

VIKALP SANGAM



DECEMBER 2020



COMMUNITY FOREST RIGHTS AND THE PANDEMIC

GRAM SABHAS LEAD THE WAY

A GRAPHIC NOVEL VERSION

This graphic novel by Poorva Goel is an adaptation of a document produced by Vikalp Sangam and Community Forest Rights - Learning & Advocacy network, in August 2020, available at <http://vikalpsangam.org/article/community-forest-rights-the-pandemic-gram-sabhas-lead-the-way/#.X8lrLi2B2V4>

Inputs for this version were given by Ashish Kothari and Vipul Sangoi.

This publication has been supported by Heinrich Boell Stiftung

Citation: Poorva Goel, *Community Forest Rights and the Pandemic: Gram Sabhas Lead the Way (a graphic novel version)*, Volume 2 of the Extraordinary Work of 'Ordinary People – Beyond Pandemics and Lockdowns' Series and Bulletin 5 of COVID 19 & Forest Rights, Vikalp Sangam Core Group, Pune, October 2020.

This is a copyleft publication. It can be reproduced freely for non-commercial purposes, preferably with credits and citation, and any reproduction should be with the same conditions and without any copyright.

The Community Forest Rights-Learning and Advocacy (CFR-LA) process was initiated in 2011 to facilitate exchange of information and experiences related to Community Forest Rights (CFR) provisions of the Forest Rights Act 2006. The COVID19 and Forest Rights bulletin series was envisaged in the light of widescale distress in Adivasi and scheduled areas. The bulletins highlight voices of forest dwelling communities during the pandemic.

For more information, please visit:

<http://www.cfsla.org.in/resource.aspx> and www.fra.org.in

This document emerged as a collaborative effort by both CFR-LA and Vikalp Sangam, in order to highlight the importance of recognition of rights, tenure security and community forest governance by Gram Sabhas to build resilient communities in the Covid19 and Post- pandemic scenario.

To learn more about the research and documentation work done by both teams, do follow the links below:

COVID19 and Forest Rights Bulletin [One](#), [Two](#), [Three](#), [Four](#)
Extraordinary Work of Ordinary People: [Volume 1](#), [Graphic Novel](#)

Vikalp Sangam is a platform to bring together movements, groups and individuals working on just, equitable and sustainable pathways to human and ecological well-being. It rejects the current model of development and the structures of inequality and injustice underlying it, and searches for alternatives in practice and vision. About 60 movements and organisations around the country are members of its Core Group (listed below). For more information please see:

For more information please see: <http://www.vikalpsangam.org/about/>

- ACCORD (Tamil Nadu)
- Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (National)
- Alternative Law Forum (Bengaluru)
- Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (Bengaluru)
- BHASHA (Gujarat)
- Bhoomi College (Bengaluru)
- Blue Ribbon Movement (Mumbai)
- Centre for Education and Documentation (Mumbai)
- Centre for Environment Education (Gujarat)
- Centre for Equity Studies (Delhi)
- CGNetSwara (Chhattisgarh)
- Chalakudypuzha Samrakshana Samithi / River Research Centre (Kerala)
- ComMutiny: The Youth Collective (Delhi)
- Deccan Development Society (Telangana)
- Deer Park (Himachal Pradesh)
- Development Alternatives (Delhi)
- Dharamitra (Maharashtra)
- Ekta Parishad (several states)
- Ektha (Chennai)
- EQUATIONS (Bengaluru)
- Gene Campaign (Delhi)
- Greenpeace India (Bengaluru)
- Health Swaraaj Samvaad (national)
- Ideosync (Delhi)
- Jagori Rural (Himachal Pradesh)
- Kalpavriksh (Maharashtra)
- Knowledge in Civil Society (national)
- Kriti Team (Delhi)
- Ladakh Arts and Media Organisation (Ladakh)
- Local Futures (Ladakh)
- Maati (Uttarakhand)
- Mahila Kisan Adhikar Manch (national)
- Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (Rajasthan)
- National Alliance of Peoples' Movements (national)
- Nirangal (Tamil Nadu)
- North East Slow Food & Agrobiodiversity Society (Meghalaya)
- Peoples' Science Institute (Uttarakhand)
- Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network (national)
- reStore (Chennai)
- Sahjeevan (Kachchh)
- Sambhaavnaa (Himachal Pradesh)
- Samvedana (Maharashtra)
- Sangama (Bengaluru)
- Sangat (Delhi)
- School for Democracy (Rajasthan)
- School for Rural Development and Environment (Kashmir)
- Shikshantar (Rajasthan)
- Snow Leopard Conservancy India Trust (Ladakh)
- Social Entrepreneurship Association (Tamil Nadu)
- SOPPECOM (Maharashtra)
- South Asian Dialogue on Ecological Democracy (Delhi)
- Students' Environmental and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (Ladakh)
- Thanal (Kerala)
- Timbaktu Collective (Andhra Pradesh)
- Titli Trust (Uttarakhand)
- Tribal Health Initiative (Tamil Nadu)
- URMUL (Rajasthan)
- Vrikshamitra (Maharashtra)
- Watershed Support Services & Activities Network (Andhra Pradesh/Telangana)

BACKGROUND

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) is a law that was brought into force after decades of long struggles by indigenous communities in India for their land resource rights. The FRA recognises the historical injustice committed against Adivasis and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) by recognizing and vesting their rights, which have gone unrecorded so far. This Act includes both individual rights for cultivation in forestland, community rights over common property resources and habitat rights. FRA recognizes that forest communities are integral for the survival of forest ecosystems, and vests rights and responsibilities in them for conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance, resulting in the strengthening of conservation regimes while ensuring their livelihood and food security.

Community Forest Resource Rights (CFR) are rights of Adivasi and OTFDs over customary common forest land within the traditional or customary boundaries of the village or seasonal use of landscape in the case of pastoral communities, including reserved forests, protected forests and protected areas such as Sanctuaries and National Parks. Section 3 (1) (i) of FRA vests the 'right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they (Adivasi and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers) have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use'. Section 5 provides the power and responsibility to the Gram Sabha to protect, preserve and manage the biodiversity, natural resources, wildlife and water sources in its CFR, and also its cultural and spiritual resources, and to prevent any activity that causes harm to these resources.

The Gram Sabha or village assembly, is the primary unit of local self-governance. As per FRA, the Gram Sabha, which must be composed of at least 1/3 women, has been given the authority to decide about vesting of claims. Apart from that, the Gram Sabha has the power to control, plan and manage minor water bodies (Section 4 (j)), Minor Forest Produce (Section 4 m (ii)) and Resources (Section 4 m (vii)). Section 4 (d) of Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA) 1996, says that the Gram Sabha is competent to safeguard among other things the community resources. Gram Sabhas maintain an account where any funds received, be it voluntary contributions, or sales of minor forest produce and minor minerals, or transfers under any devolution schemes, are held. The rights of usage of the funds are under the control of the Gram Sabha.

Community Forest Rights Management Committees (CFRMCs) are constituted by Gram Sabhas as per Rule 4 (1)(e) for protection of wildlife, forest and biodiversity in exercise of Section 5. Rule 4(1)(f) gives power to the Gram Sabha to monitor and control these committees which are entrusted with the duty to prepare conservation and management plans for community forest resources.

HEADLINES TODAY

MONSOON SESSION 2020



Although, the severe hardships being faced by migrant workers in India became global news & concern...



**NO DATA, NO COMPENSATION:
CENTRE ON MIGRANT DEATHS**

MONDAY | 09:04 PM

The government, in the monsoon session of parliament, has admitted it has not maintained the data on jobs & lives lost, because of which no compensation can be provided.

CO-SPONSERED BY GIO HANDWASH

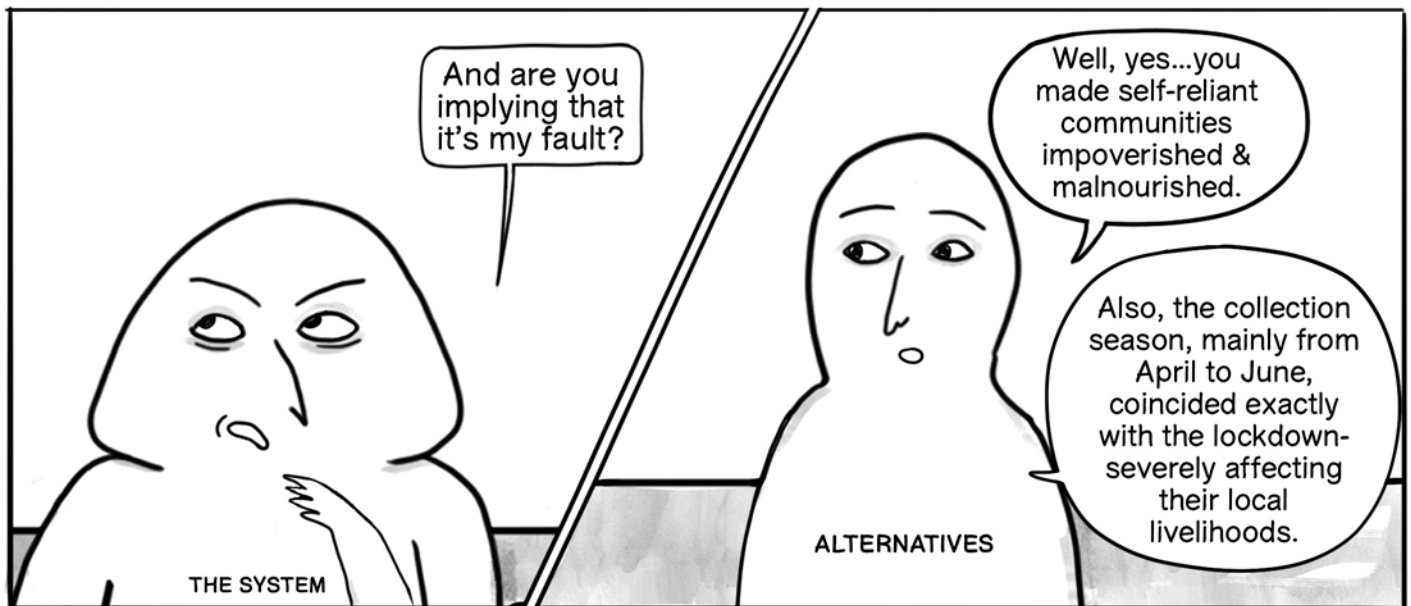
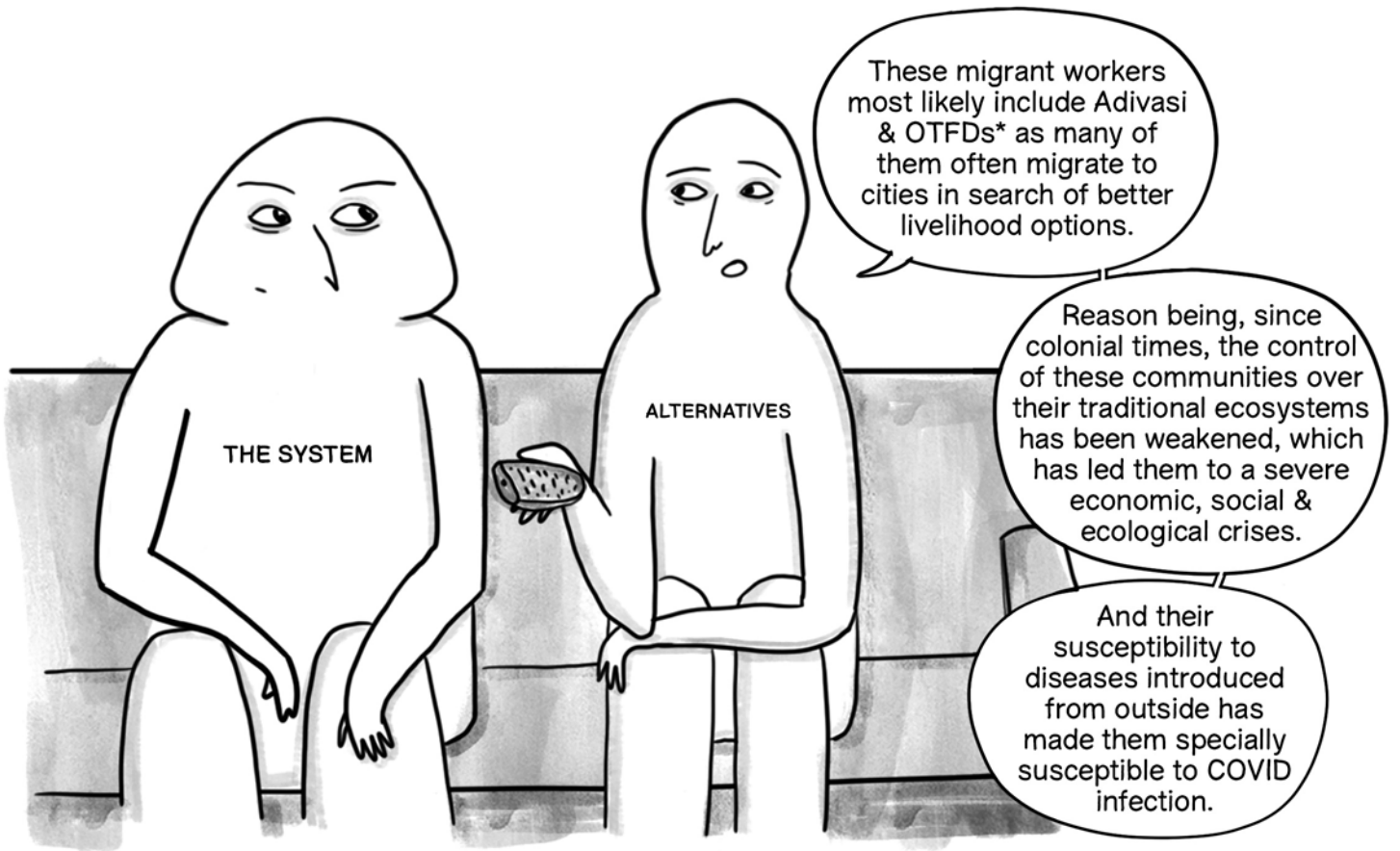


