

TENTH EXECUTIVE FOREST POLICY COURSE

**REVISITING THE POVERTY REDUCTION AGENDA IN THE CONTEXT OF SDGs:
OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR ASIA-PACIFIC FORESTRY**

15-25 MAY 2017
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA



JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN INDIA

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STRUCTURE OF PRESENTATION

- ❖ The problem of forest land degradation
- ❖ Evolution of JFM.
- ❖ Current situation and overall performance of JFM.
- ❖ Impact of JFM and emerging challenges.

- ❑ Joint Forest Management (JFM) is one of the most significant efforts in India to involve local communities in managing degraded forest lands under government control.
- ❑ The scale, diversity of conditions and outcomes so far provide valuable insights into the challenges in developing participatory approaches to natural resource management, especially in densely populated countries.
- ❑ This presentation provides an overview of Joint Forest Management and analyses the factors that contributed to its performance.

FOREST DEGRADATION

- ❑ Although forest area has remained relatively stable in India and there are some signs of increase, forest degradation remains a major problem.
- ❑ India has some 200,000 forest fringe villages having a population of over 275 million people.
- ❑ Forty percent of the poor in India live in forest fringe villages.
- ❑ India's forests support some 270 million heads of cattle. Grazing affects 78 percent of India's forests.
- ❑ Forests is one important asset that people rely to meet their essential needs – wood fuel, fodder, construction materials, green manure and a wide array of non-wood forest products.



FOREST DEGRADATION

- Although most of the forests are under public ownership, the inability to effectively protect them have made them free access resources and given the enormous demand for products, over exploitation and degradation becomes inevitable.
- The pace of degradation continues unchecked and the area categorised as open forest continues to increase.

Change in the extent of open forests in India

| Year | Forest cover in million ha | Open forest – Crown cover 10% - 40% |
|------|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1991 | 63.49 | 24.99 (39.36%) |
| 2001 | 65.39 | 25.87 (39.57%) |
| 2011 | 69.20 | 28.78 (41.59%) |
| 2015 | 70.17 | 30.04 (42.90%) |

Source: Various reports of Forest Survey of India

EVOLUTION OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

History of local community involvement

- ❑ India has a long history of local community involvement in managing forests.
- ❑ However the take over of forests under colonial rule undermined the traditional system of resource management.
- ❑ People's involvement in forest and tree management
 - ❖ Local initiatives for community involvement (Van Panchayats).
 - ❖ Success of farm forestry (Haryana, Punjab, Gujarat, etc.)
 - ❖ The Arabari and Sukhomajri experiences in the 1980s

Van Panchayats and self-initiated community forests, Uttarakhand



12,000 VPs (12-13% of state forests) ... colonial concessions to mass protests

Other (self-initiated) community forests (e.g. Chipko)

Substantial conservation/livelihood benefits (not universal)



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EVOLUTION OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

- ❑ It was in this context that Joint Forest Management was initiated as a major departure from the traditional approach to management of forests.

- ❑ Joint Forest Management is a partnership arrangement between Forest Departments (who are legally the owners) and the local communities.

- ❑ Through an agreement the local communities assume the responsibility to protect and manage the forests and in return to this they are given access to the products and share of the income from the area.

- ❑ To better understand JFM we need to look at the development of:
 - ❑ Forest policies.
 - ❑ Rules and regulations.
 - ❑ Institutional arrangements

EVOLUTION OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

Policy Development.

National Forest Policy 1988

- ❑ Emphasized the critical importance of meeting the needs of forest dwellers and other rural communities.
- ❑ Stressed the need to involve local communities in the conservation of forests, in particular afforestation of degraded lands.



EVOLUTION OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

Rules and regulations.

- Government of India issued detailed guidelines on JFM in 1990.
- Many states developed their own guidelines on the model of the national guideline.
- Revised set of guidelines in February 2000.
- Guidelines for conflict resolution with Panchayati Raj institutions.
- Revised guideline in 2009, especially to facilitate involvement of local communities in National Afforestation Programme.



