GENDER AND JOINT FOREST PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

A research study in Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka

Mariette Correa

INDIA DEVELOPMENT SERVICE
DHARWAD, KARNATAKA

India Development Service wishes to thank the Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development, New Delhi, for its support for this study. Their initiation in raising issues of Gender and JFPM is a major contribution to the development of this important programme to save both the environment and the livelihood of forest dependent people.

India Development Service is a voluntary organisation working to develop the poor in nearly eighty villages in Northern Karnataka. As common properties are so important to the landless, IDS has given major importance to work relating to the maintenance, development, and management of these properties by the people dependent on them. They work in the implementation of Joint Planning and Management in several villages as well as leading the training programme for the staff of voluntary organisations in Karnataka with the Federation of Voluntary Organisations in Rural Development in Karnataka relating to JFPM.

Research Team

Mohini S. Poojary
Shashikala Nayak
M.K.Radha
Sheela Khare

November 1995

CONTENTS

Summary

Chapter 1

- Introduction 1-6
- Objectives of this study 6
- Method of study 6-9

Chapter 2

Section 1 - Case Studies of 10 VFCs 10-67

Section 2 - Case studies of 3 VFCs where women are said to be active. 68-83

Chapter 3

Section 1 - KFD and JFPM 84-92

Section 2 - NGOs and JFPM 93-98

Chapter 4

- Issues to be addressed and suggestions for improving the status of women in JFPM 99-109

Appendices: 110-117

Appendix 1 : Interview Guidelines for the first detailed visit

Appendix 2: Information to be obtained from all VFCs (second visit)

Appendix 3: Interview guidelines for KFD staff at all levels

Appendix 4: Interview guidelines for NGOs

Appendix 5: Interview guidelines for the all women VFCs

Appendix 6: Gender Awareness related to JFPM for village women (Training Sessions)

References 118-119

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This was an exploratory study intended to research the gender dimensions in the JFPM work in conjunction with the Western Ghats Forestry and Environment Project in Canara Circle (Uttara Kannada District) Karnataka. The study was aimed at assessing the participation of women in the JFPM process and the attitudes of men and women towards JFPM. The study has to be understood in the context of Uttara Kannada where firewood is not one of the important issues due to the abundance of firewood available. Also, it is not as much of a gender issue as men in many villages go to collect firewood.

METHOD

The case study method was adopted and ten VFCs were purposively selected for the study - 5 where NGOs are working and 5 where they are not. The completion of the microplan and MoU signature were the main considerations in selecting the VFCs. The three women dominant VFCs in the district were also studied in order to understand the reasons for women's active participation in these VFCs.

With the aid of interview guidelines, data was collected during repeated visits to the villages. Attempts were made to interview women (and to a lesser extent, men) from the different communities, castes, classes and as many members of the Managing Committee of the VFC as possible, particularly the two women members. In each place at least one VFC meeting was attended by the research team. The Karnataka Forest Department (KFD) and NGO staff at all levels were also interviewed.

In the last stage of data collection, training sessions for village women on JFPM and women's issues were conducted by resource persons in most of the villages in the study. These were held since one of the main findings of the study was that women are unaware about JFPM and all it involves.

Secondary data involved going through the microplans in detail as well as the VFC registers usually maintained by the foresters in order to get an idea of the issues taken up for discussion in the VFC meetings and the people who participate.

OBSERVATIONS

The study showed that at every stage participation of women in JFPM is practically non-existent. The lack of effort in eliciting the active participation of women (primarily by the KFD, but by NGOs as well) is reflected at all stages of the JFPM process at the village level.

Women in the process of VFC formation

The promoters, i.e. the people whom KFD first contacts, usually end up becoming Chairman and Committee members. The KFD contacts the important and powerful people in the village and the dominance of these is reinforced in the JFPM process. In all the villages in our study not a single promoter was a woman.

In a patriarchal society it is inevitable that if only one person in a family has to be represented for any programme it will be the male head of the household. This is reinforced in the process of obtaining membership to the VFC where the foresters have gone from house to house and in most cases specifically asked for the male head of the household.

During the microplanning process, women (in the few cases where they do participate) are divided into groups along with men and the latter generally take over the process.

While the microplan documents as well as the people interviewed (KFD and villagers) state that the members were unanimously elected to the Managing Committees, more indepth analysis showed that the entire process is directly or subtly guided by the KFD.

The women on the Managing Committee generally belong to the dominant groups in the village. They are nominated to the Managing Committee either by the men from their communities who have already been elected to the Managing Committee or by the KFD staff.

Participation of women in JFPM

The study made it clear that women from different communities, castes, classes etc., not only have conflicting interests and priorities but often cannot even be brought together on a common platform (where interests can converge) due to deep-seated prejudices and beliefs about each other.

It is important to note that not only are the women's opinions unsolicited when making JFPM related decisions, but even after the decisions are made the women are not properly informed about these decisions. This is compounded by the fact that there are no formal processes for the VFC to feedback information about their meetings to the rest of the village.

In many places women are not only unaware of the origin of the decisions but of the very existence of the VFC - even when their husbands are members. Those who know that a VFC has been formed have no idea about its purpose and functions and are usually told by both the KFD and the men in the village that these are matters that do not concern women.

While women's needs of forest resources are not taken into consideration either by KFD or the men of the village, what is evident is that there is a greater homogeneity of interests between men and women in the village than between KFD staff and men.

When made aware of the fact that the benefits of the VFC would be in their husbands' names, women felt that it would make no difference in whose names the benefits were given since in their society men would control the benefits anway. However, they felt that if the benefits were collectively given to a group of women they could derive support from each other and their collective strength would mitigate the effects of their husbands using the benefits which were in their wives' names. It would also increase their decision-making power and their specific needs could be met.

The two immediate and visible benefits of the JFPM process are the seed money (given during the time of the MoU signature) and the installation of smokeless chullas. While the former cannot be spent without the sanction of a KFD official, the latter has not been done satisfactorily. The result is that in many places they are left unused and people continue to use their traditional chullas.

KFD and JFPM

Since many senior KFD staff express that they do not genuinely believe in the concept of JFPM and are implementing it only because the ODA has invested so much and this has translated into an order from their superior officers, it raises the question of sustainability of the JFPM process when ODA finally withdraws its support. One also wonders how the VFC can be sustained over time if there are large sections of people (women and weaker sections) who are excluded from it.

Most people still feel they are beneficiaries, recieving finance and inputs from the forest department in exchange for protection of the forests. The traditional hierarchy between KFD and the people does not seem to have diminished except that now the people feel that the KFD (and other government departments) have become more approachable and perhaps accessible. The seating arrangement during VFC meetings in most villages reinforces the hierarchy between the KFD and the villagers. From the point of view of women and KFD there seems to be no change from the earlier relationship since the former have not been involved in the JFPM process.

Promises made by the KFD have not always been fulfilled resulting in JFPM being viewed as just another Government programme. The KFD also gets labourers from outside the village to work on JFPM land. Nowhere do the VFCs understand that any work on JFPM land gives first preference to the villages and then to the outsiders. The issue of NTFP has rarely been discussed by KFD though one of the purposes of JFPM is to stop giving contracts to outsiders as soon as the VFC is formed.

The people expect higher officials (RFOs and DCFs) to attend most VFC meetings, a view reinforced by these KFD officials who often promise to attend meetings. In a way, it is very positive that these KFD officials are taking so much effort to visit the villages themselves in spite of the late hours that the meetings are usually held. What needs to be seriously considered though is for how long this involvement of senior staff can continue.

Usually when KFD staff do not come for a scheduled meeting it is cancelled. Very rarely do the members feel motivated or capable enough to hold meetings on their own. The agenda for the meetings are decided by KFD staff.

NGOs and JFPM

All the NGOs in the study have programmes exclusively for women since the approach of the NGOs has been to divide the village into groups based on age, sex, caste etc. and to conduct programmes for these groups. However, since the JFPM process prima-facie does not seem to require the village to be broken up into convenient units, none of the NGOs have felt the need to question the dominance of men in this process.

While all the NGOs are sympathetic to women's issues, none have made attempts to get more than two women on the Managing Committees of the VFCs. The only exceptions are the two all-women VFCs. It is only recently that the need has been felt by all the NGOs studied to involve women in JFPM related issues.

Since NGOs already have their priority areas of work, involvement in JFPM usually means additional responsibilities and perhaps appointing additional staff. When the existing staff are expected to get involved in the VFCs it tends to be just one more duty to perform.

KFD and NGO interface

Where NGOs are working, the KFD depends on them (perhaps too much) for support. In this respect, the NGO presence could be seen as a hindrance to a direct dialogue between KFD and the people. Often the NGOs too, tend to mediate between the people and the KFD instead of motivating the villagers to deal directly with the KFD officials.

While the Government Order has provision for the involvement of NGOs in JFPM, the KFD is often reluctant to include NGOs in the process. They expect the NGO staff to take effort related to the VFC but have been slow to give them official position on the Managing Committee.

One needs to examine the extent to which NGOs are necessary to the JFPM process. Though the importance of the roles NGOs can play in the JFPM process cannot be denied, given the small number of NGOs in the district, their geographical coverage and their limitations, one cannot depend too much on NGO involvement. From the point of view of the NGOs, it is useful to get involved in the VFCs in the areas they work. However, from the KFD point of view, stress given to NGOs in JFPM seems pointless considering the number of villages in the district in which there are no NGOs working.

Attitudes of women and men towards JFPM

The attitudes of villagers towards JFPM are by and large based on their actual personal experience. Most people have not thought beyond their own VFCs, protection of the environment in general, or broader issues. Moreover, people often hear what they want to hear. Due to the age old relationship with KFD and other government departments they are not attuned to the idea of JFPM in spite of the fact that the KFD staff have explained the JFPM concept. Since the concept is relatively new it will take some time for both the government and the people to fully internalise it.

In most places, when smugglers are caught by the villagers, the goods recieved are taken by the KFD. The villagers get little or no reward /incentive for this and feel cheated especially since this is a result of the VFC/JFPM process and this is their first experience in `joint' planning and management. Some people find the idea of JFPM merely a way of passing on some of the responsibilities of the KFD to the villagers.

CONCLUSION

Given the socio-cultural situation of women and the danger of their marginalisation in JFPM, the KFD should actively encourage women to participate. In order to make the JFPM process more gender-sensitive, it is important that the KFD staff have training sessions on the need for involving women in JFPM and how they could go about it. This training becomes even more necessary for foresters since they are in direct contact with the villagers.

The need for women to be members should be stressed during the initial meetings while forming the VFC. If this is done it is highly probable that many more women would be in the general body as well as the Managing Committee of the VFC. For women to take an active part in the JFPM process it needs to be a community endeavour.

The women members on the Managing Committee should ideally be selected by the women themselves after all the women clearly understand the importance of their opinions in the JFPM process. Also, it is important to give representation to the different communities in the village. The KFD should make attempts to get the views of women from different castes and classes.

During the microplanning process, whenever possible, a group comprised only of women could be formed. Separate meetings of the women should be held periodically to address their issues and priorities - before presenting these at the general VFC meetings.

What becomes clear from this study is that apart from social structures and attitudes of people being a hindrance to the participation of women, basic policy changes are required if women are to participate more meaningfully in the JFPM process.

It is hoped that the results of this study will be used by the Karnataka Forest Department, the NGOs, the ODA and the Steering Committee of the project as a base for policy changes and planning interventions which can lead to more equitable and gender-sensitive decision-making processes.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Forest Policy In India: A Brief Overview

In order to understand the context of the Western Ghats Forestry and Environment project, it is essential to cast a glance over the history of forest policy and regulation in India. The first debates on Forest Policy in India began around the 1860s. Prior to this, Great Britain had engaged in a policy of ruthless and indiscriminate exploitation of India's forests. Having destroyed her own forests, Britain was forced to turn to her colonies to satisfy her requirements for wood, particularly for shipbuilding. Indian teak, one of the finest shipbuilding timbers, was especially targeted and large tracts of natural forest were clear-felled to make way for teak plantations. This process accelerated further with the expansion of the railway network after 1853.

The British realised that there was the need to establish rigid control over the use of forests to facilitate exploitation by the rulers. A memorandum restricting forest dwellers rights was issued in 1855. The first Act to give effect to rules for the management and preservation of forests was proposed in 1865. The Act had been hurriedly drafted and merely sought to establish the claims of the state to acquire forests required for railway expansion, subject to the proviso that existing rights not be abridged. It was immediately realised that a more stringent and inclusive piece of legislation was required and the Indian Forest Act of 1878 was passed. Forests were divided into three categories and several restrictions were put on forest-dwellers' rights. The National Forest Policy of 1884 buttressed the provisions of the 1878 Act, justifying the need to exploit forests for the augmentation of state revenue. It paved the way for the regulation of rights and privileges of forest dwellers over forest land and produce. In 1927, a comprehensive Act was enacted, which contained all the provisions of the earlier Act along with subsequent amendments. It is interesting to note that this Act - very much a legacy of colonialism - is still in force.

The main aim of the Forest Acts was the production of large commercial timber and the generation of revenue. Towards this end, the customary rights and privileges of forest dwellers and neighboring agricultural communities were progressively abrogated and denied. An artificial separation between forestry and agriculture was created. This led to an alienation of local communities from the forests, so much as that in some cases they began to destroy the forests which used to give them sustenance.

Colonial forest policy predictably resulted in ecological havoc. Remote forests were made accessible through improved transportation networks and the remaining areas of pristine forest were ruthlessly hacked. Plant diversity suffered a body blow in that naturally growing species were felled to make way for plantation of commercially valuable species of timber. Large `63 expanses were sold at ridiculously low prices to enable establishment of tea, coffee and rubber plantations. The British obsession with Shikar (the hunt) was the cause of a major decline in wildlife populations. Probably the most serious ecological consequence was the decline of traditional systems of conservation and management.

The impact of colonial forestry on the poor was simply devastating. Forests were one of the last buffers of the poor against State takeover of common property resources. Once they were denied access to the forests, they were left with practically no resources. The 1927 Forest Act did recognise individual rights, but forest rights and privileges in India were usually exercised by communities or groups and there was no provision for recording rights exercised by groups of people rather than individuals. Also, in the absence of proper records, a largely illiterate population was denied rights to land which they had controlled for generations. Tribals were particularly hard hit.

Forest Policy After Independence

It would appear prima facie logical to assume that forest policy would become more people and ecology friendly after Independence. But this is to ignore the fact that the British were replaced by an Indian elite who were controlled by the nascent bourgeoisie and the feudal-kulak agricultural lobby. Forest Policy was subverted to provide massive subsidies for the growth of India's capitalist class, which went about destroying forests with a rapacity that would have surprised even the British.

The National Forest Policy of 1952 emphasised the ecological and social aspects of forestry. but "paramount national interest and needs' was interpreted in a very narrow sense, serving the interests of India's bourgeoisie. Forests were felled to make roads, construct hydro-electric projects and large factories and to meet the fuel and raw material needs of Indian industry. Instances where forest produce including timber and bamboo was sold to industries at throwaway prices while denying the poor any access even at market cost, are too numerous to recount.

This anti-people bias was carried to its culmination by the National Commission on Agriculture and the proposed forest bill of 1980. The former, in its section IX on Forestry advocated commercialization of forests at all costs and with disregard to the sustenance of forest-dwelling communities. The Commission squarely laid the blame for the destruction of forests at the doorstep of the rural masses. The Commission gave highest priority to production forests and lowest priority to social forests. The draft bill of the Indian Forest Act 1980 was largely based on these recommendations. The bill evoked a storm of protest and had to be shelved.

People's Responses

Recent historiography, particularly of the subaltern variety, has done much to bring to light the response of the people to this exploitative history. At the grassroots level, there have been sporadic incidents of protest right from the 1850. The forest-dwelling communities including tribals and the peasantry did not take kindly to this denial of their traditional rights over the forests. In many cases, they continued to use forest resources, braving harassment and even imprisonment by forest officials. Many of the practices which colonial foresters found abhorrent, like selective burning of forest tracts, had their roots in traditional systems of forest management by the people. The Forest Department was never entirely successful in curbing people's use of the forest to meet their basic needs. Traditional tribal practices like jhum (shifting cultivation) were not easily controlled.

A more complex reaction also set in due to alienation from the forests. Already denied access to the forests, the ubiquitous presence of forest officials and the consequent harassment led people to cause damage to the forests. It is an indictment of the process of alienation of the people from their natural resources that they were now destroying the very resources which earlier gave them sustenance.

In the post-independence period, these people's protests gained some momentum as the people naturally expected that an indigenous government would be more amenable towards evolving a pro-people policy. As ecological awareness grew in the 70s, these agitations did succeed in making some impact on policy-makers. Probably the most famous of these, Chipko, gained international attention and is considered a landmark in environmental movements in India. These movements have finally forced the State to take a fresh look at forest policy.

A Significant Policy Reversal?

There was a collective protest from NGOs, people's organisations, activists and environmentalists all over the country, when the provisions of the Draft forest Bill, 1980, became known. It was pointed out that any system of forest management which excluded the people living in and around forests was doomed to

failure. By this time, ecological alarm bells were ringing all over the country, and it became obvious that the existing policy was proving ruinous to the well- being of the forests and that unless something was done, desertification was a none too distant reality.

Environmentalists pointed out that the remaining forests in the country could be protected and improved, and degraded and decertified areas could be brought under forest cover only if the people were actively involved in the process of forest planning and management. By then, sufficient evidence regarding successful traditional conservation efforts was available to convince even the wariest of skeptics. Some cases are from Karnataka. In Halkar, a village in Uttara Kannada, a Forest Panchayat was constituted (along with eight others, of which only two still exist) in 1924. Despite many problems, the Panchayat has successfully managed a patch of forest of about 220 acres. At Hunsur in Shimoga district, the villagers have preserved a patch of forest covering about 100 acres. At K. Rampura in Pavagada taluka, villagers got together in 1982 to protect a hillock which now has good tree cover. In Orissa, this process has acquired the dimensions of a people's movement with a few hundred villages having taken up forest protection activities.

One positive step towards better forest management was taken in 1976. Though the Indian Forest Act, 1927 was passed as a central law, under the system of dyarchy, provincial Governments were constituted in 1935 and they passed some forest related acts. After independence too, forests continued in the state list, but in 1976, forests was transferred to the concurrent list. In 1980, under the Forest Conservation Act, the Government of India prohibited the state governments from allowing the use of any forest lands for other purposes without prior approval from the Central Government.

The National Forest Policy of 1988 was the first step in recognising the rights of local communities and giving them a say in forest management. The Policy categorically states that the aim of forest policy should be primarily ecological. It particularly recognises the rights of tribals. Also, it states that the practice of providing forest produce to industry at subsidised prices to industry should be discontinued.

The new policy does appear to have had some impact on official practices. On 1st June, 1990, the Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests addressed a letter to the secretaries of the Forest Departments of all the states emphasising greater involvement of village communities and voluntary agencies for regeneration of degraded forest land. 15 State Governments have passed Government Orders (GOs) enabling JFPM.

A draft forest bill has also been prepared recently. While this bill does have some positive features in that its emphasis is on forests for ecological reasons, rather than revenue or yield, it still places great emphasis on state control and management of forests. Also, the provision that prohibits the constitution of village forests from reserved forest lands strikes a body blow to joint forest planning and management, recognising as it does only the two extremes of full State Management and total village control. Ominously, there is no mention of Joint Forest Planning and Management.

Does JFPM really constitute a significant opportunity to assert people's rights over forests? Does it provide a significant means to improve the country's forests through involvement of local communities? Is it really a "revolutionary change in policy" which reverses the direction of hitherto existing Forest Policy?

These are all extremely complex questions and it is certainly premature to pass a judgment on JFPM. If it really can challenge and change the existing production relations with respect to forestry, it may be a significant step. On the other hand, it may be no more than mere eyewash to cover up the activities of the Forest Department, which will continue as before, till the whole business is scrapped. JFPM is very much one of the development fashions of the moment and it is notoriously difficult to judge these fashions dispassionately until the euphoria around them subsides. What can be said at the moment though is that JFPM does provide an opportunity for the poor to get their toe in at the door of forest management, and if luck holds, this toehold may help to open the door to give them a significant say. As such, NGO

involvement in JFPM is of the essence, if they want to make an impact on the problem of poverty. JFPM provides an opportunity to widen and strengthen the resource base of the rural poor. It has also been pointed out that participatory methods of forest management are beneficial to the forest environment. It is indeed obvious that one cannot protect the environment without safeguarding people's livelihoods.

Uttara Kannada district - The Study Area

Uttara Kannada district (the district is also the Kanara Forest Circle) lies in the north-western corner of Karnataka. Part of the Western Ghats area, the district is renowned for its forest cover. This is officially 80%, but recent satellite imagery shows it at around 55-60%. The forests range from pure evergreen (at the crestline of the Western Ghats) through semievergreen to deciduous (dry and moist) and scrub. Many tracts are covered by plantations of commercial timber and gardens of commercial crops, specially spice gardens for which the area is renowned, but a very large area of natural forest continues to exist. The lives of the people inhabiting these forests are linked closely to the forests. Poorer groups are usually more dependent on forests in terms of their livelihood.

The area divides naturally into three climatic zones - the narrow coastal strip, the upghat sections and the transition zone at the extreme eastern end. Each of these areas has its own distinct type of forest. This is a high rainfall area with the average rainfall for the area being about 2700mm. The forests of the district are extremely valuable, with teak grown here said to be some of the finest in the world. The Forest Department is involved in a big way in development and protection of forest resources here.

