

**Workshop on  
“Evolving strategies for holistic development of Chenchu community  
with special emphasis on conservation of ecosystem in NSTR with  
multi stakeholder participation”**

**21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2010  
Hyderabad**



## **Centre for People's Forestry**

### Table of Contents:

Background  
Objectives of the Workshop  
Participation  
Workshop Schedule  
Inaugural Session  
Technical Session I: Sharing Experiences of CHELE project  
Technical Session II: Experiences from Other Tiger Reserves  
Technical Session III: Identifying and Prioritizing issues on Livelihoods,  
Conservation, Policy and other Development issues in NSTR  
Technical Session IV: Strategies  
Concluding Session  
Annexure

## BACKGROUND:

Nagarjunasagar Srisailem Tiger Reserve renamed as the Rajiv Gandhi National Sanctuary is spread over an extent of 3,568sq.km and is the only Tiger Reserve in Andhra Pradesh. It was established in 1978 and elevated to the status of “Tiger Reserve” in the year 1983. This sanctuary area falls in five districts namely, Mahabubnagar, Kurnool, Prakasam, Nalgonda and Guntur. The sanctuary is an abode for floristic and faunal diversity. The reserve is dry deciduous mixed forest along the river Krishna.

This Tiger Reserve is inhabited by the primitive tribal group called “Chenchu”, who live in groups of huts called ‘Gudem/Penta’. Most of them still remain either hunters or gatherers and practice the barter system of economy. The predominant community is “Chenchu” followed by Lambada and Erukula. There are 115 Chenchu *Pentas* (Villages) in the tiger reserve in which Eco Development Committees (EDCs) have been constituted.

“Livelihood Enhancement through sustainable and safe practices of Rock Bee Honey Harvesting through GO-NGO collaboration (CHELE 2006 - 2009)” funded by SDTT is a collaborative project (APFD, ITDA, GCC and NGOs) formulated to exclusively address the livelihoods of Chenchu honey harvesters in NSTR. In the process, some of the traditional skills of Chenchu honey collectors have been honed along with introduction of scientific method of honey harvesting and hygienic method of extraction which have paved the way for the Chenchu honey collectors to earn better income. In addition, this has also encouraged a major portion of unemployed Chenchu youth to return to this profession. Simultaneously, NTFP collectors, especially Chenchu women are being trained on sustainable NTFP collection and value addition to enhance their income levels. In the process, the Chenchu youth are groomed as resource persons to address the needs of the community and forest. As a result, there is improved understanding among the Chenchu community and other stakeholders in

the NSTR to work towards improving the health of forest and the Chenchu community.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP:

1. To showcase the best practices and share the learning's of the CHELE project with regard to sustainable collection of wild honey and other NTFPs.
2. To facilitate cross learning on livelihood and conservation practices among stakeholders of other tiger reserves.
3. To identify and prioritize issues related to holistic development of Chenchu community and conservation of ecosystem in NSTR and develop strategies for addressing the same.

#### PARTICIPATION:

Participation included officials from the forest department, tribal welfare department, Girijan Co-operative Corporation, academia, representatives from NGOs, representatives from other tiger reserves and Chenchu community representatives. A detailed listing of all the participants at the workshop has been reflected in Annexure I.

#### WORKSHOP SCHEDULE:

The workshop was divided into six sessions which included

- a.) Inaugural session
- b.) Technical Session I: Sharing Experiences of CHELE project
- c.) Technical Session II: Experiences from Other Tiger Reserves
- d.) Technical Session III: Identifying and Prioritizing issues on Livelihoods, Conservation, Policy and other Development issues in NSTR
- e.) Technical Session IV: Strategies
- f.) Concluding Session

Further each session was sub-divided into various presentations and discussions. Through these various sessions, the participants worked towards identifying issues and developing strategies for the next phase of the proposal. A copy of the workshop schedule has been enclosed as Annexure 2.

#### INAUGURAL SESSION:

The workshop commenced with Mr. C. Vasu, Senior Programme Officer, CPF warmly welcoming all participants and guests to the workshop. He went on to invite the guests Dr. Urmila Pingle, Managing Trustee, CPF, Dr. Kameshwar Rao, Trustee CPF and Dr. Suvarna, Director Andhra Pradesh Forest Academy (APFA) to the podium and requested Dr. Urmila Pingle, Managing Trustee, CPF to chair the Inaugural session.

The Chenchu community representatives presented a song welcoming the participants to the workshop.

Dr. Urmila Pingle asked the dignitaries and the Chenchu community representatives to light the lamp. A round of self introductions followed.

Dr. Suryakumari, Director, Centre for People's Forestry (CPF) in her inaugural address spoke about the Chenchu livelihood enhancement project (CHELE) with special focus on wild honey harvesters. She explained that the project had been formulated in 2006 in response to the need articulated by the Chenchu community in the training programme organized by CPF in 2005. The project had been designed as a collaborative initiative and suitable strategies were developed to take up the implementation in a collaborative way. The project in its third year now had completed most of the tasks proposed in the proposal. She briefly explained the activities undertaken as a part of the project. She spoke about the external impact assessment study undertaken by Poverty Learning Foundation to understand the impact of the CHELE project.

