gram Sabha should be able to take action, not only act as a controlling body, which is indeed a form of substantial power.



## 2. WATER ISSUES

### Scarcity of Water

The people of Sarguja face massive problems regarding water. Not only is water a necessity for daily life, but it also strongly influences the productivity of agriculture and the quality of the crop. Therefore, problems with water have a direct impact on the livelihood and food security of the population. Outside the rainy season, all of the sample villages experience a lack of water for basic needs such as drinking water, washing and bathing. Low ground water levels and few natural water bodies aggravate the general problem of uneven rainfall in this region. The natural ponds and streams that exist mostly dry out outside the rainy



season. Villagers are therefore dependent on man-made structures such as hand-pumps, tube-wells and artificial ponds. The situation is particularly grave in the villages Bheski and Ghangri (Lambidand hamlet). In Bheski, people cannot even fulfil their need for drinking water in the summer and are forced to walk to pumps in other villages. The hand-pumps installed in Ghangri, on the other hand, give only red-coloured water, according to the

people. This water is not useful as drinking water because of its high iron content. The lack of water is visible in these villages even in the months immediately after rainy season, the time of this investigation. Small streams had already stopped to carry water and the soil was dry in many places. People therefore struggle to obtain sufficient water for most of the year.

Lack of water resources results in a nearly complete lack of irrigation for the fields. Farmers are at the mercy of the monsoon, which is not reliable and only allows for one crop a year. When one considers that the revenue generated by one crop on one acre of land lies between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 20,000, it is clear how badly the lack of irrigation affects the people. Although this is essentially a natural problem, it is closely linked to useful and sustainable village development. Development projects should focus on irrigation and water harvesting, as it contains large benefits for the people. Even micro projects will create substantial improvements for agriculture and livelihood. These issues relating to development projects will be discussed in Chapter.VI.



### Fishing

Water resources are not only important for agriculture; they also provide other sources of food and income, most notably the fishing. Where rivers are available, in Banspara and Riri, people go fishing for their own consumption. The catch is not big enough to allow sale in the market, it is just a welcome addition to their usual diet. With the exception of Sidhma, none of the sample villages has a fishery in man-made ponds. However, commercial fishing from ponds would bring large revenue for the people, as fish sells for good prices. Pond making therefore should be a prime focus of development projects.

Yet even in Sidhma, where a fishery is in existence, the poor have not seen any benefits from it. This case is one of many which show the discrepancy between the legal provisions for the people and their application in reality.

#### **Case Story.4 :: Pond use in Fishing in Sidhma**

Sidhma village has one medium-sized pond suitable for a fishery. For years, this pond was indeed used for fishing, but by the sarpanch only. As Bikul Sai, the leader of a self-help group (SHG) in the village, says, 15 years ago the sarpanch on paper “paid” Rs. 300 to the Gram Panchayat for the lease of the pond. Since then, he was the only holder of such a lease, aided by his winning the position of sarpanch three times in a row. There had also never been any discussion or vote regarding the lease, and no one dared to challenge the activities of the panchayat secretary for a long time. Finally, in 2005 one SHG informed about their rights by local NGOs, complained to the Gram Panchayat about this practice. The sarpanch was then eventually forced to stop his exploitation of a communal resource. Yet the people are still waiting to receive any benefits from the pond, as the sarpanch now appears to block the issuing of the lease to the SHG. The application has been running since March 2006, and there is no sign of progress. Meanwhile, the pond remains unused. This is a huge loss for the poor people Sidhma, as the estimated revenue from the pond is Rs 20,000 per year. Although this case could not be verified through discussion with the sarpanch or Gram Panchayat, it is interesting that records relating to the prior use of the pond were not available for inspection.

The case of Sidhma is a clear example of the failure of PESA as a functional law. For more than 15 years, one individual had been betraying the people he was supposed to represent. The coming into effect of PESA in 1996 did nothing to change the situation. The Gram Panchayat should have taken control of the pond, deciding on its use by consulting the village via Gram Sabha and ensuring the maximum benefits for the poorest. One would think that 9 years are sufficient for this process to take place, but it took the help of NGOs to change anything. Even now, it does not appear to be the case that the Gram Panchayat is giving out the lease for the benefit of the village. The longer the decision, whatever it will be, takes, the more income is lost. Clearly, this situation results from the bad implementation of PESA at the local level. The control of the water body is not in the hands of the Gram Panchayat, instead there are a few powerful individuals deciding the matter.



### 3. MINERAL ISSUES

With Chhattisgarh being a state with rich mineral resources, the question of control over them is connected to a lot of profit and income; it is therefore very important for the poor as well as being a focus of interest for powerful elites. Out of the sample villages it is only Bheski which has minor mineral resources in its vicinity. There are several quarries around the village in which rocks are broken for the use of stone crushers. These quarries are the main place of work for the inhabitants of Bheski, and therefore they are crucial for their livelihood and survival.

#### Quarries

Although one example is not sufficient for getting a full picture on the impact of PESA in the area of mining, it does give an indication of the problems involved. The mines in Bheski, which are the place of work for many of the villagers, are not controlled through a lease. The people of Bheski simply go there, break the rocks and then sell them to the stone crusher, all without organisation or control through a contractor or leaseholder. They say that they have not experienced any problems with this system; there has not been any harassment or intervention from other parties. Yet this unorganised excavation of the mineral carries several dangers with it. Firstly, it leaves the scene open for any agent to come and start mining. As long as this is confined to the people from the village, this is unproblematic, but it could also



be a large-scale contractor with many labourers who takes over the work in the quarry. The people would have no way of opposing this intrusion into their

place of work, a severe threat to their livelihood. Secondly, this individual mining means that there are no provision for the workers in terms of health and safety. They work in the large quarry with bare hands and feet, using only simple tools and no protection. In case of any accident, they are left completely to themselves with no health expense refunds or pensions available. Lastly, the mining without a lease also means that the villagers are effectively engaged in illegal work. All mines should be covered by a lease, held by a village cooperative. If this is not the case, the workers are under threat of intervention through the police or regional officers.



This of course raises the question why the people of Bheski do not have a lease for the mines to prevent all these potential problems. Since the quarries lie in their village, the inhabitants should fully control this resource. The main reason why this is not the case is that the people have never tried to get the lease. They say that they cannot run a mine, they do not understand the business and legal aspects of the work; neither do they know how to apply for control. All they are concerned about is their daily work and wage. This is an aspect which is not really incorporated in the PESA provisions. They call for the involvement of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat in giving out leases for the mines in the interest of the people. Yet this neglects the little knowledge the people have regarding these matters. This effectively makes it impossible for the provisions to ever be fulfilled. Not only are the villagers unable to take the lease for the mines for themselves in the form of a village cooperative, since they have no experience in controlling and managing a resource. It is also far from clear if the villagers would even be able to decide between different applications from outsiders. As long as the contractors promise secure work and good wages, the poor would not question what intentions lie behind this, as they lack knowledge of business and economical matters. PESA, however, does not incorporate this requirement fully.

#### Stone Crusher

One further issue concerns the work of the stone crusher in Bheski, which has a negative impact on the village. It is run by a contractor from Ambikapur, the local people only work there as labourers. The dust created by the stone crushing affects agriculture and health severely. Grey dust covers the fields and trees, dramatically reducing soil fertility. It also settles in the houses, causing breathing problems to the local residents. Yet the village has never received any form of compensation for these damages, nor has the contractor tried to improve the situation. But the people have never raised this issue with the contractor either. The reason for this is that they need the work desperately, and the establishment has been there for several decades. So they accept the adverse conditions out of fear of losing work. The issue was not raised in Gram Sabha, either; the people feel that Gram Sabha could not provide a solution that would not endanger their employment. This once again shows the weakness of the people in the face of the powerful, which is worsened by the absolute dependency the poor have on labour work.

#### **4. FOREST ISSUES**

##### Legal Basis

Although most tribal communities do no longer live exclusively off the products available in the forest, there is still a very strong relationship between these



people and the woods. The laws and policies of Chhattisgarh seem to recognise this fact. In the Chhattisgarh's State Forest Policy of 2001, it is stated that

*4.3 "traditional rights and concessions of entry into forests and the use of produce thereof by people living in and around forests are recognised"*

and the document specifically directs that

*4.3.3" the domestic needs of tribals should be the first concern"*

and

*4.5.2 "the state should take necessary steps for endowing ownership rights of Minor Forest Produce on local communities as per the PESA provisions 1996".*

With this legal background one would expect the rights of the tribals to be safeguarded against interference. Looking at the ground level situation, however, a different picture emerges.

### Nationalised NTFPs

In all villages where nationalised NTFPs are collected, people report problems when selling the products. The sales point is the Primary Forest Produce Cooperative Society, headed by a phad munshi (supervisor of procurement centre), which should be selected by the village, according to the official instructions, to ensure a fair trade. Yet this is often not the case. The two main complaints that emerged are improper payment and the request for a certain amount unpaid delivery to cover for spoilt or wet products.

