

Jana Prerit Abhiyan  
People's Plan for a Samarth Bastar

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Concept of Samarth Zilla

The process of development followed in India has resulted in lop-sided spatial development along with a rural-urban divide which has led to large scale migration and rural poverty- induced urbanisation. We thus witness rural areas, without basic infrastructure or amenities, stripped of their capacities to provide decent livelihoods to the people on the one hand and overburdened urban areas with growing slums where the urban poor live in dismal conditions.

Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies (RGICS) New Delhi undertook a research study in order to develop a framework for integrated district development and planning, called the Samarth Zilla framework that uses a regional approach. It borrows substantially from Sustainability Livelihoods Framework (SLF) so far as to include five types of capital (i.e. Natural, Human, Social, Physical, and Financial) and the constraints by which these five types of capital are bound. (For an overview, please refer to RGICS, Policy Watch Vol. VIII Issue 6.).

The Samarth Zilla framework aims at building an institutional eco-system to make the district more capable (Samarth) of providing decent livelihoods and a good quality of life to its inhabitants.

The study was undertaken in two districts each in eight states viz. J&K, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Assam and Tamil Nadu. Two districts selected for study in Chhattisgarh were Bastar and Bilaspur.

The framework was planned to be developed in three phases viz. i) the policy observatory phase entailing which is largely field based to capture ground realities ii) the policy repertory phase in which is problem identification, analysis and solution development iii) Policy Laboratory or Policy Lab to test finally selected policy prescriptions in a real-life situation, wherever feasible.

### 1.2 Background of the Jana Prerit Abhiyan for Samarth Bastar

Bastar district of Chhattisgarh was chosen for testing the implementation of the concept of policy laboratory. The Policy Lab is to play the role of an independent actor in analysis, action and advocacy. Analysis would be based on observation, consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and research. Action entails the pilot testing of possible solutions and evaluation of results besides capacity building before scaling up. Lastly, the Policy Lab would take up advocacy for scaling up through pentagonal partnerships or the Panchmukhi Samvaay. The idea of Panchmukhi Samvaay, framed by Shri Vijay Mahajan, keeps community in the centre of a pentagon as the target of intervention. The objective is to bring social, economic and cultural change without exploiting nature. In fact, it believes that the re-generation of natural capital will catalyse the process of community level change. The ultimate objective of this framework is to not create from nature but to create with nature. This aim of the progress can be achieved by meaningful collaborating effort by five different types of institutions. These five segments create five corners of the pentagon or five faces (Panchmukhi).

These five segments are (1) Government; (2) Corporate Sector and the market; (3) Civil Societies; (4) Capital Market and (5) Knowledge Institutions. The collaborative action by these five segments is the Panchmukhi Samvaay. The Panchmukhi Samvaay provides pragmatic structure for the implementation of sustainable livelihood framework.



The Panchmukhi Samvaay provides for proper resource management required the interactive support and functioning of five key stakeholders. The government is the largest player in the development sector with its immense power of resource allocation, including its role in policy formulation and implementation. The market because of its fundamental concern with ROI and efficiency, plays a role in the purchase, sale and distribution of goods and services, including providing necessary technological support for implementing key development programs. Civil society institutions (CSI), including but not restricted to NGOs, play a balancing role between the two. Moreover, it is only the embedded NGO - as a part of CSI - which can mobilize and organize the forest dwellers, develop norms of working, and train them on aspects of restoration and livelihoods. The knowledge organizations, such as think tanks, universities and other research and policy planning bodies are required because managing large scale program planning and implementation would mean drawing on concepts, theory and technical knowledge. Finally, one would require vast amounts of financial resources for project implementations; and since no single donor has this capacity, one would need mainstream capital, apart from funding support from multilateral agencies. Moreover, the very inflow of mainstream finance would bring upfront the financial viability of any such project.

These five segments bring in institutional and financial sustainability to facilitate environmentally sustainable progress. This idea of Panchmukhi Samvaay attempts to bring effective models of community development. The term effective here constitutes three dimensions namely efficient, equitable and sustainable. Efficiency is required to minimize resources and maximize output. On the other hand, the equity is crucial to include socially and economically disadvantaged in the process of change. The sustainability further requires meeting three prerequisites. Any sustainable model must have financial sustainability, institutional sustainability and environmental sustainability.

