

KHOJ

ANNUAL REPORT

2009-10

INTRODUCTION -

KHOJ enters its 15th year of work in Melghat. Over the last 15 years we have moved from a 2 member to a 20 member team committed to the rights of the tribals in the region.

Our intervention in the region has also moved from the initial 5 villages to over 40 direct villages of focus in Melghat in addition to the larger policy advocacy work that benefits entire Melghat. Apart from Melghat our work is also expanding to other blocks of Amravati district.

Our work is in the direction of mobilising communities to be able to access and monitor the services and take charge of their livelihood rights.

Some of the key programmes of focus that people are getting directly engaged with are the National Rural Health Mission, National Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Recognition of Forest Rights Act.

Some of the major achievements in the year have been the grant of land rights to over 180 people covering over 380 hectares of land and providing livelihood to over 180 families. Our efforts have been able to bring employment opportunities of over 80380 man days to families in 30 villages of Melghat. Our health rights intervention has been able to make health accessible to people from 15 villages through better capacities of the Village Health and Sanitation Committees as well as the empowerment of the ASHA workers. Our work with adolescent girls has brought a whole set of information related to health and nutrition as well as life skills to develop the capacities of girls to be able to lead their lives as healthy adults and take appropriate decisions. Our new initiative of Youth leadership and Development is a programme at working with the future of Melghat, which we have long cherished.

In addition, several of our youth volunteers are pursuing higher education in various stechnical institutes and soon shall be out to serve as role models for other students facing challenging circumstances in furthering their educational goals.

This Annual report will bring the details of the initiatives undertaken in the course of the year and the outcomes that we have been able to achieve as a result of these. Your comments and suggestions will help us in improving our work and moving towards our goal of ensuring Justice to the people existing on the peripheries of our development paradigm and in bringing them to the centre of the Nation's development.

Our sincere thanks to our partners in the process of development, financial institutions, our friends and well wishers who have stood by us all through these years with their firm faith and unflinching belief in our work. Thank You!!

MELGHAT - the change in the last 15 years: A few examples to demonstrate the changing scenario.

There are 314 villages currently in Melghat compared to the 317 when we started. 3 villages under the Project Tiger Melghat area have been resettled. Bori, if you remember our earlier reports, was where we were engaged as a Civil Society in the rehabilitation process and had ensured that the people who had expressed their intentions and consent to go, got justice and their due rights.

When we initiated the work in 5 villages in Chikhaldara block, we had one class XII pass student; today we have several of them already passed out and many in the process of completion

There was no school beyond class III in all these villages, today there is a till Class VII and children have an opportunity to go to school in their own village

Earlier the schools opened on 15th August and 26th January, today they are open most of the days

While the people were struggling for survival, they have the knowledge and awareness of schemes and programme to be able to access these themselves.

Earlier there were many Amla trees in the villages, today there are perhaps none, earlier there was white musali in the forests today there is none

There was no means of transportation in these villages and we had to walk 16kms. to get the bus, today there are Jeeps owned by people the villages. A mini bus connects 4 out of 5 villages.

Earlier people barely harvested a good crop in the year; today most of them have 2 harvests in the year

Earlier we had to write applications for people, today they make application to us asking us to help them when they are stuck...

Earlier some never believed in us and always thought we had done nothing for them, today they come to us and say they need our guidance and support to bring justice

Today we do not have to go to the people, the people invite us or seek our assistance when they need..Is this what we wanted... is it empowerment...we are trying to understand and analyse. While we are still working out our own learning's, we thought we should shared this with you and your insights and experiences might help us look more deeply into these changes and be more realistic, honest, un prejudiced and also humble to realize that there is still a long struggle ahead.. the case against us is just an example of what lies ahead and the fact that we need to be very careful yet retain our speed, we need to have faith on people yet not trust everyone blindly.

Some of the initiatives during the year have been -

LIVELIHOOD RIGHTS

- ✚ IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FOREST RIGHTS ACT - The Recognition of the Forest Rights Act 2006 empowered the Forest dwelling communities in the country to claim rights over the land under forest they had tilled. The implementation of this act has been in the process for the last 2 years. However the focus has been on the individual rights.

