

JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA

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Introduction

In pursuance of the National Forest Policy echoed in the white paper on its State Forest Policy, the Government of Maharashtra declared its intention of going ahead with Joint Forest Management in the degraded forest and non-forest areas of

the State. A Resolution to this effect was passed on the 16th March 1992.

Though participatory forest management was not a concept alien to the average forest personnel of the State, the revolutionary tenets enunciated in the State Government Resolution took some time to

Table 1

Year- and Circle-wise distribution of Joint Forest Management villages in Maharashtra

Region	Circle	No. of villages selected				
		96-97	97-98	98-99	99-2000	Total
Vidarbha	Amravati	1	14	16	32	63
	Nagpur	3	6	6	13	28
	North Chandrapur	5	13	10	20	48
	South Chandrapur	2	3	3	9	17
	Yavatmal	2	8	7	19	36
	Sub Total	13	44	42	93	192
Marathwada	Aurangabad	10	12	23	19	64
	Sub Total	10	12	23	19	64
Western Maharashtra	Dhule	10	22	20	46	98
	Kolhapur	3	6	6	26	41
	Nasik	5	10	10	36	61
	Pune	2	5	6	14	27
	Thane	15	15	23	66	119
	Sub Total	35	58	65	188	346
Grand Total		58	114	130	300	602

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sink in. The programme, in a real sense, took off in the year 1996-97 under the aegis of the World Bank aided Maharashtra Forestry Project when 58 villages were brought under the JFM umbrella. The gradual expansion of the programme to 602 villages is depicted in Table 1.

The extent of degraded forest areas and wasteland is more in the Marathwada and Western Maharashtra regions of the State as compared to Vidarbha, which boasts some of best forest patches in the State of Maharashtra. Appropriately, the average no. of villages under Joint Forest Management per circle comes to 38.4 villages in case of Vidarbha while the same is as high as 64 villages and 69.2 villages for Marathwada and Western Maharashtra regions, respectively.

Programme Implementation

The Joint Forest Management programme in Maharashtra envisages people's participation in the programme from the planning stage itself and the entire programme is implemented through the village Forest Protection Committee with discrete technical supervision by the Forest Department. Detailed provisions in relation to formation of FPCs, forest protection and development; usufruct sharing and so on are mentioned in the State Government Resolution. Financial assistance provided by the State Government to a village selected under the programme is given in Table 2.

Joint Forest Management programme is implemented in a selected village on the basis of prescriptions of a Micro-plan drawn for that village in consultation with the villagers themselves. Typically, a village Micro-plan has prescription for Soil and

Table 2

Financial support per village to the JFM programme by the State Government

Particulars	Financial Provision (Rs. Lacs)	Remarks
Preparation of Micro Plan	0.10	
Publicity Board	0.03	
Soil and Moisture Conservation	1.10	Over two years Rs.55,000/-per year
Entry Point Activities	1.00	Over two years Rs.56,000/-per year
Plantation Programme	7.50	For 60 ha Plantation taken in two phases & maintenance for six years
Total	9.73	

Moisture Conservation works for benefit of both the villagers and the earmarked forest area, village developmental activities under the Entry Point Programme, works regarding inducement to natural regeneration, forest protection, grazing regulation, plantation, usufruct sharing, ways and means for sustaining the programme in future and so on. Expenditure incurred so far on JFM programme is shown in Table 3.

In the 602 villages where JFM programme is being implemented, about 2 lac ha of forest area is under the protection of the FPCs and the figure will go up once full and detailed reports are received from the newly selected 100 villages. 1,02,503 Households has been covered in these villages under this programme. Besides taking up measures to encourage natural regeneration, plantation over an area of 13,537 ha has been raised with the

Table 3

*Expenditure incurred on JFM works from
1996-97 to 1999-2000*

Year	Expenditure (Rs. Lacs)
1996-1997	133.15
1997-1998	423.40
1998-1999	639.24
1999-2000	1385.27
Total	2581.06

participation of FPCs and another 12,900 ha plantations are being raised this year. Attempts are also being made to get financial assistance from Corporate Bodies. Some help in this regard is being received in Alibag and Dahanu Divisions of Thane Circle.

Participation by Corporate Houses

Corporate Houses have evinced interest participating in Joint Forest Management and afforestation programme in Raigarh District.

