

## Towards Rural Women Resource Zone (WRZ) in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh India.



SAFP, EqualSaree and TAAL with editing support from Sunita Kotnala

September 19, 2013

### Summary

This report documents the work and experiences of professionals and land rights advocates from the three organizations - Sathi All for Partnership (SAFP), EqualSaree and Towards Action And Learning (TAAL) (together known as the SET team) in the two villages of Madhya Pradesh for development of women inclusive resource zones. The inclusive resource zone encourages special measures that need to be undertaken by women, government agencies and community groups to build a protective environment for inclusion and promotion of women in infrastructural development. **Woman Resource Zone (WRZ)** within an inclusive planning of a local area redefines conventional planning to address inclusion of men and women equally. Since land use development is linked to many other local and national resource systems in practice, a system for convergence is required to identify critical gaps in gender equity and resource requirements to lay claim on budgets controlled by different government departments. Therefore, coordinated action and response from civil society institutions, women's groups, state agencies as well as district, state and central government departments is needed by integrating policy implementation through WRZ for schemes related to: land policies, water planning and climate adaption plans based on Food Security Act, Right to Work, Forest Right Act etc. through MNREGA, NRLM and livelihood initiatives and care needs at the village level. The lessons learned from evaluation of pilots and government schemes for sustainable development should be used to draw out the possibilities for a gender equal village plan using the Women Resource Zone (WRZ) as an inclusion mechanism.

This document provides an example of the benefits that could accrue to the tribal and 'dalit' communities as a result of local planning that includes women getting access to land and resources. Initial feedback from the participants indicates that the Rural WRZ framework developed in Madhya Pradesh has the capacity to: improve inclusion of women from vulnerable communities, improve land based production and natural resource protection through local governance. It offers an implementation model for inclusion of the changes that are envisaged in the recently announced food bill, ban on manual scavenging, land policy as well as the draft land rehabilitation bill under discussion. However, the work requires more research and linking local groups to district and national planning and development mechanism to make gender plans work for sustainability at the local level.

## **Shivpuri Rural WRZ**

In 2012 SET team completed a joint feasibility project to explore the development of Rural Women Resource Zone (WRZ) within the villages of Muhar and Chandawani, Pichhore block, Shivpuri district, Madhya Pradesh as a result of Rs 1 lakh received from Swiss Aid to meet travel expenses. The Shivpuri WRZ project is the result of three years of research in architecture, urban planning and gender developed in communities of rural India by SET team. The aim is to empower women through reconciliation of personal development, family responsibilities and productive work.

The task was to understand how village planning and convergence could occur within a women and resource increase perspective. The feasibility project identified pathways for convergence of different policies and development schemes by including women inclusive resource zone in future planning activity in the villages.

The Rural WRZ methodology developed by SET provides women and men and local administrators (panchayat members, block officials) with a process that provides them with the knowledge and skills to increase their capacity and productivity while allowing them to negotiate sustainability within the community as a family unit. The Rural WRZ experience can assist the national and state governments in planning socio- economic activities at district level and poverty reduction initiatives for sustainable growth with gender equality.

## **SET methodology**

SET established a work methodology based on the previous work undertaken by SAFP that includes root cause analysis and the method to calculate gender resource gaps within an area in the context of land and resource rights for women. The work is summarized in the article ‘Planning gender inclusion to address gender resource gap’ that can be downloaded at <ftp://ftp.solutionexchange-un.net.in/public/gen/cr/res20081305.pdf>. The Village Development Plan Framework within Rural WRZ was used to create a model for regeneration of natural and human resources in rural communities based on their previous experience within urban development plans in New Delhi municipal area and inclusion training of elected local leaders in 5 cities of Bihar [http://www.landandpoverty.com/agenda/pdfs/paper/bhardwaj\\_full\\_paper.pdf](http://www.landandpoverty.com/agenda/pdfs/paper/bhardwaj_full_paper.pdf) and applied in the rural setting of Shivpuri. The tribal and ‘dalit’ villages were chosen as the catchment although being a rain fed area, is food deficient with highest child mortality rate due to malnutrition.

In Shivpuri the SET team oriented and trained stakeholders (men, district and local authorizes) together with women’s groups to build the linkages needed to progress the WRZ concept and implementation. The consultations and workshops looked at; the coordination required by the local authorities and women’s groups; educated them on the different stages that groups go through when identifying gender resource gaps; and the how address critical gaps through training land allocations. The process was aimed at increasing the knowledge base of the group about undertaking local development as projects that have inbuilt application of indicators to measure sustainability and inclusion.

The Rural WRZ feasibility research process has been documented by SAFP and it is working on a methodology to evaluate similar projects in future.

## **Situation in Village Muhar and Chandawani**

The SET through a participatory method co- created the gender and natural resource access gap understanding within the local and district stakeholders by mapping ownership and roles between the village inhabitants and can be replicated in any rural setting.

