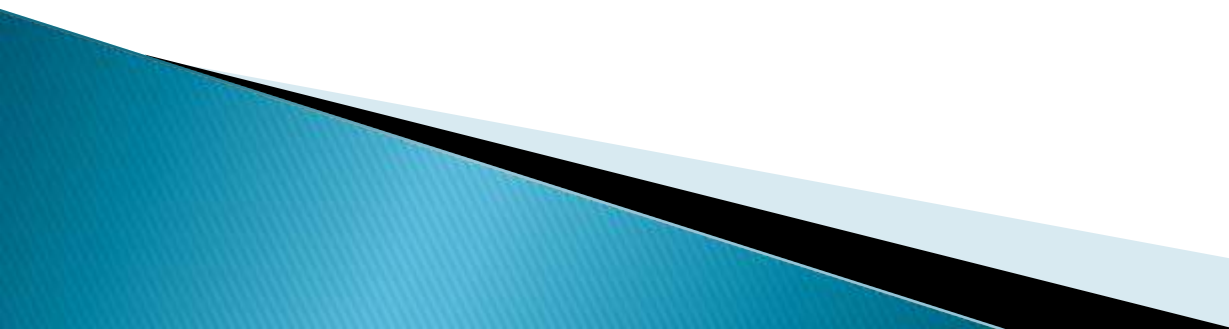


# COMMUNITY BASED SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT: ROLES AND CONTRIBUTION OF INDIGENOUS WOMEN

VERONICA DUNGUNG  
ODISHA, INDIA

# Background

- ▶ In India, 461 ethnic groups of people are officially recognized as the **Scheduled Tribes**. These peoples are considered to be India's indigenous peoples.
  - ▶ The Indigenous people are usually referred to as the '*Adivasies*'. With an estimated population of over 84.3 million, they comprise 8.2% of the total population
  - ▶ Of all the states of India, Odisha has the largest number of tribes, as many as 62 in terms of distinctive indigenous groups. And in terms of percentage they constitute an impressive 24 percent of the total population of the state. More than half of their population is concentrated in three Districts of Koraput (undivided), Sundargarh and Mayurbhanj
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# Community Based Forest Management

- In Odisha, community forest protection and management initiatives came about in the early 20th century in response to the degradation and continuous dwindling of forest resources by the outsiders. The Adivasies inhabited in and around the forest and mostly depended on forest. 50% of their livelihood was sustained by the forest products. The traditional community based forest based management system by the Govt. of Odisha and the undivided Sambalpur and Koraput districts pioneered this initiative and set an example for many other areas in
- Odisha, where it gained momentum mostly in the 80s and 90s and slowly became a mass movement.
- Women in these forest-dependent communities are mostly engaged in gathering a wide range of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFPs) for both subsistence and income generation through sale. Collection of NTFPs is mostly need-based and there is no restriction on collection by anyone.

# Chulli Chanda

A traditional method to raise community funds for forest management and emergency expenses.

**Chulli** = wood burning stove

**Chanda** = contribution

The villagers estimate a unit cost for each wood stove in the village. Accordingly, households have to pay as per the number of wood stoves they have. The funds are deposited in a nearby bank and operated jointly. Income and expenditure is discussed at village level meetings. (Gram Sabha)





**Thengapalia** (The Stick holder)  
As per the decision of Gram  
Sabha in turn they guard the  
forest.





## **Benefit sharing**

The village committee looks after the distribution of forest produce and ensures equal distribution among all members of the forest management committee.

Weaker community members like widows and disabled persons, get special attention.





# Participatory Decision Making



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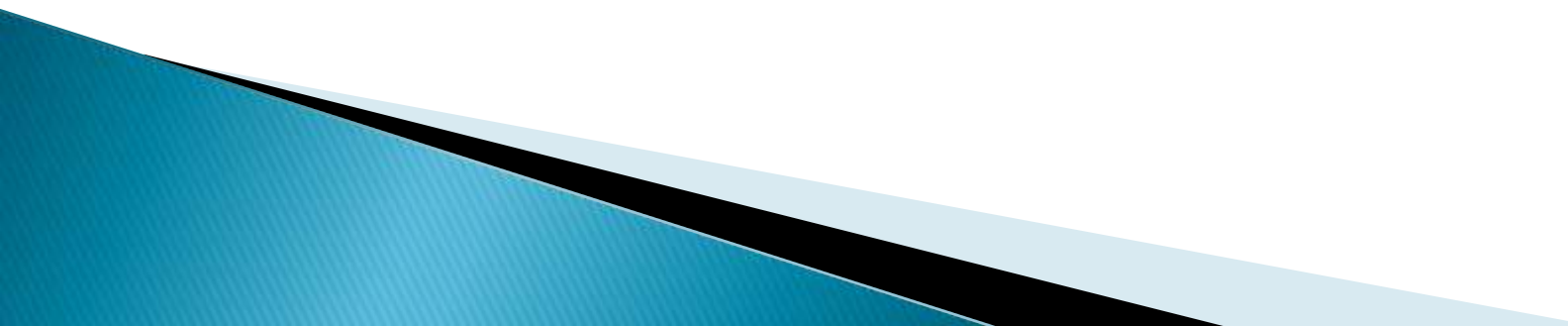


