

# Inform

Information Bulletin on Participatory Forest Management  
SUPPORTED BY THE FORD FOUNDATION

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## Viewpoint

We are pleased to bring to you the seventh issue of Inform. Several important developments have taken place in the past few months such as constitution of the National Forest Commission, passing of the Biodiversity Bill and issuance of the new JFM guidelines by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. We have covered these important developments in our **Headlines** section.

The second half of 2002 witnessed a heated debate on government policies regarding "encroachment" on forest land. To keep you updated on the issue, we present a summary of the debate in our **In Focus** section.

The issue of biological sustainability of JFM forests has received far less attention than it deserves. As there is a greater focus on Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) collection and processing in order to enhance the income of JFM groups, issue of biological sustainability of the resource is becoming critical. In our **Special Article**, an ecologist examines it with respect to JFM forests of West Bengal.

In continuance with our efforts to keep you informed about the major international event of 2002 - World Summit on Sustainable Development. We present the key outcomes of the summit in our **Report** section.

2002 is the International Year of Mountains. Keeping this in mind, we have reviewed an interesting book on life in the mountains in our **Book Review** section. This book provides an insight into the lives of mountain women and how environmental degradation and capitalist transformation have affected them.

We hope you will like this issue. We look forward to your feedback.

Wishing you a very happy new year

Sushil Saigal  
Co-ordinator - RUPFOR

Mamta Borgoyary  
Editor - INFORM

RUPFOR is based at



WINROCK  
INTERNATIONAL  
INDIA

### MoEF issues new JFM guidelines

The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) issued a fresh set of guidelines on 24th December, 2002 to strengthen the JFM program in the country. These guidelines focus on three issues: (1) Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the JFM Committee and the Forest Department; (2) Relationship between JFM Committees and Panchayats; and (3) Management of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFPs). The MoEF has earlier issued JFM guidelines on two previous occasions- 1st June, 1990 and 21st February, 2002.

For guidelines, visit [www.rupfor.org](http://www.rupfor.org)

### Madhya Pradesh issues Lok Vaniki rules

Madhya Pradesh Government has recently issued *Lok Vaniki* (people's forestry) rules under the Madhya Pradesh *Lok Vaniki* Act 2001. These rules will facilitate growth of private forestry (by private land owners and panchayats) in the state. The panchayats can get revenue land as *Lok Van* (people's forest) for forestry purposes. A salient feature of *Lok Vaniki* is appointment of Chartered Foresters for making the management plans of the tree-clad areas under the purview of the *Lok Vaniki* Act. These Chartered Foresters can be independent forestry professionals, who will be authorised to make management plans for private forests.

For details, visit [www.rupfor.org](http://www.rupfor.org)

### World Bank launches the innovative \$100 million Biocarbon Fund

A new Carbon Fund launched by the World Bank in November 2002 has the potential to create an unprecedented opportunity for farmers and rural communities all over the developing world. The US \$100 million BioCarbon Fund, a public/private partnership, will provide finance for reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions. Fourteen companies and governments have already indicated their interest in being pioneers in the 'carbon sinks' business, and have signed an MoU with the BioCarbon Fund.

For details, visit: [www.biocarbonfund.org](http://www.biocarbonfund.org)

### New World Bank forest policy

On October 31, 2002, the Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank endorsed a new forest policy and strategy aimed at improving the livelihoods of some 500 million people living in extreme poverty, who depend on forests, while enhancing the environmental protection of forests in the developing world. The decision follows a broad consultation process over the last four years. The revised forest strategy covers all forest types and has been built on three interdependent pillars: protecting vital local and global environmental services, values provided by forests; harnessing the potential of forests to reduce poverty; and integrating forests in sustainable economic development.

For details, see [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

### New Executive Director of RECOFTC

The RECOFTC Board of Trustees recently announced the appointment of Dr Yam Malla as the new RECOFTC Executive Director. Dr Malla received his PhD from the Australian National University, and has worked with the Nepal Australia Community Forestry Project and University of Reading.

### Justice Kirpal to head national forests panel

Former chief justice of the Supreme Court Justice B N Kirpal will head the country's first national forest commission to review, reform and strengthen the entire forest management set-up. The commission, which has been given a two-year timeframe, will have as members Director-General (forests) M K Sharma, environmentalists Chandi Prasad Bhatt and M K Ranjit Singh, Benares Hindu University's J S Singh and A P Muthuswamy, a former government officer. An Additional Director-General (forests) will be member-secretary

Source: *Times News Network*,

### Supreme Court bans all mining in entire Aravallis

The Supreme Court has recently banned all mining activities in the entire Aravalli Hills from Haryana to Rajasthan. The landmark order comes after another order by the

Court, on May 6, banning the mining of sand and silica in a 5-km stretch from the Delhi border into Gurgaon. Central to the Supreme Court order is the argument that the Aravallis fall under the category of "forestland." As per the order, any diversion for "non-forest purposes" (such as mining) would require prior approval from the Central government.

Source: *The Indian Express*,

### RUPFOR Discussion Series No. 3 on 'Encroachments on Forest Lands'

In pursuance of its mandate to promote dialog on key issues facing the forestry sector in India, RUPFOR organized a half-day meeting to discuss the "Government of India's policy regarding encroachments on forestlands", with the objective of bringing together NGOs and policy makers onto a common platform to discuss this important and sensitive issue.

