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Role of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Consortium in Strengthening the Livelihoods of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) gatherers in Tribal Districts of Odisha

Debasish Pradhan¹, Mamali Sahoo²

¹Program Officer, Vasundhara, Odisha

²Research Associate, Vasundhara, Odisha.

Abstract: *Minor forest products (MFPs) serve as indispensable pillars supporting the intricate socio-economic fabric of tribal communities, permeating every aspect of their livelihoods. These natural resources not only sustain their existence but also serve as conduits for economic sustenance and cultural preservation. The collection and trade of minor forest products emerge as vital lifelines for tribal households, constituting primary avenues for income generation and economic stability. Through meticulous seasonal gathering, tribal members procure a rich diversity of Non-Timber Forest Products (MINOR FOREST PRODUCES-MFPs) essential for their sustenance, encompassing a spectrum of necessities ranging from nourishment to medicinal remedies. These products, intricately woven into the tapestry of tribal life, include a plethora of resources such as medicinal plants, succulent fruits, aromatic resins, and an array of other non-timber forest products, each holding profound significance in the daily lives of forest-dwelling communities.*

Odisha, renowned for its dense concentration of tribal populations, serves as a crucible of indigenous culture, harboring 62 distinct tribal communities dispersed across its verdant expanse. Within this tapestry of diversity, the livelihood practices of these tribes are intricately intertwined with the gathering and utilization of natural Minor Forest Products (MFPs). Given the dearth of technical skills among tribal populations, reliance on MFPs as primary sources of sustenance and income remains paramount. The socio-economic importance of MFPs transcends mere subsistence, playing a pivotal role in fostering food and livelihood security, mitigating rural poverty, and nurturing economic development within tribal regions. However, despite their inherent value, challenges persist, with many tribal villagers compelled to sell their forest harvests at reduced prices, exacerbating economic vulnerabilities. Thus, a nuanced understanding of Non-Timber Forest Products (MINOR FOREST PRODUCES (MFP)s) becomes imperative in fostering sustainable development and equitable resource utilization within tribal communities. By harnessing the potential of these natural resources responsibly, policymakers and stakeholders can empower tribal populations, ensuring the preservation of indigenous knowledge systems while encouraging socio-economic resilience in the face of evolving challenges.

Keywords: *Forest produce, MFP, Socioeconomic, stakeholders, Policymakers, Livelihood, MoTA, Non-Timber, Communities, NGO, Conservation, Governmental agency,*

I. INTRODUCTION

India is home to nearly 10.4 million tribes, comprising approximately 8.6% of the total population and inhabiting approximately 15% of the nation's landmass (Government of India, 2011). These indigenous groups, known as scheduled tribes (STs), represent 8.6% of India's population according to the 2011 Census. However, despite their significant presence, many tribal communities face isolation and economic deprivation, compounded by inadequate infrastructure and healthcare systems. Statistics indicate stark socio-economic disparities within tribal populations, with 45.3% (rural) and 24.1% (urban) classified as poor, contrasting sharply with the national averages of 25.7% and 13.7% in rural and urban areas, respectively (Data, 2011–12, MoTA 2018–19). Among Indian states, Odisha ranks third in terms of its tribal population percentage. Spread across 30 districts and 314 Blocks, Odisha hosts a diverse tapestry of 62 distinct tribal communities. These communities collectively represent 22.85% of the state's total population and contribute 9.17% to the national tribal demographic, as per the 2011 Census data.

The sustainable utilization of natural resources has long been a critical aspect of rural livelihoods, especially in regions where communities coexist with dense forest ecosystems. Forest-based Livelihood is an umbrella term that is defined as the arrangement of the tribal's living, which includes different capabilities of people along with assets, food, income, and shelter as means of basic necessities for one living in the forest. Along with food and shelter, it also encompasses a number of parameters for livelihood settings like clothing, cultural values, social relationships, and bonding with others. Hence, a livelihood can be best defined as one's methods and meaning of arrangement for living in this materialistic world. A livelihood is said to be sustainable when a person is able to overcome various natural and socio-economic stresses and find a way of living again by enhancing well-being with hopes and aspirations for the future.

II. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the collaborative effort between Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is to improve the quality of life and economic prospects of tribal communities that depend on Minor Forest Produce (MFP) gathering. The endeavor aims to equip tribal individuals with essential skills, knowledge, and resources, such as sustainable harvesting techniques, value-addition methods, and entrepreneurship training, the initiative seeks to enhance their income generation capabilities and reduce their dependency on precarious and exploitative livelihood practices. The collaboration aims to create an enabling environment for tribal MFP gatherers to understand the market ecosystem. This involves establishing market linkages, negotiating fair trade agreements, and advocating for policies that safeguard the rights and interests of these communities. By ensuring equitable access to markets and fair remuneration for their produce, the initiative aims to empower tribal individuals economically and mitigate their vulnerabilities.

The collaborative efforts of CBOs and NGOs seek to catalyze a transformative process that not only enhances the livelihoods of tribal MFP gatherers but also fosters their holistic development and well-being. By addressing the multidimensional challenges faced by these communities and leveraging their inherent strengths.

A. Mission and Purposes of CBOs/NGOs Involvement

Through its various interventions, the CBOs/NGOs try to achieve the following purposes.

- 1) Community ownership over natural resources
- 2) Ensuring ecological and economic sustainability
- 3) Self-reliant communities
- 4) Caring and dignified communities
- 5) Biodiversity conservation
- 6) Conservation of natural and cultural heritage
- 7) Preservation of traditional knowledge, wisdom, and intellectual properties
- 8) Climate resilience and adaptability
- 9) Assertion for climatic and environmental justice
- 10) Equitable benefit sharing

B. Minor Forest Produces Available in Odisha

These Minor Forest Produce (MFP) items represent a diverse range of natural resources found in the forests of Odisha. They are not only abundant but also play a significant role in the lives of the local communities. Each item serves different purposes and has unique characteristics that make it valuable to the people living in and around the forest areas. Several items have cultural or religious significance, such as offerings during festivals or rituals. For example, Harida, Bahada, and Bela are often used in religious ceremonies or traditional healing practices. Moreover, products like Reetha, Turmeric, and Mustard Oil have industrial applications and are used in the manufacturing of soaps, oils, and cosmetics, contributing to the local economy through trade and commerce.

These Minor Forest Produce items are not just commodities but integral components of the socio-economic fabric of Odisha. They provide sustenance, livelihood opportunities, cultural richness, and environmental benefits, highlighting the importance of sustainable management and conservation of forest resources for the well-being of both people and the ecosystem. Here's a list of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) available in Odisha.

- 1 Sala Manji
- 2 Amba Takua
- 3 Tentuli



4	Mahu
5	Mahula
6	Tola
7	Neem
8	Karanja
9	Sala Plate
10	Sala Dana
11	Siali Plate
12	Siali Dana
13	Jhuna
14	Amla
15	Harida
16	Bahada
17	Baunsha
18	Bela
19	Chara Manji
20	Kanta Jhadu
21	Ambula
22	Black Rice
23	Lanka
24	Phul Jhadu
25	Sorisha Kala
26	Sorisha Dhala
27	Rashi
28	Nageswara Phula
29	Mung Dal
30	Kala Bhalia
31	Khajuri Koli
32	Loofah
33	Panasha Kashi
34	Panasha Pachila
35	Kaju
36	Kala Kolatha
37	Dhala Kolatha
38	Chana
39	Haladi
40	Reetha
41	Kusuma
42	Biri Dal
43	Bhuin Neem
44	Pingu Phal
45	Mandia
46	Panasha Manji
47	Salapa Guda
48	Palua
49	Khajuri Jhadu
50	Kaitha
51	Lanka Amba
52	Kendu Patra
53	Pati

54	Ambasadha
55	Khambaalu
56	Nali Alu
57	Puti Maka
58	Janhaa
59	Sorisha Tela
60	Harada Dal
61	Banra Koli
62	Nali Pimpudi
63	China Badam

III. CHALLENGES OF CBOS & NGOS

A. Lack of Funds

NGOs are expressing difficulty in finding sufficient, appropriate, and continuous funding for their work. They find accessing donors as challenging as dealing with their funding conditions. They perceive there to be certain cartels of individuals and NGOs that control access to donor funds. They have limited resource mobilization skills and are often not looking for funds that are available locally, preferring to wait for international donors to approach them. There is a high dependency on donors and a tendency to shift interventions to match donor priorities. There is a lack of financial, project, and organizational sustainability.

B. Absence of Strategic Planning

Few NGOs have strategic plans which would enable them to have ownership over their mission, values and activities. This leaves them vulnerable to the whims of donors and makes it difficult to measure their impact over time.