She explained that one of the primary purposes of the workshop was to identify and prioritize issues related to holistic development of Chenchu community and conservation of ecosystem in NSTR and develop strategies for addressing the same. She went on to add that in the past three years while implementing the proposed interventions CPF had developed a deep understanding of the present scenario and had thus come to the conclusion that only a holistic development approach would ensure the upliftment of the Chenchu community. She elaborated on the expected

inputs from the workshop like identifying specific intervention areas, utilization of NREGS funds, utilizing existing government schemes in an integrated way etc.

She appreciated the progressive role played by the government. She expressed that CPF did not want to replicate the work being done by any government agency instead it sought to play a facilitating and complimentary role to these agencies. Finally she expressed hope that the workshop would contribute towards the formulation of the second phase proposal.

Dr. Suvarna, Director, APFA in her opening remarks introduced herself to the participants of the workshop. She shared her experiences of training for the Indian Forestry Service at Dornala range at NSTR in the mid nineties. These experiences helped her to understand the deep bond shared by the Chenchu community and the forest. She expressed a special interest in the issues identified and suggestions generated from the workshop. Though prior commitments didn't allow her to participate full time in the workshop she expressed her desire to remain involved in the workshop and the future activities undertaken as a follow up to the workshop.

In his address, Dr Kameshwar Rao, Trustee CPF and Head of Department, Environment Science, Andhra University stated that the workshop as an important milestone. He said he was aware of the research and activities undertaken by CPF and its partner NGOs over the past three years that had finally led up to the workshop. He expressed hope that the discussions with participants from other tiger reserves would provide inputs that could be utilized to benefit the Chenchu community and help generate a model that could be replicated across the tiger reserves in India.

Dr Urmila Pingle, Managing Trustee, CPF and Member National Tiger Conservation Authority, India in her opening remarks recalled that during the rule of the Nizams the present Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary, also known as the Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR) was historically known as the Chenchu Reserve. She explained that the Phase I of the CHELE project focused on sustainable rock bee honey harvesting and collection and value addition to NTFPs but the next phase would try and focus on the holistic development of Chenchus with special emphasis on ecosystem conservation. She mentioned that issues like land alienation, agriculture,

livestock, NREGS fund utilization, Forest Rights Act and government schemes were to be discussed in detail for the holistic development of Chenchu community

#### TECHNICAL SESSION I: SHARING EXPERIENCES OF CHELE PROJECT

The session was chaired by Dr. Kameshwar Rao and Mr. Uday Shankar, Advisor, CPF.

Presenters:

- 1.) Introduction to NSTR and the communities living there : Mr. Thusli Rao, Assistant Conservator Forest, Biodiversity, NSTR, Andhra Pradesh Forest Department (APFD)
- 2.) Overview of the CHELE project : Mr. C. Vasu, Senior Programme Officer, CPF
- 3.) Highlights of the Impact Assessment Study of CHELE project : Mr. Narsimha Reddy, CEO, Poverty Learning Foundation
- 4.) Experience sharing by Chenchu Community:
  - Sri Muthyalu, Appaipelli
  - Sri Chinna Gangaiah, Ippalapalli
  - Smt Lingamma, Vatavallapalli
  - Smt Eshwarrama, Appapur
  - Smt Ankamma, Chintala
  - Sri Basawaiah, Palutla
  - Sri Swamy, Amarabad
  - Sri Pedda Anjaiah, Hanumanpuram

Presentation 1: Introduction to NSTR and the communities living there : Mr. Thusli Rao, Assistant Conservator Forest, Biodiversity, NSTR, Andhra Pradesh Forest Department (APFD)

The session started with a presentation on “Chenchus the Transitional Primitive Tribe of Nallamalai ”by Mr. Thusli Rao. He appreciated the work done by CPF for the upliftment of Chenchus and initiative taken by CPF to organize a workshop to develop the phase II proposal. He stated that the initiative of listing the Chenchu community as a Primitive Tribal Group by the government was of considerable importance. Interspaced with a lot of photographs, the presentation covered aspects like the spatial distribution of Chenchus, habitat, lifestyle, culture, religious beliefs, economic conditions and livelihood patterns. Through the presentation he highlighted the work of the forest department like the formation of 115 Eco Development Committees (EDC) and the preparation of micro-plans for them, habitat enrichment works like check dams, percolation tanks etc., conservation based education initiatives, agriculture development etc. He noted that there had been an improvement in the vegetation pattern over the past few years. He opined that the lands were more suited to cultivating medicinal plants rather than agriculture. He identified issues affecting the Chenchu community. He stated that alcohol consumption and drug addiction was the most prevalent health hazard among the Chenchus. He also commented that high migration among Chenchus was mainly due to un-sustainable harvesting practices. He listed the needs of the Chenchu community as those of domestic dwellings, grazing grounds, land for agriculture and water for domestic and agricultural needs. He emphasized on the need for ‘Conservation Based Development’ and providing alternative livelihoods to forest fringe dwellers for the conservation of forest. He stressed that continuous monitoring and also regeneration activities for forest resources should be undertaken for sustainability. He explained that any initiative taken up without a thorough understanding of the cultural aspects of

the Chenchu community would not succeed. Traditionally the Chenchus are very skilled archers. He suggested that CPF work towards encouraging the Chenchus to participate in Olympic events. The presentation concluded with Mr Rao suggesting that CPF focus on marketing of vermicompost and organizing trainings on honey bee keeping.