The official rates for nationalised NTFPs are set at Rs. 45-50 per 100 bundles of tendu leaves, which consists of 50 leaves each and Rs. 3.50 per kilogram of sal seed. The collectors are also entitled to a bonus, which depends on the profits made by the Cooperative Societies when selling the products on. After each season, the Forest Department auctions the total amount of sal seed and tendu leaves to large scale buyers. The net profit gained after taking off storage and transport costs should be distributed among the primary collectors. The problems of getting proper payment are particularly visible for sal seed. In Kundi and Ghangri, both villages in which NTFP collection has great importance, the payment for sal seed in 2005 was only Rs. 3.00 per kg, Re 0.50 less than the fixed wage. Further, the collectors were entitled to an additional bonus of Re 1.50 per kilogram in 2005, which was not paid in these villages. Problems also arise for the sale of tendu leaves. In Banspara, one female NTFP collector states that the entries in the collection cards for tendu leaves are frequently falsified; the salesman claims that fewer bundles have been delivered and therefore pays less money. This practice is particularly shocking when one considers the profit that the Primary Forest Produce Cooperative Societies make with tendu leaves (see Case Story 5 below). This surplus money flows into the administrative structures or into the pockets of salesmen; the poor see nothing of it. Instead of distributing the profits in the form of bonus,



it is a common practice to save the profits and balance them with losses occurring in other years. This surely cannot be the ownership of the forest resources by the people that PESA advocates. Ownership also implies the right to take profits, a right which the people are frequently denied.

<b>Case Story.5 :: Tendu Collection of Nationalised NTFPs in Rajpur block (season 2006)</b>	
Price for one standard bag when sold on from phad:	Rs 729
Estimated amount of standard bags collected in 2006 season in Rajpur block:	4700
Contents of one standard bag of dried tendu leaves:	on average 730 bundles
Total amount of bundles collected:	3431000
Cost of packing bags:	Rs 40 per 1000 bundles
Revenue for Cooperative Society: 4700 x Rs 729 – (3431000 x Rs 40)	Rs. 3289060
Payment to collectors:	Rs 50 per 100 bundles
Total payment by Cooperative Society: 3431000 x Rs 0.50	Rs. 1715500
<b>Total Profit for Cooperative Society:</b> Rs 3289060 – Rs 1715500	<b>Rs. 1573560</b>

The exploitation continues with cases where the phad munshi takes some of the collected goods without payment, claiming that this “extra” will cover delivery which is spoilt or wet. All collectors of sal seed and tendu leaves report this as a standard procedure. For tendu leaves, 2 or 5 bundles are taken without payment for every 100 bundles delivered; for sal seed 5 or even 10 kg are demanded as extra for every 100kg. But these are clear cases of exploitation, as it is against the regulations given by higher levels of the Minor Forest Produce Cooperatives. It means that the collectors get no reward for some of their work, while the people involved in the sale can pocket extra money. With a family collecting 200-300 kg of sal seed in a season, this means they lose up to Rs 100, which would provide food for several days. The forest guards and officials from the Forest Department do nothing to help. The people of Kundi are frightened of the officers whenever they are present at the phad; they do not listen to people’s complaints and have not stopped these illegal extra deliveries. If the people own the minor products of the forest, they should be able to carry out fair trade, being paid proper wages and having correct amounts recorded. Instead they have to watch how the same people who make the profits cheat them over their small income. These issues are not addressed in the Gram Sabha either, due to various deficiencies in the functioning of these meetings, but also because it lacks the means to effective action and because the village elites often benefit from the exploitation, too.



### Collection of Wood

According to the forest laws, people are free to collect fallen wood for use or sale as firewood, but no trees are supposed to be cut down for any purpose. This presents a difficulty for the rural poor, who traditionally use some wood for building, for example as basis for the roofs of their simple houses. The Chhattisgarh's State Forest Policy refers to the tribals' domestic needs as primary focus for the policy. But in several villages people have been harassed and threatened when collecting building material. Forest guards demand money from the people or tell them they will be put in jail, even though it is



their very primary domestic needs they fulfil. This discrepancy between different laws gives room for exploitation; the people feel frightened and bribes are paid. If the state seeks to protect the forest, it must also ensure that the people can cater for their needs. In Lalmati, people even reported cases where they were stopped during the collection of firewood, which is perfectly legal. Although the forest guards let the families continue their work, such encounters scare the people and create further tension between the representatives of the state and the simple villagers.

## 5. LAND ISSUES

### Bad quality of land and wastelands

Ownership of land is a very important factor for the rural population of Sarguja. Land is a source of food, of income and an asset in itself. The more people can grow on their own land, the more independent and self-sufficient they are. Yet land issues can become troubling for a variety of reasons. As noted before, the average land holdings are very small with one or two acres per family and in each village some families are landless. And even these small land holdings are often of little use because of their bad quality. Particularly the tribal families own nothing but patches of rocky land as in Ghangri or fields situated on hill slopes, as is the case in Riri. Despite the big demand for land, significant parts are completely unusable wasteland. In Ghangri, the wasteland comes from the lack of water and bad soil quality, where farming is not even possible during monsoon. Some Pahari Korwa land in Bheski is unused because of the dust created by the stone crusher that is only 20 m away. Often these



are the lands given to the resettled tribal communities by the government, who claimed to provide them with means to live but instead contributed to their serious poverty.

Land alienation

The aspect which is specifically addressed in PESA with regard to land is the land alienation, unlawful appropriation of lands by more powerful parties. In many cases, this involves a transfer of land from the hands of tribals to non-tribals, who usually have more means and influence. But land alienation also takes place within one community. Particularly Kundi faces problems with lands, partly because it has more fertile soil and better water access than other villages. Therefore, a lot can be gained by the ownership of land. There are several cases in Kundi where individuals appropriated other people’s land in order to cultivate it themselves. Sometimes it had been given to them as a temporary aid, yet they refuse to return it to their rightful owners. When the issue is raised by the victim family, the alienator responds with threats and violence. The lands under dispute are small, around 1 acre, yet this practice does great damage. Families that have land taken away unlawfully lose a large share of their income. They say that life becomes hard in such a case. Prices constantly rise, yet they have no means of increasing their income as they have fewer goods to sell. When parts of the family struggle for survival through the loss of land, others will take care of them, which in turn places a heavy burden on their small resources. Since the majority of a family’s income is spent on food among the poor, any reduction in resources will have a direct effect on people’s diet and their ability to live free from hunger.

**Case Story.6 :: Land Alienation: Kusma, son of Ram Briksh, Kundi**

Kusma tells a story of how his kindness to help a fellow villager in need turned into ruthless exploitation of his family. Five years ago, he gave 2 acres of land to Sakal for cultivation to help him out of serious money problems. But after the agreed 1 year, Sakal refused to return the land and continued his farming of peas. Kusma’s family made many attempts to get their land back, but only half has been returned, and Sakal refuses any further discussion. Kusma describes how Sakal, a strong man, frightens his family and other villagers that come to his help by starting fights any time he is asked about the issue. Even though the problem has been discussed in the Gram Sabha, this had no effect as Sakal never comes to the meetings and the villagers have no way of enforcing their decision. But seeking legal aid is too costly for Kusma, so his family continues to suffer because of their generosity. Cultivating peas on the field brings revenue of around Rs 15,000 per year, a huge loss for the family yet a massive gain for Sakal.

Again cases like this could be avoided if the ideas behind PESA were reality. Although the Gram Sabhas in Kundi function well and people are able to address their problems, they lack the means of acting upon decisions. According to PESA, Gram Sabhas should have the power to restore alienated



land. But these powers do not exist. The Gram Sabha cannot call upon any authority for enforcement; hence their effectiveness is largely dependent on consent of all parties involved. The traditional village councils which used to decide and solve cases like these are no longer in existence as the judiciary system has taken over. So unless the victim is prepared or able to spend thousands of Rupees on legal fees, such crimes largely go without prosecution. It is not sufficient to speak about the powers of the village institutions, the government needs to ensure that these powers actually exist and can be used. This particularly applies to powers of enforcement.

### Land Titles

Land alienation, however, is not the only way in which the small farmers are under threat of losing their land. Another problem concerns land titles and the official records of land ownership. Keeping records of assets and land owned is not a traditional practice among the tribals. Many did not receive titles for the land they were given after resettlement, and if they did hardly anyone kept track of them when land was sold or passed on to children. This lack of records is an opportunity for exploitation of tribal families through better-educated elites, while it also makes disputes over lands harder to resolve.

Among the sample villages there were two types of problems regarding land titles and records. The first concerns the fact that the land which many of the tribal communities cultivate is nominally under the control of state departments, most notably the Forest Department. This is the case in Ghangri. Although the families have been farming on their lands for 50 years, they do not have any land titles; no one has ever given them and the families themselves do not know what action they could take to receive them. Two years ago, this turned into a serious problem when a group of Forest Department officials appeared in Ghangri, informing the people about plans for a plantation on their lands. Since the villagers had no records or legal means to oppose this, work started on their fields and was only stopped after the intervention of local NGOs. This illustrates the vulnerability of the people in the face of complicated administrative and legal structures. Left at the mercy of the interest of powerful players without being informed about their rights, the poor always become the victims.

