

Global South Media Briefing, CSE, New Delhi
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Communities and Conservation

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Kalpavriksh



United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP14)

**Strategies to Reversing land degradation
and its outcomes while accelerating
positive achievements for people and for
ecosystems**



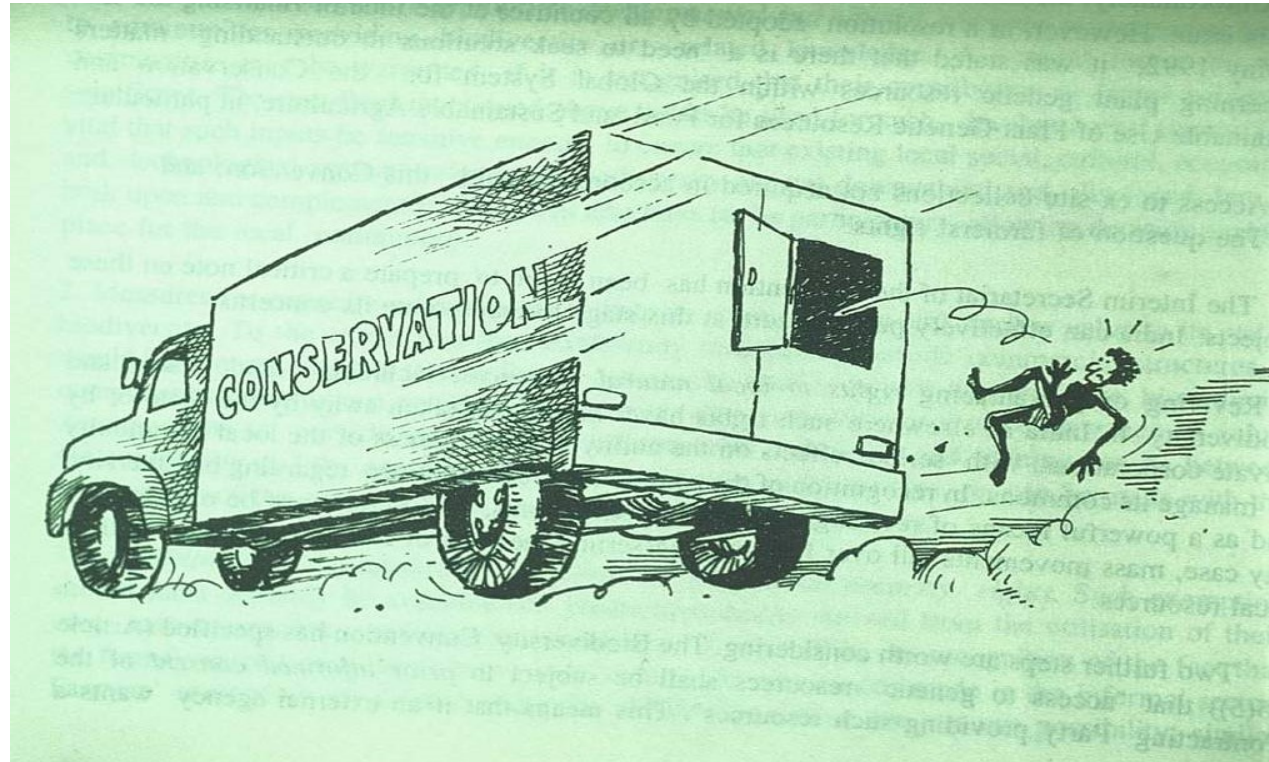
Countries with colonial legacy do this by stringent conservation and forest laws and policies by creating national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, wildlife corridors and tiger reserves.

- Over 700 protected areas, almost 5% of India's land
- All Exclusively managed by the Forest Department under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment and Forests



Natural Resource governance

Near complete annihilation of customary use, access and governance rights of the local communities whose lands and territories are taken over for exclusive conservation measures



Conservation based evictions and displacement involving human rights violations....



Ambadiha relocation site (from Simlipal TR)



Family moving from Tadoba TR, 2012

- 56,247 Families from 751 villages in 50 Tiger Reserves in India evicted since 1972.
- 12,327 families in 173 villages could be ‘relocated/resettled’
- 44, 000 (app 220,000 people) evicted without any relocation

National Tiger Conservation Authority of India

Laws are getting more stringent and exclusionary ..more evictions..

