

*“Because things are the way they are,
things will not stay the way they are”*

- Bertolt Brecht



Collaborative Forest Governance Policy: Learning from India



Purabi Bose
PhD student, the Netherlands

Presented at *Change in Governance... in Forestry International Symposium*,
Nancy, France
21-24 June 2009

Collaborative Forest Governance Conclusion

3. **Government holds control over** “who” can access (for livelihood needs) and actively participate.
2. **Political participation:** women inclusive policy is not a panacea to ensure tribal women’s political participation.
1. **No devolution of power** = legacy of colonial scientific forestry in contemporary ‘right-based’ governance.

Central Research Question

How can decentralized forest tenure reform improve local institutional systems in ways that help **tribal** people's forest rights?

Sustainability of tribal self-governance

Question for this Paper

How does decentralized forest policy ensure tribal's political participation?

- * How can "reservation of seats" become a meaningful instrument to ensure tribal's participation in forest governance??
- * What policy factors impede or facilitate tribal's ability to access forest resources and gain tenure rights??

Tribals: Marginalized Minorities of India

Who are Scheduled Tribes in India?

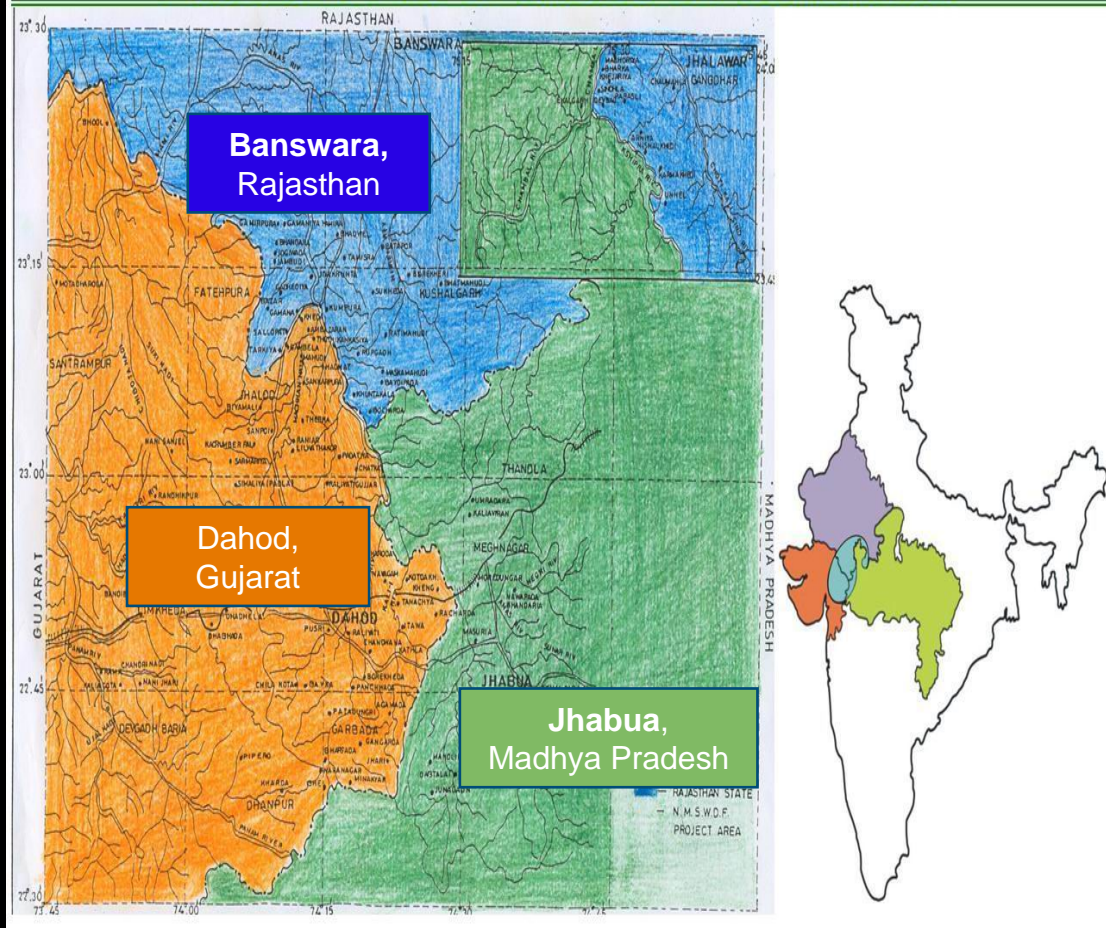
- *8% i.e. 84 million ethnic minority defined by Government*
- *"Indigenous People" acc UN Dec 2007; not in India*

What is a Scheduled Area (Tribal district)?

- District with high domination of Scheduled Tribes
- Central Govt; special laws to protect rights of tribes

Bhil Tribe of Western India

PROJECT AREA OF SADGURU FOUNDATION



- Semi-Arid Hilly Area
- 70% wasteland
- 65% degraded forests
- 0.5 ha land holding
- Not CASTE system

Policy Discourse: Bhils & Forests

oral tribal tradition of Right => statutory modern Privilege

Adss (2005) describes

(...) imagination of forest as tribal land
exploited by India, colonial
dependent... tribal people's
resistance became a
rather colonial power set
about 'civilizing' the tribes
and forests by grasping both
operated as privileges.



Policy Implications: Institutional Pluralism

- Institutional Choice vs. Compulsion
Joint Forest Management (1990),
Panchayat Act (1996) and
Village Forest Institution (2007)
- Institutional Participation vs. Reservation.
Quota - women's seat @ 30%, Tribal @ 3



Findings: Individual Empowerment

- Adapting to “people’s participation” in new ways
Open informal institution => closed literate formal institution
- New conflicts with statutory forest governance policies

Social Learning: Pre-conditions

- Devolution of resources to local government (panchayat)
- Inclusive participatory but discretionary decision-making



Points for Discussion

- Dichotomy of forest (tribal) policy -- created power pluralism and institutional proliferation
- Decentralization of resources -- another way of 'controlled authority' over marginalized
- Equitable resource management -- marginalized groups need more power

Conclusion

3. **Government holds control over** “who” can access (for livelihood needs) and actively participate.
2. **Political participation:** women inclusive policy is not a panacea to ensure tribal women’s political participation.
1. **No devolution of power** = legacy of colonial scientific forestry in contemporary ‘right-based’ governance.

Thank you!

Purabi Bose

purabi.bose@wur.nl

© Wageningen UR

