

# Thematic Report

## Resources and Livelihoods

The Journey of Community-Based Organizations under PACS Support



# Acknowledgment

This study is an attempt to assess the journey of Community Based Organisations (CBOs) formed by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) under PACS programme. It seeks to capture the rich diversity of experiences in forming the CBOs, defining their purpose, developing their leadership, expanding their membership, strategizing the intervention processes and analyzing the outcomes. The study is based on 29 detailed case studies and 14 short profile case studies, which have been used as the basis for developing three knowledge products: a) Thematic Report of Basic Services b) Thematic Report of Livelihoods and Resources and c) National Report that synthesizes the journey of the CBOs. The national report presented here is the synthesis of all the case studies documented for this assignment.

More than 85 CSOs in 90 poorest-of-the-poor districts of seven states of India came together under PACS programme to ensure better access to basic services and promote livelihood security for poor and marginalized communities. This kind of programme gains relevance in a development environment of a country wherein economic disparities are on the rise, with little sign of the social stigmas afflicting certain caste groups, the disabled and women being weakened in a modernizing India. The central strategy of the PACS programme in the selected districts was to organize these dispossessed groups and empower them to demand access to their rights and entitlements.

Samarthan would like to thank the PACS national and state management teams for reposing their trust in the organization to undertake this study. We would also like to put on record our appreciation for their commitment towards the socially excluded groups and support and guidance provided by Anand Bolimera, Rajkumar Bidla, Swati and Rajpal of the national PACS team. We also sincerely thank the CSOs and PACS state teams, who were forthcoming and co-operative in organizing meetings with relevant stakeholders. The perspective, analysis and commitment of the organizational heads and programme leaders were extremely helpful in developing the case studies.

We are grateful to the CBOs, their leaders and members for passionate and candid interaction with the study team members, sharing their joys, successes, failures, hopes and aspirations. We are humbled by their struggles in a difficult and inimical socio-economic and political environment. We laud their achievements against such odds. It was enlightening and motivating to meet the CBO leaders - disabled people, unlettered Dalit women, tribal with profound wisdom. It strengthens our belief that empowering the SEG brings equality, equity and social justice at center stage, laying the ground for transforming the socio-political ethos of the country.

We thank the Study Advisory Group for providing their guidance and support in designing the study and providing one-to-one support whenever we approached them. Last but not the least, we thank the study team members - Amit Anand and Shrdha Kumar - and the research team that lent support in preparing the case studies and the thematic reports.

It is hoped that this report will inform many about the hitherto largely undocumented struggle of CBOs of the marginalized communities fighting and creating a space for their rights and entitlements.

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## Executive Summary

The seven-year-long PACS programme is coming to an end in 2016. It involved more than 85 CSOs in 90 poorest-of-the-poor districts across seven states in India - Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and West Bengal. Land Rights, Forest Right Act, s and MGNREGS was one of the dominant critical theme of the intervention. Many CSOs worked on one of these themes, either working on only of theme or working on more than one of the above mentioned thematic area.

The PACS strategy rested on the premise that the poor and marginalized must be organized to effectively exercise their rights and entitlements. New CBOs were formed on the basis of this premise and existing ones were strengthened. Many of them were also networked at the cluster, block and district level to consolidate their collective voice and secure their bargaining power.

This study documents the journey of these CBOs, with the CBOs and CSOs adopting approaches and strategies in their unique and specific context. This thematic report is consolidation of twenty CBO journey's, covered in the thematic area and looks at the important learnings derived from them. The study looks at the strategies they devised to empower themselves socially and economically and even politically, to address the issue of exclusion and claim their rights and entitlements.

One of the purposes of this documentation is to capture and disseminate this evolving theory of

change as a package of best practices that could show the way to new groups and new communities in new geographies to pursue their collective interests.

A case study methodology was adopted to capture the outcomes of the CBO journey. A list of 20 CBOs, which had a demonstrable impact in the area of asserting community's rights over resources and livelihood was drawn up from the different states. Participatory meetings with the CBO leaders and other stakeholders were organised to share perspectives, experiences, successes and challenges. The final selection was made to maximize variation of experience and ensure proportional representation across the seven states, themes and CSO representation.

These case studies provide information on the context and genesis of the CBOs, their organization, leadership style, membership base, decision making, and financial management and above all their organisational purpose and significant achievements. Most of them came together because their members had perceived or latent need or obvious denial of rights for a long time under an oppressive environment. The mentoring support of the CSOs encouraged these communities to develop a vision, identify problems, entrust their natural leaders to take the initiative to organize the CBOs and design strategies for the significant achievements.

There were also a few cases where violence catalyzed the CBO formation (*Rampur ka*

*Sehrana*, MGSA, in Madhya Pradesh), or the looming threat of acquisition of land (*Jan Abhivaykti -Hasdeo Arnab Bachao Andolanor Dalits* were displaced by flooding of rivers (*Rapti Visthapit Manch*, PDT, Uttar Pradesh) etc. However, most other cases required mentoring support of CSOs to identify their issues with respect to Resources and livelihood. For instance, converting a relatively poorly articulated demand for land titles under FRA into a land/resource right, or mass mobilisation to demand employment under MGNREGS, were some of the outcomes of these collective actions.

Most of the CBOs have a collective leadership that operates in a transparent manner in transacting business or taking joint responsibility during interventions or campaigns. The purpose of the CBOs is determined by the nature of their constituency as well as the theme of interventions. For examples, *Dalit* groups working on MGNREGS defined the purpose of their existence as being 'to secure fair, just and dignified employment'; tribal groups working on Forest Rights defined it as 'access to legal ownership (*Patta*) over forest land or right to use forest resource for alternate and sustainable livelihood.'

The key processes emerged out of the information provided by the facilitating CSO to the community on various Acts and programmes, or even procedures to claim entitlement under different program. A significantly large number of field facilitators were identified from within the local communities, for instance *Gramya* used 'newlywed daughters-in-law' from the community or *Jan-Sahjya* used local youth as their field facilitators. This empowering process strengthened as they learnt to demand and negotiate for their entitlements with the district and local administration. Rallies, public agitations, *Dharnas* were used along with a parallel process of formal complaints. It is significant that among the groups documented in this report, most of them had networks at block and district level and used collective presence and pressure for successful negotiation with the State. Notably there was direct or indirect engagement

of Caste *Panchayats* in the interventions. The support ranged from moral backing on the issue, to mobilisation, to providing financial support. However, this has not been exploited well by the CBOs under the PACS strategy and most of the CBO leaders articulated their linkages with the traditional caste or tribal identity based *Panchayats* only as references.

Capacity building is critical in the empowerment process. Hand-holding support from CSOs was crucial in different phases of the struggle. The handholding support covered areas like filling and filing applications (for seeking wage employment, forest rights) or for putting together the required legal documents, following up cases in government offices, initiating negotiating at higher levels of officialdom, handholding during the initial interaction with the block/district administration. Exposure visits and participation in state-level conventions were found to be motivational and confidence-building.

The negotiations included demanding land titles, physical possession of land, or even work under MGNREGS, campaigning against delayed and under payment of wages, filing applications for FRA rights etc. The action was local at the village or *panchayat* level, or more broad-based at the block or district level, depending on the scope for resolving such issues. The successes fortified the belief of the CBOs in their collective strength and bargaining power. Demands for work under the MGNREGS resulted in many significant changes. Disabled people got 100 days of employment and *Dalit* women became field supervisors (mate). Other demands saw tribals getting FRA *pattas* and title deeds to revenue land. In some cases, land titles were accessed or land was physically re-possessed by the tribals after years of constant denial and forcible eviction by the dominant communities. Many policy decisions were also taken viz. re-advertisement of posts reserved for the disabled (*Viklang Manch*, Chaupal, CG) or the District Collector issuing an official order to improve the organization of *Gram Sabha* meetings (*Ekta Jan Sangathan*, CASA, MP) or accepting to set up a *Bhumi Ayog* (*Ekta Parishad*,

MP). There was evidently changed and improved power equation and improved negotiation with other communities such as better wages as agriculture labour.

Many of the CBOs also engaged with political power such as *Panchayats* at local level. Some CBO members fought *Panchayat* election. Many won elections and returned as Panchs (ward members). Though some also lost election but it raised their social status and also the perception of the community. Negotiation with authorities gave them confidence to engage with administration/other communities or other power structures, for instance, negotiating with shopkeepers to allow women to put shops in the weekly haats (CASA). They have developed a deeper understanding of issues and possible avenues to resolve them. Some want to carry forward their struggle in their *Panchayats* to ensure that left out families get benefits.

