

Collective Action Model for Promoting Sustainable Livelihood Interventions: Lessons from Case Studies in Chhattisgarh State, India

Sagar Kisan Wadkar¹

Abstract

The promotion of sustainable livelihood interventions is an integral part of agriculture and rural development. The sustainability of any (development) interventions through the collective action approach primarily depends on the 'sense of belongingness and ownership' by the clientele group. The paper aims to examine the process of collective action in promoting sustainable livelihood interventions for tribal people by analyzing the three case studies from Chhattisgarh State. The study analyses the three case studies viz. "Enroute women empowerment through convergence and group formation in Surgujadistrict", "Creating market linkages for millets produced in tribal regions of Kabirdham district" and "Harihar Bastar Bazaar, Bastar district" of Chhattisgarh State. The author had observed the planning and implementation of the above intervention and collected data collected during 2015 to 2017 from Prime Ministers Rural Development Fellows (PMRDF), who had worked at the district level to improve effectiveness and efficiency of flagship programmes, as part of the Prime Ministers Rural Development Fellowship Scheme (PMRDFs), Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India. As a result, author has modified the collective action model developed by Kruijssen, et al. (2009) in order to understand the collective action process in promoting sustainable livelihood interventions in a given area. The case studies illustrated underscore the importance of first two levels of collective action model – 'conscientization' and 'social capital' in the process of collective action, and how 'social learning', a byproduct of each level, feeds into the goal of achieving a collective action for the sustainability of efforts undertaken. These

¹ Assistant Professor, Vaikunth Mehta National Institute of Cooperative Management, Pune

² World Bank 2012 'India: Issues and Priorities for Agriculture' accessible at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2012/05/17/india-agriculture-issues-priorities>

³ India Rural Development Report 2014-15

cases differ in their degree of collective action and its form as cooperatives, self-help groups, and farmer producer companies. Comparative analyses of cases identified that 'the institutionalization of collective efforts' and 'developing forward/ market linkages' contributes to the sustenance of efforts undertaken.

Keywords : *Collective Action; Conscientization; Social Capital; Social Learning; Sustainable Livelihoods.*

1. Introduction

Livelihood promotion is an integral part of the rural development. In developing countries, three out of every four poor live in rural areas, and most of them depend directly or indirectly on agriculture for their livelihood (World Bank 2007). In India, nearly three quarters of the households depend on rural incomes for their sustenance. However, about 70 percent of the India's poor reside in rural areas and 40 percent of the rural poor are agricultural labourers. Thus, though agriculture contributes only 15 percent to the national GDP, it continues to be a fundamental instrument for stimulating livelihood opportunities and poverty alleviation. In 21st century, rapidly expanding domestic and global markets; institutional innovations in markets and finance, and revolutions in biotechnology and information technology offer compelling opportunities that enable agriculture to foster development

Simultaneously, changing economic and regulatory environment, with the advent LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) era in developing countries is posing numerous constraints to the small and marginal farm holders. These farmers possess low bargaining power due to low quantity of marketable surplus resulting in an unequal distribution of value among the actors in the market chain (especially with seasonal and perishable agricultural products). Other issues faced by them are constraints in marketing their produce due to limited capital, limited access to physical and financial resources, high transaction costs, inability to create economies of scale and scope, lack of awareness and know-how about value-adding technologies, market imperfections, and poor infrastructure and communication. Further, they possess limited technical skills and lack access to training or requisite information on market.

Additionally, it is frequently asserted that small producers have more difficulty in coping with the increasing prevalence of safety standards in global

food markets (Narrod et al 2009, Reardon et al 1999, World Bank 2005). This has resulted in exclusion of small farmers from high value markets and deterioration of their economic situation. Thus in order to improve their livelihood opportunities will require the environment including strong political will to move forward with reforms that improve the governance of agriculture (World Bank 2007).

Against this backdrop, authors argue that the Collective Action (CA) by the poor particularly farmers would improve their current living standards. CA will enable them to achieve common objectives and to solve their economic and social issues. In doing so, this paper considers three case studies that explore the role of CA in livelihood promotion of the tribal people in Chhattisgarh State in Central India. The case of tribal population is of peculiar importance given that 77 percent of the tribal's in India is small and marginal land holders⁴ and 81.4 percent of them are multi dimensionally poor⁵. Central India is homelands for tribal's, comprising roughly 100 districts and running across the belly of the country, are home to roughly 55 million tribal people.

