

Pratibimb



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A REFLECTION

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A Dying Heritage

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TASVEER – E – KASHMIR

→ A photo-exhibition, as part of the Kashmir National Consultation, was organised by Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) and Welthungerhilfe (WHH) at India Islamic Cultural Centre (IICC), New Delhi. The Photographs by IGSSS Media Fellow Bilal Bahadur reflected the many facets of life in Kashmir. The fellowship was granted under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) programme jointly implemented by IGSSS and WHH.



Insight

The loss of production and income from agriculture and forest resulting from climatic fluctuations and other manifestations, whether big or small, has become routine. The need of the hour is to identify the landraces...

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EDITORIAL

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DESIGN

Mustard Tree

PRINTED BY

Arnav Print

ED'S DESK

Spreading out, supporting the most vulnerable

The first half of 2014 has been very eventful at IGSSS. New interventions in Hazaribagh, Jharkhand and Karbi Anglong, Assam, were rolled out in two of the most difficult and challenging locations. At Hazaribagh, IGSSS is working on a food security programme focused on the judicious use of water resources and promoting sustainable livelihood options for 100 tribal families in four villages.

In the conflict ridden Karbi Anglong, IGSSS has responded by providing humanitarian assistance to the affected families along with conflict resolution. We would be sharing the details of these interventions in our subsequent editions.

Modernization has introduced many changes among the tribes, but the most significant was the introduction of a formal legal system for tribes in the Indian Constitution. While most of the north eastern tribes adhere to the formal legal system they also follow their tradition or customary law in their civil, social and cultural life. This dual system has had both positive and negative impacts. While it resulted in a section of the tribes embark on a quest for their own identity, simultaneously, few others joined in the demand for recognition of the customary laws by the State. Both Mizoram and Manipur have accorded such recognition. In this issue of Pratibimb an attempt is being made to review the Customary Property and Land Rights of Tribal Women in the Northeast India.

Climate change and climate justice is a key area of concern for IGSSS. The June 2014 edition of Pratibimb brings to you a feature on the impact of climate change in Chhattisgarh, a key area of IGSSS intervention under SOUL Programme, addressing the issue of climate change vulnerability by promoting natural resource management.

IGSSS participated in the global event 'One Billion Rising' to protest violence against women. 'Aap Beeti', a street play portraying the inspiring real stories of survivors of violence, was performed at different places in Delhi. It spread awareness on the issue and motivated people to act against all forms of violence meted to women.

Hope you find this edition more enriching. We look forward to your comments and feedback.

JOHN PETER NELSON



SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

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Customary rights of tribal women with reference to property and land rights in Northeast India

Ms. Karishma Sharma

FIELD COORDINATOR, BONGAIGAON, ASSAM

Societies are mostly regulated by a body of norms, customs, taboos, traditions, values and moral standards which undergo changes with the passing of time. However, Tribal societies differ in terms of their functioning as they are mostly governed by the traditional customs and taboos which are often resistant to change.

However, customary laws of many tribes have been changing in the last few decades. In the particular ecological setting of Northeast (NE) India, the traditional economy of many tribal communities, who remained relatively isolated from the mainstream of socio economic processes of the country, has revolved around agriculture, forest produce and land based activities.

Northeast is also the abode of a number of different communities having their own particular socio-political systems which lay down stringent regulatory norms and conventions for the prudent use of the most important resources viz land, maintenance of the ethnic identity and social order. It is interesting to examine how sharing of available resources and gender relations in different tribal communities of NE India are regulated by customary law.

One cannot deny that this home of many ethnic groups and tribes has, for the last five decades, witnessed armed conflicts that are integral to its people's search for their own identity.

This conflict could be attributed to the interface between growing modernization and the traditional existence of the tribal society. Industrialization, a significant outcome of modernization, has captured over a major portion of the land resource. It led to displacement and impeded livelihood systems of many traditional communities. The spaces between the cities and the traditional habitations are dissolving at a rapid pace. Thereby, creating unrest amongst the traditional communities, leading to a growing civil warfare, in a bid to reclaim their spaces and refusing to forsake their age old identity and culture.

The impact, specifically, in relations to the rights of women over land and other resources can be observed in the legal framework governing land relations. Most tribes of the region run their civil affairs according to their customary laws. They feel



that the individual based land law of the country is superimposed on them. Due to the disruption it has caused in their lives, one of the demands of many tribes is recognition of their customary law. However, it is only in Nagaland and Mizoram that the tribal customary law has been recognised through the process of constitutional amendment. Even if the customary laws of the tribes are recognised, the elite amongst them seemed to have interpreted it in their own favour. For example, the Sixth Schedule was enacted as a protective measure but it has not always gone in favour of the community, especially women.

