

Project Report

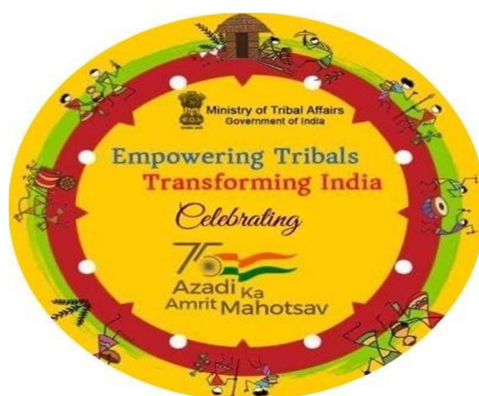
Participatory Planning by involving Self-Help Groups and linkage of Forest Dwelling Tribal communities of J&K with Market through Minor Forest Produce

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1. Introduction and background

NTFP have a tremendous economic significance, particularly for the world's rural poor, and are used, consumed, and traded by billions of people. Around 80% of the population of developing countries depends on plant-based traditional medicine for primary healthcare. In some cases, upto 96% of the value of forest products are derived from NTFP and related services. NTFP accounts for about 40% of the income of 60–80% of forest dwellers. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates the contribution of NTFP at US\$88 billion, with an annual growth rate of 15–25%, and demand is likely to increase to more than US\$ 5 trillion by 2050. “Minor forest products” contribute over 50% of the forest revenues and 70% of the export income from forest products in India. However, estimates of trade at local, regional, and global levels are underestimated as NTFP are traded mostly in informal markets. This has resulted in poor representation in national and international statistics, mostly due to deficiencies in defined structures and standards (Peerzada *et al.*, 2021).

The renewed interest in the management of NTFPs has improved extensively due to their significant contribution to addressing income inequality mitigation and supporting sustainable development. Conservative estimates indicate that a large portion of total forest products' value comes from NTFPs, although the magnitude of this value may vary from site to site. In diversified value chains, NTFPs provide medicine, aroma, spices, flavours, phytonutrients and nutritional variety in contemporary diets.

Despite maximum local consumption, trade and poor representation of details in national and international statistics, NTFPs are being increasingly recognized for their significant roles in supporting local and state economies. Comprehensive investigation into the dynamics of NTFPs in rural livelihoods, as well as trends of production, collection, consumption, trade and sustainability, are essential. In order to enhance the local subsistence as well as to support regional bio-economy with NTFPs, it is important to examine the site-specific potential of different NTFPs. This means that site-specific assessments regarding the consumption patterns and potential of NTFPs with a greater focus on forest-based livelihoods are crucial and relevant. Moreover, the collection, consumption and trade of freely available forest-based NTFPs are influenced by the context and site-specific household characteristics. Among household characteristics, gender and age are more important than numbers. Therefore, this study was conceived to understand the synergy of local community

households' dependency on these resources, as well as to understand the links with adaptation to various stresses and the potential contribution to bio-economy.

Collecting and selling of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) is considered as an important means of improving the economic conditions of the rural people. The collection of NTFPs depends upon the location, size and need of the market, the price of NTFPs, the background of FPC members and the demand of the particular market-consumers. There is irregular functioning of NTFP markets on account of price instability. Marketing of NTFPs assumes importance because it provides safety nets for the income of rural households in lean agriculture season or when crop fails. As the gathering and marketing at the local level mostly done by women, it leads to Empowering women through their increase in household incomes. Collecting and selling of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) is considered as an important means of improving the economic conditions of the rural people. The collection of NTFPs depends upon the location, size and need of the market, the price of NTFPs, the background of FPC members and the demand of the particular market-consumers. There is irregular functioning of NTFP markets on account of price instability. Marketing of NTFPs assumes importance because it provides safety nets for the income of rural households in lean agriculture season or when crop fails. As the gathering and marketing at the local level mostly done by women, it leads to Empowering women through their increase in household incomes (Bagal, *et al.*, 2022).

The NTFP outlets were more accessible than others. Some of the collectors accessed one or more of these outlets, but most of the collectors relied on the middlemen at the village. No collector had access to the market outside the district. Because of the limited number of outlets and the fact that most collectors depended on the middlemen, collectors were at the mercy of the traders or contractors. Understanding the collection and market structure dynamics will allow us to identify where opportunities, bottlenecks and inequities exist in the chain.

In India, as elsewhere, there is a move towards involving local people living in and around forests in biodiversity conservation. This is being seen as a response to the legitimate demands of the local people to be involved in activities that affect their lives and also a necessary pre condition to the success of conservation efforts (**Badola *et al.*, 2002**). Conflicts are always possible when attempt to protect the PA from human intervention by coercion is made. Hence the viability of relying on the totally on traditional enforcement is increasingly

being questioned as a long term solution to the protection of many critical ecosystems (**Wells and Brandon, 1992**). This has led to the conclusion that measures devised to conserve biodiversity must therefore address the livelihood requirement of local communities

In 1980, governments and influential donor organization around the world began to realize that biodiversity cannot be conserved in developing countries without the involvement of local communities in its management (Brandon and Wells 1992, Baker 1997). In 1985, WWF with the support of USAID and the Moriah Fund, launched the wildlands and Human Needs Program through which about twenty PA projects in developing countries were planned, to give equal importance to conservation as well as development. In 1986 world bank adopted a policy on wild lands which required that wildland management be considered in the context of overall economic and sectoral planning. Moreover, there are inadequate social and economic mechanisms to encourage individuals to invest in maintaining ecosystem functions and services.

Empowerment of local communities is an efficient and sustainable approach to conserve wildlife (Rao and Geisler1990). This would enable local people to make good decision regarding resource use with the conservation agencies, foresee the outcome of their actions and adapt to new situations. Gibson and Marks (1995) believed that empowerment motivates local communities for the conservation of wildlife. Local people living in habitat of wild species can be benefited through several forms of incentives such as land ownership, empowerment and livelihood benefits in addition to social and financial implication.

Government of India has drawn several policy measures to achieve gender equality and gender empowerment. One of such measure is the promotion and activation of Self-Help groups(SHG). SHGs are voluntary associations of economically poor, usually drawn from the same socio-economic background and who resolve to come together for a common purpose of solving their issues and problems through self-help and community action.

2) Need for the study

The **National Forest Policy (1988)** of our country emphasized that the forests should not be looked upon as a source of revenue only. They are the **national assets** to be **protected and enhanced** for the well-being of the people and the nation. Forests make a significantly direct and indirect contribution to human life in and around the forests. Recently the study in

Gujarat state revealed that the non-timber forest products make a significant economic contribution to the State economy.

The need for the study can be emphasized through the following points as explained by **(Tewari (1995))**.

- Traditionally the forest management model treated non-timber output as the byproduct of timber production process.
- Very little emphasis is given for non-timber forest products by the forestry management model.
- It is felt that the forest resources especially the NTFPs are more sustainable from the ecological, economic and social perspective.
- NTFPs are the source of livelihood to a large population belonging to poor and tribal groups.
- There is large scope for value addition through establishment of forest based small scale enterprises.
- NTFPs provide food security and nutritional supplement to a large low-income population.
- Women are largely involved in collection, processing and marketing of the NTFPs.
- Very few studies are conducted in India on the NTFPs and their contribution to the household economy.