- **This form of fortress based approach to conserve and protect ecosystems and habitats has been widely criticized not just for the human rights violations but also for counter-productive towards the goal of achieving conservation.**

**Global Research shows ...while
number of PAs is increasing
biodiversity and wildlife population
is on the decline the world over**

- Global Environment Outlook Report 5

IPCC Report on Climate Change and Land released in 2019

Recognizes that Indigenous Peoples and local communities play a crucial role in preserving ecosystems and preventing deforestation and that recognizing their rights is vital to combating climate change

The Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) report released in 2019

- 1000,000 or over 1 million species are currently threatened with extinction
- “Recognition of the knowledge, innovations and practices, institutions and values of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.... enhances nature conservation, restoration and sustainable use”.
- Further add that their land tenure, access and resource rights, and application of free, prior and informed consent, need to be recognised.

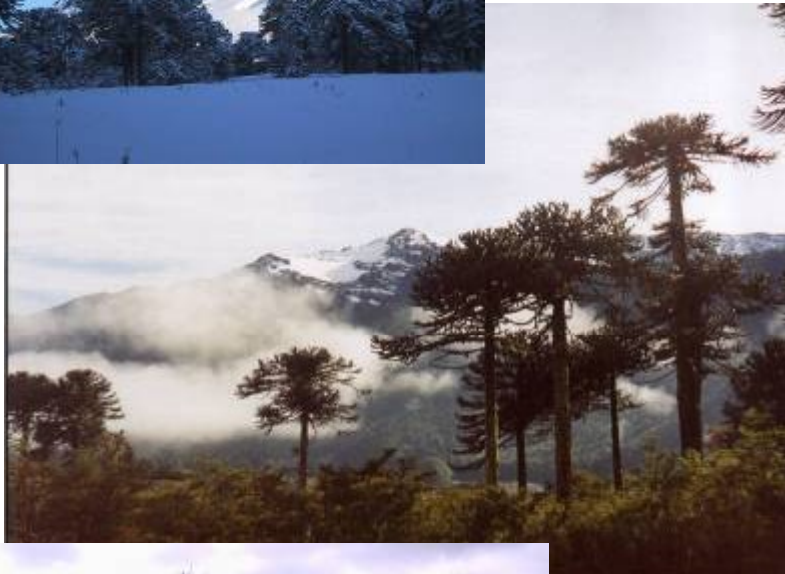


- Far from being careless users, indigenous peoples and local communities **maintain, locally enrich, and restore biodiversity** by following traditional and modern knowledge systems and developing sustainable harvest and restoration techniques....

- **Globally Indigenous Peoples are now reduced to 20% of the geographical area which is under their legal or de facto control and management. This area contains 80% of global biological and cultural diversity**

Forests of *Araucaria araucana* of the Mapuche Pewenche, Chile

... the life support system (food, housing, shelter, income, spiritual and cultural nourishment) of an entire people...



Guassa Community Conserved Area (Afro-alpine ecosystem, Central Ethiopia)



- 100 sq km conserved and protected by the local pastoralist community since at least 17th century
- Managed by “Guassa Conservation Council”
- Through many stringent self rules and regulations
- Resulting in protecting in addition to the Guassa grass and other rare alpine flora Ethiopian wolf (*Canis simensis*) gelada baboons (*Theropithecus gelada*)



Kawawana – new (but ancient) patrimony of the Mangangoulak Rural Community, Casamance (Sénégal)

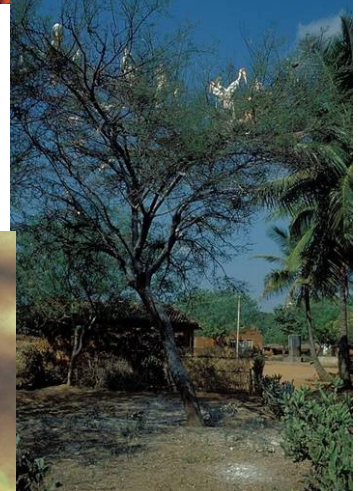
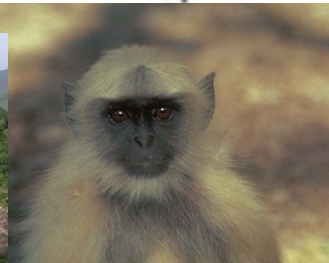
...community-declared conserved area, community-developed management plan & detailed zoning, integrated traditional and “scientific” knowledge, volunteer activities, use rules, surveillance, current struggle to get recognition and approval by the state...



