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## Synopses of Case Studies

Several case studies of advocacy in action have been made available to ICIMOD by different partners. Some have been written up as formal case studies, while others were submitted as concept notes for future research. Some relevant case studies have been selected and presented in this chapter to provide real examples that can be used for capacity building of community-based organisations in advocacy. Trainers should select those examples that best fit the contextual situation of their trainees.

### **Traditional Water Preservation System in Uttarakhand, India**

Pre-Independence, there were extensive techniques for water preservation existing in Uttarakhand, India; both before and during British rule. With the help of these techniques people were receiving a reliable water supply, for both drinking water and irrigation. Uttarakhand has hilly areas so it was not possible to dig the wells and make big ponds as in the plains. Instead, local people formed committees for the management of 'naula' (canals) 'shroot' (water sources), and 'dhara' (taps). Because of dependence on government facilities, especially after Independence, the participation of the local people was reduced and the use of these techniques is also dwindling.<sup>4</sup>

Today, these methods of water preservation have been almost rejected by local people. Consequently, over the last few years the level of underground water has reduced and the natural water sources (which are formed mainly after rain) are also becoming smaller. In the hilly areas of Uttarakhand the water problem is getting worse. Water sources have to be recharged up to 25% but the water sources are only recharged by 12% to 14% at present. Because of the regular cutting down of forests and land size, it is likely that this recharge percentage will go down in future.

According to a report issued by the World Bank, one sixth of the world's population (more than one billion people) live in places where water is scarce and most of these people reside in India, China, and Pakistan. According to this

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<sup>4</sup> This case has been adopted from the work of Tarun Joshi from Nainital district, Uttarakhand, India. Joshi wrote this case as a concept note to initiate further research in this area.

report at least 31 countries are facing a water problem. This problem will be greater in future if the right methods of water preservation are not adopted. Through analysis of the whole situation, some civil society organisations have been trying to discover ways to continue traditional water preservation techniques in the Kamoun Mandal of Uttaranchal.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What is the root cause of the problems in this case?
- Do you see any policy connections regarding this problem? If yes, what are the policy issues in this case?
- Do you see any scope for advocacy in this situation?
- Based on the case, who should start the advocacy effort and for what achievements?

### **Learning from People's Initiatives in Forest Management**

The people of Uttaranchal have developed their own indigenous system of people's forest management through centuries of experience of living in a mountain environment. These systems have been characterised by customary laws that regulate access and usage, and inculcate a respect and reverence for sustainability. About 10% to 20% of the villages in Uttaranchal continue to maintain their traditional systems with some modifications, with positive and inspiring results<sup>5</sup>.

Over a century of commercial 'scientific forestry' continues to seek to manipulate nature and human behaviour to maximise profits while ignoring the economic and ecological requirements of the highly degraded forests and village communities living side by side. Even so, the collective strength of the people has resulted in first the colonial administration and later the administration of independent India being forced to change the direction of its forest policies after pressure tactics failed to control widespread protests. Various tools have been used effectively, including religious symbolism, the use of the media, and alignment with the freedom struggle. However, even after the initial success of the Chipko Movement, the state is still facing an ecological crisis that with the fast-developing, urban-based aspirations of the youth, is jeopardising the future of the state's forests.

People have been living in close proximity to forests for many centuries in the mountain state of Uttaranchal. Their livelihoods have traditionally depended to a large extent on forest and forest products, and a symbiotic bond has existed between people and forests for generations. They have evolved sustainable systems to manage the forests, alpine grasslands, and other natural areas that

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<sup>5</sup> Bartawal, Puran (2004) A Case Study on Learning from People's Initiatives: Forest Management and Advocacy in Uttaranchal. Sambandh Network, Uttaranchal, India.

include built-in conservation and natural regeneration practices for biodiversity conservation.

With the advent of British rule after the Gorkha rulers were driven out in 1815, the forests in Uttarakhand became commercially lucrative and a destructive process of wholesale exploitation was initiated. By the end of the 19th century, almost all the commercially valuable forests in the region were taken over by the state. This went hand in hand with an increasing curtailment of people's rights, and anger and resentment soon erupted into many rebellions. To pacify people and seek their cooperation, the British constituted a grievance committee that recommended handing about 10% of the forests back to village communities in British-controlled areas.

The state continues to follow the British claim that villagers are solely responsible for deforestation – they are the enemy, and the only reason forests exist is because of state-controlled 'scientific' forest management. However, the experience of many NGOs associated with the SAMBANDH network of working with the people of Uttaranchal and researching the history of forest management in the state clearly indicates that conservation without meeting peoples' basic household and livelihood needs is simply not possible. People have to meet their basic household and livelihood needs from somewhere. Simply declaring forest areas out of bounds and leaving people to fend for themselves does not solve the problem of degradation, and violates all constitutional rights. Real conservation can only happen when people have a real stake in the survival of the forests they use.

People can only justify their proposed control over management regimes when they can prove 'scientifically' that their traditional systems are equally effective or more effective compared to state-controlled systems in terms of cost-effectiveness in providing biomass for household and livelihood needs, conserving biodiversity, conserving livelihoods, and supporting the local subsistence economy.

In order to prove that people's traditional systems are in many cases highly effective and deserve official support, it is imperative to go beyond the present emotional rhetoric on both sides and explore comparatively the real situation as it exists on the ground. The results of people's systems and state systems need to be examined according to ecological, economic, and social parameters, and matched with their management objectives. Convincing evidence needs to be generated and presented to the institutions that control the financing of the forestry sector, particularly the World Bank, to convince them that they are supporting the wrong systems politically, economically, and ecologically.

