

***Management of Common Property Resources:  
Case Studies from Maharashtra, Assam and Uttarakhand.***

***Study On Panchayats, Elected Women Representatives and Common Property Resources***

***Sponsoring Agency: The Hunger project***

***Period: 20.12.2006 to 19.6.2007***

***1.Introduction***

***1.1 Problem of the study:***

It is evident that local decision making and control over resources allows a more effective and sustainable use of resources. Traditionally, common local management of resources have existed in most parts of India. In time, especially with the need for rapid industrialization, resource extraction has been stepped up, in most cases at an unsustainable level. This is compounded by the fact that decision making for such extraction usually take place far away -in state capitals or commercial centres. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment took a step in reversing this trend with giving increasing control over various local processes to the Panchayats. These resources form a significant role in supporting the rural poor. However, with increasing commodification and intensified multi-sectoral demand, especially for natural resources, various national policies and international commitments are further eroding the control of local communities over the natural resources. The Panchayats, to serve as effective units of local governance, need to create effective jurisdiction over resources available in their boundaries and ensure equitable distribution of resources which are in public hands.

While theoretically the Panchayats have a significant say in resources in their local areas, de facto such control is limited. The 11<sup>th</sup> Schedule clearly lays out the common resources, among other things, that the Panchayats are to have jurisdiction over. As per the Eleventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, 29 subjects should be devolved by the State Government to the Panchayats-out of these 9 are directly related to common resources(Soil Conservation; minor irrigation, water management and watershed development; Fisheries, social forestry; minor forest produce; drinking water; fuel and fodder; markets and fairs; maintenance of community assets while 5 are public resources.)

However, it must be noted that while in most states of India, Gram Panchayats has de jure powers over local commons, the situation in Uttarakhand is slightly more problematic. The state has two parallel local level institutions, the gram panchayat and the van panchayat, each with defined legitimate powers of management of common resources. The first van Panchayats were formed by the British in the 1920's, in the Kumaon region of Uttaranchal, following agitation over the expansion of British control over forest areas. They were formed as a mechanism to facilitate local control over forests. At present, Van Panchayats, manage forests spanning 5,23,289 hectares.

This report addresses the issues of the creation and management of local commons, by institutions of local governance such as gram panchayats or van panchayats. The first section focuses on these local bodies and their powers regarding management and creation of CPRs. The distinctions between the theoretical and the working definition of common property resources are clarified in this section. Methodological issues and concerns are also addressed .

The second section, includes socio-economic profiles of the panchayats studied. The information for

this section was gathered from our field work and substantiated by a close reading of the latest Census reports. However, it must be noted that there appear to be great variations between different Census publications. For methodological clarity, we have referred to the detailed district census reports, 2001 through out the study.

The third section focuses on emergent themes from each of the three states. Local issues and conflicts which impact the management and creation of CPRs have been highlighted.

### **1.2 Gram Panchayats and their Powers:**

On December 22, 1992, the government passed the Seventy-third Amendment, which gave *Panchayats*

constitutional status (previously *panchayat* matters were considered a state subject). The amendment also institutionalized a three-tiered system of *Panchayats* (except for states with a population of less than 2 million), with *Panchayats* at the village, block, and district levels. The amendment also stipulated that all *panchayat* members be elected for five-year terms in elections supervised by state election commissions.

The Panchayats, which are legally local government, have a pyramidal structure. At the base is the gram sabha—the entire body of citizens in a village. This is the general body that elects the local government and charges it with specific responsibilities. This body is expected to meet at specific times and approve major decisions taken by the elected body. Above this basic unit of democracy, is the gram panchayat or GP, which is the first level elected body, covering a population of around five thousand people. This may include more than one village. It is not uncommon to find several villages coming under one GP.

At the district level is a zilla panchayat, which is the link with the state government. In between the two is an intermediate body called, the Taluka Panchayat in Maharashtra, the Anchalik Panchayat in Assam and the Block Panchayat in Uttarakhand, which is expected to play a co-ordinating role among the GPs in its jurisdiction and the Zilla Panchayat in planning and administration. While the levels are common across the country, states have passed laws that are not necessarily similar with respect to roles functions and responsibilities.

While Gram/Van Panchayats have existed in Maharashtra and Uttaranchal for several decades, Panchayati Raj in Assam, however, is a fairly new development. The first Panchayat elections were held in December 2001 and the second are due in November 2007.

### **1.3 Van Panchayats and their powers:**

Community forests managed in accordance with Van Panchayat Act is an amalgamation of state ownership and community responsibility. In contrast to civil forests, community forests or Panchayati forests as they are popularly known are not ‘open’ forests. Access and use of forests is guided by rules elaborately designed and implemented by the communities. In fact four identifiable working rules exist relating to Use, Monitor, Sanctions and Arbitration. Though only notionally or nominally owned by the communities, community forests are in a very real sense common property with an identifiable user group, have finite subtractive benefits and are susceptible to degradation when used beyond a sustainable limit. However what is more important is that the local users consider them as their collective property and in real sense they are not actually divisible. These forests though are not completely immune from misuse and the condition of the forests varies from poor to very good. Kumaun Panchayat forest Rules enacted under the section 28 (2) of the Indian Forest Act 1927

provides broad guidelines for the supervision and management of forests under the control of Van Panchayats.<sup>1</sup>

#### **1.4 Theoretical and Working definition of CPR:**

Before proceeding with an analysis of the local level management of common properties, it is crucial that we define the term 'common property resources'. "Communities' natural resources where every member has access and usage facility with specified obligations, without anybody having exclusive rights over them." (Jodha, 1995).<sup>2</sup> 'Common property systems, however, should not be used interchangeably with the term 'open accesses.'<sup>3</sup> Open access refers to resource utilization without any controls on extraction rates, a situation in which resource overexploitation often occurs. On the other hand, "common property" is a term that ought to be reserved for group use in which outside access and user extraction rates are controlled.

However, the working definition for common property resources for this study, has been modified slightly from the theoretical one. During the course of the field work, we found it was critical to include other resources, which may or may not be income generating, such as infrastructure, access to educational and health facilities, community spaces etc. While , many of these resources may be government funded, they are often commonly managed with stipulated norms for access and maintenance. Our report, then addresses, the management and creation of "common resources", by the Gram/ Van Panchayat and other local bodies and also highlights the local issues which influence common properties.

#### **1.5 Methodology:**

The research was conducted using the purposive sampling method. Three gram panchayats in Assam and Uttarakhand and four in Maharashtra were selected for the study. The states were chosen with regard to the differences in geographical, political and resource patterns. For instance, Assam, though high in natural resources, is also a conflict affected region, which makes management of these resources difficult. Uttarakhand, is a state which not only is extremely rich in natural resources , but also, has a long tradition of local community ownership of those resources. Beed district, in Maharashtra, is a drought prone area, and also a site of caste tensions. Therefore, our research, though not representative of the patterns of common resource management is certainly indicative of them.

The three states were also selected, keeping in mind, other organisations working in the area, which facilitated our access to the region. Our partners in the study, were Jan Vikas Samajik Sanstha (JVSS) in Beed district, Maharashtra, North East Social trust (NEST) in Golaghat, Assam and Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG) in Nainital and Almora, Uttaranchal.

The research approach in all three states, was fairly similar, though the specific regional characteristics were taken into account. The study, is thus, a qualitative one, with a special focus on case studies of panchayat functionaries, especially elected women representatives, members of local bodies and patterns of CPR management. A checklist of questions was used in all three states, with certain uniform questions pertaining to management and creation of common resources across the states. Besides this, specific local issues were also addressed in the checklist. Given below, is a list of the areas studied.

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1 Mukherjee, Pampa

2 Jodha N.S (1995) in Ramanathan, Usha(2004) "Common Land and Common Property Resources"  
<http://www.ielrc.org/content/a0204.pdf>

3 Ostrom and Schlager in Land Economics, August 1992

State	District	GP	Van panchayat
Maharashtra	Beed	Pisegaon	None
		Kanadi Mali	
		Borked	
		Chorumba	
Assam	Golaghat	Merapani	None
		Numaligarh	
		Pub Brahmaputra	
Uttarakhand	Almora	Sidhpur	Sidhpur, Kumaan, Pataliya
	Nainital	Chanoti	Chanoti, Dehra, Kharki
		Kokilbana	Kokilbana

The fieldwork was substantiated through a detailed reading of secondary literature and by a comprehensive analysis of the available Census data.

### ***1.6 Aims and Objectives of the study:***

The primary objective of the study was to understand the processes and patterns of management of common properties in Maharashtra, Assam and Uttarakhand. Since the grass roots bodies which are involved in the management/ creation of CPR , are the panchayati raj institutions and the van panchayats, special focus was placed on their role. Besides this, the role of other local level bodies, traditional local bodies, community initiatives were explored, with regard to management of common resources.

It is well regarded that women, as a group, are most dependent on common resources. The study also aims at a comprehensive examination of women's ownership of CPRs.

Given that the three states, chosen for the study, have such diverse socio-political, geographical and resource patterns, it was imperative, that the local issues were highlighted in the study. Caste is a significant factor in Beed, both in terms distribution of common property resources, as well as in participation and exclusion in the management of these resources. Similarly, ethnic tensions and natural disasters, play a crucial role in ordering local management of resources, in Golaghat district of Assam. Uttarakhand, on the other hand, has a long tradition of community management of local resources. The institution of the van panchayat, for instance is of great significance in managing common properties in Uttarakhand. Therefore , it was necessary to explore the over lapping roles of both the gram panchayat and the van panchayat and the possible conflicts in their functioning.

