

# Palamu: Ready to Play Gulal

Palamu - Jharkhand



**P**alamu with 1.4 lakh hectare forest cover is known as the land of the *palash*, lac and *mahua* (Pa-la-mu). However, the alarming rate of deforestation has pressed the need for conservation of the forest cover without harming the livelihood of the local community. The State Government adopted strategies to make local women independent and connect *palash* trees with the identity and livelihood of the inhabitants. Protecting the naturally grown *palash* trees would aid livelihood generation with forest produce from the trees and enable water conservation by preventing soil erosion, resulting in improved chances of livelihood.

Indiscreet cutting down of the lac forests of the Kundari lac *bagaan* has reduced the 421 acre forest cover to scattered patches of 60,000 *palash* trees and 100 *kusum* trees. The *palash* flowers, which were previously left unused, especially during the spring season, are now being collected by women from various local Self Help Groups (SHGs) and converted into herbal *gulal* (coloured powder).

The processing machine installed in May 2017, resulted in the production of the first batch of *gulal* that weighed 400 kg, sold in 50 gm and 100 gm packets on pilot basis. The target for 2018 is fixed for the production of around 46,000 kg of *gulal* for which collection of *palash* flowers was in full swing. Flower procurement centres were opened in every block of Palamu District. This has forced the people to realise the economic value of the forests and the forest produce.

Production and sale of *gulal* has boosted the purchase price of flowers and given better income opportunities to flower pickers. They have an option to take part



**FINAL OUTCOMES**

- Production of herbal *gulal* at local level
- Production of lac by JFM Committee members
- Employment generation by local available resources
- Convergence of National Rural Livelihood Mission with Forest and Co-operative Department
- Local villagers became forest protection volunteers

directly in profit sharing as members of Cooperative Society, which is at present manufacturing herbal *gulal* in Kundari.

The lac *bihan* cultivation witnessed a boost for the last three decades. In October-November 2017 lac *bihan* cultivation was done on 20,500 lac trees of Kundari area. Women are being trained in manufacturing lac products like bangles and show-pieces through various training programmes conducted through SHGs.

As human resource mobilisation, the forest Department has formed 27 Joint Forest Management (JFM) committees for conservation and regeneration of this lac forest, aided by local cooperative society members of SHGs.



**CHALLENGE FACED**

- A major problem was protecting the identity of Kundari lac *bagaan* and ensuring its survival

