

MILIEU, ACTION AND STRATEGY

Breakthrough on Gramodaya Kendra

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BACKGROUND OF STUDY

Community sensitive approach of Gramodaya Kendra induced the organization to look back before moving ahead. It is well 3 years over the development action was started in 2002 in northern upland of Kabirdham district, Chhattisgarh. Area was new, people were new, and environment was new. Over a period of 3 years Gramodaya Kendra built rapport with local communities, learnt from the people, collectively arrived at some conclusions about the problems, organized the people including women, tried to find out solutions of some problems, and created space for communities to act jointly. But certainly, Gramodaya Kendra made mistakes and then revised the action. Complete perfection cannot be achieved, yet reaching near to perfection is the thirst of organization.

Whatever it is, at the end of 3 years it seemed essential to look back. Whether the understanding Gramodaya Kendra developed about the milieu was right. Whether the action taken was compatible to the given set of conditions of people. Whether the approach, what Gramodaya Kendra calls 'community sensitive approach', was really so. Gramodaya Kendra cannot assess all this at its own. So the Grassroots Institute, New Delhi was approached to perform the assessment exercise through this reconnaissance study.

For the organization, more important is to know what next can be done on the basis of past understandings/experiences, existing organizational capacities and the priority needs and aspirations of the communities of the area. So far the Oxfam and Christian Aid have supported the organization financially. Whether the resources availed by the agencies have brought in desirable qualitative changes in the lives of people.

To undertake this reconnaissance study, 4 villages were sampled out of 25. Before field visits a protocol for conducting investigations was prepared in early April 2006. Field personnel of Gramodaya Kendra facilitated the field visits to all 4 villages. Some documents of the organization were also reviewed apart from interactions with chief functionary and the staff. In the field, participatory research methods were employed to augment the information. They included informal and formal meetings, transacts, group discussions, focus group discussions, probe, participant observation, etc. The report has been composed in April-May 2006.

Hope this study report will serve the purpose and provide expected direction to further actions of Gramodaya Kendra. This is not end, but a beginning

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● TARGET AREA OF GRAMODAYA KENDRA INTERVENTIONS

1.1 Location

Kabirdham district in Chhattisgarh is fringe district away from mainstream, though the present chief minister of state hails from Kawardha, the headquarter of the district. Northern part of the district, particularly, is poverty-stricken and hunger-prone zone, which lies in Bodla block and, to some extent, in Pandaria block. From Kawardha one needs to drive for about an hour to reach Bodla, the entrance of poverty-hit remote belts. Gramodaya Kendra has been active in 25 villages of 7 panchayats. These villages are located in Maikal range of hills that is eastern part of Satpura Mountains. For the ease of operation, Gramodaya Kendra has divided these tribal villages into 2 clusters: Taregaon cluster and Magarwada cluster.

S.No.	Name of Village	Name of Panchayat	No. of Families				Total Population		
			Total	Baiga	Gond	Other	F	M	Total
1.	Pachrahi	Boda	24	16	2	6	51	49	100
2.	Sili		37	0	17	26	129	168	297
3.	Jokpani		41	0	35	6	115	110	225
4.	Putki		28	0	28	0	63	61	124
5.	Labda		65	24	40	1	170	192	362
6.	Dulapur	Magarwada	44	1	17	26	116	111	227
7.	Tikari		43	0	41	2	131	124	255
8.	Magarwada		39	0	34	5	114	114	228
9.	Amera		57	0	50	7	188	156	344
10.	Sontara	Mudgusri	104	29	65	10	390	300	690
11.	Komo		73	45	22	6	110	118	228
12.	Mudgusri		55	18	32	5	105	126	231
13.	Thakurtola		50	43	5	2	90	109	199
14.	Batipathra	Batipathra	104	29	65	10	390	300	690
15.	Rali		76	0	57	19	215	240	455
16.	Chhindpur		35	25	6	4	65	92	157
17.	Gudali	Chhui	60	41	16	3	100	108	208
18.	Etakachhar		23	5	11	7	58	62	120
19.	Chhui		145	14	113	18	471	471	942
20.	Taregaon	Taregaon	139	7	94	38	395	385	780
21.	Junpani	Kukrapani	25	24	0	1	52	61	113
22.	Bharatpur		52	26	20	6	162	154	316
23.	Liladader		38	32	5	1	92	103	195
24.	Kukrapani		96	29	60	7	305	295	600
TOTAL			1453	408	835	216	4077	4009	8086

1.2 Topography

Being hilly and semi-arid zone the terrain is undulating with drains, streams and rivulets flowing down from uphill areas. On the highlands, the indigenous communities, particularly Baiga and Gond, have made lands for settlement and cultivation. Forests

have become sparse, especially, in the areas where habitations have swallowed. The drainage of the area is in the shape that less and less water is stored inbound; majority of water runs off down into drains and streams. The agriculture mostly is rainfed with little irrigation avenues. Forests are also not so rich to support livelihoods.

1.3 Accessibility and Infrastructure

This tract of remotest villages has got road from Bodla to Daldali mines just for last 2 years. Means of public transport is the mini bus that plies few rounds in a day from Kawardha to Taregaon. Taregaon is roadside village. To access the insidious villages only katcha roads and tracks are there with no facility of transport. The villagers access local markets or basic amenities (available in Bodla) by cycle or bullock cart. Very few families have motorcycles. Field staff of Gramodaya Kendra also accesses the villages mostly by bicycle, sometimes by mobike.

In the name of infrastructure, there is almost nothing except electricity with erratic supply. The villages 2-3 km inside the Bodla-Taregaon road do not have even the electricity. One cannot dream for telephonic connectivity. No landline, no mobile network. If electricity is off, the telephone exchange of Bodla also fails. So in case of emergency the public transport is only the mean of communication. People usually transfer their urgent messages through bus driver and conductor. As far as health facilities are concerned, there is hardly any dispensary before Bodla. Yet few private health practitioners (none is degree holder) are sitting in Taregaon and few other villages on roadside. People face extreme difficulties in accessing treatment of illnesses. Elementary education, however, has satisfactory infrastructure at village level. About 2-3 years ago, there were some villages where no school facility existed, but now such villages also have got the arrangement of education.

② SETTLEMENT HISTORY AND SOCIAL PROFILE OF COMMUNITY

2.1 Settlement History in Relation to Microeconomics

In the field area of Gramodaya Kendra, the settlement of human habitations is not more than 300 years old. Higher the altitude of villages, the newer the settlements. Villages in both Taregaon cluster as well as Magarwada cluster are mostly about 100-200 years old, and have been still evolving.

Batipathra hamlet in **Batipathra** village grew up from 3 families: of Tehari Dhruve and his 2 sons-in-law namely Pakha and Aghnu. They all migrated from Taregaon. It was te time when most of people had to nomad, but seeing the Haap river in vicinity and closeness to Mahidabra village (where Tehari had relatives) the families settled and cleared forest to make lands. Gond families multiplied and colonized the village. Baiga families arrived into the village quite late in around 1952. Baiga who came earlier were allowed to settle within the boundary of Batipathra; but who came later had to settle on margins or they formed new hamlet amid forests.

For the Gond tribe is enterprising and is oriented towards agrarian culture formed lands for cultivation. Baiga also have equivalent size of lands, or, sometimes, more than Gonds; but lands of Gonds are more intensively worked and productive, whereas Baiga have not put in hard labor to make lands productive.

If we look at the profile of Batipathra hamlets, some revealing facts come onto surface. Gonds inhabit in 2 hamlets out of 6; and only these two hamlets lie on revenue lands, while rest 4 hamlets are settled on forestlands. Batipathra and Bajaritola, which are co-inhabited by Gonds, also settled on forestlands; but the Gonds got lands regularized into revenue lands. It shows that Gonds have become relatively mainstreamed and influential in terms of resource/power acquisition. Sailutola, Bakchhapar and Padiadharan hamlets are exclusively inhabited by Baiga, which are still in encroachment status.

Adjacent to Batipathra, **Chhindpur** was colonized by Baiga tribe. Living in the deep forests sometimes, the Baiga concentrated on this fringe of jungle. Due to nomadic and solitary behavior of Baiga tribes many families initially constructed hutments, but they left. Over a period of about 15-25 years, 30 families have finally stayed in Chhindpur. Notwithstanding the tendency to construct solitary houses at distance from one another, the Baiga of this village have constructed houses in queues both sides of village's central road.

Baiga also cleared the forests to make lands. They have plenty of lands, but ever remained afraid of foresters. Of late, the Gramodaya Kendra succeeded to weed out their fear. Means of cultivation, inputs necessary for better farming and skills to produce more are absent with Baiga community in Chhindpur.