Territories and Areas Conserved by Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities— ICCAs

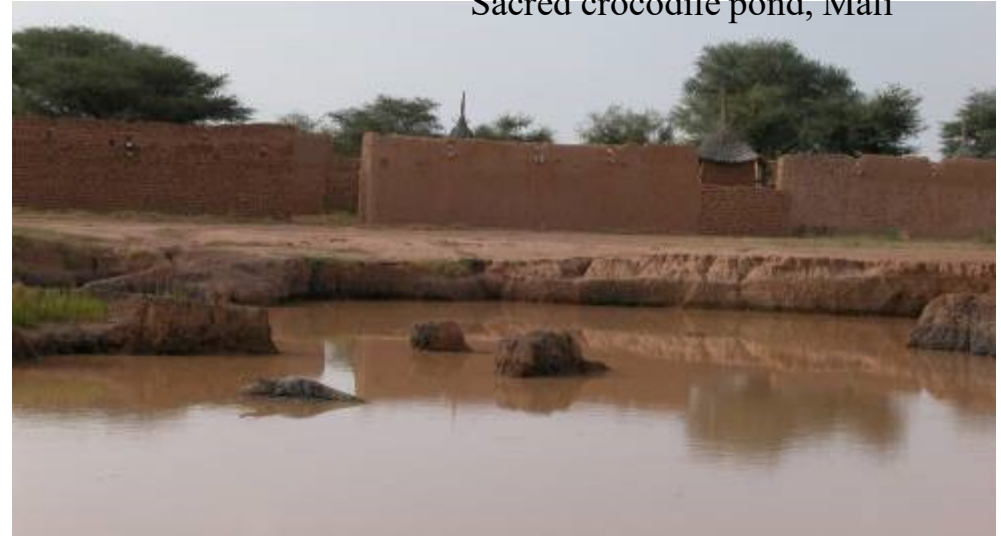


A huge diversity of CCAs with hundreds of different expressions of conservation all deeply ingrained in the social, cultural, spiritual and economic fabric



sacred and cultural spaces & landscapes

Sacred crocodile pond, Mali



Chizire sacred forest,
Zimbabwe



Forole sacred
mountain
Borana/ Gabbra
Ethiopia/ Kenya



Sacred lake, Indian Himalaya

List of Sacred Groves of India

State	Local term for Sacred Groves	Number of Sacred Groves
Andhra Pradesh	Pavithravana	580
Arunachal Pradesh	Gumpa Forests (Buddhist monasteries)	101
Goa	Deorai, Pann	55
Jharkhand	Sarana	29
Karnataka	Devara Kadu	1531
Kerala	Kavu, Sara Kavu	299
Maharashtra	Devrai, Devrahati, Devgudi	2820
Manipur	Gamkhap, Mauhak (Sacred bamboo Reserve)	166
Meghalay	Ki Law Lyngdoh, Ki Law Kyntang, Ki Law Niam	101
Orissa	Jahera, Thukuramma	169
Puducherry	Kovil Kadu	108
Rajasthan	Orans, Kenkris, Jogmaya	560
Tamil Nadu	Swwami shoal, Koikadu	752
Uttarakhand	Deo Bhumi, Bugyal (Sacred Alpine Meadows)	22
West Bengal	Garamthan, Harithan, Jahera, Sabitrithan, Santalburithan	39
Total		7332

Orans (The sacred forests and grasslands) in Rajasthan



- In Rajasthan - 25,000 Orans
- 1100 major Orans -1,00,000 hectares
- In Thar Desert -5,370 sq km
- Area-varied from 10 to 25000 hectares
- The biggest is Bhadaria, 25000 ha, Kundala- 7500, Bankal Devi- 4600 ha,
- Kanri Mata -200 ha, refuge for rodents
- Sariska is collection of about a 12 Orans / Devbanis that together formed a substantial forest tract
- 7.5 millions pastoralists in Raj. who direct indirectly depends on Orans . 54.4 million livestock, out of which

Most Orans **Protect watersheds** and **water sources** that harbour **springs**, **aquifers** and ground water storage, watering and resting place for wildlife and livestock



Most Orans have sources of water, either small springs and rivulets running through them or a variety of ponds e.g. *johad* and *nadis*, *tank*, *baori*, *well*, *tanka*, *kund* etc and *nadis* in their midst.

Important for sustenance and livelihoods

Community forests in Orissa
(over 10,000!)



Nayagarh Federation of 180 community
forestry villages, Orissa



Dangejheri,
Orissa - All
women's
forest
protection
committee



Van Panchayats and self-initiated community forests, Uttarakhand



12,000 VPs (12-13% of state forests)

Unsung Heroes-In the massive forest fires of 2017, at least 5 people from Van Panchayats lost their lives trying to protect their restored forests



Forests in the North east.....



