

# **INTEGRATING CONSERVATION AND LIVELIHOODS AT BHIMASHANKAR WILDLIFE SANCTUARY, MAHARASHTRA, INDIA<sup>1</sup>**

(Status of and Report on the Activities supported by the Rufford Small Grants  
Foundation in the year 2010)

**Period: - January – December 2010**

## **Background**

In January 2010 we received funds from Rufford Small Grants Foundation for a number of activities as mentioned in the table below. Kalpavriksh has been working in two villages, Yelavali and Bhorgiri, in Bheemashankar Wildlife Sanctuary with an overall objective of creating **support for conservation among the local people, making conservation work for the benefit of the local people** and to eventually arrive at and facilitate a **joint protected area management strategy for Bheemashankar Wildlife Sanctuary**. Specifically we hoped to be able to do so by **creating awareness** about the wildlife and ecological value of the sanctuary among the local people and children and creating awareness about the value of conservation among the political leaders, particularly those involved in the local governance; facilitating a process of **documenting** of traditional knowledge by the local people themselves; Facilitating the process of **strengthening local governance systems** and linking these structures with effective management and conservation of the surrounding forests; and effective use of available laws and policies, among others.

Some of these activities included facilitating the process of establishing legal Forest Rights of the communities & other traditional Forest Dwellers under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) [Scheduled Tribe & Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006]; exploring FRA for the joint protected area management as management of the traditional Community forest is one of the important Rights that local community can claim under this Act; linking National Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) with the activities as designed under the conservation management plan of the forests falling within the traditional boundaries of these villages; awareness and capacity building programmes and so on.

## **Short update on some of the activities and progress in Yelvali and Bhorgiri villages**

Towards carrying out the above activities and keeping up with the Rights based approach towards conservation, in last two years many discussions have been held in both the villages about the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forests Rights) Act, 2006 (Forest Rights Act). Officially the process of recognition of community and individual forest rights has been slow in taking off. After the discussions and facilitated by Kalpavriksh (KV), villagers in Yelavali

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decided to take the process forward, passed a resolution in their village assembly, formed a Forests Rights Committee (FRC), and filed the claims and submitted them to the Sub-divisional level, as is required.

Subsequent to this KV facilitated the process of verification of village boundaries and preparation of village natural resource availability and use map by applying PRA techniques. This is to facilitate the process of claiming their traditional forests for management and conservation, under the above mentioned Act. Many discussions have taken place in the village in this regard and villagers have come up with a set of rules and regulations that must be followed once the rights have been granted and management and protection is in their hands. This according to them will not be easy for them to take on alone and they will require adequate support from the forest department. Yelavali villagers have also had a few meetings in the neighbouring villages to inform their neighbours about their intention to claim and protect forests within their traditional boundaries. Keeping this in mind a discussion was initiated with the Conservator of Forest, Pune Wildlife Division. He advised that the villagers should come up with their plan of management and send it to the department and the department will then be in a position to react.

The Forest management and protection plan is currently in the process of being discussed and formulated. A Forestry and Ecosystem Management student from Germany is helping in facilitating this as an intern with Kalpavriksh. The management plan is being drafted using MIRADI as a tool. The methodology employed will be used to in the following manner:

1. Preparing a baseline inventory of flora and fauna for this forest
2. Conducting a human impact assessment on these forests and analyzing the extent and the source of impact (including activities as well as which villages are these impacts coming from)
3. Establishing long term monitoring plots in this forests
4. Eventually collating and analyzing all the information thus generated to develop a long term management plan for the site

Data collection for this has already started in November 2010. This study and preparation of final management plan will take until December 2011 in the meanwhile results of the study will be continuously discussed with the villagers, by the villagers with their neighbours and with the forest department. **(See annexure 4 for the detailed concept note)**

Activities that emerged during the discussions with the villagers during this time will be linked to the national employment guarantee Act (NREGA). This has already been discussed with the local panchayat (political and administrative unit) and they have agreed to the suggestion. In the meanwhile a female and one male member from the two villages have started to collect socio-economic information and data required for NREGS.