The district is in a sense a cultural and ethnic melting pot and has been described as an "anthropological gallery". It is a coastal district, bordering Goa. It was earlier part of Bombay Province and is now in Karnataka State. A number of languages are spoken - Kannada, Konkani and Marathi with some influence from Arabic and Urdu as well. Kannada is the dominant language, spoken by 58% of the population. The 1981 census put the population of the district at 10,72,034. The population is unevenly distributed, basically clustered around livelihood opportunities. In respect of density of population, U.K. occupied the lowest place among all the districts in the state, essentially because of the large area under forests. There are a number of poor and backward communities living in these forests and dependent upon them - Siddies, Gowlies, Halakki Vokkals, and Hulsavars among others.

The Western Ghats Forestry & Environment Project

The WGFEP took a number of years to actually reach the implementation stage. The project document went through two drafts before the final proposal was approved. The first draft (red book-July 1988) evoked a lot of criticism from environmentalists and voluntary agencies. A succession of meetings in the voluntary sector followed and a revised draft (Green Book) was prepared. The Federation of Voluntary Organisations in Rural Development - Karnataka (FEVORD-K) prepared a detailed critique of this document and it was only in 1991 that the final draft was approved (white book). The official project implementation began in April 1992, but there was still a hitch in that ODA demanded that a Government order enabling constitution of VFCs for implementation of JFPM be issued. This order was finally issued on 12/4/93.

There are still some problems with the conceptualisation of the project, but even then the project constitutes a significant departure from earlier practices for the Karnataka Forest Department (KFD). This kind of institutional change is never easy. There are pockets of resistance in the KFD. Also, it becomes clear that this change is not exactly voluntary from an embarrassing faux pas in the Government Order which openly states that ODA pressure had a role to play. The statement also appears to indicate that this is not to be taken too seriously, as the whole thing will be dropped once outside pressure is removed.

"The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests has stated the "process plan" of the Western Ghats Forestry and Environmental Project funded by ODA of the U.K. depends mainly on the JFPM and the ODA

authorities have insisted for Government order authorising the principales of Joint Forest Planning and Management. Accordingly, he has sent a detailed proposal on the above scheme to the government for consideration".

Need to study gender issues in JFPM

Several decades of development planning intervention have revealed a wealth of information about how women have been rendered invisible, marginalised and often victimised by the development process. The recent Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) resolutions passed by several states are no exceptions. Women, who are most dependent on forests for subsistence and who for what very reason are more sensitive to ecologically sustainable development needs, have been excluded from the JFPM process. Women collect not only firewood for fuel but non-timber forest produce (NTFPs) which include fodder and grasses, items of food like fruits, nuts, honey and berries and raw materials for income-based activities like leaves, cane and bamboo. As women are most severely affected by deforestation and change of species, for any form of forest regeneration to be successful women need to be actively involved in the different stages of planning and implementation.

The role of women as envisaged by the JFPM resolutions in most states is quite ambiguous. The percentages of women required to be members on the general bodies and managing committees of the Village Forest Committee is usually nominal. One of the main factors responsible for women's exclusion has been the use of the household as a unit at the village. The assumed homogeneity of the household has been criticised by gender-sensitive scholars and activists for over a decade now. However, the household still continues to be viewed as a convenient unit both for analysis by academicians and for development intervention by planners.

In Karnataka, where the JFPM resolution (dated 12.4.1993) requires only one member of each household to become a member of the general body of the Village Forest Committees, it becomes inevitable that the male `head' of the household represents the entire family. The Managing Committee, on the other hand, are expected to have at least two women members. This results in ridiculous situations where the membership of at least two women members have to be solicited on the general body so that they can be represented on the Managing Committees. The implications of this are obvious. It seems unlikely that the two women on these committees can truly represent the women in the village.

Where sharing of the benefits is concerned, the 25% which is the share of the beneficiaries is supposed to be divided equally among all the general body members. Since it is the men who form the general body, the actual profits are to be shared among them again with the assumption that the entire household will benefit equally by these profits.

Apart from the actual profits to be reaped at periodic intervals (at harvest), men also profit on a day-to-day basis. Field experience in parts of Northern India have shown that it is the men who make the decisions based on their priorities, rarely taking into account the needs of the women in their families. Therefore, for instance, where timber is needed for the construction of houses (men's department) decisions are made to protect the forest so that the long term requirements of the men are met. The short term fuel needs of their families are ignored and the women are expected to walk for much longer distances to collect firewood from non-protected areas. Though women resort to other fuels for cooking and more efficient fuel-saving methods these are still not enough. They are often left with no choice but to violate the rules of the VFC rather than let their families starve. When this happens they are considered offenders liable for fines and are beaten by their husbands. This brings us to one of the major gender issues regarding JFPM. Earlier, when forest management was under the control of the Forest Department women offenders at least had the support of the men in their families. Now the policing role of the government has been taken on at village level by male-dominated VFCs and may have succeeded in further exacerbating gender inequalities within the household.

Further, the recent trend in some forest committees in North Indian States has been to recruit women to `tackle' the offenders since it is felt that men are wary of being accused of molestation when they have to deal with the women offenders. Therefore, not only are women turned against women for the sake of `community' welfare, but the basic reasons why women continue to offend fail to be addressed.

While it is clear that women's participation is crucial to the JFPM process, there has not been sufficient research to show the quality of their participation. Though there is sufficient evidence to show that women do not play an active role in the JFPM process there is a need to understand not only what factors are responsible for their low participation, but how their participation can be increased.

This brings us to the role that NGOs have played and can play in these participatory management systems. The JFPM resolution have envisaged for NGOs the role of catalysts of the movement. In the Karnataka resolution a representative from the local NGO, if any, is expected to become an ex-officio member of the general body as well as the managing committee of the VFC. The role of NGOs in the JFPM is clearly specified in this resolution. What needs to be studied is the extent to which the NGOs actually perform these roles and how they feel they can contribute to the JFPM process.

Finally, gender issues need to be understood in the light of the National Forest Policy, 1988, which ultimately resulted in JFPM resolutions. The main aim of the policy is to achieve nature conservation and ecological balance and at the same time meet the essential requirement of the people. How this can be best and most equitably achieved may be viewed differently by women and men. The perceived ways to reach the goal of `sustainable development' are likely to be gender specific. There is no better way of understanding this then by listening to the people themselves.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To analyse some JFPM related decisions with respect of
   - the roles of females and males in the decision-making process.
   - the implications of these decisions on women and men.
2. The role of NGOs in the JFPM process.
3. The attitudes of females and males towards JFPM.

METHOD OF STUDY

This was an exploratory study intended to research the gender dimensions in the JFPM work in conjunction with the Western Ghats Forestry and Environment Project in Canara Circle (Uttara Kannada District) Karnataka.

The results of the study will be shared with the Karnataka Forest Department and ODA and the Steering Committee of the Project. It can serve as a base for planning interventions which can lead to more equitable and reasonable decision-making process.

Background research

At the start of the project, prior to the collection of data, perusal of relevant literature was completed. This background research on Gender and JFPM was done in order to

- prepare a broad framework within which to base this study
- prepare material for the training of field investigators
- prepare interview guidelines for the initial phase of data collection.

The material read included those prepared by the ODA, SPWD, NGOs, etc. as well as material on feminist research methods, particularly those to be used in the course of this research project.

Selection of VFCs

In accordance with the original plans a total of ten VFCs were selected for the study - 5 where NGOs are working and 5 where they are not.

In order to decide which VFCs to be included for the study, the NGOs working in the district and known to be involved in JFPM work were first contacted. The nature and objectives of the research project were explained and their cooperation solicited. Initial information from them was obtained regarding their involvement in JFPM related work in the villages in which they are functioning, the number of VFCs that have been formed in their project areas and the roles of the NGOs in these VFCs.

After contacting the NGOs, senior staff in the KFD were contacted in order to get information about the total number of VFCs formed in the district, the division and range to which they belong, their dates of registration, the extent of NGO involvement, and the number of women members in the VFCs.

The VFCs to be included in the study were decided after much deliberation, changes in plans and a couple of futile visits (to VFCs which we did not include in the study). We attempted to take certain factors into consideration when selecting VFCs for the study.

- Accessibility, distance from main roads, etc.
- Dates of registration
- Completion of microplan and MoU signature
- Same Division (if not range) for NGO and Non-NGO VFCs. This is so that some attempts at comparisons could be made by controlling other variables.

However, it was not possible to consider all the above for various reasons. For example, there are NGOs working in all the VFCs in some ranges so it was not possible to find a VFC in those ranges where only the Government is involved.

The final list of VFCs to be included in this study was ultimately purposively selected, the completion of the microplan and MoU signature being the main consideration. The final list is given below :

Village	Range	Division	Date of Regn.	NGO
Basapur	Mundgod	Yellapur	20/12/93	-
Hosalli	Kirwatti	Yellapur	27/10/93	Deeds
Gotgodi	Katur	Yellapur	2/9/93	Vikasa
Beligeri	Yellapur	Yellapur	27/8/93	-
Kangod	Siddapur	Sirsi	20/1/94	-
Saralgi	Gersoppa	Honavar	26/9/94	KDDC
Nagar Bastikeri	Gersoppa	Honavar	23/10/93	-
Shirve	Karwar	Karwar	18/1/94	KRWCDS
Jarde	Karwar	Karwar	31/3/95	KRWCDS
Bogribail	Ankola	Karwar	10/1/94	-

During the process of selection of VFCs and before finalising the VFCs to be included in the study we visited the VFCs. In each place the RFO and Forester were contacted. During these visits we attempted to

contact VFC members, introduced ourselves and the purpose of the research and the nature of the data to be collected during the coming months.

Selection of Decisions

The JFPM related decisions to be studied for this project were selected both on the basis of a review of the microplans and on field visits. One of the main objectives of this research study was to study some of the JFPM related decisions in terms of women's participation in making these decisions and the implications of these decisions. Unfortunately, it was found that most women were unaware of these decisions even after they were made let alone being part of the decision-making process. Still, attempts were made to analyse the processes by which the decisions were made. Interviews with a sample of the men and women involved in making the decisions were carried out. Interviews were also conducted with a sample of villagers in areas where the decisions are implemented or to be implemented.

The decisions selected which are related to the following issues are mentioned below:

1) Basapur	-	construction of fodder plots
		protection from encroachment
2) Kangod	-	M.F.P.
		Small timbers
		Bamboos
3) Hosalli	-	construction of fodder plots
		smokeless chulla
4) Gotgodi	-	Plantation of Teakbed
		Protection from smugglers
5) Nagarbastikeri	-	cashew plantation
		Manure
6) Saralgi	-	New plantation
		NTFP
7) Jarde	-	Firewood
8) Shirve	-	VFC plantations
9) Bogribail	-	Protection from encroachment
		Firewood
10) Beliger	-	Sigekai
		Smokeless chulla

Process of data collection

After the first introductory visit to the field both the investigators together made a 2-3 day visit to each village in the study. During their stay they held detailed interviews and discussions with a sample of villagers. There was no strict sampling technique followed but the method of `proportionate' sampling was roughly used. They conducted interviews with women (and to a lesser extent, men) from the different communities, castes, classes. Apart from this, as many members of the Managing Committee of the VFC had to be interviewed. In all the VFCs the two women members on the Managing Committee were interviewed.

After the joint visits, the investigators were responsible for 5 VFCs each. They made at least two or three more visits to each of these VFCs to collect more data. In each place at least one VFC meeting was attended by the research team.

During these visits they also interviewed the KFD foresters, guards and watchmen when possible as well as the NGO staff working in the field. The research coordinator accompanied them on several of the initial visits and attended a few VFC meetings. She interviewed the heads of the NGOs in the study and the KFD staff at the senior levels - RFOs and DCFs.

Detailed reports were written and regular meetings of the research team were conducted at frequent intervals.

Finally, in the last stage of data collection, training sessions for village women on JFPM and women's issues were planned in most of the villages in the study. These were held since one of the main findings of the study was that women are unaware about JFPM and all it involves. As part of the process of planning for these trainings, the NGOs that are part of this study were contacted, the possibility of training in their areas was broached and feedback was obtained from them regarding what they wanted to include in the training. Three of the four NGOs were very positive about the idea and suggested what could be included in the training sessions. This was also discussed with some of the KFD staff and they all supported the idea. Resource persons were called for the training sessions and the final inputs of the sessions were a collaborative effort of the resource persons, the three NGOs and the research team. (see Appendix 6). The sessions were organised by the field investigators and included house to house visits a few days before each session particularly in areas where women are not aware of JFPM, ensuring that they attend the training.

Summary reports of each village were given to the resource persons prior to the training in order to give the trainer an idea of what issues to take up in each particular village apart from general information on JFPM. These reports also enabled the trainer and the field investigators to fill in the gaps in data collection.

Finally, a 2-3 day visit was paid to collect data from the three women dominant VFCs in the district. The procedure followed was similar to those of the other villages. However, as these are not part of the main study, interviews were not as extensive.(see Appendix 5)

Tools for data collection

Interview guidelines were used to collect data. These guidelines were used both for individual interviews and group discussions. The guidelines were well internalised by the research team and were therefore not taken to the field. (Appendices 1-5)

Secondary data involved going through the microplans in detail as well as the VFC registers usually maintained by the Foresters in order to get an idea of the issues taken up for discussion in the VFC meetings and the people who participate.

Time period

The background research and training of field investigators took one month though it continued through the initial data collection period; collection of data from the field was done over six months; and analysis of the data (done to some extent during the latter phase of data collection) and writing of the final report two months.

CHAPTER 2 Section 1

Case studies of 10 VFCs

This chapter includes a brief description of each of the ten VFCs studied as well as the three VFCs where women are said to play a dominant role. Two of these are all women VFCs whereas one has four women on the Managing Committee. Attention has been paid more to the perception of villagers as well as KFD and NGO staff regarding the various issues involved rather than secondary data sources. The microplans, where complete, have been used to give a profile of the villages.

Since there are many issues that came to the notice of the research team that cut across villages these have been included in a separate chapter on general issues to be addressed. Many of them are not mentioned in the case studies themselves.

The formation of VFCs and the introduction to the concept of JFPM has been a relatively new process. Though attempts were made to select villages which were already some way into the JFPM process it became difficult to find these for various reasons. Therefore, even though one of the main objectives of the study was to analyse JFPM related decisions from the point of view of women's role in making these decisions and the implications of these decisions on them, it was not possible to meet this objective. Women have still not been involved in the JFPM process and by and large are not aware of the decisions that have been taken.

However, the issues that come up in the course of this research are important particularly because there are still many more VFCs to be formed and in the existing ones as well it is still not too late to increase and strengthen the participation of women in the VFCs.

BASAPUR

Profile of the village

Basapur village is situated on the Mundgod-Kalghtagi Road 14 km away from Mundgod and 3 km interior on the left side. The village is surrounded by reserve forest, and the terrain is flat. One stream flows on the Western side, on the border of Agadi and Basapur villages. The road is a metalled one. Except for one primary school there are no civic facilities available. There are no higher educational facilities in the nearby villages and hence the village children are not properly educated.

Of the three borewells existing in the village two are not working. Therefore, there is only one borewell to meet the drinking water demands of the entire village. No public transport facilities are available. The village is electrified.

Most of the villagers belong to the ST & SC group, and some are Lingayats. The villagers are very poor and economically backward. The total population of Basapur village is 216 with 54 men, 52 women and 110 children. There are 47 families - Schedule caste 31 and Others 16. Out of the 47 families, 23 are landless and depend on Government Departmental works. There were 4 artisans families who have migrated to the nearby Tibetan colony in search of work.

The village has got 98 acres of dry land. No irrigation facilities are available as two tanks are completely silted & are not in good condition. The people are employed during the rainy season only and do not have sufficient work during the remaining 7 months. The main crop is rainfed paddy which entirely depends on the rains from June to October. Cotton and other cash crops are grown in small quantities. During the summer months they often go to the neighbouring Tibetan colony in search of work.

It is mainly the women who go to collect firewood from outside the JFPM area. People are mainly forest and agricultural labourers.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

Basapur village is situated on the border of Dharwad and Uttara Kannada Districts. As the natural forests of Dharwad District have already been completely degraded the people of Dharwad who have to depend on natural forests have no other alternative but to utilise the resources of the natural forests of Uttara Kannada.

After reading about JFPM in the newspaper, Shivappa Pujar discussed it with some villagers and they filed an application to the DCF and Chief minister. After 3 months the RFO visited the village and inspected the entire area. After that he came regularly and discussed the idea of micro-planning with the people. A meeting of Basapur village was first conducted on 26.5.93. The objectives of JFPM and the facilities that can be availed by the people were also made known to them. After 2-3 visits by the KFD the people were fully convinced and came forward to form the VFC. All the 47 families of the village have enrolled their names as members of the VFC. There are 4 women altogether in the general body of the VFC. The VFC was formed on 20.12.93 and the same day a meeting was held to elect the Managing Committee. Sri Rudrappa Nagappa Angadi was unanimously elected as president of the VFC and the other 10 members were nominated by him and other villagers. The Managing Committee meet at least once a month. If there is any special matter they discuss it in the Committee and then place it before the general body. In the Committee meeting there is no strict rule that only Managing Committee people should attend. All the plans which are implemented in the VFC are taken with the consent of people and the KFD.

In order to assess their needs, availability of the resources and also to find alternative sources to meet their demands, a P.R.A. Micro-plan workshop was held in the village from 17.2.94 to 19.2.94 in which all the villagers took part.

The total area of plantation during 1993-94 was 75 acres. Bio-mass species (Variety) like Mango, Jack fruit, Teak, Cashewnut, Bamboo, Nandi Jamtee, Matti etc. were regenerated. Five acres Jamrine plantation was developed. A 3 acres fodder plot is developed. The VFC has planned to irrigate the agricultural land and the fodder plot.

On 12-3-94 the VFC intercepted the carts of Bommigatti villagers which were carrying firewood from Basapur village forest. The firewood which they have taken into their custody is fifteen cart loads. This firewood was distributed to the villagers by the Village Forest Committee.

The MoU was signed on 2-2-95. During the signing of MoU, the JFPM RFO was present. There have been 14 meetings to date (mid-June'95). So far they have conducted two general body meetings. One of these meetings was held to decide about the Shramdan for the check dam.

The people say that the KFD staff never come on time for the meetings. The VFC members fix meetings and inform the RFO. Even if the Chairman and/or Secretary do not come, the others hold the meetings. The Forester has been absent since Jan'95 due to heavy work related to JFPM in other areas. If the forester does not attend a VFC meeting suggestions can be made and minutes recorded and sent to the forester but no final decisions can be made without KFD staff - at least for the first three years.

Either the VFC Chairman or the guard keep the minutes. All records, registers are kept with the VFC chairman.

In this village Mahila Mandal and Yuvak Mandal started before the formation of VFC. These organisations helped during the time of PRA Micro-planning and during the signing of the MoU.

Involvement of women in JFPM

The two women on the Managing Committee are from the SC community. They are very active. They have attended all the meetings from the beginning. They have taken initiative to involve more women in `Shramadan' to construct checkdam.

Women actively participated in the microplan and decisions were taken jointly. All the Mahila Mandal members participated. Women also attend VFC meetings which are like general body meetings in that all villagers participate. The RFO who was present at the time of VFC formation was active in involving women in the VFC. So women got interested in JFPM. The present RFO is not interested in involving women so they are not as interested as they were before.

The three active Managing Committee members, Rudrappa, Pujar, and Ningappa have explained about JFPM to the villagers (both men and women) and motivate the women and men to attend the VFC meetings and discuss everything with them. The women do not participate much when senior officers are around but otherwise they discuss matters openly in the meetings. However, the Chairman's wife knows only that there is a VFC and her husband is chairman but does not know anything else about the VFC. (This was according to him and in an interview with her) He says that if the KFD changes its decision and the wives also can be made members it will be very good since they want their wives to actively participate.

The Mahila Mandal President is a Committee Member of the VFC. She is active in the entire JFPM process.

Women here have suggested trees like Tamarind and Mango to plant in JFPM land and they are happy that it is being planted.

Women said that if they ask for more wages for forestry work the KFD says it will bring labourers from outside. Hence women work for Rs. 12/- to 15/-.

Issues related to the VFC

The village has no irrigation facility though a perennial stream runs through the eastern part of the village. Hence villagers expressed their wish that if a dam is constructed across the stream, they will get enough water, with which they can develop a fodder plot. By evolving a fodder plot, they can rear mulching cattle and by marketing the milk they can improve their economic condition. Hence in the VFC meeting held on 20.3.94 it was decided to construct a check dam across the stream. The labour force was to be provided by the villagers, whereas material such as cement, sand, stones etc. was to be transported by the forest department.

In accordance with the decision, the work of constructing the check dam across the stream started from 23.3.94 and was completed by 30.3.94. During this period all the villagers (men and women), participated in shifts. During this period food was provided by the department to the villagers who were at the work spot. The material was also supplied by the KFD.

The Forest Department is actively involved with the people in managing the plantation. Some people feel that there will be their own agricultural work to complete when KFD starts plantation work. Therefore, it might be difficult to do the KFD work. Men get trenching work in the summer from KFD.