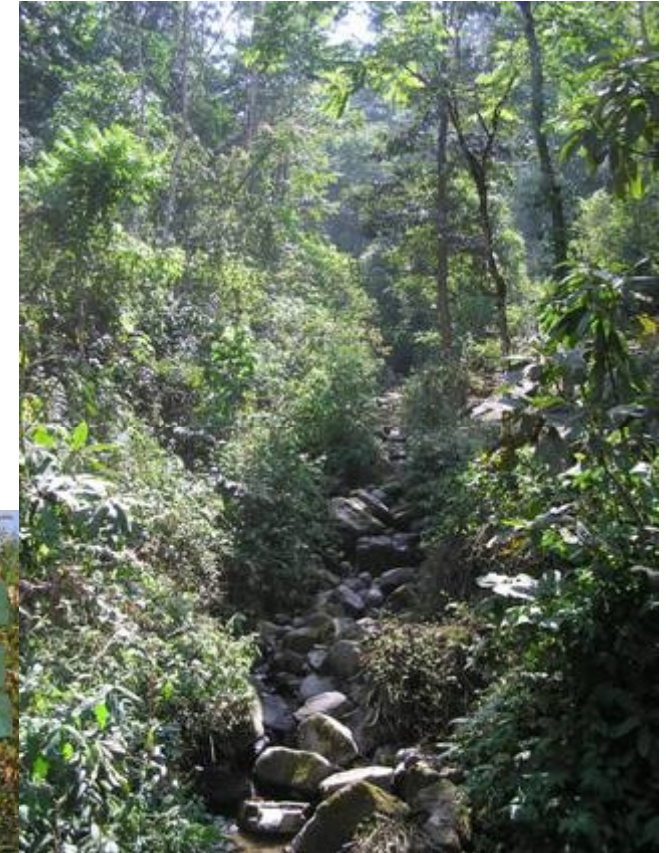
Known for Love for
hunting and love for
meat!

Over 700 villages have declared forest and wildlife reserves in Nagaland on their traditional territories



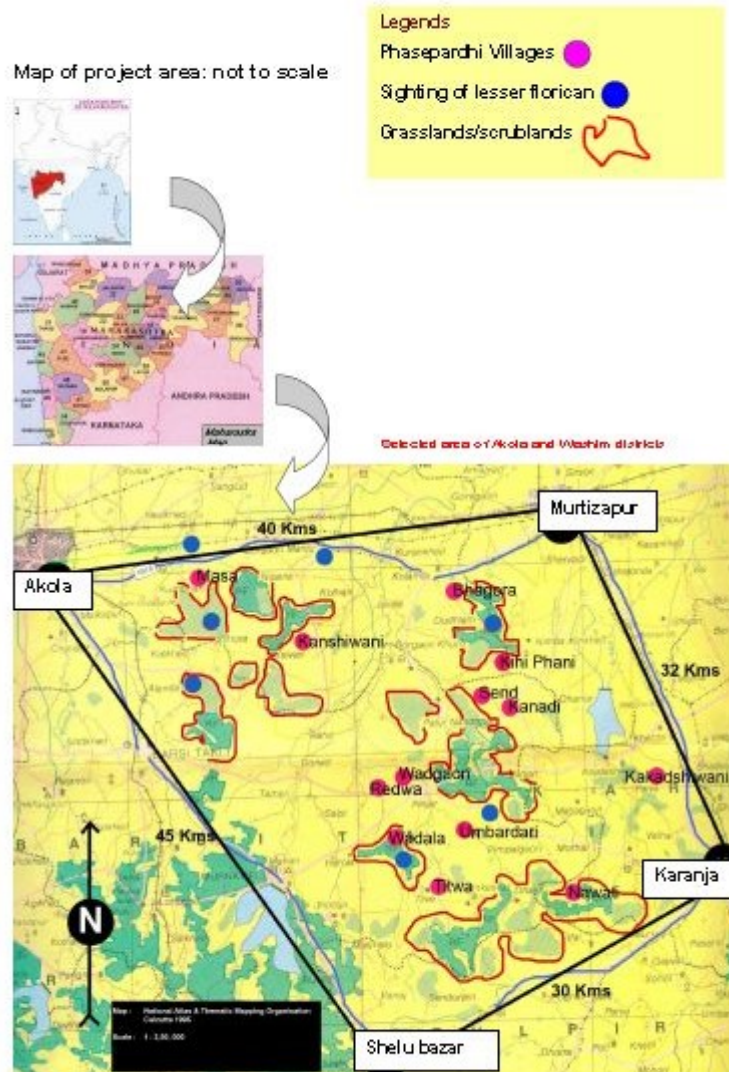
Luzaphuhu WL
reserve

Sendenyu WL reserve,
with its own “Wild Life
Protection Act”



Forest reserve
of Chizami and
5 villages

Restoration of degraded grasslands and protection of the endangered grassland bird species “lesser florican” by the Phase Pardhis community in Washim district of Maharashtra



Through “Tandapanchayat” and Biodiversity management committee formed under the BD act 2002





Defending the lands and landscapes from destruction.....

Over 15,00,000 ha of primary forests officially diverted since 1983 including for development projects like dams, mines, industries....





