

Annual Report 2019

NTFP Exchange Programme India



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One ought, every day at least, to hear a little song, read a good poem, see a fine picture, and, if it were possible, to speak a few reasonable words.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Context

Over the past year the Indian socio-political and environment context has not been a happy one. Though seemingly unconnected, certain decisions and policies that have been made in the political field have affected other sectors. The Indian GDP has slipped from 8% (in mid-2018) to 4.5% by the end of 2019. There have been attempts to dilute several environmental legislations and some blatant violations of laws, all justified with the 'development' logic that refuses to die. Large scale felling for a coal project in Sambalpur district, Odisha, has been one of the recent ones. Other violations concerning coal mines are ongoing in Raigarh, Chhattisgarh, especially in the Tamnar Block worked by Jindal Power, where local communities continue to protest.

The government's plan for the expansion of palm oil continues. However, the abrogation of Article 370 from the status of Jammu and Kashmir caused unexpected responses internationally. The Malaysian President, Mahathir. Mohammed's criticism of the Indian government's ruling has affected palm oil trade: India, the largest palm oil importer from Malaysia has now opted to not continue its business relations. It may shift to Indonesia for its palm oil requirements, which may lead to a pressure on that country's forest in the coming years.

Though several communities, especially in Odisha and Maharashtra, have benefitted from the possibility to trade the NTFPs within their CFRs (especially tendu leaves and bamboo), there has been no proper implementation of the Minimum Support Price by the governments. Combined with several structural problems in agriculture, growth in the sector has been slipping over the past 2-3 years. The combined effects of all these factors, including the threats due to an increased number of Protected Areas that denies access into forest areas to indigenous and rural communities (risen from 769 in 2017 to 828 in 2018, according to an MoEF brief) have little option for these marginalized peoples. The trend in migration to nearby towns and other urban areas continues to increase, leading to gaps in the transfer

of traditional knowledge and the mismanagement of the gram sabhas in such communities.

The status of the implementation of the FRA has not improved much since the last major survey was done in 2016, when it was revealed that a bare 3% of its potential was realized. Civil society organizations working with indigenous peoples and other forest dwellers continue to face several hurdles, the most common one being the apathy as well as the ignorance about the law by the officers concerned; an added factor is the violation of these rights when vested interests are also present there as in the cases of Sambalpur and Tamnar mentioned above.

The Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme India (NTFP India) has worked through its partners in 8 states with various rural communities and indigenous groups. Within the context described in the paragraphs above they have continued to address the major issues of today, namely biodiversity, water, deforestation and, indirectly, pollution and climate change. Some other the activities engaged in by the Programme, like the formulation a CAMPA policy paper, or conducting in-depth research about the impacts of palm oil, may seem like digressions from our primary concern with NTFPs and adivasi livelihoods. However, these activities, especially those that build up towards suggestions and policy recommendations, were absolutely necessary as they directly affect adivasi and rural peoples' tenure security, culture and well-being.

Our combined work with the regional programme in other countries in southeast Asia, on wild forest foods, culminated in October with a publication. This is the Wild Tastes in Asia: coming home to the forest for food, which was formally launched in Manila.

Madhu Ramnath

Conservation

The report

I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

In Andhra Pradesh, apart from the planting of cash-crop and food plants planted by Kovel Foundation, the organization also planted 9000 NTFP plant species in their work areas, mainly on individual farmers lands. They have a total of 6 nurseries where 3,87,115 saplings of these species mentioned were raised. In addition, Kovel Foundation



has also demarcated areas as Biodiversity Block/s where important NTFP and medicinal plant species would be raised as seed material to be distributed among the tribal farmers through Forest Seed Banks managed by community. Efforts have been initiated with some species. An indigenous seed festival was conducted by the partners in the natural farming program with support of Rythu Sadhikara Samstha and Department of Agriculture.