For minutes, see [www.rupfor.org](http://www.rupfor.org)

### India's New Biodiversity Act

The Parliamentary Standing Committee has approved the Biological Diversity Bill, 2000, making a few "principal changes" in the original draft. The Union Environment and Forests Minister T.R. Baalu claimed that this Act will regulate access to genetic resources and associated knowledge by foreign individuals and institutions and ensure equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the use of resources and knowledge with the country and its people.

The act provides safeguards to protect the interests of local people, growers and cultivators of biological diversity, as well as Indian researchers through a new National Biodiversity Authority (NBA), supported by state level boards and management committees that would regulate access to plant and animal genetic resources. The NBA's approval will be required before obtaining any form of intellectual property rights on an invention based on a biological from India or on a traditional knowledge and it will deal with all cases of access by foreigners.

RUPFOR

MoEF has issued a fresh set of guidelines on 24th December, 2002 to strengthen the JFM program in the country.

# Issues Surrounding Forestland Encroachment

Contributed by Mamta Borgoyary

(Drawn from Kalpavriksh, (2002), 'The Forest Encroachment Issue: A Briefing Note' and the note by MoEF on this issue.)

## BACKGROUND

On May 3, 2002, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) issued a circular that rekindled the debate on forestland encroachment and its impact on forest dependent communities. According to this circular, the Central government, has requested the states to seriously deal with the issue of destruction of forests due to encroachments, and evict the ineligible encroachers in a time bound manner. It further states that the eviction process should be monitored at the highest level and accountability fixed for inaction.

The Central government has defended its move by citing encroachment as a major cause for forest destruction. According to MoEF officials, large areas of forests in the country have been encroached

by vested interests often with the 'poor' as the facade.

On the other hand, the anti-eviction lobby has resisted this move on the stand that the current directive completely ignores the stakes of the tribal and other forest-dependent communities on that land which sustains them.

This article presents a summary of the debate on the issue of forestland encroachment.

## FOREST AREA UNDER ENCROACHMENT

Since the 1980 Forest (Conservation) Act, 2.78 lakh hectares of forestland has been diverted for regularization under the "eligible category of encroachments" (as per the Act), which occurred in the pre-1980 period (MoEF, 2002). As on September 30, 2002, as per the information furnished by the States, 12.5 lakh hectares of forestland are still under encroachments.

## NEED FOR EVICTION: THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S RATIONALE

The main reasons for the Central government's stand on encroachment are:

### ■ The increasing rate of forest destruction and degradation

The overall forest cover in the country as per the recent assessment (1999), and compared to the 1997 assessment, has increased by 3,896 sq km. This increase in forest cover is largely attributed to inclusion of large block plantations, practice of JFM, protection efforts and natural regeneration. However, the forest cover has also declined in 12 (out of

28) states mainly due to shifting cultivation, encroachments and uncontrolled removals from the forests without adequate regeneration. Notwithstanding the gains in forest cover, the natural regeneration in most forest areas is also deficient (MoEF, 2002). Therefore to stop any further depletion of the forest resources, encroachment needs to be severely restricted.

### ■ Significant forest area already diverted for non forestry use

There was large scale diversion of forests until 1980, before the Forest (Conservation) Act came into existence. Around 43 lakh hectares of forestland were diverted for non-forestry activities, about 50 percent of which was for agriculture cultivation. This practice if continued further, will lead to massive degradation.

### ■ Degradation due to shifting cultivation particularly in the North-eastern states

Shifting cultivation is practiced in large areas in the eastern and northern part of the country. About 1.73 million hectares is annually subjected to shifting cultivation only in the the Northeastern states of the country. Over the years, due to increase in tribal population and decrease in productivity, the shifting cultivation cycle has been reduced from 20 years to about 4 to 5 years, causing immense ecological imbalance.

### ■ Impact of deforestation on other natural resources

The result of pressure on the forests has been felt on the water resources of the country, a critical resource vital for sustaining life forms. The government claims that the recent droughts in Rajasthan and Gujarat, natural disasters such as the recent cyclone in Orissa, and flash floods and

## Box 1: GOI Communication to States dated May 3, 2002

- Reiterated the stand of the Government according to the National Forest Policy, 1988
- Requested the State Governments to seriously deal with the issue of forest destruction due to encroachments and evict encroachers in a time bound manner
- Suggested a mechanism for regular monitoring
- Fixed up accountability for "inaction"



On May 3, 2002, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) issued a circular that rekindled the debate on forestland encroachment and its impact on forest dependent communities.

landslides in Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, etc, can be linked to increasing deforestation.

**■ Adverse impact on tribal and forest-dependent communities**

Degradation and depletion of forests is likely to adversely affect the forest dependent communities. Any diversion of forestland for agriculture

would deprive the people of many forest produce that are vital for their sustenance. Moreover, the type of agriculture practised by these people on encroached forestland is unsustainable in the long run.

**■ Use of encroached forest land by vested interests**

There have been many reported cases

of encroached forestland being used by the mafia in the name of tribal land rights. Powerful lobbies utilize these lands for their vested interest in the name of tribal development.

The government wants to promote/use JFM and the recently proposed Forest Development Agencies as a tool to help tackle the

## Box 2: Excerpts from the 1990 guidelines on encroachment

All the cases of existing encroachments where the State Governments stand committed to regularize on account of past commitments may be submitted to this Ministry for seeking prior approval under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Such proposals should invariably conform to the criteria given below:

■ Pre-1980 encroachments where the state government had taken a decision before enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980, to regularize 'eligible' category of encroachments.