For further details a copy of the presentation has been enclosed as Annexure-3.

Comments and Discussions:

Q: What components should be incorporated into the next phase proposal so that it complements the works taken up by the forest department?

A: CPF could work towards playing a supportive role in NREGS implementation as multi stakeholder participation required for development.

C: It was pointed out by a participant that unless Chenchus are involved in consultations and implementation of government schemes, the schemes would not work.

Presentation 2: Overview of the CHELE project: Mr. C. Vasu, Senior Programme Officer, CPF

Mr. Vasu, in his presentation titled “Overview of the CHELE project” described the background, rationale and the objectives of the project. He listed out the major accomplishments of the project such as trainings on sustainable honey harvesting practices, grooming of resource persons, establishment of two support service centers, NTFP value addition trainings etc. He also spoke about the experiences and the learning’s from the project. He observed that the gap between the community and government official had decreased considerably due to CPF interventions. Also the scientific method of honey harvesting had improved the income of the community and encouraged the younger Chenchus to take up this profession. Alcohol consumption among the Chenchus too had decreased due to the awareness created by CPF. Subsequently he also shared aspects of the impact assessment study of the CHELE project conducted by Poverty Learning Foundation. He explained that the past three

years of working with the Chenchus had emphasized the belief that only a holistic approach would ensure the development and prosperity of the community.

For further details a copy of the presentation has been enclosed as Annexure-4.

Comments and Discussions:

Q: How many women were trained on stitching honey harvesters dress and how many orders on the dresses have been received by the women?

A: Nine women were trained on stitching and the numbers of dresses stitched were 130 dresses

Presentation 3: Highlights of the Impact Assessment Study of CHELE project Mr. Narsimha Reddy, CEO, Poverty Learning Foundation

Mr. Narsimha Reddy, CEO, Poverty Learning Foundation presented the findings of the Impact Assessment study of the CHELE project. The presentation described the context and rationale of the project, the initiatives and the activities of the CHELE project. He spoke about the methodology adopted to conduct the study and also the explained the profile of the sample households. He explained the project performance with statistical data. He noted the changes in the livelihood patterns and honey harvest due to CPF interventions. He highlighted the areas of concern like the decrease of honey harvesters due to old age and death, the reduction in honey quantities, decline of NTFPs, etc. He stressed on the fact that since the lifespan of Chenchus is limited to 60 years, policy level changes to decrease the age limit of the old age pension scheme started by the state government was required. Institutional arrangements too need to be strengthened. He identified the need for trainings on livelihood activities, NTFP collection & value addition and livestock rearing and the utilization of opportunities arising from FRA and NREGS as thrust areas for CPF. The socio-cultural aspects of the Chenchu community too need to be addressed. There was an urgent requirement to evolve a process to issue identity cards for the Chenchu community. He noted that creating awareness on the maintenance of the honey harvesting toolkit is necessary. He also mentioned that there was a great demand for rock bee honey harvesting trainings. A prominent impact of the project was that the harvesters who earlier used to spend one week for honey harvest were now spending only two days to collect the same quantity. He concluded by highlighting the need to strengthen the Support

Service Centers. For further details a copy of the presentation has been enclosed as Annexure-5.

Comments and Discussions:

C: A participant commented that the final impact report should link the results to Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and also segregate the Chenchu community representatives on basis of their income into below poverty line and above poverty line households.

C. It was suggested that report provide range of income of the respondents since the difference between highest and the lowest income was very huge and skewed.

Presentation 4: Experience sharing by Chenchu Community:

Sri Muthyalu, Appaipelli

Sri Chinna Gangaiah, Ippalapalli

Smt Lingamma, Vatavallapalli

Smt Eshwarama, Appapur

Smt Ankamma, Chintala

Sri Basawaiah, Palutla

Sri Swamy, Amarabad

Sri Pedda Anjaiah, Hanumanpuram

The community members in their speeches explained in detail the traditional method of honey harvesting. They compared the traditional method of honey harvesting with the scientific sustainable method of honey harvesting. They observed that the scientific method had helped increase their income and also the quality of honey and wax had improved. This method of scientific harvesting enabled them to harvest honey from the same colony twice in a month. They believed that the change in climate and various other factors like forest degradation etc had reduced the honey colonies. They shared their experiences on collection and value addition of NTFPs. They commented that through the CHELE project they had learned about the grading system of different types of gum, adda leaf plate making and value addition to amla

and tamarind. They observed that the forest resources had depleted over the years, mainly due to unsustainable harvesting practices of other communities. They identified the main problem faced by the Chenchu community as pressure from the forest department on relocation, harassment from government departments especially the police and also harassment from the naxals, excessive alcohol consumption and domination from other communities. They expressed a desire that the government would pass a Government Order that would allow only the Chenchus to collect NTFPs from the forest.

Comments and Discussions:

Q: Is it possible to identify honey harvested by traditional methods from the honey harvested by scientific sustainable method?

A: Yes it is. The taste varies slightly.

Q: Does the honey harvester's group/cluster have any savings?

A : Yes around Rs 35000/-.