Komo is peculiar village as far as the settlement history and landscape are concerned. Village had complete dense forest in which 2 families (Lamu and his father-in-law Mandhu) settled first. They struggled and cleared forests to make lands. Other Baiga families joined then and colonized the village. Sukhram Gond and Mukhram Gond arrived village very late whom Baiga actually accommodated. At the moment 44 families of Baiga reside in Komo, and their houses are scattered across large area. On the

contrary, 15 families of Gond and 5 families of Yadav reside in colony. Most of Baiga families came to village after being displaced from mines. Recently, 7 families have settled in the village after having been displaced from Daldali bauxite mine.

As a result of concerted constant efforts of all communities of village 34 families of village have got land titles, and village recently in 2005 converted into revenue village from forest village. Despite the fact that Gond arrived in Komo after Baiga, and Baiga shared their lands with them, today Gond overtook Baiga in terms of resource acquisition and overall development.

Gond community in **Putki** village was observed in advanced phase of evolution vis-à-vis Gonds of other two villages i.e. Batipathra and Komo. They have developed relatively reaching closer to caste community in anthropological evolution. Beginning from settlement pattern to farming practices and aggregate social attitude.

Summarily, the human conditions in different villages reflect that the inhabitant communities are in varied stages of anthropological, social and economic evolution depending on the temporal, spatial, ethological and environmental opportunities. This all has implication on strategic thinking to make development interventions further. Consideration of such human evolution dimensions in microplanning seems necessary.

2.2 Social Composition and Power Balance

Feudalism is in evolution phase in the area. However, the outsiders continued to exploit, most economically, the poor. On virgin lands of this northern part of Kabirdham district Gond tribes first started cultivation about 300 years ago. Hence they settled wherever they found suitable landscapes. There are some villages, however, where Baiga tribes settled first followed by Gond. One such village is Komo. Other than tribes, several non-tribal communities also reached to settle in jungles; they are Yadav, Kurmi and Sahu.

Since Gond are first settlers of native lands and they carried forward the agrarian practices, they emerged as having bigger share of resources and power. Gonds are locally known as kisaan (farmer) by virtue of their evolution as principal cultivators. Baiga, on the other hand, have socially dominated by all coexisting communities. Even when they are pioneer settlers in some village they have accepted their subjugation and dominance of others. Unlike plains of Chhattisgarh and many of highlands, the non-tribes do not overpower the tribes in this area barring Baiga. Non-tribes e.g. Yadav, Kurmi, Sahu or else live under the dominance of Gond. So Gonds are most powerful in the area followed by non-tribal communities with the Baiga on bottom line.

Baiga community is the vulnerable social group. Historically the Baiga were the nomadic slash and burn cultivators and hunter-gatherers. As a consequence of compulsion to leave jungles and to sedentarise to practice agriculture, they began learning farming for only about 10-25 years. Baiga thus lack means and resources, skills, attitude, knowledge and support to practice agriculture and produce food. Hunger, malnutrition, illnesses and helplessness make them further vulnerable and weak killing their ability to negotiate and participate in development process. In general, the Gond community does not like Baiga and perpetuates keeping them excluded.

Looking at the villages examined, the Gonds are dominant community in both the villages (Komo and Batipathra) where Gond and Baiga live together. Chhindpur and

Putki villages are exclusively inhabited by Baiga and Gond, respectively. Batipathra is village that has 6 hamlets wherein Baiga and Gond co-inhabit, as well as Baiga live in isolation. Here Gond have given space to Baiga to develop and come forward.

❸ RESOURCES: BASIS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITIES

Under this reconnaissance study, systematic resource mapping has not been done. However, the field observations and transacts reveal that the land is prime base of production and livelihoods augmentation. Apart from land, there are some other resources on which the survival economy is based, and they are:

Resource Base for Food Production and Livelihoods

1. Cultivable Lands and Agriculture
2. Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)
3. Livestock
4. Wage Labor

Resource Base for Social and Political Change

1. Women Associations at Micro Level
2. Panchayati Raj Institutions
3. Baiga Raj Panchayats

3.1 People's Access to Resources

3.1.1 Access to Land and Agriculture

It is well evident that the first settlers — the Gond or Baiga tribes — had cleared the dense forests to make lands. Baiga tribes, however, are still busy in making lands. It is commonly observed that there is no dearth of landholding in the villages. But due to lack of inputs the agriculture is poor in the area.

Moreover, there is serious concern in access to land. It is immaterial how much land the people hold, it is rather significant how much land the family has got the legal title of. If we look at this essentiality, Gonds and non-tribes have got legal titles of lands they hold. It has happened because of several factors. Baiga lagged behind in getting titles. Baiga in rarely any village (e.g. Komo) have got land titles, although they have plenty of land. Reasons of this are:

- a. Baiga are relatively new settlers and have less stake as well as interest in lands. Late recently, they have started realizing the importance of land in their survival, and hence trying to get legal titles on lands.
- b. Baiga since were nomads and now changing lifestyle slowly, many a time either leave lands and migrate to other places, or give others mortgaged. Sometimes they sell their lands.
- c. Baiga usually make lands from forests; so they think it can be made anywhere amid jungles and anytime. So they don't want to indulge harassing procedure of getting titles. They avoid struggling for their entitlements.
- d. Baiga are not politically so empowered that they can negotiate with state authorities or can fight for land rights.

As far as agriculture is concerned, again the Gond community is locally known as kisaan (farmer), which means they know farming and practice comparatively improved agriculture. General observations also reveal that Gond do better agriculture as they are

doing it for centuries; they possess more and productive lands with legal titles. On the other hand, their counterpart Baiga does agriculture but is in learning phase of farming. Moreover, they also collect few NTFP materials along with wage labor on-farm. Baiga despite having enough land prefer working as wage labor on others' lands. It reflects that they avoid the risks involved in farming in own lands. As the lands of Baiga often remain fallow or unworked, its are less fertile, less productive.

Thus the Gond community is most progressive and in general doesn't want to see Baiga be developed. But against this common observation, Gond of Batipathra have supported Baiga of Batipathra hamlet to develop. Gonds of Batipathra have invested quite much resource in improving agriculture. Epidemic of a weed, *Argemone sp.*, in the farm fields is the indicator of their progressiveness in agriculture. With external seeds the seeds of weeds invaded the area. Similarly, *Cuscutta sp.*, has covered much of the crop areas and vegetation. It imported from outside. Both the weeds are not endemic to the area. Gonds also have vegetational fencing surrounding their lands, while Baiga do not have such practices. Baiga of Komo have, to an extent, tried to improvise the farming practices. They also attempted to obtain titles over the cultivated lands. With the support of Gramodaya Kendra they have got titles over the lands from Revenue Department. Baiga mostly come in the influence of revenue workers or forest guards and continue to be exploited in the hope that they will get entitlement or not simply be removed from land. Initially, they had suspicion on the field personnel of Gramodaya Kendra, but now gradually a confidence is developed among them towards Gramodaya Kendra. Effect of constant efforts of Gramodaya Kendra on the attitudes of Baiga towards lands is something commendable. Baiga of Chhindpur, for example, have begun realizing that the land is limited and cannot be created further even if jungles surround them. And affirmation to existing lands is essential, otherwise they may lose it also. They were afraid of the threats of foresters. Now they face them and deny leaving their lands in any condition. They have this year invested labor in farm bunding, while previously they preferred working as farm labor on wage basis. They realize what better would have happened once they had put efforts in their own lands instead of working on others' lands.

Demarcation of lands has not yet taken place in the area. People desperately need it. Demarcation can benefit the people in number of ways; simultaneously, it may also cause loss to those who cultivate lands in large size than actual size. Excess land is the encroachment. With the facilitation of Gramodaya Kendra the farmers of Komo and other adjacent villages approached Governor of Chhattisgarh, who ordered to do the demarcation in stipulated time. Revenue officials managed emergency order of Governor in the way that demarcation is next to impossible now.

In accessing the better agriculture and satisfactory productions, the means and inputs necessary for farming played quite significant role. Gond community particularly has generated assets for cultivation, and thus capitalized over it. These assets include bullocks to plough, agriculture implements, seed, fertilizers and irrigation source. Gonds have succeeded in improving their agriculture only because they have got the means, assets and resources to invest in farming. Baiga farmers from Komo highlighted their inability to invest in agriculture. Baiga farmers in general lack bullocks, seeds and other inputs. A Baiga has to wait for the availability of bullocks, seed, water, etc. When they require it, they don't get it. Resulting delay in sowing, watering, weeding, and so on lowers down the yield. If a Baiga hires one pair of bullocks from other farmer, he works in exchange for 5 days on farmer's fields. If some Baiga buys bullocks, and it dies

unluckily; the family comes under debt. For instance, Chhotan Baiga of Komo bought 3 bullocks two years ago for Rs. 8000, but all three bullocks died of epidemic. He bought bullocks after selling 6 quintals of mahua and 2 quintals of pigeon pea. Similarly, Dhansingh Baiga of Komo possesses 5-7 acres of land. He bought a pair of bullocks for Rs. 5000 about a year ago. One of the bullocks died. So he has to hire a bullock to till the field. Likewise, Baiga people incur the losses in terms of seed sowing also. At times when Gonds keep a fraction of crop as seed to sow next year, the Baiga do not keep seeds because they eat away entire stock of foodgrains in lean season. So they borrow the seeds from Gonds, and on crop harvest they refund 1½ time grain. While arranging seeds the sowing gets delayed causing lower yields. Or instead of sowing 3 fields they are able to sow only 1 field. Baiga so is highly vulnerable in relation to practicing agriculture.