For millennia, tribal communities have lived in forests and survived on hunting and gathering. About 90 per cent of the tribal's are engaged in rainfed agriculture and most of them are landless labourers practicing shifting cultivation. The tribal's possess uneconomic holdings leading to low crop yield and extremely weak market linkages as they reside in remote areas with minimal connectivity. In addition, lack of access to institutional credit and other facilities available to farmers with land title, inadequate health and education facilities and cultural issues has lead to degeneration of tribal's life. Thus, the dearth of opportunities to enhance livelihood in this region is one of the major cause of tribal's backward status.

The paper evaluates the three case studies under a CA model developed for the purpose. The analysis helps us to understand the fundamental questions associated to CA- How does it emerge? How do we define and measure the willingness and ability of people to work together? What is the extent of CA and the impact of it on improving tribals' livelihood opportunities?

⁴ Agriculture census 2010-11

⁵ OPHI 2010 Country Briefing India

2. Methodology :

The paper aims to examine the process of collective action in promoting sustainable livelihood interventions for tribal people by analyzing the three case studies from Chhattisgarh State. The study analyses the three case studies viz. *“Enroute women empowerment through convergence and group formation in Surguja district”*, *“Creating market linkages for millets produced in tribal regions of Kabirdham district”* and *“Harihar Bastar Bazaar, Bastar district”* of Chhattisgarh State. The author had observed the planning and implementation of the above intervention and collected data collected during 2015 to 2018 from Prime Ministers Rural Development Fellows, who had worked at the district level to improve effectiveness and efficiency of flagship programs, as part of the Prime Ministers Rural Development Fellowship Scheme (PMRDFs)⁶, Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India

A total of 33 Fellows (from the both Batches 2012-15 and 2014-17) were placed in 15 conflict-affected districts of the State. During their period of fellowship and as part of their work, Fellows had undertaken many development initiatives in general and livelihood interventions in particular. For the present research three case studies from three different zones (i.e. north, central and south) of the State was selected purposively, to assess the process of collective action and drawn implications for the collectivisation people for the larger developmental cause.

3. Theoretical Framework :

Collective action approach: A tool to initiate process

A renewed interest in collectivizing small and marginal farmers into different forms of group⁷ especially Farmers Producers Company (FPC) has developed in recent years. However, the foundational work on this notion is by Mancur Olson in his book - *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Olson 1965). Kumaran (2002) states that individual approach to poverty alleviation is increasingly replaced

⁶ Prime Ministers Rural Development Fellowship Scheme (September 2011-December 2017) was an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India implemented in 111 conflict affected districts across 18 State, where PMRD Fellows works as a development facilitators to improve the efficiency of flagship programmes.

⁷ Like Cooperatives, Self Help Groups (SHGs), Farmers Interest Groups (FIGs), Commodity Interest Groups (CIGs), association, Federations, and more recent form is the Farmers Producers Company by amendment of the Companies act 1956.

by group approach. The farmers organizations are formal forms of CA. Marshall (1998) defines collective action as ‘the action taken by a group (either directly or on its behalf through an organization) in pursuit of members’ perceived shared interests’. On the other hand, Bandiera et al (2005) defined collective action as the “ability to refrain from individually profitable actions for the sake of the common good”.

Many development practitioners called for ‘Collective Action’ to overcome the constraints of the small and marginal farmers, discussed in the earlier section (Reardon et al 2009). The CA by small and marginal holders in developing countries has been recognized as a tool to correct market imperfections in the agriculture sector. It provides better access to inputs and high value demanding markets, reduces transaction costs, increases bargaining power of the members and provides acquisition of a collective reputation that serves as a guarantee while marketing the product (Markelova et al 2009).

Furthermore it increases farmers’ capacity to undertake joint investments (infrastructure, labelling and certification); provides farmers with information, technical assistance and appropriate inputs; facilitates vertical integration; enables building favorable conditions for the establishment of public-private partnerships; monitoring and evaluation at farming level and likes. (Moustier et al 2010, Narrod et al 2009, Roy and Thorat 2008, Naziri et al 2014). In the context of long-term investments for perennial crops and agro-processing technologies, it also reduces individual farmers’ risk (Di Gregorio et al 2004).