Q: How can CPF help increase the income from NTFPs?

A: Provide the community with value addition trainings.

Q: The community should not remain so dependent of forests anymore, it is time to move towards other sources of livelihood like agriculture.

A: The *patta* lands are in the control of other communities like the lambadas so the Chenchus are unable to do agriculture.

Q: Why did the Chenchus give their land to the Lambadas?

A: We were forced to give our land to meet out personal expenses.

Q: Have the Chenchus been approached by other communities like the Lambadas to conduct trainings on honey harvesting?

A: No were have never been approached.

Q: Can CPF provide us with a loan to start a unit/shop to sell honey and NTFP products?

A: CPF can help, only if the initiative is taken by the Chenchu community.

## TECHNICAL SESSION II: EXPERIENCES FROM OTHER TIGER RESERVES

The post lunch session began with Mr. Thulsi Rao releasing the documentary movie produced by CPF titled 'The Chenchu in Transition'. The documentary was then screened.

Presenters:

1.) Experiences from Simlipal tiger Reserve

Mr. Jadunath Giri, Gram Swaraj

Mr. B. Biharisingh, Community Representative, Munda tribe

Mr. Ratikantha Satru Shal, Community Representative, Khadia tribe

## Presentation 1: Experiences from Simlipal tiger Reserve

Mr. Jadunath Giri from Gram Swaraj, an NGO based in the Mayurbhaj district with an outreach in the Simlipal biosphere reserve explained the activities undertaken by Gram Swaraj. The NGO, he explained works towards natural resource conservation, sustainable harvesting of NTFPs, promoting sustainable livelihoods, participatory forest management and revitalizing local health traditions. He gave a detailed profile of the Mayurbhaj district and the Simlipal Biosphere Reserve. He spoke about the tribal population of the district and their livelihood patterns. With 40% NTFP collection was the main source of livelihood, 24% were dependent on agriculture and another 24% on wage labor. Animal husbandry, business, selling of fuel wood etc were the other source of income. He spoke about the Khadia tribe known for their honey harvesting skills. The Khadia tribe is a hunting and gathering tribe. The main source of income for them was honey collection and NTFPs. Infact 75% were dependent on NTFP collection as their source of income. A majority of them were landless. He highlighted the similarity between the Chenchus and the Khadia tribe. A copy of the presentation has been enclosed as Annexure 6.

### Experience sharing by community representatives from Simlipal Tiger Reserve

Mr. B. Biharisingh, Community Representative, Munda tribe

Mr. Ratikantha Satru Shal, Community Representative, Khadia tribe

The community members spoke about the tribes like the Santhals, Gond Bathudi, Kol, Khadias, Mundas which formed the major tribal population of the 61 villages in the Simlipal tiger reserve. The reserve had rich wildlife consisting of elephants, tigers, leopards, chitals, deer, Indian bison, sambar, sambhars, rhesus monkey etc. They explained in detail the traditional method of honey harvesting of the Khadia tribe. It involved burning identified plants to create smoke to scare away the bees. They then collected honey for the hives. They also performed a *pooja* and dance before the honey harvest process. However they went on to explain the scientific method of

honey harvesting adopted by them. They had learnt the scientific method at an exposure trip to Madhya Pradesh. They shared their experiences on NTFP collection. The major NTFPs collected by them are sal leaf and seeds, mahua flower and seed, grass, arrowroot, gum, resin, medicinal plants and different types of roots and tubers. They listed NTFP collection, livestock rearing, agriculture labor, honey collection and NREGS as their major sources of livelihood. A few tribals also practiced agriculture, but the number was very few. They mentioned that education among the tribal was very less. Though there were three schools in the village there were no teachers to guide the students. They also spoke about the lack of hospital facilities. They spoke about the local traditional practice of hunting especially in the month of March after which the catch was equally shared among the villagers. They said it had been observed that the Santhal tribe shared a good relationship with the Naxals. They concluded by stating that the state forest department and the tribals didn't share a good relationship.

Comments and Discussions:

Q: How much do you earn from honey and wax.

A: Honey is sold for between Rs 70-100/kg and wax for Rs 150/kg.

Q: Do you require trainings on scientific methods of honey harvesting? Are you willing to learn honey harvesting from the Chenchus and also have the honey harvesters dress stitched

Ans: Yes we would be very keen to undergo training.

Q: Do you do any value additions to the NTFPs?

A: No. Since most of the NTFP is used for self consumption.

The day ended with the Chenchu community representatives presenting a short play on the major issues faced by the community in the NSTR region. The play depicted the harassment the Chenchus faced from the police as well as the Naxals. It also portrayed the pressure the community faced from the state forest department on relocating from the forests. The play ended on a positive note showing the livelihood enhancement of Chenchus due to trainings given on sustainable honey harvesting practices and value addition to NTFPs.

## DAY 2

The day started with Mr. Vasu welcoming back the participants and extending a special welcome to Mr. Sanjay Upadhyay, Trustee, CPF and Advocate Supreme Court, Environment Law and Development Foundation.

Ms. Diana Joseph, Programme Officer, CPF and Mr. E. Poorna Chander, Programme Officer, CPF presented a brief review of the first day of the session.

