

## **Project Update: May 2003**

May 2003 - The project work started in the month of May 2003. It is being carried out at a site in the interiors of central Indian forests of Madhya Pradesh near Samardha village. Site visits have been undertaken throughout the months of May and June 2003 and a couple of discussion meetings with the villagers were organised as entry point activities. During the meetings, the villagers narrated their experiences with the forests and also assisted in listing out the important non timber forest products (NTFPs) which were useful as a support for their livelihoods. With the help of the field staff of the forest department and with the participation of villagers, a sensitisation workshop was organised in June 2003.

Through visual aids and by use of demonstrations, the villagers were introduced to the concept of sustainable development and its linkages with forest resources. The villagers discussed the topics given to them in groups and also presented the same.

Site specific information is being gathered through primary and secondary data sources. Literature search for sustainable harvesting practices is also in process. Planning for a village level training workshop on forest resources is underway.

July 2003 - In the first week of July 2003, a field level training on participatory forest resource monitoring was organised at Samardha, which was attended by six villagers.

August 2003 - The project achieved another milestone in soliciting the confidence and co-operation of the village community of Samardha towards the project mandate when a community level extension activity of tree plantation was organised in mid-July at Samardha with participation of the villagers. The programme was organised in order to inculcate the habit of tree protection among the villagers, as well as to facilitate the process of confidence building.

October 2003 - The process of laying sample plots is nearing completion. The exercise has been yielding many interesting findings. In the month of September the project achieved another milestone towards assisting regeneration of dying forest species through cooperation of the village community of Samardha and a nearby village Padaria when community level extension activity of plantation of 500 seedlings of *Emblica officinalis* was organized at Samardha and on the subsequent day at Padaria with participation of the villagers.

The villagers and the members of the Village Forest Committee of Samardha were informed about the plantation program and rally a week earlier. In order to encourage the younger generation towards participation in forest conservation, youth and children of the village were chosen for the forest conservation rally. This rally was christened "Jan Jungle Jagaran Abhiyan" (in Hindi, meaning - People, Forest Awareness campaign). The forest department officials were also informed and invited to take part in the program. Padaria village lies at a distance of 10 kms enroute to Samardha. This village was chosen for the plantation program for three reasons:

1. due to the receptivity of people towards forest conservation;
2. the forests of Padaria and Samardha lie adjacent to each other and are similar in many respects like vegetation type, demography, people's dependence, etc. In order to replicate the results of Samardha and to compensate for the loss of NTFFPs from the forests the village was selected for the activity;

3. to encourage the youth group of Padaria who had been instrumental in the activities at Samardha.

The plantation program helped in generating awareness of the villagers towards NTFP species and also highlighted the importance of forest conservation and sustainable management.

