

Case Study on NTFP Management: Changing Nature of NTFP Trade in *Bhakhar* Area of Abu Road Block, Rajasthan

By Pradeep Kumar Mishra

I. Title: Case Study on NTFP Management

II. Subtitle Changing Nature of NTFP Trade in *Bhakhar* Area of Abu Road Block, Rajasthan

III. Abstract

The villages in the foothills of Arawali mountain range in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan has an interesting case to share. This is an NTFP-abundant area and here NTFP collection and selling is an important source of livelihood. In the last 15 years, the NTFP management system in the area has gone through a lot of changes. So far no in-depth study has been carried out in the area to understand the situation of NTFP trading. The study tries to fulfill this gap by analyzing the inter-relations of livelihood, NTFP trade and the compelling factors leading to the benefits not reaching to people.

Till the early 1990s, people used to work for contractors for a small wage for tendu leave collection. Now, a tribal cooperative society bids for the collection and people not only get a better price for their labour but they also share the ownership. A local NGO *Jan Chetna Sansthan* has been working with these tribal on various issues. There are several other NTFPs like ratanjot, aonla etc - because of the Government's restriction the tribal can collect and unprocessed NTFP to Rajasthan Tribal Area Development Cooperative Federation Ltd (Rajasangh) only. But bypassing this restriction the tribal sell these to traders. Earlier studies have shown that the prices of NTFP fixed by Rajasangh is less than the market price. The JCS has addressed problems related to tendu leaves through the community based institutions but it has not been able to organise other NTFPs properly.

There is a complex interaction among the tribal people, traders, Government agencies, Jan Chetna Sansthan. There are also several aspects – economic, ecological and social issues related to NTFP management. Over the last ten years, the profile of NTFP availability has changed. The tribal are also grappling with regularisation of land rights. Under such complex situation, people's institutions play an important role in empowering them and in increasing their bargaining capacity.

IV. Keywords

NTFP, tendu leaves, cooperative, tribal rights, value addition

V. Background and Objectives

Collection of Non-timber forest produces (NTFPs) has been a good source of revenue for the state and is an important source of livelihood of tribal people in Rajasthan. Annual revenue realised through various sources comes to about Rs. 300 million. On a conservative estimate, contribution of about Rs. 200 million from unrecorded offtake of various types of forest products in the form of leaves, fruits, flowers, bark, roots, tubers, medicinal plants which are locally collected by the right holders. The total contribution of NTFP works out to approximately Rs. 520 millions annually in the state(FD, 2005).

The villages in the foothills of Arawali mountain range in the Sirohi district of Rajasthan is an NTFP-abundant area and here NTFP collection and selling is an important source of livelihood. This area comes under the forest type Central India Sub-tropical Hill Forest and Mixed Miscellaneous Forests. The NTFPs available can be categorised into two – tendu patta and NTFPs other than tendu patta. The former is managed by Forest Department while the non-tendu patta NTFPs are dealt with by Rajasangh¹.

Tribal people collect and sell the NTFP since long time. To save them from exploitation by traders, the Government of Rajasthan has put restriction on NTFP trading which allows the tribal to sell unprocessed NTFP to Rajas Sangh only. Over a period of time this regulation has become obsolete as the market price of NTFPs has become more than the official price. Earlier studies have shown that because the tribal get less when they sell it through the official channel, local traders tap the market bypassing the of official channel.

This area has problems related to non-regularisation of forest land for tribal who have inhabited there for centuries. Because their land rights are not recognised, the benefits of may Government schemes reached fully to the ground level. A local NGO *Jan Chetna Sansthan* has been working with these tribal on various issues. The organisation has found that NTFP as a source of livelihood should become a focus area of work. It has promoted cooperatives for tendu leave collection and supplying to Government and that way tribal have benefited immensely. However, in case of other NTFPs the system of collection and selling are still not well-organised.

In the recent years, the availability of NTFP in the area has decreased considerably and people are now shifting to other livelihood options like out-migration. Compounded with various other problems like poverty, lack of rights etc the decrease in NTFPs pose a complex web of issues related to tribal livelihood and sustainable management of NTFPs in the area.

This area makes an interesting case to understand the complexities of forest resources vis-à-vis tribal livelihood. In the last few decades the importance of NTFPs in national economy has been increasingly recognised. This case tries to bring make a comprehensive understanding of NTFP management and related matters in the area. Several questions arise at this point. How come the NTFP-abundant area has been losing

¹ Rajasthan Tribal Area Development Cooperative Federation Ltd

the rich resources? What effect does it make on tribal livelihood? Would things be better if the rights of tribal are recognised? And the most important of all – what should the Government and people do to revive the rich resources in the area?

Seeing the changes in situation over time, there is a need to make some serious thinking over the process of NTFP management in the area. However, not much information is available on this front to make any analysis. No in-depth study has been carried out to understand the situation of NTFP trading in this area. The study tries to fulfill this gap by analyzing the inter-relations of livelihood, NTFP trade and the associated factors. The objectives of the study are:

- To understand the extent of NTFP collection and selling in the studied villages
- To assess the contribution of NTFP trade in the village economy
- To identify the gaps in the NTFP trade from the NTFP collector's perspective vis-à-vis government restriction

The findings of the study will help the policy makers and academicians understand the complex relationship among various institutions and how the regulations fail to achieve its desired objective. It will also add a case in understanding the contribution of NTFP in village economy. It will also help the facilitating NGO to design a better plan to ensure maximum benefit to the tribal.

