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**PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT IN
ANDHRA PRADESH: A Review**

V. Ratna Reddy
M. Gopinath Reddy
Velayutham Saravanan
Madhuusudana Bandhii
Oliver Springate-Baginski



CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STUDIES

Begumpet, Hyderabad-500016

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Participatory Forest Management in Andhra Pradesh : A Review

V. Ratna Reddy*, M. Gopinath Reddy*, Velayutham Saravanan*,
Madhuusudana Bandhii*, Oliver Springate-Baginski*

Abstract

This paper traces the recent emergence of the new participatory forest management regime in AP Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Community Forest Management (CFM). This paper is based on the existing literature on forest policies, the historical context (pre-colonial, colonial and post independent India), and impact studies. The paper considers the contemporary developments in India in shaping the forest policies in AP. At the same time it considers the significant role played by donors and civil society. The process and quality of implementation, and the impact of the programme on local communities and resources are also examined.

AP ranks fifth in India in terms of geographical area (275,068 sq km), and third in terms of forestland (63,813 sq km or 6.38 mha (Million Hectares), which constitutes 23% of AP's total land area. Some 65% of AP's forest area is spread over 8 predominantly tribal districts in the northern part of the state. These tribal populations are particularly dependent on the forest for their livelihoods for forest product collection and cultivation on forestland. Historically the relationship between these tribals and the government agencies, particularly the Forest Department (FD), has been very poor, with numerous uprisings, including the 'Naxalite' movement. Many of these lands are disputed due to inadequacies in the legal processes by which largely tribal lands were declared state forests. Legally 'podu' has de jure status prior to 1980 Act. Post 1980 podu cultivation is illegal and considered as encroachment. De facto podu is considered as encroachment (prior to 1980) as there is no proper settlement, conceptually typical podu practice is seen only in a few pockets in the state, especially in Vishakhapatnam.

In 1956, on the formation of AP from Telangana and parts of the Madras Presidency, the pre-existing forest management regimes from the two distinct areas were harmonised by the Law Commission, leading to the AP Forest Act, 1967. Initially the states FD continued with a policy of commercialisation and revenue generation. However, with a growing crisis of forest degradation participatory approaches were introduced.

The Government Order (GO) for JFM in AP was issued in 1992, although implementation didn't start until 1994. JFM has built on the roles played by both local forest

*Centre for Economic and Social Studies, Hyderabad, India.

*Overseas Development Group, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

users and the FD staff. Funding to the FD to promote JFM has come from both the World Bank (WB) and from centrally funded schemes, such as the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS). Formation of Vana Samrakshana Samithies (VSS) began slowly after the GO, although by 2004 the official number stands at 7,245 VSS, managing 1,886,764 ha, (or over 29% of state forest land) and involving 611,095 families. The largest numbers of VSS are concentrated in the tribal areas of Adilabad, Visakhapatnam, and Khammam.

The pattern of implementation and the outcomes is extremely complex, partly because of the wide variety of local conditions, ethnic and caste composition and local livelihood uses of forestland. The limited devolution of power which has occurred through VSS formation have however certainly been popular in many areas, because they have given local people endorsement to protect 'their' local forest resources, upon which they depend for their livelihoods. Some employment opportunities have also been provided and some shares of revenues from forest product marketing are promised. Evidence suggests that the VSS have been successful in many areas in terms of regenerating degraded forests between 1993 and 1999.

However there have been many criticisms of the JFM programme so far, most fundamentally focussing on the issues of power and land tenure. Because the FD has held almost complete discretionary power over the scheme and its implementation, the JFM process has inevitably reflected their objectives. Whilst many foresters have espoused very progressive ideas and concepts, in practice the implementation of the scheme has often furthered forest management strategy according to silvicultural norms, rather than local livelihood-oriented practices.

In the context of a fundamental power asymmetry between the FD and the VSS., there has been little empowerment of local communities to take their own decisions with respect to forest management. This is most obviously seen in forest management plans. Whilst local people would like to see livelihood oriented forest management regime (ie. regular product flows, shorter term rotations, multiple product mixes) the FD has tended to prioritise its conventional forest management practices, often involving long rotation timber stands. The micro-plans commonly fit within wider divisional working plans. Livelihoods security could be increased if the forest resource were under a management plan, which actually prioritised local needs and opportunities.

Institutional sustainability is a major problem in AP with many VSS becoming defunct due to conflict, lack of interest, or lack of funds. Where participation has been based on substantial funding flows, when the funds stop the motivation to participate reduces drastically. The institutional linkage between the VSS and the panchayat raj institutions has not been developed, which could ensure not only long-term sustainability, but also empowerment and legal independence of the local institutions. Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) have been largely excluded from the implementation of JFM, despite the fact they have played a major role in formulating the PFM policies at the state level.

Participatory Forest Management in Andhra Pradesh: A Review

I Introduction

This paper traces the recent emergence of the new participatory forest management regime in AP (JFM and CFM). This paper is based on the existing literature on forest policies, the historical context (pre-colonial, colonial and post independent India), and impact studies. The paper considers the contemporary developments in India in shaping the forest policies in AP. At the same time it considers the significant role played by donors and civil society. The process and quality of implementation, and the impact of the programme on local communities and resources are also examined.

This paper consists of seven sections. The following section puts forth the linkages between forests, livelihoods and policies. Section three analyses the trends in forest resources in AP. section four reviews the forest policies in AP in a historical perspective, including JFM. The fifth section reviews the impact of JFM in AP. The sixth section reviews the advent of CFM in AP along with a comparison between CFM and JFM and section seven makes some concluding observations and suggestions.

II Forest Management and Livelihoods

Forests are a crucial link in the ecosystem. In addition to the direct use values, forests resources protect the environment in different ways, such as watershed protection, nutrient cycling, pollution control, micro-climatic regulation, and carbon sequestration. Depletion and degradation of forest resources lead to serious wider environmental consequences, not only at the local and regional level but also as is increasingly apparent at global level. The consequences of degradation are being felt in terms of the declining productivities of inter-linked natural resources such as land, water, and grass lands. The problems are of particular concern at the regional level, and hence this paper addresses forest policies and management in AP, with the hope that understanding can lead to improved policy formulation and field practice.

The Pre-Colonial Period

In earlier historical periods, people used forest resources with little intervention by the rulers, in different parts of the sub-continent. The rulers controlled only limited areas, the remaining resources were used by the people without restriction. For example, Tipu Sultan controlled only the sandalwood in Mysore region. There is debate in the environmental history literature over the extent to which deforestation had already occurred in the pre-colonial era. Of course large areas were cleared for agricultural expansion, pastoral use and strategic purposes in different parts of the country during the pre-colonial period (Parasher, 1998; Guha, 1996). Until the last quarter of the twentieth century, the colonial accounts, which prevailed sought to locate the extension of colonial control over forest resources as part of a historical continuity. While detailing the forest resources of the subcontinent, imperial forest historians concluded that denudation of forests predated the commencement of colonialism. For example, Stebbing claimed that a very large proportion of the forests, which originally covered vast tracts of the country were destroyed during the period between the invasion of the Aryans and the advent of the English as rulers (Stebbing, 1982). He claims further 'For a long period before their arrival, timber had been exported in large quantities to Arabia and Persia' (Stebbing 1982). Imperial forest historians like him held the view that commercial exploitation of forests in the sub-continent was widespread before the eighteenth century.

Scholarly works were found wanting on issues concerning forests and forest-dwellers during the period. Forest and related environmental issues have been discussed extensively over the last quarter of the twentieth century. Guha initiated the scholarly debate, and argued that the British colonial government had denuded the vast forest cover for commercial and strategic needs of the empire, in disregard of the rights of forest dwellers and users (Guha, 1983; Guha and Gadgil, 1989). Prior to the colonial regime, commercial exploitation of forest produce was largely restricted to specific products such as spices like pepper and cardamom, and ivory, where extraction did not pose a serious threat to either the ecology of the forests or customary use, and ensured renewal and sustainability (Guha and Gadgil, 1989). Scholars also cite the numerous conflicts over land, pastures and forests, often appropriated by the more powerful strata in different parts of the country during the pre-colonial period, from the Mauryan period (Baker, 1991; Guha, 1996; Guha, 2002).

Colonial Forest Management and Customary Forest Rights

The commercialisation of forests during the colonial period resulted in large-scale degradation. Since the eighteenth century, the colonial rule established the commercialisation of forests in different parts of the country, and large areas of forests were denuded for commercial purposes during the pre-Forest Act period (Saravanan, 1998, 1999). In the early nineteenth century, large quantities of sandalwood were exported to foreign countries. Coffee and tea plantations were established in the hill areas during the second quarter of the nineteenth century (Saravanan, 1999). British iron-making industries also extracted huge number of trees from the forest. Also during the second half of the century, forests were denuded on large-scale for establishing the railways. The colonial agrarian policy also envisaged the expansion of cultivation, which led to the denudation of the forests.

Heavy destruction of forests along the coast of Malabar down south for the timber and sandalwood had occurred during the latter part of the 18th and early part of the 19th century (Saravanan, 1998; Thakur, 1984). Shortfalls in the availability of timber began to be felt, leading to the first teak plantations in Nilambur (Kerala) in 1842. The colonial rulers became concerned by the 1850s that insufficient control over timber extraction was threatening fulfilment of growing demand for timber for strategic needs. This concern led in 1855 to Lord Dalhousie, the then Governor-General of India, to proclaim a forest policy for the first time, which asserted imperial ownership over forests and emphasised their regulated use for the imperial requirements: 'timber standing on State forest was State property and private individuals had no rights or claims over it' (Chaudhry, 1984). To consolidate and implement this policy, Dr. Dietrich Brandis was appointed as the first Inspector-General of Forests in 1864, and the first Indian Forest Act (IFA) was drafted in 1865. Subsequently in 1866, the Forest Department (FD) of India was created, and the Indian Forest service (IFS) was organized to exercise exclusive rights to exploitation of the existing forests. Its chief duties were to develop the large timber forests such as the *Sal* forest of '*Dudh*' and '*Deodar*' forest of Himalayas and the forests of the Western Ghats (Randhwa, 1984).

The revised IFA came into existence in 1878 and was made operational in most of the provinces. It is under this Act that the FD has taken over the forest under its control. The Act restricted the traditional / customary rights of the tribals and forest users in the forest by introducing reserved and

protected forest categories. Differences however emerged between the different presidencies in how they implemented the Forest Act. For example, The Madras Presidency had a different opinion altogether in terms of recognising the rights of the people (Guha, 1990). Subsequently several forest acts were initiated, although they, by and large, curtailed the rights of the tribals and other forest users.

The first Forest Policy of 1894 highlighted the intention of the state to recognize forestry as a land use distinctly different from agriculture, and earmarking areas for such land use had the major objective of timber production, ignoring the needs of the local people. This Policy paved way for legislation and the process of settlement of rights that followed the reservation of forest areas. The Policy provided for state ownership and regulation but very little for the local communities. During 1927, the Act of 1878 was consolidated to regulate the law relating to forests and forest produce. Subsequently the IFA in 1927 further envisaged the importance of conservation and restricted the forest use further during the colonial period.

Although India had a long history of forest policy, the livelihoods of forest-dwellers and forest-dependents are not recognised until recently in policy. It is predominantly tribal lands, which have been declared state forests, and this has resulted in continuing conflicts and contestation and the tribals losing access to their livelihood resources. Reservation of forests by the FDs has been part of the long term historical process of indigenous tribal communities being pushed deeper into the forests by the appropriation of tribal lands by non-tribals (despite some laws being meant to prevent this). The state has appropriated large areas of Schedule V (tribal majority) area lands as state forests, without recognising customary rights, particularly of shifting cultivators.

The forest policies led to the appropriation of extensive areas of tribals land with the objective of increasing and maintaining 'forest cover', and imposed restrictions on their use. The official claim has been that the tribals are responsible for forest degradation but this is highly contested both by the tribals and by sociological-historical-anthropological studies. There is found to be a strong relationship between tenurial and livelihood security and environmental sustainability, which contrasts with the results of the FD views

of 'managing' people for conservation objectives without taking their livelihoods or tenure into account. There have been several tribal revolts against these processes of tribal ancestral lands being appropriated by the FD in many parts of the country, for example the Rampa rebellion in Godavari district (1922-24) and the *Gond* Revolt in Adilabad (1940).

The colonial government thus asserted control over extensive forestlands, resulting in the decline in traditional conservation and management systems around the forests (Gadgil and Guha, 1992). The degradation of forests by the middle of the 20th century has been partly blamed on the accelerated fellings performed during the crises of the two world wars (Sitaram, 1979). Gadgil and Guha (1992) are of the same view because the tree felling during the war period was so severe that it seemed far beyond sustainable limits in many cases. Moreover, forest based industries had expanded in numbers during after the two World Wars.

Post Colonial Forest Management

After independence, the main tasks of the FDs were consolidation and unification of forest laws and extension of scientific management on a reasonably uniform basis. Subsequent to that is the taking over of most of the uncultivated lands/forests under *Zamindars* and Princely rulers. The post-independence land acquisition often did not follow the legal procedures for settling the rights of pre-existing users and occupants, besides bringing even local community forests, earlier set aside for meeting local needs, within the ambit of a national asset to be managed for meeting 'national' needs, (predominantly supplying industrial demand and generating revenue). In the early fifties most States enacted new legislation affecting land tenure systems, whereby large areas of privately owned forests were transferred to the FDs. In 1950 the '*Vanamahotsava*', 'National Festival of Tree Plantation', started, intended as a measure for the wildlife and soil conservation across India. More substantially, the commencement of the 'National Plan of Development' in 1951, followed by Five-Year plans, initiated the move toward felling natural forests on an unprecedented scale, replacing them with artificial and man-made forests for 'enhanced productivity'.

The early post-colonial forest policy differed little from the colonial period. The National Forest Policy 1952 did not consider the needs of the local people, its aim being to supply timber for industrial needs. Commercialisation

of forests was emphasised, like the colonial regime, at the cost of the local people. Independence did not help these groups of people as they suffered due to the National Forest Policy 1952. The same policy continued to be practised till 1976.

The post-colonial government, in the Forest Policy of 1952 continued to envisage the commercial exploitation of forests, now for the 'national' rather than 'colonial' interest. The operative law continued to be the IFA, 1927, later additionally adding the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, both further restricted forest-users rights. The National Commission on Agriculture (NAC, 1976) further emphasised the commercial importance of forests alleging that rural communities as the main culprits for its destruction. But despite insisting on the primacy of ensuring timber supply for industries, it at least recognised subsistence forest product needs, and proposed alternative arrangements, wood-lots and farm forestry. The new concept of Social Forestry (SF) was introduced in order to reduce the local population pressure on the forests. But, SF could not become a real substitute for product supply from the natural forests, and was unpopular in many areas, leading to conflict between local communities and the FD triggering the process of further degradation. The disillusionment with SF was clearly reflected in the rapid withdrawal of almost all foreign aid for this in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While SF had not achieved its stated objective-basic needs provision through participatory communal silviculture on non-forest wastelands, the huge success of farm forestry made possible a new policy of taking industrial wood production out of forest areas (Kumar et al., 1999).

Recognition of the importance of forests at the policy level is reflected in enshrining in the Constitution 'a commitment to environmental protection and improvement' (Kashyap, 1990). A direct reference to forest protection and improvement was introduced in the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1977, interjecting a new dimension to public responsibility by obligating the Union Government to protect and improve environmental sustainability. Article 48A makes a specific reference to forest protection as an obligation of the State. This article states: 'The State shall endeavour to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country'. Constitutionally, it has been enjoined upon every citizen of India

as a fundamental duty: 'to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures' (Article 51 A (G), (1990)).

