

## INVIGORATING FOREST GOVERNANCE BY GENDER TRAINING

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### ABSTRACT

The forestry organizations are gearing up to meet the challenges of sustainable management of forest resources in allocated time and space. The capacity building during the last three decades has achieved colossal success so far knowledge of forestry, mechanical and electronic arenas are concerned. However, lacunae in a few gender communication and behavioral ecosystems, especially interpersonal and among cadres, needs refinement. The changing social constitution of the forestry sector, where people in general and gender equity in particular, calls for organizational development. In the past, small project driven capacity building in gender for the personnel was introduced largely addressing the inclusion of women in planning and decision making in joint forest management committee, which barely addressed appropriate development of gender perception of forestry personnel.

The cognizance of gender redistributory attitude to be developed in human resource is imperative. Gender is to be internalized across all the cadres of the forest force. Specific training modules are developed addressing the gender training needs vis-a-vis their roles and responsibilities in the organization. These modules are focused to address the behavioral and communication ecosystems of Forest Guards, Forester and Deputy Range Officers, Range Officers, ACFs, DFOs and Conservators, CCFs and APCCFs and PCCFs. The framework for training is based on the allocated roles and responsibilities specific to present cadre. The enabling policies, principles and practices are used to exemplify the module with appropriate examples derived from nationwide experience. The framework will enable the forestry personnel to yield better results in achieving sustainable forest management without any social encumbrances, which often act as impediment to work output of the personnel.

*Key words:* Gender training, Communication and behavioral ecosystems, Gender redistributory policies.

### Introduction

Governance in any parlance refers to the policies envisaged to carry out rules framed to translate intentions into actions in the process of governing. The organizations forge new alliances of theories and best practices in order to maintain good governance. Maintenance of a balanced work environment is essential to ensure good governance in the organization. The forestry personnel work under tremendous stress due to an open treasure of forest resources getting scarcer to protect and develop it. The emergence of professional dissatisfaction and rebellious attitude in some ranks surfaces due to physical stress and discontent emanating from aberrance in communication while delivering goods and services in the organization. Men and women working in the organization form an integral part of the structural component of forest ecosystems, which directly impacts its functional output. To ensure good governance, it is essential to identify, underline and rectify the issues in the organization. The key to good governance lies in a healthy interpersonal environment.

A scrutiny of literature available unfolds an absence of published references highlighting conflicts on gender communication in forestry organizations. To some extent, gender was discussed during the decade of nineties, when it was discussed on eliciting participation of women in forestry operations (Agarwal, 1992). Even the capacity building programs were targeted to enable the forestry personnel to invite women from local communities in selecting tree species to be planted. It is high time now to discuss the best practices for achieving good governance with men and women working together in forestry sector for desired goal, needs and values for human and environmental benefits.

### Forestry Organization

The forestry organizations deliver within the frame of regulatory governance through a multilevel, participatory and collaborative approach. The basic job of foresters is to learn and develop an aptitude of creating, managing, using, conserving and repairing the forest resources. The organization structure in forestry is framed as per the requirements prevailing with a little variation in

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the numbers in any cadre according to current requirements. The forestry organizations involve a complex set of tasks where governance often involves personnel engaging into diverse roles by quickly switching over from one to another. There is a sustained effort in the organizations to iron out the creases appearing due to differences in desired, perceived and delivered roles at various levels.

The training of forestry personnel through learning forestry science, rigorous exercises with development of skills and insight into working on the principles of sustained yield with electronic technological tools is the corner stone in its human resource development. The forestry operations are universally tough jobs and require a firm aptitude of commitment to the goals as it is bounded in time and space. It requires a disciplined army of personnel, which is unaffected by variations in emotions and social connects as it has to deliver goods to the people. Forestry practices being outdoor and hard task, men dominated the organization.

