



JARDHARGAON COMMUNITY CONSERVED AREA, UTTARAKHAND, INDIA

Report on a field visit and consultations with Jardhargaon's residents



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As in many parts of the world, there is increasing recognition in India of the role that indigenous peoples and local communities are playing in the conservation of wildlife and biodiversity. However most such initiatives remain 'hidden' to the outside world as there has been little documentation of them. This report presents a profile of one of the India's better-known community conserved areas (CCAs): Jardhargaon, situated in the hill district of Tehri Garhwal in the state of Uttarakhand in north India.

This report is based on a recent field visit and discussions held at the village, and on observations and information from the long-term association of Kalpavriksh and other groups with Jardhargaon.

The Garhwal region has a history of resistance as demonstrated by the Chipko Andolan ('chipko' literally means 'to hug'), started in the early 1980s with spontaneous protest by villagers against tree-felling by contractors, and spread rapidly in the region. Activists from Hemvalghati (the valley to which Jardhargaon belongs) had been instrumental in mobilising the people of this area against commercial felling of trees in the surrounding forests. One of them, Vijay Jardhari, mobilized the residents of Jardhargaon to discuss the state of its degrading forests, and the possibility of the forest being managed by the villagers themselves even though it technically belonged to the state government's Forest Department. These discussions ultimately resulted in the formation of the *Van Suraksha Samiti* (forest protection committee set up by the people), to protect the forest.

Since that start about 30 years back, the community has been conserving and managing the forest. A few years after the forest protection movement started, villagers also began to discuss the crisis facing the agricultural sector, including falling yields and increasing dependence on outside government and private agencies. Farmers from Jardhargaon and other villages began the Beej Bachao Andolan (Save the Seeds Movement), to propagate the value of traditional agricultural practices, the use of indigenous crop diversity, and other such aspects.

Jardhar's *Van Surksha Samiti* (VSS) has its own enforcement mechanism by appointing a *Van Sewak/Chowkidar* (Guard). The appointed *Van Sewak* has been working to enforce VSS rules and regulations to protect the forest. Other community constituted institution like Mahila Mangal Dal and Pani Panchayat have been playing significant role to protect forest. Mahila Mangal Dal and Pani Panchayat have their own objectives and activities but with respect to the protection of the forest, these institutions follow the rules and regulation of VSS.

The conservation initiative has yielded some clear benefits. Villagers report that wild pig, deer species, leopard, and black bear have made their re-appearance in the forests. Even the occasional tiger is reported. Visits to the forest by members of Kalpavriksh, have also yielded a 100-plus list of bird species. A scientific assessment suggested that Jardhargaon CCA has amongst the most diverse floras of the region, better than many government managed forests. Water availability in the village has improved, as has the availability of fodder and medicinal plants.

However, Jardhargaon CCA is now facing a number of challenges. Among them are local politics, the multiplicity of local organizations with overlapping functions, human – wildlife conflict, the invasive pine trees that are threatening finding their way into the higher altitudinal parts of the forest and through developmental projects, mainly mining.

Lack of legal recognition to Jardhargaon's initiatives and inadequate finances are, however, two main factors undermining the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanism. The Van Suraksha Samiti has not legal or official recognition; another parallel body, the Van Panchayat, has such recognition but is not active in the management of the mixed broadleaved forests that are crucial to the village. Lack of finances means that the VSS is sometimes not in a position even to pay the salary of the *Van Sewak*. This may affect the morale and performance of the *Van Sewak* and violations may go unchecked. More serious in the recent past, especially in the last four years, has been the role of the village *pradhan* (head). He has not been supportive of the activities of the VSS.

The problem of wild animals (wild pigs and monkeys) has apparently increased over the years. The villagers said that it affects the morale of the people who have toiled in the fields. They also expressed that young people are reluctant to spend their energies on agriculture as they feel it is no more profitable with the animal damage. The villagers have requested the forest department for help but there has been no solution generated except that in May 2008 they received compensation from forest department on crop loss due to wild animals. Villagers have repeatedly expressed that they would appreciate technical help from the Forest Dept. in this matter.