- Such cases are those where the State Governments had evolved certain eligibility criteria in accordance with local needs and conditions and had taken a decision to regularise such encroachments but could not implement their decision either wholly or partially before the enactment of the Forest (Conservation) Act, on 25.10.80.
- All such cases should be individually reviewed. For this purpose the State Government may appoint a joint team of the Revenue, Forest and Tribal Welfare Department for this work and complete it as a time-bound programme.
- In case where proposals are

yet to be formulated, the final picture after taking into considerations all the stipulations specified here may be placed before the concerned *Gaon Sabha* with a view to avoid disputes in future.

- All encroached lands proposed for regularisation should be properly surveyed.
- Encroachments proposed to be regularised must have taken place before 25.10.1980. This must be ascertained from the First Offence Report issued under the relevant Forest Act at that point of time.
- Encroachments must subsist on the field and the encroached land must be under continuous possession of the encroachers.
- The encroacher must be eligible to avail the benefits of regularisation as per the eligibility criteria already fixed by the State.
- As far as possible scattered encroachments proposed to be regularised should be consolidated/relocated near the outer boundaries of the forests.
- The outer boundaries of the areas to be denotified for regularisation of encroachments should be demarcated on the ground with permanent boundary marks.
- All the cases purposed to be regularised under this category

should be covered in one proposal and it should give district-wise details.

- All cases of proposed regularisation of encroachments should be accompanied by a proposal for compensatory afforestation as per existing guidelines.
- No agricultural practices should be allowed on certain specified slopes.
- 'Ineligible' category of pre-1980 encroachments where the state governments had taken a decision prior to the enactment of the forest (conservation) act, 1980.
  - Such cases should be treated at par with post 1980 encroachments and should not be regularised.

■ Encroachments that took place after 24.10.1980.

In no case encroachments which have taken place after 24.10.1980 should be regularised. Immediate action should be taken to evict the encroachers. The State/UT Government may, however, provide alternate economic base to such persons by associating them collectively in afforestation activities in the manner suggested in this Ministry's letter No. 6-21/89-FP dated 1.6.90, but such benefits should not extend to fresh encroachers.



The type of subsistence agriculture practised by these people on encroached forestland is unsustainable in the future.

problem of rural development in a planned way in forest-fringe villages by either shifting the focus of development administration to these areas or devise separate schemes of integrated development for these villages. Around 14 million hectares of forests are being co-managed with 63,000 village committees in the country, involving 28 lakh families. Of these 12.77 lakh are tribals and another 6.7 lakh are from Scheduled Castes. Involving the tribal and other poor people in regeneration of forests would further strengthen this institution.

### POLICY DEVELOPMENT ON ENCROACHMENT

As per the Indian Forest Act of 1927, encroachment on any forestland is an offence. The section 26 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA, 1927) prohibits various acts in reserved forests, which includes the acts associated with encroachments such as clearing or breaking up of any land for cultivation or any other purposes. Similarly, section 30 and section 35 prohibit encroachments on protected forests and wastelands, respectively. Various state acts have also followed by and large the same provisions of the IFA, 1927.

The Forest Conservation Act 1980, was enacted in reaction to the rampant diversion of forest land by the states for agriculture, regularization of encroachments and other developmental activities. The Act, though regulatory is not prohibitory in nature. The Ministry of Environment & Forests has also framed detailed policy guidelines on 18th September, 1990, in respect of regularization of encroachments on forestland (See Box 2 for the salient features of the 1990 guidelines).

In 1995, a Public Interest Litigation was filed by an ex-estate owner in Gudalur, Tamil Nadu, who was distressed by the illicit felling of timber from forests nurtured by his family for

generations which have since been taken over by the government case (Writ petition 202 of 1995, T N Godavarman Thirumulpad vs Union of India). The Supreme Court has extended the scope of the petition to all parts of the country and has passed significant judgements at various points of time. On November 23, 2001, an interlocutory application (IA 703) was filed regarding the issue of encroachment. In March 2002, the Supreme Court ordered “ The chief secretaries for the states of Orissa, West Bengal, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Assam, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh, and Kerela, to file a reply to this IA (No.703).

In response to the Supreme Court order (IA 703), on May 3, 2002, the MoEF issued the circular on immediate eviction of all illicit encroachments. (see Box 2 for the salient features of the MoEF Order). On May 9, 2002, the SC ordered the setting up of a Central Empowered Committee (CEC) in Writ Petitions Nos. 202/95 & 171/96. On June 3, 2002, a notification was issued nominating the members of the CEC which constituted three officials from the MoEF and two NGO representatives. The CEC has given its recommendations that endorse the MoEF circular and recommends the removal of all post 1980 encroachments from forests within a short time span.

### ISSUES OF CONCERN: THE NGO'S PERSPECTIVE

The May 3, 2002 circular of the MoEF has rekindled the concern among the NGO community regarding the fate of the tribal and other forest-dependent communities. Using various means, ranging from meetings to protest demonstrations, the NGOs have opposed the implementation of the MoEF circular regarding eviction. In response the MoEF has issued a clarification letter on October 30, 2002 (see [www.rupfor.org](http://www.rupfor.org) for full

version of the letter), asking state governments to constitute Commissions/ committees consisting of officials from Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare Departments to identify such tribal families having disputed settlement claims. The clarification letter also stresses on the importance of economic rehabilitation of ineligible encroachers through JFM mechanism.