The main objective of this study is therefore to document good examples of people-managed forest in Uttaranchal Pradesh, India, and provide a historical analysis of the traditional efforts at advocacy of village communities to maintain control over their survival and livelihood base — the land, water, and forests.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What are the policy issues to regain the rights of mountain people over natural resources?
- What are the ways and means of balancing both the national interest and people's rights?
- How can we verify the roles of civil society organisations in this context? What can social society organisation do in favour of the poor?
- How do you justify people's rights being denied even in a democratic system? Do you see some options to balance these two phenomena?

### **Van Panchayats in Uttaranchal, India**

In the newly-formed state Uttaranchal, there has been a great tradition of forest management that is known as 'Van Panchayat'. Presently, there are more than 7000 Van Panchayats in Uttaranchal. The management of a Van Panchayat is carried out by the Van Panchayat Rules. Moreover, sub-rules can be formed by the Van Panchayat for its internal management. The Van Panchayat rules were first formed in 1931. Some amendments were made to the rules<sup>6</sup> in 1979 and 2001.

As of August 2001, there were 6777 Van Panchayats in Uttaranchal covering an area of 524 108.052 ha. However, it is estimated that the number of Van Panchayats in Uttaranchal is more than 8000 in 11 districts. At present, Van Panchayats occupy nearly 15% of the forest area of the state. The forest areas under Van Panchayats are in excellent condition comprising mostly broad-leaved species. Overall, it can be claimed that forests are managed by communities in a sustainable way to fulfil local demands for fuel, fodder, and timber.

However, the Van Panchayats are facing a large number of problems. The main problems relate to the curtailing of the rights of villagers. These rules were formed in feudal society therefore there is less scope for women and dalits to be active within the Van Panchayat structure. All the provisions are mainly in favour of the higher classes.

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<sup>6</sup> This case was developed based on the information included in the concept note prepared by Tarun Joshi in July 2004 and a presentation made by Anmol Jain in the Regional Training of Training Workshop on 3 July 2004, Kathmandu.

The Van Panchayats were formed for the consumption of forest products. Although the traditional means of forest preservation were included in the rules, sustaining the environment was not emphasised. However, today it is vital that the management of Van Panchayats must combine villagers' livelihoods with protecting the environment. Both aspects should have equal importance in the rules.

In the year 2001 'Van Panchayat Sanghras Morcha' (people's forum) was formed to raise the voice of villagers against the rules which were curtailing their rights. The 'sarpanch' (chairperson of the Van Panchayat), different representatives of NGOs, intellectuals, and the members of other 'sanghatan' (institutions) participated in this morcha, which organised various meetings and sent some proposals to the government. Consequently, the government formed the 'Van Panchayat Rule Amendment Samiti' (committee). Some amendments to the Van Panchayat rules are still under consideration. However, this morcha could not be effective mainly because of lack of funds, interpersonal conflicts, jealousy, and lack of training in running and managing a federation.

Past experiences indicate that these Van Panchayats, having historical importance in India, should be able to form a federation. This federation could be formed by including elected representatives of Van Panchayats such as the sarpanch (chairperson), 'panch' (executive member) etc. The federation couldn't work from block level to state level. This is the idea spreading to Van Panchayats in Uttaranchal, but nothing concrete had materialised by July 2004.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What are the policy causes of problems in Van Panchayats?
- What are the gaps that can be fulfilled by an advocacy initiative?
- Who are the main stakeholders in this case?
- What could be the process of advocacy for getting expected changes in Van Panchayat rules?

## **Understanding Advocacy Based on the Context of the Jainta Hills**

The working definition of advocacy in the book 'Advocacy for Social Justice' by Cohen, et al. is as follows.

"Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes – including public policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions – that directly affect people's lives<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> This part of the conceptual analysis is adopted from Nongkynrigh, A.K (2004), in a case study on 'Community Based Organisations of Jainta Hills District, Meghalaya, India'.

Advocacy consists of organised efforts and actions based on the reality of ‘what is’. These organised actions seek to highlight critical issues that have been ignored and submerged, to influence public attitudes, and to enact and implement laws and public policies so that visions of ‘what should be’ in a just, decent society is an overarching framework for these visions. Advocacy organisations draw their strength from and are accountable to the people – their members’ constituents, and/or members of affected groups.

“Advocacy has purposeful results: to enable social justice advocates to gain access and voice in the decision making of relevant institutions; to change the power relationships and the people affected by their decisions, thereby changing the institutions themselves; and to result in a clear improvement in people’s lives.”

The working definition seems a plausible framework because it broadens the social field and the idea of advocacy, but ‘value-neutral advocacy’ defines advocacy as follows.

“Advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes – including public policy and resource allocation decisions within the political, economic, and social systems and institutions – that directly affect people’s lives”.

This definition highlighted by Cohen is limited. According to him,

“In theory, the list of those who advocate has no bounds. A society should hear from a plurality of interests – economic, ethnic, occupational, geographic, ideological and so on. In reality, when decisions are made, many voices are left out and their issues are never considered.”

The working definition seems to enlarge the scope of the meaning and practice of advocacy, and also integrates varied elements and experiences from context to context. Therefore it is not out of context to argue that the findings of the study on the community-based organisations of the Jaintia Hills and their work is an example of micro-level based advocacy for social justice. The justification for arguing thus is because of the reasons outlined below.

