

Report of workshop on Land, Mining and Adivasis in Goa held on 24-25 November 2007, at Panjim, Goa

Organized by MAND, An adivasi-rights resource centre, an initiative of Gawda, Kunbi, Velip and Dhangar Federation (GAKUVED) in organizational collaboration with Nature Environment Society and Transformations (NEST). Workshop was sponsored by Vikas Adhyayan Kendra (VAK), Mumbai. The draft study report titled 'Land, Mining and Indigenous People in Goa: An Overview' by Sebastian Rodrigues was discussed on the first day was financially aided by The Other Media (TOM), New Delhi.

The workshop was attended by 47 people from Goa and beyond. Outstation participants included Prof. Nirmal Selvamony from Department of English, Madras Christian College, Chennai, Ravi Hemadri from the The Other Media, New Delhi, Ajit Muricken from Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, Mumbai, Anthony Xavier from Nagapattanam, Tamilnadu, C.R.Bijoy from Coimbatore, Tamilnadu.

From Goa University, Dr.Bikram Dasgupta, founder of collaborating group Nature Environment Society and Transformations (NEST) participated. Veteran campaigner on tribal rights in Goa Joaquim Fernandes inaugurated the workshop. In his speech he urged GAKUVED to contribute towards pressurizing the government in pressurizing the State in implementing Tribal Sub-plan in Goa. President Durgadas Gaonkar gave inaugural address; the written text of the same was distributed to all the participants. He touched upon the need to write history of tribes in Goa and also explained certain concepts like *Bhous*, *Mand*, and *Barazan* in adivasi administrative system.

The first session chaired by Ajit Muricken included presentation of Status of Adivasis in India (SAIP) Goa draft report by Sebastian Rodrigues. It was translated in Konkni and presented by Soiru Velip, a journalist in Konkni newspaper Sunaprant. The Copy the draft report 'Land, Mining and Indigenous People in Goa: An Overview' was circulated to all the participants. The discussion the same report was initiated after the presentations.

In the discussion that followed it was pointed out that though study covers many key aspects, it does not cover issues such as *Puran Xeti*, encroachment of adivasi land by Forest department, Displacement of tribes due to various mega projects.

Pandurang Kukalkar pointed out that though study touches upon capture of adivasi land by Church, it also need to include capture of adivasi lands by Devasthans (Hindu temples), Deepak Karmalkar suggested that study needs to include the land taken over by Industrial Estates in Goa as that too is adivasi lands. Ajit Muricken

Suggested to find out the history of changing land ownership, finding out as to who are the adivasis according to Anthropological survey of India. He also suggested a need to construct history of adivasis of Goa.

In the second session chaired by Ravi Hemadri Sebastian Rodrigues presented study on Adivasis and Real Estate encroachments in some villages on the Coast of Zuari River in Tiswadi Taluka. The focus of the study was Nauxi, Bambolim, Cacara, Odxel, Mariel and Aivao villages. The power point presentation was titled 'Goa for Sale' and included over 100 slides. Another presentation on 'evolution of *Mand*' was also made in power point format and discussions initiated. Damodar Mangueshkar intervening in the discussion stressed the need to get people into confidence as so far complete picture of land sale and the processes involved are not being disclosed. Ravi Hemadri suggested a need for building alliances to fight and also collaborating with other organizations in this regard.

The third session the day 'Mining terrorism in Goa' by Ramesh Gauns was chaired by Prof. Nirmal Selvamony. Ramesh Gauns presented in power point form the broad macro picture of Goa's mining industry and how it has led to collapse of people's economy, social fabric tarred, cultural degradation, environmental pollution, illegal mining, drying of water sources and numerous other issues related to mining industry in Goa. Due to exhaustive nature of his 157 slides mining presentation jointly put together by Ramesh Gauns and Sebastian Rodrigues the time was not enough for Ramesh to complete his presentation and it was suggested that separate day long session be organized only for presentation on 'mining terrorism in Goa'.

The day two's first session was chaired by Advocate John Fernandes. The presentation by Devidas Gaonkar focused on inclusion of villages in Canacona taluka by forest department under Khotigao wildlife Sanctuary. His paper in Konkni attached with the Map was circulated to the participants. Presentation by Anant Velip explained as to how adivasi village if Mangal in Quepem Taluka is encroached by Chowgule mining company through manipulation of land records.

Ulhas Gaonkar, in his presentation dealt with the adivasi right to shifting cultivation known as *Kumeri* cultivation and how people have been fooled by the State in giving away 2 hectares of land for this purpose. He suggested education and mobilization of people for this purpose.

The day two's second session was chaired by Anthony Xavier. Damodar Mangueshkar pointed out in his presentation that though highway NH 17 crosses from his village of Palem, it has become hurdle – a source of numerous accidents for the villagers, People are deprived from electricity, post office and water supply. Adv. John Fernanades

dealt with land issues in Ambaulim, Quepem. He observed that adivasis – Gawdas that got converted to Christianity were deprived of land rights. Delhi party has entered its name in the village land records. Rama Velip presented on how his adivasi village of Colomba is going under mining, including its fertile lands under cultivation of rice, coconut and sugarcane. Rampant hill cutting takes place because of mining activities. Soiru Sawant spoke about how adivasi lands in Muscaurem village taken over by forest department and handed over to the mining company.

Day two's third session was chaired by C.R.Bijoy. Prabhakar Paddekar spoke about the turmoil of the Cakra adivasi village due the real estate and mining company seeking to construct dockyard and detailed account of as to how the villagers resisted. His paper was circulated to the participants. Babal Gawade presented a paper 'My village Savoi-Verem' focusing on Adivasi habitat and their elimination and enslavement by feudal interests. His paper was circulated for the participants. Deepak Karmalkar presented his paper called 'Tribal rights', circulated for the participants. He gave his personal example of standing up to the Polluting industry and use of Right to information Act 2005 (RTI).

C. R. Bijoy in his address explained the country wide adivasi struggles on various fronts since British colonial rule and continues in Independent India. He urged Goa adivasis to continue the legacy adivasi resistance spirit and love for freedom and stand in its defense like the adivasis once led by Birsa Munda.

The last session of the day concluded with plan of action that includes mass awareness campaigns, GIS mappings of tribal hamlets, Observation of Human rights Day on December 10 with rally in Quepem, Village wise meetings of members of Gram Sabhas and declarations of adivasi liberation on Goa Liberation Day December 19 2007, Holding of Public hearing on January 27 2008, and Protest rally in Panjim on January 28 2008.

GAKUVED executive committee member Sriram Gawade proposed vote of thanks to all the participants, collaborators and well wishers for making this workshop a success.