

TRAINING NEED ASSESSMENT OF FRONTLINE STAFF OF FOREST DEPARTMENT

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Introduction

Forestry has undergone a major transformation throughout the world and it has been felt that forestry personnel at various levels especially the frontline staff of the State Forest Department need to be adequately equipped to cope with these changes in terms of management practices. There is an immense and urgent need to impart skills in new and upcoming fields like nursery techniques, Non-Timber Forest Produce, Joint Forest Management methodology, legal issues, climate change. (Kumar, 2006). Hence, it is important to know the fields in which training is to be imparted and the person to whom training is to be given for which there is a need for Training Need Assessment (TNA) of frontline staff.

In general, training should contribute to the enhancement of professional knowledge, understanding, and skills, both at individual and collective levels. It must equip constituents of an organization for appropriate response to emerging challenges. The emphasis of training should be on 'doing' rather than 'knowing'. Design and content of training programmes will therefore, depend on the working requirements and the defined goals of the Forest Department (MGSIPA, 2001).

It has been estimated that there are approximately 1,50,000 front line staff at various levels from Forest Ranger to Forest Guard in the Forest Departments of various states providing a host of services. Frontline staff has always been considered as the backbone of the forestry sector. By and large the frontline staff has been very poorly trained and are unaware about the emerging challenges in the forestry fields like People's Participation in Forestry Development, Bamboo Flowering, Global Warming, Biodiversity Conservation, Climate Change, Bio-piracy and Sustainable Management of NTFPs. (SIPARD, 2003). As such, in order to cope with these emerging challenges, there is need to offer regular training to frontline staff of Forest Department and this will be incomplete unless this is preceded by Training Need Analysis.

Training: Present scenario

Frontline staff of Forest Department transacts its business broadly in 5 categories i.e. General Services, Social Services, Economic Services, Protection Services and Technical services. There are series of activities under each of these categories and some of which can be seen in Table 1 (MGSIPA, 2001).

In fact, no other departmental staff

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Table 1*Services performed by Forest officers*

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| General Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Submitting regular reports to higher offices - Attending meetings at local level - Participation in local administrative programme - Election duties etc. |
| Social Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activities under entry point in the works of Forest Development Agencies (FDA) such as: - Construction of village roads, - Promoting health campaign, - Advocating energy saving devices etc. |
| Economic Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collection of revenue from - Harvesting of forestry products like tendu patta, bamboo, NTFP, - Economic development of FDA for sustainability of project. |
| Protection Services | Patrolling for : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Protection of forest, - Apprehending wildlife poachers and timber mafias, - Controlling jhum, forest fire etc. |
| Technical Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management of forest, - Plantation, - Silviculture, - Preparation of Working Plan, - Survey & demarcation of forest area etc. - Construction of roads, buildings. |

in this country is required to perform such wide ranging duties in his/her services staff. Presently, the Government tries to impart training to the frontline staff to perform these services through various trainings programmes, which may be broadly classified in various categories as in Table 2.

From this, it appears that all the training being offered at various levels is need based. However, the problem in such types of training lie in selection of

participants and actual attendance of training programme. In fact, it is the general tendency that frontline staff, who are under-performing and whose absence from duty may not affect the functioning of the department are being nominated for the theme-based and refresher courses. At the same time, those who are actually working in the field are being neglected from their training requirement. In spite of finalization of training programme, least importance attached to training in the