## ***2. Profiles of the States, Districts and Gram Panchayats:***

### ***Maharashtra:***

The state of Maharashtra is spread over 301113 sq. kms.of which Beed district occupies roughly,10693 sq.kms. Beed has 6 towns and 1,365 villages within its demarcation. The total population of Beed district is17,74,180 of which 13% belong to Scheduled castes, and 1.01% belong to Scheduled Tribes. The literacy rate of the district is 67.99% against the state rate of 76.90%. The literacy rate of males at

80.70% is considerably higher than the rate of 54.52% for women<sup>4</sup>.

Of the four panchayats studied, Kanadi Mali has the highest population, with 499 households, and Borkhed the lowest, with a mere 121 households. Kanadi Mali, also has the highest percentage of Scheduled Caste population, amounting to 31.1 % of the population. Chorumba, has the lowest proportion of Scheduled Castes in the population, with only 11.6%. Interestingly, it has the highest Scheduled Tribe population, approximately 31% , while Pisegaon has the lowest, with 0.3%<sup>5</sup>.

The four panchayats studied, are single village panchayats and therefore, the term panchayat and village may be used interchangeably with specific reference to Beed, in this report. Of the four, Chorumba<sup>6</sup>, was found to be one of the economically better off villages, with a post office, several telephone connections, electricity(three phase through the day), over a 100 privately owned bore wells and roads. In the drought prone Marathwada region, this village showed glimpses rare to the region such as trees and a river. Located in the Valley, Choramba is surrounded by hills, the advantage of which is finding water at 40-50 feet below the ground level (unlike most other villages in Marathwada and Vibharba where bore wells need to be dug over 300 feet below). Through 31% of the village population consists of ST's and 11% SC's, more than 50% of the village consists of the upper castes who live in a separate part of the village and clearly have more water facilities available to them. A pipeline connecting a nearby Dam with a water tank, constructed in 2005 through a government scheme, however, passes through only the upper caste area of the village. The village has 117 household connections, catering to 33% of the village households. The others receive water from the two smaller common tanks placed around the village. The Dalit basti has only one hand pump connection, supplied from the large water tank. 64% of the population is landless, eking relying on CPRs. The village also has a reasonable stock of cattle, rendering wastelands (found in abundance- 180 acres) beneficial for fodder and grazing. Yet, owing to low productivity of these lands 50% of the village population migrates for sugarcane cutting to other parts such as Gujarat and Karnataka(80% from the Dalit basti); especially 32% of the population that lives below the poverty line in Chorumba.

Borkhed<sup>7</sup>, a mixed village economically, roughly 20% of the population consists of SC/STs. The village lacks a primary Health Center and has less than a quarter kilometer of pucca road. There are no pipe line connections for drinking water. 75% of its population is landless and 20% households migrate for sugarcane cutting. Yet, like Chorumba, strong caste divisions in the village result in small pockets of people owning between 10-20 acres of land. The village even has a gymnasium apart from a 'sabha ghar', 'samaj mandir' and several religious structures. The gymnasium, however, has not been in use since the past three years, and is instead, being used as a storage room for the village elite. Besides these, the village has 2 tanks. Another source of percolation are the 2 dams nearby.

Pisegaon<sup>8</sup>, located in the Kaij block, though one of the more backward villages, economically, was also the most progressive, socially. The caste distinctions in the village are not as sharp as in the others. 55% of the villagers comprise nomadic tribes, (? Census data does not reveal any figures for nomadic tribes. Instead , it enumerates the ST population at 0.3%) approximately 19% are SCs and only 23% consist of other castes. It is possible that the social composition of the village is responsible for genuine authority being vested in the Dalit woman sarpanch. The total *gairan*<sup>9</sup> land in the village, would

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4 Census of India: Map Profile, 2001 and Detailed District Census, 2001.

5 Ibid

6 For a statistical profile of the Panchayat, see Annexure Table 1.4

7 For a statistical profile of the Panchayat, see Annexure Table 1.5

8 For a statistical profile of the Panchayat, see Annexure Table 1.6

9 Gairan is the term used for any common waste/ vacant/grazing land in Maharashtra. The land may

amount to approximately 100 acres, all of which has been encroached. 50 acres of the *gairan* land, has been used for farming, while the rest have been constructed on. The local school, the panchayat building have all been constructed on *gairan* land. The village, also has cemented roads, an effective drainage system, two community halls, six common taps for drinking water.

The village of Kanadi mali <sup>10</sup> has a significant OBC population, mainly the Mali caste, making up 63% of the population. SC, STs form the remaining 22%. Only 0.9% of the population owns substantially large amounts of land (i.e. between 10-20 acres). The rest own between 1-5 acres and some between 5-10. The village has approximately 190 acres of *gairan* land which has been entirely encroached. Kanadi Mali, has one temple in the village, two *sabhas ghars* and one *samaj mandir*, a newly created pond, one primary school and one high school. The village has been the site of significant caste tensions over the years. One major issue of contention is the common land allocated for graveyards. The Dalits of the village, do not have access to this space, and this has given rise to considerable conflict in the panchayat.

All four villages, witness a seasonal migration of workers to sugar cane plantations in Western Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. On an average, between 30- 50% of the local villagers, migrate during the months of October to March.

*Assam:*

Golaghat district is situated in Upper Assam, along the banks of the Brahmaputra and shares a border with Nagaland. It covers an area of 3502 sq. kms., with a population density of about 270 per sq. km. The total population of the district is 946,000, out of which roughly 91% reside in rural areas.<sup>11</sup> The total Scheduled Caste population of the district is 26277, which amounts to about 5.4% of the total population. The total Scheduled Tribes population is 93920, roughly 10% of the total. Golaghat has a majority Hindu population amounting to 85.94%. Muslims and Christians account for 7.91% and 5.52% respectively.

The district has been the site of conflict over the years. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) has had a strong presence in the area, and as a consequence, so has the Indian army. However, insurgent activities have been on the decline over the past years, and the conflict situation has stabilised somewhat. The National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) also exercises considerable influence in the border area. Parts of Assam, including the regions along the border in Golaghat, such as Merapani GP, falls within the NSCN vision of a greater Nagalim, which would encompass all areas of the North East in which Nagas reside.

Merapani Panchayat is located in the Gomariguri block of Golaghat district of Assam<sup>12</sup>. Merapani Panchayat is located at the foot of the Naga Hills. The Panchayat straddles the border between Assam and Nagaland, and therefore negotiates an uncertain peace with the neighbouring state. Merapani was surrounded by dense forests which have been encroached and made habitable by the residents of the GP. The earliest settlers to the area came around 1972 and since then the forest cover has steadily been eroded, by constant construction. However, it must be noted, that since the Panchayat falls in a border

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have been used for community cultivation, as in the areas, where social forestry is prevalent. There has been an ongoing struggle through which Dalits have privatised or are in the process of privatising *Gairan* land. It is widely felt by the Dalits of Maharashtra, that privatising this land would ensure the most equitable distribution of Common Properties.

10 For a statistical profile of the Panchayat, see Annexure Table 1.7

11 Data from Census Report 2001

12 For a statistical profile of the Panchayat, see Annexure Table 1.1

area, construction within about 7 kms of the border is not legally allowed.

However, despite such restrictions, there has been some investment in infrastructure in the area. There are a total of 16 roads in the GP, out of which 6 are laid with gravel, 2 pucca and 8 kacha roads. The panchayat has two rivers flowing through it, and a pucca drain, which provide adequate drainage to the area. Three of the wards of the GP have electricity connections; while 7 wards are still unconnected. However, providing electricity connections to the wards continue to be a problem, since installing transforms is not allowed.

The Panchayat has 1 post office and telephone facilities in 4 wards. Besides this, it also has 700 shops and 23 ration shops. Merapani has a large number of educational institutions, a total of 30 schools and 1 college. The average literacy rate is 95%, much higher than the district rate of 69.3%.

Pub Brahmaputra<sup>13</sup> gaon Panchayat is located in Kakodonga block of Golaghat district in Assam. The Panchayat is situated along the banks of the Brahmaputra River, and is chronically flood affected. The largest proportion of the population are Scheduled Tribes, comprising almost 45% of the total. The major tribe in the area is the Mising tribe. Since the region is regularly ravaged by floods, many local initiatives and traditional knowledge is oriented towards the management of floods. The most common example is the traditional Mising houses are built on stilts to battle the yearly deluge. About 25% of the population belongs to Scheduled Castes. Almost 33% of the total number of households are landless.

There has been limited investment in infrastructure in the area. There are only 3 pucca roads, measuring 1.5 kms, about 18 sand gravel roads, no phone facilities nor any drainage facilities. There are, however, electricity connections in all but 2 wards of the Panchayat. The Panchayat has three community halls, one Namghar<sup>14</sup> and a mosque. There are 101 shops and 27 ration shops in the GP. A steel bridge, which has made the area far more accessible, has been recently constructed by the Panchayat. Since 2002, the Panchayat has received 98 lakhs as funds from the government.

The Panchayat has a total of 29 educational institutions, out of which 10 are Anganwadis. The literacy rate is 90%, significantly higher than the district average of 69.3%.

Numaligarh Gram Panchayat<sup>15</sup> is located in Bokakhat block of Golaghat district. This Panchayat has a high number of Scheduled Tribes; they constitute approximately 43% of the total number of households. 40% of the households in the Panchayat lie below the Poverty Line.

Since, 6 wards of the Panchayat are within the Numaligarh tea estate area, a large part of the population are 'tea tribes'. This composite 'tea tribe' category includes Oraons, Karmakars, Napits etc.

Considering that large parts of the GP fall within areas of private control, infrastructural development has been lopsided. The tea garden authorities do not allow construction of Indira Awaaj Yojna houses or roads etc within the premises of the plantation. The plantation management invests to some extent in infrastructure in the garden, but the expenditure for infrastructure for workers, (such as drinking water, houses, toilets etc) especially temporary casual worker, is limited. Though, this has resulted in resentment against the tea garden management, it must be noted that infrastructural facilities in the other 4 wards, where such constraints on construction do not exist, have hardly been better. There are no pucca roads in the entire Panchayat, there is one gravel road and the high way runs through parts of the Panchayat.

