Barnawapara wildlife sanctuary, Chattisgarh, India

Last update: 2019-04-11
Protest and struggle against the relocation plan and the use of violence and criminalization against local indigenous people.

Description:

Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1976, in the state of Chhattisgarh. It is inhabited by Kondhs, Saura and Binjhwar tribes among others. In 2010 the Chhattisgarh government planned to relocate the 25 villages coming under the sanctuary; three villages — Rampur, Latadadar and Nawapara — were marked for the first round. To provide housing, agricultural land and other basic amenities, Rs 10 lakh was to be spent on each family. The total amount needed for this was Rs 13.5 crore [1]. Because the Sanctuary has not been notified as a Tiger Reserve, the economic resources available for the relocation activities have been taken both from the central government and from the CAMPA funds (Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority), a scheme which is supposed to be used for reforestation activities. To carry on the relocation, the forest department received Rs 5.40 crore from Central Assistance and Rs 29.83 crore from CAMPA fund (Information given by Minister of Forest in Chhattisgarh Assembly on 17th July 2013).

Till date, only the 3 mentioned villages have been relocated - Rampur, Latadadar and Nawapara, for a total of 374 families (Fanari, 2019). According to the Minister of Forest the beneficiary of the relocation project have received Rs 50.000 (700 $), as cash incentive, a house of 250 sqm, on a plot of 500 sqm, access to basic services like road, school, anganwadi (rural child care centre), community centre, electricity, public toilet and drinking water (info from State Assembly Report, 15th to 19th July 2013). However, as per the information shared in a fact-finding report of July 2018, basic necessities like water, livelihood cards, etc are not available to the villagers [2]. Despite several applications submitted to the forest department, the villagers did not receive any assistance and they now wish to return to their native village in Rampur [2]. As per the information shared by Devendra Bagel, a convener of Dalit Adivasi Manch, no written and informed consent was taken by the forest department for the relocation. “The families got rehabilitated without having a clear understanding of their forest rights under the Forest Rights Act, and no official meeting was held at the Gram Sabha level (committee of elders); hence the local people got pressurized to leave their place” argued Devendra Bagel in a meeting hold in Delhi on November 11, 2017. According to him the people who moved out were under unbearable pressure, as for instance the denied access to any natural resource, the denial of building up any roads, houses and any other basic public services which were important for the community.
In 2017, first in October and then in November, the 22 villages remaining within the Barnawapara sanctuary decided to oppose the relocation plan. A wave of protests overran the sanctuary. In a joint statement issued by the Dalit Adivasi Manch, the forest dwellers commented that community forest rights (CFR) haven't been settled yet in these forest villages. “How can the forest department ask tribals to move out when they are seeking community forest rights. Their rights to continue their indigenous way of life should be first recognized” [4,5]. According to the information shared by Devendra Bagel from Dalit Adivasis Manch, the 22 villages inhabiting the WLS have submitted their claims on community forest resource rights (CFRs); however these rights have not yet been settled (info from FRA in PA meeting, November 2017, Delhi).

On 15 January 2018 the Forest Department officials entered the reoccupied Rampur village and physically assaulted members of tribal families, harassed women, and destroyed the devsthal (sacred site), with the aim to forcefully evict them. Due to incomplete relocation package and the infertile land given to them during the relocation process, around 10 families refused to relocate and therefore came back to Rampur village, they have been constantly pressured by the forest officials to move out. The police has been complicit with the Forest Department in preventing the submission of a First Information Report by the forest dwellers, against the atrocities and the forceful eviction carried on by the forest rangers. In contrast, one of the villagers, Rajkumar, was assaulted and arrested under a counter-first information report at the behest of one of the accused forest rangers [6]. After this, the community members have been protesting for 10 days demanding the release of Rajkumar, and asking for action against the forest and police officials responsible for the committed atrocities [7].

Moreover, just at the fringe of the Barnawapara forest, a Vedanta gold mining project got proposed in 2016, which was threatening the life of the local communities living in this area. As for a 2017 Business Line report, the Vedanta mine, with an estimated reserve of 2,700 kg of gold metal, would have expanded to an area of 608 hectares [8.9]. Thanks to the local struggle of 24 villages around Sonakhan area, which would have been affected by the gold mining, the mining lease has for now been suspended. The local struggle has been supported by the state government, activists and environmentalists including the District forest Officers [10].

Basic Data

Name of conflict:
Barnawapara wildlife sanctuary, Chattisgarh, India

Country:
India (/country/india)

State or province:
Chattisharh

https://ejatlas.org/conflict/barnawapara-wls
Location of conflict:
Kasdol

Accuracy of location
HIGH (Local level)

Source of Conflict

Type of conflict. 1st level:
Biodiversity conservation conflicts

Type of conflict. 2nd level:
Establishment of reserves/national parks
Establishment of reserves/national parks
Land acquisition conflicts

Specific commodities:
Land (/commodity/land)
Biological resources (/commodity/biological-resources)
Biological resources (/commodity/biological-resources)
Ecosystem Services (/commodity/ecosystem-services)
Ecosystem Services (/commodity/ecosystem-services)
Tourism services (/commodity/tourism-services)
Tourism services (/commodity/tourism-services)

Project Details and Actors

Project details
The Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary covers an area of 245 sq. kilometers in the Mahasamund District of Chhattisgarh. After the passing of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, the Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1976. The altitude of this region ranges from 265 to 400 m. The wildlife species in the Barnawapara Sanctuary is varied. Of the total 25 villages within the boundaries of the sanctuary, 3 have been relocated while there are currently 22 villages remaining.

