

Adopting Livelihoods and Landscape Strategy (LLS) for Strengthening Joint Forest Management in India

1. Background

Indian Forest Policy of 1988 envisaged the role of communities in management of forests along with state forest departments. As a result, Joint Forest Management (JFM) was initiated as a participatory and bottomup programme to regenerate and manage the country's forests in 1990. Subsequently, different states adopted the programme by passing their own JFM resolutions. Backed by external funding, policy support and community initiatives JFM spread across the country. Now there are more than 100,000 Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) under JFM, which are managing 31.6% of the total forest area of the country. Although the spread of JFM has been impressive, there are mixed results on the performance of the programme. There has been a positive impact on vegetation, income, capacities of the communities and relations between communities and the Forest Department in many areas across the country. But, there are issues regarding legal status of FPCs, devolution of powers, tenurial security, the role of women and marginalized sections and equity in benefit distribution. Despite all these, JFM has created a large institutional base at the grass roots level, which can be exploited for community development. However, the full potential of JFM in the country is yet to be realized in terms of increased forest utilization, benefit sharing and poverty reduction as there is enormous scope to modify the current environmental, technical, market and social arrangements required to ensure that new incomes actually flow from the management of restored forests.

Thus, India component of LLS would further strengthen the participatory forest management initiatives for ensuring new flow of income by using the FLR/LLS approach in selected landscapes jointly managed by communities and forest departments in the states of Haryana, Uttarakhand and Orissa.

2. Profile of the landscapes selected

Based on the JFM programmes review and discussions with the Ministry of Environment and Forests (Govt. of India) and State Forest Departments (Haryana and Orissa) and partners (TERI), Winrock International India, three pilot landscapes belonging to the most successful JFM/CFM programme implementation in Haryana, Uttarakhand and Orissa have been selected for adopting the Landscape and Livelihood Strategy in India.

- **Haryana landscape**

The first pilot landscape is a part of Markanda subwatershed in Haryana, which is situated in the Indo-Gangetic plains that flank northern India. The recorded forest cover in state is approximately 3.8% and the per capita forest cover is 0.013ha. The geographical boundary of the selected landscape consists of watershed catchments including deciduous forests, agricultural and other common lands belonging to four villages, namely; Thaska, Salehpur, Jhanda and Kathgarh in the Sadhaura Range of district Yamunanagar. These villages have 725 households with a population of 4900. Major occupations in these villages are agriculture, animal husbandry and casual wage labour. About 40% of the households are landless and resort to casual labour for their livelihood due to lack of technical skills and entrepreneurial abilities. About 40% of land is irrigated through water from dams constructed in these villages. However, supply of water from the dams is inadequate due to poor maintenance and distribution. 60% of the total agricultural land is rainfed. Agriculture is mainly subsistence based, villagers depend on forests for fuelwood, fodder and *Bhabbar* grass which is an important Non Timber Forest Product (NTFP) in this area.

These villages have been associated with Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme since the early 1990s. The participating communities have been registered as Hill Resource Management Societies (HRMSs) under the Societies Registration Act (1860). These institutions are governed by JFM guidelines issued by Haryana Forest department. The guidelines deal with issues related

to constitution and eligibility of HRMS, their role and rights in management and benefit sharing of forest produce.

- **Boodibana landscape**

The other pilot site is the village landscape of Boodibana, which is situated in Nainital district of Uttarakhand in middle Himalayas. The landscape, which is a part of Ramgad watershed catchment, is characteristics of broadleaved forests and terraced agricultural fields. The village forests are managed by *Van Panchayats* or forest councils, which were constituted in 1931. The village has 120 households with a population of 900. The agriculture is rainfed and subsistence based, therefore, the local communities depend heavily on forests for timber, fuelwood, fodder, and NTFPs. Medicinal and aromatic plants constitute the important NTFPs, which have huge livelihood and income generation potential.

TERI has been facilitating the local communities in sustainable utilization of medicinal and aromatic plants in the area. The development related to production, trade and marketing of medicinal and aromatic plants have been very encouraging. There is enormous potential for issuing industries and private guidelines due to enormous availability of medicinal and aromatic plants, states' emphasis on medicinal plant resource development and its favorable policy environment for private sectors' involvement.

- **Orissa landscape**

Situated near the eastern coast of India, another landscape consisting of four forest villages has been selected in the forest patch of Tangaria in Mayurbhanj district, which is one of the largest districts of Orissa. The district has high forest cover (45%) and is surrounded by high plateaus and the Meghasani hills. Though overall there has been a reported decline in forest cover at the state level, forest cover in Mayurbhanj has remained stable, and has in fact shown an increase since the 1990s. This could be partly attributed to better awareness and sensitization amongst the communities involved. The district that has a long history of participatory forestry practices in the form of Community Forest Management (CFM), but the state has yet to incorporate other recommendations suggested in Gol's JFM Guidelines of 2000 and 2001.

