

B u n d e l k h a n d

A glorious past...A sustainable future



Development Alternatives

Cultural Heritage

Bundelkhand is one of the most fascinating areas of Central India with ancient history, famed temple complexes, rich forests juxtaposed with a harsh land and a defiant people. Known as 'Chedi Kingdom' in the ancient times, this geographic region got its name from Bundela Rajputs that ruled here until the 16th century. The region lies between the Indo-Gangetic Plain to the north and the Vindhya Mountains to the south. It is administratively divided across the states of Uttar Pradesh (UP) and Madhya Pradesh (MP).

Bundelkhand's most well known tourist and archaeological site known for its sculptured temples is the world heritage site of the temple city of Khajuraho. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, the most powerful god in the Hindu Trinity, it has a number of 10th century temples devoted to fine-living and erotic sculpture.



Extensive forests are found in the hilly areas of southern Bundelkhand. The forests spread over an area of 543 sq km, across Panna and Chhatarpur districts, and have been notified as the Panna National Park and Tiger Reserve. Rainfed rivers of Ken, Betwa, Tons and Kali traverse the land which has rich mineral and stone deposits, the diamond mines of Panna being most famous from where a very large diamond dug from the last excavation is kept in the hill fortress of ancient Kalinjar, built in AD 150.

Social and Economic Conditions

Life is tough for the rural majority in Bundelkhand. This expanse of sun-parched plains spanning 13 districts of southwest Uttar Pradesh and Northern Madhya Pradesh is one of the most marginalised and deprived in the whole country. But it hasn't always been this way; history confirms the influential role that the region has played through the ages in the sub-continent. Beyond the rich cultural heritage, there was a strong tradition of management of the natural heritage-land, water and forests that formed the basis of hard but sustainable lifestyles of the people who inhabit this land.

Today, however, Bundelkhand is inundated with the problems of poverty and penury. Dwindling natural resources, poor industrial development and very few livelihood options characterize the rural areas. Agriculture is the mainstay of Bundelkhand's economy, however, recurring droughts and poor land productivity, coupled with impacts of a changing climate threaten food security. Mass migration to cities is a regular phenomenon for a people with few economic opportunities.



Development Interventions



In response to the challenges of persistent poverty and environmental degradation in the region, and with the aim of creating sustainable livelihoods at scale, Development Alternatives (DA) initiated its involvement in Bundelkhand in 1985. The organisation objective to 'deliver eco-solutions' balancing the basic prerequisites of sustainable development - social equity, environmental quality and economic efficiency, resonates through DA's activities here.

Work on land water management and afforestation naturally led the interventions in the region. This was closely followed by introducing clean technology based livelihood options that demonstrated efficient use of local resources. Engagement with, and capacity building of local institutions, enabling communities to access basic needs of drinking water sanitation, shelter and energy has been supported by enterprise development and skill building for job creation.

TARAgam

facilitating large scale livelihoods in Bundelkhand

TARAgam, is a unique concept; a livelihood resource center demonstrating models of sustainable development, with facilities for training and conferencing. It is as much a destination for development practitioners in their quest for new learning as it is for the local village community whom it seeks to serve. Three such TARAgams have now been established.

TARAgam Orchha

Located on the banks of Baberi stream, this Sustainable Livelihood Resource Centre is very close to the beautiful and historic town of Orchha. TARAgam Orchha was set up in 1995 as a technology village by Development Alternatives. It has, over the years, demonstrated the economic viability of sustainable production systems. It has world class training and conferencing facilities with residential options. A small shop stocks attractive handicrafts produced by women groups from the area. It provides lessons from varied development interventions such as:

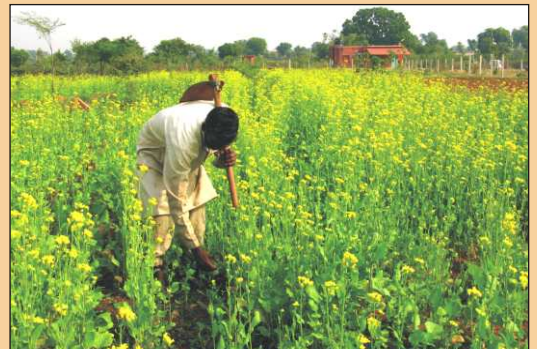
- TARA Handmade Paper recycling unit, started in 1995 run by Sahariya Tribal women
- TARA Nirman Kendra - a building material research cum production centre - started in 1995 produces a range of innovative, resource efficient affordable building products for construction of houses and public buildings.
- DESI Power - India's first commercial 100 kW biomass gasifier - set up in 1996 ensures uninterrupted renewable power supply,
- TARA Livelihood Academy - provides training and capacity building services to women and youth for jobs and enterprises.
- Radio Bundelkhand - The first Community Radio in Madhya Pradesh, Orchha set up in 2008 using 'entertainment' format for raising development issues.



