

NEWSLETTER

A Tribute to
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Bhattacharya

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Four sustainable models emerge from research studies

The models have been developed in the light of studies conducted in 6 states.

As post-research studies strategies becoming clear, Madhyanchal Forum has started working on four sustainable models which have emerged from the research findings from six states. They are-climate smart drought proofing in three regions of Rajasthan along with sustainable models on creating livelihood opportunities for nomadic pardhi community and help them live settled life, sustainable use of minor forest produce and conservation of forest in the protected areas in Chhattisgarh and sustainable model of malnutrition among children of Koru

tribe in Khalwa block in Khandwa district through locally managed millet production.

While the model on climate change in Rajasthan aims at mitigating the hardships faced by the farmers on account of erratic weather conditions resulting in frequent droughts or flash floods, other models seek to improve the socio-economic conditions of certain tribes with focus on child nutrition. The development of these models preceded by the regional, district and state level consultations with the participation of all the stakeholders in the light of



the research studies.

To encourage the communities own and manage these models, three previously identified

grass roots learning resource/learning centres are being equipped with focus on linkages and logistics.

Dr Tapan Bhattacharya who fought for equality and dignity of the marginalised

A Tribute by



Dr Indira Niadu
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Dr Tapan Bhattacharya, one of the founding members of Madhyanchal Forum who later worked in various capacities in the organisation for over two decades left for heavenly abode on July 27, 2018 after a brief illness. He was 61. This brought an end to journey of a man who inspired, motivated and mentored many and helped set up many institutions which were instrumental in providing dignity to the poor and the marginalised.

Born on July 11, 1957 in Bhopal, Dr Bhattacharya did his schooling and completed his higher education in Indore. As a student leader he started raising socio-political issues and concerns confronting youth as early as 1976. This was the time when the nation was witnessing 'Emergency', one the most critical phases in post independence India. He married Dr



Lata in 1986. It was in Sendhwa (West Nimad) that Dr Bhattacharya started his career as a professor of political science while working simultaneously for the children belonging to marginalised tribal communities who did not have access to basic education. He set up a centre for such children and created awareness about education in tribal communities.

Buoyed by the success of these efforts, Dr Bhattacharya established many organisations and collectives such as Lok

Biradari, Lok Vikas and Anusandhan trust to institutionalise and expand his vision and initiatives. In 1986 he quit teaching and devoted himself fulltime to social activism. A major milestone in his journey was setting up of a child line through Lok Biradari Trust in Indore city. He also set up Armaan-Bachhon Ka Ghar (shelter for children) for the orphans and those abandoned by their parents to provide shelter, education and opportunities for better life for them.

Dr Tapan Bhattacharya

will also be remembered for his work for tribal migrants, mainly children whose education is badly affected due to frequent migrations. He started 'Mobile School' for such children. He also set up Adivasi Sevashram Trust for the tribal communities of Madhya Pradesh and continued to work for child education, community development, women empowerment, Panchayati Raj and livelihoods in Ratlam, Khargon, Dhar and Jhabua. He also worked extensively on water conservation and was instrumental in construction of 40 ponds and 36 stop dams which immensely benefited the farmers of Bhajapur and Dhar districts.

As a member of SAARC countries forum "Action against trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children and Women", Dr Bhattacharya frequently raised issues related to Madhya Pradesh. He was associated with many renowned organisations such as Madhyanchal Forum, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, Manavadhikar Ayog, Nagar Swaraj Abhiyan, Azadi Bachao Andolan, Avaad and Mahatma Gandhi Vikas Sansthan.

He has left behind a rich legacy which would continue to inspire those working for the equality and dignity for the marginalised.

Women, youth leaders identified to take initiatives ahead



Women and youth leaders trained by MF have always played a pivotal role in creating social capital

To give an impetus to its on-going and future initiatives, Madhyanchal Forum is in the process of identifying 140 potential leaders (70 female and 70 male from 6 state forums) from Dalit

and tribal communities at the state and national level. Thirteen core leaders (3 female and 10 male from 3 state forums) from these communities are to be engaged at the state and national level. These

leaders got exposure at the national level to participate in debates related to livelihood and conflict. Efforts are being made to enhance the capacity building of these leaders. Thirty two female and 45 male leaders across six states have been identified at micro level and sensitized on ethnic and conflict issues in Chhattisgarh, dalit and conflict issues in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, water issues and leadership development in Rajasthan along with

climate change and impacts on livelihoods in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh. Leaders comprising women and youth have been identified at micro level and included in the training programs at micro level. Ever since its inception MF youth and women leaders have become a major catalyst in transforming the lives of the marginalised sections of the society.

MF to conduct national consultation on research studies

New Delhi: Madhyanchal Forum will hold a national consultation on the findings of research studies conducted in 2018. The studies completed in September were held in six states - Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The studies were focused on the impact of climate change on the agriculture and livelihoods, socio economic conditions of

certain tribes and conservation of forest regions and the concerns of the people in the protected areas of Chhattisgarh. The national consultation which is likely to be held in the last week of February or early March will be attended by all the MF partners, experts on climate change and the sustainable agriculture and the other renowned civil society personalities. The consultation will reflect on the findings of these studies and on long term strategies for future



interventions. There would also be deliberations on the expansion of MF to other states. The regional, district and the state level

consultations have already been held in all the states except Rajasthan.