Situation of irrigation is universally worse as this is water deficit zone. Rainfall although is plenty, but almost entire water runs off through drains. Most of lands are rainfed and thus single crop. Some progressive and economically able Gond farmers have got pumps or the wells to fetch river water or groundwater. For a Baiga, however, it is quite difficult viewing his vulnerabilities.

3.1.2 People's Access to NTFPs

Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) are lifeline in the areas where dense forests occur. But since the villages where Gramodaya Kendra intervenes chiefly do farming to augment food and livelihood, NTFPs collection is secondary source of livelihood. Moreover, the NTFPs are not available in more number and more quantity. As the forests have fast depleted, not only the quantity available has declined but the number of NTFP items has also dwindled. At the moment several commodities are available: mahua flower, mahua fruit, char kernel, lhasa (gum of Saaja, Dhaura), aonla, etc.

All the NTFP commodities collected are sold in the same season to local traders who either approach villages or sit in weekly haat bazaars. Exploitation in the purchase of commodities is not as sheer as it is in South or North-East Chhattisgarh, but it is present.

The communities, however, lack skills of maximizing the profit margins on unit sale of a particular NTFP commodity. An intensive planning and action is required to enable the communities especially Baiga women in negotiating the prices, in adding value and in handling/ storing the material.

3.1.3 Livestock

Livestock is integral part of agriculture and rural economy. Be they Gond, Baiga or any non-tribe, almost every family rears animals. Gond farmers mostly have bullocks, Yadav have buffaloes. Buffaloes and cows are kept for milk, as also their male offspring act as pullers or carriers.

Animals kept for food security and income generation are goats, poultry birds and pigs. But not all families rear all or any of these. Baiga families particularly lack the necessary resources to invest in buying the mother animals for multiplication. The women, who have been organized with the intervention of Gramodaya Kendra, wish to rear animals for income generation if they are supported.

3.1.4 Wage Labor

Human being is biggest resource for a planned development. Like elsewhere in the rural India the human resource in northern part of Kabirdham are underutilized. More significant here is that the families who even work on-farm search wage labor outside. This is particularly true for Gond families. Baiga, however, engages in wage labor for large part of the year. Baiga families not only work as construction labor, plantation labor or rehabilitation of roads/lands but also work on farmlands of Gond people. Even if the Baiga families have lands, they prefer working on others' farmlands as wage labor.

Critical factor in wage labor realm is what forces the Baiga prefer working as wage labor on others' lands to working on their own lands. Working on own lands must give them long-term fruits, but they don't do that. As a matter of fact Baiga tribes have the world vision outside the land based household economy, and they don't see the investment in lands may happen to secure their future generations. But the concept of 'future' among Baiga is different from the concept of future among others. Now only some Baiga families have started realizing their future in land-based economy. Other factor is that some Baiga families really do not have buffer stock of food to eat during the days they work on their own fields. Lastly, the land management is new technology for them, as they had to practice slash and burn agriculture amid the forests. Obviously, they are now bound to practice sedentarized cultivation.

3.2 Social and Political Ground

3.2.1 Women Groups

Women in most of the villages where Gramodaya Kendra works have potential to carry forward the change process. Women in rural society work more than men, and they are sincere and committed (as observed in Putki village). Although the women have dual burden, they attract towards social development process being galvanized by Gramodaya Kendra. As part of integrated development project, Gramodaya Kendra has organized the women separately in the form of 'saving groups' (29 saving groups have been active). The women, who had never to sit together, now sit together on definite intervals and discuss their problems, issues and achievements. To begin economic empowerment process among themselves, they have started saving petty amounts and linking themselves with banks. Beyond savings and credit thrift they aspire to start micro-enterprises based on the resources they have in surrounds.

Under this reconnaissance study, group discussion was held with the members of 3 women saving groups in Batipathra, namely: Jyoti, Kirti and Jagriti women saving groups. The women wish to do fish rearing in 3 ponds of village, organized selling of NTFPs, and cattle rearing, and to run mid-day-meal scheme in schools. They already inter-loan for their petty needs of child education and crop farming e.g. hiring bullocks on rent, tractor tilling rent, etc. Similarly, the Kalyani women saving group of Komo village wants to rear goats, pigs, local chicks, and to do ration shop, kitchen gardening, etc. These women have clear-cut vision on what can be done to improve women's situation. Women of Putki village are very progressive and they have clear mandate of their empowerment amidst gender inequity.

Thus channelizing the development process through women is highly desirable, as the women are bigger source of mainstreaming social change.

3.2.2 Panchayati Raj Institutions

Like other areas the northern part of Kabirdham district has gram panchayat, gram sabha and panchayat committees at village level, janpad panchayat at block level and zila panchayat at district level. Significant to note here is that Bodla block despite being tribal dominated has not been included in scheduled area under 5th Schedule of Constitution. Status of panchayati raj governance is no different in this area from other areas. However, the people of this area have shown relatively a positive response towards panchayat affairs. Best model is of Batipathra village where all panchayat representatives have been elected uncontested. The villagers have such a harmony and affinity that they disallowed anyone to contest election for any post. In a village meeting, for the post of sarpanch and panches, names were spelt, and people including women raised their hands. Names so were finalized and intimated to panchayat authorities. Following the intervention of Gramodaya Kendra, the women particularly have started attending gram sabha meetings, but they still do not speak. Gradually, women will start taking part in local governance affairs.

Pragmatically, the panchayati raj institutions are big platforms through which many changes in lives of people could be brought. These institutions have immense potential to route in the development of villages.

3.2.3 Baiga Raj Panchayat

Unlike Gonds, Baiga are not organized in the area. With the intention of organizing Baiga and forming their tribal institution, Gramodaya Kendra has induced the formation of Baiga Raj Panchayat 19 villages inhabited by Baiga community. The head office of Baiga Raj Panchayat is in Taregaon where all the villages meet once in 2 months. Each year the Baiga people organize a sammelan (convention) at specified village. Through Baiga Raj Panchayat, the Baiga community tends to assert their rights, discuss community matters, do reform activities, channelize development benefits and negotiate for political role. In developing Baiga, the Baiga Raj Panchayat can be instrumental in the long run.

④ BAIGA vs. GOND: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY BEHAVIORS

4.1 Worldview and Attitude towards Life

Worldview of tribes is definitely different from that of non-tribes. We cannot say, whose worldview is superior and whose inferior. But essentially it varies community to community. If we see the worldview of tribal communities it is eco-centric or nature-centric. This also depends on how much a particular tribe is mainstreamed.

Gond tribes in whole Gondwana country (that includes Chhattisgarh, about half of Madhya Pradesh and parts of Maharashtra) had ruled for many centuries. The ruling Gonds are generally known as Raj Gonds. Raj Gonds had also ruled Kawardha. As the community reigned the northern part of Kabirdham district, they developed the means and sources of production i.e. agriculture lands, and mainstreamed their erstwhile worldviews. Unlike primitive tribes (e.g. Baiga) they see that in present conditions agriculture only can support their lives and their generations. So they must have to develop the farming systems and its peripheral infrastructure.

Gond being ruling class also came in contact of agrarian non-tribal communities, and learnt how to sedentarize and to cultivate lands. Like most of non-tribes, they see the accumulation of materials/ assets is necessary for sustaining the production systems and hence the life. It is why they behave as if they are non-tribe agrarian community. Another factor is that they have over 3-4 centuries history of practicing agriculture and community life.

Their counterpart, Baiga, on the other hand, have typical tribal worldview that Mother Earth chest cannot be tilled, that there is no need of accumulation of food and material as Mother Earth will take care of their children, that Mother Earth has lots of forests for him, so and so forth. Baiga does not worry for the children, for next generation; so for whom should he accumulate the material?

Historically, the Baiga tribe is nomadic tribe who till recently was hunter-gatherer or had to practice the slash and burn agriculture. A critical fact is that Baiga prefers solitary life; he does not want to live in colony or group. He is self-centric liking privacy and unilateral control. This typical behavior of Baiga is continuing as yet, despite that fact that they have numerous compulsions to change.

For various reasons, bringing Baiga into agrarian lifestyle is tedious and Herculean task. And, moreover, the efforts of mainstreaming them or changing their nomadic lifestyle are very new i.e. half-a-century old. Communities that have learnt agriculture in 3000 years do expect from Baiga that they learn agriculture in 30 years, how is it possible? They are, if any, in primitive phase of agriculture. Hence they migrate from cultivated and worked lands and settle at other location. So they don't care for proper seed sowing, farm bunding, irrigation sources, and so on.