GAREEBI NAHIN...
GAREEBON SE HI
CHHUTKARA!

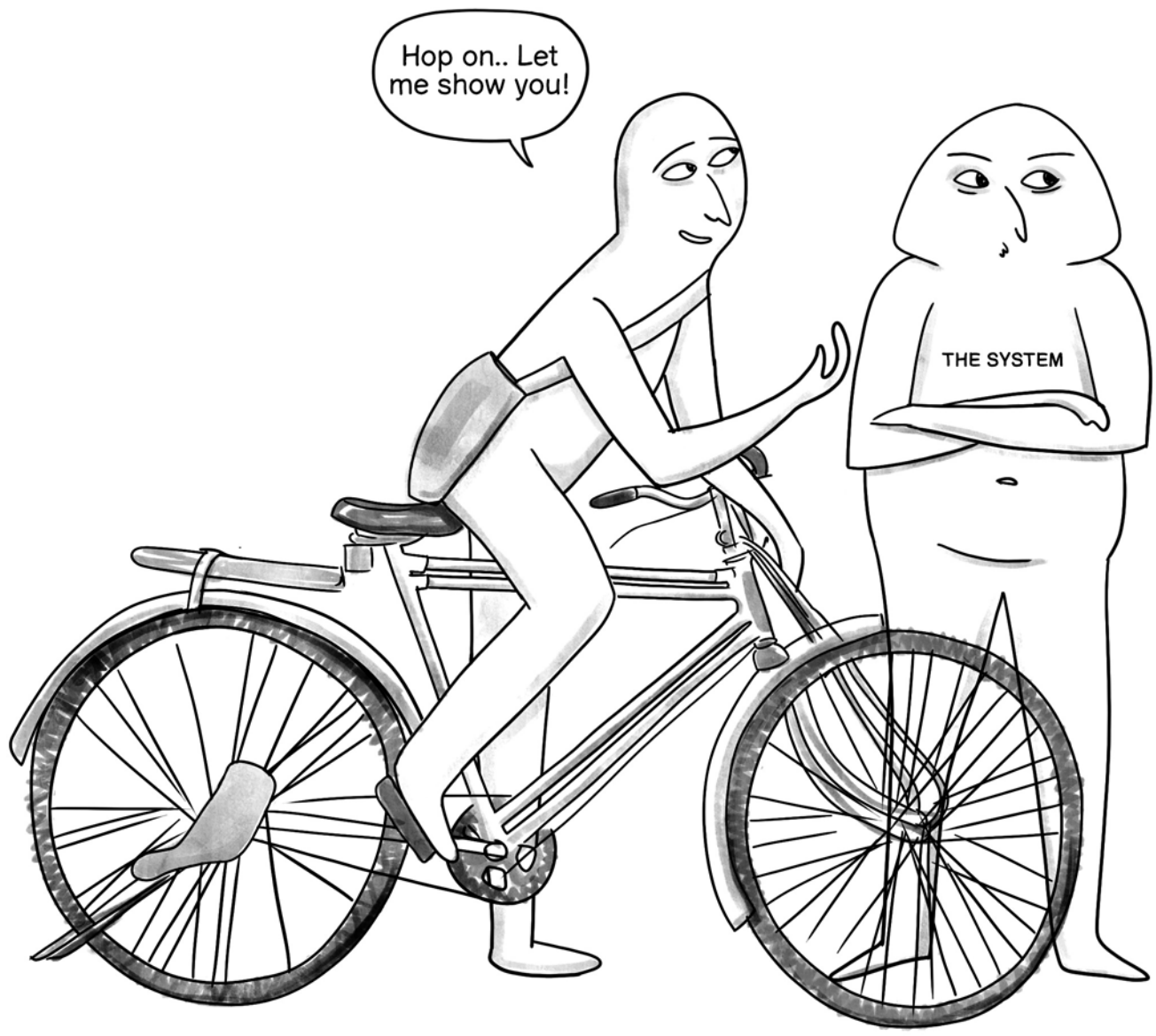
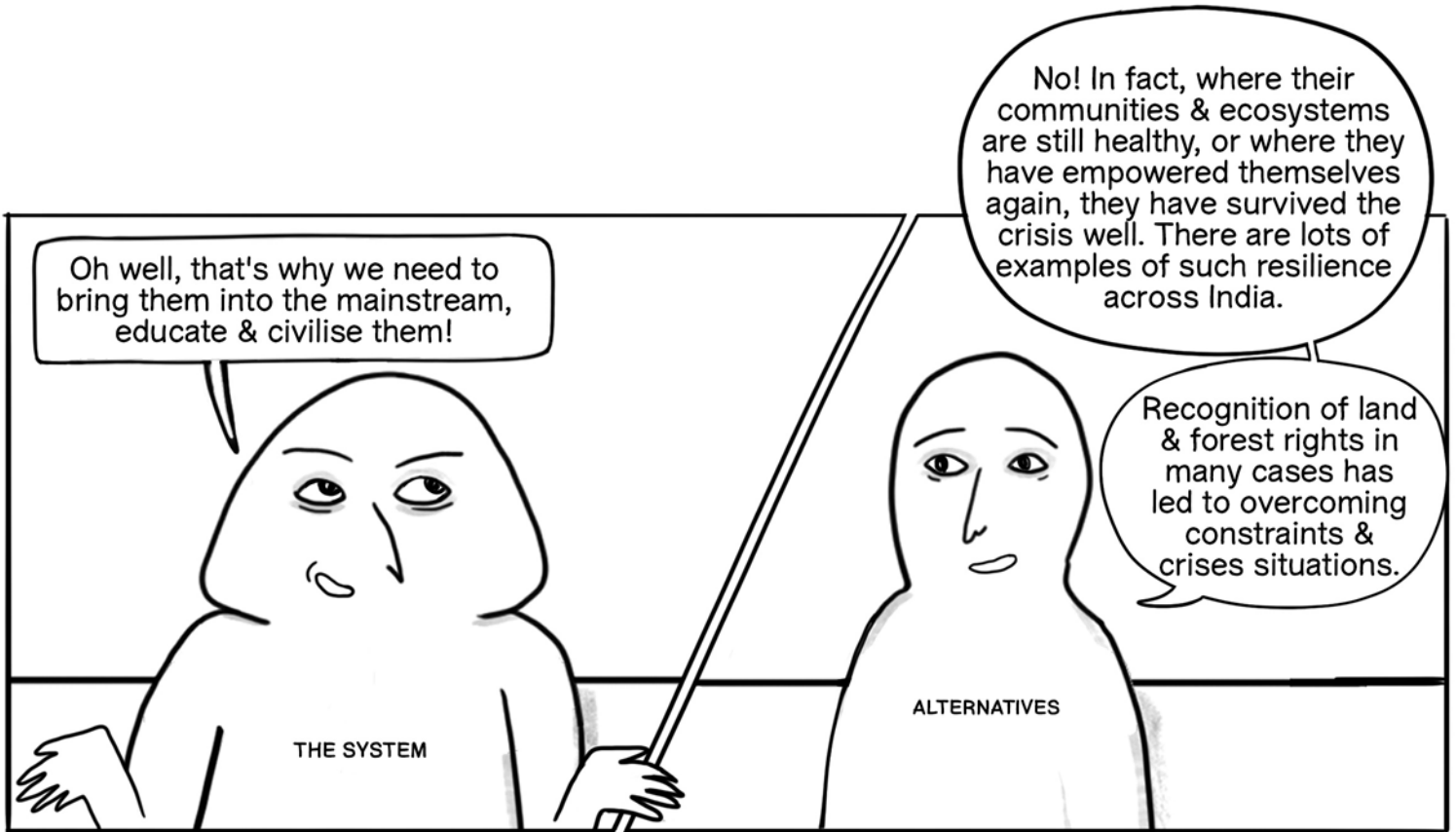
99.9%
SURE

Seems like the virus is not the only thing the government's washing its hands off...

