FACILITATING FOREST RIGHTS FOR THE SCHEDULED TRIBES AND FOREST DWELLERS: LEARNING FROM THE PACS PROGRAMME
This document is a part of the Knowledge Product Series of the Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) Programme. This document was developed by Sutra Consulting Pvt. Ltd. as an outcome of an independent assignment commissioned by PACS Programme.

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I am happy to present this document 'Facilitating Forest Rights for the Scheduled Tribes and Forest Dwellers: Learning from the PACS Programme' which captures the key learning, details of the approaches and strategies adopted, their efficacy from the eyes of multiple stakeholders, including the communities, involved in the implementation of the programme.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, commonly known as FRA, was passed by the Indian Parliament in 2006. FRA has significant implications for the governance of forests as well as the rights of the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been dependent on the forest for their lives and livelihoods. FRA provides for the entire gamut of forest rights to the forest dwellers and provides a framework for meeting the essential individual and community requirements of forest dwelling communities.

PACS Programme during its implementation period of 2011-2016, chose to work on strengthening implementation of FRA due to the changes it could bring in the lives of the Scheduled Tribes and other socially excluded communities eligible to benefit from it. PACS and its partners worked on strengthening and facilitating the process of individual and community forest rights claim, working with the state to address provisioning of the titles and address grievances.

Working in collaboration with the biggest stakeholders, the Government, was the hallmark of the approach, which the PACS Programme, adopted and demonstrated its efficacy at scale, especially in states like Jharkhand. It enabled the programme and its partners to take up innovative interventions, work on addressing specific bottlenecks and barriers and try out strategies, which brought about awareness and change at scale.

I hope that this document is able to further strengthen the discourse on looking at the issue of poverty and social exclusion in multiple dimensions and how they impact each other. This document also presents the efficacy of a constructive approach of working closely with the state and how changes brought about by influencing the system are more sustained and lasting.

Due to the diversity and scale of experiences of the PACS Programme I am sure this document will find value in the eyes of multiple stakeholders, key among them being the development practitioners, implementers and others who have a responsibility of working on flagship programmes and priorities of the Government.

Anand Kumar Bolimera
Director, PACS Programme
I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Rajpal, Mr. Avinav and Ms. Shivani from the PACS team for their continued support and feedback during the entire course of the assignment. The brain-storming sessions with them and their deep insights on every aspect of the PACS programme have helped us document this wonderful journey and prepare a road map for the way ahead. We would also like to thank Ms. Rebecca, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Mihir who are the State Co-ordinators of the PACS programme in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha, respectively. They took out time from their very busy schedules particularly during the winding up of the programme and helped us organise consultations with all the CSOs. Without this support, any progress towards attempting this work would have been impossible. They also opened up about the opportunities and the challenges that they have faced as state co-ordinators which was extremely valuable in drafting the document. The documentation of the PACS forest rights programme would have been impossible without the support and the enthusiasm of all the CSOs working on Forest Rights across Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha. We would like to thank all the CSO members and leaders for joining us for the state-level consultations and for helping us reach out to the various people across small villages and hamlets who have been a part of the process of change. Their zealous work, their optimism and their selfless service are reflected through the course of this document. Last but not least, we would like to thank the numerous CBO members, field functionaries and community members who shared their stories with us and welcomed us into their homes and hearts. Their stories, their struggles and their victories make up this document and we remain indebted to them for that.

The Sutra team over the course of six months has been trying to make this document reflective of the reality as seen on the ground. They have worked across states and have conducted thorough secondary and primary research to best capture and document the land rights story of PACS. We would like to thank the team for all the hard work put in. We would like to thank Mr. Jimuta Mishra for authoring this document and Ms. Pratyasha Rath, Ms. Amrapali Goswami and Mr. Govind Tiwari for supporting him with the field work and consultations. The document is the result of their hard work and enthusiasm.

The journey for PACS has been long and arduous and there are numerous stories of trials, tribulations and successes along the way. It is important to learn from the past so that the way ahead can be smoother. There is still a long way to go for people to access their rights to forests and other natural resources in this country and there is a need to re-strategise and re-evaluate possibilities and opportunities. We hope this document in some way catalyses this process of churning and presents a legacy that needs to be heard. We hope the journey continues with renewed determination and vigour.

Alok Acharya
Director
Sutra Consulting Pvt. Ltd.
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adhikar</td>
<td>Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AICC</td>
<td>All India Congress Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amin</td>
<td>Amin is a grassroots-level government functionary of revenue administration of the state who works under the Revenue Inspector. An Amin has the skill of land measurement and drawing sketch maps.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AnajKosh</td>
<td>Community Grain Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BachatKosh</td>
<td>Village Development Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDO</td>
<td>Block Development Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEO</td>
<td>Block Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASA</td>
<td>Church’s Auxiliary for Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community-based Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFR</td>
<td>Community Forest Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CWS-ORC</td>
<td>Centre for World Solidarity-Orissa Resource Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYSD</td>
<td>Centre for Youth and Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFO</td>
<td>District Forest Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DLC</td>
<td>District-Level Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DM</td>
<td>District Magistrate</td>
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<tr>
<td>DV Act</td>
<td>Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td>Forest Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMALE</td>
<td>Foundation for Emancipation of Marginalised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRA</td>
<td>Forest Rights Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRC</td>
<td>Forest Rights Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gokul Gram</td>
<td>A model village demonstrating bovine development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPS</td>
<td>Global Positioning System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gram Sabha</td>
<td>Village Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPPE</td>
<td>Integrated Participatory Planning Exercise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>---------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeebika</td>
<td>Livelihood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JFM</td>
<td>Joint Forest Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jharkhand Ajivika and Van Adhikar Manch</td>
<td>Jharkhand Livelihood and Forest Rights Manch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JVAM</td>
<td>Jharkhand Van Adhikar Manch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFR</td>
<td>Individual Forest Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISS</td>
<td>Institute of Social Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaam Maango Abhiyaan</td>
<td>Work Demand Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahila Samuha</td>
<td>Women's Collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDM</td>
<td>Mid-Day Meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGNREGS</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIS</td>
<td>Management Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoEF</td>
<td>Ministry of Environment &amp; Forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoTA</td>
<td>Ministry of Tribal Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mulya Nirdharan Committee</td>
<td>Price Determination Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRC</td>
<td>National Resource Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSVK</td>
<td>Naya Savera Vikas Kendra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACS</td>
<td>Poorest Area Civil Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat Sachiv</td>
<td>Panchayat Sachiv/ Panchayat Secretary is a government functionary deployed in the Panchayat to assist the Sarpanch, the latter being the elected leader of the Panchayat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PESA</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Extension to Scheduled Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMFBY</td>
<td>Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMKVY</td>
<td>Prime Minister Krishi Vikas Yojana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMSHCS</td>
<td>Prime Minister Soil Health Card Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMSY</td>
<td>Prime Minister Sichai Yojana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRI</td>
<td>Panchayati Raj Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVTG</td>
<td>Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTI</td>
<td>Right To Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sangathan Organisation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>SDLC</td>
<td>Sub-Division-Level Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SC/ST Act</td>
<td>The SC and the ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDM</td>
<td>Sub-Divisional Magistrate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEG</td>
<td>Socially Excluded Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swachch Bharat Abhiyaan</td>
<td>Clean India Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Tribal Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToT</td>
<td>Training of Trainers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Adhikar Mitra</td>
<td>Forest Rights Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Adhikar Gram Saptah Abhiyan</td>
<td>Forest Rights Claim Campaign week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAS</td>
<td>Van Adhikar Samiti/Forest Rights Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VICALP</td>
<td>Visionaries of Creative Action for Liberation &amp; Progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidhayak</td>
<td>Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vidhayak Adarsh Gram</td>
<td>Model village selected by the MLA. As per the Vidhayak Adarsh Gram Yojana/Scheme, the MLA selects a village as the model village where community development programmes are implemented under the direct supervision of the MLA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEO</td>
<td>Welfare Extension Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yojana Banao Abhiyaan</td>
<td>State-level rural planning campaign</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The knowledge product in the form of a learning document is a reflection on PACS' intervention in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha on securing forest rights for socially excluded groups. It culls out lessons and learnings from findings and evidence-based data generated through the rigours of an empirical study. The framework of the study is based on three important pegs that enable the communities to demand and secure forest rights i.e., social change witnessed within the communities, the development of indigenous leadership and the collectivisation of power.

Adopting a participative and consultative approach, the study has collected feedback and the experiences of a diverse group of respondents the PACS team, CSO partners, CBO leaders, social activists and government functionaries. In consolidating the knowledge accrued from PACS' interventions, both knowledge-based evidence, such as numbers, figures and tangible changes, and tacit knowledge-based evidence, such as personal histories, narrations and self-ethnographies, have been taken into account.

The Inception Report detailing the approach and framework of the study, roll-out plan, implementation plan including state-wise stakeholder mapping, layering strategy for documentation and documentation plan set the tone and tenor of the processes for consolidating the findings. Data collection has been undertaken through consultations, case study documentation and interactions between the PACS team and CSO partners, CBO leaders and social activists during field visits. Reports of state-level consultations, the national convention of FRC members, a baseline survey, the PACS logframe, the logframe midline assessment and tracker analysis have been studied to understand the processes through which activities have been proposed, formulated, designed and refined as also the efficacy and issues associated with strategies. Consolidation and elaboration of the findings have brought forth five important outcomes from which to cull out learning. The document is organised into sections anchored in the outcomes that delineate the processes and strategies involved in shaping the outcomes.

The first section, Historical Context of Forest Rights in India, which underlines the importance of forests in the lives and livelihoods of socially excluded communities, traces the footprints of the narrative in the struggle for forest rights from pre-colonial times to date when the Forest Rights Act (FRA) has vested forest rights to forest dwellers, thereby undoing historical injustice. The narrative locates the dominant theme, acts and laws on forest governance, the impact of the acts and laws on forest dwellers, people's reaction to forest governance and the stakeholders in the struggle for forest rights during different periods.

The second section, Understanding PACS' Intervention on Forest Rights, seeks to understand the importance given to forest rights with the framework of PACS' theory of change and its approach to forest rights within its goal of reducing the gap in well-being status between the socially excluded population and the general population. This section delineates the action points in PACS' intervention on forest rights and the achievements in securing rights on forest land.

The third section underlines a shift in the approach of CSOs working on forest rights in moving away from confrontation to engagement with the state. It seeks to understand the successful strategies adopted by the Jharkhand Van Adhikar Manch and Chaupal in Chhattisgarh in engaging the state, by documenting the
processes through which activities have been proposed, formulated, designed and refined in the form of case studies. The adoption of context-specific strategies, the importance of a network/alliance/platform, information/evidence-based positioning on forest rights, multi-pronged and multi-layered advocacy and repackaging of the rights-based approach have been culled out as learning from PACS’ successful engagement with the state.

The fourth section, Information and Evidence: Making Voices Count, narrates the success achieved through the use of GPS technology and making the community well versed in using a governance accountability tool such as the Right to Information. It encapsulates a shift from agitation on rights to using information as evidence for accessing forest rights. It concludes that the community understands the importance of evidence/information and uses it, there by demonstrating its potential as a tool of empowerment, and developing a culture of evidence-based advocacy within the community has the potential to create change agents out of ordinary men and women.

The fifth section, Collectivisation of Power, narrates the success of community-based organisations and a coalition of civil society actors in imparting strength to the demand of socially excluded communities. Through the case study of a CBO, Jeevika Adhikar Sangathan, it establishes that Socially Excluded Groups collectivised in a CBO have the ability to manage their organisation and build federations beyond the initial period of external facilitation, and a federation of CBOs and coalitions of civil society actors strengthen co-operation between civil society and the government, advance people-centred advocacy and help the replication of best practices.

Capacity building and hand holding on rights and entitlements not only provide information and build knowledge but also contribute to leadership building. The sixth section, Leadership and Empowerment, is a narrative on the processes and strategies of community leadership building that documents lively discussions with community leaders across states and regions. Underlining the importance of devising new ideas and new ways to renew the vigour and enthusiasm of community leaders, it advocates building community leadership as a best-fit strategy to strengthen institutions of local self-governance from within.

"PACS listens to the voices of women and there is no discrimination in PACS is established in Section 7, Women Steal a March: Gendered Lens for Comprehending Forest Rights, which delineates the finesse with which women leadership has been created within the programme. This section has been able to make the women lend their voices to testify to the success of the programme by documenting their lively discussion. It establishes the importance of creating women-led, community-based organisations, positioning women as key persons of community development programmes and exposing women to events of mass community participation to enable women empowerment and to promote women leadership.

The concluding section, Legacy of the Intervention, summarises the lessons and learning, and proposes a future course of action in the four key areas of strengthening community leadership, strengthening community-based organisations, building development partnership among CSO-corporate-government and policy advocacy. Among others, it proposes capacity building and linkages between community leaders, federation building and networking of CSOs, repackaging a rights-based approach and advocacy for time-bound settlement of forest rights claims and creating a dedicated mechanism for settlement of Community Forest Rights (CFR) claims to strengthen and make the legacy of PACS more pronounced.
“No other donor agency has supported so big a civil society initiative on Forest Rights as PACS. Jharkhand was lagging behind Odisha and Chhattisgarh because not many civil society organizations worked on the issue. Activities on Forest Rights gained momentum in Jharkhand after top-up assistance by PACS and the formation of JVAM. A rights-based approach is necessarily multi-pronged. There is a need to engage the government and mobilize the community. Engaging the government requires efforts to build bridges with the political leadership as well as with the bureaucracy. Civil society actors in other states had been working on forest rights with good results. We wanted to hear their experiences and learn from them. All these were possible under the PACS programme.

