2.5 The Vagad Labourers and Farmers Organisation (The Vagad Mazdoor Kisan Sangthan):

The Association was established in 1997 in Dungarpur District, and at present, it is working in 4 blocks of Dungarpur District and 2 blocks of Banswara District. The Association is working in 495 villages, having 17,651 membership (out of which 7,704 are women). The Vagad area is a Bhil tribal area, and comes under the Schedule V Areas.

In 1996, before the Association was established, many tribal families in Dungarpur associated themselves individually with the *Forest Land People's Movement*, and that started them thinking that there was not just one tribal issue, but there are many issues – and they wanted to raise those issues also.

The other issues that the people wanted to deal with were migration for labour work, minimum wage issues, displacement, and drought. After the enactment of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act in 1996 (known as the PESA Act), the need to form Village Republics and strengthen the Village Assemblies, became another issue that the people of the area wanted to deal with.

The Main Activities of the Association during the year 2008-2009:

Forest Land Rights: The Vagad Labourers and Farmers Association is actively working for proper implementation of the Forest Rights Act. The Association conducted various programmes like; campaign, Foot March, lobbying, dialogue. A total of 4,710 claim files were prepared at village level with the support of the Association.

- A team of 65 leaders moved in 72 villages, where they organized village meetings, distributed pamphlets, checked 1,930 claim files and prepared 500 new claim files during the foot march. The leaders lobbied the administration to solve the problems in filing the claims.
- A block level conference was organised (concluding the Foot March) in which approximately 1000 people participated. The political persons and advocates were also present in the conference. The people realized the strength of collectiveness in the conference.
- Rallies were organized in three blocks to reveal the irregularities in the process of filing claims and gave petition to the Administration. Due to pressure of the Association Gram Sabha / Panchayats are accepting the claims of the families having possession after 1980.
- Training of Forest Rights Committees members was organized with 104 participants to develop the skills of committee members for physical verification of claims etc.
- The Forest Department is now accepting the claim files of the peoples who were having possession of land before December 13, 2005 (i.e. before the date of declaration of the Forest Rights Act).

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA): The Association is creating awareness about the provisions of right to demand for work, explain the process of availing job card under the NREGA.

- The people submitted total 40,200 applications for getting work and 22,000 out of them got receipt.
- Helped 96 families in getting job cards
- The District Administration of Dungarpur invited the Association to facilitate the training of the Social Audit Forum members. A total of 630 members participated from 5 blocks of District Dungarpur. Although, monitoring committees were formed at village level to monitor the NREGA work but these committees are not so effective.
- Mate Training: The Association coordinated with the District Administration to organize the Mate trainings, discussed the ground realities of implementation of the NREGA. The Mates were not only trained on theoretical aspects of the NREGA but also they were taken to the field, practically worked as labour, measure the work, calculate the wage and filled in the muster roll. 60% of the mates were appointed by the administration. Group basis work allocation was practiced by the Mates in 120 villages

The Association pressurized the administration to apply the measurement system so that the people will get minimum wage. Now a day, the people are getting wage rate atleast Rs. 70-80 per day. They are demanding to increase the number of days from 100 to 150.

Tribal Self-Rule: After the enactment of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act in 1996 (known as the PESA Act), there is need to form Village Republics and strengthen the Village Assemblies became another issue that the people of the area wanted to deal with. A total of 275 villages declared themselves as 'Village Republics', out of 207 has started utilizing their powers adhering to 3-4 points. 10 *Gan Parishads* (cluster of 8-10 TSR villages) has formed The Village Assembly is accessing information from Village Councils about the works. Villages prepared development plans and submitted to the Village Councils. These village assemblies are disseminating the information through village meetings and cooperative the Forest Rights Committees. Proposals were submitted to open drought relief works through Village Council, Block and District level administration. A total 1.50 lakhs labourers benefited from the drought relief works.

Loan: The tribals in the area have been receiving loan recovery notices from the banks, and the people feels that they are over recovering. The Association facilitated the victims in availing "No Dues" certificates from the banks. Initially, the Association surveyed 400 families and 370 received no dues certificates. The Association accessed the bank record of 530 families and explained to the families.

Displacement: Many families were displaced from the catchment area (Mahi river) in the three blocks (Bagidora, Gadi & Anandpuri) of District Banswara. A committee of displaced farmers has been formed to struggle for proper compensation. The Association helped 350 families to submit the claims to the District Administration and another 300 families are in process of preparing the claims. A dialogue with leaders of the Political Parties was conducted on October 16, 2008. The families demanded to take favourable decision for proper compensation and rehabilitation of the displaced families. At the end of programme, a petition was given to the Administration for Honorable President of India. Also, agreed upon to take up the issue at state level and create pressure in the State Assembly.

Food Security: The VMKS took charge to monitor the food security schemes of the government. The Association is monitoring 10 anganwadis, mid day meal in 15 schools and 10 PDS shops to ensure proper services.

Gram Sabha took decision on the attitude of ration dealer

The ration dealer of Bansdi village of tehsil Kakanvani in Banswara District was distributing the ration on arbitrary basis. The dealer always kept the ration cards under his custody. He has entered more quantity in cards and distributing less quantity to the families. The Association (VMKS) organized meeting with the village assembly committee and took decision to make complaint to the Sub Divisional Officer. The SDO issued an order for enquiry and ration cards were found with the dealer during the enquiry. Also, there were wrong entries in the ration cards. The dealer was remved and appointed temporary dealer who is supplying the ration in time. This joint action helped the villagers to strengthen the food security.