The Garo tribes of Meghalaya who come under the Sixth Schedule have experienced a change where they have moved to commercial crops and individual ownership which goes against the rights of the women and leads to class formation. Similar replication is visible among few other tribes such as the Dimasas of Assam and the Aka of Arunachal Pradesh.



An immediate consequence of the type of habitation pertains to inheritance. While the Garos follow a matrilineal inheritance system, even amongst them there is a difference between inheritance and management of property. The woman inherits the ancestral property but men manage it. With the State encouraging commercial crops and giving loans and subsidies only to individual owners and heads of families (understood as men), there is a slow changeover to pattas in the name of men. Some like the Aka claim not to have an inheritance system because they follow a system of Customary Property Rights (CPR) lacking the very concept of individual ownership and inheritance. However, the control over the CPRs belong to the village council consisting of men alone. This right passes from father to son.

The Angami woman cannot inherit clan property but her parents can gift her acquired land and she can inherit what belongs to her mother. If the man dies without a son the inheritance passes on to the closest male relative. The Dimasa too have male inheritance but if the man dies without a son, his daughter can inherit his property. In two such cases the men divided property equally between their sons and daughters and the village recognised their inheritance. The Adibasis too have male inheritance. Such acts are justified by citing that after marriage the girl goes to her husband's house and the husband is already the natural heir to his ancestral property.

All the tribes allow the girl to inherit movable property. By and large what belongs to the mother is shared among her daughters and what belongs to the father is shared by the sons. But among the Angami tribe, the custom of the girl receiving gifts is used as a justification to exclude her from any kind of inheritance. They claim that the father has given the girl the "gift" of education and her qualifications have become her personal belongings which she takes with her to her husband's house.

The Dimasas divide personal belongings into three categories. What belongs to the mother goes to her daughters,

the father's personal belongings goes to the sons; the common belongings are divided between sons and daughters.

There is a rising demand amongst most tribes for changing the inheritance system though such a voicing for equal right is not uniform across tribes. While among the matrilineal Garo it has taken the form of men asking for inheritance rights, in the remaining tribes some women are demanding equal rights.

Also the degree and extent of the demand differs across tribes. Those who are exposed to the impact of modernisation and even urbanisation are quite articulate. It is minimal among the tribes which are not exposed to modernization. The Aka and Dimasa do not demand this right as vigorously as the Adibasi and Angami do. The Aka are close to their CPR tradition and continue to be largely guided by the customary laws. Even women among them feel that it is right for men to inherit the CPRs through the village council. Dimasas are also not vociferous in the demand for equal inheritance rights but for different reasons. Most of them feel that women among them have never been treated unjustly. Though only men inherit property, it does not result in the deterioration of women's status. As a result, women themselves do not see the need to demand equal inheritance rights.

This situation changed significantly with the Adibasi and Angami. Self Help Groups formed among these tribes and exposure to other aspects of modernization have helped the former to become aware of their legitimate rights. They have very little to inherit but the awareness of their rights has grown among them.

The Angami tribes have benefitted the most from their exposure to modernisation. Women have reaped the benefit which could be clearly observed from their educational and occupational status. It has improved their sense of self-worth. Among the matrilineal tribes, the Garo women are also fighting against the demand for male inheritance.

The Power of 49

Sreya Mozumdar

MANAGER, PROGRAMMES

The history of the Suffragette Movement in India commenced with a small deputation of women to England in 1919, led by Sarojini Naidu, to present the case for female suffrage before a select committee. Prior to this, the issue of political representation of women in India was raised in 1917, as a demand for universal adult suffrage. Although the British committee found the proposition preposterous, they allowed future Indian provincial legislatures to grant or refuse the franchise to women. To the British surprise, many did, making it possible within a short span of time for women to be represented, however limited, on a par with men. Universal suffrage for all adults over 21 was not achieved, however, until it became part of India's Constitution, in effect from 1950 onwards.