The beauty of the act lies in the fact that it has recognized the traditional rights of the communities living in the forests over the use and development of the forest from which they have been deriving their usufructory rights.

However there is a great apathy in the implementation of the community rights. A reason for this was the complex nature of the claim making process as well as the process of mobilising the community and collecting evidences. The Forest Rights Committees at the village level were given one day training on the implementation process. However this was not sufficient to facilitate the process at the village level.

There is a greater need for awareness about the Act both at the level of the officials and that at the village level as not many of them are aware about the provisions of the Act.

- ✚ MREGA & FOREST RIGHTS CAMPAIGN -

Initiating the dialogue on Alternate Livelihoods with villagers in Jaitadehi / Wajjhar and other villages to develop Fishing Cooperatives

People of Jaitadehi village have lost their land in the construction of a dam at Wajjhar village. These are tribal people from Melghat. They were compensated with money. Some of the villagers had refused to take monetary compensation however since the view had been divided they could not collectively attain their demands. In the last 2 years that we have started working with the people, our effort has been to help them organise collectively to secure their rights and develop alternate means of livelihood. One such alternative is to create a process to demand right over water of the dam that took away their land and livelihood. A discussion was initiated with the villagers on this issue and we said that we could understand more of this process from our own visit to Raigadh where such process has been initiated already. People were interested in knowing more on this and they have committed to work on this process further. We have extended an invitation to them to join us for an exposure and study of the process at Shramjivi in Raigadh and they have agreed to raise some contributions to cover the costs for the visit. It has also been finalised that a sharing will happen at the Gram Sabha in the village on the 26th January 2010

✚ Meeting with people on MREGA and Forest Rights

In order to assess the status of the MREGA and Forest Rights we called a meeting of people from Chikhaldara block on 30th October 2009 at Semadoh. Over 75 people from representing around 30 - 40 villages shared their current situation which revealed that approximately 3500 people had migrated away from the villages of Melghat. Another 8500 people would leave if there was no work initiated in the villages soon.

People shared their concerns on the implementation of Forest Rights Act. They shared their problems relating to non cooperation of the forest official or their own Forest Rights Committees. The representative of the Tribal Development Department noted these issues and assured that they would communicate to the respective officials or the committees to support the process.

This meeting revealed the immediate need for MREGA work to be initiated in the region to allow people to stay in the villages to be able to participate in other developmental activities. In view of this emergency, we faxed a memorandum to all the concerned departments, District Collector, CEO, Zilla Parishad and Deputy Collector highlighting the issues raised by the people and demanding that MREGA work got initiated in the villages.

Through our village level meetings in 25 villages, across Achalpur, Dharni and Chikhaldara, we covered 1493 families and filled in over 4146 forms demanding work. Most of these forms had to be submitted to the Block Development Officer directly as the Gram Sewaks were not located.

Assisting people for filing MREGA work demand form and MREGA Campaign for Demanding work

In most of the villages of Melghat there is no availability of Form 4 to demand work. Gram Sewaks are also not found in the villages. As a result legally it is seen that there is no demand of work in the region. In order to help people raise their demands for MREGA work, we organised a Campaign at village level to fill Form 4 in order to enable people to demand work. Since the Gram Sewaks were not available, these were submitted to the BDO at Chikhaldara and some of the Gram Sewaks in their respective Gram Panchayat. A total of 4146 forms for 3 blocks of Achalpur, Dharni and Chikhaldara were submitted.

In the meeting consequent to the Public Hearing we realised that most of these people did not get any employment within 15 days. We raised this with the Deputy Collector- MREGA and local Tahsildar and BDO and demanded that these people be given Compensation for loss of wages. Since many of the village representatives had come for the meeting, we could bring to light the false claims that work had started in the village. We pressurised the gathering to make a note that people were entitled to loss of wages and they had to take a note in the proceeding that people who were not given employment should be compensated or work should be started immediately.