The VFC President belongs to the Lingayat community. He gave seed money (Rs. 3000) as advance for collecting tumri leaves. He gave Rs. 200 each to 15 Harijan families to collect tumri leaves. Much of the Rs. 3000/- has been recovered after selling the leaves in Mundgod, Hubli etc. This has been kept in the bank. The KFD had given Rs. 500 before signing of the MoU. This has been kept in the bank. The furniture or the amount for the furniture has not yet been given. Smokeless chullas have been given to all the families who wanted it.

During the general body meetings they discussed about dairy development and supply of green grass to the live-stock. KFD has given the women training for preparation of leaf plates. The RFO said that he would take full responsibility for marketing after they finish the leave plates. In Yellapur women from Basapur were trained in small savings scheme. Now they have been saving Rs.5/- per month since the beginning of '95.

KFD discussed about the DWCRA scheme with the BDO who held a meeting with the women. The DWCRA programme started in March. A lady official from the BDO office spoke to the Mandal Panchayat Chairman and the Mahila Mandal President. The latter formed a group and agreed to start a poultry according to the official's advice. Before the meeting she gave Rs. 200/- to each woman who is a part of the group. They all kept it in the post office. Totally Rs. 3000/- was given. The next installment of Rs.7000/- was to be given after the DWCRA group replaced the Rs.3000/- i.e returned it to the BDO. Since it is difficult to get all the women together (since they all have to go to Mundgod) nothing has been done and the Rs. 3000/- is still in the Bank. They were led to believe that all finance and infrastructural support would be given by the BDO. Now, since it is the rainy season, instead of poultry the women are keen on rearing cattle. The fodder plot is constructed already so it will be easy to feed the cattle.

Neighbouring villages are reluctant to start VFCs since they feel they will be prevented from collecting firewood and grazing of their animals will be controlled.

Women are involved in the protection of the forests. People had started protecting the forest before forming the VFC. Prior to forming the VFC they had caught 12 cases of forest smuggling and protected the forest from fire. They caught teak wood smugglers and handed them over to KFD. But they had not received any compensation or encouragement for this from the department.

In fact, smugglers were caught 2-3 times after the formation of the VFC. Only once were the people rewarded. KFD gave Rs. 1000/- which is now kept in the VFC account. After this, the guard, who is very supportive of the VFC, decided that whenever smugglers are caught (either by the guard or VFC members) they will be asked to pay a fine immediately to the VFC. This is because KFD does not give any encouragement or incentive to the people. In this way some small amounts are collected every time small-time smugglers are caught (Rs.50-100 each time).

There is a lot of smuggled timber lying in the forest. The people asked the KFD to give it to the VFC. KFD people orally said that they would give it but so far it has not been given. The VFC people also asked the KFD for a tractor to transport the smuggled timber from the forest and the KFD officials agreed to provide the tractor. But so far it has not been given.

To start the teak nursery bed, the RFO (JFPM) has received Rs. 2000/- from the Yellapur DCF. The RFO has told the people that to start the bed he will have to first inspect the place. But so far he has not turned up.

The KFD permitted the villagers to cut firewood for about 2-3 days. But those who did not have bullock carts could not collect much. During that period they could take as much as they wanted, but as that is not enough they go periodically to pick up twigs, leaves etc. This is not a problem. In fact, there is no difference now and before protection. Sometimes men collect firewood (on bullock carts) but usually it is the women who go to the forest to collect firewood from outside the JFPM area.

Water problem is severe. Women want something to be done. They have discussed this in VFC meetings. Due to financial shortage they have not been able to do much yet. The women told the sub DCF about their water problem. He assured them that it will be solved. But after his transfer no one has done anything about it.

The VFC has converted irrigation land from Byarage katte (Shramadan). The KFD gave them Rs. 4,500 which they spent on hiring a Bulldozer and Tractor etc., for irrigation land. But other departments have not given them anything. KFD has also given each family 20 bamboos for house repair.

MYRADA has helped them to get work during summer i.e., earlier forest department used to bring labourers from outside but MYRADA has insisted that they give the work to the local villagers only. MYRADA had also said during the microplan that for poor people 5 fruit saplings would be given by KFD. But this has not yet been done.

Specific decisions selected for the study

CONSTRUCTION OF FODDER PLOTS

There are 94 cattle in the village. They eat green grass during the 5 months of the rainy season from the forest as well as from the bunds of agricultural fields. However much of the forest area is covered with thick growth of Euppatorium weed where grass will not come up and in one patch there is no grass, because of moderately thick cover of tree growth and shedding of leaves. During the remaining 7 months they have to depend upon the dry grass which they get from the agricultural crops.

The total amount of fodder available from forests, agricultural land, surroundings of cultivated land etc. is 708 H.T. But the annual requirement of fodder to the village cattle population is 1095 H.T. Hence the short fall is 1095-708 = 387 H.T. or say 400 H.T. To meet this short fall of 400 H.T. of grass it was

decided in the microplan to develop improved varieties of grass, under irrigated condition. It was decided to raise a fodder plot near the nala which flows between Basapur and Bommigatti by constructing a small check dam.

If sufficient fodder is made available dairying will be developed. It will then be possible to install biogas plants, using cowdung available in the village, which could be used as alternative energy for cooking and other purposes.

Women and men had participated in Shramadan for the check dam but now the fodder plot is useless because the people do not have good quality cattle. Therefore, they do not want to spend their money on fodder since anyway the milk production of their cattle will not increase substantially. It was the government's decision to construct a fodder plot with the assurance that hybrid or cross-bred cattle would be provided to the villagers. Some people were told by the ACF that if they pay Rs. 2000/- they will be given a cow. In response to people's requests, the KFD has informed them that no loans can be given to purchase buffaloes.

The KFD was thinking of selling the grass to outsiders. But the people requested them not to do this, but to give them cattle so that they themselves can use the fodder. The ACF agreed to give them cattle. But after his transfer nothing has been done.

The KFD had appointed two watchmen one each to the plantation and fodder plot and paid them only up to April 1st 1995. There have been no watchmen for either since April 1st and no sale of fodder since then. New fodder has to grow; the earlier lot was cut and sold.

PROTECTION FROM ENCROACHMENT

The place which was proposed for the teak nursery bed is encroached. VFC members asked the encroachers to vacate the land, but were told that KFD has agreed to let them have that encroached land. The people suspect that there is some `understanding' between KFD and the encroachers. The KFD has still not taken any action. Two families are said to have 20 acres of encroached land and are reported to have smuggled timber. The people have reported this to the KFD and DCF. But they have not done anything about it.

The Chairman also said that nearly 35 acres of VFC forest land is encroached by a man from Angadi which is at the border of Basapur and Angadi. The Chairman says he has tried a lot to bring this to the notice of the Forest Department but they are not able to take action to get back the land from the encroacher or to stop him from further encroachment. A police complaint was also lodged. Then he made a written statement to the news paper. He has also discussed this several times with the DCF and the RFOs. But no action has been taken.

More than anything else, women are worried about the encroachment of JFPM land (around 20 acres) by 2 families which they say is a major threat to the VFC. Though they have requested the KFD to come with them (VFC members) to approach the encroachers, there has been no response. They have written a letter to the CF, CCF & RFO as well but KFD has not taken any action. The rest of the plantation has been developed very well.

<u>Awareness levels of the people and their attitudes towards JFPM</u>

Women are pleased with the JFPM process and are looking forward to the profits in the future. They do not mind missing one days wages to attend the monthly VFC meetings. They feel that they will get knowledge. In several homes the husbands give their wives all the earnings and the wives decide how to spend the money.

So far the people of this village feel they have not got much profit under the JFPM programme, but believe that in future they will get benefits. For instance, before the formation of the VFC they had applied to officials in the concerned government departments for school, water and road. Now they have got these.

However, several women have expressed their doubts about whether they will get their share (50%) from the department since they felt there was no guarantee for it. Except for the two Managing Committee women, other women had not seen the MoU. The 2 Managing Committee women had understood it but not discussed it with others. The women feel they should be given a copy of the microplan and the MoU so that they could check whether the work of the VFC was going on according to the microplan.

VFC Meeting on 12/5/95

KFD officials did not attend this meeting. The MYRADA training officer attended the meeting. 30 members attended including some from the general body. They discussed the problems of encroachment and how it was difficult to get the people to vacate.

The Chairman said that after collecting beedi leaves, one of the Committee members took it to the market and sold it, but did not get any profit. 41,000 Packs of tumbri leaves were sold for its cost of collection. So there was no profit in collecting beedi leaves.

He said that today the VFC meeting was called to discuss the fodder matter. The villagers expect the forest department to grow the fodder. The watchman appointed by KFD to look after the fodder plot has been withdrawn from April 1st. The VFC decided to appoint a watchman from the village and his honorarium is to be given half by VFC and half by KFD. This has not been informed to the KFD yet. They expressed the feeling that the department has not fulfilled its promise of giving buffaloes to the villagers.

With the consent of all the people the chairman Rudrappa decided that all future VFC meetings would be conducted on the 12th of each month at 6 p.m. Another member said that since senior KFD officials did not attend VFC meetings it was difficult to get much information. He requested the MYRADA training officer to form a self-help group in the village.

Another member said that there are not enough sources of employment in Basapur and they have to go outside for work. It would be nice if they find a solution for this within the village. After this the MYRADA training officer introduced himself to the group and explained about his work. He assured them that he would see that next time KFD officials attend the VFC meeting. He also proposed to hold another VFC meeting on 20th of May at 9 a.m. People agreed.

BELGERI

Profile of the village

Belgeri is seven kms from Yellapur on the right side of the Yellapur-Hubli road. It is surrounded by forests on all sides. A stream which flows on the east of Belgeri gives water for 4-5 months of the year. Except for one anganvadi school there are no other facilities like high school, clinic, and vetenary hospital. The village has 1 open well, 2 bore wells and 4 tanks. Belgeri comprises Belgeri and Jambguli. While Jambguli is electrified, Belgeri is not.

The village has 80 acres of agricultural land. There is no water supply for this land except for the stream. Total families in the village are 52 with a population of 197 (34 men, 41 women and 122 children). The cattle population is 100. 15 houses are tiled, and 37 are thatched. Two families are landless.

The villagers have managed a school for first and second standard. The teacher was paid salary from the funds collected from the villagers. But the Mandal Panchayat did not help in any way. This year a building has been sanctioned by the government. After the 4th standard children have to go to Yellapur for higher studies, which is 5 kms away.

Paddy is the main crop and agriculture the main occupation. People go for labour work for the rest of the year. People depend on the surrounding forests for firewood, manure, fodder and NTFP. In their forests they get watekai, Berlannu, Atalkai and Sigekai which they collect for household consumption.

Though usually women go to collect firewood sometimes men also go. People have to walk 2-3 kms. to collect firewood. Though many trees have fallen in the forest the KFD did not allow people to take them. The people have demanded the fallen trees at half rate but the KFD did not agree. People say that they require firewood for household consumption and not for sale. The KFD has told them that for house purposes wood would be supplied at cheap rates.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

The KFD officials assembled people near the Anganavadi school and conducted a meeting during which they explained the concept of JFPM and how the people would have to be involved. The ODA DCF and RFO came for this meeting which was held in mid-93. To form the VFC, the guard (and sometimes forester) went from house to house and collected Rs. 2 per house from 40 houses. This money was kept in Chetana Co-operative Bank, and later the seed money was also credited there. After that people went to the department and asked the officials to give them the area for the VFC. The department staff came and inspected the area. After this the VFC was formed and within one month it was registered.

After the promoters meeting, 3 meetings were conducted, and the VFC was then registered on 21.10.93. The people first contacted by the KFD staff in connection with JFPM were Ramesh and Ganapathi Gaonkar (the President and Managing Committee member of the VFC respectively). The total number of VFC members is 38 (men 36; women 2). There are no SC/ST people in Belgeri. There are 4 landless and 2 artisan members on the general body.

Only in that first general meeting did KFD give information about JFPM. After that it has not been discussed. Since many women did not attend they are still unaware of what the JFPM programme is about.

While forming the Managing Committee many women attended. However, they did not speak during the meeting and did not even get involved when the two women had to be elected on the Managing Committee. The Belgeri villagers had elected Mr. Ramesh as chairman. The Jambguli villagers seconded the decision. Some people said that Mr. Ramesh was made the chairman while forming VFC committee because he is well educated. People feel that it is good if the chairman is educated. While electing the

women Managing Committee members Jambguli people proposed Girija Gaonkar and Jayashree Marathi was proposed by the villagers of Belgeri.

During the microplan the KFD officials took the villagers to the forest and showed the area given for the VFC. No women went along. 120 Hectares are given for the VFC (60 hectares in Jambguli and 60 hectares in Belgeri).

Soon after the VFC was formed people attended the meetings. But now nobody attends the meetings since they lose one days wages. Initially the meetings were held during the day however, now even though they have changed the timings people are still not interested. Earlier people of the village had decided to conduct the VFC meetings on the 10th of every month at 6 p.m. and told the department about this. But when enough people did not come the KFD told them to conduct meetings according to peoples convenience rather than having a fixed date.

After the formation of the VFC a mixed plantation has been done in Jambguli and the species desired by the villagers have been grown. In Belgeri area no plantation has been done since they have not yet located degraded land for the plantation. An earlier plantation has been given to the VFC.

There is no Yuvaka Mandal, Yuvati Mandal or Mahila Mandal in the village. Some people want to form them but the majority is not interested.

The micro-planning was attended by the Kirwatti RFO Mr. Jagnath Rao, Mundagod Sub-DCF Mr. Hegde, Manchikeri RFO Mr. Ganesh, Mr. Shivanegowda DCF, RFO Kalulkar, Forester Munithimma, Idgundi Forester and all the Guards. People were divided into 5-6 groups of four each. In each group one RFO and Forester was there. Very few women attended. It is interesting to note that in each group women were asked how much firewood they required per day and the yearly requirement was calculated; and men were asked which type of wood is required for the farms and a survey was made.

No Catholic or Muslim is on the Managing Committee because when committee members were elected no Catholic and Muslim attended. However, they are on the general body.

The VFC meetings are held in the Anganvadi school though some people want it changed. Earlier for VFC meeting S.H.Naik DCF (JFPM) used to come, but now as he is not well he has stopped coming. When he attended the VFC was more active. Since he has stopped the VFC has stagnated.

For 2-3 meetings, RFO and forester did not come. The KFD staff is always very late for the meetings. In October' 94 KFD had sent guards to inform the people to assemble since the Conservator was visiting. But though on that day all villagers assembled, no one from KFD came for the meeting. The people waited up to 8 p.m. and went back. After that no meeting was held till June '95.

Involvement of women in JFPM

Though a few women came for the micro-planning exercises they did not actively participate. Both the women committee members, Girija Gaonkar and Jayshree Marathi do not attend the meetings regularly. Though they attended the meetings earlier they did not discuss anything. When asked to attend the VFC meetings, they give one excuse or the other and threaten to resign. They have been told by the forester that within one year their resignations can be given. They do not intend to participate in the VFC till then and are not expected to.

Girija Gaonkar, a Managing Committee member from Jambguli gave 2 rupees in her own name and became a VFC member. She was not interested in becoming a Managing Committee member, but Ganapati Gaonkar proposed her name and forced her to become a member. She attended the VFC meeting

once while the committee was formed. She says that every time the meeting is conducted she is told in advance. But as she has work at home she cannot attend.
She was asked to attend the micro-planning exercises but as she had a lot of work she did not attend. She does not know much about the VFC and JFPM. She says that her husband and mother-in-law allow her to attend the meetings. But she herself is not interested. So she sends her husband on her behalf to the meetings. The other woman Managing Committee member Jayashree Marathi has not attended most VFC meetings and does not know much about the VFC or the concept of JFPM.

There is no Mahila Mandal in Belgeri. Women do not know anything about JFPM; they don't know the location of the forest land which has been given to the VFC. This holds true for the women management committee members also. They say that their names were written in the list of Management Committee members and were told that their names were taken because of the legal requirement and that they need not have to hold any responsibility, nor do they have to attend any meetings. This was told to them by the department.

Very few men have discussed JFPM with their wives or mothers. Some men even when asked by their wives about the VFC have not given them any information, their reason being that the women cannot use the information anyway. Most women know that a VFC has been formed but are ignorant about the details.

Some men say that if KFD changes its decision and makes both husband and wife VFC members they will allow their wives to attend and encourage their participation. Some say that they will not send their wives because if both attend the meetings, house work cannot be done.

The women who had to go for labour work in the nursery were given permission from the Guard to attend our training session with full payment. The few women who did know about the VFC were not interested in it. They said they would not mind attending meetings if it was convenient but were not ready to become Managing Committee members even if asked to.

Alcoholism in the village is the biggest problem that women face. All their earnings are taken away by their husbands. So they are not particularly interested in `yet another government programme' since however much they earn their lives do not change.

During our training the poor women were not really feeling comfortable to sit in front of Brahmin women and got up from the low benches and gave the Brahmin women place when they came in. The Brahmin women accepted these places as their right. They had come late since they had to walk much further. The Brahmin women employ these other women in their fields.

When the poorer women were asked which species they would prefer they said `kindal' because it is good for firewood. Brahmin women said they usually buy from the poorer people fire- wood and whatever they bring it is acceptable to them. Vatehuli, Murugula, Honey, Midi mavinkai are available in their forest which they use for house consumption. After our training they felt that they can collect honey or sell it through the VFC as was done with Sigekai.

Issues taken up by the VFC

In the VFC meetings they discuss about smuggling, firewood, protection from fire to the forest etc. No register has been maintained by the VFC. The RFO sometimes keeps minutes on loose sheets of paper and attendance is taken towards the end of the meetings.

Ganapathi Gaonkar, probably the most active of the Managing Committee members feels that only 2 women are not sufficient for the VFC but no women come forward. "If more women than men are made

Committee members, the VFC will be successful and if women are given more knowledge about JFPM and VFC, it will be successful."

Apart from the President and a couple of Managing Committee members, he attends meetings whether they are in Jambguli or Belgeri. They have asked the KFD for a fodder plot and the latter has agreed but nothing has been done yet. Since there is no water and space for a fodder plot some individuals have asked the department if they could provide them with seeds so that they could construct fodder plots in their own lands. The KFD agreed. This was discussed in a VFC meeting.

While doing the Micro-planning their suggestions were taken and KFD assured them that they would plant Jack fruit plants, Cashew nut plants, Mango plants etc. But while doing the plantation the KFD did not plant all the required trees. The DCF says that these were not available in the nursery at that time. The people had wanted Cashew nut and Mango trees so that they can watch these easily and also because they give quicker returns. But KFD has planted teakwood. The people were a bit unhappy with this, but the committee members had not yet asked the department about this since they were wary of approaching the KFD. KFD told the people in the beginning that if they form a VFC they will get 50% profit and the trees required by the people will be planted. So the people consented to form a VFC. Finally, on 5th August '95 a VFC meeting was held and each general body member was given 5 teak plants, 2 cashew plants and one mango sapling.

KFD has told them that now no plants can be cut. But after the trees become a bit bigger, all these plantations will be given to them. The KFD has told them that they should not cut green trees and to protect the forest from smugglers. Some people say that the poor people need to cut wood required for their houses but now are prevented from doing so.

KFD has told them that if they protect the forest and control smuggling, in both they will be given 50% profit. The villagers have not yet caught any smugglers. However they have given the wood cut by the smugglers to the KFD. The KFD has still not given them any incentive amount and the people are unhappy with this.

The KFD said that it would give firewood required for a year and fallen wood in the rainy season. Neither has been given. The KFD has also promised to have a desilting project but has not done anything about it. KFD has not yet supplied the gobar gas which was promised.

The KFD has sent people for several training sessions. Three girls were sent for bamboo training at Malagi. The KFD had conducted a meeting at Yellapur for which the VFC Chairman and S.T.Marathi had gone. In that training they were told the importance of savings and about saving schemes. The RFO and DCF took two Managing Committee members for the MoU functions at Gotgodi and Basapur.

One JFPM meeting was conducted in Siddi Development Project, an NGO based in Yellapur. The VFC President and Ganapathi Gaonkar had gone for this meeting.

Specific decisions selected for the study

SIGEKAI COLLECTION WITH SEED MONEY

The KFD said it would give the VFC Rs. 3000 as seed money and would use the remaining Rs. 2000 to purchase tables and chairs for the VFC. But the people asked the KFD to give them the entire Rs. 5000 which they could use for the collection of Sigekai and the VFC could purchase furniture later when they earned some profit. The KFD agreed.

Rs. 5,000 (seed money) was given which was used for the collection of Sigekai (soapnut). Rs. 8 per kg was given to those who collected it from the government area and Rs. 10 to those who collected it from their own lands. A total of 8 quintals and 5 kgs was collected. The sigekai was first kept in Ganapati Goankar's

house as suggested by the KFD Now it in the house of the DCF, S.H.Naik. He said that he was waiting for a good market price before selling it. The total investment to collect the Sigekai was Rs. 6,989. KFD share is Rs. 5,000/- and the rest was given by Ganapati Gaonkar.
The men know that the seed money was spent towards the collection of Sigekai. But the women do not know much about this. The Brahmin community women know how the seed money was used. But other women do not know that it belongs to the VFC. They have collected the sigekai and given them to a Managing Committee member who in turn has taken the responsibility of selling them. These women were merely told that they will be given Rs. 8 or Rs. 9 per kg. of sigekai. Hence they collected. Since Sigekai is available only in Jambguli, only women from Jambguli were involved in the collection. Women from Belgeri did not even know that people were being paid for Sigekai collection.