EVOLUTION OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

Institutions.

- ❑ JFM Committees (or Eco Development Committees - EDCs) for local community involvement at the forest/ village level.
- ❑ JFM Cell in Ministry of Environment and Forests established in August 1998.
- ❑ Establishment of Forest Development Agencies (FDAs) at the district level as an autonomous federation of JFM Committees.
- ❑ Establishment of State FDAs as an umbrella organization of all FDAs in a state based on the guidelines issued by Government of India.

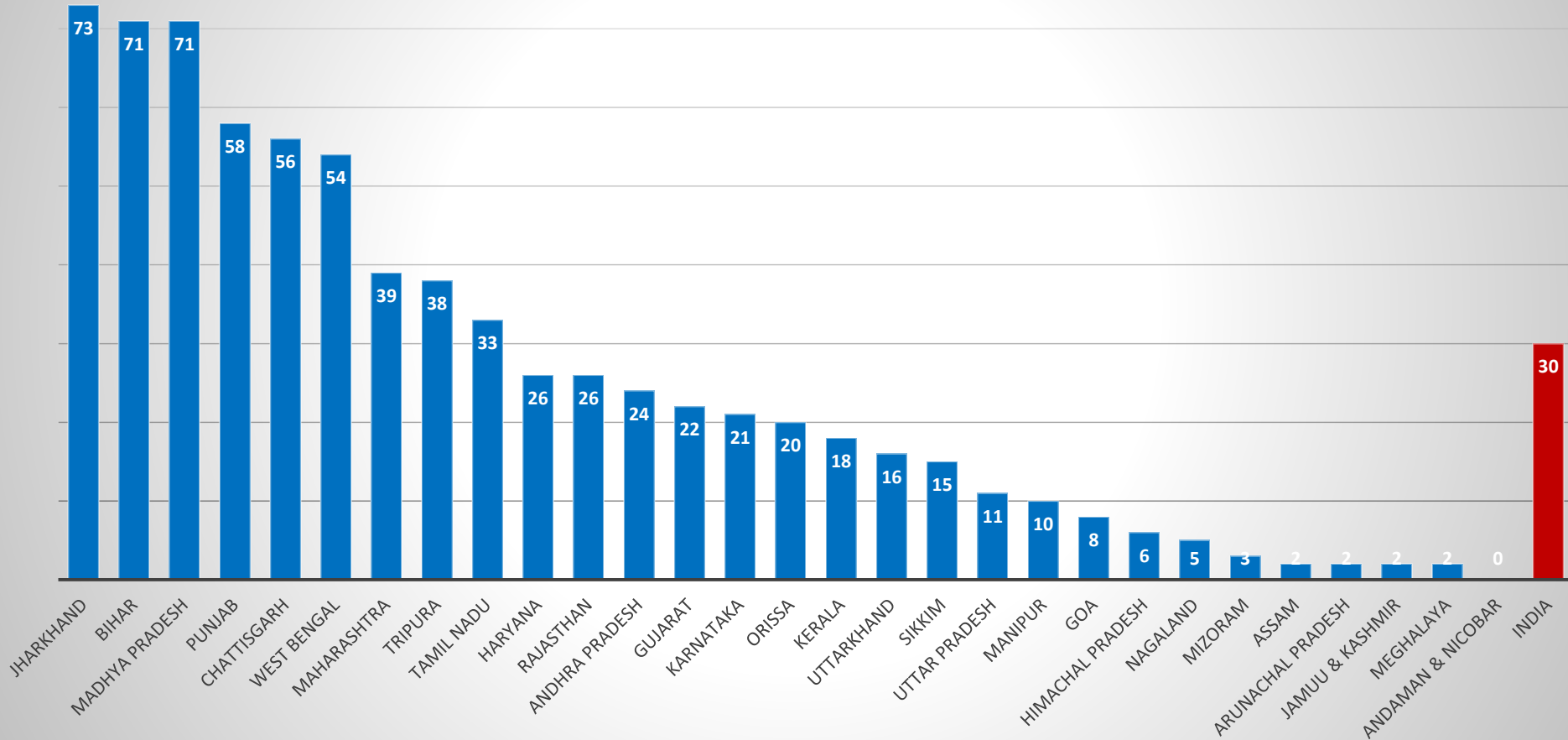


JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Initially the progress has been very slow and up to 1998 the area under JFM was only 4 million ha.
- Since the establishment of the JFM Cell in the Ministry of Environment and Forests, there has been a significant increase in the area covered by JFM.
- By 2010 the extent of area covered by JFM increased to 24.6 million ha (about 30% of the forest area in the country). In some states almost three-fourth of the forests are under JFM
- Total number of JFM Committees in 2010: 112,896
- Number of families involved 14.5 million.

JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

Percentage of forest area under JFM



FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR JFM

- ❑ In the early years there was significant financial support from several agencies including international organizations.
- ❑ Resources from central and state governments (especially under integrated watershed development programmes, national rural employment guarantee programmes)
- ❑ Increasingly substantial resources for forestry development are being channelized to the FDAs and JFMCs to implement programmes like:
 - ❖ National Afforestation Programme
 - ❖ Green India Mission



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JFM ACTIVITIES AND BENEFIT SHARING

- Afforestation and reforestation
- Management of non-wood forest products.
- Forest protection – including fire protection and prevention of poaching, illegal logging, encroachment, etc.

The contract between JFM Committee and the Forest Department stipulates how benefits from the JFM area is shared between the two entities. While local communities get 100 percent of the income from NWFPs, the share of income from sale of timber is much lower, sometimes as low as 25% of the net income.

This has been a contentious issue and many states have already reviewed the profit-sharing arrangement, significantly enhancing the share that goes to the local communities.

DID JFM MAKE AN IMPACT?

- JFM could be considered as a land-mark initiative in the history of Indian forestry.