Awareness raising about biological diversity in the area and its link with the fast eroding local culture continues. Yelavali and Bhogiri villages organized a biodiversity festival again this year. Women from both the villages cooked various recipes from seasonally available wild vegetables. The display and discussion on recipes was followed by a discussion on the value of such vegetable for human health, particularly

in this region. Group which included people from Pune and the participants from the villages also discussed the current availability and consumption status of these wild foods. **(See Annexure 3 for detailed update).**

Environment education programmes have also been initiated in these two villages. The programme aims at capacity building of interested local people in such a way that they conduct environment education programmes with the school children in their villages combining the new knowledge and their own local experiences and knowledge.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 a group of 30 villagers from these villages visited Hivare Bazar in Ahmदनगर Dist and Baripada in Dhule Dist. Exposure visit helped in exchange of experience and learning from the other sites particularly linking of conservation with local livelihoods. As an outcome both the villages have started contributing free labour once a week for common village development activities. These visits have also motivated the villagers towards effective management of their forests.

This was evident in a meeting that was held on 30<sup>th</sup> December 2010 by the forest department for declaration of Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary as a Critical Wildlife Habitat under the Forest Rights Act 2006 (a category which provides additional protection to the sanctuary against external threats). The villagers from Yelahvali agreed that this should be declared a CWH but under the following conditions among others **(see annexure 5 for details):**

1. FD accepting the community forestry resource claim of the village and promising to help in patrolling the forests and controlling illegal activities on a regular basis.
2. FD helping with water source development and not creating objections to small events such as bringing a tracker to the village for agriculture.
3. FD coming with the villagers to neighbouring villages for a meeting and discussion that they are involved in forest protection and have a support from FD so the other villagers should accept their wish to protect their forest (villagers claim that there is a very high level of hunting and timber smuggling by some people from the surrounding villages which is impacting their own natural resource availability)
4. FD should pay more attention to parts other than the sacred grove and erect check posts and sign posts on all roads & pathways to the sanctuary. In doing this the villagers will help the FD.

Agreeing to the demands of the department for cultivation of tree species useful for the villagers e.g. fruits, fodder, firewood, etc. on the community lands and along the village roads, the department has extended help to support by providing saplings. The NREGA department has agreed to payments for digging and other related activities for the same.

Discussions have also taken place with members of the group OIKOS, who will be helping the villagers carry out a medicinal plant survey, site identification for cultivation and strategies for cultivation of medicinal plants as per the list provided by the local people. This work will start in February 2011.

These are in addition to many other activities carried out during this time.

**Annexure 1: Status update on various planned activities between January 2010 – December 2010 (under Rufford Small Grants Foundation)**

<b>Sr. No</b>	<b>Activities</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
1	Organize meeting with Yuvak Mandal of Bhorgiri to draft the registration Document for Registration	Done	
2	Organize & facilitate the general body meetings of Balyogi Ganeshnath Seva Mandal of Bhorgiri before submission of the registration documents	Done	Submitted the registration documents & had two visits for the follow-up
3	Meetings with Youth to discuss regarding the various schemes & plan for the implementation of those schemes	Discussed NREGA & some other schemes from different Govt. agencies	Data collection and implementation is currently going on
4	With Yelavali youth, visit Forest & MSEB department to get permission for insertion of Electric line poles inside the BWLS for electricity supply to Yelavali	Done	Yelavali villagers got Electricity during last Diwali festival
5	With the help of 'Yuvak Mandal', organize Gram Sabha (village assembly meetings) to have awareness regarding FRA & to fill claim forms for their Forest Rights in Bhorgiri village	Done	Gram Sabha of Bhorgiri has elected the Forest Rights Committee. The process of Filing Forest Rights Claim will start soon.
6	Send letters to concerning committees & Govt. offices for the authentication of the Forest Rights Committee (FRC) of Yelavali & Bhorgiri village.	We sent letters from Yelavali FRC	Response from the government is awaited
7	To get financial & other support from Tribal development department	Still exploring	Although resources from other sources such as Panchayat and FD are more likely to come to these villages for various activities in the near future
8	Facilitate the claim filing & submission process	Yelavali individual claims (14) has submitted to the Sub Divisional level Committee (SDLC)	SDLC arranged a field inspection meeting vis-à-vis these claims. Further progress is waited
9	Facilitate & arrange field	Done	