At the end of December, it revealed that there were 958 people employed on various works and most of these related to Soil and water conservation. It has been observed that this year as a

result of the demand for Stone bunds raised by the people in the Gram Sabha on 15th August, many stone bunds have been taken up in the fields of farmers.

✚ Campaign in weekly markets on MREGA/Forest Rights/Climate Change

Campaign initiated in weekly markets on issues of MREGA and Forest Rights. These were organised at Semadoh, Paratwada and Harisal. There has been good response however it is tough to maintain this on a weekly basis given the distances and lack of communication facilities. This experiment brought to us good results and helped us reach the common people. In future we plan to reach out to the areas through markets once every month so that we can conduct outreach as well as give time to the focussed intervention villages.

✚ Forest Rights Follow Up -

After the Public Hearing a major drive was undertaken to look at the forest rights cases and resolve any further issues in submission of claims at respective levels. 125 cases from 10 villages were checked and cleared for submission to the Village Forest Rights Committees or to the Sub Divisional Committee at Dharni based on the stages of the cases.

Meetings were organised in villages of Bothra, Forest Malur and Chaurakund to share the information on roles and responsibilities of the Forest Rights Committees and to understand the documentation that needs to be completed before submitting the claims to the committees.

✚ Communication and Dissemination

Communication material in Hindi has been prepared both for the Forest Rights Act as well as for MREGA which is being used for sharing the information on the 2 acts with the people of the region. These are currently in forms of A4 size leaflets has both pictures and text and explains to the people the processes of claiming these rights and redressal mechanisms in cases of denial. These are in simple language and try to bring forth the provisions of the 2 critical acts that can support the livelihood rights of the people. These materials are used in our Weekly market campaign as well as in our village meetings and public

✚ Strengthening Gram Sabha's through Forest Rights Act and MREGA - Initiation of Bhandri Gram Sabha and Village Core Group

We realise that Forest Rights and MREGS/NREGA are two issues that touch the livelihoods of the people in Melghat. People are likely to organise more around the issues of livelihood than anything else. Hence while we support people in ensuring their rights, we would also like to bring their collective strength together for the development of their own village and community.

In Bhandri village, people organised one such Gram Sabha where they identified a Core Group that would take the village processes forward. 7 members were chosen to the Core Group by the people out of whom 3 are women. This could be a beginning of the Next phase in the development of Melghat where people take charge of their lives. We are also planning to organise a Campaign around Formation of Gram Sabha linked to the issue of Collective Rights over Forests on similar lines in other villages.

✚ Exchange visit at Gadhchiroli

A team of 8 members undertook a visit to Shruti in Gadhchiroli in the month of December 09 to understand the implementation of Community Forest Rights in their area. A couple of villagers also joined the team at their own expense to understand the process. The team spent 2 days with the people in the villages on Shankarpur and other villages as well as with the organization to understand the processes. Following this we are developing our plan to mobilize Gram Sabha's to take up the issue of Community Forest Rights.

Meeting of team at G P Shankarpur



✚ Need for a larger Pressure Group leads to engagement with the local network

Considering the apathy of the district administration in the implementation of the 2 critical programmes related to the livelihood of the people of Melghat, we felt that it would be a better strategy to work with as many people /groups in the region to create a pressure on the administration to take notice of the situation. We roped in KOSHISH the network of the local organisations to work on the 2 issues. A decision to organise a Public Hearing revealing the public opinion on the status of the 2 issues was taken. We had taken on a major responsibility as we are one of the few organisations working directly on the 2 issues in the region also having an understanding and a team to organise such a public programme.

We prepared dissemination materials, used megaphones to take the messages to the people, organise village level meetings and invited the key resource persons and the media.

We also prepared a brief film to highlight the problems of migration using the clippings that we had taken during last many years as well as recent pictures of people confronting life away from home.