By the late 1980s across India the SF programme was labelled as fundamentally flawed, in that it did not address management of forest areas. Amid widespread civil society mobilisation, policy response came in the form of the 1988 forest act. Subsequently the JFM (JFM) initiative emerged from the centre, encouraging states to form local institutions to undertake protection activities on degraded state forests (Sundar and Jeffery, 1999). Prior to 1988 forest policies focused mainly on the productive and profit making aspects with a focus on timber for industrial requirements. Moreover, they had restricted the local communities of using the forests (Gol, 1952). This effectively represented heavy subsidies flowing towards industry, and the alienation of forest dwellers and dependents adversely affecting their livelihoods. Till 1988, the post-colonial Forest Policy mainly focussed to supply the forest resources mainly to the industrial requirements and other commercial purposes, claiming that supply of forest resources to these purposes was in the 'national interest'. But this policy led to extensive deforestation in different parts of the country. These policies have not considered the needs of forest-dwellers and users as legitimate. This kind of approach led to several conflicts. This led to a reorientation from the commercial-oriented forest policy to a more 'people-oriented forest policy' leading to the introduction of JFM.

The new Forest Policy of 1988 is considered as a watershed in the history of forest policy. The salient features of the new policy were preservation and restoration of ecological balance, conservation of the natural heritage of the country by preserving the remaining natural forests, protecting the vast genetic resources for the benefit of posterity, fulfilling the basic requirements of the rural and tribal people residing near the forests and maintenance of the intrinsic relationship between forests and the tribal and other poor people living in and around forests by protecting their customary rights and concessions on the forests.

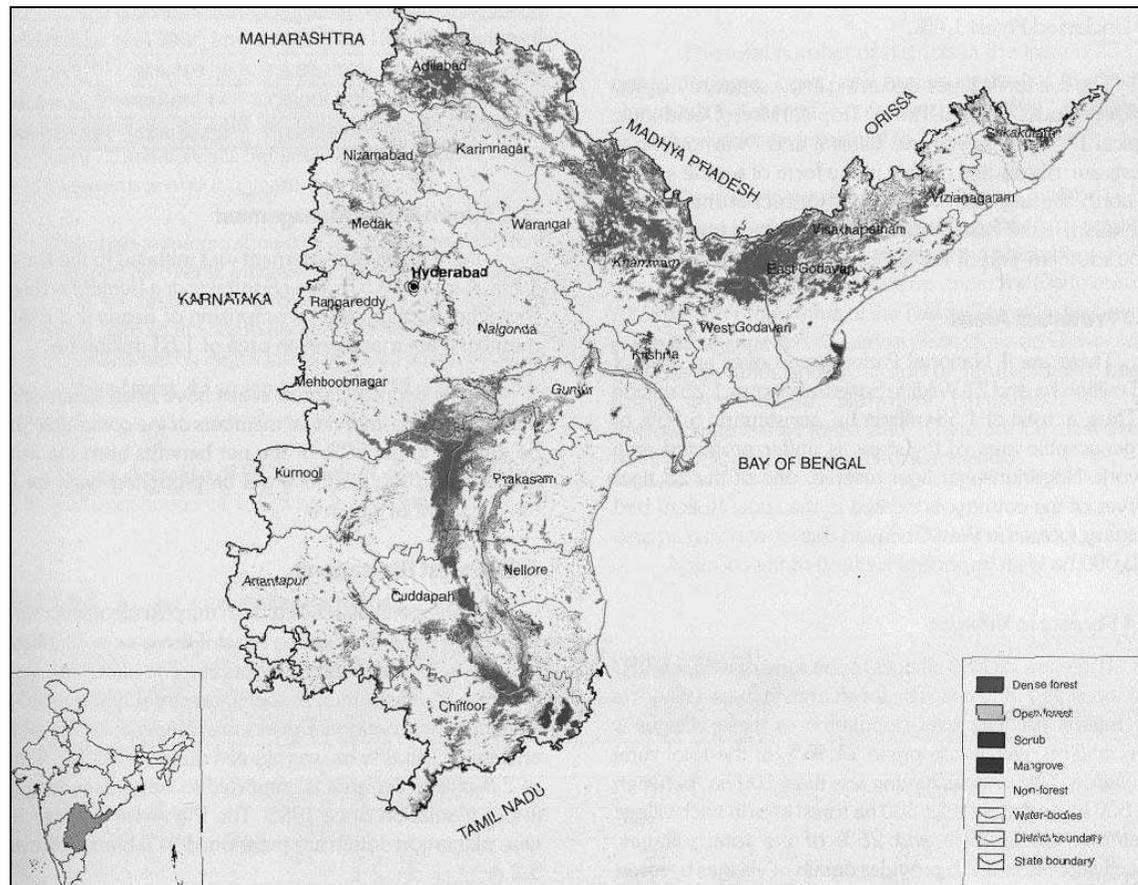
III Trends in Forest Resources in AP

In AP, 5.66 mha had been declared state forest by 1955-56 and this has increased to 6.19 mha in 2001-02 (Economic Survey 2002-03). The total recorded forest area is currently 6.38 mha. The forest cover of AP is of course different from the forest land area because of both deforestation, and the reservation of non-forest land. Based on satellite data (November 1998 to January 1999), it is 44,229 sq. km (or 4.42 mha) accounting for 16.08% of the geographic area, of which 24,190 sq.km are dense forest, 19,642 sq.km are open forest and 397 sq.km are mangroves.

The five forest types in the State are Tropical Dry Deciduous, Tropical Thorn, Tropical Moist Deciduous, Tropical Dry Evergreen and Littoral and Swamp forests. The forest area is distributed in two main strips. One is a wide East-West strip in the North of the state: running from Nizamabad district in the West to Srikakulam in the East. A belt also runs North-South from central to the southern part of the state in the Nallmalai hills. There are 4 National Parks spread over an area of 0.33 million ha and 21 Wildlife Sanctuaries over 1.25 million ha. A total of 1.58 mha, constituting 5.76% of the geographic area of the state, is under the protected area network. Nagarjunsagar tiger reserve, one of the 23 tiger reserves of the country, is located in the state. Although according to official statistics the area of state forestland has increased over the period, the actual forest cover has not increased for the same period. Besides, the official statistics often over-estimate the area under forests and other Common Pool Resources (CPR) and under-estimate the net sown area as the pre-existing occupation of lands under other uses, which have been declared state 'forest' and illegal encroachments are not reflected in official data.

Nineteen percent of the 26,586 villages in AP have 'forest' as land use. The forest area in these villages is 2.57 mha. With a total population 10.67 million they represent about 22 percent of the total rural population. The villages having less than 100 ha, between 100-500 ha and more than 500 ha forest area in each village constitute 35%, 39% and 26% of the total villages respectively. The mean forest area per village is 506 ha. Most of the forest area in the state is accounted for by Adilabad, East Godavari, Khammam Mehboobnagar, Prakasham, Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Warangal and West Godavari districts.

Map 1: Forest Cover of AP, (according to Forest Survey of India 1999)



Changes in Forest Land Use

Changes in land use are highly controversial and contested. There are a number of ways land under FD management may be re-allocated to another use. For instance area allotted for the rehabilitated persons due to projects, area occupied for the different government projects, area 'alienated' or 'encroached' by local people, irrigation projects, and so on. These kinds of activities have increased over the post-independence period. For example, between 1950s and 1983-84, 2.07 *lakh* hectares of forestland were lost of which, two-third were diverted for rehabilitation and agricultural purposes. However, much of this loss has not been reflected in the official forest statistics.

The FD claims over the nature and extent of 'encroachment' are increasing disputed by civil society groups and academics, and we must exercise caution in considering these figures, as by now it is abundantly clear that many of these lands fall under the 'disputed' category due to inadequacies in the legal processes by which largely tribal lands were declared state forests. According to official estimates, the total 'loss' of forestland had increased to 2.36 *lakh* hectares by 1991-92 (Table 1), and about 29 thousand hectares of 'encroached' forestland had been regularised by 1994. The area 'lost' due to encroachments has remained constant because only legalised encroachments are recorded here, while the illegal encroachments far exceed the legalised encroachments.

Much of the forest area lies in Schedule V areas of the state, in which the Constitution requires the protection of tribal rights, identity and culture through a different form of administration. However, the FD has not yet acknowledged the need to subordinate forest management practices to these constitutionally more important objectives. Neither has it acknowledged that much of what it classifies as 'encroached land is actually land under customary tribal '*podu*' forest fallows management. The area lost due to rehabilitation activities between the periods accounts for the second largest component of the forest area lost; both development activities and the ineffectiveness of the prevailing forest management regime has led to the loss of forest areas in AP.

Despite neglecting the underlying conflicts between conventional forest management and local livelihood priorities, APFD initiated several measures to further extend forest resources during the 1970s and 80's. Afforestation was attempted with the launch of the SF scheme aided by Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), under which an area of 136,885 ha was planted during 1983-90. Additionally, plantations were taken up along riverbanks to prevent sand drift, along coastal areas as a windbreak and for fuel wood and fodder purposes. A total of 2.5 mha area is reported to have been brought under plantation since 1951 (although it is not clear how much of these planted areas survived).

Table 1: Loss of Forests in AP (in hectares)

Purpose	Up to 1983-84 (ha)	% to total area lost	Up to 1991-92 (ha)	% to total area lost
Rehabilitation	66,759	32.18	66,767	28.30
Agriculture	87,289	42.07	104,902	44.47
Non-agriculture	18,816	9.07	19,154	8.12
<i>Singareni</i> colonies	5,461	2.63	15,907	6.72
Encroachments	29,160	14.05	29,160	12.36
Total	207,485	100.00	235,889	100.00

Source: GoAP 'Facts and Figure's 1999, FD.

Changes in Forest Condition

Not only have the forest areas declined but also the quality of the forest (forest cover) has declined in different regions of AP: the extent of the degraded forests has been increased remarkably. According to the National Remote Sensing Agency (NRSA), about 38 percent of the forest area in AP was degraded in 1988-89 (Table 2). The extent of degradation was very high in AP when compare with the national level (24 percent). Although these statistics are challenged by many civil society groups as being misleading, as the extent of actual degradation is much higher. Forest degradation is not uniform across districts of the state. The nature and extent of degradation has reflected on the revenue generation of the forests. The degradation of forests was mainly due to the ineffectiveness of the FD or non-cooperation of the people to protect the forest.

Table 2: Extent of Forest Degradation in AP

District	Total Forest Area (ha)	Forest Area as % of land use	Degraded Forest area (ha)	% Forest Area
Srikakulam	69,000	11.9	39,997	59.20
Vizianagaram	119,000	18.3	71,319	76.61
Visakhapatnam	441,000	39.4	132,417	32.69
East Godavari	323,000	29.9	51,571	17.44
West Godavari	82,000	10.5	22,831	25.96
Krishna	66,000	7.6	42,563	72.57
Guntur	162,000	14.2	136,847	91.11
Prakasam	442,000	25.1	85,335	19.25
Nellore	252,000	19.2	174,606	71.34
Chittoor	451,000	29.9	301,197	66.96
Kadapa	502,000	32.6	141,852	28.05
Kurnool	351,000	19.8	89,337	29.58
Anantapur	197,000	10.3	129,765	79.09
Mahaboobnagar	303,000	16.5	68,933	23.46
Ranga Reddy	73,000	9.7	63,071	87.30
Medak	91,000	9.4	66,179	93.84
Nizamabad	181,000	22.6	78,097	46.30
Adilabad	723,000	44.9	178,837	25.67
Karimnagar	250,000	21.2	87,465	38.04
Khammam	843,000	52.7	145,461	18.52
Nalgonda	84,000	5.9	79,689	95.79
Warangal	371,000	28.8	108,316	29.37
AP	6,376,000	23.2	2,295,685	38.02
All India	65,710,815	19.99	16,274,270	24.77

Source: NRSA, 1995

This NRSA data reflects more general problems with forest data in India: it does not pertain to 'legal' state forests but to actual forest cover over all land categories put together. The all India figures of forest area do not agree with Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoEF) figures. There is an underlying need to improve the accuracy and conceptual clarity of forest data, to be based on the legal status of the land involved.

Only by the 1980s did the government begin to concede that without the co-operation of the people, who are using the forest resources for subsistence, forest conservation is virtually impossible. Consequently, JFM was introduced in the early 90s. By early 2000 the AP Government even moved on to introducing 'CFM' in an attempt to improve upon JFM.

IV Forest Policies in AP

Since the late nineteenth century, the present State of AP came under two different systems of rule: one part ruled under the British-administered Madras Presidency, the other by the *Nizams* of Hyderabad. Hence, the former part of the state (consisting of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Eluru, Machilipatanam, Ongole, Godavari, Kistna, Anantapur, Kurnool, Kadapa, Nellore, Chittoor and Guntur) was following the Forest Acts of the Madras Presidency the other part under the *Nizams* (Adilabad, Karimnagar, Medak, Khammam, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Mahaboobnagar and Warangal districts) (see Map 2 below). The forest policy of present AP must be understood by looking at both the Madras Presidency and *Nizams'* regime during the late eighteenth century till the formation of the current linguistic state.

Forest Policy in Madras Presidency

As already discussed above, the Madras Presidency had taken a more considerate line in respect of local people's forest rights from the IFA, manifested in the Madras Forest Act of 1882. This was followed and continued in AP when the State of AP was formed on the 1st November 1956. The laws in force in the respective territories before 1956 were continued by virtue of section 119 of the States reorganisation Act, 1956. There were two enactments in force, namely, AP (Andhra Area) Forest Act 1882 (or Madras Forest Act 1882) and AP (Telangana area) Forest Act 1915 (or Hyderabad Forest Act, 1915).

Forest Policy in Nizam's Domain

Under the *Nizam* rule, the forest resources were not managed separately, but along with the revenue administration, till the mid of nineteenth century. Under the revenue administration, forest resources were exploited through the permit system. Permit holders were allowed to cut down the forests

Map 2: Administrative Divisions of AP Pre-Independence



without restriction. At the same time, customary rights of the local people were recognised. In other words, although the forest resources were allowed for commercial purposes, community needs were respected until the early nineteenth century. However, this did not create any conflict as long as the available forest resources were sufficient to meet both demands.

Although a separate department was established for forest management by the *Nizam* in 1857, it did not control the entire forest region, but only thirteen species. Except these, all other species were under the control of the revenue administration. Further conservation of forest was envisaged only in the last decade of the nineteenth century (1890). Under this Act, all the species were brought under the FD. The role of Revenue Department in forestlands was completely withdrawn. The forest was classified into two categories viz., Reserved Forest (RF) and open forest.

While introducing the reserve forest, the *Nizams* never accommodated the tribal method of cultivation. The tribals were cultivating the land under a communal tenure system, in which they didn't have private ownership rights. Consequently, many tribals were forced to evacuate RF lands during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition to this, introduction of the communication facilities into the hill areas led to the non-tribal settlement and alienation of the tribal land during the same period in different parts of the *Nizams* territory.

Earlier in 1867 when a separate department was created during the premiership of Sir Salar Jung, the forests in Hyderabad State were considered subservient to the interest of agriculture and were thus administered by the District officials. It was placed under non-professional officers for 20 years and its work was only to protect and sell eight or nine valuable species of trees, designated as 'reserved' timber under a set of simple rules, while the rest of the produce and administration remained in the hands of the district officials. As a consequence, there existed dual control over the management of forests, which proved to be a failure. There was no regard for environmental balance because revenue officers cleared *lakhs* of acres of forests for agricultural purposes thus wiping out valuable timber. However, in 1887 the government secured the services of the trained European Indian Forest Service (IFS) officer, Mr. Ballantine, from Berar. He served in the domain of *Nizam* till 1893 during which period he was able to arrest forest abuses of unrestricted felling under *darkhast* (application) system and selected several tracts for reserves.

Later in the year 1893 the government declared vast tracts of forest as protected forests and placed them under the charge of FD. The Government issued definite circular instructions for the administration of these protected areas. The Forest Act was enacted to obtain legal control over the forests in 1900 to consolidate over the instructions embodied in government circulars. The number of reserved timber species was increased in the non protected areas. The efforts of the department was directed mainly towards: survey and reservation of forest areas, introduction of felling schemes and works of improvement, systematic exploitation of forest produce, development of a sustained revenue and consolidation and conservation of big valuable forest estate. The Forest Act of 1900 was found inadequate for the growing

requirements of the FD. It was, therefore superseded by a revised Forest Act of 1916, which laid the foundation for the establishment of a more substantial forest administration. This Act was again superseded by the Hyderabad Forest Act of 1945, which was modelled on the lines of IFA (Gogia, 2002).