In order to facilitate active interaction among the MoEF and the NGOs on this issue, RUPFOR organised a half day meeting on November 15, 2002. We summarise below the key concerns as raised by NGOs in this meeting.

#### ■ Lack of clear definition of 'encroachers'

The term 'encroachers' as has been used/implied in the MoEF May 2002 circular, is very loosely defined. It does not take into consideration some of the ground situations as illustrated below

- There are lakhs of *adivasis* who have traditionally cultivated lands long before the notification of these lands as state owned forests under various laws, but whose rights were not recognised because of a faulty survey and settlement process. These traditional cultivators do not have any title deeds for their lands and are labelled today as 'encroachers'.

- The circular does not take into account the practice of shifting cultivation, particularly in the eastern part of the country, where for generations these shifting cultivators are practising rotational cultivation. Even these cultivators are included under the broad definition of 'encroachers'. For example in Orissa, all land over 10 degree slope has been declared as government forest land. These also include those areas where shifting cultivation was being practiced, but where the cultivators do not have any rights/title deeds.

- The case of nomadic groups has



**The Forest Conservation Act 1980, was enacted in reaction to the rampant diversion of forest land by the states for agriculture, regularization of encroachments and other developmental activities.**

also not been referred to in the circular. There is a chance that all traditional users will be labelled as 'encroachers.

#### ■ **Lack of co-ordination among government departments**

There is clear lack of communication and co-ordination between the Revenue Department, Forest Department and the Tribal Welfare Department. The result of which is massive confusion at the ground level. If one looks at historical records, the entire process through which land was transferred among department (particularly between the revenue and the forest department) was complicated in nature. There are cases where pattas/grants/leases have been issued to people at various points of time by a proper authority (for example, the revenue department), but the status of these land is under dispute between the different departments (such as revenue department and the forest department). Very often, lands have changed hands between various departments, but the tiller of the land has not been consulted. These people are thereby affected negatively by the MoEF May 2002 circular.

Moreover, each department's concern with achieving their own targets jeopardises the goal of sustainable development. For example, the Tribal Welfare Department, does not consult the Forest Department and carries out its own tribal development investments randomly. For example, some of the schemes of the Tribal Welfare department may be providing subsidised agriculture inputs to the *adivasi* farmer, who may be using it on the same land, from which the Forest Department is trying to evict them.

#### ■ **Lack of understanding on why encroachment takes place**

The understanding of the larger context of lack of development and

the subsequent degradation/deforestation and fresh encroachment that takes place, needs to be understood and acknowledged in all policy directives relevant to encroachment. For example, there is a sizeable population of tribals who have been alienated from their lands by land grabbers and have now 'encroached' on forest land for cultivation for basic survival. It is therefore important, that any attempts to deal with this type of encroachers should first ensure stoppage of tribal land alienation and restoration of alienated land to these tribals. Further, a huge number of tribals and non tribals are displaced by developmental projects, who have not been properly rehabilitated by the government. For example, Planning Commission estimates suggests that between 1951 and 1990, only 25% of total people displaced due to development projects are reported to have been rehabilitated. Therefore, without ensuring a fair and just package to these millions of displaced people, issuing orders to evict all will further worsen their plight.

#### ■ **Problems with the process/way the government circulars are issued**

Most of the government orders are issued out of the blue, without any consultative, participative and transparent process. The MoEF circular of May 3, 2002, concerns a vital policy issue concerning not only the welfare of the tribal people, but also governance in tribal areas. It clearly attracts the provision of Article 338 (9) of the constitution which spells out the necessity of consulting atleast the National Commission for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) on all major policy matters affecting SCs and STs". However in this case no consultative process was initiated

Infact, even the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) did not consult any other bodies before

drafting its recommendations. Also, there is an urgent need to balance the existing CEC's membership with an equally strong orientation towards tribal rights and social justice, as that of forest and wildlife conservation as exists presently.

#### ■ **JFM cannot be an adequate solution in itself**

The MoEF proposed JFM and the recently devised Forest Development Agencies may not be an adequate solution in itself to tackle the livelihood and sustainable development aspects of the so called 'encroachers'. Though JFM has been successful in some parts of the country in providing livelihood options to the forest dependent communities, the programme is still largely donor driven. There is scepticism regarding the sustainability of this programme once the funds stop flowing in.

#### ● **Generic nature of the orders ignores specific situations**

Most of the government orders are generic in nature and do not consider region specific/category specific factors, thereby being highly non-implementable and insensitive in some cases.

#### ● **Easy let off for powerful faulters**

Powerful individuals/political lobbies, who use the forest land for vested interest should be punished severely when identified. The system has to evolve stringent penalties for these lobbies who use forestland for their own benefit in the name of tribal development.

### CONCLUSION

The meeting organised by RUPFOR initiated the consultative process that is essential for effective policy making. This meeting was able to bring the Government and the other stakeholders on one platform to discuss the issue. Some common ground has been established, what remains to be seen is how much of it is translated into action.