The second issue relating to land titles is that transfers of land are not recorded properly and that officials charged with responsibility, such as the Patwari and Tehsildar, do not assist the people. Rai Singh of Kundi had received 1.5 acres of land from his grandfather, yet the transfer was made by oral contract only. Now, another part of his family is cultivating the land and they do not accept Rai Singh's claims. When he tried to get the land records to settle the issue, he found that the Patwari would not give them out. Not only does this case show that the process of official transfer of land must be simplified and the poor need to be educated about it, such that they can follow



the correct procedures and ensure their rights. It also emphasises again that the Gram Sabha needs to have the authority to question officials such as the Patwari and request the release of records. Only then the ideal of self-rule for the people can be fulfilled.





## Status of Development Schemes ■

There are a variety of schemes initiated and supported by the government, aimed at reducing the poverty and ensuring the food security of the rural population. But as with most such initiatives, they are no long-term solutions as they are dependent on the continuous flow of government aid and rarely help to create sustainable ways out of poverty. Four schemes are particularly relevant to the issues of food and livelihood and this section will discuss these in turn, taking a brief look at other initiatives, too. However, a full analysis of the functioning of the schemes is beyond the scope of this study, and only the most crucial problems will be highlighted here.

### 1. OUTLINE OF SCHEMES RELATED TO FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOOD

#### Public Distribution System (PDS)

The Public Distribution System (PDS) was set up for distributing grains and other basic goods such as sugar and kerosene at a subsidised rate to households that cannot afford the purchase at the normal market prices. As part of this scheme, households were divided into Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL) families. They receive ration cards, which entitles them to buy the cheaper products from specific ration shops in or near their village. BPL families are entitled to 25 kg rice per month at Rs 5.65 per kilogram, while APL families get up to 10 kg at Rs 6.30 per kilogram. Related schemes are Annapurna Yojana, which gives up to 10 kg of rice free of charge for the elderly and Antyodaya Yojana, which allows the poorest family to purchase wheat and 35 kg rice at Rs 2.00 and Rs 3.00 per kilogram, respectively.

#### Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) and National Food for Work Programme (NFFWP)

The objective of these two schemes is to provide additional wage employment for the rural poor to ensure food security, as well as creating long-term assets for rural development. SGRY came into effect in 2001, while NFFWP was created later to give additional resources for the 150 most backward districts in the country. The payment for the work consists in either food grains at a rate of 5 kg per day, wage payment or a mix of both. According to the guidelines, the focus of the projects should be on water conservation and land development, and the work should be carried out without the intervention of contractors. Any rural household in need of employment is eligible for SGRY, or NFFWP where appropriate.

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### National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA)

This Act, passed in 2005, merges the older work-related schemes SGRY and NFFWP into one. Unlike these schemes, which were based on a fixed budget, NREGA is a demand-based programme with a flexible budget. According to clause 1.1.1 of the Operational Guidelines, the objective of NREGA is

*“to enhance livelihood in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members are willing to do unskilled manual labour”.*

Rural households are asked to register to receive an employment card, after which they can apply for work. The Act promises work opportunities within 15 days of application, or else the applicant is entitled to an unemployment benefit. Because the Act only fully came into operation during 2006, the overall effectiveness could not be assessed and the investigation focused on information and registration only.

### Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY)

Out of all the schemes considered here, SGSY is the one which is most centred on building sustainable ways of raising the people out of poverty. It seeks to create means of gaining livelihood through capacity training, organising people into self-help groups and assisting them with assets. One part of the scheme is to encourage groups to save money or take loans in order to start small scale economic ventures or build assets with long-term benefits. In other cases, people can get training in specific skills that will provide them a source of income in the future. Overall, this process of social mobilisation should lead to greater awareness and self-sufficiency of the rural poor.



## 2. Public Distribution System

Because of the extremely low income in the study area, PDS is an essential means for daily survival of the families, as they find themselves unable to pay for food in the market. One kilogram of rice, which costs Rs 10 in the market, feeds no more than two people per day and the daily family income is below Rs 20 in many cases. However, the functioning of the scheme is more than



questionable. An investigation carried out by SGSA, which covers the blocks of this study, shows the dramatic deficits in the implementation of PDS.

Table.2: Responses of Surveyed Beneficiaries on PDS in Rajpur and Lundra blocks

Question	Rajpur Block	Lundra Block
Ration available in instalments (beneficiaries)	Yes - 12.5% No - 87.5%	Yes - 23.7% No - 76.3%
Days of ration shop opening (beneficiaries)	All say shop only opens 1-5 days in a month	90% say shop opens only 1-5 days a month
Days of ration shop opening (salesmen)	50% say shop opens 11-20 days	50% say shop opens more than 11 days a month
Distance of ration shop (beneficiaries)	75% say shop is 2-5 km away	60% say shop is 2-5 km away
Knowledge about rations and prices (beneficiaries)	No data available	Only 65% know how much ration they should get
Other issues	Families of sarpanch or other powerful people sometimes have more than one ration card	Problem of distribution of ration card - in some cases not available, sometimes only with bribes

These findings PDS survey conducted by CASA/SGSA indicate how badly the guidelines of the scheme are carried out. The scheme asks for the ration shop to be opened frequently according to people's needs, which is not happening. Yet the shopkeepers deny this malpractice. Further, shops should not be further away from the village than 3km, which equally is not the case. The fact that rations are not available in instalments is also a significant problem. Often people do not have sufficient money at one time to pay for all rations at once. At the same time, this practice requires people including the week and elderly to carry many kilograms of grain along paths without any means of transport.



Lastly, the provisions of the scheme are abused by some to gain a personal advantage and extract extra money from the poor through bribery or cheating.

The results of the study were confirmed by the reports from the sample villages. Further, it emerged that some goods are never available, especially sugar and wheat. Sometimes, there is no ration at all. People in Bheski reported that they have not had any rations in several months; nothing was available in Ghangri in June and October. The ration shop keepers usually blame this on lack of delivery. However, it seems that some people in the village received rations even in months where others were told nothing



was available, which suggests that the problem lies with the ration shops and the people in charge of it. This is supported by another example from Bheski. The BPL families only receive 16 kg of rice, instead of the 25 kg they are entitled to. The ration shopkeeper, by the name of Puran, explains this with a new government order that reduces the ration. With no such order in existence, it is likely that the undistributed grain is sold in the black market, leaving a handsome profit for the seller. Another problem is the control of the ration shops. According to the guidelines, it should not be set up in anyone's house, and it must be under public control through the Gram Panchayat or Self-Help Groups. But this requirement also is rarely fulfilled. In both Ghangri and Bheski it is a person from the local elite who is in charge, landlord Sanjay Singh and main road shop keeper Puran, respectively. The ration shops therefore are under little public scrutiny, and the PDS beneficiaries have to accept what they get told by the shopkeepers.

### 3. SGRY AND NFFWP

It proved difficult to find information on the effects and functioning of SGRY and NFFWP in Sarguja, as people are often not aware of the background of a certain work project in the village. What counts for the people is to get employment, and to get their wages without delay. Since the records obtained from government offices are also incomplete, it is hard to estimate the impact of these employment schemes until their replacement through NREGA.

There is one clear problem, however, which in fact applies to all the government schemes, and that concerns information. People are not informed properly about schemes, their aim and procedures; in some cases they are not aware of their existence at all. Neither the people interviewed in Ghangri nor Riri knew of the existence of SGRY or NFFWP. Yet according to the records of the block office Ambikapur, which is responsible for the village of Ghangri, two road-building projects were carried out in the village in 2005/2006 under SGRY and NFFWP. The expenditure on the projects so far amounted to Rs 140000, with one of them still in progress. The fact that work projects are being carried out in Ghangri, yet some people do not know about them, suggests that even the schemes designed to help the poorest only reach a select few. Taking into account the immense difference in development between different parts of the village, it seems likely that work concentrates in the main village, while the Pahari Korwa at the outskirts are kept outside the circles of beneficiaries by withholding information from them. This directly contradicts the objectives of the schemes, and again emphasises that government initiatives are not implemented properly at the ground level.

Another point that needs to be mentioned here is that the projects undertaken under these schemes sometimes have questionable benefit for the development of the village. Out of the nine SGRY/NFFWP projects in Sidhma,



Kundi and Bheski (all Rajpur block) between 2003 and 2006, seven were road building works, accounting for over 90% of the total expenditure. Although infrastructure is an important part of rural development and the people appreciate the creation of stable roads, it does not directly contribute to the food security of the rural population. In villages where even bicycles are a luxury, complete concrete roads seem unnecessary. The fact that accessibility of the village has no strong impact on its development is clearly illustrated by the examples of Bheski and Ghangri, both of which have good road connections yet have experienced very little progress. People benefit from the employment created through these works but the projects do not contribute to sustainable food security in the long run. The guidelines for the schemes mention water conservation and land development as suitable projects, both of which improve self-sufficiency of the communities in terms of food security. Seeing, as irrigation is such a grave problem in the area, this extreme focus on roads in an unsuitable use of available funds.

