Banwasi Case Study
Case Study – 1

Near the Taria Talab Manjil and Sankalp SHGs did social forestry on plot no 2545 for which they were contributed with barbed wire for fencing, and Rs. 10000/- for plants from the organisation as donors' contribution. This plot is demarcated as community land. But the so-called Mukhiya (leader) of the village Mr. Anantlal Mahto and his relatives wanted their possession over the land. They started saying that his ancestors used to cultivate this land. But the villagers refused his argument. The villagers argued that the forest department had made plantation 3 times on this land then he did not claim his possession. Doing so he could be sent to jail. Now because of construction of Taria Talab this plot has become significant then this person came to claim his possession. The plot has been being used for morning evening walk where people get themselves refreshed. These greedy people wanted to deteriorate the natural beauty of this place. So people started objecting and plantation work was started on this patch from 10th of September 2003. The Mukhiya's people came with rods and other tools and threatened the people including women who were engaged in plantation work. Those people started hitting the facilitators (Rooplal and Mahendra Kumar). At this people reacted and wanted to kill those men but the facilitators kept them silent. In reaction the villagers have a meeting in which people from different villages of Bagodar block participated. The facilitators detailed the situation in the meeting. In the meeting it was decided that the land will remain with the villagers as the community land. Now the people have done social forestry. Plants are growing very fast because of the seepage from nearby Taria Talab.

Case Study – 2

In the watershed area of Banvasi Vikas Ashram Manjil and Sankalp SHGs did social forestry on plot no 2545 for which they were contributed with barbed wire for fencing, and Rs. 10000/- for plants from the organisation as donors' contribution. With the contribution some timber and fruit plants like grafted mango and guava were purchased. The women of the SHGs dug the site, did fencing and planted. This work was started from 10th of September and completed on 13th September 03. This plantation was done on the plot that is on the way. Thus the work got popularity among the villagers who were passing by the way. Some body wanted to capture this patch of land against which a meeting of neighbouring villages was called near the plantation site. This meeting also provided opportunity to those people having a glance of the sight. People knew the history, process of JWDP, people's contribution and the result of people's contribution.

All this resulted in to the people's improved interest in plantation work. People started taking the plants raised in the nursery of Pesra and are planting these plants in their backyard or wherever they are finding suitable places. People are making fences by their own using the bamboo. This has also created competition of plantation nobody wants to be left behind in plantation work. People have understood the benefits of plantation.

Case Study – 3

In the watershed village (Pesra) of Banvasi Vikas Ashram kinds of watershed activities have been done so far including construction of gully plugs, contour bunding, construction of ponds, renovation of checkdams, construction of spillways etc. Watershed work in the village has created irrigation facility to the lands at large. Therefore, the people of the village are taking interest in creating more and more lands.

Being inspired of the watershed activities people like Kisun Mahto, Ritu Mahto, Lakho Mahto are making fields in Taria (near the pond), in the same line people like Bandhu Mahto are making fields in Diha (medium lands) and people like Premchand Mahto and Narayan Mahto are making fields in low lands. All these people are converting barren lands into cultivable lands without any assistance from outside. Some poor people like Karu Singh, Sobran Singh, Thanu Singh, Lochan Singh (total 13 families) have been supported by the organisation in contour bunding but these people took self initiative in further making contour bunding and land levelling to make it cultivable. And thus they brought 1.5 more acres of land under cultivation by their own. They are producing paddy in such fields. The gravitational force takes the water of newly constructed ponds to their fields and irrigates them. Earlier no agriculture was done in these fields which are now yielding two crops round the year. People from all these 13 families used to migrate in search of livelihoods but now they need not go out.

A replication of Taria Talab was observed in the neighbouring village of Akhena, where the families of Deglal Mahto and Jitan Mahto constructed a pond without taking any assistance from outside. The people of Singhtola (one of the hamlets of Pesra) and Gopal tola (hamlet of Mundro) have started construction of Checkdam cum Pond at Bilhorwa Tanr. No contribution has been made to these people from the organisation yet. Many people of Pesra are planning to construct ponds by their own contribution.

Case Study – 4

Prior to JWDP Pesra hamlet of Mundro village was a male dominated hamlet where women were not allowed to sit in the village meetings. If sometimes one woman comes in the meeting she sit far from the gathered people. In such cases her husband if present in the meeting was asked to drive his wife away. Some ladies whose husbands were not much vocal were started attending the meeting and started raising voices if something seem to go against her interest. In such occasions they were badly chid by the people sitting in the meeting. The women of the village were not allowed to go to market. They could go only to the field to assist their husbands in agricultural work. They were abused if they go to market without permission from their husbands or male members in the family. They were often subjected to domestic violence. The boy child of the family were allowed to attend schools whereas the girl child were forced to assist the mother in household affairs.