4.2 Development Seeking Behavior

When Gond lives in colony or group and has sense of community, the Baiga is 'individualistic' and 'self-centred'. Latter's behavior has emanated from his inherited 'solitary nomadic' behavior. Gonds cooperate one another within the community and

desperately seek their development. They relatively welcome the education. For example, in Batipathra village the Gond community in the beginning of Gramodaya Kendra's intervention was resistive to girl child education. But now after constant persuasion they have been sending their girls to schools. In other villages too, like Putki, Komo, etc. Gond families have been changing their attitude towards girl child education. On the contrary, Baiga people (except in Batipathra hamlet) do not take interest in child education. In Batipathra, the Baiga actually have assimilated community characters of Gonds, and so their behavior has changed (or been changing). They have learnt quite from Gond in Batipathra.

Opposite the common beliefs of anthropologists and pro-tribal activists, Baiga reflect certain negative behavioral traits, such as:

- Baiga speaks lies and applies mind negatively viz. Likes to destroy the fellow Baiga.
- Baiga as an individual is greedy also. He looks for how he can find the money. For little money he sells off the land also.
- Baiga tends to break the rules or impositions set by the community or group. He wants freedom. So he does not want to abide the strict norms of institutions.
- Baiga has strong individualistic vision. They do not tolerate seeing fellow Baiga families prosper.
- Leadership of Baiga is highly selfish and dictatorial.

Apart from these disturbing behavioral attributes of Baiga, Gramodaya Kendra has mixed experiences with Baiga community. Amid all adversaries, some success has been achieved while working with Baiga community.

It is but sure that once has compulsion to change his worldview and attitude Baiga has started realizing the call of the time. They have least options now to continue nomadism and slash and burn agriculture. It means they can no more cut forests to make lands everywhere. Till the date they make lands, and later sell, mortgage or just leave it, and migrate to other location where they again repeat the same. Government has already banned such a practice. So they have no alternative but to develop the existing lands they have in possession. On the other side their population is increasing posing double challenge of survival.

Only a fraction of Baiga families are able to realize these situations. Gramodaya Kendra believes that lack of means and sources for developing their agriculture, for accessing education, for getting health services, and for benefiting from development schemes are necessary, but more essential is the "attitude towards development" that in general looks absent in Baiga community. For example, both Baiga and Gond have lands. Gonds have arranged bullocks, seed, plough, irrigation, fertilizers, cart, etc. to develop farming, which Baiga could not do. Where the Gonds have brought these things from? Why could Baiga not arrange all necessary means and sources? It is nothing but the positive attitude and willingness to develop the agriculture that made Gonds superior.

Take an example of 'gram kosh' (village fund) which Gramodaya Kendra introduced in villages. The villagers if contribute Rs. 100 each family, Gramodaya Kendra also contributes equal amount. Gram kosh is for development of agriculture, education or alike. If any family seeks loan from it, the villagers decide and give loan after assessment. In Gond villages or where Gonds are in majority, these 'gram kosh'

generated sufficient amount of money and the families got benefits of community fund. Bit in Baiga villages it could not work. Wherever it grew in size, the powerful Baiga family grabbed the 'gram kosh' and utilized for himself. In Pachrahi village, for instance, the Baiga people asked Gramodaya Kendra to support their gram kosh extra as they wanted to give loan to particular family for buying an engine pump. They had about Rs. 9000 in 'gram kosh' fund, which was insufficient. So they sought extra contribution of Gramodaya Kendra, which broke the norm to support the initiative of Baiga (as Baiga rarely take such initiative at their own). Later, the family took loan and bought pump. Engine pump has done enough irrigation. The family has not only developed own lands but also earned money out of selling the waters. But the family denied repaying the loan amount. Even the family stopped attending village meetings. This story is sufficient to establish 'individualistic' and 'selfish' attitude of Baiga people. Positive thing in this story is that the purpose of 'gram kosh' to develop families is relatively fulfilled, as at least some families succeeded in developing their lands. The objective, however, of making the action collective action is defeated.

During the field visits made for this study, it was observed that less and less Baiga participate in the group discussions or just in village affairs. If it is the meeting for discussing the development of village in general, they avoid participating. In Batipathra village, only 10-12 Baiga men and women participated. Moreover, they belonged to Batipathra hamlet only, who are quite different from other Baiga in their behavior. Almost none participated from Sailutola, Bakchhapar and Padiadharan hamlets. Similarly, after calling twice, only 3 persons assembled in Komo in about 2 hours. Baiga of Komo reported that many people ask the fellow Baiga to attend meeting and report them back the outcome of meeting. Non-Baiga people usually complain that if Baiga comes to meeting he comes in drunkard condition, when he neither can understand anything nor let others hear properly. Reasons for this non-cooperating behavior of Baiga may be either of the following:

- Baiga is tired of attending meetings, which the government workers call in the village frequently.
- Baiga is apprehensive that nothing will happen in the meeting, which is according to his needs or thinking.
- Baiga does not need at all the model of development that is being discussed in meetings. He requires something different, or he needs nothing at all.
- In the meetings, the Baiga is not given due respect, as he sits in the last queue, or sits on ground considering himself the creature of bottomline. Sometimes, government people and outsiders misbehave with him.
- Feeling excluded and disgruntled (as mainstream society presses him to feel like that), he escapes the public appearance.
- Baiga does not like to be disturbed, as he wants isolated and solitary life.

Whatever it is, it is but difficult to interpret the behavior of Baiga exactly. Nothing can be universalized for Baiga people. Development seeking behavior of Baiga is typical and mixed.

When once can hear Baiga saying, "hum toa dongar ke aadmi hain, hum nahin sudhrence" (we are the people of hills, we wont change), Gramodaya Kendra has reverse experiences also. In Chhindpur village, the Baiga families have made houses in line on both sides of central path. Some families have constructed farm bunds this year after long persuasion and seeing the same in adjacent Batipathra village.

Likewise, the Baiga families of Chhindpur after long have little realized the importance of child education. So some families have been sending their children to alternative school recently started in the village. Previously, several children of Chhindpur had to go to Gudli where they were beaten by Gond children. The lady teacher also had apathy towards Baiga children. She not only threatened them often but also once beaten them by slipper. So after experiencing hostile environment of school the Baiga children tended to pass time in the way. They neither had to stay at home nor they had to go to school. Sarpanch of Gudli and Baiga parents of Chhindpur questioned the lady teacher. Anyway, Baiga of Chhindpur with the assistance of Gramodaya Kendra succeeded in getting school right in their village. In the beginning 27 children enrolled, now 8-9 pupils are regular. Some children are engaged in works like animal herding, tending the siblings. Many other children live free, as they want freedom. To see overall picture, the Baiga of Chhindpur are very slowly changing their attitude. On the day of visiting them for this study, none of them was in drunkard condition. Same was the situation in Batipathra and Komo.

Some individuals among Baiga are certainly different from the mass. Dukal Singh, panch, of Chhindpur village has got the hairs cut. He said that non-Baiga people easily identify the Baiga due to long hairs, and behave with him discriminately, harassingly. Dukal Singh removed such identity of Baiga that creates negative image. He is quite progressive. He also performs vermi-compost on-farm.

Baiga have also started, though lately, the realizing the needs of the family. They now understand that more number of children in family cause unavoidable burden on the expenses of the family. The rising population is one of the anxieties Baiga has today. In 1970s, the government banned the vasectomy or tubectomy among the Baiga community after the scientific findings that population of Baiga was declining. Now once the population of Baiga on average is increasing with the increased average size of families the rule made by government did not change ever since. Baiga of numerous villages including Batipathra wish to opt family planning measures to control the population, the government officials and health workers do not support their aspiration. They are actually afraid of any legal action that can happen against them. What will happen of this aspiration of Baiga is nor sure, but this is sure that Baiga have inclination to change, to develop.

Baiga panch of Batipathra suggested in meeting that the Baiga of his village should form a fund in order to support the needs of schoolchildren of clothes, books, etc. The poorest may seek help from this fund. Youth group can operate this fund and generate money for it from among community members. This is another example of Baiga's positive thinking and imagination, but why is this restricted to Batipathra?

In general, the behavior of majority of Baiga people is still passive to the development. Factors have been discussed several times. Amusingly, if it comes to get legal title (patta) on land, Baiga generally readies to bribe, or simply seen active. Why is it so? Some Baiga families have got legal titles also, but they after receiving it either mortgaged/ sold the land or want to do so. Baiga have come to know that only after getting legal title they can sell land to Gonds and can get good prices. It reflects that they seek legal titles not for getting ownership over the lands and cultivate it peacefully, but they like to make money out of it. Many Baiga families have done so, and then migrated to other place and made new lands.