Khandwa (MP): A one-day state consultation in the backdrop of study on socio-economic conditions of Korku tribe was conducted in Khandwa, Madhya Pradesh in January. The major contours of the study conducted by Spandan Samaj Seva Samiti and supported by Madhyanchal Forum are- malnutrition among the children, household hunger, migration, protein deficiency within the community, lack of awareness about the government schemes and gradual extinction of the Korku culture and language and the prevalent farm practices which have led to the cultivation of cash crops at the cost of nutritional millets traditionally grown by the tribe.

Over 60 participants representing Korku tribe, representatives of civil society groups and many experts took part in the workshop conducted by Spandan Sewa Samaj Samiti. Ms Seema Prakash, Chief Functionary, Spandan, briefed the participants about the objectives aimed at improving the socio-

MF, Spandan conduct state consultation on Korku tribe



economic conditions of the Korku tribe. The initiative undertaken by Spandan to achieve the objective following the study include reducing infant and mother mortality rate, providing food security for the community to combat malnutrition and hunger, conserving Korku culture and language and helping the community get access to government schemes.

Mr. Prakash, member, Spandan Samaj Seva Samiti who shared a brief of history and cultural attributes of Korku tribe, emphasized the problem of malnutrition among the Korku tribe, especially the children and linked it with changed cropping pattern. "Korku families departed from their traditional crops and millets to cash crop like soybean that they would grow but not eat. This has impacted the nutrition of the community", he said.

Mr. Santosh Samal, Head of Programme, Madhyanchal Forum briefed the participants about Madhyanchal Forum and its intervention in six states and emphasised on the collective interventions and the need for future advocacy in collaboration with partners on these issues.

As way forward, there was a consensus on the

regular and extensive documentation of culture, coping with food and nutritional concerns and preserving Korku language collectively through networking with like-minded CBOs, efforts to revive traditional crops, collective model of traditional farming, promotion of small businesses of agro-based products, setting up of community radio and convergence of different govt departments for service delivery (depts. of animal husbandry, poultry and agriculture etc).

There were deliberations on the representation of various lesser known tribes in State Tribal Museum, drawing wider attention of civil society towards tribal life and culture and engaging tribal youth in knowing their history, culture and traditions and taking up the initiative to enrich and preserve them.

- **The egalitarian value of gender equality remains firmly rooted in Korku tribe with girl child largely welcomed in the families.**
- **Most of the Korku tribe families are either small or marginal farmers with only 40% having adequate irrigation facilities.**
- **PDS is grossly insufficient.**
- **The tribal farmers debts have increased**
- **Inadequate implementation of MGNREGS**
- **Widespread malnutrition and protein deficiency**
- **Farmers are reverting to production of coarse crops and millet**
- **There is a need to preserve the Korku language**



Women's collective deepens pond, solves water problem of their village

Fish farming in the pond providing nutrition to the villagers

This is the story of the grit of a woman self help group of Chabutara, a remote forest village in Khalwa block of Khandwa district in Madhya Pradesh which saved the entire village from water crisis by deepening a pond, once a life line for the people. But for the last 2-3years the pond would not provide sufficient water to the villagers as it began to dry up by January-February leading to water scarcity not only for humans but also for the cattle.

The village has two

hand pumps but are not sufficient to make up for the water shortage. Many families had to travel two kilometers to fetch water which resulted in the wastage of lot of time which could have otherwise been used in other productive activities. It was the women whose lives were worst hit by this as they were not able to do many of their household chores.

The worsening water crisis forced the women of the self-help group to do something to retrieve the situation. After a lot of deliberations they finally





Madhyanchal Forum partner incentivized their volunteerism by providing clothing and grains to keep their stoves burning.

As massive siltation over the years reduced the capacity of the pond, the group had to use cultivator machine for a day to loosen the soil and ease the digging. The rains filled the pond again. Nearly 1300 man-days of voluntary labor were contributed by these women. The water was sufficient during the summer months for the humans for non drinking purposes and the cattle from 4-5 neighboring villages.

In 2017, the women planned to use the pond for fish farming. They used their savings from their group to get fish seeds. As some miscreants began to steal water and fish from the pond, the women and aged kept night vigil by turns. Yet the problem could not be solved completely. This compelled the women to lodge a complaint with the police who took away the motors used for stealing water.

It is time for fish harvesting from the pond. The women decided that they would not sell them in the market. They sold them to their own and neighboring villages at nominal rate so that they can fulfil their nutritional needs. They made a profit of Rs 10000 which they decided would be used for helping those in need in the village and for buying fish seeds for the next year.

The women collective from Chabutara village met the Block administration and got an assurance that their group would be given right to fishing in their pond.

decided to deepen the pond. That required help from the panchayat but their request to intervene was turned down. So, they decided to pick up the shovel and hoes themselves. De-silting of the pond was a mammoth task

as it required hard manual labor. Initially men folk were reluctant to cooperate, but later after persuasion of these women, six of them decided to join this cause. One Budhiya Bai of the village took the initiative and mobilized these 35

women and even aged people. Thus began the digging of well during the midsummer of 2016 through voluntary labor. The group toiled for 40 days to deepen the pond. The local NGO Spandan Samaj Seva Samiti, a

MF to focus on new forums, collectives

Madhyanchal Forum will focus on forming more peoples forums and partners collectives in near future which will strategically intervene through advocacy to help people get access to claims and entitlements. Currently 16 peoples organisations are working on issues related to PRI, Gram Sabha, MGNREGA, Pasture, Conservation, Right to Food, PESA and access to other government

schemes. For new collectives and the peoples forums meetings will be held in Chhattisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh to implement interventions on agrarian and water crisis, climate change and livelihoods. Apart from this, more forums, especially women collectives are likely to emerge in Bihar, West Bengal, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh.

