

JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT : PERCEPTIONS OF NEW INCUMBENTS IN INDIAN FOREST SERVICE

GOPA PANDEY*

Introduction

The social dimensions of forestry must be concretised to plan and implement a rational approach to development. The sustainability of such integrated development plans can not be achieved without accounting for the strategies to meet the survival and basic needs of the people living in and around forest areas. In absence of strong local institutions to carry out the ambitious projects of balanced, sustainable development approach, the lead has to be taken up by the Forest Department. The Indian Forest Service probationers, recruited by Union Public Service Commission, undergo initial professional training in forestry for two years at Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehra Dun. The curriculum of training is revised almost every decade in order to update the training needs. The latest updating was in 1993 which prescribed the sandwich pattern of training in which on-the-job training in cadre States is sandwiched between professional and Advance Phases. Mutch *et al.* (1991) have advocated the need to incorporate components addressing the emerging professional challenges in forestry in the training curriculum. The National Forest Policy (Anon., 1988), specifically emphasizes on resource management based on participatory planning and implementation of forestry. The present curriculum has taken into account this

socio-economic accountability in forest management (Ray, 1996) by providing space. For developing attitudinal changes and inculcating skill of carrying out participatory forest management, the curriculum of IGNFA has wrapped up subjects addressing the needs. The 11 papers out of a total of 33 focus on the emerging professional issues, an understanding of which is desirable for forestry professionals.

An attempt to analyse the perceptions of incumbents to the forest service is made here regarding the process approach of implementing Joint Forest Management (JFM). The analysis discussed is based upon their exposure to JFM during their training sessions in the Academy, tours to different parts of the country and experience during on-the-job training. The facts emerging out of the discussion illustrate a significant component of training need assessment of IFS professional training at Academy.

With these major inclusions, it is expected that sufficient exposure of the processes involved in participatory approach may be given to trainees. The Academy has entered into an institutional networking for capacity building with National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad and Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi. Resource persons from these institutions visit the Academy to deliver sessions on forestry-people interface.

* Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy, Dehra Dun (U.P.).

Table 1
A profile of courses including socio-economic aspects of forestry during professional training.

Phase	Papers
Induction Phase	Forest Ecology Overview of Forestry : National and Global
Professional Phase	Soil Conservation and Land Management Silvicultural Systems Non-wood Forest Produce Biodiversity Conservation and Wildlife Management Forest Administration Forest Protection
Advance Phase	Environmental Conservation People and Forest Working (Management) Plan

Besides this, interactive sessions are also held with NGOs of established creditability and officers from the field who have a hands-on experience of the process.

Thematic Training

The training objectives are to enhance professional knowledge of skills needed for setting better performance standards of forestry and Forest Departments. This training at the Academy is aimed to achieve following objectives set upto address the changing socio-economic roles in forest management :

- (i) An updated and high professional knowledge and technical skills of carrying out the process of inviting community participation.
- (ii) Sensitizing the young officers to the professional, socio-economic and political

environment in which they have to deliver the goods. Since the approach varies in different States, they are exposed to a cross section of working conditions so that they can learn better during On-the-Job Training (OJT).

(iii) Interactive sessions, promoting an effort to answer the queries raised by probationers, are held to develop the attitudinal orientation towards Participatory Forest Management.

A short exercise of micro-watershed plan formulation envisaging the technical as well as current socio-economic development, is carried out during the Professional Phase where PRA is used as a tool for micro-planning. The probationers are also exposed to the deep rooted problems of integrated approach to development. This is the site where they are able to appreciate magnitude of constraints in working under present set of socio-political environment.

Training Concerns

The social and political environment is highly dynamic and changes constantly in time and space. The National Training Policy (Anon., 1996) has highlighted the need to focus these concerns in civil services. The officers are to be attuned to withstand the changes through an innovative approach to the problem for developing a fertile mind. The curriculum is designed to focus on following concerns :

- (i) *Responsiveness*: The changing role of foresters needs a wider exposure of conflicts arising out of resource limitations. Therefore sensitizing them to be empathic and receptive to the challenging democratic needs and high expectations of the people helps in developing their perceptions to the objectives of participatory approach to

planning and implementation.