Table 2*Analysis of present Training structure of Frontline Staff*

| Programme | General Purpose | Subjects covered | Participants | Is it need based |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|------------------|
| Induction Training | This is the training being imparted to all staff appointed as frontline staff. | Technical services | All newly recruited or backlog frontline staff | Yes |
| Immediate Training | This is the one-day/two-day training offered to those who have been asked to perform special services, like conducting election and census as presiding officers, wildlife census, etc. | Depends on the service to be performed | Those who have been asked to perform the services | Yes |
| Scheme-based Training | This is the training being offered at Division level or Circle level of frontline staff, as per conditions mentioned in the scheme being implemented in the concerned Circle or Division and special fund is earmarked in the scheme. | Generally about guidelines of the scheme. Dos and Don'ts of the scheme, etc. | Those who are involved in implementation of the scheme. | Yes |
| Theme-based Training | These are the training being offered by GoI, for frontline staffs on various themes like JFM, Sustainable Rural Development, FDAs, etc. | Issues involved in JFM, micro-plan, Rural Development, Wildlife Management, Computer applications etc. | Selection of participants depends upon the State Govt. and it is expected that those who are working in the field shall participate. As such GoI limits the participation from each state for equal representation. | Yes |
| General | These are the training being offered by GoI, for frontline staffs as a refresher course to impart knowledge of latest happenings in the field of forestry | All technical subjects | Selection of participants depends upon the State Govt. | Yes |

administrative hierarchy, either no decision takes place on nomination at appropriate time or it is a delayed decision. Many times, very few participants actually attend the training for which they get nominated. Some State Governments are reluctant to nominate the staffs for training because of their inability to pay TA/DA charges due to severe financial constraints. As such training need assessment must address the training, technical and administrative issues coming in the way of proper training of frontline staff by way of TNA.

Issues involved in Training Need Assessment (TNA)

It is the general opinion that TNA means not only the technical aspects like identifying the subjects or discipline, but also the manner in which it is to be imparted to the frontline staff besides socio economic aspects involved in forest management. Hence, it will be a gross mistake to restrict it to identification of subject and discipline. In fact TNA has much broader scope and some of the issues it must address and should look into are summarized in the following illustrative list.

At organizational level :

1. Identifying the services being offered and performed by the frontline staff.
2. Identifying the training institutes where training can be imparted on various services being performed by staff.
3. Identifying the trainers required to offer trainings as identified.
4. Problems in timely nomination, circulation, release of staff and arranging substitutes.
5. Physical and mental fitness of staff.

6. Identification of right resource person for right job.
7. Assessment of the likely Impact of training on the job performance.

At individual staff level :

1. Difficulties on the part of staff to attend training in spite of nominations.
2. Relevance of training received to services performed.
3. Level of Job satisfaction.
4. Utility of training in the opinion of staff.
5. Subjects/disciplines where training is needed.
6. Level of knowledge of latest development in the field of forestry.

These are some of the issues, which need to be addressed during Training Need Analysis of frontline staff. This exercise should not be limited for training need intervention; instead, TNA must be exhaustive so that it can also identify non-training interventions needed to improve the performance at cutting edge of forest administration.

Steps towards goal

At the macro-level the Government of India recognised the importance of TNA and as such included this in National Training Policy (NTP). National Training Policy states :

“Every organisation shall conduct preparatory exercises like analysis of its goals and objectives, training needs analysis, job analysis, etc. with a view to determining whether the training intervention needs to be preceded, accompanied by, or succeeded by one or more non-training interventions. Such an exercise will also enable

development of appropriate criteria for measuring individual and organizational performance, an essential pre-requisite for the launching of an effective training programme” (DoPT, 2004).

Keeping in line with this NTP, Department of Personnel & Training, Government of India, has taken series of initiatives for development of Training Infrastructure, arranging workshops for TNA and Training of Trainers and nominating nodal-officers exclusively for training in all the departments. Accordingly, Ministry of Environment & Forests has also taken the steps to improve training facilities in the Forest Department of all the states and is trying to organize the funds for construction of Training Schools and other infrastructure. Knowing

the difficulties of State Governments in providing fund for the training and difficulty in keeping separate fund for TA/DA to attend the training outside the state, Government of India initiated the pilot scheme for Training of Frontline Forest Staff, through Directorate of Forest Education (MoEF, 2005). In this scheme, Directorate has identified the training needs of frontline staff (Table 3) and prepared the course material besides translating in various languages so that it can be understood by staff in their own vernacular language.