3) Tribe Defined

In India the tribes are known to be the autochthonous people of the land. Tribal's are often referred to as *Adivasi*, *Vanyajati*, *Vanvasi*, *Adamjati*, *Pahari* and *Anusuchit Jan Jati*, the latter being the constitutional name (Basu 2000). Tribe as a category, separate from the mainstream caste society, is an invention of British Administrators. According to Singh (1995), 'the notion of tribe was introduced by colonial Administrators. It was part of the universal trend to dichotomize the indigenous peoples and colonizers, the "savage" and a "civilized", the tribals and the non- tribals'. Several anthropologists however hold the view that a tribe is no different from a caste (Beteille 1974). The term "Tribe" has been defined in different ways by individual scholars and hence there is no universally accepted definition. The Constitution of India though, made several provisions for safeguarding tribals but tribe is nowhere defined in the constitution. It only declares that the scheduled tribes are "the tribes

or the tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes are tribal communities” which the President of India may specify through public notification (Article 342).

The most acceptable definitions of tribes in Indian context is propounded by D. N. Majundar (1958). According to him “A tribe is collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations.”

Gujjars: Gujjars are found in each district of the state with majority of them dwelling in Rajouri and Poonch Districts. The Gujjar on the basis of their occupation and settlement in the state of Jammu and Kashmir are classified as (i) Cultivators (*Muqami*) who have settled in villages on the slopes or valleys, (ii) The Gujjars who practice transhumance; They are further sub-divided into Banihara or dodhi Gujjars (milkmen) and Bakkarwal Gujjar (who rear sheep and goats). The Baniharas or the Dodhi Gujjar tend buffaloes and sell *dudh* (milk) and milk products and for this reason they are known as dodhi (milkmen). They live in *bans* (forests) for which reason they are also known as *Baniharas* (the residents of forests). The Bakkarwal belong to the same ethnicity as the Gujjar, and inter-marriages take place among them (Kapoor et. al 1994). The Bakkarwals keep large herds of *bakri* (goats) and this is the reason they are called Bakkarwals. The Bakkarwals tend goats and sheep whereas the *baniharas* rear buffaloes. The names, Bakkarwals, Baniharas or Dodhi were given by non-Gujjars to indicate the profession of Gujjars and with the passage of time this appellation got stuck (Himalayan and cultural Asian studies vol.4 No.1)

The higher reaches of Pirpanjal and greater Himalayas are the summer pastures of these people, which are known as *dokes*. Their villages consist of *kothas* (mud houses) which are architecturally quite different from Kashmiri houses. These *kothas* are scattered on the slopes, surrounded by maize fields and an enclosure for animals. The sub-castes of these Bakkarwal are also same as the other Gujjars i.e. Hakla, Bajjar, Kohli, Chechi, Khatana, Badhana, Bagdi, Goosi, and Kalas etc. who lead a nomadic life. For example, when they move from one place to another place, they form groups in such a way that they remain together. There will be one group of Khatana, the other group of Hakla and another Kohli and so on.

Gujjars have their own traditional panchayat which is called ‘Jerga’. This body is comprised of some old, trusted and responsible persons of the community. They decide their

matters keeping in view the welfare and prosperity of their tribe. Most of the cases being reported are on grazing fields disputes, misbehaviour with women, and theft.

Bakkarwals: The name Bakkarwal implies “high altitude” goatherds/Bakkarwals are the nomadic element of the Gujjar tribe; they keep large herds of goats and a certain number of sheep, buffaloes and cattle (Census of India, 1941, Report on Kashmir, part 1: 9-11). Seventeen years later, it was however stated that the Bakkarwal should be treated as distinct from Gujjars (Report of the sub-committee of the central advisory board for tribal welfare: 120-124). Those who don't have permanent settlement, live in tents, which may be called their home.

Gujjars and Bakkarwals take their own livestock to the summer pastures. Gujjars in Kashmir usually migrate locally from their village to a nearby forest to graze their buffaloes. The other villagers living in mountains near the forests also take their livestock to nearby forests during summer as they have dokes in these forests. All these communities are agro-pastoralists. Bakkarwals are the major migratory herder tribe, who cover large distances between their summer and winter grazing grounds. Their main source of income is their livestock.

4) Study area

a. Hirpora Wildlife Sanctuary:

Hirpora Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) falls in Gagren block in the Pir Panjal range of the Western Himalayas, covering an area of 341 km². It is located between latitude 33° 29' to 33° 41' N and longitude 74° 30'E to 74° 43'E and covers an altitudinal range of 2557m to 4745m. The sanctuary is situated in Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir, about 70 km south of Srinagar city and 12 km from the district headquarter (Shopian). Hirpora WLS got its name from the village Hirpora, a small village that lies on the north-eastern boundary of the protected area. The road that passes through this area has been a traditional route for travelers coming to the Kashmir valley from the plains of India and finds mention in Kalahan's *Rajtarangini* (11 century AD). It was called the salt road because traders used to enter the valley with salt. This is the same route which was later developed by the Mughals and is known as the Mughal Road. The same route has been followed by many migratory Bakerwals and Gujjar herders to enter the valley of Kashmir to graze their livestock in alpine and subalpine pastures during summer. This road has

however recently (6 years back) been constructed and rebuilt into a motorable highway connecting the Kashmir valley with Rajouri and Poonch in the Jammu province. The recently constructed Mughal Road has fragmented the sanctuary into two parts.

Hirpora WLS has a mountainous topography with slopes of moderate to steep gradient broken by rocky cliffs. The main river draining the Hirpora catchment is called Rambiar, the sources of which are the twin lakes of *Chandansar* and *Nandansar*. Other tributaries that join the Rambiar nalla before it hits the valley include Rupri nalla originating from *Bhagsar* and other nallas joining the Rambiar include Khushidar nar, Zaznar. These nallas are perennial due to high snowfall and presence of several high-altitude lakes in the Sanctuary.