Most of the CBOs are confident that they can manage issues in their village or at *panchayat* level, however, they feel that support for few more years would have been immensely useful. Some of the networks and federations may be able to provided sustained support. The *Ekta Jan Sanghatan* promoted by CASA has designed a sustainability plan of building a grain corpus to meet their campaign expenses in future.

Key learning's emerging from the study include the following:

- Strong social mobilisation coupled with capacity support to Socially Excluded Groups<sup>1</sup> (SEGs) organises them as strong and powerful collective.
- Organisation of collectives around similar identity and history of denial creates a strong bond within the groups.
- It is important to identify natural and

committed leaders from within the group to lead and facilitate the group objectives

- Field facilitators selected from the community itself is effective and leads to sustained support.
- Understanding of programs and issues like application writing /filing can be substantially improved by regular inputs and handholding support.
- Hands-on support builds sustainable capacities in the CBOs
- Rallies, public agitations , public marches are effective tool for demonstrating power of the network and gets the attention of the media and administration
- The association of the local CBO with larger networks reinforces its power and creates a support system.
- Significant, and sustained results can be achieved by organising communities into collectives
- Caste *Panchayats* can be mobilised effectively for support and reach to catalyse the work of CBO
- Most of the achievements had ripple effect, as the many other 'not connected' community members demonstrated similar organisation skills and achievements.

The analysis of these case studies suggests where the next steps forward in empowering disposed communities lie. These steps are visualized in the following manner :

- Invest in CBOs and their networks

Many SEG communities successfully organised themselves and demonstrated significant achievement on the issues that were perceived as

<sup>1</sup> The deprived and disadvantaged are those communities that have been denied an equitable share in the development process viz SC, ST, minorities, women and the disabled. Women are included as a separate category in the disadvantaged constituencies because many women from the economically and socially better off communities also suffer exclusion. The women from the deprived communities suffer even greater deprivation. Such communities will be referred as Socially Excluded Groups (SEGs) in the document.

critical. They even structured themselves into federated local/ regional networks from the village upto the district or region.

The CBOs identified and promoted their leaders in a democratic and collective manner. It is therefore important to nurture and build this leadership and improve their skill sets through strategic long-term support, both technical and financial, to the select networks.

- Sustenance of CBO enthusiasm

Some issues confronting the marginalized need campaigning at the state level and resolution through policy changes. The village-to-district level networks of CBOs still require a support system to mentor and back-up their collective leadership. There are also CBOs that are not affiliated to regional networks which need such external support. The need is to identify a national or state-level CSO that has a mandate of strengthening the capacity of CBOs. This organisation can play a meaningful role by conducting 1-2 day regional/district level workshops on different themes, giving the CBO leaders the opportunity to connect with each other, learn new skills, gain information on changes in the provisions of acts and programmes, and build up their understanding

of the mechanics of policy change. This would also lay the way for future action at a macro level.

- Building strategic linkages of CBO networks with existing campaigns

The CBO networks promoted with PACS support are usually constituency or issue-focused. Some of these networks are affiliated to CSOs like the *Ekta Parishad* and NCDHR that have a national presence with state and grassroots connections. Others like the *Musahar Vikas Manch*, *Ekal Mahila Sangh*, *Dalit Adhikar Manch* etc have state-level presence. Such networks need to be linked to larger existing networks, especially issue-specific networks.

- Promoting horizontal learning and support models

Different methods have been tried in different context by CBOs and CSOs . However, there is scope for learning from each type of intervention. The PACS-supported State Level CBO Conclaves provided these opportunities, however, the platform for horizontal learning can be strengthened to accommodate frequent, structured meetings amongst the CBO leaders, albeit on a smaller scale.

# 1. The context

Land and livelihood resources are critical for poor, Socially Excluded Groups (SEGs) that are already on the margins of society. Food security, livelihoods and a safety net for existential emergencies are critical for such groups, with land being the basic factor to ensure security in an agrarian society. Those who possess land become rich, those without land remain poor. Traditionally, land distribution has always been inequitable, with the SEGs being denied access to productive land and resources, while the upper castes and the elite possess large tracts of fertile lands. It is for this reason, that the SEGs, notably the tribal groups, have also been referred to as '*highlanders*' in the nineteenth and early twentieth century anthropological studies, that is, those living on higher, undulated hills, gradually evicted from their traditional lands and forced to settle on hills/ undulated highlands.

This purposeful denial of access to resources by the SEGs is a systemic manifestation of the existing caste system. The caste hierarchy traditionally alienates *Dalits* from resources and land. *Adivasis*, the traditional forest dwellers who have turned agriculturist in recent times due to rapidly depleting forest cover and forest produce, are denied access to forests. Hence, the forest-dwelling communities remain landless because of systemic resistance to granting them the legal right to this asset.

Landlessness leads to dependence on rich landowners, with its attendant exploitation of SEG communities. Such exploitation is a feature

of feudal societies where the SEGs are forced to work on the farms of the rich for a daily payment of a mere one- and- a- half kilograms of wheat or rice. Debt-ridden, they live a life of bondage. Such social conditions are still widely prevalent in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

This destitution due to deforestation, lost control over forests or traditional agricultural lands is starkly evident in tribal communities like the *Sahariyas* of Central India. It has induced social reform and affirmative action by the state. One notable initiative was the *Bhoodan Andolan* initiated by Acharya Vinoba Bhave (a renowned Gandhian) in the 1950s. It sought to redistribute the land of rich landowners among landless households on a voluntary basis. Similarly, some states like Madhya Pradesh sought to distribute 'state-owned common land such as *charnoi* (pasture) land' to the landless tribals and *Dalits*.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (or simply the Forest Rights Act) was passed in December 2006 and came into force on January 1, 2007 with the notification of its administrative rules. The FRA provides for the restitution of deprived forest rights across India, including individual rights to cultivated land in forested landscapes and collective rights to control, manage and use forest resources as common property.

However, despite legislation and affirmative action, access to land is either denied or legally withheld, or worse, forcefully captured by violent

means. The range of denials of land rights and entitlements covers denial of land needed for homesteads, delay/denial of FRA *pattas* (legal titles) to land already in possession of the tribals, and preventing legal *patta* holders from occupying land granted to them under affirmative actions of the state such as *charnoi* land re-distribution, the *Dalit* agenda etc.

The situation is exacerbated by the practically forced acquisition of land for development/mining activities under the tacit protection of the state. In worst scenarios, the SEGs are being forcibly and violently evicted from their legally-entitled land. In most cases, a land mafia operates in connivance with the local revenue and land officials to manipulate official land records. Tribal or Dalit communities such as *Sahariyas* of Madhya Pradesh, the *Kondhs* of Orissa, the *Musahars* of Bihar, the *Gonds* of Chhattisgarh, etc are living examples of such present day victimisation.

Even in cases where the SEGs do possess and farm small parcels of land, productivity levels are so low and the labour markets so exploitative that they continue to have marginal existence. The state responded to this situation with its 'food for work' programmes in the past. Focused on landless labour and marginal peasants, the rationale of these programmes was to alleviate the problems of chronic unemployment and poverty by leveraging productive human capacity.

The food for work programmes showed the way to the historic and revolutionary legislation in 2005 called the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). The Act became operational the same year, initially covering 200 districts in the country. The programme under the Act was scaled up to cover all the districts in its third phase. It has been called the Mahatma Gandhi Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) since October 2009.

The MGNREGA guarantees 100 days of employment in a year to about 54 million rural poor. It identifies the *Panchayati* Raj institutions (PRIs) as the key implementing agency for the programme, providing a significant opportunity

to demonstrate the role of village-level institutions in transforming village infrastructure and addressing abject poverty. The opportunities to develop rural infrastructure include watershed development, restoration of water bodies, forestry activities, land development, prevention of soil erosion, flood control, and construction of roads and institutional facilities.