✚ Advocacy relating to MREGA and Forest Rights for raising the demands in Media and State Assembly

We met the Members of Legislative Assembly and Parliament as well as the Minister of WCD to inform them about the huge migration from the region that has an adverse impact on the lives of the people with a view put pressure on the local administration for implementation of MREGA. This was also raised in the local media. We also made an effort to raise a Legislative Assembly Question

on the issue of MREGA implementation through Shri Vivek Pandit, MLA from Thane, who is also a Social Activist.

✚ Public Hearing



Public hearing at Amravati

Public hearing organized on the issue of MREGA and Forest Rights held in Amravati on 5th December 2009 wherein over 500 people from villages of Melghat as well as Achalpur and some even from other blocks of Amravati district raise their concerns about the implementation of the 2 acts. Local MLA from Achalpur Shri Bacchu Kadu, Member of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Council - Shri Ramesh Gawande, Meena Menon -Reporter from The Hindu were the Panel

Members. People talked about how there were no work in the villages and they were forced to migrate. Some said that they had not seen the Gram Sewaks for days in their village. Villagers also talked about their problems relating to migration and exploitation that they faced away from, home hence the need to have work in the villages. People from Butida, Bori, Menghat, Jamun nala, Kumbhi Wagholi, Mogarda, Salai, Rabang, Railway Dhulghat raised issues related to the Forest Rights.



People marching at Collector Office

Shri Gawande assured the gathering that within 15 days there would be MREGA work in the villages and he said that he would ask the local administration to take this on priority. He also welcomed the idea of organizing such public hearings in other district to understand the implementation of MREGA.

Since the District Collector did not come to listen to the people, people decided to march to her office after the public hearing and submit their demands. Hundreds of men and women of Melghat rallied to the District Collector office to raise their demands.

A delegation of villagers and NGO representatives were invited by Mr Gawande to a meeting with the Collector as we marched to the Collectors Office. He requested that we have the dialogue with her before any further action. A group of 8-10 people went to meet them and shared the problems. Some of the agreements of the meeting were -

All people working on MREGA work should get Rs 105 as a minimum wage for a days work. Men and women are entitled to equal wage

A trial pit of the amount of work entitling the people to Rs 105 would be dug at the Gram Panchayat level

A follow up meeting would be held on 7th December at Chikhaldara and 8th December at Dharni in presence of Dy. Collector MREGA and District Rehabilitation Officer

Payments to be made speedily to the people effectively maximum within a period of one month

Special efforts to be taken to ensure that People's Claims under Forest Rights especially Community Forest Rights were filled

✚ Follow up meetings

At the Follow up meetings held at Dharni and Chikhaldara to assess the status of NREGA with Deputy Collector, various organizations and hundreds of people from the respective blocks gathered at the 2 block headquarters.

At Chikhaldara meeting we came to know that over 30lac rupees work was on shelf and awaiting implementation. A plan was made to initiate the processes and take action in cases of failures.

We raised a demand that 1893 applications of FORM 4 were submitted on 17th November 2009 to the BDO however as the people got no work they should be given loss of wages. After a long agreement and discussion they had to take a note of the applications and a demand for giving acknowledgement and immediate work was made in the minutes. It was agreed that within 7 days over 5000 man days of work would be created.



People assemble at Chikhaldara for follow up



In the meeting held at Dharni again, we assessed the situation of work on the shelf and listened to people from villages where there was no work. Looking at the poor planning by the local BDO the administration sought the help of NGO as technical agencies. As a Network of organizations we assured on behalf of KOSHISH that we could help them in developing technical plans for 10 Gram Panchayat each in Dharni and Chikhaldara. The administration also agreed to appointment of NGO staff as APO for the MREGA programme in the 2 blocks.

A decision to organize Special Gram Sabhas to be organized to plan for MREGA in the block between 21st to 30th December 2009 was taken at the meeting by the local administration.

As regards the Forest Rights we checked that there were some discussions that 30th December 2009 was the deadline for filing claims, however the SDO clarified that there was no such deadline. But because of a letter issued by the District Collector in the month of June 2009, the SDO Dharni had refused to accept further claims from individuals since the month of June.