VI. Methodology

The paper follows case study research design to understand the complex situation. It includes description and analysis of the situation, roles and interest of various stakeholders, problem areas related to NTFP trading vis-à-vis people's livelihood.

The study has been limited to the situation of *Bhakhar* area of Abu Road block which is an NTFP-abundant area. The area comprises 24 tribal villages of which indepth study was made in two villages named Bosa and Deri. The situation of these two villages has been mapped in the broader context of institutions like Forest Department, Rajas Sangh and Cooperative.

The study includes both secondary and primary sources of data. The relevant studies on NTFP conducted in last five years in the state of Rajasthan were referred to. The basic statistics about the Sirohi district and Abu Road block were taken from official hand books. Regarding the situation of infrastructure and facilities of the area, unpublished records of Jan Chetna Sansthan were referred to.

The study included three spells of field visit spread over two months. Initial discussions about the area, situation of NTFP and the organisation was done with senior staff members of Jan Chetna Sansthan. This was followed by field visit where various tools for data collection like resource mapping of the village, group discussion with NTFP collectors, interview with field staff of Jan Chetna Sansthan and some key informants in

the villages were undertaken. Discussions were also held with Sarpanch and some other officials related to NTFP trading.

VII. Description

A. About the Area

The study has been conducted in Abu Road block of Sirohi district in Rajasthan. Abu Road block has a population of 165,000 of which 68 % are tribals – consisting of Garasia, Bhils, Gametaand Meena. These tribes are most backward among the others, and hence the block is considered as most backward among the other blocks in the Sirohi district. Among the tribals the literacy rate is as low as 13.17% for men and 0.85 % for women. In these villages, there are practically no basic amenities like safe drinking water, electricity, health services, roads and schools etc.

These tribes reside in the interior parts of the forest and depend on the forest as their main source of livelihood. They also undertake agricultural activities during the monsoon season. 65% of the total area consists of forestland with only 6 % land being under cultivation. These farmlands are of poor quality due to soil erosion as they are situated on the slopes of the mountains.

Land use pattern

District	Sirohi District	Abu Road block
Total area (Hectares)	517947	85811
Forest	141882	55563
Irrigated	143124	4546
Un- irrigated	89015	12656
Cultivable waste	26054	2915
Not available for cultivation	117872	10131

A large number of tribal in Abu Road block (about 2000 families) are not having land records. Because of which they are considered to be encroachers although they have been a resident of this area since centuries. In the absence of land rights they are kept aside from the Government programmes.

Abu road is located in the foothills of Mount Abu which contains the highest point (1722m – Guru Shikhar) in between Nilgiri and Himalayas. Mount Abu is a famous tourist place and it does not need further introduction. To the east of the Abu hills, across the valley of Banas, is the tract known as *Bhakhar*, which consists of successive ranges of steep and rugged hills of no great height. The area has 24 villages. This study focuses on *Bhakhar* area.

<i>Name of Villages in Bhakhar Area</i>			
Bori Bhuj	Jamboori	Nichli Bor	Tal;eti
Bosa	Jawai	Paba	Tankiya
Buja	Jaydara	Rada	Upla Khejra
Deri	Meen	Ranora	Uplagarh

Derna Dovatra	Nichla Khejra Nichlagarh	Siyawa Soorpagla	Upli Bor Chhapri
------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------	---------------------

Jawai is the largest and longest of the rivers of north - east, which eventually join Luni. It rises in the Aravali hills and after flowing through various villages' forms the boundary between Pali and Sirohi districts. Western Banas is the most important river of the district draining almost all the area east of Abu - Sirohi range in Pindwara and Abu Road blocks. No natural lake exists in the district.

B. Key Actors, their roles

Tribal Community

Economically the tribal people in the villages are very poor. Government of Rajasthan has taken a number of initiatives in the form of development programmes but due to the lack of awareness among the people and several other factors the programmes has not reached to the tribal community. One important reason for the area could not become a priority is its distance from state headquarters, Jaipur, as it is located far off at the Gujarat border.

There are no industrial unit in the block which could have supported livelihoods of people to some extent. Agriculture and daily labour are the major source of livelihood. Women equally share the economy of a household and the 50% and in some instances female of the family earns up to 75% of the income e.g. She is involved in collection of forest produce and selling the same in nearby markets.

In the last 6-7 years the area has been subjected to severe drought. This has resulted in depletion of natural resources and erosion of sources of livelihood. Depleting natural resources due to increasing deforestation, denial of right over the natural habitat because of the reservation of forestland and unreliable monsoon have severely affected their system livelihood pattern. In the absence of a regular source of income, the people often have to migrate to the cities in search of labour, facing exploitation with fewer wages for more working hours. Migration has become a major source of livelihood in tribal. They work mainly as unskilled labourers. A study shows that 40-60% of tribal migrate to nearby cities and in Gujarat for daily labourer works. Migration is on peak during the month of November - December and people return to their home before Holi. Child labour is extensively found in the area. Women, who take care of the family solely during the migration of male members are the worst victims of this this exploitative condition.

