

## Social Analysis Systems<sup>2</sup>

Concepts and Tools for  
Collaborative Research and Social Action

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### Title

***Katkari* views on livelihoods, Kumbharshetwadi, Maharashtra, India**

### Key Words

Problem Domain, Technique Report, India, Tribal Population, Katkari, Livelihood.

### Reference and Acknowledgement

Buckles, D.; Khedkar, R.; Patil, D.; Ghevde, B. 2006. *Katkari* views on livelihoods, Kumbharshetwadi, Maharashtra, India. Social Analysis Systems<sup>2</sup>, Technique Report #19, 9 pp. Retrieved from: <http://idl-bnc.idrc.ca/dspace/handle/123456789/103>.

### Context



Kumbharshetwadi is a hamlet of tribal people known as the *Katkari*. It is located on a hillock above a non-tribal village that specializes in agriculture, and is only 4 kilometres from a major religious and commercial town in Raigad District (Pali). The livelihoods of the *Katkari* are unstable and insecure; no single activity can meet all of their needs. The vast majority of the families are landless or own small amounts of poor quality uplands where only millets can be grown. Of the 94 families in the hamlet, about half work as bonded labour at charcoal-making kilns or on sugarcane plantations in neighbouring states. They are bound by advances on wages, accumulated debt and control by employers over their identity papers and other legal documents. Other families in the hamlet follow a mix of livelihood strategies including lease farming, farming on their own land, firewood collection, wage labour for non-tribal farmers, and other activities. About 10 families in the hamlet specialize in raising goats while an equal number are mainly involved in fishing.

The non-governmental organization SOBTI has been working in Kumbharshetwadi and other *Katkari* communities for many years

on a range of issues including livelihoods and land rights. They were instrumental in helping 28 villagers gain access to the uplands they now own. However, most have not invested in the improvements on the lands needed to make them productive paddy fields. Many continue to migrate as a major part of their livelihood. Achieving secure and stable livelihoods remains a major challenge for these and other households in the village.

For a report on land and livelihood issues facing the *Katkari*, see Buckles, D.; Khedkar, R.; Patil, D.; Ghevde, B. forthcoming. *The Land Struggles of the Katkari*.

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## Purpose

To see how the *Katkari* view the livelihoods they are currently involved in, using words and ideas that participants themselves choose and define.

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## Process Summary

SOBTI convened a meeting of *Katkari* in the community hall. A group of 11 people (8 men and 3 women) joined in the assessment. Wage labor, firewood collection and livestock raising were common to most of them. Three were active fishers, 2 were bonded laborers, 4 were lease farmers/share croppers and 2 farmed their own land. One of the women was a local leader (Gram Pachayat representative).



After presenting a list of about 15 livelihoods known to *Katkari* in the area, participants selected 6 they are currently engaged in and added one that was not on the initial list. Symbols were made from coloured wax to represent each livelihood, arranged in a row on the floor. The facilitators proposed a characteristic of *Katkari* livelihoods they wanted to discuss with the participants. Following discussion, the participants agreed to score the livelihoods on this characteristic using a scale of 1 to 7. The row of symbols of existing livelihoods was then rearranged from lowest to highest based on this characteristic. Other characteristics were then generated by the participants using the triad method (choosing three livelihoods at random and asking them to say which two had something in common that was different from the third). The

opposing characteristics were labelled and a symbol identified and created in wax or from nearby materials to represent the characteristic. Each characteristic was then scored. The major findings identified by looking for rows and columns with similar scores were discussed with the participants and actions identified.

The participants consented to use of their information in reports by the authors. The data from the assessment was reassessed later by the authors using the software RepGrid.

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## Analysis

The participants identified 7 livelihoods they felt reflected the livelihoods of most villagers. There were

1. Bonded labor (charcoal kilns, brick kilns and sugarcane plantations);
2. Wage work (on farms, road construction);
3. Farming on own land (usually rice and pulses);
4. Farming on rented land (rice and vegetables);
5. Fishing;
6. Raising livestock (goats, pigs, cows);
7. Collecting and selling firewood.



The collection of firewood was not in the initial list of livelihoods provided by SOBTI. The women participants noted that there is a good market for firewood because the village is very close to the commercial town of Pali.

