

**THE KUNO PROJECT
MADHYA PRADESH**

**Progress Report III
(December 2000 – April 2001)**

**SAMRAKSHAN TRUST
NEW DELHI**

Current Status of Village Relocation

List of Original Villages inside Kuno Wildlife Sanctuary

26 villages or village clusters were originally located inside the sanctuary: These are listed below:

Jakhoda	Chapraith	Badi Khajuri (Khajuri kalan)
Meghpura	Ahirwani	Choti khajuri (Khajuri khurd)
Paيرا Adivasi	Khera	Basantpura
Paيرا Jatav	Silpura	Pipalbawdi
Paيرا Khushwaha	Parond	Taparpura
Palpur	Chak parond	Bamanpura
Laddar	Khallai	Padri
Durreri	Barrer	Masawni
Nayagaon		Chak Masawni

Till March 2001, 21 of these villages (indicated in bold type in the table) had been shifted out to the relocation site¹. Of these, a majority has begun cultivation on the new land allotted to them at the relocation site. Most families have already taken at least one crop on the new land. However, five of the 21 villages mentioned above have not yet received land for agriculture from the forest department. These are Ahirwani, Silpura, Khera, Basantpura and Padri. For the first three of these villages, land for house construction has been allotted, and the people are engaged in various stages of construction. Village Basantpura has not yet been allotted land for housing, and is camping in makeshift shelters at a temporary site. Families of village Padri have dispersed to various relatives residing in surrounding villages, and are expected to return to the relocation site once the forest department starts giving out their house construction installments.

Clearance of Additional Land

The most important limitation due to which all villages that have shifted out have not been allotted land is because the 3,700 hectares land that was de-notified as part of the original relocation plan have been utilized already in settling the initial villages. As a result, the forest department has had to go through a tedious process of further de-notification of reserve and protected forestland under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. The process is now pending approval of the Central government, and it is only after due clearance has been received that the remaining villages can be relocated properly. However, it is important to note that shortage of land is itself an indicator of the flexibility of the forest department in changing rocky agricultural plots of the villages that shifted out earlier. It also demonstrates the willingness of the forest department to reconsider families that had been left out inadvertently from the original list of beneficiaries. It is these two factors that are mainly responsible for land shortage and delay in village relocation.

¹ See map of the relocation site at Annexure 1

Changing Nature of Problems

It is increasingly emerging that as villages pass through various stages in their displacement and rehabilitation, the nature of problems confronting them has also been changing. The predominant problems during initial stages pertained to

- non-inclusion in the beneficiary list
- non-receipt of installments for house construction
- poor quality of agricultural land allotted, and so on

For the villages that are now in the process of moving out of Kuno sanctuary, again it is the same set of problems that are cropping up.

However, for the villages that have shifted out over a year ago and have begun cultivation of their new land, there has been a marked shift in the nature of problems articulated. The most important issue that is now coming up for this category of displaced families pertains to adequacy and sustainability of agricultural incomes at the new site. Non-availability of irrigation facilities and low yield from land that has only recently been converted to agriculture from scrub forest are important factors that have contributed to low income from agriculture. It is important to mention here that this entire stretch of Western Madhya Pradesh has also suffered from two consecutive years of poor rainfall and resultant drought. In this light, two important points need to be highlighted:

- Distress Migration: Most families that have shifted out of Kuno sanctuary are marginal farmers, for whom lack of employment opportunities during the dry season was typical even when they were living inside the sanctuary. Thus, even earlier it was common practice for entire villages to migrate to nearby agricultural areas like Karahal and Sheopur during March-April as agricultural labour during the rabi harvest. However, after relocation to their new homes, it has been observed that for some villages, the period of migration has gone up from two months to the entire dry season (for instance, in the case of villages like Laddar and Chapraith). It is not a coincidence that the villages where distress migration has been on the rise also happen to be the ones where water for drinking and irrigation purposes has not been available to a satisfactory degree at the relocation site.
- Low food-grain availability: In the initial stages of relocation, money received in installments for construction of houses was an important source of instant cash used by the relocatees for tiding over immediate cash requirement for purchase of food and other essentials. However, over time, the installments have been fully utilized for house construction and for meeting immediate consumption requirements. However, new inflow of cash into the household has not yet begun, because of disruption of the agricultural cycle of the displaced families. As a result, there has been a growing crisis in the local economy of these villages, as a result of which they have had to resort to heavy consumption loans from the local moneylenders.