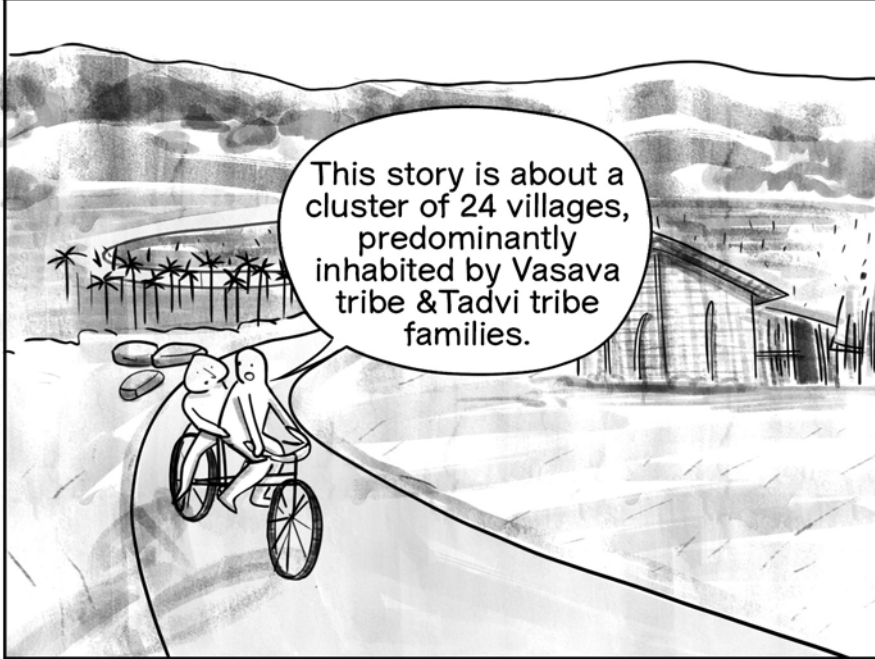




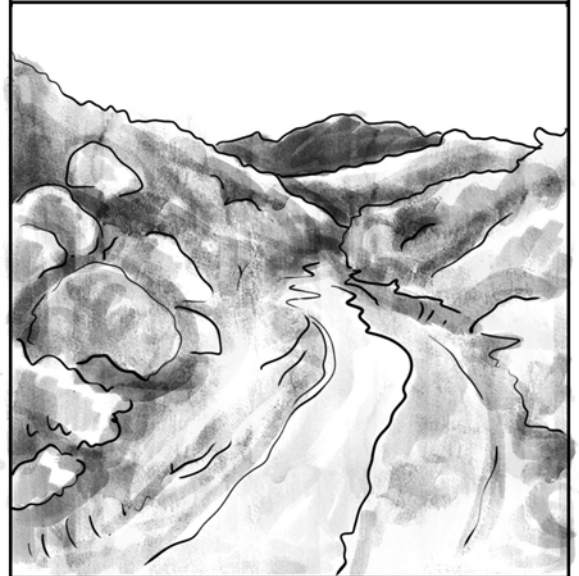
*Other Traditional Forest Dwellers



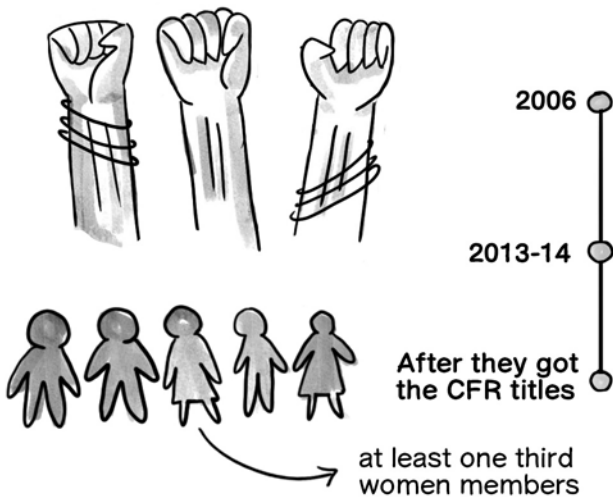
DEDIAPADA BLOCK IN NARMADA DISTRICT, GUJARAT.



These villages are a part of Shoolpaneshwar Sanctuary.



61,542.40 hectares of forest land.



The Forest Rights Act, 2006 was a ray of hope for the communities that had faced decades of violence by the Forest Department & a Paper Mill factory that was taking away their bamboo.

After a long period of struggle, these village Gram Sabhas got Adhikar Patras (titles) for all the community forest resource (CFR) rights .



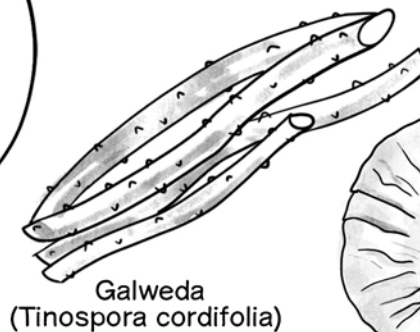
The Gram Sabha elected new Community Forest Rights Management Committees (CFRMCs).

The situation of the people in general was bad during the lock-down because they lost almost half of their annual income from various sources.

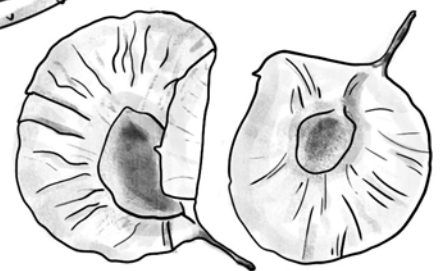


Trupti Mehta, CSO ARCH Vahini, has been working with communities here since 1980s.

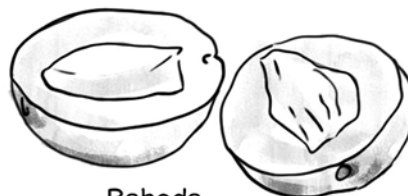
Some, especially women & children, lost some income from sale of MFPs



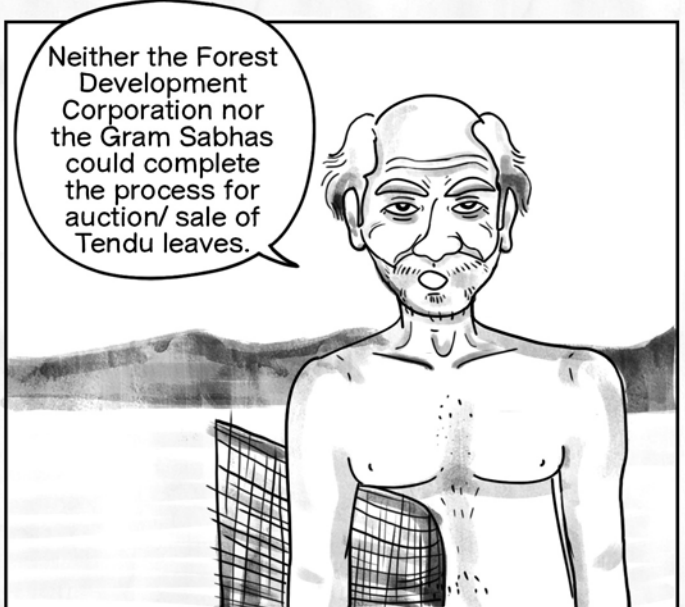
Galweda (Tinospora cordifolia)



Seeds of Kanji (Pterocarpus marsupium)



Baheda (Terminalia bellerica)



After getting CFR rights, for the 1st time, Gram Sabhas were actively involved in the management & protection of forest resources. The CFRMC members of some villages initiated land leveling work on each family's private or FRA land using Gram Sabha funds. During lockdown, they were also patrolling the forests in a group of 3-4 persons to protect their CFRs from potential threats.



GONDIA, MAHARASHTRA

75% of the population are Adivasi, mainly Gond & Halba Adivasis. Over 250 villages have had their CFR rights recognised. 29 villages have formed a Federation.

Each year, the Federation ensures that collectors-us Adivasis & forest dwellers-are paid for all 11 days of our work during the season, unlike the Forest Department which would only pay us for 2-3 days of our labour.

Also, while the Forest Department, through its traders, pays us only 220 rupees per day & seasonal bonuses are as low as 25 rupees...

the Federation pays 300 rupees per day & a seasonal bonus of 200 rupees.



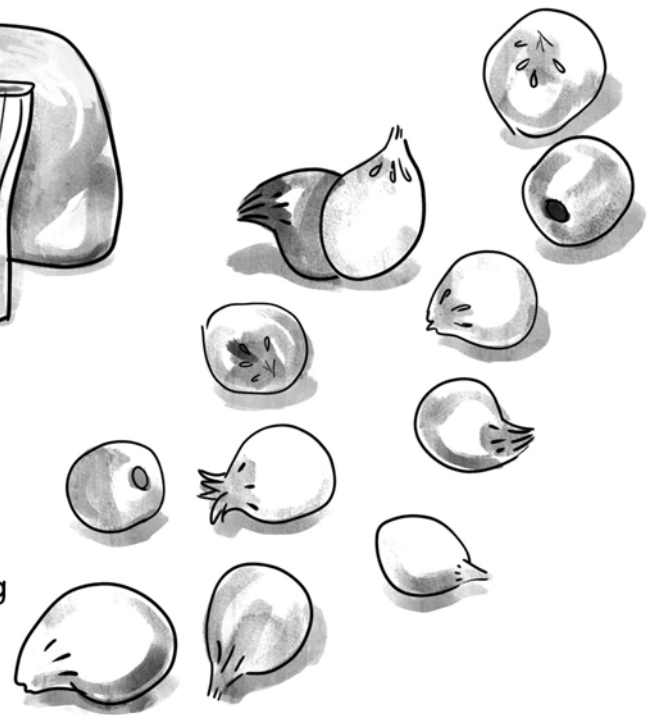
The Federation guaranteed competitive prices & bonus for our MFP collection even during a crisis.

The Federation earned 2.5 rupees crores by selling Tendupatta, with villagers managing everything themselves & taking precautions against the spread of COVID19.





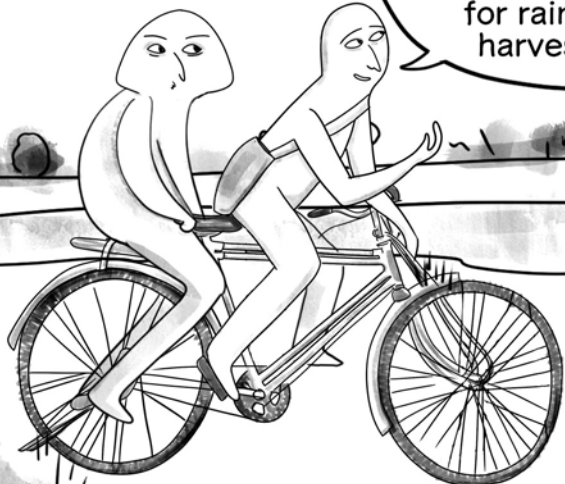
Narayan Salame, Secretary, Dhamaditola CFRMC spoke about minor forest produce sales during the lockdown “Both Tendupatta & Mahua are a source of sizable income for the community. Income from Mahua on an average is 15-20,000 rupees per family during the collection season while income from Tendupatta is usually around 10-20,000 rupees per family.”



The substantial profits from Tendupatta sales in 2017 was used to rent machinery to dig ponds or waterbodies in the Gram Sabhas for rainwater harvesting.

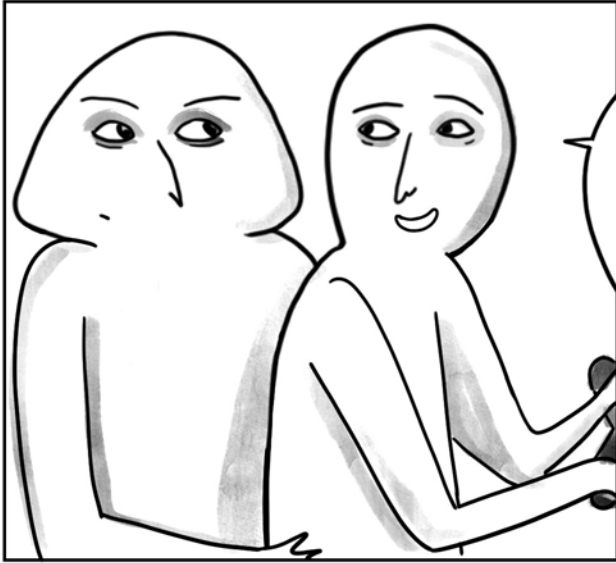
The groundwater was recharged in these areas & the villagers could focus on paddy cultivation.

When members of the support NGO Vidarbha Nature Conservation Society (VNCS) went to the community to provide relief kits, the community refused to accept them, saying they are fully self-sufficient.



**RAJNANDGAON,
CHHATTISGARH**

In this development block, the majority of the population is Adivasi: Gond, Kanwar, Halba & Baiga, who are dependent on forest & agriculture.