Forest Policy in AP from 1956

With the formation of AP, the Law Commission of AP examined the integration of the two different laws. They discussed the provisions of the two enactments and examined corresponding laws in force in Bombay, Uttar Pradesh, Mysore and Kerala. The AP Forest Act, 1967 was thus drafted and passed by the legislature and it is in force from April 1967 (Gogia, 2002, Sunder et al., 2001). Various acts and rules were later introduced to complement and strengthen the existing forest policies. Under the A P Forest Act of 1967, forest offences rules (1969) were introduced describing in detail how forest officers can carry out the compounding prosecution when they combat the offence and the procedure for booking and fixation of penalty to the offender. Similarly, the AP Forest Produce Transit Rules, 1970, were introduced to halt illegal movement of forest produce from or within the state unless it is accompanied by a permit issued by the government of the state from where such produce is imported and the said permit shall be valid only for the transport of such produce and such quantity to the destination specified therein.

A particularly significant change for local forest-dependent communities has been the introduction of the AP Minor Forest Produce (MFP) (Regulation of Trade) Act, 1971, introduced with regard to *Beedi* leaves, to ensure revenue to the government, creating a state monopoly in trading of forest produce in the state. It was accordingly decided to undertake legislative measures and drop the previous provisions where the contractors had much scope for manipulating their contract. Under this regulation the government or an officer or an agent appointed for a unit were identified for sale or purchase or cure or otherwise process or collect or store or transport any MFP. Penalty was to be imposed for the violation of the Act. The AP Scheduled Areas MFP (Regulation of Trade) Regulations, 1979, was introduced to make provisions for the trade of certain MFP by creation of a State monopoly in such trade in the scheduled areas of the State of

AP. The scheduled areas meant the areas, which have been or may be declared scheduled areas by the president under sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 6 of the fifth schedule to the constitution of India for safeguarding tribal rights and interests. It contained restrictions on purchase or transport of MFP i.e., no person other than the corporation shall sell or purchase or cure or otherwise process or collect or store or transport any MFP to which this regulation applies. The AP Scheduled Areas MFP (Regulation of trade) Rules, 1990, provide the definition of the 'accused' clearly along with the 'MFP in transit', which includes produce stored in any place or in the margin of any public road or carts or other vehicles or not and the MFP found in any river, canal or water weather in rafts or not. All these acts were aimed to create state monopoly in dealing with the forest produce although the constitution requires protection of tribal rights in Schedule V areas.

The State owns and manages almost 6.4 million hectares of forestland (effectively 23 percent of its area), a large part of which falls within scheduled areas. Earlier management strategies had focused on timber production and commercialisation. The formation of the Forest Development Corporation in AP reflected the revenue orientation of forest management regardless of forest dwelling communities. Government-enforced management has failed to reverse the trend of forest degradation, and has even increased it, through the failed reforestation schemes, where clearance of natural forests for plantations of timber and pulp species has failed. SF programmes were introduced in the 1980s, in which plantation activities were encouraged on private and community lands by supplying planting materials through nurseries. These were set-up to promote fuel wood plantations on communal lands and tree growing on farms, but did not involve forest land. Canada India Development Assistance (CIDA) assisted the project (Venkatraman and Falconer, 1998, Gopal and Upadhyay, 2001).

Tribal Livelihoods, Rights, and Uprisings

Some 65% of the forest area of AP is spread over 8 predominantly tribal districts in the northern part of the state. These areas are amongst the least developed in AP, and indeed in the whole of India. Historically, tribal communities have depended on forests for their livelihoods, both for cultivation and forest product collection. Many tribals engage in cultivation in upland forests, called *Podu*. *Podu* cultivation involves the clearance of

small patches of hill forests for subsistence cultivation (e.g. various crops including sorghum, millet). After a few years the cultivators move on to another area. A cultivator household may have customary tenure to a long rotation cycle of plots over perhaps 10 years or more, and move between them.

Forest Reservation and Tribal Uprisings

Tribals were severely affected during the colonial period by reservation of forests, and have strongly resisted the erosion of customary rights in the forest. The relationship between these tribals and the government agencies, particularly the FD, became very strained, and there have been both political movements and armed struggles by tribals to regain control over their lands, with numerous risings, including most recently the '*Naxalite*' movements. Alluri Sitaram Raju had led an uprising during 1922-24 against tribals being forced to lay roads with free labour. By the close of 1832, disturbances in the *Zamindari* of Kasipuram, Payakaraopet and Palakonda of the present day Srikakulam district resulted in passing of Act XXIV of 1839 wherein the collector was vested with extraordinary powers. The implementation of this Act led to upsurges in many other areas. The disturbances, which started with the passing of Act XXIV of 1839, continued into the 20th century, which saw Rampa Rebellion in Godavari District when tribals were barred from entering into forests. The *Gond* Revolt of 1940 in Adilabad district started because of the influx of outsiders and land alienation following the new forest conservancy laws. In the post-independence period several heavily forested districts in AP, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh have witnessed armed rebellion by the so called *Naxalite* Movement directed against the state (Saxena, 2000). The *Naxalite* movement erupted initially in the Srikakulam district during 1968-70 due to exploitation by the *sahukars* (Rao and Rao, 1982; Arnold, 1982).

Tribal Welfare

The issue of tribal welfare was an urgent one for the *Nizam*, partly due to the tension and periodic violence between administrator and tribals. The *Nizam* appointed the anthropologist Furer-Haimendorf to study the issue of tribal welfare and make recommendations, which led to the 'rehabilitation' of tribals on forest land, and in Adilabad alone it is estimated that over

45,000 ha were provided to them. In other areas Tribals continued to challenge the reservation of forests they had customarily used, and this led in 1972 to the regularisation of 27,952 ha of land (land under *podu* prior to 1964).

Over the 20th Century, with increasing tribal populations and reducing forest extent and rights, *podu* rotations have been reducing. A further recent issue exacerbating tribal tensions was the political decision in 1977 notifying *lambadas* ethnic group as Scheduled Tribes (ST). This affected the Telangana region and resulted in an increased influx of *lambada* families from neighbouring districts of Maharashtra state. This also increased the pressure on forests and further loss of the indigenous *Gond* tribals' lands to the more aggressive *lambadas*.

There is intense argument over labels and definitions in terms of tribal rights. Tribals claim their customary use of forest land for *podu* cultivation is being labelled 'encroachment' by the FD. Indeed many of these lands do fall under the 'disputed' category due to inadequacies in the legal processes by which largely tribal lands were declared state forests. Foresters on the other hand commonly argue that regularisation of *podu* land has only encouraged tribal *podu* to expand, led to immigration, and strengthened popular demands for further regularisation. The debate has remained an intractable dilemma for many years. One might have hoped that the implementation of JFM could mark a turning point in this dilemma, although we will see it has only exacerbated the friction to date.

JFM in AP

Even before the introduction of JFM in India, community-based forest management was practised in different parts of AP (and indeed in several other states), on a small-scale. For example, in Karimnagar district this system has existed since 1982-83 (Venkati Madari, 1997). The Government of AP had introduced people's participation in forest management in 1983; the FD leasing out the degraded forestlands on 'tree *patta*' to the weaker sections of the society for raising fuel wood plantation with a view to improve the performance under SF programme. This was modified as reforestation of degraded forests under the 'Family Assistance Method'. This scheme granted tree *pattas* for raising block plantations to the weaker sections of

the society. However, this programme has not produced the expected results (Reddy, nd). Leasing out forestlands to weaker sections for raising fuel wood plantation was taken up with CIDA assistance. Many people could not access these entitlements, as the Forest Conservation Act 1980 did not permit leasing out of forestland to private individuals, authorities or agencies without the approval of the central government. As a way out, the scheme was modified into the 'Reforestation of Degraded Forests with family Assistance Scheme but when this scheme was referred to the central government for approval it was rejected. The central government said that the scheme could not be allowed on forestlands. The efforts of the poor to seek livelihoods received a setback and they could not savour the fruits of their efforts (Gopal and Upadhyay, 2001).

JFM Implementation Strategy

JFM was implemented in AP from 1992, consequent to the issuance of the first GO (GO). Later, this Order was changed several times to incorporate pro-people measures, resulting in the GO No. 173 of December 1996. In consonance with the National Policy, the Government of AP framed a revised State Forest Policy in 1993. Under this, Vana Samarakshana Samithis (VSS) was established to protect the forest resources, mainly in the hill areas.

SD Mukherji, previously the Principle Chief Conservator in AP, and an enthusiast for JFM, describes the initial scenario:

'The most difficult part of JFM was to change the mindset of the Foresters and restore trust between them and the people. Most foresters genuinely believed that JFM would bring an end to whatever little forest was left due to their protection. They were also of the strong view that people's need of forest produce, if any, should be met from SF plantations of fuelwood and fodder outside the RF area. They were also afraid of losing their power and authority over the people. On the other hand the people refused to come to the Foresters even for a discussion. They would not believe the foresters because of their past experience when the latter used to visit the villages mostly to book cases against the people for 'forest offences' such as collection of fuelwood, bamboo and timber, grazing of cattle ...

The people, living either by *podu* or by selling fuelwood and timber, were afraid of losing their livelihood. It was difficult for them to believe that the FD could think of doing any good to them. Similarly, the FD had no idea of the role of NGOs either and did not trust them. The NGOs also believed that the Foresters were anti-people and corrupt.’ (Mukherjee, in Bahuguna et. al, 2004).

As observed above it is clear that FD enjoyed complete command of the RF. People entering the RF without the permission of the FD were trespassers and liable to be prosecuted. The Khaki uniform was a symbol of policing power and equated with police. They were there to protect the forests and people had to pay, officially or unofficially, for use of the forest in any form. The fear of imposition of fine or prosecution in the court of law for the use of forests kept the forest fringe communities in constant fear. People used to run away seeing a uniformed forest officer entering the village. This relationship of fear and distrust had developed over a century of forest management. It was therefore a difficult task, for both the forester and the people, to shed the mind-set and feel free to discuss matters regarding forest development in a participatory manner. Initial period of JFM saw difficulties in communication between the people and FD. But each following year bridged the people and FD and brought closer to each other, thanks to JFM. Now people have no more fear of FD mainly because of regular interaction and mutual interests in forest protection and development. Visits by senior officers to enlist the cooperation of the people in the development of forests has imbibed the confidence in the people (Mukherjee et. al, 2004).

Clearly the poor relationships would be difficult to change. The basis for envisaged working relationship between the FD and local people was through Vana Samarakshana Samithis (VSS) or village forest protection committees. The basic purpose of the VSS is to protect the forest from encroachment, grazing, theft, and fire. The VSS would have the right to enjoy the usufruct from the adjacent forest, and share of revenue flows from it. Later, as funds became available forest management plans, known as a ‘micro plans’ were prepared for longer term management planning.

The guidelines for drawing up local micro-plans specify the following the current stages: Through a method of 'participatory appraisal with regard to initiation to under take the work is discussed, where all the members get a chance to air their views. After this the Department of Forest surveys the forest adjoining the village and demarcates boundaries, using the conclusions of the initial discussions as a framework. The committee and the forester then prepare a detailed micro plan for forest development. Thereafter, annual programmes are worked out and submitted to the Forestry Department for approval. The micro plans are premeditated to ensure the protection and restoration of the forest's productive capacity in a shortest possible time. Finally, the VSS members undertake the planting, silvicultural operations, and soil conservation works for which they are paid out of project funds. A legal memorandum of understanding between the VSS and the Forestry Department formally minutiae the duties, functions, and entitlements of everyone involved (Venkatraman and Falconer, 1998). The micro plans are ostensibly developed to ensure the protection and restoration of the forest's productive capacity in the shortest possible time. However, in practise it is generally the FD staff writing the plan and ensuring their objectives are prioritised. The extent to which villagers have a genuine say in decision-making is widely questioned.

To generate income from degraded forests takes time. The FD also seeks to motivate the members by addressing social needs; in some cases developing and supporting the village development through women's thrift groups, drinking water facilities, water storage facilities, community halls, fishponds, household biogas plants are built and low-cost smokeless ovens, and small-scale irrigation facilities are provided to the villagers. These "entry point" activities are sometimes provided through project funds, but mainly the foresters must seek the assistance of other government departments or NGOs to facilitate this broader rural development. In many instances, this experience has encouraged the government to assign foresters the task of coordinating rural development assistance within their localities. This trend illustrates the apparent transformation of the Forestry Department, now attempting to present itself as integrating the conservation and development aims of the government in forest areas.

Although JFM was introduced in early 1990s, the growth in numbers was very slow till 1995-96. From a mere 133 VSS during 1994-95, it has gone

up to 6,726 VSS in 2001-02 in the State managing 16.89 *lakh* hectares of forest area, of which about 7.85 *lakh* ha of degraded forests have been treated through these VSS (Table 3). Around 13 *lakh* people, including 6 *lakh* women are involved. Funds from the WB aided AP Forestry Project, the EAS and other centrally sponsored schemes have being utilized for implementation of JFM. The availability and pooling of funds, apart explains the sudden increase in the number of VSS during the above years. By 2004 the official number stands at 7,245 VSS, managing 1,886,764 ha, (or over 29% of state forest land) and involving 611,095 families (Bahuguna et al 2004). The number of VSS and areas under JFM in different districts are shown in Table 4. The largest number of VSS concentrated in Adilabad, Visakhapatnam, Khammam districts, those districts with both high forest cover and coincidentally those where *podu* has been seen as a major problem by the FD.

Table 3: Progress Of JFM Implementation in AP: 1994/95-1999/2000

Year	No. of VSS formed	Area Covered (in lakh ha)
1994-95	133	0.67
1995-96	447	2.51
1996-97	1,722	6.44
1997-98	3,812	9.28
1998-99	6,527	15.46
1999-2000	6,575	16.52
2000-01	6,726	16.82
2001-02	6,726	16.89

Source: Economic Survey, 2000-2001, 2002-2003, p.38

The AP Forest Policy 1993 laid down broad guidelines for future forest management. It encouraged participation of local village communities in forest management through JFM, by organizing them into VSSs. The initiatives in the policy were

- (a) abolition of forest contracts and encouragement of departmental working,
- (b) establishment of Forest Development Corporations to attract investments
- (c) encouragement to SF, Agro Forestry and Farm Forestry,

- (d) bio-diversity conservation and enactment of a special Act for the purpose and
- (e) widening the scope of Forest Laws to cover specific issues such as timber in transit, regulation of tree felling in private lands, regulating of saw mills and timber depots in private sector, etc (Government of AP - Abstract).

Table 4: Number of VSS/EDC in Districts of AP in 1999

District	No. of VSS/EDC formed
Srikakulam	225
Vizianagaram	189
Visakhapatnam	913
East Godavari	368
West Godavari	207
Krishna	75
Guntur	167
Prakasam	125
Nellore	144
Chittoor	406
Kadapa	236
Kurnool	228
Anantapur	215
Mahaboobnagar	291
Ranga Reddy	132
Medak	235
Nizamabad	216
Adilabad	978
Karimnagar	332
Khammam	506
Nalgonda	118
Warangal	243
AP	6,557

Source: Sharma, P.K (1999) `JFM: The AP Experience' p.105.

There is however a total absence of mechanisms for addressing and resolving the serious conflicts related to people's rights over lands declared state forests.