#### 4. NREGA

Since NREGA is a recent initiative, which is supposed to replace and improve on SGRY and NFFWP, it seems an ideal opportunity for the government to create a well-administered and well-implemented scheme to help people out of poverty. But even before it has been put into practice fully and work projects started, NREGA is laden with problems and deficiencies.

As before, the most serious issue is the lack of information and explanation. The introduction of a new initiative should be publicised fully, not just in official government circulations or the national press but in such a way that it reaches the target group - the rural poor. This is particularly crucial in a case like this, where the procedure of getting work requires initiative from the people themselves, as they need to register and later apply for work. If the initial stage of registration and application is already an indication of the overall success of the scheme, the outlook is grim. In Lalmati and Riri, the people had not even heard of NREGA. The process of registration, which is under control of the Gram Panchayats, had not taken place, and not even any initial information had been distributed. The lack of any information is also very visible in Ghangri and Bheski. In Bheski, a photographer appeared one day. One panchayat representative told the people once their photo was taken they would get work within a week. Of course this was not the case, yet no one ever explained the details of the application process or indeed the overall aim of NREGA. The people of the Lambidand hamlet in Ghangri only by chance came to know that a photographer had come to another part of the village. When they arrived there, he was gone, leaving them with no registration, no work and therefore no food.



Other villages fare little better. Only about half the population of Banspara is registered by the Gram Panchayat; they received no instructions regarding the matter. Further, they were not aware that it is necessary to apply for work in a specific period of time with the Gram Panchayat. Therefore, the families were waiting to receive work, and no one had dared to ask any questions about the lack of employment offers. People from Sidhma reported the same problem. As above, this lack of information renders the whole initiative useless.

The absence of any instructions and discussions of schemes and help in following the procedures results partly from badly functioning Gram Sabhas. These meetings, which should be attended by all voters in the village, are the platform where explanations could be given and matters can be discussed. Yet low attendance, inflexible agendas and disinterest of the representatives prevent this (see Section VII). But there are also no alternative sources of information, like government employees going out to the villages or information distributed on the local markets. Quite often NGOs have to fill this gap, yet it is beyond their capacity to replace a full system of information and instruction.

This situation is bad as it stands, but what makes things worse is that the government does not acknowledge these shortcomings. On the website of the Ministry for Rural Development one can find statistics relating to the progress of NREGA (see Annexure 1). The table, dated September 2006, claims that 91% of all rural households in Sarguja have registered for NREGA, all of which supposedly received job cards. One third of all registered households demanded employment, and 100% of this demand was apparently fulfilled. Comparing these figures to the observations in the sample village, there is a massive discrepancy. Seeing as the people of two villages had no knowledge about the scheme, while no proper registration was carried out in two further ones, it is hard to believe that 9/10<sup>th</sup> of all rural households are registered as beneficiaries of NREGA. Leaving out Kundi, where the matter of NREGA was not discussed, in none of the sample villages any employment opportunities had been created. Again, this questions the statement that 33% of the households have already received employment. Even without having done a full survey of the Sarguja, the claim that all demands for work were fulfilled seems more than doubtful. Such statistics strongly question the government's monitoring of the ground level progress of NREGA, as well as its preparedness to admit and address various shortcomings.

## 5. SGSY

Being focused on capacity building within the community, SGSY is the government scheme that promises to deliver sustainable results and use direct aid only as a temporary means of poverty alleviation. And indeed, where it has been carried out properly, clear benefits are visible. Unfortunately such cases are by far in the minority.



### Case Story.7 :: Positive Impact of SGSY: Brick-making in Sidhma

The people of Sidhma had been migrating from their village for decades, usually to find labour work in brick factories in Ambikapur or other cities. In order to reduce the adverse effects of migration on families and the development of the village, SGSA motivated the people to form their own brick-making business. The organisation assisted the people in groups, headed the community task of educating and creating the making. This through funds SGSY scheme. six SHGs formed Sidhma, three groups. Out of 30



forming self-help by active members of who undertook the and mobilising people facilities for brick process took place and assistance of the Over the past years, in one hamlet of male and three female families, 10 are now

engaged in the brick making in the village, and therefore escape the need to migrate. With small scale loans from the banks they financed the basic assets required, and the loans were repaid once the bricks could be sold. This way, one family can produce 6000-10000 bricks per week, giving them a weekly income of Rs 900-1500, several times the amount an agricultural labourer can earn.

If such positive development is possible, why is Sidhma the exception rather than the rule? The crucial point for the functioning of the SHGs and their business in Sidhma is the assistance from SGSA. Without explanation and coordination from the NGO, the benefits of SGSY would have been unattainable for the people. The poor are not familiar with the creation of self-help groups, much less have they any experience in dealing with banks and financial matters. As it stands, SGSY is too complicated to be carried out by the villagers themselves. Hence, the villages that are not lucky enough to be supported by an NGO would require equally good assistance from the government or local administration. But such help is absent. Neither in Riri nor in Bheski there has been any attempt to make use of SGSY resources as the people had little or no knowledge about the scheme. The Gram Panchayat of Lalmati formed one SHG two years ago, but it was simply an exercise on paper as the group has not been active in any way.

Banspara, on the other hand, shows the dangers of bad administration of the SGSY assistance. In 1993, one SHG was set up by the Gram Panchayat, with the aim to establish a Lift Irrigation System in the village. The group took a loan of Rs 290000 under the provisions of SGSY. But the project was not carried out properly. Bad quality working materials meant that the irrigation system broke down in its first season, and it was not repaired. The members of the SHG did not receive any benefits from the installation, yet they were left with the loan to repay. The Gram Panchayat, who had arranged the project without explaining the process, no longer took any interest in the issue, while the



families receive notices of due payment every six months. The initial loan of Rs 10000 per family now amounts to a debt of up to Rs 40000, impossible for the people to repay. Notices of debt are even sent to families who live on the other side of the river and therefore could never have benefited from the irrigation system. And in all this time, neither Gram Sabha nor the Gram Panchayat has taken any steps to resolve the issue. The unprofessional and ineffective work of the representatives has pushed people into debt and insecurity instead of improving their livelihood.

There is also a question about the way the resources of the scheme are released. Individuals may apply to the block office for assistance with certain projects, which has to approve of the proposal before a loan is given. But the money is not issued to the people. Instead, it is given directly to the contractors who are in charge of the actual works. Mudrika and Samal, two farmers from Kundi who applied for assistance in building a tube well, complain about this procedure. Although they both signed papers for a loan of Rs 70000 each, they do not know how much money was actually given to the contractor. This lack of transparency leaves room for corruption and misuse of the funds. Further, both said that the tube wells do not function properly. Because of very low ground water levels, the well should have been 300 feet deep, but the contractor built wells of lesser depth. Not being in control of the money, the people have little possibility of overseeing the contractor's work; once again they lack the power to stand up against influential groups.

## 6. OTHER INITIATIVES

There are a variety of other initiatives from both the central and the state government who are supposed to aid the poor in their daily lives. But there is one striking case of waste of public money, which the people in Kundi recounted and which also received attention in the Economic Times.

In March 2006 the state government of Chhattisgarh launched a plan to distribute 12 lakh pairs of specially designed shoes to the tribal NTFP collectors in Chhattisgarh. The shoes were regarded as a means to enable better and safer work in the forests; it was therefore presented as a programme for tribal development and improvement of livelihood. Yet the benefits of this initiative are unclear, as the experience of the NTFP collectors of Kundi shows.

Firstly, only one pair of shoes was given per family. However, in most households, several members are engaged in NTFP collection. One wonders whether the families are supposed to share the pair or decide each day on the use of the shoes. Secondly, all shoes came in the same size that was far too big for many, especially women and children. Traditionally, however, it is particularly the female members of the family that collect forest goods, while the men work on the fields. Lastly, the women of Kundi asked in what way



wearing shoes would benefit them. The tribal people have always roamed the forests without shoes; they know the hazards and are well adapted to dealing with them. So overall, the initiative was nothing but a waste of funds. The planners did not consider the real needs of the people; it seems they are in fact completely unfamiliar with the life in the villages. As the Economic Times suggests, it would be much more beneficial for the people if the state passed on more of its vast profits from the collection of nationalised NTFPs in form of bonus. This could provide an additional income for a family of Rs 1000 per year, according to some estimates, which would be a real improvement for people's livelihood.





## Development Plans & Expenditure in Panchayats ■

Not only the control over existing resources is important for improving livelihoods, it is also the planning of future projects and review of past expenditure that is required for real self-rule. The people should be allowed to make their own decisions regarding the development of their village, as they know the problems and opportunities best. They are both the beneficiaries and the agents that can carry the projects out. Further, because the people can directly observe the progress and management of the works, they are also in a position to comment on the expenditure of the panchayats. But as before, the provisions of PESA do not translate into any substantial power, as the following paragraphs will show.