Jan Chetna Sansthan

Jan Chetna Sansthan (JCS) is an organization working for generating awareness among the people, leading to their empowerment. It was formed, in 1990, by a group of social activists and development professionals. The constituency of JCS is the tribals and women who constitute the most marginalized, disadvantaged and exploited section of the society in the tribal villages of Abu Road Block in the Sirohi District of Rajasthan.

The organisation started its work in early 1990s when there was a large movement taken up to save the tribal from the exploitation of money lenders of the area. Through this movement the organisation was able to release the jewelries of tribal people which were mortgaged with the moneylenders who took the opportunity of illiteracy among them. The successful movement was the main driving factor behind establishing the organisation. JCS has undertaken many activities. It believes in promoting people's organisation and working through them rather than working directly. It has formed various organisations including *Bhakhar Bhitrot Adivasi Vikas Manch* (BBAVM), a 2200 member body, acts as a forum for tribal development which takes up various issues with Government, *Adivasi Tendu Patta Sangrahan Sakhari Samiti Ltd.* (ATSSS), 250 SHGs which undertake micro-finance activities. The SHGs have been federated as Adivasi Bachat Evam Sakh Sakhari Samiti Limited and JCS provides capacity building support to them. The other activities of JCS are strengthening Gramsabhas, networking with other NGOs on the issue of tribal rights. The organisation has participated actively in several demonstrations, workshops and conferences at national level.

Rajas Sangh

Rajasthan Tribal Area Development Cooperative Federation Ltd. (*Rajasangh* as it is well known as), was formed as an apex cooperative institution under the Ministry of Tribal Area Development of Rajasthan Government for the purpose of providing infrastructure, financial and marketing support to tribal cooperatives engaged in farm and non-farm commercial activities. Its membership is made up of primary cooperatives in the tribal areas. In Rajasthan its operations extend to tribal sub plan districts including the Sahariya area. The State Government, tribal development funds and commercial banks finance Rajasangh. Rajasangh is headquartered at Udaipur under the ex-officio chairmanship of Tribal Commissioner.

Rajasangh was formed with the purpose of helping the poorer collectors of the villages who were not able to get the true worth for their products from the traders as the traders had monopoly and full control over the trade and thus the price. The Rajasangh has the right to collect and sell all the NTFPs except Tendu Patta. Initially this set up worked well for the collectors, as they got the true price of their produce. But slowly Rajasangh began to lose sight of its true purpose. The traders have also increased the rates and their rates, as of now stand to be more than that of Rajasangh. So the villagers are again selling their produce to the traders, thus defeating the very purpose for which Rajasangh was formed.

Cooperative

Rajasangh operates through its various cooperatives called LAMPS. It also has set up and financed fishery and forest produced cooperatives. Rajasangh participates in direct marketing operations, which include retail outlets in major cities in the state. It also trades in commodities on behalf of primary cooperatives.

Forest Department

The Forest Department has a separate section, which looks into all the aspects related to the NTFPs collected and sold in the region. But its active involvement is limited to the collection and selling of only Tendu Patta in Rajasthan. The collection and marketing of all the other forest produces in the state are controlled by Rajasangh.

The Forest Department gets the information related to the collection and rates of the various NTFPs in respective region at yearly basis. But, in real terms, it has no involvement in the actual collection or rate determination process of the same. The Forest Department does not get any royalty from the forest produce auctioned by the Rajasangh. Its responsibility is limited to stopping illegal traders from taking away the forest produce and prevents selling of the same, except to the Rajasangh.

In case of Tendu Patta, which is a nationalized produce, all the trade is done under the supervision of Forest Department. Contracts are given by the Forest Department at the beginning of each season according to the collection done in that particular region in the earlier year and the rates are fixed by the Forest Department only. The traders who bag the contract pay a predefined sum to the Forest Department and get the license to sell all the Tendu Patta collected in the region. The labor rates are also fixed by the Forest Department, thus keeping a control over the traders, so that they do not begin to exploit the local people.

Recently the Forest Department is also venturing into the cultivation of NTFPs. In the Sirohi region they have undertaken a plantation of Tendu Patta spread in over 200 ha (90000 seedlings) in two Forest Ranges. They plan to take more area under cultivation in the future (Source: FD, Sirohi 2002-2003 in Dave and Nag, 2003).

Traders

Traders play an important role in the area – particularly in the NTFP business. Most of them are either local traders operating as middlemen simply procuring the NTFP from villages and deliver in the township, or they have a full-fledged shop at the town.

C. The NTFP Management at Village Level

As discussed earlier, the Bhakhar area has 24 tribal villages – more than 80% of them are from *Garasiya* tribe and rest are from *Gameti* tribe. The two villages taken for case study here had population from these two tribes. Bosa and Deri are the two villages taken under this study. Bosa has Gameti population while Deri has Garasiyas.

Bosa

The village Bosa has 195 households. About half of the people have some amount land, others are landless although they some cultivate some land. Each of these people have 1-2 bighas of agriculture land and they also use another 1-2 bighas of forestland for this purpose. It is located on a highly undulating tract of more than 15% slope. The households are scattered over small hillocks. The village is located across 3/4 km at the

Gujarat border. Agriculture is the main source of livelihood in the village. Collection of forest produce and daily labour are the other important source.

Deri

The village Deri has 580 households spread over 4/5 km and has six hamlets. Here also the situation is same as Bosa. However, this village is closer to main road – it is located at about 5 km from the same, while Bosa is located at about 15 km from the main road.

