

# **Indigenous and tribal communities, biodiversity conservation and the Global Environment Facility in India**

**General overview and a case study of people's perspectives of  
the India Ecodevelopment Project**

*A Report*

*Study team:*

*P. Devullu*

*Mithun Raj*

*K. Bhanumathi*

*Satish Kumar*

*Anjoli Bandhopadhyay*

*On behalf of:*

*Samata*

**No. 8-2-590, Road No. 1, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad 500034, AP, India**

**Tel: 55637974, Telefax: 91-40-23352488**

**Email: [Samatha@satyam.net.in](mailto:Samatha@satyam.net.in)**

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# **Indigenous and tribal communities, biodiversity conservation and the Global Environment Facility in India**

## **General overview and a case study of people's perspectives of the India Ecodevelopment Project**

### **Executive Summary of Study findings:**

1. The majority (56%) of the population affected by the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEDP) financed by the GEF and World Bank were tribal communities. Yet, there was no programmatic or conceptual focus on indigenous (tribal) people's issues. The project concept is based on a very conservative framework of forestry and not as a symbiotic eco-system understanding where natural habitats in India cannot alienate the human-animal-forest interdependence, which is most distinctly important with regard to tribal people. Hence, the project is basically flawed as its primary effort is to alienate this interdependence by creating artificial, alien and short term resource and livelihood systems for the tribal people and distance them from this eco-system. It can never be a successful model in sustainable forest management in India.
2. The project has clearly violated the World Bank Operational Directives with regard to indigenous peoples as displacement and relocation of tribal communities took place in many of the EDCs either prior to the GEF-World Bank-assisted project or during. In some places, the project tried to provide alternate economic means of livelihood, but failed to a large extent. The tribal people have been forced to shift their entire livelihood pattern from being pastoralists to agriculturists, which has led to further impoverishment. The project has not made any substantial improvement in the tribal economy and in many places impoverished them further.
3. The project simply ignored the legal cases filed by the project affected people especially in Gir and has equally ignored the social conflicts as a result of relocation. There has been no fund allocation for rehabilitation of tribals, in its true sense apart from nominal household facilities which cannot be termed as rehabilitation. Hence, projects like the GEF-assisted IEP cannot rehabilitate tribal communities in a responsible way and hence should not tamper with tribal communities and their livelihoods in the name of protecting wildlife and 'reducing poverty'. These interventions only create development and conservation project refugees of the twenty-first century.
4. The project has proved that there is no accountability towards the tribal communities when it comes to relocation and there are no legal mechanisms for the tribal people to challenge the non-implementation or poor implementation of rehabilitation, the denial of livelihood opportunities or the right to object to relocation.
5. The project has created greater inequities between the tribal and non tribal populations locally as most of the material benefits or livelihood development programmes of the project were grabbed by the non tribals or were passed on to them by the tribals due to the latter's inability to use them.
6. Such projects attack local communities aggressively while the larger encroachers and forest destroyers like mining, tourism and other industries are left unhindered. Hence, these are market influenced conservation projects and not people-oriented.
7. Project created protected area monitoring mechanisms left to implementation by highly corrupt wings of the government like forest departments, are not sustainable. The monitoring and management of PAs end with the closure of the project cycle. Such projects only create temporary financial in-flows into the department leading to highly wasteful expenditure and create hierarchies of corruption right down to the tribal hamlet where they did not exist before. Sustainability is dependent on extension from one project to another as is seen here also.
8. There has been no involvement or participation or decision-making of tribal communities or of civil society groups in this project beyond a superficial level. Such consultations are very subjective and community/public responses can be easily manipulated to serve project interests. In the case studies

conducted, most of the tribal people expressed ignorance of project details. Where they were aware, they were mostly complaints, the redressal of which had no mechanisms built into the project for the tribal people.

9. There have been no critical inputs that can be learnt from the external evaluation at the end of the project as is seen in the project performance assessment report commissioned by MoEF. Such evaluations do not highlight or address the basic issues of tribal communities and tend to overlook or play down mistakes.
10. The project has succeeded in preventing the tribal people from accessing the PA resources for firewood, fodder, collection of NTFP and even medicinal herbs thereby destroying their traditional livelihood systems as well as knowledge systems. These have been projected as achievements in the project performance report whereas these would be viewed as serious violation of rights from an indigenous perspective.
11. The project has not built any institutional systems among the tribal communities in the PAs to protect, manage or exercise control/decision making over them, except, to a small degree, in Periyar. Centuries of traditional forest management systems of the tribal people have been eroded and replaced by project-based institutions like the Ecodevelopment Committee (EDC), which began and ended in most villages over a short period. There are no sustainable future plans built into the project to carry it forward.
12. With regard to tribal women, the project could only design superficial programmes like tailoring programmes or self help groups which are not their basic needs. Tribal women have neither been aware of the project in many places nor have benefited by the project directly. Other than the case of Periyar, their involvement in the project has been totally marginal.
13. The focus and energy of the project was on providing development incentives which were woolly, short term and do not have any sustainable future. Huge amounts of project funds were used and misused for household items, futile economic schemes, ill-implemented infrastructure activities and the like. It neither has any impact on the goal of protecting the biodiversity nor has it fulfilled the development or livelihood needs of the communities. Moreover, such programmes overlap into existing internal development programmes and plan expenditures of central and state governments creation duplication of resources and opportunities for multiple corruption.
14. Thus projects like GEF-assisted IEP have proved that the financial implications are heavy while the positive impacts on the environment or local communities are negligible or non-existent. In many sites, IEP impacts have actually been negative, at times severely so.
15. Given the government's inclination towards this nature of projects in future, it can only be concluded that external agencies like the World Bank and GEF are succeeding in influencing the policy shifts in forestry. One of the biggest policy influences being brought in is to increase more and more areas of land and forests within State control in the name of biodiversity conservation and wildlife protection. It is taking more and more land and natural resources away from access of local communities, particularly tribal communities by projecting them as the main causes of degradation. These policy shifts are highly challengeable.
16. Thus the nature of policies being pursued by projects like the IEP are not in tandem with the spirit of the constitution as enshrined under the Fifth Schedule, the 73rd Amendment and such other Acts which reflect the social responsibility and the recognition of the symbiotic relationship between forest dwelling communities like the tribal people and the natural resources of the country. These projects are by-passing and ignoring the norms under these laws thereby influencing government agencies to disrespect the constitution.
17. These projects, even where they have majority tribal people affected, do not properly consult the concerned Tribal Welfare departments and ministries, constitutional bodies like the Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes Commission, the Tribes Advisory Councils, state Governors, the tribal

committees of the Planning Commission which are important statutory bodies which are concerned with tribal policy and programmes.

18. The government of India has not yet finalized the rules under Biodiversity Act, the NBSAP (National Biodiversity Action Plan) is yet to be finalized, the legal procedures with regard to other forestry projects like JFM, Ecodevelopment Committees, National Environment Policy, Forestry Policy, Tribal Policy are not clear and are still under consultation. Without a consensus and approval of such policy and legal issues, new proposals of GEF, World Bank and IDA are being proposed. This parallel process of interventions by external agencies is wrong and should be halted before clear legal norms emerge on such important sectors as forests, biodiversity and tribal people.
19. In the Appraisal of Major programmes as part of MoEF's 2004-5 annual report, it is stated that under the Xth Plan, it is envisaged to increase national parks, protected areas and sanctuaries in India and to bring them under a common umbrella programme called "Development of National Parks and Sanctuaries" with a budget of Rs 350 crores. The report says, "it has also been experience in implementation of GEF-funded India Ecodevelopment project that it is necessary to incorporate ecodevelopment activities in the framework of general management of National parks and sanctuaries". Some of the important objectives of this scheme are:
  - To engender the active involvement of these communities in protecting these sanctuaries and national parks and their wildlife through a well designed package of activities aimed at providing sustenance to them and mitigate their hardships.
  - To minimise conflict between these communities and protection staff.
  - Relocation and rehabilitation of the people living inside the protected areas to outside.

**It shows that the policy of PA development is going to be on a large scale in the future and will be implemented along the lines of the previous GEF Ecodevelopment project. This is a dangerous signal considering that there has not been any proper independent appraisal of the IEDP and there has not been proper consultation with Adivasi-tribal organisations nor civil society, NGOs and community groups at national and local levels.**

**It is becoming a customary practice of the World Bank to conduct hasty and brief workshops or consultations at a national level, with selective civil society groups' participation, thus making public consultation a mere mandatory and superficial process. There is no detailed WB programme, project or policy information disclosed during the workshops and being very short, completes provides no scope for detailed discussions or debates. The strategy plans are based on selective inclusion of public and civil society discussions. It is becoming dangerous for NGOs to participate in these processes as consulting selective NGOs is attributed as consulting communities and mere participation in a consultation is projected as endorsement of Bank policies and programmes. Such consultations should in no way be considered participatory appraisal and planning of these projects.**

## **1.0 Introduction and background to the present study by Samata**

### ***Scope, methodology and purpose of the study***

Samata is a social justice and advocacy organization working on tribal rights concerns in the state of Andhra Pradesh, India. Samata works closely with tribal communities to support local struggles for rights over lands, natural and forest resources, access to proper livelihood and development facilities. Since 1990 Samata has been working at a grass-roots and advocacy level on various issues, particularly, promoting and strengthening the traditional forest management cultures and practices of the tribal people, campaign against alienation of rights and right to utilization and marketing of forest produce, resolution of conflicts between State and tribals with regard to forest lands, violation of tribal communities' rights in the context of joint forest management and protection of ecological and tribal sustenance in the context of industries and development projects, especially mining and non forestry activities in the tribal areas. Samata also works at a national level on campaigning for the protection of constitutional rights and tribal policies.

Samata was invited to undertake a study to assess the situation of the people, with particular focus on the Indigenous Peoples affected by the Eco-Development Project funded by the Global Environment Facility in collaboration with the UNDP and the World Bank. The study involves documenting the overall situation of the EDC projects in the seven national parks in India and a focused study on two national parks where the project was implemented. The study is intended to analyse the extent to which the project was implemented within the World Bank and GEF policies and directives and to briefly look at national policies and legal mechanisms vis-à-vis the project.

### ***Scope***

The remit of the study is to undertake a summary review of the GEF portfolio in India and to examine briefly the impacts of the GEF's Biodiversity-related projects on tribal and local communities, with a particular focus on the India Ecodevelopment Project funded by the Global Environment Facility and the World Bank. The study was undertaken by the Samata team in January – February 24 by doing an overview of the GEF projects in the seven national parks in India and visiting two parks for detailed case studies.

### ***Methodology***

The Samata team undertook the study in January –February 2004. The case study is based on primary sources of information drawn from interviews with project-affected people in two Ecodevelopment sites and interviews and email communication with tribal and mass movement organisations affected by or familiar with the other five Ecodevelopment sites. The study is also based on communication between the Samata team and various Indian individuals and civil society organisations and activists with experience and knowledge of other GEF biodiversity projects. A number of face-to-face and telephone interviews have also been conducted with government and implementing agency staff as well as GEF and World Bank staff in India.

### ***Case Studies***

Specifically, two detailed case studies were undertaken by making field visits and having meetings with communities affected/involved in the IEP in Gir National Park, Gujarat and in Pench National Park, Madhya Pradesh. The case studies have given a wealth of information and perspectives from the people living in and around the national parks. These visits gave a good insight into the variance in the project

objectives and programmes and the actual outcomes in implementation. Also, the perceptual differences of development and livelihood needs between communities and project/government agencies have come out clearly. We have done a lot of secondary information collection and also looked at other World Bank-funded forestry projects outside the IEP to analyse the programmes and policy implications.

### **Secondary research**

Secondary research has also been conducted on the various laws and acts governing the forests and protected areas in the region and corresponding central laws and acts. Other research studies and reports of organisations and individuals on protected areas and forest issues in India have been examined. The evaluation also reviewed World Bank policies, country strategies and projects related to forests, tribals and other sectors, including the GEF project documents. Secondary research was done on the various laws and acts governing the forests and protected areas in the region and corresponding central laws and acts. This included collecting and analyzing the various laws and acts like the Wildlife Act and the Forest Act.

### **Purpose**

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this report will first and foremost provide useful information for indigenous peoples' organisations, communities and campaigners seeking reforms and improvements in GEF policy and practice so that they better respect the rights and priorities of tribal and local communities in India and elsewhere.

The main part of Section 4.0 presents the findings of two detailed case studies undertaken by making field visits in Gir National Park, Gujarat and in Pench National Park, Madhya Pradesh. Fieldwork at these two sites included visits to 6 villages and hamlets in Gir and 6 settlements in Pench. Informal interviews were conducted with local people, including women, community representatives and also some representatives of government in the village.

## **1.1 Introduction and background: Forest, conservation and protected area laws in India**

The government of India has found that its traditional methods of forestry and biodiversity conservation approach in the country have not had a very positive impact on the regeneration and protection of forests. Over the decades it has given way to certain shifts in the policy and programme designs towards forestry where regeneration of forest cover is now being conceived by making local communities inclusive partners of protection and sharing of the benefits of forests around them. The other important aspect is the recognition of the diversity of biological resources in the country and communities' traditional livelihood and social practices of management and protection as significant not only in the cultural sense, but also in administrative, management as well as economic definitions.

In India, the majority of the population depends on land and forests for their survival and livelihood, ownership and utilization of forest resources were vested with local communities or traditional governance structures until the advent of the British. The administration of the natural resources and its forest wealth in India started in 1864 by the British followed by the Indian Forest Act of 1865, which was the first attempt at legislation. With this began the shift in ownership of forests from people to the State thereby leading to the beginning of the conflict between State and communities over protection and utilization of forests. The Indian Forest Act which came into being in 1927 brought in three significant legal entities into the forest policy – the specific interpretation and legal mechanisms in defining Reserved Forests, Village Forests and Protected Forests. The concept of protected forests takes roots in this Act, giving the State government the right to declare any forest lands or waste lands not declared as reserved

forests, as protected forests and prohibit/restrict the rights of private persons on these lands. The other important section of the Act which has not been implemented is the creation of village forests assigning rights over certain reserved forests to any village-community.

The Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 is the other legal framework created for classifying certain areas as national parks and sanctuaries in order to conserve wildlife by restricting the entry of private or commercial interests. However, since the creation of this Act there have been situations where local communities' needs were curtailed causing man-animal conflict on one side, and private commercial lobbies trying to circumvent the Act in order to do mining, quarrying and other industrial activities. Many of these conflicts are also in the form of legal battles at the high court and Supreme Court levels. The Eco Development programmes in the national parks were initiated to enhance the Wildlife Protection Act and to reduce local community interference with the environment.

The Forest Conservation Act of 1980 was enacted to provide for the conservation of forests by checking the indiscriminate diversion of forest land for non forest purposes and the need for clearance from the central government for approval of diversion of forest lands. However, the 1988 National Forest Policy made a signification shift in forest policy by stating the need to consider local community interests for utilization of forest resources and for involvement of local communities in protection and regeneration of forests. To a large extent, forest laws in India have had the most serious impacts on tribal communities whose customary laws and practices have been worst affected and even the constitutional safeguards provided to them stand threatened by newer shifts in forest and other economic policies.

### ***Tribal laws and constitutional safeguards for tribal people***

India followed a policy of social protection towards the marginalized sections of the country, like the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes. The majority of the Scheduled Tribal population lives in the hilly and forest areas and their basic sustenance and livelihood are dependent on the natural and forest resources around them. The 100 million tribal population (8% of the total population of the country) is protected by the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution through legal mechanisms of ownership over lands and resources in the areas earmarked as the Scheduled Areas. These areas are spread across 8 states in the country and have corresponding state laws to protect the tribal people as enshrined in the Fifth Schedule.