Tata Electric Company, IPCL and Reliance Industries have shown interest in afforestation-cum-beautification schemes on land adjacent to their premises. They want to carry out afforestation work under guidance of Forest Department only for first year and to hand over the area for maintenance purposes to the Forest Department after planting operation. M/s IPCL is interested in Installation of smokeless chulhas, WC units and Wind Turbine generators in Cherati Tribal Joint Forest Management village. Tata Electric Company has committed to supply smokeless chulhas in Homgaon and Mandavane villages. In Mandavane village Tata Electric Company has already

constructed some WCs. They are likely to construct another 100 WCs and also to take up agriculture and fisheries project in this village. Proposal of afforestation in 150 ha in Homgaon village is also being made by Tata Electric Company. They have also identified 100 ha patch along Khandala Ghat (Dasturi point to Khopoli) for afforestation-cum-beautification scheme with watershed management activity. Bharti Vidyapeeth Environment Research Institute, a reputed NGO would be working in close cooperation with them and the Forest Department. M/s Uttam Steel Ltd. Khalapur has committed to donate 1.5 km steel pipeline for providing drinking water in Khalapur Joint Forest Management village.

Monitoring

As the programme is being implemented in 602 villages throughout the length and breadth of the State of Maharashtra, it is imperative that the programme be monitored regularly and necessary guidelines issued from time to time so that the implementing agencies have the right direction while going ahead implementing the programme.

At present monitoring is being done at two stages: at the Circle level and at the State level. For this purpose the monitoring indicators are developed based on deliberations in different workshops of senior forest officers specially organised for this purpose. The State level monitoring is carried out on a bimonthly basis by the Chief Conservator of Forests (Development) and, additionally, a simple monitoring proforma has recently been designed to impart more objectivity and cover more parameters that were felt necessary to get the annual feedback.

Both at the Circle and the State levels, monitoring of the programme is also done through field visits undertaken by the monitoring agencies.

Documentation

There are 11 Forest Circles in the State of Maharashtra and the JFM programme is being implemented in each of these Circles. Each Forest Circle has its unique village clusters, degraded forest areas, needs and aspiration of its people and localized problems. Documentation, it was felt, will serve a great purpose in dissemination of information about the JFM programme. Detailed guidelines about process documentation have been formulated and issued to the implementing Circle and documentation process has started in the right earnest and it is hoped that this activity will expose more people to the theme of this programme. The process will also help the Forest Circles to know each other's programmes better, eliminate the past mistakes and absorb the innovative ideas of others. Documentation is also expected to apprise the NGOs about the present State of JFM activities in the State and motivate them to participate in this programme in greater numbers.

Training

In furtherance of the objectives of the JFM programme, intensive training programme has been organised since 1996-1997 on the following lines :

1. Three-stage exposure to the implementing level (RFO, Forester and Forest Guard).
2. Two-stage exposure to selected villagers.

3. Two-stage exposure for planning and integration process for middle level Officers (Dy. CFs and ACFs).

4. Workshop for senior officers.

The training programme included exposure to technique for undertaking PRA/ RRA exercises, visit to success areas, exchange of ideas, training of the trainers and so on. Leading training institutions such as M.P. Administration Academy, Bhopal; NIRD, Hyderabad; VIKSAT, Ahmadabad; YASHDA, Pune and others have been involved for imparting training under the programme. Training and/or workshops have been organised at the village or Divisional level for villagers of over 500 villages where work is going on at present. Workshop for senior officers were held at Khamgaon, Nashik, Nagpur and other places and a workshop was held at Chandrapur especially for the NGOs, also attended by villagers from implementing villages and forest officials, for a 3-way interaction. Overall 100 training sessions, 20 study tours, 40 Division level workshops, 200-village level workshop have so far been organised. On a conservative estimate over 15,000 persons including forest personnel, villagers and NGOs received training exposure.

JFM training has also become a regular feature in the Forest Training School in the State and Joint Forest Management has been included as one of the subjects in the curriculum for the training of Forests Guards and Foresters in all the 5 Forestry Schools located at Chandrapur, Chikhaldara, Jalna, Pal and Shahpur. Recently a reference book containing the guidelines regarding all the JFM issues has been prepared for circulation among the staff implementing the programme.

Benefits

Forest protected under JFM programme has lower incidence of forest fire, illicit grazing and illicit felling. Tending of natural regeneration and planting by artificial intervention has a positive impact on the quality of the forests. This has resulted in increased production of palatable grasses and leaves and the same is being made available to the FPC members. The mandatory soil and moisture conservation works has enhanced the moisture regime and the same is likely to have a positive impact not only on the forests but also on the nearby agricultural fields. Under Entry Point Activities, developmental activities such as water supply scheme, community halls, go-bargas plants, village temple, approach roads, water well, sanitation, community utensils and other similar services have been provided to villages. Besides direct employment generation has benefited the villagers. There is definite enhancement in the quality of the life of villagers.

Since the programme has started recently no harvest, interim or otherwise has been obtained. Once the same is available, provision will be made in the micro-plans, in conformity with the provisions made in the GR, to distribute the same to the FPC members as part of usufruct sharing. Presently the FPC members are permitted to collect grass, leaves, flowers and fruits (with certain exceptions), fallen twigs etc.