TARAgam Pahuj

TARAgam Pahuj is a Sustainable Livelihood Resource Centre, located near Pahuj dam, in Village Ambabai, in Uttar Pradesh. The centre focuses on natural resource management and sustainable agricultural practices. It provides training and information services for local farmers and demonstrates:

- Rainwater harvesting, soil and moisture management practices
- Land reclamation and development especially using green organic manure
- Energy and water efficient farming practices



TARAgam Datia

TARAgam Datia located strategically on the north-south highway corridor demonstrates different models of energy conservation and green technology. TARAgam-Datia undertakes extensive research and demonstration related to the manufacture of energy efficient bricks. It is equipped with a Material Research Laboratory to undertake testing and analyses of clay and non clay-based bricks and building materials. It houses a women's entrepreneurship center and provides facilities for training. Highlights are:

- A running model of the Eco-Brick Kiln that provides a clean solution to building construction and climate change mitigation
- A materials laboratory
- Biomass gasifier that provides green power to the operations.



TARAgam Orchha Conference Facilities

TARAgam, the conference facility of Development Alternatives at Orchha, Madhya Pradesh in central India offers a world-class ambience for meetings on issues of current interest, particularly sustainable global development. Situated in a rural Indian environment, the location offers a quiet and conducive atmosphere for creative thinking and discussions.

The campus in which the conference facility is located directly demonstrates ecological living, sustainable livelihoods and resource efficiency in all their aspects. The buildings use local materials and indigenous technology for construction. Water

is harvested through a check-dam and the campus is electrified using renewable bio-mass energy sourced locally. The campus also hosts an industrial estate for mini-enterprises, providing jobs for local people and generating goods and services for local markets.



The main conference center comprises a discussion space for up to 80 participants. In addition, it has 4 smaller meeting rooms for 8-10 participants each. It also provides numerous semi-open breakout spaces for use as interactive meeting forums. Audio-visual projection and recording facilities and Internet connectivity through broadband – Wi-Fi are available.

The conference facility offers local Bundelkhandi (central Indian), North Indian, South Indian, Chinese and Continental cuisines. Alcohols are not permitted on Campus, however, cocktails and bar facilities are available for evening dinners at nearby Orchha hotels. Accommodation for delegates is organized both on campus in 12 simple rooms (single or double occupancy) and at Orchha in 4 star hotels, at a distance of 7 km. Local transport from the hotels to the conference facility is arranged as per requirement.

The facility costs are as follows:

- The conference room, with air conditioning and audio/video facilities is INR 25000/- per day
- Small meeting rooms are available at INR 10,000/- per room per day
- Breakfast, lunch, dinner and 2 tea/coffees are charged at INR 1200/- per person per day
- Accommodation charges are INR 3,000/- per night (single) and INR 5,500 per night (double)
- The rates for hotels in Orchha (7 Kms away) are similar and available upon request
- Local travel for local sightseeing is approximately INR 1,200/- per person per day

The nearest railhead is Jhansi, which is 5 hours from Delhi by fast trains throughout the day. Jhansi railway station is 11 kms away from the conference facility and pick-up and drop service to and from the conference centre is complementary. The conference organizers will also facilitate local sight-seeing tours to the Orchha palace and temple complex and for visiting development projects in the region on request.

Some of the most visited tourist attractions of India, including the Taj Mahal in Agra, the Khajuraho Temples in Chhatarpur and the Panna Tiger Reserve in Eastern Madhya Pradesh lie within two hour drives from Orchha. The locality also has some one hundred projects of Development Alternatives aimed at empowering local communities, raising the status of women and introducing resource-efficient methods for managing natural resources.

Places to visit:

Village Mador: located in Niwari block, Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh, eco-habitat interventions, new poultry based livelihoods developed in association with public sector programmes and partners. Strong community institutions are now linked with finances and credit.



Village Rampura: located in Badagaon block, Jhansi district of Uttar Pradesh is a fully electrified village using 100% renewable solar power. Electricity generation and supply is managed by a community based institution and powers a computer training center for children, besides lighting homes and streets.

Villages Maharpura and Budera: located in Niwari block, Tikamgarh district the check dam on river Gurari flowing through the villages has demonstrated spectacular results in recharging ground water, enabling multi-cropping and enhancing agro-bio-diversity of the two villages fuelling economic growth of these villages.

Welcoming Visitors to TARAGram, Bundelkhand

We are gratified that the field activities of the Development Alternatives Group have become a major point of call for practitioners of sustainable development worldwide. We will always continue to welcome visitors to our establishments; such interactions are of considerable value in fostering the exchange of information that is now needed more than ever before.

However, we have found that the process of looking after our guests entails costs that we can no longer afford: the time of our colleagues that takes them away from their work, the costs of transportation, accommodation and food and the contribution of our intellectual and management resources.

We have therefore set modest fees to help cover some of the basic expenses we incur for providing this service:

Per Group:

Vehicle for field visits per day	Rs 2,000	\$ 60
Professional guide per day	Rs 5,000	\$ 160

Plus

Per Individual:

Train Delhi-Jhansi-Delhi	Rs 2,000	\$ 60
Daytime Meals and Refreshments	Rs 300	\$ 10
Overnight stay (incl Dinner and Breakfast)	Rs 2,500	\$ 80



Getting There:

Air - The nearest airport is Khajuraho (56 kms). Well connected from major airports in the country and regular flights are available.

Rail - Jhansi (11 kms) is the nearest Railhead. Well connected with major towns and cities in Bundelkhand. You can break journey at Agra to visit the Taj Mahal.

Road - Good network of roads connect Jhansi to Delhi (9 hrs.) via the north-south highway corridor. Jhansi is well connected by road to other major towns and tourist points in Bundelkhand.