The importance of NTFP as a Source of Livelihood

There are two types of families – about half are having an area of 3-4 bigha (including land ‘encroached’ by them). Almost 75% of families have 5-10 goats each and about the same no. of people have 1-2 cattle. Poultry is also found to a limited extent.

A household having land has the following sources of income in an average year of rainfall:

Source of income	details	Amount (Rs.)	% of people having the resource	Average contribution to HH income
Agriculture	Maize 5-6 quintal @ 600/- p. quintal	2500-3000	60%	1656
	Tuar/Chana/Urad 1-2 quintal @ 1500/- p. quintal	1500-3000	80%	1800
Animal husbandry	Milk 1-1.5 lr. Per day 150 days. @ Rs. 12 per litre	1800-2700	80%	1800
	Sale of goats, birds	1000-1500	90%	1125
NTFP	Tendu Patta collection	1200-1500	100%	1350
	Other NTFP	500-2000	40%	500
Daily labour	50-80 days @ 50-60/-	2500-4500	100%	3750
			Total	11981 p.a.

So, NTFP collection contributes to about 15% of the village economy as a whole. However, the contribution ranges from 10-30% which differs from family to family. From discussion with villagers, it came out that the households have an average income of ranging from Rs. 7-8,000/- per annum to Rs. 15-16,000 per annum. Those having agricultural land are at the higher end. But contribution from NTFP is about the same for all the households. Rather, it becomes the primary activity for people not having agriculture land.

Animal husbandry is also one of the important source of livelihood. Every family has one or two cows and 5-10 goats but the milk production from cows is as low as 1-1.5 litres per day. People usually do not sell milk and they use it for household consumption. However, the sale of goat and poultry fetches some money (about 1000-

1500) every year. People in the area work as daily labourer in Government implemented development programmes, and many other visit to Abu Road, Ambaji etc. when the labour opportunity is not available nearby the village. From the discussion with villagers, it came out that there is no certainty of being hired as labourer – it is dependent on availability of works. A visit to nearby towns increases the probability of getting it, but women cannot visit these places because there is no proper conveyance and they have household works also. The best thing about NTFP collection is that it is available in the village itself.

Availability of NTFPs and Return from it

Tendu leaves

Tendu patta collection is one of the most important activity in the village. This is collected during the months of May-June when there is no other employment opportunity. The season of tendu patta collection includes intensive involvement of all the able family members who identify appropriate tendu leaves, pluck them, dry them, bundle them into 50 leaves, and transporting the same to *phad* (collection centre). The activity is so intense that the whole family gets full employment for about 15-30 days.

Ratanjot

Ratanjot collection is one of the growing activity in Bhakhar area. Earlier very few people used to collect ratanjot. But in the last 5-7 years the collection has increased substantially. This is available round the year and people collect it throughout the year except for the rainy season. This is available in and nearby the village and it requires very less labour. In a period of 15-20 days, spending about an hour a day, one person is able to collect about 20 kg. of ratanjot which is sold at a price of Rs. 4/- per kg thus earning Rs. 100-150/- per month. The seed of ratanjot is used to extract oil – which is more popularly known as bio-diesel these days. In Deri this is collected by about 60-70% of families while in Bosa about 20-30% of families collect Ratanjot. The variation is because of the extent of availability.

Tendu fruit

The collection of tendu fruit is not as high as tendu leaves. But about 20% of people in the village collect tendu which fetches an amount of Rs. 50-60/- twice or thrice a week for about a month which comes to about Rs. 500/-.

Aonla

Aonla is available during November-December every year. Earlier, a decade ago, Aonla was available abundantly in the village. However, in the last few years because of regular drought, as people said, the Aonla trees have dried away and production of Aonla has sharply decreased. Now, only a small amount is available in the villages, and one has to travel to remote forest to get a good amount of Aonla. Presently, only 12-15 households in Bosa and 20-25 households in Deri collect it. Aonla fetches a price of Rs. 7-8 per kg and for the people who collect it, it fetches about Rs. 1000-1500 per season. People say that in the lean season, Aonla fetches a price upto Rs. 20/- but they cannot wait so long because of lack of storage facility and, more important, the need ready cash.

Shahad (honey)

Natural Shahad is available in this area and a few people (about 15-20 households from Deri and 8-10 households from Bosa) collect it round the year. One person can easily collect about 15 kg. of Shahad in a month and it is sold locally at a price of Rs. 50-60/- per kg. It is sold in loose and unfiltered form.

Arhita

Arhita is available during the month of March. The fruit is used to extract hair oil. The availability of Arhita is not much – only 10-12 families collect it. The fruit is sold after drying which fetches a price of Rs. 12-15 per kg and people are able to collect 20-30 kg. in a season.

Mahua

Mahua is collected and used for household use only in these two villages. Mahua flower has a lot of importance in tribal society – it has some religious sanctity also. The flower is used as a medicine and it is used to produce liquor also. Its fruit is used to extract edible and medicinal oil.

According to discussion with people, Mahua is available in commercial scale in three villages in Bhakhar area – Meen, Jambori and Taleti. In Meen it is available in highest amount and in the other two villages it is available in medium scale. Mahua flower is collected around the month of March. A family in these villages is able to collect an amount of 5-10 quintals of mahua flower. In the market, mahua flower is sold at a price equivalent to wheat, which is Rs. 10 per kg at present.