We have developed a model of CSO-government engagement with the support of PACS. The engagement of the CSO forum with the government has been constructive and has gone beyond the thematic area of forest rights. Beyond forest rights, we partner with the government in developing Development Plans under IPPE.”

Virendra Kumar, Convenor, JVAM, Jharkhand
Forests in India are mostly state-owned and cover an area of 69.79 million hectares, corresponding to 21.23 percent of the total geographical area of the country. Nearly 100 million people reside in forests and another 275 million live on the periphery and earn their livelihood from forests. More than one-third of the forest cover of the country and nearly two-third of the dense forests lie in 187 tribal districts. Of 58 districts that have more than 67 percent of their area under forest cover, 51 are tribal districts.

Of the 5,633 distinct communities in India, 635 are considered to be "Tribes" or "Adivasis". Most of the Adivasi communities are classified under the administrative category of "Scheduled Tribes". Constituting a little over 8 percent of the total population, scheduled tribes are unevenly distributed in states and union territories with the majority inhabiting the central region, i.e., Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and West Bengal, and form the majority of the population in the north-eastern region.

Adivasis use a different principle of organising individuals into collectives based on moral relations rather than coercive power, and on expansion of the self into the surroundings, as well as on reciprocity, mutuality and equity. As forest dwellers, they collect food, house-building materials, fuel for cooking, fodder for cattle, medicine and many other items to meet their day-to-day necessities. The forest provides them with shelter as well as shelter for their pantheons and totems. They have developed various norms, values, beliefs and practices that regulate the use of natural resources around them in such a way that nature remains bountiful to them. Moreover, there has been a sharing of space, material goods and cultural norms among various communities tribal and non-tribal living in and around the forest.

"Historical Injustice" in the form of dispossession from the homeland (forest) is the meta-narrative of discrimination, deprivation, dispossession and development-induced displacement suffered by the Adivasis. Discourses on the dispossession of tribals from the forest trace the beginning of the process to the colonial period that witnessed a legislative framework and system of forest governance that struck at the founding principles of the symbiotic relationship between the tribals and forests. Tracing the narrative of the forest rights of the tribals along the strand of Acts and Policies enacted by the colonial government and the post-independence central government that redefined social utility and social welfare functions except in the domain of forest management has evoked arguments that "before 1947, our forests served the strategic interest of British imperialism, and after Independence, they served the needs of the mercantile and industrial bourgeoisie".

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2 M.S.J.Areeparampil (2002), Struggle for Swaraj, Chaibasa, Jharkhand; Tribal Research and Training Centre (TRTC)
3 The government accepted the fact of Historical Injustice in Indian history in the affidavit by the Ministry of Environment and Forests in July 2004 to the Supreme Court in the T. N. GodavarmanThirumalpad vs. Union of India and Others (Writ Petition [Civil] No. 202 of 1995 in the Supreme Court) that the "rural poor, especially tribals, had been deprived of their livelihood rights.”
Acts and policies, especially those related to forests in India given that they have an impact on the lives and livelihoods of so many people, are narratives on the forest rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers. They script the narratives that play out in terms of assertion of rights, people’s mobilisations around articulation of rights, institutional structures that emerge through people’s mobilisation and people’s reactions to the response of the state to their demand for rights. As scripts of the narratives on rights, the acts and policies may be poles apart in terms of their orientations, but they are related in a way that is best expressed as “what is now in the past was once in the future”. Needless to say, the narrative rather than the script would help us gain insight into the struggle waged by Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers that has culminated in the enactment and implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 that seeks to undo the “historical injustice” done to forest dwellers.

THE PRE-COLONIAL NARRATIVE

The pre-colonial narrative on forest rights is woven around the theme of the state formation process by non-tribal rulers. Most of the tribal areas of the central Indian region that experienced the process of state formation by non-tribal rulers in the pre-colonial period witnessed impoverishment of the tribals. The process of state formation involved expanding the frontier to areas of tribal habitation, creating agricultural land out of forest land, introducing a land revenue collection system, abolishing a communal land holding pattern, encouraging the immigration of non-tribal cultivators to augment agricultural production and collecting land revenue, all to the disadvantage of the original tribal inhabitants of the land. Impoverishment as well as the downfall of the tribal chiefs in the local socio-political structure created a sense of resentment that resulted in revolt against the exploitation.

THE COLONIAL NARRATIVE

The history of forest governance in India is replete with conflicts between the traditional rights of forest users and the colonial legacy of ‘command and control’ forestry. Forestry in the colonial period was mainly confined to mean commercial exploitation and revenue earning for the administration. The British wanted to undertake the use and management of timber, which required that the government assert its ownership over forests and suppress the traditional systems of community forest management. A series of Forest Acts were passed from 1876 to 1927. The Indian Forest Act, 1927 was enacted; it continued to be the central forest legislation and, with modifications, remains operational even today. The Forest Acts empowered the government to declare its intention to notify any area as a reserved or protected forest, following which a Forest Settlement Officer would enquire into claims of rights (land, forest produce, pasture etc.). Since the primary intention of the Act was to take over land and deny the rights of communities, the ‘settlement’ process was preordained to fail, which it did.

The takeover of large areas of forest by the colonial state, thus, constituted an important watershed in many ways: a political watershed, in that it represented an enormous expansion of the powers of the state, and a corresponding diminution of the rights of village communities; a social watershed, in that by curbing local access it radically altered traditional patterns of resource use; and an ecological watershed, in that the emergence of timber as an important commodity came to fundamentally alter forest ecology5.

Colonisation of the forest and invasions into the land of the forest dwellers by the British led to stiff resistance. This resistance had a sharper edge than that witnessed in response to the process of state formation. Prominent tribal resistance movements became an integral part of the freedom movement against British imperialism because the All India Congress Committee (AICC) supported restoration of the customary rights of tribals, especially those pertaining to the forest and its resources. The resistance movements also brought forth tribal leaders who have left indelible imprints on the life of the community and the nation for their heroic struggle and sacrifice. The seeds of popular movements in the creation of Jharkhand as a separate state within the Union of India, as well movements for self-determination in the north-east that demand secession from the Union of India, lie buried in resistance against state monopoly over forests that began in the colonial period.

**THE POST-INDEPENDENCE NARRATIVE**

The post-Independence narrative on forest governance can be divided into three phases. In the first phase from independence to the early 1970s development projects, or 'Temples of Modern India', were built on the ruins of the forest and environment. The second phase covers the decades of the 1970s and the 1980s. The third phase began in the early 1990s when the globalisation process opened up the resource-rich tribal areas of the country to global capital; it covers the period from the early years of globalisation until the enactment of the FRA.

The post-independence period witnessed acceleration in the process of dispossession of forest dwellers. Economic development implied more intensive resource use, which led inevitably to widespread environmental degradation. Prior to independence, conflicts emerged because of the competing claims of the state and people over a relatively abundant resource, but post-independence conflicts were caused by a rapidly dwindling forest resource base. Tribals bore the brunt of industrial development because they were displaced from their homeland for the establishment of industries, construction of dams and mining of minerals. However, displacement didn't evoke very stiff resistance from the tribal community and the plights of the tribals didn't find prominence in the discourse. The alienation of forest-dependent communities from their life support systems resulted in widespread forest degradation that put the community in a state of perpetual conflict with the forest department.

The early 1970s marks the beginning of an awakening and advocacy for thwarting exclusionary forest management and conservation of forests through the involvement of local people. Popular movements emerged as a powerful statement against the violation of customary rights by the state forestry and brought into focus a wide range of issues concerning forest policy and the environment debate. The movements that demonstrated success (Arabari Village, West Bengal; Sukhomajri Village, Haryana; Gopalpura village, Rajasthan) in developing rural livelihoods and regenerating forests through co-management pointed to the contrast between the subsistence orientation of villagers and the commercial orientation of the state. There was increasing realisation that forests could only be protected if the people are actively involved in their management.

Concern for the conservation of forests took centre stage in forest governance in the 1980s. Taking note of the unabated diversion of forests, the central government brought an ordinance for judicious regulation of diversion and de-reservation, which was later converted into the Forest Conservation Act of 1980. The Act proved to be a bane for forest-dwelling communities because large-scale evictions took place in the name of conservation.
The National Forest Policy of India, 1988 outlined the scope for people’s participation in forest management as one of its basic objectives, which read as “meeting the requirements of fuel wood, fodder, minor forest produce and small timber of the rural and tribal population and creating a massive people movement with the involvement of women, for achieving the objectives and to minimise pressure on existing forest.”

The 1988 Forest Policy formed the basis of Joint Forest Management (JFM), which is the primary government programme designed to share benefits with local communities in exchange for helping to protect forests near their villages. However, JFM doesn’t vest formal rights to the local communities. Though the JFM programme has been welcomed in some quarters as a beginning for socioeconomic sustenance of forest governance in the country, its qualitative and quantitative achievements are highly debated nationally and internationally.

The 1990s marks the beginning of an epoch when people are more aware of their rights and there are more avenues available for people’s mobilisation around rights. Stiff resistance movements have emerged that challenge the legitimacy of the state’s ownership over natural resources. Issues of social justice, gender equality, inclusive development and development with dignity began to get more frequently voiced in the discourse on development. Broad-based coalitions and networks advocating the rights of forest-dwelling communities started engaging the administration and policymakers, which is evident in the enactment of Acts and Policies that ensure rights and entitlements. The Panchayatiraj Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996, Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005 and Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2006 have their central focus on citizen rights.

Among others, PESA has come out with a strong statement on tribal rights and their rights over resources. The Act recognises traditional customary rights over local natural resources. It accepts the validity of customary law and social and religious practices of community resources. PESA empowers the community to protect community resources, own minor forest produce, manage water bodies, give recommendations for mining leases, take decision on land acquisition, identify beneficiaries for poverty alleviation and other government programmes and have a decisive say in all development projects in the village. It is true that the Act hasn’t been implemented in letter and spirit to date. However, demands for implementation of the Act have been raised in various platforms and judgements of the court of law based on the interpretation of the Act have helped tribal communities such as the Dongaria Kondh of Niyamgiri Hill in Odisha to assert their rights over the homeland. It is interesting to note that grassroots advocacy and community-based monitoring of the implementation of welfare schemes have come to be distinct features that underline citizens’ engagement with the apparatus of governance.

In India, people who are excluded, unlike the rest of the poor, are disadvantaged by who they are. Social exclusion locks people out of the benefits of development, denying them choices and a voice to claim their rights. Social exclusion causes greater levels of poverty because excluded people face discrimination relating to resources and opportunities. They may be discriminated against in the market for jobs, goods and services and when trying to access rights and entitlements provided for by law or public and/or private services.

PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion- a theory of change”, p.5.
The opening up of natural resources to global capital after the 1990s has led to massive diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes. Of the total of 1,133,123.93 hectares diverted from 1980 to March 2006, 51% (573,164 hectares) was diverted in the past five years alone from 1 January 2001 to 19 April 2006. It is ironic that India witnessed massive eviction of forest dwellers during the period when large-scale diversion of forest land was being undertaken. Between May 2002 and March 2004 alone, evictions were carried out from 152,400.110 hectares. About 300,000 forest dwellers were evicted from their habitat and deprived of their livelihood during this period. The silver lining is that the inhuman eviction of forest dwellers from their homeland became a precipitating factor for the emergence of the Forest Rights Act that seeks to undo the historical injustice meted out to forest dwelling communities.

THE NARRATIVE AFTER THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 was passed by Parliament on 18 December 2006. The Act undoing “Historical Injustice” has significant implications for the governance of forests as well as the restoration of forest rights to Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

The Act vests the entire gamut of forest rights on forest dwellers. This includes the right to hold and live in the forest land (either individually or as a community), habitation and self-cultivation, community rights including the right of ownership/access to collect, use and dispose of non-timber forest produce, right for conversion of patta/leases/grants on forest land into titles, right of settlement and conversion of forest villages into revenue villages and the right for proper rehabilitation if evicted from forest areas. The Act confers the rights and responsibilities on forest dwellers and Gram Sabhas to protect/regenerate/conserve/manage community forest resources, bio diversity and community right to intellectual property and traditional knowledge related to bio diversity/cultural diversity. Gram Sabhas are also empowered to properly regulate access to community forest resources and to stop any activity that adversely affects wild animals/forests/biodiversity. Forest dwellers who have been illegally evicted or evicted without proper rehabilitation even before the Act came into effect are eligible for proper rehabilitation. To cut along story short, the Forest Rights Act provides a framework for meeting the essential individual and community requirements of forest dwellers necessary for a decent existence.

With the enactment of the Forest Rights Act, the history of people’s struggle to establish their rights over forests is seen as ‘ending’. The establishment of forest dwellers’ rights over forests is not seen to be of ‘dramatic interest’ to many people because of the lack of conflict between forest dwellers and the state. In contrast to the fact that the demand for forest rights had the tone and tenor of confrontation with the state over the years, the post-FRA narrative unfolds a paradigm shift, i.e., "moving away from confrontation to engagement with the state". The Forest Rights Act and the Rules lay down elaborate processes and procedures for the establishment, verification and sanction of claims and titles. The post-FRA narrative has its own set of problems such as multiple and at times contradictory interpretations of the Act and Rules by implementing agencies, limited awareness among the forest-dwelling communities, problems of reaching out, difficulties in awareness generation and lack of mobilisation among the communities. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) after the enactment of the FRA play the role of facilitator, which includes listening more closely to the communities, representing their interests with more impact and become themselves become more inclusive in the process.