**Organization Culture** A definite culture of discipline in the organization is maintained throughout to deliver the greatest good of the greatest numbers in the long run (Anon., 2005). Forest service is characterized by a common uniformity in science background and education. The organization culture developed to address the multilevel regulatory framework used to be a challenging and exciting business with a masculine image discharging it. Over the passage of time, mechanization and social transformation reduced the perceptible gender gap and thus women made their way in the forestry arena. Women discovered the science and craft of forestry a business as usual and competed to take positions in the green landscape on the canvass. It all started with a minor policy change in 1980 in India, under which specific principles were modified to facilitate appearance of women on the landscape. The government started recruiting women in Indian Forest Service since 1980 and various state governments initiated recruitment of women as frontline staff since 1986. This was a major departure from traditional forestry in India. The training for personnel to accept women as peers, seniors and juniors was never talked about. They often switch roles within the forestry organizations for administration, conservation, trade, research, training and extension. The limited workforce is offered different positions with varied tasks to break the monotony of a particular job beyond three to four years. This trend, however, is changing as the personnel feel a promising career by specializing in a particular area within forestry. Yet it is essential to learn the skills of forestry administration in all the fields to be able to deliver the desired goals.

Whenever a gender training course is organized, the women members in the organization are deputed to attend it. The effective means to introduce a gender redistributory attitude in the organization can be attained when both men and women attend the training together. In most of the communication sessions, men appear to be more introspective and try to resolve issues on their own wisdom while women tend to be more extrospective and try to resolve issues by discussion and consultation.

#### Structural Diversity

The forestry personnel at all levels are selected through a tough competition open to all citizens with an age bar, a science background and aptitude and strict physical standards to test their ability to endure the prolonged working hours in rough terrains and ability to communicate to varied category of people.

The tough competition for entry in forest service calls for an intensive screening of candidates on a scale defined in the recruitment for physically challenging jobs. The equal employment opportunities legislation calls for a process of improved screening to filter the appropriate aptitude to work in forestry. Physically unfit persons are prone to frequent lower back injuries, a phenomenon discussed by Campion (1983). He has profiled a set of physical ability assessment standards. Current practices for endurance tests in forestry through walking a certain distance in stipulated time along with pre employment medical screening on standard scales provides grounds for selection of men and women with fitness. This includes height, 163 cm for men and 150 cm for women and chest expansion of 5 cm in 84 and 79 cm for men and women, respectively. A walking test is held for 25 and 14 km in 4 hours for men and women, respectively (Anon., 2001). A rigorous medical test is mandatory to be cleared by a candidate competing for the service. This is essential to recruit candidates who are mentally and physically fit to perform outdoor job with desired efficiency.

Once recruited in forest service, there is no discrimination in duties allotted to men and women. The time to go out on duty and returning back is undefined and one may be required to move out during odd hours. The necessity to go out for work involves leaving household unattended in lower cadres, who have no systemic back up. However, both men and women officers in higher cadres are less vulnerable as they get the back up support to take care of household. The psyche of men and women, especially women, may be affected due to numerous reasons, which is to be perceived and responded appropriately in forest service failing which unpleasant situations may crop up. This calls for a sensitive

governance code for personnel to follow, which can be instilled through a capacity building program.

#### Training Needs for Good Governance

It is imperative today to make the work place more inclusive and convenient for both men and women. Efforts to include people, especially local communities, were made during the past 25 years through joint forest management. The observations of performance related interpersonal conflicts between men and women within the organization are there which raise an urgent need of imparting training across all cadres. More often than not women are taken for granted and they are given limited opportunities to prove their mettle. In fact they are tested at every posting in their career, unlike their men counterparts for most of whom performance is rated business as usual. The gender training till day was focused to involve women of local communities on board in planning, decision-making and communicating so far as forestry projects are concerned. Seldom a training to address interpersonal conflicts within the organization was designed.