Dialogue with political party (*Amne-Samne*): The Association organized dialogue (Amne-Samne) with the candidates of political parties before the State Assembly Election. The Association created pressure on the political parties to include the issues in the party's election manifesto. The issues mainly related to problems in implementation of the NREGA, Forest Rights Act, and food security schemes etc. Around 900 people participated in the programme.

Accessing government schemes: The Association helped the people to access the social security schemes of the government. 86 forms were filled up for old age pension out of 58 forms were sanctioned. 3 families were benefited with construction of house under National Housing Scheme (*Indira Awas Yojana)*.

Overall Impact: The impact of the Association work visualizes in the confidence level of tribal. The tribal people are collectively putting their problems before the political parties and Administration. After declaring the villages as 'Village Republic', they had started utilizing the powers, the village meetings are solving the internal conflicts and forwarding the other problems to district level for solution with the help of the Association. After the intervention of the Association in both the Districts (Dungarpur and Banswara), the forceful displacement by the Forest Department has stopped and claims were submitted to the administration which will help them in getting the rights on land. Due to efforts of the Association women leadership and participation has increased a lot. Women leaders are putting their matter before district and higher-level authorities.

The Association presented the problems of tribal people of the area before the political parties in the 'Dialogue with political parties' programme. The issues like; implementation of the Forest Rights Act, increase the number of days from 100 to 150 in the NREGA, rehabilitation of displaced families from Kadana Dam, loan etc. were included in the party manifesto.

Conclusion:

The Association has worked in spreading awareness about Tribal Self Rule, and 275 villages have declared their villages as Village Republics. These tribal villages have claimed the increased rights given under the PESA Act. Now, the Village Republics have started to establish clusters of Village Republics, called Village Republic Federations. The Association also helps to raise the issues of the Village Assemblies at the District Level. The Village Assemblies work on the issues of solving disputes and exercising control over natural resources. They also ensure transparency by asking the officials for the accounting of development works.

Dungarpur and Banswara Districts have been in the forefront of showing the way to conduct "Social Audits" of the work done under the Employment Guarantee Scheme. The first Social Audit was held in Dungarpur, and officials and activists from many parts of the country came to participate, and learn by doing, how to involve the people, elected representatives and the administration in a post-facto "audit" of the word done and money spent. The Vagad Association continues to work actively on the Employment Guarantee issue. Indeed, *many* of the village tribal families have completed 100 days of labour work, and area campaigning that the number of days of assured work per year should be increased to 150 days.

Despite the collective efforts of the Association, till now not a single family receive land right paper. Local political leaders of the village and government staffs are demanding for bribe for allocation land paper.

2.6 The Jarga Area Development Society: (Jarga Kshetriya Vikas Samiti)

The Society was established in 1997, with the objective to help the adivasis/ tribals in Kumbalgarh Block of Rajsamand District to improve their conditions, and to ensure the rights of unorganized adivasis in the area of "Jarga[8]". The tribals of this area are cut off from the mainstream of development, because of lack of education and awareness. Many influential people and government officials try to exploit them in many ways. Kumbalgarh Block has a large tribal population, unlike the rest of Rajsamand District, and the difficult and remote geography has contributed to the lack of attention to tribal issues there.

The tribal population in Kumbalgarh Block is 29%. Because the tribal population is in the minority, the upper castes of the area try to take advantage of them. The Society was formed to stop exploitation, and to ensure the human rights of the tribal in the Block.

Kumbalgarh Block is a MADA tribal area, and on paper, there are some benefits for the tribal people of MADA areas, but in fact, the benefits are noteworthy by their absence! That is another reason why the Society was formed – to strengthen the position and knowledge of the tribal people of the area, about laws, schemes, systems, and to access the resources and benefits that are available to them. The Society has also allowed them to experience the effectiveness of collective action.

Working Area – 139 Villages, in 27 Village Council Areas in Kumbalgarh Block of Rajsamand District, and in addition, there are 6 Villages in 3 Village Council areas associated in the Saira area in Gogunda Block of Udaipur District. There are total 6,334 members (out of which 815 are women) in the society; 45 men and 11 women leaders at village/ Panchayat level; at block level five leaders (out of 2 women) and one man leader at district associated with the society.

The Main Activities of the Society during the year 2008-2009 :

Forestland: Progress on efforts made by the Society to avail the rights to forestland

- Total 988 claims (978 claims were filed by individuals and 10 claims were filed for community land) were filed for rights over forestland. The Forest Rights Committees did physical verifications for the claims. Out of these, they forwarded 464 claims to the Sub Divisional Level Committee. The Sub Divisional Level Committee forwarded 112 claims to the District Level Committee. The administration gave direction to the patwari/ panchayat secretary and the Forest Department to correct the rejected claims. A team of people submitted a petition to the Sub Divisional Officer for relaxation in necessity of enclosures like; residence certificate as address proof. 5 new community claims were also filed during the period. A total of 105 families have received land ownership papers.
- A decision was taken in a village meeting to get the refund of the money illegally collected by the Ranger of the Forest Department as, fine for cutting grass from the forest area in the name of the forest protection committee. Construction of stone fencing/ boundary walls by the Forest Department was stopped after being exposed with the help of the media and the people had a dialogue with the administration and Member of Legislative Assembly. In addition, the Society helped 15 people in receiving caste certificates and 46 families received residence certificates with the help of the Society. 5 Village Councils were surveyed to know the status of process adopted for implementation of the Forest Rights Act.

[8] There is a well-known temple in the area, after which the adivasis named their Society, called the Jarga Temple.