In Mayurbhanj district, Odisha, Gram Swaraj has continued with its Peoples Forestry School programme. The first of the schools was realized in Bhagirathpur village; lessons and activities were organized during the school vacations – the larger purpose being the transfer of traditional and inter-generational knowledge – and 425 youngsters participated. Discussions were about biodiversity, life-skills and culture. Gram Swaraj conducted capacity

building workshops for gram sabha members in its work area on themes such as conservation, livelihood, traditional knowledge, water, climate change, law and policy. Resource persons were invited to facilitate the capacity building sessions on all themes. Twelve such sessions were organised and 110 persons participated in these programmes. 25,000 simli plants (*Bombax ceiba*), threatened in the region



known by its name, and were planted in 18 CFR areas. Biodiversity registers were prepared in five villages on plants, domesticated and wild animals, birds, fruits, and wild foods; knowledge related to biodiversity and conservation good practices were also documented. In two villages, short documentaries were prepared on biodiversity conservation practices and people's perception. Nine biodiversity festivals were conducted to educate the younger generation about the richness of natural heritage.

In Saintala Block of Bolangir district where RCDC is engaged, 32 villages have collectively undertaken forest protection activities along with forest conservation. 11,000 NTFP and medicinal plant species (Rare, Endangered, Threatened) were planted and care is being taken to protect them; after one season the survival rate is 80%. Other forest conservation activities include adopting sustainable harvest methods for NTFPs; identifying specific areas for grazing within CFR zones; controlling forest fires; soil and water conservation; and formation of committees for forest protection and conflict resolution.



In Maharashtra, GSMT participated in the 33 crore plants reforestation programme of the government; other institutions in the programme were the forest department and the gram sabhas. GSMT worked in 6 villages and planted a total of 89,500 plants. In Yavatmal district the conservation and management plans have been prepared in 61 villages; the CFR Management Committees are established in 82 villages, and 67 villages are in the process of having such committees; conservation and management plans of 53 villages have been approved by the tribal development department. GSMT-initiated conservation programmes have resulted in a stop to leaf-litter burning during the mahua and tendu-leaf season; in controlled bush cutting for tendu-leaf harvest; in establishing a separate area for cattle grazing; better water availability due to soil and water conservation; regulation of illegal timber felling; enhanced biodiversity in the area and increase in wildlife presence.

In the Akole Block of the western ghats of Maharashtra Lok Panchayat is working to conserve sacred groves in 5 villages. In this context 30 key plant species have been studied, and nurseries established in 4 sites and 36,000 plants raised for planting. In addition the youth from 10 villages have been trained in sustainable honey harvesting; they are now selling their produce to Baliraja Krushak Producer Company. Honey festivals were also held in

Sirsi, Uttara Kannada in Karnataka, by Prakruti. Festivals were organised in two places, Mandaganmane, in Sirsi taluka and Bargadde in Yellapur taluka. Bee colonies and boxes were distributed to propagate bee keeping among youth. The successful work on bee keeping has helped rural youth to find alternate employment and they have contributed towards pollination and forest diversity. A booklet in Kannada “The Practical way of bee keeping” has been published.



Lok Panchayat has worked with the women to conserve (in situ) crop diversity; a district-level seed bank and 4 village/cluster level seed banks have been established by them. Through a total of 5 such seed banks 200 varieties of 120 different crops were exchanged. Work on the endangered local Dangi cattle breed is ongoing in 24 villages.



In Udaipur, Rajasthan, Samarthak Samiti helped local farmers collect and exchange indigenous crop seed varieties. Training programmes for the proper collection of custard apple was given, along with a refresher course in honey harvesting. Sewa Mandir, the other partner worked on afforestation in Girwa, Badgaon, Kherwara, Gogunda and Jhadol blocks of Udaipur district and Kankroli block of Rajasamand district. Plants were planted in village pasturelands with the help of the people. In all, 53,120 plants were planted under the afforestation programme, benefitting 84 farmers. Apart from plantation, direct seeding (Karanj, Katkaranj, Sahejan, Kher, etc.), stump/branch cutting plantation, thanwla, etc. has been also done to increase vegetative cover of commons and individual farmers land with an objective of meeting food, fodder, fuel wood & medicinal requirements of the people.