Case Study – 5

BVA started running NFE centres in the hamlet of Pesra since 1997. In these centres those students particularly girl children are being imparted education who had been neglected of education so far. Literacy rate among girls increased in two years when JWDP was launched in the hamlet. Facilitators of the organisation started with awareness programmes and formed Watershed Association and Watershed Committee in the hamlet. In Watershed Committee 6 out of 11 members are women. All the members in SHGs are women. SHGs sit regularly. Particularly this forum (SHGs) made the women vocal. The facilitators acquainted the women about their rights. Women started raising their voices in the Watershed Association. The women outnumbered men in the meetings of Watershed Association. Women have been imparted training on leadership development, and accouts. Exposure and training to women particularly on dairies, goat rearing, poultry, grafting and animal care strengthened their latent potential. They were provided with goats and chickens to add to their income. They were empowered with nursery raising and social forestry. 100% women membership was ensured in VSS. Now the women are feeling empowered and actively participating in training programmes stepping out of Purda System. Number of women leaders has significantly increased. Chameli Devi, Koshalya Devi, Kunti Devi, Chetni Devi, Parni Devi, Anita Bala, Sumtra Devi, Lakhiya Devi, Sukri Devi, etc. are now renowned women leaders, who were sometime forced to remain confined to the four wall. Male members of the society were not in favour of women's empowerment in the beginning but now they have adopted the change in the situation and are keeping pace with women now.

Case Study – 6

Mrs. Cameli Devi wife of Mr. Bhubaneshwar Singh is a dalit illeterate woman. She only writes her name. Her husband has migrated to foreign. The responsibility to run the household and look after the children is on her shoulder. But she is full of courage, patience and self-confidence. She was very much interested in social work. She wanted to contribute in the development of the village. But the male dominated society never wanted to allow her in social affairs.

The people of Pesra believed in superstitions and enchantments and ghosts. However, Chameli Devi worships God but the people used to call her a witch. They did not go near her. If some animal or child died people use to accuse her for the unnatural death. Once two oxen and grandson of Budhan Mahto died. This Budhan Mahto accusing Chameli Devi for the deaths went to her house and abused her badly.

At that time JWDP was being implemented in the village. In the meeting of Watershed Association where more than 50% women were present Chameli Devi put her problem. The Watershed Association found Budhan Mahto guilty and passed the regulation that nobody in the hamlet will further accuse her of witchcraft. Giving Chameli Devi proper honour for her social work and providing safety the Watershed Association elected her the President of the Association. The organisation BVA also finding her suitable selected her to be one of the facilitators.

Case Study – 7

One of the tola of Pesra hamlet is Bhuniatanr. People of this tola belived in superstitions and witchcrafts. There were two quacks namely Mangar Singh and Ritu Singh, who used to do some enchantments to cure so-called witchcraft. Many times he had been unable to cure the disease and pretended that some body living beside the victim's (patient's) house is engaged in witchcraft and she has caused the victim's death. All the time Mrs. Samni Devi the wife of Mr. Premchand Mahto was used to be accused for causing deaths in the hamlet.

In the year 1999 BVA started working under JWDP in the hamlet and knew about these problems prevailed there. Most of the people used to believe in witchcraft. In the meetings of SHGs and Watershed Association, Samni Devi started raising these problems, which were affecting her life adversely. The facilitators motivated people to be free from superstitions and made them believe in medicines and science. Thus intervention of facilitators through JWDP changed the mindset of the innocent villagers and now they have totally gave up superstitions.

Case Study – 8

About 15 years ago, the Pesra hamlet was surrounded by forest from three sides. Then people easily obtained woods for fuel, shrubs for house making, timber for making agricultural tools from the nearby forest. They graze their cattle in the nearby forest. Women of the hamlet used to collect Kendu leaves (used in making Bidi for smoking) and fruits like Bhelwa, Kendu, Piyar, Plums, Kundri etc from the forest and sold it in the nearby market and earn seasonally.

They two powerful persons of the village formed Vand Suraksha Samiti (a group to protect the forest) and selected some people to be its member. These two people used to fine the persons who collected minor forest produces or took timber or wood from the forest. They never presented the accounts of thus collected money before the villagers. In stead they used to obtain as much timber as much they can and sell it in the open market. The people were frightened of their power and were afraid of raising voices against their illegal work. Finally the VSS got split. Then followed a period of 12 years of indiscriminate cutting of trees from the forest.

In 1999 BVA launched JWDP in Pesra. That time there was no brotherhood in the village. There was no village based organisation. No person was thinking for the village. But the people in the village were laborious.

The facilitators started awareness programmes in the village and continued with people contact, meetings, one to one talk etc. After formation of Watershed Association, Watershed Committee and SHGs facilitators started motivating people to protect the forest from indiscriminate cutting of trees. Again VSS was formed and the women were given the responsibility to protect the forest. The women protected the forest firmly and checked its further degradation. In stead they started plantation work in the forest and it is gradually becoming dense. Whatever the situation of the forest exists is only because of women in the village.