

Struggle Against Hull Hydro Projects, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh



On 14th February 2010, five people, including Zilla Parishad Member and veteran environmentalist, Ratan Chand, Up-pradhan Jadera Gram Panchayat, Mansingh (Chamba District) and three other residents – Hemraj, Laxman and Manoj, were attacked and seriously injured by contractors of the Hul Hydro Power Private limited. The attack happened at village Chungah (Silla Gharat Panchayat) where the villagers had gathered to hold a meeting to oppose the construction of the 3.8 MW Hul Hydroelectric project being constructed on the Hul Nala, a tributary of the Ravi River. We, the locals of 8 Panchayats in the Saal Valley of Chamba, who have mobilized under the banner of the ‘Saal Ghaati Bachao Sangharsh Morcha’ have been opposing the construction of the hydroelectric project due to its impacts on the local forests, water resources and environment since 2005. Several peaceful rallies have been carried out against the projects in the last 5 years. To support our demand for justice please sign the petition to the Chief Minister of Himachal Pradesh on <http://www.petitiononline.com/scraphul/petition.html>

Saal Ghaati Bachao Sangharsh Morcha

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About the Project and Issues of Concern

The total length of Saal River is 28 kms and towards Jadera it is approximately 20 kms. In this short stretch there are seven mini and micro proposed commissioned and commissioning power projects which are going to be directly affected the ecological, the geological, the socio-economic and the cultural status of the area.

In mountains where the smaller rivers are used, more than the larger ones, as sources for fulfilling people's needs related to irrigation, drinking water, fishing and running water-mills. The Hull stream is no exception to this rule. The Hull Nala has been supporting the livelihood of approximately 6000 peoples directly or indirectly.

In Barour Panchyat there is 3399.17 bighas of land which further can be categorized as 1318.17 bighas as cultivated land; 2000 bighas as uncultivated; 223.9 bigha dhani; 243 bigha, bagicha; 185.6 bigha private ghala; 233.17 bigha common pastures and 707.14 bighas of forest land. There are seven kuhals which are feeding approximately 24 villages of Barour Panchyat and is backbone of three hundred families who earned their livelihood from fruit and vegetable cultivation. Each family in this area earns approximately thirty to thirty five thousand from fruit and vegetable cultivation.

This example of vegetable and fruit cultivation in Barour Panchyat shows that the small irrigation schemes have huge potential to generate a sustainable self employment for the local youths. In this regard, we demand to revamp Silla-Khadd Sarol Kuhl, which was planned and partially constructed in early fifties and will benefit the people of Silla-Graht, Jadera, Upper Barour, Sungal and Sarol Panchyats.

In Barour Panchyat there are 25 functional watermills and in Sillgraht and Jadera pachyats there are 41 watermills going to be adversely affected by the construction of these two micro hydel projects. These Gharats are bearer of Hatt and Gharat culture of hill community. From one Gharat approximately 3 to 5 five families earn their livelihood. In addition to this there are approximately fifty fishermen whose livelihood is being supported by this nala, and the construction of this project will completely destroy their livelihood. The loss of total sustainable employment in this region due to closure of Gharats and ceasing of fishing activity will be more than the new sustainable livelihoods generated by the installation of these two projects.

This whole region is known for milk, ghee and honey production which depends on the local bushes and fodder available in the forest. Both the Jadera and Sillagraht Panchyat fulfill approximately 50% of dairy products need of the Chamba town. Almost all the families from Silla-Graht and Jadera Panchyats are dependent on sale of milk income to Chamba town and

face acute shortage of green fodder (especially in winters). All the forests in Chamba district except coniferous forests are deciduous in nature and only Oak trees provide green fodder during winters.

The forest from which the channel is going to pass is a mixed forest dominated by Oak trees; very few this kind of mixed and dense forest has been left in Chamba. Not only the trees coming in the way of channel will be cut down but the disturbance and destruction caused by the labor force employed by the company will have a large toll on wild flora and fauna. The disturbance caused by this increased human activity and the explosives used by the company to construct channel path will disturb the whole area and will lead to distinction of faunal species like Black Bear, Tiger, Peej and etc.

According to survey conducted by Sal Ghati Bachao Sangarsh Morcha, Chamba, there are 1782 trees of different species and 2045 bushes of local variety are falling in the path of proposed five km open water channel for Hull-1. The destruction to this forest will erode the livelihood base of the Gujjar community which is entirely dependent on livestock economy.