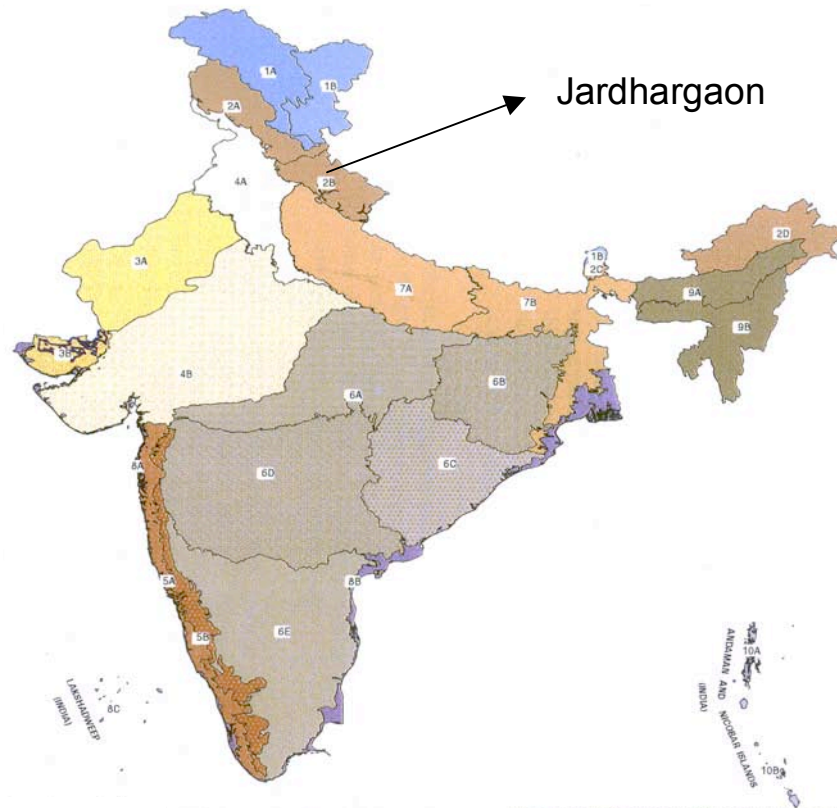
The village of Kataldi near Nangni (in the neighbourhood of Jardhargaon) has been identified as a potential area for mining limestone; indeed a patch of slope has been leased out by the state government to a private contractor. Villagers of the area, including of Jardhargaon, have been protesting against this, and for the last 15 years or so have been able to stall commencement of work including by physically occupying the leased area.

Jardhargaon's forest and agricultural biodiversity conservation efforts have attracted considerable attention not only from neighbouring villagers in the region but also from conservationists and environmentalists elsewhere in India. It has been written about in articles in many Indian newspapers and magazines. Jardhargaon has even figured as one of the case studies (presented by Vijay Jardhari) at the World Parks Congress (Durban 2003), which was instrumental in bringing the phenomenon of community conserved areas (CCAs) to the global stage.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Profile of Jardhargaon

Jardhargaon is situated in the hill district of Tehri Garhwal in the State of Uttarakhand in north India. The village is at an altitude of 1500 meters. It is a part of the Chamba Block¹. Access to Jardhargaon involves a 3 kilometre trek or 15 minute vehicle ride from Nagni, which is in the valley and nearest to the the Rishikesh-Tehri highway. Cutting across boundaries of administrative blocks, local people refer to this entire region as Hemvalghati. This name comes from the river Hemval, which originates from the Surkhanda peak in the Garhwal Himalayas and merges with the Ganges at Shivpuri, about 16 kms upstream of the town of Rishikesh.




The Garhwal Hills are located between the Shivaliks and the Higher Himalayas (to the South and North respectively). The average relief of ridges and valley bottoms in this zone ranges between 1500 and 2700m and 500 and 1200m respectively. Geomorphologically this belt can be considered a mature belt, since this zone (predominantly of crystalline rock) has undergone considerable erosion and denudation. This part of the region consists of several fertile valleys with an agreeable climate and is densely populated. In this thickly cultivated area, deforestation has been quite severe.

Jardhargaon is a typical hill village nestled in serene and picturesque surroundings. On one side of the village is the pine forest and the village grassland (these are part of the

¹ Administrative unit for a group of villages

Civil *Soyam* Forest or forest under the jurisdiction of the civil administration rather than the forest department) and on the higher ridges is dense forest (under the administration of the forest department and assigned the category of Reserved Forest). This covers an area of 429.5 ha and comprises primarily of oak and rhododendron trees. Jardhargaon has scattered settlements in different pockets. The different pockets are situated at quite a distance from each other. There are about 3-4 families in every settlement, the only exception being Jardhargaon Proper, which, as the name suggests, is the earliest and the largest settlement. With the growth in population, people from Jardhargaon proper spread out to various other parts of the village over a period of time. Cultivation is carried out in the valley, where most families own land, and on terraced fields on the slopes. The total *nap* land (revenue land) is 436.376 ha - irrigated land is 27.825 ha; un-irrigated land is 156.350 ha and 229.878 ha are under *Civil Soyam* forest. (*Vijay Jardhar*; personal communication, 1998)

Box 1: Land categories and ownership in Jardhargaon

Category	Jurisdiction	Total area	Rights of local people	
Reserved Forest	Forest Department	429.5 ha	Few restricted rights	
Civil <i>Soyam</i> Forests	Revenue Department (Civil Administration)	229.878 ha	Villagers enjoy usufruct rights to fuel, fodder, fibre and so on	
<i>Nap</i> land	Privately owned by the villagers	436.376 ha	Villagers have all rights	



1.2 Objective and methodology of the study and report

This study is designed to deepen the understanding of the CCA phenomenon at specific locations. In the present context of increasing threats to natural resources and lives and livelihoods dependent of those resources, it is also to find ways of contributing to strengthening and enhancing the appreciation of the phenomenon throughout the world.