TECHNICAL SESSION III: IDENTIFYING AND PRIORITIZING ISSUES ON LIVELIHOODS, CONSERVATION, POLICY AND OTHER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES IN NSTR

The session was chaired by Dr. Urmila Pingle.

Presenters

- 1.) Presentation and Discussion on Livelihoods and Conservation: Dr. D. Suryakumari, Director, CPF
- 2.) Presentation and Discussion on Policies: Mr. Sanjay Upadhyay, Advocate-Supreme Court, Environment Law and Development Foundation
- 3.) Presentation and Discussion on NTFPs in NSTR and Marketing of NTFPs, Mr. V. Sitaram, Deputy Manager, Girijan Cooperative Corporation, Srisailam
- 4.) Presentation and discussion on other development issues, Mr Uday Shankar, Advisor, CPF

Presentation 1: Presentation and Discussion on Livelihoods and Conservation: Dr. D. Suryakumari, Director, CPF

The session began with Dr. D Suryakumari engaging the participants in a discussion on livelihoods and conservation. She spoke about the relocation issues facing the community present in the core areas. She highlighted the dependency of the community on NTFPs and other works like livestock, labor and agriculture. She also spoke about the high levels of migration prevalent among the Chenchu community. She asked the community members to gather information on the land they had leased out to other communities and the land they had received under the FRA. She asked them to ponder on the methods to get these lands back from other communities. She mentioned that the land if used appropriately could help reduce dependency on the forests. She asked the community to think of different activities that could be undertaken by accessing government schemes. She asked the community why the government scheme of providing livestock had not been successful and measure that need to be taken to make it a success. She spoke about the need to train Chenchus on grading of gum and value addition of NTFPs. She requested the GCC to focus on the same and also on the price index of NTFPs. She asked the Chenchus the measures that need to be taken to strengthen the EDC and steps required to prevent other communities from harvesting NTFPs. She mentioned that all the stakeholders need to plan how the NREGS funds could be accessed for natural regeneration and afforestation. She mentioned that a Participatory Performance Assessment study needs to be undertaken to understand the impact of the CHELE project on the community. She spoke about the need to form local biodiversity committees and understand the rules and regulations applicable so that limits could be set on external extraction of resources. She asked the community to comment on the number of villages, appropriate locations, EDC to be taken up for forest landscape conservation as a part of the next phase of the proposal. She concluded by requesting the community members to speak on the help they require from CPF on different issues.

Comments and Discussions:

Q: Can any development activities be taken up on the lands received under the individual FRA claims? Can grazing lands be developed on lands under the community FRA claims?

A: This can be done. However our focus should be on conservation and livelihoods. Presently food security is the top priority. Organic farming and agro-forestry works can be taken up by mobilizing NREGS funds.

Q: The Chenchu community receives only seasonal income from NTFPs. We request for trainings on agriculture practices to enhance the livelihood.

A: The trainings can be conducted. As the first step one responsible person from each village should select 5-10 representatives for training on agriculture practices.

Q: There are problems in local transportation due to lack of infrastructure like roads. If CPF could help in tackling this problem

A: CPF can facilitate the process by trying to channel NREGS funds to road laying through the concerned department.

C: There is a need to collect information on lands owned and leased by Chenchus for the success of this workshop.

Presentation 2: Presentation and Discussion on Policies: Mr. Sanjay Upadhyay, Advocate- Supreme Court, Environment Law and Development Foundation

Mr. Sanjay Upadhyay, Trustee, CPF and Advocate, Supreme Court in his presentation titled *Protected Areas Governance and Law-Some concerns of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)* spoke about the various nuance of the law affecting the Chenchu community, their legal rights and areas of concern. He stated that Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve had been renamed as the Rajiv Gandhi Wildlife Sanctuary. He asked the participants to explain their understanding of the word sanctuary. He emphasized on the need to understand the legal meaning of the word sanctuary and the rights community holds in a sanctuary. The community needs to understand why the situation changes once a place is declared a sanctuary. He went on to explain that the word tiger reserve closely associated with the Nagarjunasagar Srisailam Tiger Reserve (NSTR) had no legal entity until amendments were made in the Wildlife Act in 2006. He explained that often the tiger was portrayed as a flagship conservation species to also ensure the conservation of other species in the forest area. He

enlightened the participants the before 1991 a government could declare an areas as a sanctuary without settling the rights of the locals. The amendment to the Wildlife Act in 1991 made it compulsory for the government to declare a notification of intention, ensure settlement of the locals before declaration of an area as a sanctuary. He highlighted that it was only in 1995 when WWF filed a case that the rights of the settlers in sanctuaries declared before 1991 were defined and settled. NSTR was established in 1979 and given the status of tiger reserve in 1983 the rights of the locals had not been settled. In response to a Supreme Court query, in 1997 the government of Andhra Pradesh filed the affidavit declaring the situation of the settlement process in court. The court then allowed the AP government to announce the 'Proclamation Notification' so that NSTR could finally be declared a sanctuary. Here Mr. Sanjay pointed out the discrepancies in the affidavit namely 'Rights have been determined by the Forest Department within this Sanctuary' which was technically not possible. The law provides that the rights have to be settled by the District Collector and the state forest department is infact one of the claimants to the land. He explained the *due process* in four steps a necessity while creating or declaring zones as inviolate areas. The four steps are as follows a) Proclamation Notification; b) Claims; c) Settlement of claims; and d) Declaration. He elaborated that unless the Recognition of Rights process and acquisition of land is complete, scientific evidence on irreversible damage to forests due to human presence is proved and agreed upon, a consensus reached on co-existence of locals and wildlife as impossible, an informed consent on relief and rehabilitation established and location and facilities for rehabilitation prepared an area/zone cannot be declared as an inviolate area. He asked the community representatives to be aware of this process and asked them to bring to his notice incidents that had happened outside the purview of these guidelines. He asked the participants to recall if there had been a final or formal notification by the AP government on declaration of the sanctuary.