Resisting degradation of forests because of commercial logging and monoculture plantations

Baiga chak (Madhya Pradesh): struggling for a biodiverse forest to ensure food security



threats & challenges



- **‘Development’ -- mining and fossil fuel extraction**, logging, tree plantation, industrial fishing, sea dredging, large-scale grazing, agriculture, water diversions and drainage, urbanisation, major infrastructure (roads, ports, airports, mass tourism...)
- **Expropriation of community land** (nationalisation, privatisation, state-governed protected areas...)
- Land encroachment and unauthorised resource extractions (poaching, stealing...)
- Active acculturation of ICCA communities (formal education, evangelisation, publicity ...)
- War, violent conflicts and movements of refugees
- Inappropriate recognition by governments
- Taxes and other unbearable fiscal burdens
- Divisions and conflicts created by political parties & projects
- Air and water pollution; invasive species
- **Climate change** (natural disasters, sea level rise...)

ICCA Need



- **Formal recognition of land, water, and natural resource rights**
- **Recognition and respect for the organisations governing ICCAs**
- **Protection against encroachment from outside and imposed 'development' initiatives**
- Support to engage and inspire the community youth
- Support to generate livelihoods
- Support to meet the conservation challenges of the ICCA
- Support for organising and networking

**Scheduled Tribes and Other
Forest Dwellers (Recognition of
Forest Rights) Act 2006**

or

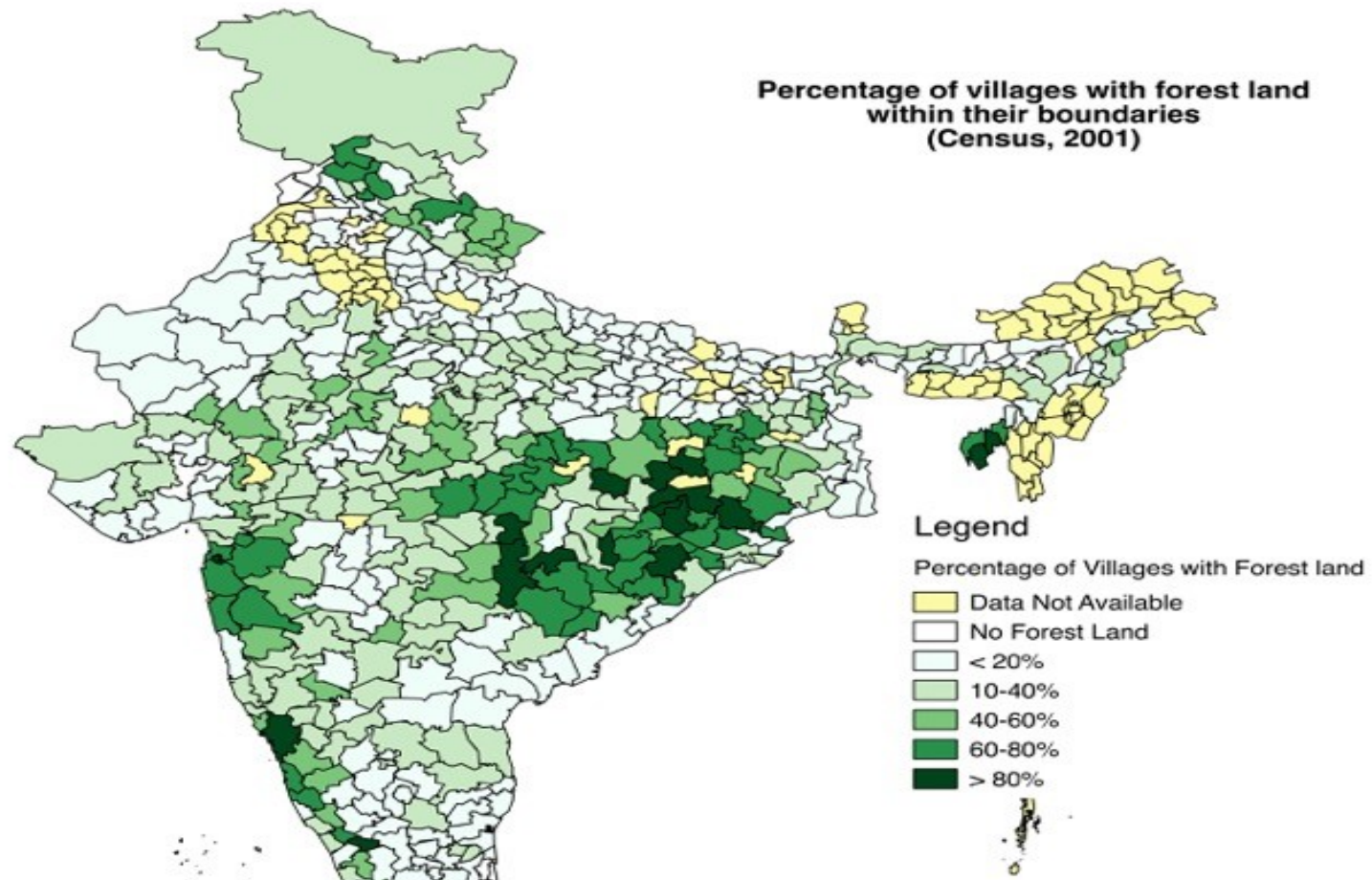
Forest Rights Act in India (FRA)