CSOs as facilitators have reached out to forest dwelling communities, mobilised and created awareness and co-ordinated an interface between the rights holders and duty bearers for common understanding on the Act and Rules. Until 30 April 2016, 44,23,464 claims (43,07,154 individual and 1,16,310 community claims) have been filed and 17,44,274 titles (17,00,786 individual and 43,488 community claims) have been issued. The post-FRA narrative bears success stories across states about tangible improvement in the lives and livelihoods of forest-dwelling communities.

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“Earlier, we used to say that the government denies us forest rights. The government through the Forest Rights Act (FRA) said that we would be given rights over the forest. The situation changed thereafter. We understood that we have to do something to get our rights. But we were in the dark.

With PACS coming to our village, we got a clear idea as to what needs to be done. The Vana Adhikar Samiti of our village was reorganised and the members were imparted training on FRA. We started to discuss it in our meetings. It became clear that we have to do the most to get our forest rights. We came to know about the processes and procedures for filing claims and the importance of presenting our claims with evidence. The Gram Sabha wrote a letter to the Forest Department for verification of the claims and following verification we have got titles. Our interaction that began with the Forest Department continues to date and our relationship with the Forest Department has changed for the better.

Nowadays, we are discussing how to make our land productive by creating an irrigation facility. PACS has guided us since the days of submission of claims and getting forest rights up to making the land productive.

Dayalal Dhru, Sarpanch, Hardi, Gariabandh, Chhattisgarh
Section 2: Understanding PACS interventions on Forest Rights

Two fundamental premises underpin the PACS programme. The first is the notion that chronic poverty in India is to a large extent caused by discrimination on the basis of group identity, in other words, social exclusion. The second premise is that civil society has a critical role to play in addressing social exclusion. PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion: a theory of change”, p. 10

The Poorest Areas Civil Society Programme (PACS) is an initiative of the UK government’s Department for International Development. The broader vision of PACS interventions in India has been to reduce the welfare gap between socially excluded communities and the general population.

PACS realised from the experience it gained during the first phase of its programme that certain categories of people bear the burden of poverty as well as social exclusion. Social exclusion revolves around institutions that discriminate against certain groups on the basis of identity. Socially excluded groups are denied rights and entitlements and the poor among them have less chance to escape poverty. Socially excluded groups include Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, women, Muslims and people with disability.

The PACS programme is primarily concerned with Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, women, Muslims and people with disability and covers 90 of the poorest districts of India across seven states Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal that have a high proportion of excluded people. The programme is anchored on two fundamental premises: Chronic poverty is caused by social exclusion and civil society has a critical role to play in addressing social exclusion.

Social exclusion as a concept has three distinguishable features. Firstly, it affects culturally defined social categories, with associated cultural perceptions, values and norms that shape social interaction. Secondly, it is embedded in social relations, as it is through social networks that groups are wholly or partially excluded from participation in society. Thirdly, social exclusion affects people’s rights and entitlements, denying them the opportunities they need to have and maintain a universally acceptable standard of living and to fulfil their potential.


The PACS programme has supported civil society to challenge discrimination and encourage inclusive policies and decisions aimed at opportunities for the poor on the two broad themes of: i) livelihoods, i.e., improve non-discriminatory access to livelihood opportunities for socially excluded groups, and ii) the right to basic services, i.e., non-discriminatory access to basic services (education, health and nutrition) for socially excluded groups. Forest Rights is integrated with the thematic strand of livelihoods.

The goal of the programme is to reduce the gap in well-being status between the socially excluded population and the general population. It aims at improving the uptake of entitlements to discrimination-free services and livelihoods by socially excluded people. PACS interventions seek to ensure i) stronger CSOs prioritise and raise issues affecting women and socially excluded communities in PACS–targeted areas; ii) women and socially excluded communities are better represented and have a greater voice in committees at the village/block/district level, in government decision-making bodies and in CSOs; iii) civil society works to make service providers more responsive and accountable to women and socially excluded communities; and iv) wide dissemination of the learning.
PACS conducted a baseline survey with the objectives, among others, to generate data for routine monitoring of both the purpose and the output-level logframe of the programme. Household data revealed that 41 percent of the households were aware of the term “Forest Rights Act”, but the level of awareness about the key provisions of the FRA was limited across most of the provisions. The right to live in the forest was one of the most recognisable provisions of the FRA. It was found that 56 per cent of the claims filed in Odisha had got the title, which was 44 per cent in the case of Chhattisgarh and 21 per cent in Jharkhand. High level of dissatisfaction on key services of the FRA was found in the baseline study. Only 30.7 per cent in Odisha expressed satisfaction with the key services of the FRA, while it was 20.5 percent in Jharkhand and 6.3 percent in Chhattisgarh.

**PACS’ APPROACH ON FOREST RIGHTS**

Adivasis (tribal people) live on and off forests. Rights on forest land provide them with legal, food, livelihood, cultural and social security. Socially excluded groups mainly Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women make up the majority of the landless population working as agricultural labourers. According to the draft paper of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2007-2012), 77% of SCs and 90% of STs are either “absolute landless” or “mere landless”.

“Forest Rights didn’t feature prominently in the proposals submitted by the partners to PACS. Only a few partner organisations mentioned Forest Rights in their proposal. We had a national level appraisal in 2012. We discussed at length about our observations from field visits and discussions with partners and the community and started to think of Forest Rights’ top-up. PACS provided top-up assistance for working on additional issues and for coverage of additional geographical area. Top-up assistance was provided to create a critical mass of civil society actors that would work on forest rights.

Rajpal, Programme Manager, PACS
PACS’ APPROACH ON FOREST RIGHTS

Adivasis (tribal people) live on and off forests. Rights on forest land provide them with legal, food, livelihood, cultural and social security\(^8\). Socially excluded groups mainly Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women make up the majority of the landless population working as agricultural labourers. According to the draft paper of the Ninth Five-Year Plan (2007-2012), 77% of SCs and 90% of STs are either “absolute landless” or “mere landless”.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 vests forest rights to the Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers and a framework for meeting the essential individual and community requirements of forest dwellers necessary for a decent existence. PACS with its approach of encouraging diversity and inclusion has supported Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other forest-dwelling groups to claim land title rights (Individual Forest Rights & Community Forest Rights) under FRA.

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\(^8\) Legal security  land rights certificates (or pattas) prove that a household or community legally owns a defined area of land, making it illegal for others to evict them from it, or to use it without permission. 

Food security  families who have the rights to their land are able to invest in making their land more agriculturally productive, with the knowledge that any crop increases will be theirs. 

Livelihood security  households with land rights can build up their assets, investing in buildings, animals and other resources that will help them to develop and grow their livelihoods and their incomes. 

Cultural security  for many communities, having the rights to the land on which they have lived for generations provides them with security in protecting their land-based ways of life, identities and traditions. 

Social security  owning a piece of land provides a household with an identified permanent address, leading to dignity and increased social status, making them more likely to be included in decision-making and able to access other government welfare schemes. 

Cited in PACS India Website-http://www.pacsindia.org/projects/land-and-forest-rights
PACS' programme intervention on forest rights has four well-knit strands: facilitating co-operation between civil society and the government; creating avenues for interaction between government functionaries and claimants; ensuring participation of marginalised communities in the decision-making process through collectivisation and network building; and propagation of experiences to the rest of society.

Reminiscences on the beginning of the journey of PACS on FRA in Jharkhand the legislation was rarely talked about despite Jharkhand being a State abundant in forests and forest resources by Johnson, State Manager PACS, Jharkhand seem to be more or less correct with some variations in the case of Chhattisgarh and Odisha, which called for the adoption of strategies specific to the context of the state.

PACS' approach on strengthening the FRA regime has created discernible patterns in the engagement of the government by CSOs in different states. While the pattern in Chhattisgarh is engaging the government at the top level, it is engaging the government right at the bottom in Jharkhand. The pattern of engaging the government has been specific to the context, i.e., strengthening of the FRA regime in Chhattisgarh has been mostly at the top so that government orders, circulars and directions have helped pull out procedural difficulties, while in Jharkhand government apparatus at the bottom level has been engaged by the creation of a forum (JVAM) from the generation of forest rights claims and their movement to SDLC and DLC.

3,258 training and sensitisation events, formation of 2,015 forest/land rights groups, organisation of 593 advocacy meetings with government officials, organisation of 239 advocacy meetings with other stakeholders, submission of 134 recommendations and organisation of 229 community-service provider interface meetings have been done during the four years of the PACS' programme intervention on forest rights. 1067 Van Adhikar Mitras have been trained in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha to support forest-dwelling communities in submitting FRA applications and help them to follow up on rejected or pending claims.
1,24,500 IFR claims have been filed, 35,012 IFR titles have been received including 13,421 titles of joint ownership and 874 titles to single women. 966 homestead pattas and 21,984 pattas of agricultural land have been secured under the FRA. 3,418 CFR claims have been made and 1,201 CFR titles have been secured.

The support provided by PACS to 51 CSOs in five states (Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar) across 41 districts has played a pivotal role in civil society's efforts to strengthen the FRA regime in terms of grants for assisting people who face social exclusion to claim their rights and entitlements, capacity building on issues ranging from financial management to policy advocacy and creating opportunities for networking, alliance building, communication and promotion of joint advocacy and knowledge management.

Van Adhikar Mitras are community volunteers trained on Forest Rights Act. They mobilise the community, create awareness on the Act, Rules and provisions and provide support in filing claims.

Van Adhikar Mitras are positioned as community leaders and act as a link between forest rights claimants and service providers. They play a key role in the interface between the community and service providers and lead the process of CFR filing and participatory planning.
“The stereotype built in the psyche creates the branding of a CSO working on forest rights as anti-government. Civil society organisations espouse the cause of the poor and the marginalised. In fighting for the cause of the poor and marginalised, there are occasions when the government and the CSO position themselves in opposite camps. But it doesn’t call for an attitude that one will shun the other. Both the government and the CSOs are here to stay. In recent times, partnership between CSOs and the government has reached new heights. Many Acts and laws with a pro-poor orientation are being enacted by the government. The CSOs at best can influence the making of Acts and policies, but it is the government that passes laws. Engagement between the CSO and the government in non-grey areas to begin with is a good strategy where common ground between the two could be found. Constructive engagement between CSOs and the government ordains well for the people. The relationship between the two has been improving and it is possible that it will improve further.

Anuj, Project Co-ordinator, NayaSavera, Jharkhand
The CSO-government engagement architecture in the state of Jharkhand has been built around a platform of CSOs under the PACS programme. The Jharkhand Van Adhikar Manch (JVAM) is a platform of PACS partners and non-partners working on forest rights. The Manch has a 20-member Steering Committee with one representative from each of the CSOs. Members of the General Body have been drawn from the Forest Rights Committee, people’s organisations, forums and other development support organisations such as CASA and Chhatra Yuba Sangharsh Vahini. A group of convenors of the JVAM comprise five members representing an equal number of regions in the state. The JVAM has district-level structures with representatives from each block within the district. Each district-level structure has a District Convenor and a District Co-ordinator.

PACS support is aimed at making partner CSOs strong and confident advocates for social inclusion with government, elected bodies, private sector actors and civil society. CSOs are encouraged to work with national, state and local governments to improve the service delivery mechanisms of government-supported schemes and programmes. PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion - a theory of change”, p. 12.

The JVAM has trained community volunteers as Van Adhikar Mitras to provide support to communities in preparing and submitting claims and supporting the claimants in following up rejected or pending claims. Capitalising on the pool of trained Van Adhikar Mitras, the Government of Jharkhand in partnership with the JVAM organised the Van Adhikar Gram Saptah Abhiyan that resulted in 22,000 claim submissions and the settlement of 15,000 claims and later the Kaam Maango Abhiyaan to help people get work under MGNREGS.

Conceptualisation of the JVAM was done to strengthen the FRA regime in the state of Jharkhand. Given that there were few claim generations in the state, strengthening the FRA regime required awareness generation and handholding. Therefore, trained cadres up to the Panchayat level have been positioned.

We have been part of the struggle that relentlessly fought for forest rights. As the Act has been enacted, the next level was implementation of the Act. We realised the necessity of engaging the government for smooth implementation of the FRA. Given the enormity of the challenge, engaging the government through the activation of the governance apparatus required CSOs to come together.

Virendra Kumar, Convenor, JVAM

9 Forest Rights Claim Campaign week.
10 Work Demand Campaign.
“PACS worked on four aspects establishing co-operation between civil society and the government; interacting with government functionaries so that we can discuss our problems with one another; ensuring participation of marginalised communities in the decision-making process; and propagating our experiences to the rest of society,” points out Johnson, State Manager, PACS, Jharkhand. The awareness campaign organised by the partners of PACS has gained accolades from the government. Shri Saryu Roy, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs & Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs, Jharkhand says, “The awareness campaigns conducted by social bodies like PACS can be the permanent solution to social disparities and government will support it in every step.”

JVAM underlines the importance of information in successfully engaging the government. The initiative points out that the elaborate structure of JVAM from the state down to the panchayat and village level helped it collect information/evidence from the grassroots level to the state level. “We placed our view points and arguments on the solid foundation of uncontestable facts and figures. It has established clarity on the issue and commitment to the cause before the administration. Success in engaging the government depends to a large extent on the sincerity with which one works and the perception that is created about the sincerity of the initiative. It is important to be sincere and to be seen as sincere is far more important,” says the convenor of JVAM.