(ii) *Commitment and Dedication*: The OTs are given exposure to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment regarding empowering the local village institutions. The concept of participatory decision making and partnership in bottom up approach of planning is designed to develop commitment to democratic values. A substantive theoretical and practical input is given on the concept of holistic planning at micro-level by conducting Participatory Rural Appraisal techniques during watershed micro-plan formulation and Working Plan exercises.

(iii) *Awareness*: A profile of ongoing activities and success stories of participatory forest management is given during training to create awareness about the scope of drawing community participation. The eminent personalities and officers actively involved in conceptualisation and promotion of participatory forest management are invited to discuss these issues at length with the probationers. During their four major tours to North, West, South and East India, they are shown the experiments of JFM which provides them an opportunity to evaluate the concept by discussing with officers, cutting-edge staff and local communities.

(iv) *Infusion of Scientific Temperament*: At each stage, the OTs are encouraged to ask the rationality of approach or theme for scientific analysis. The theory of what, when, why, how and where is promoted during training so that logical approach may be applied. Training is that advantageous period where trainees and trainers have a learning atmosphere of understanding where their doubts and questions are taken care of without any hindrance in communication. This is often observed as a

barrier during hierarchical execution of policies and programmes.

(v) *Accountability*: The stress on physical fitness not only aims to make OTs feel friendly and easy to work for nature, but also streamlines their attitude towards duty. It is self discipline which is imbibed during yoga and physical exercises which keeps one aware of the duties as well as rights. This is important to ensure high standards of performance and cost effective delivery of goods and services. The trainees are explicitly exposed to the concept of accountability in the execution of government plans.

Analysis of Facts and Figures

The educational background of the IFS probationers is science and a constant increase in the ratio of technology students in IFS indicates an inclination towards civil services in the job market. This may be considered as an indicator of highly objective parameters preferred during the selection process of UPSC. The technology students have already cultivated a competitive career prior to joining technology courses. During their education ahead, a lot of competition sets in and strengthens a competitive aptitude. This is why they emerge as successful candidates on UPSC list too. An analysis of background of probationers joining IFS during last four years reveals a gain in the proportion of engineering students (Table 2).

The decrease in the proportion of agriculture and science graduates is a natural result of increase in technology graduates and post graduates. This is a significant trend which can answer some of the perceptions outlined in Table 3. A set of 12 assumptions was framed on which

Table 2
Academic Background of IFS Probationers

Background	Year of Joining			
	1992	1994	1995	1996
Technology	08	25	14	21
PMC/Geology	17	09	06	03
CBZ	16	26	14	12
Forestry	04	05	03	04
Agriculture	18	17	04	04
Total	63	82	41	44

(PMC - Physics, Mathematics and Chemistry, CBZ - Chemistry, Botany and Zoology)

comparative rating was obtained from around 150 probationers (Table 3).

The following assumptions were worked out as common indicators of community participation in forest management which are listed below.

These assumption were rated along a scale of 1 to 5 starting from Myth, False, Just True, True and Very True (Figs. 1-12).

It is interesting to note here that the

officers who have received OJT in their cadres for 8 months are more positive and hopeful of attracting people's participation in forestry than the officers undergoing professional training at the Academy. The observations suggest a strong acceptance of JFM as an option by more than half the sampled number. Their approval of using it as one of the processes or tools of forest management indicates concern for democratic values. Very few of them disagree that Forest Department is failing to manage forests. This may be explained by the

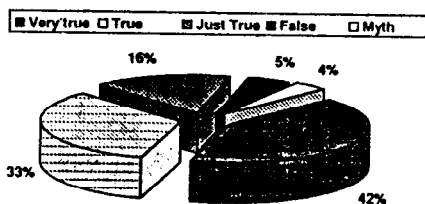
Table 3
Assumptions on the process of JFM.

S.No.	Assumptions
1.	Community participation in the management of Common Property Resources is essential.
2.	People would like to exclude bureaucratic control.
3.	Forest Department is failing to manage forests.
4.	Forest can not be regenerated on its own, therefore need interventions of local community.
5.	Local community is not yet equipped with the skills of handling forest as a resource.
6.	Local community is having better skill and stake in sustainable use of forests.
7.	Fast spreading transparency and easy communication will erode discipline in the organisation, essential for resource protection.
8.	People should have a stake in the formulation of micro-plans.
9.	All the sections of the society, economic and social, should be represented in the village bodies.
10.	People's participation remains half in absence of women's representation.
11.	The community funds can raise the quality of rural life and thus generate mutual respect between foresters and people.
12.	Benefit sharing in JFM will be feasible on a long run.