Determining the policies and procedures for the joint action, the GO laid down certain rules for the VSS formation, its roles and responsibilities along with that of the Forestry Department and elucidated the benefit-sharing policies. AP's benefit sharing policy is apparently the most liberal of all the states in India, although the contentious issue of people's entitlement only to the 'net incremental value' after the initiation of JFM effectively reduces entitlements considerably. Initially, in 1992 the membership of the VSS was promised complete access to non-timber forest products in the JFM areas, 25 per cent of the timber and one-third of the revenue from the sale of the non-timber FP. Under the revised order of 1996, the VSS is entitled to 100 percent of the 'net incremental value' of timber and bamboo harvested after deducting costs, with a condition that at least 50 percent or as much as required of this revenue should be ploughed back for the management or enrichment of the forests. Benefit sharing arrangement of 100 percent share in the net incremental value of the produce is further amended. Now VSS are entitled to full harvest of timber and bamboo from natural forests vested with them in addition to Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFPs) and yield in proportion to period of management by them in respect of timber from plantations (Communication from Mr. Kalaghatgi, PCF). The VSS is entitled to all non-nationalised NTFPs. Although *de jure* only three items (ie *sal* seeds, bamboo and *Tendu* leaf) are specified as 'nationalised' while the villagers have only collecting rights in their area over the nationalised ones and have to sell to the *Girijan* Cooperative Co-operation (GCC) at its rates despite the fact that Panchayat Extension Act to Scheduled Areas (PESA) endows *gram sabhas* in schedule V areas with the ownership of all MFP. Some changes have been made to other provisions as well, such as the composition of the executive committee and the right of the VSS to apprehend offenders. There are a number of committees related to JFM operate at the state, district and village level in AP, which are discussed below:

State Level JFM Committee

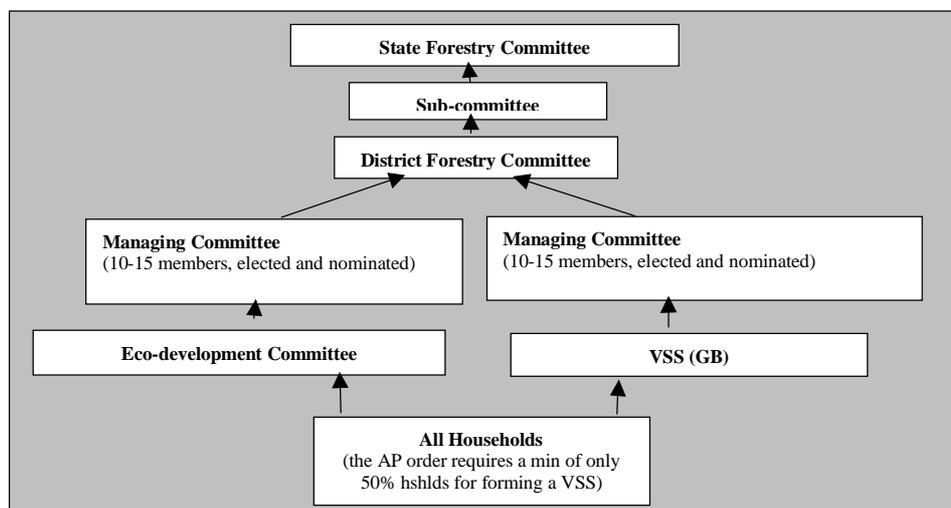
The state level committee consisted of Principal Secretary of Energy Forests Environment Science and Technology (EFES&T) as its chairman, Principal Secretary of Social Welfare or his nominee, Managing Director of AP Forest Development Corporation Limited, Commissioner of Tribal Welfare, Director/ Commissioner of Agriculture Department, Managing Director of *Girijan* Co-operative Corporation Ltd., Nominee of Secretary (Finance), Director of

Women and Child Welfare, Two representatives of NGOs, a representative of MoEF (GOI) as the members and PCCF as member convenor. This committee was to meet quarterly to submit its report to the government and co-ordinate among various departments of the State government connected with the implementation of JFM.

In order to strengthen the JFM further various GOs were enacted in AP. These are mostly in the nature of incentives for forest protection. One such GO is regarding sharing of compounding fees to the tune of 25 percent (agreed during the second State level committee meeting held on 26.8.1995) with the VSS members for better forest protection and prevention of smuggling of forest produce. The order contained directions to constitute 'three member committee' consisting of Principal Secretary of EFES&T (FOR. VI) Department, Secretary of Finance and Planning Department and PCCF of AP to scrutinise the cases apprehended by the members of VSS and recommend the award to be given to such VSS. Further changes were made to the earlier orders to give more incentives to the members of the VSS with respect to sharing of benefits from the reserved items like '*Beedi* leaves'. The order also mentions about prohibition of 'horticulture' in the name of JFM and the emphasis was on the maintenance of bio-diversity. The order also speaks about ensuring the local people's interests before starting the JFM programme at a given location by laying emphasis on places where good leadership is available or NGOs are active enough to provide interface between the government and people, association of an officer not below the rank of a 'Range Officer', monitoring of the programme to provide for the local people's requirements and their wishes in the planning process and provision for frequent review to identify the shortcomings to steer the course of events towards positive outcome by amending and regulating the rules. The order also specifies for the constitution of VSS of the local village communities, and a direction for the already existing VSS to carry out forest programme jointly with the FD as per the rules and the guidelines issued thereon by the GoI (Figure 1).

The Forestry Department organises and provides the assistance in technical and administrative skills for the VSS by carefully selecting the villages that are on the fringe of the degraded forests. Although due to most areas falling under schedule V of the constitution, the Integrated Tribal

Figure 1: Organisational Arrangements for JFM



Development Agencies (ITDAs) are supposed to be responsible for these areas.

District Forest Committee

The 'District Forestry Committee' is constituted to implement JFM at the district level. The committee comprised of District Collector as its Chairman, Project Director of District Rural Development Agency (DRDA), Project Officer of ITDA, Joint director of Agriculture, Joint Director of Animal Husbandry, Deputy Director of Social Welfare, All Territorial Divisional officers in the District, three NGOs active in the district and Five representatives of VSS as selected by the collector respectively as the members and Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Headquarters of Territorial Division as Convenor Member. The function of the committee is to ensure co-ordination between the various departments of the government at the district level involved in the implementation of the JFM and refer matters to AP State Forestry Committee as and when necessary, apart from meeting quarterly to send its report to the PCCF and the government regularly.

To co-ordinate and facilitate the implementation of the concept of JFM in the tribal areas a Sub-committee was formed with Project officer of the ITDA as its Chairman, two NGOs to be nominated by project officer of ITDA, ten members from VSS in the Agency area, again to be nominated by the

project officer of ITDA as members and Sub-DFO/DFO in ITDA Headquarters as member/convenor. This Sub-committee was to address themselves to the problems in carrying out the deliberations and the decisions of the AP State Forestry Committee and District Forestry Committee at the field level. The Sub-committee was also responsible to implement JFM concept within its jurisdiction and meet at regular intervals (at least quarterly) and send the report to the Conservator of Forests of the District at regular intervals. The implementation of JFM in tribal areas has been strongly challenged by civil society groups as a means for the FD to gain almost total control over 'tribal development'.

Village Level Committee

The works and funds of the VSS are handled jointly by the chairperson of the VSS and the forester who acts as the secretary (Venkatraman and Falconer, 1998). NGOs are involved as facilitators to promote the formation of VSS and Eco-development committees. Their responsibilities include bringing awareness, motivation, help in preparing micro-plans, help in conducting training of local communities for capacity building, leadership skills, gender sensitisation, etc.

The members of the VSS, individually or jointly, are responsible to a) ensure protection of forest against encroachment, grazing, fires and thefts of forest produce, b) carry out development of forests in accordance with the approved JFM plan, and improve the awareness regarding forests among rural communities. The members of the VSS have the powers to apprehend the offenders and handing them over to the authorities. The authorities have the responsibility to report back the action taken against the offenders.

The managing committee shall meet at least once in a month. The managing committee prepares the JFM plan in coordination with the Forest Range Officer (FRO) and in consultation with all sections particularly women and other disadvantaged sections of the community. The JFM Plan should be approved in the General Body (GB) of the VSS. The FD assists the VSS in selection/demarcation of the forest area to be covered under JFM, in preparation of micro-plan, approving the micro-plan, drawing of the budget for the plan and getting the budget approved. The department is responsible to transfer the skills of sound silvicultural treatment and soil conservation to the members of VSS and to guide JFM micro plan implementation.

The formation of VSS is performed with the ostensible intent, according to FD and donor project literature, of bringing socially marginal groups into the fold of each VSS. Persons from all households are eligible to become members, particularly those from the most disadvantaged sections of the society, the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Tribes. Generally, two people from each household can become members, and one of them must be a woman. Most VSS range in size from 75 to 150 members. This GB elects a Managing Committee (MC) of 10 to 15 members, 33 per cent of whom must be women, who in turn elect a chairperson to oversee and manage the affairs of the VSS. Elected representatives shall not be less than six members. The number will increase by one for every fifty households or fraction over and above the base of 150 households. And the maximum members are restricted to ten. President of the gram panchayat is a member of the MC. Besides, the concerned forest guard, an officer nominated by the project officer Integrated Tribal Development Area, the local NGO actively involved in the formation of the VSS and the village development officer are also members of the VSS. The concerned forester / Deputy Range officer is a member secretary of this committee. The forester and the forest guard shall not have voting rights. The chairperson's term is co-terminus with MC i.e., 2 years. In the ITDA areas all the elected members should be tribals. In the case on non-tribal areas at least 1/3rd of the members shall be reserved for SCs and STs. Non-elected members have no voting rights. On the similar lines an eco-development committee will be constituted with an elected managing committee. A GB meeting of the VSS shall be held once in every six months to review the action taken regarding the JFM plan and review the performance of managing committee.

Role of Donors

JFM has been implemented through a number of different funding schemes. While the AP Forestry project of the WB was the major contributor (2910 VSSs), other programmes like EAS (1956 VSSs), NABARD (918 VSSs), centrally sponsored schemes (411 VSSs), etc. also accountv for substantial number of VSS. The WB started discussing an AP Forestry project in 1991, when the AP FD wanted guns and ammunition, more staff, subsidized distribution of seedlings for farm forestry, research and so on. The Bank initiated a process of reform for the Andhra Pradesh FD (APFD), hiring Indian consultants who had experience of the way the West Bengal

Government had developed participatory approaches. After workshops in 1992 with FD staff and NGOs, visits by AP staff to see what was happening in West Bengal, the principles of the project were agreed between the Bank and FD staff. About 30 percent of the project base costs are reserved for Integrated Forest Management (IFM) related components (Participatory forest rehabilitation, JFM and Tribal Development Special Action Programmes). The AP Forestry Project, sanctioned for six years from 1994 to 2000 at the overall project cost of US \$ 89.10 (Rs. 3536.5 million) of which the bulk consisted of a loan from CIDA (Sunder et al., 2001).

The major conditions put up by the WB for loan included restructuring of the FD, policy reforms open to the sectors of private initiatives and overseas training. But the local NGOs observe that this proposal would reduce the employment generated in the project and the possibility of giving away good forestland situated near industries for plantation instead of degraded land (Centre for Environmental Concerns, 1995). Initial progress was slow, and the Bank expressed some concern over the quantity and quality of VSS formed. There were also problems of co-ordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and the FD over who would implement the Bank-initiated Tribal development Plan (TDP), to provide alternative income to those adversely affected by the closure of the forests. It was finally decided that the FD would implement both JFM and the TDP, and that TDP would be implemented in all VSS with a tribal population of over 15 percent. The financial support extended by the WB in 1994 for the first phase, which ended successfully in September 2000 (Nanda, 2002).

Role of NGOs

NGO working exclusively in JFM were almost non-existent when this programme was started, but they have emerged off late to play a very significant role in the affairs of the PFM, evolving PFM policies in AP. Their role is significant in safeguarding the interests of forest communities. They have contributed positively towards bringing awareness among NGOs and VSSs regarding JFM and CFM, and strengthening the local networks. The networks could also stall some of the anti-people policies like involvement of industries in VSS through effective lobbying and campaigning. Though, there are issues that need to be addressed in order to make these networks effective. They are the issues relating to poor implementation of CFM and the involvement of NGOs at the VSS level.

On the whole, networks have evolved and spread along with PFM in AP over the last decade. They have played an important role in designing and improvising the PFM policies. Their main contribution is making the FD sensitive to the needs of forest communities. Networks and FD worked together during the transition phase of JFM to CFM. Even the FD has no hesitation in saying this though they had some unpleasant experiences between them. In fact, FD has provided them support, which helped them evolving into formal institutions and capacity build themselves. Over the last ten years their coverage has increased to 50 percent of the total VSS in the state.

The history of PFM network in AP is as old as JFM. The first NGO network was formed during the year 1992, two of the networks active and effective in their role in policy making at the state level and coordinating the groups at the local level are: i) AP NGOs committee on PFM, and ii) Vanasamakhyia. Both these networks vary in their size, structure, activities, strategies, etc., while working towards the common goal of enhancing the benefits to user groups or communities. These networks not only join hands in pursuing number of issues they have established horizontal as well as vertical linkages. While they have their own structure of vertical linkages with the NGOs and user groups at the regional and sub-regional level, their horizontal links include: Center for World Solidarity (CWS), Center for Peoples Forestry (CPF), Oxfam India Trust, SAMATA, Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development (SPWD), Action for Food Production (AFPRO), Inter Corporation NGO programme- AP (SDC-IC), Bread for the World (BFW), Action Aid, and the FD at the state and district levels.

AP NGO's Committee on PFM

The AP NGO's committee on PFM was informally initiated in 1992 with 37 NGOs. It took a formal institutional form in 1994 in the name of State committee on JFM with over 100 NGOs coming together in Anakapalli of Visakhapatnam district. Centre for World Solidarity (CWS), Oxfam India Trust and AFPRO have facilitated the formation of the network.

Presently the network has 300 NGOs spreading in 16 districts and supported by district level networks in 14 districts. These 300 NGOs cover 3000-4000 Vana Samrakshna Samithis (VSS) in the state. That is the network covers

about 50 percent of the total VSS in the state. These NGOs are coordinated at the state level with the help of a secretariat based in Hyderabad. Over the years the network got financial support for its activities from various organisations like Oxfam India Trust, CWS-NOVIB, AFPRO, SDC, BFW, Christian Aid, Action Aid and the FD.

In the year 1999 the GB recommended and elected a steering committee to take the responsibilities of the secretariat. Further, the GB recommended and authorised the secretariat to register the network under the societies act. Accordingly the network was registered in December 2001 with a new name viz., AP NGO'S Committee on PFM. Presently, Inter Co-operation (IC) and Oxfam provide financial support while the AP FD, CWS, AFPRO, Action Aid provides short-term activity based support.

Major initiatives and Achievements

The network played a critical role in evolving the JFM strategies in the initial stages. Apart from creating awareness among the communities about JFM it lobbied for pro-peoples policies at the policy level. Specifically, the network was involved in resolving the problems or conflicts pertaining to demarcation of boundaries of VSS, VSS records, C-fee (Compounding fee), Economic Development Committee (EDC) etc. Besides, the network has spread and strengthened itself during the period 1992-96. The network gained momentum and recognition at the policy level. As apart of its efforts NGOs were made members of the state forestry committee, district forestry committee, ITDA committee, and VSS management committee (GO No. 173, 1996).

Prior to the initiation of CFM in 2000, the major achievements of the network at the policy level include: a) getting the NGO representation into the policy making bodies at various levels, and b) enhancing the usufruct rights of the VSS to 100 percent. These are achieved through consultations at various levels i.e., VSS, district and state level with various stakeholders like communities, NGOs and foresters. The campaigning and lobbying for clarity in the net incremental value of use rights continued till January 2004 when further modifications are added to the earlier GO (see box 1 and also below).

Box 1: Lobbying for Usufruct Rights

AP's benefit sharing policy is apparently the most liberal, thanks to the effective lobbying of the networks. Under the revised order of 1996, the VSS is entitled to 100 percent of the 'net incremental value' of timber and bamboo harvested after deducting costs. The VSS is entitled to all non-nationalised NTFP. This is further revised in January 2004 (G.O.Ms.No. 4) to bring clarity into the 'net incremental value'. According to this, the VSS shall be entitled to the following forest produce obtained from forests managed by them.

i) All NTFPs, ii) all intermediate yields obtained from silvicultural operations in natural forests, iii) all timber and bamboo (including bamboo plantations) except in case of plantations, iv) in the case of teak plantations within VSS area, whose age is known, twice the proportionate yield harvested (including yield from thinning) with reference to age of the plantation and the period of maintenance by the VSS, v) in the case of other plantations, whose age is known, 50 percent of harvest (including thinning) of the period of management of plantation by VSS is less than 50 percent of the rotation period and 100 percent of volume harvested if such period of management by the VSS is more than 50 percent of rotation period of the plantation, and vi) all the timber obtained from second and subsequent rotations of all plantations.

