

## **Trends in the contribution of Common-pool resources to economies of Pastoral Communities**

Rashmi Komal, VikasAnvesh Foundation, India

### **Abstract**

The forest forms a significant Common Pool Resource (CPR) for *Nand Gawali* communities in Wardha district of Maharashtra, India. *Nand Gawalis* are traditional pastoral communities who possess large numbers of livestock and heavily depend on the *Bor* Forest for their livelihood. They also migrate to villages with fodder and water situated along the Wardha river for 3-4 months every year.

The exploratory study is undertaken to understand the change in the access and usage of forest grazing land. It also becomes beneficial to explore changes in the livelihood patterns of these communities. Five villages situated in the transition and buffer zone of the forest are chosen for the study. The leading economy in the region is pastoral while agriculture contributes further to the livelihood.

Despite their valuable contributions, the declining and degrading grassland pose a threat to the traditional livestock rearing practice of these communities. The age-old practice of seasonal migration for fodder is changing rapidly for *Nand Gawalis*. The dependence of people on the forest has decreased because of many intertwined factors. Of the many reasons, the decrease in the no. of livestock and tightening of the government policies for Forest appear to be the latest causal factors. Understanding the trends in access and usage of CPR can help in devising means to conserve traditional livelihood practices for these communities.

## Research Brief – Trends in The Contribution of Commons-Based Livelihoods to Economies of Rural Households

### Problem statement

Common Property Resources (CPRs) play a significant role in the lives of the rural poor in India. The definition and conceptualisation of commons differ widely among the community, government systems, legal system and other involved stakeholders. Access and usage rights for CPRs lie with the community and the current CPR regimes in the country focus on community-based management and governance of these resources. Given the context of changing the rural landscape, the status of CPRs in rural areas is also changing and with similar effects on the dependence of the households. As the land area under CPR is continuously decreasing, the dynamics between access to CPRs and usage of resources as well as institutional mechanisms are also in flux.

The forest forms a foremost CPR in rural areas of India for many communities mainly Pastoral. One such community that is dependent on forest grazing land and Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is *Nand Gawali* community residing in the transition and buffer zones of *Bor* forest. Livestock rearing forms the primary source of income for these communities and hence, pastoral land is of utmost importance to them. Under the decentralisation governance of CPRs, the access and user rights for Forest have been defined by the community with government systems playing a role in the conservation of these lands and also as a facilitator of community access to CPRs through individual and community forest rights. At the community level, the access/user rights may have been formed based on class-caste hierarchies and other similar social structures. Similarly, the presence of non-government organisations in the CPR ecosystem also play a specific role in facilitating access for various activities and management for conservation.

The proposed research aims to assess the changes in dependence on the Forest of the pastoral community for livelihood activities and the factors driving these changes. The study also focuses on the understanding the current regime of forest grazing land, its access, management and governance systems with the perspective of the *Nand Gawali* community. The trends in accessing and using CPRs for livelihood activities will provide insights devising strategies of promoting livelihoods with better management and conservation of common property resources.

### Research Objectives

- To assess the current status and access/usage rights of Forest
- To assess trends in the dependence of Forest in the livelihood basket of the households over the years, and the factors driving these changes
- To identify institutions in place for management and governance of Forest and assess their role in livelihood security of households

## Sampling Plan

### Population characteristics

The sample population for this study will focus on the *Nand Gawali* community residing in Wardha district of Maharashtra. The population will primarily comprise of households that are/were dependent on grazing land and forest produce in multiple ways. Panchayat and block level officials, as well as NGOs working in this space, will also be a part of the sample population. The sample will be collected from multiple locations across the country.

### Size of Sample

The study aims to cover four to five villages in one district. In each of the village, community interaction through focus group discussion and survey of 30-35 households will be conducted. Thus, for each location (i.e. one district in each state) 120-150 households will be covered as a sample for the study. The villages will be selected on the basis of the parameters designed for the study.

### Data collection

Sample household-level survey will be the primary tool for data collection along with focus group discussions at the community level for qualitative aspects of the study. In each village, a minimum one Focused Group Discussion (FGD) will be conducted, comprising of both men and women as the participants. If a common FGD cannot be conducted, two FGDs with only men and only women as respondents will be conducted. Also, key informant interviews and interactions with panchayat level officials, NGO personnel, forest department official and others will be done for collecting data around knowledge systems related to access, management and governance related to CPRs. Secondary data collection from existing surveys and records will also be done. Along with the household survey and FGD, case study of locations focussing of best practices/model intervention/incidences of high degradation and similar issues will also be prepared.

### Data analysis plan

The data analysis will be done using software such as MS-EXCEL and SPSS against the indicators collected during the survey. Descriptive analysis and inferential analysis will be conducted against the data collected.

### Expected outcomes

The study aims to find the trends in the dependence of forest in livelihood basket of rural households and the driving factors behind these changes. Also, the 'before-after' analysis will characterise the nature of changes happening in the forest and will give insights for action, advocacy and policy implications for forest access, usage and conservation. Additionally, the

study outcome will provide a repository of concepts and knowledge system of CPRs along with case studies on efficient models on CPR access, usage and management

### **Limitations**

The study takes the approach of identifying the trends as quantification of the contribution of CPR in the income of the households is a difficult as it depends mostly on the recall of the respondent and may not be an accurate representation of the situation.