SIGNIFICANCE OF COMMUNITY FOREST RIGHTS

Confers Community Forest Resource (CFR) Right over customary forest

To protect, regenerate, conserve or manage community forest resource by formation of a village level committees for protection of wildlife and habitat

Empowers local communities to protect their habitat from any destructive practice affecting cultural and natural heritage and hence their Free Prior Informed Consent is needed before any forests can be diverted for non forestry purposes



Potential (minimum) for recognition of min 32 mha of forest land (> 50% of India's forest lands)

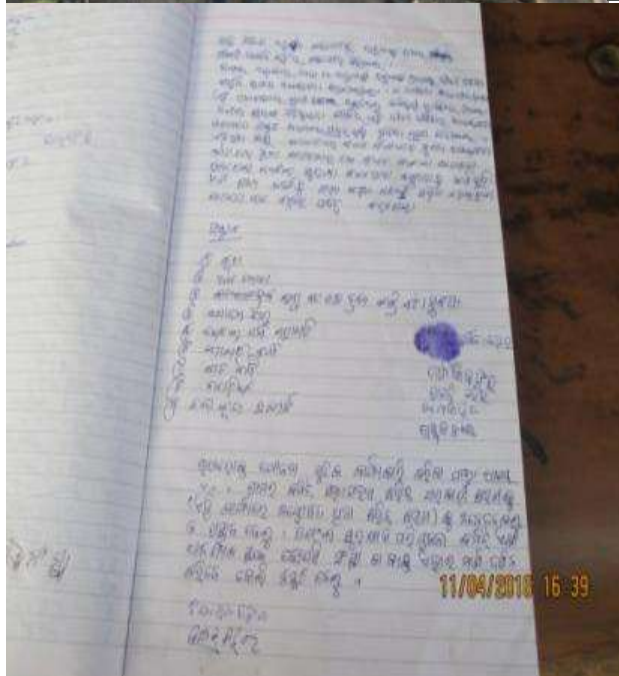
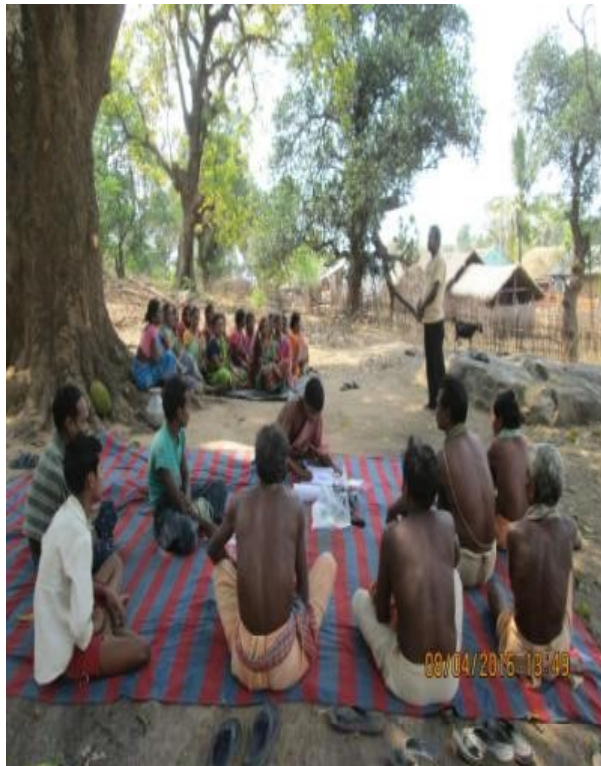
- Impacting >200 million people forest dependent people
- Little over 3% of this potential had been realised till 2016

Governance and management of community forest resources



Restored sense of belonging is leading to local communities in many states taking up CFR management based on adaptive practices and local knowledge

Empowered to drafting their own strategies and plans, local management plans include elements of sustainable use, food security, restoration of degraded areas, complete protection of wildlife



Maharashtra

Highest number of Community rights recognised; harvesting of NTFP such as Bamboo has generated huge opportunity to strengthen livelihoods, local forest based economy and employment, and ecological restoration



FRA - Facilitating progression from de facto to de jure

1800ha of forests conserved by the Gond tribe of Mendha-Lekha, Gadchiroli, Maharashtra for three decades