The major campaigns carried out by NGO Committee were one against GO 112, regarding involving private industries in managing forest. The NGO groups have seen this as a WB ploy to privatise forest areas in the long run jeopardising the interests of the forest communities. A collaborative campaign was launched at various levels. An exclusive forum called forum against Privatisation of Forests was formed. Public consultations, discussions and hearings were held at various levels. Media was roped in to give wide coverage and debate the issue. Two, regarding provision of Legal Status to VSS and educate the VSS members on the controversial legislation called the JFM and VSS rules, 2000, as an addition to its AP Forest Act of 1967. This bill was opposed on the grounds that it will strengthen the FD's control over VSS rather than giving more powers to the VSS. As per the

new bill 'the DFO shall have powers to remove any member who is found guilty of having committed offence under any of the forest acts and rules... or found guilty of any other offence punishable under any law'. Further, 'in the event of disagreement between the DFO and the VSS, the DFO's decision shall be final.' And marketing of the surplus has been made the monopoly of the government. Three, was regarding Incremental Value in Usufruct Rights and R & R Policies: The network along with Samata initiated the dialogue with the WB and the FD regarding the issues of clarity on usufruct rights for VSS and Resettlement and Rehabilitation policies. The committee has stressed on transparency and information sharing at VSS level regarding R&R policies. Considering the demand FD agreed to make the necessary changes by bringing in an addendum regarding usufruct rights (see box 1).

Vanasamakhya

Though *Vanasamakhya* is a relatively small and young federation, it has its roots in PFM since 1992 as a JFM wing of CWS. The wing – Centre for Peoples Forestry (CPF)- was promoting JFM activities with 32 NGOs in 12 districts since 1996. CPF has become independent in August 2002 and formed as an autonomous, non-profit and non-governmental organisation. The partners (VSS networks) of CPF were working effectively on issues of availing records, cashbook, estimation copies, etc.

Major initiatives and Achievements

Though CPF has many initiatives and achievements¹, it is not fair to attribute them to *Vanasamakhya*, which is still in its infant stage. One of its major initiatives is the news letter is being brought out successfully. So far six issues of the newsletter are published. The first meeting of the VSS members with the CCF-JFM and the memorandum submitted had evoked positive response. Some of issues/problems raised in the memorandum were addressed immediately by giving instructions to the field staff. These include (CPF, 2002):

¹ CPF is one of the main partner in most of the campaigns and achievements of the AP NGO network on PFM. Moreover, it had played the key role in organising the stakeholder's consultations on CFM. CPF is very strong in research and documentation. And it works in close association with FD in capacity building and policymaking.

- ❑ Cutting order and permit to sell bamboo in the Kittalpadu VSS, Pathapatnam range, Srikakulam district.
- ❑ Records, bank passbook, estimation copies were made available to the VSS of Salur range in Vizianagaram district and also in Narsapur range of Medak division.
- ❑ Action has been taken on the issue of DRO assault on the local VSS members.
- ❑ Land grabbing in Tellapadu VSS of Kavali range, Nellore district was addressed.
- ❑ The issue of parallel network formation by the local FD officials in Anantapuram range in Anantapuram district is resolved.

This has boosted the confidence of the members. Another indicator of the achievement of the samakhya is the credibility it has received from the forest officials in a very short span. More importantly, it has created gender balance and followed pro-women approach in its structure. The FD officials are confident that they can work together with the federation in a meaningful manner in future and ready to provide the necessary support. Though this could be due the good rapport between the CPF and FD, it certainly is a positive achievement.

The successes or achievements of these Networks cannot be attributed to any one particular network, as they work in close collaboration with one another on most of the issues. Though a particular network might have taken the initiative on a specific issue, the ultimate success is due to the collective efforts. In the present case, the AP NGO network² operates through the local NGO networks, while the Vanasamkhya works more directly with the VSS representatives. While the former is more oriented towards campaigning, lobbying and pressure groups, the later is strong in advocacy, capacity building and alliances. As a result Vanasamakhya³ has relatively closer linkages with FD. This is mainly due to the reason that its promoters- CPF and CWS- believe in strategies of alliance with different communities like researchers, activists and policy makers. On the other hand, the AP NGO network is relatively aggressive in its strategies. This is reflected in

² Here network is used interchangeably with the committee on PFM.

³ Here we are reflecting on the CPF strategies, as Vanasamkhya is still evolving. Moreover, both of them operate from the same platform.

the differences in the stands taken on the issue of R&R policies. While the AP NGO network has demanded for stopping of CFM implementation till the R&R issue is resolved, CPF has argued for the CFM implementation in the 60 percent of the VSS where there is no R&R problem. But in the case of the issue on handing over VSS to private industries, both have taken an aggressive stand. While it is difficult to judge which strategy is better, the experience indicates that issue based strategies yield better results. More importantly, the success of the networks in AP is due to the combination of these two strategies rather than due to either of them. This is reflected in the changed approach of the FD: all the networks and their partners have become part of the PFM policy-making process in AP. This in itself, we consider, is a great achievement.

As in most cases no success story is perfect. Though the PFM networks in AP have made significant strides in bringing about people centred PFM policies, there are still problems that need attention. One of the main problems is the gap between policy and implementation. This is mainly due to the reason that the attitudes of the lower level forest officials remain unchanged. As a result, implementation of CFM is largely unsatisfactory, as far as micro plans, execution of works, benefit sharing, etc⁴. Nexus between VSS presidents and officials and the resulting corruption⁵ continues to be the major hurdle for effective implementation of CFM. As a result, some of the local NGOs (network members) are not very happy with the networks impact on implementation issues. Some of the partner NGOs has also expressed the view that 'networks are ineffective as far as implementation problems are concerned'. Some of these problems could be resolved with the expansion of network to more VSS. One reason for the slow expansion process is that NGO involvement in CFM is still marginal in some of the districts. This is mainly attributed to the attitude of the local FD officials. The issue of R&R remains to be resolved in an acceptable and amicable manner.⁶

⁴ Some observers feel that micro plans are by and large are farce.

⁵ In some places corruption is as high as 40 percent of the VSS funds.

⁶ Some of the partners NGOs do not agree with the R & R policies. They demand allocation of land rights to podu cultivators. And there are also problems regarding arriving at a cut-off date for giving the land rights. Though this is an important and nagging issue, there is no clarity among the stakeholders.

Stakeholder's role and CFM

Before initiation of CFM, there was a lot of debate on the possible changes and impending effects on the forest dependent people in general and VSS members in particular. When the AP FD thought of going ahead with phase II of AP Forestry Project in the name of CFM there were varied perceptions among various stakeholders. If NGOs were for more decision making powers to the communities in respect to planning, utilisation of available funds, collection of fines from forest offenders, etc. the role of the FD was expected to be one of facilitating and guiding. Whatsoever, the role played by the Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) is laudable in holding Consultations with Stakeholders at the Regional and State level which included WB Team, NGOs, Academicians and FD officials before passing GO 13 with wider scope for "Communities" and defined role for the "NGO"s. The consultation has influenced in reservation of either of president or vice presidents position to women members in MC, women member as one of the signatories in the joint account, VSS's empowerment to levy fines in forest offences and enabling the 'communities' with more powers in decision making process and plummeting the FD's role to one of "facilitators" etc. (Suryakumari, 2001,b).

Local Governance: The Panchayat Extension Act to Scheduled Areas (PESA), 1996

Under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the Panchayat has emerged as one of the key potential stakeholders in forestry management, and the sharing of benefits derived from it. Under this act panchayats may now be empowered by state governments to decide on matters and functions specified in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution (although most of the states are yet to devolve the powers to the panchayats, including AP). This pertains directly to JFM, and throws up a fundamental contradiction. This amendment includes items relating to forests (land improvement, soil conservation, watershed development, SF, farm forestry, MFP, fuel and fodder), although the management of state forestlands are *not* as yet included. Furthermore, extension of this Act to Schedule V areas has wider implications on forest resources in tribal areas (as specified in the Fifth Schedule). The *Gram Sabha* or the Panchayat is endowed with the right of ownership of NTFP, granted to meet the bona fide requirements of the local community. The Act empowers the *gram sabha* of traditional communities to

manage its community resources in accordance with its customs and traditions.

Nationally, *gram sabhas* have been conferred forest usufruct rights, in order to improve the economic well being of the tribals. Out of the net surplus available from all the MFP, at least 25 percent should be transferred back to the *Gram Sabhas* through the agency responsible for MFP trade. Another 25 percent should be utilized for community development through the agency and the balance 50 percent should be given to individual collectors in proportion to the value of the produce collected by them. Under the XI Schedule of the constitution, panchayats can be empowered to implement plans relating to SF and farm forestry and MFP and fuel (Pathy, nd).

However these measures have not been conferred in AP yet. The Ministry of Welfare and the Ministry of Rural Areas and Employment has asked the MoEF to initiate action on the Extension Act, conferring ownership rights over MFP to Panchayats / *Gram Sabhas* and to incorporate appropriate provisions under its own acts and rules for implementation of the decision. The latter constituted an expert committee under the chairmanship of Shri C.S. Chaddha in October 1997, which decided that villagers were generally incapable of managing NTFPs sustainably, besides feeling that the definition of MFPs was not given. In A.P, it is claimed that the PESA is followed in terms of returning profits from NTFPs to the village committees (by a 1999 order, 50 per cent of the net revenue from *tendu* leaves collected in the area goes to the VSS but almost all other MFPs remain under the monopoly control of the GCC) (Sunder et al, 2001).

V Impact of JFM in AP

In the absence of systematic state wide studies or even effective monitoring we rely here on small-scale studies and anecdotal reports. These indicate a range of benefits from the programme, the most obvious being improvement in forest conditions. Additional benefits have apparently been to local peoples livelihoods, where the evidence is that local people have not been empowered, and that benefits have not been entirely equitably distributed.

Positive impacts

Evidence suggests that the swift expansion of JFM in AP has led to

regeneration of forests and the resulting economic gains of local people. Additional benefits have been the reduction of forestland conversion for agriculture, reduction of illicit timber felling, and additionally improved safety for forestry staff. However, many of the reports have been presented either by donor-project staff or by foresters themselves, and so are not entirely objective. The discussion of a number of different case studies here is illustrative of the sort of benefits possible, rather than attempting a conclusive weighing up of positives and negatives.

Behroonguda VSS in Adilabad, where JFM was launched in AP on May 23, 1993, and became the first VSS in AP to win official recognition. The 'village committee' comprised of 50 percent women members in a 97-member body, was headed by a women member. In 1998, Behroongooda also became the first VSS in AP to reap the fruits of forest protection. It generated income to the tune of Rs 0.36 millions from the sale of teak poles, the first round of thinning in an 80 year teak management rotation. A number of non-timber forest products (NTFP) have also re-emerged due to better protection by the VSS. From the point of employment the labours were kept busy in 'coppicing shoots' for which they were paid Rs. 40–50 per day; a better deal than agricultural wage. At the same time out-migration has been reduced. In terms of income, the VSS families earned Rs. 1000 each per year apart from the 'usufruct benefits' (D'Silva and Nagnath, 2002).

Resource Improvement

The primary aim of JFM has been to improve forest condition through improved protection. Evidence, both statistical and field case studies seem to bear this out. The Forest Survey of India have been collecting forest cover data, and comparing their 1997 (in fact 1993) and 1999 data shows a slight improvement in forest cover in AP, apparently a change from scrub areas.

Furthermore a number of case studies bear out the claim that 'better protection of forests has been the greatest achievement of JFM' (Mukherjee, in Bahuguna et al; 2004) give the same story. The VSS in Hottebetta, a hamlet in Rolla Panchayat in Rolla Mandal in Anantapur District, came into existence on 1996, with an initial focus on the development of grasslands. Subsequently in 1996-1997 fodder development was taken up in 30 hectares

of land. In the same year 5 rock-fill dams, 3 check dams were constructed and 20,000 saplings were planted afresh, which have gone up to 61,540 by the year 1998. In other matters, the VSS resolved to develop 20 hectares into 'horticulture land' with an intention of serving as source of independent income for sustaining the people's action, this scheme also met with significant progress⁷. Not stopping here the VSS also indulged in 'pasture development and Community hall building' (Muralidharudu, et al., 1997).

Table 5: Change in Forest Cover in AP 1993 to 1999 (Area in Sq. Kms.)

	Dense Forests	Open Forests	Mangroves	Scrub	Non-forest	Total 1997
<i>1997 Assessment (data Oct 1993)f</i>	23,048	19,859	383	11,191	220,587	275,068
<i>1999 Assessment (data Nov 1998-Jan 1999)</i>	24,190	19,642	397	9,559	221,280	275,068
<i>Net Change</i>	+1,142	-217	+14	-1,632	+693	-

Source: Forest Survey of India, 1999

Naginayana Cheruvu, a remote area adjoining forests in the District of Anantapur was able to protect the natural re-growth of plants in the forest land, from 10 to 15 percent cover initially up to 80 percent cover, resulting, it is claimed, in substantial increase in the groundwater levels. There were also sharp increase wildlife populations in the area. The developments in Naginayana Cheruvu indicate a positive surge in forest growth, thanks to taking people into confidence and without compromising on their basic needs (Biswas et. al., 1997).

Reddy et al (2000) in their study of VSS in the villages in Anantapur district have found 'natural regeneration of forests' in all but one *thanda* (hamlet), while the growth of plant species was relatively better than that of bushes

⁷ OM Consultancy in its evaluation report has had recommended 'horticulture' in a region with highly degraded forest for sustenance because gestation period for usufruct is relatively longer in these areas (OM Consultancy, 1998).

and fodder. The reasons for such drastic change are control of fire, prevention of illegal felling of trees and prevention of cattle grazing. As a result, the way was paved for the recovery of wild life populations. As regards income, JFM has left a telling impact on the living conditions of the locals by generating additional income and reducing the dependence on moneylenders. The increase in economic status facilitated children's education, particularly girls, active involvement of women in VSS, etc. The seasonal migration (except one *thanda*) was checked and the general health improved and showed an encouraging signs towards following family planning policy by the people. This was again possible due to different works undertaken by the VSS in the area.

At the VSS in Juttadapalem protective measures were undertaken to develop contour trenches, and several thousand trees were planted and two hectares of fodder grass raised. Chandrayyapalem repaired a well for drinking water and constructed a small check dam to harvest rainwater. In Kannaram and Vandrujola illicit felling of trees, grazing and firewood collection was successfully contained. In Konnaram 'palm tree' fence was developed around the forest to protect it from the smugglers and cattle.

Income Generation

Among the areas studied by Reddy, et al (2000) two VSS of Kannaram and Chandrayyapalem were able to generate good employment and income in view of the fact that in these areas the commercially important species like tamarind, soap nut, honey, gum and *beedi* leaves were grown. However, the people here obtain firewood from other unprotected forests leading to degradation of these forests (Kameshwar, et al., 1995-96).

Gopal and Upadhyay (2001) have reported on the formation of a VSS in 1995 in Sugali *thanda* a tribal hamlet under the Muddireddipalli Panchayat of Maydukar Mandal in Kadapa district. A PRA exercise was undertaken in 1996 and a micro plan prepared to address livelihood needs. A two-pronged strategy was implemented: one was to provide the vulnerable families with improved facilities to carry out agriculture, and the second was to provide continuous employment opportunities in the forest. Over a period of 4 years it is claimed the annual average family income rose from Rs 3,800 to Rs 4,700. The key factors for the success were identified as three years of

continuous awareness and motivation, provision of identity cards to all the members, improved savings during JFM and improved employment and income generating activities. It may be guessed that the most crucial of these was the provision of funds for employment generation, and returning of revenues from timber marketing to the community.