Other NTFPs

Apart from the above, several other NTFPs like karonda, khajoor, safed musli, puad, kanji etc. are also collected by people. But the amount collected is very less and their contribution to the household income is insignificant. Also, the availability of these has decreased substantially over last 10-15 years.

Procurement of NTFPs

Tendu patta is a nationalized forest produce and this has to be sold to the Forest Department. So the responsibility of collectors remains till the delivery of the bundles in the *phad*. For 100 bundles of 50 leaves, an amount of Rs.35/- was paid in the last season.

For other NTFPs Rajas Sangh has a monopoly over buying the raw produces. However, the processed NTFPs could be directly sold in the market. Rajas Sangh operates through several LAMPS which have their collection offices in different places (mostly one in a block). The Agents are at the lowest position of the hierarchy who are actually local traders whom the Rajasangh has authorized to collect the NTFP from the villagers and bring to the collection centers. From the collection centers these produce are then sent to the Regional Office and from there to the Head Office in Udaipur. They are stored in the godowns in Udaipur and are auctioned every week. The Rajasangh

pays the agents 6% of the total produce that they bring to the office and the local office gets 2% of the total produce. So the total commission paid by the Rajasangh is actually 8% of the total collection. No royalty is given to Forest Department for this sale.

In the year 2002-03, the value of NTFP collected from Abu Road Region in the year amounted to Rs 13,83,498/-. This is only a small fraction (estimated to be 28%) of the NTFP collected in the area. The rest are sold through the traders in the nearby towns like Abu Road, Palanpur, Ambaji etc (Dave and Nag, 2003). Of this collection, Rs. 10 lakh comprised only Ratanjot.

Value Addition

As per the group discussion with villagers, mainly raw produces are sold for almost all NTFPs. Ratanjot and Arhita are sold after drying but they are not even graded. It is expected that even grading could fetch significantly higher price than the present one. But the potential of value addition is very high. The following kind of value addition can be done:

- Drying
- Cleaning, filtering
- Grading
- Grinding
- Oil Extraction
- Packaging etc.

As discussed earlier the main reasons for not undertaking such value addition is immediate need of cash. There are other important reasons like lack of storage facility, processing machineries, and lack of training for grading, grinding, oil extraction etc. The processed NTFPs are under no restriction to be sold in open market.

Price Differential

There is a significant price differential between the price of NTFP received from Rajas Sangh and that from the open market i.e. traders. Dave and Nag (2003) had estimated this price differential and had found that there are varying differential in almost all the NTFPs ranging from 12% for Mahua flower, to even upto 100% in case of Aonla. The present study has also seen the same pattern although the gap was little lower in the upper end. Still there are 10-50% of price differential. Particularly in lean seasons, the price of NTFP shoots up like anything. But by that time tribals are left with little of it. This price differential is one of the major reasons of the fact that LAMPS have not been able to tap the market fully. Also, the LAMPS collection centres are not available in remote villages where the chances of getting NTFP is very high. The traders here take the advantage, they can also react to the price fluctuations in the market to woo the NTFP collectors which cannot be done by the LAMPS.

Growth of Tendu Patta Business vis-à-vis Involvement of CBOs

Tendu patta collection is managed by Forest Department. Every year tender notice is given where the bid is taken by the contractors. Earlier, the private contractors took the bid and used to pay very little amount to the tribal labourers. In 1989 the rate paid to

collectors was Rs. 7 per 100 bundles and this rate had not been revised for several years. This was well below the rates minimum wage. Astha, an Udaipur based organisation, and *Sangharsh Samiti*, a tribal forum, urged the Forest Department to 31.50 per 100 bundles which was dismissed outrightly. Astha carried out carried out a time and motion study which took nearly 19 hours to collect and tie 100 bundles of leaves and calculating the cost of labour on the basis of prevailing minimum wage rate, it came to Rs. 50/- per 100 bundles. In 1990, the Sangharsh Samiti called a strike the contractors agreed to pay Rs. 13.50 (Katiyar and Khandelwal).

In 1991, JCS, took up the issue in Abu Road and at that time the rate was Rs. 16/-. JCS discussed this issue widely in the area and it organised tendu patta collectors. A strike was called to increase the rate but the contractors mobilised the village headmen that ultimately tribal were losing scope for employment. The strike was called off and the first movement in Abu Road ended up as a failure. However, the process of movement brought a sense of struggle in the minds of tendu leaf collectors and they understood the nexus between village headmen and contractors. The village headmen confessed that it was their mistake and in 1992 the strike was launched again. For 16 days the tribal did not collect. On 17th day, the contractors suggested that they could pay maximum an additional Rs. 5/-. In 1993, because of negotiations the rate increased to Rs. 30/-. This enhancement in rate over such a short period of time brought the feeling of success among the people (ARAVALI, 2005).

In 1993, JCS further discussed with people in the area. The consensus emerged that despite the increase in rates, the contractors took a substantial margin. Why not the tribal people themselves take the contract – the question was widely discussed. Finally, the *Adivasi Tendu Patta Sangrahan Sahkari Samiti Ltd. (ATSSS)* was formed. For a few years the ATSSS tried to understand the overall bidding process. Because of lack of resources it could not move forward also. It contacted several banks also but nobody agreed to lend money to the emerging organisation having no assets. It required about Rs. 20 lakh. JCS talked to one of its funding agency Swissaid which agreed to fund this initiative. In fact, Swissaid was in an impasse because they provided fund only on grant basis, but ATSSS insisted for a loan because the purpose of it was to initiate a business. Finally Swissaid approved a loan of Rs. 15 lakh and in 1998 the ATSSS was able to bid for tendu patta collection. Last year (2004-05) also the ATSSS filed the tender and took the bid.