- These organisations resisted and challenged the idea of the political fragmentation and religious segregation of the village community. They used non-protest methods of finding ways to resolve the issues at hand by giving a good example through their mixed membership, and by discussions with people and village institutions during training or awareness programmes. They may not have been totally successful, but the fact that they have taken the initiative is in itself an edifying example.

- They have been raising critical issues such as the problems faced by educated and illiterate youths, youths in difficult circumstances, poverty, the participation of women in decision making and recognising their role in the society, economic development, conserving the environment, and other issues affecting the lives of the people.
- The nearest and most immediate institution of the village and the villagers is the village council and its leaders. Organisations are carrying out their tasks by working with the village councils and have been putting forward various issues for consideration, and assisting them whenever called upon.
- The idea and application of bridging the villages with the government departments and other development based agencies by organising village-based programmes and bringing these agencies to the village is another method they have adopted, and by doing so they have been able to provide space for direct interaction between the villagers and the agencies.
- The network of CBOs and its fission is another aspect which has contributed towards the sharing of resources, information, and promoting ideas and the ownership of leading, acting, and doing something for others.
- On their own they have shown that they are directly involved by evolving innovative initiatives to solve issues affecting people's lives.
- By organising awareness programmes they provided a forum for the public to debate, interact, and discuss varied issues.

From the above analysis and the information gathered by the study we can see two binary aspects which will provide us with a clear direction of what type of recommendation needs to be suggested for future intervention and support. These are as follows.

- **Strengths:** It is very clear that the community-based organisations of the Jaintia hills district are potential organisations for carrying out advocacy for the poor and the marginalised sections of the population. The types of activities they have been conducting so far are evidence of this fact.
- **Weaknesses:** The strengths may be stymied by factors like organisational management, leadership skills, clarity of ideas, and application of ideas in trying to bring about positive change.

### Questions for discussion

- What does this analysis add to your understanding about advocacy in your own working context?
- Which points from this analysis match your own context?
- How do you verify the strengths of organisations of your constituencies based on the finding from the Jainta Hills?

## **Changing Status of the Dalit Community in the Eastern Hills of Nepal**

Generally speaking, 'dalit' is defined as those castes and classes of people that are deprived of their rights, social prestige, and dignity. In the Nepalese context, the classes of people who are considered 'untouchable' have fallen behind economically, are looked down on socially, lack awareness in political participation, are less conscious academically and adopt caste-designated jobs. They are referred to as the oppressed<sup>8</sup>.

In Nepal a social order composed of four castes and eighteen different sub-castes was put in place in the Lichchhavi period (200-879 A.D.). Since then, the practice of untouchability has been customary. New occupations emerged along with the development of society and the Aryans, the then-ruling class, had to have a double standard in dealing with the non-Aryans. In that situation, the aristocrats and the ruling class people of the Aryan origin continued subjugating the working class and slaves in order to establish and maintain their domination and supremacy. Later on, when King Jayasthiti Malla (1360-1395 A.D.) divided people into 4 castes, 38 communal classes, and 725 ethnic groups, the customary practice of untouchability became strongly institutionalised in the society.

In Nepal there are two types of dalits – the dalits originating from the plains (Terai) and those of hill origin. The dalits of hill origin mainly involve the ethnic groups Kami, Damai, Sarki, Badi, Gaine, etc. The oppressed of the Terai origin involve the ethnic groups like Chamar, Dusadh, Dhobi, Dum, Batar, Khatwe, Mushar, Halakhori, Jhangar, Pattharkatta, Kanu, Teli, Kalawar, Jhangad, Dom, etc. There are also untouchable ethnic groups within the Newar community itself. They involve Kasai, Kusule, Pode, Kulu, Harhuru, Dhobi, etc. But these ethnic groups are only treated as untouchable in some places. So they simply belong to the neglected classes of people.

The total population of Nepal is 22.2 million, out of which the dalit class constitutes 2.9 million (census of 2001). This figure is 12.9% of the total population. About 90% of these people live below the absolute poverty line. The average life expectancy of these people is 50.8 years (HDR 1996) whereas that the average life expectancy of a Nepali is 55 years. The literacy rate of the Nepalese in general is 48%, while that of the oppressed is only 10.7%. The literacy rate of dalit women is only 3.3%. Twenty three per cent are completely landless and 48.7% of them have pieces of land only big enough to construct a small house (Mukti Path, Year 1, Volume 1, 2003). The highest population of dalits in Nepal is in a district called Saptari located on the eastern plain land.

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<sup>8</sup> Subedi, Bidur. (2004). 'Changing Status of Dalit Community in the Eastern Hills of Nepal: A Case Study of Dhankuta District, Nepal'. Human Rights, Social Awareness and Development Centre (HUSADEC), Nepal.

The movement for social equity is not a new phenomenon in Nepal. When reviewing this long-running movement, the following can be cited as examples of success.

