

JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN PUNJAB

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Introduction

Punjab is predominantly an agricultural State with 84% of its area under cultivation. The forest area of the State is only 6%. Of the total forest area, 44% is government owned and balance 56% is private/community owned. The private/community forest is under the management of the Forest Department (FD) in view of certain provisions of Punjab Land Preservation Act 1900. Table 1 gives the broad breakup of forest area in Punjab.

For the purpose of this article, JFM in context of block forests and strip forests has been discussed separately.

Block Forests

Out of the total forest area of the State, almost 2.34 lac ha is in the form of block forests including private/community owned areas falling mostly in the Kandi tract in Shiwalik hills. The Kandi tract is prone to severe soil erosion and other forms of degradation. The Administration in the past had imposed certain restrictions in the private/community areas through enactment of a legislation i.e. Punjab Land Preservation Act, 1900 regulating/restricting or prohibiting cultivation, felling, grazing, quarrying etc. in these areas. In addition to the legal measures, the Forest Department had also been taking

Table 1
Status of forests in Punjab

Government Forests:	
(i) Strip forest along canals, roads, railway lines etc.	70259.10 ha
(ii) Government block forest	63671.36 ha
Total Govt. forests	133930.46 ha
Private Forests :	
(iii) Private/Community owned areas closed under PLPA, 1900	169899.60 ha
(iv) Private areas closed under Indian Forest Act, 1927 (Areas at Sl. iii & iv above are also in the form of block forests)	675.33 ha
Total Private/Community forests	170574.93 ha
Grand Total	3,04,505.39 ha

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up afforestation and soil conservation measures to rehabilitate and to check forest degradation. Apart from the private/community owned forests, government owned/protected or RF areas also exist in this belt.

The vegetation of the area mainly comprises of Khair, Shisham, Kikar, Lannea, Chhal Rajain, Amla etc. with Pine in the higher reaches. Not much cultivation is possible in the area due to non-availability of assured irrigation and loose sandy nature of soil. People are considerably dependent on the forests for their income. *Acacia catechu* and *Eulailopsis binata* grass are the two most important forest produce from the area besides Resin, Bamboo and fruits. Grazing is also quite common in this area.

JFM in Punjab State

JFM Resolution of 1993 : Despite legal restrictions and efforts of the Administration for several decades through afforestation and soil conservation works, not much success could be achieved in restoring the area to a satisfactorily stable and self-sustainable ecosystem. In pursuance of the 1990 notification of the Central Government, the State Govt. in 1993, with view to actively involve the local community in protection and conservation of these forest areas, issued a resolution encompassing for the first time, the principles of Joint Forest Management. The salient features of this resolution were:

- Constitution of the Forest Committees comprising of village Sarpanch, members of the village panchayat, local forest guard, village level worker and three other members, one each from the scheduled castes, women and ex-servicemen category.

- Assignment of the specific roles of the villagers in the protection of Govt. forests adjoining their village and community/private forests of the village itself.
- Participation of committee in planning and execution of afforestation and soil conservation works. The plan in this regard shall contain complete details of the site, activities to be undertaken, estimate cost and benefits, list of beneficiaries, mechanism for sharing the produce and other related matters.
- Villagers were entitled to obtain their bonafide requirements of dry/fallen twigs and leaves, fruits, medical herbs etc. from the forest for household consumption; FPCs were made responsible for proper distribution of forest produce among the households depending on the requirement and availability of the produce.

Subsequent amendments : This being the first JFM resolution, the State faced a number of shortcomings in its implementation. Not much incentive was given to the local people on revenue/benefit sharing and also there was lack of desired level of extension activities on the part of the department to involve the local people. As a result of the extra cautious approach of the FD and indifference/ignorance of the local people, JFM failed to take off. Learning from the shortcomings in the past, in 1995 the State Govt. issued certain amendments to the earlier notification. These were however in the first instance made applicable to only those areas of the Kandi tracts that were being covered under World Bank assisted Integrated Watershed Development Project (IWDP). The underlying principle in this case was that

the enhancement in benefits may act as a greater incentive for the local people and they in turn would ensure the maintenance of plantations once the project is over. The amendments *inter alia* were :

- FPC will function as a sub-committee of Panchayats. This will give certain degree of authority to the FPC.
- FPCs would be responsible for the maintenance of plantations taken under the IWDP.
- 10% of the revenue collected from the sale of the timber from forest land shall be deposited in the account of Gram Panchayat to be operated by FPC. The amount would be used exclusively for conservation and regeneration of forest crops.
- The amendment also provided that 25% of the Bhabber grass would allow to be used locally by beneficiaries at subsidized price.
- These benefits were in addition to those listed in the earlier notification of 1993.