### 1. GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANS

The government, having realised the importance of the drawing up of plans and people's ability to actively take part in it, incorporated provisions for planning into PESA. Clause 4(e) states that every Gram Sabha shall

*i. "approve of the plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development before such plans, programmes and projects are taken up for implementation by the Panchayat at village level" .*

Further, the Gram Sabhas are encouraged to design their own plans for development, in general as well as specific terms. A report on *Planning at the Grassroots Level - An Action Programme for the Eleventh Five Year Plan* compiled by an expert group in March 2006 recommends the following:

*3.9.10 The planning exercise ought to lead to a five-year plan for the period corresponding with the national plan period, and annual plans that define and prioritise areas and schemes from such a plan. The longer-term plans would capture the overall picture of the Panchayat and allow people to understand what planning and governmental funding could hold out for them. Once a five-year plan is prepared, the annual plan can be drawn out from it. Considering the size and availability of personnel of gram panchayats, it is obvious that they would need assistance and help in the preparation of projects and schemes, but the decision should be that of the Gram Sabha. Development Meets/Workshops at Gram Sabha level would be necessary leading to the emergence of a draft plan, with schemes and projects listed in priority.*

These clauses give significant powers of approval and planning to the Gram Sabha. However, the legal basis is not sufficient; the provisions also need to be accepted by the institutions and offices involved in the process. Moreover, the Gram Sabha needs to be enabled to play this active role in the creation of



development plans. The Gram Sabha members must be trained in this work. Yet these aspects show great deficiencies at the ground level, which questions the value of the provisions.

## 2. DEVELOPMENT PLANS IN THE VILLAGES

### Preparation of Plans

The Gram Sabha is the forum where the village development plans should be drawn up. Through discussion of the problems and voting on the most effective projects, the villagers should compile an overall vision for development as well as designing specific plans of action for one year. These proposals should then be passed on to the block office, which reviews all proposals and sets up a final plan for the block. Before any projects are started, this block level plan should

again be reviewed in the Gram Sabha to ensure that the villagers' demands and needs have been considered.



The people in the sample villages claim that so-called plans are prepared in nearly all Gram Sabha meetings. However, these are not plans fit for execution; they are more like a collection of ideas presented by the people. This is hardly surprising, as the villagers have no experience in analysing problems and finding executable solutions. They cannot easily estimate the feasibility of projects and therefore often get disappointed in their demands.

As the report on grassroots planning emphasises, before village development proposals can be drawn up, the people should be trained in workshops and should receive assistance from officials and experienced personnel. But this does not happen. The panchayat secretaries record the decisions and pass them on to the block office or at least claim to do so, but there is no structure to the plans and demands. This is related to the problem of plans being drawn up independently at higher level and then imposed on the villages. As long as the output of the Gram Sabha is not a proper plan, it is easy to disregard it, which in fact is a common practice. It gives higher officers leeway to manipulate projects for the benefit of their personal interest. Therefore it is not surprising that there have not been any attempts to improve the village level planning.



### Inaction of Block Offices

Even if the plans emerging from the villages are not perfect, they should still be taken seriously since they directly reflect the people's needs. Yet this does not seem to be the case. Frequently the only reaction is inaction. Once the village plans are submitted, the block level needs to draw up a final plan that orders projects according to priority, but in several villages this does not happen. In Kundi, Banspara and Bheski ideas for projects are regularly given to the block office, yet none of them are ever put into practice. But the people lack the knowledge and means to follow up any of these proposals. They simply wait for a response, as approaching the block office is a difficult and intimidating procedure for them. The panchayat representatives are little helpful as the people of Banspara report, the panchayat secretary visits the block office but does not address questions regarding the village plans. This strongly contributes to people's disillusionment with Gram Sabhas and the government institutions. They feel they do their share and put in time and effort, yet no one listens to their voice and consistently their demands are ignored.

#### **Case Story.8 :: Gram Sabha's Development Plans in Kundi**

In the Gram Sabha of February 2006, the people of Kundi compiled an action plan for their village, which was particularly focused on projects for the new NREGA employment scheme. They proposed the creation of various ponds and small dams in the village, all of which would contribute to irrigation and would provide an opportunity for setting up fisheries. The plan was sent to the block office in Rajpur immediately afterwards. By the time of the interviews, in November 2006, there still had been no reaction regarding the project proposals. The block office had not even released an overall outline for the block development or given any information when projects would be finalised. Since new village plans would experience the same fate, the people are forced to simply wait for some response with no improvement of their livelihood in sight.

### Projects in the Village

As mentioned before with regard to SGRY and NFFWP schemes, the development projects undertaken in the villages do not always address the most urgent needs. Since employment guarantee scheme projects can be seen as part of the development plans, the unnecessary focus on infrastructure and connectivity carries over here. Yet irrigation, creation of ponds and plantations, all of which could hugely improve people's livelihood, are consistently neglected. Where pond work takes place, they are mostly for household needs only and cannot be used for fishery. Interestingly, when NGOs are active in the villages, their first concern is usually with the improvement of agriculture and water availability. Projects such as a hillside dam in Banspara show the immediate success of such small-scale irrigation projects. It is therefore not understandable that Gram Panchayat and block office projects do



not follow the same path. The villages do not require large-scale projects; micro-works in land development and irrigation are far more effective and have less negative impact on the environment. These are exactly the type of projects that should be in the centre of all government supported development plans, yet they are an exception.

One further point in this regard is that the Gram Sabhas are not consulted about the final projects as should happen according to PESA. Usually the Gram Panchayats are in control of the projects that are given out by the block office, although sometimes they also involve outside contractors. The block office passes the responsibility directly to these agencies without getting Gram Sabha approval. This means that the people have no chance to intervene or even express their views on the final projects. Any work chosen by the block office can be carried out, whether or not it corresponds to the people's demands and requirements. So the role of the Gram Sabha is again diminished.

### 3. EXPENDITURE

A full analysis of the expenditures of different levels of panchayats on village development is not possible within the scope of this study, partly because this would require intensive data analysis and comparisons, partly because it was simply not possible to obtain sufficient data in the period of time. But even from the few records available from the Gram Panchayats and block offices, a variety of questions emerge which could be the basis of further investigation.

#### Unused Funds

One such question is the difference between the amount the panchayats receive from the higher levels and the amount they spend on projects. The difference appears to be huge in many cases, which a significant share of funds going unused. According to a transcript of the expenditure of Kundi Gram Panchayat, nearly Rs 400000 of the received Rs 1400000 were not spent on the projects they were budgeted for. That means that 30% of the funds apparently were returned to the block office of Rajpur. Assuming that the transcript and the records are correct, one has to wonder why the money was left unused instead of being spent on further projects for the benefit of the people. This is also the question for one project recorded in the block office Ambikapur. The office planned Rs 500000 for 900 m road building in Ghangri, yet only around Rs 75000 were spent in the entire project. The difference seems to be too large to be accounted for by fluctuation in prices. Instead, it was either a severe miscalculation, in which case the funds should have been allocated to a different project from the start, or it was an attempt to use funds in more than the specified way. The unused funds supposedly are returned to the level of panchayat which initially released them, in this case the Janpad Panchayat, yet this practice leaves space for corruption. It becomes harder and harder to detect the flow of money once it



passes several stages. Either way, this issue should be addressed, since the available funds should be used immediately and in the most efficient way instead of being passed back and forth between offices.

### Record Keeping

The question of what happened to the surplus amounts links in to general doubts about the correctness and completeness of the records. For example, the records of Kundi panchayat of the expenditure in 2005/2006 show many more SGRY and NFFWP projects than the block office data. According to the block office, only one complete concrete road was constructed in that financial year under SGRY, the funds for which amounted to Rs 299000. Yet according to the Kundi records a nursery school building and a stone and mud road were built, while another road was repaired. These additional projects altogether had a budget of around Rs 716000, which is not recorded in the released block office documents, although the money came from this office. Since no data is available from other panchayats, it is not possible to determine whether these irregularities are an exception or if this problem is widespread. But to allow for proper transparency and accountability, full and correct records are absolutely essential. Otherwise, the Gram Sabha can under no circumstance fulfil its role in reviewing panchayat expenditure. This duty of the Gram Sabha already is only taking place in a few cases. Review of expenditure happens in Kundi and is recorded in the minutes book of Sidhma, yet the people of Bheski claim that they are not consulted about any expenditure. Again this is due to the shortcomings of the Gram Sabha meetings and the lack of power transfer to this institution. Therefore one more point of PESA becomes a legal fiction for many villages.





## Status of Gram Sabhas & Panchayats ■

At the centre of the PESA legislation and the idea of tribal self-rule stand the village level institutions, the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Sabha is the body of all voters in a village, who elect representatives for the different level of panchayats. It should be the forum to discuss and solve problems in the village, while the representatives are responsible for relations with the higher levels of government. The provisions of PESA crucially depend on the working of these bodies; only if they are fully functional they can take on and apply the powers PESA provides. Yet, as the following paragraphs will make clear, there is a vast deficit in this area, too.