Intervention strategies

In the light of the above situation, it is clear that the Samrakshan team found itself grappling increasingly with problems of a qualitatively different nature from the ones faced during early stages of village relocation. In the early stages, we focussed mainly on advocacy and networking, as well as individual problem-solving on issues related to delivery of the rehabilitation package. Being a time-bound process, village relocation related work took up a major chunk of the time available to the field team.

However, there has now been an increasing stress on community participation in identification and analysis of problems, and greater discussion with the community on means of resolving these problems. The first major step in our shift from providing leadership to building participation has been a detailed analysis of the situation using the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodology. This PRA exercise has been initiated in selected relocated villages in March 2001, and we hope to carry forward this approach in analyzing and tackling problems of the community in the future.

In addition, we continue to engage in regular dialogue and active co-operation with the forest department for tackling various emergent issues pertaining to village relocation. Also, an active strategy of advocacy and networking is in place, including regular media briefings, news coverage and meetings with government and non-government agencies involved in the project.

Work Progress

Project progress since December 2000 has been categorized under two main heads. First, a detailed account is given of work progress with regard to tackling problems of the relocated villages relating to the delivery of the R&R package. Subsequently, a detailed description has been given of attempts at mobilizing villagers in selected villages on crucial issues like regeneration of common property resources, and provision of water for irrigation and drinking purposes.

Rehabilitation of Villages

As can be expected, the task of shifting the entire population of numerous villages to another location and recreating their lives and livelihoods anew is a complex and delicate one. A range of hurdles and problems have been (and indeed, are being) encountered in the course of this operation. The foremost of these are problems relating to water availability, land quality, access to social and economic infrastructure, and problems of distribution of R&R benefits between households. A good part of the time and energy of the field team during its first year of full-time field presence has been taken up by fire-fighting measures to tackle emergent problems. Given their critical nature and the preponderance of time devoted to them, progress in regard to these has been listed out in detail in the following section.

DRINKING WATER

Among the relocatees, drinking water and irrigation are among the most important issues

requiring priority attention. Last year, due to severe shortage of drinking water, the forest department had to supply water by tankers to villages Laddar, Taparpura and Meghpura. This year, it was planned to provide hand-pumps for meeting drinking water needs of these villages, well in advance of the dry season. However, this is not a straightforward task, and among the first and foremost problems associated with it is the selection of site for hand-pumps. Following the recommendations of a team from the Central Ground Water Board, a few more hand-pumps were drilled at the sites selected by the CGWB, and care was taken to drill up to the recommended depth of 375-400 feet. However, barring village Durreddi and a site near village Paira Adivasi, none of the other hand-pumps have been successful.

The only effective alternative to hand-pumps is wells, meant for drinking water as well as irrigation purposes. However, out of the five relocated villages facing water scarcity, only village Jakhoda has a well with satisfactory water availability. One of the proposals being considered for action at present is deepening and widening of wells in the remaining villages. Work in this direction is currently under way. In village Laddar, all other sources of water have failed owing to the location of the village on high ground. The forest department proposes to reach water to Laddar through diesel pumps that would lift water from intake wells dug in the riverbed. However, as of date, there is not much progress in implementation of this proposal.

IRRIGATION

The importance and criticality of water for irrigation is also increasing with a rise in the number of relocated villages that have begun cultivation of their new land. Work is going on at a war footing to provide irrigation sources to the relocated villages through irrigation wells and lift irrigation schemes.

Irrigation wells: The forest department proposes to provide wages to villagers for digging irrigation wells between user groups consisting of three families each. In this regard, work has already commenced in villages Khallai, Barrer and Chhoti Khajuri on digging of 80 wells. For some of these, the forest department has already released payments in installments, while for others, payment is due and should be made in the near future. However, in villages like Paira Kushwaha, problems have arisen due to lack of concrete information as well as confusion among villagers regarding digging of irrigation wells. Some families have already begun work on digging wells, without any formal assurance from the forest department regarding whether money has been sanctioned for these wells. Also, in some villages, there is confusion regarding whether irrigation facilities would be provided through wells or lift-irrigation schemes, resulting in duplication of effort. The Samrakshan team is engaged in continuous dialogue with the people as well as the forest department to ascertain the situation on a village-wise basis, and in conveying this information to the affected villagers.