Unlike Baiga, the Gonds have systematic thinking. They not only work hard but also continuously think how they can grow and prosper. Gonds and Yadav of Batipathra village in order to improve and diversify their agriculture want to have ensured irrigation. They suggested to build checkdam on stream flowing close to village, or to construct lift irrigation system along the bank of river. They have finely observed the impact of the checkdam built in Chhui village. After the checkdam, the water has started flowing in the stream even in summer, which was simply a dream otherwise. Gond took notice of this phenomenon, whereas their counterpart Baiga did not.

On the front of social empowerment, the Gond have also made progress vis-à-vis Baiga. It is nothing but strange that Gonds of Batipathra have been supporting and inducing their women to come forward. Normally, its are males who suppress the women not to take part in development process. Women of Batipathra have been supported tremendously by the males.

In Komo village, Gond farmers are vocal to speak about the benefits and importance of farm bunding., compost making, etc. The farmers have constructed bunds on their lands to check rainwater, increase moisture content, and arrest soil erosion. They had to throw the dung scatteredly; now they make compost out of it following the intervention of Gramodaya Kendra. On the other side, the Baiga have not done the same. Farmers like Mr. Jagat suggested few interventions to further develop the agriculture. He suggested kitchen gardening and farm forestry (with aonla and mango). Identically, the women also suggested organized selling of mahua and other NTFPs. The women showed their desire to undertake goatry and piggery. “Farm bunding is effective only when all fields are bunded. If some farmers will do and some will not, the heavy runoff may abandon the constructed bunds also”. Such knowledge the Gonds of Komo have. Baiga do not think so deeply about the farming systems. Gond farmers of Komo dream the wells on their fields after they raise groundwater level through farm bunding and other water conservation measures.

As has already been discussed several times, the Baiga of Batipathra village are exception.

There are fewer gaps in health seeking behaviors of Gond community and Baiga community. Both the communities equally complain for absence of health facilities, but none of them make efforts to hold the health workers accountable or to question their irregular visitations. The MPHWS or ANMs actually do not serve the populations regularly and intensively. They are casual in health service delivery. In common diseases like malaria or diarrhea, one has to visit private practitioner in Taregaon. In case of emergency, they go to Bodla or Kawardha. But they do not act to make health services reach their doorstep efficiently. Women’s reproductive health always remains in worse condition. Many women have died during childbirth due to lack of proper support and medication.

4.3 Community Institutions and Leadership

Development of society in villages depends on the community institutions. Stronger and democratic the community institutions are the greater the opportunities one community gets to develop. And leadership is the axis of community institution.

Gond community in the area has better-shaped institutions, though informal and invisible. Every Gond village has a 'patel' who not only collects revenue but also acts as chieftain of entire community in village. The clans of Gond also have clan leader called as 'sermia', who delivers mainly the religious, spiritual and social functions. Patel on the other hand vests judicial powers also. Both patel as well as sermia are inherited posts. Community leaders of Gond generally have superior character and lead the community in progressive direction. For example, Gond leader of Batipathra, Mr. Bale Singh Pandram, who is also the patel, encourages and supported the girl child education. Community institutions of Gonds led by relatively committed leaders allow the innovations diffuse fast in the benefit of all. These leaders also filter the negativities. For instance, the patel of Batipathra was once misguided by deputy ranger against Gramodaya Kendra. But he was patient enough to observe the deeds of Gramodaya Kendra and thus he let the social good prevail. As a result, Batipathra is model of development action and social change.

Except the Baiga of Batipathra, Baiga in general do not have attitude of behaving in community. They mostly reflect individualistic behavior. They don't like collectivity. What is serious with Baiga is that their leaders are rarely supportive and positive. They are rather dictators. They prohibit any good idea to percolate in Baiga community. Such bad leaders are found in Damgarh, Taitirni, Dhauratola, Thakurtola, Gudli, etc. Mr. Durga of Gudli, Maniram of Junpani, Mahavir of Chhindpur, Daroga of Komo and Santu of Pachrahi are infamous for their dictatorship.

Baiga in Komo village are divided into two groups, both led by two brothers. One by Chaitu, and another by Chhotan. If Chhotan group calls meeting the other group affiliates do not attend, and vice versa. The Baiga people of Komo told that none comes even when it is a community meeting. People even do not gather in marriage of someone. Yes, they gather only when someone dies. But the same Baiga in adjacent village, Mudghusri, gather and participate in meetings. All it shows that Komo has divisive politics within that keeps other half excluded. This is leadership crisis in the village.

Conclusively, before forming any institution among Baiga it is a challenge to create community feelings among them. As long as they don't develop "affinity" in the learnt behavior towards the fellow Baiga, they cannot come together to form institution. If any institution is imposed on them, it cannot work. However, there is no set formula to develop 'affinity' among Baiga families.

4.4 Participation in Political Affairs

Micro-politics of village determines various dimensions of socio-economic environment. This micro-politics becomes hyperactive when it comes to determine electoral politics or the benefit sharing. And this micro-politics could be inter-community or intra-community. The community that is politically inactive always remains marginalized or excluded. Be it the matter of participation in village panchayat or the involvement in party politics, whosoever attains the power to negotiate actually accesses or catches hold the resources in large quantity. Those who cannot bargain lose their share in the incoming or existing resources. Where the power to negotiate or bargain comes from? One source of attaining power is "participating in micro-politics", which means taking part in panchayat affairs, in resource management, in development discussions, in social

affairs. At least there should be a representation of the person who wants share in the benefits accrued or to be accrued from the political process.

In above conceptual background if we see Baiga community, it is found absent almost on each platform. Due to constitutional privileges and special status even among tribes, government has given reservation/ emphasis for Baiga to participate in governance institutions. Despite all favorable legal environments, they don't participate desirably. Reasons behind this are two: one, Baiga do not have adequate willingness to participate the governance at village level or above; second, the non-Baiga communities and the government functionaries deliberately exclude them. Actually, both the reasons are applicable here in the area.

Visibly, the Gond dominates and overpowers the panchayat meetings and decision processes. Gond also derives the power from external sources. Baiga seems to be powerless even if he takes part in meetings. It is the fact that Gonds have kept the Baiga out of the panchayat domain even when Baiga represent the panchayat institutions. What lies in the roots is that Gonds don't want Baiga to live even in the vicinity. Gond perceives Baiga as encroachment on their living space, rights and privileges. This thinking among Gonds has germinated due to many factors. Actually, government has special project for Baiga called as 'Baiga Vikas Pradhikaran' (Baiga Development Authority), which provided plenty of assets to Baiga. Though the exercises of government have all gone futile, the Gonds have developed an "antipathy" syndrome.

Since Gonds have been united and powerful, the Baiga surrender in front of them. Had the Baiga been equally powerful, it would have been a violent conflict between the two communities. So the rift between them is exploded in the form of exclusion of Baiga from all collective affairs.

Baiga in general also do avoid contesting elections of panch or sarpanch. Those who have been elected as panch, mostly do not attend the panchayat meetings. If they attend any they don't voice, let alone they would advocate the interests of people.

5 OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT ACTION OF GRAMODAYA KENDRA

5.1 History of Gramodaya Kendra

An organization carries the legacy emanated as composite experiences of the founder(s). History of Gramodaya Kendra revolves around the individual history of the main founder, Mr. Kashiram Verma. Till 1988 he was the core leader of Prayog in Tilda-Nevra, which was the brainchild of Bam India. Between 1983 and 1988 Mr. Kashiram Verma had to command the Tilda regime in Balaghat district too. The team active in that project grossly splitted to form Gramodaya Kendra in Lanji block of Balaghat district in 1988. Then they got it registered on 30 September 1989 under Madhya Pradesh Societies Registration Act 1973 at Bhopal.

The dedicated team under the leadership of Mr. Kashiram Verma continued struggling to organize the local community without financial resources. At times when the local communities were having lot of resistance towards social change, its were difficult days before the team members to operate in complete lack of funds. Chief functionary, Mr. Kashiram, had to seek support from many friend NGOs from entire Madhya Pradesh. Other team members were to earn from petty works. And thus all collectively carried forward the mission. Amid this struggle Oxfam (India) Trust, Nagpur provided some support to the organization in 1994 for continuing the community organization and development. Gramodaya Kendra got prior permission from Ministry of Home to receive the foreign grant. By 1995-96, Oxfam included Gramodaya Kendra in a package program that was supported by consortium of several European partners.

GRAMODAYA KENDRA AT A GLANCE

Registered Office: Saletekri Road, Lanji, DistT– Balaghat
[M.P.] 481222

Project Office: Lohara Road, Ramnagar, Kawardha,
Distt. Kabirdham [C.G.] 491995

Date of Establishment: October 1984

Registration No.: 22984 dated 30.09.1989
[Registered under M. P. Societies Registration Act 1973]

FCRA Registration No.: 06312009 dated 22.03.1999

Income Tax Registration No.: PAN AAAG 1977 F 21.08.2003

Name of Executives: Mr. Kashiram Verma, *President*
Mr. Radheshyam Dandare, *Secretary*
Mr. Munnalal Malgam, *Treasurer*

Vision of the Organization: The organization dreams self-reliant, capable and equitable rural community.