This report relies on information from the past that Kalpavriksh and other groups have put together, based on a long term association with the village, and on a field visit undertaken from 1st to 3rd June, 2008. During the field visit, group and individual discussions were held with the villagers, in formal sessions as also informally such as when walking through their community protected forest. The local discussions were facilitated by Vijay Jardhari, one of the farmers of the village who has been instrumental in the conservation initiative, and whom Kalpavriksh members have been interacting with over the last 30 years. Vijayji has presented the Jardhargaon case study at the World Parks Congress; indeed this CCA is one of those that led Kalpavriksh to develop the concept of CCAs and introduce it to TILCEPA which took it to global forums.



2. COMMUNITY INITIATIVES

2.1 Origins

The Garhwal region has a history of resistance as demonstrated by the Chipko Andolan ('chipko' literally means 'to hug'), started in the early 1980s with spontaneous protest by villagers against tree-felling by contractors, and spread rapidly in the region. The response to the movement at the grass-root level was overwhelming. The publicity generated prodded the government into establishing an eight member 'expert' committee to prepare a comprehensive report on the forest policy in the Himalayas. On the basis of the report and the degree of social pressure, the government instituted a 15-year moratorium on commercial felling above 1000 metres in the Uttarakhand region. The environmental philosophy of the *Chipko* movement appears to be against commercial forestry and State support to what is responsible for the deteriorating Himalayan environment. Although of course forestry was and is not the only threat to the Himalayan environment, there are also serious threats from large dams and mining operations. Jardhargaon, too, came under the influence of this movement, primarily through the active involvement of one of its residents, Vijay Jardhari. In 1978, Vijayji and two other activists from Hemvalghati (the valley to which Jardhargaon belongs), Dhoom Singh Negi and Kunwar Prasoon, had been instrumental in mobilising the people of this area against commercial felling of trees in the surrounding forests.

Perhaps the most important impact of the *Chipko* movement has been the broadening of environmental consciousness of the peasantry in the Himalayan region. This understanding is depicted most in the following efforts predominant within the Jardhar village:

1. Efforts at protection of the forests
2. Revival and sustenance of traditional agriculture including domesticated biodiversity

2.2 Forest protection

In 1980, a pine tree in the Civil *Soyam* Forest (forests reserved for village use) was felled by one of the villagers in Jardhargaon. The Forest Department taking cognizance of a complaint filed by the villagers imposed a fine on the concerned person. This complaint was withdrawn under Vijayji's initiative. Vijayji, who had just returned to the village after his involvement in the *Chipko* movement, discussed with the villagers the possibility of the forest being managed by the villagers themselves. These discussions ultimately resulted in the formation of the *Van Suraksha Samiti* (forest protection committee set up by the people). The Samiti was entrusted with the task of conserving not only the Civil *Soyam* forest, but more importantly the larger stretch of Reserved Forest area above the village, where previously dense broadleaved forests had got badly denuded. This was the beginning of community based forest conservation in Jardhargaon. After this, the community protected the denuded forest (stopping grazing and fuelwood/timber collection, controlling fire, and so on), and helped it regenerate on its own without any reforestation.



It is important to recognize that the Reserved Forest area being conserved by the community is actually owned by the government, and is supposed to be managed by its Forest Department. But *de facto*, it is the community that has been conserving and managing it for the last 30 years or so.

2.3 Sustaining and reviving traditional agriculture

A few years after the forest protection movement started, villagers also began to discuss the crisis facing the agricultural sector, including falling yields and increasing dependence on outside government and private agencies. Farmers from Jardhargaon and other villages began the Beej Bachao Andolan (Save the Seeds Movement), to propagate the value of traditional agricultural practices, the use of indigenous crop diversity, and other such aspects. They openly made clear their opposition to modern homogenous forms of agriculture, though they were not averse to learning the good aspects of new systems also.

This opposition was based on solid grounds. Though the first few years of the 'modern' system being propagated by the government yielded a good harvest, says Vijayji, the latter years made agriculture very intensive and dependent on external inputs. Sudeshna Devi, an elderly woman who was active with the *Chipko* movement, informed how earlier villagers would never have to visit the market for anything except salt. But as agriculture became more cash oriented, the dependency of people on the market increased. The cash crops did bring in money. But it was of no value, she added, as the men would splurge it all on the drinks. The result was that there was very inadequate food in the house.



After assessing their situation, Vijayji and other consulted the elders in the village for a solution to increasing agricultural problems. The elders advised that the native crops and their diversity were of great importance to humans, animals and to nature itself. The indigenous varieties of crops, therefore, needed to be conserved. With this knowledge, the Beej Bachao Andolan was initiated. It propagates use and conservation of indigenous varieties of seeds through in situ conservation. Much has been written about the diversity

of seeds that the BBA can boast of (including over 300 varieties each of rice and *rajma* beans). The Andolan propagates organic cultivation with little external input in the fields. With the help of the NGOs Vividhara and Kalpavriksh, produce from these organic fields are also sold at Dilli Haat, New Delhi, once a year at a 'nature and man' fete.