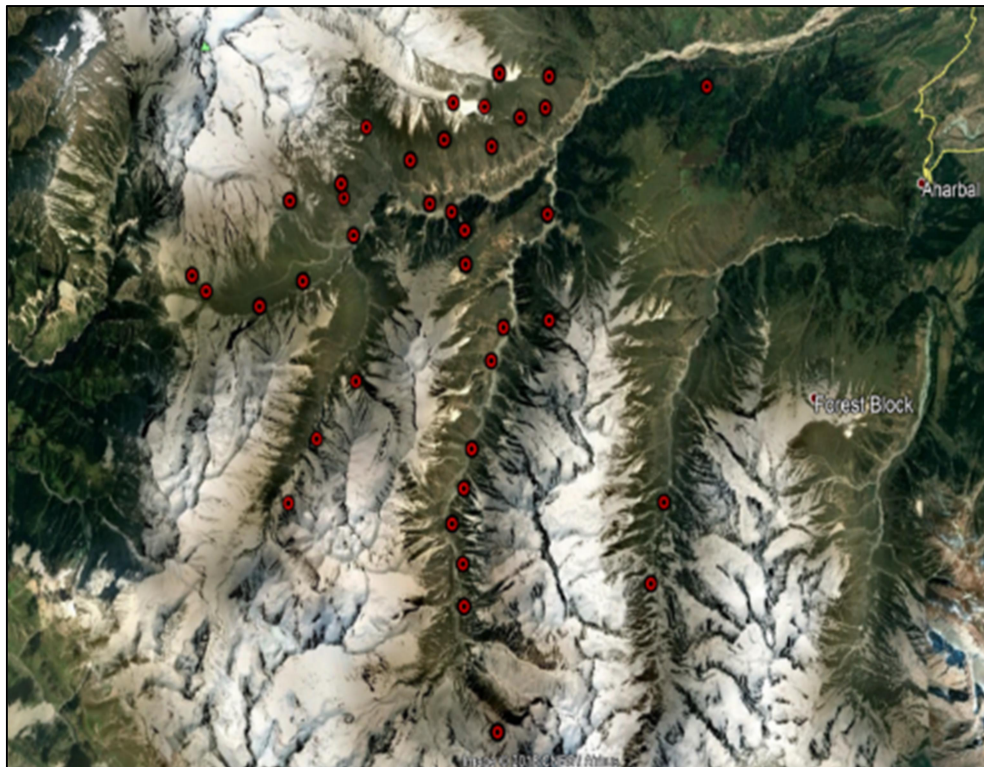


Figure 1: Sampling location of herder Dhoks of Hirpora forest.

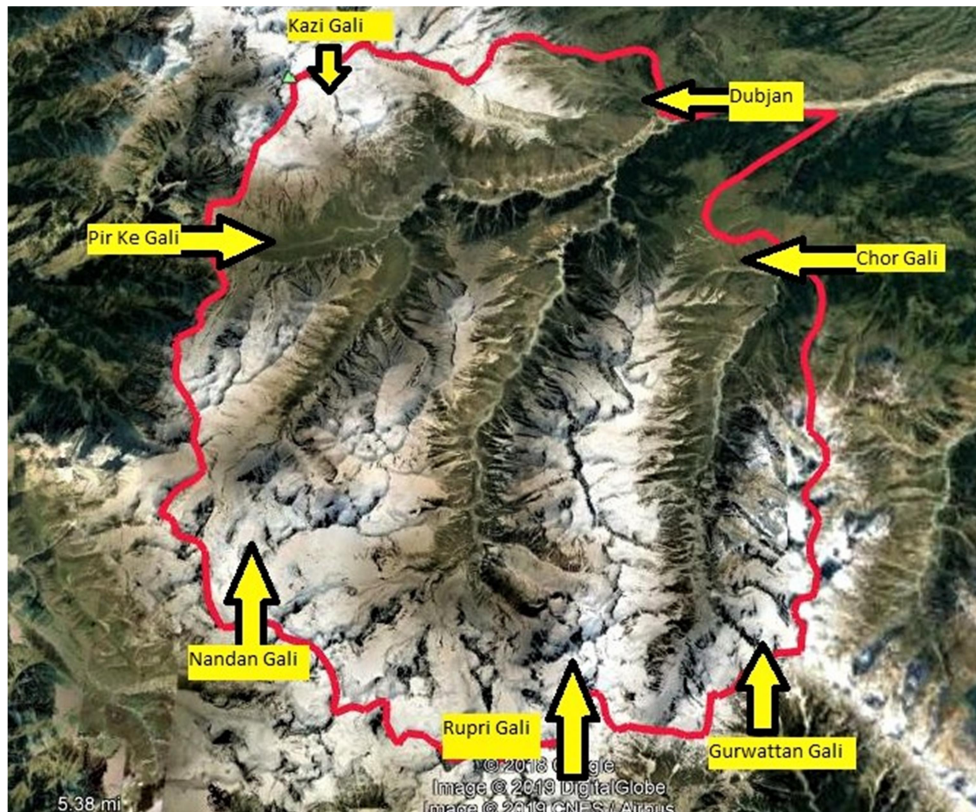


Figure 2: Migratory routes of herders in Hirpora Protected area.

5) Objective of the work

- 1) To assess the market linkage of tribal communities in J&K on Minor forest produce

The objective was sought to be achieved through following methodologies.

Methodology

- **Sources of data collection:** The data in the study sites was collected through both primary and indirect sources.
- **Types of Data Collection:** We applied both Qualitative and Quantitative data collection procedures.

6) Data Collection: Tools and Techniques used in the current study

a) Methods of data collection used during the Survey

To effectively achieve the desired objectives, the herders survey was supplemented by Focused Group Discussion (FGD) combined with other Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools like, seed sorting of problems, pair wise ranking and seasonal calendar. At least 10 people from different sample location participated in the FGDs and PRAs in Hirpora (WLS). The participants included, sarpanch, Panch, and young males and females. The information collected had a dual character of being primary and participatory in approach. In addition to getting insights into their socio-economic development, our objective was also to explore the relevant alternatives to reduce the dependence of the migratory herders on the 'Protected Areas'.

- b) **Questionnaire survey:** A structured questionnaire was framed (**annexure 1**) to assess market linkage of tribal driven communities for NTFPs in Hirpora Protected Area. In 2021-2022 we went to Hirpora protected area to locate the herder *dokes* and administered the questionnaires. These locations were found ideal for the collection of data and observation of various activities of herders. We went from *doke* to *doke* to interview the herders at their camping site, after each respondent was apprised of the purpose of our survey.

A total of 75 families were surveyed during summer of 2022 in Hirpora wildlife sanctuary. Out of these surveyed families 120 respondents were selected randomly for interviewing which makes about 40% of migratory herders.

c) Ethics followed during the study

While carrying out the qualitative type of research, a researcher can't avoid engaging the ethics followed during the research process areas;

- **Confidentiality:** since the women under the umbrella of SHG were sharing the financial and other related information with researchers, therefore the principal of confidentiality was highly taken into consideration.
- **Non- based attitude:** Since the researchers were dealing with the people belonging to the lower social economic groups, therefore unbiased attitude was followed in letter

and sprite in order to collect the data best to the knowledge and avoid any kind of miss information or base in the data.

- **Gender sensitivity:** The Study was focussing on the women SHG,s therefore, gender sensitivity was taken into consideration so that the felling and the sentiments won't be hurt.
- **Cultural sensitivity:** Culture sensitivity was taken care of in order to make a good report with the people of the community.

7) Findings and Discussion

Dependence of the locals on the forest products for domestic and economic purposes

Forest resources play an important role in providing livelihood to a high proportion of human population around the world (Pimentels *et al*,1997). However, peoples' dependency on the protected areas varies depending upon the availability of resources and access in different regions that leads to ethnological use patterns. It is also very important to know if people are aware of their rights for only then can benefits of conservation percolate down to the grassroots. They must be aware of the policies, rules and laws and it is only then that can effective enforcement can happen.