C. Poor Networking

This has been a major challenge. It is the cause of duplication of efforts, conflicting strategies at the community level, a lack of learning from experience, and an inability of NGOs to address local structural causes of poverty, deprivation, and underdevelopment. Negative competition for resources also undermines the reputation of the sector and the effectiveness of NGO activities at the community level. As a result, there is a great deal of suspicion among NGOs themselves. Many NGOs, large and small, intervene at the community level without any community mapping and implement projects without due regard to ongoing community initiatives.

NGO politics: one fighting another, one with resources but no community presence, another with community presence but no resources.

D. Poor Communications

NGOs also recognize that there is very poor communication within the sector. The majority of NGOs have little or no access to information. They receive almost no literature on development issues and are generally out of touch with issues of regional, national and global importance. Their lack of understanding of the basics on subjects like Laws, Policies, Schemes, Govt facilitated missions and institutions is just one example of the knowledge gaps that exist.

E. Limited Capacity

Most of the small NGOs and CBOs have limited technical and organizational capacity and are often dependent on collaborating partners. Weak capacity was identified in fundraising, governance, technical areas of development, leadership and management. They feel that that the existence of quality networks would assist them to develop the required capacities.

F. Development Approaches

Many organisations are still focusing upon what some refer to the 'hardware' approach to development, i.e. the building of infrastructure and the provision of services; rather than what some refer to as the 'software' approach of empowering people and local institutions to manage their own affairs. They are unaware of effectiveness of a "right's based" rather than "welfare" approach. While it is becoming harder to fund and sustain service delivery interventions (As the state is doing it directly through different missions), most local NGOs persist with them.

Although they are acutely aware of the increasing needs of the communities and feel at a loss as to how they can respond to all these needs. There is a lack of sustainability and ownership of development interventions by communities. Some communities have been spoilt by dependency creating interventions and are not inclined to do things for themselves. For this phasing out of the intervention is becoming difficult.

G. Relationships among INGOs

There is considerable concern among local NGOs that the giants, mainly Big NGOs, occupy so much space that it is very difficult to find room for themselves. They often intervene without any concern for the building of sustainable local organisations. They pay government and community members to participate in their projects while local NGOs have no facility for doing so

IV. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CBOS & NGOS

- 1) *Local Networking*: Connecting with others in your community opens doors for learning together, finding the right projects for development, pooling resources, and working better with local government. It helps everyone to work together smoothly and push for important local issues.
- 2) *Regional and Thematic Networks*: Being part of bigger networks helps NGOs to share ideas, research, and resources with others, including the government and businesses. Strong networks at the district level support smaller groups, and this strengthens the overall NGO community.
- 3) *Local Resource Mobilization*: NGOs have a chance to raise funds from local sources like businesses, individuals, and the government itself. But to do this well, NGOs need to be transparent, have clear plans, and be trusted by the local community.
- 4) *Enabling Environment*: The government's new policies have given people more freedom to take charge of their own development. People from all walks of life are now more willing to work on their own projects instead of waiting for help from the government or other outsiders.
- 5) *Accessing Government Funds*: Different government schemes offer funds that NGOs can tap into for their projects.
- 6) *Community Mobilization*: Encouraging communities to use their own skills, time, and resources for development is key. By investing in local people and helping them plan and carry out their own projects, communities can find solutions to their own problems more effectively.
- 7) *Income Generation for NGOs*: NGOs with extra resources can use them to make money, which can then be used to fund their activities. This could involve renting out buildings, providing consultancy services, offering training, or selling locally made products.
- 8) *Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*: Embracing technology is crucial in today's world. Having internet access and email is vital for any serious organization. Creating a website can help NGOs connect with others, share their work, and make a bigger impact.
- 9) *Seeking Partnerships*: Exploring partnerships for financial, technical, and institutional support can strengthen NGOs and their causes. Working together on advocacy initiatives can address root causes of poverty, inequality, and injustice, making a real difference in the community.

