

**ESTIMATED IMPACTS OF ARMED CONFLICT ON LOCAL  
LIVELIHOODS OF FOREST-BASED COMMUNITIES**

**in the Short Run: A Micro-Level Analysis**

By

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# Conflict in Forest Corridors

- Conflict situation - India's 223 districts with active Maoist's presence in forest corridors under JFM

PM mentioned – India 'losing Maoist battle' and gravest internal security threat

- Of late, GOI intensified its offensive against the Maoists forces
- Such conflict in Lalgarh, Jhargram Sub-Division (West Bengal) since June 2009

# Objectives of the Paper

- The Paper estimates impact of present conflict on livelihoods of forest-based communities in affected areas and their local coping strategies and policy implications

Such estimates important:

- for impact on local livelihoods
- impact on poverty dimensions,
- use as indicators for social security measures and transfer payments
- policies to reduce hardship during such conflict period/situation

# Paper's focus: Impact Estimates

The Paper based: on field research, on-going -

- Preliminary findings presented
- Present conflict situation expected to continue
- Paper not delving into proximate causes of such mass conflict
- Focus - mainly to estimate the effects on livelihoods' of forest-based groups/communities

# Literature Survey

There is lack of framework and lack of estimates of such cost of conflicts and civil war

- on local livelihoods and forest-based communities

Causes and resolution by Ballentine and Sherman: 2003; Collier: 2007; Evans: 2009; Stathis: 2003; and The World Bank: 2007); and impacts on household welfare (Justino: 2009).

Major research gaps in terms of impact analysis

- household/community livelihoods, behaviour and welfare
- risks and insecurity and
- impacts on community-based political and social capital

# Methodology

To construct a picture of local livelihoods

- Compare data 'before' the conflict situation and 'on-going' situation

And assess changes in terms of livelihoods, if any

Livelihoods'-related data for different social groups - base period 2008

- compared to that of conflict period in the year 2009
- to estimate short run effects on local livelihoods and
- attribute them to their proximate causes

- Exact periods compared:

- June to November 2008 (base period) and
- June to November 2009 (conflict period)

# Tools, Data – First Round

Data generated based on household and group interviews  
Coverage: 70 per cent or about 105 village households  
coverage of poor households from the bottom exhaustive

- For cross-checking of data key informants consulted, also local officials
- Additional interviews for gap filling - also checking errors

Participatory tools used:

- semi-structured interviews and FGDs,
- social grouping and livelihoods analysis,
- time line, food calendar and others

# Tools – Second Round

During the conflict period:

- Interactions with households and key informants
- no group discussions could be held due to section 144
- The local block office and gram panchayat offices also contacted to cross-check data and fill gaps

Telephonic interviews of workers, banks and others to verify data, gather their views and to bridge gaps

Pass books of NREGS beneficiaries and others referred

# Sample Village - Khayerboni

Patashimul Panchayat Samity, Jhargram block, Jhargram Sub-Division, Paschim Medinipur district

Area = 250 ha, near Lodhashuli forest

*Sal* forest of 70 ha, wasteland of 50 ha,

Residential area of 15 ha, cultivable land of 80 ha

68 % = poor households

2008 = 150 households

2009 = 155 households

ST HHs = 39, SC HHs = 7 and general HHs = 119

Also includes 24 HHs (with 3 female-headed HHs) of a primitive tribe (*sabar-lodha*)

# **Khayerboni Village: Strategic location in the conflict area**

- Intersection of Forest areas of Jharkhand and Orissa
- Strong Maoist presence - a inter-state passage
- Passage for Jhargram and Forest areas of West Bengal
- Khayerbani village 17 kms from Dharsa, Jharkhand  
35 kms from Baripada, Orissa
- Forest as hideout from protection forces
- Killing of local political leaders
- Arrests of suspects, high level of tension/anxiety in surrounding areas

# Khayerboni: Socio-Economic Profile

155 HHs categorized into 4 socio-economic groups

- Based on type of dwelling, land holdings, trees owned, sources of livelihoods, possession of livestock and other assets and earnings

4 socio-economic groups include

- (i) destitute households = 10
- (ii) very poor households = 25
- (iii) poor households = 70 and
- (iv) non-poor households = 50

# Poverty Reduction Measures: Khayerboni Village

- In 2000-2001, ST households – subsidy from MTP tribal loan of Rs. 8000/- per HH utilized to buy livestock
- IAY – Support for attacks by wild elephants damaged huts
- Tribal HHs allotted small sized patta wasteland -  
Planted bamboo plants, cashew nuts etc.
- Some HHs leased additional land and/or share-cropped
- Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) since 2003-04 – AAY helped cut food expenses by 18 % or so
- Also below-poverty line ration card for sugar and kerosene

# Sources of Livelihoods: Khayerboni Village

- Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs);
- Agriculture and non-agriculture labour;
- Produce from one's own land;
- Livestock rearing
- Fruits and other items from homestead;
- Earnings from migrating as labour; and
- Others - wages, pension, salary, stipend etc.

# Significant changes in short run

- Average earnings compared at HH level 'before' and 'during' conflict

Mix of factors:

- some changes directly due to conflict situation (especially differential access to NTFPs),
- sharp rise in prices of many NTFP items,
- failure of monsoon (lack of agriculture work)
- government transfers (old age pensions)
- and others

# Some Interim Findings

- Only destitute HHs - average increase in nominal earnings by 148.1 % (with old-age pension) and 71.1 % (without old age pension)
- Average nominal earnings of other groups worsened during conflict –
  - (i) Very Poor Group (% change ): + 4.28 %
  - (ii) Poor Group (% change): + 1.37 %
  - (iii) Non-Poor Groups (% change):
    - Lower Strata Non-Poor: - 10.24 %
    - Higher Strata Non-Poor: - 34.88 %
- Average price increase of NTFP items: 44 %

# Interim Findings (Continued)

- (i) Only destitute HHs fared better in nominal terms
  - due to increased prices of NTFP items,
  - higher quantities harvested - *sal* seeds, resins and mushroom and
  - old age pension
  
- (ii) Livelihoods'-related earnings of very poor and the poor
  - suffered due to lower harvest of NTFPs, lack of agriculture work and little or no fruit production from homestead
  - Some loss made up by NREGS work for average of 22 days
  
- (iii) Local forests -providers of livelihoods during critical times

# Interim Findings (Continued)

Worst victim - Non-poor group - sharp decline in NTFP earnings, poor land production and fruit trees though normal income stream remained usual – salary/pension

Non-poor group - key role in Panchayat and direct victims of Maoist conflict - Loss of lives - male members fled

- Out migration of increased and work load on women went up
- Coping strategy - very poor and poor households - increased borrowings against fall in real income and high prices of food items
- Cash borrowed – average amount INR 2500/- per month, per HH

# Selected Policy Suggestions

- Compensatory packages for those conflict-affected – IDP's
- Concept of hardship and insecure living - Hardship allowance
- More NREGS work arranged in other suitable locations
- Other measures are to manage out-migration - cash transfers include micro-credit
- Index-based Micro-Insurance to protect farmers from vagaries of rainfall

# Armed Conflict and Natural Resource Management

For armed conflicts over extended period –  
uncertainty and development programmes get stalled

- Difficult to continue support from local forests
- Lack of communication between local communities and FD - protecting forests by local FPCs problematic
  
- Critical issue in medium and long term –
  - Major breakdown in rules and procedures
  - Key arrangements/contracts no longer respected
  
- More evidence –based research is suggested on conflict and natural resource management