The amendment in 2006 to the Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA) and the Forest Rights Act (FRA) had lead to crucial legal categorizations of wildlife parks and sanctuaries. He listed them out to be

- Critical Wildlife Habitat- governed by FRA
- Critical Tiger Habitat- governed by WLPA

- Community Forest Resource- governed by FRA
- Conservation Reserves- governed by WLPA
- Community Reserves and - governed by WLPA
- Ecologically Sensitive Areas- governed by EPA (Environment Protection Act) and Indian Court

He assured the community members that declaring an area as a Critical Tiger Habitat did not necessarily make it an 'inviolable area'. It required the due process explained earlier to be followed only after which could an area of the national park or sanctuary be declared as inviolable. He added that in a sanctuary the District Collector after consultations with the Chief Wildlife Warden can allow the community to live in the area. However if an area is declared as a National Park, under the Wildlife Act the rights of the community are abolished.

He explained the terminology core (areas where tigers breed) and buffer (dispersal zone) zones used in reference to sanctuaries and national parks. Under the law only the core area can be declared inviolable and the due process mentioned earlier needs to be followed. The Chenchu community could have rights in the buffer area.

Pre-independence the tribal policy of Hyderabad state in an act known as Tribal Area Regulation of 1949 had notified tribal areas which included the present Chenchu Habitat. This notification could be used to claim parts of the core and buffer zone as community areas under the FRA. Since the Chenchus were declared as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) they would be treated specially. For claiming the areas under community claims, the Chenchus would have to submit community claims to the gram sabhas in all the five districts that are part of the NSTR. This would also help unify the community and also create a uniform process. He concluded by saying that the law can be used to benefit the community. The presentation has been enclosed as Annexure 7.

Presentation 3: Presentation and Discussion on NTFPs in NSTR and Marketing of NTFPs, Mr. V. Sitaram, Deputy Manager, Girijan Cooperative Corporation, Srisailam

Mr. V. Sitaram, Deputy Manager, Girijan Cooperative Corporation spoke about the history of the establishment of GCC, its objectives, core functions and organizational structure. He described in detail the functioning of the divisional office of GCC at

Srisailam, part of the NSTR region. He explained that earlier GCC had a monopoly over 125 NTFPs that has now been reduced to a mere 25. The GCC had established around 40 daily requirement depots to meet the marketing needs of the community. GCC has also initiated a scheme of giving loans for agriculture. Around 2000 households have been given loans. GCC has also conducted special trainings on scientific tapping of gum to Gum collectors, other NTFP collectors and honey harvesters in collaboration with Kovel Foundation, Visakhapatnam and CPF, Hyderabad. Due to the government development activities, we at GCC have observed that dependency on NTFPs has reduced and less products are being sold to the GCC outlets. GCC is planning to launch regeneration activities for trees producing gum and sought cooperation from the community. He mentioned that only if GCC is involved in training conducted by CPF on honey harvesting would they be able to identify genuine honey harvesters. He emphasized on the need of follow up after trainings. He observed that the life expectancy among Chenchus is very low, only around 40 years. Also nutrition deficiency and TB is a major problem among the community. He requested the Chenchus to access nutritious food being sold at the GCC counters. Mr. Sitaram appreciated the interaction with the community representatives and was extremely happy to receive comments and feedback from the Chenchu community. He said that if there were any more issues that required his attention, he would visit the village to discuss it further.

Comments and Discussions:

Q: Why the GCC offers only Rs 80/kg for honey while other buyers offer between Rs 200-250/-kg.

A: The GCC offer price for honey when compared to other neighbouring states was the highest. Recently the GCC had hiked the rate to Rs 90/-kg. Though the middle men offered more money they often cheated the innocent Chenchus by weighing the honey incorrectly. He would discuss this issue of honey pricing with higher officials. He also offered to provide training on gum extraction to the community.

Q: Request to establish a GCC procurement centre for each set of 35 thandas. This would ensure that the GCC is centrally located to all the 35 thandas. It would be of great help to the Chenchus.

A: If the Chenchu community representative was interested in procuring the NTFPs and honey, the GCC can offer him a loan and also a salaried job of a GCC sales representative on contract basis.

Q: Why the distribution of Giri cards is only 11%.

A: Expressed surprise and mentioned that as far as the information he had, Giri cards had been distributed to all Chenchus. He requested the Chenchus with Giri card to ask the officials at the GCC counters to enter the details of the transactions on the Giri card. The Giri card if used appropriately would help as identity proof and thus in the long run help in issuing ID cards.