According to Vijayji, in this area, many farmers had either not given up the traditional agricultural practices, or are now reviving them. The *Barhanaja* system of traditional agriculture where up to twelve (in Hindi *barah*) varieties of crops are grown in one plot of land, is in fact spreading again. This system helps retain the fertility of the soil and also capitalizes on the symbiotic functions of the crops through a system of mixed cropping. However one recent detrimental trend was the increasing cultivation of tomatoes in the valley, using chemical inputs; some farmers were doing this for its commercial value. The production and marketing of organic produce also needs to be further organized for it to be profitable to the people, said Vijayji.

BBA as of now is not structured. It is a loose conglomerate of farmers/activists spanning several villages.



2.4 Institutional structures of conservation and their results

This report focuses more on the forest protection efforts than on the agricultural sustainability initiatives. A number of institutional innovations are evident in this.

Van suraksha samiti (forest protection committee)

As noted above, the village formed a van suraksha samiti (VSS) or forest protection committee, at the start of its forest conservation efforts.

(a) *Membership* - The VSS comprises of around 10/11 members of the Jardhar Panchayat (village council, the official decision making body of a village under the Panchayati Raj system of governance in India), although the number is not fixed. Women are also represented. The members are chosen by common consensus in a meeting of the Gram Sabha, which comprises of all the adult members (including women), i.e. above 18 years of age, of the village. Since the entire Gram Panchayat consists of about 20 hamlets, an effort is made to seek broad geographic representation, as representation from every hamlet would not be possible.

(b) *Meetings* - The VSS meets around once a month. Decisions are taken by passing of resolutions by consensus. The *Adhyaksh* or the President, who is chosen by consensus among the members of the VSS, gives a letter to the village *pradhan* (head) informing her/him of the date of the meeting. The villagers are all informed informally and the date of the meeting is passed around through word of mouth. The meetings are held in the main village (Jardhargaon Proper).

Recently however, meetings have not been frequent. The last meeting of the VSS was held in the month of December 2007. This mainly is because of two reasons:

- Lack of support from the *panchayat*; reportedly the *pradhan* (head of the *panchayat*) is not very encouraging of the forest conservation efforts. Many villagers are angry at this, and are hoping for a change in the village head in the upcoming *panchayat* elections.
- Lack of funds; earlier sources of funds had dried up, and none were coming from the *panchayat*; as a result the community appointed forest guard (see below) had not been paid for a year, other than some income from the *van panchayat* scheme (see below).

(c) *Enforcement Mechanism* - *Van Sewaks/Chowkidars* (forest guards) are appointed on payment of salary by the VSS for ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations. The above rules are enforced by imposition of fines. Apart from using fines as a possible deterrent, violations are also tackled by means of discussions. Offenders are reminded of the necessity to protect forests. However, lack of legal recognition to Jardhargaon's initiatives, and inadequate finances are two main factors undermining the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanism. Invariably, the *Pradhan* is requested by the VSS to ensure that a recalcitrant offender pays the fine imposed upon him for violation of a rule. Further, lack of finances means that the VSS is sometimes not in a position even to pay the salary of the *Van Sewak*. This may affect the morale and performance of the *Van Sewak* and violations may go unchecked.

For the past two years, the *van panchayat* (an official scheme of the state government in which the village is given management over forests on revenue land, the Civil Soyam Forest) has been paying for the services of the *Van Sewak*.

(c) *Rules and Regulations* - These rules and regulations have evolved over a period of time by consensus, though not all are enforced e.g. the rule regarding cutting of only branches instead of the whole pine tree for weddings is still debated upon. Some of the rules are given below:

- cutting of green wood is totally prohibited;
- cutting of the bark of pine trees is prohibited – in case of any violation, the offender will have to pay the price of the tree which is fixed by the VSS and the fallen tree will not be given to him/her;
- trees that fall down will be distributed to the needy for house construction and fuel wood at rates fixed by the VSS;
- notices issued to *Gram Sabhas* of neighbouring villages of Hindwal and Bandhargaon prohibiting them from cutting green trees from the forests of Jardhargaon. In case of any violation axes, etc., of the offender are confiscated along with the cut wood and he/she is punished (the punishment is not specified);
- quarrying for commercial sale is prohibited;
- persons who need wood for house construction, wedding, etc. is allotted pine trees for a price of Rs.20 per Pine tree;
- VSS bank account is operated by select persons;

- participation of women in conservation activities is encouraged;
- the *mahila mangal dal* (see below) and VSS inspect the forest regularly.
- 4 green pine trees are traditionally cut for weddings. This practice results in large-scale depletion of young pine trees every year leading to deforestation. Instead of cutting the whole tree, this practice can be followed by cutting only the branches – hence only branches should be cut;
- a committee is formed for reporting offences – this committee includes women and representation is given to all settlements.