V. METHODOLOGY ADOPTED BY CBOS & NGOS

- 1) *Stakeholder Mapping*: Identify and map relevant stakeholders including CBOs, NGOs, government agencies, and local communities involved in MFP-related activities. Understand their roles, capacities, and existing interventions in the target areas.
- 2) *Participatory Planning*: Facilitate participatory planning workshops and consultations with tribal communities, CBOs, and NGOs to identify priority needs, aspirations, and strategies for strengthening MFP-based livelihoods. Ensure the active involvement of marginalized groups, particularly women and youth.
- 3) *Capacity Building*: Develop and implement capacity-building programs for CBOs and NGOs focusing on sustainable harvesting techniques, value addition, market linkages, entrepreneurship, project management, and advocacy skills. Foster learning exchanges and peer-to-peer support mechanisms.
- 4) *Market Linkages*: Facilitate linkages between tribal MFP gatherers and market actors including traders, wholesalers, retailers, and potential buyers. Support the establishment of producer collectives or cooperatives to negotiate fair prices, improve market access, and enhance value chains.

- 5) *Resource Mobilization*: Explore diverse funding sources including government schemes, grants, corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds, and international donors to support MFP-related interventions. Strengthen fundraising capacities and promote financial sustainability among CBOs and NGOs.
- 6) *Knowledge Sharing*: Promote knowledge sharing and learning exchanges among stakeholders through workshops, seminars, publications, and digital platforms. Document best practices, success stories, and lessons learned to inform future interventions and policy dialogue.
- 7) *Policy Advocacy*: Engage in advocacy efforts at local, regional, and national levels to influence policies and regulations in favour of tribal MFP gatherers. Advocate for the recognition of their rights to access and manage forest resources, fair trade practices, and inclusive development policies.

In tribal areas of Odisha, besides farming, Minor Forest Produces (MFP) is becoming a big way for people to earn money. There are lots of forests here, so minor forest produces are easy to find. MFPs are really important for many people around the world, helping them make money and survive. It's often the poorest families who rely on minor forest produces the most. But many locals don't know how valuable these products are, so they can't make much money from them, even though there's a big chance to. So, minor forest produces (MFP) could be a major way to improve the economy for forest based tribals. They use things like leaves, flowers, fruits, branches, gums, resins, and roots. The forest provides lots of things that people need to live.

VI. GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS WORKING ON MFP IN ODISHA

Several NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) are actively working on non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in Odisha to support local communities and promote sustainable forest management. These NGOs, among others, play a crucial role in empowering tribal communities in Odisha through sustainable management and utilization of non-timber forest products, contributing to their socio-economic development and environmental conservation.

- 1) *Gram Vikas*: Gram Vikas is an NGO that works with tribal communities in Odisha to improve their livelihoods and living conditions. They have projects focused on NTFPs, including training programs for sustainable harvesting and value addition to forest produce.
- 2) *Living Farms*: Living Farms is an organization dedicated to promoting agroecology and indigenous knowledge systems in Odisha. They work with tribal communities to strengthen their capacity in NTFP management, marketing, and value addition, thereby enhancing their incomes and food security.
- 3) *VASUNDHARA*: VASUNDHARA is an NGO working on sustainable natural resource management in Odisha, with a focus on empowering tribal communities. They run projects aimed at promoting sustainable harvesting practices of NTFPs, capacity building, and market linkages for local forest produce.
- 4) *CYSD (Centre for Youth and Social Development)*: CYSD is engaged in various development initiatives in Odisha, including projects related to sustainable livelihoods and natural resource management. They collaborate with tribal communities to enhance their knowledge and skills in NTFP collection, processing, and marketing.
- 5) *Gram Swaraj*: Gram Swaraj is an NGO focusing on rural development and natural resource management in Odisha. They work with tribal communities to enhance their understanding of NTFPs, provide training on sustainable harvesting techniques, and facilitate market linkages for forest produce.
- 6) *Adivasi Ekta Parishad (AEP)*: Adivasi Ekta Parishad is a grassroots organization advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples, including tribal communities in Odisha. They undertake initiatives to empower tribal communities through capacity-building programs on NTFP management and value addition.
- 7) *Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP)*: OTELP is a government-supported initiative aimed at improving the livelihoods of tribal communities in Odisha. They implement projects related to NTFP development, focusing on enhancing community participation, sustainable harvesting practices, and market access.
- 8) *Nisarga*: Nisarga is an NGO working on environmental conservation and sustainable livelihoods in Odisha. They collaborate with tribal communities to promote the sustainable management of NTFPs, including training on forest conservation, organic farming, and value-addition techniques.
- 9) *Forest and Environment Department*: This department is primarily responsible for the conservation, management, and sustainable utilization of forest resources, including MFPs. It often collaborates with other departments and agencies to implement policies and programs related to forest-based livelihoods.