SMOKELESS CHULLAS
In Jambguli and Belgeri combined the KFD has given 52 smokeless chullas, 30 in Belgeri and 22 in Jambguli. The KFD officials gave the smokeless chullas to the VFC members. The VFC members distributed the chullas to all those who wanted it in the village.

According to some men, the people are happy with this. The benefits from this are less smoke and less requirement of firewood and less time for cooking. According to others the only benefit of the VFC has been smokeless chullas and this benefit is only for women and not for men. Some women say that their eyes are less affected by smoke now. However, other women say that with these chullas they cannot cook fast and have not really felt that they need less fuelwood. So they do not like them and prefer to cook on their traditional chullas. No demonstrations were given on how to use these chullas.

Awareness levels of people and their attitudes towards JFPM

People are positive about the idea of JFPM as long as the KFD implements the plans that they make. As the VFC has had no profits till today people doubt whether there will be profits in the future from the VFC. Already 2 years have passed since the VFC formation and no profits are visible.

Women in Jambguli are slightly more aware than those in Belgeri about the VFC. This is because Jambguli is more prosperous and the women were involved in the Sigekai collection. However, apart from the Brahmin women (who do not want to get involved in the VFC) other women have still not understood the concept of JFPM. Women do not even know who the other members in the Managing Committee are. Though they have signed the MoU they do not know what it is. Though MoU was signed a year ago, women do not know where JFPM land is.

Some people say that there are many smugglers so it will be difficult to protect the forests. They feel that the KFD has a hand in the smuggling. They feel that the VFC is there only for show. Meetings are also not conducted often. Even the people do not take interest in it.

People from this village have spread the word about the VFC to neighbouring villages and tried to motivate them to start a VFC. Due to this a VFC was formed in Kondemane. And these people have told the Idgundi and Manchikeri people and they too felt that they will benefit if in their villages VFCs are formed.

Apart from these villages they have discussed about VFC with Mavalli village people, so Mavalli people too are interested in forming a VFC in their village. Earlier Mavalli people used to attend VFC meetings, but now as meetings are not conducted in time they have stopped attending. Till today no women from other villages have come for VFC meetings in Belgeri. RFO Kalulkar told the VFC members that once the work is over the KFD will not attend all the meetings. The villagers themselves (VFC members) have to conduct meetings.

VFC Meeting held on 20.6.95

40 people (only men) attended the meeting. The DCF, RFO and MYRADA training coordinator sat on chairs and all others sat on the floor during the meeting. One of the Committee members Mr. Ganapathi Gaonkar went from house to house for three days to call people for the meeting. But they did not come so he asked the DCF to ask the members why they are not coming to the meetings. The DCF asked the people and gave the example of Basapur where people are united and interested in VFC management.

JFPM RFO asked the people to explain why when meetings are organised in Jambguli, Belgeri people do not come and when the meetings are in Belgeri, Jambguli people do not attend. If they have any personal problems they should discuss it openly. (The tension between Belgeri and Jambguli have their roots in minor fights due to alcoholism.) The VFC Chairman reacted to that by saying that there are 52 people who have installed smokeless chullas. If these are not able to come, at least the 11 committee members should come for the meetings. The RFO said that the next meeting will be in Jambguli at Ganapathi Gaonkar's house and here-after on the 5th of each month one meeting would be at Belgeri and the next at Jambguli and so on. All the committee members agreed to this.

The RFO told the members that according to the government order they should give the tree plantation to the VFC, but here KFD has given about 60 hectares of the 1993 plantation in Belgeri to the VFC but still nobody is taking the responsibility for it and people are not protecting it. The RFO told the DCF that one of the committee members has proposed to desilt the lake. The members reacted in different ways. The VFC Chairman said that if the lake is repaired, Belgeri villagers can grow two crops. Another committee member said that they could catch fish. The DCF said he had no idea about fisheries. The RFO said that if there is a lot of water then they can take up fish rearing. The DCF said that if all the members agreed to desilt the lake they could use the seed money for this. At present the seed money has been used to collect Sigekai. Once it is sold the profit and actual seed money could be used to desilt the lake. And he asked the people to work together to make the work easy. All the members agreed to this.

The RFO said that according to the estimate given by the people desilting the lake costs Rs. 1,500 to 2,000. If expenses go beyond Rs. 2,000 he asked whether people were ready to do Shramadan Everybody agreed.

In response to queries by the people, the VFC Chairman said that all people have the right to fish in non-restricted public lakes. Another Committee member said that they could appoint a watchman after rearing fish kids in the lake.

The RFO asked the members whether they knew that the seed money given to the VFC was used to collect Sigekai. Rs. 2,000 was supposed to be spent for furniture but was used to collect Sigekai. Another 2,000 Rs. was spent by Ganapathi Gaonkar from his pocket. He also asked why some of the members sold the sigekai outside instead of giving it to the VFC.

One of the committee members said that it would be useful if they collect honey; another said that the season for collecting honey was over. He said that they planned to collect honey, but the department gave the tender to a contractor so the people lost interest in collecting honey. The RFO said that the department will not give tenders to contractors hereafter for any NTFP collection in the area of the VFC. One of the committee members proposed that they grow fodder if the lake is repaired but the DCF said that it would be more profitable to rear fish than grow fodder. The DCF said that those who wanted to grow fodder on their own could do so in small groups and could visit Hosalli fodder plot the following Monday. After that they could decide whether they want to grow fodder. This was agreed by the members.

One of the committee members said that they have the problem of electricity in the village. The DCF said that the committee members do not come regularly for the meetings so it was not possible to know about the problems of the village and how many poles are required for the electrification of the village. The

committee member told that 6 poles were required. The DCF assured them that he would meet the K.E.B.officials and give this priority. He told the members that he would call the K.E.B. officials for the next VFC meeting. (This however has not been done.)

The DCF told the people that in Geral and Bare (in Yellapur Division) a VFC credit union (saving fund) has been started from the past 4 months and people are saving 5 to 10 Rs. per month. He suggested that the same be started in Belgeri VFC.

The VFC Chairman said that if any committee member misses future meetings they should pay a penalty of Rs. 2. The DCF thought this a good idea.

Finally, the MYRADA coordinator told the members that they should learn some procedures of conducting meetings in future and he gave some information about how to conduct meetings.

BOGRIBAIL

Profile of the village

Bogribail is a revenue village 4 km away from Ankola town. It is on the Karwar-Hubli state highway. The villagers travel by lorry more than 90% of the time. There is no bus stop/shed for the village. Houses are built on both sides of the highway. There is a hotel and a tyre shop on the left side of the road. On the right side, there is a temple, coconut plantations and paddy fields. The water which flows from the Baleguli stream on the right side of the highway is used by a section of the village. The stream dries up completely during the month of April every year. The repair work of the highway is going on. Quarries can be seen on the hills of the village. The stone-pieces (jelly) are supplied for repair work. The hills are completely degraded with very few natural trees.

Bogribail consists of Bogribail, Kalgodu, Kuligadde, Aregadde and part of Baleguli and Jaddigadde. Nearly 60% of the houses have grass roofs and the others are tiled. There is a primary school with one teacher in the village. For further studies they have to go to Ankola. As there is no bus facility available children have to go walking to school.

There are 125 families in the village. The total population of the village is 900. Out of 125 families, 13 are Naiks, 1 Bovi, 4 Tamil, one Muslim, 2 Vayshy Shetty and 1 Harijan (Ageru). The remaining 103 families are Halakki Vokkals consisting of 90% of the total population. Due to the location of the primary school, majority of the people are illiterate. However the number of people going in for higher education is gradually increasing.

The only Harijan family is landless; the head of the family performs pooja of the temple. One of the Vaishya Shetty family has 10 acres of land the land consisting of coconut, mango and cashew plantations. The other family is landless but having a small hotel in the village. The Muslim family has 4 acres of paddy fields. All the four Tamil families are migrants and are landless. The Bovi family has 3 acres of paddy fields. All the Nayak families have paddy fields ranging from 3 acres to 5 acres. All the Halakki families have lands ranging from 1 acre to 3 acres who come under small holding (marginal farmers). The landless people depend on labour work on a daily wage basis.

Paddy is the main crop in the village. It is harvested once in a year. Sugarcane and groundnut are grown in small quantities. All the houses have one or two coconut and mango trees and a few cashew plants. There are 15 pumpsets in the village, water being supplied from the dug wells. The village has 5 gobargas plants.

The cattle population of the village is 500. The landless families do not have cattle. There are 20 families having no cattle. Milk is got in small quantities. Cattle is mainly used for manure and ploughing the land. There is no veterinary hospital in the village so the villagers have to go Ankola town to treat their cattle. There are about 10 sheep in the village.

Villagers depend on forests mainly for fuelwood. They also use soppu and darku from the forest. There are some families whose basic survival depends on selling fuelwood. Most of them are women. They walk a distance of 4 km from the village to collect the firewood. They use fuelwood for themselves and for selling. One head load of fuelwood fetches them an income of about Rs. 15.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

During the month of October 93, the Forester along with the RFO came to the village and told some villagers about JFPM. Gopal Naik (a rich landowner) was the first person approached by the KFD and he was asked to call some more people. The RFO said that they would conduct a meeting in the village for

detailed discussion. After four days a meeting was held in the temple. 70 villagers attended the meeting as it was preinformed. There were seven women present. The RFO explained about JFPM in detail.

About 15 people actively participated in the meeting which lasted for almost 2 hours. Some said that they did not want the forest near their houses since forest animals harm their cattle and crops.

The department, with 2-3 more consultations with the villagers attempted to form the village forest committee. Finally at the end of December 1993, the VFC was formed. 200 villagers attended the meeting of which 25 were women. The management committee members were elected unanimously with some suggestions by the KFD.

The first VFC meeting was called on 7.1.94. During the meeting to sign the MoU the book was read in front of the members. 5,000 Rs. seed money is deposited in the bank. They have also received one table, two chairs and one jumkhana (carpet).

So far 7 VFC meetings have been conducted. The Committee members are not given enough notice before each meeting; they are told a couple of hours or so before each meeting is scheduled. Therefore, it is difficult to attend meetings at such short notice. As far as possible they try to hold the VFC meetings on the 28th of every month. Apart from Managing Committee members others also attend.

The forest secretary attends all the meetings. The JFPM RFO Rajanna and RFO Hitlamakki attend some of the meetings.

In Bogribail, there is no Mahila Mandal or Yuvak Mandal. Gopal Naik, the Managing Committee Chairman, regularly attends all the VFC meetings. Village people elected him as chairman. He is well off and has a gobar gas plant of his own.

People are still becoming general body members.

Involvement of women in JFPM

Baby Nayak (a Managing Committee member) was nominated to the Managing Committee by Gopal Naik who is the chairman of the VFC. This is because one more women member was required and Gopal Naik preferred someone from his own community. Though her husband does not object to her attending the VFC meetings, she does not find the time, nor is she particularly interested. She had told the people from the beginning that she could not attend but in spite of that they included her name.

They have 4 acres of agricultural land. They also have a gobargas connection so they do not need firewood. They do not bring manure from the forest because they get manure from the trees surrounding their field.

Of the 7 VFC meetings conducted, she has attended only 3. She has not attended the Micro-planning meeting, but her husband attended and explained to her what happened.

Pandri Mangu Gowda (a Managing Committee member) attended the first meeting called by the forester and DCF. Mr. Narayana, a Managing Committee member proposed her name as a Committee member in the meeting. She attended the micro-planning. She does not know the total amount of VFC area.

Pandri Gowda informs other women about the VFC meetings, what discussions took place and persuades them to attend. She goes along with others to protect the plantation. They take turns to protect the plantation since the formation of the VFC. She has 10 acres of agricultural land. They do not get any KFD work. She takes the responsibility of the family. She does not go for labour work. Her two children go for stone cutting labour and each one get rupees 25/- per day.

Her husband sometimes attends the meetings. He does not know much about JFPM but is fully supportive of his wife. Both husband and wife take joint responsibility of the house.

Women are now coming forward and paying the 2 Rs. with the hope of getting smokeless chullas. Also, Shashikala Nayak (previously a field investigator who is active in that area) motivated the women to actively participate and promised them that she would form a separate women's committee. Pandri Gowda, the only active women VFC member has also been motivating the women to join.

Women who came for the meeting on the 7th of June were there only for smokeless chullas. Once the topic of encroachment started they left partly since they are not interested and partly as they are from the Gowda community, who are the main encroachers of the land. The women who attended sat at the back in a small group. Though it is the usual trend for women to sit at least separately if not at the back of the hall an additional reason in this case appeared to be that most of the men present belonged to the Nayak (dominant) community. The women did not say a word throughout the meeting.

All the women (except Pandri Gowda) left before the Tamil Nadu contingent of DCFs and RFOs arrived. When the Karwar DCF was translating for the Tamil Nadu group, one drunk from the village said they should not talk so much in English among themselves. Pandri said that it was alright since the T.Nadu people did not know Kannada. She also said that as so many outsiders had visited their area since JFPM had started, they could now catch a few words in English. The drunk yelled back 'Why don't you join them and talk to them in English?' He also made some other insulting remarks which left Pandri humiliated in front of so many people and she started crying.

In general, women are not particularly interested in the VFC. The main problem that they face is that their husbands drink heavily and squander the family income. They are interested in income-generating schemes and what can be done to solve the problem of alcoholism in the village.

Issues related to the VFC

92 families from Bogribail have revenue land in Bogribail but live in other villages. They come daily to Bogribail to work on their lands. The other 33 families live in Bogribail. The VFC has only included these 33 families and not the others in the microplan. The VFC members are now demanding that all those other families be included. But the people living outside are not interested since in Bogribail they have encroached land and come there to cut firewood. Once they heard that a VFC was to be formed initially 50 people became members. But once they learned that they would have to protect the land they have avoided the KFD and the resident villagers. The locals are worried because there has been no motivation to involve these people in the VFC and there is fear about later demands once benefit-sharing arises.

The VFC has a total of 250 hectares forest area. KFD had decided during the Micro-planning which plants to be planted in 1 hectare of land. The KFD is planning on distributing 200 mango saplings to grow in this one hectare. People are supposed to dig that land. They can buy mango saplings from the KFD. Government has suggested that they can utilise the seed money for their wages. (They had earlier planned to use the seed money at the end of 5 years. By then, they would also get money from the acacia plantation.) However, as the mango grafting will cost about Rs. 10,000 according to the forester and since they have only Rs.8,000 in the bank (seed money + quarry money) they are wondering how to get the remaining Rs.2000. They are trying to figure out whether shramdan will reduce the costs. Another suggestion for the utilisation of the seed money is to pay an allowance to those who attend VFC meetings.

In one of the meetings some villagers expressed their dislike of acacia plants saying that they prevent the growth of grass and reduce the source of water in the earth. The KFD officers said that due to such complaints they have sent the saplings of acacia to the laboratory for testing and have found that these complaints lack any scientific basis.

Some women have felt that the VFC should grow fruits, flowers etc. which the women can sell in Ankola. Before JFPM started, the KFD cut the acacia plantations and got labourers from elsewhere (other villages and Ankola) to dig the land for new plantations. However, the land for the plantation was dug after the formation of the VFC. When Gopal Naik, the VFC chairman, asked the RFO why the VFC was not given the work, he said that they had advertised (for tenders) in the local newspapers and in the Head Office. Since no one replied to the advertisement, the RFO had to take the decision. He gave the contract to outsiders. This has upset the villagers. Pitting is over for the plantation, but nothing has been planted as yet.

KFD has assured the villagers that smokeless chullas and gobar gas plants will be provided and to date 19 smokeless chullas were installed. Also, KFD has assured them that electricity will be provided soon as there is no electricity facility in the village. By mid-July, after approaching the concerned BDO, the Bhagyajyoti scheme was started in the village so all the families have electricity. Some women said they did not want smokeless chullas since the same amount of firewood was needed. Apart from less smoke they say there is no difference between these chullas and their traditional ones. And in the rainy season they need the smoke and fire to dry the blankets they use to cover themselves in the fields. The person who constructs the chullas requested the cooperation of the villagers since they are often not at home when he comes. He also requested the VFC to provide him 4 men (villagers) so that he could train them in the construction of the chullas.

There are five stone quarries in Bogribail. The VFC has taken the initiative to ask the people working in the quarries (mainly Tamil labourers) to pay the VFC Rs.5 per lorry load. They got the help of the KFD to do this. In this way they have collected Rs. 3000 which they have deposited along with the seed money. The KFD has asked the VFC to utilise this amount towards village development.

Specific decisions selected for the study

FIREWOOD

Firewood is not available near by. Women (and children) walk 5 k.m to bring firewood and manure. KFD officials do not prevent them from bringing firewood, as they collect only dried twigs and leaves and fallen branches. However, when the cashew plantation is given on lease, during the lease period for 3 to 4 months the contractors do not allow them to enter the plantation. Only after the completion of collecting the cashew nut, they go to bring dry leaves.

The Cashew plantation which is leased out to contractors was promised to the people in order to entice them to form the VFC. After VFC formation, the contract for the cashew plantation was given to the contractor. The Chairman has discussed with the department to hand over the cashew plantation to the VFC. The KFD has assured them that they will try to give the contract to the VFC in the future.

Some people (who do not belong to Bogribail) steal wood and sell in Ankola town. The women who do not stay in Bogribail but who have lands in that area cut wood from the JFPM land. Though one head load is enough for 3 days, they take one headload daily to sell in Ankola. This was discussed in one of the VFC meetings. The villagers informed the guard and forester. They asked the staff to come for 4-5 days at a stretch but the KFD did not respond. However, smuggling has now reduced. The committee members caught some smugglers and explained to them about the responsibility of the VFC to protect the forest. Also all smugglers have to pass near the house of VFC committee member Pandri Gowda and Gopal Naik (chairman) since there is no other route.

PROTECTION FROM ENCROACHMENT

Nearly 60 acres of forest land (belonging to the VFC) has been encroached by the people in this village. The encroachers are Halakki Vokkaligas. The KFD has asked the people to leave that land. However, most of the land has been encroached over twenty years ago and the encroachers are waiting to get it regularised. This was also discussed in the VFC meeting. It was decided that those who have encroached

the land less than twenty years ago should give up the land. The issue of encroachment is discussed in every meeting.

On the meeting held on 28th July '95, the President said that the families (33 altogether) who live here have some feeling towards JFPM land, whereas those who live outside the village but who have land in Bogribail and come only for cultivation do not care about the JFPM land and they (Halakki Vokkaligas) are the ones who are cutting wood from the forests to sell in Ankola. The outsiders have to be motivated first to join the Committee. Moreover, in the beginning itself, people had warned KFD not to do plantation in encroached lands because it will become difficult for protection, but the latter did not listen and have done plantation in at least 50 acres of encroached land. Now the encroachers are either destroying the saplings or claiming that the saplings belong to them and not to the VFC and KFD is now asking the Managing Committee to take action against such people. The president asked "With so much power and authority if KFD cannot do anything against the encroachers, how can we do anything without having any power? We have also requested KFD to give some identity card to VFC members so that they can exercise powers, but KFD does not respond".

Awareness levels of the people and their attitudes towards JFPM

The men in the village are by and large aware of JFPM. In their opinion the main benefit of the programme is the plantation which has been promised by KFD due to monetary benefits they will receive from this. Most of the women do not know much about JFPM. Some women said the husbands do not attend the meetings and do not allow them also to attend. They say "what is the use of attending such meetings?". Pandri Gowda, the only active women in the VFC who has clearly understood the concept of JFPM believes that if the people protect the forest, it will be helpful to their children and it is not correct to expect results/returns immediately.

The president and the Committee members do not know anything about the budget. Though they have signed the MoU and have the book with them it does not contain a detailed report of the village or the budget. But the President is hopeful that the department will discuss with the VFC about the plantation and the income of VFC.

Inspite of so many problems with the KFD, the villagers feel that the relationship with the KFD has improved in terms of accessibility to the KFD staff. Interaction is easier now and channels of communication are more open.

According to the contractor of the stone quarry, the concept of JFPM is good, but the protection of the forest and practical implementation of the programme seems to be rather difficult. Others from the Nayak community feel that it is better to give the work of the plantation to the villagers so that the villagers get much needed work. However, people are wary about the money being sanctioned on time and their payments being properly made.

Others who are dependent on daily wages say they would like the programme to the extent that they get employment out of it. Most of the people see it as just another government programme though they agree that this is a `little more participatory' than other programmes of the government.

VFC Meeting on 28/7/95

All the male Managing Committee members and one woman (Pandri Gowda) were present. The lady forester (newly appointed who was previously in charge of the firewood depot) was present as an observer and the old forester who has been transferred conducted the meeting. The issues discussed were how to use the seed money and how to protect the JFPM land.

The forester suggested to buy mango graftings (out of seed money) from the department. The mango plot could be done in one hectare of JFPM land, which may cost Rs. 10,000/- totally and he asked the VFC members to do Shramadan. The president said that they have to pay the members who work (dig pits). He asked some technical questions related to the measurement of the pits etc. but the Forester did not give any satisfactory answers.

He changed the subject saying that people are destroying the saplings planted in the JFPM land and that the Guard is unable to protect it. He requested the Managing Committee to convince the villagers to protect the saplings planted. One of the members replied that along with the KFD Guard, one person from the VFC should be appointed and the JFPM land should be `jointly' protected. He said that that would be the best way of protecting the JFPM land.