- In 1948 the dalit students of Nepal were not allowed to sit and study together with students of other castes. Protesting against this practice, some of dalits of Dhankuta district went to the 'badahakim' (district administrator), to file a complaint. The badahakim said that a change in the rule was not possible without a policy change from higher up. As a result, Gajaram Yogi, an alumnus of Darjeeling, built a separate hut at the side of the playground and started to teach oppressed class students.
- Towards 1978 'Hotel Bhet', a hotel in Dhankuta Bazaar, prohibited dalits from entering the hotel. The dalits had to eat sitting outside and also had to wash their cups and plates themselves. Protesting against this treatment by the hotel owner, the members of 'Nepal Rastriya Dalit Jana Bikas Parishad Dhankuta' (an oppressed class organisation operating in Dhankuta district at that time) went to the district administration office. In response to their complaint, the Chief District Officer ordered the hotel owner to open his hotel to all classes of people.
- The dalits were not allowed to enter a temple at a place known as Muga in Dhankuta district. This place was famous for the politics of Nepal because a person who became the prime minister five times and for more than ten years was from this place. Even in this village, some dalit women collectively entered into the holy temple in 1999. During the years 1999-2003 several such temple-entering actions took place in this district very successfully.
- A dalit community offered a party to a group of youth club members during a big festival in 1999. The young members participated in the party happily but when they returned to their home, their old generation did not allow them to enter the houses. Later, the old generation allowed them to enter after daubing the floor with cow dung and purifying them ceremonially. This tendency indicates that younger generation is becoming more open in comparison to the older generation.
- On 14 April 2002 the 'Dalit Mahila Sangh Dhankuta' organised a get-together with a view of minimising the discrimination against each other within the oppressed community itself. The feast was held at a park and was attended by 50 people including men and women of various ethnic groups belonging to the oppressed class such as Bishwokarma, Damai, and Sarki.
- There is discrimination against each other between Kami and Sunar, too. Inter-caste marriage between these two ethnic groups is not socially recognised. In such a context the Bishwokarmas (Kamis) recognised the marriage of their daughter with a man belonging to a Sunar family by inviting the married daughter and the son-in-law to their home and offering 'tika' (a sacred red mark on the forehead), clothing, and blessings to them ceremonially on the occasion of the Dashain festival (the greatest festival of Hindus) of 2000 A.D.

- In 1999 a peon (lowest level of personnel) at the Agriculture Development Bank scolded a dalit for touching the water filter. Protesting against this, a delegation of representatives from dalit organisations of this district went to the bank and asked for legal action to be taken against the offender. In response, the peon was brought before the office in charge of the bank and was compelled to apologise for the offence both orally and in writing.

The examples above of successes in campaigning for social equality suggest that the movement of the oppressed class has helped significantly in raising the awareness of the target community and bringing changes to the conservative ideas and attitudes of the non-oppressed communities. It is because of these successes that incidents of inhuman treatment such as discrimination in public places like temples and shrines, government institutions and organisations, inns and rest-houses, hotels, educational institutions, and various cooperatives have not taken place. If any event is seen to support the practice of untouchability, this will be acted against collectively and immediately. This process of counter-action has helped to minimise discriminatory practices.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What are the root causes of the problem in this case?
- What the policy issues?
- How relevant is this case in other hill areas? What are the common features of the case?
- How do you comment on successful events from advocacy perspective?

### **Community-based Organisations in the Jaintia Hills**

Meghalaya was first carved out as an autonomous state with the two hill districts of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and the Garo Hills of Assam in 1970. It became a fully-fledged state in January 1972. Located in the northeast, it is a strip of land spread along the northern boundary of Bangladesh and is one of the smallest states in India with an area of approximately 22 429 sq. kms. The length of the international boundary is about 423 kms. Transportation is mainly by road from Assam. It mostly comprises steep hills and deep gorges, with valleys and plain land being very limited<sup>9</sup>.

In the case of the Jaintia Hills, community-based organisations have been addressing some critical issues affecting a village in particular and the district as a whole. These organisations accept that they have not been able to accomplish as much as they wanted, and are still working towards their goals. The issues affecting the growth and development of the villagers are as follows.

<sup>9</sup> Nongkynrih Kyrham, A. K. (2004). 'A Study of Community-based Organisations of Jaintia Hills District in the State of Meghalaya, India'. Department of Sociology, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, Meghalaya.

- The party-based politics of the Indian democratic system of governance has brought along with it political factionalism and fragmentation of the cohesive village community, which is sharply divided into party lines.
- Differentiating on the basis of religion is another issue faced by the villagers and the society as a whole. The notion of keeping with people of one's own religion stymied the initiative to bring about social change and develop the villagers.
- Politicisation of the village community and the village councils has affected the poor and marginalised domestic groups.
- Information about various centrally sponsored schemes and local area development schemes are the privilege of a select few. The majority of the population of the village has no knowledge about them. Secondly, the poor have no access to any institutions or information.
- The poor are not organised because there are few facilitators or organisations working for them.
- The level of literacy in villages is very low, especially in young people and women. This makes them more vulnerable to being influenced emotionally by powerful agents who may exploit them for some other ends.

It is difficult to draw any absolute conclusion from the study since it has not been able to cover all the CBOs of the district. However, the study brought up some very important issues which can be divided into two broad categories: (a) critical issues confronting the life of the people, and (b) intervention by organisations.

The following critical issues relevant to the entire district were highlighted as a result of the study.

- Parliamentary democracy has brought two types of changes: namely that the participation of people in politics has led to political factionalism and favouritism. Due to this problem village solidarity and unity is increasingly becoming more vulnerable and unstable. A contributing factor is that people are not politically educated and are exploited by political parties
- Religion is another problem. The problem is not about religion as matter of faith but as an issue of identity. The segregation between members of the same ethnic group on the basis of religious persuasions has led to the formation of villages according to religion or localities being segregated within the same village
- Poverty in the villages is contributed to partly by the issues cited above. Illiteracy, inaccessibility to correct information, very few organisations working in the villages, lack of village-level leadership skills, and the leaders being politicised has compounded the problem.
- Isolated or pocket-based development exists but there is a lack of extension and networking.