JFM and the recently devised Forest Development Agencies may not be an adequate solution in itself to tackle the livelihood and sustainable development aspects of the so called 'encroachers

## Local Environment and Lived Experience: The Mountain Women of Himachal Pradesh

By Brenda Cranney

Sage Publications, Pages: 297, Price: Rs 495

Reviewed by Pampa Mukherjee, Punjab University, Chandigarh, and published in the *Seminar*, August 2002

While much has been written on issues of environmental degradation, resource depletion, or women and development, one rarely finds detailed work on how rural environment impacts the everyday life of people in general, and mountain women (*pahari women*) in particular. Subjected to patriarchal norms and the harsh terrain in which they live, the impact of environmental degradation is felt all the more severely by the *pahari* women. Dependent on their immediate environment, the life of these women is woven around making provisions for fuel, fodder and water for the household.

The limited availability, difficult access to or total absence of these basic requirements due to natural calamity, or as a consequence of inappropriate development policies makes the already arduous life of mountain women even more stressful, affecting their work, health and existing lifestyle.

In *Local Environment and Lived Experience: The Mountain Women of Himachal Pradesh*, researcher and activist Brenda Cranney provides a detailed insight into the everyday life of mountain women of Himachal Pradesh. She explores and unfolds, in a lucid and persuasive manner, her lived experience with the women of Ichasser and Dev Nagar, the two villages of Himachal Pradesh where she conducted her study.

The book, based on the author's doctoral work, allows the reader an

insight into the inner world and existence of *pahari* women and how the degradation of environment and capitalist transformation has negatively impacted their lives, laying bare the hidden truths about their struggle and resistance. It informs the reader about how "the degradation of environment, land fragmentation, and the erosion of subsistence economy by unsustainable and inappropriate development or mal-development in Ichasser and Dev Nagar has, in fact, resulted in fragmentation of the social fabric of the family and the community."

What makes the book interesting is the manner in which Cranney narrates her experiences, involving an element of story-telling. Using a mixed writing style consisting of both diary format and regular writing, the author takes the reader along to experience the everyday life, emotional upheavals and deep involvement of simple Himachali women whom she met, lived and worked with, and with whom she developed a life-time relationship. The narrative's rigorous methodological application adds depth to the work, combining oral histories, personal interviews, photographs and participant observation, thereby developing an integrated approach that cuts across the disciplines of sociology and anthropology.

Chapters two and three of the book detail the choice of her methodological tools, how her research focus shifts from macro to

micro analysis and finally into an attempt to develop an appropriate research framework to study the ways in which development has changed the life and work patterns of the rural poor women.

Development policies in India are primarily guided by the dominant official framework of the post-colonial state which, with its centralizing and intrusive strategies, tends to push the main actors, that is 'the people', to the periphery. The implications of such policies are felt and become visible even at the micro level, affecting the production process and the social structure of the village economy in which women and the poor peasants are the worst hit, especially because they are systematically marginalized from the development agenda. This argument also holds true in the case of Himachal Pradesh, particularly in the context of social forestry programs.

Cranney rightly points out how social forestry projects have not only marginalized and neglected peoples' needs and opinion including their choice of tree species, but also how these projects have failed because of their focus on profit maximization and commercialization, their inability and unwillingness to address 'structural changes', and finally the 'top down' approach to project planning, identification and implementation. With the introduction of development policies based on the capitalist mode of production, there has been a distinct shift in the economy of the state from the semi-feudal to a market economy. The book asserts that such policies have not only affected the social fabric of the village community but also the natural resources of the region under study.

Life in a mountain society is fundamentally linked to the geographical, topographical, environmental and political factors that make the mountain. Verticality



The author takes the reader along to experience the everyday life, emotional upheavals and deep involvement of simple Himachali women whom she met, lived and worked with, and with whom she developed a life-time relationship.

and marginalization, and a vital dependence on the environment are basic aspects of the region. In this context any effort to understand the dynamics of development and its repercussions, particularly on women, emerges as a complex issue linked closely to a multitude of factors – environmental and social. The lack of this realization and knowledge, therefore, has a bearing on the kind of policies that are being framed and implemented. The book argues that the situation becomes complicated and difficult for hilly states such as Himachal Pradesh as it has to accept policies generally meant for the plains which fail to take into consideration the geographical, cultural and socio-economic as well as ‘local’ specificities of the region, devoid as they are of a ‘mountain perspective’.

In her effort to understand the implications of economic development and state policies at the micro level, Cranney refers to the life histories of three women – Nirmala, Kalabati and Shanti. Representing three different generations, their narratives touch upon diverse issues such as environment, culture, sexuality, and politics and economics, and demonstrate how macro concerns translate into their everyday existence.

The book also emphatically argues that macroeconomic policies have not merely marginalized these women in terms of resource depletion, but have further reduced the choices available to them to join the mainstream economy. The author reflects upon how women are subjected to extremely hard work and, of these, fodder collection and water are the most important and arduous. The situation is further exacerbated due to ‘gendered’ division of labor and in more recent times because of environmental degradation which impacts both the availability of natural resources as also the time required to

procure such resources. By applying time-cycle as a research tool, Brenda argues that the women she studied worked, on an average, for 17 hours a day. No surprise that women are reluctant to get involved in any kind of income generating activities introduced by development projects as this involves extra work and hence more labor. Moreover, the heavy workload contributes to many health problems among women as well as their family members, a situation worsened due to extreme poverty as also the dominant culture of the region shaped by patriarchy.

Despite the detrimental impact of environment and development policies on the region in general, and the dismal situation of women in particular, Cranney looks at the main actors in the study not as passive recipients of the circumstances in which they find themselves but as active agents. She argues that women have been able to use their agency to articulate concerns and find ways to bring about change. Their lives have

not merely been sites of oppression but of resistance, and they have challenged and protested against ‘traditional, patriarchal and cultural expectations’ both in the private and public domain. In coping with changes that capitalist transformation has brought about in Himachal Pradesh, women have asserted their agency in both adopting certain coping mechanisms and resisting others. The book concludes on an optimistic note that the struggles and challenges which the women face have strengthened their agency and made them politically active.

