

Proceedings

of the

National Conference on Dalit Concerns in Forestry

14-16 December 2004



Organisers

Centre for People's Forestry
Centre for World Solidarity
National Dalit Forum

National Conference on Dalit Concerns in Forestry

Conference Proceedings

14th to 16th December 2004

IACIS, Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad

Organized by
Centre for People's Forestry
Centre for World Solidarity
National Dalit Forum

Contents

| | | | | |
|---|---|-----|-----|-----|
| Executive summary (process followed and future direction) | | | | |
| I. | Introduction | ... | ... | 1 |
| II. | Objectives | ... | ... | 1 |
| III. | Themes | ... | ... | 2 |
| IV. | Structure of the conference | ... | ... | 3 |
| V. | Proceedings of the conference | ... | ... | 4 |
| | Day – 1 Inaugural & Status reports presentations | ... | ... | 4 |
| | Day – 2 Theme papers presentations | ... | ... | 12 |
| | Day – 3 Group discussions & adopting conference recommendations | ... | ... | 19 |
| VI. | Recommendations | ... | ... | 25 |
| VII. | Papers presented | | | |
| | 1) Status Reports | ... | ... | 27 |
| | • Gujarat - Mr. Srinivas Mudrakartha | ... | ... | 27 |
| | • Madhya Pradesh- Mr. Gautam Patil | ... | ... | 31 |
| | • Maharashtra - Mr. Avil Govalkar | ... | ... | 40 |
| | • Uttar Pradesh - Mr. RA Diwakar | ... | ... | 46 |
| | • Jharkhand - Ms. Reshma Singh | ... | ... | 51 |
| | • Rajasthan - Mr. Viren Lobo | ... | ... | 58 |
| | • Orissa - Mr. Moheet Naik | ... | ... | 64 |
| | • Andhra Pradesh - Mr. G. Srinivas | ... | ... | 75 |
| | • Uttaranchal - Mr. Sherilal Bhai | ... | ... | 87 |
| | 2) Theme Papers | ... | ... | 91 |
| | • Dr. K. Kameshwara Rao | ... | ... | 91 |
| | • Dr. Archana Prasad | ... | ... | 94 |
| | • Prof. V. Ratna Reddy | ... | ... | 102 |
| | • Prof. PK Biswas | ... | ... | 113 |
| | • Ms. Madhu Sarin | ... | ... | 123 |
| | • Mr. Sajan Thomas | ... | ... | 127 |
| | • Mr. Sourish Jha | ... | ... | 132 |
| | • Prof. P. Krishna Deva Rao | ... | ... | 149 |
| | • Mr. Sharad Kulkarni | ... | ... | 155 |
| | • Mr. G. Satya Srinivas | ... | ... | 161 |
| | • Ms. Jyoti Kumari | ... | ... | 169 |
| | • Mr. VM Ravikumar | ... | ... | 182 |
| | • Dr. Samuel Asir Raj | ... | ... | 197 |
| VIII. | Annexures | ... | ... | 206 |
| | 1) Details of preparations made before the conference | ... | ... | 206 |
| | 2) State coordinators | ... | ... | 207 |
| | 3) Resource persons | ... | ... | 208 |
| | 4) Framework used in preparation of status reports. | ... | ... | 209 |
| | 5) Programme Schedule | ... | ... | 211 |
| | 6) List of participants | ... | ... | 214 |

Executive Summary

The “National Conference on Dalit Concerns in Forestry” was organized by Centre for People’s Forestry, Centre for World Solidarity and National Dalit Forum during 14-16 December 2004 at IACIS, Hyderabad. The conference was aimed at influencing the policy makers, forest bureaucracy and other relevant actors to incorporate measures taking appropriate and adequate cognizance of the livelihood dependence of Dalits on forest resources in the policy/ implementation plans and to strengthen the implementation of such measures in order to safeguard the interests of Dalits especially with regard to livelihood security.

The conference was scheduled for three days. The first day was marked by presentations of *status reports* on the role and space for Dalits in forestry, with an emphasis on their livelihoods, rights over forest resources in various states and state-wise group discussions to foster networking and to help disseminate relevant information and experiences. The second day witnessed panel presentations by resource persons on the *themes* identified followed by group discussions. The third day was earmarked for adoption and endorsement of the conference *Recommendations* based on discussions held on the preceding two days.

A total of 122 individuals representing 58 organizations from 16 states participated in the conference. 9 state level status reports by leading NGOs and 13 theme papers by academicians, researchers and activists were presented and debated upon. The participants were drawn from research, academic institutions, NGOs working on forestry issues, Dalit mass organizations, Dalit activists, Dalit CBO representatives (VSS), NGOs working with Dalits and Adivasis, Forest Department, Government agencies related to forestry, Bi & multilateral funding agencies, Media representatives, etc. Participation in the conference was kept open for individuals as well as institutions. The organizers extended invitations to few organizations, government departments concerned with Dalits, forestry and development in general.