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13 For a statistical profile of the Panchayat, see Annexure Table 1.2

14 Namghar is Hindu prayer hall, most common in upper Assam.

15 For a statistical profile of the Panchayat, see Annexure Table 1.3

There is one phone within the tea plantation and none outside. While the Dhansiri River facilitates drainage in the area, only one proper drain has been constructed. There are, however, electricity connections in all the wards, except two.

#### *Uttaranchal:*

Given that there are two local level bodies, co existing in Uttaranchal, it is important that we take into account the resources of the van panchayat, while profiling the gram panchayats studied. The three gram panchayats studied are Kokilbana, Chanoti and Sidhpur. The Kokilbana gram panchayat and van panchayat are co-terminous, while Chanoti and Sidhpur are group gram panchayats, as a result of which, there are multiple van panchayats, which are organised at the village level, within one gram panchayat.<sup>16</sup> Uttaranchal has about 65% of its geographical area under forests. In the two districts, that we had selected for study, Nainital and Almora, VPs manage a total of 97922 hectares<sup>17</sup>.

The Kokilbana GP is located in Dhari block of Nainital district. Demarcation of Panchayats in Uttarakhand are effected along the criteria of population. In the hilly regions, an area can be classified as a Gram Panchayat on the basis of a population of 150 persons or more. The Kokilbana GP consists only of Kokilbana village, which has a population of about 300 people; approximately 38 households, out of which approximately 57.8% are below the poverty line.

The village has an exclusively Brahman population and therefore is not eligible for caste wise reservations. However, membership to the Gram panchayat is equally divided among men and women, with three male and three female members, including the Panchayat President or the Gram Pradhan. The current Panchayat term is till April 2008. In the past five years, the Panchayat has received Rs. 2 lakhs a funds, which have been utilised in setting up an electricity transformer for the village, constructing 3 cemented roads, building boundary walls for the local primary school and in beautifying the village temple. Prior to this, a water tank and a compost pit was set up in the village, through a world bank funded project, the Swajal scheme.

Since the water source is managed by the van panchayat and the water tank and pipeline in the control of the gram panchayat, it is evident that a certain level of co-operation is necessary to keep the water supply functioning smoothly. Despite the fact, that there are no legal spaces of collaboration between the two, locals in this village, have managed to re-appropriate local governance, to the extent possible. The Van Panchayat area of the village is 88 hectares, out of which the 3 acres have been kept aside for Chirag's intervention in the form of a grass nursery.

The Dehra/ Chanoti Gram Panchayat is located in the Bhimtal block of Nainital district. The panchayat is situated around a major tourist center, Naukuchiyatal. One of the major issues that emerged during the study was the impact of tourism on the GP and the subsequent strain on local resources. This panchayat comprises of three villages, Dehra, Chanoti and Kharki, of which Chanoti is the largest. The three villages, have a caste wise population distribution pattern, with Brahmans concentrated in Chanoti, Rajputs in Dehra and Scheduled castes and tribes in Kharki. The total population of the Panchayat is approximately 150 households, amounting to 750 persons.

Out of the three hamlets, Chanoti is the closest to the lake and therefore, also, the one most affected by the impact of tourism in the area. It is interesting to note that Naukuchiyatal is shared by three Gram

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16 Chanoti GP contains the villages of Chanoti, Kharki, both of which have independent van panchayats. Sidhpur GP comprises villages of Sidhpur, Kumaan and Pataliya, all of which also have separate van panchayats.

17 Data from Census, 2001

Panchayats, Chanoti, Siloti and Thapaliya.

As in the rest of Uttaranachal, the van Panchayats are organised at the village level, and therefore, each of three villages of the Chanoti Gram Panchayat have a van panchayat. The term of office of both the gram panchayat and the van panchayat is five years and is due to end in 2008. In the past five years, the Gram panchayat has been involved in the construction of a Panchayat building, boundary walls for two schools, toilets in both the schools. A three km. Long drinking water pipeline, a 50 mt. Canal and 500 mt. Of drains has been constructed as well five cement connecting roads and one kuccha road. The panchayat has also invested in chairs and tables for one of the schools. Beautification and repair of the local temple was also undertaken during this period. Four irrigation tanks were constructed and the drinking water pipeline was repaired, under the guidance of the panchayat.

The Chanoti Van Panchayat is spread over an area of about 300 hectares. There are 6 water sources within the VP area, the use of which is free. The main sources of income from the Van Panchayat, therefore, are limited to the royalty charged per household for collecting fire wood, cutting grass etc. Besides the Van Panchayat, Chanoti also has a village level Van Surakhsha Samiti, formed under the aegis of Chirag. Initially, the VSS were formed in the absence of a functional VP. However, at present, some of the VSS function independently of the Vp, while some have been subsumed under it.

Sidhpur gram panchayat consists of the three villages of Sidhpur, Kumaan and Pataliya. It is located on the banks of the River Kosi, in Holbagh block in Almora district. All three villages are extremely remote and there has been barely any infrastructural development. The total population of the entire gram panchayat is estimated at 483 persons, 83 households, out of which 52 are below the poverty line<sup>18</sup>. There are no concrete roads connecting the villages to the main road, nor is there a bridge to enable the villagers to cross the river Kosi. None of the three villages have electricity connections, and share only one primary school, which also doubles as a meeting place. One functional Anganwadi exists in Sidhpur; however, it operates out of the Panchayat building. There are absolutely no health facilities, in the panchayat, apart from the ANM and the Asha worker, who have only recently begun visiting the villages. Child birth mostly takes place at home, unless there are complications, in which case, the patient has to be carried on a stretcher down the hilly dirt track and across the river.

The Sidhpur gram panchayat is composed of 6 members including the Pradhan, out of which 2 are women. The process of holding regular meetings and gram sabhas becomes extremely difficult in regions like this. Therefore, meetings are called only when government schemes have to be announced or allotted. On the other hand, since van panchayats are situated at the village level, the practices of participation are easier. For instance, meetings are called when the forests are opened for public access. Of the three van panchayats, Sidhpur is the largest with 150 hectares, Pataliya, the second largest, with 20.30 hectares and Kumaan, the smallest with only 4.42 hectares. In each villages, however, there are multiple levels of engagement, with both the gram panchayat and the van panchayat.

### **3. Management of Common Property Resources:**

#### *3.1 Maharashtra:*

The area under study, has been a historically drought prone area and therefore, common natural resources are scarce. However, it is crucial to recognize that the management of the relatively few CPRs that are present in the area, are fraught with tensions of caste dominance which will be explored

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18 CHIRAG household survey, 2005

later in the report. Since natural resources are rare, it is imperative that we extend the definition of CPRs to other locally managed institutions and other community initiatives.

The politics of common property in this region is quite contrary to the movements in other parts of the country. While there is some local management of certain kinds of common property, there is also a powerful popular movement that seeks to regularize/ privatize *gairan* land. The role of CPRs must, therefore also be analysed in the context of several wastelands, which were common properties being encroached upon, and eventually privatized. In Marathwada, *gairan* land covers '2,31,300 ha which is, 3.6% of the total geographic area of 64,813 sq. km. On an average, each village has 230 ha of *gairan* land'(NCAS; 2005)<sup>19</sup>. NCAS(2005)<sup>20</sup> figures state that over 2 lakh Dalit landless families depend on 1,00,000 ha wastelands in the Marathwada region alone for their survival. This movement of taking possession of common waste lands was started in the 1960's by several Dalit landless farmers distraught with policies that never reached or benefited them. Most still do not have legal entitlements over these lands, but the struggle continues.

Of the four Panchayats, Pisegaon, has made significant progress in collective creation and management of resources. Two factors may have influenced this; one, the caste composition of the village, may have invested greater control in the hands of the Dalit woman Sarpanch and second, the active presence of the local grass roots organisation, JVSS, has possibly, been able to mobilise the local Dalit community and consequently empower them.

One of the main achievements of the Pisegaon gram panchayat, is the construction of the bore well in the local school compound. Levels of local co-operation and initiative is evident in the fact that the construction was done entirely through local contributions. The bore well, also follows the typification of a common property resource. it's creation was effected, following a local need, and it's use is restricted to students of the school, thereby, limiting open access to it.

This gram panchayat, also has a steady source of income from two common Tamarind trees, which are leased for Rs. 2000 a year. This source of income has also inspired local self Help Groups to buy 4 Tamarind trees, as a source of income.

The activities in the gram panchayat, involve all residents of the village, irrespective of caste. For instance, a pond was built recently, for irrigating *gairan* land. Also, an interesting feature of the village, is the level of development of the *gairan* land of the village. The local school, the panchayat building, have all been constructed on *gairan* land. An effective drainage system also exists in the *gairan* area.

The panchayat has a very effective gram siksha samiti, of which the Sarpanch is a part, which supervises the work of the school authorities. It must be noted that the Gram Shiksha Samiti does not receive any funds from the government and therefore, it is sustained entirely through local initiatives and pressures. Since most villagers work as migratory sugar cane cutters, the gram panchayat, with assistance from the government, has formed a 'hostel' in which the children of such migrants are given two meals a day. Though, it is colloquially known as the 'hostel', these are not spaces of residence, just a place to eat two meals.

In the other panchayats studied, we did not encounter such active participation and involvement of the whole village. Caste remains a divisive factor, in most villages; with Dalits being spatially and socially

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19Advocacy update on land rights, NCAS

Issue 18: Oct-dec 2005 <http://www.ncasindia.org/Public/AdvocacyUpdate/update18.pdf>

20 Ibid.

segregated from the rest. Subsequently, even in common properties managed or created by the panchayats, Dalits are divested of all means of control and participation. The question of caste and dominance especially with regard to common properties, has been addressed later in the report.