For successive generations of women in India, the right to vote has come to mean different things. For the rural woman struggling to eke out a living in the hinterland, the black ink has meant broken promises - of better roads, better healthcare, better schools and means of employment. For the tribal woman or the woman from a religious minority, vote bank politics on the basis of caste and religion have subsumed the real nature of issues on the ground. For the urban middle class woman, the right to vote has often been met with apathy and disinterest; so far removed are her aspirations from the political slugfest that she sees around her. For feminists and activists, the right to vote remains a symbol of a battle hard won and hence the many

Women form as much as 49 percent of the total electoral base in India. Their vote played a critical role in the formation of the new government in the recently held Lok Sabha elections. They will continue to influence the political scenario in the country through the power of their vote share and need to be awakened to this realization.

questions regarding representation of women in Panchayat and the Parliament, the politics of patriarchy and power that still hold sway. So where lies, this Power of 49?

The evidence of a slow uprising can be heard with an ear close to the ground. In the release of a gender manifesto by women's groups that calls for the development of legal frameworks that ensure gender equality within political parties, development and effective implementation of women-friendly legislation, implementation of all of Justice Verma Committee recommendations and the immediate passage of the Women's Reservation Bill. In the participation of the increased number of young women who campaigned on the ground; in traditional male dominated bastions, raising critical issues of safety, participation and mobility during the 16th Lok Sabha Elections; In the outvoting of men, by women, in the last five state assembly elections and in the changing sex ratio of voters (from 715 in the 1960s to 883 in the 2000s, as per a recent Brookings India report). In the strategic targeting of rural women, through innovative means, undertaken by the Election Commission in the Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation programme; In much of the lipspeak of politicians, who have been forced to flag issues of gender based violence and violation in the public discourse, however politically motivated; In the demand for promoting women's interests to a newly formed government.

The wheels are churning...



Traditional weaving: A dying heritage

Ms. Leena Bhanot Singhal,
HEAD - PROGRAM QUALITY & SUPPORT



The informal sector in India provides employment to 94% of the workforce, i.e. of the 465 million persons employed; 437 million are employed in the informal sector (NSSO 2009). This sector also contributes almost 50% to the Indian GDP (The Report of the Committee on the Unorganised Sector Statistics of February 2012). Craftspersons form a large part of the unorganized sector work-force. In fact, they form the second largest employment sector, next only to agriculture in India. In terms of the distribution of the crafts population across the states, Uttar Pradesh has the highest share of about 17% (Brinda Viswanathan –

Enumeration of Craftpersons in India).

IGSSS' association with this sector goes back to 2011 when the organisation started working with carpet weavers in two villages, Zalpora and Nowgam Payeen in Bandipora district, Kashmir. It was observed that the carpet weavers were caught in a vicious cycle of poverty, illiteracy, lived and worked in miserable conditions. The higher price of the raw materials such as the loom, design and the script for carpet weaving caused difficulties for the weavers to independently undertake any work. They worked for the contractors, who paid them meagerly and reaped a high profit



margin by selling the carpets to dealers in the bigger cities. Since, sustaining on low wages was difficult; the weavers often ended up borrowing from the contractors and fell into a debt trap. Government apathy and lack of awareness about the welfare schemes also significantly affected the development of the community.

On turning the attention towards the carpet weavers in Bhadohi and the Benarsi sari and brocade weavers in Benaras, the working conditions was found to be almost identical. Most of the sari and brocade weavers, were dependent upon the middlemen and large traders for designs, raw materials and even the jacquard for their looms. They worked primarily on a daily wage rate which ranged from INR 80 – 100. While the situation was similar in Bhadohi with the carpet weavers, their daily wage rate was little better at INR 125 – 150, but all the raw materials were supplied to them by the trader or exporter. Also as compared to the silk carpet weavers of Kashmir, the woollen carpet weavers in Bhadohi were in a slightly better condition as the daily wages in Kashmir were as low as INR 60 – 80 only.

It was observed in the context of both Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh that the women play a key role in the entire weaving process. They not only fill the shuttle for weaving but also spin the wool to make the yarn needed for weaving, while in Kashmir, the women also weave the silk carpets. But the labour of the womenfolk is neither compensated for nor recognized in the entire weaving process.

IGSSS under the Enhancement and Empowerment Needs (K-Caleen) programme is working towards addressing the issues of Carpet Weavers in Zalpora and Nowgam Payeen village in Kashmir. Focus is on enhancing the capacities of weavers, to create awareness for their rights and entitlements and advocate for better working and living conditions. The

carpet weavers were linked with the Government institutions such as the Indian Institute of Carpet Technology (IICT) and were helped to avail Weaver Registration Cards. Further, they were provided training on advanced weaving technology and were linked with welfare schemes to procure raw materials at subsidized rates. Self Help Groups (SHGs) were also formed with the male carpet weavers, and with the savings accrued, a group of 24 carpet weavers from Nowgam Payeen village has independently initiated carpet weaving as an income generation activity.