A well-trained army of forestry personnel with adequate understanding of mutual psyche may deliver the desired goods and services better to the society. The training of personnel can be designed tailor made to fit in all cadres. To work on training needs, the job description and interaction phases are identified. The skill sets for training designs are framed on the basis of personnel level and specific skill gaps are underlined in training needs analysis. The presence of women on different levels calls for an empathetic behavior and communication skill by subordinate, peer and senior levels to maximize the output without compromising with the quality. The men are often comparing their women colleagues with their own perceptions of women not withstanding their role in the organization at par with themselves. This underrating of women's roles contributes to the fuelling of conflicts causing public damage of organization's image.

#### Training framework design

The development of an attitude of equity in opportunity with behavioral correctness is an essential ingredient of the training content. The peer perception is to be based on magnitude of performance and exchange of ideas through meetings and conferencing. A healthy professional communication at workplace eliminates possibilities of under evaluation of a particular person into discourses through providing such platforms. Also, on such forum, highlighting any behavioral anomaly and personalized comments by men or women personnel in a conscious way are to be restrained. Generic comments on

women in public places, both in presence or absence of women, are never welcome and this principle be internalized at all the levels. The communication framework based on direct meaning and interactive sessions to allow equal opportunity to explain on part of men and women always ends up in a successful resolution. Sometimes the denial of such opportunity is reduced to differences. This is undesirable and creates crevices in the interpersonal relationship among personnel in organizations.

A sound angle of empathy carried forward all the times to ensure a healthy work environment is welcome in the organization. It is not impossible for men and women working together to gauge the mental state of each other at times of communication between them. If they can perceive what is going on with others, which most of the times is known, and modulate their statements in a tone and tenor that sets the pace for action, half the problems are solved. On the other side, if daggers are drawn into heated arguments, no one is a winner and the very purpose of the organization delivery is defeated.

In a nutshell, the training framework will include perception, empathy, verbal and non-verbal communication and case studies. Since there are chances to get fewer case studies and generally situations arising from gender conflicts go unquoted, the details of place and person may be omitted. However, the organization being very tightly knitted, it is easy to connect with people and practices narrated in the case studies. Case studies are the best tool to correlate situations and suggest rectifications to dissolve the knots in interpersonal relationship.

#### Gender trainer

The trainers who are equipped with skills explaining messages and be able to interpret postures and gestures fit in mostly to carry out the role of a trainer. One with a balance of experience in workplace and training skills, coupled with information of inter personal vectors in the organization will be able to deliver the training. The standard human resource development trainers from outside the forestry organization may miss an insight into the framework as forestry specific modules prepared according to social, cultural and organizational ecosystems with a flavor of a few generic skills has to be imparted. The examples will be drawn from local forestry organizations by engaging in clear and non-personalized communication. The capacity building to recognize a few interventions aiming at practices that will remodel forestry governance asserting the reforms to enhance the efficiency is the need of the hour.

### Training of groups

Generally the forestry organization may be classified at three major strata, viz. the frontline, management supervisory and top-level personnel. Besides the organization, other interactive platforms with forestry personnel are communities, people and NGOs. Since training personnel from various levels of job responsibilities together loses its objective and intensity, level specific groups can be identified with equitable job profiles. Their state of interaction among themselves, with seniors and subordinates may be identical. The working groups to be trained are:-

- Frontline Personnel are the ones with duties including managing Beat, Circle and Range level tasks of protection, development, disbursement and management of communities and labor work force. They are responsible for implementation of best practices envisaged in policies and outlined in principles into practices on the ground. The job also requires them to resolve conflicts, especially forest offences and a high risk factor is involved, sometimes even threatening their life. The skills include empathy, precaution and protection along with awareness of local challenges and maintain good informer base for a prompt feedback. The level includes communication ecosystems of Forest Guards, Forester and Deputy Range Officers and Range Officers.