The Kanadi Mali Gram panchayat, also has a practice of generating income from the local common resources. Two rooms of the local high school building have been let out to the Zilla parishad for a rent of Rs. 8000 a year. One large tamarind tree also fetches an income of Rs. 200 per year. Besides this, drainage and house tax are collected through the gram panchayat. This panchayat also has a gram shiksha samiti, including the panchayat president and the school head master. A kitchen has been constructed in the primary school, which is run, mainly by the Sarpanch. Curiously, even in Kanadi Mali, like in Chorumba, an arrangement was made, by which the sarpanch's post was shared between two people, a Dalit man and the current Sarpanch, a Dalit woman.

It is interesting to note the presence of a somewhat active 'civil society' in the village. Ved Prakash Raut, who was the Sarpanch, for 15 years and also holds the social title of the 'mukhiya', was instrumental in expanding the local primary school to a high school. Students of Vasant Colege in Kaij, also chose this village to perform 'shramdaan' and construct a pond, about a year ago. Presently, this pond is largely used to supply water to cattle.

Despite the fact that the entire village, comprises backward castes, significant caste tensions prevail. Other panchayats, such as Chorumba, have devised alternative strategies for generating income from CPRs. One such way, has been to create a common resource of vessels, that are rented out on functions. However, since the only open space available for holding functions/ weddings etc is adjacent to the temple, into which Dalits are not allowed, it is possible, that the renting of these vessels may also be caste oriented.

Certain activities, for instance, running a 'hostel' for migrant workers' children, are being conducted collectively by the villagers and the GP. A major 'common property' created during the last few years, is the Hanuman temple in the village. Money was raised from every household for its construction and Rs. 25 per year, is still levied on every household for its maintenance. However, though Dalit families, also contributed, they are not allowed into the inner sanctum of the temple. Therefore, what could potentially be a CPR, either as a meeting place or a space for social cohesion was eroded because of casteism.

Similar tensions prevail in Borkhed. While funds were collected from everyone to build the local temple, only upper castes are allowed entry. Besides this, casteism is evident in the fact that access to the local well is limited. Borkhed also has 40 Muslim families, who are spatially segregated from the rest of village. Tensions exist regarding the proximity of the Hindu funeral ground close to the Masjid. Through the interviews and the meetings held with villagers and Panchayat functionaries, it was quite evident, that the deputy sarpanch, who was previously sarpanch for three terms, asserts significant control over panchayat politics.

The Borked gram panchayat, has not only been not successful in creating Common Properties, but has proved to be extremely lax in consolidating the existing ones. The anganwadi building in the village, lies in ruins. Chairs and tables, meant for the children's use, have been stolen by the villagers. To understand the politics of management of CPRs, we must analyse the caste issue in tandem.

### **3.2 Assam:**

Our research reveals that there are a significant number of common property resources in the Merapani

Panchayat. There are two community ponds, one grazing field, 12 bighas of waste land, one super market, one daily market, one weekly market<sup>21</sup>, one cattle market, one community hall, 35 Namghars<sup>22</sup> and 4 mosques and one church, 3 bighas of land belonging to the panchayat and a panchayat building. Besides this, there are a number of tube wells.

Since 2001, the panchayat has repaired 26 Namghars and 4 mosques and constructed one church. However, it must be noted that Panchayats are not legally allowed to use its funds for any religious purpose, which includes repairing or constructing religious buildings.

The President of the GP, Mr. Baputa Das, informs us, that before 2001, when the Panchayati Raj System was not instituted in Assam, the common properties were managed by the Forest Department. Here, he makes a distinction between the existing common properties and those recently built by the panchayat. The forest department, apparently, continues to exercise considerable control over the pre-existing CPRs. The tax imposed on the weekly markets is marked as income for the Forest department. The income from the daily market goes to the Anchalik panchayat, and the tax from the cattle market and the barren land {waste land?} is shared equally by the Anchalik panchayat and the Gaon panchayat. There is no income generated from the common ponds, the Namghars etc.<sup>23</sup>

Often in discussions regarding Common property resources, one tends to focus primarily on material resources, such as ponds, tube wells etc, and overlook the non- material ones. In Merapani, the question of a non- material common resource becomes particularly crucial. Since it is located in an area of intense conflict, the residents of both sides of the border have constituted 'Peace Committees'. These committees were formed in 2002, to address issues of insurgency and border conflicts. The committee has 11 members each, and meets to resolve various issues of conflict that arise.

*Chandra Babu Singh, the Secretary of the Merapani Peace Committee, said "The Nagaland government places a lot of importance on the Peace Committee. In Assam, however, this sort of government support is dwindling, and that's why, we haven't been able to work as we used to."*

It appears that while Panchayats are supportive of the peace committee, (some GP members are also members of the Peace Committee), the Assam government is not quite so. It is, therefore, crucial to interrogate the very idea of common property resources to include initiatives of collective action.

The Pub Brahmaputra Panchayat also has a considerable number of common property resources. There are 9 ponds, 8 fisheries (including some of the ponds that have been converted to fisheries), 3 large ponds, one Namghar, one mosque, one church one community hall, one market, one Ghat, one bridge, one well and 7 bighas of land. According to Minu prabha pasung, the President of the GP, some of the fisheries have been 'encroached' by the villagers, by which it is implied that the fisheries are being used for private consumption.

The other ward members also reveal that no tax is collected from the common ponds. The common well is lying in disuse, and there is no income from the common Ghat on the Brahmaputra. This Ghat connects the north and the south banks of the Brahmaputra and would have been crucial in connecting the two banks had it been in use.

Mr. Lok Nath Das, the secretary of the GP, observes that sand/ soil is being ferried from the Panchayat, but no tax is imposed on it. The panchayat, he argues, has no dearth of common properties.

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21 This market is held on Tuesdays every week.

22 Prayer Hall

23 Interview with the Secretary of the GP, Mr. Sonit Bora

However, it is the management which is ineffective. Flood management, could be a crucial area in which local initiatives and knowledge would be critical.

Some common resources have been created by the GP in the past five years, such as the steel bridge, the community hall etc. There has also been a history of local initiatives, especially with regard to floods. Minu Pasung, the President, informs us that relief committees, comprising ward members of all flood affected areas, are formed during times of crisis. The Panchayat has areas of raised land, which serve as a shelter during floods. Flood affected people often gather here, while the relief committee distributes relief material. Though there is government support during floods, especially in terms of relief material, but local agency is very important during emergencies. Pradip Pasung, cultural secretary of a local youth club, '*Lachit yuva sangha*', says, "*Whenever there is a fear that the embankments protecting the Panchayat may collapse, we guard the embankments.*"

Identifying common properties in Numaligarh panchayat is problematic since large tracts of the GP fall within the Numaligarh Tea Estate. Therefore most of the grazing land, waste land etc is owned by the tea Company. Nevertheless, an effort was made to enumerate the common properties in the area. There are three ponds, out of which two lie within the boundaries of the plantation. These two ponds are now being used by the manager as his private property. All income generated from these ponds (i.e. from fishing etc) is denied to the GP. The other pond is not in use. There are also four large ponds in the Panchayat. Though they are leased, the income generated goes to the Anchalik panchayat. Besides this, there are two mandirs, 10 namghars and one church.

There are about 7-8 bighas of wastelands along the highway. Though it is within the boundaries of the GP, it is under the control of the tea garden authorities.

Some tension is evident in this Panchayat, especially over the allocation of government schemes. It is alleged that the tea garden wards are neglected and the ward members not consulted in the decision making process. "*The Secretary handles all the schemes himself and there is no possibility of dialougue. The Panchayat President and the Secretary are together and pay no heed to the other ward members,*" says Chandrama rabi Das, a ward member. Such a situation is particularly adverse for the casual tea garden workers. They are excluded from benefits from both the tea garden authorities and the panchayat. The benefits they have received over the years are limited to a few *thelas* and 2 senior citizen pensions.

Assam has had a history of various forms of traditional local authority. One such is the authority vested in the local Namghars. Literally meaning 'prayer halls', these Namghars are sites of Vaishnavite Hinduism. Despite the legitimacy of the authority of the Namghar being derived from religious sources, the Namghar, an institution peculiar to Upper Assam, also forms a locus of various cultural and secular activities. In times of crisis or conflicts, the namghar becomes a secular, common space. Since Upper Assam, has always had a communally mixed population, there are no practices of exclusion by either the Hindu or the Muslim community. Therefore, while resources of such religious institutions, (for example, ponds, tube wells etc) are open to the entire panchayat, they are managed solely by the 'managing committees of the institutions and not by the GP. Therefore, in all the Panchayats the income generated from the 'common' ponds in the Namghars and mosques goes the respective Namghar or Mosque management committees.

Another such position of traditional local governance is that of the 'gaon bura' or the 'village elder'. Presently, however, it has become a semi- government position. One the one hand it is hereditary<sup>24</sup>, and

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24 Hereditary possibly through the law of primogeniture

on the other, its legitimacy has to be sanctioned by the government. While, earlier, the Gaon bura could exercise considerable authority, in terms of management of resources and resolution of conflicts, this authority has disintegrated significantly over the years.

One of the 'gaon buras' of Pub Brahmaputra Panchayat, for instance, was responsible for the management of the CPRs. He used to breed fish in the common ponds and distribute the catch among the people. Now, however, these ponds have largely been encroached by villagers for private use and they are being eventually filled for constructions.