Fund is being given directly now to Heads of various forestry training schools to avoid unnecessary delay in release of fund from the of State Governments and continuous monitoring is carried out to ensure that no fund, earmarked for

Table 3

Training needs of Frontline Staff

| Beat Guard | Forester | Range Forest Officer |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| Attitudinal | Attitudinal | Attitudinal |
| Nursery & Seeds | Seed collection | Tree improvement |
| Survey | Survey | Survey |
| Wildlife | Wildlife | Wildlife |
| Conflict resolution | Conflict resolution | Conflict resolution |
| Computer application | Computer application | Computers application |
| GIS & GPS | GIS& GPS | GIS& GPS |
| Communication | Communication | Communication |
| Working Plan | Working Plan | Working Plan |
| JFM/FDA | JFM/FDA | JFM/FDA |
| | Eco-development | Team Building |
| | | Eco-development |
| | | Rural & Tribal development |
| | | Legal issues Policy planning |
| | | Financial Management |
| | | Nature education |

training, is diverted for non-training activities. In the year 2005-06, 130 courses across the country have been organized to achieve the objective (MoEF, 2005). However, due to institutional issues, results of these efforts have not been achieved to the desired extent. In order to further improve these efforts, MoEF is also conducting Workshops on Training Need Analysis to get concrete ideas, as how to improve further the training of front line forest staff so that they can perform the duty to their optimum capability.

Institutional Issues

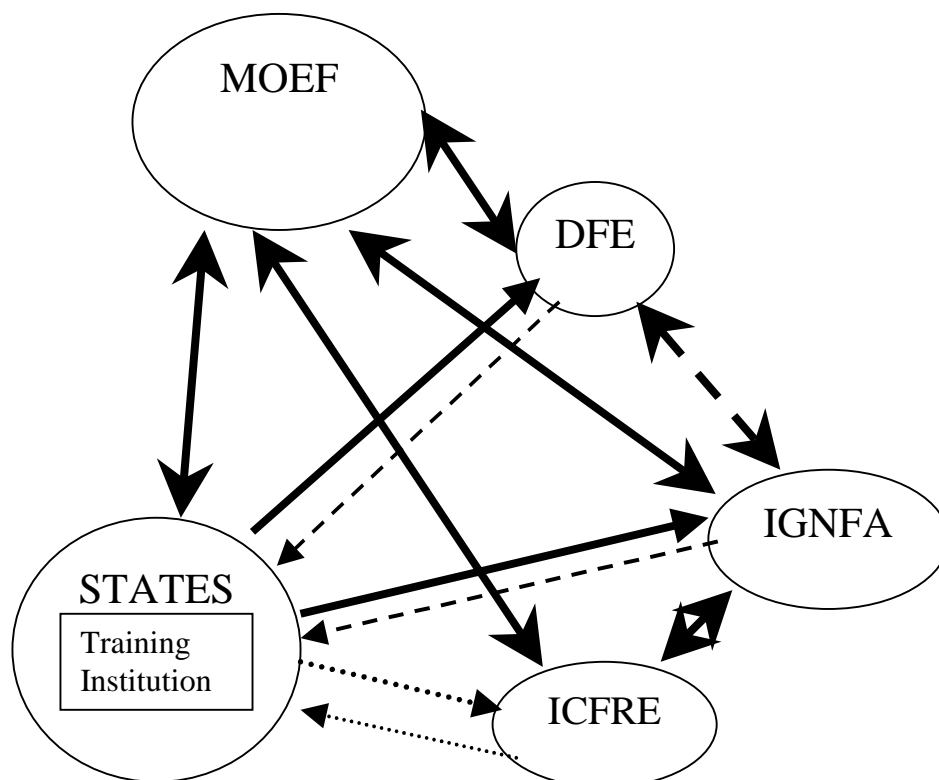
Other aspects which are directly related to training need assessment are

institutional issues. State Training institutions are under the administrative control of State Forest Department, where training for frontline staff are now organized. As such, training manager need to contact various institutions within the State Government and at GoI level as well NGOs. To improve the delivery mechanism at the GoI level, linkages among various institutions like ICFRE, IGNFA, DFE and MoEF need to be strengthened (Fig. 1) due to which these training managers, at times, find it difficult to impart the effective training to participants (DFE, 2005).