The district is facing a number of challenges, but on the other hand there are concerned people who are taking positive remedial measures to overcome these challenges. For example, the CBOs whose actions are outlined below.

- The history of these organisations is very recent but they have a high potential.
- The activities they have been organising have a semblance of commonality. This is because they promote and work for the development of the people by creating opportunities, pursuing economic development, changing attitudes and behaviours, and educating the people to work together and find solutions through collective action.
- These organisations are small in size and have very limited resources, but they have been organising and providing new inputs, skills, information, and networks, and show people the positive paths of development and change.
- These organisations can be major prime movers of social change in the district. But they are faced with constraints like lack of proper organisational management, leadership skills, communication skills, accounting skills, projects formulation, and skills in building strong and effective networks.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What are the critical issues identified in the Jainta Hills?
- Which are the issues lacking policies?
- Which are the issues related to policy enforcement?
- What issues are important from an advocacy point of view?

### **Social Capital in Local Governance, Pakistan**

Two factors encouraged network formation in Ajad Kashmir (AJK). Firstly, the National Rural Support programme (NRSP) maximised its ability to reach the poor. Once the networks had been established, NRSP staff were able to save time and resources by using them as intermediaries with the COs. The second factor was that activists and community organisation (CO) members wanted to scale up the COs' role in the Union Council by creating a platform to pool resources and undertake collective initiatives to overcome constraints and problems<sup>10</sup>.

The CO office-bearers are fully accountable to the members, and report on all financial and operational activities during fortnightly meetings. These mechanisms and processes ensure that benefits are not hijacked by the local elite, and greatly reduce the chances of resource fungibility. As a result, effective local leadership, a prerequisite for social capital formation and utilisation, emerges.

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<sup>10</sup> Baluch, M. Saleem (2004). 'A Case Study on Development of Social Capital to Promote Local Governance in the Mountain Areas of Pakistan'. The National Rural Support Programme (NRSP). Islamabad, Pakistan.

Understanding the role, the tensions, and the successes of COs in the networks is important for understanding the processes of social capital formation and utilisation. The networks are able to act as a means for the flow of information, pooling resources, and sharing expertise, thus bringing the benefits of economies of scale. Discrete COs are far less able to lobby for resources.

The three networks are (1) Women's Welfare Organisation Poonch (WWOP); (2) Kiran Welfare Organisation; and (3) Rural Community Development Foundation (RCDF). The WWOP was formed in 1997, KWO in 1999, and RCDF in 2002. The levels of organisational structure, access to financial support, and ability to undertake developmental activities of these networks are linked to their age: the more established the network, the more refined are its systems and approaches.

Although NRSP has actively promoted network formation in Sindh, Punjab, and Balochistan, the networks have only taken root and flourished in AJK. In Punjab and Sindh the networks failed because of conflict amongst member COs. In southern Balochistan, the COs are too far apart for network members to meet regularly. The networks have taken root in AJK because of the dedicated efforts of individual social organisers and the dedication of trained and skilled community activists.

In AJK, the scattered settlements, poor infrastructure, and mutual dependence on natural resources result in community interdependence. The establishment of a network made it possible for COs in different villages to share water and other resources. Similarly, the roads benefit a number of contiguous communities. Education and health services need to be centrally located around a number of communities. This suggests that there are fewer conflicts, or better mechanisms to resolve them, in AJK than elsewhere.

According to Abdul Rahim, the NRSP Regional Programme Manager in Rawalakot, "The networks were established for sharing experiences and pooling human and physical resources. In the Rural Water and Sanitation Project in 1990-2000, 1600 schemes were implemented in AJK with a World Bank loan to the Government of Pakistan. Similarly, the Integrated Land Management and Area Development Projects and the Northern Education Project were implemented through networks of CBOs. Many activists saw the benefits of widely-based networks and began to encourage the NRSP COs to form them."

The WWOP President and staff say they have been successful in socially empowering rural women and promoting the understanding that rural women are able to undertake development activities and manage education and health activities. The WWOP has also encouraged women's roles in politics. For

example, finally one candidate<sup>11</sup> was selected as an MLA who is now working with the WWOP to undertake development activities. With the support of this MLA, the WWOP is now a member of various forums including the AJK National Coordination Council of NGOs.

The COs and network members cover about one third of the total households in the area.

Due to their collective strengths and activism, the COs are involved in holding local public ceremonies and festivals, and in promoting community development activities. They are also engaged in measures related to promoting the welfare, good health, safety, and convenience of village residents, in addition to assisting the village-level revenue officials in preparing records, assessments, and revenue collection.

The evolution from COs to networks involved both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. The push factors are primarily the deep poverty, lack of physical infrastructure and exclusion from local decision making. NRSP also encouraged the establishment of networks by convincing CO members to create a platform for sharing resources and expertise. The ‘pull’ factors include the work of activists who were motivated to magnify the role of the CO at the Union Council level. Institutional factors included NRSP’s encouragement, and the opportunity to access economic resources from the government and from donor agencies.

The networks present a successful model of local development, an effective and efficient local governance system in terms of capacity building of the COs. They also help to improve transparency and accountability in the working of Union Councils and line agencies. There are certainly some opportunities for these networks to expand. The government is implementing some large-scale development programmes through CBOs. The most important of these are the Community Infrastructure Services Project (CISP), an IFAD-funded project to be implemented by GoAJK; and the Integrated Land Management Programme. Technical and financial support from the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) is expected to create significant opportunities to strengthen and develop the networks.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What are the differences between local NGOs and networks based on this case?
- What are the issues these local networks are dealing with?
- How do you examine the strategies of these local networks for policy advocacy?