Another member asked why financial matters are not informed, leave alone discussed with the VFC. He wanted to know why the villagers could not utilise the money from the joint account for JFPM -related work. He also asked why KFD spends that money directly without bringing it to the notice of the VFC members. The Forester had no answer to this.

The president also suggested that instead of jointly protecting the forest land, it is good if each family is given one acre and they will definitely protect it well. All male members present strongly condemned the non- cooperation and lethargic attitude of KFD and said that people were losing enthusiasm as a result. The same topics are repeatedly discussed in the meetings. No decisions are made in the meetings and hence no action can be taken.

They also criticised KFD for the lack of effort they have taken in organising people in the village. Their efforts have been so weak that people do not assemble even when they are told that visitors are coming. Once it so happened that workers (who do not belong to Bogribail) working in construction of roads were asked to sit in the meeting and were introduced to the visitors as VFC members! The woman member did not speak anything in the meeting, even when the issue of installation of smokeless chullas was brought up.

GOTGODI

Profile of the village

Gotgodi village, 7 km from Malagi in Mundgod taluk, is 34 km from Sirsi, on the Sirsi-Hubli road. Gotgodi is the nearest big village from Malagi. This village, surrounded by forests, is on the edge of the western ghats.

There are a total of 40 families in Gotgodi; 32 Lingayats, 3 Kammar, 3 Talwar and 2 Vodduru. There is only one primary school and for higher studies (after 7th standard) children have to go far away. The whole village depends on agriculture, which in turn is dependent on rain water. The main crops of the village are paddy, chillie and maize. The people of the village adopt the old method of cultivation and are not interested in modern methods. Almost all the families have their own tiled houses. Agricultural equipment is also made from wood. The village women are also dependent on forest products for their daily needs.

There is a severe water problem in the village. There are 2 borewells but both are in the Lingayat area. So people have to walk quite a distance to get water. Moreover, the water in these wells is not good. People also drink water from the open tank.

There is not much labour work available and people have to go far away to do coolie work, if there no work in the village. Labour work was available in the rainy season only for about two months. Since the last one year there has been no work from the KFD since the plantation is over and there is no new plantation. Since there is no irrigation facility only one rainfed crop is grown. In summer there is not enough green grass available for cattle. In the rainy season women go to the forest area to graze cattle. People are eager to develop a fodder plot for their livestock.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

In the beginning the JFPM DCF visited this village and held a meeting on 7-6-93 during which he told people about the formation of the VFC under JFPM and explained the objectives of JFPM. People tentatively agreed to form a VFC. During this first meeting there were 8 to 10 women present. Before forming the VFC he conducted a meeting in the Gotgodi School with the people of Gotgodi. He wanted to know whether Gotgodi and Gotgodi koppa are the same village. People said that both are different. After having another two meetings in Gotgodi people agreed to form the VFC. The people were told by the DCF and RFO that if the village people protect the 21 acres of forest land from destruction, they would give 50% profit to VFC and 50% to KFD. That is why they formed the VFC.

Before forming the VFC Committee a promoters committee was formed and KFD gave one month to people to think about whether they wanted a VFC or not. The first people the KFD contacted were Rudre Gowda, Chenappa and Basalingappa. All three are on the VFC Managing Committee. The 2nd meeting was called on 2/9/93 to elect a committee of the VFC promoters. For this meeting 8 women were present. The forester visited the village next time, and got a few members for this VFC. Two months after the formation of the promoters committee i.e. on 3.10.93, the VFC was registered. While forming the VFC Committee, the forester attended. While registering the Committee 10 to 12 women were also present in the meeting. The total number of VFC members is 39 (men 35 and women 4). The MoU was signed on 2.2.1995.

Totally 60 people, both women and men were involved in the micro-plan. They were divided into 3 groups. Women actively participated throughout. The Vikasa (NGO) representative was also present. It

was during the microplan that the idea for a women's sangha and tailoring classes came up. Girijavva P. Kammar and Girijavva Karajgi attended the meeting when the committee members were selected.

Apart from Committee members one person from each house attends the Committee meetings. During the meetings all the villagers and KFD staff sit together on the floor. Though the VFC has been given chairs and a table they are in Rudre Gowda's house.

In May '95 they passed a resolution that if a committee member does not attend for three meetings, he or she will be dismissed and a new member will be appointed. However, the Vikasa staff said that VFC Committee members do not have the power to remove a member. The Managing Committee should send the minutes of the meeting to the forester, RFO and DCF if they want a member removed. Also because the forester (Secretary) had not been attending the meetings the VFC passed a resolution to dismiss him and appoint another forester. This resolution was also sent to the DCF. Before any action could be taken the forester has been transferred.

The VFC meetings are held on the 6th of every month at 8 p.m. at the temple. This was fixed by the villagers and department officials together. All the villagers agreed to conduct the meetings in the temple. But department people never attended the meetings after fixing this schedule. The forester had come for 2-3 VFC meetings and the RFO has not come again after the MoU signature. They conduct meetings even if the Secretary does not come.

When the forester does not attend meetings, Vikasa staff or a VFC member keeps the minutes. Vikasa staff had given training to the VFC members on how to keep minutes. Decisions taken when no KFD staff are present are sent to the forester. Serious matters are sent to the forester, RFO and DCF.

Final decisions in the meetings are made by the Committee members only. The Committee has decided that if there are different opinions within the Committee then they will call the department officials and ask them to make the final decision.

There is one Yuvaka Mandal in the village, but they do not participate in the VFC meetings. Only RFO and forester came for the MoU signature. The DCF did not attend.

Issues taken up by the VFC

After the formation of the VFC, around the forest area they dug a canal and constructed a fence, so the people are pleased that they have protection for their agricultural land.

The people have prepared Patravali from Muttuga leaves, oil from Nellikai and Nellikai supari. Under JFPM, ACF Kolgi organised training for the women for these on 17.11.94. The trainers were called from Siddapur. However, as these NTFP are available only seasonally women are not so interested in them. They are interested in work which will give them employment throughout the year like making Agarbatti sticks, tailoring etc. People were also sent to Malagi for training in making bamboo articles. Their expenses were paid for by KFD.

The Committee people inform the general body members about important subjects discussed in the meeting. Sometimes special matters like planting teak beds and protection from smugglers are informed to the general body members by going from house to house. Also there are no restrictions on general body members attending the meetings. Since the houses are closely spaced the whole village gets to know if any matter is discussed.

With the Rs.5,000 (seed money), KFD has given 2 chairs and one table at the time of the MoU signature and Rs 3000/- to the VFC. Women wanted to use this money to buy tailoring machines. They said that they could get a tailor from Sirsi and learn tailoring. But men suggested that women should organise a

Mahila Mandal, and through the Mahila Mandal a saving scheme could be introduced. And from the savings women can buy the machines. So at present 11 women have come together and started saving since May '95. It has been decided by the VFC that after the Mahila Mandal collects more money they can buy tailoring machines. The VFC will contribute the seed money as well so that enough machines can be bought. The tailoring training is intended for the daughters of the Mahila Mandal members.

There is not much of a firewood problem. People have to walk two kms from their village for firewood. Most have smokeless chullas; two gobar gases have been promised by KFD but have not yet been given. After VFC formation the area for firewood collection has been restricted but this has not affected the people significantly. Most people (men) bring firewood in carts. They do not have any problem since drywood is sufficiently available in the surrounding forest. Some of the families have been given smokeless chullas so they require less firewood. Some men and women are aware of the benefits of smokeless chullas i.e. now there is much less smoke and less need for firewood. Women do not go to the forest to bring firewood, dry leaves, fodder. Men collect all these.

According to the micro-plan, department has distributed only smokeless chullas and no other programmes are implemented. According to the microplan 3 Gobar gas plants and 46 smokeless chullas were to be distributed. But only 20 smokeless chullas have been given to date. Some people have not yet constructed their smokeless chullas since they have heard that it takes a long time to cook on these. Women were not asked about whether they wanted it. People were just informed that they would be given these chullas and were told about the benefits. KFD had also assured to give some part of the money for gobar gas plants and asked the people to get some subsidy from the B.D.O. But when people asked the B.D.O. about the subsidy he told that this year the subsidy is exhausted and he may give it next year.

The need to desilt the tank has also been discussed in the VFC meetings. It was also decided to document in writing all the matters and expenses of the VFC in a book.

Specific decisions selected for the study

CONSTRUCTION OF TEAKBED

KFD had started a teak plantation before JFPM in the regular plantation. People were not happy with this. They (both men and women) wanted other trees for firewood and NTFP like Sigekai and Nellikai which give immediate profits. After the VFC formation they made these needs clear to the KFD. People want to fill the gaps in the plantation with NTFP (Non timber forest produce) species. The KFD has agreed to plant NTFP. They planted a few samples of sigekai. In the VFC area a variety of trees have been planted according to the microplan.

Most people are keen on planting teak beds. However, they feel that some people work but others do not. Therefore, some people are upset because they feel that they are working hard but the benefits will be shared by all the members later. Due to the differences of opinion on how to ensure that people work and how the benefits should be shared and as all people are still not convinced about the benefits of teak beds, the discussions have been postponed.

PROTECTION FROM SMUGGLERS

There are many smuggling cases particularly from Dharwad. The VFC members have caught the smugglers and feel they should get at least 50% of the fines imposed after the smugglers have been caught. 2 cycles and plenty of timber has been retrieved by the villagers. Women also participated in nabbing the offenders. The DCF has valued the smuggled goods at Rs.2,700 and accordingly has given the VFC Rs. 300. Goods retrieved more recently by the VFC has not yet been valued by KFD. The people expect more than the amount they have received for the effort they take to catch offenders.

During one meeting the VFC passed a resolution to send a letter to the ACF regarding incentive money to be paid to the VFC for the timber caught from the smugglers.

Some people (men and women) say that for the time being two women Committee members are enough. Since this VFC is in the boarder of another range they need more men to catch the smugglers. Though women can participate it is much easier for men to be involved in the protection of forests.

Involvement of women in JFPM

The women are happy about the VFC. They feel that they and their children will get training in agarbatti, patravali, Nellikai, Removing oil, etc. This training is over and more is promised. Since there is no marketing facility, the people have to take responsibility to sell the produce. If necessary, women take the responsibility. They will get 50% profit from the final benefits.

There is one Mahila Mandal which consists of women from Kolgi, Gotgodi and Arshanhalli. They meet every Thursday. It is not yet registered. The women in the Mahila Mandal attend VFC meetings. The aim of forming the Mahila Mandal is to have small -scale or home industries like agarbatti making, tailoring, patravali making. Each member has to contribute Rs 5 weekly.

An application was sent to the BDO on 21st August '95 for the DWCRA scheme. Women who already possess cows are interested in dairy farming. To increase milk production, coconut cakes can be purchased by the DWCRA group.

Girijavva Puttappa Karajgi, a Managing Committee member was elected by the other Committee members. Now she cannot attend since her mother-in-law who used to look after the house died. She has 10 acres of agricultural land on which they work so there is no need to work outside.

According to some people Girijavva does not attend the meetings because a smokeless chulla was not given to her. First she had said she did not want a smokeless chulla and wanted a gobar gas plant instead. But later she changed her mind and asked for a smokeless chulla. As it was already agreed to give it to others, she could not get one.

Girijavva Kammar, the other woman Managing Committee member attends the VFC meetings regularly. She avoids meetings only when she has urgent work. She has attended the PRA and micro planning exercises as well. She feels that two women members are not enough in the committee. At least 4 women members are required to discuss different problems of the women related to JFPM, because they will get strength to discuss these if there are more women present.

In the beginning, the KFD guard visited every house and called village people for a meeting in the temple, and explained about the JFPM objectives. After that a training was arranged in Katur to explain about the need to form a VFC. She was the only lady to attend the programme along with the men of the village.

The KFD guard proposed her name as a Managing Committee member and everyone agreed. If there is any special matter to be discussed in the meeting, she goes personally from house to house to call women to the temple for the meeting. She has 3 acres of land but it is not enough to manage, so she goes for labour work.

Though the men are members i.e. they have paid Rs.2, the women are aware of it. They are pleased that 50% profit will come to the village and not to outsiders. Some women are not interested in the VFC. They say that there is no restriction from their husbands but that they are just not interested. Some say they do not want to get involved because they will lose wages if they have to attend meetings. Women have

decision - making power in the family. Discussion between husband-wife about JFPM and general issues are common.

Men say that if KFD changes its decision and allows both husband and wife to become VFC members, then they will allow and support their wives to attend and talk in the VFC meetings. Some Managing Committee members feel that two women members on the Managing Committee are not enough. Two more are needed if women are to actively participate.

NGO involvement in JFPM and general issues

Earlier Vikasa was not involved much in Gotgodi since they were much more involved in policy issues and discussions regarding JFPM at other fora. They did not concentrate on field issues. Around the end of '94 there was a change of staff and policy in Vikasa and it was decided to concentrate only on field issues. Vikasa is now working intensively in only three villages and therefore spends a lot of time in these.

Now, the Vikasa coordinator attends all the VFC meetings. He comes regularly. He was instrumental in forming the Mahila Mandal. He keeps giving information about government programmes etc. He explains about all the programmes very well and is involved with the people. Apart from JFPM Vikasa is interested in the overall development of the village and though it does not give financial inputs to the village, it is actively involved in community organising. The people speak very positively about Vikasa.

Vikasa staff from Bangalore did a study of all the tanks in Gotgodi and decided to give guidance to desilt one tank in December' 95. People will have to do shramdan for two hours daily. The people have agreed to do so.

Recently Mr. Prabhu from BAIF (an NGO) had visited the village and told the people to form a group of 15. Each person had to contribute Rs. 125 in a joint account opened by the group. From that each person had to give Rs. 50 to BAIF. They have done this and BAIF has given them assorted plants (500 saplings to each person). Apart from this 15 grafted mango plants will be given to each person in the group. The remaining Rs. 75 is to be used for the development of these plants once interest is got from this money.

Attitudes of the people and their awareness about JFPM

The people of this village have high levels of awareness due to the information provided by the forest department and Vikasa about JFPM.

Some people have a bad impression of the KFD because they feel they have links with the smugglers and have not done anything about the encroachers.

Some people asked for bamboos, but they have not yet been given. According to the people, the KFD officials have made many promises but have not kept them. They say that in the forest there are a lot of dry leaves, firewood, fodder, but KFD does not give it to them. Also distribution of Gobargas, desilting the tank, making teak nursery etc., which are in the plan have not been implemented so far. Due to this some people say that there is no improvement after the VFC formation.

In spite of all this people say that earlier they had no relation with the forest department, but after the VFC the relations have been cordial. As one Committee member said "So far with the VFC there has not been any profit or loss. However, it is a good idea implemented by the government, because even if there is no profit so far, we will get profit after 5 years. For this both people of the village and the forest department have to work together properly."

To some extent, the people's views about the VFC & JFPM in general depend on their personal experience. For example, one women wanted gobar gas and not smokeless chullas. She feels that the

department should have given it to her. She has not bothered to find out details about how it should be obtained. But she feels that the VFC is useless if it cannot get her a gobar gas plant.

VFC meeting held on 6.8.1995

35 people attended the meeting. Only one woman was present and she did not participate at all. No KFD people attended. The KFD has given mango graftings to the VFC. The VFC decided during the meeting that those who have not got the smokeless chullas should be given the mango grafts. People want smokeless chullas but the supply has not come from the department. The remaining grafts they want to give to the school which already has started a nursery of various plants.

Since many villagers are sending their cattle into the VFC area for grazing, it was decided that they build a fence around the VFC area from material available like plants, sticks etc., and with shramadan.

KFD gave 360 acres for the VFC. In 21 acres they want to put the fence - they could utilize some amount of the seed money to pay people so that they would not lose their wages.

HOSALLI

Profile of the village

Hosalli is situated on the right side of the Yellapur- Hubli road. Protected forest land surrounds the whole village and the lone water tank to the South-East of Hosalli fulfills most of the water requirements of the cattle throughout the year. Since the agricultural land is at a higher level than the tank, the water of the tank is not used for irrigation.

There is a pre-primary (Anganwadi) and primary school facility and the High School is in Kirwatti, 1.5 km away. Kirwatti also has a Hospital and Veterinary Hospital. In Hosalli there is a private owned milk dairy using modern technology. Drinking water supply is at present got by two borewells and two more borewells or wells are required. The village is electrified.

The main occupation of the people is agriculture; the main rainfed crop grown is paddy. Cotton is grown to some extent on higher levels. Green gram, Togeri, Huruli etc. are also grown as secondary crops to some extent.

Gowlies are originally from Maharashtra, mainly from Kolhapur. They are basically nomads who have migrated from place to place due to the shortage of fodder and water for their livestock. The main occupation of the Gowlies is cattle-rearing. At present they are highly dependent on the forests and live in Haliyal, Yellapur, Supa and Mundgod Taluks of North Kanara District. The total population is around 35,000 to 40,000. They speak Konkani mixed with Marathi. Recently they have started agriculture in the forest and are reducing their migration. Gowlies are socially, educationally and economically very backward and exploited by the high castes.

The Gowlies of Uttara Kannada are called Kachee Gowlies, because the women are half Kachee and the men are Langoti.

In Hosalli the Gowlies undertake farming and they have occupied forest land illegally and now are doing agriculture in that land. All the communities are involved in agricultural work and they do labour work given by the department.

According to the micro plan there are a total of 75 houses in the village (see next section). The total population of the village is 451 (Males 122; Females 125; Children 204) There are a total of 289 cattle. There are very few literate people in Hosalli.

Out of 75 families 73 families belongs to Gowlies (Milkman) and two belong to scheduled groups. 7 families do not have land and remaining undertaken farming in their own or illegally occupied areas. Apart from farming they work in Government departments on a contract basis. Though there is a primary school, the children leave school at an early age and are sent to watch the cattle and for labour work.

People walk for about 3 k.m. around the village from February to May to get the required fuelwood for the year. Both men and women go to collect firewood. From the surrounding area of the village, the Gowlies collect seeds of the teakwood from January to March and sell it to the forest department at Rs. 3.80 per kg. Every year villagers collect around 10 quintal seeds and from this earn around Rs. 3800 . Only Gowlies collect since they go into the forest with their cattle. This collection and payment is done on an individual basis.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

The first meeting to introduce the concept of JFPM in Hosalli village was conducted on 24-07-93 . In this meeting the importance of JFPM and the benefits available to the villagers by this project was explained. After this the KFD staff visited the village a few times and finally about 55 villagers came forward and formed a VFC on 27-1-1993, i.e. they paid Rs. 2 as membership fee. In the microplan only the Gowlies and 2 SC families have been included. This is probably because in the Gowli area there are a total of 75 families (73 are Gowlies and 2 SCs). The others stay about a km away from this area. The other communities are not on the general body or the microplan. According to the KFD attempts were made to include the others but they did not respond. The other communities when questioned said it was essentially a Gowli programme. On 3.11.93 the VFC was registered and the Managing Committee was formed. Since the Chairman was earlier the watchman of the nursery, the KFD suggested that he should become the Chairman. Some people were not happy with this but could not voice their opinions in front of the KFD staff. The chairman is unaware of many things about the VFC. He used to follow whatever the KFD told him. At that time he was working as a watchman for the nursery and was being paid by the KFD. Now the nursery work is over so he is not being paid by the KFD and takes more interest in the VFC.

The KFD had called only two of the SC families for the meeting to elect the Managing Committee (since they live in the Gowli area) so the heads of these families were automatically elected. The other SCs did not attend that meeting. There are no general body members from the other communities. KFD has not called them or included them in the entire JFPM process. The 2 artisans on the Managing Committee are from the Gowli community.

The first meeting was called on 12-4-94. The Chairman is Mr. Mallu Jannu Doipudi. Earlier KFD had said that meetings would be held every month. Afterwards in a VFC meeting the RFO said that a meeting would be held on the 22nd of every month. But since then 3 months have past and no meeting has been held. This is because the KFD staff have not attended.

Department people do not come for VFC meetings in time. And when KFD people do attend then villagers do not come. Every VFC meeting is conducted in Vittu's house as no people live there and it is vacant. For VFC meetings, department people sit on the chairs and the others sit on the floor. So far no General body meeting has been held.

In Hosalli the VFC has not yet signed the MoU. The P.R.A. and micro planning exercises are over. Only the Gowlies attended. No women attended. After PRA, it took one month to form the Committee. According to the people this was because the DCF present at that time was interested in JFPM so everything was done and completed within a short time.

The Yuvak Mandal in Hosalli is not active and does not attend any VFC meetings.

Involvement of women in JFPM

Except for Jannibai none of the other Gowli women know much about JFPM except that a VFC has been formed. They do not know details and are not interested. Though they have the time to attend meetings they do not attend. Women from the other communities (and most of the men as well) are not only unaware about JFPM but do not know that a VFC has been formed in their village. They are aware that a group has been formed and refer to it as the Gowli Sangha which they believe has no connection with them.

All decisions have been made by KFD alone. People's views are not at all considered. There is no process evolved as such, everything is very vague. The people said that they are not allowed to ask money matters in the meeting. Hence the question of women's participation does not arise.

The wives of the Committee members know that a VFC has been formed but the husbands do not discuss with them anything that is discussed in the meetings.