The characteristic of *Katkari* livelihoods supplied by SOBTI was that some livelihoods help people stay in the village while others require that they migrate in search of work. SOBTI felt that this characteristic might help explain why *Katkari* livelihoods are so unstable and insecure. The participants agreed the characteristic was of interest to them because they want to break away from dependency on bonded labor.

The first characteristic elicited from the participants was the contrast between livelihoods that build on or even require other livelihoods in order to be carried out and livelihoods that are

solitary or independent of each other. They gave several examples: “A good bullock helps with agriculture”. “If we have money from wage work it becomes easy to buy supplies for renting land or farming on your own land”. “If you breed pigs and give them to other families on a share basis they will come to work for you on a priority basis”. By contrast, bonded labor in charcoal or brick making could be pursued as solitary livelihoods, without drawing on other livelihoods. People said that while doing it they could not do anything else.



The second elicited characteristic was the contrast between livelihoods that provide only periodic work and livelihoods that provide continuous or long duration work. Raising goats, for example, gives continuous employment, while firewood collection gives employment for a short period of time. Bonded labor at charcoal units gives direct employment for six months. Advances on their wages help them manage their livelihood for a couple months more.

The third elicited characteristic was the amount of time tied up on a daily basis by the livelihood. An example provided by the participants was that raising livestock requires a lot of time because someone needs to look after the animals all day and every day. By contrast, leased-land agriculture usually focuses on crops (such as rice or vegetables) that require only periodic tending once they are established.



The final characteristic elicited from the participants was the amount of money needed to engage in the livelihood. The participants noted that in order to farm rented land they must not only pay rent but also buy seed, fertilizers and pay for ploughing and the wages of hired hands, all before any crop is harvested. They must also buy rice, both for the family and for the workers they hire. By contrast, there is no need to spend money for firewood as they simply go directly to the forest and carry the firewood to the nearby market. No money is required to go to work on charcoal units, brick units or at sugarcane plantations as the

employers transport them from the village to the place where they stay for months at a time.

Table 1 shows the rating matrix for livelihoods generated by the participants on these characteristics and for each of the selected livelihoods.

Table 1: Rating matrix for livelihoods of the Katkari, reordered on the characteristic “work away/work in village”.

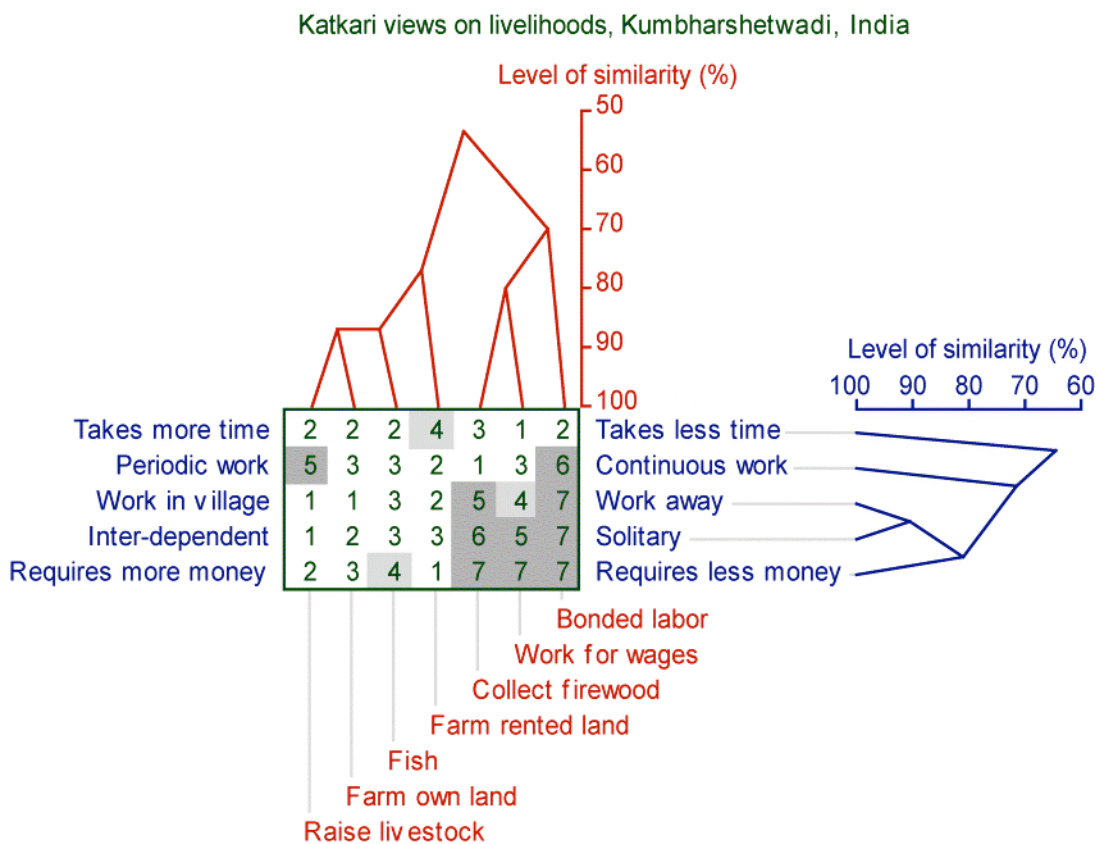
Criteria	Bonded labor	Fire wood collection	Wage Labor	Fish	Agriculture on rented land	Agriculture on own land	Livestock
1 = Work away 7 = Work in village	1	3	4	5	6	7	7
1 = Solitary 7 = Interdependent	1	2	3	5	5	6	7
1 = Periodic 7 = Continuous	6	1	3	3	2	3	5
1 = Takes more time 7 = Takes less time	2	3	1	2	4	2	2
1 = Requires more money 7 = Requires less money	7	7	7	4	1	3	2