This stream whose catchments area is spread over in a length of twenty kilometers, not only feed water to 5 irrigation channels but also supply the drinking water to whole Chamba town and Sarol Panchyat. Separately, each microhydel project is going to disturb approximately 5 kms or one fourth of catchment area and jointly 10 kms or half of the catchment area of Hull stream. In Palyur Panchyat due to construction of Him Kailash Micro hydel project out of 7 natural springs and seepages 6 totally dried up and one partially. In this scenario, when glaciers are reducing in size construction of any one micro hydel project can kill the Hull stream and is going to put all the present and the possible future uses in jeopardy.

On one hand where Hull-1 is going to destroy the livestock economy of Sillagraht and Jadera Panchyats and on other Hull-2 will deprive hundreds of vegetable and fruit growers from irrigation facility and the negative cumulative adverse impact of these projects will be on watermill economy, fishing, irrigation and drinking water schemes and overall adverse impact on local ecology. These two power projects are going to lead to private appropriation of community resources that are a support base for the subsistence livelihood and cash economy of the entire valley.

The Chronology of Events in the struggle against Hull Hydroprojects

Struggle

1. **16.11.1996**- MoU signed with M/S Astha Projects (1) Ltd. New Delhi for preparation of Detailed Project Report (DPR) for Hull Hydro Electric Projects (2.35MW)
2. **15.3.2001**- Another MoU signed with M/S First Hydro Generation (P) Ltd. New Delhi for preparation of DPR for Hull-II Hydro Electric Project (1.40MW)
3. **25.04.2003**- The Gram Sabha of Jadera Panchayat passes a resolution against the project.
4. **20.09.2003**- HP State Electricity Board office grants “Techno Economic Clearance” (TEC) to Hull-II (2 x 1700 KW) to MS M/S First Hydro Generation (P) Ltd.
5. **29.10.2003**- Once again the Gram Sabha of Jadera Panchayat passes a resolution against the construction of project and send a resolution copy to Chief Minister, Minister of Animal Husbandry (local MLA), Environment and Pollution Control Board and DC, Chamba.
6. **8.6.2005**- Implementation Agreement for Hull-II signed between Government of HP and First Hydro Generation (P) Ltd. signed.
7. **8.6.2006**- Letter from SDM Chamba to Gram Pradhans of Jadera and Sillagraht to issue NoC in favour of company.
8. **02.07.2006**- One more time Jadera Gram Sabha unanimously passes resolution against the project and send a copy to CM (HP), Minister of Animal Husbandry (local MLA) and DC, Chamba and unanimously elected Sh. Ratan Chand, Zila Parishad (District Council) ward Jadera to lead the movement.
9. **01.09.2006**- District Council, Chamba through its resolution no. 4.1-5 asks the State Government to cancel the Hull micro hydro electric power projects looking at the interest of local population.
10. **15.12.2006**- Gram Sabha Jadera pass a resolution against granting land to company on lease and send a copy to the Government and concerned department
11. **04.01.2007**- District Council Chamba once again passes the resolution against the project and asked the Government to cancel the Hull projects citing reasons for that in detail.
12. **16.01.2007**- Huge protest rally in Chamba town and formation of “Saal Ghati Bachao Sangarsh Morcha” with participation of people from 8 Panchyats of Saal valley and with “Himalaya Bachao Samiti” Kamla submission of a resolution to CM through DC Chamba to cancel the project.
13. **17.01.2007**-Detailed memorandum with all the resolutions passed by Gram Sabhas of affected Panchyats and Dsitric Council to the various Ministries and Department of both the Central government and the State Government
14. **21-01-2007**- Gram Sabha of another project affected Panchyat Sillagraht also pass a resolution against the project and send a copy to Central Government and Sate Government.
15. **13.02.2007**- “Grievance Committee” Chamba headed by local MLA passes a resolution to stop all the project construction activities till the project is reviewed by competent authority.
16. **07.03.2007**- 3 MLAs from Chamba region raise the question in State Legislative Assembly on Hull micro hydro projects and in reply Power Minister gives assurance to review the project.