One of the Managing Committee members said that only 2 women members are not enough for the development of VFC, it needs at least 2 more women members. Others say that the more women there are the more chaos there will be.

Jannibai Doipude, a Managing Committee member, has some superficial knowledge about JFPM and the VFC. She attended the first VFC meeting. She had attended the meeting to select the Managing Committee members. She was selected as Committee member by the people and the department as she knows and talks Kannada.

Her husband takes all the responsibility of the house. She has to give the money earned by her to her husband who gives her money for marketing. She attends the VFC meetings and participates. She worked for one day when the teak nursery was done in the VFC area.

Godi bai, the other Managing Committee member of the VFC does not attend the meetings. She does not know anything about JFPM. She has attended a training programme conducted by KFD in Yellapur. The training was in Kannada. So she did not understand anything. She was not interested in becoming a Managing Committee member. In the meeting men made her a VFC Committee member without asking her. She has not attended any VFC meeting so far. She has not attended the Micro-planning or P.R.A.

She does coolie work and gets Rs. 13 as wages (Men get Rs.15) Her husband takes all the financial responsibility of the home and gives her whatever cash she needs. They have one acre agriculture land and also lease in others land for agricultural purpose. She says that men come to call her to the VFC meetings, but she does not go. 'What is to be achieved by these meetings?' she asks. She does not plan to attend future VFC meetings.

Issues taken up by the VFC

The VFC has taken up a teak nursery plantation during the last year (around 200 beds). They will be continuing the same this year also. Two chairs and one table for the Hosalli VFC are kept in the RFO's house and still not brought to Hosalli.

During one of the meetings it was decided that the RFOs (Territorial and JFPM) and a VFC member should go to Kalghatgi to bring buffaloes on 20.6.95. Two Gowli families have now been provided with a buffalo each by the department - from Kalghatgi. The criteria to select these two families are not known (one buffalo has been given to Jannibai who is a Management Committee member). Another one has been given to the NGO coordinator's brother. These buffaloes require 40 kg. of grass whereas the cows and buffaloes of the Gowlies need 10 to 15 kg. per day.

Out of the total amount collected by the VFC the two buffaloes were purchased at the rate of 7,000 each and the balance now is Rs. 10,000. The two families will have to experiment with a new improvised feed regime to increase milk productivity. These cattle will not be sent out for grazing. They will be given green grass (from the fodder plot) and other food. If this is successful then the KFD will supply more cattle.

KFD also assured that they will give funds for poultry farming but they have not yet given this. VFC members have been sent for training to make bamboo baskets and to develop teak nurseries.

The Hosalli villagers informed the Bailndoor village people about the formation of VFC in their village. But these villagers are not interested in forming one in their area.

The main problems in Hosalli are water problems and school problem. The teacher does not come regularly to the school. Also there are many families without proper housing.

A tailoring training facility has been started near Kirawatti Depot. One girl from Hosalli attends the training. Jannibai says that they go for work for the whole day, so if they are given tailoring training during the night for 2-3 hours, it will be helpful. She says that they cannot leave their labour work to go for training since they need the money for their livelihood. The VFC Chairman asked the KFD during one of the VFC meetings to pay a stipend to the women who go for tailoring training. The KFD does not intend to do so. However, the JFPM DCF told the VFC chairman that he would be giving 2 metres of cloth to each woman who goes for tailoring training, provided every lady goes for tailoring training. They say that women above 18 years only can go for the training.

In response to the people's demand, the DCF and RFO Jaganath Rao said that they will try to provide a borewell or open well in the future. KFD has told that training to prepare Agarbatti sticks will be given, but it has not yet been done.

People have also asked why the MoU has still not been signed even though the VFC has already completed one and half years. The DCF's response was that it can be made ready the following day itself, but he is not doing it because he wants to arrange a function for the same and another cause for the delay is that this VFC does not have a forest plantation area under the JFPM forest project.

Two Managing Committee members from Hosalli were taken by JFPM DCF to the VFC meeting held at Kangod (Siddapur) for the MoU signature.

Specific decisions selected for the study

CONSTRUCTION OF FODDER PLOTS

Though 289 cattle are there in the village, not even 25 litres of milk are produced. So the people have not yet come above the poverty line. There is insufficient fodder available for the cattle. From June to September, they depend upon the green grass in the forest; at other times the grass grown on the edge of the agricultural land (badu) is brought and given to the animals. From December to May the grass available from farm produce and imported straw from outside is given.

From the cattle around 80 lorry load cattle manure per year is collected in which 40 lorry loads are sold by the villagers to outsiders (mainly Yellapur people) at 1000-1200 per lorry load. The remaining 40 lorry loads are used in their own agricultural lands which increases their yield.

According to the survey, each cattle requires 30 kg green grass per day. The total deficit in the rainy season is 200 tonne green grass and 6 tonne dry grass and in summer the total deficit is around 420 tonne. To solve this problem, in the road side, in the boundary under electricity poles and besides the tank fodder plantations can be built.

KFD dug two borewells but both have failed. There is now a water problem for the fodder plot. The departmental people said that they will dig one borewell for the fodder plot.

The fodder plot constructed by the VFC has been done in about 8 acres which is sufficient only for 15 to 18 families and not for all the 75 families. At least no plans were done to provide fodder for all the families.

In Hosalli, the VFC chairman and secretary jointly sell the fodder to the people at the rate of 10 paise per kg. and collect the money once in 15 days. They give receipts to the people and deposit the amount in the bank. The main function of this VFC is to hand over the management of the fodder plot to the village. The extent of fodder plot is around 5 acres. At present there is acute shortage of water to the fodder plot.

During one of the meetings, the Chairman said that he was getting a salary when the previous DCF was in Yellapur Division. After his transfer the allowance has been stopped. The Secretary said that the Chairman was getting allowance as a watchman for the Nursery and not as a VFC Chairman. Now he is no longer a watchman so his salary has been stopped.

The RFO said that the chairman can become the watchman for this fodder plot and do the work of distributing fodder to the people who want it by properly weaving the grass and properly watching the fodder plot. This way he can get the salary of the watchman who is at present working in the fodder plot and the present watchman can be placed in some other area as a watchman. The VFC Secretary further said that the VFC people themselves can watch the fodder plot and nobody would object to it.

When non Gowlies have asked for grass from the fodder plot, they were not given and were told that grass is to be given only to the Gowlies.

The forester said that he could not spend the balance in the VFC account, i.e. Rs.10,000 towards purchasing of manure (urea) though it is much needed for the fodder plot. This is because he does not have permission from his RFO and DCF. He also expressed the problem that the RFO is not taking care to provide manure from the department budget. Hence this year there is no sufficient fodder in the plot. He felt very bad about this and asked the research team to contact the RFO DCF about this issue.

SMOKELESS CHULLAS

In this VFC 30 and 11 smokeless chullas have been distributed to the Gowli and SC community respectively. They have been given smokeless chullas under VFC. However, most people do not use the smokeless chullas as they say it takes a long time to cook on them. No Gobargas is given.

NGO involvement in JFPM and general issues

In this VFC an NGO, DEEDS, Gowli Project is involved. They have provided finance (through the assistance of OXFAM) to the VFC to dig a borewell. The borewell however, is not working.

Deeds started working in Hosalli after JFPM was introduced and the VFC was formed. It seems that the enthusiasm of the NGO is reducing due to the irregularity of the meetings and the fact that forest officials do not come for the meetings and they get cancelled.

People say that Deeds has not given them much information, though one or two staff members from Deeds usually attend the VFC meetings.

NGO representatives are fed up working with KFD. Inspite of asking them to hold meetings, their suggestions are not taken seriously. However, they could build awareness among Gowlies regarding development of fodder plot and working with KFD.

The Cooperative society formed by Deeds in Hosalli prior to VFC formation had got contracts for nursery, wood logging etc. A private contractor instigated the people against Deeds saying they had misappropriated funds. The people got suspicious and Deeds was unable to remove their suspicions nor did they make enough attempts to do so. Now the people have threatened to beat up the head of DEEDS and even to kill him.

Awareness levels of people and their attitudes towards JFPM

People doubt that there is any benefit in attending VFC meetings. They lose wages if they attend meetings. Even when meetings are held in the evenings they have to get back early to finish housework if they are to attend. Those who attend are of the opinion that the department should make more attempts to convince the people about the benefits of the VFC; then only people will be interested.

People say that the KFD has not given enough information to them about JFPM. They are also unhappy that KFD is secretive about the VFC account. They are not told about the money collected from the sale of fodder or about the seed money and what it is to be used for. Even the Committee members do not feel they are consulted about what has to be done in the VFC.

The men who attended the training were really surprised to hear that the fodder plot is one of the activities in VFC and felt sorry for themselves for not having involved themselves in VFC activity. But they clearly mentioned that nobody from the department came and explained to them all these details. They were told that department has not involved other castes because there is no degraded forest area to have JFPM. They said that they would discuss with the RFO and DCF. Even the Gowlies thought that the only activity of the VFC was growing a fodder plot.

Apart from Gowlies the other communities are completely unaware of what is happening in the VFC. There are two SC men on the VFC who said that "we often used to get confused about our role in this Committee, because benefits (fodder) were given only to Gowlies". After receiving the training non-gowlies want all benefits given in JFPM viz. free firewood - fodder from forest and a piece of forest of their own to protect and share.

The Forester said that his position is very awkward because it is he who has to answer to the people. He himself did not know that KFD will withdraw its support so soon. He does not know about involvement of non-Gowlies in VFC. When cross questioned he could not answer. He said that mistakes have been made by his superior officers and not at his level. (He was referring to the exclusion of non Gowlies).

Non-Gowlies have decided to approach the KFD to involve them in the VFC. This was decided after the training.

VFC meeting on 22/03/95

8 Committee members, the organiser of the Gowli Project, and around 35 people from the village were present at the meeting. The forester Secretary Mr. Savanth had gone to Yellapur to bring the VFC file from the division office. He was not able to reach in time for the meeting, and could not therefore attend. The territorial RFO was present. There was only one woman Committee member present. No other women attended. One of the forest contractors was present. The chairman came before the meeting started but then disappeared. People were surprised about his attitude towards the meeting.

The women Committee member Mrs. Jannu Bai raised the issue of changing the chairman after giving him a chance for one month to get properly involved and take the responsibility of the VFC. All the male members agreed with her suggestion. They said if the chairman did not participate then he would be removed. (This was also brought up in a later meeting. At that time RFO said that there were 75 members in the general body. All of them should pass a resolution to change the chairman and any one can become the chairman with a majority of votes.)

The RFO motivated the people and said that he would provide soapnut (sigekai) seedlings to the people of the VFC and they would have to plant it (by shramadana) in the surroundings of the fodder plot. This would give the VFC some income in the future. All the people agreed to do this.

Though the NGO representative had attended the meeting, he did not take much interest to organise members for this meeting. However, he was able to bring up the problems of the VFC such as employment to the women (Agarbatti stick making, water problem, etc.) during the meeting. During the meeting, the investigator observed that people are frightened of the RFO who sometimes looks as though he is giving orders to the people. It also looked like the people give too much respect to the RFO People did not appear to be particularly interested in this meeting.

Through the VFC a controlled ration shop will be started in Hosalli by giving responsibility to an SC or handicapped woman. The RFO had asked for the photo of a handicapped women (a Committee member's mother). They gave it but nothing has been done since. Three months have passed to date. The forest contractor who runs a ration shop at present in Kirwatti area explained the responsibilities involved.

Agarbatti Stick - making was also discussed with the members. But nothing has been done in this regard.

JARDE

Profile of the Village

Jarde is situated 27 kms from Karwar on the Sadashivgad - Anshi road. The village is on the right of the road and on the left is the forest. There are 45 families from different communities, viz. 8 Christian, 5 Naiks (Kamarpanth), 6 Bhandari, rest Padthi. There are no communal problems at all. They attend each others festivals, go to each others homes etc.

Though there are many wells in the village only 2 of them give water during the latter part of summer. Regarding fodder, villagers have sufficient feed for their cattle from paddy straws. During June and July when fodder is short people send their cattle to Goa for the Gowlies to look after. Per cattle they have to pay Rs.30/- to Gowlies.

Many men have gone to the Gulf countries for work. In spite of this the villagers do not appear well off. There are only 2 TVs in the village which were bought in early 1995.

Processes of the VFC from formation to date

In the 1st week of April, A KRWCDS worker took 5 women from Jarde to Satgeri the day the VFC Managing Committee was formed in Satgeri. 3 women were from KRWCDS staff (paid by them), 1 was the mother of the vetenary doctor who is paid by KRWCDS, and 1 is a member of the women's committee formed by KRWCDS. For that meeting, the RFO, DCF etc. attended. At that meeting these 5 women decided that they too would form a VFC in their village. They expressed this during that meeting in front of the DCF.

The guard and forester of Jarde informed the entire village that a meeting would be held on 18th April. The DCF and RFO attended. This was the first meeting to form the VFC. During the 2nd meeting the Managing Committee was formed. All women and men from the village attended and elections were held. The KRWCDS staff recommended most of the Managing Committee members including the Chairman and the women members. Of the two women Managing Committee members, one is an Anganwadi assistant (a Christian) and other a Hindu. The membership fee has not yet been collected from any family.

The third meeting was held prior to the PRA exercise in the Anganavadi school. Men, women and KRWCDS staff attended. In the beginning JFPM RFO gave some information regarding JFPM, VFC and PRA to the villagers. 31 people have become members of the VFC.

The research team attended the microplan exercises which were held on 16th May. Three groups were formed; each group consisted of some villagers, NGO staff and department staff. After that a Seasonal Map was drawn on a drawing sheet where they noted the season of field work, or agricultural work, unemployment, availability of fodder, rainy months, availability of milk, etc. The first group completed the seasonality map. The second group drew the social map by locating the trees, fields, wells, houses, roads, schools etc. The third group drew the Venn Diagram (chapathi) to show the relationship of villagers to the various government departments. After this all these three groups gathered together and showed their Maps. Most of the women who attended the microplanning exercises were quite elderly and almost all were illiterate. They did not seem to follow what was going on in spite of repeated explanations by the NGO staff and the research team.

Issues taken up by the VFC

Since the VFC has been recently formed they have had no other meetings apart from the ones mentioned above.

The seed money has not yet been given. Smokeless chullas were provided to all 35 houses in the village immediately after the micro-plans which were on the 16th May. The chullas have not yet been constructed. Gobar gas has been promised to those who want and Rs. 1000 as incentive to those who construct it. Therefore they have to work to build it.

KFD has given 5 cashew saplings to each family. About 15 acres forest area is given to the VFC. Mango and Cashew plantations are to be grown according to what has been discussed in the micro-plan. KFD wants this, the reason being that the fruits will come soon and they can get profits easily. One woman said that spices should be grown in between since that would be very useful for the women. She did not discuss this during the micro- planning since her husband was present and she did not want to talk in front of him. However she intends to mention this before the plantation work starts.

There is a small lake in the forest which the people want desilted.

Smuggling has stopped after the VFC was formed. Since there is only one route for the outside villagers to enter, the VFC secretary informed everyone that smugglers would be caught and punished.

Involvement of women

During all meetings (not only related to JFPM) both men and women attend. However the women say that they cannot talk in these meetings since there are many men present and they feel restrained.

The Mahila Sangha was started 4 years ago by KRWCDS. As the members belong to Hindu and Christian communities, the Sangha has not yet kept any name. The women have still to decide. The women from the Mahila Sangha are the ones who also attend VFC meetings. They may become general body members of the VFC, but have not yet discussed this with their husbands. The Mahila Sangha conducts regular monthly meetings but does not discuss about VFC. JFPM matters are discussed only when KFD people come to the village.

NGO involvement

KRWCDS has been working in Jarde for about 5 years. KFD relies strongly on KRWCDS. In Bargi, a neighbouring village when KFD had planned to form a VFC, the KRWCDS staff could not attend so people did not come for the meeting.

A couple of village women have been trained in local medicines by KRWCDS. Every day they spend half a day going around the village and giving medicines to those who are sick. (In Shirve, 2 women were trained). The women selected are usually from poor families, widows etc. KRWCDS has sent one of their staff who lives in Jarde for vetenary doctor training to Shimoga. Earlier people had to take their animals to Karwar (28 kms away). Now they have a vetenary doctor in the village. The villagers only pay for medicines. The doctors salary is paid by KRWCDS.

Each family has a bank account in which they put in Rs. 10/- per month. KRWCDS has motivated them to do this. For those in need, KRWCDS provides seeds, fertilizers, small coconut saplings etc. at half rate. They plan to start a cooperative society in the village.

Every month they have separate meetings for men and women.

Attitudes of the people and their awareness about JFPM

Most of the village men and women know about JFPM and the VFC since all have been involved and the VFC has only recently been formed. People see their responsibility as protecting the forest and attending VFC meetings.

Earlier they used to fear the forest guard but now the relationship has improved. They have problems of firewood. They have to walk far to collect firewood. However, the difficulty may reduce after some years because in their (JFPM) land, they have asked KFD to plant firewood species. They feel that they will get benefits in future due to the VFC.

KANGOD

Profile of the village

Kangod is situated in Siddapur taluk 9 km. away from Siddapur towards Chandragutti, a historical place. It has 3 hamlets VIZ. Hallibail, Iogodkatte, Kumbarkeri. The village has one primary school, one middle school and one high school situated on the main road. It has also a Panchayat office, post office, Mahila mandal and Yuvak mandal. There are no other Govt. offices such as police station or hospitals. People depend upon Siddapur for these. The village has 11 open wells and 6 pumps for drinking water. Apart from this, 15 taps have been installed by the Mandal Panchayat.(Water storing capacity of 4 tanks is reduced due to stock of mud.)

There are 314 households with a total population of 1928. (982 male and 946 female). Literacy percentage is only 36.6. Of the total families there are 205 Namdharies, 7 Brahmins, 26 Muslims, 2 Christians and 100 others. There are 5 temples, 5 mosques and 1 church. The population of cattle is almost the same as that of the human population. There are 75 landless labourers and 8 artisan families in the village. About two thirds of the houses are thatched while the rest are tiled.

Greengram, horsegram and other pulses and sugarcane are grown. The village has 17 acres of Areca field. People are primarily dependent upon agriculture. During the months when there is no agricultural work they depend on forest work or go outside the village in search of work. There are 35 Medar houses who depend upon Bamboos.

The harijans get farm work during the rainy season for which they get only Rs. 10 per day. Sometimes they get labour work in the pineapple plantation where they are also paid Rs. 10 per day. They usually collect firewood on their return from work. They collect NTFP (only Kavale Kai) from the forest for their personal use. The men go for stone-loading work which is available only outside the village. Men or women do the marketing for the household. However, men control the finances. The older women used to have greater responsibility for the family and with finances, shopping etc. Nowadays it is the men who take most of the decisions in the house. Though men are not particularly interested in sending their daughters to school, the women are interested. And when men do not have any strong opinions about this the girls are sent at least to primary school.

In Hallibail there are 30 houses, but there is no water and electricity facility and the houses are also not good. Earlier there was no Anganvadi school. But now one has been built by the Christians.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

Kangod village was selected under the JFPM project during 1993-94 due to its poor socio-economic condition. 33 ha. of degraded forest land were identified during 1992 November. In the process of constituting the VFC, several meetings were conducted by the KFD between 9-10-93 to 28-10-1993 to introduce the idea of JFPM and to motivate the villagers to form a VFC. Apart from these meetings, the KFD staff conducted a house-to-house survey to collect socio-economic and demographic data. A P.R.A. was also conducted.

In the presence of the Revenue Inspector, the VFC Management Committee was elected. About 5-6 women attended that meeting. None came forward to become Managing Committee members. After some amount of convincing by the men (Naiks) two Namdhari Naik women came forward and agreed to become members. KB Harijan, an active SC representative on the VFC Managing Committee who lives in Jayantiwada, said that before Micro-planning, the KFD came to them and took the details. When people were asked who the department discussed this with they said only with KB Harijan and a few active Janata Dal workers. (KB Harijan has married a Namdhari Naik) He attends VFC meetings and was

elected unanimously. The other SC member in the VFC merely attends the VFC meetings but does not actively participate.

The joint management plan was then prepared involving the villagers. Only the two women Managing Committee members attended. Men who are not on the Managing Committee also attended - particularly those from the Yuvak Mandal.

During the first VFC meeting i.e. after the Managing Committee was formed there were 10/20 members only. The meetings are held during the day (morning or early evening) at the temple. The Chairman and Forester decide the date & time for each meeting. First meetings were conducted on 22nd of each month. But now the meetings are conducted on the first Monday of every month. After the MOU, 2 meetings were held but there was no quorum. The forester (Secretary) always attends the meetings. If he does not come they do not conduct the meeting. Altogether 8 VFC meetings have been held, 3 of these have been after the MoU signature.

Apart from VFC members no other people attend or are called for meetings. However, according to the committee members interviewed, the subject matter of the VFC meetings are decided before the meetings. If there is any special matter to be discussed, then they announce this to the villagers and call them for the meeting. Final decisions are taken with the consideration of everyone's opinion. If some people disagree then the others convince them by explaining about the subject.

The Yuvak Mandal in Kangod is very active. They attend meetings, take active part in discussions and attended the Micro-planning exercises. None of the yuvak Mandal people are in the VFC Committee. In spite of some negative opinions about the Yuvak Mandal President, people's views about the Yuvak Mandal as a whole are positive.