In Tamil Nadu, Keystone Foundation has been working on wetland and water body restoration in several places in the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. Other fields of work include wild food restoration, high altitude shola plants (for which nurseries have been established), harvest protocols for resin, hon-

practice of exclusionary methods of conservation. Within these 'agreements' various aspects such as community-based barefoot ecologists, the regular observation and documentation of forest phenomena, etc., are highlighted.

In Bastar, LEAF worked in 15 villages of 7 panchayats on various aspects of conservation. These include seed collection (of 60 species, also sent to other organizations), nurseries (presently having 2,04,000 plants of 45 species) and plantations (3000 plants of 10 species planted); the restoration of sacred groves in 10 villages. As in most years the guarding of common village forests were done through the traditional thengapalli method with people from different households taking turns to walk through their forests with a ceremonial thenga.



ey and other wild foods, and related publications. In several villages in vicinity of the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve, Keystone has been developing 'conservation agreements' with indigenous communities, a system to get such communities to observe certain rules as they harvest NTFPs or in their use of the forest. This is also a counter to the state view and

Livelihoods & Enterprise

The Kovel Foundation has worked extensively on an agro-forestry model in 5 districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telengana with a scheme called Giri Lakshmi Thotalu, a model that uses 75% cash crops and 25% food crops to ensure both food security and income to the families. Across 5 districts a total of 268 such models have been established with each model have 52 such plants; a total of 13936 plants have been planted of various species. Medicinal plants too form a part of the GLT model; these are planted as intercrop along with pulses and 8 species (among a total of 55,000 plants) have been planted. Apart from the GLT, Kovel is working on making podu plots useable over longer periods of time by creating ponds and preventing soil erosion. Appropriate training programmes for medicinal plant cultivation and agro-forestry models are also being conducted.

In Maharashtra, our partner Gramin Samasya Mukti Trust worked through the gramsabhas due to their participation in the Forest Conservation and Management Plan Development process. The two main community level institutions are the Women's Federation and the Gramsabha Mahasangh, which actively engage in the convergence of various government schemes with village requirements. A total of 50 barefoot ecologists have been trained and are able to work on forest conservation and management themes such as natural regeneration, nurseries and plantation, NTFP-based entrepreneurship, etc.

In the Yavatmal region 5 villages have successfully managed their Tendu-leaf business and distributed bonuses. The gram sabhas in Shiradhoki, Khkadvai, Vagdara, Vasantnagar and Pendhari villages participated in the process, a total of 287 families getting a bonus. With regard to NTFP-based enterprises, 2500 households in 20 villages were involved. The details are in the table below.

The GSMT was requested by the District Collector of Adilabad (Telangana) to help with mahua product training. Twenty women were given the required support; 2 women were also trained with mahua flower product development which was then taken on by the Adilabad district.

Also in Maharashtra, Lok Panchayat has helped form the Adyaktantiveer Raghoji Bhangare Vanopaj Sahakari Sanstha Marayadit, a registered body. This will begin procuring, processing and value-adding certain NTFPs, especially bal-hirda (Terminalia chebula). In 9 villages, Adivasi farmers produce Kaal Bhat, an indigenous aromatic rice variety and have linked the producer group to Baliraja Producer Company. 10 tons of rice was purchased from the farmers group at INR 32000/-.

In the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, the Legal Environmental Action Foundation (LEAF) has supported the community procure tamarind and mahua for Rs 1,42,666. This will be sold at a later date back to the community or in the wholesale market and the profit kept in the peoples' fund.



In Mayurbhanj district of Odisha the Regional Centre for Development Corporation (RCDC) has worked with 100 households in Boula and Jharjhari villages of Bhaliadal Gram Panchayat in Thakurmunda block. The people were provided an improved cooking stove to reduce the pressure on the forest and to improve respiratory health. In these two villages the community ponds were de-silted through MNREGA funds and with a little project support a fish-culture initiative was begun. This has provided a sustained income to the people. In Bolagiri district some work with agriculture and NTFP-based pro-

NTFP	Mahua	Tendu	Gum	Honey	Lac	Fishery	Total
Amount	18.95 lakhs	69.41 lakhs	5.76 lakhs	2.67 lakhs	0.15 lakhs	5.05 lakhs	1.02 crores

ducer companies continues.