In keeping with this approach, widespread discussions were held with various stakeholders in Bastar district as also in some neighbouring areas to get an insight in the dynamics of the development

process. Discussions were held with people from all walks of life such as agriculturists from villages, progressive farmers, members of women self-help groups, forest dwelling communities, local artisans, businessmen including officials of the chamber of commerce, young entrepreneurs, students, agricultural scientists, lawyers, members from academia and the media, officials of non-profit organisations and social workers, officials of Farmer Producer Companies and co-operative societies, retired officials, social and political leaders and government officials, including the District Collector and the Chief Conservator of Forests. Visits were made to the Horticultural University, the office of the Coconut Development Board, office of TRIFED etc.

Besides individual discussions, a meeting was also convened in Jagdalpur on the 24th June, 2019 where the RGICS team from Delhi and Chhattisgarh interacted with a cross section of people in the spirit of the consultations under the Panchmukhi Samvaay. The meeting was chaired by Padmashri Dharampal Saini, the renowned Gandhian educationist working in Bastar for over four decades. The discussions were led by Shri Vijay Mahajan, Director, RGICS who invited the participants to express their vision of a Samarth Bastar and give their suggestions. The deliberations in the meetings were marked by an enthusiastic response from the participants to the initiatives proposed under the framework. The discussions led the foundation for continued action. It was committed that RGICS would continue the discussions, observation and analysis and would submit a document incorporating a plan with suggestions for people's action for a Samarth Bastar district.

This document is being presented in keeping with the commitment and is the result of the discussions with people from all walks of life from Bastar and the neighbouring areas.

We express our deepest gratitude to the various people who contributed to this effort by offering their time, ideas and support in various other forms.

### 1.3 Methodology of this document

The document has been developed using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) and the Panchmukhi Samvaay Framework. While the sustainable livelihood framework provides the conceptual base for planning community development initiatives, the Panchmukhi Samvaay provides the pragmatic structure for the implementation of sustainable livelihood framework in the current context.

In the analysis of the various sectors and resulting suggestions, the methodology adopted has been to make a brief note on the current state of affairs of the sector followed by an outline of the potential for development and the various possibilities. A brief enumeration is then made of the various schemes and arrangements currently being implemented for the sector. This is followed by an analysis of the factors considered to be reasons for the under-achievement, under three broad categories viz. pattern of control over the resources, institutional capabilities relating to the sector and the adequacy of financial provision available for development. Based on these, finally, steps suggested for action are presented. This methodology is followed for each of the areas selected for focussed action.

At the end of the analysis of the various areas of focus, suggestions are made for the way forward by way of a series of steps which could be taken for facilitating community action.

### 1.4 Areas of focus for Samarth Bastar

The plan for a Samarth Bastar through people's initiative would require action on several fronts. Some of the areas of focus as a part of working towards a Samarth Bastar are outlined below:

- Agriculture and Allied Sectors
- Forests and Forest Produce
- Responsible Tourism with People's Participation
- Entrepreneurship Development
- Public participation, community action and governance
- Health and nutrition
- Education

### 1.5 What areas are excluded, and why

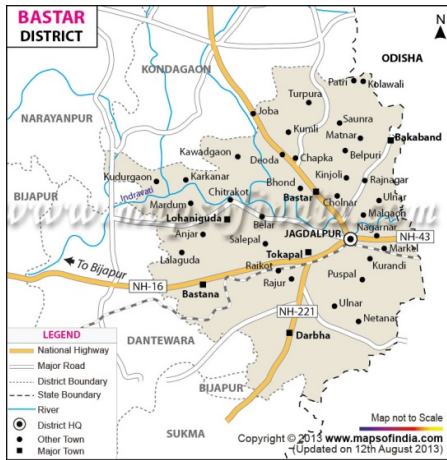
Ideally, a district plan has to incorporate action-oriented goals and targets spanning a wide range of areas which together combine to make a comprehensive document covering the entire gamut of activities and sectors within the district. However, this plan to make Bastar a more Samarth district envisages action by the people to address development challenges through engagement with the government and other constituents of the PanchmukhiSamavaay.

This document, therefore, is not intended to be a comprehensive plan covering all sectors such as government programmes, lending by banks and financial institutions, infrastructural arrangements required and planned, initiatives by educational and research institutions etc.

Out of the five types of capital considered under the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, physical capital is an important segment for Bastar due to the pressing need for better infrastructure. However, since planning for infrastructure and the resources required etc. is an area where only the concerned authorities are capable of the specialised functions, this important segment has been excluded. Similarly, mineral deposits are an important resource of the district of Bastar. However, since planning for the extraction of minerals and their deployment is a specialised and exclusive function of the concerned authorities, this area has also not been covered. In short, the focus has been less on influencing government programmes but more on community action for sustainable development, no doubt with government support wherever required.