For piloting LLS programme, forests and agricultural and revenue land belonging five revenue villages; Raikalia, Kaladahi, Kunta hill, Khadikhania and Mankadpada have been selected. Each village has more than 100 households which are divided further into small hamlets, within these villages six hamlets close to the forest have been selected for piloting in the first year. The pilot outcomes are going to be scaled-up at the landscape level from the 3rd year implementation. All the five villages are primarily tribal dominated, and forests are a major source of income for the majority of the population, especially the Scheduled Tribes and the Scheduled Castes. Though there is a significant level of dependence on forests in the pilot area both for livelihoods and subsistence, forests ranked third in most cases in terms of economic returns. This signifies that the potential of forests towards reducing poverty has yet to be fully realized.

Livelihood pattern in these five villages can be broadly categorized into three groups; agriculture, wage labor and forest based. Almost all households reported collection of NTFPs, either for sale or for self-consumption. Also, forest product collection and sale is reported to be one of the major sources of livelihoods, yet in terms of returns, it is found to be quite low (around 15%). This reflects that though currently there is a significant dependence on NTFPs for livelihoods, which is also very time and labor intensive, there are no commensurate economic returns gained from engaging in this activity owing to the low level of interests amongst manufacturing companies in the state due to lack of incentives for private players and also complexities in the current NTFP policies and guidelines.

3. Challenges

The main challenges that need to be addressed in the selected areas are as follows:

Forest landscape restoration

Evidence shows that the implementation of JFM/CFM has improved the conditions of forests in the country. Control over open and uncontrolled grazing has helped the regeneration and survival of vegetation in forests. The formation of local institutions as registered bodies with legal status has been a significant catalyst in ensuring the participation of the community in the decision-making process, and for equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms for forest products. The resultant incentives have been seen in the form of increased availability of fuelwood, fodder, etc., addressing basic needs, besides providing an impetus to the socio-economic status of the local community. However, the limited forest resources are not able to sustain the pressure of the communities for their various needs. As such, apart from forest protection and raising plantations, interventions would be required on a holistic landscape management level addressing livelihood security by improving the existing JFM implementation, institutional mechanisms, trade of forest products, etc. There is also a need to incorporate the local landscape approach and interventions so as to further strengthen the natural resources utilization by securing the non-forest related income generation activities to complement the incomes from forest utilization.

Income and Livelihoods

The baseline study indicates that natural resource development made as part of the JFM/CFM programme in the pilot areas has provided benefits of forest restoration and the enhancement of livelihoods of the participating communities. However, a large proportion of population in the pilot areas remains below Poverty Line (BPL). Thus, in spite of sustained efforts having made for over a decade and a half in the selected villages under JFM, enhancement of incomes and livelihoods of the local people remain to be addressed adequately. Limitation in Forest Department to move forward in implementing policies has been a major issue that LLS will address. Increasing the incomes of local communities for addressing poverty reduction goals would be an important challenge to be addressed by strengthening of the current JFM interventions based on the LLS approach.

Markets and Incentives

The JFM programme in the pilot areas has not been able to capitalize on production and utilization of NTFPs. The utilization of NTFPs remains mostly unexplored owing mainly to inadequate mechanisms for NTFP trade and marketing. The development of NTFP-based enterprises becomes significant as a livelihood support mechanism for increasing the cash income of the beneficiaries and hence addressing poverty issues. Enterprise development, by strengthening the institutional mechanisms, building capacities of the local communities and developing linkages with the market, is particularly significant for the landless and small farmers who constitute a significant percentage of the population in the selected landscapes.

- ***Institutional strengthening***

Joint Forest management practices provide relevant lessons for some of the glaring challenges that face the Forestry sector in India by formation of institutions for prudent management of resources. The functioning of the local institutions in selected pilot areas over the past 15 years has shown that the institutions need periodic strengthening to make them more effective, influential and to improve decision making. The baseline analysis study also indicated that there has been a lack of pro-active functioning of the institutions, poor financial management, etc. in JMF managed areas mainly due to a lack of capacity building and motivation. The situation thus entails a need to build the capacities of the local institutions not only for better management of the resources but also for benefit sharing, silvicultural practices, production, development of business and trade of forest produce by strengthening further linkages with the forest and other line departments and with markets and industries. Another major issue related to sustainable

forest management is the absence of participatory silviculture/adaptive forest management (AFM) in a case like Orissa which needs to integrate community initiatives with the formal processes in a manner that continuously empowers the communities and strengthens the facilitatory role for JFM in the State.

Uptake and Need for Policy Change

The LLS programme through forest landscape restoration (FLR) has the challenge of strengthening the JFM programmes and policies by studying the current institutional framework to enhance the income and livelihood as well as conservation of forest resources for posterity. The policy makers also need to be sensitized to the dynamic nature and requirements of the local institutions for sustainable resource utilization and management with greater degree of accountability, transparency and partnership.

