

## **Solidarity in social and economic development of the Adivasi (and Dalit) communities**

(Berlin Platform, October 2013)

Adivasi communities in India have been struggling for decades against outside domination and also against externally designed projects (mainly for external benefits). At times, such struggles were successful, but even then – after some time - the struggles may become weaker. And questions may arise as to what could be an appropriate community based concept for their development. In many cases the young generations are, in fact, interested in a development, from which they expect better education, social advancement and cultural autonomy. And there may be only comparatively few members of the Adivasi communities, who would prefer to be left as they are and to continue their traditional lifestyles.

Most of the people, however, would argue: In case mining or industrial or wildlife tourism projects are not accepted on Adivasi land as they have damaging effects on the local communities, then what are the alternatives from within the Adivasi communities for the social advancement of the young generation? Is migration to cities an alternative, even knowingly taking upon oneself the negative consequences? The Koel Karo Jan Sangathan, the peoples' movement that successfully stopped the Koel Karo Hydel Project in Jharkhand, very explicitly raised such questions.

Today - in the so-called developed and industrialised countries - some people have come up with critical search on alternatives to the dominant, market-driven socio-political concepts.

The two main concerns in this are:

In individual perspective: for a self-determined and functional way of life of the person;

In multilateral perspective: for an equitable and respectful international cooperation that would not harm the individual or collective ways of being (like in the case of Adivasi communities), but support them.

“Solidarity in social and economic development” has become a key concern in many parts of this world in searching for alternatives that would guarantee the survival of communities and at the same time provide tools for social advancement, and thus the acceptance and plurality of diverse lifestyles. Everywhere, attempts are made in building up alternative forms of social, political and economic self-organisation, and to put them to test in real-time.

The root principles of “solidarity in social and economic development” are mutual support, participation, a supportive and sustainable relation with nature (rather than indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources), focus on local capabilities and cultural traditions. In the area of exchange relations (from traditional trade to modern market relations), the guiding principles would be morality, confidence and cooperation, and also the protection of women from sexual, economic and emotional exploitation.

Apart from such general ideas, it may not easily be possible to copy or transplant the experiences already gathered in practice. Local forms of solidarity in social and economic development will have to be established through dialogue in their respective practical context. Adivasi Koordination in Germany are arranging dialogues with Adivasi activists towards that end and for our better understanding of experiences already gained.

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