Thus most of the CA literature emphasizes on increasing economies of scale and bargaining power of the group members, lowering of input, transaction and coordination costs , creation of countervailance, easy access to capital markets and improved risk management as the main benefits. However the outcomes of the CA depends on at least three factors: group characteristics; institutional arrangements within the group; and institutional and economic environment (Markelova et al 2009).

However, there is one major challenge while engaging in CA, which is ‘free riding’. Free riding can be referred to as opportunistic behavior that leads self-interested individuals to enjoy the benefits of a collective effort while contributing little or nothing to the effort (Olson 1965). Nonetheless, several

scholars have identified a number of conditions and institutional mechanisms that could limit free riding and facilitate the creation and maintenance of the collective good.

Sustainable Livelihood Frameworks (SLF)

To promote livelihood opportunities, the Sustainable Livelihood Frameworks (SLF) offers a coherent and integrated approach for strategizing livelihoods activities as per the characteristics and requirements of the community. It addresses people's strengths, available resources and their conversion into positive livelihood outcomes in order to address issues of vulnerability, risk, and insecurity. Following the strong advocacy for sustainable livelihoods approaches in development planning since the 1990s (Chambers and Conway 1992 and later Scoones 1998, Carney 1998, Ashley and Carney 1999), many international development agencies like DFID⁸, UNDP, Oxfam and CARE started to advocate livelihood approaches as central to their programs and organizational structures.

Conceptually these SLF helps us to a. Identify people's resources/ assets, sources of livelihood and their coping mechanisms to deal with risk and uncertainty; b. Explore factors that constrain or enhance their livelihoods and its linkages with markets on the one hand, and policies, processes, and institutions in the wider environment, on the other hand; c. Identify appropriate measures that can strengthen assets, enhance people's capabilities and reduce their vulnerability. Thus the sustainable livelihood approaches explicitly recognizes the role of five capitals (human, physical, economic, social and natural) in constructing and improving livelihood opportunities, which are often determined by the state policies, processes and institutions. It is therefore essential to plan a form of CA *"as per people's needs, interest by keeping in view their present status, capability and local demands of the region"*.

4. Results and Discussions :

Case Study 1 : Women Empowerment in Surguja⁹

In *Surguja* district, tribal women contribute significantly toward their family income but they possess low income generating resources. Moreover, due to poor levels of education they tend to ignore the basic health issues

⁸ 7See Carney et al (1999) Livelihood approaches compared (Available on: http://www.start.org/Program/advanced_institute3_web/p3_documents_folder/Carney_et.al.pdf)

⁹ Gupta, D. (2017). Enroute Tribal Women Empowerment through Group Formation and Convergence: An Action Research in Surguja District of Chhattisgarh. Unpublished Thesis – M.Sc. in Development Practice, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

resulting in poor nutritional and health status among the women and children. Status of tribal women of Surguja in terms of skill and access to resources is very poor which leads to low productivity and income.

In 2014, district administration took an initiative to mobilize all 150,000 women of the district, aged 18 to 60, into self-help groups under NRLM (National Rural Livelihood Mission) scheme of Government of India. Through the coordinated effort of district, block, and field-level government staff, facilitated by PMRD Fellow, 12,411 SHGs were formed. Each of these SHGs were linked to credit and financial services, government social safety nets, and new livelihoods opportunities. As a result, these women have greater decision making power in their households, the opportunity to raise the household income through additional livelihood opportunities, and address pressing human development challenges: widespread illiteracy, maternal and child health, poor sanitation and hygiene, and prevalent alcoholism and in their communities.

The characteristic feature of women empowerment especially in tribal region was evident in form of increase in income level, improvement in knowledge and skills and their increased capacity over public resources and assets. It also shows that the SHGs have greater impact on social and economic aspects of beneficiaries.