Project area:
24,500

Type of population
Rural
Affected Population:
8,000

Start of the conflict:
01/01/2008

Relevant government actors:
Chattisgarh Forest Department

Environmental justice organizations (and other supporters) and their websites, if available:
Dalit Adivasi Manch
Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan

Conflict & Mobilization

Intensity
HIGH (widespread, mass mobilization, violence, arrests, etc...)

Reaction stage
In REACTION to the implementation (during construction or operation)

Groups mobilizing:
Farmers
Indigenous groups or traditional communities
Local ejos
Neighbours/citizens/communities
Women
The area is inhabited by Kondhs, Saura and Binjhwar tribes among others

Forms of mobilization:
Land occupation
Official complaint letters and petitions
Street protest/marches
Refusal of compensation

Impacts

Environmental Impacts
Potential: Biodiversity loss (wildlife, agro-diversity), Food insecurity (crop damage)

Health Impacts

Visible: Violence related health impacts (homicides, rape, etc.)
Potential: Malnutrition

Socio-economical Impacts

Visible: Increase in Corruption/Co-optation of different actors, Displacement, Lack of work security, labour absenteeism, firings, unemployment, Loss of livelihood, Violations of human rights, Land dispossession, Other socio-economic impacts
Potential: Loss of traditional knowledge/practices/cultures, Social problems (alcoholism, prostitution, etc.), Specific impacts on women, Militarization and increased police presence

Outcome

Project Status
In operation

Conflict outcome / response:
Criminalization of activists
Migration/displacement
Repression
Strengthening of participation
Violent targeting of activists

Development of alternatives:
Recognition of community rights under the Forest Rights Act within the limits of the Wildlife Sanctuary

Do you consider this an environmental justice success? Was environmental justice served?:
No

Briefly explain:
The villagers continue to be oppressed and threatened by the Forest Officials. No recognition of the community rights.

Sources & Materials

Juridical relevant texts related to the conflict (laws, legislations, EIAs, etc)
The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006
[click to view](http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/ind77867.pdf)

THE COMPENSATORY AFFORESTATION FUND ACT, 2016
[click to view](http://www.ukcampa.org.in/Docs/CAMPA%20Act%202016.pdf)

Links to general newspaper articles, blogs or other websites

[click to view](http://cgbasket.in/?p=16340)

[click to view](http://cgbasket.in/?p=2477)


[click to view](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/chhattisgarh-tribals-oppose-relocation-from-barnawapara-forest/articleshowprint/61470213.cms)

[click to view](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/chhattisgarh-tribals-oppose-relocation-from-barnawapara-forest/articleshow/61470213.cms)

[click to view](https://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/wildlife-shrinks-vedanta-s-gold-mine-in-chattisgarh-117033100568_1.html)

[10] Sruti 'The turning tides in Sonakhan'.
[click to view](http://www.sruti.org.in/?q=news-media/turning-tides-sonakhan)

[9] Scroll 'Vedanta plans to develop India's first private gold mine in Chhattisgarh – and locals are worried'. Author: Rina Chandran, Thomson Reuters Foundation. May 08, 2017.
[click to view](https://scroll.in/article/836501/vedanta-plans-to-develop-indias-first-private-gold-mine-in-chhatisgarh-and-locals-are-worried)

Related media links to videos, campaigns, social network
[click to view](https://counterview.org/2018/02/01/stop-forceful-eviction-and-atrocities-against-tribal-families-of-chhattisgarh-wildlife-sanctuary/)

Dharna against the illegal arrest of Rajkumar and the illegal eviction of Rampur village, Barnawapara. Video posted by Devendra Baghel in facebook, Jan.28, 2018
[click to view](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8eaP7dHoVk&feature=youtu.be&fbclid=IwAR1fbZensjx74eMhZu6O3OyXhxH18fE3xqgU8iEKovxUjaJ8D1lG78xZAvMw)

Other documents

**Petition to National Commission of Scheduled Tribes (NCST), January 2018** Petition written by Dalit Adivasi Manch and Chattisgarh Bachao Andolan against the atrocities in Barnawapara Wildlife Sanctuary,
[click to view](https://file.ejatlas.org/docs/4133/Petition_NCST_BarnawaparaWS.docx)

Other comments:

We are thankful for the information shared by Devendra Baghel from Dalit Adivasi Manch.

▼ Meta information

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▼ Comments