The ATSSS made a profit of Rs. 56,000 in the first year. By now it has paid back the loan plus interest from Swissaid and by now it had created a net worth of Rs. 15 lakh. About 2200 families are benefiting by the ATSSS (ARAVALI, 2005). The ATSSS interventions and support of JCS has really empowered the tendu patta collector. As Shri Bhairaji, an Ex-panchayat member of Deri, says “the interventions of the Samiti has brought a sense of ownership in the tribal people. Earlier they were getting only the benefit of labour component. Now they are getting the surplus too”.

For NTFPs other than tendu patta there is no such committee formed. One problem with other NTFPs is that they are available in small amounts in different areas. Nevertheless,

the potential is there. A villager in Bosa says that they need a forum similar to ATSSS for dealing with other NTFPs also which can benefit the tribal much better.

D. Social and Ecological Aspects of NTFP Management

Rights and Bargaining Power

NTFP collection and trading in the area is not an isolated activity. There are several other aspects that influence it. Starting from the exploitation of tribal earlier to presently they grappling with getting a fair price of their produce is deeply entrenched in the social process. As mentioned earlier, the area has several people who are considered as 'encroachers'. Tribal have been living in this area for ages, how come they are labelled as encroachers?

Traditionally, tribal people did not have any recorded system of land allotment. Their landuse was primarily based on community decisions. The village headman decided which area to be cultivated by whom. It was all forestland and as they have been living here traditionally, they did not find it important to bring the land to their record. Because the area was under Forest Department, the Revenue Department did not cover the area under its settlement. Hence, the landholding of tribal people was not regularised. When the Forest Conservation Act was enacted in 1980, it left people to nowhere. Later on Government ruled that those who have been there before 1980, their land would be regularised. However, because of bureaucratic hassles the situation still remains standstill.

To deal with this the BBAVM has started a *Jangal Jammeen Andolan*. This movement is spread in other areas like Udaipur and Pratapgarh also where similar issues have cropped up. The Jangal Jammeen Committee of BBAVM is fighting for the issue since last 5-6 years. The committee has raised the issue of tribal rights continuously with the Government. This issue slowly getting momentum and we hope some action by the Government after election. Up to now 1345 families have presented their claims to the District Collector.

The issue that can be raised here is that – had the tribal right to their land are recognised, their bargaining power would definitely have increased. Under such conditions they could have fetched a better return from the NTFP collection in the area. In absence of their rights, their claim do not get due recognition.

NTFP growth and availability

During the discussion with people it has come out the availability of some NTFP has decreased significantly over last 10-15 years. This is attributed primarily to the continuous drought in the area. Particularly the availability of Amla, Arhita, Shahad etc has decreased. Apart from the drought, overharvesting may be one of the reason. It is a matter of concern for the tribal and forest officials that the availability is decreasing. But on the other hand the availability of ratanjot has increased substantially. Overharvesting has thus been balanced by way of decreased collection of Aonla and increasing

production of Ratanjot. Still, there is a need to put surveillance on the changing pattern of NTFP availability. Experience says that with proper harvesting practices NTFP collection can be made more sustainable.

Locally, for some species like Mahua people themselves take care of sustainability aspect. According to one respondent in Deri, the Forest Department, which is more oriented towards timber based production had tried to control some area in Meen which had Mahua trees. Tribal people do not fell Mahua tree because of its multipurpose use and religious sanctity. Because of their protest, the Forest Department had to leave the idea of felling Mahua tree. Although for other species, such religious sanctity would not be there, studies on sustainability aspect could be conducted and the information could be shared among people.

E. Discussion

The above section describes the situation in Abu Road, a glimpse of tribal economy in the area, contribution of NTFP to the household income. It also includes a description of NTFP availability, procurement, agencies involved and how things have changed over a period of time and finally gives an overview of the social and ecological aspects of NTFP management. In this section we will try to analyse the linkages and interactions between/among the stakeholders and will analyse the complexities embedded in the overall situation.

From this description it comes out that in the last 15 years, the stake of tribal people in the NTFP management has increased. The facilitating organisation JCS has played a key role in empowering the tribal community. Starting from highlighting tribal rights the organisation has been able to integrate tribal livelihood promotion. The organisation has also promoted several SHGs which compliment its earlier mentioned interventions. Although this case study does not include much information in this regard, it can safely be accepted that the institutional aspects of tribal people has been strengthened. Their bargaining capacity has increased.

The increasing bargaining capacity of tribal has also affected the dependence of tribal on the Government agencies like Forest Department and Rajasangh. Earlier, people were dependent on tendu patta collection as a source of livelihood only as a low-paid labour. In fact, when Rajasangh was established it restricted the sale of raw NTFP to stop exploitation. But over a period of time, Rajasangh did not change its policy with respect to the changing needs of the tribal livelihoods. As their institutional strength has also changed it should have modified its policy facilitating the tribal to continue their allegiance to Rajasangh. Because the latter remained stagnant, the NTFP trade (other than tendu patta) bypasses the official channel.