Figure 3: Focus group discussion with Migratory herders

Besides timber and firewood, the forests are abundant in various NTFPs (Non-Timber Forest Products) like medicinal herbs, honey, lac, broom grass etc. which are very useful and highly precious. People living in or near the forest areas extract these NTFPs for domestic and economic purposes. Some of these NTFPs are used as food (substitutes), some are sold at higher prices for income generation while others have high medicinal value and are used as medicines for curing certain diseases. The forests under Hirpora Wildlife Sanctuary possess various useful and precious NTFPs found abundantly which include guchi (*Morchella sp.*), pambhakh/Pamchalan (*Rheum sp.*), vanangun (*Podophyllum sp.*), daed (Fern), tripatter(*Trillidium*), jogifool(*Sasurrea*), guggal (*Jurinea dolomiaea*) and chuhur. These NTFPs are extracted in particular seasons. *Morchella* is extracted between May to June for about 15 days, *pambchalan* is extracted from May to October, *Dade* is extracted in the month of May. There are plenty of grasses, herbs and shrubs present in these forests that are used as fodder for animals at home and during grazing. Data were collected from migratory herders in order to assess intervention and dependence of locals on these forests.

Table 1: Products extracted from forests by Tribals in hirpora PA.

Products Extracted	Gujjar			Bakkarwal		
	Average NTFP Extraction Kg/per/month	Total number of families involved(n)	Total quantity of NTFP extraction /kgs/ 5 months	Average NTFP Extraction Kg/per/month	Total number of families involved	Total quantity NTFP extraction kgs/five months
<i>Trillium (Ladli)</i>	3.2	11	176	2.4	20	240
<i>Sassarui (Koth)</i>	1.5	7	52.5	1.0	11	55
<i>Picrorhizia (Kod)</i>	3.5	10	175	2	22	220
<i>Aconitum (Patrees)</i>	1.5	9	67.5	1.0	21	105
<i>Jurinea (Google)</i>	1.5	12	90	0.8	20	80
<i>Mochella (Guchi)</i>	2	8	80	1.2	17	102
Rheum (Pambhalk)	6	12	360	5	14	350
<i>Arnebia (Kehzabaan)</i>	1.5	12	90	1.5	21	157.5

Source: Field study 2022

Table 1. reveals that among the NTFPs, the average quantity of *Morchella* extracted by each household belonging to Gujjar tribe is 2 kg amounting to 80kg by 8 families per 5 months while as in bakkarwal community 102 kg was extracted by 17 families over the extraction period of 5 months. Maximum extraction was found in Rheum (*Pambhalk*) by both

communities of Gujjar and bakkarwal amounting to the figure of 360 kg and 350 kg per 5 months respectively. However, it was found that middleman was in the marketing Channel of NTFPs. In addition to the self-consumption of local communities that rely on NTFPs to meet their daily needs, many people are also engaged in the collection and trading of NTFPs and derive a substantial part of their annual income from this activity.



Figure 4: Interaction with tribal women at Chek Amshipora in Shopian district

Table 2: Major NTFPs

<u>S.No</u>	<u>NTFPs</u>	<u>Use</u>
1	Khavzaban (Arnebia)	It is used to treat cough.
2	Patris (Aconitum)	It is given to the Diabetic patients.
3	Jogi Phool (Sausseria)	It is used in a Stomach ache.
4	Tripitter (Trillium)	It is given to the little babies to cure ascaris (deworming)
5	Dade	It is used as a veg. in fringe areas.
6	Chuhur (Anglica)	It is burnt, and the smoke is used to scare away snakes.

Despite the high dependence on NTFPs among forest users, there are still many barriers inhibiting the generation of greater benefits from these resources. In Jammu and

Kashmir, such barriers include differential availability of NTFPs, issues of tenure security, lack of processing skills and limited market access (Islam *et al.*, 2016).

8) SHG led empowerment drive in India

In 1948, for the first time, the concept of social mobilization and business development through organizing SHGs was introduced based on prof. Yunus's Grameen bank model. Initially the national bank for agriculture and rural development (NABARD), along with empanelled Non-Governmental organization (NGOs) designed and developed the promotional ecosystem including the SHGs bank linkage programme. In the year 1990, the reserve bank of India recognized SHG as an alternative credit flow model. Thus there was a paradigm shift in the development banking in india, whereby SHGs were accepted as group based clients of banks for both deposit and credit linkage, collateral free lending and lending to the groups without specification of purpose/Project. Prof. S.R. Hashmi (1997) committee reviewed the poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes of ministry of rural development, Govt. of India and recommended shifting focus from an individual beneficiary approach to a group based business development approach. Hence integrated rural development programme (IRDP) and its associated schemes were merged and a new scheme called Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana(SGSY) was launched to provide self-employment to the below the poverty line households through the formation of SHGs to bring them out of the poverty during 1999 to 2011.

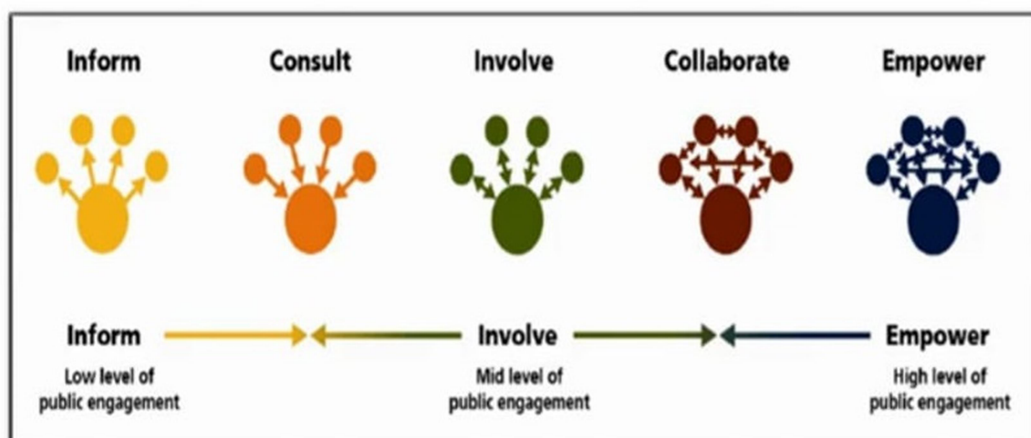


Figure 5. Community engagement framework

Prof.R. Radhakrishna (2009) committee reviewed the performance of SGSY and suggested changes in its design from a “Top down poverty alleviation approach to a community managed livelihood” approach. It was felt that underprivileged managed their livelihoods through a mix of activities with different cash-flows, seasonality and support requirements. The emphasis was also given to linking SHG members to social safety/ Welfare schemes and programs. The need for institutionalization of SHG movement was felt necessary. Thus based on the prof. Radhakrishna committee recommendation, SGSY was restructured into National rural livelihood mission(NRLM) by the ministry of rural development to provide a sharper and greater focus as well as momentum for poverty elimination on 9th December 2010. The complete transition of SGSY into NRLM was effective from 1st April 2013.

The key emphasis is on universal social mobilization for including all target households; institution building i.e. a 3 –tier structure, ‘SHGs’ at the ward level, village organization(VOs) at the village level, and cluster level federation (CLFs) at the cluster block level; universal financial inclusion; enhancing and expanding existing livelihood options for the members of the SHGs, and inculcating the entrepreneurial spirit to empower them psychologically, socially, economically and politically (FIG!)

The SHG movement follows five principles or ‘Panchasutra’ Viz Regular Meetings, Regular savings; Regular Inter-Loaning; Timely repayment of loans; and upto date books of Accounts. In addition, five additional principles now followed by SHG are Health, Nutrition and sanitation; Education; Active involvement in Panchayat Raj Institutions(PRIs); Access to Entitlements and schemes; and creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. These taken together are called- Dashasutras’ under DAY-NRLM.