Recognising tribal self-rule and conservation



All decisions in *gram sabha* (village assembly); no activity even by government officials without sabha consent



Informed decisions through monitoring, and regular study circles (*abhyas gat*)

Filed claim in 2009. Amongst 1st in the country to receive title in 2010 over 1800ha



- **After struggle, GS claimed right to transit permit; has traded bamboo worth >Rs. 10 million during 2010-12. Paying VAT to the government**
- **Forest planning process initiated (10% area for wildlife)**
- **Economically independent**
- **Politically independent**
- **Providing income to surrounding villagers**

De facto self –rule now legally backed

Gadchiroli District in Maharashtra

- Nearly 38% of total forest area in Gadchiroli district in Maharashtra is under community ownership and governance now as CFRs
- Village federations are emerging in almost all talukas in the district
- Models of sustainable harvest and ecological restoration are emerging

Federations of village communities towards strengthening conservation and sustainable livelihoods in Korchi

- 90 villages after receiving their CFR rights have come to form a federation
- Share experiences, learn from each other and support each other.
- Counter the market forces and unfair trade practices.
- Supporting struggles for self-determination and self-governance
- Reviving collective cultural activities to revisit lost traditions and reconnect with local histories and traditional knowledge
- Establishing forest conservation rules and regulations for all its member organisations





Sustainable harvest and trade of bamboo and other forest produce to ensure human wellbeing

Restoring and afforesting the degraded patches within their traditional forests to ensure ecological wellbeing



Pachgaon village, Chandrapur dist., Maharashtra

- Pachgaon village received title for Community Forest Resource (CFR) rights in 2012
- Total area 1006.416 ha or 2486.90 ac
- Sustainable harvest of bamboo and restoration of habitat.
- Between 2013-17 the village had earned a total of Rs. 1.46 crore
- Since 2012, distress out migration has reduced to zero. The sightings of wild animals, including the tiger, has also increased.



Bamboo clumps found abundantly in the forest of Pachgaon. Courtesy: Sneha Gutgutia

- **Village Governance, Forest Management and Rules**
 - The village takes all the decisions in the *gram sabha* by consensus of the majority
 - Village gram sabha has made and is following over 115 rules and regulations
 - A register is maintained to record minutes of every *gram sabha*
 - Men patrol the forest everyday
 - Women help in controlling forest fires and negotiating with violators
 - 85 acres left completely untouched as a sacred grove
 - Regulated and rotational grazing



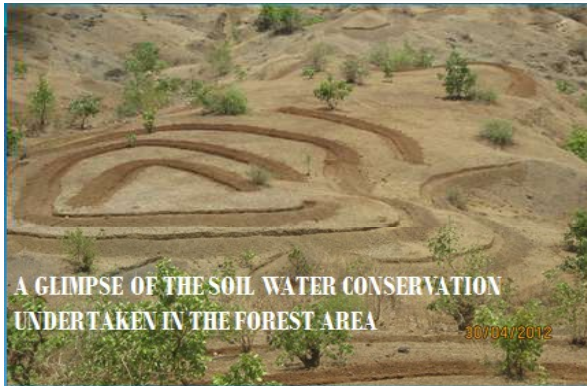
Villagers during patrol duty .Courtesy: Sneha Gutgutia



Tiger paw print seen in the devrai. Courtesy: Sneha Gutgutia

Payvihir village, Melghat

The Discussion on Community Forest Rights under Forest Rights Act brought the Community together to discuss the forest issues and their traditional relationship..it was a realization of what we had saved and what we lost...