Alongwith the changes in livelihoods of people, NTFP availability have also changed. It is still a proposition that comes out of this case that the profile has changed which has to be verified through a vegetation survey in the area covering many more villages. But there are evidences that lead to such proposition e.g. these days Aonla is not much

available as it was earlier, and Ratanjot has increased substantial in comparison to the last decade. One of the reasons cited for changing NTFP profile is continuous drought which may be true. But the Forest Department which should have taken a note of such changes and acted upon maintaining the ecology has not done so.

Regarding the relationship between JCS and Government agencies, it seems to be a mixed situation. JCS has so far acted as an activist organisation. It has played a key role in promoting the tribal organisations who have held several dharnas, demonstrations, rallies etc. It is also a member of the network of organisations involved in the Jangal Jameen movement. At the same time it has maintained a close relationship with the local administration also. It is difficult to say whether the organisation would have been more effective if it were operating like a service delivery agency. The Forest Department and Rajasangh would definitely prefer to deal with a pure service delivery agency but then probably the basic rights issues could not have been addressed.

VIII. Policy Recommendations

Now that migration has been increasing, and people have linkages in cities, selected NTFP could be processed in-house and could be promoted as an enterprise.

The depletion of NTFP in the last few years has to be tackled through some planned interventions. All the stakeholders including people, Forest department, Rajas Sangh and Traders should come forward and cooperated to revive NTFP production. The Forest Department should take up a vegetation study to find out the changing profile of NTFP species and develop a plan to maintain the ecology of the area.

The tribal do not have legal rights and land holding. Hence they are not able to bargain for a better pie from the traders. Even they are not able to take the benefit of Government programmes. Recognising their rights will improve the situation which will have multiplier effect on the tribal economy.

Lack of entrepreneurial skill is also one of the problems in the area. The lack of capital investment may have resulted in this situation. JCS may mobilise such support from various sources including Government, donor agencies and other sources.

There is another aspect of the case that has some future implications. As discussed earlier, the tribal areas today have a number of SHGs. This is also to add that in the last few years, the micro-finance and micro-enterprise sectors have boomed like anything. If we see the probable linkages, the tribal families can very well undertake house-level processing under the banner of the SHGs. The linkages with SHG will solve the problems of distress sale thus losing the premium prices during lean seasons.

IX. Key Learnings

The key learning from the case are as follows:

- The NTFP trade has gone through a lot of changes for the last 15 years. From a contractor based collection system, not a tribal organisation manages the NTFP procurement. The transformation from 'labourer to owner' is the major learning.
- The rights issue has affected positively the NTFP trade. More rights has definitely increased the bargaining capacity which is vital to better return in NTFP trade. Without having proper rights the institutions will also not be strengthened. And NTFP (particularly tendu patta) trade has been deliberately intervened by the tribal with support from JCS.
- With time, the NTFP profile has been changing because of several factors like – drought, demand and livelihood options. As more livelihoods options like migration has been increasing people who gained marginally have stopped collecting NTFP. Drought has led to decrease in some NTFP like Aonla.

X. Conclusions

It can be concluded that the NTFP trade in Abu Road area has been changing from a contractor-managed one to a people-managed one. However still many aspects are to be addressed to call it a community based management system. Recognition of people's rights is one of the important needs in this regard.

Over the years the most important changes is that Community Based Organisations have strengthened. The role of JCS, the facilitating NGO, is vital in doing this. The organisation has not only been able to provide a better wage regime to people in lieu of their labour, it has built a forum where people are developing a sense of ownership.

The interventions of Government, particularly the formation of Rajasangh, in the mid-1990s was to stop exploitation of tribal from traders. Now that the bargaining power of tribal has increased, it still follows the old rules which have gone obsolete. Even the Forest Department has remained indifferent to the changing ecological profile of the area and has not undertaken any new interventions to revive the ecology of the area.

Thus, the tribal people has been asserting their rights in various ways. The case of NTFP management is just a beginning of the phenomenon. This if properly facilitated may lead to an empowered society.

XI. Acknowledgements

The author is thankful to Winrock International India for supporting the case study writing. The author also thanks Jan Chetna Sansthan, Abu Road for their unconditional support in conducting the studies. Special thanks to Ms Richa Audichya, Mr. Ashok Yadav, Laxman Ji and Nilanjan Dey Biswas. Also, thanks to the villagers of Dera and Bosa who spared their valuable time and provided information during the data collection.

XII. Bibliography

ARAVALI (2005) Kahani Mazdoor se Maalik Banne Ki (Story of Transformation of Labourer to Owner), Pahal Logon Ki, issue 24, Sept. 2005, Jaipur: ARAVALI

Dave, Ankur and Rita I. Nag (2003) Feasibility of NTFP Enterprises, Report prepared for ARAVALI Jaipur as part of their organisation training during PFM Course in IIFM, Bhopal

JCS (2005) Annual Report, Jan Chetna Sansthan, 2004-05

Katiyar, Sudhir and Rajiv Khandelwal (1993) An Uncertain Liaison: NGO's Relations with Government Agencies in Promotion of Tribal Tendu Leaf Cooperative Societies in South Rajasthan, in *Negotiating Space*, Volume 2, Cases in GO-NGO Collaboration in Rajasthan, Srijan and Pradan, New Delhi