**Box 1: FIFTH SCHEDULE is the constitutional safeguard for the tribal people in India** and deals with "Provisions as to the Administration and Control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes".

Fifth Schedule (Article 244(1) Part 2  
(a) prohibit or restrict the transfer of land by or among members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area;  
(b) regulate the allotment of land to members of the Scheduled Tribes in such area.

### **Box 2: PESA**

The second most significant legislative protection for the tribal people in support of the Fifth Schedule is the enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act (Act. No.40) of 1996 which is known as the Panchyats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act and came to be adopted in most of the states with scheduled areas, with corresponding laws. The Act clearly states the supremacy of the Gram Sabha (the decentralized unit of governance in the tribal areas) in the Scheduled Areas and right to self rule and governance of the tribal people. It empowers the Gram Sabhas to have control over resources and the right to "customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management practices of community resources."

### ***State approach towards local communities with regard to forests and tribal people***

The policing attitude ruled the system of governance which considered local forest dwelling communities as 'encroachers' and 'exploiters' of the forests. In many of the states which had tribal populations, there were revolts and resistance against these highhanded State laws. Tribal uprisings which were reckoned as part of the freedom movement in India, are in reality, struggles against the oppressive forest regulations of the British and its exploitation of local communities in order to plunder these forest resources.

This oppressive attitude continued post independence where the State was considered the supreme authority over the forests and the local communities were regarded as exploiters of the forests. Besides, the nature of development pursued by the State led to large-scale displacement of forest dwelling communities and submergence of vast areas of forests for big development projects. Industries were given priority of access to forest resources or of destruction of forest cover, at highly subsidized costs whereas the same was denied to local villages. Notification of forests took place without proper consultation with the people and without recognition of their customary habitations and resource use within the forest areas.

Settlement of rights of forest dwelling communities was conducted in a highly lackadaisical manner leading to harassment of people by the forest officials. With the increase in paper, timber, mining and other industries in the forest areas bringing in new populations, the pressure on the local communities and on the natural resources multiplied spreading a vicious web of exploitation of the resources and of innocent tribal communities traditionally living in these regions.

The realization of the need for dialoguing with the local communities began when government failed to stop the large-scale deforestation which was caused both by people, large development projects and by industries. The alarming rate at which thousands of hectares of forests and biodiversity have become extinct, has led to the administration's focus on re-strategising its intervention in forest conservation. Social forestry programmes were initiated which in the 90's took the shape of joint forest management programmes under the influence of both internal rethinking and external financial institutions.

Quasi legal institutions and programmes like the Joint/Community Forest Management (J/CFM) programmes for forestry are being created currently in various states for conserving forests with huge external aid, also bringing in policy changes. At the national level there are contradictory processes happening in the forestry management approaches. On the one hand, there is a great impetus to participatory models of forest governance like the JFM programmes and on the other, there is an increasing pressure on local forest dwelling communities by the State by terming them as 'encroachers' and 'illegal' inhabitants of the forest regions, the greater pressure being on the tribal people whose existence in these regions for centuries is not being recognized.

Thus, it is in this legal and social background that the Eco Development programme was started with GEF and World Bank funding.

## **2.0 Role of GEF and other financial and bilateral institutions in the forestry sector in India**

The global environmental negotiations for global equity and the biodiversity conservation attempts started influencing the government of India decision especially after India became a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity in June 1992 with a commitment to identifying and protecting ecosystems, protected areas and developing legally binding instruments for conservation. The global negotiations between developed and developing nations under this convention led to the entry of global players into India's forest programmes and policies especially some of the external financial and development agencies like the World Bank, CIDA, DFID and others. The World Bank and DFID have poured in millions of dollars into forestry projects since the 1980's like joint forest management, capacity building and training of forest personnel, research and development of forestry institutions, livelihoods enhancement through forestry projects, creation of carbon sinks, commercial plantations for forest regeneration, transfer of technology and information on forestry and biodiversity conservation.

One of the programmes developed for conservation of wildlife and biodiversity in India through in situ method has been the declaration of certain ecosystem areas as Protected Areas and further initiating a programme called India Eco-Development Project (IEP) in national parks. Seven such national parks came under the IEP funded by the Global Environment Facility and World Bank, that was prepared by GEF-UNDP and implemented by the World Bank.

Prior to the IEP, UNDP and FAO had already supported ecodevelopment projects in several national parks in India through a project with the Wildlife Institute of India (IEP: Project Appraisal Document, Annex 12). The purpose behind the development of these projects has been stated to be to bridge the long standing conflicts between the State and forest dwelling communities over resource sharing, exploitation and control over resources. The programme was envisioned with the objective of involving local communities in protection of the ecosystem around them as well as to find alternatives to reduce the communities' dependence over forest resources and thereby, 'reduce the pressure' on the biotic and animal species in these zones.

However, this programme has had varied responses and impacts on the forest dwelling and tribal communities and on the forest policies and programmes of the country. The study here is an attempt to look at some of the GEF funded Ecodevelopment Committee (EDC) projects and to identify issues for policy and implementation concerns in the forestry sector in India and particularly, to look at issues concerning tribal (indigenous) rights, laws and impacts of this project on their rights and livelihoods. The present situation in India is such that tribal peoples are being more and more marginalized through so called development projects and are being viewed as encroachers into forest lands, their constitutional rights are under threat of being amended whether with regard to forest lands or revenue lands and there is a clear paradigmatic shift in the perspective towards social responsibility where tribal people are concerned. External development and investment agencies and banks are having a greater influence, directly or indirectly, overtly or subtly, in reversing the social and economic policies of the pre-90's. The concept of biodiversity conservation in the State parlance has been an externally driven concept into India as artificial ways of conserving wildlife and forest resources. At the same time, traditional cultural beliefs and practices of forest dwelling communities in the management of forests has been eroded by state and external pressures due to lopsided and unjust development and conservation policies.

The World Bank has clearly stated that "India's biological resources are economically important both globally and nationally." And these biological and natural resources will be exploited "for industrial and municipal development", while wildlife will not be protected from global and national industrial

development, but primarily from tribal populations living in and around the parks. Furthermore, while the World Bank recognizes that "medicinal plants and other non-timber forest products are particularly important as a source of income and subsistence for tribal populations," it has designed a programme which clearly denies tribal populations on the peripheries of these national parks access to the biological resources it deems "economically important" to other industrialized populations. Even traditional medicinal plants are cited as important "commercial products" to be exploited by pharmaceutical companies in the future.

Hence, while the World Bank on the one hand implemented GEF conservation projects, it is also encouraging the national government to promote private industries and is also funding non-forestry industries like mining in forest and tribal areas thereby allowing for further displacement and marginalisation of tribals from their lands and forests. It has gone a step ahead circumventing the constitutional provisions by encouraging state governments to get into tripartite agreements with industries in tribal areas where World Bank forestry projects are being implemented, in the name of enhancing economic development of local communities (e.g., Andhra Pradesh).

### ***Protected Areas in India:***

PAs (Protected Areas) as defined under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 encompass a variety of legal designations including, a National Park, a Sanctuary, a conservation reserve or a community reserve. There are 540 protected areas demarcated in India and majority of them support human habitation. While protective policies have to some extent been successful in conserving wildlife in some areas, the implementing agencies and conservation organisations have failed recognise and respect local and indigenous community rights as an important factor in conservation and development. The project officials fail to identify the fact that human communities and their culture are an integral part of global diversity that is often directly related to the maintenance and enhancement of biological diversity. Even in 2005, many conservationists and conservation agencies are not convinced that isolating or viewing local communities and Adivasi people differently would in any way help in the conservation of biodiversity. With regards to the Ecodevelopment Committees in India funded between 1996 and 2004 by the GEF and World Bank, the implementing agency Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) has taken the opportunity to use this project to further strengthen its control over forest and wildlife protection. The rights and social development of Adivasi (tribals in India) or indigenous people within and surrounding the most of the protected areas involved in the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP) have been grossly neglected by the implementing agency (see below).

#### **Box 3: Protected areas and natural resource laws in India**

- According to section 18 of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 the State Government may by notification declare any area as a sanctuary.
- According to section 32 of The India Forest Act, 1927 the State Government may make rules in matters relating to the forest produce, grant licenses to inhabitants regarding use of forest produce and felling or removing trees and timber and the protection and management of any portion of a forest closed under section 30.
- Collection of any forest produce without the permission of the forest department in protected areas is a punishable offence.
- Fishing and Hunting in the PAs is strictly prohibited.
- Movement of people is also very restricted in PAs.

## **2.1 GEF portfolio in India**

India is the second highest recipient of GEF funding in the world with US\$ 146.1 million of which UNDP/GEF is responsible for US\$ 31.18 million and the World Bank/IFC for US\$ 115 million. Ten projects are funded under climate change focal area and 5 projects under biodiversity focal area. Under Small Grants Program 24 projects have been funded with US\$ 300,000, 24 being biodiversity focal area and 4 climate change focal area. The second phase is set to fund US\$ 600,000 from GEF and US\$ 700,000 by UNDP/India resources. In total UNDP/GEF is funding US\$ 31.18 million and US\$ 22 million in kind by the GOI and other participating institutions amounting to US\$ 53 million. The UNDP/GEF has 7 operational projects, 5 PDF projects, 7 Pipeline projects and 24 SGP projects.

## **2.2 Salient features of GEF biodiversity portfolio in India**

- Claims to look at environmentally, socially and financially sustainable projects
- Projects involving a wide range of issues
- Projects are based on national priority
- Supposed to ensure public participation by information dissemination and building awareness amongst stake holders
- Involves capacity building for GOI staff and institutions participating in GEF projects
- Networking with other bilateral/multilateral funding agencies/ organizations and civil society partners.

**Table 1: GEF-assisted Biodiversity Projects in India (mid-2004)**

Project name/ID	Focal Area/ Operational Programme	GEF Grant (\$US)	Implemen- ting agency	Co-finance	Date Active	Date Completed
India Ecodevelopment	Biodiversity: Forest Ecosystems OP3	\$20.21 million Full size Project	World Bank- IDA	\$28 million World Bank-IDA loan	1996	Closed June 2003
Conservation and Sustainable Management of Dryland Biodiversity, Phase 1	Biodiversity: Arid Ecosystems OP1	\$2.04 million Full size Project	UNDP	Nd	2001	Active
Conservation and Sustainable Livelihoods in the Indian Sundarbans	Multi-focal	\$8.0 million Full size Project	ADB	Nd	Pipeline	In preparation
Capacity Building for Implementation of Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety	Biodiversity:	\$1.0 million Full size Project	World Bank- IBRD	Nd	2003	Active
Conservation and Sustainable Use of the Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve's Coastal Biodiversity	Biodiversity:	\$7.68 million Full size Project	UNDP	Nd.	2001	Active
Management of Coral Reef Ecosystem of Andaman and Nicobar Islands	Biodiversity:	\$3.345 million Full size Project	UNDP	Nd	1995	PDF-B
First National Report to the CBD	Biodiversity:	\$0.03 million Enabling Activity	UNDP	Nd	1997	Closed
National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan	Biodiversity:	\$ 0.97 million Enabling Activity	UNDP	Nd	1998	Closed
Linking Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihoods	Biodiversity:	--	World Bank- IBRD	--	Pipeline March 2004	In preparation

**Table 2: Some examples of past GEF-UNDP Small Grants Programme in India**

Country	Project	GEF Focal Area	Operational Program	Grant	Period
India *	Conservation of Traditional Knowledge of Medicinal Plants by Irulas	Biodiversity	3	\$13,499	09/96-09/98
India *	Promotion of Sustainable Lemon Grass Cultivation for Oil Extraction for the Development of Marginalized Farmers	Biodiversity	2	\$11,428	09/96-09/98
India *	Distribution Behaviour and Conservation of the Endangered Gangetic Dolphin and Awareness Programme for its Protection	Biodiversity	2	\$2,857	09/96-09/98
India *	To Design a Local Information Network for Implementation of Decentralized Municipal Solid Waste Management, Bangalore City	Climate Change	5	\$11,714	09/96-09/97
India *	Popularization and Construction of Improved Fuel-Efficient Crematoria	Climate Change	5	\$11,971	12/96-12/98
India *	Promotion of Participatory Approaches for Forest Management	Biodiversity	3	\$11,142	09/96-09/98
India *	National Environment Awareness Campaign in the States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka and Networking with Grassroots NGOs	Biodiversity	3	\$11,425	09/96-09/98
India *	Sustainable Biodiversity Conservation in Indigenous Systems	Biodiversity	3	\$11,397	02/97-02/99
India *	Participatory Approach for Environment Conservation	Biodiversity	3	\$7,572	02/97-02/99
India *	Nurseries for Indigenous Plant Species of the Western Ghats through Local Initiatives in Schools	Biodiversity	3	\$11,157	01/96-01/98
India *	Conservation of Indigenous Species, Reduction in Global Warming and Propagation of Bhojpatra	Climate Change	3	\$13,092	01/97-09/99
India *	Re-Establishment of Sustainable System of Natural Resource Management in Bakhtpura Village, North Aravalli Hills Bio-region	Biodiversity	4	\$11,215	01/97-01/99
India *	Promotion of Agroforestry among Small Farmers by Establishing Agroforestry Units	Biodiversity	3	\$11,285	02/97-02/99

(\*) Denotes Pilot Phase-funded project.

## **Objectives of SGP in India**

- Capacity building of people, particularly women and tribal and local institutions.
- Design and implement sustainable development strategies.
- Creating awareness on global environmental issues.
- Capacity building of NGOs and CBOs.
- Review of community based activities and skill share.

India also forms part of three “Global” and one “Regional” multi-country GEF projects on Biodiversity these are:

- Conservation and Sustainable Use of Cultivated and Wild Tropical Fruit Diversity: Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods, Food Security and Ecosystem Services [pipeline]
- Conservation and Sustainable Management of Below Ground Biodiversity, Phase I [active]
- Management of Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) [in prep > Project Development Facility – Stage B]
- Conservation & Management of Pollinators for Sustainable Agriculture through an Ecosystem Approach [in prep> PDF-B]

A summary evaluation of the impacts of the aforementioned GEF-financed projects and SGP portfolio in India is beyond the scope of this report. The remainder of this study examines two protected area sites that formed part of the 1996-2004 India Ecodevelopment Project. The final part of the study seeks to draw some conclusions and the implications for future GEF biodiversity projects in India.

### 3.0 India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP)

#### ***Project overview***

India has 75 national parks and 421 sanctuaries covering almost 4% of the total land area of the country. According to the IEP project document, the current project involved seven national parks, five of which are tiger reserves, covering a total protected area of 6,714 sq km. The project envisaged the participation of 427,000 villagers of whom 39% were tribal. The cost for each beneficiary family was envisaged to be Rs 10,000.

The concept of IEP is based on the perceived need to reduce the “pressure” of local people (population) on protected area resources and vice-versa through the active participation of the local community and their provision with “alternative livelihoods”. The IEP sought to apply a two-legged strategy for PA management:

- (i) Improved PA management.
- (ii) Village Ecodevelopment.

The IEP intervention in India was based on three key assumptions:

- Increasing in local population and demand for natural resources (including forests) is the main threat to biodiversity within protected areas
- Poverty is the main reason why people exploit the forests and natural resources for their survival.
- Inadequate management of PAs adversely impacts on biodiversity.