	inspection for filed claims by FRCs of both villages		
10	Organizing weekly meetings with villagers to discuss claiming Community Forest resource and Management of the forest on the community forest resource	Done and carrying on	
11	Organize meeting of Yelavali villagers to fix up the boundaries & draw PRA map of their forest	Done	Traditional boundary map is now ready. Total area and impact zones are currently being plotted
12	Organize Yelavali meeting to make rules for better management of the resource	Done	Rules formulated but not implemented yet, as villagers expect a support from the FD to implement the rules. Finalisation of the management plan will help achieve this
13	Visit concerned forest officials to discuss the issue of Joint Protected Area Management by using the provision of Community Forest Resource under FRA.	Done	Had meeting with Conservator of Forest (WL) for Yelavali CFR
14	Discussion with local women & Youth group of Bhorgiri to organize a bio-diversity festival	Done	
15	Organize local bio-diversity festival in August or early September	Done	
16	Starting an environment and social awareness programme for the local primary and secondary schools	Done	Initiated in both the schools of Yelavali & Bhorgiri
17	Getting permission of Pune Zilla parishad & Bhorgiri school to start the environment education programme	Done	
18	Training of – at least one - local youth towards environment education in the local schools in the long run and finding resources to support his livelihood.	Done	A man and a woman from Bhorgiri and Yelahvali respectively are now involved in environment education in the village schools.
19	Organizing 5 environment education workshops in	Done	4 & 5 workshops in the school of Bhorgiri &

	Bhorgiri school (5 <sup>th</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> standard) in the current education year		Yelavali respectively
20	Meeting & Discussions about the legal issues, ecological importance & need of conservation in context of Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary (BWLS)	Done	Through village meetings
21	Legal and ecological awareness & education workshop for the local villagers, <i>panchayats</i> and other relevant bodies.	Not done	This being an election year a new panchayat was elected. Discussion with the new panchayat members is currently on. Planned for the next phase
22	Separate meeting with Gram Panchayat members to discuss & aware them about the legal issues impacting on Tribal Forest relationship scenario at BWLS	Not done	We've planned to do it in next phase.
23	Find out the local educated youths & train them for the documentation of local flora and fauna. Effort will be made to generate funds and publish this information with local youth as authors	Not done	Already discussed, But people are not comfortable to do so as they feel that it will affect their Forest Rights an outcome of a long term distrustful relationship with the wildlife policies and conservation efforts in the area.
24	Considering the richness of the area in medicinal plants, meeting with Yelavali people to discuss & note down the Medicinal plants, their status & plan for conservation.	Done	It has been decided to plant medicinal plants on their individual lands as well as on their Community Forest Resource. A team has been identified to do the work; Work is to begin in the next phase.
25	Arrange Meetings with individuals or group of people – especially elder persons - to document their traditional forest management practices by local trained youths.	Not Done	Planned to be done in the next phase alongside developing the forest management plan.
26	Discussion with Gram Panchayat members,	We have been discussing with Gramsevak &	Initiated the process of application to get job

	Gramsevak & local youth groups regarding implementation of NREGA & other schemes	Villagers	cards & employment
27	Collection of information on employment status and need in the two villages for the NREGA process	Done	
28	Employment mapping as per the NREGA requirements	Not done	Will do it in next phase
29	Collection of information from various Government offices about available schemes. Making a small booklet on this for the local use.	To the extent it could be collected but not all	We are encountering difficulties in collecting information from government departments as such information is not consolidated or mentioned on the websites.
30	With some local youth & Gram Panchayat member, try to visit Government offices to follow up the implementation of schemes – especially NREGA	Done	We are initiated to take some local youths to the government offices to allow them to get exposure.