Mahila mangal dal (women's committee)

The Womens' Group called the *Mahila Mangal Dal* started functioning in Jardhar in 1986/87 (the formal registration took place in 1990). During the post-Chipko movement period there was a great sense of social mobilization and awakening, especially in the areas of self help, community activities, health and education. While women had been participating in *panchayat* activities since much earlier, their role had not been a very active one, with major functions and activities restricted to male members. According to Vijayji this could be rephrased as a process of *Mahila Shakti Jagran* (Women's Empowerment movements), linked with programmes of forest conservation (*van sanrakshan*) in the Tehri district since the 1970s. This along with encouragement to women's programmes by the government gave a major impetus towards the creation of the *Mahila Mangal Dal*.



The MMD was also involved in plantation work in nurseries under the Government of India's Greening the Himalaya scheme in the 1980s. It has also played an active role in banning liquor in the area and in protection of the forest against fires. At our group

meeting on 3rd June 2008, most of the men present claimed that the women have a greater role to play in the protection and conservation of the forest. As one of the women themselves said: “*We have nurtured the forest like our own baby and to see it conserved is our only wish!*”

The MMD is not so active now on a regular basis, though in times of crisis it gets activated. For example, when there was a recent threat of mining near the village, women came together and took action. Some of the problems faced by the MMD are lack of finances, difficulty in communication due to the terrain, and above all, the burden of housework and agricultural operations on the women.

Grassland conservation and the pani panchayat

Another area of regulation pertains to grass cutting. A section of the Civil Soyam Forest, has been declared by the VSS as 'Bandh Van' (forest closed for use) and is used as grass-cutting area subject to certain regulations. This area is closed from August to December to allow the grass to regenerate during the monsoons. When it opens in November or December, one member from each family is allowed to cut one head-load of grass per day during specified hours only. Bulk of the grass that is cut during this season is stored for the dry months. During the monsoons i.e. July to October, there is enough grass in the vicinity of the houses for the cattle to graze and women do not have to go deep into the forest for fodder.

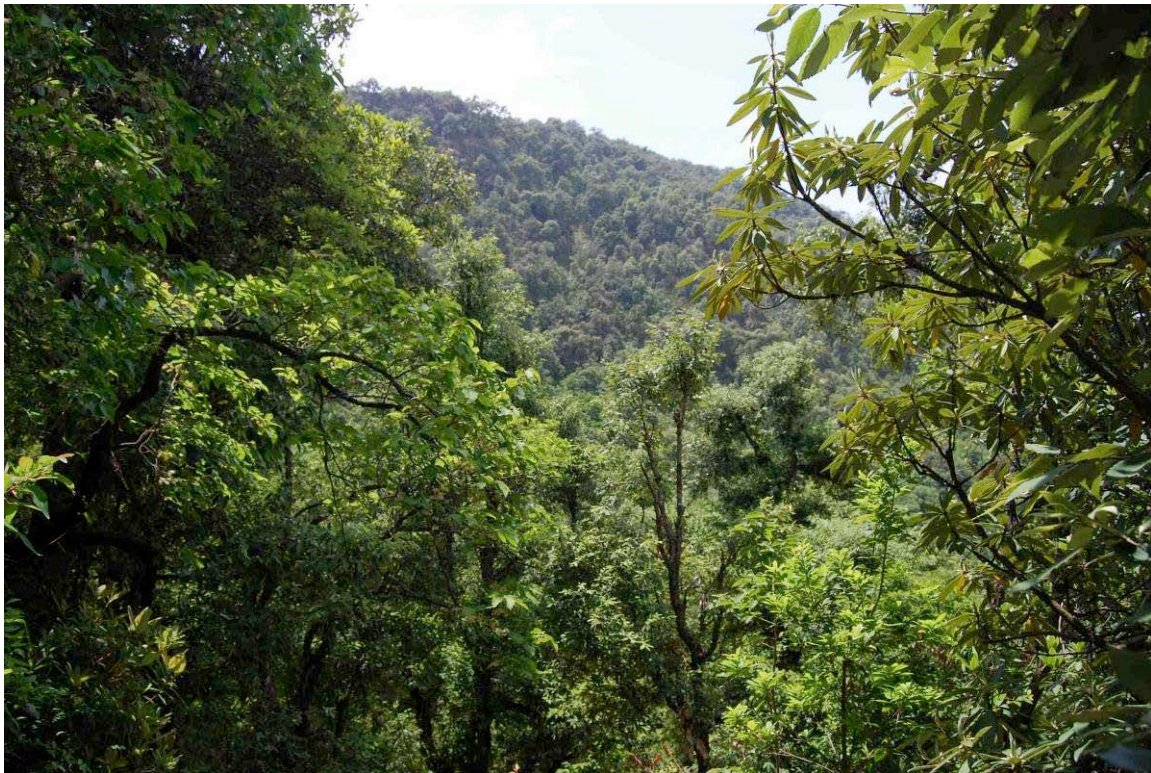
These regulations are enforced by the pani panchayat (water council), which functions under the supervision of the gram pradhan (village head). The pani panchayat's main functions are regulation of supply of water from the river to the fields, equitable distribution of irrigation water, warding off animals from the fields, and regulation of grass cutting. There are 8-10 members who are chosen by consensus. One of the members is chosen as the *thekedar* (the contractor), to oversee the entire team. The members are paid in grains, and this payment depends on the size of landholding and the nature of duties performed.