However, Acts like the FRA (Forest Rights Act), MGNREGA, RTI (Right to Information) etc. and land redistribution measures are only enabling legislations or affirmative actions. The efficacy of such sensitive legislation depends on the ground level implementation of their provisions and on the actual allocation of rights at the local level. This is where serious challenges arise. Recognising the rights of the SEGs involves shifting resource control away from government departments and rural power structures, which stand to lose territory and potential revenue streams, both legal and illicit. This rural nexus continues to exercise a high degree of autonomy from democratic oversight.

Several studies, assessments by the civil Society organisations and reports of Controller and Auditor General of India have questioned efficiency, effectiveness and quality in implementation of MGNREGS. Social audits carried in various states also brought to the notice, different corrupt practices in its implementation of the program. The State analytical report-Madhya Pradesh prepared by Samarthan for PACS pointed towards the MGNREGS planning exercise. The exercise which was visualised as a big step towards decentralisation and community participation, was conducted in a ritualistic manner, with token engagement with community. The Gram *Panchayat* work plan and the choice of infrastructural schemes are prepared by the elected PRI representatives but they more often than not reflect the wish the state administrative machinery and the rural power structure. State control extends to the implementation of the scheme, with employment provided not on local demand but for 'works' decided by the administration.

## 2. Rationale for PACS support

The Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) programme was implemented from 2011 to 2016 across 7 states to foster inclusive development of the SEGs. The objective was to reduce the welfare gap between the SEGs, who exist on the margins of society, and the other dominant castes, who enjoy the fruits of the country's socio-economic development. The programme sought to address the systemic discrimination the SEGs are subjected to by the dominant castes, which it saw as the root cause of their socio-economic exclusion.

The programme sought to empower the SEGs by encouraging them to build their own Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) that could collectively demand SEG rights and entitlements embedded in the welfare schemes initiated under the state's thrust for affirmative action. This thematic report is a synthesis of the learnings and trends emerging from the documentation of this CBO journey in their struggle for 'resources and livelihoods'. It captures the experiences and contestations of a group of CBOs selected for the study. It seeks a common thread in the socio-cultural narratives of the SEG experience in different regions by looking at the different forms and intensities of discrimination and exclusion the SEGs faced and how they were able to make the delivery of rights and entitlements more inclusive and accountable.

The report is based on more than 20 case studies from different states and contexts. The selected CBOs worked exclusively on land-related issues, integrating land with livelihoods under the FRA

and MGNREGS and also integrating the employment guarantee scheme with other entitlements related to basic services. The report builds the context in which these CBOs emerged, the challenges they faced, the strategies they adopted, and the success they achieved.

The land and FRA rights issue required care in selecting CSOs that had the necessary experience in addressing the procedural complexities. The MGNREGS, however, presented a larger canvass, allowing the selection of both small, women-headed organisations and big, experienced ones. MGNREGS was a focal thematic intervention of the PACS, both to complement the land rights interventions from the land development perspective, and to address the issue of access to basic services and their entitlements. Many CBOs that weren't basically focusing on the MGNREGS found it necessary to intervene in the scheme because of its scale, dimension and demand in the community.

We hope the learnings from this report will be useful for policy makers, donors both national and international - governments and CSOs planning or currently working with CBOs on a macro scale to improve access to welfare services. The learnings suggest possible ways for social mobilisation to build CBOs and develop their intervention capabilities to act as local social watch guards and become self-sustaining entities. They also suggest the strategy that could be adopted to guide the process of change in different social contexts and in the face of different challenges.

The report can also serve as a guiding resource document for governments looking to implement programmes with the participation of the community and monitor their progress on the ground. Policy makers will also find this report

helpful in understanding the bottlenecks in implementing current national flagship schemes that are specifically designed for marginalised communities but present some formidable challenges to access and inclusion.



### 3. Methodology

Around 20 CBOs across different CSOs and states were covered to prepare this thematic report. Many of these CBOs were working on more than one theme. MGNREGS, in particular, cuts across several thematic areas, from land rights and the FRA to basic services like employment, education, health, etc. Hence, some CBOs complemented their work on land issues with the MGNREGS, while some others complemented it with education, nutrition etc. Therefore, the division of the CBOs into two broad categories was based on the larger focus of their work, combined with the organisational mandate of the CSO supporting them.

The partner CSOs first identified a set of empowered CBOs based on their experience of working with them. The PACS state teams subsequently reviewed the achievements of each of these CBOs and narrowed the list down, based on significant and tangible outcomes and impacts. The national PACS team did a further comparative review of all the CBOs and came up with a list of 30 CBOs whose journey of struggle

from denial to access, they felt, could be inspirational for other communities and organisations, if documented in detail. To further diversify the narratives, an almost equal number of CBOs were taken from the 7 PACS programme states - not more than one CBO per CSO - for the detailed documentation. Diversity was also ensured in terms of the SEGs constituting the CBO membership, the nature of the organisation-CBO federation, single CBOs, networked CBOs- and the nature of services improved/accessed.

Based on these selection criteria, the CBOs listed below were identified for detailed case documentation and analysis under the report's thematic area. They include several CBOs who complement their work by accessing the MGNREGS, given the magnitude of and demand for services under this scheme, but the primary focus still remains on the FRA that empowers tribals and other traditional forests dwellers to acquire land rights, forest entitlements and livelihoods.



Cases related to livelihood and resources				
	CSD	CBO	Theme	CSD
1	CASE	Ekta Jan Sangathan	MGNEGS	M.P.
2	Mahatma Gandhi	Ekta Gram Samiti- Rampura ka Sahrana	Land, FRA	M.P.
3	GEAG	Women Farmers Group	Livelihoods	U.P.
4	PDT	Rapti Visthapit Manch	Land rights	U.P.
5	Tarun Chetna	Vijay Nari Sangh	MNREGS, health, education and	U.P.
6	MDA	Musahar Vikash Manch	Discrimination, atrocities, land, health, education and MGNREGS	Bihar
7	Bihar Viklang Kalyan Parishad	Viklang Adhikar Sangathan (Differently-abled persons)	PWD rights, MGNREGS	Bihar
8	Janasahajya	Jeevika Adhikar Sangathan, Kotagarh	MGNREGS, FRA, land rights,	Odisha
9	THREAD	Ranibandha Labour club Federation	MGNREGS, FRA	Odisha
10	Aaina	Jiban Jibika Shramika Sangha	MGNREGS, education, advocacy for different issues of PWDs, women and CWDs	Odisha
11	SPREAD	Mahila Mahasangha	MGNREGS, FRA, land rights, gender mainstreaming	Odisha
12	SMOKUS	Balia Adivasi SHG	MGNREGS, health and nutrition	Odisha
13	Janabhivayakti	Hansdeo Arand Bachao Sangharsh Samiti	FRA	Chhattisgarh
14	Sharmajivi Mahila Samity SMS	Jamuna Syam Sahayata Samuh	Land rights, livelihoods and RSBY	Jharkhand
15	EFICOR	Paktodi Pahar	MGNREGS and FRA	Jharkhand
16	NSVK	Gram Ekai, Baramdiha	FRA and MGNREGS	Jharkhand

A participatory approach was adopted to understand the CBO journey in its entirety. The first step was discussing the selected case studies with the PACS national and state teams to understand their perspective on each CBO and its journey. Subsequent steps flowed to include the following methodological elements :

### 3.1 Methods of inquiry and information gathering

Literature review : All documents related to the mentoring CSOs were reviewed to understand their past and current work, their traditional areas of intervention in social and other contexts, and their interventions for rights and

entitlements. They included policy and legal documents to understand their policy context.

**Participatory approach:** Discussions were held with all stakeholders to understand the CBO journey from their perspectives. They included the CBOs and their leaders, other people from the community, other villagers, elected representatives, front line workers, other service providers, senior government officials, and larger federations and networks. The objective was to understand how they viewed the impact and achievements of the CBOs to improve access to basic services and make them more inclusive.

**Discussion with the CSOs :** Talking to the CSO field staff and other senior staff contributed insights into capacity building methods, hand-holding support processes, strategies that yielded better results, the challenges the CSOs faced and their learnings from the entire experience.

**Discussion with PACS state team :** A mandatory discussion was held with each state team to understand its perspective on the context, case and typology of interventions.

The case documentation covered the following phases of the CBO journey :

**Formative phase :** The study took an 'outsider' perspective to 1) understand whether the CBOs were formed with PACS support or had existed earlier, and 2) identify the reasons and socio-economic conditions/context for their genesis/evolution. The motivations that brought the community together were probed, in particular, the critical incidents (if any) that made the SEGs rally together as a cohesive unit to oppose or protest against a collective denial. Understanding this phase was important because it gives a picture of what motivates SEGs

to mobilise and come together strongly with a sense of purpose. It holds potential lessons for larger community mobilisation processes.