Q: The procurement centre officials refuse to take the NTFPs citing reasons of bad quality.

A: He requested the community members to give him the details of the village where such problems existed and also contact him directly if there are such problems.

Presentation 4: Presentation and discussion on other development issues, Mr Uday Shankar, Advisor, CPF

Mr. Uday Shankar spoke about development issues on concern for the Chenchus that have not been covered in the other presentations/discussions. He highlighted issues that need to be focused on for the holistic development of Chenchus. Nutrition is one of the most important aspects. A focus on diet would help increase Chenchu lifespan. A delivery in hospital would ensure that the younger generation of Chenchus would remain healthy. He expressed the need to develop strong collaborations with government officials to access government schemes for development. Land issues too were of extreme importance for upliftment of Chenchus. CPF needs to train the community members to how to avail these schemes. CPF should explain the different laws and rules to the community so that they are not exploited. CPF should create awareness on the link between ecology, conservation and livelihoods of the poor at state and central level. The Chenchus have recently received land under FRA. CPF needs to train the Chenchus on agro forestry, organic farming and biodiversity conservation issues. Chenchus should be trained on establishing Seed banks. He spoke about the importance of the Basic Capabilities Index which covered aspects like infant mortality, education, nutrition, health and hygiene, social and economic issues etc. Livestock rearing and livestock health too were issues to be dealt with. Trainings

on sustainable harvesting of NTFPs should be provided to Chenchus. He emphasized the importance of collaborations with government and non government agencies for the development of Chenchus. He concluded by saying that if these aspects are covered then holistic development of Chenchus is ensured.

#### TECHNICAL SESSION IV: STRATEGIES

Dr. D Suryakumari requested all the participants to divide themselves into two groups. Based on the earlier sessions and the personal experiences of the community, she requested the Chenchus to prepare a presentation based on the thematic issues of livelihood, conservation, other development issues and legal aspects. The groups were given 45 minutes to prepare the presentation.

Two groups consisting of the workshop participants and Chenchu community representatives were formed. The two group was facilitated by Mr. Saleem, Chief Functionary, CONARE and Mr. Shiva Reddy, Chief Functionary, CHRD.

## CONCLUDING SESSION

Dr. D Suryakumari warmly welcomed and invited the guests, Mr. Hitesh Malhotra, IFS, Chief Wildlife Warden,, APFD; Mr. K.S. Reddy, IFS, Additional PCCF-WL,APFD; Mr. Chinna Veerabadrudu, Addl Director-Tribal Welfare & GM, TRICOR (Tribal Corporation) and Dr. Suvarna, Director, Andhra Pradesh Forest Academy to be seated at the podium. She requested Mr. Uday Shankar and Mr. Sanjay Upadyay to chair the session.

Dr. Suryakumari then introduced the CHELE project to the dignitaries. She spoke about the history of the project and the discussions held with the various stakeholders like the Forest department, Chief Wildlife Warden, ITDA, etc while formulating the proposal. She spent some time explaining the objectives and the purpose of the workshop. She highlighted the activities and accomplishments of the project. She also spoke about the impact assessment study of the CHELE project undertaken by an external agency-the Poverty Learning Foundation. She also gave a brief review on the proceedings of the past sessions of the workshop. She identified issues like identity card, sustainable marketing of NTFPs, land alienation, FRA, scarcity of fodder, high alcohol consumption and NREGS as the thrust areas for Chenchu development. She spoke about the issues and the opportunities affecting the Chenchu community. She explained the concept of the holistic development of Chenchus identified as a key theme for the next phase of the proposal. She concluded by expressing hope on continued co-operation, collaboration and support from all government agencies.

Mr. Sanjay Upadhyay then requested Mr. Uday Shankar to co-ordinate the presentation made by the community.

The Chenchu community representatives made presentations before the panel.

In their presentation the community members spoke about the CHELE project, the activities undertaken like sustainable honey harvesting trainings, NTFP value addition trainings etc; establishment of the Support Service Centre and the benefits received from these initiatives. They also spoke about the problems faced by them. The highlights are as follows

- One of the main problems the Chenchus faced was that of identity. They were often questioned by officials about whether they were indeed genuine Chenchus. They requested the officials to provide them with identity cards.
- The livelihood options for the Chenchus were very limited. So they requested the officials to give preference to Chenchus for government jobs.
- Health too was a primary concern for the community. Most Chenchus did not have access to health workers and health centers. They requested all present to consider this problem.
- Most Chenchu villages did not have drinking water sources. They were dependent on forest water bodies for their daily needs.
- The Chenchus did not own pucca houses. If provisions could be made to solve this problem.
- Agricultural lands too were not made available to Chenchus. Though the Chenchus had approached the ITDA, Mandal Officers and even the Collector it had not lead to results.
- They requested the officials to provide agricultural inputs like oil engines, bullock carts etc
- They faced a lot of pressure on relocating from the forests.
- Domination by other communities over control land and access to water bodies.
- FRA claims of most of the Chenchus were not yet settled.
- They requested that roads be layed for better connectivity.
- Requested the government to provide employment throughout the year.
- They expressed a need for trainings on cultivation methods.
- Requested that the state government pass a Government Order allowing only Chenchus to collect NTFPs.