We then brought to the notice that within the law this process is not laid down and hence this letter is null and void. Also since no Community Claims have been filed and individual claims only from 30 odd villages of the 314 villages were filed, the administration should accept claims. We also checked about the availability of the Community Claim Application forms and then realized that these forms had not even been printed.

A decision was made that the SDO would start accepting the Claim applications and that the Community Claims would be printed and distributed to the people within the next 2 weeks.

There are currently over 400 claims pending for final approval with the district level committee out of which 64 are from 2 villages of Rehtyakheda and Ghana where we have been working on this issue directly.

A follow up meeting of these discussions were scheduled for the following week. However, in the following week meeting happened only in Chikhaldara block. Within a week of the meeting the number of people employed on MREGA work went up to 5000 from around 730 people in both the blocks of Melghat region at the time of the Public Hearing.

✚ REVENUE ENCROACHMENT CASES

While dealing with the land rights cases in Achalpur block, we have come across many tribal villages who have encroachments on revenue land however their titles are not clear. We asked the people of the 4-5 villages with around 70 claims to compile all their information and their evidences and fixed up a meeting with the local SDO. After understanding the process of regularising the claims under revenue department, people were asked to prepare their cases and come prepared for filling their claims with Tahsildar.

Separate claims under Revenue department were filed with the Tahsildar for villages of Salepur Pandhri for 27 people and 8 people of Muiphata village.

HEALTH RIGHTS

✚ COMMUNITY BASED MONITORING PROGRAMME

Community based monitoring of health services is one of the key institutions that aims at bringing in public accountability, participation in planning and implementation under the National Rural Health Mission. In the state of Maharashtra the programme is being implemented in 5 tribal districts of Amravati, Thane, Nashik, Nandurbar and Pune.

The programme aims at building capacities of the people's institutions engaged with health institutions at various levels and in trying to link them to the services and ensure better quality.

KHOJ works as District Nodal agency for this programme as well as Block Nodal Agency for Chikhaldara block and 2 other organizations work in Achalpur and Dharni blocks as block nodal agency.

This programme involved working with Village Health Nutrition and Sanitation Committees and in training them about various programmes and schemes available under NRHM for people. Similarly we worked with Community Based Monitoring Committees at PHC, Block and District level. Data gathering at village, sub centre, PHC level was conducted to understand the access, utilization and quality of services by the patients. Cases of denial of services were heard during Public Hearings held at PHC, District and State levels. This gave people voices while it was a good mechanism of feedback to the health administration.

✚ COUNSELORS PROGRAMME AT HEALTH INSTITUTIONS

Counselors programme was meant to be a bridge between the people and the health administration. This was meant to bridge the language gap, convince the people about the services of the health institutions, provide counseling to the people and explain the line of treatment. The programme showed good results both in IPD and OPD.

However this programme was abruptly stopped at end of January 2010. There is struggle ongoing to reinstate the counselors so that the mileage gained by the intervention is not lost due to faulty decisions and vested interests.

GIRLS GAINING GROUND

Girls Gaining Ground is a programme aimed at providing life skills education to adolescent girls across various villages of Melghat, that will allow them to not only live their life in a more informed and aware manner but also help them take critical decisions. The programme aimed at empowering girls with information about health and hygiene, nutrition, personality development, communication skills, group formation and the importance of working in groups, decision making, marriage, child development. It was also anticipated that this programme will help the girls not only take decisions of their own lives but also contribute to spreading messages of good child health and nutrition to their families and their own villages thereby impacting health and nutrition of child and young girls. Over 1000 girls from around 15 to 20 villages will benefit from this programme.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

In order to bring about a larger impact of the work done, it was important that youths not only participated in the developmental processes of the village and the region but it was also critical that their leadership potential was harnessed and utilized a Youth Leadership programme that would provide all youths an opportunity to develop their socio economic and political understanding and develop their skills to dialogue and communicate. Initially an advertisement was circulated

amongst the local villages, organizations about the programme and applications called for interview. From this a group of 10-12 youths were to be identified for detailed training programme for one year. However, we realized that it was difficult for youths to spare a year of their time in such processes due to various pressures and hence we decreased the programme to 4 months. This training programme provided opportunities to learn theory as well undertake practical exercises, go on exposures programmes, participate in trainings and as well as contribute to the processes on ground. It was designed to be an experiential learning programme that would help explore their future as well as that of their own communities.