- **Field Visits to understand the conceptual framework of the various institutions of the poor in District Shopian and to know the impact of the programme on the beneficiaries.**
- Our first visit of **SHGs** was at NRLM office at Shopian District. We met there both the BPM and the DPM of the NRLM (Umeed) at Shopian who discussed the various aspects of the scheme.
- We had a brief interaction with the members which were present in the office, and had a discussion with community trainer Miss Asifa and try to collect the information about the project and also get the know how about the progress of the project. During

the period of field work we visit five villages of district Shopian and also block check Ahemshipora of district Shopian. In these villages we interact with SHG groups and try to know how these groups are formed and how are they working, also during this phase we came to know about the role and responsibilities of community mobilize, community trainer and PRP's. we also attend a meeting where group leaders of every SHG come with the final report which include the total saving and total loan taken and also include the amount which was not refunded back. This meeting was all about the annual report were BPM (Block Programme Managers) has the responsibility to check the progress and all the documents in which there is the information about the finance the documents which we get to see during this meeting were just like budget like how many times the members have taken loan and on what they have expenditure that money. The list is also prepared were those members of the group are highlighted who are slow in refunding the loan back. This meeting is like a check on everything of the groups so as to find the better results. About 50 members were in this meeting and each member in this meeting was participative and all of them had developed the sense how to maintain the documents. Other meetings in which we participate during field work were VO meetings; cluster federation meetings, SHG meeting these meeting were simple and the group members made held these meetings at their own.



Fig.6. Team conducting focus group discussion with the migratory herders who are involved in self-help group under DAY-NRLM

- Every meeting starts with Dua and this Dua was compulsory for all the members who were present in the meeting. In newly formed group the objectives of the meeting were to give trainings to the group members and try to clarify the doubts which they have regarding the project. These trainings were given by the community trainers. Mainly the trainer was female as the group with which they have to deal is a female group. In older groups usually meetings were related to finance i.e. they have to see and check how is the process of saving going on also they check the performance of the members and their contribution towards group. They have to check also if anyone had taken loan was then that member able to refund it back, and also find the one in the group who at that time is in the need of loan. During interaction with people at field we came to know people were satisfied with this project and most of them were at better position than before.

9) Inferences drawn from the field

- **Financial Assistance**

Finance which the beneficiaries get from the mission is of two kinds one which they get from their own saving and one which mission provide them after six months, when they join the group.

- **Internal lending:** -The SHGs members take loan from the group to which they belong. This loan is known as internal landing, mostly used for the consumption purpose like school fee, medicine household's purchases etc. The internal landing amount is the amount which the members have saved themselves in the group.
- **Revolving fund:** -This is the second stage of taking loan from the group. The RF is an amount of RS 15,000 paid by the NRLM to each SHG which covers under grade" A". Grading is done after 3 months. The RF is directly deposited into village organisation account through online process
- **Cluster Investment fund:** - After 6 months SHGs are again graded, audited and micro-credit plan (MCP) is prepared and thus the "A" graded SHGs are again provided CIF amounting RS 40,000 per SHG which is also deposited into village organisation account in order to maintain transparency and accountability
- **Bank Linkage:** - Bank linkage is provided when the SHG maintain its "A" grade throughout and no collateral or any other mortgages are required for taking loan from bank. The interest rate is also very low.

All the groups which we visit in 5 different villages of district Shopian have taken all these funds and loans as they are now in the second year of this mission, and as now they have developed a good sense of investing this fund to establish a livelihood.

- **Livelihood activities taken**

Livelihood is a means of making a living. It encompasses people's capabilities, assets income and activities required to secure the necessities of life. A livelihood is sustainable when it enables people to cope with and recover from shocks and stresses and enhance their well-being. There is a great importance of rural livelihood in the world economy. Keeping all these factors into consideration NRLM has initiated various livelihood activities in which SHG women are engaged like animal husbandry, farm activities, non-farm activities etc.

- **Impact of livelihood: - (District Shopian)**

Various variables described below depict the impact of Women Self-help groups under the umbrella of National Rural Livelihood Mission. How women are able to many things after going the groups.

- **Borrowing capacity:** - Most of the women from the group say that now their borrowing capacities had increased after joining the group and anyone can trust on them and they can easily get what they want as after joining the group the one from whom they borrow is now sure that he or she gets the thing back.
- **Saving:** - They are now good in saving the money, not only that money which they get as a fund or loan but also the savings which they have started after joining the group 25Rs per week. This is the good step to increase the finance.
- **Income level:** - most of the women agree that their income level has now increased as they give various examples that before joining the group they were not able to do things now they are able to do various things like they were not able to send their children school now they are and many more if not increased so much still now they are able to cater many things which they could not do before joining the group
- **Asset holding:** - An asset means the properties of every description belonging to the trade or the valuable things owned by the business concern. It gives the sense of belongingness and by holding something one fell empowered.

Now by analysing all this we came to know that women really feel empowered and get the knowhow of various things. This all shows that these women get the idea how to initiate small business and how to run that, by joining the groups they feel active and also get this understanding that they have their role in each and every aspect of the life. The SHG, s gave them the platform where they can prove themselves.

10)Impact of Self-help group mobilization and formation

Decision Making

- The self-help groups under DAY-NRLM is community based, Owned and community driven, it gives women a choice to be and not to be. It makes them choice makers rather than choice takers. General awareness about rural development schemes like MGNREGA was quit high as members in the meeting used to discuss in this regard.

Empowerment

- Most of the consultations we have with the various self-help groups, they feel they have their own identity and rights and started striving for their rights. Once they had their own identity, they have now the power to think into critical matters of the family in which they were never a part before, and moreover they have now money in their own hands though some of them not utilise the money by their own, but still they have this thing in mind that they are the one who earn this money, and this very thing make them feel empowered.

Utilization of Money

These women who are a part of the Self-help groups have been trained well enough to utilize the money which is scarcely available to them in the best possible way so that they can boon their family needs and expenses in a much appropriate way. As all the women who were the part of these groups are from the families they always remain the need of money, so they know how to utilise the money they lend the money from the group only when there is need.

Borrowing Capacity

- These women were agreeing that now their borrowing capacities had increased as now if told to any one from the locality to help them in any way, they get positive results, as the one who gives them money also knows that they will get their money back from the person, as now they have their own livelihood and can arrange money at any time.

Banking Knowledge

- The level of women was such degraded that they didn't had knowledge about the banking facilities even in the 21st century and now after joining this program they have their own bank accounts but also have knowledge of withdrawals, deposits and other schemes. Banks also credit them with the required amount they are in need of without any guarantee and these skilful and talented ladies who now even sign despite being illiterate can know how to repay the loan of the banks back and in time as well.

Understating of Different Institutions

- These women after joining this program are knowledgeable enough to have a basic understanding of different institutions like health, schooling, bank etc. and held meetings about the workings of the same. They visit these institutions and look into the affairs and make sure that they function well enough and effectively.

Impact of micro credit in the SHG groups

- Micro credit has great importance in the lives of low income earning villagers widely known as below poverty line households (BPL) and micro credit can create considerable impact to scale up quality of life; BPL households are in the SHG group. It has also increased their social mobility which is also important in advancing equality.