The IEP aimed to improve protected area management, reduce local population pressure and alleviate local poverty through targeted socio-economic development. The project was originally to be implemented over five years, starting in October 1996 and ending in September 2001. However, due to a two-year delay in launching the project the WB and PTO (Ministry of Environment and Forests – MoEF) agreed to extend the project by two years ending in June 2003. The WB later granted a further one-year extension for the project until June 2004. The project was implemented in three phases: **Phase I:** October 1998- September 2002; **Phase II:** October 2002- June 2003; **Phase III:** July 2003- June 2004.

Initially, the MoEF and Government of India (GOI) had proposed eight sites under the IEDP project. They were: Buxa tiger Reserve (West Bengal), Gir National Park (Gujarat), Nagarhole National Park (Karnataka), Palamau Tiger Reserve (Jharkhand), Pench Tiger Reserve (Madhya Pradesh), Periyar Tiger Reserve (Kerala), Ranthambhore Tiger Reserve (Rajasthan) and Similipal Tiger reserve (Orissa). In the end, Similipal Tiger reserve was excluded from the IEP because government authorities in Orissa did not provide the World Bank with authentic information and verifiable assurances that all relocation would be consistent with the agreed IEP resettlement strategy for people in the PAs. In short, the WB was not sure that the Orissa government would comply with the banks policy of voluntary relocation.

The selection criteria for PAs for inclusion in the IEP consisted of:

- (i) Biogeographic representation
- (ii) Biodiversity importance
- (iii) Likelihood of success [extent and intensity of human pressure, PA management capacity, existing infrastructure, accessibility, state and national government support and state government responsiveness to community and NGO involvement in forest management.

### **3.1 Project history, identification and preparation**

The India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP) was first conceived as a pilot project in June, 1994, on the basis of an Indicative Plan prepared by the Indian Institute of Public Administration on behalf of the Govt. of India after the study of eight sites selected by the Ministry of Environment & Forests. This preparatory study was funded by the UNDP. It was at this stage that the Simlipal protected area site in Orissa was dropped due to non-observance of World Bank norms. The final IEP was confined to seven sites and the total cost was brought down to US\$ 67 million.

### **3.2 Public consultation during project design**

The sustainability of biodiversity conservation in Protected Areas (PAs) depends above all on the nature of human interactions with PA resources. Though the GEF and World Bank (WB) claim that the involvement of the local communities in their development and conservation projects is important, the effective implementation of this principle did not occur in the IEP. The much-touted participatory approach that the GEF and World Bank envisaged to minimize negative social impacts and strengthen the positive impacts aptly termed 'Innovative Participatory Approach' never really took off as expected. The project preparation report failed to deal with the problems and policy discrepancies encountered in the field during the initiation process (including non-compliance with project social policy). Instead, the report placed most emphasis on project interaction with the affected communities.

#### ***The list of institutions involved in the preparation and implementation of the IEP***

- Government: Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF)
- State Forest Department (SFDs), National Parks and "Tiger Reserves (PAs).
- National consulting government institutions: Salim Ali Center for Ornithology and Nature (SACON), Wildlife Institute of India (WII).
- Non-government (National co-ordinating NGO): Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA).
- Institutions involved through special studies, expert consultations, other consultation:
- Government: Ministry of Agriculture (Animal Husbandry etc)
- Finance, Rural Development, Integrated Tribal Development.
- Government Institutes:
- Botanical Survey of India (BSI)
  - o Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)
  - o Indian Institute of Forest Management (IIFM)
  - o Wildlife Institute of India (WII)
  - o Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI).
- National NGOs:
  - o Society for the Promotion of Wastelands Development (SPWD)
  - o Nature Conservation Society, Nature Club, Development Research Group
  - o World Wild Fund for Nature – India (WWF-India)
  - o Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS)
  - o Indian National Trust for Arts and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)
  - o Ranthambhore Development Foundation
  - o Indira Gandhi Conservation and Resource Monitoring Centre.

## **List of consultations**

### **Nationally organized consultations:**

- March 1992: MOEF-Project Tiger Workshop on Ecodevelopment
- June 1992: Multisectoral meeting to discuss proposed Ecodevelopment Project
- July 1993: MOEF meeting to discuss initial PRA results with state and park officials and national consulting NGOs
- October 1993: Multisectoral Consultation Workshop to discuss indicative planning
- February 1994: MOEF workshop to discuss PRA results and consultants reports
- April 1994: MOEF Project Steering Committee and NGO and UNDP representatives
- August 1994: Meetings to revise Indicative Plan
- October 1994: State and PA officials meeting to discuss PRA findings and present initial project plans
- February 1995: IIPA briefing to state and PA officials on supplementary planning and design of the Indicative Plan, together with national consulting NGOs
- May 1995: Work plans and budgets by state and PA officials including IIPA

### **Interstate Consultations and Training Programs:**

- June 1992: Meeting of State Forestry officials and project officers to discuss proposed Ecodevelopment Project
- December 1992: State and project meetings with IIPA and other NGOs; start of PRAs
- February 1993: Two interstate PRA training workshops involving PA officials and NGO representatives organized by SPWD and IIPA
- July 1993: Two interstate PRA training workshops involving PA officials and NGO representatives organized by SPWD and IIPA
- September 1993: Continuation of PRA activities; IIPA follow-up of PRAs
- April-Sept 1994: IIPA site visits and follow-up of PRAs; at least three field visits per site done by IIPA, SPWD, and WII

### **Other consultations:**

Some meetings were also reportedly held during project preparation at the village level in all the protected areas within the project boundaries. Nevertheless, reports suggest that the average number of people attending such meetings were around 20, which indicates that relatively few villagers were informed about the project's intentions and its implications for their welfare and livelihoods. It is claimed by the World Bank that the meetings were in groups of 6 – 10 people as this number was found useful in facilitating PRAs. However, when villagers were contacted in Gir and Pench as part of this study, the villagers were surprised that the Bank claimed that they had participated in project planning. On the contrary, many villagers advised the authors of this report that they were not aware that the IEP was being planned for implementation in their villages.

Field information from some IEP sites therefore suggests that during project preparation the World Bank and the implementing agency did not properly involve the major "stake holders" most affected by the IEP – the tribals and other local communities residing inside the PAs. In other words, though documentation indicates that some communities and some villagers on the fringes of the PAs may have been involved to a greater or lesser extent in IEP planning processes, the communities inside the PAs were largely sidelined or ignored.

### 3.3 Treatment of GEF and World Bank social policies

The GEF has no specific social policy on Indigenous Peoples. For its part, the World Bank does have an Indigenous Peoples Policy (OD 4.20) policy. There is multiple evidence to show that this safeguard policy was violated by World Bank staff and implementing agencies (Forest Departments) in several of the IEP sites, particularly in relation to OD 4.20's mandatory requirement for informed participation of affected Adivasi communities throughout the whole project cycle. Though Indian law does not recognise the term Indigenous Peoples, there is no doubt that under of OD 4.20, World Bank staff had binding obligations to address the impacts of the IEP on Adivasi and tribal communities.

### 3.4 Project Objectives as put forward in SAR

#### Box 4

The Project would work for the conservation of biodiversity by implementing the Ecodevelopment in and around the Project area. The IEP would also support the preparation of future biodiversity projects. The main objectives as mentioned in the SAR were to:

- Improve capacity of PA management for conservation of biodiversity and encourage local participation in the management and decision making activities.
- Reduce the negative impacts of PAs on local people and vice versa by participatory conservation and management.
- Develop a more effective and extensive support system for Forest Development.
- Ensure effective management of this project
- Prepare future biodiversity projects.

### 3.5 Components and Budget

Components of EDC:

- Improved protected area management
- Village Development plan
- Environmental education and awareness campaigns
- Impact monitoring and research

The total cost of the India Ecodevelopment Project of US \$67 million was financed by a US \$20.21 million grant from the GEF, a \$28 million loan from the World Bank (IDA) and counterpart funding of \$18.79 million from the Government of India (GoI), respective state forest departments and local "beneficiaries". It is noteworthy that under the budget rules of the IEP the latter (largely impoverished) local contributors were required to pay for 25% of the cost of forestry development activities (see budget below).

The breakdown of the budget with regards to the components is as follows:

1. Improved PA management – US\$ 14 million (22% of base cost)
2. Village Ecodevelopment Plan – US\$ 34 million (55% of base cost)
3. Environmental education and awareness campaigns – US\$ 5 million (8% of base cost)
4. Overall project management – US\$ 5 million (9% of base cost)
5. Preparation of future biodiversity projects – US\$ 2 million (4% of base cost)
6. Reimbursement of the project preparation facility – US\$ 2 million (3% of base cost)

## **Brief Background to the seven PA sites involved in the IEP [Boxes 5-11].**

### **Box 5: Ranthambore Tiger Reserve and National Park, Rajasthan**

Ranthambore was declared a Tiger Reserve in 1973 and a National Park in 1982. There were 16 villages located inside the Park and 96 villages around it. The inhabitants of 12 villages, located within the park, were rehabilitated during 1975 to 1979, of which families from nine villages were settled in a cluster at Kailashpuri village. People from Lahapur, Nagadi and Ranthambore were resettled and rehabilitated in Gopalpura village in 1979 (Source: State Forest Department). Inhabitants of four villages are still living inside the National Park. The majority of the displaced population belongs to Gujjar community, whose main occupation is animal husbandry. Agriculture is practiced by them at a subsistence level using traditional methods. Prior to being displaced, the Gujjar communities used to earn cash through the sale of dairy products (mainly milk and ghee). For rearing of animals, mainly buffaloes and cows, fodder was available in plenty within the park area. After relocation and rehabilitation undertaken by the forest department, the Gujjar were required to switch over their main traditional occupation from animal husbandry to settled agriculture.

Traditional use of park resources continued even after 10 years of rehabilitation because the Gujjars could not develop their agricultural lands due to lack of skill and resources and insufficient and insecure livelihood returns. As a result, the Gujjars had to continue their dependence on natural resources within the Park for customary livestock grazing. This led to confrontation with Park authorities every now and then. WWF-India then decided to formulate and implement a plan for the social and economic development of the local community, particularly the displaced families.

At the time of rehabilitation, the forest department had given verbal assurance for levelling of allotted land and providing drinking water wells and school buildings. But these promises were not fulfilled. Availability of fodder and drinking water for livestock was scarce in the resettlement area and as a consequence traditional livestock rearing by the rehabilitated families was adversely affected. Reliance on crop cultivation was not an option because land was of very poor quality and crop farming had not been a traditional occupation for this community. Thus due to these reasons the economic condition of these people has severely deteriorated.

### **Box 6: Periyar Tiger Reserve, Kerala**

The Periyar sanctuary was formed in 1934 as Nellikkampetty sanctuary (600 sq km.) and renamed as Periyar Wildlife Sanctuary (777 sq km) in 1950. It was declared a tiger reserve in 1978. The core area of the reserve (350 sq km) was declared a national park in 1982. Periyar Tiger reserve is one of the most visited tiger reserves in India. Records indicate that 400,000 tourists visit the park annually. Periyar is the home to “Ayyappa” temple, which is located at the fringes of the PA. There is a floating population of approximately 10 million pilgrims during the months of November to February every year. Pepper is grown extensively in this region. Local people also generated income through fuel-wood sale, sandalwood and cinnamon bark from the forests. Women who could not make both ends meet were forced into prostitution. There were constant squabbles between the local communities and the forest department. As in many poverty stricken communities in India, the role of moneylenders and middlemen is prominent in the region. The protected area was also suffering from poachers, although it was not clear who was behind the illegal trade. Despite increased budgets more staff, the authorities were unable to control the illegal poaching activities. This was the scene until around the year 2000 when Periyar faced with the same conflicts that were found at other PAs.

The local community, which had settled there for decades and had customary rights over the resources, faced constant battle with the department for access to the same resources.

### **Box 7: Buxa Tiger Reserve, West Bengal**

Buxa tiger reserve is located in the Jalpaiguri district in the state of West Bengal bordering with Bhutan and the state of Assam. It covers an area of 761 sq km with 314.5 sq km designated as sanctuary (117 sq km proposed as national park), and the remaining 391 sq km categorized as forest reserve. According to 1991 census, 15608 people inhabited “forest villages” and protected areas. The local population inside the PA are Bengalis, Nepalese and members of Schedule Tribes (Rava, Bhutia, Bodo, Garu and Santal) and the scheduled caste of Rajbhanshis. At present there are 37 forest villages inside the reserve forest and eight within the national park. There are about 44 villages surrounding the project area. There are 25 tea estates with about one lakh labour population, of which half are schedule tribes.

Agriculture is the principal activity in the revenue villages adjoining the PA. Land is primarily under private ownership (raiyat) and some so-called wasteland is held by the government. Approximately 30,000 tourists visit the park annually, the local community is not involved in the tourism as it is controlled by the forest department.

### **Box 8: Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand**

Palamau tiger reserve is located in the district of Palamau in Jharkhand. The area falls in what is known as the Chotanagpur plateau. The total area of the PA is 1026 sq. km and there are two divisions, namely, the Project Tiger Division and the Daltonganj South Forest division. Over 970 sq km area of Palamau Tiger Reserve was declared as Palamau Wildlife sanctuary in 1979. Out of this, an area of 226.32 sq km was notified as Betla National Park in 1996. Around 29 sq km is designated as a tourism zone.

There are three tribal villages, Ramandag, Latoo and Kujrum, in the core area of the park. The human and cattle populations in these villages are 549 and 643 respectively. These people belong to the tribes of Oraon, Kherwar, Korwa, Munda and Birjia tribes. Of the communities in the project affected area, 56% belong to the Scheduled Tribe and 15% to Scheduled Castes. There are 72 villages in the buffer zone of the Reserve and an additional 113 around it within a radius of 5 km. The total human population in these villages has been projected at over 116,550 out of which 39,000 people are living within the Reserve boundary. The project area is by and large free from encroachment.

The area faces severe drought almost every five years. There is a proposal to start underground coal mining near Horilong, about 1.6 km. from the Reserve boundary. This proposal is under consideration by the Central Government.

The Kutku Dam of the North Koel Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project, which would flood 15 villages (of which five are within the Reserve) could indirectly threaten Palamau Tiger Reserve. If the dam is ever made operational, people living in the submergence zone may be obliged to enter the forest area of the Reserve because the Water Resources Department has not yet complied with the stipulation laid down by the Government of India under the *Forest Conservation Act, 1980*, regarding rehabilitation of the villagers. It is, therefore, necessary that the people affected due to the proposed submergence are relocated suitably and no relocation takes place without their free prior and informed consent.

### **Box 9: Nagarhole National Park, Karnataka**

Nagarhole National Park spreads over an area of 643.4 sq km. The core zone is about 192 sq km. the total population in the project area in 1981 was around 72652 in which the tribal population is about approximately 6254 from 54 'hadis' (hamlets). Outside the PA the forest department had identified 96 revenue villages to be included in the project.

The tribals who live in the PA collect NTFP such as honey and fruits for their own consumption and earn a living by working in the near by coffee estates as labourers. Outside the park the primary occupation is agriculture; there is some cultivation in the PA also by the tribals. Tourism is also well developed with two zones demarcated for the same. The tourist population is steadily increasing every year. The presence of large number of coffee estates poses a serious threat to the forest cover.