Case Study 2: Kodo-Kutki Millet: Value Chain Analysis in Kabirdham

Kabirdham district is known for mountainous terrain as its two blocks are flanked by *Maikala* range of Satpuda mountain chain. It is a typical case where the tribal population in remote mountainous regions produces *Kodo-Kutki* millets in large quantity. These crops are cultivated with the help of traditional knowledge and no external input is utilized for this production. However, most of the production is at subsistence level and surplus is sold at meager price to local traders. Considering the lower levels of income generated through these crops, communities are moving away from Kodo and Kutki production to other crops. Today, when the nutritional values of these minor millet is being realized, the demand in the market (especially metropolitan markets) is increasing rapidly. However, the dominance of middlemen over the supply chain of the minor millet obstructed the benefits of the growing demand to trickle-down to the millet growers and thus remained aloof from the higher returns.

Kodo-Kutki millet has more nutritional values with five anti-diabetic compounds and has always been staple food of *Baiga* and *Gond* tribal

communities in a district. The current price is somewhere at level of Rs. 8/- per kg and even if people get Rs. 30/- per kg there would be substantial rise in per capita income in the village. On the other hand, the price of *Kodo*, as per online portal such as Organic depot, is Rs. 180/- per kg. It was a crucial moment, when the huge difference between price at the level of producer and at the end user was realized. It led to a strong feeling that an intervention is needed to ensure better returns to millet producers. Community members were not aware about the 'value' *Kodomillet* possess in urban markets. Hence, PMRDF led-district govt. has initiated a value chain analysis of millets. The process started with sensitizing the people about the true value of their produce in urban markets and drew a line of action to expedite the process.

Focused efforts were undertaken to make community aware about the possible economic gains, in the process several public meetings were organized and all the stake-holders - officers at district level were informed about this idea. As a result, two SHGs were formed and they were also strengthened through capacity building efforts. They were made aware of similar project carried out in Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh.

Case Study 3: Linking collectives directly to market : Harihar Bastar Bazar

Many of the small holders in Bastar districts have been following traditional farming practices and they grow on indigenous varieties. Being located in remote area far from the market, weak institutional support, poor infrastructure and services, poor policies are some of the major challenges of tribal farmers in Bastar district. Further, they lack in market intelligence and depend on money lenders for credit making them prone to abject poverty. The price that they are offered for their product is extremely volatile and has no relationship with the costs involved. Against this backdrop, district administration with the help of tribal farming community came with an idea of promoting collectivization amongst small farmers as a panacea to all their woes and setup marketing platform called "Harihar Bastar Bazaar" under Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP) – NRLM.

Currently, more than 100 products (milk and dairy products, vegetables, varieties of rice (including scented and red rice), pulses, minor millets, processed products (mahualaddu, tamarind candy, tomato ketchup, jaggery) organic fertilizers, pesticides and likes are available at the Harihar Bazaar, which now has 22 producer groups (comprising of four Farmer Producer

Companies, five cooperatives, and 13 women SHGs. Each farmer producers group was been given the charge of supplying a niche product in the market. Thus Harihar Bazaar was established as a supermarket owned and run by tribal producers group and provides all relevant facilities. These members sell their products to Harihar Bazar and in return receive remunerative price for their products.

Case Study Analysis

The cases are diverse, owing to different approaches employed, but their purpose is similar to demonstrate the effect of CA in promoting livelihood opportunities to tribals. Table 1 gives an overview of the case studies and their characteristics.

Table 1 : Overview of the case study characteristics

Case	Enroute women empowerment through convergence and group formation	Creating market linkages for millets produced in tribal regions	Hariharbazar bazaar
Purpose	For women empowerment by linking them with livelihood activities	Promotion of Nutricereals and Value addition	Linking Collectives directly to market
Location	Surguja district, Chhattisgarh	Bairakh, Bodla block and Polami, Pandariya, Kabirdham district, Chhattisgarh	Bastar district, Chhattisgarh
Stakeholders	WDS (Widow, Divorced, & Separated) Tribal Women's and Women's	Kodo-Kutki millet producers	Tribal farmers' and Women's
Partners	District government and its enabling agencies	District government & its enabling agencies; local NGO; Nella Kerai, Chennai formarketing	District government and its enabling agencies
Forms of Collective Action	Self-Help Groups	Self-Help Groups	Producers groups: SHGs, FPCs, Cooperatives
Trigger	Community requested assistance and district government	Community requested assistance and district government	Community requested assistance and district government

