

MANDLA VISIT REPORT



Summary: The approach towards the village visit was to decode the interconnected causal loops, dimension and components of the **complex adaptive system**. Most importantly, keep from providing any solution to the issues in the tribal and rural livelihood. The first few villages we visited were mostly affected by lantana bushes. The villagers are taking initiatives to make the field arable and lantana free. The plants cannot be burned as their germination rate increases by 50% with increased temperature, they must be uprooted individually (as its root penetrates around 1 metre deep and spread around 4 -5 metres). Lantana bushes not only create hindrances for agriculture but also infect the cattle if they fodder on lantana. Not only these bushes obstruct sunlight by its sheer dense spread of branches and by not letting other plants grow but also disbalances minerals in the soil. These bushes are also safe hiding place for animals who feed on cattle and easy kills. In all these villages **commons play** a vital role where villagers share the various associated risks with farming, other agricultural activities. On the second day, we visited a Baiga village, was displaced because of the water reservoir. They are the second generations of Baigas who are still learning to cultivate, as all the previous generations survived on hunting and fishing. In the Gaund village through Shramdan or payment of INR 125 per household they build the irrigation and canals for the village. After the irrigation was built, even the dried-up wells were filled with water (else the women had to travel 50 km for fetching drinking water). The villages near Bichiya, have primary medical and maternity care. The women send their children to

school, and they have formed a committee on their own to resolve domestic issues as by-laws play massive role in these villages. Toilets were built in the houses under Swachh Bharat Mission, but scarcity of water remains as a major problem in the entire plateau and the villagers chose to defecate in open. Another considerable aspect is **human and wildlife conflict**, Villagers are forbidden from fencing their crop-lands, as the wild boar / animals attack may spread randomly to other villages (crop risk sharing among the cultivators plays a vital role to escape the tragedy of commons). We also met the Field Director of Kanha Tiger reserve and he explained that trespassing happens in the buffer zone for collection of fire wood, fruits/ berries, mushrooms, and small animal kills. Even after the trace passers were caught by the guards, fined or arrested, once it happened that the media and the politicians criticised severely for arresting two Baiga women for stealing Mushrooms worth INR 25.

On one hand, in the core area of the jungle, the rules are as strict as "shoot at sight" to get hold of the poachers or any illicit movements. On the other hand, we heard strong complaints from the villagers for being strictly handled by the forest guards.



While the tribal community are settling down physically in their new habitat, but they still identify themselves as men of the jungle.

Day by Day Itinerary



Day 1 - Dec 11, 2018

The day one started at 7, with a morning walk through the nature trail around the Banjar riverside. As we walked down, Ishan engaged us in the discussion over challenges and opportunities in the context of natural resource governance. We were simultaneously oriented about the landscape and topography of Kanha Tiger Reserve from an ecological, socio-economic and bio-geographical perspective. Ishan and Suhas along with a bird expert led our way, we got to know about different birds



species

and how their behaviour can forecast weather. The bird expert cautioned us about Munna (an ageing tiger), was spotted around this area in the late night, for easy kills of cattle.

At 10 o'clock after we finished our breakfast, we re-convened in discussion room at Wild Chalet (the place we were put up), where Ishan presented the natural history of Central Indian landscape-a geographical, geological and ecological perspective along with the current issues. After a fifteen minutes tea break, Ishan continued the discussion with triangle of Tribals, forests and poverty; colonial legacy and importance of commons in tribal psyche;

Tribal agriculture-past & new challenges and then we took a lunch break. Post lunch we gathered to hear from Suhas about FES and their engagement in Mandla; then over evening tea we reflected on the day's proceedings.

Day 2, Dec 12, 2018

By the second day, we made a routine to go for a morning walk at 7 am for each of the following day. After breakfast we started for the villages at 9:30 am. We visited Matiyari tributary basin, then travelled to restored sites of Indravan, Sarhi to understand the impact of eco-restoration, participation of community in conservation; conservation for poverty alleviation. This activity was followed by discussions with villagers both women and men, walking through the restored sites, going through the Village documents, bylaw registers and fodder collection registers. Suhas, Ishan, Dhvani and Bichiya team accompanied us during the whole day trip.