Catharsis & Punctuality

- It is only after joining the group these women came close to each other and vent out their suppressed feelings which they couldn't have vented out coherently without being in the group. Punctuality was the hall mark of SHG Formation

11) Participated in one day chir Pine needle based handicraft training in Rajouri Kalakote

Handicrafts training of the chir pine needles was conducted in Kalakote Rajouri Forest division with an aim to generate livelihood and also to prevent the forest fire .60 women from different village of Rajouri district participated in one day chir pine needles handicrafts training at kalakote. During the camp women were trained to make handicrafts including utility and decoration items using non-timber forest produce. All the handicraft items made by the trainee women participants were sold out completely in view of the theme “Earn while you learn” model envisaged by the forest department.



Figure 7. Participated in one day chir pine needle handicraft training workshop in Rajouri Kalakote

Various Self-help groups have been constituted which are making the handicrafts items. The forest Division officer Arshdeep singh (IFS) aslo working towards the market linkage of SHG for the marketing of the handicrafts.



Fig.8. Organizing training for SHG Members in making Jam and Pickle by BPM Budhal in collaboration with the help of Chief Horticulture Officer Rajouri.

12) NTFP marketing initiatives and relevant convergences through participatory planning

▪ Training and capacity building of MFP (Minor forest produce) Gatherers

It is a fact widely acknowledged that forests in India have survived mostly in areas that have a high percentage of tribals. This is largely because the tribals traditionally have had an interest in forest conservation and development. Their economy, culture and every other aspect of life are closely related to forests. They have a symbiotic relationship with forests: the survival of one depends on the survival of the other. Over generations, they have built an enormous traditional knowledge base regarding forests and forest products.

After 1927, when the Forest Act was enacted, the State adopted the Timber-centric, commercial approach towards forest development. Timber, especially high value timber like teak, found focus. The various crops of forests (the non-timber products) were dismissively clubbed as 'Minor Forest Products' (MFP). The fact is that the tribals' dependence on forests was chiefly for these MFPs; to them timber was secondary. It was precisely for this primacy of MFP that they were nurturing the trees. However, tribals were overlooked.

However, subsequently certain reforms have been made by the government in terms of ownership of MFPs by the tribals. *The Scheduled Tribals and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights Act as brought in 2006. Earlier, Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 conferred ownership rights on Tribal Gram Sabhas in respect of MFP found in their area.* In 2014, the scheme of MSP for MFP was introduced.

All of the above are steps in the right direction. But to achieve the desired object, several 'gaps' that include the following need to be fulfilled:

- I. As a result of the Timber-first policy, the area under MFP-bearing trees is shrinking. This is reflected in a general fall in production figures of various MFP.
- II. The trade mechanism of MFP at the primary haat bazaar level remains highly inequitable to the tribals. As a result of this, even when the market prices appear

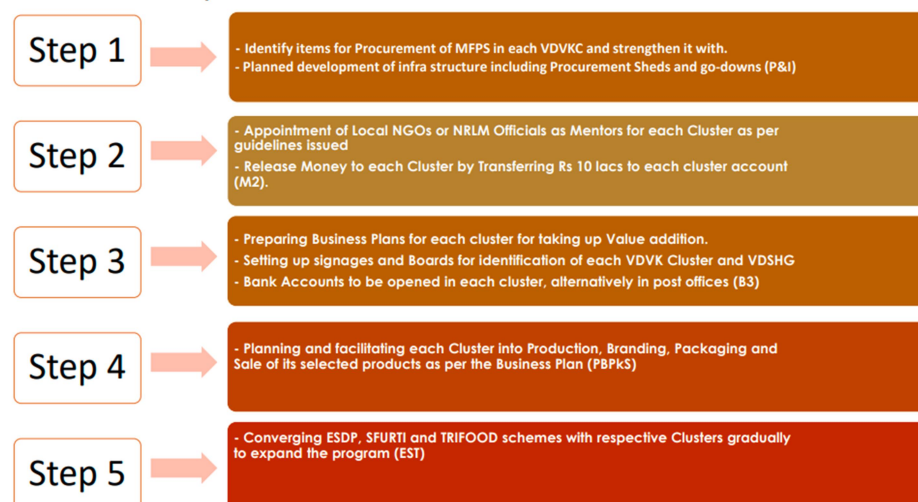
impressive, the cash that comes to the tribals hands remains low. Substantial gain is reaped by the long chain of middlemen.

In other words, the first mile and the last mile intervention by the Government to safeguard the tribals trade-interests in MFP is still pending. The result is that the forest-tribal areas continue to remain hotbeds of unrest and continue to bleed under left wing extremism

▪ **The Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram**

Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram is an initiative targeting livelihood generation for tribals by harnessing the wealth of forest i.e. Van Dhan. The programme aims to tap into traditional knowledge & skill sets of tribals by adding technology & IT to upgrade it at each stage and to convert the tribal wisdom into a viable economic activity. The initiative shall provide enhanced livelihood to about 45 lakhs tribal gatherers in one year. The Van Dhan initiative shall promote and leverage the collective strength of tribals to achieve a viable scale to take on the predatory market forces in the areas where these are still prevalent. Proposition is to set-up tribal community owned Minor Forest Produce (MFP)-centric multi-purpose Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (the Kendra) in predominantly tribal districts. About 6000 Van Dhan Kendras are proposed to be set up in span of 2 years i.e. 3000 Kendras to be set-up in each year, which will be further continued based on evaluation of their performance and also expanded every year.

VDY Ready Reckoner



▪ **Essential Features of the Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram**

The Kendras would act as common facility centres for procurement cum value addition to locally available MFPs. Value addition of raw produce is expected to increase the share of tribals in the value chain to 70-75% (from the present share of 20-25%)

A typical Van Dhan Vikas Kendra shall constitute of 10 tribal Van Dhan Vikas Self Help Groups (SHG), each comprising of upto 30 MFP gatherers i.e. about 300 beneficiaries per Kendra (subject to variability as per local conditions).

The key features of the Van Dhan Kendra would be as follows:

- (i) The Van Dhan Vikas SHGs would belong to contiguous area, preferably in same or near-by villages
- (ii) At least 60% beneficiaries of the SHG shall be tribal and the SHG shall be led by a tribal member
- (iii) Preference to be given to convergence with functional SHGs promoted under Aajeevika Mission with majority tribal members

The endeavor would be to identify a cluster of 2-3 Aajeevika SHGs/ primary level societies/ collectives (as the case may be) operating preferably in the same or near-by villages as a Van Dhan SHG for the training and equipment supply. Each Van Dhan SHG would be given a unique name although the Aajeevika SHGs within the Van Dhan SHG will continue to be identified by their respective Aajeevika SHG IDs. *The Aajeevika SHGs will also continue to use their Aajeevika bank accounts for working capital requirements for the purpose of Van Dhan operations. The Van Dhan SHG may also open a new bank account for this purpose in case the need is felt by the SHG members.*

▪ **Role of SHGs**

The SHGs for value addition & marketing would be developed as producer groups through a hierarchy within a federation of SHGs at the National, State and District & below levels.