In spite of early progress made by the Department in issuing resolutions on JFM, their actual implementation on ground continued to lag behind. One single reason attributed to the slow progress could be the rigid mind set of the Department at the ground level in accepting the peoples' participation in the management of forests which till late was their sole domain. The result was, alienation between the Department and the people continued.

JFM and the Punjab Afforestation Project:
With the commencement of another project

in the State i.e. Punjab Afforestation Project assisted by JBIC, covering Kandi tract as well as the strip and other forests in the entire State, once again the JFM implementation came under scrutiny. It was decided to extent it vigorously in more and more areas. A new MoU was also drafted for signing between the FPCs and the department, the salient features of which have been listed in the forthcoming para. It would be worthwhile to note here that JFM had been reviewed on both the occasions in the past while implementing the externally aided projects, which shows that its evolution in the State had been rather funding agency driven than on Department's own initiative. Perhaps this could also be the reason for initial reluctance and slow change in the mind set of the department towards JFM implementation.

Current thrust

However, with the emergence of success stories of JFM from certain areas covered under the two above-mentioned projects, the Department realized that to effectively manage the forest resources, the involvement of the local people could not be ignored. Towards this end two-pronged approach has been formulated. On one hand, field level staff as well as the local people are being given orientation courses in benefits of participatory approach in forest management to both the sides, and on the other hand comprehensive draft guidelines have been drawn after detailed interaction at the field level as well as with local people for meaningful implementation of JFM in the State. While formulating these guidelines, the Department has also taken benefit from the experiences and fieldwork of one of its officers Shri Jitendra Sharma who has been working in this field for this Ph.D.

Initial success has been achieved in JFM in certain parts of the Kandi tract through formulation and successful implementation of the micro-plans. So far under the JBIC assisted afforestation project alone, approximately 200 micro-plans have been prepared and being implemented in the project area so far covered under this project in Kandi tract. Besides this, 115 Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) have been signed between the FPCs and the Forest Department for management of the forest areas. These MoUs provide for the following benefits to the local people :

- 10% of the revenue obtained from the sale of timber from the government forests as well as from the panchayat lands shall accrue to the FPC.
- The villagers shall be entitled to cut fodder grasses from the government and panchayat forests either free of charge or by imposing a suitable sickle fee as decided by the FPC.
- The FPC is authorized to distribute up to 25% of the fruit and Bhabbar grass from the government and panchayat forests to the villagers at the mutually negotiated price in order to sustain the village economy.
- In respect of the private/community areas, the entire benefit shall accrue of the individual/community.

The guidelines also incorporate following setup and action plans for JFM :

- An FPC to be constituted by convening general meetings of the villagers
- Two adult members (at least one of

whom should be a woman) of each household can become member of FPC

- FPC to formulate a Joint Forest Management Plan (JFMP) and constitute a Natural Resource Management Committee (NRMC), having a term of one year.
- Funding of JFMP would be borne by the Government.

Constitution and responsibilities of NRMC would be as given in Table 2.

Sharing of benefits : Proposed sharing of benefits is as under :

- The FPC is entitled to the usufruct and NWFP rights in the area. FPC itself would do assignment of share in this regard amongst the members.
- On one hand FPC is competent to levy penalty for any violation and on the other hand it can give great share to a member for discharging responsibility in an exceptionally well manner.
- In case of grasses including the Bhabbar grass, where the system of auctioning the same to private contractors had been prevalent earlier, the FPC will be given lease at the average price fetched during the last three years.
- In case of other forest produce like timber, bamboo, katha etc. 15% revenue obtained by the Department from sales shall be given to the FPC.
- The income so received by the FPC could be reinvested into the JFM area to further increase the productivity, to

Table 2*Constitution and responsibilities of NRMC*

Constitution	Responsibilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sarpanch of the concerned Grampanchayat ● Six-nine representatives of FPC (Two or three should be women, two SCs or landless and two land-owners) ● Block Officer ● Forest Guard (member secretary) ● Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the committee are to be elected and one of them should be a woman. ● One of the NRMC members would act as treasurer of FPC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● NRMC would hold its meeting at least once in two months ● Its member secretary would maintain records of the meetings. ● FPC as well as NRMC would ensure protection of assigned forest areas against grazing, fires, and theft of forest produce and other influence on the forest. ● Make fellow villagers and their families aware of the importance of forests and the need for such participatory initiatives. ● Assist the forest officers in carrying out forestry development works in accordance with the JFMP. ● FPC itself through NRMC would resolve all disputes pertaining to distribution of share etc.

carry out other welfare activities of its members or could be used for direct distribution of appropriate shares among the members.