With all its strengths, the book could have done with some editing, in particular the repetition in content, arguments and assertions relating to research methodology, research design and approach. Nonetheless, the book finds its forte in the rigorous fieldwork using varied research tools and methods, the theoretical framework and an interdisciplinary approach that the author developed. An interesting and useful read for any student of development studies.

## RUPFOR

Development policies in India are primarily guided by the dominant official framework of the post-colonial state which, with its centralizing and intrusive strategies, tends to push the main actors, that is ‘the people’, to the periphery.

## INDEX

(List of recent publications in participatory forestry and related field )

### Books

Shukla, P.R., Subodh K. Sharma and P. Venkata Ramana (Edited) (2002) *Climate Change and India: Issues, Concerns and Opportunities*. Tata McGraw Hill.

Pierce, J. Carol, Colfer and Ida Aju Pradnja Resosudarmo (Edited) (2002) *Which Way Forward? People, Forests, and Policymaking in Indonesia, Resources for Future*.

### Articles

Zuo Ting (2002) “Some Technical Issues in the Practice of Community Forestry.” Institute of Scientific and Technological Information; Source: *Forestry and Society Newsletter*, Vol. 10, No. 1.

Edmund David and Ella Wollenberg (2002) *Disadvantaged groups in multi-stakeholders negotiations*. CIFOR Program Report, June 2002.



# Is Joint Forest Management in West Bengal Biologically Sustainable?

Contributed by Ghazala Shahabuddin

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(Based on the study on “Biodiversity in commerce: an assessment of current knowledge on the biological sustainability of forest product extraction in West Bengal and proposed research strategies”, prepared under the Winrock International India’s Small Grants Project)

Under the Joint Forest Management (JFM) program in south-western West Bengal, *sal*-dominated deciduous forests are being managed for large-scale extraction of numerous plant products, both for commercial benefits and subsistence-level use. Over the last century or more, a majority of the *sal* forests have been managed as coppice stands, that is, repeatedly cut every few years for their branches and poles to be used as scaffolding. The forests of this region also undergo a variety of other extraction and management processes throughout the year. People collect a variety of plant products from the forests they protect for fuel, timber, fodder, medicine, commercial sales, and food.

In a study of NTFP utilization across 214 households belonging to 12 different Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) in Midnapore district, nearly 73 percent of the 155 local plant species, including their leaves, roots, bark, seeds, fruits, shoots and flowers, were recorded as being used by local people for various purposes throughout the year. Commercially and in terms of volume, important among these were *sal* seeds and leaves, *mahua* flowers and fruits, mushrooms, *tendu* leaves and fruits, honey, *kalmegh* (*Andrographis paniculata*) and *satamuli* (*Asparagus racemosus*). The forest floor is swept for dry leaves and twigs for fuelwood in most areas. Additionally, there is

disturbance in the understorey in the form of fuelwood extraction, fire and grazing during certain seasons.

In most areas, felling of *sal* trees for timber and poles followed a 10-year rotation cycle or more, and the monetary benefits shared between local forest committees and the Forest Department. Cut-back operations were undertaken to convert the uneven *sal* coppice growth into an even growth to build up a series of age-graded *sal* stands.

In many villages, large tracts of barren and degraded lands have been converted to monocultural plantations of Australian *acacia* or *akashneem* (*Acacia auriculiformes*), eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus spp.*), and cashewnut (*Anacardium occidentale*), all of which are non-indigenous (or exotic) species that have been transported to India during the last few hundred years. In some areas, the forests are managed for specialized activities such as *tassar* cultivation, which is reported to leave negative impacts upon the local biodiversity of flora and fauna. In Purulia district, lac cultivation on *palash* is prevalent as an economic activity. Therefore, the regeneration of *palash* is encouraged to the possible decline of other species including *sal*. Hunting of a variety of species of mammals and reptiles too is prevalent amongst the tribal community. The current vegetation status in the *sal* belt of southern West Bengal can thus be summarized as a patchwork of

regenerating *sal* forests of various ages, semi-natural stands managed for various purposes, degraded land, and monocultural plantations of exotic tree species.

However, despite the intensity of forest use in the region, there has been little serious evaluation of the long-term biological sustainability of forest produce extraction or the accompanying ecological impacts. Lack of knowledge in the area of biological sustainability is likely to become a bottleneck in the long-term success of JFM initiatives in the region.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF CURRENT FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES: SUGGESTED RESEARCH STRATEGIES

It was found that currently there is little or no scientific data on the ecological impacts of forest produce extraction either at the species or at the ecosystem level. For example, not even one of 150 or more plant species being used has been studied for ecology, distribution, productivity or sustainable yield. On the other hand, many traditional practitioners feel that generation of several species of useful plants such as *kalmegh* (*Andrographis paniculata*), *sarpagandha* (*Rauwolfia serpentina*), *Lygodium japonicum* and *mahua* (*Bassia latifolia*) is declining over this entire region. Even previously common and widely distributed tree species, such as the *charoli* (*Buchanania lanzan*), *kusum* (*Schleichera oleosa*) and *piyasal* (*Pterocarpus marsupium*) are reportedly now restricted to a few pockets.