Year of Action	2014	2014	2015
Size	1,50,000 women	40 community members (2000quintals of Millet)	3500 community members
Activities	Sensitization and Mobilization; SHGs membership drive; Credit linkages, Linked to livelihood activities Training & capacity building	Sensitization and Mobilization; SHGs formation; Processing of millets; Collective marketing	Sensitization Mobilization; formation; marketing
Functions	Social, Economic	Economic	Economic
Governance	Democratic	Hierarchical	Democratic

Collective Action Model

The CA model has been developed for the purpose of research after analyzing the process of three collective action livelihood interventions. This paper analyses the three cases in terms of the role CA plays in promoting livelihood opportunities within a conceptual framework. Fig. 1 provides a schematic overview of the framework depicting the process leading to CA and discusses plausible outcomes and threats that may result from CA. The process begins with conscientization on the left-hand side of the diagram.

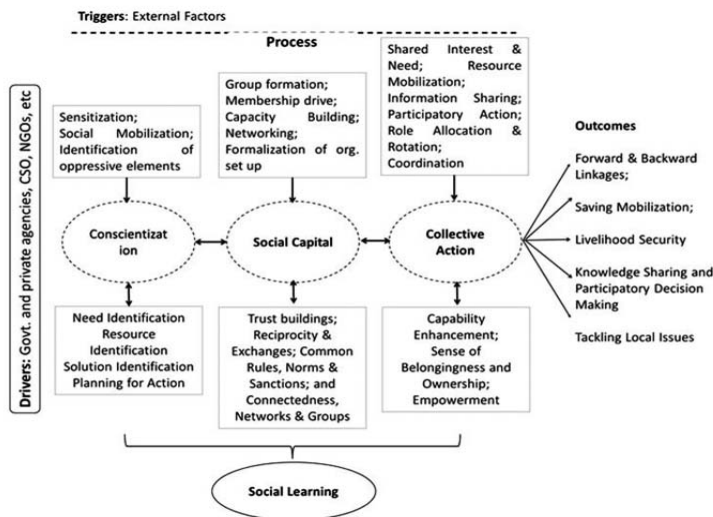


Figure 1. Collective action model to promote sustainable livelihood interventions

(Source : Modified version of Kruijssen, et al. 2009.

The Process of Collective Action for smallholder market participation)

Conscientization : The theory of critical consciousness or conscientization by Paulo Freire (1970 and 2005) talks about how people's critical consciousness enables them to express their social discontent (oppressive elements), think critically about their problems and actively resolve them. Consequently this led to the realization of felt and unfelt needs¹⁰ of people. It necessitates exploration of ground realities by raising people's consciousness. It is the moral awareness which propels individuals to disembrace from their cultural, social, and political environment. It encourages them to take action against the oppressive elements that are illuminated by that understanding (Possardt 2003). Thus the process of conscientization makes people reflect on their realities.

All the case studies has been used this approach of sensitization & mobilisation of people to identify the oppressive element / community issues, keeping in view the sustainable livelihood framework The PMRD Fellows had played crucial role in 'mass awareness' of the people and created '*desire to take participatory action*' to resolve the economic and social issues. They have identified the problems and solutions, shared relevant information, and planned mutually convenient activities to achieve common goals. This process led to develop a "*sense of belongingness and ownership*" towards the development initiatives, which is the primary criterion that determines the effectiveness of any CA and thereby help to ensure the '*institutional sustainability*' of the efforts undertaken.

Social Capital : The next stage is of social capital, a concept often referred in the literature of CA (Coleman 1988, Uphoff 1995, Koelen and Das 2002). Social capital recognizes the fundamental role social relations play in promoting livelihoods and ensuring sustained economic growth. This group approach (for e.g. SHGs) improves the social capital base (Srivastava 2005). In the context of CA, there are many interpretations of social capital, but one useful definition is: "*the shared knowledge, understandings, norms, rules, and expectations about patterns of interactions that groups of individuals bring to a recurrent activity*" (Ostrom 1999). This includes both 'horizontal ties' among a group (referred to as "*bonding social capital*") as well as 'vertical ties' between different groups (referred to as "*bridging social capital*"), also described by Coleman (1988 and 1990) as "*the structure of relations between actors and among actors*" that encourages productive

¹⁰ In psychological point of view, needs classified as felt or conscious and unfelt or unrecognized. The development facilitators need to take intense efforts in identifying unfelt needs and make them aware about it.

activities. Hence, social capital facilitates CA, as the process develops confidence among people to invest in collective activities with the belief that other members will also do so.