The training package on how to use a balanced communication skill and treat women personnel appropriately forms an essential component. The responses to the basic needs to provide support at work place and provision of restrooms with water facility are a few examples usually missing from the establishment agenda. The frontline personnel are also engaged with men and women from communities in forest development and protection under collaborative forest management on the ground. So personnel need to equip themselves with skills that enable them to handle conflicts.

This can be achieved by organizing short duration training sessions, may be for a day, at the range headquarters. The training environment to be designed in a manner so as to enable all participants to air their views and a supervisory level officer may advise the communication strengths to underline and resolve issues cropping up in conflicts. A strict control on the use of language and tone needs to be maintained as often this category works under heavy pressure of achieving target on timescale.

- Supervisory personnel include District level responsibilities of forest management units upholding the legitimate principles of forestry to ensure achievement of the organizational goals. They manage large workforce in the unit and resolve interpersonal conflicts within organization and between personnel public interphase. They supervise organizational unit to be in order and oversee the welfare of personnel. Their task includes meeting the basic needs of personnel at workplace to carry out the professional development of men and women in the unit. They need to develop sensitivity towards the needs of men and women working under them and supervising their jobs. This level comprises of Assistant Conservator of Forest, Divisional Forest Officer and Conservators.

They ensure smooth implementation of forestry operations within the time frame and budgetary allocations. Besides the general administrative and financial discipline, they manage a harmonious ambience within their units. Organizing frequent training camps in smaller group within their units, which can invigorate the skills of personnel in the unit and enrich the interpersonal relationship.

- Top level personnel prepare policies for governance for framing rules. Forestry organizations are a top down system where orders are relayed to the ground personnel. It is a discipline which requires certain established technical principles are arrived at after due diligence of the organization. Therefore altering and questioning the rules by executing units leaves small space for options and choices to be made. The level ensures a good governance where roles are widely policy framing. They define principles to execute and oversee the balance in organization. The policies in the organization are framed in all fairness to men and women to monitor the communication. The personnel at this level address the members in the organization with a sense of belonging, yet a gender distributary address is seen missing. The personnel included in the level are Chief Conservator of Forest, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forest and Principal Chief Conservator of Forest.

Short duration inbuilt training programs may be organized at the state headquarter level so that there is minimum movement of all the top personnel together. Apart from training them on amicable communication behavior, training on gender placement and direct the organization to draw training programs to implement it within the organization would be appropriate. They may

redefine dress code for men and women as a policy translated into conduct to maintain an air of discipline in an organization where three fourth of the personnel, from Assistant Chief Conservators and above, are uniformed cadres.

#### Gender Training Matrix

The training is to simplify the behavior of men and women at workplace like office, field and meetings where activities are explained, examined, reviewed and monitored. The personnel look at each other as merely doer of a particular activity or engaged in an operation where communication is subtle. This includes gender redistributory identities where treating men and women in their roles is most befitting method of addressing. Arranging institutions of forestry according to the three levels of policies, principles and practices enables training personnel to treat individuals as men and women with their individually specific halo around them. The allotment of duties, assessment of work and its evaluation according to efficiency and capability may yield higher outputs as presumed by the controlling and regulating levels in the organization.

The training modules are designed according to local trends in work and communication, keeping in view the traditions and work culture of the specific place. One of the ready references to use handbook on gender communication training is available by Nelson and Brown (2012), which can be widely used by trainers with adoption

of a forestry organization structure and culture in the training methodology. Johnson (2016) relates it to differential training material blended well and presented to a group of men and women trainees in the organization.

#### Conclusion

Once the business models of training are in place, the capacity of personnel will be built to execute the tasks in a more congenial environment and the delivery of goods and services to the public will be maximized. The approach of this training may minimize the personnel problems of frictions due to absence of perception, empathy and right approach thus holding the organizational image high in public. There will be a series of immediate, intermediate and long-term interventions to introduce change in the administrative ambience. Some of the immediate actions include organizing meetings and conferences to share the knowledge and experience from the training and test it on the ground. A few intermediate interventions like executive orders to facilitate an amicable communication environment, provision of appropriate rest rooms and some kind of crèche in the vicinity of workplace will be necessary to take away the burden of responsibility off the personnel's heads. This will prove to be a productive intervention increasing their efficiency and output. The long-term interventions include alterations in policies and rules to facilitate a congenial ambience of work for both men and women.

#### Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, Government of India for giving numerous opportunities to study the issues from a close quarter and make observations. She thanks Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy to provide her opportunity to start gender training for IFS Probationers in 1994 onwards and for inviting the author to interact with IFS Probationers on the issue frequently. She acknowledges the opportunities provided by Madhya Pradesh State Government in planning forestry and its human resource development.

#### वन अभिशासन का लिंग प्रशिक्षण द्वारा सशक्तिकरण

गोपा पाण्डेय

#### सारांश

वानिकी संगठन दिए गए समय में वन संसाधनों के पोषणीय प्रबंधन की चुनौतियों को पूरा करने के लिए तैयार हो रहे हैं। गत तीन दशकों के दौरान क्षमता निर्माण ने विशाल सफलता अर्जित की है, जहाँ तक वानिकी, यांत्रिक एवं इलेक्ट्रॉनिक कार्यक्षेत्र की जानकारी का संबंध है। तथापि, कुछ लिंग संचार एवं व्यावहारिक पारितंत्रों, विशेषकर अन्तःवैयक्तिक और संवर्गों में परिमार्जन की आवश्यकता है। वानिकी सेक्टर की परिवर्तनशील सामाजिक संरचना, जहाँ सामान्यतः लोग एवं विशेषकर लिंग समानता, के लिए संगठनात्मक विकास की आवश्यकता है। पूर्व में कर्मिकों के लिए लिंग में लघु परियोजना संचालित क्षमता निर्माण का सूत्रपात मुख्यतः संयुक्त वन प्रबंध समिति में योजना एवं निर्णय लेने में स्थानीय महिलाओं के समावेशन का समाधान करने के लिए किया गया था।

मानव संसाधन क्षमता विकास में विकसित किए जाने वाले लिंग पुनरवितरक दृष्टिकोण का संज्ञान लेना अनिवार्य है। लिंग को वन कार्यबल के सभी संवर्गों के आरपार आभ्यन्तरीकृत करना चाहिए। लिंग प्रशिक्षण आवश्यकताओं की तुलना में संगठन में इनकी भूमिकाओं एवं उत्तरदायित्वों का

समाधान करते हुए विशेष प्रशिक्षण मॉड्यूलों का विकास किया गया है। यह मॉड्यूल वन रक्षकों, वनपाल एवं उप वन राजि अधिकारी, रेंज अधिकारी, सहायक वन संरक्षक, प्रभागीय वन अधिकारियों एवं वन संरक्षकों, मुख्य वन संरक्षकों, अपर प्रधान मुख्य वन संरक्षक एवं प्रधान मुख्य वन संरक्षक के व्यावहारिक एवं संचार पारितंत्रों का समाधान करने पर केन्द्रित हैं।

प्रशिक्षण के लिए रूपरेखा वर्तमान संवर्ग के लिए विशिष्ट आंबटित भूमिकाओं और उत्तरदायित्वों पर आधारित है। देशभर के अनुभव से प्राप्त उपयुक्त उदाहरणों के साथ मॉड्यूल को दृष्टान्तों द्वारा समझाने के लिए समर्थ नीतियों, सिद्धान्तों और पद्धतियों का उपयोग किया गया है। रूपरेखा किसी भी तरह की सामाजिक बाधाओं, जो प्रायः कार्मिकों के कार्य निष्पादन के लिए अड़चन के रूप में कार्य करते हैं, के बिना पोषणीय वन प्रबंधन हासिल करने में बेहतर परिणामों को देने में वानिकी कार्मिकों को समर्थ बनाएगी।

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