**Maturation phase :** This phase included understanding the history of the interventions, the nature of mentoring and other support provided by the CSO, the capacity building input received, the learning imbibed by the organisation along the way, the course changes in approach and strategy adopted by the CBO/CSO to contest new challenges and issues, the widening of their perspective and scope of work in response to the higher expectations of the community or the circumstances, the structure and leadership that emerged within the CBOs over time, complementary CSO strategies for strengthening individual CBOs through engagement with the state/civil society/other CBOS around the same or different themes, creation of federated structures, etc.

**Subsequent phase :** This was a retrospection phase to take a re-look at the learnings derived from the CBO experiences and the key processes they followed to rally the SEGs around a specific issue. It also studied the key outcomes and achievements of the CBO struggles against denial of rights and entitlements and also against gender, class or caste discrimination and also the future plans of the organization in terms of the new struggles that they would engage in, the new threats that they see emerging over the horizon and the ways in which they would cope with the new threats to stay together as a collective and work for the rights of the community.

The evolutionary journey of the CBOs also covered dimensions such as leadership, structure and norms, sustainability, and outcomes and impacts.

## 4. Emerging trends and patterns

The case study analysis sought to identify the generic challenges the CSOs faced and the strategies they adopted to rally SEGs to fight for improved access to resources and livelihoods. The research team tried to de-layer the different kinds of discrimination, exclusion and denial, as well as the inefficiencies and unaccountability of the service providers in delivering the services to these excluded communities. It tried to assess whether the primary motivation of the CBOs was strong enough to mobilise the SEGs or whether they needed to add other issues to strengthen their mandate to forge solidarity within the groups.

The analysis also tried to give a clearer picture of the types of organisations and mandates that help create strong and sustainable community collectives. It tried to see which mobilisation and collectivisation strategies work for which specific issues. The objective was to identify trends and patterns that can inform future CBO mobilisation strategies, in particular macro-level strategies to access resources and livelihoods.

### 4.1 Challenges contributing to denials of rights

This section lists the common challenges that influence generic denials in land rights/FRA and MGNREGS.

#### 4.1.1 Land rights and FRA entitlements

1. Low interest in land titles among tribals and traditional forest dwellers : Traditional

forest-dwelling tribes such as the *Gonds*, *Kondhs*, *Sahariyas* etc who turned agriculturist relatively recently, generally show low interest in land ownership. They fail to understand the importance of land and legal titles, giving vested interests the opportunity to exploit them (MGSA, *Jansahajya*, *Janabhiyakti*).

2. Non-transparent and complicated land record management : Land records are difficult to access and comprehend. Manipulated versions are used to intimidate the poor and force evictions. The management of land records is non-transparent, giving ample opportunities for low-rung officials to manipulate them (MGSA). Interpreting this sensitive policy/legislative framework is the responsibility of the district administration and district collector.
3. Low awareness about land and FRA applications procedures : The SEGs in the intervened regions in all states knew next to nothing about these complex revenue and forest related legal procedures. Applications with supportive documents have to be submitted to access land rights and FRA entitlements. The applications have to then be followed-up with the higher tiers of authority. This automatically excludes those who do not have the capacity or know-how to fulfil the procedural requirements. Land demarcation also requires an understanding of how to use GPS.

4. Forced occupation of government land allocated for redistribution : The demand for homestead land in densely populated areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is a challenge for these states which face a land crunch. Matters are aggravated because rich upper caste landlords have forcibly occupied land marked for redistribution (MVM, Reflect Circles).
  5. No mechanism to deal with flood-related disputes : CBOs like *Rapti Vishtapit Manch* (*Panchsheel* Development Trust) operate in a unique situation: trying to reclaim the land of farmers that is repeatedly 'lost' whenever the Rapti River floods. The land boundaries disappear and it takes tremendous effort to mobilise the revenue machinery to carry out the measurements needed to re-identify and re-possess the land.
  6. Insensitivity of the bureaucratic machinery : This insensitivity is evident across the states. The political will to redistribute land in favour of the poor and landless is weak, if not absent. The administrative machinery does not evict illegal occupiers of the land. It also shows little interest in helping the landless locate land for which they have been granted *pattas* (MGSA). Front line workers and staff responsible for last-mile implementation are not trained adequately so they fail to appreciate the need to target SEGs. This lack of sensitivity and unsupportive behaviour of the service providers discourages people from engaging with them.
  7. Prolonged delays in decisions-making and granting FRA *pattas* : FRA applications require approvals by the *Gram Sabha* before they are considered by the district and sub-divisional level committee (SDLC). Pending applications keep piling up. Applicants find it demotivating and expensive to follow up their cases (*Janabhiyakti, Jansahajya*).
  8. Less land granted in the patta, particularly for community forest rights : The common experience is that community forest rights are difficult to access. Another common problem is that the quantum of land granted in the FRA *pattas* is usually substantially less than the original demand (across most CBOS in different states)
  9. Vested departmental interests : Within government departments, there are interests that want to protect and promote their turf/jurisdiction. There are also other interests wanting land for development, mining, and factories. The state is also unwilling to lose control of land and forests. This diversity of interests results in clashes between vested interests, the state and the SEGs (across states, but more evident in Chhattisgarh - *Janabhiyakti*).
  10. High opportunity and economic costs : Regular petitioning and follow-up on service requests means there is a high opportunity cost for getting entitlements (PDT, GEAG, Choupal, BVKP etc).
  11. Lack of local support : In most remote rural/feudal areas, the mind-set is that SEGs should not overstep their limits to become landowners but should serve the upper caste landlords. So there is little support for processes to allocate land, resources or services.
- 4.1.2 Common challenges with respect to the MGNREGS
1. Poor awareness and lack of community ownership : Awareness about the scheme is low because of poor quality investments in popularising it. This reduces a self-targeting, demand-based, rights-oriented scheme into a typical beneficiary scheme that provides employment as a benefit at the will of the administration and the last-mile functionary. Most CBOs had never demanded employment under the scheme prior to the PACS intervention (across CBOs in different states).

2. Lack of proper and capable implementation machinery : The scheme is poorly staffed, in terms of capacity and attitude to deliver. Many CBOs explored the right to employment and submitted written demands for work. Getting employment was easy in some cases (*Jansahajya*, AINA, THREAD, etc), very difficult in others (*Gramya*) and moderately challenging for most CBOs (CASA). Lack of sensitivity and unsupportive behaviour of the service providers discourages people from engaging with them.
3. Prolonged delays in wage disbursement: A self-targeting and demand-based scheme like MGNREGS turns self-limiting if wages are delayed for months. This affects demand negatively. Most of the CSOs started their interventions by first streamlining wage payments or persuading the community to be patient. CBOs across states also recognised this challenge and fought for timely payments (*Ekta Jan Sangathan*, CASA, AINA).
4. Excluded find it difficult to seek/invest in assets: Despite MIS and online processing of data, the scheme is plagued with malpractices and forged documents. Beneficiaries of individually targeted schemes usually invest in their assets and later recover their investments from the scheme. The practice automatically debar the poor from seeking the asset or investing in it.

## 4.2 Favourable environment for CBOs

Whether it is denial of land or denial of wages in the MGNREGS, the issues concern lives and livelihoods, so they are significant for SEGs already on the margins of 'access' and excluded from the gains of development. Since land and MGNREGS bring immediate gratification, unlike health or education that have distant and less obvious impacts, the CBOs showed greater clarity of purpose in pursuing their rights and entitlements in these schemes. The favourable

environments that facilitated CBO formation and fostered their work include:

**Strong mobilisation after a trigger :** Sometimes, there were unique contexts that trigger CBO formation and growth- for instance, a violent attack by the powerful land mafia to evict a marginalised farmer from his land (MGSA), or the forced eviction of those with FRA *pattas* without due compensation for coal mining (*Janabhiyakti*), or repeated loss of land to floods, triggering a readiness to organise to negotiate with the state (PDT). The CSOs were able to galvanise and mobilise a community already agitated by the stimulus created in its social context. The CSOs built capacity in the CBOs, identifying and honing leadership skills while supporting the intervention at the block, district and state level. Most of these CBOs were part of larger federations and networks.