Future Plan

The Forest Department has an ambitious plan for JFM in future. Maharashtra has an estimated degraded

area/wasteland over 19 lac hectares under the control of Forest Department spread over 10,720 villages. The possibility of covering these villages under JFM is currently being explored and the State Forest Department has a vision of covering a substantial number of these villages under JFM programme in a phased manner. Over 600 villages have been covered under the programme in a short period of 4 years and the results are already encouraging. The success stories are many and spread over the whole State.

Once financial assistance to the programme from the State Government ceases, it is necessary that the programme sustain itself from its own resources. The village selected upto 1998-99 have taken an initiative in this regard and have generated some earning for themselves by voluntary labour, levying nominal fees on forest produce collected by the members, rentals from assets created under Entry Point Activities and so on.

It is proposed to introduce this programme in the Naxalite infested areas of the State in Bhandara, Chandrapur, Gadchiroli, Gondia, Nanded and Yavatmal Districts from next year with Central Assistance. A proposal for taking Joint Forest Management works in 370 villages with an estimated financial implication of Rs. 1,755 lakhs over the next three years has been included in the "brief note on the activities proposed by the Forest Department in the Naxalite infested areas" submitted to the Govt. recently.

Conclusion

Experience of the past few years has shown that participatory approach in forest protection and development is both feasible

and essential. The Department has already identified the potential JFM villages in the State where this programme may be taken up in future. The extent of degraded forest area and wasteland available in the immediate vicinity of these villages has

also been identified. Considering the overwhelming response received by this programme, the day is not far away when the entire endeavour related to forest and forestry is carried out with a participatory approach in the State of Maharashtra.

SUMMARY

Joint Forest Management in a real sense began in Maharashtra from 1996-97 and 58 villages were included in the first instance under this plan. This has now increased to 602 villages. Financial assistance is provided by State Govt. in a phased manner for its various components. The micro-plans are prepared in consultation with the villagers. Total area covered at present is about 2 lakhs ha, under the protection of village committees. Corporate houses are also participating in several of its programmes. The progress is monitored at Circle and State levels. Documentation is done as it is likely to motivate the people. Training is being imported to Forestry staff at different levels. Village level workshops are also organized. Benefits have been noticed in the quality of forest management, moisture regime and better quality of grasses and some employment to the villagers. Future plans are to extend the scheme to the management of more than 18 lakhs ha, spread over 10,720 villages in a phased manner. When Govt. assistance shall be stopped, the scheme will be able to sustain itself from the forests' own resources and an initiative has been made by levying some nominal fees, etc. Naxalite infested areas are proposed to be included in the scheme.

महाराष्ट्र राज्य में संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध

एस.के. मित्र

सारांश

महाराष्ट्र में संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध असली अर्थों में 1996-97 से आरम्भ हुआ और प्रथमतः इस योजना के अन्तर्गत 58 ग्राम लिए गए। अब इनकी संख्या बढ़कर 602 हो गई है। इसे वित्तीय सहायता राज्य सरकार से मिल रही है जो इसके विभिन्न अंगों के लिए भागों में बांटकर दी जाती है। इसकी अणुयोजनाएँ ग्रामीणों के साथ परामर्श करके बनाई जाती हैं। इस समय लगभग 2 लाख हेक्टेयर भूमि वन का प्रबन्ध किया जा रहा है। इसका रक्षण ग्राम रक्षण समितियाँ करती हैं। निगमित घराने भी इसके कई अंगों में अपना योगदान कर रहे हैं। प्रगति की जांच पड़ताल वन वृत्त और राज्य स्तरों पर की जाती है। प्रलेखन भी किया जाता है क्योंकि इससे लोगों को उत्साहित करने में सुविधा रहती है। वन विभाग वालों को भिन्न-भिन्न स्तरों पर प्रशिक्षण दिया जा रहा है। कई जगह ग्रामीण कार्यशालाएँ भी चलाई गई हैं। जो लाभ अब तक हुए हैं उनमें वनों के प्रबन्ध की गुणवत्ता में सुधार, भूमि की नमी में वृद्धि और अच्छी गुणवत्ता वाली घास का उत्पादन बताया जा सकता है, गांव वालों को कुछ रोज़गार व अन्य लाभ हुए हैं। भविष्य में इस प्रबन्ध योजना को अन्य क्षेत्रों में भी धीरे-धीरे क्रमशः बढ़ाने की योजना है और इसका क्षेत्र 18 लाख हेक्टे. से अधिक हो जाएगा जो 10720 गांव में फैला हुआ होगा। जब सरकारी सहायता मिलनी बंद हो जाएगी तो आशा है कि योजना अपने साधनों से ही चालू रखी जा सकेगी और इस दिशा में कुछ सेवाओं पर थोड़ा बहुत सामूनी शुल्क लगाकर आमदनी करने का सिलसिला आरम्भ भी किया गया है। नक्सलवाद से आक्रान्त क्षेत्रों को भी इस योजना के अन्तर्गत लाने की योजना बनाई गई।