Johnson et al (2002) state that where markets fail and transaction costs are high, social capital can contribute significantly to stable performance by providing access to information and reducing the costs of contracting and coordination. Pretty and Ward (2001) documented growth of social capital as evidenced by group activities in wide range of natural resource management and further have identified four aspects to build social capital asset viz. *relations of trust; reciprocity and exchanges; common rules, norms and sanctions; and connectedness, networks and groups*.

In the selected cases, participatory action planning took place at the district level, where people started to build a group¹¹ as per their need and interest to engage in CA. Case study 1 and 2 has used SHGs as a form of CA and in the case study 3, producers group comprising of Cooperatives, SHGs and FPCs formed became the part of 'Harihar Bastar Bazar' initiative. Subsequently, Fellows and district government officials undertook many activities to increase membership of people in this efforts, organized capacity building workshops and meetings at regular interval and finally registered these groups as business entities.

Collective Action : The theory of logic of CA by Mancur Olson (1965) explains the rationale, reason and need for group formation to achieve the purpose/ goal of their togetherness. Most definitions on CA highlight that its success requires involvement of a group of people, common interest within the group and some kind of common action which works in pursuit of their shared interest (Meinzen-Dick 2004).

The literature has shown that CA involves various aspects including development of institutions, resource mobilization, coordination of activities and information sharing (Poteete and Ostrom 2003). The purpose of CA varies as per the level at which, we have to analyse the phenomenon such as institutional level and social unit (individual, group, community and intra- community, etc). Similarly indicators of analysis might differ depending on the specific objective of a CA.

¹¹ The study followed the Tuckman's model (Forming - Setting the stage; Storming - resolving conflict and tension; Norming; and Performing - implementing and sustaining projects), which has been used extensively in development practice and considered as an excellent model for analysing individual and group behaviour.

Field studies and evidence from all across the globe have shown that the ‘*tragedy of the commons*’¹² is not unavoidable and people can efficiently cooperate and build institutions to govern collective goods (Ostrom 1990). Most of the literature on CA is related to the management of common pool resources. Agrawal (2001) synthesized the works of several authors in an effort to identify enabling factors that would lead to successful outcomes such as group size, social capital, education, organizational factors and institutional arrangements (Naziri et al 2014).

Social Learning : Koelen and Das (2002) emphasis that the basis of exchanges between different stakeholders while engaging in a collective activity is determined by social learning. Albert Bandura (1963 and 1977) posits that “*learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement*”. This process entails the shift from ‘*multiple cognition*’ to ‘*collective cognition*’ (Koelen and Das 2002). Social learning processes are seen as the ‘*engine of collective cognition*’ (Jordan et al 2003). To benefit from collective cognition, it is important that convergence on a shared idea occurs only after engaging in a dialogue between divergent viewpoints. The interaction that takes place during CA also feeds back into the social learning process changing the nature of social capital over time vis-à-vis conscientization in order to redefine problems and challenges and to tackle the consequences, if any. Hence, in order to design policies that are effective and sustainable it is important to understand the process of social learning, as this will greatly enhance the sustainability of a CA

In present research, author argue that the ‘learning’ takes place at all levels viz. at conscientization, building social capital, engaging in CA and even after the process of group formation is completed and the group engages in certain defined CA. At the conscientization level, it has been observed that the group of people (key persons) learns together to identify and define problems, to search for and implement solutions, and to assess the value of a solution for a specific practice. These key persons then further guided the collective action process.

At Social Capital level, it has helped to develop the trust & confidence among group members, define their own sets of rules and regulations.

¹² It is an economic theory of a situation within a shared-resource system where individual users acting independently according to their own self-interest behave contrary to the common good of all users by depleting or spoiling that resource through their collective action. The concept originated by William Forster Lloyd (1833) and popularized by Garrett Hardin in 1968 and 1998.