The livelihood mapping undertaken demonstrates that women in both villages have negligible land rights. The process identified that the women are designated less public and private spaces for productive activity, therefore reducing their influence on managing the ecology of the area even though they have more knowledge and competence than men to nurture livestock, natural resources and vegetation. All members of the families including children and elderly are involved in hard labor to support the family income while the able bodied adults often migrate out of the area.

There are no built structures or forest produce that can be accessed by the tribal community. The current forest access right granted to the community is meaningless due to ongoing deforestation which has stripped the forest of any useful resources. Animal husbandry as a livelihood is not profitable due to poor quality fodder, current land holding yields less and less food for families and PDS and midday meals do not reduce food security gaps. In the absence of employment/ livelihood opportunities families are forced to migrate. The 'dalit' village land use map shows that the 'dalit' hamlet is segregated to the point where water shed gives least ground water recharge options. There is no community water point that 'dalit' households have access near their homes.

The forest department and the district authorities are aware of the need to design and implement programs for the Tribal and 'dalit' communities and offer fruit and vegetable patch improvement schemes. Unfortunately in Shivpuri as in other parts of rural India the support from the government for these kind of programs is influenced by the political shenanigans of the ruling political parties.

Participatory process when combined with design and construction activity can increase women's decision making capacity and the ability for management of economic resources. The knowledge and the skills of negotiation and liaison assist women to enhance their visibility within social spaces/ civic forums become more confident and they gain the respect of the community.

### **Opportunities for convergence in Shivpuri**

The local authorities had completed water shed planning previously and feasibility reports on increasing dairy identified growing fodder, increasing social forestry and improving soil and water conservation activities as the next step in planning MNREGA and NRLM. Despite the rocky crater, the area has the capacity to sustain fodder plantation options, may support stall feeding cattle for self use or for dairy business and setting up of a community kitchen. There is a possibility for the establishment of a wood, Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) and food bank.

The SET team found that DPIP program in the district was getting over and the district authorities were looking for an agency to work on convergence. A long term state sponsored initiative project is needed as existing program/ schemes do not cater to convergence at the local level between government departments. The district authorities and forest department were willing to begin 'dalit' and tribal women inclusion in the existing schemes but needed further discussion on what is possible.

The women in the two villages expressed the need for infrastructure development that could support Cattle Forestry Community program managed by women as part of Natural Resource Management scheme. The program will allow existing community spaces accessed by women and men and will be utilized to support.

The following three projects based on the work undertaken by SET team in Shivpuri can be replicated in other rural areas. Details are available from SAFF on request by district administrations.

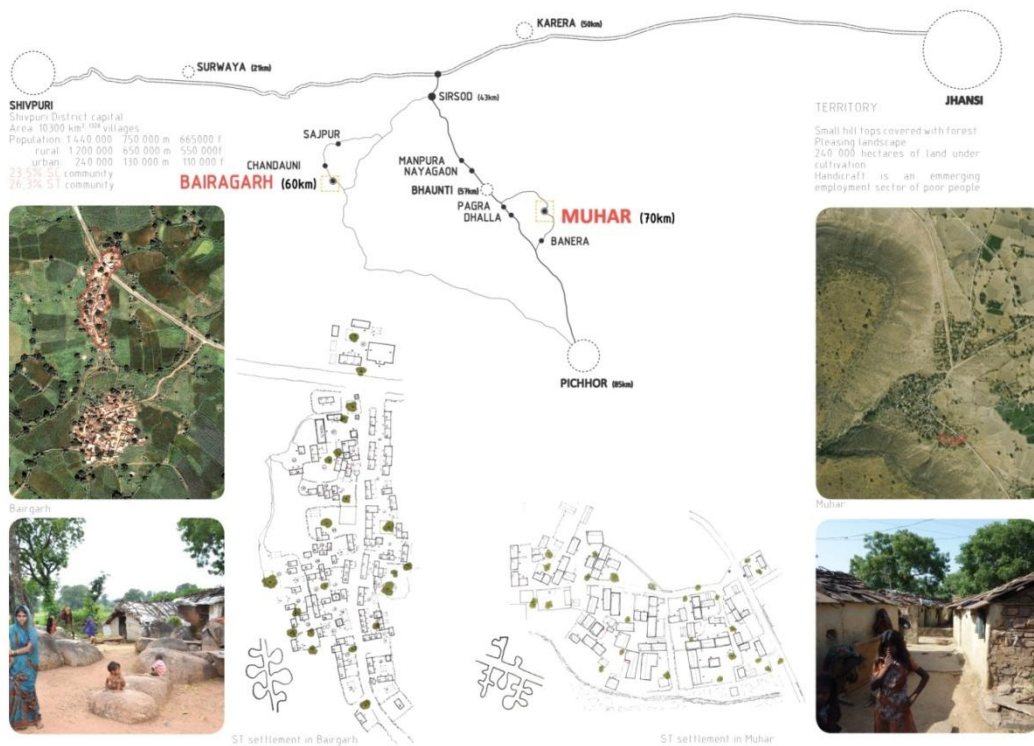
1. A Woman Assistance Centre that offers residential and training facility as well as meals and care support
2. Space for production activity such as Ghee making and Sale Centre
3. Space for Social Forestry plantation/ reforestation activity that includes banking to support land, wood, NTFP, fodder and seeds.