Recording 1 - Please (Ctrl+click) or copy the link on browser : [Interaction with the villagers at Bichiya](#)



After we finished our packed lunch, we visited Umarwada and Urdali villages in Bichiya and learned

about village institutional processes, tenurial issues over commons, spin offs from strong village institutions, process of developing locally agreed behavioural norms around different commons. Here women and commons played a major role, then we interacted with village leaders.

In the afternoon we interacted with community members of Gadiya and Kharpariya villages, particularly vulnerable tribal group of Baigas, learning about impact of development induced displacement, lives of baigas; community interaction.

In the evening we visited Matiyari reservoir to



understand the linkage with the upstream-downstream issues.



Our long day ended around 6:30 in the evening as we reached Mocha. Once we were freshened up, a bonfire was lit, and we reflected on the day's proceedings followed by dinner.

[Recording 2 - Interaction at Urdali Village](#)

[Recording 3 - Interaction continued at Urdali](#)



Day 3, Dec 13, 2018

Today we went to for Gidli Gobra waterfall and spent around one hour in the river side. Some of us were absorbed into meditative moments in no time.

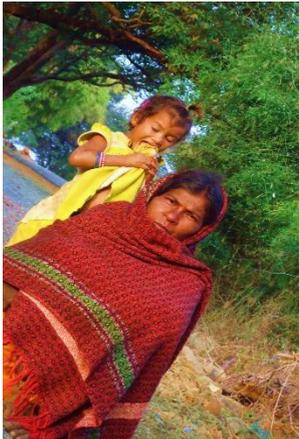


After imbibing the blissful energy from water and sun, we headed with our packed breakfast in the river bank. On our way back, the MPPP participants

picked up and collected all the garbage/ plastic, broken bottles laying on the sand for several days at the river bank and disposed them off; "Cleanliness drive at Gidli Gobra", as they named it.



We started for Manikpur Rayyat village at 10 and reached there in little more than an hour. The group was led by Abhishek and team, to understand the relevance of meso-level platforms, landscape restoration and land use planning, alternative models for participatory land use planning.



After lunch was arranged in the village, we visited Batwar and Samyya-Bhagpur to understand the context of forest villages and impact of human-wildlife conflict. The village communities pointed out the issues of livelihoods of forest

dependent populations.

Interaction with the Kanha Tiger Reserve Field Director was scheduled at 4 in the evening, and he elaborated upon the steps taken for conservation of Kanha and relating it with community's issues around human-wildlife conflict and presenting Forest department's perspective.



Meeting with Field Director, Kanha Tiger Reserve

Day 4, Dec 14, 2018

Today, we went for a small hike in the nearby hills.

At 9 am we started our travel to Mohgaon, Balaghat district and spoke to the village community in Mohgaon on

exposure to sustainable livelihood interventions, exposure to farming systems (**drip irrigation**), understanding tribal agriculture and animal husbandry as the villagers explained the interventions and impacts.

exposure to farming systems (**drip irrigation**), understanding tribal agriculture and animal husbandry as the villagers explained the interventions and impacts.



Then we travelled to Khuksar and Bargi where mostly changes in back yard poultry and farm animals were identified. Once the interaction was over we travelled back to Mandla and had a lunch at MPTC hotel.



After lunch we interacted with the NGO representatives from Pradan, WWF, Reliance Foundation, Mrida Foundation, Eklavya Foundation and got to know the interventions of different organizations in worldviews along with presentation and interaction with other NGOs-Presentations. Our day concluded as we travelled back to Mocha at sunset and reflected on the day's proceedings over dinner.

Day 5: Dec 15, 2018

On the last day, the MPPP participants arranged a visit to the Kanha National Park in early in morning.



After lunch we convened in the meeting room to ruminate the whole journey. Ten students were divided in the group of five for consolidation (collation, presentation, clarifications) of the take-aways and prepared the following charts.