## **Annexure 2:**

### **Exposure visit of villagers from Yelahvali and Bhorgiri villages to Hiware Bazar and Baripada villages**

Kalpavriksh facilitated an exposure visit for villagers from Yelahvali and Bhorgiri villages in Bhimashankar, between 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> of November, to Hiware Bazar village in Ahmednagar District and Baripada village in Dhule District of Maharashtra. The objective was to give the villagers a first-hand understanding and exposure to the process of improvement in local governance due to community mobilization and resulting into effective and equitable village development and natural resource conservation.

Subsequent to the exposure visit, in Bhorgiri village, the people who had gone for the exposure visit have decided to start some work in the village beginning small. This they have done after reflecting on whatever they saw during the exposure visit led by Bhaguji Kathe, a senior member of the villager. They have also started weekly meetings to discuss on future directions and course of action. They have decided to volunteer two hours every Tuesday to contribute for village development related common activities. Similar discussions have also taken place in Yelahvali village, who have contributed towards improving the condition of the village road.

### ***The sites visited during the exposure trip***

30 villagers from both the villages were part of the group along with Pradeep and Neema of Kalpavriksh team. The situation of Hiware Bazar and Baripada are very different from each other and yet there are similarities. Hiware Bazar is a non tribal village, close to the district headquarters Ahmednagar, a large village of about 2000 population with its own panchayat. Baripada on the other hand is a completely tribal village, very far from any big urban centre and part of a group gram panchayat (part of a panchayat along with five other villages) hence not too many resources from the line agencies coming directly to the village.

In both the villages however the process of good governance, village development and natural resource conservation has followed a similar trend. In both the villages a village youth went outside to study and then decided to return to the village, provided it with a vision and leadership to achieve the vision. Both the leaders became the sarpanches of their respective panchayats, both worked on the principle of village unity, transparency, collective decision making and accountability. Please follow the following links for more details about these two villages. [http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/CCA/Directory/Maharashtra\\_CaseStudy\\_HiwareBazarAhmednagar.pdf](http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/CCA/Directory/Maharashtra_CaseStudy_HiwareBazarAhmednagar.pdf) and

[http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/CCA/Directory/Maharashtra\\_CaseStudy\\_BaripadaVillageDhule.pdf](http://www.kalpavriksh.org/images/CCA/Directory/Maharashtra_CaseStudy_BaripadaVillageDhule.pdf)

### ***Some reflections on reaction of the villagers***

The reaction was fascinating. The travel was long and frustrating and many villagers had never traveled such long distances. There were also a few non-complaining, very tolerant but absolutely exhausted children. Villagers were initially excited about an outing (and had specially requested to include a trip to Shirdi). After a few hours' drive the group finally reached Hiware Bazar. There were initial sniggers and remarks such as "this is a strange outing from one remote village to another!" However, once the representatives in the village spoke to the group and they saw the kind of village development activities that have been carried out, the attitudes began to change. Early next morning we set out for another long drive (for 7 hours) to reach Baripada. Chaitram Pawar, the village leader spoke with the villagers and took them around, villagers were definitely impressed by his charismatic personality and his humility. After which we all went for a walk to the forests protected by the villagers. In the evening the youth of the village came together and we were treated to a surprise cultural programme, an amazing dance by young boys full of energy, skill and traditional and new concepts.

By this time things definitely began to make sense to the majority of people in the group. Some of the points that they reflected upon included:

1. Baripada has very little rain and a small patch of forests (mostly all teak and very valuable) yet the amount of effort that they put in its protection is impressive. They even have had physical conflicts with violators from outside. Yelahvali and Bhorgiri are lucky to have a large patch of diverse forest and natural forest...all we need is to look after it.