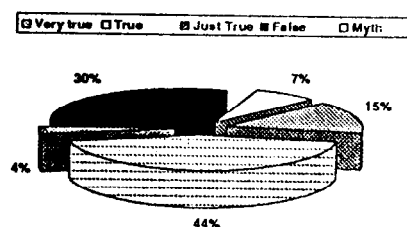
Fig. 1-6

Percentage distribution of ranking on 12 assumptions
among I.F.S. Officer Trainees

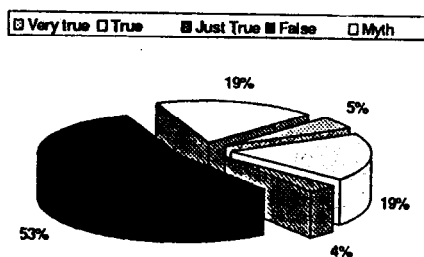
1. Community participation in the management of CPRs is essential



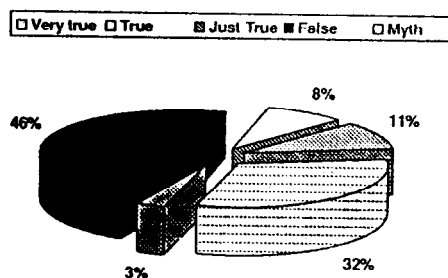
2. People would like to exclude bureaucratic control



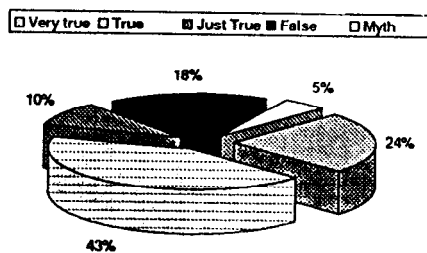
3. Forest Department is failing to manage forests



4. Forests can not be regenerated on its own, therefore need interventions of local community



5. Local community is not yet equipped with the skills of handling forest as a resource



6. Local community is having better skill and stake in sustainable use of forests

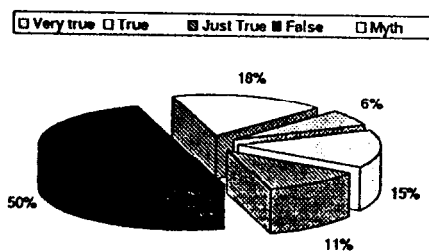
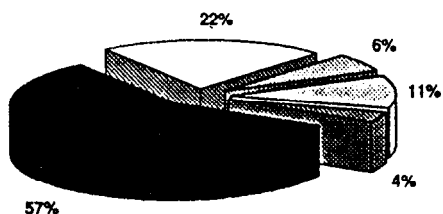


Fig. 7-12

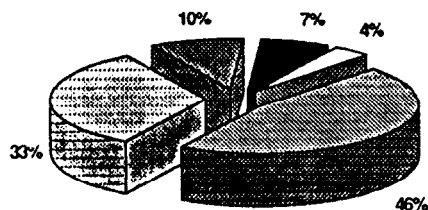
7. Fast spreading transparency and easy communication will erode discipline in the organisation, essential for resource protection

Very true True Just True False Myth



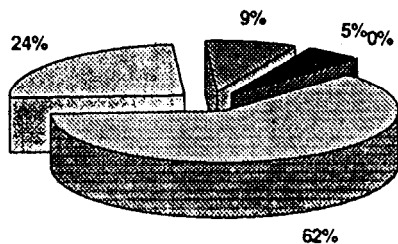
8. People should have a stake in the formulation of microplans

Very true True Just True False Myth



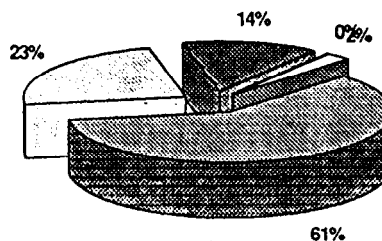
9. All the sections of the society, economic and social, should be represented in the village bodies