### 1. FUNCTIONING OF THE GRAM SABHA

#### Meetings

In most villages Gram Sabha is only held at the mandatory dates every three months. Although this is sufficient to discuss longer term plans and general matters, it shows that the Gram Sabha is rarely involved in decisions on specific projects or urgent problems, which can come up any time. In Bheski, on the other hand, a meeting is held every month, yet its usefulness is doubtful. Only around six people participate out of 25 families, the rest of the village discusses some points after the meetings among themselves. This hardly deserves the name Gram Sabha; proper participation from all village inhabitants is not given and discussion only takes place in small groups. Another issue is the time devoted for the Gram Sabha discussions. The meetings usually last less than two hours, as the people in Riri and Bheski explain. People say they are busy with their work and therefore cannot spend much time at the meeting. Some people arrive late while others leave early, which creates commotion and makes discussion in a large group rare. This may be due to the fact that people are usually only informed about the meeting one day in advance by one person coming to each household in the village. It leaves little time for preparation, especially during the work intensive periods such as harvest.

#### Discussion

The structure and topics of the discussions was a point of complaint in most villages. The debates are usually quite broad, relating to general demands for ponds, roads and electricity. Specific problems that have been mentioned in this study, such as the faulty payments for NTFP collectors or the problems with PDS rations are rarely addressed; neither is the lack of food a focus of attention. Moreover, the discussions do not involve all people present at the



meeting. It is dominated by certain individuals, usually including the panchayat secretary, the sarpanch and the panches or members of the village elites. A large problem also appears to be the agenda. It should be open to allow people to raise their problems. In some villages this is no issue, people can present their problems although no action ever follows on the discussion. But the agenda is a big problem in other places such as Banspara. The vice-president of the Village Development Committee describes how the Janpad Panchayat of Lundra block sets the agenda for the meetings. The panchayat secretary brings a list of 15 fixed topics from the office, which fills the time of the meeting and leaves no room for the people to address their issues. The topics also change completely for every meeting, therefore a follow-up of one specific issue is hardly possible and the discussion remains without substantial results. The Janpad Panchayat also frequently sends a nodal officer to Banspara to oversee the debate in the meetings, which strengthens the impression that the block office imposes its own interests on the Gram Sabha. The following case study shows a further aspect of the problem of discussion.

**Case Story.9 :: Gram Sabha in Banspara**

One year ago the women of Banspara decided to bring up the lack of drinking water in the village in the Gram Sabha meeting. But before the meeting even started the panchayat secretary asked the women to state their problem and promised to solve the question of drinking water within two months. This way, they did not raise the issue in front of the full Gram Sabha as they believed the problem to be solved. It is a case where proper discussion and communal solution finding was prevented by representatives for whatever reasons. Now, more than one year later, the people of Banspara still wait for an improvement in their drinking water supply. Through false promises and closed discussions, Gram Sabha lost its effectiveness as an institution of people's self-rule.

The next deficient point is the topics that are discussed. From the Gram Sabha minutes book of Sidhma, one gets a good insight into the topics that come up in the meetings. At each meeting a variety of issues are addressed, and one has to wonder how a meaningful discussion on each of them is possible in such a short space of time. Take, for example, the meeting of 14 April 2005. According to the records, the 120 people present reviewed the Gram Panchayat expenditure, made an action plan for 2005/2006 regarding SGRY, PDS and a housing project, and discussed drinking water issues, hand pumps and help for seasonal sickness. They also looked at issues of pond and road making, setting up an SHG to control the PDS ration shop and giving aid to people of the village in need. It is unlikely that all these issues were really discussed in detail, suggesting that either the records are incorrect or that no proper discussion takes place. This is not an exception, either. In the Sidhma Gram Sabhas of 2005, on average ten topics were addressed in a two hour meeting, which leaves only five to ten minutes per issue if the general addresses and speeches are taken into account.



### Attendance

The attendance at Gram Sabha meetings varies greatly between the villages. While in some cases hardly more than five people attend regularly, in Riri the interviewed persons claimed attendance of nearly the entire village. Sometimes it is only one member per family who goes to the meetings, which has the effect that the Gram Sabha is strongly dominated by men, as it is the male household members who take on this role. People who do not attend meetings regularly were asked to state their reasons for not doing so. The most common answers were the distance of the meeting place from the village and the inconvenience of the meeting time. In Bheski, Gram Sabhas are held in the middle of the day; which makes it impossible for labourers to attend. None of the representatives has ever suggested changing this; only a select group of people will be present each time. People further complain that Gram Sabhas take up too much time of their day. Going to the venue, waiting for the meeting to start and long discussions leaves little time for people's work; therefore they often decide to not attend at all. One different issue which significantly reduces people's



interest in Gram Sabha meetings is that they feel their opinion is not valued and no one pays attention to them. In the meeting they do not get an opportunity to speak or their points are not discussed, therefore they stop attending the meetings altogether, especially when the discussions and decisions never lead to any substantial results.

### Decisions

The decisions taken in the meetings are recorded in the Gram Sabha minutes book as well as forwarded to the block office. Since the Gram Panchayats were not forthcoming in giving out minutes books, it is not possible to analyse decision-making in detail. However, one can clearly identify a problem when it comes to passing on decisions to the block offices. The minutes books and records regarding the decisions are in the hands of the panchayat secretary. But the people often cannot say if these notes ever get passed on, especially in villages where the panchayat secretary comes from other settlements of the Gram Panchayat and rarely even visits the village. Since the block offices themselves take a long time to respond to plans, if they in fact consider them at



all, this failure of some representatives gives an even lower chance of proposals being put into practice. Where this connection between the Gram Sabha and the offices fails, the Gram Sabha is degraded to an irrelevant talking shop.

## 2. PROBLEMS WITH PANCHAYAT REPRESENTATIVES AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

The following is an overview over problems that have occurred in the study villages regarding the panchayats and representatives. Although they are specific examples, they indicate the general difficulties in this area.

### Problem of Inactivity

As part of campaigning during the election period, the state government of Chhattisgarh promised a pair of cattle for each Pahari Korwa family in the state. This turned into an actual initiative, and various families indeed received the animals from the district. The Pahari Korwa of Ghangri were not among them. The reason for this is the inactivity of the panchayat representatives, most notably the sarpanch and panchayat secretary. Some paperwork was required from the panchayat in order for the village to be eligible for the aid. The representatives neglected this, and consequently the people missed a chance for improvement in their livelihood. This is not the only complaint the people of Ghangri have regarding the work of their representatives. Severe problems are constantly ignored; no action has been taken to improve the bad drinking water situation or to get electricity for the Pahari Korwa hamlet. Since the representatives are the crucial link between the village and higher levels of government, these shortcomings are particularly serious. Not only will no demands be passed on to the relevant authorities; it also means that any assistance coming from the government will fail to reach their targets and instead end up in private pockets.

### Wastage of Public Money

In Bheski, the lack of water is the most pressing concern for the people, as it affects their daily lives as well as their ability to grow food grains on their fields. The Gram Panchayat made an attempt to solve this problem by providing hand pumps and machines for digging. But the installation of the hand pumps was unsuccessful, as there was no accessible ground water in the place chosen. The people of Bheski report that this same scenario occurred four times - each time the Gram Panchayat provided material and started digging, yet water was never found as the water reserves were never checked beforehand. Hence, despite large expenditure the inhabitants of Bheski still have to make long trips to get water and have no way of even watering a small patch of land behind their house. Public money, intended for development and poverty eradication, was wasted because of inefficient and unprofessional work of the Gram Panchayat.



### Cases of Corruption

Corruption on a small as well as large scale is a common feature of rural India. Cases often remain in the dark, but even few examples illustrate the problem. The Pahari Korwa of Ghangri report that they received a solar cooker from the government for the communal use in the village. Yet the cooker never reached the people. Instead, the sarpanch kept it for him. Even though aid was given from the government, it did not get to its target group because of dishonesty and ruthless self-interest of people in between. In Banspara, a similar case of corruption occurred, though on a much larger scale. The previous panchayat secretary betrayed the people he was supposed to work for by taking money from government schemes. Three years ago, Banspara received funds from the Jogi Dabri scheme for the construction of two small ponds. According to the vice-president of the Village Development Committee, Rs 20000 were released and given to the Gram Panchayat. But only half the money was used for the project; the rest disappeared in the pockets of the panchayat secretary. This sum would have been sufficient for a small well or the improvement of a pond, yet the people were betrayed and did not receive the assistance they are entitled to.