- Tiger trackers employed by the forest department were not receiving wages for the past 6-7 months. Officials were requested to look in to this matter.
- The forest department had set up a restaurant called Sheetal. However only people from other communities were employed there. Officials were requested to create employment opportunities for Chenchus there.

Mr. Hitesh Malhotra, IFS, Chief Wildlife Warden, APFD in his address said that he would like to respond to the issues raised by the community. He also expressed happiness over the confidence developed by the Chenchu community. He had earlier interacted at length with them in 1989 and between then and now he could see positive changes in the community. The Chenchus talking about agriculture was a indicator of their development. The highlights of his message are as follows

- Land alienation is a major concern. He suggested that the Chenchus approach ITDA and the revenue department to solve this problem.
- Chenchus should hone their skills on bee keeping and collection and value addition of NTFPs.
- Employment for Chenchus had been generated by hiring them as tiger trackers and tiger protectors. Though a few problems like the late payment of wages had cropped up, the problem had now been solved. He requested those employed as trackers and protectors to open back accounts to facilitate smooth transfer of wages.
- The forest department would work towards creating government jobs for Chenchus.
- Most land allocations had taken place through the FRA and in case of discrepancies, he suggested the Chenchus to approach their gram sabhas.
- Relocation of Chenchus from forests would take place only with their consent. He assured them that the forest department would not force Chenchus to relocate and in case the Chenchus decide to relocate he said that the choice of location would be decided by the Chenchus themselves.
- Eleven crores had been sanctioned for NREGS in the Chenchu area. He requested the Chenchus to work on NREG schemes to earn wages.

- Eco Development Committee's (EDC) should be strengthened to facilitate NREGS. Awareness should also be created in other EDCs about NREGS.
- He assured the Chenchus that any usufruct rights of the forest were the first right of the Chenchus especially when it was concerned to NTFPs.
- EDC should be strengthened to control NTFP collection by other communities. He asked the Chenchus to be more proactive in protecting their forests.
- He asked the Chenchus to focus not only on agriculture and land but also other sources of livelihoods.

He then requested Mr. K.S. Reddy, IFS, Additional PCCF-WL,APFD to translate his speech into Telugu.

#### Comments and Discussion

Q: I am a Chenchu tribal who works as a tiger tracker. For the past few months I have not received any wages. We are also facing pressure from the forest department on relocation.

A: Necessary steps have been taken to tackle this problem. In a months time all dues will be paid.

Q: There have been a lot of problems for FRA claimants. For example certain Chenchu families relocated to Sarnapalli from their location due to problems caused by extremists and were denied claims under FRA. How can this situation be rectified.

A: The forest department cannot do much here, since the claims were rejected by their own village gram sabha.

In his message Mr. Chinna Veerabadrudu, Addl Director-Tribal Welfare & GM, TRICOR recalled his experience of working as a district officer in the early nineties. He explained that during that time he worked on agricultural and other issues with Chenchus and shared a great bond with the field director Mr. Sudhakar. Their mutual regard for each other led them to invite each other to FD and ITDA meetings. He assured the Chenchus of the ITDAs commitment towards them. He spoke on the following issues

- The importance of all government departments working together to enhance the livelihood of Chenchus.
- There is a need to create awareness on the various government schemes specially designed for the tribals like the primary education schemes (Rajiv Vidya Mission) health schemes, housing schemes etc
- The ITDA and the Tribal Welfare department had launched a lot of schemes on education, he requested the Chenchus to avail these schemes.
- He mentioned that the Tribal Welfare department developed a proposal for setting up residential schools for girls at Dornala (Eklavya Model Residential School). It was in the final stages of approval.
- He requested the Chenchus to send their children to attend the government schools already present in Mannanur, Erragondapalem, Nandyal and Macharla.
- He offered 100% grant support to the Chenchus for purchasing land as well as constructing pucca houses.
- He asked the Chenchus to prepare a list of Chenchus without land and give the same to the tribal welfare department. The department would try to do the needful.
- He also assured the community that the department would provide agricultural inputs to the Chenchus.
- He emphasized that relocation should be taken place only with the consent of the Chenchus. He stated that essential infrastructure should be built before relocation takes place.
- He spoke about the need for awareness creation on FRA to the Chenchus.
- He spoke about the hardware-software mechanism. The hardware consisted of lands, wells and roads while software consisted of plantations, cultivation and facilitation. He emphasized the role of the NGOs in implementing this mechanism.

He concluded by sharing the information that recently the forest department had permitted the tribal welfare department to make provisions for laying underground cable to provide electricity to the Chenchus.

Comments and Discussion:

Q: One acre of land is insufficient for Chenchus

A: If the Chenchus provided the ITDA with a brief plan or proposal, the ITDA would provide the initial investment required.

The chairperson of the session, Mr. Uday Shankar summed up the session by identifying awareness on legal rights, health, education, alternative livelihoods, livestock rearing, NTFP value addition, watershed programmes and net planning as the areas CPF should incorporate into the next phase of the proposal that deals with the holistic development of Chenchus. The workshop ended with Mr. Bruslin Mento, Senior Programme Officer, CPF extending a vote of thanks to the dignitaries, chair, all participants, the staff of CPF and finally APFA for hosting the workshop.