### **Box 10: Gir National Park, Gujarat**

At the time of notification of PA in 1972, there were 129 Maldhari “Nes” with 845 families, which comprised 4,802 people and 16,842 head of livestock. A scheme for relocation was drawn up in 1972 and the process was continued up to 1986. Out of 845 Maldhari families, 580 Maldhari families have been resettled. Of the original 129 “nes”, some are now completely abandoned and the rest are partially abandoned. The Maldhari still depend on the park (buffer zone) for their livestock grazing and fuelwood. There are no Maldhari *nesses* in the national park area now. The community is categorized into three groups by the government they are – permanent Maldhari, non-permanent Maldhari and “illegal” Maldhari. The permanent Maldhari are the ones who have grazing passes. The non-permanent are the ones who have passes but they have expired as passes are issued for a fixed period only. The “illegal” ones are those who have resettled in the *nes* and were residing in the *Vasahats*\*. At present there are 54 (2,540 population) “nes” in the sanctuary having 361 families including non-permanent Maldharies. Gir forests also have settlements of 239 siddis who are of African origin and are classified as scheduled tribes. There are also approximately 65 people permanently occupying the three main temple complexes within the forest in the core area

There are 14 forest settlement villages in the buffer Zone covering an area of 5,176 ha. A total human population of about 4,500 and 4,200 cattle population is existing in Gir forests. An area of 1,867 ha. has been given as settlement land to cultivators for agriculture purpose and all development works in these settlements are carried out by forest department under development of forest settlement schemes.

The Maldharies of Gir are mainly Charan, Rabari, Bharwad, Ahir, Makarani, Muslims and Dalits. Rabari, Charan and Bharwad are the ones who are schedule tribes and mainly depend on their livestock for their survival.

The Maldhari communities do not enjoy any formally recognised rights over their natural resources despite the fact that they have traditionally used local lands, flora, fauna and other biological and mineral resources in the area for generations. According to existing laws, they cannot have land in their name even if given on lease as outside the forests where individual ownership of land is a norm. They do not have control over minerals, forests and other resources on their traditional lands and are controlled by the State, principally by the State Forest Department.

### **Box 11: Pench Tiger Reserve and National Park, Madhya Pradesh**

“Project Tiger” was initiated in 1973 with a budget of Rs 23 million which was increased to 230 million in 2000 and 2001. The aim of this project was to protect tigers in India from threats to their survival such as human encroachment on their habitat. Pench Sanctuary was created in 1977. Pench National Park was created in 1983 and carved out of Pench Sanctuary. The Sanctuary is located in a Fifth Schedule area straddling the states of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra. The park is divided by the Pench River into east and west Pench. East and West Pench are governed by two different range forest officers (RFOs). The southern part of the forest in Maharashtra was initially designated as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru National Park, but was included in the Project Tiger network as part of Pench Tiger Reserve in 1999.

In 1974 the states of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh started constructing a dam in the sanctuary adjacent to the national park as part of a hydroelectric project – despite the national park’s mandate to protect wildlife. The dam was completed in 1985. In the process, 54 km sq of wildlife habitat were submerged by water from the dam when the reservoir was created. Villages, including Totladoh in Maharashtra and Alikatta in Madhya Pradesh, were also displaced. The hydroelectric project itself is designed to provide Maharashtra with one third of the electricity it generates and Madhya Pradesh with two thirds of the electricity it generates. All of the water is supplied to Maharashtra through canals for the city of Nagpur and for irrigation purposes. No water is supplied to Madhya Pradesh.

In 1990, the Maharashtra government also set up the Wildlife Conservation Project and established an independent office and staff to deal with wildlife conservation and anti-poaching activities in the sanctuary. Before the creation of this division, there had been a Commercial Forest Division governing and administering the harvesting of tendu and bamboo in the sanctuary as well as the collection of timber for fuel. According to the Range Forest Officer in Nagpur, Maharashtra, his division was “created to protect wildlife.” So accordingly, people living in the sanctuary have been evacuated and resettled and entry into the sanctuary is more strictly monitored. The range forest officer (RFO) from the Wildlife Conservation Project claims that there are 20 tigers in Maharashtra (east Pench) and 44 tigers in Madhya Pradesh (west Pench).

The RFO in Nagpur cites two major struggles faced by the Wildlife Conservation Division of the Forest Department. First, he talks about an “illegal fishing mafia turning over more than a crore of rupees per year” and “forest officials burnt by pouring kerosene on them.” The Forest Department took the case to the Supreme Court to ban fishing and won the case. In 1999, the water reservoir created by the dam which “provides water to wild animals” was decreed “a water body for the tiger projects in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh.” But still, “illegal fishing” goes on and forest officials from both states regularly enforce the law and make arrests. The second problem faced by the Forest Department is that from 1973 to 1990 “ten thousand people” were living in the sanctuary before the building of the dam and “exploited the forest.” The RFO adds that these people were successfully resettled in another village and that their “illegal accommodations” have been demolished—though one still finds remains of the earlier settlement. Today, there are only accommodations for people from the Irrigation Department who work in the area and patrol the area.

For their part, Adivasi and lower caste communities point out that illegal fishing is undertaken by large-scale outside operators. Local fishing had on a small-scale and was a vital part of local livelihoods that has now been largely lost.

In 1992, the Pench Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh was created, becoming the 19th Reserve in the Project Tiger network. The buffer zone around the Pench Tiger Reserve covers 465 km sq and comprises 333.05 km sq of Reserve Forest, 102.36 km sq of Protected Forest and 29.59 km sq of revenue land. The total area of the Pench Tiger Reserve is 757.86 km sq.

## **4.0 Summary evaluation of implementation of the IEP**

This section examines the impacts of the IEP at two project sites in Gir National Park and Pench National Park (Madhya Pradesh), before briefly assessing available information on IEP impacts on Adivasi and local communities in the other affected PAs.

### **Case Studies:**

#### **4.1 Experience and perspectives of tribal and other villagers in Gir National Park and Pench National Park**

The following section seeks to assess in some detail the implementation experiences of villagers in two of the project sites visited by the evaluation team in January and February 2004.

##### **4.1.1 Ecodevelopment in and around Gir National Park, Gujarat**

In Gir National Park, the Samata team visited two tribal hamlets and three villages within and adjacent to the protected area. The main findings in relation to local people's perceptions and experiences of Ecodevelopment are first set out by settlement and then the findings are pulled together in a general discussion.

The local communities have inhabited the forests for generations and they perceive themselves to be part of the forest. They don't explicitly talk about their role as a caretaker, but they do understand their responsibility towards the forest. Their livelihood depends on the forest directly or indirectly whether for fuel wood or for grazing cattle. So, when some external force (the GOI and GEF in case of PAs) is planning to affect their lives they would invariably prefer to be a part of the decision making process. It is difficult for them to comprehend or anticipate the outcomes of these projects some of which also relate to displacement, loss of livelihood and denial of access to resources.

The GOI started to adopt the concept of protecting the forest and wildlife in some of the biodiversity rich areas like Gir, Pench etc. from 1955 onwards. The GOI has the prejudice that the local human inhabitants are the main threat to the richness of these areas, deliberately ignoring the fact that these same communities have been there for generations. It is a fact that man has been exploiting nature for his ulterior motives but the fact also remains that unless there is recycling nothing is sustainable, and this concept has been a part of the rural culture. A symbiosis exists between indigenous Adivasi cultural communities and their surrounding environment.

Most of the respondents were vaguely aware of the Wildlife Act of 1972. They felt the need for some legal control over the forest to avert the illegal activities of poachers. Any man or for that matter any living creature is comfortable living the way their ancestors have been living. Any changes in their surroundings or their basic livelihood patterns would result in some violent reactions, which might take some time to adjust.

#### **Allavan**

Allavan is a small *nes* (hamlet) in the western part of Gir. This hamlet is dominated by Charan community of 15 families (approximately 100 in total). All the people in the village are the members of EDC, though women rarely attend public meetings due to cultural constraints. The landless and the labourers are also not really welcome, even if they attend the meeting they do not have any say in the decision making process. Though the EDC project is officially closed, it is seemingly still going on in the field due to irregular implementation of the project.

During the initiation of the project, the implementing agency in this case the forest department had proposed various developmental activities for those villages and hamlets who would take up EDC project. The forest department very cleverly proposed the EDC project for those villages which would accept the relocation package. There are signs that some of the villages were relocated 'involuntarily' but on paper it only mentions 'voluntary relocation'.

The main occupation of the Maldhari community is animal husbandry. They generally sell milk products like butter and curd etc. as it is more profitable than selling milk. They sometimes also sell cow dung manure for additional income. The village has a bore well in its vicinity and most of the houses are made of stones and mud with bamboo tiles as roofs. There is no school in the village and a majority of the residents are illiterate. The most important observation made by the villagers is that they were forced to shift from being pastoralists to agriculturists by the forest department. This was done by providing them with agricultural land (without any training or knowledge of crop husbandry) and discouraging them to take their cattle into the forest for fodder. The authorities also imposed sanctions on the marketing of milk products as the villagers had to go out of the PA to sell them.

The women in the village are normally not allowed to move out from their houses or to attend any public meetings. When asked about the project, they said that they do not have any idea when the project was launched and its details. They also mentioned that forest officials approached them and asked them to deposit Rs 2,500 for a tin shelter. All the money which was taken by forest officials was in the name of the president and member secretary of the EDC. Each villager has been given tin shelters in the name of EDC. Further questions revealed that this was given to them to reduce their dependence on the forest for wood. Interestingly, these villagers don't even know the price and cost of these tin shelters.

Later on in the discussion it was found that the tin roofs were given to them from the EDC fund of Rs 7,500 per family. The villagers now are asking for the tin shelters with the remaining money, but officials have turned their backs on them and are ignoring their demands. None of the EDC officials have visited them nor is there any involvement of NGOs in this project.

The forest officials constantly harass them if they go out into the park for fuel wood. They have even fined the villagers a sum of Rs 250 and in some cases put them behind bars. Moreover there has always been a tussle between the villagers and the forest officials over grazing land. Some villagers have managed to get a grazing pass for one year. Interestingly, however, the villagers who have a grazing pass are excluded from membership of the EDC.

From the government side there has not been any scheme (income generating) for the Maldhari which could help them in any way. They have been completely neglected by the government. The Maldhari have been identified as people living below the poverty line by the forest officials, but have not received any benefits from the government. The government has also fixed compensation for the villagers in case they incur any loss of cattle or human life as a result of wildlife damage. But this compensation is also limited to the people who have been identified as permanent and these people also have to really fight hard to get the compensation.

The villagers are not aware of any microplan, nor have the officials and the authorities concerned with EDC conducted any orientation programme for the villagers. Some people are open to the idea of resettlement and said that the government should come out with proper resettlement plan where they can have basic amenities and not have to face the day-to-day hassles with forest officials. There has not been any resettlement in Allavani since the project was launched in 1991 and therefore this research team was

unable to assess the impacts of resettlement. The only thing the native people demand is access to rangelands and pastures close to their hamlets. They stress they are not involved in illegal poaching activities.

### ***Dhadia***

Dhadia is also a small hamlet in the western side of Gir. This village is inside the sanctuary area but outside the core zone. The village has eight families with all of them belonging to Rabbaris. The villagers in this hamlet migrated from Chodianes in the national park and settled in Dhodia during 1985-86 after the declaration of the area as a national park in 1972. The migration was more or less voluntary as the department then had advised them of the requirements to move under the new Forest and wildlife laws. The main occupation of this village is cattle rearing. There is hardly even a basic infrastructure in the village. Most of the people including children are illiterate as there are no schools. On paper, all the villagers are officially members of the EDC. Despite this, they report that they are not involved in any meetings or decisions that are taken.

This is one of those unfortunate villages where the people were evicted from the National park in 1985 – 86 without any resettlement plan. The people settled wherever they could get water and fodder for their cattle. Some of the villagers even left their people behind and dispersed to places where the people do not have any knowledge of their whereabouts. The people who stayed behind settled inside the sanctuary.

When asked about changes the villagers replied that when they were living in the national park grass and water were easily available and of good quality. The number of cattle was also large. But since displacement everything has become expensive for them. When asked about the EDC project they also said that they don't have any clue what so ever about the project, they are members on paper but they have no say in the decision making process. They mentioned some minor benefits generated through the project such as receiving tin shelters. Here in this hamlet the EDC also charged them Rs 2,500 and promised to give them tin shelter and LPG connection. But now the officials are asking for Rs 800 more before giving them LPG connection. In addition to this the officials have also given 19 tin shelters to some families, to whom they will not give LPG connection.

### ***Bhojde***

Bhojde is a revenue village on the periphery of the sanctuary (Map 1). The population of the village is approximately 2,200 with 454 families. The village is dominated by Hindu Ahirs (Yadav), Patels and Sagars. The village also has a small Dalit, Muslim, Koli and Kumhars population. The village is a complete Revenue village. One person from each family is the EDC member in this village. The EDC project was started in 1999 and is still going on, this might be a contradictory statement as officially the project has been terminated in 2004 but due to lack of proper implementation it is still going on.

According to the EDC president, the IEP did help reduce the tensions between the forest officials and villagers as the interaction between them increased substantially. Earlier the forest officials would be very rude without even consideration for children and women, but after the project started the behaviour towards the local community has changed from that of 'ruler' to that of 'amiability'. On the other hand, it also helped the landless villagers in getting work to sustain themselves as they became agriculture labourers. He further informed us that through this project most of the people were able to get LPG connections for which they spent a huge sum of money. In addition to this their houses were also renovated for Rs 80,000, a check dam was constructed for Rs 98,000 and street lights were put for Rs 70,000. The local school playground was renovated for Rs 500.

In this village the project also launched some income generating schemes like distributing mango saplings to 13 families. The saplings were procured from the local farms. The forest department or any other nursery was not in any way involved. The forest department doesn't involve the villagers in any of their forest conservation activities (soil conservation, water conservation).

Before the Eco development project was launched the forest department did not allow them to build a road to their farms and check dam. They were also facing difficulties in transporting their farm equipment. The forest department also did not give them permission to lay a pipeline from the check dam to the fields for irrigation. All this changed after the launch of the project. They were given permission to build roads as well as to lay the pipeline for irrigation.

Moreover, the villagers were not allowed to take their livestock inside the sanctuary for grazing but now they have fixed a tariff per animal for entry into the sanctuary in a predefined boundary for a period of two years.

This village was lucky enough to be included in micro planning process. The villagers regularly hold meetings and discuss the project. Like any other village or *nes* here also the women have been neglected completely. There is no participation of women, no programs for women nor any income generating activities as envisaged in the project. The involvement of the village committee in the decision making process was due to the active interest of the committee. But other non-monetary benefits were completely ignored as the village committee was unaware that such a provision existed in the EDC project.

### ***Nagadla***

Nagadla is a village of 350 families on the fringes of Gir sanctuary. The village has 316 EDC members. The eco development project was launched in 1999. There are 360 EDC members including one woman, four Dalits and three Muslims in the village. Agriculture is the mainstay of the villagers. In Nagadla the villagers face the problem of wild herbivorous animals invading their fields and destroying them.

Before the commencement of the project forest department officials visited the village in December 1998 and informed the villagers about the project. In the beginning the villagers did not understand what the EDC project was all about. They thought that the officials wanted to evict them from their land. Some of them even thought that it could be a mining company which is interested in acquiring their land. Eventually, everybody in the village agreed to the project though some were still skeptical. There were no disputes between the people, but after the project commenced there have been some personal disputes between the villagers with regard to the implementation. Ten acres of land with mango saplings was taken up as part of alternative income generating programme under the EDC project. The farm has now been handed over to the panchayat and not to the village as a result of which the villagers feel cheated as another village is also included in this panchayat and does not have the membership of the EDC project. Therefore there is a dispute between the two villages.