With the formation of VSS in 1995 in Ippapenta a hamlet consisting of 35 Harijan families located in Chintakommadinne mandal in Kadapa District, were able to persuade the neighbouring villagers to stop their illegal activities in the forest. They were successful in convincing the rich farmers not to collect firewood and timber from the forest patch allotted to the SC colony and to restrict their cattle from grazing in the protected patch. The efforts of VSS bore fruits, as hundred hectares of forest has already been treated for rehabilitation. In 50 ha area fruit bearing trees, including mango, blackberry, cashew, etc, were planted along with cleaning and singling operations. VSS members with technical and financial support from the FD have constructed contour trenches, rock-filled dams, concrete check dams, etc. Agave suckers have been planted along the contour lines. Protection of the forest from grazing and controls on firewood collection has resulted in increased hill-brooms growth. During the year 1997-98, the VSS members earned a sum of Rs 9,975 from the sale proceeds of broomstick (Gopal and Upadhyay, 2001).

The data to gauge the forest cover carried out using satellite data in the districts of Adilabad, Nizamabad, Kurnool, Khammam, Visakhapatnam and Warangal during the years 1996 to 1998, revealed that not only the forest area under VSS has improved but also the adjoining forests for which the entry was through the VSS. The dense cover also improved in the JFM area compared to non-JFM areas and the degradation process has also stopped (Rangachari and Mukherjee, 2000).

The data from 120 VSSs accounting for 5 percent of the total in the State formed before 1998 showed that except for Anantapur district, which is the driest in the State with heavy incidence of grazing there has been an overall improvement in 'growing stock' (i.e. timber trees). The data is also supported by the change in forest cover based on satellite data. With regard to NTFP production the decline before JFM for various reasons is

thwarted after the introduction of JFM with the revival of people's interest in NTFP and plantation of NTFP species in most of the VSS such as tamarind, *usiri*, *neradu*, *seethaphal*, etc. These species were also enthusiastically recommended for the better regeneration of forests and consistent livelihood by OM Consultants who came to this conclusion based on their evaluation of JFM in AP (OM Consultancy, 1998). Besides, raising some high yielding eucalyptus clones on demonstration plots for people to see and understand the economics of growing plantations in place of cultivating forestland. Similarly, medicinal plants of certain identified species such as the *aswagandha*, *senna*, *rabhi*, *pippalu*, etc., are being grown on an experimental basis with the help from people.

The regeneration and species diversity has boosted overall forest biodiversity. Other ecological benefits like increase in water table is very appreciable because the increase ranged from a minimum of 0.13 metres to a maximum of 13.92 metres contingently improving the agricultural yield to the extent of 51.7 percent.

Community Development

Mallett (2000) citing the example of Adilabad district in AP illustrates how the people who were suspicious of JFM are now eager to participate, as the fruits of JFM could be seen in the district where 45 percent of the forest was lost to agricultural encroachment between 1983 and 1993. Ever since JFM was launched this trend has been reversed, and there have been no reports of forest loss in any areas managed by the VSS'. Not confining to mere forest activities the development works like community halls, check dams, drinking water structures, roads, etc, was also taken up under JFM. It also goes to show that where there is earnest participation from the people and the government it is possible to have fruitful results. The area where JFM policy least expected to bring any sort of positive results was that of countering the '*Naxalites*', which came as a 'godsend', according to the Forest Secretary and the PCCF, in Adilabad, one of the strongholds of the people's War Group: 'today the forester feels safe to visit the once *Naxalite*-infested localities because of the protection by VSS members' (Rangachari and Mukherji, 2000).

According to Venkatraman and Falconer (1998) and Rangachari and Mukherjee (2000) the degraded forests came back to life with the stoppage of timber smuggling, control over cattle grazing and virtual stoppage of encroachment. Village labour is now gainfully employed, and out migration has declined. Women participate in all VSS affairs as equal partners and get the same pay as men. The soil conservation works have resulted in higher water tables in many areas, leading in turn to improvements in agricultural production. There is a general improvement in the flora and fauna of the area. Rangachari and Mukherji (2000) are of the opinion that bringing people and forest officials together in itself was a tremendous breakthrough given the hostile conditions between the two parties existing earlier in this region. The co-operation and trust is increasing with every passing day.

Gender Issues

AP is one of the states, which has promoted the 'women self-help group's known as '*Mahila Podupu Sangham* or *Awal Thrift Group*' on a large scale. As observed by Gopal and Upadhyay (2001) the women in Maktha Masanpalli, located 75 km from Hyderabad are quite active, which could be seen from the three thrift groups, which are functioning effectively. SC colony women were restricted to religious and marriage ceremonies until the formation of VSS, when the women started participating actively in village welfare activities. Though women here have to walk more distance than before to collect the fuel wood but now the forest guards do not stop them. The quarrying for sand and stone by neighbouring villages has also declined with the efforts of VSS.

Subdued Impact

While the proceeding review highlights the positive aspects of JFM, the following narration brings out the other side of the story. The JFM has had much more limited benefits, as well as negative aspects in many parts of the state due to different reasons, according to different studies:

Asymmetric Power relations between VSS and FD

Although JFM claims to be 'joint', control over resources and decision making is not 'joint', but rather the 'Department' maintains asymmetric power over

the VSS. This is illustrated by many cases where the VSS wishes have been ignored. For instance, there have been cases of VSS area handed over for bauxite mining. There was even an attempt in 2000 to bring in private industries (GO 112) into plantation on state forest lands, on the pretext of 'fund crunch' (i.e. lack of funds), wherein the private companies like Reliance, Bhadrachalam Paper mills, etc., were to invest in growing remunerative species in collaboration with the VSS in degraded forests with a revenue sharing arrangement with the VSS. The plan was to form a tripartite of industry, VSS and government representatives to oversee the scheme. It was assured that the revenue from such an attempt to the VSS would be much higher than what they are earning now. The idea was seen as a design against the very interests of the 'tribal' in particular and 'environment' in general. Under pressure from NGOs, human rights activists and opposition political parties the government backtracked (Mahapatra, 2000).

Poor Institutional Sustainability

The most positive feature of the JFM programme, it is claimed by forest officials, is that in all the VSS areas JFM appears to be the most actively implemented government programme at the village level, no other government department has built up this kind of community institutional structure. However, this claim is contradicted by a number of sources. Simply from field visits it is quickly realised that many VSS are in fact non-functional, and the ones that are functional face particular problems when the period of funding support ends. Commonly their activities are also far reduced. Local people appreciate that they have been given legal endorsement to protect the local forests from cutting by outsiders. However, beyond this livelihood benefits such as employment have been dependent on inflows of funds, and when this stops the motivation to be involved in VSS activities is reduced. Poffenberger et al in a recent study in Adilabad found that women's independent Self Help Groups (SHGs) are more dynamic and self-sustaining, whereas many of the VSSs have gone into hibernation at the end of phase I of the Bank project, without further funding flows.

Corruption and Lack of Transparency regarding Funds

Funds are transferred to VSS to fund their forest works and employment generation. The system is not transparent, and irregularities in fund allocation

are rampant: there are widespread anecdotal reports that the distribution of funds system set up allows the Forestry officials to embezzle funds in collusion with the VSS treasurers and committee. A set rate of 25% of the total going back to FD staff is even talked about openly in committees. There is even wastage of money on non-forestry activities like publicity material, to camouflage the real intent and purpose of JFM by the groups with vested interests.

Most of the general members are not aware of this. D'Silva and Nagnath (2000) pointed out that there is ambiguity and confusion at the grass root level over JFM funds, particularly with regard to 'final harvest' and the confusion over 'incremental benefits'. Benefit sharing arrangement of 100 percent share in the incremental value of the produce is further amended. Now VSS are entitled to full harvest of timber and bamboo from natural forests vested with them in addition to NTFPs and yield in proportion to period of management by them in respect of timber from plantations (Communication from Mr. Kalaghatgi, PCF).

Sunder et al (2001) found that wage discrimination between the JFM committees also discouraged the JFM activities. The wage rate is as low as Rs 20 and Rs 25 to women and men respectively, a very discouraging sign considering prosperous condition in other parts of AP.

Forest Boundary Conflicts

Some other studies found that disputes over forest boundary due to the ignorance of FD of the traditional village boundaries and demarcating the VSS area. In many areas the Department has not thought of maintaining the balance between population and extent of forest area, but made arbitrary boundaries, sometimes trespassing into other villages. Artificial boundaries have taken over traditional village '*polimeru*' causing most of these problems. As a result in many instances the aggrieved villagers have cut down the entire plantation (e.g. R. K. Nagar VSS - Araku Mandal, Vizag District Burnt down). This has been a particular problem in Paderu area, where tribals felt the FD was trying to set one village against another, by giving rights to the benefits from one village's forest to a neighbouring one, on condition that they stop *podu* cultivation in the forest. Sunder et al. (2001) found that boundary disputes and NTFP conflicts are demoralising the people to give up joint management.

Tribal Development Vs. Forest Development

The 'encroachment' of forestlands is reported to have been stopped, with no fresh cases of encroachments reported under VSS jurisdiction because of people's participation. The most significant development in many of the VSSs especially in the districts of Visakhapatnam and Adilabad, has been the return of about 24,000 hectares of land, which was under *podu* cultivation to the FD (Rangachari and Mukherji, 2000). Whilst this is viewed as a success by the FD it in fact indicates that land has been taken out of use for livelihood support of tribals. This is the main reason why in the predominantly tribal Paderu division, tribals and their organisations (e.g. the *adivasi aikya vedika*) have rejected CFM out of fear of losing more *podu* land.

There has been severe repercussion of the JFM on the 'indigenous tribals', whose very survival and sustenance is under threat, because they are forced to do away with their traditional stay in the forest and discouraged from '*podu*', their traditional form of shifting cultivation. Although the intention of the government to halt '*podu* cultivation' claims justification from the point of the environment, it is the responsibility of the government to rehabilitate and compensate them. In spite of resolutions available on this issue nothing concrete is coming up. The perception of the tribals in many affected areas is changing negatively towards the schemes of government. Hence, many commentators have come to see the implementation of JFM in tribal areas as an anti-poor plot by the FD and the WB in reclamation of forestland under *Podu*.

According to SAKTI, a local NGO, the FD will not protect the rights of the tribal people who are part and parcel of the ecosystem. Instead, the JFM programme exploits the tribesmen in the name of forest and socio-economic development. The NGOs feel that recognition from the State FD will motivate the tribes to protect their forests efficiently and allows the community to benefit from other programmes, such as support from the Integrated Tribal Development Authority and other allied government agencies, which give special reference to those communities that, are involved in JFM activities although, the tribals are entitled to these irrespective of JFM. In fact, JFM enabled the FD to take over even the ITDA's role in tribal areas (Rao et. al., 1995-96).

Gender Equity

Women are the predominant collectors of fodder, fuel wood and NTFPs and were supposed to benefit considerably from JFM but are, in fact, neglected in most areas (Farrington and Bauman, 2002). The role of women in JFM is found to be negligible in spite of their substantial membership in the VSS. As Sarin et al (1998) points out, even where the one man and one woman per household rule is adopted for membership in the FPC (as in AP), large number of disadvantaged women are still excluded as formal membership means little unless the women are empowered to participate in decision making on the basis of ready access to information and alternative management options. In several villages women are unaware that they are members of a GB, let alone of the executive committee. Not only have women been excluded from community decision-making bodies by tradition, but JFM rules, in the name of protection, give further power to elite men to exclude poor forest dependent women from the forests. Hence, ensuring women's informed participation in the decision making process has to be the essential first step towards equal participation of women in community forestry management institutions (Kameshwari, 2002). Empowerment of women in JFM has not ensured in different regions of the state. Sunder et al., (2001) found that women were playing very little role in the management of JFM in Paderu of the Eastern *Ghats* of AP.

Shortcomings of JFM in AP

As we have seen there are several problems emerging from the field implementation of JFM. Although JFM undoubtedly represents a change in the state's approach to forest management, problems may be distinguished into two sets of issues (Saigal et. al., 1996). The first set is *conceptual*, for instance, the extent to which communities have economic, as opposed to subsistence, rights to forest produce. The second set of issues relate to the *practical* problems of managing the JFM programme including the assigning of forest areas to communities, developing systems for conflict resolution, dealing with different administrative and forest boundaries, and increasing women's participation and their active role. We need to understand whether the problems are arising from poor implementation or from poor policy and conceptual structure.

At the conceptual level one area of problems is the ambiguity with regard to terms used; like 'community', 'participation', 'benefit sharing' and 'stakeholders' as used in the National Forest Policy and also in the resolutions on JFM issued by the State Governments. Lack of non-clarity of these terms leads to serious confusion, as has been the case with benefit sharing (Jeffery and Sunder, 1999).

Power Asymmetries

A further lacuna in the provision of VSS is the asymmetrical power relationship between the FD and the villagers. Participation of the village people in the planning process of JFM has in practice been ignored by the FD. The micro-plan is framed in the forest office; and rarely does it reach the villagers. People are rarely aware of the budgetary allocations and the budget plan for their village. Ideally the VSS should be in possession of a copy of the budget plan but that rarely happens (Farrington and Bauman, 2002). The second copy is with the ranger, which is never shown. Another aspect which is adversely affecting the performance of JFM in some areas, are the supposed elections to executive committees after every two years, which in practice are often not being conducted, leading to undemocratic practices by the 'elites' (Reddy et al, 2000). The majority of the ordinary members are not aware of the funds being released to their VSS.

Coordination

In tribal areas the success of JFM requires the support of other departments working for the development of tribals and rural development, but their response is lukewarm and is not coordinated. In practice the work, which the ITDA used to do has been transferred to the FD, supposedly for better coordination (Anonymous, nd). In the opinion of Jodha (2000), the ultimate goal would be that the people become independently able to look after tribal development their own. Yet there is little sign that their independent capacity is being built up.

Equity and Gender Issues

Baviskar (1998) stresses the importance of sensitivity to the tribal community and their internal dynamics before drawing up policies. He recommends powers and decision-making roles in JFM should emphasise greater

decentralisation and devolution (an issue frequently raised in relation to the JFM movement, e.g. Jodha, 2000). Jodha specifies: more explicit and equitable sharing mechanisms for tribals, landless labourers (particularly women) and for those who have been deprived of their traditional earning options following the introduction of JFM and workable means to empower women, e.g., by raising their number at all levels of forest service (Jodha, 2000).

Thousands of women will need to be inducted into the Indian Forest Service and the state cadre. This would present an immense challenge for recruiting and training. Furthermore, the organizational environment of forest agencies should be reoriented to allow women to participate equally with their male counterparts. Working groups, diagnostic studies, new monitoring systems, and feedback loops that enable emerging experiences to be channelled into policy-making will transform these institutions, making them accountable to their staff and the public that they serve (Poffenberger and McGean, 1996).

Exploring the women's involvement in JFM in three regions of AP, Suryakumari (2001) has found that women in general are unaware of the programme, though they participate in the meetings. Even worse the women committee members themselves are unaware that they are in the management committees and those few who know about it are unsure of their roles, in such circumstances it becomes immaterial whether stipulated 30 percent quota of filling the management committee is carried out or not. On the wage front they are discriminated against even when the nature of work is same, since the decision on wage rates is the prerogative of VSS mostly dominated by men.

Local Governance

There is clearly a need to resolve the contradiction between the VSS and the panchayat structures, by placing JFM Committees in the overall context of decentralisation promoted through the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution. *Panchayati Raj* institutions are in the process of becoming empowered as custodians of rural affairs and natural resources, and in order to minimise conflicts between JFM Committees and Panchayats and improve their mutual effectiveness the VSS must become articulated as sub-committees of the

PRIs, as gradually happening in other states (Jodha, 2000). The undemocratic set up of VSSs strongly indicates the need for the empowerment of Panchayats (PESA) to oversee their functioning.