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<sup>11</sup> In AJK, both men and women are eligible to stand for election as MLAs but women do not contest elections.

## **Advocacy Approaches in Local Self-governance**

The Rural Technology and Development Centre – Local Self-Governance Group (RTDC-LSG) is an NGO working to promote local self-governance in the state of Himachal Pradesh in India. Having worked on this issue for over a decade, RTDC-LSG has developed a model of local self-governance called Panchayat Micro-Planning (PMP) and is engaged since April 2003 in an officially declared pilot demonstration of it in the Bhatiyat Development Block with the support of the state's Panchayati Raj and the Rural Development Department (PRRD). This study examines RTDC-LSG's advocacy in the Bhatiyat pilot trial with the goal of illuminating successful advocacy approaches<sup>12</sup>.

The contemporary situation of local self governance in the Indian mountains is not encouraging. Although it has been ten years since India made a constitutional provision for local self governance through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), this framework has disappointingly not done enough to support community empowerment in practice. Planning is still done in a top-down manner that does not address the felt needs of the people and results in poor governance outcomes.

In the years leading up to the Bhatiyat pilot trial, RTDC-LSG has worked to better understand the nature of local self governance issues, design the PMP model, advocate at all levels for local self governance, network with other stakeholders, and test and refine its perspective through a series of field demonstrations. Local self governance presents an especially interesting advocacy challenge because it involves convincing not only a resistant government filled with vested interests, but also the people themselves who are meant to be empowered through it.

With this understanding of the local self governance scenario, RTDC-LSG has applied itself to intensive advocacy with communities in Bhatiyat, PRI representatives, all levels of the bureaucracy, and the key political figures in the area. This study examines the process of the accomplishments in Bhatiyat, the pressures RTDC-LSG deals with in advocacy, and the lacunae it currently faces. This overall experience is then analysed to extract generally applicable lessons for advocacy.

What are the advocacy lessons we can draw from the experience of RTDC-LSG in the Bhatiyat PMP pilot trial? It is important to note that the most effective advocacy would depend on a holistic approach that incorporates all these points. For instance, it may not be especially helpful to network with other

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<sup>12</sup> Garg, Arjun (2004). 'Advocacy Approaches for Promoting Local Self Governance: A Case Study of Bhatiyat Block, Himachal Pradesh, India.' Rural Technology and Development Centre, India.

stakeholders if one does not pay attention to maintaining a good reputation. Likewise, all of these guidelines are interconnected, in that adhering to any one of them has a positive effect on all the others.

For the advocate, change can never come too quickly, but when working intensively at the field level, one tends to forget that massive shifts in development occur only at their own gradual, deliberate pace. Success ultimately stems only from the people's political will. NGOs are ultimately legitimised only if what they advocate is what the public wants.

One of RTDC-LSG's strengths is that its advocacy is based on real-world field trials that help improve the model of local self governance and provide unambiguous factual evidence of viability that is more powerful than any theoretical argument. Information, education, and communication about the issue are a vital prerequisite to doing advocacy. The advocate must himself be knowledgeable, and must transfer that knowledge to the intended beneficiaries and other stakeholders at every stage. A thorough grasp of local self governance issues and constant outreach has enabled RTDC-LSG to create understanding, trust, and support among all classes of stakeholders. Personal experience of the Pradhan office and the Bhatiyat area has been particularly helpful.

The government is not a monolith. There are sensitive people and sub-institutions in every area and level of the government who will be helpful if identified and given an opportunity. Moreover, different constituencies within the government can be played against one another. Constructive collaboration is generally more effective than confrontation, particularly when trying to reform the bureaucracy. When a confrontational stand is needed, it should be disassociated from the collaborative aspect of the advocacy so that enemies are not made unnecessarily.

Networking with other stakeholders, particularly larger-level organisations and forums, pays off in a variety of ways in the long term, fostering awareness of how one's agenda fits into the larger scenario and building useful contacts for the future. To move ahead with this principle building and maintaining credibility of advocates must be a constant concern. The attitude of advocacy must never be that of asking for a favour from those in power; rather, advocacy should be used from the perspective of demanding one's rights.

Finally, advocacy has already paid many dividends in Bhatiyat, but it remains to be seen how much further the RTDC-LSG can carry the pilot trial and what impact this success have on the larger picture. The primary advocacy challenge RTDC-LSG will face in the future is to move beyond local trials and mobilise a state-level, mass movement to build a political and bureaucratic consensus that

will finally overcome the stubborn resistance of vested interests in the existing power structure.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What are the main issues of local governance in the Indian mountains based on this case?
- What are the policy or behavioural causes of existing issues?
- What are the useful lessons that RTDC has learned from Bhatiyat?
- To what extent are the Bhatiyat lesions are replicable in other contexts?

### **Watersheds as a Tool for Good Governance**

The evolution of the watershed concept, as a development intervention aimed at productive and sustainable use of basic natural resources such as land and water, has come a long way since the start of this intervention about half a century ago. The word ‘watershed’ was derived from a German root, namely ‘Wasserscheide’ that was adopted by the American hydrogeologists, defining watershed as a geo-hydrological unit, which comprised land and water within the confines of a drainage divide<sup>13</sup>.

India is endowed with vast natural resources in terms of land, water, and biodiversity. In terms of land resources, out of 329 million hectares reported area, only about 142.82 million hectares is presently under cultivation, out of which, about 90 million hectares is rainfed. Paradoxically 35% of the irrigated area accounts for only 55% of the food production and 65% of the rainfed area contributes to only 45% of food basket for the country. This underlines a clear need to give high priority to the integrated approach for watershed management.