2. Baripada has so few resources, sources of income, and economic status is much worse than Bhorgiri and Yelahvali but they are able to make all the difference because they are united. We have everything; all we need is to unite.
3. Kalpavriksh has been saying much about village institutions and strengthening but to us it was like a teacher drawing a mango on the board, now we have seen the mango, what is left is to taste it ourselves.

There were many other points, discussions and reflections, Yelahvali villagers requested that we go to the village the following week and the village will start some direct action. Some initial ideas were:

1. Cleaning the village surrounds, and repairing walking paths and so on
2. Pushing for the construction of village school and a community hall more actively
3. Working towards a forest management plan

Bhorgiri villagers were very impressed but were not as hopeful of being able to unite the entire village given the political factions in the village. However, they sought great inspiration from the words of one of the village members in Hiware Bazar, who said “does not matter if the entire village is not with you....as long as the eight of you who are here ensure that you don’t give up, stay united and continue your efforts, when the right time comes things will change”.

The trip ended with a visit to Shirdi, this also led to a discussion on how religious tourism should be managed and what lessons could be learned from here for Bhimashankar. In the end villagers were very happy that they got any opportunity to see what they saw.

### *Effects afterwards*

In both the villages the villagers have started contributing one day a week towards common village activities, starting with repairing village access roads which aim to eventually move towards water conservation and forest protection activities.

### **Annexure 3: Wild Vegetable Festival**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of October 2010 the wild vegetable festival was held in Yelahvali. As the festival got delayed because of unseasonal heavy rains, the availability of wild vegetables had gone down. The weather was nice and sunny for a change (it has been raining in the previous days). The programme was organized in the forest and began with bhajan kirtan by the youth in the village. This was followed by appearance of women dressed beautifully and carrying their plates of wild food, decorated with wild flowers. We had a discussion with all the participants about the recipes that they had come with, what species, where from, availability status now and before, how frequently is it eaten, what are its values and so on. We also shared with them some information that we had managed to gather about the nutritional value of some of these species. All the participants were given an Ayurvedic first aid kit to be used for

simple ailments. Event was followed by a meal cooked for the entire village, which included some of the wild vegetable and a delicious preparation of crab!

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> the festival was in Bhorgiri, which was also attended by about 18 people from outside the village. Many visitors who had come to the area for a weekend or to visit the Koteswar temple also dropped in and participated in the event and discussions. The numbers of wild vegetables were much higher here. The event was as in Yelahvali and followed by a meal cooked for all those from outside the village. After the meal all the visitors walked up to the river and kids had a blast splashing in the water.

*Anupama Juvekar who participated in the event in Bhorgiri village on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, describes it most aptly!*

*“Thanks to u and all the team members at Kalpavriksh for the wonderful event organised yesterday at Bhorgiri. It was indeed a treat to see & taste so many varieties of veggies prepared by the village folks. The lunch thereafter, the hospitality, the waterfalls swim..lovely weather .... could we ask for more?”*

#### **Annexure 4: Concept note on developing a management plan and carrying out Impact studies within the traditional boundaries of Yelahvali village in Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary (5th December 2010)**

My name is Amelie Wienecke; I am studying the 5th semester of Bachelor course “International Forest and Ecosystem Management” at the University of Applied Sciences in Eberswalde (HNE) / Germany. The main focus of my study is social or community forestry, management of ecosystems and sustainable silviculture methods. While looking for an internship opportunity I came across the long time established non-governmental organization Kalpavriksh – Environmental Action Group in Pune. After some further mail correspondents and a Brief meeting in Berlin, Neema Pathak-Broome and I agreed, that it will be enriching for both sides to work on a conservation management plan for the village Yelahvali in the Bhimashankar Wildlife Sanctuary (BWS). I intend to conduct this study from the beginning of November 2010 until the beginning of February 2011.