Conclusions

From the experience gathered in the

Fig. 1



field of needs of training, it is quite necessary to have the detailed Training Need Assessment of Frontline staff of forest department. As on date, entire country do have sufficient infrastructure, expertise and institutions to offer the training as identified through TNA exercise in any discipline. What is required is to identify non-training interventions, which have much more impact in the performance of frontline staff in their day to day work. Some of these non-training interventions identified in the final analysis of TNA exercise are listed below: (i) Delay in nomination, (ii) Treating training as opportunity to runaway from regular service life, (iii) Least importance attached

to training, (iv) Nominating unwanted staff for the training, (v) Neglecting staffs who are posted in inside forest. In addition to these some other non-training interventions merit attention are timely promotion of staff, filling of vacancies at regular interval, cadre management etc., so that there should not be any stagnation at different level, apart from introducing reward/punishment for performance and recognition of excellence in forestry sector. (SIPARD, 2003) In addition, there is a need of central database of all the frontline staffs of all the states, where training details of each staff can be monitored. In addition, besides need to keep record of Trainings in the service book, like record of EL/HPL.

SUMMARY

Forestry has undergone a major transformation and the frontline staff of Forest Departments is now required to perform many diverse functions besides carrying out their earlier protection and silvicultural duties. The number of such staff ranging from Forest Guards to Forest Rangers is approximately 1,50,000. Training for such staff being given at present is inadequate and not properly assessed and provided to them. The present paper systematically analyses the requirements, surveys the steps taken so far towards achieving the goal, and constraints experienced in its implementation. The authors feel the necessity of detailed assessment to identify areas, especially in non-training intervention, which have more impact in day-to-day performance of such staff. These have been listed along with suggestions for rectifying them.

वन विभाग के अग्रिम मोर्चे पर काम करने वाले कर्मचारियों की प्रशिक्षण जरूरतों का आकलन करना

अनिल कुमार व प्रवीण अग्रवाल

सारांश

वानिकी कार्यों में अब भारी परिवर्तन हो गया है और वन विभागों के अग्रिम मोर्चे पर काम करने वाले कर्मचारियों को अब पहले के वन रक्षण और वन संवर्धन उत्तरदायित्वों को पूरा करने के अतिरिक्त तरह-तरह के अन्य कार्यों को भी पूरा करना पड़ता है। ऐसे कर्मचारियों की संख्या जिनमें वन रक्षक से लगाकर वन परिक्षेत्र अधिकारी तक आते हैं लगभग 1,50,000 अनुमानित है। इन कर्मचारियों का प्रशिक्षण इस समय अपर्याप्त ही किया जा रहा है, समुचित रूपेण आकलित भी नहीं किया गया और न ही उन्हें दिया ही जा रहा है। प्रस्तुत अभिपत्र इसकी आवश्यकताओं का विविधवत् विश्लेषण, लक्ष्य को प्राप्त करने के लिए उठाए गए कदमों और इसके क्रियान्वयन में आई कठिनाइयों का विवेचन किया गया है। लेखकों का कहना है कि विस्तृत आकलन करने की आवश्यकता है ताकि उन कठिनाइयों का, विशेषतः गैर-प्रशिक्षण हस्तक्षेप क्षेत्रों का पता लगाया जा सके, जिनका ऐसे कर्मचारियों द्वारा दिनानुदिन कार्य संपादन पर प्रतिकूल प्रभाव पड़ता है। इनकी सूची दी गई है तथा इन्हें दूर करने के सुझाव भी दिए गए हैं।

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