When asked about the benefits, the villagers said that the houses of 200 families in the village were repaired through this project and some villagers even got agricultural implements. However, cheetal and nilgai have been invading the fields of the periphery villages damaging the crops and the forest department has not compensated the villagers in any way. There is a constant struggle between the villagers to safeguard their fields and the animals to feed themselves.

### ***Chikalgouba***

Chikalgouba is a settlement village with a population of about 400 people. There are 68 members from the village in the project. The village is dominated by Rabbaris, Kolis and Patels. There are only 22

families which have pattas for agriculture. The rest of the landless people (most of them tribals) are employed as labour by the forest department. The elders of the village (both tribal and non tribal) told that the land was given to them by the maharaja of Baroda, before independence. They still have the patta issued by the then maharaja. A dam was constructed inside the sanctuary which stands testimony to the gross violation of the Wildlife Act. The dam was constructed in 1977, for the benefit of the down stream villages and not for the benefit of the nearby *nesses*.

As part of EDC, LPG connections were provided, provision for house repairing was made and pipes were laid for drinking water. Building stone was provided to some of the villagers but, ironically, they did not know what to do with them. There is a dispute between two communities – Rabbari and Koli. The dispute is with regard to ownership of land in the sanctuary. According to the law, there is no transfer of land but there was land transfer between a Rabbari and a Koli. When the forest department came to know about this, they forced the seller to lodge a case against the recipient on the pretext of forced selling. This led to the then EDC president (Rabbari) of the village to be taken into custody and he was removed from the post and replaced by a person of another community.

When the village was resettled (at the time of declaring it as PA) as part of the notification of sanctuary, the process of land distribution was very haphazard. Who ever had the local influence to lay claim to any amount of land was given patta to that land. Those who could not claim any land could not get any land and have been reduced to agricultural labour.

### **Overall Analysis of Ecodevelopment Project in Gir national park**

The project's main objective was to involve the local people in the conservation of the Gir forest which is the last home to the Asiatic lions. The word 'involve' has a different meaning from the perspective of forest department, it just means the presence of some of the members of the local community at the meetings without the power to take decisions. One of the objectives of the EDC was to promote public support for conservation through environmental education and awareness campaigns, but it has largely failed as there have been few education programs though the people have some awareness wildlife conservation policies and regulations. The ultimate expectation of the local community is to have a life free without harassment from forest department and to follow their traditional way of life.

The IEP and EDCs were supposed to enable communities to meet their needs in an environmentally sustainable manner, reduce unsustainable use of PA resources, offset negative economic and cultural impacts of Pas on local communities and resolve conflicts. The interior villages like Allavani and Dhadia have been neglected on this front. The communities in these villages find it very difficult to graze their animals. The forest department authorities have forgotten that people and their customary resource use practices (Maldhari) have constituted an integral part of the ecosystem for centuries. These communities have survived so long without degrading their resource base because their way of living was sustainable.

People in these villages report that after the IEP project they have not observed any rise in the lion and leopard population, but they do maintain that there has been a steep rise in the population of wild herbivores which is affecting the balance of the ecosystem in the area. This is a sharp contradiction from the forest department's statements that the lion population has increased so much so that there needs to be a relocation of some local communities into another areas at a cost of two crores.

The wildlife census data collection is done every five years. Some local people are used to helping with the data collection – mostly at all the water holes. Villagers suspect that the range officer, to get an increase in the fund allocated to his range, may manipulate data collected by the villagers. Most of the money is used

for administrative purposes, like travelling, procuring the latest vehicles, renovating the office etc. The grazing land allocated for rejuvenation, so that the village can use it in the next season, was given to a village outside the PA, by the department for a price. [The forest department lets out land (pastures) on lease to the hamlet for grazing and the next year another piece of land is let out while the previous year's land is left for rejuvenation.] This implies that the forest department has the monopoly over the forest and agro-forestry resources. As a result, the next year, the village which was supposed to use that part of land would find it difficult to satisfy their cattle as there was no scope for regeneration of grass. This has been one of the reasons for a sharp decline in the number of cattle owned by Maldhari. The other stand that could be taken is that, when the cattle find it difficult for grazing they are taken into other areas designated by the forest department as "non-grazing areas", thereby causing conflict between the forest officials and the Maldhari.

After eviction of Maldharis from the protected area prior to the IEP, the forest department secured a monopoly over access to its natural resources. The Maldharis traditionally depend on animal husbandry for their livelihood. They milk their cattle and churn ghee and sell them at the nearest revenue village. Today they are obliged to strictly follow the timings set by the forest department at the main exit points of the sanctuary where they sell their products. But the corrupt staff of the forest department take undue advantage of these rules and force the Maldhari to dole out their "share".

Although the IEP did not directly involve resettlement, the project did reinforce a system that has undermined traditional livelihoods centred on cattle rearing as traditional pastoral farmers have been given land to cultivate to discourage them from going to the sanctuary to graze their cattle. The Maldharis accepted these unwanted changes to their livelihood in an effort to avoid further harassment and abuse at the hands of the forest department. The department officials would lose no opportunity to harass the pastoralists and would put them behind bars with no fault of theirs. To avoid this oppression, pastoralist communities reluctantly opted for a shift in their livelihood even though they were aware of its difficulties and potentially negative implications.

However, given that the Maldhari of Allavani and Dhadia had little prior knowledge of agricultural practices before the implementation of the IEP, their efforts to raise crops have failed miserably. The affected communities therefore soon found themselves neck deep in debt. In some cases, families have been forced to sell their land to clear their debts and have become casual landless labourers. Those Maldhari families that do still keep cattle and sell cow dung manure to supplement their income, have found that since the IEP outside vehicles coming to buy their manure are charged high tariffs by the protected area authorities, which has made it economically unviable for them to buy the fuel. Overall, the IEP has had a serious negative impact on Maldhari livelihoods and welfare as many families complain that today they find themselves more impoverished.

The forest department gave an LPG connection to each villager anticipating that this would prevent the people from going into the forest for fuel wood, but eventually some of them could not afford the recurring expenses involved and had to sell the LPG connections to the well off villagers. Unfortunately, the forest department mentioned LPG connection on their ration cards. So, now the situation is such that these people don't even get kerosene oil for their basic needs nor there is any electricity in their houses. Worse, the forest department imposed the LPG connections on the people in order to avail of other benefits (corrugated tin sheets) of the project.

The effort of Ecodevelopment Committees (EDC) to develop stronger linkages between the PA and the local communities in order to implement an effective ecodevelopment programme has not been very successful as local communities have not been properly involved in the planning or implementation of the

project and have gained few official rights to influence the management of the protected area and its buffer zone. The highest authority which the villagers are in touch with is the forest range officer who intimidates them and demands bribes. The situation is worse in the villages and hamlets which are inside the sanctuary (nesses).

One of the agenda of the EDC is biodiversity conservation. However, their myopic vision of what effective conservation involves is arguably putting biodiversity at risk in the protected area through the exclusion of people and their domestic animals from the park. For example, with the decrease in traditional forest grazing by local cattle herds, the floral diversity in the National park has gone down as the growth of vigorous wild grasses growth has gone unchecked. AS a result, The result, grass grew to about 4 –5 ft in height and unable to stand erect it has smothered the ground and prevented other seeds from germinating. Also, the exclusion of people has meant forest animals have extended their range right up to human settlements where they cause crop damage on farms belonging to nearby peripheral villages like Nagadla.

The project has stressed the need for the state to develop legal mechanisms to establish eco development committees and define their rights and responsibilities. It is, however, not clear as to whose rights are upheld under ecodevelopment. Field investigations for this study found that even participation rights have not been respected under the IEP. According to the project document, both men and women should have been involved in micro planning and implementation, but it has been found that women were largely ignored. The situation was the same in all the five settlements visited in Gir.

Even incorporating the village into the EDC project has been inconsistent. Villages which were in need of the project were not included as they were not prepared to agree to “voluntary” relocation under the IEP. Though the exact preconditions presented to villagers for receipt of project benefits are difficult to verify, there are signs that the Forest department sought to take advantage of the EDC to facilitate the resettlement of villages to areas outside the forest, by making it mandatory for the villages to relocate if they wanted the benefits of EDC project. This discrimination was a clear violation of their rights to remain on their land and in their customary settlement area and was in breach of the loan agreement with the World Bank. The ill-thought out use of project funds at the village level was also apparent in several villages. In Bhojde village, for example, Rs 15 lakhs was expended under the IEP for LPG connections, yet the poor could not afford the gas had to sell it to outsiders who use gas to run their vehicles. The forest department’s desperate attempt to check the felling of trees by obliging villagers to accept LPG that they could not afford led them to sell the cylinders to the affluent in the revenue villages.

One important observation on disturbance to the ecology is the “*chakada*” a three-wheeler similar to an auto but with ear ripping noise and spewing loads of exhaust fumes. A posh hotel from Taj group right in the sanctuary and the forest department office in the same compound seem to compliment each other.

The micro planning was done by IRMA [A leading Rural Development Institute called “Institute of Rural Management, Anand”]. They prepared a questionnaire for assessing the needs of the people living in and around the sanctuary. The Maldharis are illiterate and could not understand the contents or reasons behind the questionnaire given to them. They were apprehensive that these people were from some mining company or forest department trying to grab their land. So they furnished incomplete/ incorrect data. In this regard the EDC is flawed because it did not involve culturally appropriate consultations and consequently could not cater to the real needs of the indigenous and tribal people.

The Maldharis own large number of livestock and mainly survive on selling milk, ghee and dung to the outsiders. Traditionally, traders from the nearby towns come to the *Nesses* everyday to collect these

products from the Maldharis. After the declaration of the protected area, the traders cannot enter the sanctuary and the Maldharis have to come to the check post to conduct their transactions with the traders. The check post gates are closed by five in the evening and if the Maldharis or the traders are delayed in reaching the check post before this time, the milk and other products cannot be sold and the Maldharis lose their income. This gives opportunity for the local forest guard at the check post to demand bribes in order to oblige the Maldharis by holding open the gates in case of such delays.

Hence, decisions involving the Maldharis' livelihood practices and domestic needs have been taken by the forest department without culturally appropriate consultation and without the prior agreement of affected communities. As reported in the Biodiversity Conservation Plan of the Gujarat government "the regulations imposed upon local population for above activities by the wildlife managers are considered as harassment by the residents in and around the PA. The cases of human injuries and occasional deaths by wild animals are also reported. This has resulted in strained relations between wildlife managers and the local population."

### **Resettlement Issues in Gir**

In Gir, the Maldharis, who are Scheduled Tribes were removed from inside the park 'voluntarily' prior to the IEP. It is admitted by the government of Gujarat that due to lack of resources, the rehabilitation programme was not implemented fairly. There are legal cases pending in the High Court of Gujarat where relocated people are demanding proper rehabilitation and fair compensation. The process of rehabilitation which started in 1972 continued until 1986-87 affecting a total of 845 families in the *Nesses* which were relocated. However, due to poor implementation of the rehabilitation programme there is great reluctance on the part of the remaining Maldharis to leave their *Nesses*. The protected area authorities plan to resettle the 54 *Nesses* which continue to live within the sanctuary area under the Biodiversity Conservation Plan. However, with compensation for already evicted Maldharis yet to be fulfilled, there is likely to be strong resistance from the 54 communities to any resettlement.

The nature of rehabilitation also stands to be questioned as the programme consisted of small-scale land-based compensation, which intended to push Maldharis families into a converting their livelihoods from extensive pastoralists to settled small-scale crop farmers. The transition from a pastoralist existence to semi pastoralist and now semi agriculturalist livelihood has not helped the Maldharis improve their standard of living. In fact, drastic shifts in their livelihood practices have driven the majority of Maldharis families into debt as they were alien to agriculture and lost their lands either through sale or mortgage to moneylenders and rich farmers. As a result, some of the Maldharis returned to the sanctuary after having failed to eke out a living outside the PA. The IEP was implemented in the context of this historical upheaval in local livelihoods. The World Bank and GEF did not directly finance eviction in Gir during the IEP. At the same time, however, the IEP failed to properly address the pre-existing resettlement issues and problems affecting Adivasi and local communities. The IEP likewise failed to question if the Maldharis alone were responsible for the ecological threat to the protected area and did not pay attention to other external factors that might be responsible for degradation of ecology in the PA.

### **4.1.2 Ecodevelopment in and around Pench National Park, Madhya Pradesh**

In Pench National Park, the Samata team visited five tribal villages and two revenue villages within and adjacent to the protected area. The two villages visited were in the buffer zone. There are no revenue villages in the core zone. Ninety-nine villages in Madhya Pradesh were involved in the IEP and had Ecodevelopment committees (EDC). Seven villages were selected for field research in the Seoni district for this study. They are: Tikardirayat, Turia, Durgapur, Mohgaon, Sale, Barelipar, and Potiya.

### **Tikardirayat**

Tikardirayat is a small traditional forest village of 145 Gonds whose boundary touches the sanctuary. Their basic sustenance is agriculture and they are blessed with abundant water resources. They say that their traditional boundary was not directly infringed upon. However, they have information that suggests that a non-tribal has bought land in their village, even though it is located in a Fifth Schedule Area.

Community members report that before the India Ecodevelopment Project (IEP) they regularly went into the forest for firewood, fruit and other forest produce and they continued to do so even after the implementation of the EDC, but harassment by the Forest Department has increased. The villagers explain that “before, when we went to the jungle, we were merely fined but now we are arrested.” They say people from their village are arrested two to three times a year. They describe a dismal situation in which their relations with the Forest Department are rapidly deteriorating. Some villagers complain that they have worked with the Forest Department and have not been paid for their work. The implementation of the forest development activities is very slow and the payment of wages infrequent. People are pressed into taking out loans on high interest as they do not receive timely wages.

Though the EDC was started five years ago with 12 members and ended in March 2004, villagers advise that there were no orientation sessions and that “if the population of wild animals increases, their crops will be destroyed.” They rarely see tigers, but believe that tigers occasionally take their cattle away. They sometimes get compensation for lost animals.

The first President of the EDC was involved in a scandal. He had apparently embezzled funds through a cement company. The villagers were not properly consulted in the micro-planning process and have many grievances. Fourteen people got biogas plants of which only four are working. Landless people were given Rs 5,000 and two people were given buffaloes. They paid Rs 3 for each bamboo or fruit bearing sapling that they got; some of the saplings have died. There were no training programs. No alternative sources of firewood, fruit and livelihood have been provided beyond the buffaloes that were given to two people and the four working biogas plants. Their *bhumka* (traditional medicine man) only knows a little about medicinal plants as the knowledge was not transmitted to him. The transfer of knowledge from a senior *bhumka* to the new *bhumka* did not happen as there were restrictions on collecting herbs from the forest and so the traditional knowledge has been dying a slow death. The IEP has not addressed the issue of loss of traditional knowledge and has arguably made things worse at Pench.

### **Turia**

Turia is a Revenue village with a human population of 3,000 and a cattle population of 5,000 located two to three km from the sanctuary. The village is home to Gonds and Hindus from a variety of castes. The main source of livelihood is agriculture and the crops are rice, maize, Jowar, wheat, grams. Being a revenue village with 5,000 cattle, this village appears to have more political clout than other villages that were involved in the IEP.

We learned from Khandelwal that the villagers rarely go into the sanctuary though they are allowed to collect forest produce such as mahua and tendu. Many people grow mahua on their land as Khandelwal does, to make toddy or to sell in the village markets. There is now a wall and a moat separating the village from the sanctuary and preventing wild animals and people from crossing the boundaries. So, wild animals have not been destroying their crops or attacking their cattle recently.