The value, effectiveness, and sustainability of the CCA initiative

What was once a degraded and in parts barren slope, is now several hundred hectares of dense mixed forest. A diversity of Oak (*Quercus incana*), Burans (*Rhododendron arboreum*), Horse Chestnut (*Aesculus indica*), Pine (*Pinus roxburghii*) and other species are present. In places, especially further away from the main village houses, the forest is as good as any found in a wildlife sanctuary; an assessment in the 1990s by botanists of the GB Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment and Development showed levels of diversity that were unmatched, according to them, in government protected forests.

Indeed, wildlife has obviously benefited from the protection work. Villagers report that wild pig, deer species, leopard, and black bear have made their re-appearance in the forests. Even the occasional tiger is reported. Visits to the forest by members of Kalpavriksh, have also yielded a 100-plus list of bird species.

Community members of the Jardhar village are aware about geographical extent of forest that falls under the jurisdiction of the village, and of the rules for its conservation and use. Any matter related to the forest falling under the VSS's jurisdiction is decided upon by a discussion in the *Samiti*. What is important, according to the villagers, is that no-one has to be given the rules in writing, and repeatedly told to follow them; the rules have been internalized in people's behaviour, and it is only the occasional deviation that has to be dealt with.



Achievements of the forest conservation have attracted other villages to adopt similar initiatives as in Jardargaon. According to Vijayji and the Van Sewak Hukam Singh, nearby Paturi village is also conserving their forest. This interlinkage between two villages is clearly visible when representatives share their experiences in any small or big platform.

Sustainability of the initiative remains an issue, especially in the face of growing needs for funds. In the group discussion this issue came up as crucial; however every one of the villagers spoken to, asserted that there was no reduction in interest in protecting the forest, including amongst the younger generation. This and other challenges that emerged in our conversations with the villagers are discussed below.

3. KEY CHALLENGES

3.1 Local politics and multiple local institutions

The main impediment in the more effective and sustained functioning of the VSS is lack of official recognition. The *Van Panchayat* (VP), under the administrative control of the

Revenue Dept., is responsible for only a small part of the forest, i.e., the predominantly pine patch separate from the mixed broad-leaved forest the community has been striving to protect. In the past there has been lack of coordination between the VP and the VSS, with most villagers not recognizing the former, but the government and a few villagers who took up the VP, trying to ignore the latter. Issues of transparency and accountability, with regard to the funds it gets, have been raised regarding the VP. The funds from the Forest Department as well as other agencies of the Government are routed through the VP which does not seem to hold as much ground in the village as the VSS. However of late there appears to be better coordination, with the head of the VP recognizing that the VSS has a more legitimate role; as a result, the VP does contribute to the payment of the *van sewak* for his services. At the village meeting the VP head explicitly recognized the crucial role of the VSS.

More serious in the recent past, especially in the last four years, has been the role of the village *pradhan* (head). He has not been supportive of the activities of the VSS. He not only instigates people against the activities of the VSS, but also discourages its functioning by not fulfilling his promises regarding participating in its meetings or provision of funds, said the villagers at the group meeting.

One of the reasons for his hostile attitude can be attributed to the fact that he does not understand the importance of the forest, says Vijayji, as he has been in the city for a long time and is not dependent on the village and its resources for his livelihood.

In one instance the *pradhan* had encouraged the thinning of forest near the hamlet of *Launji*, alleging that the density and closeness of the forest was the cause of severe animal-related crop loss (see below). Apparently, though, almost no-one from village come forward to do this, so the *pradhan* asked outsiders (of the Bakerwal nomadic herder community) to do same. But after the villagers' strong protests, the cutting stopped. Some trees, however, had been cut in a small patch of forest. In our group and individual meetings, villagers indignantly recounted this episode.

3.2 Human wildlife conflict

In the past few years, the population of wild pig and monkey has significantly increased, say the villagers. The monkeys, who were earlier afraid of the 'monkey chasers' (a traditional institution in which some village youth were employed to regularly keep them away), now come in the wake of the day in large numbers to plunder the fields. They even enter the houses in search of food. In the night, the wild pigs enter the fields and ravage fields of potatoes, peas and other vegetables. Even bears attack the crops; especially millet, maize and wild fruits. Wild deer species and parakeets also add to the damage.

The problem of wild animals has apparently increased over the years. The villagers said that it affects the morale of the people who have toiled in the fields. They also expressed that young people are reluctant to spend their energies on agriculture as they feel it is no more profitable with the animal damage.

The *pradhan* and some of his supporters are of the opinion that the population of wild animals has increased because the forest has become denser. When the veracity of this possibility was put forward at our group meeting, most men and women denied it vehemently. They said that even neighboring villages, where the forests were denuded, suffered from serious loss. Some women were also of the opinion that the prohibition on killing wildlife, due to wildlife protection laws, may have caused an increase in numbers and encouraged their uninhibited entrance into the fields. Villagers also observed that edible plants and fruits in the forest for the wildlife had declined, and there was a rapid spread of exotic weeds such as “*lalten*” (Lantana) and “*kaali baans*” (Eupatorium). Many admitted that humans themselves were to blame, not the animals.