Figure 1 shows the result of a multivariate cluster analysis based on the levels of similarity among livelihoods (column scores) and among characteristics (row scores). It confirms and quantifies the row and column similarities observed in the matrix by the participants (Table 1). The similarities among the livelihoods “raise livestock”, “farm own land”, “fish” and to some extent “farm rented land” are high (at the 79% level). The participants noted during the analysis that they would prefer these livelihoods but the livelihoods require savings of their own (for example, for the purchase of fishing nets, seeds, fertilisers, wages, etc.) and involve financial risk (for example, losses due to damaged nets, crop losses, pest/ disease attacks, etc). What separates farming rented land from the other similar livelihoods is that it takes relatively less time to

tend the crop once it is established and the season is short (see Table 1, above).

Firewood collection and wage labor form a separate group of livelihoods, also at a high level of similarity (80%). Participants noted the connection between these two livelihoods in terms of their preferences and actual practices: wage labor is preferred because it provides cash, but if it is not available then the women in the household will go to collect firewood. In effect, firewood collection is seen to be a substitute for wage labor. Bonded labor on charcoal kilns and sugarcane plantations is perceived by the participants as different from all the other livelihoods.

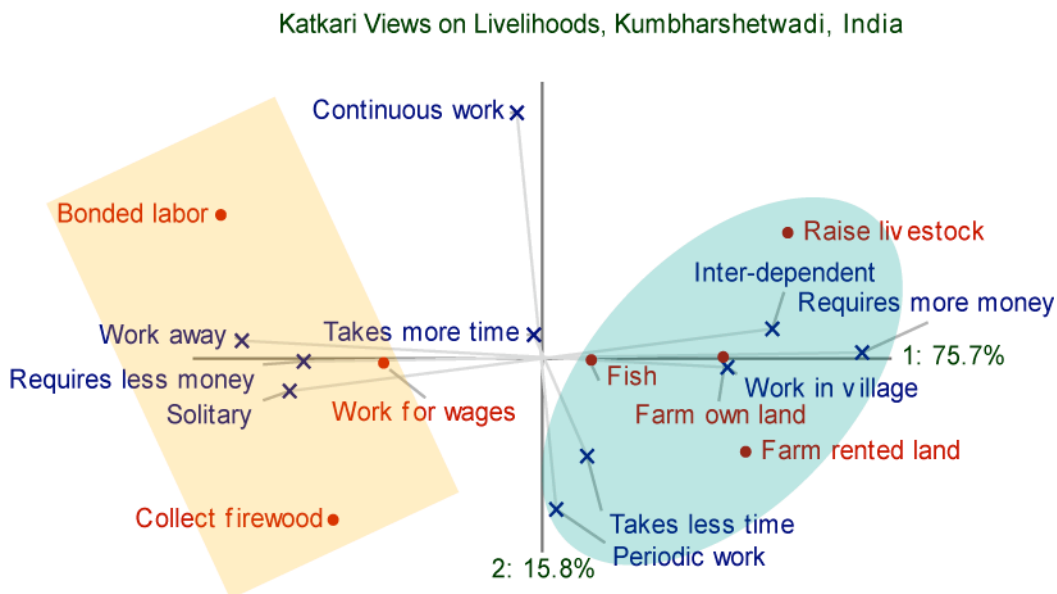
Figure 1: Cluster analysis of Katkari views on livelihoods, Kumbharshetwadi, India.