“PACS has organised consultations and workshops that provide opportunities to the leaders of CBOs and CSO representatives to share their views with the bureaucracy. We have engaged bureaucrats at the level of Secretaries to issues orders and circulars to do away with confusions and procedural bottlenecks. Events have been organised for the sharing of experiences by bureaucrats who have got a reputation for implementing the FRA. Beyond these, all that you see in CSO-government engagement has been done by the partner organisations at their level.”

Rebecca David, State Manager, PACS, Chhattisgarh
JVAM has been successful in engaging the government owing to its strategy of engaging the bureaucracy and the political leadership simultaneously. Recounting his interaction with leaders of different political parties, Virendra Kumar said that creating a feeling among political leaders that the initiative is aligned with their cause is absolutely important. He adds, “I never forget to tell political leaders that I am working on forest rights which he/she raised years ago.”

“Both PACS and TAC are organisations working for the welfare of the under-privileged, telling them about their rights and entitlements. There are many organisations working to uplift the downtrodden, they need to come together and find ways to take Jharkhand ahead on the path of progress.”

Shri RatanTirkey, Member, TAC, Jharkhand in Jharkhand Inclusion Utsav

The PACS programme has nudged the partner CSOs to move from a position of confrontation to engagement, making "engagement with the government” a key deliverable of the programme. Investment in capacity building of the CSOs, promotion of the CSO forum and helping it set its objectives and the organisation of consultations between the CSOs and the government for sharing views and perspectives have played a key role in gently goading CSOs towards constructive engagement. The organisation of “Regional Consultation on Collaborative Action for Implementation of Forest Rights Act, 2006” in collaboration with the Department of Welfare, Government of Jharkhand, “State Level Consultations on Forest Rights Act” in Chhattisgarh and “National Convention of Forest Rights Committees” provided scope for sharing of views and opinions between the community, social activists, development practitioners, bureaucracy and political leadership. During the fouryears of programme implementation, 9,149 Government officials have been involved in training and sensitisation events and in the thematic area of forest rights; 593 advocacy meetings have been organised with government officials and 134 recommendations have been proposed to the government, which speaks volumes for the concerted efforts made in reaching out to the government at different levels.
PACS has engaged research and training institutes in consultations to facilitate the dissemination of knowledge and information. SC, ST Research and Training Institute (SCSTRTI), Bhubaneswar, Odisha has been designated as a National Resource Centre (NRC) by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA). The NRC has undertaken research and published best practices on Forest Rights. PACS has facilitated the dissemination of learning and the research findings of the NRC among partner CSOs and the community.

"The Government has spent 2.5 crore in training on forest rights and the budget, training module, training calendar for the training programmes were developed by JVAM. JVAM is consulted in preparation of Policy Documents by the government. JVAM and the government in Jharkhand organised FRA claim generation campaign which was a great success. Given the fact that JVAM and the government have built strong partnership, JVAM will carry on even after PACS and government will be its mainstay."

Johnson, State Manager, PACS, Jharkhand

Rajpal, Programme Manager, PACS says that a pattern can be discerned in how the CSOs engage with the government in different states. While the pattern in Chhattisgarh is engaging the government at the top level, it is engaging the government right at the bottom in Jharkhand. He adds that the pattern of engagement has been specific to the context, i.e., strengthening of the FRA regime in Chhattisgarh required interventions at the top so that government orders, circulars and directions helped pull out procedural difficulties, while in Jharkhand government apparatus at the bottom level was engaged by creating a forum (JVAM) for the generation of forest rights claims and its movement to SDLC and DLC.

The partnership forged between Chaupal and the government is a lively narrative of a CSO moving away from confrontation to engagement with the state. Gangaram, Director, Chaupal, Chhattisgarh reflects, "The PACS programme has changed our perspective on working with the government, encouraging us to build a partnership with them". Chaupal has been working in Surguja district of Chhattisgarh for the past 15 years. The organisation takes pride in being known as a rights-based organisation. The organisation conducted social audits that didn't go down well with the administration. It put the administration in the dock on issues of corruption. To cut a long story short, Chaupal and the administration shared an uneasy relationship.

Things changed when Chaupal started to work on the issue of forest rights as a partner of PACS. There was non-cooperation from the administration and any overture from the organisation was rebuffed. The administration didn't invite the organisation to any of the training programmes despite repeated requests.

Realising that a change in its stance was necessary, Chaupal modified its strategy. It began by involving the administration in the roll-out of its forest rights programme. Another important strategy was to strengthen the roll-out of the Act on the ground. Exposure to Gadchiroli of Maharashtra was undertaken for the purpose. A meeting ground with the administration was fixed in the non-grey area of capacity building and Chaupal went the extra mile in investing in the capacity building of government functionaries.
Chaupal was aware of corruption in the implementation of MGNREGS, MDM and the pension scheme. Social audits undertaken by the organisation had blown the lid on corruption in the implementation of the schemes. “In order to build bridges with the government, we turned a Nelson’s eye to it and parked our social audit programmes”, points out Narendra who works with the organisation. Chaupal spoke too often about forest protection rather than forest land rights to suit the perspective of functionaries in the Forest Department.

Chaupal adopted different strategies to build bridges with the district administration. Personal chemistry was built with persons close to district-level officials. Engagement of the media helped endear Chaupal to the district administration. Knowledge building and capacity building initiatives by the organisation gave it an opportunity to build rapport with government functionaries at different levels as representatives of Chaupal-facilitated trainings as resource persons. Chaupal has enhanced its image with the administration through the visits of external supporters such as researchers and trainers that sent the administration a message about Chaupal's external linkages. Positive vibes with the administration were created through community mobilisation for voluntary planting; for example, the people of Maria and Govindpur planted 3,000 saplings without any incentives. Thus, speaking the language of protecting the forest rather than forest rights or getting pattas changed the image of Chaupal in the mind of the administration. Chaupal has maintained a strategic silence on some occasions which otherwise would have strained its own relations as well as those of the community with the administration. Martinga village was granted CFR titles after the claim was placed as per the procedure. But as the day to get the final signature drew closer, the DFO put down his pen stating he was under pressure from his seniors. The patta did not grant many of the rights mentioned in Section 3.1 and certain conditions were inserted such as requiring villagers to support the Forest Department in their planning of the forest, which contravenes the very concept of community forest rights. This took the community and Chaupal by surprise. After much debate and discussions within Chaupal, the villagers agreed to accept the title with conditions, hoping to challenge it later.

"Constructive engagement with the government requires treading the middle ground and it puts our ability of working simultaneously with people having different and almost contradictory view points to the test," says Nurani, PRAYOG, Chhattisgarh. Narrating the situation during the initial years of her work, Nurani adds that the forest department always considered the organisations that encouraged the community’s rights over the forest as people promoting new encroachment. Also, the community

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"There was not much done on filing of claims and sanction of titles under FRA in Saharapada block of Mayurbhanj district, Odisha. In one of the Review Meetings, I was taken to task for tardy progress on FRA. I was in a dilemma. People were not aware of the Act and showed no interest to file the claims. Fortunately, ISS started work in the area. With the awareness generation programmes and training and most importantly, imparting training on Barefoot Amin, they gave a momentum to filing of claims. As a result, 1526 IFR have been claimed out of which titles have been given to 972 claims. 17 CFRs have been moved from SDLC to DLC. Out of the 972 families that have got IFR, 477 have got housing support under Mo Kudia and IAY."

**Mr. Sunaram, WEO, Saharapada, Mayurbhanj, Odisha**

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had differing viewpoints. Some within the community thought that they had rights over the forest from time immemorial and there was no need to go before the government on bended knees to get it. Given their experience of being ignored and neglected, some in the community didn’t believe that they would get rights over the forest. There were others who still wanted to claim their rights using FRA. Our work in the initial years was to cultivate these people within the community and send the message across to the community through these early enthusiasts.

The idea was to engage the government with the strong backing of the community.

• Formation of state-level network/alliance/platform of civil society actors with horizontal (across regions) and vertical spread (from the state down to the village) is a best-fit strategy to engage the state on forest rights.
• Information/evidence-based positioning helps in effective engagement of the state.
• Effective engagement of the state requires initiatives that are multi-pronged (engaging the political leadership and bureaucracy simultaneously) and multi-layered (top-level as well as grassroots-level apparatus of the state).
• Re-packaging the rights in language that matches the perspective of the government leads to cooperation.
• Creating a livelihood development model with a visible link between securing forest rights and the economic well-being of the rights holders through CSO initiatives helps in constructive engagement of the state.

Partners CSOs have pushed the frontier of engaging the government beyond the sole thematic area of forest rights. Training of Barefoot Amins\(^\text{12}\) organised by the ISS, Odisha imparts men and women with knowledge and skills; they have been used by government departments that face a shortage of skilled manpower. The soft skill-building programme undertaken by the ISS has strengthened the engagement of the CSO with the government.

Janasahajya, Kalahandi has mobilised support from the Horticulture Department to develop orchards on land secured through forest rights. “Our initiative in developing orchards on the plots of land secured through forest rights has sent a signal to the administration that our demand for people’s rights on forests has the motive of bringing about changes in the lives and livelihoods of people. It has brought about a change in the attitude of the administration and paved the way for more intense engagement between us and the government,” says Annayat. It is appropriate to quote Shyama, VICALP who at his jovial best says, “Our engagement with the government has come to such a level that the WEO calls me if the CFR of any village is not filed in time. It is as if he wants me to meet him in his office every day before I set out on work. I think the time has come to tell the WEO that I will do my best so that CFRs will be filed in time, but I can’t meet him every day in his office.”

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12 Amin is a grassroots government functionary of revenue administration of the state who works under the Revenue Inspector. An Amin has the skill of land measurement and drawing sketch maps. The Revenue administration doesn’t have sufficient Amins to cater to the demands of the claimants. Therefore, educated youths were trained by ISS to support the claimants in land measurement and drawing the sketch maps. Since the trained youths were selected from the community and did the job not unlike the Amins of revenue administration, they are called “Barefoot Amins”.
परिचित की-4
प्राध्यापक-3
[लिखित 8 (8 व) वेधो]
सामुदायिक वन अधिकारों के लिए हक

1. सामुदायिक वन अधिकारों के धारक (को) का/के नाम : सरदार गुरु सागर पासवान
   (गुरुसागर के अनुसार)
2. नाम/प्राद ना : ग्राम/गाँव गुरुसागर
3. ग्राम/प्राद नाम : ग्राम/गाँव गुरुसागर
4. तहसील/तालुका : कुलगढ़
5. जिला : कोटा
6. अनुचित जनजाति/अन्य परंपरागत वन नियमातः
7. सामुदायिक अधिकारों का स्वरूप : सामुदायिक अधिकार हैं वित्तता भावा मंदिर
8. हरी बदि छोड़ी होः
9. प्रमाणित के जमा सीमाओं के विवरण
   शहीदिया विभाग और/या नगर/उपनगर/कंप्यूटर सेंटर द्वारा माँग और/या जिला भाग्यानी भिड
   शामुदायिक वन अधिकार का/के धारक (को) का/के नाम :
   1. सामुदायिक अधिकार
   2. वित्तता भावा मंदिर

हम, आपोहितार्थी, अधिकारिक सरकार के लिए और उनसे ओर से, सामुदायिक वन अधिकारों के उपरोक्त चलनित्व
   धारकों के आदेश में न्याय चलनित्व वन अधिकार की सुरक्षा करने के लिए हस्ताक्षर करते हैं:

[सामुदायिक वन अधिकार के धारक (को) के लिए सुरक्षा]
[सामुदायिक वन अधिकार के धारक (को) के नाम]
[सामुदायिक वन अधिकार के धारक (को) के लिए सुरक्षा]
[सामुदायिक वन अधिकार के धारक (को) के नाम]
[सामुदायिक वन अधिकार के धारक (को) के लिए सुरक्षा]
[सामुदायिक वन अधिकार के धारक (को) के नाम]
“Information is power and the power of information gets multiplied in the hands of the common man. Why does somebody get deprived of his/her rights? It is because he/she doesn’t know whether he/she should get it, how he/she can get it and why he/she doesn’t get it. In such a case, information is a powerful weapon. Information gives a voice to the poor, makes him/her confident and fearless.

When we don’t have information and evidence we are misled easily. We have no option but to keep silent even though we know that the person is not telling the truth. Lack of information is illiteracy and helplessness. Most of the people incapable of fighting by themselves can do it if they get information. “

Subhadra Devi, Animator, NSVK, Jharkhand
PACS aims to sharpen the evidence focus of partner CSOs, help them listen more closely to the socially excluded, represent their interests with more impact, and become more inclusive themselves in the process. PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion - a theory of change”, p. 12.

“There were problems galore during our early days of work on forest rights”, says Narendra, Chaupal, Chhattisgarh. “What unnerved us most was the failures we faced even when we did our work with utmost sincerity and efficiency. In most of the cases, claims were either rejected or the land settled was less than mentioned in the claim. The most disturbing outcome was the conflict that arose after claim settlement. There were instances of conflicts between PahadiKorba and other tribes and between one tribe and the other for the reason that somebody’s land was settled in the name of another. All our efforts were coming to naught. We felt as if we were fighting with our backs to the wall. All our claims of veracity didn’t have a solid foundation of evidence.

The problems we faced were also faced by many other organisations. The problem was discussed in PACS meetings. The introduction of GPS technology, training on use of GPS and other associated technicalities and dissemination of the knowledge and skill down to the community proved to be the game changer.”

“The solution to the problem was found at last. PACS organised training on GPS. Learning the technology wasn’t easy but with persistence we learnt to use GPS instruments and the technicalities associated with it. The next step was dissemination of knowledge and skill down the line.