## 2. District Overview

### 2.1 District Snapshot:



Bastar is an administrative district in state of Chhattisgarh with Jagdalpur as its headquarters. Jagdalpur is located at a distance of 305 kilometres from the capital city Raipur. The district is endowed with beautiful landscape, tourist spots, natural and mineral resources. 62 percent of the total population is tribal. Tribes like Gond, Maria, Muria, Dhruva, Bhatra, Halba etc. constitute the tribal population of the district. Owing to tribal culture, Bastar is also called as the cultural capital of the state. However, be it forest management, arts and handicrafts, kosa silk or herbs and plants of medicinal properties, each such area needs strategic interventions.

A large number of Bastar tribal are still living in deep forests and avoid interaction with outsiders in order to protect their own unique culture. The tribes of Bastar are also known for their colorful festivals and arts and crafts. Bastar Dussehra is the most famous festival of the region.<sup>1</sup>

Starting from Orissa, the river Indrāvati flows through Dantewada and Bijapur before it merges in Godavari near Bhadrakali, which is a symbol of faith and devotion for the people of Bastar. Jagdalpur is a major cultural and handicraft centre. Historical and entertainment related items of Bastar's tribal people have been displayed in the Anthropological Museum at Dharampura. Dancing Cactus Art Center is an outstanding demonstration of the renowned art world of Bastar

Statistical snapshot of the district:

| Particulars                | Details          |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Area                       | 4029 km          |
| Division                   | Bastar           |
| Sub divisions              | 3                |
| Blocks                     | 7                |
| Villages                   | 595              |
| No. of Panchayats          | 317              |
| Municipalities             | 2                |
| Total Population           | 8,34,375         |
| Scheduled Tribe Population | 521000 (62.40%). |
| Scheduled Caste Population | 15000 (1.8%)     |
| Literacy rate              | 53.15            |

<sup>1</sup>"Gond Tribal Dance from Chhattisgarh" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHUMAPsi9zk>

## 2 Economic profile of the district:

Mono crop and rain fed agriculture, followed by collection of forest produce and handicrafts are the key contributors to the economy of the district. Contribution of tourism sector to district's economy is as minimal as 0.5-2 % despite huge potential. Similarly, contribution of other sectors like industrial, allied sectors of agriculture, medicinal and aromatic plants, etc. are minimal. Rearing of milch cattle is less practiced. District is deprived of skilled work forces despite eleven (11) Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs).

## 3 Livelihood Profile of the district:



The pattern of livelihood is fully dependent on the geography. The landforms, soil texture and the climatic features are fully interlinked. 40 percent of livelihood activities are forest based, 30 percent are agriculture based and 15 percent are animal related. Another 15 percent of income comes from wage labor.

### Agriculture based livelihood:



The main crop of the district is paddy which is grown on 2.39 lakh hectare. Production of Paddy in the district is significantly low. Production of Paddy per hectare is 8.53 quintals which is approx. one third of the national average production of Paddy, which ranges between 3-5.5 tons. Irrigated area constitutes 1.67% of the total sown area while use of fertilizer is 4.6 kg / ha, which is inadequate to provide adequate nutrients to the crop leading to low

production of the paddy in the district.

Maize and pulses are mainly rabi crops. Agricultural practices are traditional. Use of wooden ploughs is overwhelming while the number of iron ploughs is negligible. The same is true for bullock carts. The number of tractors is negligible while bullock carts are all pervasive. The usage of traditional agricultural implements has lowered the production of agriculture. Kharif crops grown here are paddy, urad and maize. Rabi crops include til, als, moong, mustard and gram. Collection and sale of forest produce and other forest-related work supplements meagre agricultural incomes.

#### Forest based livelihood:



Forests play an important role in the lives of the people, providing food security and livelihood through the collection of minor forest produce, and employment (as casual labour) in the Forest Department of Chhattisgarh. The forests provide for people's consumption needs - fuel and firewood, medicines, food and drink, implements and housing materials.<sup>2</sup> Forest produce providing the livelihood to tribal communities include Trees, Tendu Leaf, Lac, Dhup, Year Seed, Tamarind, Amchoor, Tuber, Origin, Drugs etc. Pathar, Gitti, Murum, Flouri stone, Sand mining are also the allied elements of the economy.