In Numaligarh, the forms of local level authority merge within the tea garden. The Mazdoor Sangh (Trade Union) is possibly the most significant local body in the plantation. Not only is the union the most active political organisation in the tea garden, it is also the body in which all powers of legitimate resistance are vested. The position of the 'gaon bura' is incidentally, filled by the secretary of the Trade Union. The interviews with him revealed that he continues to be the arbiter of local conflicts. Besides this, he also plays a crucial role in times of crises, such as floods.

The tea garden management is not only an important local authority in this area, but also one, which controls some common properties within the Panchayat. For instance, two of the common ponds are now within the private control of the garden manager. Besides this, are other CPRs such as grazing land, which is managed by the garden authorities.

There are some points of intersection between the different local authority structures and the panchayat. Some interactions, such as that of the Panchayat and the plantation authorities, may be marked by tension.

The namghars, mosques and churches etc have their own domain of authority. There exists a social demarcation of such powers. In some cases, such as in resolving conflicts in Numaligarh, the Panchayat does not play any role at all. The social authority to resolve conflicts rests with the trade union and by default to the gaon bura.

The gaon bura, in other areas, assists the Panchayats in day to day affairs. Their most significant contribution is, however, in times of conflict, when he is called on as arbiter or in times of crises.

### 3.3 Uttaranahal:

The distinction of powers over local commons in Uttaranahal, is highly problematic, given that two legal, legitimate bodies exist, at the village/ local level. The roles of the Gram panchayat and the Van Panchayats have not yet been clearly differentiated. The situation of governance and management is made even more complex by the fact that the Uttaranahal state does not yet have its own panchayati raj act. The Van Panchayat Act, on the other hand, has continuously been modified and is rather contentious. However, it is important to note that there are many spaces of co-operation between the van panchayat and the gram panchayat, sharing and managing water resources being one of the most significant.

In the four van panchayats that we studied, Kokilbana, Chanoti, Sidhpur and Kumaan, the role of the VP is limited to protecting the forest area; the mechanism of generating income from the forests, however, is quite weak. This creates a problem, especially, since the Van Panchayat, does not receive large government funds.

In Kokilbana, where the van panchayat spreads across, 117 hectares of forest and grazing land, the income is restricted to the 'royalty' earned from villagers. This 'royalty' includes, the fees charged for

felling trees<sup>25</sup>, the charges levied for bi-yearly access to the forests for cutting grass, collection of fodder, leaf litter etc. Another source of income of the VP is also the sale of pine litter. Kokilbana falls within the fruit belt of Uttaranachal, and therefore, pine litter which is used for packing fruits is always in demand. The average rate of one 'jal' (approximately 40 kgs) is about Rs.20-25.

The role of local initiatives and cooperation is clearly evident in the functioning of the van panchayat. During the bi-yearly opening of the forests, a chowkidar is employed to ensure that the local norms and rules are adhered to. Each household pays Rs. 10-15 as contribution towards his salary. Besides this, every summer, all women from the village, collectively clear the forests of dry pine litter, which poses a great fire hazard.

Chirag, a grass roots organisation, has also been greatly influential in mobilizing local villagers and creating spaces for cooperation and collective action. The van panchayat, this year, has given 3 hectares to Chirag to cultivate grass. The grass plants after being nurtured in the village, will be planted collectively, during the monsoons. When the grass is ready for cutting, 'passes' will be issued by the van panchayat to families who were involved in the planting. The 'passes' are valid for one member of each family to collect 20-25 kgs of grass. This is simple yet effective way of ensuring equitable distribution of resources. Since, the van panchayat, largely, bases its authority on normative rules, it implied, that the rules originate in the community itself. And therefore, the community, with the van panchayat body as its representative, is authorised to impose fines/ sanctions on those who break those rules.

The Kokilbana Gram Panchayat, also manages and creates certain types of common property resources. The drinking water connection, which draws from a local water source in the van panchayat, collects in a water tank in the village. A jal prabandhan samiti has been formed, of which the pradhan is a part, which collects Rs.10 per month for the maintenance and upkeep of the water tank and pipeline. Besides this, the GP also has a seven member Gram Siksha Samiti, which supervises the functioning of the local school. The gram panchayat has also been constructive in creating common properties. For instance, the Panchayat has constructed boundary walls around the local primary school as well the temple, consolidating their local resources as it were.

It is worthy of note, that the caste dimension was entirely missing in Kokilbana. Since the village is exclusively Hindu Brahman, the issues of exclusion that we encountered in Maharashtra were entirely missing.

In the Dehra/ Chanoti panchayat area, there are three van Panchayats at the village level. Therefore, there is a van panchayat each for Chanoti, dehra and Kharki. Of these, our research covered the Chanoti VP as well as the larger functioning of the Dehra Gram panchayat. As in many areas in the Naukuchiyatal area, the local grassroots organization, Chirag, has helped in forming van suruksha samitis<sup>26</sup>, which currently manage smaller chunks of the forest area. The dynamics of the relationship between the VSS and the VP will be explored later in the report.

The Chanoti Van panchayat spans over an area of 300 hectares, including 8 acres of grass plots. The

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25 Only pine trees are allowed to be felled. As per the government's rules, each family is allowed to fell one tree a year.

26 Van Suruksha Samitis, henceforth referred to as VSS, are formed under the guidance of Chirag. They are usually formed in the absence of functional Van Panchayats, as a mechanism for increasing the people's stakes in forest management and protection.

plots are opened once a year, with unlimited yet exclusive access for the villagers. There is, however, a charge for cutting grass; Rs. 20 for every 30 kgs mowed. Besides this, the VP also receives other income from the forest. For instance, dead trees are given to villagers for use for a charge that varies according to the type of tree. For collecting firewood, leaf litter etc, the VP charges Rs. 20-25 a month per family. On the other hand, no 'royalty' is levied for the use of the six water bodies in the VP area, in accordance to the local custom that it is inauspicious to 'sell' water. As in the other van panchayats, the primary means of maintaining order, is through locally accepted norms. The van panchayat has local legitimacy to fine or sanction those who violate rules. For instance, a fine of upto Rs. 100 can be imposed on those who fell trees without permission.

The Chanoti Van Panchayat, has been active not only in managing and protecting forest resources, but has also managed to mobilize local support in a cleanliness drive. Given its proximity to Naukuchiatal, a large number of residents, earn their livelihood from tourism in the lake area. Therefore, the formation of the Chanoti Pariawaran Vikas Samiti, becomes even more critical in instilling a sense of ownership in the lake area. The samiti has a nine member working committee, including a President and secretary. The samiti raises money through local contributions of Rs. 30 from every shop per month. Money is also raised from the boat operators, who pay the amount they charge for one round of the lake. Besides this, the samiti also earns Rs. 2 per day, from *kabari walas*, hawkers, *ghodawalas* etc. This collection is utilised in paying the salaries of the sweepers employed by the samiti, as well as to place dustbins etc. around the lake.

The dehra gram panchayat has also played a crucial role in mobilizing local villagers into collectives, either as self help groups or the Kisan Club, which assists farmers, with linkages with the agriculture department and with financial institutions.

The Sidhpur Gram Panchayat comprises the three villages of Sidhpur, Kumaan and Pataliya. While the three villages are contained within the larger territorial boundaries of Sidhpur GP, there are, however, separate and independent van panchayats for each of the villages. Since the three villages are located in the remote reaches of the hills, there hasn't been much infrastructural development. The primary school was established in 1958, and was built through local contributions, both in the form of monetary help or as 'shramdaan'. The secondary school is at a distance of 4-5 kms. from the panchayat. Out of the three van panchayats, Sidhpur is the largest, with 150 acres of forest land. However, since the Pataliya van panchayat is at a higher altitude, the water connection in Sidhpur village originate in the water sources of Pataliya van panchayat. A drinking water pipeline was connected to the water sources in Pataliya van panchayat, in 1957-58, under a block level scheme. The labour for constructing the pipeline was contributed by the villagers, while the financial support was provided by the block administration. This pipeline empties into two tanks in Sidhpur village, from which there are household connections and neighbourhood connections. The water tanks and the pipelines are maintained collectively by the entire village, with each family contributing rs. 10 per month. Out of this monthly income, Rs. 5 is kept aside as savings and Rs. 5 goes toward the salary of the maintenance person. Along with the drinking water programme in Sidhpur, the van panchayat, gram panchayat and the villagers are also collectively involved in a catchment area protection project, initiated by Chirag. In the past few years, 30-40 check dams, one 800 mt. contour trench and 3 pits have been constructed in a 4 hectare plot in Sidhpur van panchayat<sup>3</sup>. Cooperation within the village is also evident in the practice of fodder cultivation. Every year, a plot of land is made available for communal fodder plantation. While the scheme is facilitated by Chirag, there is clearly, a strong local initiative. A consensus is reached in a meeting of the entire village of responsibilities of nurturing and planting. Once the

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plantation is over and the grass is grown, the plot is made accessible for about 10-15 days at a stretch. One person from each family is allowed access on payment of a fee, which varies according to the demand for fodder in the village. On an average, the fee varies from Rs. 25 to 50 per person. If the demand in Sidhpur has been satiated, then the plots are leased out to outsiders, for an average of RS. 500- 1200 depending on the produce. Here, we must recognize the exclusive access reserved for villagers of Sidhpur. (write more about CPR and exclusive access in Kokilbana also) The income from the last four years of fodder cultivation has amounted to RS. 21,000, which has been saved in the Sidhpur van panchayat's bank account. It is planned, however, that this income will be utilized for a common purpose, such as beautifying the village temple or forming a common pool of cash, which can be lent out for emergencies.

Like in the other van panchayats, the Sidhpur VP also has the authority to impose fines or sanctions on those who violate the rules of the forest. Rs. 25 is the fine charged for unauthorized cutting of grass, property seized are auctioned off and any cattle found grazing are impounded and handed over to the government post in the area.