Watershed development was restructured during the Ninth Five-Year Plan to make it more community-oriented and participatory in approach, allowing a higher degree of flexibility and decentralisation. Success in the planning and implementation of watershed development depends crucially on the extent and type of community involvement, the institutions involved, their nature, and the extent of empowerment.

There are ample examples that women are the best managers of natural resources and their empowerment in watershed programmes will result in good management and replenishment of resources. In an actual sense, most of the watershed programmes are focused on developing land. Landowners are ‘men’ therefore the whole project becomes male-oriented in theory and in practice.

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<sup>13</sup> This case is adopted from a case study carried out in 2004 by SUTRA (Society for Social uplift through Action – Jagjitnagar, Himachal Pradesh, India).

Women are usually involved in the community institutions just for the sake of satisfying guidelines.

Guidelines are supposed to provide a broad framework to steer decision makers towards choosing the appropriate solutions. These guidelines are prepared and circulated by the central government.

The main goal was to make women self-reliant by initiating processes to give them space in decision making and to make their self-reliance sustainable by the end of the project cycle.

Their capacities were built for purposeful development. They were also made aware of the prevailing situations and how to employ people and manage them. To achieve the objective of women as agents of change, regular and process oriented inputs were contributed. These were: economic independence and upliftment, infrastructure development (safe drinking water), reproductive health and hygiene, decentralised governance, and gender.

For the purpose of study, these women's groups were analysed as follows.

**Power to:** This relates to having decision-making ability, and power to solve problems. Within this sphere we also try to locate individual decision-making and leadership.

**Power with:** This involves people who organise with a common purpose and have an understanding about achieving common goals. This is associated with coalitions and building alliances.

**Power within:** This refers to self-confidence, self-awareness, and assertiveness.

There are 17 SHGs with a total membership of 216. Dalits make up 34% of the membership. The women were briefed about the importance of reproductive health. Apart from general health and hygiene, they were sensitised about the social disorder arising due to female foeticides, which is also against human rights and dignity. People were given training on decentralised governance. After training and sensitisation through guided discussions, 193 people actively participated in the Gram Sabha, out of which 95 were women.

It is important to involve adolescent women in watershed management, as they are the real barrier breakers. Our efforts were to make many Yuvati (adolescent women's) groups but to date there are two existing groups who have saving of Rs 900 and these groups are helping others whose economic condition is not good by providing them with uniforms and books. They have started celebrating their birthdays, which is not the usual practice in villages as only boys'

birthdays used to be celebrated. Later on, a total of 154 adolescent women were trained on reproductive health, decentralised governance, watershed and natural resource management.

### **Kanyon Village**

One of the members of the SHG of Kanyon village was not in the usual mood and spirit. This continued for almost three months, and she would be a mute spectator in the meetings, which was not her usual style. Many times, she was asked for the reasons but she never uttered a word. How could she say anything in open meeting about an ongoing attempt from her father in law for a sexual favour? Her husband was a daily labourer and taking advantage of his absence in daytime, he would say inappropriate things to her. He had gone to the extent of touching her when she was serving food or catching her from behind in the 'obra' (place where livestock is kept, a little way from the house). She was in a great fix, if she was to tell her husband he would not believe her and it could invite lot of trouble for her. As she narrates in her voice:

“If I say to my husband that your father touches me with wrong intentions he would say ‘He likes you as a Bahu and that is his way of greeting,’ and if she would have pestered him he would have found fault in me.”

The women suspected some foul play and decided to find out what was the matter. One of the neighbours who was also a member of SHG volunteered to investigate. She started spending more time with the girl and slowly she revealed what was going on. This matter was taken very seriously by the women, who decided to call the father-in-law to the next meeting. He never turned up. The next morning all the women caught the old man off-guard. Her husband was also asked to stay for a while until they were finished. They told the whole story to her husband and issued a strict warning to the father-in-law. Despite that the father-in-law never stopped. In next visit to her place, the women told the old man that at his age it would be very humiliating as they would garland him with slippers and make him walk through all the villages. They told the old man to stay at another place, which was far from the house. Thus, the nightmare of the woman was controlled. There was a transformation in the SHG as apart from dealing with financial matters they helped another woman.

### **Gopatia Village**

As it has been rightly said, it is very difficult to break a bundle of sticks but easier to break one. This classic case of helping each other is in Gopatia village where the SHG and VDC decided to make a drinking water tank.

During construction there were nine users of the tank, therefore labour was expected from all of them. But there were three households which were female-headed and they were the sole earners. Their children were also small and if

involved in the labour, their schooling would have been adversely affected. So these three households were not in a position to give both money and labour. This matter was taken up by the SHG in their monthly meeting. These women narrated their problem. After giving it serious thought all the members decided to help these women.

All the SHG members decided to give some time as labour for the construction of the tank. The contribution from the community was fixed at 15% and these women got that much money deducted from their labour payments. These women could have taken all the money but they all contributed Rs 500 for their self-help group. Thus, SHG was successful in the attempt to create a community-based organisation as a safety net for the unprivileged.

### **Dhaun Village**

In Dhaun village a husband physically abused his wife. She was so brutally assaulted that she could not even come for the meeting. When the women enquired about the member, they came to know about the reason for her absence. All the women decided to call her husband along with mother-in-law to their meeting. He came to the meeting and was asked to explain the physical abuse. The man realised his mistake and apologised for the same and promised them to repeat the episode. Her mother-in-law was also warned since she did not come forward to rescue her daughter-in-law.