The BWS is situated in the Western Ghats, one of the 34 global biodiversity hotspots (see [www.biodiversityhotspots.org](http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org)). The Western Ghats mountain range is facing high population pressure and the forests here have been dramatically impacted by the demands for timber and agricultural land. To help stop the ongoing fragmentation of forests to sustain the diversity of wildlife and secure natural resources is one of the crucial objectives with which Kalpavriksh is working. For the last two years Kalpavriksh has been working with two villages, Yelahvali and Bhorgiri, one situated on the boundary and the other inside the sanctuary. In the two years of work, Kalpavriksh has attempted to create awareness about conservation issues among the local people. They have also supported the villagers in resolving some social as well as ecological issues and the ecologically sustainable livelihoods of the villagers. The overall objective of the project is to move towards facilitation of a joined protected area management strategy, with the belief that participation of the local people in protection and management of the sanctuary will be useful for the wildlife in the long run.

As a result of this regular interaction and discussions with the villagers, they have shown interest in conserving a patch of forest that falls within their traditional boundary. Towards this they have held many discussions within the village, formulated a set of rules and regulations and also held discussion with the neighboring villages about their intention to protect the forest within their traditional boundaries. The villagers are now at the stage of discussing and preparing a detailed plan for management and protection of this patch of forest within the sanctuary, which they also intend to submit to the forest department for their cooperation and support. Most important aspect of the project is that the final management and conservation plan will be formulated in discussion with the villagers where they would assess their needs and expectations as well as those of the ecosystem (helped by external inputs). Hence, the self-identification of various problems and needs will assure the long term implementation of the conservation plan.

#### Work proposal and tool to be used

My primary role will be to facilitate the process of drafting this plan along with my associates, Neema Pathak-Broome and Pradeep Chavan. We will work with the Conservation Tool “Miradi”, to design a fundamental conservation management plan. Miradi is a user-friendly program that allows nature conservation practitioners to design, manage, monitor, and learn from their projects to more effectively meet their conservation goals. The program based on the [Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation](#). In particular, these standards are meant to provide the steps and general guidance necessary for the successful implementation of conservation projects. As practitioners go through these steps, Miradi helps them to define their project scope, and design conceptual models and spatial maps of their project site. Miradi is a joined Project from the Conservation Measure Partnership (CMP), which is a consortium of conservation NGOs committed to improving the practice of conservation and Bentech (Technology Serving Humanity), which is an innovative Palo Alto-based nonprofit set up that develops sustainable technology projects addressing major social issues in areas such as disability, human rights, literacy, education, the environment and the digital divide. Named organizations like World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Indian branch are active users of this Conservation Tools.

Since the entire project-work Mr. Chavan undertakes once a week visitations to both villages and is therefore familiar with all steps the chosen work-group from Yelavali prepared for the realization of the management plan. Those visits I will accompany to gain a fundamental understanding of the expectations and needs of the participants towards the outcome of the conservation management plan. Mr. Chavan and Mrs. Pathak-Broome will support me with language translation, clarify the history of the BWS and help me to understand cultural circumstances of Yelavali. Concurrent operations will be the elaboration of the Open Standards and the manual training guide provided by FOS (Foundation of success)-CMP. Hence, we will be able to structure a time frame in which approximately the steps can be achieved.

The first visit will be in the first week of December, followed by visits as and when needed for discussions with the villagers and data collection. None of my work will require collection of any flora, fauna, their parts or non living matter from the sanctuary area. Further steps will include the joint revision of the so far collected Data, which means the orientations decided upon work-group members, to gain a

common ground. Through these steps we will use the software Miradi to record the collected data:

1. Define their project scope
2. Design conceptual models and spatial maps
3. Prioritize threats
4. Develop objectives
5. Identify and prioritize strategies
6. Determine indicators to assess the effectiveness of strategies
7. Develop work plans and budgets (if necessary)
8. Export data for reports
9. Export data for a central database where it can be shared with other practitioners

All problems and steps will be as a matter of course simplified and visualized to the suitable point for all relevant actors. My experience with Miradi and the Open Standards are based on a one week workshop within my study course, since these objectives are part of our curriculum. It is a great opportunity for me to improve my skills by applying this conservation tool.