### **WRZ Plan for the local area and the district**

A second phase of work is required in the two villages for the development of a Rural WZR Project to be implemented in a phased manner, to demonstrate the creation of a land use plan to address gender land and resource gaps in the two villages. SET will undertake desktop research to gather further evidence on "what works" approaches to increase resource base of women within communities. The training of stakeholders and frame work for local development will be agreed in first phase of the project.

SET will train district authorities, panchayat officials and other stakeholders and work with them to co- create a framework for gender equal local development. It will assist women to make business plans that will include resource generation, identification of training needs, budget management and infrastructure support for their enterprises from the local and district authorities.

The detailed project report will be developed by a local organization for at least four projects in each village that are supported by state and central schemes. These projects should set the pattern of group approach to land mentioned in the draft land policy which should plan both farm and non- farm activities with Marginal and Small Enterprises linked to land based resource generation managed by women.



*From village map to water and vegetation mapping to district gender livelihood plan that links to national inclusion plan is suggested to district administration*

External consultants will work with state and central government departments to develop feasibility study and project plans for establishment of a transport and marketing link from the village to the town to complete the story of rural production for urban needs. SET will provide training that links inclusion mechanism designed in the urban areas of the district to the needs and networks of the rural people with the 'gender equal sustainable development' perspective and designing self-sufficient resources and waste management at the local level through neighborhood and village governance networking.

### Rural WZR and Convergence

The SET model of rural WRZ has the capacity to integrate the policy and existing provisions within draft Land Distribution Bill to demonstrate how to strengthen resource base for women through local area planning in a rural setting. The draft land policy provides a suitable political and policy platform for the integration of the women inclusive WRZ approach within larger reform agenda as it talks about rural land use plan that should be made with gender equal resource distribution. The policy asks that for all future land allocation made by the government, 50% of community forest rights should be in the name of women. It further mentions that group approach to land

rights will be implemented in rural areas so as to help women from 'dalit' and tribal communities to retain their land rights.

Women support centre, anaganwadi and community centre/punchayat bhawan are spaces that have worked well in different state sponsored projects. The Consult for Women and Land Rights (CWLR) gathered voices of women across different cultures to advocate and lobby for change in law, policy and programs in 2003. The few studies undertaken to date have indicated the gains made in reducing the control ownership and access of land women and men have at district and national level. The first integrated district planning was done in Kerela in 2009 which expected state agencies to respond to proposals sent by local elected village councils. In 2010 the district gender plans were moved with technical help from UNDP and resulted in creation of women accessed infrastructure in the district but the pilots did not inform of overall change in land use policy of the village based on specific gender resource and natural resource management needs gaps. Rural Development Institute (RDI) ([http://www.landesa.org/wp-content/uploads/WomenSupportCenters\\_FactSheet\\_2013.pdf](http://www.landesa.org/wp-content/uploads/WomenSupportCenters_FactSheet_2013.pdf)) has established a model that has been replicated at district level in partnership with Odisha government to educate women in land literacy as well as assist single women to gain land. There is a possibility to replicate these centers using the WRZ in for mission convergence in urban and rural context within New Delhi, Kudamshree in Kerela, Mahila Samakhya in UP, AP and Bihar <http://www.isca.in/IJSS/Archive/v1i2/1.ISCA-JSS-2012-024.pdf>.

The Rural WRZ approach provides an opportunity as well a support for women to transform their economic and social position by: increasing their worth within existing sphere of influence and supporting them to demand gender equal plans for their village and district from gram punchayats. The feasibility research activity undertaken in Shivpuri district indicates that Rural WRZ model can be replicated and adjusted to other rural areas.

**This document is prepared by Sathi All for Partnership (SAFP) and cannot be used or replicated without permission.**

#### **Rural WRZ partners:**

Sathi All For Partnerships  
E09 Anand Lok Mayur Vihar Phase I, New Delhi  
1100091'India  
cell : 09810536717  
Email: [safp.sb@gmail.com](mailto:safp.sb@gmail.com),  
[www.sathiallforpartnerships.org](http://www.sathiallforpartnerships.org)

Association Equal Saree Barcelona, Spain :  
Carla Amat Garcia, Helena Cardona Tamayo, Julia  
Goula Mejón and Dafne Saldaña Blasco  
[equalsaree@gmail.com](mailto:equalsaree@gmail.com),  
<http://genderequalurbanplanning.tumblr.com>

Towards Action And Learning (TAAL)  
A 23 BDA Colony, Shahpura, Bhopal 462 039  
Tel 0755-2422920; 4287138 [amod@taalindia.org](mailto:amod@taalindia.org)

#### **With Support from:**

##### ***Editing***

Sunita Kotnala, Consultant  
25 Mallard Drive, Wanaworie, Sydney 2769,  
Australia  
cell: +61 435576751

##### ***Funding***

SWISSAID India  
Shefali Apartment, Flat No.2, First Floor, , Pune - 411  
040  
Phone: 020-26824597