**Social mobilisation for a perceived need :** In several cases, the social context for intervention was shown in a different perspective to facilitate the formation and organisation of the CBOs. This mode of CBO formation required intensive mobilisation to convert a potential demand - such as employment under the MGNREGS, or accessing FRA *pattas*, or demanding timely and fair wages under the MGNREGS - into a perceived need.

## 4.3 Strategies applied

Organisations adopted different strategies depending on the context in which they attempted to access the right and entitlements.

### 4.3.1 Intensive social mobilisation

The CBOs operated in an environment of low demand because of low awareness, low interest, poor perception of the benefits, and unhelpful and discriminatory attitude of the service providers. When demand was low - such as demand for employment under the MGNREGS - the SEGs and the entire village were mobilised to understand the 'demand-based' mandate of the scheme (*Gramya*, CASA, MVM, AINA, *Jansahajya*, THREAD, etc). Thus a process of

conscientisation had to precede the social mobilization process to make the community understand the implicit denial and deprivation that they had been suffering.

Awareness was also generated to mobilise the tribal community in the case of FRA land rights (*pattas*) and entitlements (*Jan Sahajya, Jan Abhiyaykti*). Sometimes, the demand existed, but was not backed by any action, for instance, revenue land claims made by the *Sahariya* community in Central India. In such cases, a more extensive approach was adopted (MGSA, PDT, MDA, BVM), first letting the community initiate action and then giving direction to the demand and action.

The mobilisation and awareness generation continued for more than one year on average, giving space to organise the community. Campaigns were subsequently launched to access entitlements, such as employment under the MGNREGS, FRA *pattas*, land entitlements, etc. Less time was required to mobilise in cases where a local incident had inflamed and triggered the community. Action to access 'rights and entitlements' quickly followed.

The investment in social mobilisation, organisation and awareness building helped make the SEGs aware about the critical legislations and the entitlements embedded in them. It also brought procedural clarity the SEGs understood which documents/records were necessary to expedite the process. Mobilisation on a wider scale was supported by the CSO and CSO networks.

#### 4.3.2 Identification of natural leaders

Manju, Pavitiri, Pooran, Sumant, Sai bani, Rajkishore ... these are some of the names of natural leaders who were mentored to make the CBO journeys possible. Outputs depend on good local leadership combined with action. CSOs across the states and the different communities and contexts first made the effort to identify these natural leaders. They were subsequently groomed for their future roles. Findings leaders was one of the important outcomes in the formative phase of the CBO.

#### 4.3.3 Capacity building of the CBOs

The CSOs mostly used less structured methods for capacity building - informal orientation, hand-holding support, facilitation in writing applications, facilitating visits to blocks and district offices to interface with officials, etc. They worked with the CBOs on the procedural processes - understanding the documents and relevant paperwork needed to claim entitlements and rights. The paper work could be simple, like making a demand for work under the MGNREGS, or more elaborate, like arranging the documents to claim forest rights and entitlements.

Wherever needed, documentation was done to strengthen the struggles. For instance, *Ekta Sangathan* (CASA) collected data on delayed wage payments - with details like job card number, number of days worked, and the amount of pending wages - before pressurising the district administration to release the payments. MGSA trained the CBO to understand the nuances of land records, the sessions being more practice-oriented than classroom-oriented.

In training field facilitators, structured classroom trainings definitely helped to build collective knowledge. Even the informal orientations of the CBOs involved preparation and method by the CSOs.

One key capacity building strategy was to build the confidence of the CBO leadership to deal with the official machinery. Initially, hand-holding support was provided in these interactions. But the support was gradually withdrawn. Most CBOs in the study developed the capacity to independently pursue issues with the concerned authorities.

Exposure visits were another instrument to build confidence and mutual learning through sharing. For instance, *Jansahajya* took the CBO to nearby Kalahandi district, where a relatively matured and successful CBO existed. Or there were mutual visits within the districts. CBO conclaves promoted by the PACS in each state also helped in enhancing capacity and confidence. Specific

details are given in table- 1.

#### 4.3.4 Pressure- building strategies

*Gheraos*, public agitations, rallies and marches at the block/district office were the means used to press demands and expedite claim applications. For instance, *Jansahajya* agitated the block office several times to press the demand for resolving pending FRA claims. Similar tactics were used to demand wages (CASA etc). *Gramya* used a milder version of such agitations with its women groups when they did not get employment.

Organisation like AINA used rallies to gain visibility and media attention. Although these rallies did not spotlight specific issues, they marked special occasions such as Independence Day, Children's Day etc. CASA also used rallies to get media attention and visibility in the administration to expedite the resolution of pending issues. Chhattisgarh *Viklang Manch* celebrates Disability Day at the district headquarters every year to demonstrate its strength and to gain visibility.

Most CBOs backed their agitation with proper documentation to strengthen their case. They complemented pressure tactics with intensive preparation to claim entitlements. For instance, Bihar *Viklang Kalyan Parishad* organised disability camps in clusters of *Gram Panchayats* while *Jansahajya* made individual and community FRA claims after proper GPS mapping.

Most CBOs formally or informally federated in their geographical locations. Networks and federations generated greater awareness and shared knowledge. The extended collectives also generated numbers at the village and regional level to catalyse change.

#### 4.3.5 Using local cadre from the community as field facilitators

Most CSOs identified youth from the local community to be trained as their facilitators and resource persons. *Gramya* used local married women, *Janabhivyakti* and *Jansahajya* used local

youth, AINA used moderately educated village youth, *Chhattisgarh Viklang Manch* used persons with disability from the local community. The local cadre was an additional and sustained resource for the community. Since the youth were also directly affected by the issues the CBOs were addressing, they were empathetic. So it is likely they will continue to support the community even after the CSO/PACS support is withdrawn.

The Table-2 provides a snapshot on how the CBOs working on resources and livelihoods were organised and intervened during their journey:

## 4.4 Types of Membership

The emphasis in all the CBOs was to build on an already existing affinity or common identity. Most were organised as homogenous groups that faced the same discrimination and denial, so they identified with each other and the purpose of the interventions. FRA issues are of greater concern for tribals while land and MGNREGS entitlements are common deprivations among both *Dalits* and tribals. Hence, the communities were organised along caste and class lines, giving them a strong identity and a well-articulated sense of purpose for example, only tribal membership or only *Dalit* membership or, sometimes, a mixture of tribals and *Dalits*, but with all being traditional forest dwellers or inhabitants of areas with a similar socio-economic context.

CSOs also built up existing groups or revived defunct groups like women's thrift and credit groups to form collectives (*Jansahajya*, CASA). This served several purposes - it created avenues for women to come out, meet, and develop confidence to engage with the outside world.

## 4.5 Type of leadership

The selection of the leadership was mostly a collective effort by the CBO and the CSO facilitators. The qualifying traits for the leader were more or less uniform across most CBOs. They included : 1) the ability articulate one's personal views and views of the group with

reasonable cogency, 2) social commitment and willingness to give time for the CBO's work, 3) the ability to comprehend government schemes and programmes, and 4) the ability to raise one's voice in protest and withstand pressure in large gatherings and public forums to access their right and entitlements.

The facilitating CSO provided crucial capacity building inputs and handholding support. Many CBO leaders vouched that they were inarticulate and ignorant before the interventions but developed their confidence and perspective with the mentoring of the CSOs.

#### 4.6 Democratic norms and decision making

Decision making among most groups was collective and informal in nature. The challenges related to services were first discussed within the group and a consensus on the action to be taken was developed through a consultative process. In some cases, guidance was taken from the CSO functionaries and from senior CBO network/federation members.

#### 4.7 Clarity of purpose and goals

The CBOs could clearly articulate and express the purpose and objectives of their collectives. CBOs that emerged out of a triggering incident had greater clarity of purpose. The orientation during the mobilisation helped consolidate this clarity about what they stood for and what they were supposed to achieve.

#### 4.8 Negotiation with the State machinery

Almost all the CBOs confronted the establishment to secure their entitlements and benefits, the confrontations forming the *leit motif* of their existence. They included confrontations against upper caste landlords, PRI representatives, and government officials at the block and district levels. The CBOs showed strong evidence of their growing ability to negotiate with the state, elected representatives, and upper caste elites during their journey to empowerment.