Thematic Areas of Operation:

1. Natural Resource Management
2. Livelihood Systems Development of Tribes
3. Empowerment and Development of Tribes
4. Strengthening Local Self-Governance
5. Women Empowerment
6. Maternal & Child Health
7. Child Education
8. Publications

Bank Account Details: No. - SB A/c 11175
Bank - Central Bank of India
Branch – Balaghat
[Distt. - Balaghat 481 001]

Journey of Gramodaya Kendra got momentum in 1997 when it launched Sustainable Integrated Development of Tribes Project with the support of Christian Aid. Meanwhile the organization also received FCRA registration in 1999. The said project brought in lots of visible impacts in the local community of Lanji block of Balaghat district; so the project went into withdrawal phase between 2000 and 2002.

As envisaged in the Integrated Tribal Development Project, the second phase of the project was to be implemented in Bodla block of Kawardha district. At the time it was conceived, Madhya Pradesh was not divided and Kawardha was very much the part of Madhya Pradesh. But in 2000 new state called Chhattisgarh born and Kawardha became part of new state. However, as per envisaged plan Gramodaya Kendra started work in Bodla block of Kawardha in 2002.

This new area was difficult area for the staff of Gramodaya Kendra as it is Baiga mixed area. Organization selected 24 villages in northern part of Kawardha where the local community initially had different types of doubts and suspicions. The field staff personnel of Gramodaya Kendra were thought to be 'child kidnapers'. But in about a year the perception of communities gradually changed following the exposures Gramodaya Kendra arranged for the people in Balaghat. Now the project is running smoothly and has achieved a commendable success.

Changing lives of Baiga

Gallu Ram Baiga is among the few progressive farmers of this area. He went to Lanji and got exposure. On return he started working the soil and bunding the fields. His fellow villagers invoked him not to dig the land wastefully. Now he sows maize on bunds and paddy in the field. On harvest of paddy, if there is moisture he cultivates potato or gram. He is also doing vermi-compost to prepare manure for the vegetables he grows close to hand pump. Previously he stopped his daughter from going to school, but later allowed her to continue education. His daughter Budhwara Bai, scored first in tournament at block level and second at district level. Gallu Ram never dreamt all this. He is extremely happy today.

The organization not only has established the development action in this belt of 25 villages but it is diversifying the activities based on the needs of the people.

5.2 Structure and Governance of Organization

Top decisions in the organization are taken in meeting of Governing Body by the members of Governing Body constituted by 7 members namely: Mr. Kashi Ram Verma, Mr. Radheshaym Dandre, Mr. Munna Lal Malgam, Mr. Mohan Singh Kokode, Mr. Amar Das Mankar, Mr. Udeswar Dharne and Ms. Rekha Vaidya. Among these members 4 are tribes, 1 scheduled caste and rest 2 are backward class members, while 1 member is female. Above the Governing Body, there is General Body that takes crucial decisions. Mr. Anil Chandravanshi, Ms. Ramkali Sonwani, Mr. Udai Sahu and Mr. Rati Ram Karsayal are the members of Governing Body apart from 7 members who represent Governing Body. What makes Gramodaya Kendra different from other organizations is that the staff personnel mainly are the members of both Governing Body and General Body. It is because of the thinking of Gramodaya Kendra that its are staff personnel who actually implement the plans and strategies, so what is the fun if some outsider takes decisions about the organization and the staff blindly executes it. Here the decision-makers also execute the decisions. So they understand the logic and relevance of the decisions. Mr. Kashi Ram Verma acts as chief functionary in day to day decisions and

handles managerial functions of the organization. Functioning of the organization is practically democratic away from all rhetoric.

In the organization, important is that all the members of organization (i.e. staff) hold meeting every month to discuss the monthly progress and the next monthly action plan. Some long-term policy matters are also discussed in the meeting. Critical matters related to action on particular intervention are discussed in meeting and decisions are taken mutually. Everybody in the organization is accountable to everybody i.e. the Body.

To maintain a discipline in the organization and functioning protocol the organization has evolved a unique “organizational policy”, which is highlighted in the box below.

Unique Organizational Policy of Gramodaya Kendra	
❖	Organization has been created for the people and the staff of organization also works for the people.
❖	Organization is meant to work in rural areas targeting specifically socially & economically backward and excluded communities.
❖	None including government or non-government organization is able to develop the society. Development is inevitable and people develop themselves. Organizations like Gramodaya Kendra induce the momentum of development. Building a base or environment for people to develop is another role of organizations.
❖	What should be the direction of development action will also to be decided by the people themselves; organization will support their initiatives to the extent that it can do.
❖	If the community’s customary institutions are responsible for keeping the customs alive, the same institutions have contributed more to the progress of communities in comparison to the government, constitution or NGOs.
❖	Those who work are the officials of the organizations, and the workers could be the decision-makers.
❖	Everyone of the organization has specified responsibilities but cooperating/supporting others is also the responsibility.
❖	In election/selection of officials of the organization, it is selective democracy. But in decision-making, planning, reporting, solving problems and preparing/spending budget, all participate equally.
❖	What makes the NGO different from GO is the flexibility, transparency, honesty and commitment. Gramodaya Kendra abides to it.

5.3 Sustainable Adivasi Integrated Development Program

Gramodaya Kendra after withdrawing from Balaghat district took over to Bodla block of Kabirdham district. This second phase of ‘Sustainable Adivasi Integrated Development Program’ was already planned in original project submitted to Christian Aid. Actually this program was conceived as part of mutual understanding of the communities’ needs, and Christian Aid supported it in capacity of PARTNER. So it was ample space for flexibility in the activity frame viewing the conditions of target community. The core intention of the program was (and is) to uplift the downtrodden tribal community (especially Baiga) to the comparable level of other communities.

With above intention, Gramodaya Kendra selected 25 village in northern highlands of Kabirdham district. Subsequently, Gramodaya Kendra started enhancing the capacities of society so that people could access the resources, development, empowerment and justice.

⑥ UNIQUENESS OF DEVELOPMENT ACTION

6.1 First Encounter with Community

Gramodaya Kendra never was in favor fulfilling targets. It ever wanted to change the status quo, transform the society. If this is the vision of the organization, it is obvious to face difficulties and adversaries. In the beginning the challenges were triple. Organization was new entity for the people, the field personnel were the strangers for them. Communities had also never seen the outsiders except government personnel and traders. Understanding the area, communities, sociology, economic and governance was crucial for the field personnel. Undoubtedly, no action was required at that point of time. Building rapport and winning confidence of local people was more critical. Building team of committed and dedicated field personnel was also the challenge. Thus in year 2002-03, Gramodaya Kendra simply understood the area, situations, people and the environment, formulated strategies, stratified action plan, build the relations, established rapport in the communities, sharpened the capacities and understanding of staff personnel, organized several exposure visits for local people, and conditioned the outreach methods in accordance of local tribes.

6.2 Understanding the Milieu

Gramodaya Kendra never stopped learning from field. Relatively following the frame of 'participatory learning and action' (PLA) the learning from field still continues. Based on the learnings and situations the approach of action must change, then only the success is achieved and results are sustainable.

In first year of intervention viz. 2002-03, understanding the environment was prime agenda. Points of study were the livelihood base of people --- obviously the land --- and quality of life. Beginning from chief functionary to field personnel, all were involved in knowing the landholding, land ownership and legal aspects, crop patters, crop cycle, production, yield, irrigation sources, micro-economics, social structure, social dynamics, political institutions and institutionalization, government-people interface, resources inflow into the villages, platforms of social and knowledge exchange (e.g. haat bazaars), and, lastly, the scope for development action. On the basis of information generated on different variables of understanding, Gramodaya Kendra prepared preliminary chart of problems and needs of the communities. It is shown hereunder:

Preliminary Chart of Problems and Needs of Community

<u>Problems</u>	<u>Needs</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No ownership and control of people over cultivated lands ▪ Lack of capital to invest in agriculture ▪ Lack of education ▪ Liquor consumption ▪ Poor quality of life ▪ Under-utilization of land and low yield ▪ No social and political participation ▪ Discreet population 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ownership and control of people on lands ▪ Community fund to invest in assets, sources and means necessary for production ▪ Compulsory primary education ▪ Elimination of liquor consumption ▪ Sanitation and hygiene ▪ Intensive farming ▪ Inclusion of all in social units and micro political structures ▪ Creating affinity among families

Above was the basis to take off and to build upon the whole complex of interventions. The field personnel performed PRA exercises several times to arrive at some conclusions. Further strategy of action evolved from these understandings.