The knowledge and skill of using GPS has also been disseminated among members of the District Vana Adhikar Samiti.”

Narendra, Chaupal, Chhattisgarh

The knowledge and skill of using GPS was disseminated among members of the District VanaAdhikarSamiti. Chaupal discussed the use of GPS technology in the DLC Meeting. It was found that there was lack of knowledge on using GPS. The technical edge we [Chaupal] had over the district administration in terms of knowledge and skill on the use of GPS for substantiating claims with land maps was acknowledged by the administration. However, the adoration was not so much in words but in terms of the collaborative programme that the administration wanted to launch. Tardy progress of the administration in sanctioning forest right titles and especially to PahadiKorbas, a PVTG was making headlines in the media. Pulling up its socks, the district administration of Surguja entered into an agreement with Chaupal to take up claim generation in a campaign mode.
As the first step in collaborative effort, two-phase training on GPS was provided by Chaupal. Training was imparted to members of the village committee in the first phase on 22 September 2015. The second phase training was imparted to government functionaries such as RIs, Rangers and Beat Guards on 30 September and 1 October 2015. Following the training on GPS, a timeline between 3 October and 26 October was fixed for generation of claims in 32 villages of Lakhanpur, Ambikapur, Batatoli and Lundra blocks of Surguja district. The plan was implemented according to schedule and maps of the land claimed under FRA were prepared by 28 October 2015.

Special Gram Sabhas for approval of the claims were organised from 7 to 11 November 2015. In the Gram Sabha the entire land of the village was displayed on a flex that mentioned the area of the land and the name of the claimant. The views and opinions of people present in the Gram Sabha were sought on each plot of land and the veracity of the claim was discussed threadbare. In total, the exercise was done for 741 plots. Upon thorough verification by the Gram Sabha, 514 plots got approval since 149 plots already had pattas. All the claims have been filed with error-free evidence of the claim attached to them. The success of the initiative has prompted the district administration to go for similar exercises in PahadiKorba villages. Upon the decision taken in the DLC Meeting, all the Panchayat Secretaries have been directed to facilitate the process of GPS mapping and claim generation in 138 PahadiKorba villages. The Forest Department has provided 7 GPS machines for the exercise. By the third week of January 2016, mapping and data processing were completed.

"We had to run from pillar to post to get information on FRA as there were four departments dealing with the implementation of the Act and beneficiaries looking for information were often confused. After PACS intervention in 2011, we came to know how to generate claims for forest and land rights."

Sita Devi, Chief Functionary, Janasahajya, Odisha

Narendra, who was involved in the whole exercise, points out that the knowledge and skill of GPS mapping has helped Chaupal break the ice between the organisation and the district administration. He adds that earlier the government used to reject claims on the pretext that false/incorrect claims had been made although it didn't have any proof to the contrary, but the decision of the government could hardly be challenged. With the GPS mapping exercise, irrefutable evidence has been placed that can hardly be rejected. Narendra concludes by saying that the introduction of GPS mapping by PACS has been a game changer. Gangaram, Director, Chaupal, adds, “The GPS mapping tool has been one of the biggest victories as it allows complete transparency in filing claims and acceptance.”

The introduction of an elaborate MIS by PACS didn’t have many avid takers among the partners in the initial days. Mr. K.K. Pattanaik, ISS, Odisha points out, “We felt ill at ease with the MIS introduced by PACS. We considered them strenuous and thought that disproportionate time and energy was being spent on it. But at the end of the day, I must say that a robust MIS has emerged as one of the strengths of the programme.” The praise for the MIS of the programme is echoed in the opinion of Ms. Chandana Das, CWS-ORC.

The programme stood on a solid foundation of evidence and data/information collected through a study that fine-tuned logframe purpose and output indicators as well as developed key measurable sub-indicators for the purpose and output indicators. Midline assessment was undertaken to capture the changes/progress against the baseline values and provide midline values against all the logframe indicators of PACS and to assess how key stakeholders,
including the community, CSOs and policymakers perceive the contribution and impact of PACS. The data generated through assessment exercises have proved to be extremely important for the organisations in their advocacy work because they could substantiate their claims with numbers and figures. The appreciation that the MIS of the programme has received owes a lot to the initiative taken by the programme to strengthen the knowledge and skills of the partner organisations through “Training on Reporting, Documentation and MIS”, “Training on Reporting and Monitoring” and “ToT Workshop on Annual Survey”. The contribution of the programme to strengthening the MIS at the level of the partner organisation is underlined by Nishad, Documentation Co-ordinator, PRAYOG, who said, “We have come a long way from the time when we believed that action speaks for itself and there is no need for documentation. Our organisation laid an emphasis on MIS, reporting and documentation. However, since our engagement with PACS our MIS and documentation have got better.”

Virendra Kumar, Convenor, JVAM links the forum’s success in advocacy with the irrefutable information and evidence that it was able to collect and present to the bureaucracy and political leaders. He adds that the elaborate structure of the JVAM helped it collect information and evidence right from the village level to the top at the state level. “The quality of information and evidence which we collected and presented before the government established our clarity on the issue [Forest Rights] and commitment to our work. With our irrefutable information and evidence collected from the field we felt confident to engage the government officials. Our information and evidence often made them accede to our argument and position.”
People are keen to learn new things and are receptive to new technology. The community, including semi-literate and illiterate members, understands the importance of evidence/information and uses it, demonstrating its potential as a tool of empowerment.

The introduction of appropriate technology and the dissemination of tools and techniques for collecting information/evidence among the community helps SEGs present their point of view before the administration with confidence and certitude.

The use of technology to generate evidence/information can at times be a game changer by breaking the ice between the administration and civil society.

Developing a culture of evidence-based advocacy within the community has the potential to create change agents out of ordinary men and women.

PACs has not only strengthened the MIS of partner organisations and introduced a culture of evidence-based advocacy, but it has also familiarised the community with the governance accountability tool, i.e., the Right To Information (RTI) Act. During the programme in the thematic area of RTI, 1,578 training and sensitisation events have been organised, 2,475 applications have been filed, 392 advocacy meetings have been held with government officials, 136 advocacy meetings have been held with other stakeholders and 9 recommendations have been proposed. There was a marked difference between the baseline and the midline on the levels of awareness on RTI. Compared to 5.6 per cent people across the states who were highly aware about RTI provisions during the baseline, the midline figures showed that 26.3 percent of the population was highly aware of the same. Stonewalled by the government, the community leaders have used the RTI to assert their right to information and demand accountability from government duty bearers. Rajaram Kureti, President, FRC, Kursel using RTI to get the status of his CFR claim and Keshav Shori of Kanker using RTI to get the status of claims made under FRA are a few community leaders who have learnt the use of the governance accountability tool through the PACS programme. The importance of information as an important tool of empowerment is underlined by Pragyan Mohanty, State Manager, PACS, Madhya Pradesh in her address to community leaders in the Odisha Inclusion Utsav: “PACS has helped you to grow; now you have to take the work forward. Information is the biggest weapon you have, use it.”

PACS has developed a Land Tracker System that provides information on the status of a claim. The data generated through this system provides critical inputs (percentage of claims that gets converted into titles, percentage of claims that are rejected and average duration between submission of claim and final decision) for engaging the government. PACS has engaged the government on strengthening its MIS on the FRA. Through the persistent advocacy of the JVAM, the government of Jharkhand is in the process of developing an MIS that would provide information on the status of the claim and the reason for rejection.
Developing a culture of evidence-based advocacy within the community has the potential to create change agents out of ordinary men and women. Given the magnitude of the impact, creating such a culture is no less difficult. It is important to create and nurture the culture through capacity building and hand holding. The process of collecting evidence and information is in itself empowering. However, the collection of information and evidence needs to serve a purpose. PACS has been able to make the community understand the importance of evidence-based advocacy and has imparted knowledge and skill on the tools and techniques of information collection. The community has witnessed the difference that evidence makes to advocacy efforts. Creating a culture of evidence-based advocacy will be considered an important legacy of PACS.
“You can’t tell the people to come together and form an organisation of their own. Even if they come together, it will not last long. The feeling to come together must come from within. People come together when they believe that coming together will help in solving the problems. The people that experience exclusion are resigned to their fate and lack confidence. Due to illiteracy and ignorance they think that there is no way out. When they are told about their rights and entitlements, they find a ray of hope. They start to believe that their problems can be solved. When a majority of the members in the excluded group believe that their problems could be solved they come together to fight for their rights.

CBOs need regular hand holding initially. However, they gain the knowledge and skill of managing their organisation very fast. We have seen people managing their organisation well. A community moves on the path of development when it gets organised.”

Annayat, Janasahajya, Kalahandi, Odisha
Why do socially excluded people have limited access to basic services and livelihoods opportunities? In PACS, we believe that the main reasons among others include rudimentary mobilisation among socially excluded people with limited social capital and a few civil society organisations that originate from within the community and are truly representative. PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion - a theory of change”, p. 10.

Bairikupuli is a small village in Chhatarpur Panchayat of Lanjigarh block in Kalahandi district of Odisha. Nearly 50 scheduled tribe and scheduled caste households inhabit the village. Most people in the village are either semi-literate or illiterate. Households depend on agriculture, forest produce and wage labour to eke out a living. The village is very close to the forest. Due to dwindling forest resources, people’s dependence on the forest has decreased over time.

Janasahajya reached out to the community three years ago under the PACS programme. Years ago, the Forest Department had formed a Forest Protection Committee and when the FRA was enacted the committee was renamed as the Forest Rights Committee. The Committee was defunct as most of those listed as members of the committee didn’t have information about their membership in the committee. The villagers had heard about the Forest Rights Act, but they didn’t have any knowledge about its rules and provisions.

“Initially, we believed that fighting social exclusion would be very difficult but it did not prove to be. Today, we have more than one crore people fighting for their rights. Sustained by an organised society, this is a programme that will never end in spirit. If we feel we have changed, our villages have changed, then that will be the biggest achievement for PACS.”

Ms. Swati Kundra, Head of Finance, PACS in Odisha Inclusion Utsav

To begin with, Janasahajya held a series of meetings in the village and identified their issues and concerns. The people of Bairikupuli had a long list of problems - roads, drinking water and education and to top it all the absence of records on the rights of forest land. Janasahajya started talking about the Forest Rights Act. It re-organised the Forest Rights Committee and trained its members on the Forest Rights Act. Filing of IFR claims started after the training and following approval in the Gram Sabha were sent to the SDLC. Of the 35 IFR claims, 25 titles have been sanctioned and the remainder are with the DLC.
The village was facing a lot of problems in roads and communication, education, drinking water, etc. These problems always came up for discussion in the village meetings. Men and women of the village attended training and sensitisation events organised by Janasahajya. Awareness on rights and the urge within the community to articulate their needs and priorities prompted them to form an organisation of their own. Jeebika Adhikar Sangathan was formed in the village. All the men and women of the village are members of the Sangathan. The Sangathan has a 10-member Executive Body comprising 7 male and 3 female members. The Sangathan holds its meeting at least once in a month, while the Executive Body meets at least once a week.

Formation of the CBO has set in motion a community-led model of development. Faced with the problem of communication, the Sangathan apprised the BDO of the problem and expressed its willingness to execute the work. However, knowing that the government had sanctioned construction of road in the village, a contractor started work even before the tender process was over. When the villagers refused to work saying that they had decided to execute the work, the contractor brought labour from outside to work at the site. The Sangathan lodged a complaint with the BDO and the contractor had to stop work. The work order for construction of roads Majhipada to Harijan Sahi and the road of Sahi Colony was issued in the name of the Jeebika Adhikar Sangathan.

The village has a primary school with education facilities up to Class V. However, the school had only one teacher to look after all five classes. Needless to say, children were not taught properly. Matters became worse when the only teacher went on leave; the school remained closed on those days. The matter was brought to the notice of the Block Education Officer (BEO) by the Sangthan, but no action was taken by the BEO till two months after the complaint. With no option left, the members of the Sangathan went to the BEO and gave an ultimatum that they wouldn’t leave the office premises unless a teacher was provided to the school. The BEO gave a verbal assurance for the deployment of a second teacher and the second teacher joined the next day. The issue of mid-day meals (MDMs) not being provided in the school was also resolved by the Sangathan and the Nandi Foundation now supplies MDMs in the school.

“Given the problems that we have been able to solve through our Jeebika Adhikar Sangathan, I wonder why we didn’t form the Sangathan earlier. Then I think who would have thought of having an organisation of our own when we didn’t know about our rights and how to claim it? Only when we realised that our problems could be solved, we thought of coming together to solve them”.

Raghu Majhi, President FRC, Bairikupuli, Kalahandi, Odisha

The Sangathan has been able to bring together the entire village to solve community problems. With the initiative of the Sangathan the tube well gets repaired within days of becoming dysfunctional. With the initiative of 10 youths of the village, a prohibition on liquor has been imposed in the village.

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13 Jeebika = Livelihoods, Adhikar = Rights, Sangathan = Organisation
A watershed structure in the village got damaged and the side wall ruptured, disrupting communication; this affected three villages. Representatives of the Sangathan met the District Collector on Grievance Day, which was followed by instructions from the DM’s office to the BDO for necessary action. Within a few days of the complaint, the watershed structure was repaired. Following discussion in a meeting, the Sangathan invested Rs. 15,000 for fish farming four months ago.