Similarly, SAREL (State Alliance for Right Entitlement and Livelihood) network, formed under the IGSSS livelihood intervention, has been effectively advocating for the inclusion of weavers and artisans under the Government welfare schemes. As an outcome, the Ministry of Textile has announced free electricity and health benefits for the weavers and it has also stated that all handloom exhibitions in India have to exhibit products carrying the handloom mark. Further, a new design studio is also in the process of being set up in Varanasi. It will provide innovative design development training to the weavers and other stakeholders and will disseminate information on latest handloom technology.

Lack of patronage combined with Globalisation and market driven economy has led to the alienation of this community in both Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh. Unable to compete in the market driven economy they are migrating to urban centres to work as daily labourers adding to urban poverty. If this trend continues unabated, very soon entire families will migrate to cities in search of livelihood for which they are ill equipped and an entire community of vast traditional knowledge and skill will be lost forever.

AN INSIGHT INTO THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN CHATTISGARH

Dr. Gayatri Mahar

ASSISTANT MANAGER, CLIMATE CHANGE



Chhattisgarh, a tribal dominated state, located in the central part of the country is largely rainfed and interspersed with plateau and hill areas which are characterized as barren and un-cultivable due to excessive water run-off. Like the other parts of the country, the livelihood options in this region continue to be predominantly dependent on natural resources such as land, forest and water and also equally on rain and weather patterns. Being an agrarian state, variability in climatic conditions i.e. declining, late or early rains adversely affect the socio-economic and environmental condition of the state.

While there is no dearth of expert data and observation at macro level, the understanding and experience from micro ecosystems, where the impact of the changing climate is

most direct, are few and far between. IGSSS under its flagship livelihood programme "Sustainable Options for Uplifting Livelihood (SOUL)," aims at generating insights into the present interface between livelihood and climate change, collecting experiences at community level and understanding the triggers contributing to the impact induced by changing weather patterns. It was done with the goal of identifying existing opportunities and future prospects to reduce the vulnerability of the community and eco-systems. While working in three tribal dominated districts i.e. Koriya, Jaspur and Surguja of Chhattisgarh, IGSSS attempted to collect information on farmers' perception of climate variability, its impact on livelihood of the community and identifying potential adaptation measures.

Climate variability and its linkages with livelihood practices

While paddy and kodon (*Panicum miliare*) are grown as main food crops; arhar, sesame, gram, alsi, mustard are grown for self consumption and income generation in these areas. Other sources of income generation include collection of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), such as Mahua flowers, goat rearing and daily wage labour.

Cultivation is done mainly on three types of land such as –

Bagad : Upland, close to habitation- mostly un-bunded and most of the cash crops i.e. paddy, arhar, sesame, gram, alsi and mustard are grown on this land.

Barha : The land holds water and is suitable for cultivation of long duration paddy i.e. cultivation period encompasses from 90 to 110 to 140 days).

Dipra : High dry land and found at the foot hills.

All the farming operations are done in a set pattern and fluctuation in local weather results in loss of production and income. For example - The month of June and July is the period for sowing and nursery preparation, planting of the food grain crops as well as pulses such as arhar. Delay in sowing and transplanting reduces production and hampers the timing and intensity of the second crop.

October and November is another busy and important period for cutting of paddy, varieties of pulses i.e. chana, alsi, peas and sowing of oil-seeds such as mustard. Rain during this period affects harvesting and also leads to delay in sowing. It results in reduced acreage as farmers refrain from sowing multi - crops.

December and January, the months when we usually see the flowering, fruiting and harvesting of pulses and oilseeds, crops are vulnerable to prolonged rain, excess cold, fog and hoarfrost. Farmers face economic loss as it is the time for harvesting of pulses mainly arhar and other crops. It is also the preparatory stage for the economically important forest produce 'Mahua' and too much cold affects the formation of its 'kunchi' - the early stage of bud root.

March and April is an important period for the forest produce collection. Rain during this period makes the flowers drop prematurely or destroys flowers, and some flowers turn upward and do not even fall.



Climate Variability, Coping and Adaptation Potential: Experience across the Region

The loss of production and income from agriculture and forest resulting from climatic fluctuations and other manifestations, whether big or small, has become routine. The inherent characteristics of the terrain, food and cash insecurity, unsustainable coping practices and socio-economic factors are the contributing factors. Women are the most affected group, who to a large extent, shoulder the farming operations such as transplanting, weeding, cutting, harvesting, storage, collection of NTFPs and taking care of livestock.