## 4 Flora and Fauna



The National Park is situated in a transition zone where southern limit of sal forests and northern limit of teak forests overlap (ecotone region) and both sal and teak are seen in their best growth form. Kanger Valley is in fact, one of the last pockets of almost virgin forests still left in the peninsular region.<sup>3</sup>

The steep lush green panoramic wild view of Kanger valley is unique of its kind. Kanger valley represents best example of moist peninsular valley of sal forests and is one of the densest parks in India. The National Park is known for its high floristic diversity. It has thickets of bamboo, climbers, ground flora and tall trees. Tree branches are dotted with epiphytes. The ground is thickly covered with medicinal plants, herbs, shrubs and tubers.

The valley is representative of old growth moist forests of Bastar. The terrain is hilly and offers spectacular landscape. Floral diversity includes in-situ gene bank of medicinal plants, grasses, climbers, wild sugarcane, canes, ferns, epiphytes, Sal, teak, bamboo and their rich associates.

The National park has 553 floral species out of which 12 species are new to Chhattisgarh, 43 species are reported rare. Faunal diversity includes leopard, wolf, jackal, wild dog, sloth bear, wild boar, barking deer, chital, civet cat, otter, spiders, butterflies, fishes, snakes, tortoise, crocodiles and different kind of birds including Bastar Hill Myna. The Park has rare civet " Binturong", giant squirrel and the famous State Bird of Chhattisgarh "Bastar Hill Myna".

#### Topography of the district:



Topographically undivided Bastar has 3 agro-climatic zones i.e. the hills, the plateau and the plains. Socio-economically, villages in the plain zones have better exposure to modernity and development, while hills are remote and traditional and plateaus are intermediary in nature. The district is characterized by its vast natural forest area and prominent rivers. Indrāvati is the largest and the most important river having numerous tributaries, the largest being the

<sup>2</sup>"Ganpathy (Maoist)" [https://wikivisually.com/wiki/Ganpathy\\_\(Maoist\)](https://wikivisually.com/wiki/Ganpathy_(Maoist))

<sup>3</sup>Kanger Valley National Park <http://www.kvnp.in/flora-fauna/>

PamerChinta. Indravatiriver rises from Rampur Thuamul in Orissa and flows through the Bastar division for around 240 miles finally merging into Godavari River in Dantewadadistrict. Owing to its rocky bed the river is not navigable. Interestingly, neither the river nor its tributaries dry up in the hot summer season. District is very rich in its forest resources. The forests can be divided in to four belts, namely, Northern Mixed forests, Central Moist Region comprising of Sal belts, Teak belt zone and the dry region comprising mixed forests.<sup>4</sup>

## 5 Tourism and places of attraction:



Tourism plays an important role in the development of any region and contributes significantly to the economy of district, state and region. The strategic planning of the sector can impact the socio-economic profile of the region and has immense growth potential. There are numerous examples where the sector is key contributor to the state economy. The floating population of tourist besides providing sustainable sources of livelihood to

almost every section of community can be a potential consumer to things of regional importance, be it food, local handicraft, herbs, or any other.

Bastar is endowed with a wide spectrum of places of tourist attraction. Jagdalpur the district capital has earned its importance as the tourism capital of Chhattisgarh state and known for list of nearby tourist attractions, adventure tourism, Kailash Caves, waterfalls and KangerGhati National Park.

## 6 Handicraft (Art and Culture):



Arts and handicrafts of tribal community has always been a center of attraction for tourists and visitors. It varies from community to community and place to place and basically depicts their tradition, values, culture, deities and their affiliation to nature. Bastar art has been recognized around all over the world. The art is being practised and protected from generation to generation by specific section of tribal community of Bastar region. The essence of Bastar art lies in its process of preparation which mainly include use of

conventional tools not the modern machines.

Bastar art can be classified into woodwork, bamboo art, soil art, and metal arts. Wood art works are mainly used in wooden material to make Bastar culture, festivals, and creatures of gods, statues of gods and goddesses and decorations. Bamboo art uses bamboo sheets and includes chairs, living room table, baskets, mat and home furnishings. In soil art, the statues of goddesses, decorative utensils, vases, pots, and household furnishings are made. In the metal arts, artefacts of copper and tin mixed metal are made, mainly in which statues of goddesses, idols of worship, idols of tribal culture, and home furnishings are made.

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<sup>4</sup>“NTPF- An Important source of livelihood in Bastar District”  
<https://www.scribd.com/document/293716622/chattisgarh>



Bastar district specializes in the preparation of items from the Dhokra Handicraft. This process calls for a great deal of precision and skill. The artefacts prepared from Dhokra technique are by using cow dung, paddy husk and red soil in the preparation, beeswax being the most important one. Apart from contouring, wax wires are also used for decoration purpose and for giving a finishing touch to artefacts.