The people of Bairikupuli came into conflict with Pratappur, a village where the inhabitants have influence and wealth. The administration had planned to check the water of the natural stream that flows beside the village to construct a check dam. The check dam would have caused damage to the agricultural fields that belong to the people of Bairikupuli. The Sangathan united the people of the village against construction of the dam and they protested at the construction site. As the villagers dug in their heels, the administration had to relent. Delineating the importance of the Sangathan in the life of the community, the President of the Sangathan says, “We were neglected by the administration for being a small village of STs and SCs. They were sure that there would be no complaint if we were not given our due. We were voiceless when we didn’t have our Sangathan. The Sangathan had given us voice to articulate our demands.”

“When we formed our CBO, we first discussed our problems and noted them. As we grew stronger, we went to the Collector’s office and submitted a memorandum listing these problems. As a result, we have received land pattas, Indira Awaas, widow and oldage pensions and MGNREGA payments have been regularised. It is sad to see PACS go, but we will keep our fight going.”

Bibinika Pradhan, CBO leader, Kandhamal, Odisha

PACS’ approach is firmly rooted in identifying the reasons for limited access to basic services and livelihood opportunities by socially excluded people. One of the output indicators of the programme is “Number of Community-based Organisations (CBOs) developed by PACS grantee CSOs with leadership from socially excluded communities”. During the four years of programme implementation, 23,206 CBOs have emerged that are of different types such as labour union/ group, farmers' group, human/dalit/tribal rights group, forest/land rights group, village monitoring/development group, self-help group, producers' group/ co-operative, common interest group, youth group, women group and children's group.
CBOs have evolved out of the felt need of the community to come together to articulate their needs and priorities. The role of PACS has only been to promote such a desire among socially excluded groups making them aware of their rights and capacitating them to demand it when they are denied. The organisation of training and sensitisation events as well as advocacy meetings with government officials and other stakeholders has prompted the partner community to articulate its needs and priorities through the formation of CBOs.

Grassroots CBOs have been federated at the Panchayat, Block, District and Assembly constituency level to strengthen their capacity to play the role of pressure groups. CBOs as members of like-minded federations have contributed to the advocacy efforts of the federations. Out of 23,206 CBOs 8,082 are members of federations. As Rajpati, a CBO leader of Chhattisgarh, reminisces, “PACS explained to us the importance of a union. We created a collective of 100 women in our village as a means to represent our demands in the Gram Sabha (village meeting). Our voices are heard today and this collective is now a district-level federation of 3,000 women.”

PACS has created enabling conditions for the formation of collectives and coalitions of civil society actors operating at different levels. Intra-state and inter-state coalitions among PACS partners and between PACS partners and non-PACS partners have facilitated the sharing of experiences and the exchange of expertise among civil society actors. For instance, civil society organisations of Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have gained knowledge and skills infiling CFR claims from their counterparts in Odisha. A unified demand for the inclusion of forest rights in the election manifestos of political parties has been voiced by Forest Rights Committees across the nation. State-level platforms like the JVAM have engaged the government bridging the policy-practice gap in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act.

“The mind set and attitude of people have undergone a change on many levels. PACS has created strong institutions amongst socially excluded communities. This is the only way to bring about a lasting change in society.”

Belinda Bennett, Chairperson, IFIRST Consortium in Jharkhand Inclusion Utsav

- The ability of a community to identify the problem and advocate for its rights and entitlements gets restrained in the absence of a Community-based Organization (CBO).
- CBOs, apart from being a platform to aggregate and articulate the issues and concerns of SEGs, function as an avenue to gain, use and spread knowledge among the masses.
- Adequate time, energy and resources need to be invested in capacity building and handholding for the formation and strengthening of CBOs among SEGs.
- Socially Excluded Groups collectivized in CBOs have the ability to manage their organisation and build federations beyond the initial period of external facilitation.
- Federations of CBOs and coalitions of civil society actors strengthen civil society-government co-operation and people-centred advocacy and facilitate the replication of best practices.
PACS has played the role of a facilitator in bringing together civil society actors to work on forest rights through its top-up assistance provision of additional financial and manpower support, consultations and dissemination of PACS lessons. PACS has given liberty to civil society coalition partners to set their agenda and give shape and form to the collectives. A lasting legacy of PACS is the creation of grassroots-level collectives that facilitate the engagement of socially excluded people with the government, elected bodies and civil society and collectives of CSOs to help them listen more closely to the socially excluded and represent their interests with greater impact.
“A leader must be like the people he/she leads. He/she should live with the people. If the leader doesn’t live the life of a common man, how can he/she know about the problems that the people face? There is a difference between a politician and a leader. Those who are politicians avoid people and sit in Raipur and Delhi. A leader stands shoulder to shoulder with the people in their struggle.

In rural areas like ours, the person who gets elected doesn’t know what to do and even if he/she knows what to do doesn't know how to do it well. He/she does what the Panchayat Secretary tells him/her to do. However, this doesn’t happen in our Panchayat. Persons who were active in our Jana Sangathan have become Sarpanch and leaders in the Panchayat. Many good things have been done in our Panchayat. Our area/Panchayat will not be considered backward. Do you think there would be backwardness if there are good leaders helping the poor get their rights and entitlements under different schemes and programmes?”

Leelabai, Hardi, Gariabandh, Chhattisgarh
LEADERSHIP AND EMPOWERMENT

More aware of their rights and better equipped, socially excluded people will start articulating their needs and priorities more forcefully and will be more eager and prepared to demand accountability and to challenge when entitlements are not met or rights are violated. We should see more people belonging to socially excluded groups stepping forward for inclusion in elected bodies and civil society governance structures. PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion- a theory of change”, p.12.

The unassuming MeituKamar of Jogidhipa in Phingeswar block of Chhattisgarh has a glint in his eyes when he narrates the story of their fight for forest rights. He says that he has never been to school, but one can see that the man has been schooled in the school of life. Jogidhipa is one of the three villages of BodkiPanchayat; Bodki and Phuljhar are the two other villages.

Jogidhipa is a big village with more than 200 households of different social groups. The Kamars (Scheduled Tribe), 32 households in all, have their hamlet at one end of the village that adjoins the forest. The Kamars traditionally depended on hunting and making bamboo utility items. Meitu says that hunting has become a relic of the past but the skill of archery is still in their blood. The other traditional occupation of the Kamars, i.e., making bamboo utility items, fails to provide sustenance to the craftsmen due to the non-availability of bamboo. Meitu points out that with both their traditional occupations losing their sheen, they shifted to settled agriculture. The change is not recent; their forefathers adopted settled agriculture as their livelihood, working on clearing the forests. Things went well until they came in conflict with other castes when the agricultural land became inadequate and they came into frequent contact with the Forest Department.

Meitu says that the Kamars came into conflict with the Yadavs, the dominant caste of the village because the latter usurped their land through their larger numbers and money. He minces no words in underlying the importance of having proof/evidence of land, saying, "Since we didn’t have proof of our possession, the might of the Yadavs became the right." We wouldn’t have lost our land to the Yadavs had we got the patta of the land and therefore, I have ensured that each and every Kamar family submits claim for ownership of forest land," says Meitu.

“Push came to shove,” says Meitu, adding that the Yadavs of the village were pushing them away from their land, but they felt the shove when the Forest Department planted saplings on their land in 2008. They were enraged and decided to uproot the plants. The Forest Department registered a case. The Beat Guard and the Deputy Ranger came prepared to arrest them and their houses were razed to the ground. The tense atmosphere persisted for some time.

“The role of the leader is to empower the people. Can a person empower another if he/she is not empowered himself/herself? With knowledge a person becomes confident and can argue his/her case and that of the people. People suffer due to lack of good leadership. The difference between good and bad leadership can be judged from the conditions of the people. It can be seen at the village, district and state level.”

Udaya Chandra Nayak, President FRC, Sarasmal, Jharsuguda, Odisha
The incident made them sit up and think of forming a collective to counter such onslaughts. Kamar Sangh was formed in the village to fight for their rights. The Sangh organised meetings, discussed the issues and concerns of the community and presented the united voice of the community on different issues. Citing an instance, Meitu says that the school for the children of the Kamars in the village, which was on the verge of being closed down, continues to function only because of the persistence of the Sangh. Kamar Sangh promoted the filing of forest rights claims, which Meitu says, were rejected only because of the mischief of the Panchayat Sachiv. They could do nothing against the rejection of the claims until Ekta Parishad/ PRAYOG went to the village to mobilise the community on forest rights.

“Leadership building shouldn’t be seen as a stand-alone activity in community development programme. The leader of a community in the final analysis is as active as the community. Community leadership by its very notion means leadership emerging from the community. If the community is not active and disinterested with your programme then how can leadership emerge from it? The community must get benefits from the programme. People saw the benefit of using GPS. There is enthusiasm among the people. Building leadership within the community is easy when there is a feeling among the people that there is high probability of success in taking leadership.”

Narendra, Chaupal, Chhattisgarh

Intensive engagement with the community has led to the formation of the Ekta Mahila Samuha, AnajKosh and Bachat Kosh in the village. Meeting of the CBOs are held regularly. “The formation of CBOs,” points out Meitu, “has created scope for discussion among the community on some of the most important issues of concern.” The AnajKosh of the village has two quintals of food grain and the Bachat Kosh has a fund of more than Rs. 7,000. “Formation of the Anaj Kosh and Bachat Kosh are not as important as managing them,” says Ratnibai Kamar, Ward Member who is also a member of the CBOs. “Maintaining records and keeping accounts was a problem for us as we didn’t know about it. We were very slow to learn it as most of us don’t have formal education. But we were given training on it and support by Kuleswari [Community Organiser of PRAYOG]. Now we maintain the records and accounts.”

14 PanchayatSachiv/ Panchayat Secretary is a government functionary deployed in the Panchayat to assist the Sarpanch, the latter being the elected leader of the Panchayat.
15 Women’s Collective
16 Community Grain Bank
17 Village Development Fund
Meitu dwells on the training and handholding at length and says that the knowledge they got through these programmes has helped them a lot. He adds that training sessions on PESA, the Forest Rights Act and the Domestic Violence Act not only educated them on rights and entitlements, but they also came to know about the ways to claim and get these rights. "It was an eye-opener for us to know that many of the things for which we have been fighting have already been guaranteed to us by law," says Meitu.

The knowledge that the rights they fight for have already been guaranteed to them by law infused them with resolve to renew their struggle. "The Vana Adhikar Samiti (VAS) was dysfunctional and the members didn't know that they are members of the Samiti, let alone about their roles and functions. After training on the FRA, VAS was reorganised and with the knowledge about their role and function, VAS started work in right earnest," says Umendraram Sahu, President of VAS.

First, members of VAS met the SDM and lodged a complaint against the rejection of forest rights claims, which resulted in the SDM sending an order to the Panchayat Sachiv to collect claims afresh. With a fair knowledge of the process of filing claims, VAS prepared the claims covering each and every family and the claims were submitted in 2015.

"Nothing has been heard about our claims since we submitted them in the Gram Sabha. We know that the Panchayat Sachiv will put a spanner in the works. But we are not going to lie low this time. We have decided to file an RTI application on the status of our forest rights claims and meet the SDM for issuing an order for joint verification to be done. We have learnt to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat in our fight for forest rights,"

PACS considers "social exclusion" as a concept with three distinguishable features. First, it affects culturally defined social categories with associated cultural perceptions, values and norms that shape social interaction. Second, it is embedded in social relations, because it is through social networks that groups are wholly or partially excluded from participation in society. Third, social exclusion affects people’s rights and entitlements, denying...
them the opportunities they need to have and maintain a universally acceptable standard of living and to fulfil their potential\textsuperscript{18}. This is the focus it sought to lay on leadership building among socially excluded groups. Leadership building among SEGs has been a conscious effort of the PACS programme, which is evident from the fact that better representation and more voice of the SEGs in CSOs, government decision-making bodies and village committees has been taken as an output (Output2). Over the four years of programme implementation, 23,206 CBOs have been formed with a membership base of 351,926 persons. Of the 23,206 CBOs, 21,649 CBOs are led by SEGs and of the 351,925 CBO members, 334,993 belong to SEGs\textsuperscript{19}.

Community leaders across the areas where the programme has been implemented attest to the contribution that training, interactive sessions and protest movements have made to leadership building. Dheluram (Hardi, Chhattisgarh) unravels still another dimension of community leadership that PACS has successfully nurtured, citing the example of Dayalal Dhru, Sarpanch and SukuramSahu, Naib-Sarpanch. “Both of them became our natural choice in the Panchayat election for their active participation in the village-level CBO,” says Dheluram. Asharam Dhru points out that we miss the wood for the trees if we stop at the fact that leaders of the CBOs have been nurtured by the programme only to be elected to the panchayat. He goes on to add that since their election to the panchayat, 160 IFR claims have received titles, 32 Indira Awas have been sanctioned and planning under IPPE-II has been completed in the panchayat. Given that the Sarpanch and Naib-Sarpanch have clarity of purpose, the Vidhayak\textsuperscript{20} has supported them all along. Hardi has been chosen as the Vidhayak Adarsh Gram\textsuperscript{21} and as a result has got support for the construction of a road and the excavation of a pond. The village has also been chosen as a Gokul Gram\textsuperscript{22} and the construction of a cattle shed is underway. Hirabai Sahu adds to the discussion saying, “Both Dayalal and Sukuram went to the panchayat from our village organisation and they have done what the panchayat with good leaders can do for the community.” A one-liner by Dayalal “I don’t play politics; my role is to empower the community” is telling about the kind of leadership and the way it has been groomed by the PACS programme.