6.3 Logical Selection of Activities

After intensive field learning and analytical discourse, Gramodaya Kendra evolved several values in particular context of current field area:

- ❖ Community must have its own base for development, sustaining livelihoods and making choices;
- ❖ Income is not the criterion for development and sustenance of a community system;
- ❖ To sustain, the community should be able to produce, access resources, and control the means and decisions;
- ❖ For a least 70% of the basic needs the community should be self-reliant;
- ❖ Villagers can earn much more through labor, but they cannot exercise control over it; hence they don't develop;
- ❖ Only the agriculture on own lands guarantees sustained incomes and food security. Baiga or Gond has to be first the farmer, then a trader;
- ❖ Government wants to give goats, shop, tractor, or else.....but does not want to give land. It means the government does not give the means through which a family can become self-reliant and empowered;
- ❖ Every primitive community (such as tribe) must have to pass from same doors through which all civilizations have passed, and that is "agrarian" ways of life.

In light of above, Gramodaya Kendra selected "land-based interventions" as the gateway to alter the lives of poor tribes especially Baiga. Gonds had already been in the agrarian culture, it was the question for Baiga only. And Baiga also has no option except adopting agriculture as main life-support system.

Activities that were chosen during 3 years period are illustrated as under:

2003

Promotion of Institutionalization	1. Constant exchange of information, knowledge and learning through interactive meetings, formal meetings, exposures, demonstrations, etc.
	2. Formation of Baiga Raj Panchayat as common platform to initiate social change process among Baiga community
	3. Orientation of identified community leaders
Agronomic Interventions	4. Revival of endangered/extinct traditional crops (e.g. popat, kultha, urad, kusum, etc.) for bringing back the food security
	5. Compost making and its application for fertility management
Input Support System	6. Constitution and establishment of seed banks (keeping seeds of popat, kultha and kusum)
	7. Constitution and establishment of community funds called 'gram kosh'

2004

Intensifying the Institutionalization	1. Constant exchange of information, knowledge and learning through interactive meetings, formal meetings, exposures, demonstrations, etc.
	2. Meetings and conventions of Baiga Raj Panchayat to address the issues such as housing scheme for Baiga, enlisting in BPL, gram kosh, family planning, child education, grain bank, liquor abolition, land demarcation, health, representation in panchayat, etc.
Social Reform and Awareness	3. General awareness on to abolish social evils like liquor consumption, child marriage and misbeliefs
	4. Education on keeping sound health, sanitation, child education, etc.
Agrarian Reform	5. Public meetings of farmers addressing demarcation of lands, land upgradation, crop husbandry
	6. Lobbying the district collector, chief minister and governor for quick demarcation (bandobast) of lands.
	7. Exposure of villagers to study people's forests in Maharashtra
Organizing the Women	8. Initiation of organizing the women for gender equity
	9. Exposure of selected women
Land & Water Management	10. Farm bunding on cultivable lands of farmers
	11. Exposure visits of farmers
Agronomic Interventions	12. Promotion of traditional crops cultivation for sustainable food security
	13. Compost making and its application for fertility management
	14. Measurement of crops production and yield
Horticulture	15. Introduction of vegetable farming of chilly and brinjal
	16. Distribution of fruit plants e.g. guava, citrus, aonla, karonda
Input Support System	17. Constitution of 'women saving fund' to support economic initiatives of women
	18. Constitution of Baiga Panchayat Fund to support activities focusing agriculture development
Local Self-Governance	19. Gram sabha strengthening
	20. Training of elected representatives
Integration of Human Development	21. Education on health including herbal treatment methods
	22. Assistance in identifying cases of leprosy
	23. Promotion of primary education through enrollment drive, monitoring of retention in schools

2005

Internalizing the Institutionalization	1. To reinforce the institutional process, interactive contacts, village level meetings, conventions, etc. were continued
	2. Constant exchange of information, knowledge and learning on varied subjects

Social Reform and Awareness	3. Cluster and regional meetings encompassing gram kosh rules, sanitation, land improvement, community institution, gram swaraj, learning from exposure, importance of panchayat/ gram sabha, role of mitanin, govt. schemes, community reform
Organizing the Women	4. Baiga Raj Panchayat sammelan
	5. Formation of women saving groups to strengthen organization and empowerment of women 6. Training of beneficiary women on saving fund management, women and child health, women empowerment, etc.
Land & Water Management	7. Farm bunding on cultivable lands of farmers
	8. Earthen check dams
Agronomic Interventions	9. Promotion of traditional crops cultivation for sustainable food security
	10. Compost and vermi-compost making and its application for fertility management
	11. Seed treatment
Agroforestry	12. Exposure and training on sustainable agriculture
	13. Distribution of bamboo saplings
Input Support System	14. Distribution of mango plants
	15. Strengthening of Baiga Panchayat Fund
Local Self-Governance	16. Strengthening of gram sabha
	17. Voters awareness campaign
	18. Preparing women to participate in panchayat processes
Integration of Human Development	19. Monitoring of PRIs functioning
	20. Enrollment drive for out-of-school children
	21. Support to mitanin (female health volunteers) program
	22. Participation in promoting govt. schemes

Except few activities like forestry plantation all the interventions have logical relevance in given conditions of field. The yearly sequence of the activities is also justified. For example, the women empowerment process was not started in the first year, rather it received momentum in the 3rd year. This had been done keeping in view the situations of the communities and suitability of timings of the intervention.

6.4 Small Changes, Big Impacts

In social transformation, the 'figures' are meaningless. It is the 'process', which determines the qualitative change. Gramodaya Kendra has ever worked for changing the values, for removing the inertia of rural society and for infusing 'organic fabric' among the communities.

It was (and is) really difficult to move the stone: particularly moving Baiga from point 'A' to point 'B'. Today Baiga have undergone the process of change. Those who still resist are in dilemma of 'which way they should go'. Dilemma opens the gates of progress. Gond community too had no less resistance. They have today accepted Gramodaya Kendra as part and parcel of their community life.

The most difficult for Gramodaya Kendra was to organize the women, and to prefer Baiga to Gonds. Gonds were offensive from both the angles. Gradually, the situation came into control. Women who could not participate in village meeting today not only participate panchayat meetings but also speak about gender inequity. Gramodaya Kendra does not claim that women have become leaders but they have at least started coming out of 'ghoonghat' (the veil).

Changes are visible in farmlands, in crop harvests, in agronomic practices, in application of agro-technologies, in village meetings, and in women assemblies. Till 2003, the people were suspicious whether farm bunding could hinder the maize growth. By end of 2005, majority of farmers wishes to make bunds on farmlands. Dung is properly managed now. Baiga now perceive their discreet houses as obstacle in coming closer. Realization among Baiga of changing environment and challenge of their survival is dawn of conscience. The biggest change has happened in Batipathra where Gonds have accepted Baiga, and Baiga have assimilated traits of Gonds. Divide line between the two communities is shrinking.

Interventions made to reform the governance system in the villages brought about interesting impacts. The effect of IEC material, intensive gram sabha strengthening and education of voters and women became visible in the form of: proper meetings of gram sabha, proper delivery of intimation to people, increased participation of women in the meetings, raising of questions, completion of quorum of meetings, awakening of panches, and preparation of proper proposals and moving forward. A process of big change has initiated in the villages.

Physical Achievements

- Baiga organized under Baiga Raj Panchayat
- Baiga Raj Panchayat has Rs. 72756 in fund
- 465 women have organized and formed 29 women saving groups with fund of Rs. 93000.
- Farm bunding is done on 164.43 acres lands, which not only reduced soil erosion but also caused increase in production
- 453 farmers have built compost pits
- 48 farmers have built 96 vermi-compost structure
- Women have started taking part in each meeting and activity

6.5 Inclusive Strategy

On understanding the conditions of area and people, it became clear to the organization that it was the Baiga community with whom development action was needed. Seeing the pathetic condition of Baiga, Gramodaya Kendra started action and focused on Baiga. Very soon the organization realized that merely including Baiga in development focus started irritating Gonds. They started perceiving the organization as another enemy. Situation became tensed. After smelling the odour of hate Gramodaya Kendra quickly revised the strategy --- no development of Baiga was possible without including Gonds in the process. Gonds have regularly been counseled that Baiga require intensive focus, as they are much backward in comparison to Gonds.

Moreover, concentrating on “land-based” economic development is mandatory but the interventions should be diverse. Integration of social reform, political empowerment, human development and knowledge exchange are critical components of the development action today.

Strategy was incomplete if women were not included. But this was also the strategy to include them in later stage of project cycle. Decisions to initiate women empowerment later were taken noticing the gender structure of the society.

Apart from above general strategy, Gramodaya Kendra formulated 3 separate policies, namely adivasi policy, women policy and agriculture policy, to maintain efficacy in the development action. Field staff follows the policies in their micro-planning and approach of pursuing action.

