



Executive Summary
Landscape Restoration in Sidhi: The Way Forward

3 February 2018

Sidhi, Madhya Pradesh

World Resources Institute India (WRI India) organized a workshop at the Zilla Panchayat office, Sidhi, on February 3, 2018 to discuss findings from a first-of-its-kind “Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology” (ROAM)¹ assessment that was undertaken in Sidhi from October 2016 to September 2017. The primary objective of the workshop was to discuss the way forward to operationalise ‘Sidhi’s Landscape Restoration Opportunity Assessment’ findings. The workshop brought together 214 stakeholders from the state and district government, NABARD, private sector, civil society organizations, locally elected leaders, farmers, farmer producer companies, and champions in a half-day consultation.

The workshop was chaired by Mr. R. Parasuram, state election commissioner of Madhya Pradesh, and gained from presence and participation of Mr. L.M. Belwal, CEO of MP State Rural Livelihoods Mission, Mr. B.B. Singh, Mission Director of Madhya Pradesh State Bamboo Mission, Mr. K Arthanareeswaran, Deputy General Manager of NABARD, Mr. Krishna Kumar Singh, Former legislator of Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Abhayuday Singh, President of the Zilla Panchayat of Sidhi, Mr. Ashis Mondal, Executive Director of Action for Social Advancement (ASA), Mr. Vivek Sharma, Chief Functionary of the Centre for Advanced Research and Development (CARD), and Dr. O P Agarwal, CEO of WRI India.

Dr. Rohini Chaturvedi of WRI India presented the findings of Sidhi’s Opportunity Assessment, which was done in partnership with the Vindhya Environment and Livelihood Trust (VELT) of Sidhi, the Institute of Livelihood Research and Training (ILRT) of Bhopal, the Centre for Environmental Law (CEL) WWF-India. Sidhi’s Opportunity Assessment indicates potential for landscape restoration in more than 3,60,000 hectares and at least eight landscape restoration interventions are suitable. There are many pilot initiatives in the district on landscape restoration that can be scaled, and models available from other parts in Madhya Pradesh, such as the success of implementation of *lok vaniki* in Dewas that could be adopted.

Dr. Chaturvedi stressed that implementation of Sidhi’s Opportunity Assessment will provide direct benefits to communities and generate wage labour employment for at least 31,000 persons including women, unemployed youth and the landless. Implementation of Sidhi’s Opportunity Assessment will also generate multiple environmental benefits in terms of regulatory and provisioning services, and support tiger conservation. Notably, findings indicate that although many enabling conditions are in place, there is a need to strengthen them in order to realise the full potential of Sidhi’s Opportunity Assessment.

After the presentation of Sidhi’s Opportunity Assessment, Mr. Parasuram chaired a high-level panel discussion on how best to operationalise the findings. Key points from the deliberations are outlined below:

1. Mr. Parasuram suggested constituting an expert planning and consultative group to guide operationalisation of Sidhi’s Opportunity Assessment. Additionally, it was considered necessary to develop a framework document that integrates ongoing work in the district on livelihood enhancement,

¹ IUCN and WRI, "A Guide to the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology (Roam): Assessing Forest Landscape Restoration Opportunities at the National or Sub-National Level.," in *Working Paper (Road-test edition)* (Gland, Switzerland: IUCN, 2014).

watershed development, agriculture and forestry, taking into consideration the Landscape Restoration Opportunity Assessment findings. Dr. O.P. Agarwal of WRI India emphasised the need for a bottom up approach to landscape restoration where district development plans could integrate strategies from different departments.