Over some years, the Gram sabhas created plans around forest protection & conservation, minor forest produce collection & sales, food security & distribution & livelihood management.

When COVID19 was declared a pandemic the Gram Sabhas declared a full lockdown. The Gram Sabhas built a system to distribute medicinal plants grown around homes, farm vegetables & forest vegetables.

The Gram Sabhas ensured food security for all families, especially the most marginalised. They arranged a free & dry cooked meal for people. Quarantine facilities were made in the district & food was provided to the migrant workers returning home.

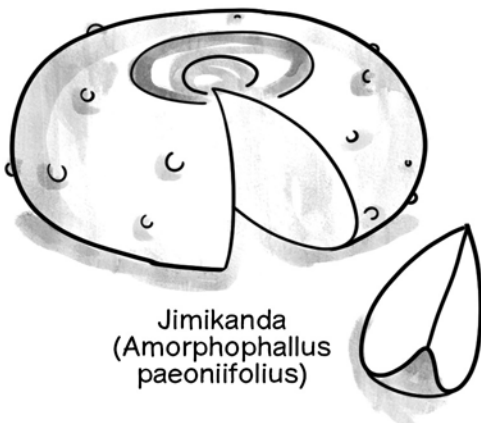
In the case of ill villagers, the Gram Sabha decided that two people could accompany them in the ambulance to the main town.



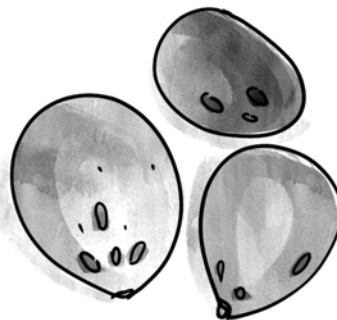
Keshav Gurnule, SRISHTI-a community support organization

As part of CFR management plans & MGNREGA scheme, two ponds were made & fisheries businesses were initiated in these ponds for employment.

At the same time, indigenous plants were planted.



Jimikanda
(Amorphophallus paeoniifolius)



Kewkanda
(Costus speciosus)



Kochaikanda
(Colocasia esculenta)

For daily use and consumption, they decided that three women and three men from each hamlet should be assigned a different section of the forest, to collect fruits, flowers, tubers, vegetables, firewood and fodder grass everyday. The committees devised a plan for the collection of minor forest produce.



Inter village movement was restricted. All the routes within the forest were sealed & the community kept a check on trafficking & theft of forest tubers, fruits & other minor forest produce by outsiders.

कार्फ्यू का पालन करना होगा।
कोरोना वायरस को भगाना होगा।
संयुक्त तमाम सेवा संस्था



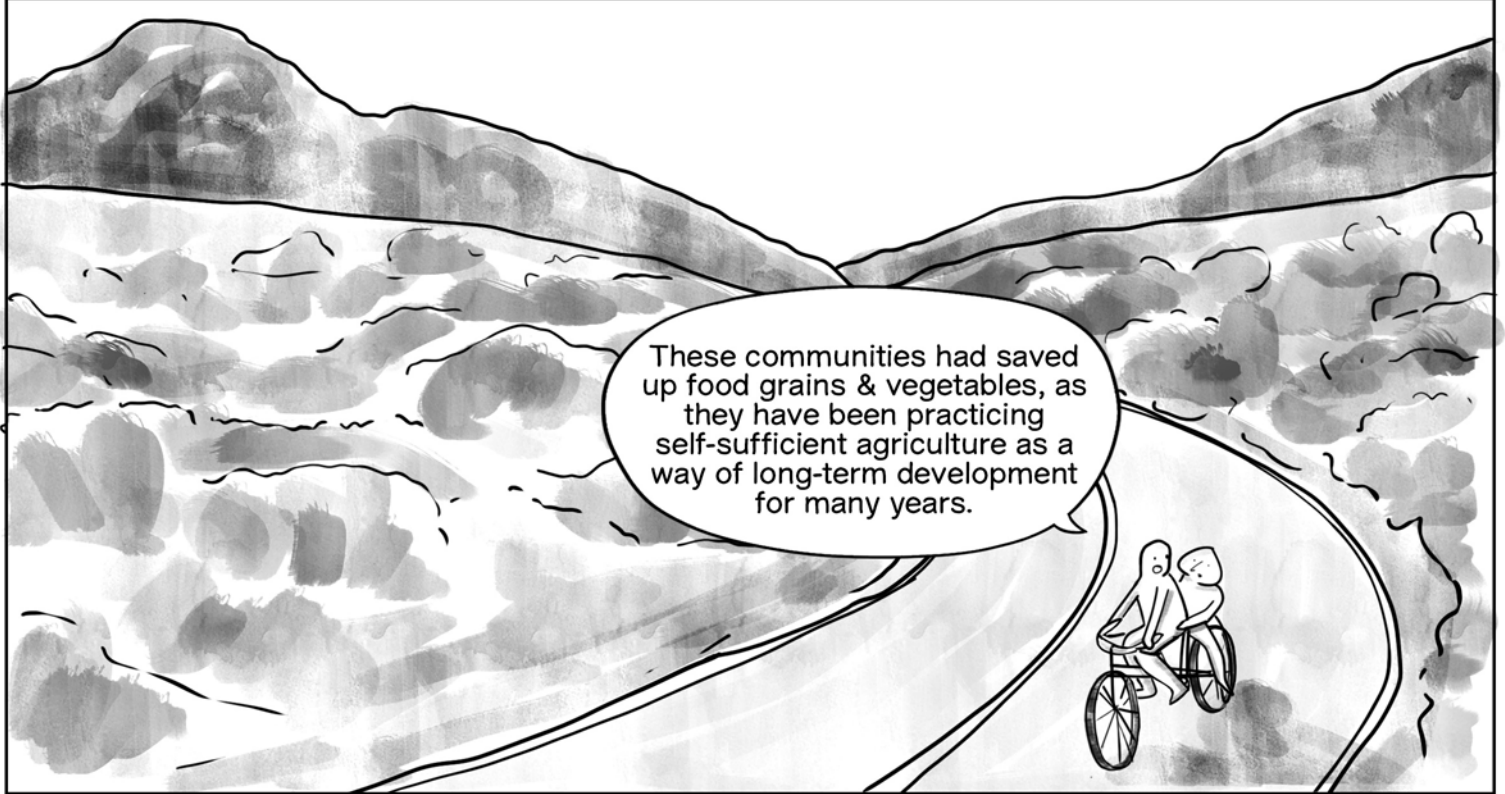
The Gram Panchayats were also instructed to spread awareness about COVID19.

In both forest produce collection & food distribution it was important to safeguard communities from the possibility of infection.

The Gram Sabhas decided to distribute food to each and every household doorstep, via the Gram Panchayat.

**DHULE,
MAHARASHTRA**

In 2017, the individual forest rights (IFRs) & CFRs of around 130 Kokni & Bhil Adivasi families, residents of Baripada village, Gram Panchayat Manjri, in Dhule District were legally recognised. Since the forests here are not very dense, villagers are agriculturalists & grow grains & vegetables throughout the year.



These communities had saved up food grains & vegetables, as they have been practicing self-sufficient agriculture as a way of long-term development for many years.



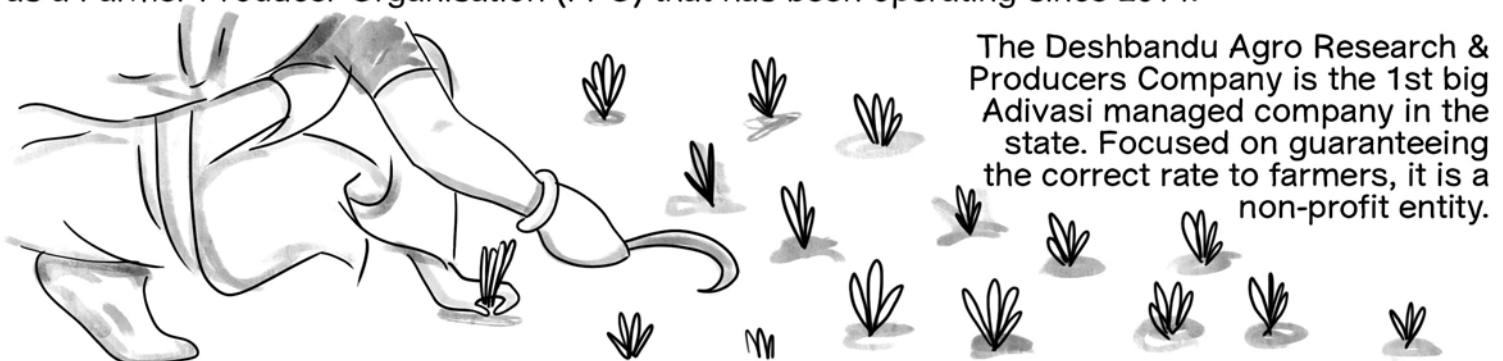
For people in cities development maybe a big building, a four-wheeler, a big TV, for us Adivasis it is land, forests, agriculture, livestock, food security & self-governance.

We respect the interconnection between jan, jal, janwar, jangal, jameen.*

We have also added 3 central processes: collective water management, collective farming & collective marketing.

Chaitram Pawar, a social-worker & community member of Baripada village.

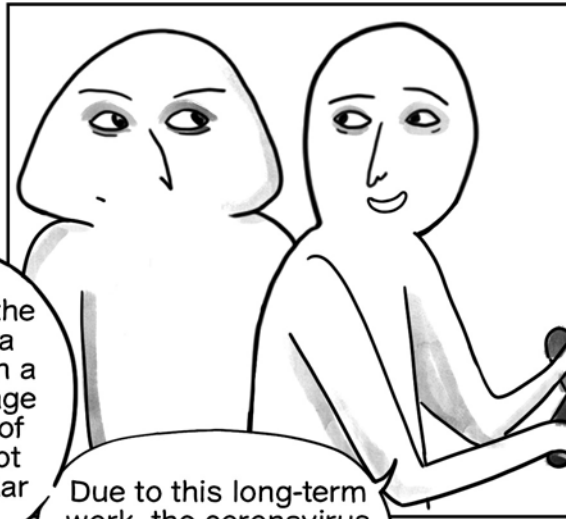
As part of community farming, 1016 dryland farmers of 45 villages in the district are organised as a Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) that has been operating since 2014.



The Deshbandu Agro Research & Producers Company is the 1st big Adivasi managed company in the state. Focused on guaranteeing the correct rate to farmers, it is a non-profit entity.

However, in years when there is a surplus, 30% is distributed to the accounts of farmers, while the rest is invested in building up the infrastructure of the company.

*jan(human), jal (water), janwar (animals), jangal (forest), jameen (land).



About 7-8 years ago, the villagers carried out a survey & came up with a micro plan for the village so that in a situation of crisis, villagers did not have to go to a sahuakar (money lender).

Due to this long-term work, the coronavirus lockdown has not had any drastic impact on this community.