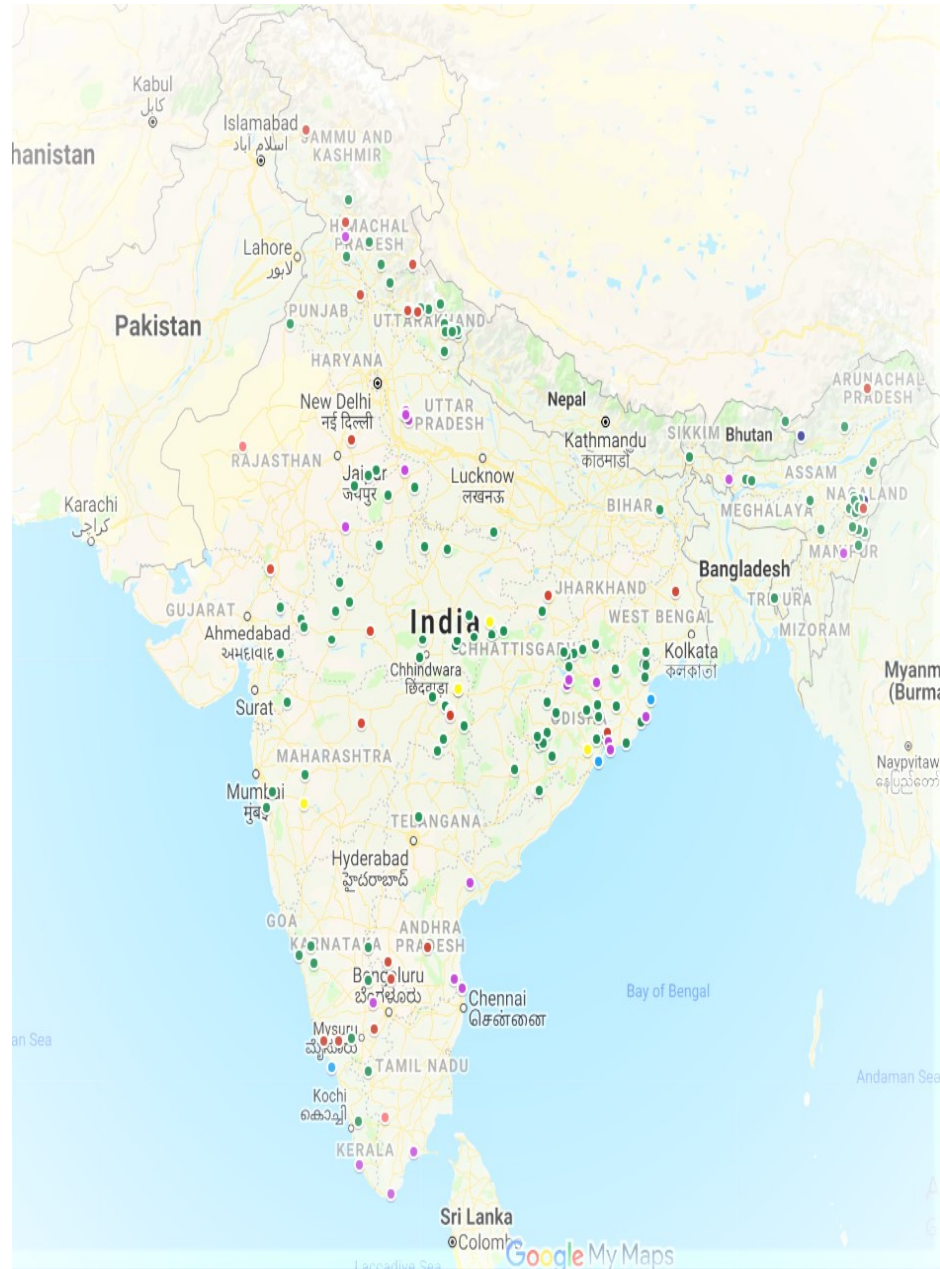
- 109 ha of reserve forest land claimed and regenerated as CFR
- Village planning; forest protection through patrolling;
- Fire prevention, 50, 000 trees planted , check dams built under NREGA and 2000 planted under Shram Dan, through convergence of government schemes
- Earned Rs. 3 lakhs from sale of sitafal, out migration controlled
- keep accounts, prepare estimates of check dams, identify root stock and do singling for natural regeneration.



Restored habitat and
return of wildlife in
Payvahir

Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Sanctuary & Tiger Reserve –Drafting plan for non timber based forest produce and also **Redefining Tiger Conservation** based on traditional knowledge





For More Information
www.iccaconsortium.org
And
www.kalpavriksh.org

GIS based map of CCAs in
India. www.kalpavriksh.org

Expected from UNCCD

- **The UNCCD's Conferences of the Parties (COP) when identifying gaps in their strategic and effective land use and sustainable land management goals recognise:**
- **Local communities and indigenous peoples roles in arresting biodiversity decline and restoring ecosystems**
- **Provide for recognition of their rights to use, conserve, manage and govern their areas and territories**
- **Where national laws like the FRA have been enacted asks for their effective and immediate implementation**

Thanks You!!

This presentation would not be possible without :
Local Community members from Mendha-Lekha;
Yaval wildlife sanctuary; Nayakheda; Payviheer;
Kalu Dam area; Ghati gaon and many others
Kalpavriksh members Ashish Kothari; Shiba
Desor; Meenal Tatpati; Milind Wani; Pradeep
Chavan, Sneha Gulgutia, Tanya Majmudar, others
Civil society actors: Khoj, VNCS, Lok Sangharsha
Morcha, Shramik Sangharsha Sangathana,
Vrikshamitra, Amhi Amchi Arogyasaathi,
Samvedna, Amand Singh KRAPAVIS, TISS
Mumbai, ATREE, AIFFM, CFRLA and many
others

CSE for the opportunity to present