In a routine inspection of watershed work, the project officer of DRDA came to visit 'talon ban kala'. A joint meeting of SHGs was called in Dhaun. During discussion, the project officer lit a cigarette and he was about to enjoy the first drag. All the women asked him not to smoke in the meeting as they have a rule that nobody smokes in the meeting. The women requested him that if you want to smoke then kindly go outside and smoke. They also told him that they usually take Rs 50 as fine but said that since he was not aware about the rule they would exempt him. Looking at the guts of women, he was impressed. He said this was real empowerment.

In order to create awareness about the menace of female foeticide SUTRA organised a rally. Eighty-nine women from the watershed participated and they started a movement in their village to see that these kinds of killings are not part of their respective villages.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What examples can we learn from this case for advocacy in relation to local issues?
- What are the elements in this case that hit the policy issues?
- List the advocacy tools used in this watershed area.
- Which elements of this case can be replicable in other contexts?

## **Livelihood Improvement in Rampuriya Village**

Rampuria forest village is located to the southeast of Darjeeling town in India. It falls within the Sanchel Wildlife Sanctuary under the jurisdiction of Wildlife Division I, Darjeeling. The total area of Rampuria forest block is 300 ha and it lies at an altitude of 1500 metres to 1800 metres above sea level, facing southeast. This village was first established in 1953, as a temporary settlement by the Forest Department. People from the nearby areas were brought in for felling operations carried out by the Department. At the time of establishment, there were only 17 households dominated by the Tamang community. The forest department provided the labourers with marginal landholdings for basic agricultural purposes and allowed them to collect dried twigs and broken stems for subsistence<sup>14</sup>.

The present livelihood pattern of the village community is primarily agricultural. Potatoes are the main cash crop, which is supplemented by cardamom and other vegetable production, mainly peas, squash, pumpkins, beans, and carrots. Yet, Rampuria forest village community continues to exist in poverty due to an unfavourable agroclimatic condition. Factors such as extreme cold (minimum temperature – 3° Celsius, maximum temperature 17° Celsius), unsteady rainfall, sandy loam soil with high acid content, and soil erosion make it very difficult for the villagers to have good agricultural yields. The problem is further compounded by the fact that the average landholding is only 0.1011715 ha (1210 square yards).

It is, however, interesting to note that the poverty is not entirely of an economic nature. Poverty also prevails in terms of lack of educational facilities for children, poor health and improper sanitation conditions, inaccessibility to the basic services provided by the state and the central governments, and the power to voice opinions for access to basic social, economic, and cultural rights.

Rampuria forest village is one of the many forest villages that were established in the early 1900s when the forest department brought in labourers for forestry operations such as logging and establishing forest plantations during the British reign. The labourers were given small pieces of land on lease for cultivation, to be renewed every 10 years, but their main source of income was as wage earners in forestry operations. The meagre landholdings are not enough to sustain the livelihoods of these people. The total village land is 41.38 acres with an area of 14.82 acres available for agricultural activities. The average land holding per family is 1.38 acres with an availability of 0.42 acres for agriculture. This village has 0.85 acres of dry land, 2.35 acres of wasteland and 21.45 acres is used for cardamom cultivation.

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<sup>14</sup> This case is adopted from a case study carried out by ATREE (Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment) about the impacts of social mobilisation in Rampuriya village in 2004

In order to mobilise the forest village community, the advocacy strategy adopted by ATREE-EHP included equal participation from the village community, Wildlife Division I, other government agencies, civil societies, and Darjeeling Gorkha Autonomous Hill Council (DGAHC). No economic or social activity within the forest village is carried out without the prior knowledge or approval of the Wildlife Division I. The process of establishing relationships with the concerned institutions starts right from the very first step of selection of project villages. All the project villages of ATREE-EHP have been selected after detailed consultation with Wildlife Division I.

The role of each of the above-mentioned institutions is kept in mind and equal importance is attached to each of these institutions during the project implementation period. During the process of village development plan that is essentially laid out by the village community, suggestions and feedback is regularly taken from the concerned departments. Thus along with the village community, the authorities also become a part of the process, and this enables the programme to gather momentum. Special attention is paid to the fact that the activities being framed do not breach the mandate of any of the above-mentioned institutions, nor do they violate the environmental or rural legislations in place.

One of the most distinct advantages of the participation of the authorities in the process is in galvanising the community members to turn the objectives for village and community development into success stories. This results in an energetic community and raises the probability of achieving the goals and objectives of attaining basic human rights through sustainable livelihood patterns. The other advantage of this strategy is that it gives to the village community the much-needed exposure to the authorities in power. As a result, fear and the perceived antagonistic attitude between the village community and the authorities is also diluted. This exercise has opened up avenues for the village communities to communicate directly with the authorities in power to address issues of utmost importance. The community members are no longer wary of the departments and interact regularly with these bodies.

Periodic visits by the concerned authorities to Rampuria forest village has also increased due to their involvement in the activities. This serves a dual purpose of effective implementation of the programmes and also keeps a check on the surrounding ecosystem that most of the community members are heavily dependent on. Through all these activities, interaction between the villagers and the authorities has improved significantly and this can only augur well for the village community of Rampuria Forest Village.

### **Questions for discussion**

- What are the policy issues in this case?
- Examine the activities carried out by ATREE in Rampuria from the advocacy point of view
- List the learning points from this case as examples for advocacy



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