Wherever the administration was unresponsive or refused to be accountable to the community, the CBOs first tackled the situation on their own, then used the support of the mentoring CSOs to mobilise larger rallies at the district/block headquarters to press their demand - be it wages under MGNREGS, delayed decisions on FRA applications, getting *Dalitpattas* for their land in their possession, or taking possession of land for which they had the legal titles and documents. District/block level negotiations are now as common for the CBOs as dealing with field functionaries.

Mass agitations also brought visibility to the CBOs, built their confidence and increased pressure on administration to take cognizance of the issues they raised. The administration began seeing them as a legitimate social force. The Table-3 captures some of the common patterns found across different CBOs.

## 5. Significant outcomes and impacts of the CBO interventions

The selected CBOs were handpicked for their demonstrated impacts. While their levels of articulation differed, some being more vocal and clear in airing their views about the change they were able to bring about in their environment, all the CBO leaders, irrespective of their leadership style and traits, could clearly express the impacts of the efforts of the collectives.

The outcomes need to be assessed in the social, economic and political context of individual CBOs. For instance, it is easier to demand employment than to get delayed wages released by pressurising the administration. Similarly, it is extremely challenging to obtain FRA *pattas* when the land in question is destined for coal mining. If the administration is sympathetic, it is easier to obtain land titles but if it connives with the local land mafia, things get more difficult, especially if the community is subjected to violence, or the land records are manipulated to force evictions. There are also instances of illiterate villagers mustering their collective courage and refusing to sign documents presented by departments without first understanding their content and implications.

So the achievements of the CBOS are context specific. We need to assess the outputs in conjunction with the coping mechanism and strength's demonstrated by the CBOs in withstanding adversity. These adversities in accessing their rights and entitlements are summarised below :

### 5.1 Adverse situations for the CBOs

- A land site is proposed for coal mining. Local muscle and administrative power align to evict tribals from their land and deny them their rightful FRA *pattas* (*Janabhiyakti*).
- Acute shortage of land in densely populated states prohibits the distribution of homestead land to Musahar families (MDA).
- Aggressive land mafia uses violent and forceful eviction to possess land redistributed by the state to SEGs (MGSA).
- Regular flooding of fields by the Rapti River leads to the unique situation of periodically re-identifying land to regain possession (PDT).
- Irregular fund flows in the MGNGEGS results in delayed payment of wages for work done. Pressure is applied on the administration to release the large sums involved (CASA).
- Demanding work from a feudal *Panchayat* that provides work at distant sites, then demonstrating the collective will to challenge the *Panchayat* by travelling daily to these distant sites to perform the work (*Gramya*).
- Challenging an insensitive department to get work for persons with disability

*(Chhattisgarh Viklang Manch, Bihar Viklang Manch).*

- Seeking comprehensive development of land obtained through FRA *pattas* (*Jansahajya*).
- Forcing closure of liquor shops despite tacit protection from the state (KALP).

## 5.2 Coping mechanisms

- Building unity and clarity of purpose in the community to counter the attempts to lure members with money or muscle power (MDA, BVM, *Janabhiyakti*, PDT, GEAG).
- Strengthening local governance and the Gram Sabha, and using the constitutional mandate to contain the vested interests (*Janabhiyakti*, *Jansahajya*, CASA). The CBO aligned with the Gram *Panchayat* to counter the departmental authorities. In some cases, the *Panchayat* worked in close coordination with the *Gram Sabha* to derive strength from each other
- Despite failures, many CBOs used collective action through rallies/demonstrations as a strategy to gain visibility, build pressure on

the administration, and boost their own morale and collective strength.

- Many CBOs fighting for FRA land rights and entitlements as well as access to the MGNREGS formed mixed gender groups to draw on the strengths of both genders. Men were more mobile and relatively better educated, while women were more organised, meticulous and vocal. Such groups facilitated negotiations at the block/district level.

## 5.3 Significant achievements

The CBOs that focused on improving access to resources and livelihoods had to develop specific skills and capabilities which included:

Clear understanding of the entitlements : All the CBOs developed a clear understanding of the rights and entitlements they were seeking to access. A substantive effort was made by the CSOs to develop clarity within the community about why these rights and entitlements were important for their well being and how their in access will keep them within the grasp of poverty and deprivation.

### *Initiatives of the Village development association Chordongri ( CASA)*

- *A large number of written applications were filed for demanding work. Around 45 families have got 100 days of employment while on average 40 to 50 days of work was provided to most of the families. Women organised photocopies of application and took signature on it as mark of receipt of the application*
- *Women ensured that selection for Indira Awas beneficiary should be done in Gram Sabha and the list of beneficiaries should be displayed in Panchayat.*
- *When the wages were delayed for more than a month, they organised all the data and records from the Panchayat and reached the block office for payments. Their negotiation led to release of payment without any further delay.*
- *Demanded and ensured several individually targeted work under NREGS on their land like mud-bunding, land levelling, dug well, small farm ponds, poultry sheds etc.*
- *Raised and rectified the issue of poor management of mid-day meals in school, where children were forced to share plates. And menu was not followed. They insisted on distribution of sweets on Independence Day celebration.*
- *Raised issues of poor functioning of Anganwadi, such as irregular distribution of take home ration.*
- *Many women from the self-help group have started selling vegetables at the local haat despite a stiff resistance from the local shop keepers.*

- Ability to make rightful claim documents : In the context of the MGNREGS, the applications included demands for employment as well as demands seeking release of delayed wage payments, which required data and proofs. For the FRA/lands rights cases, the applications involved GPS mapping to establish CFR claims and interpreting complex revenue records to gain physical possession of land. The CBOs learned to prepare 'claim seeking applications' independently, though they were initially facilitated by the CSO.
- Building pressure on the administration for an affirmative decisions : Most of the CBOs in the study had a direct or collective presence at the block and district level. They undertook activities to gain visibility in the media and build pressure for speedier decision-making in their favour.
- Increased access to critical entitlements : The CBOs helped improve access to entitlements. Examples include several families in a village getting 100 days of employment, and others receiving 60 days of employment against the state average of around 40 days. They accessed FRA *pattas*, and other land rights, which may not have been possible without collective intervention. Some CBOs ensured entitlements for extremely excluded constituencies like PwDs, gaining employment under the MGNREGS and other disability benefits.
- Strengthening the *Gram Sabhas* : Many CBOs mobilised the Gram Sabha when invoking the PESA provisions, establishing its credentials as the primary decision-making institution in the local context. For instance, the *Hansdeo Arand Bachao Sangharsh Samiti (Janabhiyakti Sarguja)* strengthened the *Gram Sabhas* in the region and used their resolutions to contain the infiltration by coal mining interests. Attendance at the *Gram Sabha* meetings and participation in the *Gram Panchayats* swelled because of CBO motivation. The

PRI representatives, too, realised their own importance, refusing to sign land rights documents and consulting the *Gram Sabhas (Janabhivakti)*. Similarly, demands for work under the MGNREGS work were made in the *Gram Sabha* meetings in Betul (CASA).

*The Sarpanch of Madanpur Panchayat in Sarguja district, Devsay filed an complaint with the forest department on fencing of the forests and construction of CPT trench. The complaint cited that fencing prohibits the use of forests, a right granted by FRA, while CPT trench on violates the PESA, as no consent of the Gram Sabha has been obtained before digging the trench in Panchayat. The department had to withdraw the fence and trench to allow the free movement of the villagers.*

*(Arnab Bacho Andilan-Jan Abhiyakti)*

- Increased political awareness and participation: CBO members contested *Panchayat* elections as a sign of empowerment and defied the local political powers even though a few contestants lost. The elections established the growing social identity of the CBOs.
- Ripple effect in neighbouring areas : The CBOs resolved their own issues as well as similar problems faced by others. For instance, wage disbursement/*patta* distribution in one location impacted adjoining *Panchayats/villages*. The networks also amplified their reach and effect. Uniquely, the traditional caste *Panchayats* indirectly carried the empowerment message to many other communities in the region.
- Wider agenda for policy advocacy: Some interventions, particularly of large CBO networks, cut across regional boundaries and impacted SEGs across the state or nation. For instance, gaining employment for PwDs as teachers in government schools was the outcome of the initiatives of the *Chhattisgarh Viklang Manch*. Similarly, a *Bhoomi Aayog* was set up on the demand of

the *Ekta Parishad* CBO network. Guidelines for bamboo cutting and sharing, currently being enforced by the Odisha state government, was a CBO initiative (THREAD).