- 10) *Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Development Department*: This department focuses on the socio-economic development of tribal communities, including initiatives related to MFPs. It may implement schemes to support tribal livelihoods through the sustainable collection, processing, and marketing of forest produce.
- 11) *Rural Development Department*: The Rural Development Department may undertake programs to promote livelihoods in rural areas, including those based on MFPs. It may provide support for capacity building, infrastructure development, and market linkages for forest-based enterprises.
- 12) *Tribal Development Department*: This department specifically addresses the needs and concerns of tribal communities in Odisha. It may implement schemes aimed at enhancing tribal livelihoods through the sustainable management and utilization of MFPs.
- 13) *Horticulture Department*: While primarily focused on fruit and vegetable cultivation, the Horticulture Department may also support initiatives related to non-timber forest produce such as medicinal plants and herbs. It may provide technical assistance and training to farmers and collectors engaged in MFP cultivation.
- 14) *Cooperation Department*: The Cooperation Department may facilitate the formation and support of cooperative societies and self-help groups involved in the collection, processing, and marketing of MFPs. It may provide financial assistance and other resources to promote collective enterprise development among MFP gatherers.
- 15) *Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)*: While not a government department, TRIFED operates at the national level and works closely with state governments to promote tribal livelihoods through the marketing of MFPs. In Odisha, TRIFED may collaborate with relevant government departments to facilitate the sale and export of tribal products.
- 16) *Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA)*: ITDA is a government department working directly with tribal communities in Odisha to address their socio-economic needs and promote cultural preservation.

VII. POLICY OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ON PROCUREMENT AND TRADE OF NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCE

- 1) Non-timber forest produce (NTFP) has traditionally been seen as a significant source of forest revenue. As a result, policies regarding NTFP have historically focused on maximizing revenue. However, NTFP is a vital source of livelihood for tribal communities and the rural poor. The majority of NTFP gatherers are women who have limited access to markets. Their primary concern is receiving a fair price for the NTFP they collect and being able to sell their produce. The current system does not adequately provide these opportunities to the primary gatherers. The collection of NTFP must be done in a non-destructive manner to ensure the sustainability of forests and the long-term viability of NTFP-based livelihoods.
- 2) The state government is developing a policy for Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), considering the Panchayats Act and involving local communities through Joint Forest Management. They're clarifying the term "minor forest produce" and ensuring equitable sharing of NTFP products, as per the Vana Samrakshyana Samiti. The approved guidelines aim to streamline the collection and disposal of NTFP items.
- 3) Minor Forest Produce.
 - a) The items listed in Annexure A are considered Minor Forest Produce (MFP). Gram Panchayats in scheduled areas have ownership over MFPs within their jurisdiction, including those collected from government and forest lands. However, in non-scheduled areas, Gram Panchayats do not have ownership rights. Nonetheless, in both scheduled and non-scheduled areas, Gram Panchayats have the authority to regulate the purchase, procurement, and trading of MFP, as outlined in the policy.
 - b) Gram Panchayats won't own MFP from Reserve Forests, Wildlife Sanctuaries, or National Parks. They can't grant collection rights. However, Vana Samrakshyana Samitis, tribals, etc., can collect MFP except from sanctuaries and parks. When brought to villages, Gram Panchayats regulate procurement and trading. Samitis and members have priority over Gram Panchayats for collection and disposal from respective areas.
 - c) Persons wishing to buy or trade MFP from primary gatherers must register with the relevant Gram Panchayat annually, from October to September. The Gram Panchayat aims to encourage competition by registering numerous dealers for each MFP item and charges an annual registration fee. Registered dealers must submit monthly reports to the Range Officer detailing MFP procurement. Operating as a Dealer/Trader in MFP without Gram Panchayat registration is prohibited.
 - d) The collection of MFPs by the primary gatherers will be subject to reasonable control to be exercised by the DFO in accordance with the provisions of law and sound silvicultural principles laid down in the Forest Working Plan which shall be given publicity in advance in the adjoining GPs.