The Kumaan van panchayat was formed only three years ago and has only about 4.8 hectares of land under its control. Given the limited area of the VP, a full time chowkidar is not required. Instead, each family takes turns in guarding the forests. The main source of income of the van panchayat is the Rs. 4000 received as 'royalty' from the government from the collection of pine resin. ( As per the Van panchayat act 2005, the income from the collection of pine resin is split between the gram sabha, the zilla parishad, the forest department and the van panchayat, with the van panchayat receiving a mere 30- 40% of the earnings. This has given rise to a feeling of resentment between the van panchayats and the government. And the tenuous sense of ownership invested in the people, with regards to the forests is slowly being eroded.) Besides this, the van panchayat also earns from selling dead trees at a nominal rate, ranging from Rs. 100-150 per tree. One tree, though, is allotted per family, for free use in a year. Stone, rocks, etc can also be excavated from VP land, as long as it is not for profit.

Besides the van panchayat, Kumaan, also has a 23 member Van Vikas Samiti, comprising entirely of women. The VVS collects Rs. 10 per family every month, and contributes to communal village expenses.

Despite being rich in natural resources and having a strong sense of ownership of the them, the Sidhpur gram panchayat, is severely lacking in material resources. This situation is understandable given the remoteness of the area and the complete and utter lack of government support. In fact, the few common material resources, the panchayat does own, have been created through local initiatives. For instance, the primary school that is shared by all three villages and serves as a meeting place, was built through local contribution of money and/or labour. The panchayat, also has a set of vessels for common use. While they can be used free of charge by the villagers, Rs. 100 is the rent for outsiders.

#### **4. Emergent themes:**

The field work revealed certain significant themes regarding the management of common properties in the three states. The management of Common Property Resources has always been a significant political process. However, with this responsibility being vested in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, it has to contend with and negotiate party politics, casteism, gender discrimination and corruption.

##### *4.1 Caste and Dominance:*

One of the most striking themes, especially in Beed, which emerged during our study, was the issue of caste and dominance. Marathwada has historically been a region with severe caste tensions. Though,

dominated by upper caste, the Matang (Dalit community) is numerically the largest.

The issue of caste and dominance is most clearly articulated in the tensions regarding encroachment of land. *Gairan* land, which was once CPR, is now being privatised. However, one needs to question whether, the lands were genuinely a common resource. As has been elaborated in the report, caste plays a crucial role in restricting access to local commons.

It is important that we recognize the two types of land encroachment that takes place in Beed district. One, is the encroachment of fallow/ grazing land and second, the encroachment of ‘vanikaran’ land (land which is afforested)<sup>27</sup>. The second type of encroachment in particular, evokes resentment among non- Dalits. The extent to which the ‘vanikaran’ was forested, however, is suspected. Nevertheless, many inflated figures of income are presented as having been generated from the land. For instance, non- Dalit panchayat members state that the loss of income since the Dalit encroachment of ‘vanikaran’ land has amounts to Rs. 25,000- 30,000.

Gram Panchayats, especially, those dominated by non- Dalits, do not remain oblivious to these encroachments. Often, there are subtle, un-obivious means of expressing resentment. In almost all the panchayats studied, there were incidents of upper caste villagers, letting their cattle loose in Dalit farms. This sort of tension, continues to prevail especially in Kanadi Mali, Chorumba and Borkhed. Often, police cases are also registered against the encroachers. However, instead of being harassed, this provides crucial documentation in the struggle for land rights of the Dalits.

It appears that some panchayats have kept silent about the Dalit encroachment of wastelands because they themselves are involved with privatizing water pipelines(diverted from the village property to a sarpanch’s private farm lands). The village of Borkhed for instance has 20% irrigated land and 80% dry land. In a place with severe water scarcity, this shows inequalities in resource allocation. As reported in the Frontline(Deulgaonkar, June 6;2006) “the situation is so volatile that fights over water erupt with little provocation... Forty-three of the 76 taluks (mandal) in the Marathwada region are facing drought, and Latur, Usmanabad and Beed are the worst-affected districts.”

Another example of privatization by the PRI is in Chorumba where 40 acres of common land and contributions from all villagers, including Dalits, were used by the Mahajan(upper caste community) to build a temple with restricted entry.

These factors have reduced the relevance of CPRs for the poor who have few cattle and hence have little need for fodder(a major product collected from cprs by poor in drought prone regions) from the wastelands. This is also another reason that despite Dalit encroachments of wastelands, more than half of them still migrate with their entire families as sugar-cane cutters to other states.

The survey indicates that elected GP members have provided no benefits to the Dalit community under any of the schemes. Mrs. Yashoda Bhagavan Borade, a Dalit woman and an agricultural labourer from Borkhed, alleges, “*Our representatives in Gram Panchayat are illiterate and we have no say in the Gram Panchayat affairs,*” Social relations in the village are critically impacted by caste tensions, “*They show respect to us only for the sake of it. They think and feel that the Mahars and Matangs should only toil in their farms like bygone times and do not want us to be developed*”.

It is, therefore, crucial to factor in caste dynamics, while analyzing the role PRIs play in Cpr management. Certain upper castes appropriate all the benefits, leaving poorer farmers with no choice

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<sup>27</sup>Though they are two categories of land, the term *gairan* is used colloquially to denote any kind of vacant land.

but to struggle to privatize resources. As stated by (Menon and Vadivelu, 2006)<sup>28</sup> “[t]here is evidence that CPRs are often captured by the rich or allocated in ways that privilege the needs of the rich.”

#### 4.2 Women’s Participation/ Exclusion:

“ Probably no other group is more affected by environmental destruction than poor village women. Every dawn brings with it a new search for fuel, fodder and water.” ( CSE report 1987, cited in Radha Kumar)

The second crucial theme focuses on the participation/ exclusion of women, both as functionaries of the gram/ van panchayat and as citizens. This study suggests that the politics of village development and the management of CPRs is highly gendered. With the exception of Pisegaon, women Sarpanchs as well as women members of the Gram panchayat, have little or no say in the functioning of the GP. Respondents in three of the four villages state that women GP members function only as signatories while effective control rests with their husbands.

In Borkhed, one could perceive a sense of fear that Pramila Borade, the sarpanch felt, with regard to her counterparts in the GP. Most elected women representatives, are dismissed as having no capabilities to manage politics. She says, *“Women are not taken seriously. We go for all the meetings but we do not speak. It does not make any difference if we get angry this treatment. It is something, we have to live with forever and therefore, one day’s anger, will not change anything.”* Her words were echoed, by Draupadi Muski, Sarpanch of Kanadi Mali, who says, *“ I do not talk in meetings. The man who was Sarpanch before me, refused to relinquish power, because I am a woman. He is very disdainful of my abilities.”*

Similar to the lack of acceptance and respect for women in positions of political power; women’s role and entitlements in common property are also questioned. In Pisegaon, the Panchayat, led by Usha, Langde, the sarpanch, has managed to get legal ownership documents of land, in both the husband and the wife’s name. This was carried out as per a government directive, though it has faced much resistance from the men. Women are equally, if not more dependent on their encroached lands; however, resentment regarding women’s ownership was evident in the interviews. A Dalit man from the village stated *“when grazing land was to be distributed to us on an ownership basis, they asked us to provide the names of our wives on the ownership document. We do not allow this. In fact we ask- if the wife marries another person, I will lose my land.”* However, despite the resistance, the women of the village, have come together as a collective and as a pressure group and have managed to get 50% of the houses registered in this format.

The SC/ST’s face similar exclusion. They are not involved in the running of the panchayat, as the spaces of their interaction are limited. Understandably, they have minimal control of the processes of management of CPRs.

It is significant to note that gram sabhas or what are understood as gram sabhas are held only on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January and 15<sup>th</sup> of August. Our study reveals that only in Pisegaon are gram sabhas held about 4-6 times a year and also convene mahila gram sabhas.

Draupadi Muski, Sarpanch of Kandi Malispoke about the difficulties she faces as a woman. She believes reservations are important for both women and Dalits but *“being a woman I cannot travel*

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<sup>28</sup>[http://www.conservationandsociety.org/cs\\_4\\_1\\_132-154.pdf](http://www.conservationandsociety.org/cs_4_1_132-154.pdf)

*much. I cannot go to the district often.*” She also mentioned her inability to implement several schemes because of pressure she faces from many established people of the village. Since 2 SCs were chosen for the position of Sarpanch, her tenure is shared with another Dalit man. Other GP members don’t take her too seriously either. As stated by another member *“We have to take care of all affairs as the Sarpanch is a woman. The woman belongs to the Matang community. She knows nothing.”*

Such attitudes towards women cannot be changed simply with women being trained. For instance, many men spoke about the discrimination they faced. *“Why is it that the women are always trained about panchayat duties etc; don’t we men need to learn as well.”* It is imperative that men be trained to work with women, which is a reason why villages with already functioning local organizations have more dynamic gram panchayats.

Women’s self help groups are fairly active and empowered in Beed district. Mrs. Ranjana Raut, the chair person of an Shg, says, *“ At least, under the pretext of SHGs, women have started coming out... Our SHG has received a bank loan of Rs. 25,000, through which we have started small industries.”* Sobha Neharkar, president of the Mahila Vikas Mandal, Pisegaon, agrees, *“Earlier, our lives were just chula and bacha. Now, because of the Self Help Groups and the Mahila Vikas Mandal, our lives extend beyond the home.”*

Women SHG’s have also attempted to form collectives and support the woman Sarpanch. In Borkhed, for instance, despite the support the Sarpanch has received from the SHGs, she has been unable to negotiate the politics of dominance in the GP and not been able to include any Dalit women in any of the GP committees.