The Table-4 gives an overview of the nature of outcomes that the CBOs working on resources and livelihoods were able to achieve - both in the short term as well long term - for improved access:

Different factors worked at different stages of CBO empowerment, or for different CBOs, during their sustained struggles to demand and secure

resources and livelihood entitlements. One common factor, particularly for seeking employment under the MGNREGS or FRA *pattas*, was better understanding and awareness of the entitlements. Many cases, such as seeking delayed wages, required continuous struggle, meticulous preparation and negotiation skills. It took sustained persuasion, follow up, and pressure building in district committees to secure *pattas*. Similarly, a comprehensive understanding of the land records was required for ensuring physical possession/land titles in cases of land received in land redistribution programmes.

## 6. Emerging learnings

The PACS programme empirically contested the notion that SEGs are passive recipients of benefits and entitlements who do not have the capability to demand these rights. The interventions across various contexts demonstrated that CBOs can be mentored to acquire the vision and develop the leadership to independently guide the cause and struggle. Regular orientation and strategic hand-holding support can create effective collectives with a strong identity to access rights and entitlements across issues and services.

The programme demonstrated how CBOs can work as effective platforms for social change.

The study analysed the strategies that worked well in the programme from the perspective of the mentoring CSOs, in consultation with the PACS national and state teams. They include the following:

**Identifying potential leaders of the CBOs :** All the CBOs had potential leaders and active members, especially those without defined boundaries. The leaders played a critical role in giving direction to the CBOs. The CSO's role was to identify and nurture potential CBO leaders. The interventions also ended up creating a large second rung leadership within the community.

**Building a suitable strategy for intervention :** Issues like asset creation under the MGNREGS had to be intensively pursued at the local level compared to issues of revenue land or demands for employment under the MGNREGS, which had to be dealt with more extensively. Some needed a campaign approach while others needed stable and constant hand-holding.

**Creation of a critical mass for progressive change:** The PACS strategy was to create many CBOs in a given area to create concentrations of like-minded organisations with a common identity. Many were given similar names to bind together their different identities. The similar backgrounds/experiences of denial helped the CBOs develop critical mass to build pressure for claiming rights and entitlements. They were

*The FRC committees of different villages in Kotagarh block of Phulbani district in Oddisha, federate to form a block level federation called Jungle Adhikar Manch. The federated body has a president, secretary and active members of different FRC committees. Some of the members of the federation and FRC committees are common. There is no formal linkages between the village level CBO and the federated body as the mandate of the federated body is community Forest Rights only. However CBOs ( Jeevika Adhikar Manch) of different villages with the FRC committees of the respective village work in close association of the federated body, Jungle Adhikar Manch.*

*There is an organic relationship and informal support when the CFR claims are made through Jungle Adhikar Manch. The respective Jeevika Adhikar Manch Facilitate the support of Gram Sabhas when the demarcation of the forest, listing out the traditional usage and passing of resolution for CFR rights is made. The expenses incurred by the Jungle Adhikar Manch, along with their boarding and lodging is born by the Gram Sabhas, where Jeevika Adhikar Manch also plays a role but the block level federation has support of various Jeevika Adhikar Manchs. Jungle Adhikar Manch makes claims independently, and mostly does not need any support of the CSO for claim negotiations. The federation has settled 51 C-FRA claims in last one and half years.*

usually networked to forge a collective identity, or were merged with existing collectives. For instance, many CBOs struggling for land rights/FRA entitlements were directly or indirectly linked to the *Ekta Parishad*. They could thus benefit from the *parishad's* network to achieve critical mass. Similarly, newly-formed CBOs in the case of CASA were merged with an old network of CBOs the *Ekta Jan Sangathan*. The merger provided a strong identity for the new CBOs and gave them the required numbers.

Associations with caste *panchayats* for larger social capital : Though there were no direct links with the caste *panchayats*, some CSOs knowingly or even unknowingly integrated these *panchayats*. For instance, MGSA consciously engaged with the *Sahariya* caste *panchayat* on land-related issues, but steered clear of social issues. The *Jansahajya*-promoted *Jeebika Adhikar Manch* informally engaged with the *Kondh Caste Panchayat* to mobilise financial support and generate numbers for staging rallies and *dharnas*. However, no conscious effort was made to use this connection actively.

Using the powers of the *Gram Panchayats* and *Gram Sabhas* : A significant number of CBOs working on land rights/FRA entitlements and MGNREGS used the *Gram Panchayats* and the powers of the *Gram Sabha* to claim their rights. For instance, CASA and AINA claimed employment under the MGNREGS through the *Gram Sabha*, Janabhiyakti used *Gram Sabha* resolutions to counter the state's propositions for opening the village to coal mining.

The conscientisation and reflection process gave the CBOs the strength and ability to demand denied rights and entitlements. The contest did not always reach its logical conclusion because of other social and economic factors. These included the dependence of socially excluded communities on upper caste and rich farmers for their livelihoods - wage labour, farm tenancy, credit needs and, sometimes, even access to services

under different schemes. Similarly, they had little power to withstand the pressure of the state or fight the muscle of the moneyed corporates. This dependence could potentially create barriers for realising rights to basic services in future unless the local power structure is altered.

The prevailing environment presents challenges that will continue to confront the CBOs. There are other constraints to intervention as well. For instance, the case documentation across different states reveals that while many CSOs/CBOs made sterling efforts to claim land revenue or forest - they devoted considerably less effort to develop the land, which remained unproductive and even barren after possession. This demotivated the communities as they did not have the means or knowledge to develop their land. Thus, possession of the land did not change their lives as they expected. This was also the situation in tribal regions where substantial funds are targeted to particular tribes such as the *Sahariyas*, or there are substantial funds in national tribal sub plan.

Also, the large pool of CSOs working on the MGNREGS issue have confined their interventions to the demand for employment and in some cases engaging themselves in the IPPE planning exercise. The CSOs did not have the capacity or expertise to seek asset creation or land development by intervening in village plans. Some CBOs even took up MGNREGS road construction work in neighbouring villages. Very few CBOs attempted asset creation for themselves through the employment they generated under the MGNREGS. The immediate need, thus, is for CBOs/CSOs to see their interventions for land rights/FRA entitlements and MGNREGS benefits as programmes for sustainable employment and productive asset creation.

Table:1

Conscientisation/knowledge/awareness	Organisation/capacity development	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identification of SEG and community members as per organisational focus</li> <li>● Identification of leaders of the target communities to initiate discussions</li> <li>● Identification of core and urgent issues of concern to initiate dialogue</li> <li>● Awareness building on provisions of various schemes/Acts such as forest rights committee, MGNREGS etc</li> <li>● Regular meetings to build trust, share information and articulate issues with the marginalised people</li> <li>● Regular interface with the field functionaries such as revenue inspector, <i>rozgar sahayaks</i>, <i>Panchayat</i></li> <li>● Regular interaction with block/district officials</li> <li>● Follow up of applications for entitlements</li> <li>● Hand-holding support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Formation of CBOs, defining membership norms</li> <li>● Merger of existing SHGs in CBOs</li> <li>● Expansion of existing CBOs to other villages</li> <li>● Federating CBOs to the block, district and state level</li> <li>● Training and hand-holding support on various issues</li> <li>● Interface meetings with officials/<i>Panchayat</i> representatives</li> <li>● Field-based demonstrations, agricultural programmes, forestry</li> <li>● Generating resources for the CBOs and their federations for their long term sustenance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Land and livelihoods</li> <li>● Filing FRA claims and pursuing them at the block/district level</li> <li>● Filing written applications to demand work under MGNREGS</li> <li>● Organising <i>Gram Sabha</i> to prevent resolution in favour of mining companies, influencing planning of MGNREGS, social audits</li> <li>● Organising rallies and <i>dharnas</i> on livelihoods and land issues at the district collector's office/ block office, and organising state-level conventions</li> <li>● Campaigns for demanding employment in MGNREGS</li> <li>● Pressure building at the district level to mobilise release of pending wages</li> <li>● Mobilising departments for integrated development of entitled land</li> </ul>

Table 2 : Diversity of interventions in the thematic area- Livelihoods and resources