The EDC process started in 1992 and ended in June 2004. 307 families were included in the Forest Department’s survey. People were involved to some extent in the microplanning process and got many of

the implements they asked for. According to Khandelwal, each family received Rs 12,000, a lantern, and a pressure cooker. One hundred and twelve families have working biogas plants and 82 families have LPG connections. Landless people received Rs 5,000. Farmers got sickles and the children were given school bags. The villagers asked for a small check dam for irrigation purposes and it was built. They also had a drainage system repaired, renovated one pond, and built two more ponds. Some people also bought lime, amla and bamboo saplings. Not all of the saplings have survived.

The Sarpanch from Mohgaon suggested that they open a sewing class for six months for women. They were told that all the women who attended the training would be given a sewing machine. When the course was over they received sewing machines but found them defective and have sent them back. The women who attended the course are still waiting for adequate sewing machines.

### ***Alikatta resettled in Durgapur***

The village of Durgapur has integrated 15 Gond families from the displaced village of Alikatta in the sanctuary. They were all born and brought up in Alikatta on the banks of the Pench River. They had good agricultural land in Alikatta and many of the men also had jobs as night watchmen or as workers building roads for the Forest Department. In Alikatta they grew rice, maize and wheat and didn't have water shortages.

The villagers of Alikatta were displaced from inside the sanctuary when the hydroelectric dam started flooding their land. They were resettled in Durgapur ten years ago, in 1993, and were told that they had to move because a National Park had been created and a dam was built. They moved "voluntarily" when they realized that the rising water levels were beyond their control and that wild animals were destroying their crops and when they were offered good terms by the government for relocation. Durgapur is located two to three Km from the sanctuary.

They say that they were promised good land, irrigation, wells and a dam but that all the promises have been broken. They were also promised money but never got it. They were given bricks for their homes but had to provide all the other building materials such as bamboo themselves. They were also promised work in a tourist lodge but they have yet to see the tourist lodge. They are very angry about the five or six acres of land each family was given as it is of "poor quality." They have severe water problems and have yet to see any provisions from the government and forest department for irrigation.

They know about the EDC because the forest officials came to tell them that there was money available for building bunds, ponds, wells, etc. But they haven't seen any of the money and no bunds, ponds or wells have been built. And yet, their only request is that their water problem be solved. They need water to irrigate their fields which are not sufficient to sustain them and not yielding enough rice without the water. They were not offered any alternative sources of livelihood and must "go to Nagpur for work."

These villagers say they get firewood from their fields and use dried cow dung for fuel. They don't go into the forest anymore as they get arrested and jailed. They don't have a *bhumka* the last *bhumka* had died earlier without transfer of knowledge due to restricted movement in the forest. So the villagers now go to a doctor in Kawasa, five to six km away.

What they got from the EDC were six biogas plants, three of which are working, and 15 pressure cookers. They didn't get any saplings. The women were told about a sewing classes four Km away and were told that if they attended the sewing course they would get a sewing machine and a cycle. However, two of the women report that when they went to the sewing class, they were asked for their Scheduled Tribe Certificates. The women explained that they could not present their Scheduled Tribe Certificates as the

certificates were in their mothers' villages. Then they were asked to sign papers but they cannot read or write. So they were excluded from the program. Women who did attend the sewing training are angry because they haven't received any of the sewing machines or cycles they were promised. But they know that in another village 36 cycles were distributed. If given a chance the Gonds tribals would like to convey their apprehensions as well as their outright anger at having their traditional pattern of living disrupted.

### ***Mohgaon Sadak***

This is a revenue village located on the highway. It is 1 – 2 km from the Pench sanctuary, the population of the village is approximately 650 – 700 and 50% of the village population consists of Gond tribals and the rest belong to different castes. There are no Muslims and no Christians in the village. Agriculture and animal husbandry are the main sources of livelihood of the village. The village has electricity connections in all households. The main crops grown are wheat, paddy, maize, peas and grams. Rajani Uiky, a tribal woman, is the village Sarpanch.

The villagers informed us that the EDC programme was launched in 1998 – 99. There are 11 members in the EDC committee with no representation from women. When asked about the composition of the EDC committee, the villagers were unable to do so as they don't have information about all the members. The forest department took Rs 60 as membership fee from the villagers.

The villagers mentioned that the forest department did not give any orientation session explaining the IEP. They think that the programme is coming to an end in their village but they still don't know what the EDC project aimed to achieve. The villagers said the programme was implemented according to the whims and fancies of the forest officials irrespective of their opinions. They never had any meetings with the villagers to assess local needs and requirements. The general opinion of the villagers about the EDC project was that the forest department has money to spend and that they have to show for the expenditures. Whether or not the work was useful was rarely taken into consideration.

In this settlement, the villagers did not even know that there was a micro-plan for their community under the project, so the question of their inclusion in the planning process did not arise. We asked them whether at any given point of time they were asked about the different schemes under the EDC project and their reply was in the negative. The villagers complained that officials didn't even give them the correct information related to the different schemes carried out by them in the name of the EDC project.

The villagers talked about the 10 to 12 ponds constructed under the project. However, these ponds are not collecting water. They said that approximately one lakh rupees was sanctioned for each pond, but the forest department used only Rs 12,000 for each pond. Nobody knows where the rest of the money has gone. When we inquired how they know that only Rs 12,000 worth of work had been spent to construct each pond, the villagers who were involved in the construction of the pond said that with their experience they were able to estimate the value of the materials used in the construction of the pond, which were of poor quality.

The forest officials also constructed 20 to 25 biogas plants for the villagers of which only 50 percent are working. The villagers told us that these biogas plants were provided based on the assumption that the people would no longer need to go to the forest for fuel wood. But as half of the biogas plants are dysfunctional, there hasn't been much of a difference in terms of dependency on forests. Moreover, in some cases biogas plants were given to households that don't have cattle to supply the plant with cow dung, a very important component to run the plant.

The villagers also informed us that the forest officials dug six wells for irrigation as part of their eco-development scheme. There was one well to be dug for the irrigation needs of four to five people. The forest department promised the group undertaking this work that they would be paid Rs 60,000 for the well. The villagers agreed to the deal but when the people were ready with the wells and asked for the money there was a delay of several more months and they only received half of the promised amount. We also met Mr. D.L. Rai who showed us a 35-foot-deep well he constructed along with his group but was only paid half of the incurred expenses. On the whole, the people don't trust the forest department officials anymore. The forest department also distributed 5,000 rupees to the landless and needy people so they could start small businesses to sustain their families. The forest officials allegedly took 25 percent of the money given to the people.

A road leading to the actual colony was planned to be constructed under the project. The estimate was quoted to be approximately Rs 1 lakh. Though the EDC project is nearing completion, a road has not yet been laid. The preparatory work for the road has been done, with stones and mud. The panchayat is claiming that it has undertaken that work and not the EDC, but the EDC is claiming that it is responsible for the work. The road is not yet complete and there is controversy regarding who has paid for the preparatory work.

As far as women's participation is concerned, the forest department carried out only one programme for them. They opened a sewing class for the women where they recruited a local woman for teaching sewing skills. The training programme was for six months and after completion of the course all the trainees were promised a sewing machine by the officials. The training was over a year ago but the trainees are still waiting for their sewing machines. To make the matters worse, the forest department has auctioned the sewing machines for Rs 1,500. The villagers want them for Rs 1,000, but the forest officials are not bringing the auction price down.

Mohgaon village is less dependent on the forests for its day to day needs as they have access to the district head quarters being close to Seoni and are well connected by road. As far as requirement for wood is concerned, the villagers these days must buy the wood from Netaar Depot which is run by the forest department. They felt really strange when they were asked to buy fuel wood but now they reluctantly have had to get used to buying wood. The Netaar Depot was established before the Ecodevelopment programme was launched in the village and now caters to the housing needs of the villagers. Some of the villagers still go to the forest for fuel wood. People who cannot afford two square meals a day cannot expect to spend their money on fuel wood and end up not having anything to eat. They have to face the risk of harassment by the forest department. But dependence on the forest has to a large extent been reduced.

One of the objectives of the IEP was to improve the relations between the officials and the people. However, little has really improved. On the contrary, relations between the two parties have gone from bad to worse. Villagers' cattle are no longer allowed to go inside the sanctuary area for grazing. The forest department has given the villagers ten acres of grazing land and if their animals go beyond these set limits, they are fined. The fines differ from one animal to the next. For example, they charge Rs 2 for a cow and Rs 10 for a goat and for a buffalo. If the villagers' animals are killed by any wild animal in the forest they are not compensated adequately. In Narayan's case, a local resident, though his cow was worth Rs 1,500 and was killed by a wild animal, he only got Rs 250 from the forest department as compensation. The villagers also complained about the wild animals destroying their fields for which they don't get any compensation.

### **Salae**

This is a traditional tribal village where the IEP project was initiated in 1997-98. The villagers clearly mentioned that they do not have a clue about the project as they were not properly consulted by the department. When we asked them about the members of EDC the villagers replied that they don't actually know about the members. In fact, people might be on the membership list of the EDC without even knowing it. They don't have any idea what the project is all about and said that the forest officials haven't conducted a single meeting in their village. There was no orientation. When one of the researchers asked the villagers whether the programme has ended or not the villagers answered by saying that they don't know whether the project has ended or is still going on. We then asked the villagers what work has been done by the forest officials in the past five years and this is what they report:

The forest department installed nine gobar gas plants in the village. None of them are working. When asked why these plants are not working the villagers told us that to run these plants they need water. They say, "there is no water in the village for drinking so how can we put water in these gobar gas plants" [The gobar gas plants need some amount of water for the process of fermentation to be initiated, proper supply of water is necessary for the regular functioning of the bio-gas plant]. Though the irrigation department and a local NGO has constructed a well half a kilometre away from the village, it only caters to their daily needs for cooking and bathing. They then told us that before this well was constructed they used to bring water from another village called Vijaypani, which was two kilometres away from the village. Sometimes they dug shallow pits of three to four feet to get the ground water for their consumption.

The forest department widened a road with the help of villagers connecting another kutchra motorable road. The villagers feel that this initiative was motivated by the forest department's own desire to travel through the villages with their vehicles as they had difficulties getting to the village on foot.

The forest department has also implemented a national scheme, though it has nothing to do with the EDC project, called the "Rajiv Gandhi Water Mission" in the village. Under this scheme they built bunds in the fields and are still in the process of constructing wells and ponds for the villagers.

The villagers were also given saplings for oranges, bamboo, lime, etc for which they charged Rs 10 each. After one year only one percent of these saplings have survived and the rest have all died. Most saplings died due to lack of water in the initial stages.

Seasonal migration has been observed in this village during the off- season (summer). Men are migrating to Nagpur and nearby towns for employment. During the monsoon season they practice agriculture and the rest of the year they are employed as casual labour in cities and towns for construction and other labour intensive activities.

There is a constant conflict between the villagers and forest department regarding the compensation for loss of cattle and crops to the wild animals (tiger, wild boar, deer etc). The villagers don't get any compensation though there is a provision for the same. The forest department does the paper work, but often does not give any compensation to the villagers whose survival depends on timely compensation for farm losses. Moreover, villagers are fined if their animals trespass into the park i.e. Rs 25 per day per animal. They are often arrested and put in jail. There are only three below poverty line card holders, so the villagers don't even get any kind of relief from the government of India to buy basic needs at subsidized rates.

When the villagers were asked whether the Ecodevelopment project has changed or affected their lives in any way, the villagers said that nothing has changed; "we were harassed before and we are still harassed."

They added, “We had a water problem before EDC and we still have a water problem.” No programme for women has been initiated in this village.

### **Barelipar**

This is a complete Gond (tribal) village, with a population of approximately 350 people. It is located around 8 kilometres from Salae. The villagers’ main occupations are agriculture and animal husbandry. Crops like wheat, paddy, maize, grams and soya beans are grown. There are approximately 450 cattle in this village. The source of drinking water is a hand pump dug by the panchayat 15 years ago. There is no other source of drinking water. This village shares its boundaries with the forest, which has been used traditionally for a multitude of purposes including cattle grazing and collection of fodder, medicinal plants and construction materials. Hence villagers are constantly in conflict with the forest department. There is a primary school in the village, but for further studies they have to travel 5 – 6 km. The use of traditional medicines in this village is on its last legs. This is largely because the *bhumka* (local name for the traditional doctor) is fined by the forest department for going into the forest to collect herbs, fruit, nuts, etc.

The IEP was started in 1998- 99 and came to an abrupt end in 2003. There were seven members in the EDC. Like other villages, the people here were not really aware of what the project entailed or what its objectives were. The forest officials didn’t carry out an orientation programme for the villagers. The villagers were supposed to be included in the micro planning process of the project for the village but were not; as a result, most of the people were never clear about the EDC project or the reason why it was initiated in their village. In this case, the GEF and World Bank policy requirements for informed participation of affected villages during project preparation and implementation has not been complied with.

The forest department installed eight to ten biogas plants. In 204, none of those biogas plants were working. The general complaint here is that the forest department has supplied the villagers with inferior quality material. They are also not aware of the cost of a plant. The villagers were asked to pay 25% of the cost of the plant and those villagers who could not pay in cash were required to pay by doing labour equivalent to 25% of the cost. Most of them dug the pits for their own plants. Villagers were never informed of actual cost of the bio-gas plant.

Under the Ecodevelopment project, the road to the village connecting the main road was repaired and widened so that the village is accessible to vehicles. But the villagers don’t own any vehicles. The nearest mode of transport provided by government is five km away.

The only pond in the village was renovated under the project. The forest department also constructed a new pond. These two ponds are functional only after they are fed with rains. The ponds remain dry during the summers. The villagers were also unable to give any information about the amount of money spent on these ponds. Bunds were also constructed along the fields for efficient use of water during agriculture. Mango, orange and lime saplings were distributed for Rs 10 per sapling. The villagers are not aware of the quality of the saplings, variety/ hybrid. The majority of them perished as they did not receive adequate water and care. They were distributed during the monsoon season when the villagers were busy in their fields so could not plant the saplings immediately. The present situation is very pathetic with only 2% surviving. Small grants, sum of Rs 5,000 were given to landless villagers, for setting up a poultry farm, a cycle repair shop, etc. Women who had attended the sewing classes were given sewing machines instead of the money.

The villagers still depend on the forest for fuel wood and fruits. Though they have their village forest land, they sometimes unknowingly go into the restricted area. When they are caught, they are fined severely. Earlier the forest officials were not very strict but in recent years restrictions on villagers have become very severe. The traditional boundaries of the village were not affected by the project. But villagers said that initially their animals used to go inside the forest but now they don't; their grazing area has become limited. Moreover, the forest department also forced them to grow forest trees which they were not allowed to cut for their own benefit.

The village also has its own traditional doctor called "*bhumka*" who has the traditional knowledge of the medicinal plants. The forest officials' harassment has restricted the *bhumka's* movement in the forest and he cannot gather his medicinal herbs. As a result, he is unable to transfer his knowledge to the next generation.

There is a constant conflict between the villagers and forest department regarding the compensation for loss of cattle and crops to the wild animals (tiger, wild boar, deer etc). The villagers complained that half of their crops are destroyed by wild animals. The villagers added that before the creation of the park their crops were less frequently attacked by the animals as there were fewer wild animals. The villagers have not received any compensation for their losses. The forest department does the paperwork but does not give any compensation to the villagers whose survival depends on these two sources of income. Moreover villagers are fined if their animals go inside the sanctuary.