In Rajasthan, Samathak Samiti has been engaged with training community groups on the Forest Rights Act, the Minimum Support Price for agricultural products as well as for NTFPs, and on tree-based livelihood models. To prepare for the forthcoming season meetings have been organized on various NTFPs, especially honey, bees-wax, jamun, palash, tendu leaves, etc. With support from TRIFED and the Tribes India the Samiti is collaborating with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to establish 5 Vandhan Kendras in Udaipur and Pratapgarh. Other activities and achievements include training of indigenous people (incl. disabled people) in preparing herbal colours for Holi; getting a fairer price for tendu leaves in 10 villages; and collecting 10 tonnes of honey.

In Tamil Nadu, Keystone Foundation has worked on agro-forestry in 50 wadi-projects and provided seed support to 200 farmers in the Sigur region. Other activities include providing 50 farmers with saplings, fencing and bio-inputs; establishing 2 nurseries in Konavakkarai; establishing 3 nurseries and 3 seed banks in Sigur and holding bio-input training for 30-40 farmers; exposure visits to 25 farmers to Aadhimalai and Bangapadigae; a seed production training for 5 community representatives in Mysore. Some details about the specific enterprise work and the amounts involved are given in the table below.

Enterprise – Sales Data from Aadhimalai Jan – Dec 2019

	NTFP		
1	Honey Bulk	2932.66	1253205
2	Shikakai	9651	789672
3	Eucalyptus Oil	139.38	166447.4
	Total	12723.04	2209325
	Agri		
1	Pepper	1655.6	974218.8
3	Silkcotton	5188.5	342441
4	coffee Parchment	5176	688422
	Total	12020.1	2005082
	Particulars	Nos/kg	Amount
1	NTFP VAP	64715.3	3719097
2	NTFP Bulk kg	12723.04	2209325
3	Agri VAP	1129.9	298314.1
4	Agri Bulk kg	12020.1	2005082

Policy & Advocacy

Kovel Foundation has held a stakeholders meeting in 4 districts of Andhra Pradesh to discuss the various issues of importance today for adivasi and rural people. These include the PESA, the FRA, the Biodiversity Act, implementation of government schemes and other matters concerning the Panchayat Raj Institutions. IFR claims for individual lands have been submitted for 136 families to the Revenue Officer concerned.

In the Simlipal Biosphere Reserve Gram Swaraj has worked with 9 communities and helped prepare the management plans for the CFR areas. Other related work is ongoing in 205 villages. RCDC brought out a policy brief with regard to the CAMPA (esp. in Odisha) and also engaged with the Forest Department regarding funding support to CFR Management Committees (wherever they exist) / VSS / EDCs out of CAMPA to operationalize the Gram Sabha plan. The objective is to integrate the CFR Management Plan with Govt. Sponsored schemes as well as with the Divisional Working Plan. On another note, RCDC took up the matter of conversion of Forest Villages to Revenue Villages and met the Revenue Minister and the Department Secretary. The good news is that the Revenue Department, Government of Odisha has come out with a detailed procedure for this activity. The procedure and government letter related to it is yet to be accessed by RCDC. However this process will be the gateway for all Forest Villages to be converted into Revenue Villages.

In Bastar, LEAF has held legal literacy meetings and workshops in 15 villages regularly and discussed/supported the community understanding of various essential laws and Acts including the Panchayat Extension for Scheduled Areas Act (PESA), the FRA, PRIs and the Right to Information Act, the functioning of the Gram Sabha, etc. CFR-related information is being given in 11 villages and of these the process of application for rights have begun in 6 villages. A conservation and management plan of the CFR areas claimed have also begun in 6 villages. In Udaipur, Samarthak Samiti, along with Adivasi Vikas Manch, organized group meetings to discuss the FRA and PESA in with people in 20 villages. People are able to make their IFR/CFR claims through an online portal of the government. In Sewa Mandir's

field area 9 Community Forest rights authority letters have been allotted and CFR management committees (CFRMCs) have been constituted in these villages. These villages have been visited and primary information concerning the socio-economic status, conservation, etc., have been gathered.