Involvement of women in JFPM

The two women on the Managing Committee were nominated by the (Naik) men on the Committee. Though they were not particularly keen on becoming members they reluctantly agreed.

Only one women (Ramakka Naik) has attended the 3 meetings held after election of Management Committee. The other women has not attended. No women are aware of how the management plan is being implemented. But many women attended the MoU function where they say they "merely sat like dolls"

Ramakka Naik said that since she was the only women in the meetings, she never spoke because she did not know what to speak or discuss. As she cannot understand what happens in the meetings how she can inform other women.

Some women said that they were asked to give 2 Rs. in their husband's names but were not told for what purpose.

During the Micro-planning, the two women committee members namely Mrs. Halamma Naik and Mrs. Ramakka Naik attended but did not actively participate. Ramakka Naik attends the VFC meetings but does not understand what goes on.

One women from the only carpenter family, who was President of the Mahila Mandal before the formation of the VFC was not told anything about the VFC. The first time she heard about the VFC was when she was asked to perform 'arti' when the minister came for the signing of the MoU. She wanted to attend the VFC meetings later but nobody called her.

There is one Mahila Mandal in Kangod, but it is not working properly. The members of the Mahila Mandal do not attend the VFC meetings. No one calls them and since they do not have meetings they do not discuss anything.

Some women (from the Naik community) have asked their husbands not to get involved in the VFC because it is not bringing any profit. They tell the men to bring firewood and do other work instead of going for VFC meetings.

After our training session the Medar women said that though bamboo plantation has been done by KFD, they never knew that it was for them. They are happy that KFD has planted the variety they need viz. Oxytenenthera monostigma (pannangi).

Regarding the fuelwood issue, one poor women said that rich people consume 75% of fuelwood and 25% is consumed by poor people. Hence this should be considered when finding out people's needs.

As the women go for nursery work 9 months in a year, they want to know if they can get the nursery contract through the VFC and their wages increased; they wanted to know about the laws concerning minimum wages.

Issues related to the VFC

Men are all members in that they have paid Rs.2 - with the understanding that they will get firewood from the committee which has been formed and that they have to protect the forest. This was told to them by the Forester. Now people are allowed to bring firewood for domestic purposes but not for sale. They are not allowed to cut green trees. Though there is some amount of smuggling people are afraid to discuss this since there is no protection from the smugglers. (The Janata Dal vice-president from Hygod said that the Hygod villagers have also applied to the KFD to form a VFC. He opined that Hygod villagers want a VFC because Kangod villagers are protecting their forest well and are coming to Hygod forest to fulfill their fuelwood and fodder needs.)

During the Minister's visit he had assured them that bamboos and smokeless chullas would be given. Bamboos have been given every where, but smokeless chullas have been given in Kangod only. 13 smokeless chullas were supplied to Jayanthi wada Harijan colony in June '95 and they still have to get another 50 smokeless chullas. In Kangod totally 120 smokeless chullas have been distributed. Only the people in Jayantiwada (where the Harijans, Medars and Muslims live) still have to get. Many Harijan families still do not know that smokeless chullas have been distributed in Kangod. When interviewed the RFO said that they have been given to all the families.

A couple of joint families have got more than one smokeless chulla. When this was discussed in a VFC meeting the Forester assured them that after surveying in whose house more than one smokeless chulla is there he will arrange for withdrawing it and giving to the others. But this has not yet been done.

When interviewed in Sept '95, the forester said that they are planning on giving big size smokeless chullas to the remaining families. This is because according to the opinion of the women who have got smokeless chullas cooking takes more time on these chullas and they cannot cook keeping large sized vessels on it. So it has been decided to provide big sized chullas hence forth.

He says that women are now being asked about the advantages or problems they face with smokeless chullas. He says that women have got much benefit because they are not asked to pay any money. Earlier they had to give Rs. 87 for these chullas when they took it from the BDO.

Some men say that the responsibility for and the benefit from the smokeless chulla and from gobar gas is the women's and not theirs. The women feel that everyone benefits from these.

The KFD has introduced a scheme at present to supply jungli wood poles to the SC community for housing purpose.

There is a severe water problem in several areas. Though there is a big tank it is not used for providing water supply. While conducting a meeting to discuss this issue, the CCF attended. He told the people to desilt the open tank so that apart from providing water for the teak nursery it would give employment to the people. The people agreed with this but later felt that if the water was used for the nursery there would be less for agricultural purposes. So they later requested the department to dig wells in other places but the KFD objected.

Others felt that due to the VFC itself problems have started. This is because the nursery is stopped and they cannot get labour work. According to one lady, the landowners do not want the nursery since they need water for their fields. But for the landless a nursery means daily employment. She said that the people of the village chose another place for the nursery, but the KFD has not yet started the nursery. The RFO said that there is a problem of water in that place so they cannot start a nursery there. However, people said that in one of the places selected for the nursery where water is available, people have encroached the land. Though the villagers have asked the KFD to get the land vacated and to undertake a nursery nothing has been done so far. The encroachers have occupied it since many years and are now trying to get it regularised.

The nursery they are planning is not in the VFC area. The saplings and seedlings will be used for the regular plantations of the KFD.

Forest officials assured the people that more fodder would be raised near the lake by keeping a waterman. But this is not yet implemented since people do not want it near the lake but elsewhere for the same reasons for which they do not want a nursery.

Also people from Hallibail said that Hallibail had improved since the last 3-4 years as there was a nursery started by KFD because of which people got labour work. But now that the nursery is stopped they do not get labour work.

The KFD has given the VFC 1 table cum cupboard and 10 chairs. The VFC has deposited the seed money (Rs. 5000/-), the income from the sale of fodder and the membership fee in the Bank in a joint a/c with the Forester and VFC Chairman. They plan to use this money for some common programme, by asking the opinion of the general body members and the committee members. They are thinking of extending the hall of the temple so that they can have VFC meetings without any problem and can accomodate people during the time of the Jathra.

In Kangod a plantation was raised in the year 1984, and first department officials said that this plantation would be included for the right of VFC. A senior KFD official said that they would give 50% share from the old (existing) plantation during the time of harvesting it. After his transfer the new KFD officer said that they have to follow the KFD rules and it is not possible to give the VFC a share from the old plantation since that plantation was raised prior to the formation of the VFC. People objected seriously about this and were reluctant to sign the MoU. Then the Minister was due to arrive and the KFD wanted the MoU in his presence. So the department officials made a blank MoU and asked the people to sign it, saying that the 1984 plantation would be given to the VFC. Since the RFO earlier belonged to their village they trusted him and agreed to sign this temporary MoU. However, after the Minister came the plan to give the plantation to the VFC was cancelled.

Department fixed Re. 1/- as labour charges to harvest a plant (from the 1994 plantation). Since this was a very low rate people of Kangod did not agree to become labourers. So KFD called outsiders to harvest the plantations. The people feel that the Department avoids local labourers because the local people will know everything about the department dealings. In fact, as the villagers stated, the KFD has to spend more when they bring outsiders due to transportation costs, food, etc.

After the timber has been cut, village people have been given labour work. This is not related to the VFC.

Specific decisions selected for the study

SMALL TIMBERS

Among 340 families 273 families are dependent on agriculture, hence they require wooden plough, yoke etc., for agriculture purpose. There are 206 thatched houses and every year 5000 poles are required for repairs. For religious activities at least 500 poles are required every year. For all these requirements, the forest and the plantation will be the main source. The village requires 10,000 fence posts every year.

The solutions to these as given in the microplan and the current status is as follows: 1) providing iron plough with financial assistance from the government which has not yet been done; 2) reducing the quantity of wood required for fencing by growing livehedges like Glyrecidia, Subabul, Acacia, Hibiscus etc. People have not yet grown live-hedges. 3) For first five years department should provide required number of poles. KFD started to pay Rs. 1.25 to fell a neelgiri pole. Each family got 40 poles. If a pole is 18 feet, it is given to the KFD and if it is more than 18 feet then it is given to the people. KFD gave one week to fell the poles. All those who wanted the poles have got them 4) For housing purpose, hardwood trees are required. The gestation period of these plants is long term. Hence villagers have requested to provide either free of cost or with a nominal cost of the department. KFD has not yet provided hard wood for housing purpose.

MINOR FOREST PRODUCE

The information collected during the PRA exercise shows that MFP collection is quantitatively high in this village. At present the auction of MFP collection is through the department and so far MFPs are being given to the outsiders. As there is much scope for collection of MFPs it would be beneficial if the contract is given to the VFC. The VFC has requested the KFD to hand over the contract to them. It was decided during the microplan to hand over MFP collection to the VFC at a nominal rate.

KFD has permitted the VFC for the collection of MFP like Nellikai, and wild Tamarind fruit etc., (which do not have monetary value to the KFD) available within the area of the VFC. People collect amounts for their household consumption and a little for sale to outsiders.

The contracts for NTFP which are of monetary value like Sigekai, Beedi leaves still continue to be given to contractors. The people were unaware that the VFC had the right to demand the contract for the collection of the NTFPs once the VFC is formed. This issue has not been discussed by the KFD with the people. Women (particularly of the Muslim community) are interested in taking the contract for the beedi leaves since they will get a good income from it.

BAMBOOS

There are 35 bamboo artisan families who depend fully on bamboo. They prepare baskets, and other bamboo articles & sell in the market. They get raw materials from the forests. But nowadays Medars do not get the total requirement of the bamboos from the forests, so they depend on other work for their livelihood.

Unscientific methods of cutting bamboos from the forests and improper protection results in dwindling of bamboos. Therefore, the VFC has decided to plant maximum number of bamboos in the available area.

During 1994 50 Ha of bamboo plantation has been raised. The plantation to be raised in future should be mixed with bamboos according to the local requirements.

According to the microplan the 50 Ha of plantation raised during 1994 will meet the total requirement of bamboo culms, if extraction & distribution can be done according to the condition of the Committee and also the villagers sell their articles for correct prices.

The Medars and Harijans belong to Jayantiwada. The Medars (Harijans) collect Bamboo from the forest almost everyday. Sometimes they bring bamboo bundles by cart. Among the Medars only the elderly people do bamboo work. They make baskets and small articles and sell in the market. Even the women make bamboo articles but as they work in their homes and as marketing is the responsibility of the men, the women do not know the value of the things they make and often are not even aware that they are doing `productive' work. The women work as labourers during the rainy season.

The Medars feel that during October and November much bamboo work is available, but at that time sufficient bamboo is not available. If they do not get sufficient bamboo they remain unemployed. The youth are not interested in bamboo work; they prefer to work as labourers. They work as coolies (e.g. they load stones in lorries). The children are sent to school.

The Medar men have become members of the general body of the VFC by giving 1 Rs. membership fee on the understanding that a society will be formed. The Department has told the people that once the society is formed they will get work and during the rainy season when work is not available they will be given loans. The people of the Vada are still waiting for the society to be formed.

The Medars do not know about the decision taken by the forest department to allow them to share the amount collected from selling forest produce (NTFP) and they also do not know about the purpose of the survey made. Inquiries made by the KFD during micro-planning regarding the number of members in each family, cattle population etc., with the men in the household is not known by the women. Moreover, the opinions of these men were not solicited during the micro-planning process.

The people of Jayanthi Vada do not get any work from the forest department. During his visit the Forest Minister promised that sufficient quantity of bamboo would be given to the people and the people should not cut trees and should protect the forest from wood smugglers. 20 bamboos were provided to each Medar and Harijan family once by the KFD after the MoU function and thrice after the formation of the VFC. This was given to the general body members.

However, the bamboo supplied by the KFD is quite useless to the Medars except for roof shafts. Since the KFD gets it cut by labourers elsewhere, who cut the bamboos at the joints rendering it useless except for baskets and smaller articles, the Medars have asked the KFD to involve them in the cutting of the bamboos. They had asked before but in vain. The RFO said that good bamboo is not available in Siddapur range. Since they have to get it from elsewhere the people in those areas are given the work of cutting the bamboos.

Though people have benefitted by the Bamboos (some have made baskets etc., and sold them) they still feel that if they were involved in the cutting of the bamboos it would have been much more beneficial.

Awareness levels of people and their attitudes towards JFPM

SC, Medar, Muslims, Kumbar (potter), Kurubar (shepherd), Madivals (barbers and dhobis), Carpenters and Vokkaligas do not know about the VFC nor are they aware about any Government facilities. Most of the women and men in these communities are unaware of JFPM. The few women who had heard about the VFC said that they were not informed about the date and time of the meetings. They all know only

that the Minister came for the signing of the MoU. But many people (mainly women) do not know what is meant by MoU.

There is no representative in the management committee from the Medar community. The artisan seat has been represented by a person from the potter community. After our training, Medar women said that at least one from their community should be present in the management committee to represent them and their problems.

Though most of the women know about the Minister's visit, they know nothing else about the VFC, nor are most of them interested. One Harijan lady said when asked about what she feels about the decisions that have been taken (after being told by the investigators) `Who are we to ask? We should take whatever KFD gives us, we shouldn't say this is good or that is bad.'

The one or two women who evinced interest about the Minister's visit were scolded by their husbands saying that these are not issues women should concern themselves with.

In the Brahmin community, the women know very little about the VFC and do not want to get involved since they are in a minority. They do not want to go for meetings since they do not have `the right company'. They get information from the labourers who work in their lands. They do not discuss these issues or get any information from their husbands.

The men also do not participate for the same reason. They do not feel the need to participate since they have enough money and lands of their own. One Brahmin, a Managing Committee Member, was disillusioned with the Minister's visit as in his view since there was no pukka road the minister did not visit any plantation.

The Naiks, which are the dominant community in Kangod, are aware about the VFC and its functions. The women in this community know about the VFC. They are interested but are not informed about meetings, dates. Therefore they cannot attend. The men who are not members are also not informed. The Chairman, who belongs to this community, does not tell his wife, daughter and son-in-law anything about the VFC.

Some women from this community showed interest in attending VFC meetings but due to house work they could not go for the meetings. But most women are not interested in the decisions even after being told. Except for 2-3 Naik women, none of the others know about PRA, micro-planning exercises. The women said that as the male is the head of the household the membership for the VFC is in his name.

The women only know about smokeless chullas. One Nayak women said that they should have given the Harijans first. She said that the next time they are distributed, the Harijans should be given smokeless chullas first.

The Chairman feels that the forester should not become the VFC Secretary. Instead he is of the opinion that the guard should become the VFC secretary, since the forester has too many responsibilities. People feel that the Forester dominates the meetings. Also the locals want to remove the chairman since they say he does not fulfill his responsibilities and is very partial to his community. He was made chairman due to his age. He does not explain anything about the dealings of the VFC to other general body members.

Opinions about the usefulness of the VFC vary. Some feel that after the formation of the VFC there have been benefits and it is likely that it will continue to be profitable. For example, bamboos were given only after the VFC was formed. Earlier it was not supplied. Others feel that it was only due to the Minister's visit that things were done. After the Minister's visit no programme has been held; everything has stopped. Earlier the forester used to come weekly and made many promises but now he does not come to discuss anything.

The people do not have confidence in ministers. They feel that it is easy for ministers to make big promises but difficult for them to implement these.

Some people are of the opinion that education is not a consideration when selecting members of the Managing Committee. Therefore, they say that JFPM cannot work in the long run.

Most people spoke about the lack of unity between different communities and political groups in the village. In fact, some people said that they would have attended the meetings but they do not like the environment and undercurrents so they prefer not to get involved. In a situation like this they believe that JFPM cannot work over time. The people feel that much could be achieved if there was unity in the village.

NAGARBASTIKERI

Profile of the village

The village is situated on the right bank of the Sharavati river 2 k.m. away from the headquarters, Gersoppa which is 35 k.m. from Honnavar. Though the village is prosperous in terms of the fertility of the soil which results in good yields, the facilities are poor. Since one needs to cross a small stream to get to the village it is difficult to get doctors to come there. The villagers have to go across to Gersoppa. In the rainy season it becomes difficult for the children to cross the stream to go to school. There is no hospital, no bus facility and no secondary school in the village. There is an Urdu school up to the 7th std. and for high school education they have to go 8 kms. away to Sanshi. They have to walk 3 kms to catch the bus.

Nagarbastikeri has a total of 162 families. Of a total population of 971, there are 496 men and 475 women. Nayak is the largest community followed by Muslims. In the Hindu Community, only men collect firewood and manure. Women do not go to the forests at all. The Nayak community is dominant; others are scared of them. They are said to be quite rowdy and pick up fights easily. In the Muslim community the women go to collect firewood. There are a few Ambiga (Fisher community) families. In this community the men go to collect firewood.

Most people own at least some amount of land. Those who do not have land usually migrate to Goa or the Gulf countries; or work as daily wage labourers.

Paddy is the main crop in the village. Sugarcane, coconut, arecanut, are also grown. Those who have irrigation facilities grow 2 crops a year. Others depend on the monsoons for their crops.

People have to walk about a km. to bring fuel wood. Since in the rainy season they get less they store as much as they can in summer. The 408 cattle in the village depend on forest fodder and paddy grass (straw). From June to December they get this from the forest; the rest of the year they depend on trees, leaves and bushes. Since they eat the leaves of the small plants many good plants do not grow.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

After several visits and discussions with the KFD staff the villagers agreed to form a VFC. For the first meeting the guard went around the entire village informing people about the meeting. The RFO, held that meeting. During that time around 200 people gathered. The KFD first suggested the name of the Chairman since he had worked with the KFD and they knew him well. Then others were suggested by the Chairman and seconded by others in the group. The VFC was registered on 3.10.1993.

One interesting feature in the Nagarbastikeri VFC is that during the elections to the Managing Committee people were wary of taking on responsibilities. Therefore, many whose names were informally suggested (including women) said they did not want to become Committee members since they did not have the time. The same process seems to be in operation during the enrollment to the general body. Many men have migrated to the Gulf countries. Therefore, women have given their names as general body members. Another probable reason (which comes across when talking to the people) why people are reluctant to become members is that they feel that protection is their main responsibility. There is a genuine fear of the smugglers who are part of that village itself and are said to belong to the dominant community. Besides some people are resentful of the KFD and do not think much of the JFPM process. They say that now the KFD is expecting the villagers to protect the forests but who is to protect them (the people) from the smugglers.

Though there is a Yuvak Mandal and Mahila Mandal it does not take any part in the VFC.

During the microplans the people were not involved. The KFD took all the main decisions. KFD fixes the meetings and sends notices to the VFC members. They see to people's convenience. The microplan and MoU book were not given for a long time to the VFC in spite of repeated visits by the chairman to the KFD. The contents were not even read but people were asked to sign after being informed that benefits would be shared 50/50.

No meetings have been held after signing of the MoU.

Involvement of women in JFPM

The 2 women who were selected as VFC members were from one family only. There were 3 other women from different castes but people selected the two from the dominant community only. Both women members of the Managing Committee are relatives of important people which is why they were made members according to people from the other communities. Both their husbands never interfere; on the other hand, they encourage them to attend the meetings. Both these women have been involved in the micro- planning exercise but do not know what happened afterwards i.e. they are unaware of the management plan and how it is being implemented.

The women who are members of the general body do not participate. Most of them have not attended any VFC meetings, though several attended the microplanning exercises. Some of the women know about the VFC due to the ODA visit. Many of them do not even know why they were asked to pay Rs. 2/- when membership was being solicited. Those who do attend VFC meetings do not talk during the meetings and often do not register what was discussed. Apart from one Managing Committee member, Shanti Naik, none of the other women members participate in the VFC. Shanti Naik is the only vocal women member of the VFC and has attended all the 3 meetings. (Only three meetings have been held altogether). She said that while electing people to the Managing Committee about 5-6 women were present. The others were not interested in becoming Managing Committee members when their names were proposed. She was. Thinking that her husband would support her they selected her.

She told the KFD that the `Gairana' (an area reserved/meant for cattle grazing, not in the VFC area) is encroached by the people resulting in lack of fodder for their cattle. The people have informed the revenue department about this but nothing has been done yet.

Women have some amount of decision making power. Though husbands are dominant there is greater equality between the sexes compared to the other VFCs in this study (particularly the ones where there are no NGOs working). Husbands also support their wives if they want to participate in VFC meetings. In many families the husbands give their incomes to their wives who manage all the household expenses. In the Muslim community most men have migrated to Goa, Dubai, etc., so women take all the family decisions.

Issues related to the VFC

A fence was put to watch the plantation, but the fence itself was stolen. To discuss that a meeting was convened but because only 6 to 7 people were there and the RFO did not come, the meeting was canceled. And later that matter was not put forth, though everyone knows about the theft of the fence.

In Nagarbastikeri, no protection has started. Smuggling is going on a large scale by some of the villagers and the others are all aware about this but are afraid to inform the KFD because they are scared that they will be harmed by the smugglers. In fact, people were initially wary of the research team and did not want to reveal any information about smuggling. Some of them have been threatened when they made attempts to report the smuggling. They are disillusioned with the KFD because they claim that the KFD officials are aware that smuggling is going on but have not done anything about it. People are also upset because the street light is put in front of an important person's house and not in the required place. It is not on the

road where smuggling is taking place. Fortunately, after the formation of the VFC smuggling has reduced to some extent. The entire VFC area is outlined and people are told not to cut branches but only pick up dead or fallen branches.

Apart from smuggling there is a severe problem of encroachment. Here again there is some amount of isillusionment with the KFD staff particularly by the `weaker' communities. They state that some of the land that has been encroached by the dominant groups has been regularised.