A controversial issue in the arena of forest management in this region is the long-term viability of felling *sal* on a 10-15 year rotation. Repeated felling of *sal* at such an early age may cause depletion of nutrients in the local soils and may lead to declining productivity of *sal* poles, apart from causing



**Lack of knowledge in the area of biological sustainability is likely to become a bottleneck in the long-term success of JFM initiatives in the region.**

depletion of local flora and fauna that are dependent on a multi-tiered, tall forest for food and shelter. Preliminary studies indicate that soil fertility and microbial communities are impoverished in many areas of intensive human use, though comprehensive studies have not been undertaken on a large scale. However, other practitioners feel that *sal* trees become prone to fungal disease with age, and that it may not be viable to have a longer felling cycle. This contention also remains to be verified in the field.

There may also be numerous ecosystem-level effects of forest product extraction in these forests that remain unstudied. From various accounts – including those of villagers and researchers – it appears that there has been increasing impoverishment of plant communities since the pre-independence days. There is evidence to suggest that biotic pressures over the last century may have converted the original multi-species *sal*-dominated forests to almost monocultural stands of *sal*. The reason could be weeding-out species that regenerate only from seed, are shade-tolerant, and cannot bear repeated cutting, fire or grazing. Clear-felling for *sal* poles additionally exposes the soil to the ravages of wind and water erosion, solar drying and invasion by weeds, and may also be a contributing factor in gradually reducing the proportion of shade-tolerant tree and shrub species that are important components of peninsular deciduous forests. Similar changes in species composition have been found in the thorn scrub forests of Biligiri Rangan Hills where a dry deciduous forest is suspected to have degraded into scrub forest in certain areas owing to intensive human use over the years.

A distinct impoverishment of native fauna has also been noticed in the region, possibly owing to harvesting of many of the local plant species for leaves, fruits, flowers and bark, plant parts that many animals depend on.

Some groups of birds such as those depending on standing dead trees or foraging in leaf litter and understorey shrubs also appear to be impoverished. However, to date, there is no systematic data on the animal life of variously managed forest stands compared to data available on relatively undisturbed forests such as that still found in sacred groves and Forest Preservation Plots.

In the absence of statistics or systematic data, few concrete strategies can be derived for long-term forest management. It is necessary, however, to undertake research on:

- the distribution, population status, and sustainable extraction limits of commercial NTFP species that are considered threatened;
- effects of forest management practices (both in coppice *sal* forests and in monocultural plantations) on the diversity of native flora and fauna, especially pollinators and seed dispersers;
- restoration of native forests in areas currently degraded and under plantations of exotic tree species;
- control of crop and other damage due to elephant migration through Midnapore district;
- reasons underlying failure of *sal* regeneration in the study area;
- sustainability of the *sal* felling cycle;
- effects of various forest management practices on soil properties, microbial ecology and nutrient cycling processes;
- ecology and control of invasive weeds in forests and plantations;
- implementation of various participatory monitoring procedures for ecosystem management;
- experimental testing of various forest management strategies for long-term biological sustainability. It is also necessary to expand vegetation monitoring activities at the local level that can holistically address several management questions relating to forest use, involving local managers/ stakeholders (village community).

## CONCLUSION

It should be emphasized however, that no amount of scientific research can be of relevance unless a societal consensus on the uses of the forest is first reached amongst the various stakeholders, such as the national and state governments, local people's bodies such as forest committees, and industrial corporations, which enables resolving the conflicts across forest user-groups.

Biologically, there are trade-offs among various uses of the forests. For example, *sal* pole production that involves clearfelling, the way it is currently practiced, cannot coexist with the objectives of biodiversity conservation (unless it is scientifically designed at the landscape level). As another example, it may be possible to combine some types of NTFP extraction with the conservation of a subset of local fauna. An open and wide-ranging consultative process is recommended amongst the various stakeholders at many different levels – local, landscape and national – before initiating research.

There are also larger issues regarding the long-term viability of managed-forest ecosystems in India today. Most of our forests that are outside protected areas today represent “living dead forests” in which the presence of a tree canopy hides the absence of a functioning ecosystem. Many forests now resemble monocultural plantations where a few plant species dominate, where natural regeneration of trees is next to absent, the normal processes of seed dispersal, pollination, nutrient cycling and herbivory no longer occur, and where the understorey is dominated by invasive species such as Eupatorium and Lantana. We must remind ourselves that a stand of trees does not necessarily constitute a ‘forest’, and ensure that our future management decisions on landscape-level biodiversity conservation consider this.

## RUPFOR

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# World Summit on Sustainable Development: Key Outcomes

By Sushil Saigal

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was held from August 26 to September 4, 2002, in Johannesburg, South Africa. The key objectives of the Summit were to:

- reinvigorate political commitment to sustainable development
- focus on actions that promote sustainable development through economic growth, social development and environmental protection

It was held 10 years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. However, it was not Rio II or even a Summit just about poverty.

## MAJOR DOCUMENTS

The Summit resulted in two major documents:

- *The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*
- *Plan of Implementation*

The former reaffirms sustainable development as a central element of international agenda while the latter deals with ways to translate this vision into reality through concrete actions on the ground. The Summit broadened the understanding of sustainable development, particularly the links between poverty, environment and use of natural resources. There were over 8,000 civil society participants who played an important role in the Summit. Separate civil society declaration and program of action (titled "A Sustainable World is Possible") was also released during the Summit.