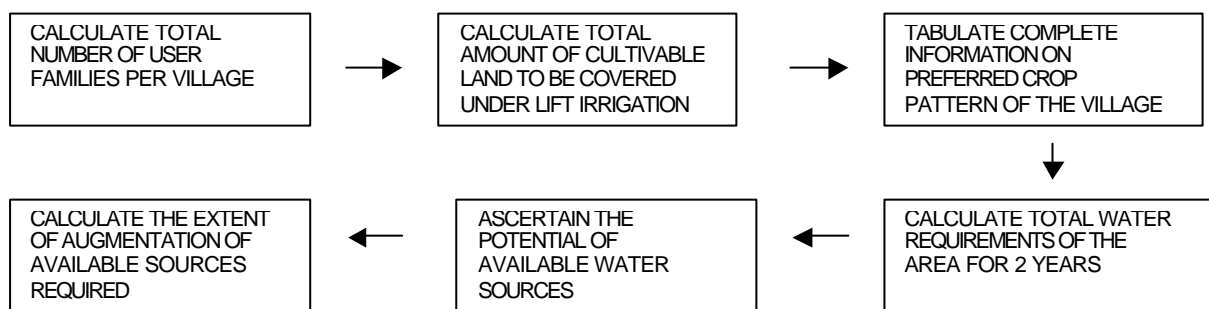
Lift Irrigation:

In order to provide irrigation facilities to agricultural fields located along the river Kwari, the forest department is proposing to initiate some lift irrigation schemes. As a part of this endeavour, two dams are being constructed on the river Kwari, of a height of 1-1.5 meters each, at a cost of Rs. 4-5 lakhs each. One of these is located near the Kushwaha *ghat* of

village Agraa, while the other is near village Meghpura. Once the natural ponding of the river is enhanced through these dams, intake wells would be sunk in the riverbed at these two locations, and then water will be lifted from these wells through pumps. This water would then feed the agricultural fields of selected villages along the riverbank. At present, two companies have been given pilot projects for these two lift irrigation systems, and it is only after these are proved to be functional that the system would be extended to other relocated villages.

On its part, the Samrakshan team is providing all possible assistance to the forest department for initiating and popularizing the lift irrigation system. Once the system is in place, our role would also extend to mobilization of the community into self-regulating and participatory lift irrigation user-groups.

Integrated Irrigation Planning (village-wise): In order to solve the problem of water scarcity on a long-term basis, we propose to initiate village-wise irrigation planning exercises with community participation as well as external help from experts. The exercise would involve the following steps:



Once such an exercise is completed for each relocated village, one would be in a position to ascertain the technically feasible crop output as well as the desired crop output of the community. It is this interface between the feasible and the desired that one would then target as the final output of the agricultural improvement exercise.

LAND RELATED ISSUES

Distribution of Agricultural Land: This year, only two villages, Silpura and Khera, have been allotted land for agriculture. For all other villages, the process of land distribution can begin only after de-notification of additional land under the Forest Conservation Act 1980 is completed at the level of the central government.

Intra-village Land Redistribution: Once this process is completed, our role of enhancing participation of the community in allocation of land would become crucial once again. We intend to implement some of the lessons learnt from our experience the past few months to ensure that at the initial stage itself, all villagers get access to at least some land adjoining the river, which they can cultivate despite rain failure, by pumping water from the river. This would enable them to cultivate using irrigation during the dry season, thus reducing

instances of drought-related distress migration.

We are already engaged in intensive dialogue with the community in village Laddar for re-distribution of land within the village on such lines. However, owing to migration of a majority of the families during the dry season, this process has been slowed down, but we hope to resume this dialogue after the migrants return in the summer.