SURVEY

EACH FAMILY'S ACCESS & OWNERSHIP OF:

LAND _____

WATER _____

ENERGY _____

LIVESTOCK _____

FOOD _____

MEMBERS OF FAMILY:

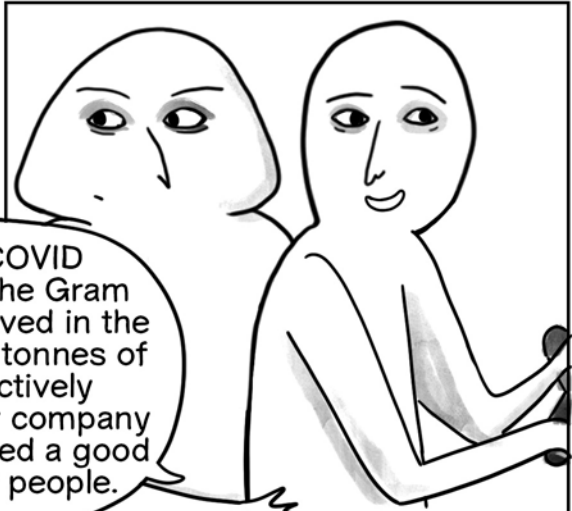
SCHOOLGOING CHILDREN _____

SENIOR CITIZENS _____

For several years now, families in Baripada have been growing enough vegetable & food produce for their households in order to store the excess, & therefore even during a lockdown there were no food shortages. In kharif (summer) season, villagers grow rice, urad (split black gram), chauli (cow peas), mungfali (peanuts), soya bean & jowhar (sorghum), while in rabi (winter) season they grow wheat, sugarcane, masoor (red lentils), onions & corn.



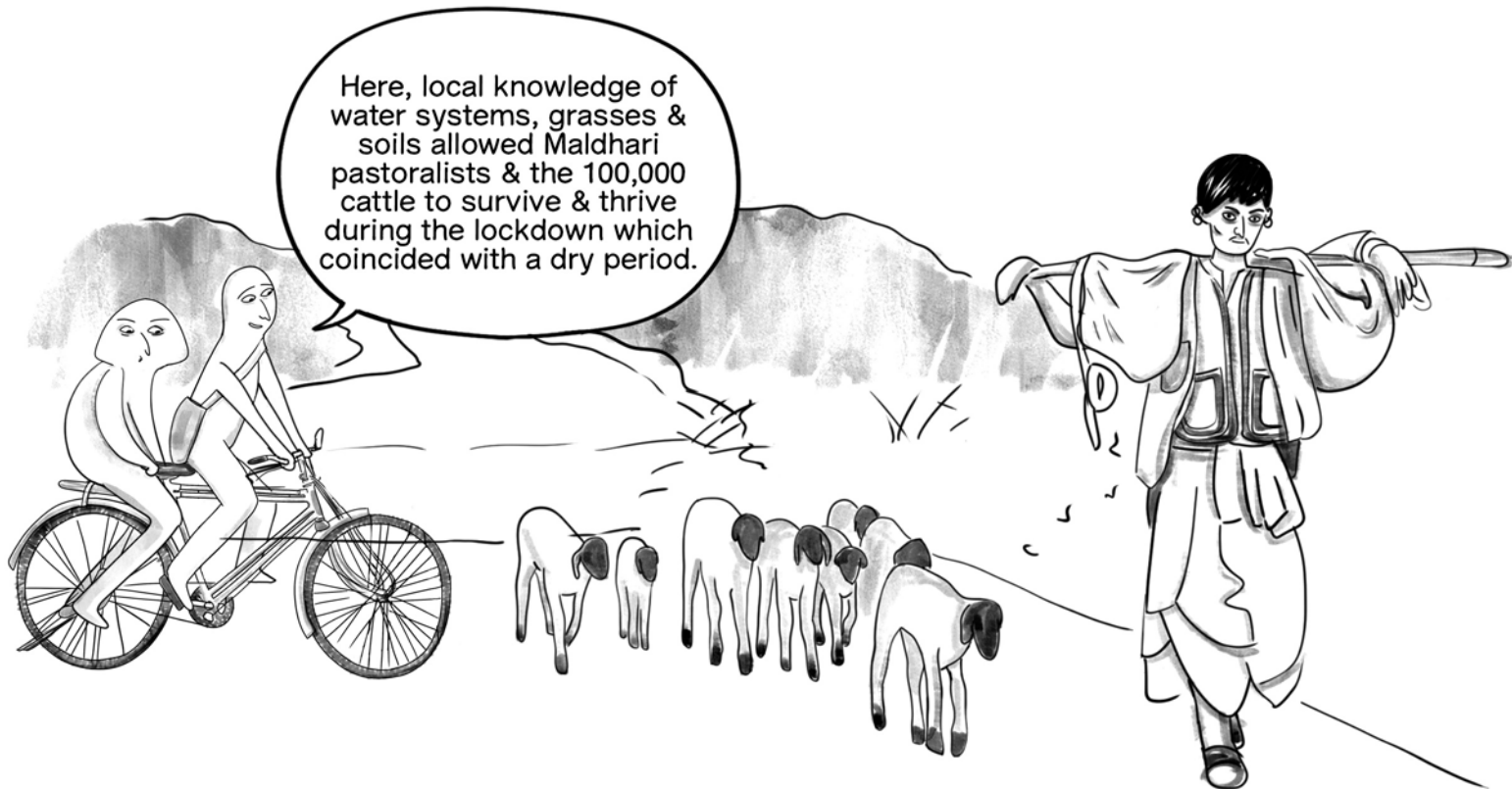
We have been involved in conserving traditional forest vegetable varieties, which we showcase & exchange yearly at the Van Bhaaji Mahotsava.*



During COVID lockdown, the Gram Sabhas involved in the FPO sold 50 tonnes of rice collectively through their company which provided a good income for people.

*(Forest Vegetable Festival)

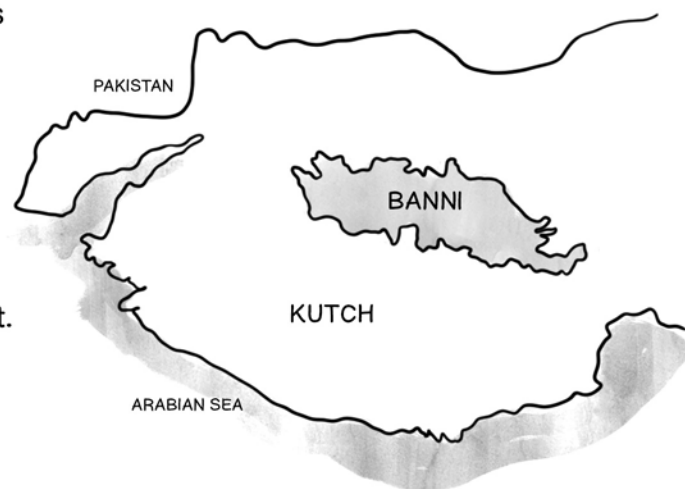
KUTCH, GUJARAT



“While we have been living a nomadic life with our buffaloes for over 550 years, after the Indian Forest Act, 1927 & the 1955 notification of Banni Protected Forests were brought into force, we were compelled to live a sedentary lifestyle,” Ishabhai, a Maldhari pastoralist from Gorevale village reminisces. He says, “Subsequently the Forest Department began aerial seeding of an invasive tree species called Gando Bawal (*Prosopis juliflora*). The establishment of the Forest Division in Banni & a new working plan in 2009, which led to closure of grazing areas has affected us. However, since then we have filed our CFR claims that are still under process.”

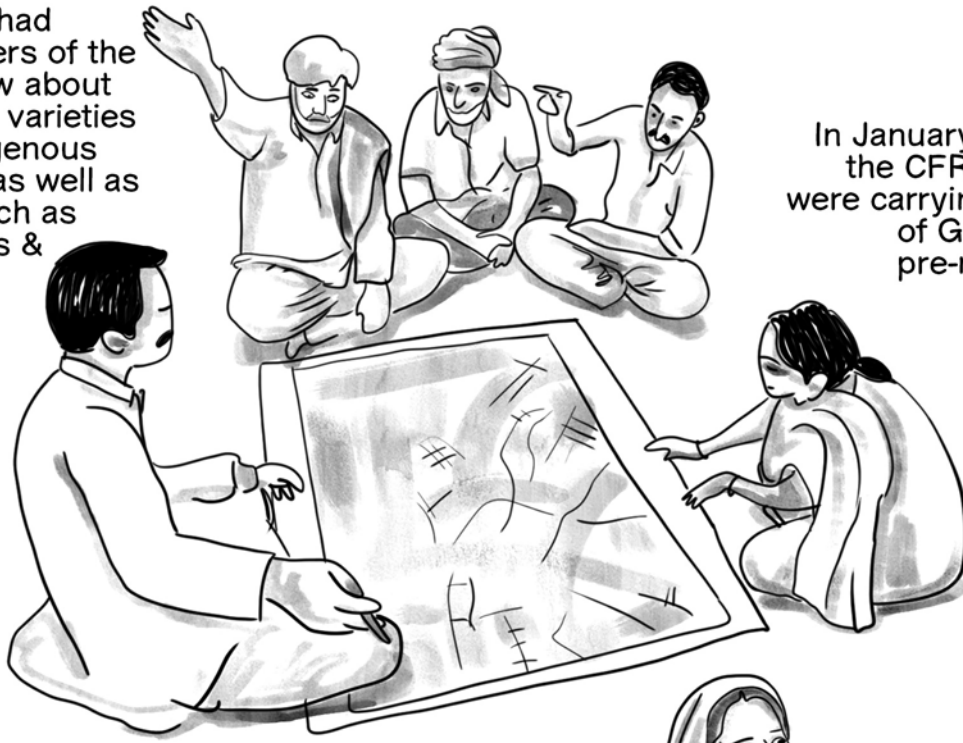
The Maldharis of the Banni grassland, one of Asia’s largest grasslands, are the 1st pastoralist group in India to have filed for CFR under FRA.

- Before 1947** ● The dependence on the grassland has been community based— there is no individual ownership, & no physical boundaries exist within the grassland area.
- 1947-55** ● The Banni grasslands were brought under the Revenue department
- 1955** ● It was designated as a protected forest.
- 1998** ● The Forest Department was officially given the responsibility of the grassland by district authorities.



Following this, there has been ambiguity about the ownership of the grassland- neither the Forest Department nor the Revenue Department have acknowledged or accepted the ownership.

The CFRMCs had consulted elders of the area who know about the numerous varieties of grass, indigenous shrubs, soils as well as the wildlife such as cranes, jackals & foxes.



In January & February 2020, the CFRMCs in 15 villages were carrying out the removal of Gando Bawal as the pre-monsoon period is critical.

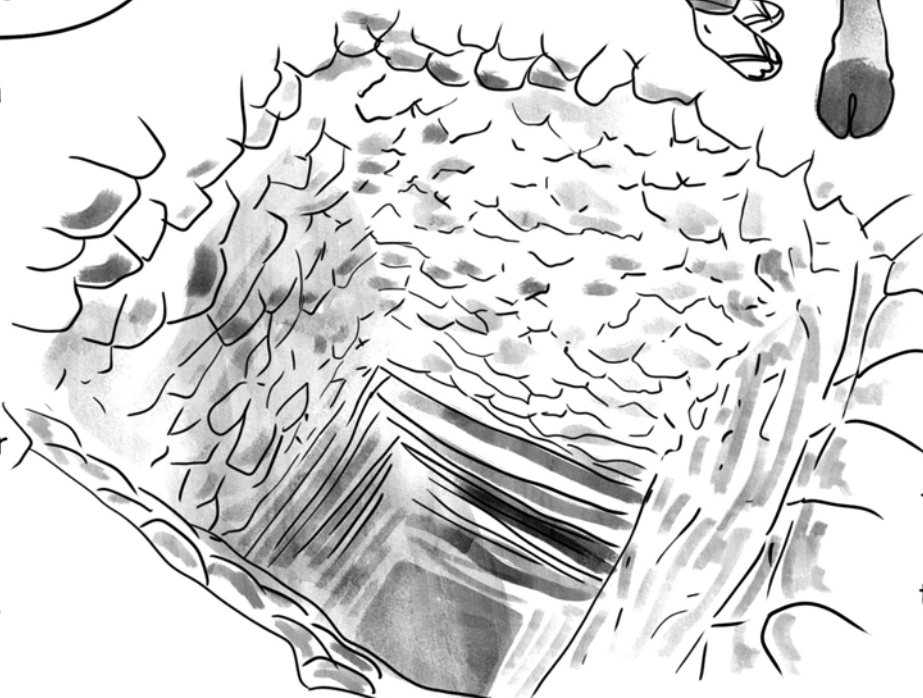
When lockdown was announced, the CFRMCs had to put their work on hold.