### **Potiya**

This village is a revenue village and the population is approximately 1,000, 85% of whom are tribals while the remaining families belong to different castes. The sanctuary is approximately 2 – 3 km away from the village. The main occupation of the people is agriculture and animal husbandry. The principal crops grown are wheat, paddy, grams, millets and maize. There are approximately 1,500 cattle; this is the present population which is 50% of the cattle population prior to 1995. The primary hospital is 10 km away from the village. The village has a primary school, but for the next level of studies the children travel 2 km away to another town.

The Ecodevelopment project launched in 1997 was ongoing in January 2004. The project in this village got an extension for 1 – 2 years (the extension is the second leg of the project granted by the forest department). Like other villages, the people in this village were largely unaware what the Ecodevelopment project is all about and what its objectives were. The villagers complain that the forest officials did not give them complete information about the project. They never consulted or considered what people wanted. Mr. Ramgopal, a local resident of the village, said: "if the villagers wanted a chair they made a bench".

When asked about their participation in the micro planning process the villagers replied by asking us a question – "what is micro planning?" the villagers are not sure of the project's objectives. Three wells were dug in the village with the EDC funds, which cater to the domestic water needs of the village. When the forest officials were renovating the ponds under the IEP, the villagers demanded that instead of renovating if they could connect Kaatpadiya river in the park with the community dam so it would also benefit the surrounding villages. But the forest officials did not pay any attention to their demand.

The villagers told us that their dependency on the forest has decreased as they have sold their cattle due to the restrictions imposed by the forest officials. Moreover, some of the cattle have died due to starvation. Some of the villagers have started buying fodder for their cattle. The villagers cannot go inside the park for fuel wood and, as a result, the demand for kerosene stoves has increased. In the village of 1,000 people,

only 15-20 people have bio-gas plants. The wild animals regularly destroy crops in their fields. Earlier the villagers used to get the compensation which is now stopped by the forest department. The above factors have made living expensive in the village. Consequently 60% of the people have gone to the nearby cities and towns for work as casual labour. The forest department also started a sewing classes in the village. The trainees were promised sewing machines after the completion of their course but till now they haven't got anything. The villagers' perceptions of what it means to protect biodiversity and their ecosystems were not incorporated in the program.

#### 4.1.3 Other IEP sites

This study regrettably did not have sufficient resources to undertake field visits to the other five IEP sites at Nagarhole, Buxa, Palamau, Periyar and Ranthambhore. However, communication with local NGOs and activists familiar with these protected areas and the GEF-assisted IEP report the following information:

- Ecodevelopment Committee activities have generated conflicts and divisions in most sites
- In Nagarhole people have been subjected to forced eviction and harassment by the Forest Department
- In Buxa, one Rabha community boycotted the IEP after one of their community members was shot dead after being mistaken to be an Illicit firewood collector
- The IEP has resulted in unwanted restrictions on local access to PA resources, other than in Periyar where traditional resource practices were largely respected by the Forest Department
- Restrictions on the gathering of forest produce and fuel wood have caused hardship and impoverishment in several IEP sites, including Nagarhole and Buxa
- In Ranthambhore, the locals earn their income by Animal husbandry, the inception of the project has forced them to take up agriculture which has completely lowered their standard of living
- Rehabilitation and relocation activities at Ranthambhore have resulted in impoverishment of affected families, in violation of the World Bank's OP/BP4.12 on Involuntary Resettlement
- In Buxa, some tribal communities are reported to have been unjustly excluded from project benefits
- With the exception of Periyar, affected communities were not adequately involved in project design
- Implementing NGOs often did not have adequate links to the communities and lacked sufficient resources to carry out their duties under the IEP
- Social assessments and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) undertaken for the IEP were often superficial
- Biogas plants constructed under the IEP never worked or have stopped working since there is a shortage of cow dung, which is an essential resource for biogas. The reason being poor availability of fodder for cattle due to restrictions on grazing in forest areas imposed by the Forest Department
- IEP Implementing agencies consistently disregarded the development priorities and proposals of villagers
- In Periyar the IEP achieved better interventions involving institutional building and involving local tribal communities. Institutions like the 'Vasant sena' initiated voluntarily by the local women to protect flora and fauna and Swamy Ayyappan Poonkavana Punarudharana EDC was created to handle two pilgrimage routes through Periyar by providing alternate fuel source, waste management and other conservation-oriented activities.
- In Ranthambhore tribal communities were given culturally inappropriate training for pig rearing and other small-scale industries
- A significant amount of the infrastructure development under the IEP has been for enhancing the forest department facilities.
- Rehabilitation and so-called "benefits" under the IEP were token interventions. In Nagarhole, relocated families were given solar lamps and cooking technology that never worked. Repeated complaints by the affected families never resulted in any action to correct problems

- Sewing machines promised to women villagers under the IEP have never been delivered
- Relations between local communities and protected area authorities have deteriorated in all sites, except in Periyar where they have reportedly improved somewhat
- There is an almost total lack of knowledge among communities involved in or affected by the IEP about future GEF/World Bank proposals in India

## **4.2 Summary Findings of evaluation of Indian Ecodevelopment Project**

### **Indigenous People and the EDC Project: access to information, participation in project, resettlement issues, conflicts and protection of rights:**

As the project document specifies, 56% of the people affected by the EDC Project are indigenous/tribal communities. However, the findings of the study, both in the field visits and the secondary information available show that the IEP did not adequately address or implement special programmes based on the tribal peoples' livelihoods, practices, needs or rights. There has been relocation of tribal communities in project sites either prior to the project or during the project period. Findings from this field study demonstrate that the IEP did not deal effectively with indigenous/tribal issues in Gir and Pench.

In India, the process of declaring protected areas, sanctuaries and national parks started much before the GEF project was implemented in these areas. There was little importance given to protection of people's rights while notifying these areas. "Conservation" often involved the resettlement of people to locations outside protected area boundaries. Resettlement was done in a very haphazard manner with least respect to human rights or development needs. In most cases, people were forcibly relocated, sometimes during monsoons without alternative shelter or means of livelihood. Some tribal families disappeared and disintegrated without any trace like in Gir. Since displacement and relocation took place prior to the GEF's entry, it appears that the GEF did not consider that its grants should ensure full completion of prior resettlement activities in the project area. In practice, however, multiple resettlement issues and conflicts spilled over into the IEP project period due to non-implementation of previous rehabilitation programmes.

In the case of Pench, the villagers from Alikatta were resettled in Durgapur with poor quality land and not enough water to sustain their agricultural livelihood. The EDC did not provide them with improved sources of livelihood nor did it help fulfil earlier promises made by the government at the time of eviction. Here the GEF and World Bank are answerable for not addressing the crucial existing social and economic problems linked to previous displacement and faulty rehabilitation of indigenous communities.

The IEP promoted an anti-people and exclusionary model of conservation where the tribal communities dwelling in the forests were not considered part of the habitat requiring protection. The NGOs in Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat have taken serious objections to the World Bank's involvement in the EDC projects and have accused the Bank of violating its Operational Directives (e.g., SOPAN an NGO in Seoni district of Madhya Pradesh). In M.P civil society organisations organized wide protests and wrote open letters to the President of the World Bank demanding that the Bank withdraw from the EDC and related World-Bank funded forestry projects in the same State.

Although the GEF and the World Bank have social policies, they are not properly implemented on the ground and this pattern of poor implementation is striking in the case of the India Ecodevelopment Project – based on the findings collected for this independent evaluation and indeed of the World Bank's own Inspection Panel review of Ecodevelopment in and around Nagarhole National Park.

This study has found compelling evidence that social assessments and “PRA” undertaken prior to the project did not adequately address rights issues and the specific needs and priorities of tribal groups living in and around the protected areas included in the project. There are also indications that the IEP served to strengthen existing exclusionary conservation policies rather than reform an inequitable and exclusionary approach to protected areas in India.

While the project did have the stated aim of increasing local involvement in conservation, in practice the project design and implementation did not enable this, but rather more often than not enabled the Forest Department to further strengthen its anti-people methodologies and ‘parks without people’ policy. The alternative livelihoods and alternative technologies have not proved sustainable in many cases and have undermined the traditional knowledge and customary resource use practice. At the same time, indigenous and local communities maintain that the IEP planners and Forest Departments never proved that their traditional practices within protected areas were ever unsustainable in the first place. In many cases, the Samata team has found that families only reluctantly accepted alternative livelihoods in the face of fear, misinformation and intimidation by the forest department or just to avoid further daily harassment. The GEF and the World Bank can be accused of colluding with the national and state governments to push local communities off their lands and restricting their access to the natural environment in the name of biodiversity conservation.

Projects like the IEP throw up a whole lot of contestable issues with regard to indigenous people and development policies and programmes supported by the GEF and World Bank. This study found that indigenous people were either not informed or ill-informed about the projects and do not have any genuine role in designing, planning or implementing the activities of the project, however well envisaged the original project document was with regard to people’s participation. In addition, alternate livelihoods provided under the IEP have had a negligible impact on peoples’ standard of living and in some cases have actually made people worse off. IEP funds for housing, roads, agricultural support systems, basic amenities like alternate firewood, lighting, distribution of cattle, plant material, etc have not substantially addressed local priorities, but merely enabled the forest department to fulfil its mandatory requirements of making documented project disbursements.

Limited distributions of tin sheds, dress-making programmes for women, LPG connections, street lighting facilities, and other such activities have not resulted in a sustainable increase in the quality of life and food/land security of local communities. To the contrary, as this evaluation in Gir and Panch reveals, there is a significant amount of qualitative evidence in some villages to demonstrate that people and households have been actually impoverished as a result of the IEP (directly or indirectly).

On the other hand, these programmes are implemented with vast amounts of project money spent either without proper planning or because of the irrevocable corruption, mismanagement or poor planning and supervision of the forest department. For the forest authority, international projects such as the IEP are a welcome source of maintaining or enhancing the administrative expenditures required to sustain and increase the capacity and influence of the department or a means of enhancing the scope for corruption which cannot be removed by mere directions or recommendations from the World Bank.

### **People not involved in Project Planning and limited access to information**

The responses given by the people living in the *nesses* within the EDC in Gir and in Panch indicate that there was very little awareness or understanding about the project by the local people. In all the village visits whenever people were questioned, it came out quite clearly that there was little information about the project, its design and implementation and at what stage the activities were. Even when the project

was reaching its concluding stages, people did not know much about the existence of the project. With the constant threat of eviction, the people were suspicious of the micro planning process and deliberately provided inaccurate information regarding their livestock and the details of their families/households in Gir. In turn, the development programmes like housing, electricity, cooking gas connections, schools or any other activities were inadequately provided because of this.

Many discrepancies and inequities in the delivery of project benefits also occurred due to faulty information and inadequate legal definitions of local resource users and rights holders within and adjacent to protected areas involved in the IEP. Since 1972, the Maldharis and other communities residing inside the sanctuary in Gir were defined as either permanent settlers, non-permanent settlers or “illegal encroachers”. These defective and outdated definitions continued to hamper later development and conservation programmes, including the IEP.

This study has also found that the IEP did not protect and maintain traditional indigenous people’s practices of forest management. The people in Pench complained that the EDC under the IEP neglected Gond traditional practices and culture by restricting *bhomka* from entering the forest to collect their medicinal supplies, which impeded their ability to heal the sick and blocked the effective transmission of their knowledge to other community members.

### **Problems with Ecodevelopment Committees and associated conflicts**

Discussions with local *nes* dwellers, Panchayat leaders and local NGOs revealed that there has been a very limited effort to institutionalize the EDC concept as planned in the project design. Meetings are rarely organized by the local forest department and the few times they were convened it was mainly with the intention of fulfilling a mandatory process rather than to sensitise the people or to involve them through a participatory process of decision making and implementation of the project. Only one village (Bhojde) where the study was conducted which expressed that meetings were held within their *Nes* to discuss the funds and programmes.

With regard to participation of women and building the EDC institution with their involvement, it was quite apparent in the villages visited as part of this study that the women did not participate in public platforms. Therefore, their participation in the EDC project was almost non-existent. Although NGOs like AKRSP and IRMA were involved in microplanning in the early stages of the IEP, they were not actively involved later in the project. The only institution involved in the project was CEE which is again not an NGO but an institution set up by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. In Pench, there were no NGOs involved to our understanding.

Although the attitude and practices of the forest officials seem to have relaxed in some places after the IEP compared to earlier draconian behaviour, such changes are not systemic (cf. *Shalini Randeria, Globalising Gujarat: Environmental Action in the legal Arena*). The Maldhari communities with whom our team held discussions noted a positive change in Forest Department attitude in some cases. However, the Maldharis say that they continue to be harassed by the forest officials at the field level for various reasons like issuing or renewal of grazing passes, entry into the sanctuary, implementation of development activities, when dealing with conflicts between *Nesses* and other villages over boundaries and grazing rights.

Although the Ecodevelopment Plan was initiated with the main objective of “increasingly involving the people living in and around the national parks into conservation planning and implementation in management of the area” and is also aimed at minimizing conflict between officials and people through

innovative and participatory approach, in practice there have been continued conflicts due to lack of involvement of people in the programme and due to the antagonistic approach of the officials in ensuring rehabilitation, compensation and alternatives.

There has been a rise in the conflicts between the people and the forest department on some issues after the EDCs were formed. For instance, as people's movements are restricted, the incidence of arrests and cases on them has increased if cattle were caught trespassing into the park, or people entered for fodder or fuelwood, etc. However, wildlife attacks also have increased but rarely is compensation paid to the owners of the cattle. Therefore, people sometimes, have also resorted to injuring or killing the wildlife in frustration and also due to the newly created antagonism between man and animal, animal having gained priority over people in our new conservation models of EDC.

### **Inadequate and unsustainable livelihood alternatives for project-affected people**

Under the EDC programme a number of activities related to fulfilling infrastructure needs as well as economic needs were planned and implemented. Some of the infrastructure activities relate to housing, street lighting, drinking water, schools, and other facilities. On the economic front, activities undertaken were distribution of livestock, providing wage labour for forestry works in the protected area, etc. When the study team looked at the impacts of these investments on the Maldharis vis-à-vis the expenditure, it was found to be far from adequate where the project objectives of creating sustainable alternatives and reducing the dependency on the biomass cannot be fulfilled at the present intervention levels. Other studies and reports of the seven projects also reveal similar findings.

### **Ecodevelopment schemes do not suit local needs and priorities**

In Pench, instead of providing the villagers with secure access to native sources of forest produce, fodder, tendu and mahua, the EDC provided the villagers with lime, mango and orange saplings to be planted on unsuitable village lands without adequate irrigation. In Potiya, many villagers have had to sell their cattle due to lack of fodder and are migrating in search of work. In many cases, adequate baseline studies of local livelihoods and resources needs were never carried out. For example, none of the villages were surveyed to determine whether or not they would have enough water or cow dung to operate the biogas plants. So villagers report that few of the biogas plants are actually working. In Potiya, the villagers report an increase in the demand for kerosene stoves, which were not provided by the EDC.

With regard to housing for instance, people were asked to pay a deposit in order to avail of the scheme in accordance with project rules. Not many Maldharis could afford to pay this and therefore, were left out of the programme. Those that could afford the contribution did not find the nature of housing suited to their requirements and therefore, do not live in these houses or use these as a second dwelling while they continue to use their traditional houses. The main issue here is that the people were not consulted about the kind of housing requirements they desired while doing the micro plans. Many of the EDC members are not aware of the funds allocated or spent on their respective villages for housing, which has created suspicion between the people and the forest department. Similarly, there was street lights set up with huge expenses. Some of them are already dysfunctional.