WE are thankful to our Donors for supporting our efforts. Mention needs to be made of

Oxfam Australia

Sathi

Association for India's Development

Bhavishya Alliance

Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950

SCHEDULE - VIII
[Vide Rule 17(1)]

KHOJ
Balance Sheet as at March 31, 2010

Registration No.: F-19752(MUM)

Funds & Liabilities		Rs.	Rs.	Property & Assets		Rs.	Rs.
Trusts Funds or Corpus:-				Immovable Properties :- (At Cost)			
Balance as per last Bal. Sheet				Plot at Gaurkheda		1	
Adjustment during the year				Building		330,583	
Other Earmarked Funds :-				Add. During the year		272,356	
Depreciation Fund				Less : Depreciation		602,939	
Sinking Fund				Moveable Properties		60,294	542,646
Reserve Fund				As per Schedule 'C'			19,429
Any other Fund - Gaurkheda Plot Dev. Fund			28,936	Advances :-			
Loans (Secured or Unsecured)				To Trustees			
From Trustees				To Others MTNL			1,000
From Others			386,200	To Loan given to others (unconfirmed)			158,758
Liabilities :-				Cash and Bank Balances :-			
For Advances				In SB Account with SBI As per Sch. 'B'			397,616
For Rent & Other Receipts				Total Rs.			1,119,449
For Sundry Credit Balances (As per Sch. 'D') (Proj. to be contd.)			570,829				
Income & Expenditure Account							
Balance as per last Bal. Sheet		45,019					
Less : Appropriation, if any							
Add : Surplus as per income & Expenditure A/c		88,465	133,484				
Total Rs.			1,119,449				

The above Balance Sheet to the best of our belief contains a true account of the Funds & Liabilities and of the Property & Assets of the Trust.



June 8, 2010
Place : Mumbai

RK Bhatia & Co
Chartered Accountants

Dated : June 8, 2010
Place : Mumbai

Banpadhyay
Trustee

KHOJ F Y 2009-10

Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950

SCHEDULE - IX
[Vide Rule 17(1)]

KHOJ
Income & Expenditure Account for the year ending March 31, 2010

Registration No.: F-19762(MUM)

Expenditure	Rs.	Rs.	Income	Rs.	Rs.
To Establishment Expenses			By Interest (Realised) on Bank Account		5,391
To Audit Fee			By Grants & Donation		85,300
To Depreciation		70,395	By Donation		209,480
To Expenditure on Objects of the trust			By Income from Other Sources		
(a) Religious			Vehicle Rent		90,000
(b) Educational			Misc Income		60,337
(c) Medical Relief			By Deficit carried over to B/S		
(d) Relief of Poverty					
(e) Other Charitable Objects		291,648			
To Surplus carried over to Balance Sheet		88,465			
Total Rs.		450,508	Total Rs.		450,508



Dated : June 8, 2010

RK Bhatia & Co
Chartered Accountants

Dated : June 8, 2010

Banpadhyay
Trustee

Report Prepared By -

Purnima Upadhyay for
KHOJ
Yashwant Bhavan
At Po Gaurkheda(Kumbhi)
Tal Achalpur
Dist Amaravati 444 806
Phone 07223-227292
Email - khojmelghat@gmail.com

Registered Office -

C/o Vijay Jawlekar
D/3/20, Chittaranjan Nagar,
Rajawadi, Vidyavihar(East)
Mumbai 400 007
Email - khojmelghat@gmail.com
Registration.No
Mum/Mah/1997/1021