	Theme	Types of intervention
1	MGNREGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identification of SEG and community members as per organisational focus</li> <li>● Organisation of women/mixed gender collectives, strengthening of CBO, formation of federations at different levels</li> <li>● Awareness on MGNREGS, Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha, strengthening Gram Sabha</li> <li>● Demanding employment under MGNREGS, monitoring its implementation, monitoring wage disbursement, demanding assets, submitting applications to seek redressal, improving wage disbursement by pressure building on district administration</li> <li>● Building financial and social mechanism for sustaining the CBO federation</li> <li>● Participation in the political process - Panchayat elections</li> <li>● Demonstrating empowerment in other social/economic field such as handling local traders, police, lawyers, Panchayat etc</li> </ul>
2	FRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organisation of women/mixed gender collectives, strengthening of CBO, formation of federations at different levels</li> <li>● Awareness on FRA, Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha, PESA ,strengthening Gram Sabha</li> <li>● Capacity building, making and processing claim applications, GPS</li> <li>● Agitation, rallies, Padyatra to build pressure for redressal of application</li> <li>● Following up of applications at higher tiers</li> <li>● Making CFR claims</li> <li>● Availing pattas</li> <li>● Ensuring land development on the allotted land parcel</li> </ul>
3	Land rights in Revenue land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Awareness of land records, measurements, and land administration/ departments</li> <li>● Agitation, padyatras, rallies to gain visibility on the issue and pressurise the administration</li> <li>● Ensuring physical possession of land received under land redistribution programmes</li> <li>● Getting the entitlements record</li> <li>● Claiming land for homesteads development</li> <li>● Claiming land lost repeatedly to floods</li> <li>● Ensuring land development on the received land parcel/pattas</li> </ul>

Table 3: Common patterns across different CBOs

Sl No.	Name of CBO	Thematic Focus	Governance Structure of CBO	Part of larger Network/ Forum	Leadership	Decision making
1	Ekta Jan Sangathan- CASA	NREGS	Formal Well defined	No	Formal and defined	Informal and
2	Ekta Gram Samiti- Rampura ka Sehrana- MGSA	FRA & Revenue land	Informal Loosely defined	Part of Ekta Parishad having national level presence	Informal at village level but more formal at district federation of ekta Parishad	Informal and collective
3	Jamuna Swayam Sahayata Samuh- SMS	Land rights/ livelihood	formal. Well defined. Representative of community	Part of state level fed. of Ekal Nari Sashaktikaran Sangathan	Formal and defined	formal and collective
4	Paktodi Pahar	MGNREGA and FRA	Informal	No	Informal	Informal and collective
5	Gram Ekai Brahma- NSVK	FRA & NREGA	Informal but well defined	Part of National level Ekta Parishad	Formal and defined	Formal and collective
6	Chhtisgarh Viklang Manch- Choupal	Disability MGNREGA	Formal and well defined	Part of State level network on Right of PWD	Formal	Formal and with the nominated head
7	Vijay Nari Sangh- Tarun Chetna	MNREGA, Health, Education	Informal and well defined	District level network	Formal	Formal
8	Women Farmers Group- GEAG	Livelihood	Formal Well defined Registered Union	Groups are part of state level Laghu and Seemant Krishak Majdoor Sanghh	Formal and defined	Formal and defined
9	Rapti Visthapit Manch- PDT	Land Right	Informal	No	Informal	Informal
10	Mahila Manch- GRAMYA	MGNREGA	Informa Defined	Yes- NCDHR	Informal and collective	Informal and collective
11	Lok sangharsh samiti- SSEVS	Land and MGNREGA	Formal and defined	Yes	Formal and collective	Formal
12	Musahar Vikash Manch- MDA	Discrimination land, health mgnrega	Defined, Formal Written- bylaws	Yes-	Formal	Formal
13	Viklang Adhikar Sangathan	PWD rights, MGNREGA	Informal Defined	Yes-	Formal	Formal and collective
14	JEEVIKA ADHIKAR SANGATHAN- JANSHAJYA	MGNREGA, FRA, Land Rights	Informal Defined	Has informal linkage with block federation on Community Forests Rights.	Informal but defined	Informal and collective
15	Dhanbanipati Labour Club THREAD	NREGA, FRA	Formal well defined SEGs represented on the Board	Yes, part of the state level federation of Nari Samaj	Formal and defined	Formal
16	Jiban Jibika Shramika Sangha- AAINA	MGNREGA & PWDs	Formal	In the process of formation of block	Informal but defined	Informal
17	Mahila Mahasangha- SPREAD	MGNREGA Land Right (FRA)	Defined, to be registered soon	No	Formal	Formal and collective
18	BALIAADIBAS SHG- SMOKUS	MGNREGA, Health, Nutriri on	Informal as SHGs	No	Informal	Informal
19	Dalit Sewa Sangthan- KALP	MGNREGA	Informal, Undefined	No	Formal	Collective and well defined
20	Hasdeo Arand Bachao Sangharsh Samiti- Jan Abhiyakti	FRA	Informal but defined	Loose networking with other similar groups of Chattisgarh	Informal	Informal and collective

Table 4

	Livelihoods and resources	Significant Achievements
1	MGNREGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two disabled person became mates (work supervisors) and many disabled got 100 days of employment on social forestry project. (BKLP)</li> <li>• 10 Musahar women are working as mates (MVM)</li> <li>• More than 150 days of employment for 30 <i>Dalit</i> families (KALP)</li> <li>• <i>Dalit</i> women registered online demand for work and pressurised for differentiated higher wages for women (Gramya)</li> <li>• Accessed MGNREGS to get development and employment in the village - two CC roads, gravel road, approach road to school, cattle-sheds, land development (THREAD, Jan Sahajya CASA)</li> <li>• Smoother implementation - problems of delayed and lower payments to workers was resolved (THREAD, Jan Sahajya, CASA, Gramya, SSK, AINA)</li> <li>• Demonstration and picketing by women CBO members on delayed wage payment and demand for bribe (SHARE)</li> </ul>
2	FRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settlement of individual (7) and community FRA (5100 hectares) claims against strong resistance from the state (Janabhivaykti)</li> <li>• Village CBO could get 42 tribal families rightful land ownership and 37 pending cases of land demarcation under <i>charnoil</i> land got settled. (MGSA)</li> <li>• Submitted claims for IFR- 23 and CFR-8 (THREAD)</li> <li>• Development of confidence to engage with the forest bureaucracy and raise voice against exploitation (NSVK, Jansahajya, Janabhivaykti)</li> <li>• Realised community rights over 727 ha of forest; filed 90 IFR claims and in the process of filing 50 more (NSVK)</li> <li>• Regular system of monitoring and protecting forest started by CBO members (SMS)</li> <li>• CBO members symbolically tie <i>rakhi</i> to trees in their forest to strengthen the tribal-forest bond (SMS)</li> <li>• Passed <i>Gram Sabha</i> resolution under PESA to prevent mining on the village land (Janabhivaykti)</li> <li>• Realisation of need to conserve and self-manage their natural resources / commons (THREAD)</li> <li>• Creation of extensive forest management/regulation by the villagers (SMS)</li> <li>• Developed by-laws to govern the extraction of forest resources (THREAD)</li> <li>• Stopped local mafia of businessmen from cutting and stealing bamboo (Disha)</li> </ul>

3	Land rights/agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small and marginal Dalit women farmers are producing organic vegetables and grains taking land on lease (GEAG)</li> <li>• Development of confidence to engage with the land and revenue bureaucracy at the village as well at district level (MGSA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bhumi Ayog (Land Commission) was set up by campaigning of Ekta Parishad. The PIL resulted in instructions from the MP High Court to appoint members of Land Commission within 15 days. (Ekta Parishad/MGSA)</li> </ul>
4	Livelihoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBO members successfully running business collectives - vegetable selling/PDS and also individual - bangle/grocery/stationery selling (SHARE, CASA)</li> <li>• Economic independence of CBO of single women running PDS shop, doing collective farming and running a brick kiln (SMS)</li> <li>• Around 1,900 PWDs have been linked to skill development under NRLM (SPARC)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Established alcohol free village through mass protest and monitoring to prevent unproductive expenditure (KALP)</li> <li>• Convergence of CBOs with NRLM for credit access, and agriculture department for subsidized seeds/fertilizers and equipment.</li> </ul>



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