Important connections among characteristics are also evident in Figure 1, and confirm participant observations on the matrix.

Livelihoods that require people to work away also tend to be solitary and require little money (83% level of similarity). By contrast, livelihoods that help people work in the village also tend to be interdependent livelihoods and require more money. It also indicates that livelihoods with these characteristics tend to share other characteristics on the same side of the figure. The participants had noted a tendency for livelihoods that help people stay in the village to also be more time consuming on a daily basis and seasonal or periodic. The opposite characteristics hold for livelihoods that require less money, are solitary and involve work away (characteristics on the same side of the figure).

Figure 2: Principal component analysis of Katkari views of livelihoods, Kumbharshetwadi, India.



Principal component analysis of the same data provides additional insight into the pattern of relationships among livelihoods and characteristics (Figure 2).<sup>1</sup> It confirms that from the point of view

<sup>1</sup> The statistical technique used to create this figure is called principal component analysis. It simplifies a data set by reducing the multi-dimensional relationships among observed variables to a cross-shaped, two-dimensional representation. The shorter the distance between livelihoods (dots) and characteristics (crosses) shown in the figure, the closer their relationship to each other. In the figure, the scores assigned to



of the Katkari, livelihoods are of two types (represented by the coloured shapes in the figure): relatively costly, village-based and highly integrated livelihoods on the one hand and, on the other hand, work that is easy to become involved in and carry out without complications.

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## Interpretation

The Katkari view their livelihoods in a highly pragmatic way. They recognize that all of the livelihoods currently available to them, including bonded labor, are important to their survival. While they would like to break free from bonded labor, many are reluctant to leave one strategy for the other. The participants explained this reluctance in terms of the bonds they are under and the financial costs and risks involved in village-based livelihoods. Reference was made to losses due to insufficient rainfall, pest attacks, animals dying, damage to fishing nets and other risks associated with agriculture, livestock and fishing.

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## Action

The participants decided to explore ways of reducing the cost of engaging in village-based livelihoods. One idea discussed was to set up a revolving fund for the rental of bullocks, a major cost component. The participants also noted that many could make better use of the cash they earn by avoiding spending on gambling and alcohol, a common habit among both men and women in Katkari communities. The possibility of setting up a common savings fund was discussed, along with ways to reduce costs by doing certain tasks collectively. The meeting ended with a decision by both the participants and SOBTI to consult further in the community regarding these ideas.

SOBTI also decided to reflect further on how Katkari views of livelihoods explain Katkari response to past interventions. For example, an effort by SOBTI to enable a group of youth to own and

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livelihoods and characteristics (the observed variables) are mapped in relation to two fictive variables. The horizontal line (first component) represents a fictive variable that accounts for 75.7% of the total variance in the data (pattern of relationships among dots and crosses). The vertical line (second component) represents a fictive variable that accounts for another 15.8% of the total variance. Together, the two principal components account for 91.5% of the total variance, a very high level of explanation.



run a teashop failed, possibly because they had not anticipated and taken into account concerns regarding the continuous nature of the work required to keep a teashop open.

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### Observations on the Process



The sun set before the exercise could be concluded. People from the community spontaneously brought lamps from their homes so that the meeting could continue, evidence of their interest in contributing to the process. The use of wax and other objects to make figurines representing the various livelihoods and characteristics helped everyone relate to the discussion and enlivened the process. While some people came and went during the assessment, most stayed throughout. Participants expressed their satisfaction with the result and said that it had provided them with workable ideas for reducing the sharp contrasts between livelihoods available to them.