The momentum generated has developed their capability to deal with an individual and community problems collectively, which further leads to '*Collective Capability*'¹³. It has been observed that tribal people has their own limitation and faces to number of constraints (financial, physical, human capital), which has encouraged them to act collectively to strengthen their capabilities. Thus the CA acts as a stimulus for collective capability.

Triggers and Drivers : This process of CA is normally initiated by a 'triggers'. This may be an external factor beyond the control of the individual (in this case tribal people). CA is more likely to emerge where an individual's fail to address his/her issues related to livelihoods and/or other relevant local issues.

In contrast, the 'drivers' facilitates the process of CA and it could be external (for example, government and private agencies, Civil Society Organizations - CSOs, NGOs, etc.), or internal (community leader, progressive farmer, etc.) and takes a principal role. The driver can also play a role in sensitizing and mobilizing local people to identify felt and unfelt needs and create the willingness to work together.

In this case the PMRD Fellows and district government & its enabling agencies played an imperative role to facilitate the entire process of CA with ensuring its institutional and financial stability.

Thus, this collective action process has helped to develop the habit of saving for SHGs members, further helped them to connect with any livelihood activities by strengthening forward and backward linkages, inculcated the need for participatory decision making, culture of information sharing and thereby lead to achieve livelihood security for the beneficiaries. In addition to this, the beauty of these collectivization efforts, as this has contributed significantly in addressing the local issues as well. For instance, in *Surguja* district, SHGs women's had undertaken many initiatives to eradicate '*alcoholism*' from villages, and educational campaign about health & nutrition issues. Since the process is highly dependent on the social (milieu)/ cultural, economic, and political contexts, it usually takes place in a collective setting. Thus, the process of collectivism and its influence in increasing people's consciousness, enhancing social capital, facilitating social learning and building group capabilities, contributes substantially in improving the livelihood opportunities of a community. It thereby also helps in creating a social identity.

¹³ It empowers the group with certain valued beings and doings which an individual alone wouldn't have been to achieve

5. Conclusion:

The above cases shows that collective action is a social process, which can be triggered by a range of factors, often prompted by the difficulties in securing their sustainable livelihood source. The drivers in each case played a vital role in facilitating the process of CA, once the demand was raised by the afflicted people. The District level government functionaries and its enabling agencies with the help of local NGOs played a pivotal role in expediting the process. In each case, the PMRD Fellow served as a vital link between the government and the community.

The cases presented illustrate how CA has enabled the expansion of local livelihoods opportunities thereby, improving the well-being of the tribal people. It is clear that '*raising consciences*' of people is fundamental to initiate the CA process. Once people come together and form groups, the process then promotes building off social capital as the basis for the trust and connectedness requisite for sustainable planning and execution. Increased social capital reduces individual risks; stimulates CA to achieve mutually benefitted outcomes. This process served as a catalyst for institutionalizing CA. As illustrated in the cases above wherein SHGs were linked to livelihood activities in *Surguja*, marketing channel was established for value-added *Kodo-Kutkimillets* in *Kabirdham* and marketing platform was created for producers groups in *Bastar*.

Further this CA process helps to acquire, assimilate and internalize the knowledge, behavior and skills from peer farmers starting from need and resource identification to developing a sense of belonging and ownership towards the development efforts undertaken. Finally CA leads to empowerment of the members by enhancing their capabilities and improving their participatory decision making skills.

It requires huge efforts and investment to achieve successful and sustainable collaboration among several individual small and marginal holders. Based on these cases we are unable to conclude whether public or private interventions are more suitable. At times public spending seems necessary to create the necessary conditions for private investment. Private investors are increasingly aware of the potential of smallholder market chains. Public funds should therefore be utilized for the most marginalized farmers who do not have access to private investments. As CA to be sustainable in the long run, requires an enabling environment, including the policy framework. These efforts have bailed the tribal people out of the "deprivation trap"¹⁴.

¹⁴ The concept given by Robert Chambers (1993) in his book - Rural Development: Putting the last first. Deprivation

Trap: Powerlessness; Vulnerability; Physical Weakness; Poverty; and Isolation.

Hence CA offers a promising platform for shared experiences, social learning's, participatory decision making, securing livelihood and thus can help to constitute a unique 'social identity'.

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