This concept has been proposed keeping in view the need for aggregation of produce and Guidelines for Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) Through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP for strengthening of individual tribals through clusters. This will also lead to economies of scale, holding and bargaining power to the SHGs.

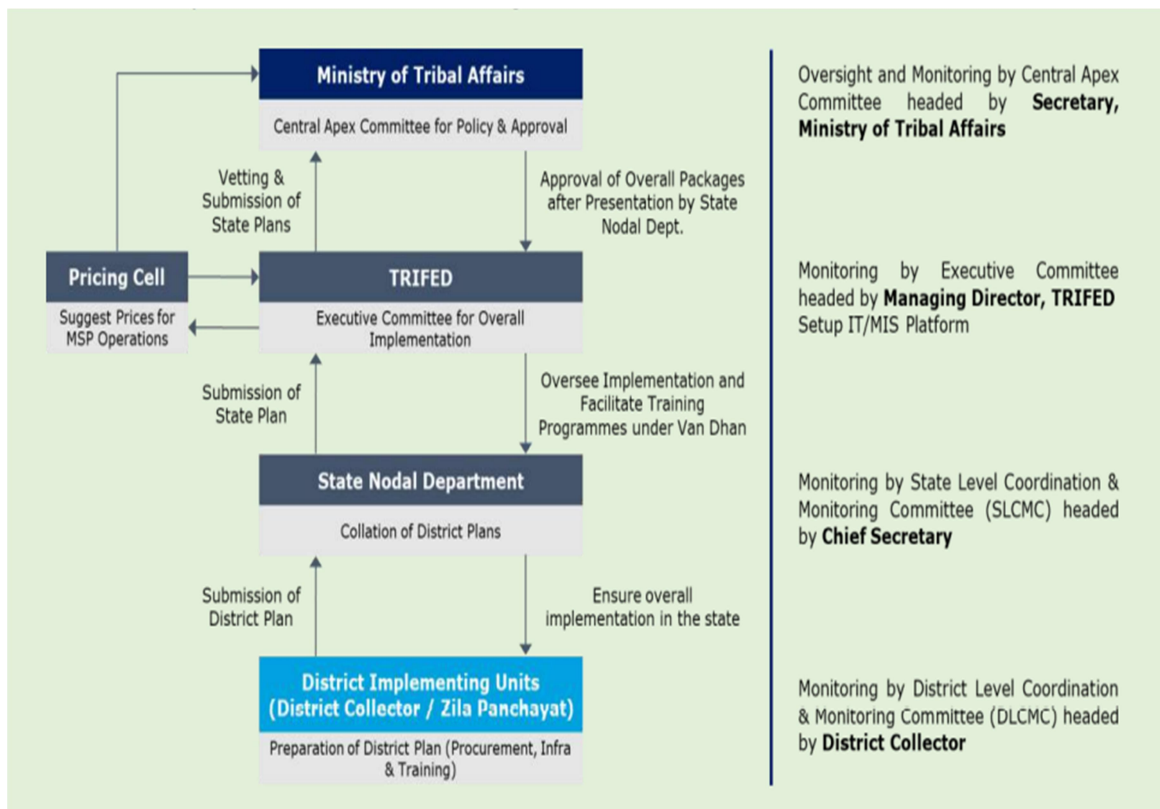


Fig.9: Hierarchy within a federation of SHGs at the National, State and District & below levels.

- **Risk Management**

A **risk management matrix** to **identify, pre-empt under-performance** and support SHGs which may not function as per expectations which will be put in place.

Only upright **performing SHGs** would be **considered** for the aggregation and marketing of produce.

The Scheme entails business activities at the levels of procurement, value addition and marketing (Van Dhan) which would be a start-up activity for the predominantly tribal SHGs.

It is expected that 60% of the SHGs formed would take off. The remaining weak and failed units would need resuscitation, handholding or transfer to other activities which suits them.



Fig.10: Collection and processing of MFP for marketing chain under Van Dhan SHG,s

13) Support for marketing

The ministry of tribal affairs provides funds to TRIFED for marketing of tribal products by empaneling tribal suppliers comprising individual tribal artisans, tribal SHGs organizations/agencies/NGOs working with tribals, etc under the scheme Institutional Support for marketing and Development of tribal products/Produce. TRIFED is also engaged in direct sale of tribal products, including art and craft items through its network of tribes India showrooms, exhibitions, Aadi Mahotsav. Further marketing is done through online e-commerce portal developed by TRIFED and also online retailers. The ministry of tribal affairs is implementing schemes Mechanism for marketing of minor forest produce(MFP) and development of value chain for MFP, Institutional support for development and marketing of tribal produce' and equity support to National scheduled tribe Finance development corporation(NSTFDC)/ State tribal Finance Development Corporation(STFDC), wherein funds are provided to support livelihood improvement of STs involved in NTFP collection. The scheme is aimed at elimination of middleman through providing MSP to MFPs.

TRIFED works in two broad fields. The first relates to direct retail marketing of tribal handicrafts sourced from the artisans empanelled through a defined process. The second and more important field, relates to providing the tribes an equitable deal in the trade of non-timber forest produce(NTFP). *The scheme of minimum support price (MSP)for non-timber forest produce(NTFP) also called minor forest produces(MFP) was launched in 2103-14. It had a sub-moderate impact.*

The true achievement of TRIFED goes far beyond numbers. It concerns a new perspective on MSP for MFP, enough to make economists sit up and think anew. Traditionally, MSP has been seen as a safety net' set up by the state to help the vulnerable farmer against market forces he does business with. MSP therefore was seen to be 'market-price-minus-x'. This may be the right approach a regards the farm sector, which has generally been under watchful eyes. MFP, which by its very definition is viewed as 'minor' belongs to the tribal world and the remote backwaters of economy. It represents a 'neglected sector' in a very literal sense. The market dynamics in the tribal haat bazaar have been predatory. To adopt the market-price-minus-x' formula for fixing MSP for NTFP, in a context where the market price is the middleman's call and exploitatively low, would mean nothing. Such an MSP would lend a legitimacy to the middleman's price-call and be tantamount to giving a clean chit to the unfair trade practices.

The price is now scientifically determined by an expert's committee, taking into consideration various factors. Instead of trailing the market price for produces, the MSP now leads the market price. Why? Because under the middleman's call, as the AG's audit observed, the NTFP gatherer was getting just around twenty percent of the end price; the labour he/she invested did not get her even half of what it deserved as per the notion of minimum wage. Sweat equity and owner's royalty on NTFP was a far cry. An aggressive approach was necessary to break the unfair practices. By leading the market price, TRIFED has been able to achieve what was never achieved before: namely, constraining the middlemen to pay fair prices to tribal gatherer, or face extinction in the market. This strategy has worked! The tribes have gained an aggregate of more than Rs. 3841 Cr in FY 2020-21.