FD (2005) <http://rajforest.nic.in> accessed on 30th January 2005

XIII. Key people and institutions

Ashok Yadav, JCS, Abu Road

Richa Audichya, JCS, Abu Road

Kamalendra Singh Rathore, Samarthan Samiti, Udaipur

Rajiv Khandelwal, Sudrak, Udaipur

Sudhir Katiyar, Sudrak, Udaipur

Dr. Deep Narayan Pandey, IFS, Forest Dept. Jaipur

Dr. N. C. Jain, IFS, Forest Dept. Jaipur

Rajasangh, Udaipur

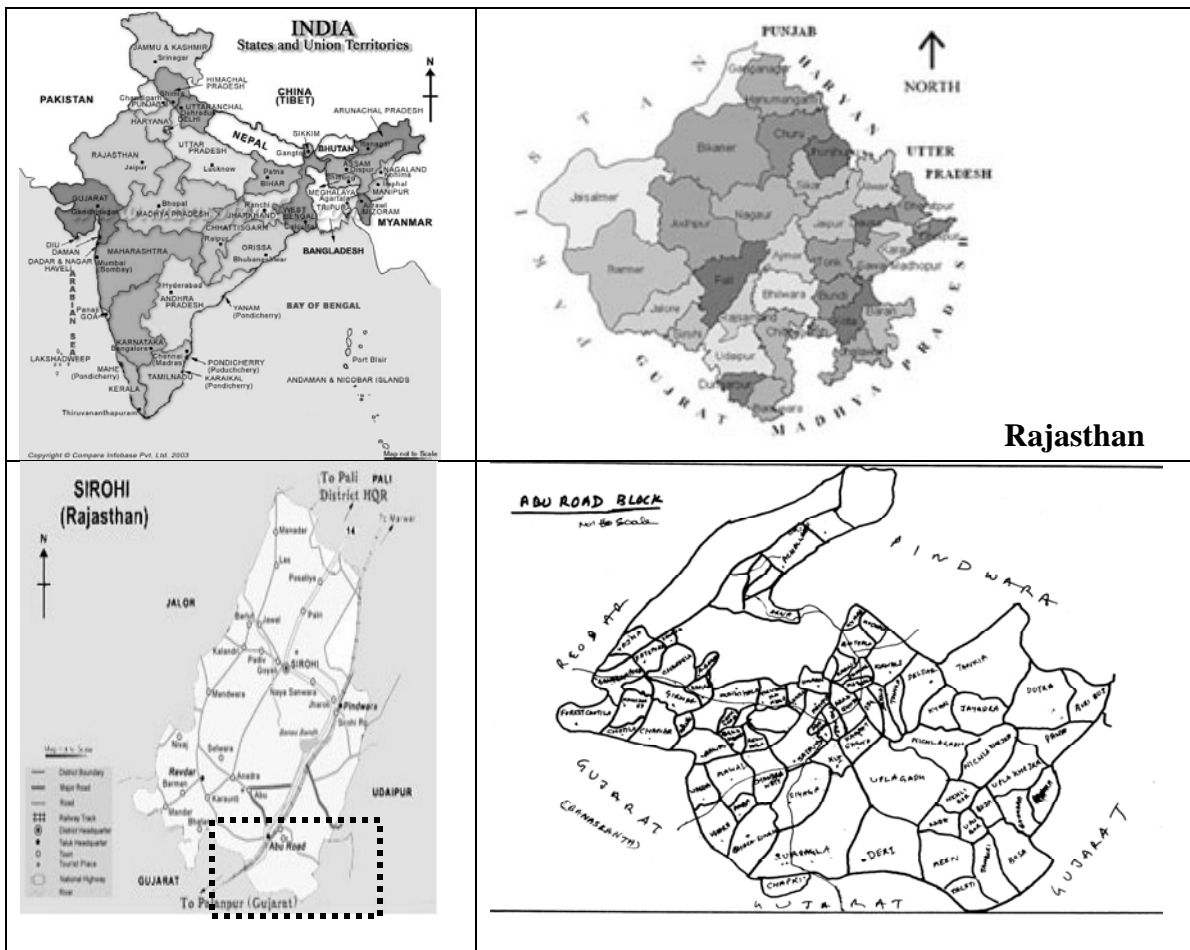
Conservator of Forests, Tendu Leaves, Forest Department, Van Bhawan, Udaipur

XIV. Publications and websites

<http://rajforest.nic.in>

XV. Map

A map that points to the state(s) in India and a detailed map (might be not to scale) of the area in question must accompany all case studies. (Optional)



XVI. Details of author

This case has been developed by Pradeep Kumar Mishra, presently a doctoral student at the Institute of Rural Management Anand. He is doing the doctoral level fellow programme in the area of 'Rural Economics and Natural Resource Management'. Before joining this course he has done M. Phil. in Natural Resource Management from the Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal. He has 11 years of work experience in Orissa, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh on various areas like watershed management and forest management. He has conducted several studies on watershed management, JFM, agriculture, animal husbandry, irrigation and micro-credit.

XVII. Brief description of association:

Earlier, in 2003, he had conducted a study on Feasibility of NTFP Management in several districts of Rajasthan when he worked in ARAVALI, Jaipur. The findings of the study provided a lead to this case study. Apart from this, the author has conducted some case studies on Joint Forest Management in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.