Patriarchy in Assam has been influenced greatly by strong matrilineal systems of neighbouring tribal communities. Public spaces and spaces of political power, have been traditionally, open to women, especially in rural Assam. Nevertheless, the role of women as homemakers and nurturers continues to be dominant. Therefore, despite the politics of patriarchy being muted, it has posed a challenge for women to assume positions of power in the PRI.

*“Women’s decisions and actions can have a profound impact on the policies the government decides to pursue and the lives that people can lead. Women have often been very active in demanding and working for basic social change... In much of India, women tend to be rather homebound and politically unassertive, but given the critical importance of political action and pressure, a real difference can be made by women taking an active role in these activities.”*(Dreze, Sen, 2002)<sup>29</sup>

Women leaders, such as Umeshawari Das, Merapani Panchayat’s representative to the Anchalik panchayat, have paid special emphasis to women’s livelihood skills. Even before she was elected to the Panchayat, she formed a Mahila samiti (women’s group), and initiated a women weaver’s co-operative, about 20 years ago. Besides this, there are two other active women’s co-operatives, ‘Anchalik Bowan Samobai Samiti’ and ‘Bahumukhi Samobai Samiti’ both formed by women’s initiatives.

Pub Brahmaputra and Numaligarh, both have active co-operative societies, all formed by women.

The recent Gram Sabha attendance in Numaligarh should be indicative of women’s participation in the political process. Out of the 234 people who attended, most were women. It is worthy of note, that the Trade Union which is the most prominent and active local body in the Numaligarh Panchayat is a singularly masculine organisation. There are no women among the 31 member governing body. It is

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29 Dreze, Jean and Sen, Amartya; India development and participation, 2002.

evident that women, while active in local cooperatives and in the political process, are denied space in the worker's struggles.

In many of the Panchayats, whether the gram sabha is held is a contentious issue. In Merapani for instance, Gram Sabhas are held twice a year, with about 100- 150 people in attendance. These sabhas are not just restricted to political party workers, but include other villagers, village elders etc. In Pub Brahmaputra, however, Gram sabhas are considered by the Panchayat to be synonymous with RAPRAS<sup>30</sup>. Likewise, in Numaligarh. In fact, the most recent Gram Sabha, held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, was actually a RAPRAS.

The practice of Gram Sabhas need to be investigated in greater detail. While most panchayat leaders claim that gram sabhas are necessary to identify beneficiaries and allot schemes, it is alleged, that often the President and the secretary of the GP take these decisions without consulting anyone else.

Since the Panchayati Raj system itself, is nascent, it is difficult to have an understanding of women representative's role in managing CPRs. Nevertheless, the processes of participation and women's roles in local collectives and movement give a clear indication that women are a significant part of local governance in Assam.

Women of Uttaranachal have had a long tradition of activism, beginning with the Chipko movement. The daily trials of village women, articulated in the CSE report have not changed much two decades down the line. All of the responsibility of providing fuel, fodder and water, lies on the women. Therefore, it is critical that women be involved in the management, protection and effective utilization and distribution of resources.

It is evident from the field work, that women in all the three gram panchayats and the four van panchayats studied, form the most cohesive unit of society. From organising 'sharmdaan' to forming local collectives, women in Uttaranachal are the locus of political/ social activism.

Most van panchayats in the upper reaches of the mountains contain the Chir pine, which sheds its dry leaves during summer. The dry pine litter poses a severe fire hazard. In both Kokilbana and Sidhpur, local women perform 'shramdaan' to clear the litter. Even in community farming, the sowing and planting of grass seedlings is performed by women. In Kokilbana van panchayat, three groups of women, with 11 women each, do the grass planting every year, says, Prema Pandey, a ward member of the gram panchayat. Subsequently, it is ensured that the grass is distributed equitably.

*" Women do all the work here. We work the hardest and it is still very difficult to manage house work and Panchayat work,"* says, Durga Devi, Sidhpur GP ward member.

Besides this, women's work is characterized by a spirit of co-operation embodied in the 'palta' system. By this, agricultural and other social/ cultural work, even on private land and for personal purposes is shared by all women of the village.

Women in each of the three panchayats have taken the leadership in organising self help groups, mahila samitis etc. In dehra gram panchayat, the pradhan, Ms. Vina Bhat, was responsible for forming the first Mahila Sangh, as well as the Kisan club in the panchayat.

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30 RAPRAS- Raijor Poduli Raijor Sarkar, is a government meeting with the BDO in attendance in which people's problems and concerns are aired. These are usually held once a year and are not co-terminus with the Gram Sabhas.

Most social programmes initiated by grass roots organisations, mainly involve women. Van suruksha samitis and van vikas samitis are often composed entirely of women, as they are in Chanoti and Kumaan. As mentioned above, since the onus of providing fuel, fodder and water, is on women, it is only fair, that the powers of management and distribution are in their hands.

#### *4.3 Political Parties and their Participation:*

The third major issue which emerged from the study were questions regarding the role of political parties in the functioning of panchayats. This is especially relevant in Assam, since, the panchayat elections are held along party lines. While political parties in the rest of India, including Maharashtra and Uttarakhand do informally support candidates contesting in Panchayat elections, in Assam, the candidates contest officially as political party candidates. The three Panchayats studied in Golaghat district were Congress dominated. As a result of the policy of allowing open campaign and contest along political party lines, local governance in Assam is largely influenced by party politics. Party affiliations play a crucial role, both in the allocation of government schemes in the panchayat as well as in the efficacy of panchayat functioning. According to Minu Prabha Pasung, the President of Pub Brahmaputra gram Panchayat, the fisheries which have not been 'encroached', by other villagers are being leased to Congress party workers for the rent of Rs. 1000 per year. The ponds are also being leased, to Congress party workers. Earnings from the ponds range from Rs.500 -300 per pond, in a year.

Political parties, in the Marathwada region are oriented along caste lines. Though the region, now the stronghold of the NCP, it has several other active political groups, even within the villages and the PRIs surveyed. The Shiv Sena won four seats from the region in 1996 and the BJP has some support as well with Munde reigning from the region and representing the upper Vanjara tribe.

A feature peculiar to gram panchayats in Maharashtra is the sharing of power between two candidates affiliated to the same political party. Apparently, the Maharashtra government gives a Rs. 25,000 reward for panchayats that are formed consensually. The village, possibly motivated by the desire to be a 'model' village, did not hold elections. As a result, there was an informal arrangement of the two candidates for the Sarpanch's position sharing the tenure. Because the Sarpanch's position was reserved, a female candidate and a male candidate with similar party affiliations assumed power for 2 and a half years each.

Political parties, are hence, oriented along caste lines. Often, a 7 member gram panchayat may have representatives from as many as 3 to 4 political parties. This mostly results in the lack of consensus in the decision making processes, culminating, ultimately in limited development of the village.

Also, for instance, as in Borkhed, workers of one political party enter and control the entire panchayat. In the village of Borkhed, this has meant the same deputy sarpanch has been in power for the last 15 years. Being an upper caste as well, schemes meant for Dalits like the Dalit Basti improvement Scheme has been stalled with the Panchayat for months with no sign of implementation. The general perception of party involvement in Panchayat functioning in Maharashtra has been negative. It is felt that political parties impede the smooth functioning of the Gram Panchayats. On the other hand, the perception in Assam was absolutely contrary; political parties were seen as ensuring accountability of the Panchayat functionaries.

#### 4.4 Role of Grass roots Organisations:

The fourth crucial theme which emerged during the course of the study was the role of a grass roots organisation and community participation. Here we, explore the role of a local organisation in mobilising and collectivizing people and analyse the extent to which, such organisations have facilitated local initiatives and created spaces for local participation. The Van Suruksha Samitis, initiated by Chirag, is one such instance in which a local organisation has effectively mobilised collective action.

In the Naukuchiayatal area, in Uttarakhand within which the dehra gram panchayat and the chanoti van panchayat are located, Chirag began the Van Suruksha samitis in 1989. The VSS were formed at the village level, and mostly as a possible alternative to non functioning van panchayats. In the period before the formation of VSS, the Van Panchayats were merely active in implementing some government schemes. They were not effectively involved in managing the forest resources for the use by all locals.

The VSS/ VVS were mechanisms through which control and management of local forests were re-invested in the people.

The first VVS were formed in Chanoti, Thapaliya and Jangaliya gaon. There were no formal and fixed criteria for constituting the VSS. The convenient system of representation for each village was use. However, women, continued to play a critical role in re-appropriating the forests, and in many villages, VSS/ VVS are composed completely of women. After the formation of the VVS, a division (in no way, equal) was effected of the areas under the management of the VP. Small tracts of land were allotted to the VSS for a forestation, community farming etc. During its nascent years, the villagers undertook the responsibility of guarding their forest land. Subsequently, a 'chowkidar' was employed, whose salary was paid by Chirag. Currently, however, VVS/VSS are making attempts to make the management of the forests sustainable, by which the expenses of the forests will be covered by the income earned from the forest.

In some areas, the VSS/ VVS have been subsumed under the VP; while in others, they continue to function absolutely independent of the VP. In most cases however, the VVS/VSS have their own sources of income from the forest land allotted to them.

Not only has the Chirag, been effective in facilitating the process of community management of resources, it has also been effective in fostering collaboration between the van panchayats and the gram panchayats. Since there are no legal means of collaboration between the two, spaces of necessary and crucial co-operation remain limited and even unexplored.

In many areas, such as Sidhpur, Chirag's water shed management project is being implemented through the gram panchayat and the van panchayat simultaneously. In kokilbana, as well, the social forestry and community farming initiatives were introduced through the GP and the VP. Such initiatives have opened spaces for a more equitable and participatory process of development.