### No Proper Democratic Processes

The Gram Sabha of Ghangri suspended the village sarpanch during 2006 for bad work and inefficiency. At the end of October, a new sarpanch was elected, but the proper process was not followed. Instead of election by the entire Gram Sabha, the sarpanch was selected by a small group of people consisting mainly of panches and influential people from the village. Interestingly, the new sarpanch also happens to be the nephew of the current panchayat secretary. Although the Gram Sabha applied its powers by suspending one representative, the real power still lies with other individuals. Another case comes from Banspara. The Gram Sabha dismissed the panchayat secretary eight months ago and is waiting to elect a new one. However, the Chief Executive Officer of the Janpad Panchayat needs to authorise this election, which has not happened yet. The role of panchayat secretary is now occupied by the agricultural development officer of the region. Again, although Gram Sabha superficially exercises its power, proper democratic elections do not take place and the people are left with an unelected official to represent them.

### **3. PROBLEMS OF BIG PANCHAYATS**

Another problem that emerged from the investigation concerns the size and composition of the Gram Panchayats. Depending on the size of the settlements, one Gram Panchayat can include several villages. Since each of the villages has its unique problems, one can observe differences in progress and development, similar to the differences in various parts of one village. Most notable is the problem that assistance and projects usually reach only the biggest village of one



panchayat , or the settlement in which sarpanch or panchayat secretary live. Since development projects and the release of funds are often recorded Gram Panchayat-wise, this skewed development between the different villages is hardly observable from official data. It is therefore a problem that has not been addressed much in analyses of the panchayat system, and its solution to which might require a significant change in terms of the set up of the Gram Panchayats.

In two of the sample villages problems resulted from the fact that the gram Panchayat consisted of more than one village. One example here is Riri. Riri is part of the Basena panchayat in Lundra. Both the sarpanch and the panchayat secretary come from Basena, which is the bigger of the two villages and which is also much easier to access. This creates great difficulties for the people of Riri regarding their representation and the development of their village. Firstly, the officials do not take any interest in Riri whatsoever. The panchayat secretary visits the village four times a year, on the days of the Gram Sabha, while the sarpanch only appears once a year. This of course makes proper representation impossible, as the people have no chance to express their problems and the representatives know little about the issues the village faces. It is therefore not surprising that Riri has experienced little progress, while Basena is developing as the local market town.

Equally, Bheski is part of a bigger Gram Panchayat, of which Baghima is the central village. The people of Bheski explain how their views and demands are consistently neglected in the Gram Sabha, which is dominated by the Baghima inhabitants. Discussion in the Gram Sabha is divided into smaller groups, in which the people of Bheski have little influence, and therefore their village usually misses out on projects and assistance. This is the case even though Baghima is situated directly next to the main road and has much more development opportunities. Many people of Baghima are shopkeepers, and even the PDS ration shop is located there. The people of Bheski complain about this difference, as their demands are never fulfilled. The existence of Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat has little meaning for them since it works exclusively for the larger village.

#### 4. OWN EXPERIENCES

Some of these difficulties manifested themselves when trying to get information for this study from the public representatives or panchayats. There seemed to be a general lack of willingness to share data or give interviews, as if this would create problems for the offices. It has to be noted that there are exceptions, the representatives of Kundi as well as the block office Rajpur cooperated very willingly. But in most cases people tried to delay the sharing of information. So for example the Gram Panchayat Sidhma, which kept delaying the giving out of the Gram Sabha minutes book despite an application under the Right to Information Act. Similarly, the block office Ambikapur was slow in releasing its



data and kept promising to do it by the next day, which meant the research team had to pay several visits to the office with no result. In Ghangri, on the other hand, one could observe the hesitation of the elected representatives to answer questions. Upon meeting the newly selected sarpanch, he declared that he couldn't answer any questions, as the government offices do not yet endorse his position. With this excuse he left the place.

Although these incidents are too few to draw any strong conclusions from them, they illustrate the deficits in sharing information. If the people face the same problems in getting any form of information or data, their unawareness as well as their distrust of official institutions is hardly surprising. Villagers that fail in speaking to an officer or representative once or twice are likely to stop trying afterwards, and immediately the democratic chain is broken. In order to really involve people in the democratic system, the flow of information must be quick and correct and representatives must be forthcoming and approachable.





## Connection of Food Issues & Democracy ■

The six sections above have given a detailed and direct insight into the daily lives and daily problems of the rural poor in Sarguja. Their situation is dire, and a variety of factors lead to the permanent food insecurity and struggle for survival. But one overall connection becomes clear. Hunger and poverty result from a lack of democracy. The poor are consistently deprived of their political, legal and moral rights; they are exploited and become the victims of corruption without a chance to raise these issues. Where assistance is available, it does not reach them or is of no use to the people as they have do not have the necessary knowledge or skills. Most of all, they are kept uninformed about rights and schemes and do not receive training in how to participate in the democratic system. This all has to be understood as a failure of democracy at all its levels. Democracy requires full information, wide participation and transparent processes; otherwise it provides a breeding ground for many forms of corruption and exploitation. Yet all of these aspects show severe deficits, as the investigation found; and the problems are not confined to the village level. Since democracy is the rule by the people and for the people, it should be a form of government which addresses people's problems and solves them. The ones that rule the state are, in theory, the ones that benefit from all such measures. But this is far from reality in Lundra, Rajpur and Ambikapur as well as many other parts of rural India. The following points will pick out the most important connections between deficiencies in the governance structure and people's food and livelihood insecurity, while the examples of Ghangri and Sidhma illustrate the relationship clearly with direct evidence.

### Lack of Power of the Gram Sabha

Without doubt, the Gram Sabha occupies a central role in the relationship between food security and democracy; since it is the one democratic institution which actually consists of the people and which therefore is closest to their basic needs. Hence, difficulties and malfunctioning of the Gram Sabha directly translate into problems for the people, or more commonly, the lack of solution to such problems. Most significantly, the Gram Sabha as not been given the powers it should have according to the provisions of PESA. PESA gives the village meetings a high status as forums in which to decide on development of the settlement and in which to solve problems. But the Gram Sabha has no power to translate any discussion into action. This is vividly illustrated by section IV, which is concerned with the control over resources, but also visible in the failure of the village development plans described in section V. No control over resources means loss of valuable sources of income for the people as well as dependency upon more powerful agencies. The ignoring of development plans leads to wastage of public money and projects of little



value. In both cases, the poor lose out on a chance to improve their livelihood and food security.

**Case Story.10 :: Connections in Ghangri**

As noted before, Ghangri, or more specifically the Pahari Korwa hamlet of Lambidand, is one of the worst of the sample villages regarding food security, largely due to the absence of good agriculture. The people own some land, yet it is in many cases unusable because of the lack of water in the village, leaving people dependent on labour work. Since water is the decisive factor here, some form of irrigation would dramatically improve the situation. There are currently around 20 acres of wasteland in the hand of Pahari Korwa, which would be usable with irrigation. Seeing as one acre land can give more than Rs 15000 per crop, the poor families lose over Rs 300000 per year due to the lack of water, or even more if one considers two crops per year. One would therefore expect development projects to focus on irrigation. But it seems that rather the opposite is the case. Since irrigation systems require first drilling and later pumping, they are also dependent on the availability of electricity. Yet Lambidand is not connected to electricity, despite its closeness to the district capital Ambikpur. The people have been demanding electricity for years now. It was discussed in the Gram Sabha three times in the past two years, but the problem and demand was never forwarded to the block office, so no action has followed. The people remain in their dramatic situation. Because the Gram Sabha lacks the power to put its demands through and because the representatives do not fulfil their role, the development necessary for the improvement of people’s livelihood does not happen. No proper democracy means their demands for electricity are not fulfilled, which in turn leads to the lack of irrigation and absence of agriculture. Therefore, the lack of democratic rights directly leaves people hungry.

It has so be said in this regard, however, that many Gram Sabhas are not fit for exercising the power they are theoretically entitled to. As described in section VII, attendance is low in many cases and there are severe shortcomings in the debate. This results actually from the disillusionment many people have with this institution. Without motivation, people will not take part in the democratic system. This suggests that not only the system has to be set up in a proper way but people also have to be given the incentive and training to become actively involved.

*Ineffectiveness of the Representatives*

A second way in which livelihood is affected by problems with democracy is the work of the public representatives. They are the link between the Gram Sabha and other levels of the democratic system as well as the administrative system. In section VII, the problems with the representatives are discussed, and it becomes clear that their malpractices in many cases inhibit development. Corruption and ineffective work leads to problems with government schemes of assistance, and it further weakens the efforts of Gram Sabha, for example when decisions are not passed on to the relevant office. The election of sarpanch and panchayat secretary is not always free and fair; elitism and



power within the community play a big role. So the poor cannot rely on the representatives for help, instead they might even worsen their situation. With the help of motivated and honest community leaders, however, many changes could be achieved.