SETTLEMENT OF OBJECTIONS

A number of cases of persons whose names were not included in the list of people entitled to rehabilitation have been reported from the relocated villages. Some of these are cases of people whose names may have been left out in the process of compilation of beneficiary lists inadvertently. Others are disputed cases of individuals who may possess land elsewhere, or who may not have been bona-fide residents of displaced villages for the stipulated number of years prior to displacement. The process of settlement of objections involves villagers putting in their applications with suitable documentary evidence in favour of their case. These objections are then heard and settled by a dispute-settlement committee which has, among others, representatives from the forest department, revenue authorities of the district, as well as an official from the Sahariya Vikas Abhikaran (a district agency looking after tribal welfare).

After the last meeting of the objection-settlement committee in May 2000, there has been no further progress with regard to the cases that are still pending. An important factor responsible for this is non-availability of fresh land for distribution among the new additions to the beneficiary list. After de-notification of additional land for relocation, we hope to revive our mobilization, lobbying and advocacy efforts in this direction.

OTHER ISSUES:

Title Deeds: Despite intensive efforts from the field team, grant of title deeds or *pattas* to the relocated families is still hanging fire. We have been lobbying intensively with the forest department as well as the revenue department in this regard. As per information from the forest department, two letters, recommending grant of *pattas* have been sent to the revenue department on September 19, 2000 and March 15, 2001. The Samrakshan field team has also had discussions on this issue twice with the district collector. However, action from the Collectorate in this regard is still awaited. The importance of speeding up this process cannot be over-emphasized, because in the absence of these title deeds, no major schemes of the district administration can be initiated in the relocated villages.

Schools under the Education Guarantee Scheme: Last year, in response to a request to the district administration for a primary school to be opened under the Education Guarantee Scheme of the Madhya Pradesh government, permission had been granted for appointment of two teachers in villages Laddar and Ahirwani. However, these two individuals have not received their appointment letters till date. Further inquiries have revealed that the proposal is still pending at the panchayat level, and the Samrakshan team is engaged in efforts to mobilize the village community to sort out the issue so that schools can run smoothly in these two villages.

Law and Order situation: It has been observed that over the last few months, the law and order situation in this historically dacoit-prone area seems to have deteriorated further. This seems in large part because of the severe drought faced by the region, which has eroded the economic viability of the region due to a massive reduction in livelihood opportunities. The rise in dacoit activity must be viewed against the fact that with relocation of villages from Kuno sanctuary, the geographical spread of villages has in fact been reduced. From being scattered over a 345 sq. km area inside the sanctuary till last year, the villages are now located within a nearly 10 km radius around the Agra Police Station (PS).

The police have tended to follow a two pronged approach to the problem. On the one hand, they have tried to tackle dacoits by setting up a network of informers, resulting in raids on and encounters with the dacoits. On the other hand they are attempting to identify and take action against persons who supposedly aid the dacoits and support them with crucial supplies and provisions at their hideouts. In spite of these efforts, however, there had been no marked improvement in the ground situation. In this light, we lobbied extensively to arrange a visit by the Director General (Police) of Madhya Pradesh to village Agra, for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation. This visit took place on April 14, 2001, and we are hopeful of improvement in the ground situation following this visit, through better communication with the police force.

Empowerment of the Community

Our entire intervention is based on the belief that over time, the local community should be empowered to be able to make decisions regarding a range of issues affecting their everyday lives. Towards this end, a series of community mobilization activities are being undertaken in the relocated villages.

- An extensive exercise in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was undertaken during March-April 2001 in five selected villages to try and understand the perception of the people regarding their main problems and possible solutions.
- A detailed social and resource mapping exercise with community participation is also under way as part of the same drive. Information is also being collected with people's participation on issues such as indebtedness, agricultural pattern, changes in resource-use pattern and general impact of displacement on lives and livelihood. The information so collected would be appraised with participation of the affected community, and used for planning future strategies and community responses. Special attempts are being made to increase participation of women in these exercises.
- We are also trying to create a database on each village in a format easily comprehensible to the mainly illiterate community. These village-registers would contain demographic and socio-economic information about the village, and would also help to record details of village meetings held, decisions taken and strategies proposed by the community. A beginning has been made in this direction with village Ahirwani, and over the next few months, we hope to carry it forward in the other relocated villages too.

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