Likewise, in Beed, the presence of Jan Vikas Samajik Sanstha, has facilitated the mobilisation and empowerment of Dalits. The organisation has provided a space for collective action and activism. JVSS has also ensured a climate in which encroached *gairan* land can be distributed equitably. The village of Sonesangwi, is one such example.

The struggle for privatizing *gairan* land in the village has been on since the 1991. The land was part of the village 'vanikaran' (land which is afforested). The encroachers cleared the land manually and attempted to begin farming in the area. De-forestation of this area, created grave resentment among the other villagers, who led by the gram panchayat, filed, a police complaint against the encroachers. The *gairan* land holders, were jailed for 6 months, following the complaint. Despite the extreme threat of physical coercion, the encroachers persevered.

What is most interesting about the land encroachment in Sonesangwi, is the equitable pattern of distribution, carried out under the guidance of JVSS. The *gairan* land in the village borders a large lake, thereby resulting in enhanced fertility of the land closer to the banks of the lake. Therefore, individual plots of land were created in such a manner, that all twenty one families, received plots which were equally fertile.

The role of NEST, in mobilising and empowering elected women representatives, in Golaghat district has been significant. The organisation has facilitated the process by which women have appropriated political power, especially at the local level. The case study of the President of Rajabari Gram Panchayat, who has consistently been supported by NEST, clearly demonstrates the importance of grass roots organisations.

Ms. Hem Kumari is the President of the Rajabari Gram Panchayat. This Panchayat comprises 8 revenue villages and 2 tea gardens. Before she entered politics, she was a school teacher. Bhakatsapori, the village in which her school was located, was an extremely poor village, with an original population of about 50 people. In 2001, she contested against four other women, for the post of the Panchayat President, under pressure from the villagers of Bhakatsapori.

She has made considerable progress in consolidating and managing Common Property Resources. There are three common ponds in the panchayat, which she leases yearly for Rs. 1000 each. She has constructed a market complex with 12 rooms, each of which she leases for Rs. 3600 a year. Rs. 5000 is charged as a security. If the Panchayat receives regular rent for the shops, then this security is returned; otherwise, a fine is deducted from the security money.

Two cattle pounds are located within the Tea Estate, which the tea garden authorities were managing. The cattle pounds are now within the control of the GP and give an income of Rs. 11,000 each, every year. Two weekly markets in the Panchayat were also under the tea garden authorities. She threatened to file a case against the garden authorities, in case the control of these markets were not handed over to the GP. The tea estate management has, since, handed over the control of the markets to the panchayat.

The Rajabari Gram Panchayat imposes Rs. 10 as tax per cycle, Rs. 70 for pan shops and Rs. 150 for grocery shops. The taxation from the shops amount to Rs. 10,000 per year.

The panchayat also houses a stone quarry, to which there are two gates. The gates are leased for Rs. 1500 a year. The taxes collected by the GP, contribute to the salaries paid to the President and the ward members.

Rajabari GP does not have a government appointed tax collector. Therefore, the Panchayat members have employed one themselves. While he is not paid a salary by the GP, he gets a 30% commission from the taxes he collects.

She informs us that funds for general category Panchayats are very limited. At best, they get about Rs. 8- 10 lakhs a year. The GP places a special emphasis on the unemployed, while selecting beneficiaries for government schemes.

As has been mentioned earlier, two parallel authority structures are present in those Panchayats which also contain Tea garden areas. Construction of any sort, be it IAY houses or roads or installing tube wells, is allowed only with permission from the garden authorities. Hem Kumari, however, has waged a successful campaign against this dictate and has installed 19 tube wells within the premises of the tea estate. Besides this, she has also constructed roads and overseen 3.5 kms. of electrification.

The success of the Rajabari gram panchayat under the leadership of Hem Kumari is encouraging for the Panchayati Raj system across Assam. It proves that, despite the various inherent dynamics and structures of oppression in Assam and especially in the tea gardens, a significant devolution of power has taken place.

#### *4.5 Implications of Ongoing Conflict on Common Properties:*

As has been discussed earlier, the implications of social tensions is significant especially in the management or creation of common properties. The situation in Beed district, clearly demonstrates the link between caste conflict and the control over local commons. The historic oppression of Dalits in Maharashtra continues to exist in certain areas of the state. This discrimination and oppression is most evident in the fact that Dalits have limited control over common resources. Moreover, panchayats dominated by the upper castes, often, completely neglect to develop the infrastructure and local resources in the Dalit bastis.

The issue of conflict and management of common property resources assumes a different tone in the case of the Numaligarh Panchayat in Assam. This area has overlapping and parallel spatial authorities: the gram panchayat and the tea garden management authority. Within the tea garden area, there is restriction on the sort of work the Gram Panchayat can do. Construction of IAY (Indira Awas Yojna) houses and roads within the garden area is allowed only when it has been sanctioned by the manager. There is, in fact, a constant struggle between the management and the ward members on this issue.

Spatial segregation is also evident with the temporary garden workers. Numaligarh Tea Estate has about 70% permanent and 30% temporary casual works ( called 'faltu' workers in common parlance). While the garden management provide to some extent, drinking water facilities, health care facilities etc to the permanent workers, the temporary ones are left outside of the system of 'benefits' accorded to permanent workers. Not only does the management not provide basic facilities for those casual workers residing within the premises of the estate, it effectively prohibits the Panchayat for doing so, as well.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

The term 'common property resources' is a contested one. This study reveals that the management of common properties is fraught with contradictions. Common properties are not exclusively under the control of the Panchayats, nor are they under the management of other local authorities. Sometimes, there may be no norms governing the use of CPRs; sometimes existing norms may be disregarded for private profit.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions are crucial in devolving power to the village level. Therefore, for any real authority to be vested in the people for managing common resources, the panchayat, or the van panchayat, for that matter, has to be strengthened. In this system, gram sabhas has to play a crucial role — in ensuring downward accountability, transparency and voice to the people. However, as has been elaborated in the report, this is far from the truth. In most panchayats, the gram sabhas are rarely held, and even, when they are, its largely ineffective. It is evident that women, across the country are most dependent on common resources. It is, therefore, even more crucial that women be empowered to take ownership and responsibility for their management.

The study also indicates the critical role played by local civil society organisations in empowering the disenfranchised and the oppressed to assume positions of leadership in the community. Interventions by such organisation, as has been documented in the report, have led to a positive re-ordering of society. Possibilities of collaboration between these organisations and the government need to be explored for an equitable system of local governance.

It is understood that the income earned by the GP, except in certain exceptional cases, is limited. Some form of awareness and capacity building is required in order to educate Panchayat functionaries regarding the possible sources of income. The government, in collaboration with local organisations,

could perhaps, conduct workshops, campaigns, and widely circulate vernacular manuals on the roles and functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Evidently, the Panchayats have significant scope of managing local resources, resolving conflicts, diffusing tensions etc. What is lacking however, is adequate support from the top. With enough guidance and support, Panchayats will not only be effective in managing and creating common resources, but also as the primary unit of democracy.

## ANNEXURE

### Statistical Profile of Panchayats:

Golaghat, Assam:

Table 1.1

Merapani

Total Population	10739
Number of Households	2127
Total Sc population	2143
Total ST Population	1281
Literacy Rate	95%
Landless Households	Approximately 10% of the total number of households <sup>31</sup>
Total number of BPL households	1030
Wasteland	12 bighas
Number of Primary Schools	11
Number of Middle Schools	2
Number of High Schools	2
Number of Colleges	1
Number of Non Government Schools	9
Anganwadis	10

Table 1.2

Pub Brahmaputra

Total population	11029
Total number of households	1804
SC Population	2854
ST Population	4881
Literacy rate	90%

31 It is difficult to estimate the avg. size of land holdings and the number of landless households in Merapani, because no land ownership documents have been issued to the people.

Landless families	600
BPL households	80% /40% <sup>32</sup>
Area of wasteland	27 bighas
Primary schools	17 <sup>33</sup>
High schools	2
Anganwadi	10
Health centre	2

Table 1.3  
Numaligarh

Total population	8619
Total Number of households	2500
Total number of ST households	1197
Total number of SC households	584
Literacy rate	97%
Number of BPL Families	1000
Landless households	60%
Wasteland	87 bighas
Primary schools	11
ME schools	2
High Schools	1
Anganwadi	9

Beed, Maharashtra:

Tbale 1.4  
Chorumba

Total population	1276
Total number of households	250
SC Population	149
ST Population	397
Literacy rate	66%
Landless families	117
BPL households	113
Area of wasteland ( <i>gairan</i> )	180 acres

32 The census records show the number of BPL households as 80%, while the Panchayat members estimate it at 40%.

33 Out of which 1 is a Madrassa and 3 are Venture schools (?)

Total population	1276
Primary schools	1
Middle Schools	1
High schools	0
Anganwadi	
Health centre	1

Table 1.5  
Borkhed:

Total population	594
Total number of households	121
SC Population	107
ST Population	11
Literacy rate	60%
Landless families	109
BPL households	93
Area of wasteland ( <i>gairan</i> )	
Primary schools	1
Middle Schools	0
High schools	0
Anganwadi	1
Health centre	

Table 1.6

Kanadi Mali

Total population	2428
Total number of households	499
SC Population	513
ST Population	21
Literacy rate	75%
Landless families	26
BPL households	208

Total population	2428
Area of wasteland ( <i>gairan</i> )	108 acres?
Primary schools	1
Middle Schools	1
High schools	1
Anganwadi	1
Health centre	0

Table 1.7  
Pisegaon:

Total population	1767
Total number of households	337
SC Population	329
ST Population	6
Literacy rate	62%
Landless families	105
BPL households	95
Area of wasteland ( <i>gairan</i> )	100 acres
Primary schools	1
Middle Schools	1
High schools	0
Anganwadi	
Health centre	0?