Very true True Just True False Myth



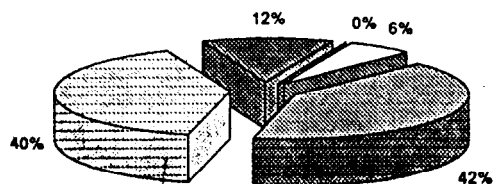
10. People's Participation remains half in absence of womens representation

Very true True Just True False Myth



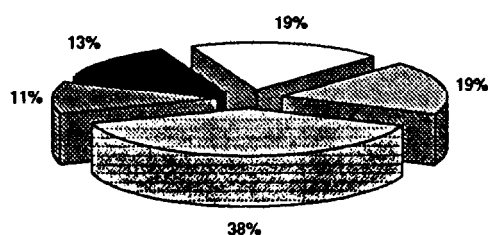
11. The community funds can raise the quality of rural life and thus generate mutual respect between foresters and people

Very true True Just True False Myth



12. Benefit sharing in JFM will be feasible on a long run

Very true True Just True False Myth



experience of OTs returning from OJT who can appreciate the constraints of protection and management in the field. Most of them are empathic and sensitive to the needs of people living in and around forest areas. Ironically, many of them believe that woman's participation is obligatory in managing forests in a better way. Similarly, a lot of them are of positive opinion towards the building up of community funds and consider it a positive feedback of JFM. A considerable number have expressed apprehensions about structural effects introduced by the benefit sharing from JFM. They do feel that people's participation in bottom-up approach to planning should be identified and respected.

The level of empathy and sensitivity expressed by them throughout their responses is significantly high and indicates sound approach to participatory

management. The objectivity observed in the comments also indicates much needed specific efforts targeted to long term objectives in planning process. It is possible that their concerted efforts and ideas can redress the grey areas in JFM today.

The OTs of 1994 course have expressed some doubts on the process of JFM. These perceptions are direct observations during their experiences in OJT where they encountered practical situations. These perceptions are listed in Table 4.

An analysis of these question suggests the lacunae existing in the approach to JFM in different States. Although financial constraints and specially the 'donor driven project' perceptions are mere observations, yet it is a food for thought to be included in the monitoring parameters of the projects of States carefully.

Table 4

The perceptions expressed by probationers on the process of JFM

S. No.	Perceptions
1.	JFM is a project approach.
2.	It is Joint Forest Protection only and not management or planning.
3.	JFM is doling out money on processes only.
4.	What will be the outcome of JFM when the money is squeezed ?
5.	JFM : Is it integrated rural development programme ?
6.	Is Government serious about JFM ?
7.	JFM is top-down and not bottom-up approach.
8.	JFM is an end to well stocked forests (?)
9.	Which is the right regime for JFM ?
10.	To what extent the handing over of power to people will be there in JFM?
11.	JFM is basically individualised and not institutionalised.
12.	Notions on sharing of usufructs and benefits in JFM remain hazy.
13.	JFM should not be universal and uniform phenomenon.
14.	What will be the scenario in the North East towards JFM ?
15.	What are the legal questions and implications of the money collected from social fines ?
16.	How far JFM will be able to address the issue of encroachment ?
17.	What benefit would the JFM visits (sponsored?) bring to the system?
18.	Sustainability of JFM through passage of time is questioned.
19.	Is it further degradation of the forest or rehabilitation in future?

The OTs also expressed strong opinion to reinforce the process of JFM with institutional arrangements. The whole procedure is very much individualised and depends on person, place and time. Often States are witnessing fallout for Officers whenever slightest deviation in routine observation of norms has occurred. This has sent waves of insecurity and uncertainty of institutional acceptance amongst managers. Only a strong institutional build up and legal cover for the implementation of eco-development can reinstate confidence and resolve conflict at various levels of implementation. A firmly structured institutional framework to identify the interrelationships of State, people, community society and market may be build up to lay strong foundations of JFM. This is how the new generation of foresters feels.