GSMT has been working in Maharashtra with the Vidarbha Livelihood Forum (VLF), a network of like-minded organizations working in the Vidarbha region to work for broader impact at appropriate level. A proposal to facilitate management plans in 53 villages was submitted to the state tribal department and was approved. Other activities of GSMT include the filing of guidelines for Critical Wildlife Habitat and Relocation with the Mumbai High Court; consultations with State Level Monitoring Committee and Principal Secretary of TDD on proposed changes in IFA and CWH guidelines; approval by the Tribal Development Department and Tribal Research and Training Institute of Conservation & Management Plans in new (400) CFR villages in Vidarbha region. GSMT has initiated the process of MSP of NTFPs; a process to prepare the brief report is on considering the inefficiency of the concerned department.



In the Akole Block of the western ghats in Maharashtra Lok Panchayat has worked in 20 villages and 93 hamlets. This is in the Kalasubai Harishchandragad landscape, where 380 square kilometres has been declared as a wild life sanctuary. Additionally, in 11 villages CFR management plans are being developed to secure livelihoods that may control out-migration. For strengthening forest governance system, other pro-people legislations, like PESA, BDA, NREGA are being used to build the confidence of the local communities.

In Uttara Kannada in Karnataka, Prakruti has been providing platforms for dialogue between forest department officials and local communities

to resolve their conflicts around the implementation of the FRA. These interactions and workshops were held in four different forest regions, in Bhankuli Panchyat in Sharavati Wild Life Sanctuary, in Anshi National Park, Shirasgaon and Chenngar.

In Tamil Nadu, Keystone supported the filing of 1887 claims for individual titles of which 1559 have been received; 302 more claims have been submitted for revision and there has been some progress in 159 of these. Regarding CFR titles the submission plans are ongoing for 57 claims and 31 have already been submitted. Exposure visits for community members have been conducted to Nilambur (Kerala) and to Yavatmal (Maharashtra).



Health & Substance

Health-related interventions have been made by Keystone Foundation in the Sigur and Aracode regions among 81 households (305 people). This is ongoing work that has been slightly scaled up. Other interventions include a nutrition and diet plan in 34 households, along with the monitoring; mental health assessment and engagement with 5 people; supporting consultations of 8 people and an adolescent health meeting held with 160 people. In Andhra Pradesh Kovel Foundation facilitated a multi stakeholders meeting around traditional health which included ayurvedic doctors, academicians, highly successful and famous healers with specializations. Training programmes to build the capacities of traditional health practitioners have been conducted frequently with a focus to conserving traditional resources, medicine preparation, basic diagnosis methods, etc.

Health related work in Bastar is being done essentially by the women's groups. They have established kitchen gardens in 15 villages and are now self-sufficient in terms of vegetables and often have excess which they take to the local haat for sale. The consumption of wild foods, which have been encouraged through workshops and awareness programmes over the past 2-3 years, have also contributed to better health.

Focusing on the nutritional aspects many partners have established kitchen gardens in community households; in Rajasthan Samarthak Samiti provided a seed kit of 100 seeds to community-members. Prakruthi helped organize a tuber fair in Joida, Karnataka, to create an awareness about the qualities and use of tubers as food.

Other Activities & Events

Kovel Foundation visited Baitarani, an NGO in Odisha working with Dabur India Ltd., to learn about agro-forestry models that integrate medicinal plants in the model

Gram Swaraj, along with 35 other organizations, held a River Conference in Odisha, to showcase the importance of riverine communities and their links with food, agriculture and culture

Prakruti organized 12 literary programmes to discuss the present trends in literature and the environment

Samarthak Samiti participated in Milan Mela organized by the Adivasi Vikas Manch; they also attended a national workshop on honey held in Sirsi, Karnataka