4. LLS interventions

Indian partner organizations i.e. The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and Winrock International India (WII) are already involved with these communities through JFM programme. Both are the major players in JFM in India, having strong links with the Forest Department and experiences in many Indian states. The LLS programme aims to catalyze the sustainable use and conservation of forest biodiversity and ecosystem services for the benefit of the rural poor. The goal of LLS for India focuses on improvement of the existing institutional arrangements for community- based forest management, in particular JFM, to promote participatory local-level forest product marketing and processing, and to integrate these arrangements with LLS approach. The focus of the activities will be oriented on integrating institutional arrangement like JFM with a landscape level approach by adopting FLR. The interventions will include the following elements:

- Strengthening the ongoing Joint Forest Management programmes and institutional mechanisms for sustainable utilization of forest resources and promoting the trade of forest products, in general, and NTFPs, in particular.
- Promoting support for the production, management and enterprise development of NTFPs to increase the income of the local communities
- Institutional and policy strengthening for better management of natural resources for achieving poverty reduction goals.
- Expanding FLR approach to locally negotiated landscapes (including other land use) and activities for supporting the incomes from increased forest utilization.
- Monitoring/ supporting the ongoing JFM programmes/institutional mechanisms for greater transparency and accountability.
- Capacity building of the stakeholders for sustainable management of natural resources and addressing issues of increased forest utilization, livelihood and income generation along with FLR/LLS.

5. The four years Outcomes

Based on situational analysis in the landscapes selected produced by LLS partners (TERI and WII) and consultation with local stakeholders (i.e. community authorities and Forest Departments) in meetings in the programme areas the following Logical frameworks (LF) were developed by IUCN India and partners.

The LF includes the targets and the major external factors (assumption column) that LLS require to consider during implementation.

India LLS Logical Framework

<p>Super goal The leverage of real and meaningful change in the lives of forest-dependant rural poor by catalyzing necessary reform in national and local policies (often outside the forest sector) as well as new and innovative investments so that the contribution of forests and trees to rural poverty reduction, long-term and equitable conservation of biodiversity and the sustainable supply of forest related goods and services is enhanced and optimized.</p>			
<p>Goal [intervention goal] To improve the existing institutional arrangements for community-based forest management – particularly Joint Forest Management – to promote participatory local-level forest product marketing and processing and to integrate these arrangements with Forest Landscape Restoration approaches.</p>			
Narrative Summary	Objective Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions
Strategic Outcomes:			
Poverty, livelihoods and landscapes			
Increase in cash income recorded in households participating in improved collection, marketing and processing of NTFP's in the pilot and adjoining areas. (Contributing to LLS Outcome 2).	30% increase in average and medium annual household income from NTFPs trade in pilot and in successful replicable villages.	Household survey (baseline + Impact study) Households time series/panel study Annual Focus Group Discussion related to increase in income	There is an effective demand for products developed by community-based initiatives at the local, state and national level.
Market and incentives			
Comprehensive and improved institutional and benefit sharing arrangements for managing, harvesting and trading forest products under JFM, tested and agreed in at least two selected areas (Contributing to LLS outcome 3).	Local Institutions streamlined rules that promote transparency and equitable benefit sharing in two pilot areas. Communities apply 3 new practices from 5 identified participatory silvi cultural techniques	Annual Focus Group Discussion with different socio-economic groups Households time series/panel study Interviews with community members Field observation of silvicultural practices	Enabling policy environment for de-regulation of forest produce continues
Institutional arrangements established and strengthened to transfer greater rights to sustainably harvest, manage and trade forest related resources to the communities in	Number of arrangements that increase sustainable local trade value for poor households Communities decide user rights of forests	Interview with executive members of forest protection committees Annual Focus Group Discussion on user rights	

two pilot areas. (Contributing to LLS outcome 3).			
Industry guidelines on investing and setting up community-based forest enterprises adopted and promoted by at least one large private sector company. (contributing to LLS outcome 4).	One private sector party adopts LLS initiatives as part of its CSR strategy	CSR strategy document review	Private sector is committed to implement supporting policies on sustainable forest management
Uptake			
Decision makers from government, civil society and the private sector demonstrate commitment to adopt the concepts, recommendations, tools and approaches generated by the Strategy's activities (contributing to LLS outcome 8).	Recommendations, tools and approaches developed in the frame of LLS are discussed in government forum at state and national level	Proceedings of the government forum meetings	State and National Government authorities are flexible to learn from new initiatives

6. Budget (Annexure I)

7. Annual Activities Workplan & Communications Plan 2008 (Annexure II)

8. India Technical Report 100 days (Annexure III)

9. Financial Report 100 days (Annexure (IV))