Value addition can fetch her far better returns, and also ensure gainful work beyond the NTFP season (usually four months a year), but that requires facilities, training and restructuring of the trade. TRIFED picked the gauntlet. *A new scheme named Van Dhan (meaning, wealth of the forest) was launched in 2018.* This focusses on strengthening of

infrastructure to facilitate processing for value addition. The group is called Van Dhan Vikas Kendra (VDVK). Around 15 VDVKs are clustered together into a VDVK cluster (VDVKC)

6.77 lac NTFP gatherers in 253 districts in 25 states and UTs are involved through an MOU of the state with TRIFED. In terms of the MOU, 37904 VDVKs have been established, and clustered into 2275 VDVKCs. The state nodal agencies receive working capital for NTFP procurement, grants for strengthening facilities in haat bazar (poor or no facilities cause damage to the produce due to rain, mud-contact etc). Grants are also given for construction of common facility center for the VDVKC, for the members to sit and process the produce. Several VDVKCs have installed plant and machinery for tertiary processing, packaging and branding of the produces. These include jams, jellies, candies, pickles, honey, tamarind products, hill-grass brooms, cashew, healthcare products, and a number of processed spices. The produces are marketed through TRIFEDs nearly 150 outlets. The VDVKs are free to market the produces through other channels also.

The law has conferred ownership status on the tribes in respect of the local NTFP. TRIFED is aggressively inspiring the tribes to use this right to manufacture finished products. The idea is to move beyond the traditional mindset of viewing tribes-folk as wage labour. The new aspiration is to transform them into entrepreneurs. The battle cry now is; mera Van, meradhan, meraudhyam (my forest, my wealth, my industry'). To push the idea further, terms like Start-up' are being popularized in tribal parlance.

14) Problems in the area of Marketing of Forest products

Over the years, the government has taken numerous measures to promote the marketing of Minor Forest Products (MFP) such as Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Value Chain Development for MP. Despite these efforts, tribal conditions have not improved significantly, and tribes are still struggling to make ends meet. One major source of concern is that forest products are inaccessible to the general public due to a lack of a proper marketing policy. As a result, the clientele or client base of forest products has not grown significantly. Furthermore, despite the fact that there are numerous opportunities to sell forest products outside of India, many areas have yet to be explored.

- **Major Problems Areas**

The following are the major sources of concern regarding the marketing of forest products and the development of the forest product value chain: > High product cost > Smaller clientele

- **Opportunities**

Despite many challenges, forest products offer the following opportunities:

> Because forest products are natural products, and demand for natural products is increasing globally, there is a huge potential for forest products in both domestic and foreign markets.

> Tribes are also involved in the production of handicrafts and cotton products. These products have enormous potential in both domestic and international markets.

15) Recommendations and way ahead

- **Linkage with the existing programmes**

The various initiative of training the local population on chir pine handicraft making through formation of the SHGs has to be linked with the existing scheme Mechanism of marketing of minor forest produce(MFP) through minimum support price (MSP) and development of value chain for MFP. This is to be done for market linkage of the minor produce and long term sustainability of the institutions of the self-help groups. These SHG by the forest department in Rajouri Kalakote have to be linked with the DAY-NRLM SHG, s and Van Dhan programme to avoid the duplication of efforts and to avoid the role of the middleman in the marketing of NTFPs

- **Name & logo and tagline of the product or company**

A logo or name of the company or product would give it a proper identity, and more importantly, a logo also attracts the general public of consumers. It is advised to create a logo for the product or the business given the potential for forest products on the Indian

market as well as the international market. A perfect logo for a business or product can easily reach a broad audience of consumers and foster a positive perception among them.

Another important part is tagline of the product or the company. During the last decade, there are numerous examples, where it is evident that tagline of the product or company wins the half of the battle as far as marketing of such product is concerned. So, it is recommended to create a tagline for forest products which will appeal to the mass consumers in the market.

- **Involving the local communities and Integration with working plans.**

Planning is deciding in advance what is to be done to attain a set of goals. In JFM (Joint forest management) the broad objective is to involve people in the management of national forests and link people to the benefits accruing from forests and their proper management. Since the unit chosen for JFM is usually a village and a forest patch surrounding it on which the village is dependent, the microplan should attempt to link the resources with specific identifiable group of people. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) methodologies can be quite effective in ensuring that the planning process is broad based and truly reflects community goals. The plan should be easily understandable to field workers as well as to local people; thus it is imperative that it uses the local dialect.

One should keep in mind that a microplan for a forest patch is also a part of a particular forest block, range and division, and thus there is a need to dovetail the microplan with the working plan prescriptions. A special provision may be kept for NTFPs, which are generally ignored in working plans.

- **Unique Selling Proposition (USP)**

It is necessary to adopt a USP for the product that distinguishes the business from its rivals in the market. The product's USP should be focused on the fact that forest products are unique in the market and the best on the market in terms of quality. It is necessary to explain the USP of the product to the general public, but more importantly, it is necessary to explain how the product differs from other options on the market.

- **Proper Packaging of the product**

Proper packaging of product is also a marketing strategy to glorify the product in order to attract consumer's attention in the product.

- **Feedback about the product**

In order to communicate continuously with the consumers at large and also to improve the product, it is required to have a system of product feedback form where customers would be requested to give their feedback about the products. Based on the customer feedback, quality of the product would be improved so that best product could be offered in the market.

- **Marketing of forest products through Social Sites (Digital Marketing) :**

This is modern form of marketing and opposite of conventional form of marketing. Now a day, marketing of any product is more popular and effective in social platform commonly known as “digital marketing” than traditional way of marketing of the product. It is recommended to create a page of company in various social sites like Facebook, Instagram, youth tube etc. and also share pictures of the products and activities on regular basis on social platform. This kind of marketing will help in spreading awareness about the product among people on a large number.

- **Marketing of forest products through blogging**

Another effective contemporary tool of marketing of the product is “Blogging”. In this case, it is required to write blogs about the product and the company as a whole and share the same on company website and social media. This method will help the company to engage with the followers and get insights from their comments and use such comments to improve the quality of the product. This is another way of taking feedback from the customers about the product.

- **Marketing of forest products through Influencer in the society**

In this kind of marketing, generally promotion of the product would be done through a influencer in our society who has huge followers in the market, and this kind of influencer may be an actor or sportsman. The main purpose of choosing this kind of marketing policy is to connect with huge fan base of the influencers and make them aware about the product so that by word of mouth of such huge fan base, awareness of the product would be spread in the market.

- **Raw material production.**

If there is a strong market for an NTFP, producers can take advantage by improving the quality and quantity of their produce through improved management and/or expanded production area. For wild harvested species, basic ecological knowledge is needed, along with appropriate monitoring techniques to measure the impact of extraction, to facilitate management.

- **Awareness workshop on Van Dhan scheme and MSP for MFP**

TRIFED should conduct out a workshop inviting the ST population on VAN DHAN and Mechanism for marketing of Minor forest produce (MFP) through minimum support price (MSP) and development of value chain for MFP and tribal entrepreneurship development with its emphasis on creation of tribal entrepreneurs and tribal owned enterprises. The workshop shall present the details of the VAN DHAN program, the work carried out in the various states for establishing the MFP value addition centers i.e., VDVKs and the support and leadership envisaged from the MPs for promotion of VAN DHAN program in their constituencies.

16) Recommendation for development of value chain of the forest products

- **Lead Generation:** On the basis of different marketing campaign by the company, company would get contact details of the people who may be interested in the product.
- **Evaluate potential leads:** The next step is to evaluate the potential leads of the product and more importantly to identify whether potential leads can afford the price of the product. Then the last process is to communicate or connect with people whose responses are positive via emails, messages etc.

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