\textsuperscript{18} Poorest Area Civil Society Programme (PACs), 2011, “Working with Civil Society to tackle Social Exclusion- A Theory of Change”, p. 3.
\textsuperscript{19} Tracker Analysis, PACS.
\textsuperscript{20} Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA).
\textsuperscript{21} Model village selected by the MLA. As per the VidhayakAdarsh Gram Yojana/Scheme, the MLA selects a village as the model village where community development programmes are implemented under the direct supervision of the MLA. The objective of the scheme is to bring about positive changes in the lives and livelihoods of the people through an integrated and synergistic approach by streamlining development programmes. The long-term goal is to demonstrate a sustainable model of development, disseminate learning and experiences and replicate the development model.
\textsuperscript{22} A model village demonstrating bovine development.
People belonging to SEGs have grown to leadership positions from CBOs as well as through their association with larger forums such as JVAM. Subhadra Devi, Animator, NSVK points out that some of the community volunteers associated with JVAM contested the election to the PRI as well as the General Election for the first time in their life. Lakhan Ganju, Vana Mitra, Brahmana Panchayat one of those who contested the election, says, “The self-confidence, feeling of empowerment, appreciation of the community and the knowledge on community development I gained through my association with JVAM made me take the decision to contest the election.”

Virendra Kumar, Convenor, JVAM pegs his bet on the strength of leadership built in the community when he discusses the sustainability of the JVAM. He adds that roles and responsibilities have been cut out for the community leaders beyond PACS. The JVAM has laid out plans to organise Yojana Banao Abhiyaan23 in collaboration with the government of Jharkhand. Community leaders groomed under the PACS programme will carry their knowledge and skills into development of the Village Livelihood Plan. Virendra Kumar concludes, “Jharkhand Ajivika and Van Adhikar Manch have been planned keeping in mind the community leaders that have emerged through the implementation of the PACS programme.”

Jagadananda, Member-Secretary, CYSD, Odisha singles out the creation of community leaders, i.e., people in the community who will play the role of people’s auditor and empower the community, as the most important outcome of the PACS Programme.

23 A state-level rural planning campaign.
“Women empowerment is an oft-repeated statement of intent, but never so well-realised on the ground. Women are slow to arrive on the public space but never let you down. They are always sincere and committed to the cause. Women empowerment will not only lead us to inclusive development but it will also give the right direction to development. Women have an instinctive understanding of what is good for humanity.

There are only a few initiatives that listen to the voices of women. The presence of women in committees is considered the most that can be done. But when the women speak, they speak loud and clear. Their voice on forest rights is louder still. PACS helped us pay careful attention to the voice of women. Women individually and collectively expressed themselves, strengthening the initiative. There is never an iota of doubt that we wouldn’t have achieved so much had we not lent our ears to them.

The time has come to make the women owners of the forest. When we make the women owners of the forest, there will not be any problem of deforestation. Women have looked after the family and they will certainly not fail in saving the forest and mankind provided the forest is kept under their ownership.”

Ramsevak Bharti, District Co-ordinator, Chatra, JVAM
Section 7: WOMEN STEAL A MARCH: GENDERED LENS FOR COMPREHENDING FOREST RIGHTS

PACS supports CSOs working to build the capacity of ST and other traditional forest dwellers, especially women, to help them claim land-title rights and common property rights, and to demand the right to access and manage their forest and grazing land. PACS aims for full participation of women in forest committees and other decision-making bodies and the increased capacity of communities to manage natural resources. PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion- a theory of change”, p.12.

Leelabai, a resident of Hardi in Gariabandh district of Chhattisgarh, waxes eloquent when she is asked about the struggle they have waged for forest rights. She plays host to outsiders who come to the village to talk about the people’s movement. The village has been the epicentre of the people’s movement on forest rights and the people part of a phenomenal people’s movement. Leelabai traces the origin of the people’s movement to 199596 when the land that they had been tilling for generations was termed “illegal encroachment” by the government. "The land which our forefathers made cultivable with their sweat is our identity and, howsoever small it may be, it provides us sustenance,” says Leelabai, adding, "When our land became illegal encroachment, we became encroachers and it is an indignity we weren’t prepared to accept lying down. But there was a problem as well, as we didn’t know what to do. However, it was clear that each of us could not fight the gloom that was looming large in our lives and livelihoods. We thought of fighting it with unity. Our village stood united, but not much was done until Ekta Parishad/PRAYOG came to our village. People from Ekta Parishad/PRAYOG organised meetings and spoke about our rights over forest and land. They told us that having an organisation of our own would help in discussing the issue and taking a collective decision. Accordingly, we formed the Ekta Mahila Samuha and both men and women of all 51 households of our hamlet [Shyamnagar] are members of the organisation. The Samuha during the initial period post-formation cruised along, but it gained momentum after 2011 when the village was covered under the PACS Programme."Leelabai adds, “With the implementation of the PACS programme we got somebody to guide us, help us strengthen our Samuha and link us with other organisations. Training on the Forest Rights Act, the role and function of the FRC, women leadership building and women rights, community forest rights and Right To Information have brought about a change in looking at things.”
Ekta Mahila Samuha holds regular monthly meetings to discuss different issues and takes appropriate decisions. The formation of Ekta Mahila Samuha led to the formation of Gram Kosh (village fund) and Anaj Kosh (grain bank) in the village. Leelabai points out that the Samuha, Gram Kosh and Anaj Kosh have separate registers and resolutions, and transactions are recorded in the respective registers.

“Anaj Kosh,” points out Leelabai, “is a community-based initiative to deal with the problem of food scarcity.” Leelabai is the President of the Anaj Kosh. Each member household of the village contributes Rs. 10 per month to the Gram Kosh. Leelabaisays that the fund generated under Gram Kosh is used to meet the expenses required for attending meetings, rallies and padayatras held in Raipur and other far-off places and provide loan support to members who face financial problems.

With a twinkle in her eye, Leelabai goes on to narrate her experience of participation in a padayatra that was held in 2007 and another from Gwalior to Agra in 2012. The padayatra of 2007 had more than 25,000 participants from all over the country and the padayatra from Gwalior to Agra was even bigger with participation of nearly 100,000 people across the country. “We faced a lot difficulties during our Padayatra,” says Leelabai and adds, “We had to sleep beside the highways in the night, there was neither adequate food nor was it ontime. But those were lifetime experiences. Nobody complained and bonhomie and camaraderie were full to the brim.”

Leelabaisays that her participation in the padayatra was a turning point in her life. “For the first time in my life, I knew that so many people are facing the problem that we face in our village. It was heartening to see that so many people have taken up the cause and are fighting it out with such rock-solid resolve. Thereafter, there is no loneliness; it is as if the mist of despondency has melted in the ray of hope we saw in the padayatra.”

Leelabaihas coaxed the women of the Samuha to take up income generation activities. Women of the Samuha are engaged in preparing “Ready to Eat” powder, which is supplied to Anganwadi centres. They have also taken up goat rearing to generate income. She reasons that money in the hands of the women of the households leads to the well-being of the household as well as empowerment of the women. Leelabai’s statement finds an echo in the assertion that Pushpanjali Seth, a female farmer of Odisha, makes in her delineation of the impact of the PACS Inclusive Livelihood Project: “Now we are not dependent on our husbands. We are now socially and economically free and independent to take our own decisions.”

On being asked what has made her and other women step out of their households into the public space, Leelabai enumerates a few reasons. She says that threat of eviction hanging over their heads questioned their very existence and there was no option but to fight it. She went on to add that they collect Mahua, Kendu leaf, Salseeds and Harida from the forest and the income from this forest produce mostly comes to the women. “We work on the field, which the government sought to snatch away. Women far more than men are economically and emotionally attached to the forest and the apprehension that we would be deprived of the land made us take up the fight up front. Women’s participation in the Samuha and their active participation were underlined time and again and our
village organisation getting the name of “Ekta Mahila Samuha” sent a feeler to women to become part of the initiative. Despite our initial hesitations to participate in the discussion, we found to our pleasure that women’s rights on forest and land was discussed by the facilitators that came from PRAYOG/ Ekta Parishad. We were treated with dignity in all the meetings and programmes. Apart from getting pleasure for being the centre of attention, we nurtured the hope that strengthening the organisation would bring in a culture of giving women the dignity that they rightly deserve.” Referring to Nurani Jain, Community Mobiliser, PRAYOG, Leelabai said, “We have taken a leaf from women like Nuranididi who come to help us fight our cause.” She concludes that in such a situation, how can the women of the village sit keeping their fingers crossed?

PACS’ Theory of Change points out, “Women, among all socially excluded people, are generally more discriminated against than men belonging to the same social categories.” Assessment of the programme in terms of the indicators at different points of time in the implementation of the programme Baseline (2010), Midline (2014) and Milestone-Endline (2016) and the progress made on these indicators is testimony to the fact that partner CSOs have focused on integrating women into their organisation and activities under the programme. Nishad, Documentation Officer, PRAYOG attests to this inference and adds, “Robust and almost error-free system and procedures were adopted for collection of data/information on these indicators with the development of formats CSO Representation Format, Representation in Decision-making Forums Format and Households Tool. As a result, women empowerment being the fulcrum of the programme and could hardly have been overlooked by any partner CSO.” Positioning of women as key persons of the programme and as the interface between the community and the CSO has helped to encourage women leadership and the active participation of women.

"Positioning of women with adequate representation at all levels have been ensured in JVAM,” points out Virendra Kumar. He adds that the gender perspective had already been built into the programmes and activities of the CSOs, and the emphasis by the PACS programme made it non-negotiable. Representation of women in the General Body of JVAM is 50 per cent, while there is 40 per cent representation of women in the Steering Committee and 1 out of 5 convenors is a woman. The JVAM through training and handholding has created fervent articulators of community’s rights on forest and land out of seemingly ordinary women of the village. Subhadra Devi, Animator of Brahmana Panchayat of Jharkhand links women’s empowerment with the sustainability of the initiative. She goes on to add, “Indomitable articulators of people’s rights on forest created out of the women at the grassroots level are here to stay. Women, more than men, understand the fact that their lives and livelihoods are intricately linked to the forest. Earlier, they didn’t know about their rights and the instruments with which they can fight their cause. The PACS programme has helped them learn these essentials.”

Partner CSOs that have been working on the theme of women empowerment as their dominant strand of engagement with the community have expanded the focus to include a group that faces further exclusion and discrimination, i.e., single women, which is considered a specific group within the category. IFR claims with joint ownership and by single women have been emphasised under the programme. The misconception that land will be left fallow if single women are given ownership over the land proved to be a roadblock and there was an evident lack of interest by the Gram Sabha and Forest Rights Committees to push forward the cases of single women. FEMALE adopted a multi-pronged strategy. Collectives of single women were formed to encourage them to apply for forest rights. Gram Sabhas and Forest Rights Committees engaged in interactive sessions to bring about a change in their attitude. Single women were provided training on the productive use of land and single women primary collectors of forest produce have been linked with the Mulya Nirdharana Committee/Market Committees to eliminate the exploitation by middle men.

"Women know forest more intimately than men. It was quite evident when we were identifying community forest resources and customary boundaries. It is the women who showed us the place from where they collect coloured earth for mud plastering of their houses. They showed us the place from where they pluck kendu leaves. Literally and figuratively, women were leading the men in the whole exercise of preparation of claim for community forest rights."

-Shyama Naik, VICALP, Jharsuguda, Odisha

It seems that engaging the community on forest rights brings women into the public sphere more easily than in other thematic areas. Women's participation has pushed the frontier of being given representation in the Forest Rights Committee to their active participation in the process of claim generation and filing. Women have actively participated in preparing claims for Community Forest Rights. Shyama Naik, VICALP, Odisha pointed out that there was overwhelming participation by women, they showed unprecedented enthusiasm and were meticulous in identifying community forest resources and customary boundaries. He adds, "We had our apprehensions about women's participation in the programme as most of them are illiterate and, going by custom, women are mostly conspicuous by their absence from the public space. We were not sure of women's participation when the Forest Rights Committees were reorganised to ensure representation of women. Going by the enthusiasm with which women have participated in the process of claim generation, with the benefit of hindsight I can say that the women were looking for an opportunity to play the big role."

"Women play the role of primary collectors of forest produce. In our village a woman earns nearly Rs. 3,000 from Kendu leaves. They collect Mahua, Sal leaves, Sal seeds, mushrooms and leafy vegetables from the forest. The income from forest produce mostly remains with the women. You know, women always have a tight purse string on wasteful expenditure. The money earned from forest produce is always used for a good purpose."

Phagnu Buda, President FRC, Pitamal, Jharsuguda, Odisha

25 Price Determination Committee.
It is interesting to note that partner CSOs have broken thematic confines in strategically engaging the women. The participation of women through representation in the FRCs and in claim generation have been taken to a level where the knowledge and skills imparted to women has given them a new identity and dignity. A case in point is the training of women as “Barefoot Amins” by the ISS, Odisha, whose knowledge and skills have been used by the community and the government.

- Positioning women as key persons of community development programmes and as the interface between the community and the CSO helps to build women leadership from within the community.
- Exposure to events of mass community participation instills confidence in women to play the role of community leaders.
- Women leadership, more often than not, evolves within community-based organisations. CBOs with norms of treating women with dignity and working on women rights attract women membership and are best suited to promote women leadership.

CSOs has chartered a route for engaging women from ensuring representation and participation to leadership, and from the domain of “rights” to the domain of “livelihoods”. Land secured under the Forest Rights Act has been developed as a livelihood resource base through convergence under government programmes with the pro-active engagement of women. Janasahajya, Odisha has promoted the development of mango orchards by mobilising support from the Horticulture Department on the land secured under the FRA. “Women of the households,” says Anayat, “have been deliberately chosen as the contact persons as they have traditionally played the role of nurturer and are quick to accept the suggestion.”