- e) Government agencies like Orissa Forest Development Corporation, Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation, etc. may also register themselves with one or more Gram Panchayats for procurement and trading in one or more items of Minor Forest Produce.
- f) A Gram Panchayat may cancel the registration of any dealer/trader or may refuse to grant registration for the subsequent seasons if after a summary inquiry in the course of which the affected party shall be given an opportunity to show cause it is satisfied that the dealer/trader has procured any MFP from the primary gatherers at a rate lower than the minimum procurement price fixed for that item of MFP under para 5 of this resolution for the relevant year.
- g) No lease shall be granted by the Government in respect of any Minor Forest Produce nor shall it levy any royalty on these items after the commencement of this Resolution. No Forest Department Transit permit will be required thereafter for transport/movement of any Minor Forest Produce within the State.

VIII. OTHER ITEMS OF NTFP

- 1) The Trade in Kendu leaf will continue to be directly controlled by the State Government as there are well-laid-down statutory provisions for control of trade in this item. Sal Seed which is the one NTFP item notified as a specified forest produce under the Orissa Forest Produce (Control of Trade) Act, 1981 will also be dealt with by the provisions of law by the Government keeping the overall interest of the trade, the industries and the gatherers in view.
- 2) Certain items like Sal leaves, gums, resins, khaira, catechu, barks, climbers, and medicinal roots won't be leased due to sustainability concerns. However, in certain areas with proper assessment and enforcement, these items may be collected by the Forest Department or government undertakings.
- 3) Items listed in Annexure-B of NTFP can be procured and traded by registered dealers approved by Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs). Individuals, societies, cooperatives, and government entities can register as dealers for a seasonal period (October to September) unless there are valid reasons for refusal. DFOs promote competition by registering multiple dealers for each item in specified areas. OFDC, TDCC, cooperative societies, and recognized groups like Vana Samrakshyana Samiti can also register for trading. Registration fees are determined by the government.
- 4) The registered dealers will be required to furnish the names of their authorised agents/nominees and the names of their collection and storage centres to the concerned Divisional Forest Officers, and will also record the daily transactions in prescribed formats. The dealers will have to enter into an agreement with the concerned DFOs under which the dealers will be responsible for achieving a minimum target of procurement to be fixed by the Divisional Officer, of a particular item during a collection season. If the collection method of any particular item in any particular area is considered to be harmful or injurious to the forest, the DFO may impose temporary ban on such collection.
- 5) The registered dealers will have to pay a royalty to the local forest Range Officer at the rate fixed for the quantity of produce collected. The rate of royalty shall ordinarily not be less than 10 percent of the minimum procurement price for the particular item, but this rate may be varied by the Government from time to time, Cuomo, or on proposals submitted by the Divisional Forest Officers.
- 6) The registered dealers will be required to take transit permits from competent Forest Officers for movement/transport of the produce out of the collection centres after setting the royalty dues, etc.
- 7) The Divisional Forest Officer may cancel the registration or refuse registration of any dealer/trader if after summary inquiry in the course of which the affected party shall be allowed to show cause it is found that the dealer has procured any forest produce from the primary gatherers at a price less than the minimum procurement price fixed for the relevant year under para-5 of this Resolution or has failed to achieve the minimum target of procurement, or has failed to file the prescribed returns or has failed to settle the royalty dues in time.

For all NTFP items including MFP, the Committee appointed by the Government in the SC & ST Development Department will fix the minimum procurement price each collection season or part thereof. These procurement prices shall be announced every year ordinarily during the month of September and will be given wide publicity as decided by the Government.

IX. CONCLUSION

India's tribal communities, comprising 8.6% of the population and residing over 15% of the land, face significant socio-economic challenges despite their substantial presence. Particularly in states like Odisha, where tribal populations are prominent, disparities persist, with many communities experiencing isolation and economic hardship. Sustainable utilization of natural resources, integral to rural livelihoods in forested regions, holds immense importance for these communities.

Forest-based livelihoods encompass not only basic necessities but also cultural values and social relationships. Achieving sustainability in livelihoods involves overcoming natural and socio-economic obstacles, thereby enhancing well-being and fostering hope for the future. The collaborative efforts between Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) represent a vital step towards improving the quality of life and economic prospects for tribal communities reliant on Minor Forest Produce (MFP) gathering. Through initiatives focused on skill-building, sustainable practices, and market access, this partnership aims to empower tribal individuals, reduce dependency on exploitative livelihoods, and foster economic resilience. By advocating for fair trade agreements and policy reforms, the collaboration strives to create an enabling environment that safeguards the rights and interests of these communities. Ultimately, this approach not only enhances livelihoods but also contributes to the development and well-being of tribal MFP gatherers, creating a transformative journey towards greater prosperity and sustainability.

PHOTO GALLERY



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