6.6 Community Sensitive Approach

As has been mentioned before, Gramodaya Kendra never imposed an activity on the people. Always ideas/ suggestions are put before the people who then take decisions. For instance, Gramodaya Kendra suggested that farm bunding is essential to develop the lands. Benefits of bunding were also explained. Although farm bunding is common in Chhattisgarh plains, they had not seen the farm bunding ever before. So majority of farmers refused to do farm bunding. Their argument was that it might retard the growth of maize. Gramodaya Kendra was not adamant at all to bund the lands. As the time passed by several farmers were taken on exposure to Lanji, Balaghat. They saw the farm bunding apart from many other agro-practices. On returning back they did farm bunding on their lands. In second and third year, the Gonds have more or less understood the urgency of farm bunding. They now demand support of organization in constructing bunds on their lands.

It is still not the case that farm bunding has become universal in the area. Not all Gond farmers have realized the need of bunds as yet. Gramodaya Kendra does not force them to do. Similarly, the time of activity is also not fixed. It all depends on the people when they are prepared to take up the activity. For farm bunding the organization sought it to be done in 2nd year in good size of area, while it could happen only in 3rd year. Taking case of Baiga, the idea of farm bunding largely failed on their lands. Baiga in fact construct the same farm bunds on lands of Gonds, but does not repeat on his own lands. Working for Gonds he gets wage labor. The same is the provision in the project. Even then he doesn't like to construct farm bunds on own land. Only several Baiga farmers have taken up farm bunding during 2005-06 in Chhindpur, Batipathra, etc. So Gramodaya Kendra believes that Baiga have now becoming prepared to adopt the activity.

Organization's approach is always people-sensitive. In the annual plan, a set of activities is proposed. But not necessarily all activities are done. Only those activities are pursued for which the communities are assessed to be ready. For the activity the people are seemed not ready is either postponed or eliminated. Here it does not mean that organization's mobilization or outreach is somehow faulty or ineffective. Actually, the organization analyses the conditions/ situations under which the people are seemed reluctant to carry on certain activity. If the activity does not suit at all or its timing is incompatible the organization withholds it. This is how Gramodaya Kendra differs from

government (whose interventions generally fail due to rigidity in procedures, approach, etc.) and many NGOs (who favor target achievements under donor-driven agenda). For the activities, which are turned down or delayed, the budget remained unspent, and it is well reflected so in project accounts.

Women empowerment process was not deliberately taken up till onset of 3rd year, as the community was not prepared. “Community-Sensitive Approach” is further relevant when it comes to changing the behavior of Baiga people. So far in about half-a-century the government has spent at least a thousand million rupees on Baiga. Despite that the Baiga still cuts the trees to make lands and after few years migrates to other place and repeats the process. Baiga is still most vulnerable, hunger-prone and underdeveloped. It is because “Baiga needs different approach to be changed, which government lacks. Universalized strategies and approaches cannot work in case of Baiga. Even in transforming efforts one cannot move fast taking Baiga along. Baiga is distinct primitive community that requires change agency (any GO or NGO) to have patience, tolerance, flexibility, commitment and willingness”. With Baiga particularly, Gramodaya Kendra moved one step ahead, but soon had to move back, then retook the step with altered path line. So changing, revising, rescheduling and remodeling the approaches to pursue an activity with Baiga has been the phenomenon of the day. It is Gramodaya Kendra that endured all this for the sake of making Baiga self-reliant, dignified community.

6.7 Team and Competence

Gramodaya Kendra has small team of 10 persons who are dedicated to bring social change in rural society they are working with. Some details of the team members are highlighted as below:

Name	Sex	Age	Category	Education	Designation	How Old in Organization
Kashi Ram Verma	M	54	OBC	BA	Project Coordinator	17
Mohan Kokode	M	45	ST	Matric	Supervisor	15
Amar Das Mankar	M	36	ST	Matric	Sr. Field Worker	8
Rekha Vaidya	F	27	SC	MA	Field Worker	5
Ramkali Sonwani	F	23	ST	+2	Field Worker	3
Maya Manikpuri	F	22	OBC	BA	Field Worker	2
Udeshwar Dharne	M	32	ST	+2	Sr. Field Worker	7
Udai Sahu	M	28	OBC	Matric	Field Worker	5
Beepath Dhruve	F	22	ST	BA	Field Worker	2
Radheshyam Dandre	M	34	OBC	MA	Accountant-cum-Computer Operator	3

Most important fact has been that the field personnel belong to same social profile and family backgrounds that they are working for. They are not at all different from local Gonds or Baiga. The educated tribal, backward and poor youths living in the villages were identified and promoted to act as field personnel. They got training in the organizational environment and grew up as to handle social change. Positive factor with these field personnel is that they understand, feel and sense the pain, pleasure, anxieties, dialects and processes that exist undercurrent in the rural society. The tribe can feel the tribe better. Farmer can know farmer better.

As far as the professional competence is concerned the field personnel do not have any professional degree. But they are often superior to the degree holders in the sense that

they have come up from churning process of field learning. With the fellow personnel the new entrant starts work in the field and goes on to learn, relate, imagine, conceptualize, plan, implement, monitor and report. The villages/communities is their school where they test, experiment and succeed. Out of field, they assemble together every month in head office and exchange the learning, problems, proceedings, plans, etc.

Almost all the field personnel have got exposure to similar development interventions in other areas/states. On return they try to apply the learning in the field. Moreover, majority of field personnel has received various training and exposure outside, which are enlisted as below:

2003

Training	BPL Survey	Kashi Ram Verma
	PME	All personnel
	Vision Mission	All personnel
	PRA	7 personnel
	Role & Responsibility	8 personnel
	Herbal medicine Preparation	8 personnel
Exposure	Integrated Rural Development	4 personnel
	Cooperative System	Kashi Ram Verma
	Study of Organization & Activities	9 personnel
	Execution of Development Action	4 personnel

2004

Training	Land Demarcation & Record Mangt.	All personnel
	Role of Educated Youth in Rural Development	8 personnel
	Health Mitanin	All personnel
Exposure	Farmers Field Demonstration	Mohan Kokode, Radheshyam
	Baiga Lifestyle & Economic Development	Kashi Ram Verma, Mohan Kokode
	Women Empowerment	Udeshwar Dharne
	Knowing Govt. Functioning	4 personnel
	Rural Development Works	5 personnel

2005

Training	Gender issues	Rekha Vaidya, Ramkali Sonwani
	Role of Media on People's Issues	Ramkali, Mohan Singh
	Project Planning & Management	Mohan Kokode, Udeshwar Dharne
	Proposal Writing	Kashi Ram Verma
	Computer Graphic	Radheshyam
	Documentation	Radheshyam
	Self Monitoring	All personnel
	Organizing, Development and Fund management	All personnel
	Right to Information	Mohan Kokode

7 SCOPE AND STRATEGY FOR FUTURE ACTION

7.1 Scope for Future Action

Based on the broad understanding and considering the technical and managerial capability of the organization, the scope for development action in the given clusters of villages is in the following fields and sub-fields.

LIVELIHOOD SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT

- Agriculture based livelihoods
- Horticulture development
- Off-farm livelihood resources development
 - NTFPs*
 - ✧ Marketing interventions
 - ✧ Value addition to products
- Microfinance & Income generation programs
- Advocacy on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

- Economic empowerment
- Social empowerment
- Political empowerment
- Gender mainstreaming in development action
- Gender equity (in later stage)

REFORMING GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

- Strengthening gram sabha and panchayati raj
- Training and capacity building of elected representatives
- Monitoring and facilitating governance structures in rural areas
- Right to information

HEALTH AND SANITATION

- Reproductive and child health or Maternal and child health
- Child health and nutrition
- Advocacy to strengthen health service delivery (in later stage)
- HIV/AIDS
- General health services

EDUCATION

- Strengthening elementary education system of government
- Mainstreaming out-of-school children under sarva shiksha abhiyan.

7.2 Strategy for Future Action

Seeing the scope of the development action, the analysis of the field situations, needs of the communities and capacities of the organization, strategy has been formulated to guide the future interventions. It, however, depends on the resource support Gramodaya Kendra receives from support agencies. The strategy is indicative but elaborates well how Gramodaya Kendra perceives the things and how could the organization move

ahead. However, there is plenty scope for flexibility at the part of organization, and the same flexibility is sought for.

Theme	Intervention Area	Why and What done so far?	Why and How to do?
LIVELIHOOD SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT	Agriculture based livelihoods		
	Horticulture development		
	NTFPs: Marketing interventions		
	NTFPs: Value addition to products		
	Microfinance & income generation programs		
	Advocacy on National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005		
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT	Economic empowerment		
	Social empowerment		
	Political empowerment		
	Gender mainstreaming in development action		
	Gender equity (in later stage)		
REFORMING GOVERNANCE SYSTEM	Strengthening gram sabha and panchayati raj		
	Training and capacity building of elected representatives		
	Monitoring and facilitating governance structures in rural areas		
	Right to information		
HEALTH AND SANITATION	Reproductive and child health or Maternal and child health		
	Child health and nutrition		

	HIV/AIDS		
	General health services		
	Advocacy to strengthen health service delivery (in later stage)		
EDUCATION	Strengthening elementary education system of government		
	Mainstreaming out-of-school children under sarva shiksha abhiyan		