Gopal and Upadhyay (2001) have found that in Ampali village in Dharur Mandal of Ranga Reddy, there are no conflicts between the VSS and Panchayat simply because there is no income from the forests. On the other hand in Eliminedu village and its hamlet Malluguda the one Panchayat in Ibrahimpatnam Mandal in Ranga Reddy District experienced conflicts related to common property resources, forests and between the *Panchayati Raj* and the VSS. In Guvvalacheruvu, a heterogeneous village at the foothills of Palakonda tracts of the Nallamala hills, there have been good NTFP earnings but population growth has meant the poor have not escaped poverty yet.

The legal and policy frameworks surrounding JFM need more clarity because the provisions of the executive order governing JFM often conflict with the Forest Conservation Act, and don't acknowledge that the poor depend upon forest products (fuel wood, fodder, small timber and non-plant extractions) to attain their livelihoods. Policy makers must acknowledge this and accept local livelihood forest use within the context of forest management rather than see it as an obstacle to management (Gopal and Upadhyay 2001).

Livestock and Livelihoods

The recent grazing policy, drafted in the backdrop of Mr. Naidu's (The Chief Minister) statement in the AP Assembly that 'goats are the enemy of environment and forests' on 1st April 2001, is seen as anti-poor, anti-low caste, pro-land owning caste, and anti-livestock in general and anti-goat in particular. Evaluations of AP JFM, carried out by Om Consultancy too have come up with a finding wherein drastic curtailment of 'goats' numbers is established (OM Consultancy, 1998). The reintroduction of indiscriminatory grazing fees for livestock (Rs. 40 per goat per annum), prohibition of grazing on the interior protected forests, creation of 'paddocks' for grazing and delegation of 'permission authority' to the VSS chairmen in the VSS areas has given the impression that government is acting hand in glove with the WB to benefit the local elites and Multi National Companies (MNCs)

from Australia and New Zealand to further their interests in the Indian meat market with their 'boneless meat'. Holding goats and their herders solely responsible for the destruction and deforestation is implausible, since historically they have always been depending on forests and forests have been their source of survival and its conservation is their own survival (Ravinder, 2003).

Short-term livelihood impacts have strongly influenced the performance of the JFM scheme. Tribals outside the scheduled areas find the JFM programme and its development works a great boon, since it has provided valuable wage employment in comparison to the past (Farrington and Bauman, 2002). Borgoyary (2002) has found in her study of five selected VSS in Visakhapatnam in AP that the JFM was successful in those villages where there is considerable alternative employment generation such as the 'food for work policy'. The employment generation has such a bearing on the success of Participatory Forestry Programme could be well understood by the fact that the moment funds stopped until "food for work" supplemented the cause in October 2001. The people had lost interest during this period of one year in the JFM programme. The funding under APFP closed in September 2000 (Mukherjee, 2004). The tribals who voluntarily evicted from the '*podu* land' had their private lands for their sustenance and those who are facing forced eviction in plain terrain where *podu* cultivation has almost become permanent cultivation and where application of fertilizers and other HYV has led to high yields, need to be facilitated with irrigation, fertilizers, etc. Where local people have their forest use disrupted by the introduction of JFM, particularly the landless, alternative livelihood options, are essential to make JFM universally successful.

In the overall context of VSS and benefits to the marginalized sections of the society, an interesting observation is made by Suryakumai (2001a) wherein she has found VSS to be helping SC, ST and Backward Castes (BCs) in honing their leadership positions through reservations especially in the MFP areas, but in VSS areas where there is high value timber in the forest, the dominant communities take leading roles in the VSS and exclude the marginalized, for instance by prescribing high membership fees and proposing voluntary labour which the poor can not afford.

VI CFM: New Forest Policy of AP

The positive response to the JFM policy in AP encouraged policy makers, with support from the WB, to refine the approach to manage the forest through 'VSSes' on the lines of CFM. This approach aims to upgrade the initiatives taken under JFM. While JFM has been a partnership between the forest-dependent communities and the FD, CFM claims to be a more democratic process, through decentralising and delegating of the decision-making process, planning and implementation, with the APFD acting more as facilitators and providers of technical and infrastructure support (see figures in appendix).

The CFM initiative makes many claims: it balances the local needs with external and environmental needs through increased productivity of the forest resources, reduced dependence on forests through substitution of demand and alternate livelihood opportunities, up gradation of living standards and above all inculcating a sense of ownership and pride among the forest dependent communities engaged in CFM. Community and farm forestry programmes carry out the basic objectives by strengthening local leadership, promoting participatory approaches and testing new approaches to JFM. The primary beneficiaries are the small forest farmers and landless people of forest areas (Papia Roy, 2001).

The legal backing for CFM has come through a package of supporting changes: the relaxation under Forest Conservation Act (FCA) for medicinal plants cultivation by VSS, the liberalization of the state monopoly of NTFP, conformity of Panchayat laws with CFM regulations. Further areas which the programme plans to give special attention include conflict resolution among stakeholders and traditional rights, consistency of micro-plans with working plans. Other enabling issues like poverty alleviation through skill up gradation and income generating activities, training and capacity building, empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups, NGO's participation, will also receive attention it is claimed.

Shortcomings of CFM Policy

Some apprehensions are expressed by some commentators with regard to the latest CFM policy. Sarin (Critique, AP CFM Project, nd) comments that

although CFM is claimed to be 'community driven' and 'for the benefit of poor' it is not, because the GO overlooks the interests of the perhaps 50% of households who may be unwilling to join the VSS. Similarly exclusion of other members apart from the 2 from each household from the membership is questionable.

Although in theory a valuable tool for ensuring forest management reflects local needs, in practice the 'micro plan's have generally conformed to the prescriptions of the wider FD working plan, rather. There is no VSS representation in the State Level Committee unlike the case in Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. The nomination of VSS representatives for District Forest Committees by the collector is undemocratic. Although VSS are supposedly entitled to all NTFPs, due to the GCCs monopoly VSSs are still expected to get NTFP permits from the DFO.

The 1988 Forest Policy spoke about the state government's right to permit shifting cultivation up to a period of 3 years and provide for the alternative, later JFM was recognized as one of the ways to provide this livelihood but nothing concrete has materialized which is proved by the admission of the FD that, thousands of *adivasi* lands traditionally cultivated by them are not regularized until 1995 and continued to be under dispute and unsettled (APAAY, 2003). According to the FD by 1994, over 327,742 hectares of forestland was under illicit cultivation and encroachment. Newspapers reported FD figures of encroached land in the districts of Adilabad (94,000 ha), Khammam (75000 ha), Visakhapatnam (33,000 ha), Warangal (13,500) and East Godavari (7200 ha). Out of the estimated 46,725 families who might have encroached forestland assigned to VSS, the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) under the CFM project provides for rehabilitation grant and livelihood opportunities to an estimated 11680 families (Madhusudhan, 2003). Sarin (Critique, AP CFM Project, nd) questions the reclamation of the *podu* land from the tribals by the FD depriving the tribals of their livelihood because the poor are neither being provided any secure rights to land and forest produce nor being empowered to make their own decision about how to use and manage their forests in accordance with their own priorities.

Sarin (2003) also highlights the plight of the tribals who survived on the *podu* land for their livings and about the forests, which were never on the

ground and were only in records or paper but later declared to be encroached by tribals and evacuated. OM Consultancy (1998) evaluation report also indicates this aspect and stresses to consider technicalities while constituting the VSS. The matter became too serious for the Ministry of Environment and Forest (GoI, MoEF) resulting in issuance of a directive on May 3, 2002 to summarily evict “all illegal encroachment of forestlands in various States / Union Territories” before September 30, 2002, citing the Court’s concern over the matter. This order totally ignored a framework for resolution of disputes related to forestland between tribal people and the State, which had been worked out in 1990 by the Union Government, but lies unimplemented. A set of six circulars, issued on September 18, 1990, by MoEF itself clearly make a distinction between ‘encroachments’ on forest land, and ‘Disputed Claims over Forest Land arising out of Forest Settlement’ and Disputes Regarding *pattas*/leases/grants involving forest land. The May 2002 circular only refers to ‘encroachments’ overlooking disputed claims, it was feared that 10 million *adivasis* and other forest dependent communities would be displaced, threatening their very existence. Mr B D Sharma, former Commissioner for SCs & STs, pointed out that the MoEF order represented a violation of Article 338(9) of the Constitution. With the issue being brought to the notice of the Prime Minister and Parliament, MoEF was compelled to issue a clarification order that the framework for resolving disputed claims over forest lands remained in force (Sarin, 2003).

One issue that remain to be resolved under CFM is the rights over marketing of NTFP items; an issue that is critical to the livelihoods of the tribal population. Under JFM it is mentioned that VSS members have 100% rights over marketing of NTFP. This is in contradiction with the stated policy, that *Girijan* Co-operative Corporation (GCC) has “monopoly rights” for marketing of about 25 NTFP items. In a study titled “VSS sustainability and the Role of GCC in connection with CFM programme in AP”(June, 2003), it is mentioned that with the formation of VSS, and providing for 100% benefits out of MFP to the members, the primary stakeholders in respect of NTFP constitute two categories Viz., the tribal members of *Girijan* Primary Co-operative Marketing Society (GPCMSs) and the VSS members; of whom also there are tribal members to the tune of 30% across the state (out of 13 *lakh* VSS members 4.15 *lakh* are tribals). It is often felt by VSSs and the people exclusively working with the VSS i.e., the FD and some NGOs that

they could get remunerative prices if they could go to private traders instead of GCC. This may be true for some items and in some areas but it is not true everywhere and for every item. Moreover the influx of forest produce into the state is coming in the way of GCC offering remunerative prices to the collectors (CWS, Draft Report, 2003).

On the other hand integration and convergence of other governmental agencies with VSS is highly spoken about under CFM but it does not appear to be easier to do because on the similar issue the government had to burn its finger when the GO 78 was opposed vehemently by the VSS members with the active support of the NGOs on the ground that the existing VSS will be dis-empowered. This GO issued by Environment of Forest Science and Technology (EFS and T) on 17 –10 – 2003 was to converge “VELUGU” (District Poverty Initiative Project) with CFM.

The Difference between JFM and CFM

CFM is envisaged as distinct from JFM in a number of ways (Table 6). In JFM, a forest official was the member secretary of VSS managing committee; in CFM the member secretary is from the managing committee. VSS in JFM has one president position, which is often represented by the male member, but under CFM there is provision for two, that is for president and vice-president either or both should be women. With regard to the bank account JFM has only one, while CFM has a provision for two, one for project / government and the other one for VSS benefits, for which the forest official and the president are the signatories in JFM, but in CFM both president and vice-president are signatories of both the bank accounts, for project account the third signatory is forest official. In financial matters, in JFM the funds from DFO to VSS go through FRO and section officer, but in CFM the funds are directly deposited in the account of VSS. The Panchayat has no relation with JFM while CFM has a panchayat president in the VSS advisory council and also chairs the council meetings. JFM has no provision for VSS to levy and collect fines from forest offenders, while CFM do collect fine up to 100 rupees for the same. JFM envisaged FD role as project implementer with the help of VSS community. But CFM envisages FD role to that of facilitator, while VSS has to prepare and implement plans. Finally CFM has a defined role for the NGOs whereas JFM has not any for them.

In the light of all the GOs on JFM and the proposal put up by the PCCF of AP to refine the 'JFM' into 'CFM', the government after careful consideration decided to modify all the earlier orders issued on the 'JFM' to pave the way for the implementation of the 'CFM' in the State with immediate effect. Further, the government directed the local 'village communities' be constituted into VSS and for the already existing '*samithies*' to carry out the forest programmes jointly with the FD as per the latest rules. This GO will be put to practice for one year and learning from experience of implementing this Order and refining the concept further, suitable amendment to the Forest Act 1967, (which provides legal authority to forestry in AP) will be brought about (A P CFM Project).

Table 6: Contrast Between JFM and CFM

	JFM	CFM
Implemented	GO 173 of December 1996	GO 13 of February 2002
Member secretary of VSS managing committee	forest guard	from the managing committee
President position	one, which is often represented by the male member	two, (president and vice-president) either or both should be women
Bank account	one	two, one for project / government the other for VSS benefits
Signatories for bank account	forest official and president	president and vice-president signatories of both the bank accounts, for project account the third signatory is forest official
Financial matters	the funds from DFO to VSS go through FRO and section officer	funds are directly deposited in VSS account
Panchayat	no relation	panchayat president in the VSS advisory council and also chairs the council meetings
Collect fines from forest offenders	no provision	collect fine up to 100 rupees
FD role	project implementer with the help of VSS community	facilitator, while VSS has to prepare and implement plans
Role for the NGOs	not any	Defined

Continuing Tension between Tribal Groups and the FD

In a letter written by 13 NGOs to Edwin R. Lim, Country Director, The WB and c.c to the H. S. Brahma, Principal Secretary, EFS and T department, GoAP and Principal, CCF, Hyderabad raising the issues pertaining to tribal rights, *podu* land and inadequacies in CFM project have highlighted a study undertaken by Samata (a NGO) in 1999 in North Coastal Andhra on the impact of JFM as it was found that of the 1500 acres of *podu* lands in 29 VSS only 520 acres are with the people after the formation of VSS. The rest of the *podu* lands have been taken away under the JFM programme exposing the government's claims as being empty. On the other hand, Dr. Lim replying to the letter has assured the NGO members with a promise to attend to their grievances, while the PCCF has strongly condemned the accusations, as he believed there is no coercion of any sorts against the tribals by the government. Moreover, he contended that the lands evicted under *podu* were never the lands of those tribals who were occupying them since they never had legal rights because the govt simply took over their lands without recognising their rights.

Reacting to the poor status of the evacuees he responded that because of poverty they had switched to *podu*. He refuses to buy the argument that his department dishonoured the shares and benefits. However, at the Bank's insistence, a consultative process for discussing the RAP was followed with the assurance that no resettlement would be undertaken in tribal areas till the process is completed. The revised RAP is not yet available but in areas like Paderu, where the *adivasis* are better informed and organised, they are said to have rejected bringing their *podu* lands under CFM in the fear of losing it altogether.

VII. Conclusions and Suggestions

JFM is a different concept from many earlier attempts to promote forestry needs of the people, simply because it builds from the roles played by both local forest users and the professionals employed by the state to act as custodians. The combined effort of community and government is the ultimate solution under prevailing circumstances therefore the government intervention is expected to address the equity and transparency aspects to strengthen the voice of the poor. In the same way, participation of the people will warrant a constant vigil against all odds to protect the forests, hence VSS

should be viewed as an entity for an overall development of village resources and its people, and not merely an instrument of developing the degraded forests, more so when the forthcoming endeavour of graduation from JFM to CFM focussing on alleviating rural poverty. This would be carried out through improved forest management and community development through participation of the stakeholders in a democratic participatory approach and empowering forest dependent local communities that are expected to improve the forest development.