We are mainly dependent on indigenous livestock herding. While the pastoralist community could largely survive on its own milk production, some community members had food shortages. In such instances, neighbours & villagers would assist them.

Though the price of commercial fodder was rising, communities were able to rely on their own grasslands due to the timely management & removal of the invasive plants.



Close to a lakh of livestock depend on the water system. Once Lockdown 2.0 was lifted, the CFRMC fund was used to pay people to carry out the labour of water management by recharging traditional ground water jheels (ponds).



Through a collective system of work called aabat, communities worked to dig wells, called viradas, that collect sweet rain water. In the COVID lockdown period, communities are faring well due to the timely management of the Banni grasslands & of people's livelihood needs.

**NANDURBAR,
MAHARASHTRA**

This district has the 2nd highest acreage of CFR recognition in Maharashtra, where in April 2018, communities had titles over 2,16,723.10 acres of land.



The forests have plenty of Bhutya (Gum tree/ *Sterculia urens*), Mahua (*Madhuca longifolia*), Cuddapah Almond (Char tree/ *Buchanania lanzan*) trees. As part of CFR Management plans, the CFRMCs are guiding villagers to plant more trees that help to support livelihood of forest dwellers.



During the Covid-19 lockdown, the villagers had livelihood: in the collection of forest produce, tree plantation through MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) & building ponds & water harvesting for irrigation & other purposes through the CFR management committees.



Pratibha Shinde, a member of Lok Samanvay Pratisthan, on the reduction in migration since obtaining CFR recognition.



Over the years, the communities have planted tree species that can be used to extract MFPs. During this lockdown, villagers planted mango trees etc., which could be beneficial for future livelihoods & food security.

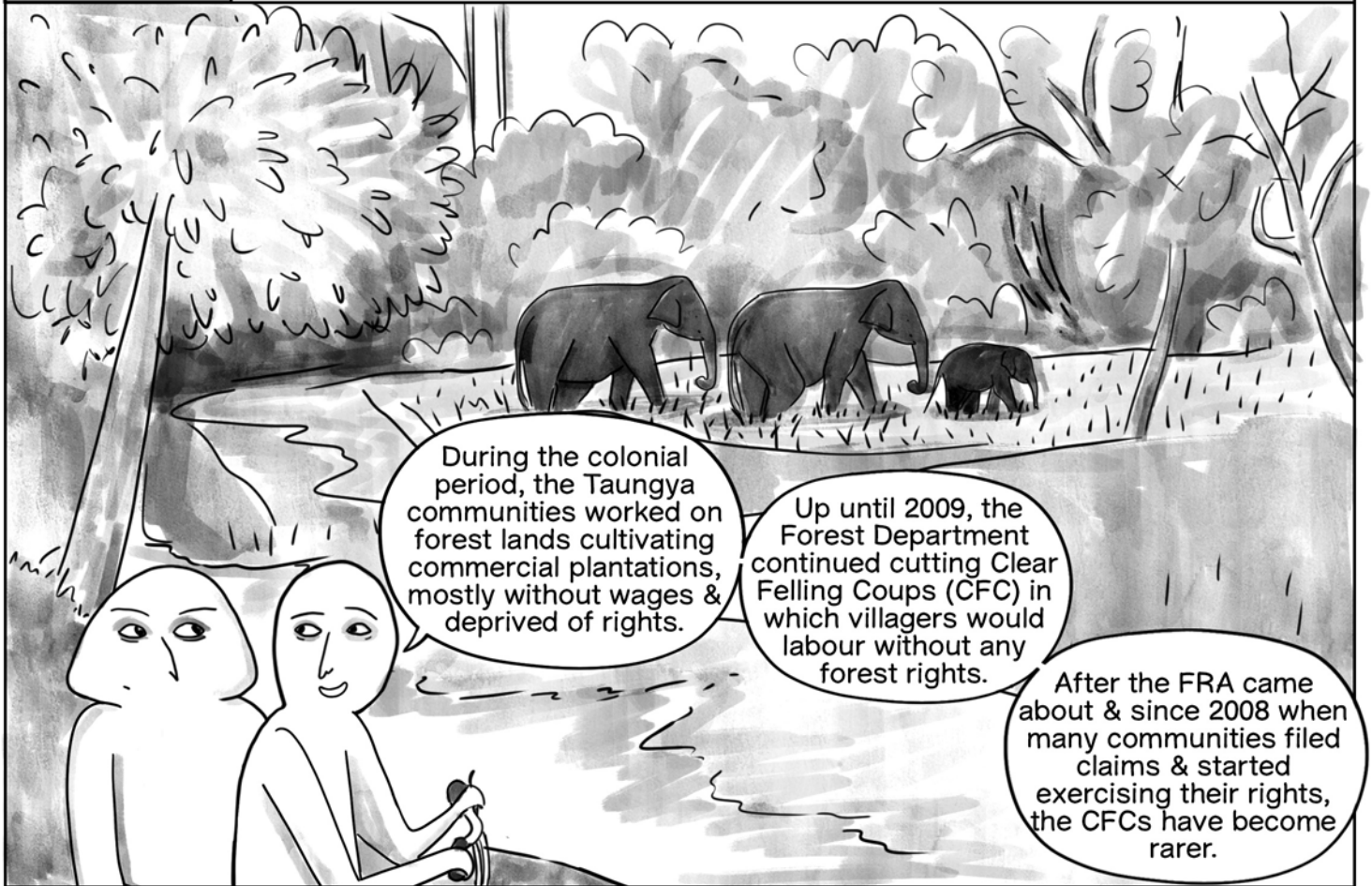
During the lockdown, CFRMCs & sold gum to cities like Indore & Mumbai at 70 rupees/kg. We were paid 50 rupees/kg. for the collection & 10 rupees/kg. as a bonus of the profit.

They sold our Mahua at 50 rupees/kg. & paid us 40 rupees/kg with an additional 5 rupees/kg from the profits. We could take the earnings from forest collection & purchase necessary items, during lockdown.



**ALIPURDUAR,
WEST BENGAL**

While CFRs are still officially unrecognised by the Government of West Bengal, the Adivasi communities- Rawa, Santhal, Oraon, Mech & Koch and other Van Taungya (forest village) communities, living in & around the Jaldapara National Park & Buxa Tiger Reserve in Alipurduar district in West Bengal, have been accessing & conserving the forests for several years.



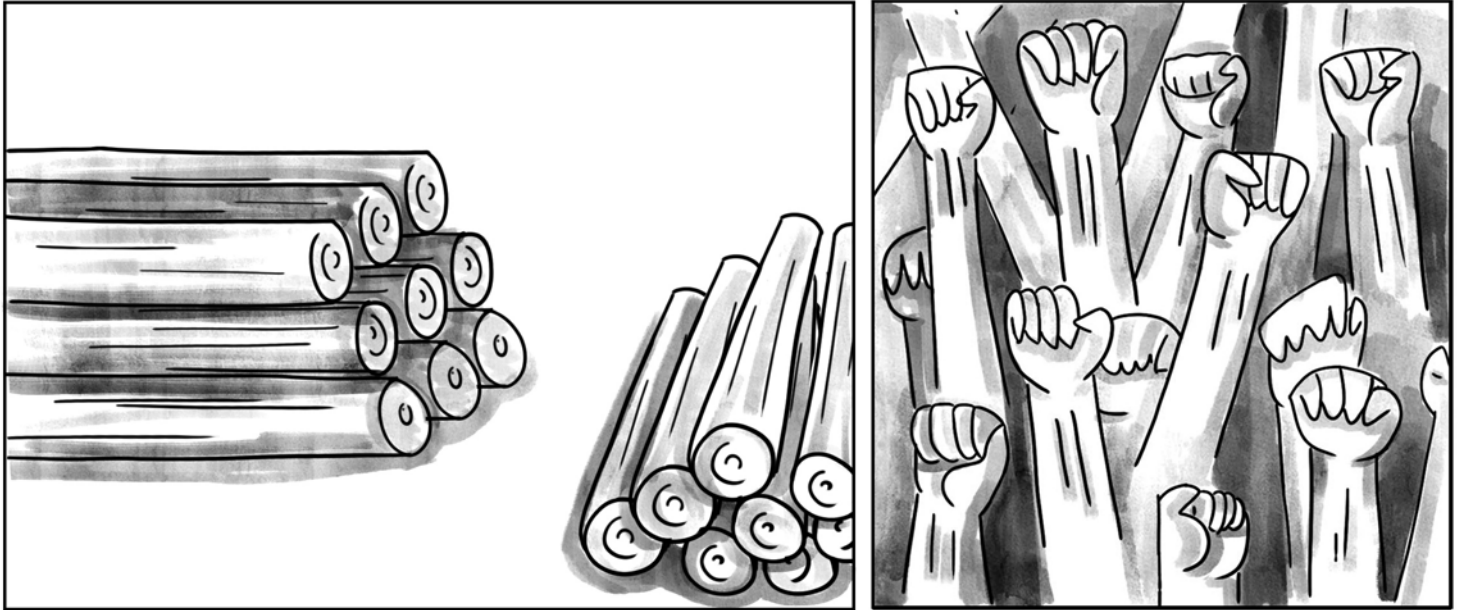
Some villages are leading the way for other forest villages to exercise their forest rights, protecting the forest from looting, collecting fish, firewood & forest produce, & managing forest resources. Kodal Basti, located in the Jaldapara National Park is the first village to self-proclaim their CFR in West Bengal.



After filing their CFR claims, the villagers put up a board in 2010 indicating that the forest in their area was managed & protected by their community. Thereafter, there was a steady movement of villages putting up boards, some even made of concrete, to demarcate community forests.

May, 2020.

Cyclone Amphan ripped through various parts of West Bengal. In Alipurduar district, although there was heavy rain, there was no large-scale damage.



Sunder Singh Rava of Kurmai Basti said, “This year, the cyclone season coincided with the lockdown so there were fewer people in the forests. The Forest Department took advantage of the situation & cut down many trees when in fact, only around 10 trees had fallen due to the rains in our area. The villagers of Kodal Basti intervened & stopped further tree-felling.”

While earlier the police would unquestioningly support the FD, over time, they began to notice when people were taken to the police station that in fact the FD was being brutal to poor people who were defending their rights to the forest.

Forest food is a source of nutrition & many families have depended on it during the lockdown period & beyond.

We are now planning to start a process of collective farming in our villages to ensure food security & boost livelihood.

The migrant workers have come home in many villages & there is a shortage of rural jobs. We are trying to provide jobs through creating a self-government in our Gram Sabhas.

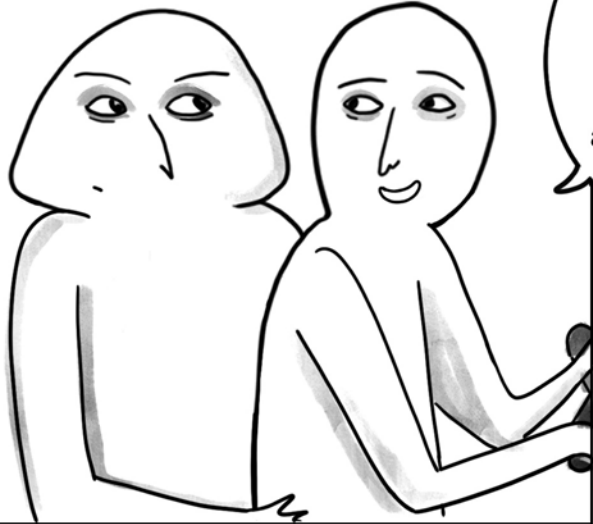
Chatu (wild edible mushrooms)

Lali seeds (Amoora wallichii)

Narikeli fruit (Ber, Zizyphus mauritania)

In the neighbouring village of Garobusti, located in the Buxa Tiger Reserve, Lal Singh Bhujel of the Van Taungya community.