### **Wastage and misuse of project funds**

In an effort under the IEP to reduce the consumption of firewood, large sums of money were spent on providing LPG connections to the affected communities. The local tribals find it more viable to gather firewood from their surroundings rather than to travel long distances carrying the gas cylinders to nearby

towns and pay a price too high for their incomes for refilling the cylinders. Hence, many of them have sold their connections to the more well to do non-tribals and continue to depend on firewood. Thus, creating an artificial dependence not suited to the economic and social capacities of the people has led to wasteful expenditure under the project. More than the tribal people, the non tribal villages and road side villages grabbed whatever development activities were provided in these projects. Moreover, this lopsided programme approach has not created any long term sustainable alternatives to the use of natural resources in the PAs for the local people and defeats the whole purpose of the project.

The development activities implemented under the project have largely been in the nature of giving some superficial incentives – tin roofs, LPG stoves, household utensils, street lights, village infrastructure repair works, and the like which have no direct relation to the basic problem of forest degeneration or the issue of people's livelihoods and sustainability. On the other hand, the traditional corruption within the forest department got a boost by having a large amount of funds to misappropriate. Ad hoc and hastily formed people's institutions created by such projects, whether the EDCs under GEF or VSS under JFM programme or other village forestry committees, do not have the power or control over information, legal mechanisms to bring about greater accountability in the forest department.

### **Poor project planning and implementation of programmes for Tribal Women**

Moreover, civil society organisations detect an apparent duplicity in the flow of funds and in design of development programmes with the post-90's trend of increasing external aid/loans for government projects. In this way, international project activities run parallel to the programmes of different departments within the central and state governments. For example, programmes related to women mainly center around training programmes in dress-making, small income-generating activities or the establishment of Self Help Groups (SHG)/Thrift Societies. Currently, in India, the formation of SHGs with poor women has become one of the most competitive programmes with multiple players – NGOs, different departments within the government, international financial institutions like the World Bank, external aid agencies, and even corporations - claiming ownership over these institutions. In many of the tribal areas, the same group of women from the same area are wooed by all these institutions to form SHGs and, depending on the nature of support, (loans, matching grants, capacity building, etc) the women are pressed to decide upon their affiliation. In some areas, the same approach has been adopted in the GEF project where women's SHGs managed by the forest department, have been touted as successful programmes. In reality, few of these groups function properly after such projects are wound up, unless there is an existing NGO locally to take the institution forward. Even where training programmes were provided under the IEP, many women are still waiting for the sewing machines to use their newly acquired skills.

### **Serious threats to protected areas not tackled by Ecodevelopment**

The Gir sanctuary has a number of other threats to its lions and other fauna and flora. For example, there is a railway line, which passes through the protected area. The official records of lion population and deaths of lion indicate that every year a lion is killed due to being run over by trains and not by the local people. The proximity of the railway line has also been the cause of forest fires due to sparks. Tourism is another cause for pressure on the biodiversity and has negative impacts on the forest. One of the biggest group of hotels in India, the Taj is housed within the protected area. These businesses derive greater income from tourism than the local communities, while creating pressure on the resources and the wildlife through a high traffic of tourists all through the year. It is also questionable how Hotels and Resorts are allowed to exist inside sanctuary areas against the Wildlife Act, while tribals traditional land use is prohibited.

Pressure on Gir sanctuary increased due to uncontrolled deforestation of the area by incoming farmers who left the Saurashtra region due to severe drought. Agricultural colonisation has increased the livestock population within the protected area causing pressure on the grasslands, and increasing the incidence of forest fires. Loss of cattle to lions has also led to conflict between the lions and the forest dwellers. Hence, the traditional symbiotic relationship between the peaceful Maldhari communities and the wildlife of Gir has created a situation of pressure on the biodiversity due to the influx of outsiders. In practice, therefore, it is not the traditional sustainable system of livelihood and existence that has increased threats to protected areas as is alleged by the Forest Department, but rather recent exploitation of the area by outsiders, which is one key factor destroying the ecological balance in Gir.

Another important threat to the sanctuary is the presence of mining companies. Gir sanctuary is rich in limestone and although the High Court of Gujarat has prohibited mining in the sanctuary areas, illegal mining activities continue within the periphery unchecked. Some of the most influential private companies are operating these mines and have proposals pending with the government. The local NGOs also suspect that the proposal to shift some of the lions from Gir to Palpur Kuno in Madhya Pradesh has more to do with giving leases to mining companies by removing the lions than to protect the lions themselves. As a result of the relocation of lions from Gir, a recent problem that has arisen is the eviction of tribal villages around Kuno to clear the park for the new wildlife population. Already local communities and NGOs are protesting against this.

### **Ecodevelopment underpinned by unjust and fundamentalist conservation concepts**

The general objectives of the India Ecodevelopment Project as cited by the GEF and World Bank are based on assumptions that local communities living in or around wildlife conservation areas have a negative impact on the delicate plant and animal ecosystems; their resource use must be reduced or they must be relocated outside the boundaries of the wildlife reserves and encouraged to survive without entering the forests. This course of action, according to the IEP approach, was intended to protect villagers and their crops from wild animals and will protect wild animals and plant species from human encroachment. Yes this approach has never been backed up by strong scientific evidence. Indeed, scientific studies in Pench National Park undertaken by the People's Science Institute compared different areas where people are totally excluded with parts of the protected area accessible to village communities, and found that greater human presence and activity did not lead to greater biodiversity loss (Roy, D: 2005 – note on Chhattisgarh-net, May 2005).

After completion of the IEP another very serious issue related to global conservation lobbies that press national governments to redefine forest boundaries and creating layers of 'biodiversity enclaves' thereby strategically cutting off the peoples' access to forests and extinguishing their rights over land and forest resources. To quote a senior forest officer Shri R.K.Rao's analysis in his paper "Forest Myths, Jungle Laws and Social Justice":

“the National Wildlife Action Plan in its objective No. 1 states that the area under PAs at present is around 16 million hectares and we should aim to bring 10% of India's landmass under the PA network. This again is an arbitrary norm. Earlier it was 10% of forest area and 4% of land mass! If we look at the evolution of the PA's concept in our country, their objective was preservation (not conservation) of wildlife and PAs comprised of core area and a buffer zone, both within the PA; then came the concept of declaring the core as a national park and the buffer as a sanctuary under the Wildlife Act in view of the greater restrictions that can be imposed in a national park and the buffer was shifted to outside the PA boundaries. Now the buffer zone is proposed to be

declared as the conservation area under the 2003 amendment to the Wildlife Act; and most likely, the area beyond the conservation area, if any is left, will become the buffer zone.”

In this way, across India more and more areas stand to be taken over by the forest department. Shri R.K. Rao (retired forester) questions the basis for declaring biodiversity conservation as the primary objective of the PAs. He further contends that the 17 centres of biodiversity identified by the global biodiversity study should be focused by the government for protection. This growing global conservationist concept creates a fear in the minds of governments, policy-makers and civil society that the biodiversity in countries like India is being threatened by the local communities and that they have to be removed from the habitat.

It is this unjust conservation principle based on flawed and unproven assumptions, which is continue to encourage government authorities to seek overt and covert ways of grabbing lands back from forest dwelling communities and influencing policy decisions on redefining forestry theories and practices. In this context, the forest policy statements in our Tenth Five Year Plan gives the following road-map:

- Increase in forest and tree cover in the country to 25% by 2007 and to 33% by 2012.
- Universalisation of JFM to cover 15 million hectares
- Thrust on strengthening the protected areas network as conservation is assigned a high priority in forestry under the Plan.

All three pose serious threats to the rights and welfare of forest dwelling communities at a time when they are already being affected by increasing resource conflicts in reserve and protected forest areas. Over the last 50 years industries, dams and other development projects have forced Adivasi-tribal communities off of their lands and so they have been displaced to occupy forest lands in other areas. In 2002, the Ministry of Environment and Forests termed them as “encroachers” and passed a circular ordering for their immediate eviction from reserve forestlands instead of recognizing their rights. Though the government has since advised forest authorities to resolve existing land claims and exercise caution prior to any eviction, in practice some forest communities have suffered eviction and many others still face the threat of eviction. Secondly, through the Joint Forest Management (JFM) programmes, forestlands are being reclaimed by the State in the guise of community participation in forest protection. Further, through so-called ecodevelopment projects, even the few existing rights of the tribals which are enjoyed under the JFM programme are undermined by the EDC concept that seeks to restrict people’s presence in the forest.

The basic principle of EDC is to find mechanisms to restrict people’s access in return for so-called development benefits and to persuade them to resettle away from protected areas. In this way, the IEP and the ongoing ecodevelopment principle seeks to eliminate the ancient symbiotic processes of existence between people and forests. The goal of ecodevelopment is to create alternative sources of livelihood for the people. However, it is impossible to remove the people or their dependency on the forest through artificial mechanisms. This has been proved both in the IEP funded under GEF and World Bank and in World Bank-funded forestry projects in India.

More seriously, at a national level, these projects and concepts have created a wide divide between civil society groups whose thrust is on conservation and wildlife protection and peoples’ struggles/NGO’s whose focus is on supporting the human rights issues.

Even conservation groups who have a balanced understanding and sympathy for community rights still advocate resettlement on the condition that it respects human rights. However, these advocates admit that in practice the history of rehabilitation in the country is far from acceptable. Peoples’ movements

contend that in real terms, the programmatic approach of participation, economic development and alternative resource creation do not lead to a process of addressing ecological protection and social rights as these have very little impact on communities' development, while conflicts and human-biotic pressures are increasing due to larger climate change and issues linked to the global economy.

### **Project Performance Report – superficial**

At the end of the project period, MoEF issued an extensive project performance report the findings of which have failed to consider the issues concerning tribal people. There is no reference to the conflicts and problems faced by the tribal people, and the report does not try to assess the project from the perspective of the affected communities. The evaluation was primarily focused on management and implementation of project components, resource management, reduction in poaching, grazing, tourism, collection of firewood and NTFP, all of which are reported to have been “successfully” reduced. Further, the report looked at the other details of PA staff and their ability to control PA resources, micro planning, soil and water conservation, and other specific issues, but did not provide indicators for future sustainability of the project nor does it provide a larger assessment of the effectiveness and drawbacks of the ecodevelopment concept.

At the end of the IEP there is no accessible official report to assess how the huge expenditures of the PAs are going to be met or how the activities and monitoring are going to be fulfilled. Given the trend of bureaucratic dependence on external projects, the only strategy likely to be adopted is to prepare another internationally-financed project. The new GEF proposal to finance a project “*Linking Biodiversity Conservation and Rural Livelihoods*” with an estimated fund of US \$96 million, in the pipeline suggest this is indeed the approach to be adopted to follow-up the IEP. The content of the proposal also indicates the trend in World Bank funded projects being pushed into India where earlier projects are redesigned and reintroduced with slight variations in terminologies and programme activities. There is no open public debate or consultation about these minor changes, nor participation or decision making of tribal communities involved before the project is approved. In this way, so-called World bank-GEF community and NGO consultations in India have become a mockery of good faith public consultation.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

Thus, some of the serious problems found with the GEF/World Bank funded India Ecodevelopment Project that have emerged from this study are:

- Conflicts and Violation of World Bank norms and ODS with regard to Indigenous Peoples and displacement and rehabilitation of indigenous communities
- Disregard for the symbiotic relationship between the Adivasi-tribal people and the eco-system
- Policies and practices that alienate the indigenous-tribal communities from their traditional habitats, cultures and practices
- Lack of serious consultation with tribal communities, before or during the project
- Artificial and superficial institutions created for protecting and managing PAs
- Superficial and shallow development programme that do not address the basic concerns of communities
- Lip service to “gender sensitivity”, but little practical action on the ground
- The creation of social conflicts within the communities and with outsiders
- Support for a flawed and unjust premise that identifies Adivasi/tribal people as “encroachers”, destroyers and enemies of the forest

- Promotion of unsustainable, unwanted and culturally inappropriate alternative livelihood activities
- Failure to create or support sustainable natural resource management systems
- Contradictions between project objectives and activities and the constitutional safeguards for the tribal peoples' rights in India
- A huge wastage of funds in the name of eco development
- Failure to address the actual causes for deforestation and degeneration of natural resources in the country

## 5.1 Recommendations

- **GEF and World bank guidelines and directives on indigenous people must be clearly spelt out for India and mechanisms of addressing violations must also be clearly stated**
- **the local communities proposed to be affected by the project should have clear and accurate information of these directives and mechanisms**
- **No project should be sanctioned in the tribal areas without the free, prior and informed consent of the affected tribal people and tribal communities**
- **The IEP must be properly evaluated by independent and external evaluators with a team that includes members of the Adivasi communities affected as well as local and national level NGOs working on Adivasi rights and tribal concerns**
- **Public hearings must be conducted before the commencement of any further full-size GEF biodiversity project to consult Adivasi organisations, local communities and the public about any new proposed project and its objectives and components.**
- **Information about any GEF full size project proposal must be made available and accessible to the public in Hindi and in other local languages in advance of the public hearing**
- **Public comments must be called for before the project is approved and sufficient time period must be allowed for sending comments**
- **Consultation with tribal welfare departments, state and central Tribes Advisory Councils must be mandatory for all projects proposed in tribal areas**
- **Prior approval of the respective Gram Sabhas must be made compulsory before sanctioning such projects in the tribal areas. The GEF should ascertain whether affected Adivasi peoples and their communities consent to the proposal**
- **Where projects propose relocation of tribal communities or are proposed in areas where displacement has occurred in anticipation of such projects, consent or objections of Gram Sabhas must be made a compulsory precondition for project approval by the GEF and other international funding agencies. A clear project proposal including rehabilitation programme must be included in the consultation in order that the Gram Sabhas may make a free, prior and informed decision.**
- **Redress procedures must be established during for the project wherever tribal communities are affected. A public hearing should be held not only before the commencement of the project, but also periodically during project implementation. These hearing during project preparation and implementation must be made compulsory.**

- **Denial of access to resources within the PA should not be the purpose and objective of these projects. The tribal people should enjoy the right of access to these resources and their traditional resource rights must be fully respected.**
- **The tribal communities must have a right of demanding withdrawal of the project if their rights are being violated as per the terms of agreement approved by the Gram Sabha**
- **Where the tribal communities have strong customary practices and traditional institutions of managing the PAs/forest resources, these should not be tampered with for the implementation of the project which comes up with artificial institutions and mechanisms.**
- **The Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, the national tribal policy and the 73rd Amendment Act must be respected and followed in their true spirit for any projects in the tribal areas.**
- **The impact of the IEP must be evaluated by a national level independent committee before the next GEF project proposal on ‘Linking Biodiversity with Rural Livelihoods’ is taken up for consideration.**

## Glossary

CBO	Community-Based Organization
FD	Forest Department
Ghee	A milk product locally made with high fat content.
Gujjar/ Maldhari	A traditional name for a pastoralist.
IEP	India Ecodevelopment Project
IP	Indigenous People
MoEF	Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India.
Nes	Hamlet inside the forest. Now some has become revenue village outside forest, with tag of 'nes'.
PTO	Project Tiger Office
PDF	Project Development Facility
Vasahat	Resettlement colony, where the displaced population is relocated, later it becomes an administrative unit, may be as part of revenue village.
WB	World Bank

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