- But did it make any significant impact on forest degradation?
- Did it improve the livelihood of rural communities and reduced poverty?
- While there are many challenges, one could consider the accomplishments as “half-full” than “half-empty”.



DID JFM MAKE AN IMPACT?

The outcomes of JFM have been extremely varied considering the enormous diversity in the social, political, economic and institutional environment.

- ❑ There are several studies that suggest that JFM had a positive impact on the condition of forests.
- ❑ JFM has enhanced the income earning opportunities – especially from the collection of non-wood forest products, sale of timber and wages for various ongoing activities. witnessed an improvement in Afforestation and reforestation
- ❑ In many states JFM has broadened their intervention to improve the overall development of the villages, especially through investing in schools, healthcare centres, improving irrigation, agriculture development, etc.



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MANY CHALLENGES

However there are many challenges and more are expected as society-nature relationship evolves:

- ❑ **Governance challenges, especially relating to the institutions involved.**
 - ❖ Relationship between the two key partners – local communities and forest departments – Unequal partnerships heavily loaded in favour of Forest Department.
 - ❖ Internal issues relating to the management of joint forest management committees – In the case of more homogenous communities benefits sharing tends to be more equitable. But in others elite domination remains a concern.
 - ❖ Internal issues relating to the Forest Department. There are those who see this as a genuine effort to involve local communities in forest management while there are others who use JFM as a means of mobilising labour.
 - ❖ Institutional rigidities – especially from the side of Forest Department



MANY CHALLENGES

- The performance of JFM differs considerably within and between the different states in India. It did have some positive impacts on poverty reduction.
- JFM has largely evolved as a top-down approach. Forest Department has a strong administrative, technical and financial control on JFM activities.
- Eventually JFM will have to evolve as a system where local communities take full responsibility for management of forests. In fact this is what the Forest Rights Act 2006 is aiming at.
- Many however are of the view that JFM is not encouraging true participatory efforts, thwarting genuine devolution of forest management to local communities.



Thank you



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