DINDORI, MADHYA PRADESH



In Baiga Chak, an area of dense forests primarily inhabited by the Baiga PVTG* the communities were initially confused when the lockdown was announced, as they were unclear as to what it meant.

The Gramdut Karyakram & Jangal Adhyayan Mandal have taken up campaigns to spread awareness about recognition of individual forest rights since 2008 & on the legal recognition of CFRs since 2017.

10 gram sabhas of Dindori block had their documents & evidence ready to claim CFR, when the lockdown was announced. Between March 24 to April 29, there wasn't much support or hardly any information that reached Baiga communities about the lockdown. The rights-based campaigns, with volunteers, health workers & panchayat members, approached the District Collector of Dindori on April 29 & demanded that they be allowed to carry out support work in the district.



They made sure that communities got rations for 3 months & that radios & other systems were put in place to provide isolated villages with information about the health & other implications of the lockdown.

As migrant workers returned to the villages, they were quarantined in the district headquarters itself. At the gram sabha level, many villages put up barricades as there was a fear of outsiders coming into their villages through the forests, which are contiguous with the Chhattisgarh border.

Women, many of whom were empowered through the campaigns, played the leading role in the Gram Sabhas, organising systems to work with social distancing:

Women ensured that when they went to fill water at springs, hand pumps & pipelines, there was no overcrowding.

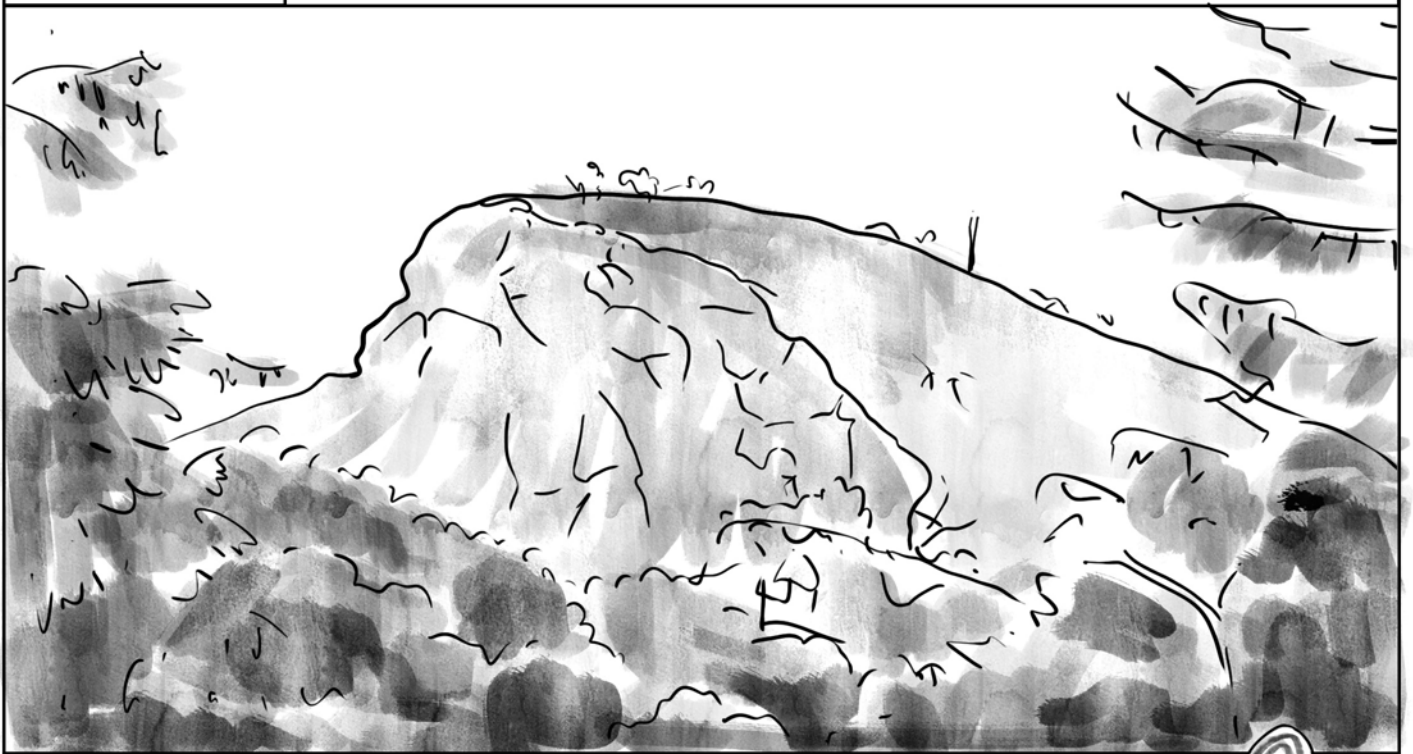
At ration shops, the women ensured that each hamlet had a specific day & time for collection in order to guarantee no overcrowding at the shops.

During ceremonies of death, birth or weddings, women ensured that there was physical distancing maintained when visiting or supporting the necessary spiritual ceremonies.



CHAMARAJNAGAR,
KARNATAKA

The Soliga community, who live in & around the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserve, have a symbiotic relationship with the rest of nature.



Over the last 10-15 years, they have mobilised to claim rights to the forest, and have formed two sanghas (collectives): Zilla Budakattu Girijana Abhivrudhi Sangha and Taluk Soliga Abhivrudhi Sangha.



The lockdown coincided with a major season for minor forest produce collection. We do not have the practice of storing food items stocked up for such a long period. We go every day to the forest for MFPs collection, tubers, fruits & green leaves, & use the same day's wages to buy the food items for that day.

The Adivasis leaders of the Sangha approached the District Commissioner & District Tribal Welfare Officer to demand distribution of nutritious food items & free rice. This acted as food security for communities who in the initial phases of the lockdown supplemented these with the tubers & greens they harvested from the forest.



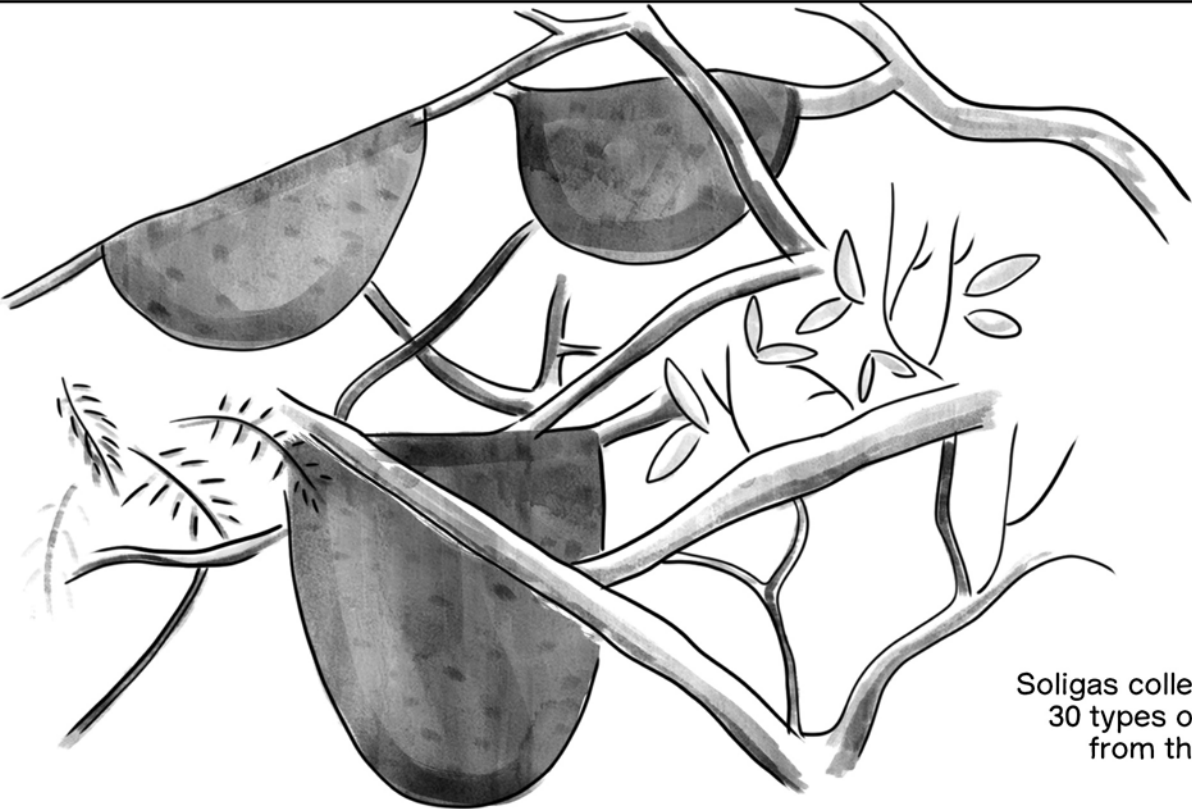
ಶ್ರೀಬೀಕಣ್ಣಿ ಸೋಲಿಗರ ಕಿರು ಅರಣ್ಯ ಸಂಸ್ಕರಣಾ ಸಂಘ



Many Soliga wage labourers who were working in coffee estates or elsewhere, were laid off and faced a food crisis. The Sanghas pressurised the District administration to provide food relief.

Many more families used to migrate out to other districts or states for 4-5 months of the year seeking employment. After community forest rights were legally recognised, most of the households stopped migrating & became actively involved in NTFPs collection.

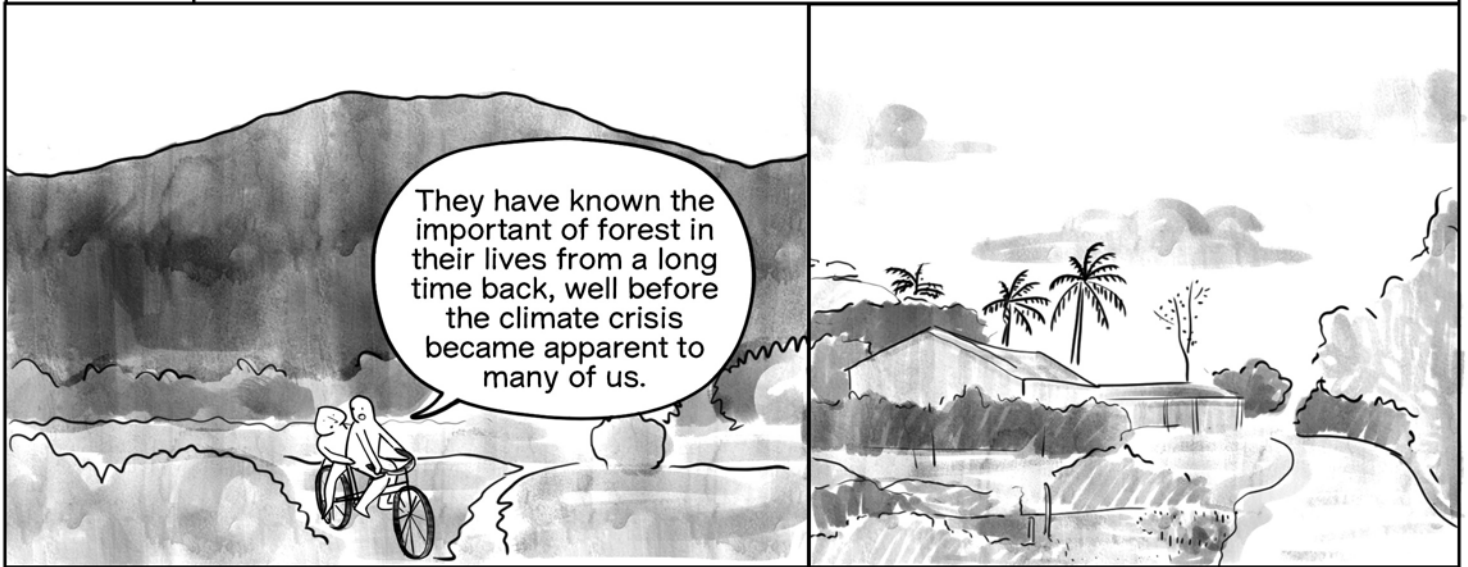
Kethegowda of Bangale Podu said: "More than half of our incomes are from forest produce. My community people collected honey that we sold to LAMPS*. These LAMPS societies, initiated by the government some decades ago & now managed by our Adivasi Sanghas, have been an important source of support. The LAMPS societies assisted us for survival & provided income throughout the lockdown period"



Soligas collect about 30 types of NTFPs from the forest.