17. **09.03.2007**- Members of Saal Ghati Sangarsh Morcha file a complaint to DC on violation of decision taken by Grievance Committee
18. **28.03.2007**- Coordinator of Sangarh Morcha writes a letter to Power Minister, HP to intimate members of Sangarsh before about the schedule of review committee
19. **16.04.2007**- Another affected Panchyat Barour passes resolution against the Hull-II micro hydro project and sends a copy to the State Government, local MLA and DC, Chamba.
20. **21.04.2007**- Members of sangarsh morcha conduct a huge protest march in Chamba town and a combined memorandum signed by Saal Ghati Sangarsh Morcha, Himalay Bachao Samiti, Kamla and Himalaya Niti Abhiyan is submitted to DC, Chamba to cancel the project and take necessary action against the project officials for threatening local people
21. **22.04.2007**- Himalay Niti Abhiyan gives a press statement against the threatening atmosphere created by company in the area.
22. **28-04.2007**- District Council passes a resolution on the objectionable behavior of concerned Government officials favoring Hull hydro company which is harming the interest of local community and show its resentment and asks for a suitable action.
23. **15.05.2007**- Gram Sabha of Sungal Panchyat demand to Irrigation and Public Health Department to revive "Sillagraht_Sarol" an old irrigation channel which is defunct now.
24. **26.05.2007**- The coordinator of Sangarsh Morcha receives a letter from Project Officer, Him Urja regarding a meeting on "Grievances on Construction of SHP Hul- I and II" in Jadera panchayat bhavan on 06.06.2007 in Chairmanship of DC Chamba
25. **06.06.2007**- Review committee conducts field surveys and on 8.6.2007 conduct a combined meeting of all three project affected Panchyats i.e. Jadera, Sillagraht and Barour in which people vehemently oppose the both projects and Sal Ghati Sangarsh submit a detailed memorandum "Objections regarding the installation of Hull-I&II Micro Hydro Power Projects" to the review committee.
26. **15.06.2007**- Sangharsh Morcha submits a memorandum to speaker of state legislative assembly.
27. **05.08.2007**- During Minjar fair members of Sangarh Morcha conduct a huge protest march in Chamba town and submit a memorandum against the projects to Chief Minister HP
28. **06.01.2008**- Gram sabha, Jadera again passes a resolution against the project
29. **30.01.2008**- District Council again passes a resolution against the project
30. **03.10.2008**- District Council unanimously passes irrigation and drinking water supply scheme based on Hul stream for four Panchyats i.e Sillagraht, Jadera, Barour and Sungal.
31. **04.01.2009**- Jadera Gram Sabha passes a resolution for the implementation of Forest Right Act, 2006 and asked the government not to initiate the project construction activities on forest land till their right gets recognized under this Act. A copy of resolution send to Speaker, CM, HP, Power minister, Forest minister, Local MLA, Principal Chief Secretary and DC Chamba.
32. **04.01.2009**- Gram Sabha Jadera passes a resolution on "Uplifting Drinking water Supply Scheme" and a "Irrigation Scheme Sillgraht " on Hul stream, benefiting 22 villages and a copy of resolution send to Irrigation and Public health Department, Chamba.
33. **04.03.2009**- Getting no answer from Officer from State Electricity Board, regarding action taken on various resolutions passed by district council on Hul hydro power projects , council takes decision to forward resolution to Secretary, MPP, Shimla.

34. **31.03.2009**- Submitted a memorandum to DC Chamba and DFO Chamba to stop illegal activities carried out by Project Company on Government land and copy sent to the Chief Secretary and the Forest Secretary.
35. **10.05.2009**- Copy of memorandum to the Chief Secretary HP and others regarding review/cancellation of Hull-I&II hydro power projects.
36. **13.12.2009**- Gram Sabha of neighboring Kela Panchyat passes a resolution against the Hull Hydro projects and propose a drinking and water supply scheme from Hul stream.
37. **02.01.2010**- Members of Sangarsh Morcha complain to Superintendent of Police, Chamba that Project officials are threatening them and any time they can attack them
38. **13.01.2010**- Conducted a rally and submitted a memorandum to CM, HP through DC, Chamba to cancel the Hul hydro projects.
39. **13.1.2010**- Members of Sangarsh organize a protest rally in Chamba town and submit a memorandum to CM through DC, Chamba to cancel the Hul-I&II micro power projects on the ground of environment and livelihood destruction.
40. **14.02.2010**- Company's contractors and goons attack members of Saal Ghati Sagarsh Morcha in village Chungah with swords, guns and sticks, when they are conducting a peaceful meeting, in which five members get life threatening injuries.
41. **15.02.2010**- Members of Sangharsh Morcha organize a huge protest march against the Jadera's incident in Chamba town and demand immediate arrest of all the criminals involved in the Jadera incident and to cancel Hull power projects. Sangharsh Morcha gets support from many people's organization and political parties.
42. **16.02. 2010**- Again a huge protest march organized in Chamba town and a memorandum was submitted to DC Chamba. Joint Action and Solidarity Committee of over 10 organizations formed to strengthen agitation

PICTURES OF AGITATION ON 15th and 16th Feb 2010 at Chamba