To address the impact of climate variability, farmers have mostly switched to short duration crops, High Yielding Varieties (HYV) and hybrid varieties. While speaking about their experiences, the farmers shared that the hybrids are highly susceptible to insects or pests as compared to the traditional varieties and, therefore, the use of chemical fertiliser and pesticides has increased substantially. This along with the mushrooming growth of bore wells, electric motors and setting up of diesel pumps has been spelling devastation for soil and ground water which has gone down by 100 feet in the last 10 years.

While there are unsustainable coping practices adopted by the farmers in the regions, some progressive farmers especially in the Bardih village of Surguja district have engaged themselves in organised farming through flat bean and vegetable cultivation, use of drip irrigation, diversifying livelihood through rearing of mulching cow and small ruminants. In Lundra Block of Surguja district, the community is involved in vegetable cultivation in a big way since 2006. It has now increased by 2 times as 65 villages in the mandal are engaged in vegetable farming.

Looking into the aspects of vulnerability of the community and ecosystem due to the factors resulting from climate change, IGSSS decided to scale up livelihood activities. This is being done by promoting mix-cropping, expansion of climate resilient crops, organic farming, promotion of horticulture activities, land development, optimum utilization of rain water, promoting rain water harvesting and promotion of drip irrigation system.

Another possibility of working with the tribal community of the region could be realized through conducting research on existing local varieties that are adaptable to extreme environmental conditions. It is prominent to note that Chhattisgarh has 200 traditional varieties of paddy which are on the verge of extinction due to excessive use of hybrid seeds. The need of the hour is to identify the landraces which can withstand climate variability and can give good results in the changing situation. Last but not the least, there is also a great need to replicate already existing good practices and adaptation measures to make the community climate resilient.



Climate Change

The latest report from the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) emphasizes that India's vulnerability and exposure to climate change will severely impact its economic growth, health and development. It will impede food security measures and will make poverty reduction difficult. Aromar Revi, one of the lead authors of the report, shared that, "All aspects of food security are potentially affected by climate change including food access, utilisation of land, and price stability."

The IPCC lead authors said India, like many other developing nations, is likely to suffer losses in all major sectors of the economy including energy, transport, farming and tourism. Extreme weather may also harm infrastructure such as roads, ports and airports, impacting delivery of goods and services.

Source – Reuters

Dr. Gayatri Mahar

ASSISTANT MANAGER, CLIMATE CHANGE



Clockwise from top (Left to Right) :

1. Low production resulting from Climate Change is forcing many farmers to opt for menial labour as an alternative source of livelihood
2. Meeting with the community women about their perception on Climate Change
3. Excessive frost destroyed the roots of the tomato plant
4. Organic Farming led to better production

New Programmes

- The programme 'Securing Household Food Security and Stabilizing Livelihood of 100 Poor Families through Land and Water Centric, Sustainable Agricultural Interventions' was launched by IGSSS at the Churuchu block of Hazaribagh district, Jharkhand. The intervention envisages food and livelihood security for the tribal farmers in the four identified villages. It has already completed six months. The programme is supported by SCIAF.
- The programme 'Recovery Support to the Conflict Affected victims of Karbi Anglong, Assam' was also initiated to provide humanitarian assistance to conflict affected victims of Karbi Anglong, Assam. The specific objective is to contribute to early recovery of conflict affected communities through access to food security, livelihood and psychosocial support and peace building. The programme is supported by Misereor, Caritas Germany and FADV.



Good Governance: Key to Development in Kashmir

→ IGSSS and Welthungerhilfe jointly organised a two-day national consultation on 'Good Governance – Key to Development in Kashmir'. It looked at addressing the challenges and strategies related to governance in Kashmir, women and youth and the role of civil society and government institutions in the development context in Kashmir.

Few significant recommendations that emerged during the discussions included involving people in local governance to ensure good governance, suspension of anti democratic legislations like Public Safety Act (PSA) and Armed Forces Special Power Act (AFSPA) and educational reforms to make education accessible to all the sections of the society.



ONE BILLION RISING

→ IGSSS participated in the global event One Billion Rising, commemorated across nations to protest violence against women. Members of the IGSSS team enacted a street theatre 'Aap Beeti', a monologue portraying true stories of four women survivors of violence and their inspiring fight backs. The play 'Aap Beeti' was performed at several places in Delhi such as Urdu Park near Jama Masjid, Dilli Haat, Delhi Zoological Garden and the Jantar Mantar. The intent was to spread awareness on issues of gender based violence and to motivate the masses to rise against all forms of violence meted to women.



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