Many thanks in advance for your cooperation. All data and results will be regularly communicated to all relevant and concerned actors.

#### **Annexure 5:**

#### **Update on a meeting in Bhorgiri and Yelahvali on Critical Wildlife Habitat (CWH)**

The process for declaration of Critical Wildlife Habitat has started in Bhimashankar. This entire week was spent by ACF Mr. Naik, RFO Ms. Gaonkar, the forester and the guard of the area to go to all the nine villages and read out the proposal to them. Pradeep and Neema were present for the meetings in Bhorgiri and Yelahvali villages. The ACF told the villages that the proposal has been rejected by all other seven villages so far. In both the villages Pradeep had to clarify to the villagers what the FD proposal was as the FD communication was not very clear.

The meeting in Bhorgiri was highly politically influenced as it was alongside the meeting of the Panchayat Samiti for which all the local political leaders were present. Most of the meeting was spent in discussions related to the construction of Bhorgiri-Bhimashankar road (a long standing demand objected to by conservation groups and forest department as it is likely to impact good patches of forests). Mr. Naik kept explaining that it was not in his hands to grant the permission (everyone seemed to know this already) but still this continued to be discussed. Villagers indicated that they may not accept the CWH proposal.

The meeting in Yelahvali was very different as the villagers had already had a meeting the night before and worked out exactly what they were going to ask for (although it was not announced in advance as to what the meeting was all about). Mr. Naik read out the proposal and mentioned that "it may have an impact on your use of the forest" but emphasised that "no right would be impacted unless locally acceptable alternative were provided for". The alternative that he suggested included gas stove, improved varieties of cattle and so on. Villagers discussed with him viability of some of the suggested alternatives such as gas stoves and provided their own suggestions.

They also submitted their own list of conditions which must be fulfilled before the declaration of CWH, these included:

1. FD accepting the community forestry resource claim of the village and promising to help in patrolling the forests and controlling illegal activities on a regular basis.
2. FD helping with water source development and not creating objections to small events such as bringing a tracker to the village for agriculture.
3. FD coming with the villagers to neighbouring villages for a meeting and discussion that they are involved in forest protection and have a support from FD so the other villagers should accept their wish to protect their forest (villagers claim that there is a very high level of hunting and timber smuggling by some people from the surrounding villages which is impacting their own natural resource availability)
4. FD should pay more attention to parts other than the sacred grove and erect check posts and sign posts on all *kacha* roads leading to the sanctuary in the vicinity of their village. In doing this the villagers will help the FD.

These were some of the 11 point resolution that the villagers worked out and in the end Yelahvali was the only village which has agreed to give its consent for CWH provided their conditions are accepted.

The ACF promised that if they helped protect the forests they will be given badges from the department to indicate their support to their activities. Mr. Naik also explained that this proposal and results of these meetings will now go to the higher authorities and there will be further discussions with the villagers. Villagers were requested to provide names of village representatives who can attend the higher level meetings on the issue.

The outcome of these meetings and whether or not Bhimashankar can be declared a CWH will be clear in some time but as of now most other villages have rejected the proposal. However, if the FD keeps up with the spirit of the discussions and promises of the ACF in the village meeting, the villagers may be able to work out some kind of forest management arrangement with them. The ACF agreed to the formation of a Forest Protection Committee in the village and also agreed to the demand of the villagers that he will send a forest official every 15 days to go on a patrol in the forest with them. Villagers made it very clear to him that they feel very vulnerable in trying to protect the forests on their own as the poachers and timber smugglers are politically and otherwise strong people.

Kalpavriksh team will continue to follow this process. We have completed the demarcation of the forests falling within the village boundary with the villagers (walking all along the boundary). The FD has promised to help with estimating the area that is covered within this boundary for claiming the CFR. In the meanwhile Amilie, Pradeep and Neema are also working on a management plan with the villagers and also trying to develop flora fauna inventories. Aparna Watwe has agreed to help with the studies on the impact of human activities on these forests. Impact studies will start in January 2011.