The conference was marked by presentations and deliberations on four broad themes encompassing several decisive and key aspects related to Dalit concerns in forestry:

- a) Joint (Community) Forest Management - Dalits’ Participation
- b) Status of livelihoods of Forest dependent Dalits
- c) Forest Policies and Dalits
- d) Forest Management – A Dalit Perspective

Sri. C. Sivasankara Reddy, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Andhra Pradesh, Sri. K.D.R. Jayakumar, Special Secretary – Environment, Forests, Science and Technology and Sri. M.V. Sastri, Convenor-CWS were guest speakers in the inaugural session of the conference chaired by Dr. D. Suryakumari of CPF.

Session-II was devoted to presentation of status reports from nine states on the status of Dalit livelihoods in forestry sector. The reports were prepared based on a common framework by leading NGOs in the state who have been working on forestry and Dalit issues. In the forenoon, the status reports session was chaired by Ms Madhu Sarin, Consultant and Mr Kanwarjit Singh, CF-CFM, APFD, in which Mr. Srinivas Mudrakartha (Gujarat), Mr. Gautam Patil (Madhya Pradesh), Mr. Avil Govalkar (Maharashtra) made presentations. In the afternoon, Mr. R.A. Diwakar (Uttar Pradesh), Ms. Reshma Singh (Jharkhand), Mr. Viren Lobo (Rajasthan), Mr. Moheet Naik (Orissa) and Mr. G. Srinivas (Andhra Pradesh) made presentations and the session was chaired by Prof. PK Biswas, IIFM, Bhopal and Dr. Archana Prasad, Consultant. Mr. Sherilal Bhai (Uttaranchal) made his presentation on the second day before the session-III began.

On the second day, in Session III, presentation of Theme Papers took place under four broad themes. This session was split into three thematic sessions. The first thematic session - JFM/CFM: Participation - was chaired by Dr. Urmila Pingle, Consultant and Mr. K.S. Dehal, IFS., Addnl. PCCF, Tamil Nadu Forest Dept, in which Dr. K. Kameshwara Rao, Dr. Archana Prasad and Prof. V. Ratna Reddy made presentations. Second thematic session on Status of Livehoods was chaired by Mr. P. Mallikharjuna Rao, IFS., Director - AP. Forest Academy and Dr. K. Kameswara Rao, Andhra University in which Prof. PK Biswas, Ms. Madhu Sarin, Mr. Sourish Jha and Mr. Sajan Thomas made presentations. Themes three and four were on Forest Policies and Dalit Perspectives was chaired by Mr. SBL. Misra, IFS., CCF - FDA and Prof. V. Ratna Reddy, CESS in which Prof. P. Krishna Deva Rao, Mr. G. Satya Srinivas, Mr. Sharad Kulkarni, Ms. Jyoti Kumari, Mr. VM Ravikumar and Dr. Samuel Asir Raj made presentations.

On day 3, session-IV was devoted for discussions on present situation and recommendations in 6 working groups on i) Participation, ii) Livelihoods iii) Policies (Two groups on each theme). The recommendations adopted in the groups were presented and discussed in the plenary in session-V. A panel consisting of Mr. Vijay K. Sardana, SPWD, Mr. Sanjay Upadhyay, ELDF, Mr. MV. Sastri, CWS and Dr. K. Kameshwar Rao, Andhra University provided their views on the recommendations evolved in the groups. M. G. Srinivas and Dr. D. Suryakumari rapporteured for the session and prepared draft recommendations.

Compiled draft recommendations were presented to the plenary by Mr. G. Srinivas. The participants discussed, suggested modifications and ratified draft recommendations in the concluding session chaired by Mr. Lalit Babar, Dr. Samuel Asir Raj and Mr. R. Ravi Kumar.

Few important recommendations adopted during the conference are:

1. Towards enhancing the **Participation** of Dalits in forestry:

- Dalit members of Forest Protection Groups (FPGs) require more training and exposure visits to enhance their participation in forest management and forestry programmes

- Strengthening and activating Dalit leadership in forest management committees should be ensured to facilitate Dalits' enhanced participation and ensure equality and equity in participatory forest management programmes
- Dalits' participation in all aspects of forest management viz., planning, decision making, implementation, benefit sharing, monitoring & evaluation and conflict resolution should be ensured

2. To address the **Livelihoods** needs of the Dalits in forestry:

- Dalits' traditional skills and knowledge related to forest management and documentation of local plant species, their uses and management practices should be promoted to improve their livelihoods
- Dalits should have not only usufruct rights but also ownership rights over forest resources
- Dalit NTFP cooperatives should be formed where necessary and provision for training on value addition and seed capital for marketing the products should be made.

3. The following **Policy** measures are essential for undoing the injustice done to them in forest policies and practices and to safeguard their livelihood rights:

- The National Environment Policy (that presently recognizes the interdependence of tribals and forests more explicitly than of the Dalits) should be amended to recognize the same in the case of Dalits and specify the rights of traditionally forest dependent Dalits on forest resources
- All the protections and provisions enjoyed by tribals in the Scheduled Areas should be extended to the forest dependent Scheduled Castes. Similarly, all the benefits enjoyed by the tribals in the forestry sector should be extended and made available to all the forest dependent Dalits too.

Please contact CPF for copies

040-27154484