They accept that the forest is an integral part of their life and it is vital for their livelihood. Members who were present at the meeting unanimously accepted that their efforts at conserving the forest should be maintained.

But with respect to the human – wildlife problem, the villagers feel helpless. They have requested the forest department for help but there has been no solution generated except that in May 2008 they received compensation from forest department on crop loss due to wild animals. The forest dept. undertook a survey to estimate the loss caused due to crop damage. The compensation however was unevenly divided. Some persons, they said, even received miniscule amounts like Rs. 20, less than what they had to spend on getting the compensation forms! Apparently the Chief Wildlife Warden of the state has also issued orders to his field staff to help villagers in this regard, including by permitting controlled hunting by professionals with valid gun licenses, but in this region the Divisional Forest Officer has not taken any follow up steps.

Some optimistic individuals like Vijayji are taking this matter positively. They acknowledge the fact that it was the first time that the forest dept. was taking such a step as compensation. He said that they would just have to be careful the next time and ensure fair distribution of compensation.

On this issue Bachani Devi, former head of the *mahila mangal dal*, and some other villagers, said that if forest department cannot stop the wildlife from destroying the crops, villagers should be given permission to kill them. Some also asked if there was any way of doing “family planning”, sterilizing the monkeys and pigs so that population increase could be arrested.

3.3 Pine trees

Community members also expressed threats from chir pine (*Pinus roxburghii*) trees because the species is spreading in the broad-leaved forest area. A trip to the forest confirmed this fear. It was observed that the Pine trees, which earlier were existent only in the lower slopes of the village, have made their way into the upper and denser parts also. In the group meeting villagers admitted that in the initial stages of forest protection efforts, they hadn't provided much attention to stop this species from spreading into the forest.

The VSS has encouraged villagers to cut and use pine trees for construction and fuel so that it can be prevented from spreading. Use of pine trees is only allowed to community members; for this they have decided to collect some fees. However this encouragement is not yielding the desired results so far. Villagers would appreciate some technical help from the forest department or others on this matter; during the field visit for this study, Kalpavriksh connected the village to a scientist of the Wildlife Institute of India (Dehradun), who is discussing with local forest officials about possible measures to take.

3.4 Threat from mining

The village of Kataldi near Nangni (in the neighbourhood of Jardhargaon) has been identified as a potential area for mining limestone; indeed a patch of slope has been leased out by the state government to a private contractor (see box). Villagers of the area, including of Jardhargaon, have been protesting against this, and for the last 15 years or so have been able to stall commencement of work including by physically occupying the leased area. The patch involved is important for grass and minor forest produce, which would be destroyed; additionally the mining would directly impact an important stream just below the leased patch. The issue has gone through the local courts, and is currently awaiting a decision by the District Collector.

Mining in Kataldi: a threat to the CCA

The government has granted a 30-year lease to M/s Parvatiya Mineral Industry to mine for limestone from a 5.26 ha. area just above the village. Not only will this restrict the villagers from accessing the produce forest, it will impact the hydrology of the area, which is crucial source of drinking and irrigation water for villages and towns around . A variety of issues, ranging from social, economic, environmental and legal to simple natural justice are involved.

Source: <http://www.sanctuaryasia.com/features/detailfeaturescategory.php?id=435>

4. ISSUES OF RECOGNITION

Jardhargaon's forest and agricultural biodiversity conservation efforts have attracted considerable attention not only from neighbouring villagers in the region but also from conservationists and environmentalists elsewhere in India. It has been written about in articles in many Indian newspapers and magazines. Jardhargaon has even figured as one of the case studies (presented by Vijay Jardhari) at the World Parks Congress (Durban 2003), which was instrumental in bringing the phenomenon of community conserved areas (CCAs) to the global stage. We informed the villagers about this, and asked what they thought of the recognition being given or needed to their efforts.

They said they were happy that their efforts had helped in this way. However, they were unhappy that their own government (state or central) had not given them any recognition. Asked what form of recognition they would like, they said it would help them greatly if there was some kind of official award or reward (such as, they gave the example of, the Indira Gandhi Priyadarshini Award that is given by the Government of India for such

efforts across India). Equally important, they said was if the government could at least pay for the *van sewak* (forest guard) and some other expenses, and take care of the issue of crop damage by wildlife.

They did not fear take-over by the government as a negative impact of recognition, as they are confident of their own strength.

They agreed that larger networks with other CCAs at local and global level would be useful, to share their experiences and find out some kind of solution for their problems. The women said that the main benefit that they expect out of a national or global recognition is that their forest should remain protected.