The Summit also led to a number of "Type 2" partnerships, which are not just between governments but between governments, business and civil society. Altogether 220

partnerships (with US\$ 235 million in resources) were identified in advance of the Summit and 60 more during the Summit.

## KEY COMMITMENTS AND TARGETS

The following are the key commitments and targets in the area of forests and biodiversity; water and sanitation; and renewable energy:

### Forests and Biodiversity

- Accelerate implementation of Inter-governmental Panel on Forests/ Inter-governmental Forum on Forests proposals of action by countries and by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and report to the United Nations Forum on Forests for its assessment in 2005
- Achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity

### Water and Sanitation

- Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation
- Develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005

### Renewable Energy

- Diversify energy supply and substantially increase the global share of renewable energy sources in order to increase its contribution to total energy supply

## KEY INITIATIVES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The following are the key initiatives and announcements made during the Summit regarding issues related to forests, biodiversity and ecosystem management; water and sanitation;

energy and certain cross-cutting issues:

### Forests, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Management

- Canada and Russia announced they intended to ratify the Kyoto Protocol
- The United States announced US\$ 53 million for forests in 2002-2005
- The United Nations received 32 partnership proposals with US\$ 100 million in resources

### Water and Sanitation

- The United States announced US\$ 970 million in investments over the next three years on water and sanitation projects
- The European Union announced the "Water for Life" initiative focusing on Africa and Central Asia
- The Asian Development Bank announced US\$ 500 million credit for the Water for Asian Cities Program
- The United Nations received 21 partnership proposals with US\$ 20 million in resources

### Energy

- The European Union announced a US\$ 700 million partnership on energy and the United States announced it would invest up to US\$ 43 million in 2003
- Germany announced a contribution of 500 million euros over the next five years to promote cooperation on renewable energy
- The United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Environment Programme, and the United States EPA announced a partnership on cleaner fuels and vehicles with support from private sector and NGOs
- The United Nations Environment Programme launched a new initiative called Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development
- The United Nations received 32

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The Summit broadened the understanding of sustainable development, particularly the links between poverty, environment and use of natural resources.

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partnership proposals with US\$ 26 million in resources

### Cross-cutting issues

- Agreement on replenishment of Global Environment Facility by US\$ 3 billion (US\$ 80 million added by the European Union during the Summit)
- The United Kingdom announced 50% increase in Official Development Assistance
- The European Union announced that it will increase Official Development Assistance by 22 billion euros until 2006 and then increase it by 9 billion euros annually
- Japan offered to train 5,000 foreign nationals over the next five years for environment-related capacity building

### PARTICIPATORY FORESTRY

It is not widely known that the world lost 94 million hectares of forests in the 1990s alone (in spite of Rio) – 1.5 times the entire forest cover of India. Local communities, which are major stakeholders in the forests are not involved in the management of forests on a meaningful scale. However, wherever they have been involved, they have proved to be better stewards of forests. The forest-fringe

population of India itself is 147 million.

RUPFOR staff attended the Summit with the objective of focusing attention of the world leaders on the issues related to forests and in promoting community forestry as a viable solution to several problems of the forestry sector. The Association for Good Forest Governance in the Asia-Pacific with its secretariat at the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC) in Bangkok – of which RUPFOR is a member – played an important role in lobbying for greater recognition and acceptance of community forestry at the global level. The Association's efforts were supported by the Ford Foundation, which played a key role in facilitating greater civil society participation in the Summit. A Global Community Forestry Caucus was also formed during the Summit to push for inclusion of community forestry on the Summit agenda.

As a result of these efforts, a new sub-paragraph 43h was included in the *Plan of Implementation*. It reads: *"Recognize and support indigenous and community-based forest management systems to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable forest management."*

## On-site

### LIST OF PARTICIPATORY FORESTRY RELATED WEBSITES

#### [www.janmanch.org](http://www.janmanch.org)

This web site contains information about protected areas in India and an online database on protected areas for easy reference.

#### [www.wombatcfm.info](http://www.wombatcfm.info)

This web site provides a record of the activities resulting from the Wombat Community Forest Management Pilot Project initiative in Vietnam. It offers the final opportunity for group discussion and feedback in the first stage of this project.

#### [www.trees.slu.se](http://www.trees.slu.se)

The network is designed to share information about improving community forestry activities and about initiatives of interest to its members. It includes newsletters, publications and listserves as well as a member search engine.

### LIST OF UPCOMING EVENTS, WORKSHOPS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, CONFERENCES AND TRAINING COURSES

#### CONFERENCE/WORKSHOPS

##### Politics of the Commons:

##### Articulating Development and Strengthening Local Practices

July 11-14, 2003

Chiang Mai, Thailand

**Contact:** Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Faculty of Social Sciences

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Tel: 66-53-943594

Fax: 66-53-943596

Email: rcsd-con@soc.cmu.ac.th

#### TRAINING/COURSES

##### NGO Leadership, Development and Social Change

January 20 to February 7, 2003

Y.C. James Yen Center, Silang,

Cavite 4118, Philippines

Email: Education&Training@iirr.org

Web site: [www.iirr.org/html/](http://www.iirr.org/html/International.htm)

International.htm

Course Fee: US \$2,500

## FEEDBACK

We welcome you to send us relevant articles/news/events/announcements that you would like to disseminate widely.

For any further inquiries/suggestions, please contact:

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