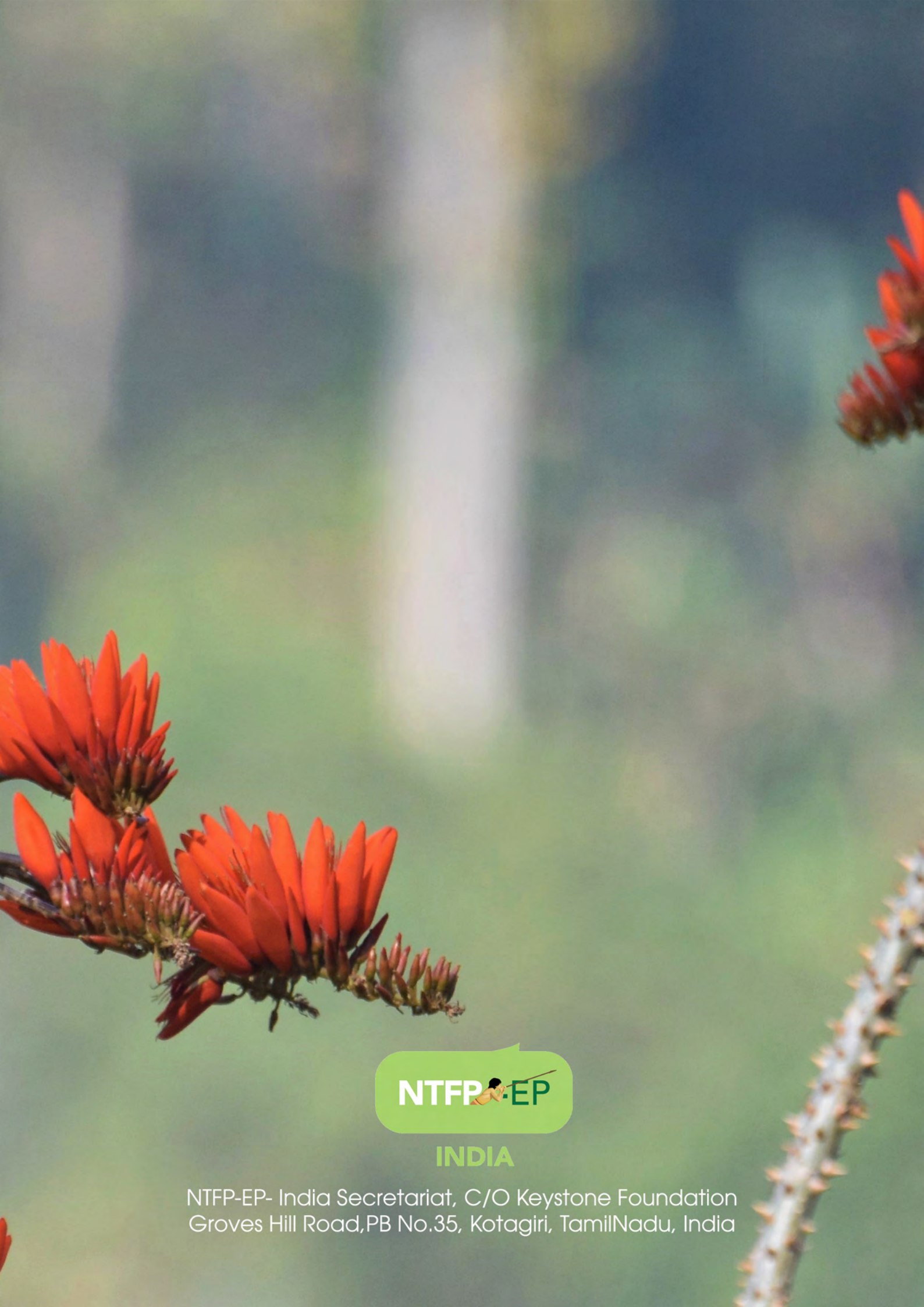
In October the Madhu Duniya was held in the Philippines and attended by Keystone Foundation, Prakruti and Samarthak Samiti

Kovel Foundation conducted studies towards contributing to Gender and NTFPs by surveying gender roles in the collection of gum karaya and tamarind

Kovel Foundation conducted a survey to study the supply chain of karanj (*Pongamia pinnata*) in the Araku valley.

NTFP EP Asia organized a workshop on sustainable harvest protocols for honey, resin and wild foods attended by Keystone Foundation in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.





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