### Power of Higher Level Institutions

Even in cases where both the Gram Sabha and the representatives fulfil their responsibilities and work for the people, help for the people is still far. Looking back at the cases of the development plans and expenditure in section VI, one can see how much freedom the block offices and district level administration have in imposing its own interests on the villages. Inaction and disregard for the needs at ground level make the efforts of the Gram Sabha fruitless attempts at self-rule. This shows that the power distribution within the panchayat system is still faulty. Several levels of institutions are involved in planning or approval of a project, which leads to conflicts in responsibilities and rights and causes long delays. It is not enough to give the Gram Sabha the rights to make its own decisions; there must also be provisions that safeguard these against overruling and ignoring in higher places. It is the people who know what is best for their lives and in which way their situation can improve, and this needs to be recognised by the higher level officials.

#### **Case Story.11 :: Connections in Sidhma**

A very different case from the one in Ghangri serves as another illustration of the tight links between democracy and food. The poor of Sidhma have been struggling for several years now to be recognised as scheduled caste by the district level authorities and local officials. Before the independence of Chhattisgarh, the Bhumiya caste was listed as scheduled caste, as was its sub-caste Bhuiya. However, the Bhuiya accepted as such by the local administration, including sarpanch and panchayat secretary. The people cannot understand how this is possible, yet whenever they ask authorities about the problem they are told it was “under consideration”. This arbitrary change in status and the inactivity of the representatives regarding this matter has serious consequences for the people. As members of a scheduled caste, people are entitled to certain concessions and assistance. For example, the SC families receive a Rs 30 subsidy per month for every child attending school, children can get free rail passes for examinations and there are different quotas specifically for SC people. Further, there are some schemes for the benefit of the scheduled castes, such as one of 2006 where the state government provided pigs to SC families free of charge. But because of an administrative issue and its sluggish attempts to deal with it, the Bhuiya of Sidhma are deprived of these benefits.

### Lack of Information

Last but not least, democracy depends on a full and open flow of information both from the ground level to the top and vice versa. As the problems with the government schemes described in section V show, this is not given. Since the information has to pass through a chain of agencies and individuals until it



reaches either top or bottom, there are many dangers that it does not arrive at its target. These threats have to be addressed and minimised as much as possible. If the needs at the ground level are not known to the policy makers, their measures will have little effect. Similarly, if the poor do not know about their rights and opportunities for assistance, they cannot take advantage of it. A lack in one piece of information regarding the PDS ration of rice can already mean that a family will go hungry for days. Therefore, information is an absolute basic requirement for development and eradication of poverty.





## Conclusions & Recommendations ■

This study has shown the strong link between food security and democracy, more specifically between the shortcomings of the democratic system and the continuous poverty of the rural population of Sarguja. The observations from the sample villages gave an overview over the problems, while the case studies contributed to a vivid picture by telling the real stories of life in rural poverty. There are provisions for the people which should improve their livelihood, yet they are not implemented or they are started without ensuring the necessary background conditions. The deficiencies range from the democratic structures such as the Gram Sabha over weak representatives to severe lack of information, all of which inhibit rural development and tribal self-rule in the scheduled areas. This directly affects people's livelihood and food security. Although life has always been hard for the rural population, exploitation and corruption continues to make things worse. While the price of living rises, the farmers gain less and less from their land due to droughts and land alienation. Simultaneously, the forest resources are depleting, making people more and more dependent on exploitative labour work. This results in life at the bottom of poverty, with less than Rs 20 available for an entire family per day, bad nutrition and severe vulnerability to any form of emergency.

Yet this is no reason to discard democracy as an approach to eradicate poverty. Development must be a process that involves the people and directly focuses on their needs, while at the same time being sustainable in the long term. Although schemes of aid might have short-term benefits and are indispensable in times of emergency, they are not a sustainable approach, since they require a constant flow of government funds and do not improve people's non-dependency. So instead the power of the people to decide the future of their villages, control the resources and thereby shape their own lives should be strengthened by creating a fair system of democratic governance right down to the village level. These are the aims PESA and other legislations seek to achieve, so the government should focus on their proper implementation. In the following there are some more specific recommendations that have emerged from the discussion of the problems above.

### Recommendations

#### - *Improving Information*

The people in the villages need to know their rights and entitlements; they need to be informed about democratic processes, schemes and ways of participation. The government and the administration have to recognise that this information has to be released in a form accessible to the rural population. Possibilities



here include direct visits from trained officials to the villages, workshops, and involvement of local NGOs, but also proper briefing of the representatives and officers involved. The information flow should concentrate on direct contact with the villagers rather than the impersonal distribution of printed material.

- *Training of Community Leaders*

Motivation and organisation are crucial for people's active involvement in village development. To achieve this, each village requires some leaders who can take on the role of coordinators and leaders of debates and thereby motivate the general public to also take part. They should be trained in this function through workshops or seminars. Further, special training is required in cases where villagers want to apply for mining or fishery leases, such that they can make full and fair use of these resources.

- *Focus on creation of long term assets*

Government schemes for the help of the poor are not a long-term solution to the problem, but they can build the foundation of sustainable sources of income. Projects should therefore take place in the areas of water harvesting and irrigation, plantation or micro-enterprises. These assets will give benefits in the long run in addition to the immediate creation of employment.

- *Accountability of officials and representatives*

Officials and representatives have to work in the interest of the people and should be held responsible if they fail to do so. Government officials should therefore be appointed on short-term contracts, the renewal of which depends on their performance. Further, the people should have the option of removing public representatives from office if they do not fulfil their task properly.

- *Resolving conflicts between laws*

The introduction of PESA brought with it conflict in laws, particularly related to forest issues and ownership of resources. Although the states were asked to incorporate these new regulations into their state laws, this has not happened everywhere. Similarly, specific clauses in laws sometimes contradict overall aims of policies. These discrepancies must be resolved, as they create serious problems for the people and add another source of conflict to the relationship between the people and the state.

For the sake of the people of Sarguja, one can only hope that the government takes on these tasks with serious efforts. Legal provisions are a good start; however, it is not policy papers that feed people. The situation of the poor can only improve through real action. This also requires a change of thinking in many



heads, which currently see their own gain as the primary focus. Once society understands that solutions to the problem of hunger are possible, everyone can work on their realisation and make democracy a real rule of the people.





## Annex. I ■

### STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF NREGA DURING 2006-07

STATE: Chhattisgarh  
Progress up to Sept '06

S.No	District	O. B. as on 1.4.06	No. of BPL HH (2001 Census)	Estimated BPL Families	Applic. ans. registered	Job cards issued	Job cards issued			Demand for Employment			Employment provided			
							% to BPL HHs	% to ans. reg. ans.	% to HHs	% of HHs to Job cards Issued	Individuals per household	No. of Households	% of Households to Employment Demanded	Individuals per household	No. of Households	No. of Persons per household
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
1	Bastar	1076.44	232755	86259	187000	187000	80.34	100.00	53893	28.82	67252	1	53893	100.00	67252	1
2	Bilaspur	719.02	297867	110890	204079	190695	64.02	93.44	57245	30.02	91239	2	57245	100.00	91239	2
3	Dantewada	1134.54	134062	49683	128342	114000	85.04	88.83	111412	97.73	123059	1	111412	100.00	123059	1
4	Dhamtari	133.05	113119	41922	109000	106000	93.71	100.00	43165	40.72	121725	3	36205	83.88	90100	2
5	Jaspur	555.06	142423	52782	139098	139098	97.67	100.00	65705	47.24	73023	1	65705	100.00	73023	1
6	Kanker	267.76	120781	44761	110015	108000	89.42	98.17	54260	50.24	84337	2	54260	100.00	84337	2
8	Koria	240.31	83917	31100	75633	75633	90.15	100.00	35239	46.58	73997	2	35239	100.00	73997	2
9	Raigarh	409.67	234809	87020	197284	195212	83.14	98.95	34272	17.56	98705	3	34272	100.00	98705	3
10	Rajnandgaon	389.54	201884	74818	189718	177325	87.84	93.47	76756	43.29	173700	2	76598	99.79	173451	2
11	Sagoja	179.35	357920	132645	325872	325872	91.05	100.00	108447	33.28	271118	3	108447	100.00	271118	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>5312.09</b>	<b>2023402</b>	<b>749873</b>	<b>1772900</b>	<b>1726355</b>	<b>85.34</b>	<b>97.40</b>	<b>695642</b>	<b>40.28</b>	<b>1302463</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>688524</b>	<b>98.98</b>	<b>1270599</b>	



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## **FOOD & DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGN**

*A common man is only the victim of colonialism. So-called democratic institutions in the country tend to be sabotaged by the elites and mighty leaving the poor marginalized and deprived. Those who promise to serve the poorest in order to get votes turn hostile to the same poor once the election is won. The representatives of the public become a source of repression of the poor. Instead of relieving the pressure from a tribal's solitary life they exert burden by accelerating the loot of community resources, means of livelihood and food, the opportunities of employment, and so on. As a consequence, the poor standing last in the queue is bound to starve; and there is none to look him after. How can then hunger and starvation be reduced and food security established? "Food & Democracy Campaign" was started in 2005 with the belief that unless the governance structures and public institutions are democratized and made inclusive no hunger or starvation can be eliminated.*

**SHRI GANDHI SEVA ASHRAM**

**GRASSROOTS INDIA TRUST**