Way Forward

There is a need to revamp the

curriculum at the Academy. The courses may be organised in a manner to address the emerging issues coming in the form of perceptions of the OTs. It is observed that some of the papers included in the Advance Phase may be shifted to the Professional Phase so as to impart knowledge and skill of these themes before OTs leave for OJT in their respective States. This is felt essential as they needed its use during OJT.

The sessions have to be reorganised in a participatory manner rather than monotonous lectures. For this orientation, a lot of skills are to be developed among trainers and a bit of change to be introduced in the existing examination pattern. A new scheme has to surface on the horizon of forestry training in India which has deep rooted historical recognition in addressing the emerging issues of forest management through time.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the contribution of IFS OTs belonging to four batches, which joined during 1992, 94, 95 and 96. Special thanks are due to the OTs who joined IFS training during 1994 because they are pioneers of newly introduced sandwich pattern of IFS Professional Training. It was their perception and encounters with JFM as a process during OJT which provided a frank opinion and expression, especially in the institutionalisation of the process.

SUMMARY

The training pattern of IFS officers recruited by the UPSC is frequently moderated to address the emerging professional needs. Professional training of Indian Forest Service Officers at Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy at Dehra Dun has also been tailored to suit the upcoming socio-economic dimensions of forestry profession in India. A survey of IFS probationers from four batches of Indian Forest Service officer including the first batch which has undergone the latest pattern of on-the-job training sandwiched between Professional and Advance Phases has been conducted to interpret their assumptions and perceptions on the issues of Joint Forest Management in India. Though their exposure to the process is very limited, yet the new generation has expressed some key issues from its objectivity to the problem which needs to be addressed. Most of them have revealed optimistic thoughts about the process and accept JFM as one of the options of regulating forestry in India.

संयुक्त वन-प्रबन्ध : भारतीय वन सेवा में नए परिवीक्षार्थियों के अनुभव

गोपा पाण्डे

सारांश

संघ लोक सेवा आयोग द्वारा प्रविष्ट भारतीय वन सेवा-अधिकारियों के प्रशिक्षण पैटर्न को निरन्तर सन्तुलित किया जा रहा है ताकि नई उभरने वाली व्यावसायिक आवश्यकताओं को पूरा किया जा सके। इन्दिरा गांधी राष्ट्रीय वन अकादमी, देहरादून में भारतीय वन सेवा अधिकारियों के व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण को भी इस तरह तैयार किया गया है कि वह भारत में वानिकीय व्यवसाय में उठ रहे सामाजिक - आर्थिक आयामों के लिए उपयुक्त हो। भारतीय वन सेवा अधिकारियों के लिए चार बैचों, जिसमें पहला बैच शामिल है। जिन्होंने व्यावसायिक तथा एडवांस फेज़ेज़ के बीच अन्तर्निष्ठ कार्यरत प्रशिक्षण के नवीनतम पैटर्न में प्रशिक्षण प्राप्त किया, से भारतीय वन सेवा परिवीक्षार्थियों का सर्वेक्षण किया गया ताकि भारत में संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध के मामलों पर उनकी धारणाओं एवं अनुभवों का विवेचन किया जा सके। हालाँकि इस प्रक्रिय के विषय में उनका पक्ष बहुत सीमित है तथापि नई पीढ़ी ने समस्या के बारे में अपनी वास्तविकता से कुछ मूल विषयों को उजागर किया है जिन पर ध्यान देने की आवश्यकता है। इनमें से अधिकतर ने भारत में वानिकी को व्यवस्थित करने के एक विकल्प के रूप में संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध को अपनाने तथा प्रक्रिया के बारे में आशाजनक विचार प्रकट किए हैं।

References

- Anon. (1988). *National Forest Policy Resolution*, Min. of Env. and Forests, Govt. of India, pp 12.
 Anon. (1996). *National Training Policy*, DOPT, Min. of Pers., Pub. Griev. and Pensions, GOI, pp 82.
 Mutch, W.E.S., P.D. Hardcastle, J.W. Morrison and A. Norton (1991). *A Report on Forestry Education and Training*. Min. of Env. and Forests, GOI.
 Ray, P.N. (1996). Dynamics of Curricular Changes in Initial Inservice Education and Training of Indian Forest Service, *Indian Forester* **122** (2) : 103-116.