For the success of any programme of this nature and magnitude needs top-level commitment at both political and official levels and process transparency. Unless the commitment is extended beyond missionary zeal towards humane and social aspects the results would be effective. In the same way transparency wins the confidence of the people targeted by the programme. At the same time not ignoring the potentiality of the involvement of NGOs, who could play a crucial role. Above all if the programme is tailored to local conditions, culture, institutional and geo-climate not throttling local creativity and innovation there will be no stopping. Though most of these aspects are addressed in the CFM initiative of AP, the effectiveness of the programme depends largely on the implementation. As in the case of watershed development programme in AP the implementation could suffer due to the scaling-up of the programme. This issue was observed to be crucial for the success of JFM by many district forest officials. For, even in the case of CFM FD continues to be the main implementing agency. The human resources of the department are not enough to follow the intensive approach of sustainable community participation when the scale of the programme is large, especially in the districts with larger forest areas. In this context, it is necessary to consider NGOs and panchayats as implementing agencies. There is also an urgent need to first resolve the contentious issues of forest dwellers land and forest rights, providing them tenurial security for devolved management of community forests based on enhancing both livelihood and ecological security.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1: Flow chart depicting CFM Project Monitoring Unit - Organisation chart

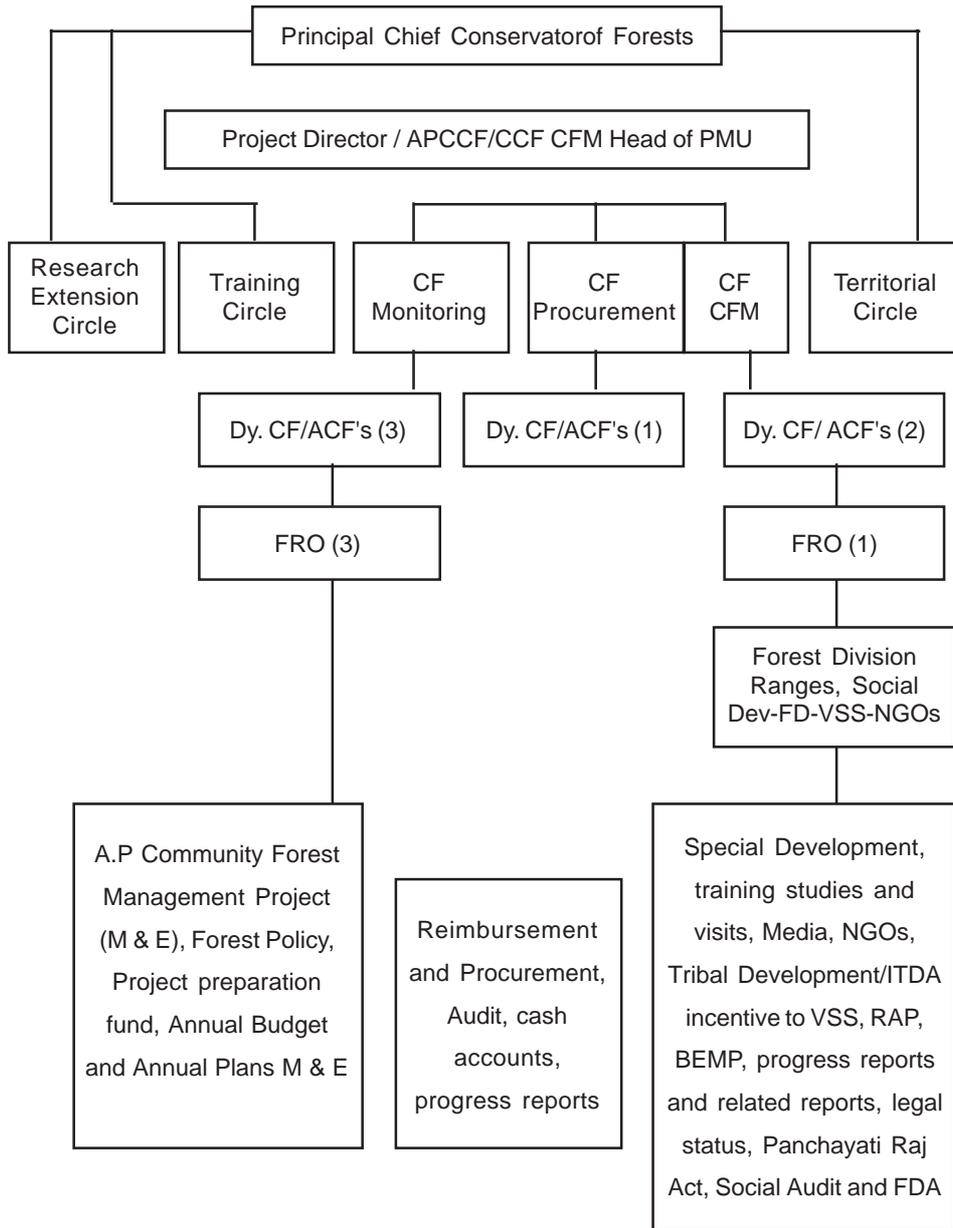


Figure 2: Flow chart of CFM depicting the linkages in Planning, Implementation and Monitoring System of the Tribal development Plan; System of Resettlement Action Plan; and Reporting Channel

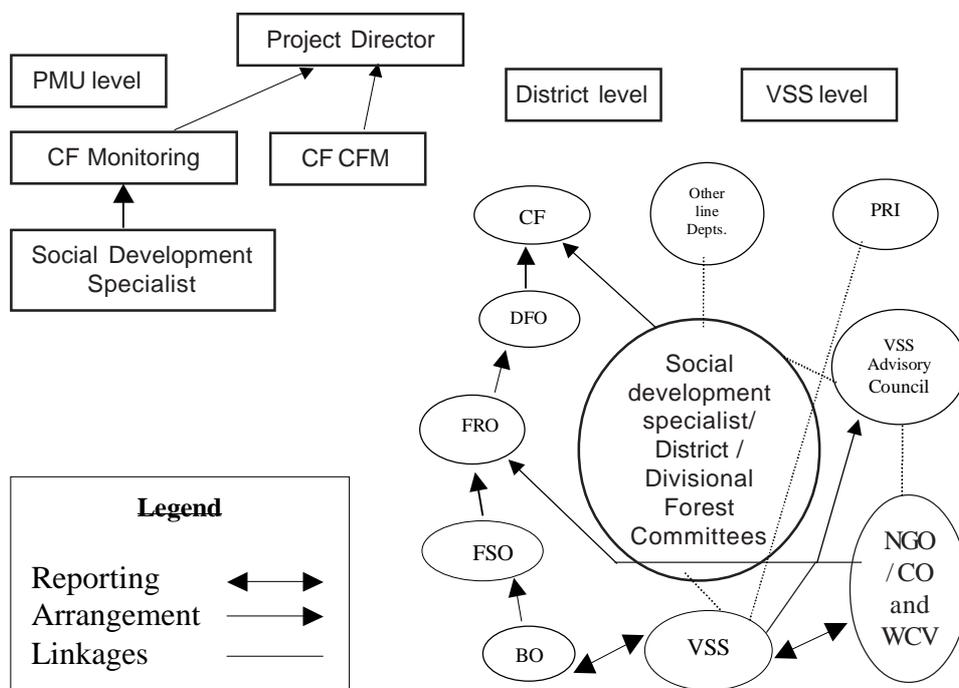


Figure 3: Flow chart depicting CFM Process

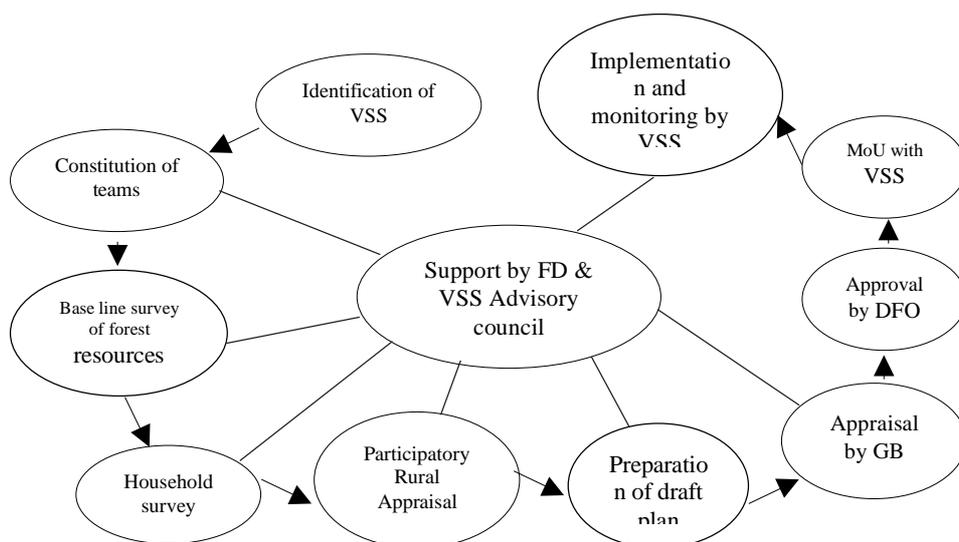
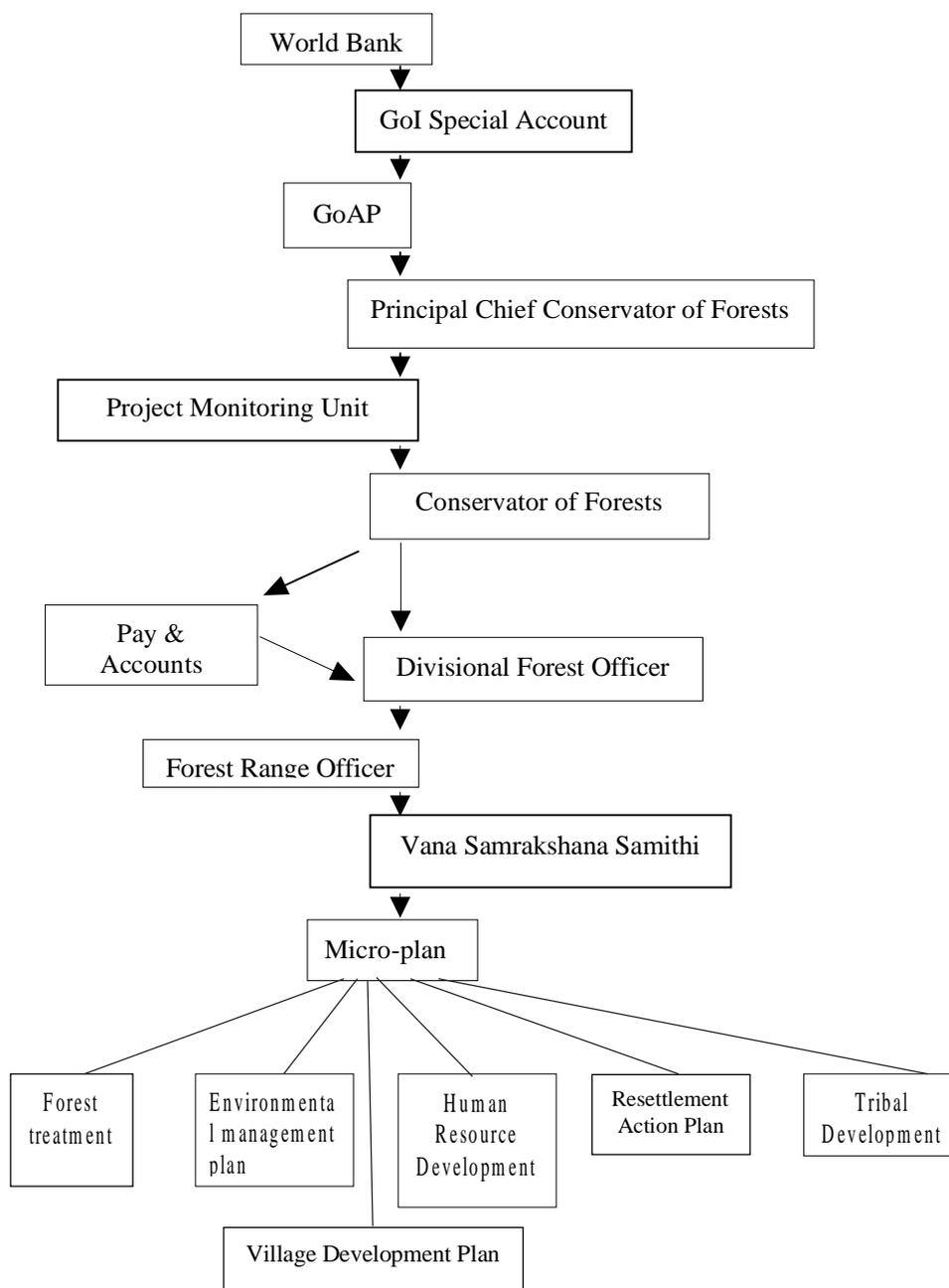


Figure 4: Flow Chart of CFM depicting details of the mechanism of fund flow to VSS



Source : A P Community Forest Management Project

Abbreviations

ACF	:	Assistant Conservator of Forests
AFPRO	:	Action for Food Production
AP	:	Andhra Pradesh
APAAV	:	Andhra Pradesh Adivasi Aikya Vedika
APFD	:	Andhra Pradesh Forest Department
APNGO	:	Andhra Pradesh Non-Government Organisation
BC	:	Backward Castes
BFW	:	Bread for World
BO	:	Beat Officer
CCF	:	Chief Conservator of Forests
C-Fee	:	Compound Fee
CFM	:	Community Forest Management
CIDA	:	Canadian International Development Agency
CM	:	Chief Minister
CPF	:	Centre for People's Forestry
CPR	:	Common Pool Resource
CWS	:	Centre for World Solidarity
DFO	:	Divisional Forest Officer
DPIP	:	District Poverty Initiatives Project
DRDA	:	Director of District Rural Development Agency
EAS	:	Employment Assurance Scheme
EDC	:	Eco Development Committee
EFES and T	:	Energy Forests Environment Science Technology
EFS and T	:	Environment of Forest Science and Technology
FCA	:	Forest Conservation Act
FD	:	Forest Department
FDA	:	Forest Development Agency
FRO	:	Forest Range Officer
FSO	:	Forest Section Officer
GB	:	General Body
GCC	:	Girijan Cooperative corporation
GO	:	Government Order
GoAP	:	Government of Andhra Pradesh
GoI	:	Government of India
GPCMS	:	Girijan Primary Co-operative Marketing Society
IFA	:	Indian Forest Act

IFM	: Integrated Forest Management
IFS	: Indian Forest Service
ITDA	: Integrated Tribal Development Agency
JFM	: Joint Forest Management
MC	: Managing Committee
MFP	: Minor Forest Produce
MNC	: Multi National Company
MoEF	: Ministry of Environment and Forests
MoU	: Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	: Non Government Organisation
NOVIB	: Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation
NRSA	: National Remote Sensing Agency
NTFP	: Non Timber Forest Produce
PCCF	: Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
PCF	: Principal Conservator of Forests
PESA	: Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas
PMU	: Project Monitoring Unit
RAP	: Resettlement Action Plan
RF	: Reserved Forest
SC	: Scheduled Caste
SDC-IC	: Swiss Development Cooperation-Inter Cooperation
SF	: Social Forestry
SHG	: Self Help Group
SPWD	: Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development
ST	: Scheduled tribe
TDP	: Tribal Development Plan
VSS	: Vana Samrakshana Samithi
VTDA	: Village Tribal Development Association
WB	: World Bank
WCV	: Women Community Volunteer

Glossory

Adivasi	: Scheduled Tribe
Aswagandha	: Indian Ginseng, Winter Cherry, Withaniasomnicera (Botanical name)
Awal	: Cassia, Cassia obovata (Botanical name)

Beedi	: Hand-made leaf cigarettes, Abnus (Botanical name)
Darkhast	: Application
Girijan	: Tribes living in forests
Gond	: A tribe living in forests
Gram Sabhas	: Village assembly in which all adults have equal
voting	rights
Lakh	: 100,000
Lambadas	: A tribe living in forests
Mahila Podupu Sangham	: Women thrift group
Naxalite	: Left-wing extremist outfit
Neradu	: Roseapple, Syzygium Jambo (Botanical Name)
Panchayat Raj	: Local Government Institutions
Papaya	: Papaya, Carica Papaya (Botanical name)
Pattas	: Rights of ownership
Pippalu	: Wine palm, Caryotaurens (Botanical name)
Podu	: Shifting cultivation
Polimeru	: Village boundary
Sahukars	: Local Money lenders
Sal	: Sal, Shorea robusta
Samithies	: Committees
Rabi	: The Cropping season that follows agricultural season
	after the onset of monsoon
Senna	: Indian Senna, Cassica Augustifolia (Botanical name)
Seethaphal	: Custurd apple
Telangana	: A region in Andhra Pradesh
Tendu	: Diospyrros melanoxyton
Thanda	: Hamlet
Udyamam	: Market
Usiri	: Indian gooseberry, Emblica officinalis (Botanical
	name)
Vanamahotsava	: Forest festival
Zamindar	: Landlord with ownership and revenue rights over the
	cultivating peasants