2. In order to accelerate, coordinate and implement Sidhi's Opportunity Assessment, participation of local stakeholders was considered paramount. Mr. Belwal shared learnings from the implementation of the livelihood mission in Madhya Pradesh where women, trained in extension services and IT applications, enabled successful implementation of livelihood programs. There was a consensus that livelihood diversification initiatives that enable tangible livelihood benefits with clear benefit flows to the local community, incentivises community and is a good entry point for landscape restoration in the district. Focus on establishing forward and backward linkages to establish value chains around livelihood diversification emerged as a key next step. Technology was identified as a major enabler that could aid in leapfrogging the existing marketing lacunae. Mr. Belwal offered full support for landscape restoration on behalf of the Livelihoods Mission in Madhya Pradesh. He supported the involvement of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in landscape restoration-related activities and the revival of income generating facilities that create value-added products from value chains that could be developed around key tree species.
3. Mr. B.B. Singh emphasised the immense potential of jackfruit and bamboo for commercialisation to enhance livelihoods. Mr. Singh committed to supplying high variety clones of bamboo that are ready for harvest in five years to support landscape restoration in Sidhi. Mr. B.B. Singh emphasised creating awareness about laws and regulations among key stakeholders as there is ambiguity and a lack of clarity on which bamboo species can be transported and on felling restrictions in buffer zones which are impeding realization of the full potential of existing laws and regulations. He called for greater consideration around changing climate, land use and customary practices while planning and selecting tree species to realise Sidhi's restoration potential.
4. Mr. Krishna Kumar Singh emphasised that guidelines should be issued from the concerned authorities to provide clarity on revenue sharing from bamboo plantations by local communities under the UNDP Sustainable Livelihoods and Ecosystem Management (SLEM) program. He stressed that long term management should be handed over to local communities. Likewise, Mr. Bhadoriya, representing a local civil society organization (CSO), raised questions about ambiguities surrounding resource rights and management of buffer zones of the Sanjay Tiger Reserve in the district. This is a major impediment to incentivising local communities to undertake landscape restoration. Mr. Chandramohan Gupta, an eminent environmental lawyer Sidhi, teased out legal perspectives on felling restrictions on private land and said that policy changes are, at times, not sufficient and there is a need to revisit the laws.

5. All stakeholders agreed that CSOs and the local community have a crucial role in taking forward the work on landscape restoration. Mr. Vivek Sharma from CARD and Mr. Ashis Mondal of ASA suggested learning from the implementation of watershed programs in the Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh, where civil society helped take forward the implementation of landscape restoration. Mr. Mondal underscored the salience of ROAM for land use planning in other districts of Madhya Pradesh. He also emphasised, using the example of MGNREGA, that management could be an issue, and appropriate orders could resolve ambiguity and smoothen implementation of programs in the district.
6. Additionally, the role of local stakeholders and the district administration emerged as key in prioritizing interventions and programs. Mr. Abhayuday Singh of Sidhi offered full support of the Zilla Panchayat office in operationalising Sidhi's Opportunity Assessment. He emphasised the need to have a bamboo restoration scheme that could accrue direct benefits to tribal communities.
7. Mr. Parasuram emphasised that implementing landscape restoration in Sidhi needs a process intensive focus, with clear identification of benefits in the medium and long term. As success tends to be process intensive, maintaining institutional memory and continuity in work despite changing government office bearers was identified as a crucial factor that can aid in smoother implementation of ongoing initiatives. Mr. Parasuram suggested that, at the district level, if standard operating procedures for big programs can be instituted, similar to what is already in practice at the state level, this will create an enabling environment for the implementation of programs. Mr. Parasuram emphasized there is an urgency to focus on heavily eroded river banks so that they do not degrade to the point of no return.
8. Mr. Dwivedi, representative of a Farmer Producer Company (FPC) of Bahari, brought forth the perspectives of the FPC in the district. He said that planting species like Moringa on river banks will arrest degradation and also lead to the creation of produce that has market value.
9. Ms. Kalawati, an SHG member who used to work at the Gandhigram Centre, emphasised that revival of the centre is crucial given the associated livelihood benefits, especially for women. Mr. Sheshmani Panika, president of the Zanpad Panchayat of Kusmi, elaborated on the need to establish a *tendu patta* processing industry to provide alternative livelihoods and reduce pressure on forests. Mr. Deepak Khare from Orient Paper Mills said that a lack of government support for forest-based industries has been a hindrance for his company.
10. Mr. Aditya Singh from Navbharat Times spoke of the role of media in raising awareness and apprising people of the recent developments with respect to landscape restoration. He sought regular meetings and cooperation in this regard from WRI India, including an initial orientation.

11. Mr. K Arthanareeswaran from NABARD said that Sidhi's restoration opportunity potential could be realised by identifying micro projects under the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and adaptation fund for which NABARD is the National Implementation Entity (NIE). NABARD can guide the process of drafting the proposal. He also said that it may not be possible to get a full grant under the GCF as there is focus on having a multiple institutions and agencies in the current framework. He also emphasised a need for having a national soil policy and suggested that a pilot for soil policy could be integrated into the micro projects that will be developed. The opportunity assessment could also be integrated with Potential Linked Credit Plans (PLCPs).

As next steps, Dr. Chaturvedi of WRI India offered to convene the expert consultative group to take forward the discussion. Nine members have agreed to be part of this group. The first meeting of the consultation group was convened on March 5, 2018 in Bhopal.