# Decision making Process

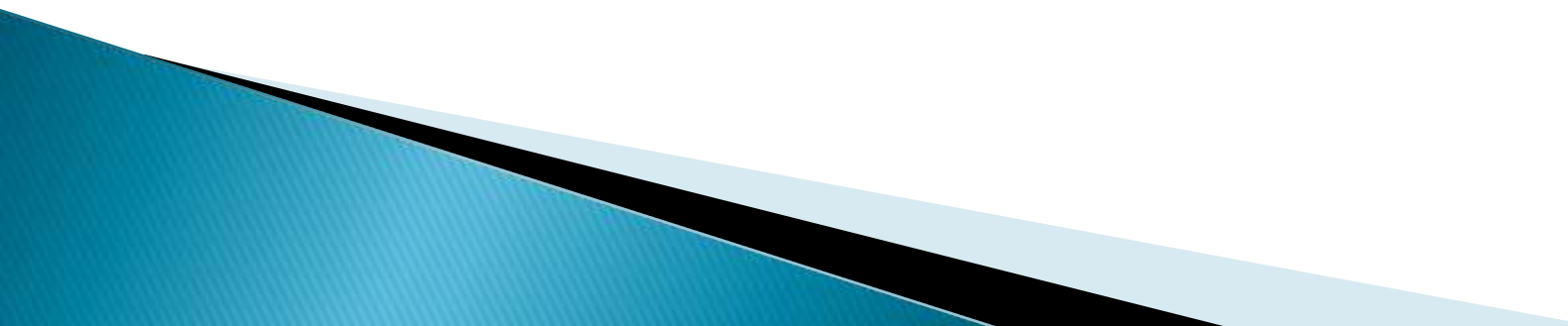
- ▶ Identification of problems regarding forest management and the solutions are worked out on the basis of different criteria fixed by the community.
- ▶ The rules and regulations of Community Based Forest Management is made with unanimous decisions.
- ▶ Responsibilities are shared among the women and men and the Leadership is respected and the decisions are final.
- ▶ Decisions are taken on: collection of NTFP, fire wood, timber for housing, raising of forest protection fund, Watch and Ward in turn, Animal Grazing, Fire protection, rejuvenating the degraded forest and protection of Bio-diversity etc...



# Forest and Indigenous women

- Indigenous women and men share their own exclusive relation with the forest
  - Indigenous women worship the forest as their God.
  - Women are the one who have greater frequency of interface with the forest than men
  - A typical (average) indigenous women in the state of Odisha spends 3-4 hours in forest every day
  - If the forest protection related activities are taken into account then the count can go up to 6 hours altogether
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# Women are the Resource Manager

- Women are excellent resource managers due to their inherent overall understanding of nature and its sustainability
  - They know the exact mechanism how to manage the household activities in coherence with their forests
  - They know the over all value (tangible/intangible) associated with forest and forest based activities
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# **Women' s participation in Community Forest Management**

- Women generally play a leading role in forest protection and management.
- Women play the major role on collection of forest products, processing & Marketing. (Mahua, Leaf plate, Grass broom, palm mat & kendu leaf)
- Women occupy 50% of the executive bodies.
- They have also occupied the key office bearer position such as president, secretary and vice president in village level committees.

- **Provisions under FRA 2006**

- Section 3 (1) (i) of the FRA recognises the rights of the community over the forest they have been protecting and managing. Section 5 empowers the community to protect, manage and conserve the forest while under section 4 (1)(e), the law empowers the community to form a management and protection committee. These are all illustrated in practice in the Gunduribadi example.
- Most importantly, the FRA 2006 has been successful in providing a platform for the community to voice their opinions and participate in the decision-making process.





Madana Jani, President,  
Khasiguda

*“We initiated forest management practices in this area. Presently we are actively involved in all the processes like Thengapali, participating in meetings, maintaining accounts etc.”*



Guadei Sunani, Treasurer,  
Kasturapadar



Kamale Majhi, Treasurer,  
Kanakpur



Suresta mallik, Treasurer,  
Jamgudabahali





Collecting Saal seeds in the forest





Collection of grass broom stick



Returning home after forest guarding





**Womenfolk weaving brooms from grass stalks**



**Hiramani Dung Dung proudly displaying a bundle of brooms woven by her**



A woman weaving mat



A clump of P. Humilis



A woman weaving palm leaf mat



**Thank you for your attention!**