Annex 1: **Format for the preliminary database of CCA sites being tested for UNEP/WCMC**

Basic data (please provide all)

Site Name (in local language and in English)	Jardhargaon .
Country (include State and Province)	Tehri Garhwal district, Uttarakhand state, India
Area encompassed by the CCA (specify unit of measurement).	Total forest conserved: ~650 hectares (ha) (Land use in village: Reserved Forest: 429.5 ha Civil <i>Soyam</i> forest: 229.878 ha Revenue land (including agriculture): 436.376)
GIS Coordinates (if available)	NA (not taken)
Whether it includes sea areas (Yes or no)	No
Whether it includes freshwater (Yes or no)	Yes (small perennial and seasonal streams)
Marine (Y or N)	No
Concerned community (name and approx. number of persons)	Predominantly Hindu community with mostly <i>Rajput</i> and <i>Harijan</i> castes; no tribal population
Is the community considering itself an indigenous people? (Please note Yes or No; if yes note which people)	Not clear. It is not officially classified as a Scheduled Tribe; however people consider themselves to have been here for centuries.
Is the community considering itself a minority? (Please note Yes or No, if yes on the basis of what, e.g. religion, ethnicity)	No
Is the community permanently settled? (Please note Yes or No; if the community is mobile, does it have a customary transhumance territory?)	Yes
Is the community local per capita income inferior, basically the same or superior to national value? (please note how confident you are about the information)	NA (not studied)
Is the CCA recognised as a protected area by governmental agencies? (Yes or no; if yes, how? If no, is it otherwise recognized?) If yes, legal document? Establishment date?	It is not recognised by government as a protected area, or in any other form as a CCA. However, a part of the forest being conserved is now under an official scheme (<i>van panchayat</i>) which

	encourages community management of civil forest (forests under the civil administration)
Conflicts with land tenure, natural resource use?	No, member of community using natural resources according to community made rules.
What is the main management objective (e.g. livelihood, cultural, spiritual...)	To conserve natural resources from various threats, especially for sustained water and biomass benefits.
By definition, a CCA fulfils a management objective. To which IUCN management category ² do you consider it would best fit (this does not imply that the management objective is consciously pursued by the concerned community, but that it is actually achieved)	Category V (managed landscape) if full village is taken into account; or Category VI (managed resource reserve) if only forest is considered.

Additional qualitative information

Main ecosystem type	Broadleaved and pine forests, with traditional agricultural landscape adjacent to it. It is part of the Garhwal Hills, in the middle Himalayan range.
Description of biodiversity & resources (ecosystems, species, functions) conserved by the CCA	Forest ecosystems of broadly two kinds (Western Himalaya broadleaved, with oak and rhododendron predominating; and Coniferous, with Chir pine predominating). High floral biodiversity, high bird diversity (over 100 species), significant signs of mammalian life. No studies on other kinds of fauna.
Description of local ethnic groups and languages spoken	The Jardhari people's language is Pahari (for local communication) and Hindi (for communication with outsiders); a few people use broken English.
Broad historical context of the CCA	Forests under state control since colonial times, heavily degraded till 3 decades back; regeneration and protection began then, under the influence of the Chipko (save the forest) movement that had spread across the middle West Himalayan region. Continues to be <i>de jure</i> with the state (Forest Department) but <i>de facto</i> managed by the community.
Governance structure for the CCA (who takes management decisions, how?)	Members of community take decisions with common consensus in traditional institutions dealing with different resources, including a Van Suraksha Samiti (VSS, or forest protection committee) for the broadleaved forest, a Van Panchayat (VP or forest council) for the pine forest, and the Gram Sabha and Panchayat (village assembly and council) for overall village level decisions
Length of time the governance model has	The overall village governance is a traditional

² Please see http://www.iucn.org/themes/wcpa/wpc2003/pdfs/outputs/pascat/pascatrev_info3.pdf

been in place	system continuing from well into the past; the specific forest protection institutions are about 30 years (in the case of the VSS) and 15 years (in the case of the VP) old
Land and resource ownership in the CCA	Forests belong to the state (the Forest Department and Revenue Departments), with the community having traditional resource use and access rights. Agricultural fields are privately owned by the villagers.
Type of land use in the CCA	Forest land- Managed by community as common resource, and household land – managed by household.
Existence of written or oral management plans and specific rules for the use of natural resources in the CCA	Some are recorded in the Gram Sabha or Van Suraksha Samiti minutes, some are oral.
Map and zoning of the CCA (please attach if available and relevant,)	Sketch maps prepared by the community are included in photographs.
Relevant pictures with captions (please attach if available)	Inserted into text
Major threats to biodiversity and/or the CCA governance system	Lack of government recognition of the CCA; inadequate funds for basic expenses like paying the forest watchman; inappropriate ‘development’ activities such as mining; internal disputes with local political leaders; spread of invasives such as pine into broadleaved forest.
Local CCA-relevant features, stories, names, rules and practices	See main write-up

Additional reading:

<http://beejbachaoandolan.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.sanctuaryasia.com/features/detailfeaturescategory.php?id=435>

<http://uttarakhand.prayaga.org/archive/biodiversity-4.html>

<http://www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/mag/2004/03/28/stories/2004032800250400.htm>

<http://www.uttaranchal.org.uk/bba.php>

<http://www.hinduonnet.com/fline/fl2502/stories/20080201508109100.htm>

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