Not only the proposed guidelines provide for greater benefits to FPCs but also, it is in favour of making FPC an independent working unit with sense of involvement and responsibility towards the forest resources. It is also under consideration to carry out suitable entry point activities to establish a constructive rapport with the village communities.

Strip Forests

Strip forests in Punjab State constitute approximately 70,000 hectares area. In keeping with the intentions to extend participatory forest management to more and more areas of the State, it is

proposed to share the benefits/revenue obtained from the trees along roadside strip forests in Punjab with the adjoining landowners. Towards this end, tree apportionment rules have been recently formulated for the approval of the Government. This benefit sharing mechanism is applicable to all categories of roads including the State and National Highways. The proportion of share of revenue proposed in the aforementioned rules is given in Table 3.

The farmer/adjoining landowner in return to be responsible for protection from encroachment, grazing, theft, fire, etc.

Conclusion

The experience of JFM in Punjab had not been encouraging initially for the reasons mentioned in the preceding paras.

Table 3
Proportion of share of revenue proposed

Type of road	Share proportion
All categories of Government owned road strips other than National Highways and State Highways.	50% of the net revenue
State Highways	25% of the net revenue
National Highways	10% of the net revenue

But with the recent initiatives of the Forest Department, attitudinal changes, enhancement of skills and changing mindsets both in the Department as well as of the local community, steady progress

has been made in this direction and there is no reason that with further steps like sharing of benefits from the strip forest areas also, it is bound to be a success in the coming years.

SUMMARY

Punjab is predominantly an agricultural state, the forest area being only 6%. This area has been divided into block forest, partly Govt. owned and part owned by private communities; and strip forest for the purposes of Joint Forest Management. The block forest include areas prone to severe soil erosion and degradation. Previous efforts to improve these areas did not meet with much success. Under JFM resolution, Forest Protection Committees were formed and given share in forest produce to meet their requirements. World Bank aided Project, 1995 improved management further under which committees were made responsible for maintaining plantations, given share in revenue and also planning. Punjab Afforestation Project further improved situation, in which villagers were given larger share in revenues. The comprehensive guidelines associated the people, including women in Management plan, which was more effective in conserving and improving the forests. The management of Strip forests associated adjoining landowners in protecting these forests and sharing revenues therefore these are making steady progress. These include roadside, canal side, plantation etc.

पंजाब में संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध

गुरमीत सिंह

सारांश

पंजाब प्रधानतः कृषि प्रधान राज्य है जिसमें वनों का प्रतिशत मात्र 6% है। यह वन क्षेत्र सरकारी और निजी समुदायों के अधीन खण्ड वनों और पट्टी वनों में बंटा होने पर भी संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध के अन्तर्गत है। यह ऐसा क्षेत्र है जहाँ भारी मृदा कटाव और व्याघ्रास होता रहा है। इसका सुधार करने के पहले प्रयत्न, जिनमें वनोपयोग पर प्रतिबन्ध और वनीकरण सम्मिलित रहे कोई खास सफल नहीं रहे। 1990 वाले संकल्प से संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध शुरू हुआ जिसमें वन संरक्षण समितियाँ बनाई गईं, जिनमें जनता के चुने हुए प्रतिनिधि भी लिए गए और उन्हें छोटी योजनाएँ बनाने और जरूरतों की वनोपज लेने में साथ रखा गया। विश्व बैंक सहायित परियोजना 1995 ने प्रबन्ध में और सुधार किया जिसमें समितियों को रोपवनों की देखरेख का उत्तरदायी, राजस्व में भागीदार तथा आयोजना में भी सम्मिलित किया गया। पंजाब वनीकरण परियोजना ने प्रबन्ध योजना में और ज्यादा सुधार किया और गांव वालों को प्रबन्ध में और ज्यादा हिस्सा दिया जाने लगा। सर्वसमावेशी मार्गदर्शक अनुदेशों ने लोगों को महिलाओं सहित प्रबन्ध योजना बनाने में सम्मिलित किया गया जिससे वनों का संरक्षण और उनमें सुधार अधिक प्रभावकारी बन गया। राजस्व में उनकी भागीदारी बढ़ाई गई। पट्टी वनों के प्रबन्ध में उनके साथ लगते भूस्वामियों को इन वनों की रक्षा करने और उनसे मिलने वाले राजस्व में भागीदारी से सम्बन्ध किया गया। अब ये वन प्रगति करते जा रहे हैं। इनमें सड़क, रेल और नहर आदि के किनारों पर लगाए रोपवन आते हैं।