Perhaps, the last word on the centrality of women empowerment in the PACS programme was said by BimalaBardhan, CAM, Odisha in the PACS Inclusion Utshav, Odisha which reads, “There is no discrimination in PACS.”
“Women empowerment is an oft-repeated statement of intent, but never so well-realised on the ground. Women are slow to arrive on the public space but never let you down. They are always sincere and committed to the cause. Women empowerment will not only lead us to inclusive development but it will also give the right direction to development. Women have an instinctive understanding of what is good for humanity.

There are only a few initiatives that listen to the voices of women. The presence of women in committees is considered the most that can be done. But when the women speak, they speak loud and clear. Their voice on forest rights is louder still. PACS helped us pay careful attention to the voice of women. Women individually and collectively expressed themselves, strengthening the initiative. There is never an iota of doubt that we wouldn't have achieved so much had we not lent our ears to them.

The time has come to make the women owners of the forest. When we make the women owners of the forest, there will not be any problem of deforestation. Women have looked after the family and they will certainly not fail in saving the forest and mankind provided the forest is kept under their ownership.”

Ramsevak Bharti, District Co-ordinator, Chatra, JVAM
Section 8: Legacy of the Intervention

PACS seeks to leave a legacy of empowered communities that understand their rights and entitlements and have the confidence and skills to negotiate with others to claim them. Furthermore, it seeks to establish a society in which authorities are accountable to all their citizens, lessons and responsibility for change are shared, and all have the opportunity to interact freely and productively with others and to determine the course of their own economic and social development. PACS, “Working with civil society to tackle social exclusion- a theory of change”, p.14.

REPACKAGING THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

PACS has nudged its partner CSOs to move from a position of confrontation to engagement, making “engagement with the government” a key deliverable of the programme. The finesse with which the CSOs have engaged the government has imparted strength to the development partnership established between civil society and the government. The following lessons and learning have evolved out of re-packaging the rights-based approach on forest rights, which is evident in moving away from confrontation to engagement with the state.

- Formation of state-level network / alliance/ platform of civil society actors with horizontal (across the regions) and vertical spread (from the state down to the village) is a best-fit strategy to engage the state on forest rights.
- Information/evidence-based positioning helps in effective engagement of the state.
- Effective engagement of the state requires initiatives that are multi-pronged (engaging the political leadership and bureaucracy simultaneously) and multi-layered (top-level as well as grassroots-level apparatus of the state).
- Re-packaging the rights in language suitable to the perspective of the government leads to co-operation.
- Creating a livelihood development model with a visible link between securing forest rights and the economic well being of the rights holders through CSO initiatives helps in constructive engagement with the state.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of government officials participated in Training &amp; Sensitisation events</td>
<td>9149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of community-service provider interface meetings</td>
<td>229</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Advocacy Meetings organised with government officials</td>
<td>593</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Advocacy Meetings organised with other stakeholders</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of recommendations proposed to the Government</td>
<td>134</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
USE OF TECHNOLOGY TO GATHER EVIDENCE

PACS has been able to make the community understand the importance of evidence-based advocacy and has imparted knowledge and skills on the tools and techniques of information collection. It has demonstrated that a culture of evidence-based advocacy within the community has the potential to create change agents out of ordinary men and women. Creating a culture of evidence-based advocacy, which is an important legacy of PACS, has brought to the fore the following lessons and learning:

- People are keen to learn new things and are receptive to new technology
- The community, including semi-literate and illiterate members, understands the importance of evidence/information and uses it, thereby demonstrating its potential as a tool of empowerment.
- The introduction of appropriate technology and the dissemination of tools and techniques for information/evidence collection among the community helps SEGs present their point of view before the administration with confidence and certitude.
- The use of technology to generate evidence/information could at times be a game changer by breaking the ice between the administration and civil society
- Developing a culture of evidence-based advocacy within the community has the potential to create change agents out of ordinary men and women.

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<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Training and Sensitisation events organised on RTI</td>
<td>1578</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of RTI Applications filed</td>
<td>2475</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of responses received on RTI Applications</td>
<td>1417</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Advocacy Meetings organised with government officials</td>
<td>392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Advocacy Meetings organised with other stakeholders</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of recommendations proposed to the government</td>
<td>09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COALESCLING EFFORTS FOR SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

PACS has facilitated the formation of collectives and coalitions of civil society actors that have functioned as platforms for articulating the views and ideas of civil society, unified forums for engaging the government and set up advocacy forums. By bringing about lasting change in society through building strong institutions among the socially excluded, the PACS programme has underscored the following lessons and learning:

- The ability of a community to identify the problem and advocate for its rights and entitlements gets constrained in the absence of a Community-based Organisation (CBO).
- CBOs, apart from being a platform to aggregate and articulate issues and concerns of the SEGs, function as an avenue to gain, use and spread knowledge on rights and entitlements among the masses.
- Adequate time, energy and resources need to be invested in capacity building and support for the formation and strengthening of CBOs among SEGs. (Picture 6)
- Socially Excluded Groups collectivised in CBOs have the ability to manage their organisation and build federations beyond the initial period of external facilitation.
- A federation of CBOs and coalitions of civil society actors strengthen civil society-government co-operation and people-centred advocacy and facilitate the replication of best practices.
EMERGENCE OF EMPOWERED LEADERS

In establishing a community development model of diversity and inclusion, PACS has successfully created empowered leaders among socially excluded groups. In building a lasting legacy of shaping new leadership with a new vision across all the villages, the PACS programme has brought forth the following lessons and learning:

- Capacity building and handholding support on rights and entitlements not only provide information and build knowledge but also contribute to leadership building. Effective community leadership is built upon the efficacy of capacity building and handholding.
- Knowledge of a governance accountability tool like RTI and the processes and procedures of engaging the administration with information/evidence strengthens community empowerment and leadership building among SEGs.
- Building community leadership is a best-fit strategy to strengthen institutions of local self-governance from within.
- It is important to devise new ideas and new ways to renew the vigour and enthusiasm of community leaders.

| Table: Percent of PACS-grantee CSOs that have at least 50% members from socially excluded communities on the staff and Governing Body |
| Baseline 2010 | Midline 2014 |
| Governing Body | 68 | 72 |
| Managerial level | 64 | 77 |
| Field Staff | 69 | 84 |

| Table: Percentage of socially excluded people in key decision making forums |
| Baseline 2010 | Midline 2014 |
| Education Committee | 42 | 50.3 |
| Health & Sanitation Committee | 28 | 41.2 |
| Forest Rights Committee | 24 | 58.4 |
| NREGA Monitoring & Vigilance Committee | 37 | 37.9 |

| Table: Key indicators of the PACS programme |
| No. of Forest/ Land Rights groups formed | 1,846 |
| No. of CBOs formed | 23,206 |
| No. of CBOs led by SEGs | 21,649 |
| Total CBO members | 351,926 |
| CBO members from SEG | 334,993 |
| No. of CBOs as members of federation | 8,082 |
WOMEN LEADING FROM THE FRONT

Emergence of women leaders is a testimony to PACS' success in establishing a model of inclusion and diversity and shaping new leadership with a new vision. The programme has helped women to become indomitable articulators of people's rights on forest through the collectivisation of women, ensuring their participation in decision-making bodies and making them aware of the rights and the instruments with which they can fight their cause. The process of building women leadership under the programme has brought forth the following lessons and learning:

- Positioning women as key persons of community development programme and as the interface between the community and the CSO helps in building women leadership from within the community.
- Exposure to events of mass community participation instils confidence in the women to play the role of community leaders.
- Women leadership, more often than not, evolves within community-based organisations. CBOs with norms of treating women with dignity and working on women rights attract women membership and are best suited to promote women leadership.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Women Groups formed</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of Training and Sensitisation events on the Domestic Violence Act</td>
<td>4,090</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of Advocacy Meetings organised on the Domestic Violence Act</td>
<td>1,675</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of recommendations proposed on the Domestic Violence Act</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHALLENGES AND THE ROAD AHEAD

"It is clear that the initiatives taken during the programme are far from over," says Jagadananda and adds that there is still a long way to go for community leaders and CSO partners. Outlining the two main challenges, he points out that convergence of schemes and government departments need to happen to ensure effective implementation of programmes, and new ideas and new ways have to be devised to renew vigour and enthusiasm among communities. Both these challenges could be woven into a single strand with the following suggestions for a future course of action.

- Development of a database of community leaders, mapping their knowledge on key provisions of the FRA and linkage with institutions that provide on-campus and off-campus training. For instance, community leaders could be linked with the SCST Research & Training Institute (SCSTRTI) for training since it has a plan to provide off-campus training to CBO leaders and members through CSOs.

- Organisation of capacity building training on new welfare schemes and programmes such as the Prime Minister Krishi Vikash Yojana (PMKVV), Prime Minister Sichai Yojana (PMSY), Prime Minister Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Prime Minister Soil Health Card Scheme (PMSHCS) and Swachha Bharat Abhiyan (SBA)

- Linkage of community leaders with agencies that provide fellowship support for grassroots leadership development programmes.
- Training of community leaders on grassroots governance and encouraging community leaders to participate in elections to Panchayati Raj Institutions

- Linkage of community leaders with issue-based networks and forums such as the National Convention on People's Right to Information (NCPRI) and the Right to Food Campaign.

PACS has created strong institutions among socially excluded communities which Belinda Bennet, Chairperson, IFIRST Consortium points out as the only way to bring about lasting change in society. A set of initiatives to realise the full potential of the social capital created by PACS is as follows:

- Orientation of CBO leaders to rise above issues of caste, gender and religion and to work towards development. Organisation of training on gender sensitisation, gender justice and “Beti Padhao, Beti Bachao”

- Federation building of CBOs at the block and district level with capacity building of CBO leaders on operational and financial sufficiency

- Linkage of federations with state- and national-level issue-based alliances, networks and advocacy forums

- Identification of a model for self-sufficiency and self-sustainability of the CBOs

- Capacity building on livelihood skills, linkage of SEGs with skill development training, formation of producer groups and collectivisation of producer groups in producer companies

"With incessant effort from all the CBOs and CSOs, PACS has been immensely successful. A platform has been established and it upto us how we take it further," reflects Mamta Kohli, Senior Social Development Advisor, DFID. Given that resources and funds are the main challenges for the sustainability of the changes, inspiring and formidable strength could be maintained by establishing CSO-corporate-government development partnerships where CSOs can help corporates magnify their CSR investment and help people access government funds.

- Establishing a consortium for dialogue and laying down a code of conduct for building relations with companies

- Re-packaging a rights-based approach that facilitates the establishment of a CSO-corporate-government partnership model and creating a mechanism to manage stress in the relationship

- Investing in capacity building for CSOs to demonstrate that they have the capacity for governance and handling finances

Reflecting on the impact of PACS, Rajkumar, National Programme Manager, PACS says, "We have proved that the CSO is a very important and responsible entity. To take forward this work the CSOs have to use the networks that they have made over the last five years. They have a duty to talk about their work, carry out advocacy with the government and present their case for seeking collaboration." There is no denying that the momentum will continue on the strength of advocacy. The advocacy agenda could include the following:
- Advocacy on strengthening the grievance redressal mechanism and framing of rules for time-bound disposal of claims

- Creation of a separate mechanism for the settlement of Community Forest Rights (CFR) claims

- Assistance on denial of land acquisition for development projects pending settlement of forest rights claims. Mandatory provision for the project developer to submit the testimony on non-pending of forest rights claims

- Development of a Land Tracker System at the DLC level that disseminates information on the date of claim submission and the status of each claim

The inspiring and formidable strength of PACS partners and the social capital created over the years are unmistakable signs that the model of inclusion and diversity will be replicated.
ANNEXURE

List of Organizations contacted through consultations and field visits.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>CSO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>Development Education &amp; Environmental Programme (DEEP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>Navrachna Samaj Seva Sanstha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>Prayog Samaj Sevi Sanstha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chhattisgarh</td>
<td>Rachna Manch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief (EFICOR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
<td>Naya SaweraVikas Kendra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Adivasi Chetna Shikshan Seva Samiti</td>
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<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi Seva Ashram</td>
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<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>MahilaShramSewaNyas (MSSN)</td>
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<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Navrachna Samaj Sevi Sansthan (NRSSS)</td>
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<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Professional Assistance for Development Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Centre for World Solidarity (CWS)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Development Institute for Scientific Research, Health and Agriculture (DISHA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Institute of Social Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Janasahajya</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Society for Promoting Rural Education and Development (SPREAD)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Society for Welfare, Animation and Development (SWAD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Team for Human Resource Education and Action for Development (THREAD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odisha</td>
<td>Visionaries of Creative Action for Liberation and Progress (VICALP)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Poorest Areas Civil Society (PACS) programme is an initiative of the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID). Under PACS, DFID partnered with Indian civil society to help socially excluded groups claim their rights and entitlements more effectively, so they receive a fairer share of India’s development gains. PACS, in its second phase of implementation (2009-2016), had been supporting the work of CSOs to promote inclusive policies, programmes and institutions at local, district and state levels in the areas of livelihoods and basic services.

FRA is one of the priorities of the Government on which PACS Programme worked from 2011 to 2015 in 41 districts across five states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha. This document presents the approaches, strategies, results, achievements and key learning from the intervention along with the stories of change from the intervention area.