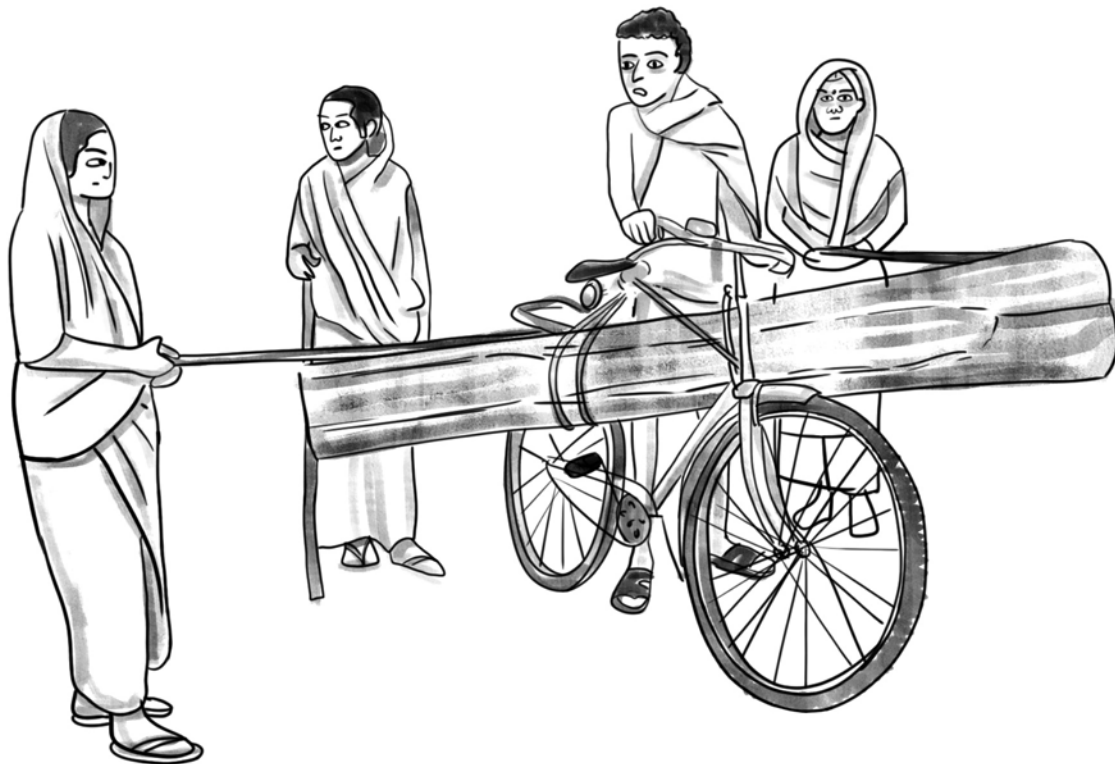
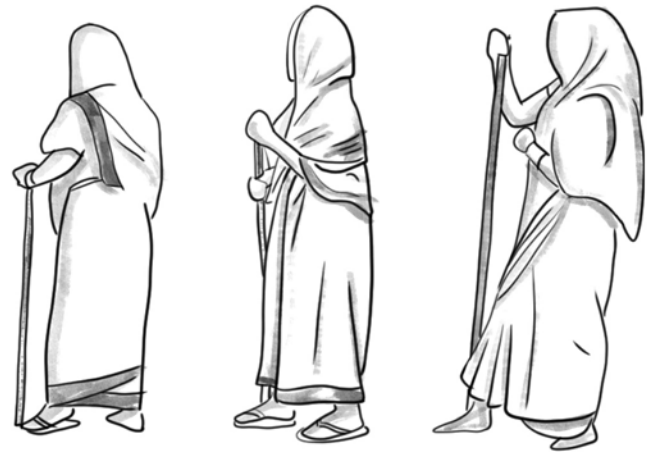
**NAYAGARH,
ODISHA**

The Kondh Adivasi community of Nathapur village in Nayagarh district has been protecting the Tangi range forests for several decades.



In Ranpur block, women in some villages have been actively protecting forests for at least four decades. Despite this, their CFR rights have not been legally recognised.

- 1993** ● The community started protecting the forest when the local timber mafia stripped off the green cover & left the village forest barren.
- 2004-5** ● Villagers opposed the Forest Department's plans to grow plantations of non-native plants & bamboo in the community forest resource areas of Nathapur & Karadapalli.
- Today** ● They resist any form of unhelpful, human intervention by guarding the forest, through their traditional practice of thengapalli or forest patrol.



The forest around Nathapur village is an example that it is possible to regenerate to a healthy forest by just leaving it alone, only protecting it from destructive factors.

In the district, 24 CFR claims have been pending since 2013. However, without waiting for recognition, Nathapur village has been exercising its rights to manage & conserve the forests.

During the lockdown period, its inhabitants have set an example by securing food, nutrition & livelihood.

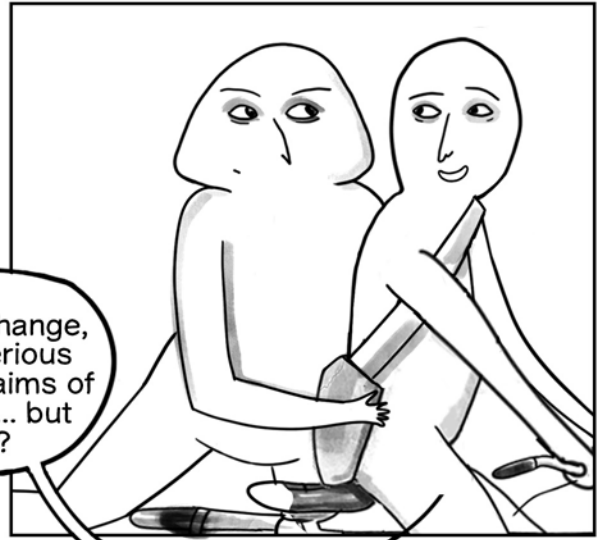


In the face of a health crisis, the Nathapur villagers were eating a diverse food plate. There are macro & micro-nutrients present in different forest plants that have a great potential to eradicate hunger, malnutrition, & related illnesses.

Hope you understand now the importance of recognising the rights of all forest-dwellers!

Unfortunately you have allowed only about 3-4% of the potential of the Forest Rights Act to be achieved; your government departments have systematically blocked or delayed implementation!

This has to change, if you are serious about your claims of 'acchhe din'... but are you?



Woah...

Hold on tight... Next, we're headed to the Himalayas! Get ready for some more shakes... physical & mental!



ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY

Compensatory Afforestation (CA) is defined as the process of afforestation, and associated regeneration activities done to compensate for destroyed forest land that has been diverted to non-forest activities. In line with FRA, the Forest Department should seek free, prior, informed consent from the Gram Sabha for plantation work, as the Gram Sabha has the power to self-govern the community forests and resources under FRA.

District Level Committee (DLC) is the body that makes the final approval of forest rights claims and ensures their recording.

Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO)- A legal entity, a company or a cooperative, of farmers formed to organise for better income and markets for all producers.

Federation of Gram Sabhas are a political and economic organisation of Gram Sabhas coming together to lobby and make collective actions.

Forest Department (FD) is a government agency for forest administration. The FD was formed during British colonial era, and the State continues to exert control over Indian forests through it.

Forest Rights Committee (FRC) is a body formed by the Gram Sabha to facilitate the process of claiming forest rights.

Forest Villages (FV) are villages that historically have fallen under Forest Department control or old habitations, unsurveyed villages and other villages in forests whether recorded, notified or not. As the villages did not fall under the Revenue Department, they received very few developmental benefits and no legal entitlements.

Individual Forest Rights (IFR) include the right for Adivasi and Forest Dwellers to live in (housing) and cultivate (agriculture) forest lands.

Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), composed of Forest Department and Gram Sabha members, most often have an imbalance of power where the FD dominates decision-making and profits, and the role of communities is tokenized.

Large Scale Adivasi Multipurpose Cooperative societies (LAMPS) are government scheme supported organisations for providing economic support in which Adivasi communities can buy, sell, get loans and market their produce through agricultural cooperatives.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 is a law that guarantees the right for rural inhabitants to a fixed number of days of work.

Ministry of Environment Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) is the nodal agency in the administrative structure of the Central Government for the planning, promotion, coordination and overseeing the implementation of India's environmental and forestry policies and programmes.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) is the nodal Ministry for overall policy, planning and coordination of programmes for development of ST's. MoTA is the nodal agency for implementation of FRA.

Minor Forest Produce (MFP) & Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) includes all non-timber forest produce of plant origin that provide cash income and sustenance for forest communities. Section 3(1)(c) of FRA recognises the 'right of ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of minor forest produce which has been traditionally collected within or outside village boundaries.'

Nistar Rights are community rights for access and use of forests recognised earlier in Princely states, Zamindari or such intermediary regimes. Records of nistar rights are found in govt documents and reports in many states.

Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs) are inhabitants and communities who have resided in and depended on forests for generations.

Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act, 1996 (PESA) is a legislation that vests the control, management and governance of forests and resources in the hands of local tribal communities. PESA also intends to reduce impoverishment, food insecurity, malnutrition and out-migration among tribal populations by providing them better control and management of natural resources which will improve their livelihood and standard of life. Equally important is the recognition that for tribal communities, their economic, social and cultural connection to their lands and forest resources are integral to their identity

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) is a government classification of tribal communities that have been systematically excluded to such an extent that they possess very low developmental indices.

Protected Areas (PAs), as per the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, include areas demarcated by the government for conservation purposes such as National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves. The definition of forest land in FRA includes protected areas, and the rights of Adivasis and Forest Dwellers are recognised in all PAs. Section 5 of FRA says that these Gram Sabhas have the power to protect the wildlife, forest and biodiversity. They have the duty to ensure that adjoining catchment areas, water sources and other ecological sensitive areas are adequately protected.

Record of Rights (RoR) is the final step in recording of forest rights, when the rights are entered into the Government records of the Revenue and Forest departments.

Reserved Forest (RF) and Protected Forests (PF) are defined as per the Indian Forest Act (1927), referring to different levels of protection that the State executes over these forests.

Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC) examines resolutions for forest rights claims by the Gram Sabhas and pass it to the DLC.