There are no problems of firewood. Those who do not have the time to collect it themselves buy firewood from others and pay approximately Rs. 150/- for 1 cart. There is no water problem in Nagarbastikeri but in Nagari there is slight difficulty in obtaining water since it is at a higher level. Also there is no electricity supply there. Water supply from lift irrigation is not distributed properly. There are not enough employment opportunities. The KFD brings labourers from Saralgi instead of getting local labour. Most people have their own land and therefore getting labourers becomes a problem. Those who migrate do so in search of better opportunities, more money etc. Due to lack of labour work available during rainy season they have to take loans. The government schemes available are the `Hudco' housing scheme and Bhagyajyoti.

The KFD has promised to give timber to the poor people at a cheap rate. This will stop them from cutting the forest trees. But they have not yet been given anything.

The KFD has planted the species which people had asked for. Women did not specify any species to plant. They agreed to whatever the men said.

Seed money of Rs. 5000 was given to the VFC apart from furniture. The VFC is interested in the construction of a building with the seed money. They plan to do shramdan to reduce the labour costs. First from the Rs.5000/- the foundation is to be put and then, if more money is needed, they will collect it from the profit out of the produce.

Women are interested in getting the tenders for NTFP collection and selling. However they said this year all the NTFPs have gone to contractors, and at least next year they should try to get it. The women are even confident that they can market the NTFPs themselves. The NTFPs available include Honey, Sigekai, Rampathri, Vatehuli. Lavanga and Dalchini.

Some smokeless chullas have been given. Some claim that they want but it has not been given. The KFD says they will be given in the next installment. Some people are interested in gobar gas plants and have asked KFD. The latter has promised them they will be given.

<u>Specific decisions selected for the study</u>

MANURE

The villagers use very little fertilizer; they use mainly green and dry leaves from forest. For a year 850 tonnes of green leaves and 800 tonnes of dry leaves are used depending on season. Due to the need for green leaves they cut many branches and leaves from the forest. The fallen leaves are not enough for manure. Therefore, KFD suggested that they plant small plants in their own lands so that they will get green leaves for manure.

In the JFPM plantation, acacia trees have been grown. The women collect the leaves from these trees for fuel and not for manure. Permission for this has been given by the KFD. During the summer they collect dry leaves from the forest and during monsoon green leaves. The poor women sell this to the landowners and earn good income from this. The formation of the VFC has not affected the collection of green or dry leaves.

CASHEW PLANTATION

The KFD had promised the people that they would get the contract for the cashew plantation in order to entice them to form the VFC. However, after the VFC formation the tender for the old cashew plantation has been given to some private contractor. People are unhappy about this.

Awareness levels of the people and attitudes towards JFPM

By and large, people in Nagarbastikeri do not know about the VFC whereas those in Nagari have much more knowledge. There is some amount of tension between the Nagari and Bastikeri villages. Bastikeri people are not happy with JFPM because the JFPM land is very far from their village and closer to Nagar. The women in the Nayak community are not aware of details about JFPM. However, they know about the formation of the VFC, the MoU signature and the ODA visit. The KFD staff did not read the MoU aloud nor did they explain the details of the need to sign it. It was signed during the visit of the ODA team. The women get this information from their husbands or neighbours.

The Muslim women do not know anything about the VFC. Even the men do not know much. Nor is the community interested. However, after the visit of the research team during which a VFC meeting was held and the purpose of our research study was explained the RFO and some villagers got interested. During successive visits to collect data, individual women were met and the importance of women's participation in JFPM was explained. Now there is a plan to enroll only women as general body members (in the families which have not yet become members of the VFC). Therefore they are expecting quite a high percent of women members. About sixty families are still left to enrol. The quality of their participation is another issue which also needs to be considered.

The Ambigas do not know anything about JFPM, though there is one man in the VFC. The Ambiga omen said that if they were informed about the VFC they would have definitely become members. But they were not given any information. One of the women knows about the VFC since she met the women coming out after the last meeting and asked them what it was all about. The women in this community complain that in their village they are not included in whatever goes on. Only if they ask will they know what government facilities are available.

One family said that KFD only goes to the big land owners and important people. 'They don't come to us so how can we know what goes on?' Even when the women showed interest they were put off saying it was not their business.

Even the Committee members are not always aware of the purpose and functions of the VFC. Some people say that there is a lot of politics in the village and a lot of vested interests so they do not feel the VFC will be successful in the long run.

VFC meeting held on 21.3.95.

This meeting was held since the territorial RFO wanted to introduce the research team to the villagers and ensure their cooperation in the research project. Both the RFOs and the forester attended. Most of the Committee members and many villagers (both men and women) attended.

During this meeting, people decided to spend the seed money on building a house/structure which could be used for the VFC meetings and to keep the furniture. Some suggested that the people could collect more money for this and could contribute labour free. Shanti Naik, who came in towards the end of the meeting and proposed the vote of thanks said during her speech that the seed money could be used to buy more furniture since what the KFD had provided was not enough. This was not recorded in the minutes by the Forester.

SARALGI

Profile of the village

Saralgi is situated on the left of the Gersoppa - Honnavar road, 8 kms from Gersoppa. Muslims and Uppars form the largest population in Saralgi with about 40 families each followed by Naiks and Brahmins with about 20 families each. There are 20 Ambigas (fisher community), 10 Bhandaris, and 2 Christian families. The Muslims are quite rich as the men are in the Gulf and they also have land in Saralgi. The Uppars too, have some amount of land. The Brahmins are scattered in different areas usually in the interior. They have their own arecanut and coconut plantations. As there is lift irrigation, 2 crops are grown per year. People depend mainly on agriculture and during the off season go for coolie work. Some have migrated to Goa in search of work. There is no high school in this village. Children have to go to the high school in Gersoppa, 8 kms away.

There is general cooperation between the different communities. Fights based on community lines are infrequent but do exist. There is some amount of encroachment, but this is not in the VFC area. The RFO has not taken it seriously since in that area there is Hindu-Muslim dispute. In most places the government does not deal with encroachers in spite of requests from people.

The men go to collect firewood and the women collect manure. Women bring bushes and fodder. They stock the required leaves for the rainy season. N.T.F.P like Vatehuli, Murugalu etc., are available in the forest and the women collect as much as they need for household consumption. Though all communities except Brahmins collect NTFP, the Uppars are the main collectors. Both men and women go to collect. The men climb the trees and the women collect the NTFP, tie them in bundles, etc. As one woman said "We are just like monkeys". They avoid selling the NTFP on their own because the department people find out and fine them heavily. Still, when possible they try to sell small amounts since they earn more that way.

Women have no water problem. People would like a firewood depot in the village. Most of the families are poor agricultural families, and therefore are not able to build gobar gas plants. Brahmins and some Muslims have their own gobar gas plants; not through the VFC. So far KFD officials have not prohibited them from collecting firewood from any of the areas where they usually go.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

Emzad A'Shaik, the VFC Vice-president is a member of the Gram Panchayat. He first heard about JFPM from a notice sent to the Gram Panchayat related to JFPM. He mentioned it to others who had also read about JFPM in the newspapers. They sent an application to the DCF to start a VFC in this village. The DCF intimated the RFO, who came and conducted a promoters meeting. After motivating the promoters to start a VFC, the DCF visited again after a year. The promoters were the Chairman, and Raju Naik from KDDC who is the secretary of Chetna Credit Union and a schoolmaster.

After the first meeting that KFD held in the village, the KDDC staff explained to the village about JFPM and then on the request of the forester, collected Rs.2 from each house. In each house the head of the household was asked to become a member. After the collection of the membership fee no further developments took place till one of the KDDC staff requested the RFO to start the VFC. After this micro-planning dates were scheduled several times but were not held.

The JFPM RFO has not attended any meetings though he has promised to through the other KFD staff. The people have complained twice but nothing has been done.

The first meeting of the VFC was held on 22-9-1993. The VFC was registered on 26-9-94. Out of the total membership of 153, men are 150, women 3. There are 45 SC members. People became members on the understanding that they will get firewood if they become members by paying Rs. 2/-. They were also told by the KFD officials that 50% of the profits will be given to KFD and 50% to the people. The Managing Committee was formed only in October 1994. The VFC meeting to select the Managing Committee had 60 total members - 25 were women. Krishnappa Naik, whose brother is a forest contractor, was selected as the VFC President. His name was suggested by a KFD official. Other members were nominated by the president and other vocal members. Women did not actively participate.

The PRA exercise and micro plan are still going on. House-to-house survey and rough social mapping were done. KFD officials said that they would complete the micro-planning in the first week of April 95, but they kept postponing the dates they scheduled for the meetings. The KFD staff do not seem to be interested. The villagers and KDDC staff feel that KFD is delaying the micro-planning here because the micro-planning will not be done exactly as the KFD wants due to the presence of KDDC in Saralgi. Around the end of July 1995, without prior intimation, the KFD supposedly did the microplan. The ODA RFO came but there were only 9 villagers present. More people did not come since there was no notice and they had gone to work in the fields and there were too many false alarms earlier. Social Mapping and Seasonality Mapping were done and KFD considers the microplan over. However, the villagers with the help of KDDC are planning on writing to the department saying they want the microplan done again with enough notice so that the villagers can actively participate in the process.

The Mahila Mandal and Yuvak Mandal in Saralgi attend the VFC meetings.

Involvement of women in JFPM

Most of the women from the different communities know about the VFC, the ODA visit etc.
With the motivation of KDDC a Mahila Mandal was started in this village. The Mahila Mandal is active. Gauri Uppar who is the President of the Mahila Mandal is also the Managing Committee member of the VFC. Savings and crafts have been started by the Mahila Mandal. However, though the Mahila Mandal members attend they do not participate during the VFC meetings.

In the Mahila Mandal meetings they have discussed about well, roads, arecanut business, petty shop, street light, fish trading, regenerating the forest, protection of the forest, avoiding the cutting of green trees etc. They have also discussed about smokeless chullas and demanded a Jersey cow from the ODA team when the latter visited the village.

Since many Mahila Mandal members are not experienced in attending meetings they do not talk or discuss anything during the VFC meetings. But they discuss with neighbours and relatives about the discussions in the VFC meetings.

There is a women's credit union. During one of their meetings the territorial RFO, was invited and told them all about JFPM.

The two women on the Managing Committee of the VFC are from the Uppar and Nayak communities. Mahadevi Shridhar Naik, one of the Managing Committee members, became a member in the absence of her husband. She was elected by the men and the other lady member was proposed by women. Mahadevi Naik has attended all the VFC meetings. But when her husband came back from Goa before the last meeting he forbade her from attending the meeting and threatened to hit her if she went for the meetings. But she is interested in attending the meetings. During the ODA visit KFD informed her, but she did not go as she is afraid that if she goes her husband will beat her.

Gauri Uppar, the other Managing Committee member and President of the Mahila Mandal does not know much about and lacks interest in the VFC. She is also afraid to discuss anything in the VFC meeting

because she is worried about how the men will react and what they will think of her. She regularly attends Mahila Mandal meetings.

There is only one Muslim lady who attends V.F.C meetings. She said that she attends the meetings because only then will she get her share from the profits (from the money that comes to the VFC). In the begining KDDC helped her by giving her a loan of Rs.2000/- most of which she has repaid.

The Ambiga women rarely attend the VFC meetings. The Ambigas do not have any agenda of their own regarding the VFC (which they have voiced) but are interested in the VFC in so far as they get their firewood requirements and cattle durig for their houses.

Issues related to the VFC

So far 4 VFC meetings have been held. Once the chairman informed the department that some people had smuggled acacia trees. But the department officials did not visit the village.

The JFPM RFO, assured them that he would give smokeless chullas before March 95. No smokeless chullas were distributed by then and nobody has asked about it. The women want smokeless chullas, but inspite of promises nothing has been done yet. The KFD is not supposed to give smokeless chullas before the microplan is done. During the microplan the need is assessed, the budget is made etc. The Department has promised to supply bamboo but this has not yet been given.

The department has given seed money of Rs.5,000/-. The Managing Committee has decided to buy a thermos flask, some cups, plates etc. since guests come often and they have to depend on villagers for this. This was first suggested by the KFD staff, then KDDC and the people agreed.

The KFD has not yet given table and chairs to the VFC. During the first meeting they gave a register book.

In the course of discussions with the villagers it was found that in the forest smugglers cut four teakwood trees and took three away. The villagers protected the remaining one from the smugglers but have not given this to government since they want to give this to the VFC. They are waiting for the MoU to be signed and then will give the wood to the government in the hope that they will get some incentive money. The people want 50% of the proceeds from the sale of smuggled wood. They had asked the territorial RFO and he had agreed. (Other forest officials however, have told the research team that Rs. 500/- is the maximum amount of incentive money to be given to people each time they catch smugglers.)

The villagers had asked the KFD for the Cashew plantation, but were told that the tender is over. Therefore their view is that they have not yet received any benefit from the VFC.

Specific decisions selected for the study

NTFP

People are of the opinion that one of the reasons for delaying the microplan is the NTFP lobby. There is hardly any degraded forest near Saralgi and the VFC would therefore have to be given good forest land from where the NTFP collected is now sold to the government through contractors. The NTFPs available include sigekai, honey, lavanga, mavinkai, rampatri, and saplings of sagwani, mathi, kindal and nandi. The seeds and saplings are sold to the KFD through forest contractors.

The women from the Uppar Community, whose main source of income is from collection of NTFP, found the NTFP issue very interesting during the training session on JFPM held by our resource person. They immediately asked whether the VFC will allow them to collect NTFPs and pay them a little more than what the contractor does. They said at present they are getting a maximum of Rs. 8/- per kg for most of

the NTFP for which both husband and wife in a family have to go to the forest early in the morning and return late at night leaving children behind at home. They expect that they should get at least Rs. 12/- per k.g. for any NTFP. Throughout the year their work is only to collect NTFPs and sell them. They rarely go for coolie work. Though agricultural and forestry work is available their primary work is to collect NTFPs.

Some months after the formation of the VFC, the Uppar community collected one and a half quintals of lavang and planned to sell it to a merchant in Honnavar who was ready to pay a higher price than the one they get from the regular contractor who pays Rs.25 per kg. The latter found out about this and informed the RFO who confiscated the entire amount. The people are upset since they feel that the KFD contractors do not give them proper rates for their NTFP collections.

After being informed during our training that VFCs can take up NTFP contracts the women decided that they would ask for the Lavang contract.

NEW PLANTATION

Teak is grown in spite of people's requests for other trees apart from teak. Informal discussions were held with the forester. People said they want gobbar trees and hulugala trees. Women were not asked. People are pleased with the teak plantation since they will get more money in the long run, but they cannot cut these for firewood. After the formation of the VFC the local people protect the plantation.

Involvement of NGO in JFPM

The KDDC staff attend all the VFC meetings. They build awareness among the people about JFPM and organise people to conduct the meeting. People feel that the VFC will be successful here because an NGO is involved in the VFC. This opinion is shared by the KDDC staff as well. All are of the opinion that the NGO is necessary to the success of the VFC.

KDDC has started a sangha. They have also helped poor people to build houses. Though KDDC attempts to work with all communities the Brahmins and Ambigas do not get too involved the Brahmins because they are rich and do not like to get involved with other villagers and Ambigas since their needs are different from other villagers and they tend to keep to themselves.

KDDC has been paying the salaries of two full-time teachers for the primary school. During the non-school hours they have to do community organising, motivating people (called animators). KDDC has regular training for these staff.

In other places KDDC has 1 animator for every 3 villages, but in Saralgi they feel there is a greater need for more animators. KDDC also organises field/ exposure trips for credit union members to other villages. Since the men dominate the credit union, the Mahila Mandal was formed in mid-94 and was registered soon after. The Mahila Mandal members are from different communities. They were taken by the KDDC staff in July '95 for an exposure trip to other credit unions in Karwar as well as for sight-seeing. They have all been taught to sign their names. 25 Mahila Mandal members have given their names to Samatha Vedike, a taluk level women's forum in Honnavar. They fight for women's rights, alcoholism, literacy. These 25 women sometimes go to Honnavar.

The financial inputs of KDDC in Saralgi is very low. The credit union building has been built by KDDC and they have supplied some tiles for the school. The villagers did shramadan to build these.

KDDC does not give loans except to very needy cases. If people need they take from the credit union or from the federation of credit unions organised from KDDC. The Navachetna Credit Union was formed in 1989. The government fair price shop is also run by the credit union. Earlier they had to go to Gersoppa and often missed their rations.

Awareness levels of the people and their attitudes towards JFPM

The awareness of women and men about JFPM is due to the presence of KDDC and the Credit Union formed by them. In fact, the situation of women is quite good due to two reasons - 1. NGO influence. 2. Krishnanappa Naik (VFC Chairman)- goes to each house and personally motivates each women to attend meetings and take an active part in the VFC.

However, in all the communities, except for the Mahila Mandal members the women do not know very much about the VFC.

Though the Muslim women do not attend VFC meetings some of the men tell their wives about the issues discussed in the meetings. Some men said that if both husband and wife become committee members (if KFD changes the VFC rules) they will encourage their wives to speak in the meetings.

The Brahmins have their own lands and are not interested in the VFC. The Ambigas (Fisher community) are not particularly interested in the VFC or in JFPM.

The villagers said that the JFPM RFO does not take any interest and does not work properly. They do not feel the need for an ODA RFO. They feel that the Government is unnecessarily paying the ODA RFO. He does not have much contact with the people. According to them, the territorial RFO who is very interested in the VFC should be given all the facilities for and responsibilities of the JFPM project. The people say that the territorial RFO is in regular contact with the people and takes a lot of interest. He is interested in involving NGOs in the JFPM process. The people feel that there will be no problem till he remains but once he leaves or gets transferred they do not know what will happen to the VFC. They say that the VFC will be successful only if there is mutual co-operation between KFD and the people. The Forester does not know much about nor does he take interest in the VFC.

The people feel that to protect the forest they have to invest a lot but the profit is very little particularly because they have to do everything themselves. The watchman too does not take any responsibility.

The villagers say that the department people do not mix with the local people who have to go and persuade them to come to the village. There are also complaints that the KFD does not inform everyone about the meetings. People have not attended since they do not know about the dates and timings of the meetings. For instance, when the ODA team visited Saralgi, KFD officials first informed the villagers that the meeting would be in the Kannada school at Saralgi. But they conducted the meeting in the forest making the people wait for several hours in the school.

KFD did not inform about the seed money, how to utilise it etc. The people feel that the officers think the villagers are not worthy of respect. For instance, Emzad A'Shaik's name was given as vice-president. The officials took his signature but did not bother to give him any details about the VFC.

People are very unhappy because though they are keen to start the JFPM process, KFD personnel are not responding properly. Membership fee has been collected, Management Committee has been elected, and seed money has been given, but there are no follow-up meetings and hence people say they are losing interest. They said they did not know details so were keeping quite, but after the training by our resource person they said that they would now approach KFD and force them to sign the MoU.

KFD has not built awareness in the people to involve more women in the VFC.

The people are also doubtful about how successful the VFC will be as they see it as just another government programme. These are their views as expressed by one villager : "Government officials have created problems in our village. Any programmes of the government do not properly reach the people.

People have to keep asking the officials if they want anything. So planning another government programme means again giving more trouble to the poor."

VFC meeting held on 21-3-1995

This meeting was scheduled since we (the research team) had informed the RFOs that we wanted to include this village in our study. Therefore, both RFOs and the Secretary were present. Most of the Committee members including the President and three KDDC staff also attended. They were all asked to co-operate in the research project. Though one woman Committee member and several other women were present none of them spoke nor were they addressed by the men who spoke. It was as though they were meant to merely listen to what was being discussed. They were seated on a bench at one side of the hall and the men on the opposite side. The RFOs, Forester and NGO representative on the VFC sat at the table in the front from which they `addressed the gathering'. In the meeting the following issues were discussed:

The VFC committee members said they would try to get the tender of the cashew plantation.

They wanted to get the fallen trees. KFD does not allow the VFC to take these. Usually these trees are smuggled or lie waste. So the people have asked for them.

SHIRVE

Profile of the village

Shirve is situated in Karwar Taluk, near Devalamakki, 32 kms from Karwar on the left of the Karwar - Kaiga route. It is surrounded by hills which are thickly forested. There are 57 houses in Shirve with a population of 340 (92 men, 98 women and 150 children). The cattle population is 223. There are 22 houses with tiled roofs and 35 with thatched roofs. The main occupation is agriculture and during the lean months the villagers get employment on a daily wage basis from the government departments. There are 2 open wells and 3 bore wells in the village. During the summer there are acute water shortages.

The nearest bus facility from the village is from Devalamakki which is three kms from Shirve. There is no clinic or hospital, vetenary hospital, high school, police station, government office, ration shop, market, bank and post office. All these are situated in Devalamakki. Shirve has one anganvadi school.

Women (and to a lesser extent, men) go to the forest to bring firewood and manure by walking about 3 kms. They do not bring green, tender or raw firewood.

Processes of the VFC from formation to June 1995

KRWCDS staff had called the people to their office and explained to them about JFPM and VFC. Soon after this the forester and guard discussed JFPM with the people. After this, KFD officials (DCF , RFO , Forester and Guard) explained about JFPM and said that they would form a VFC in Shirve. Fourteen women attended this meeting. Initially people from the Patthi community raised objections believing that this was a Catholic programme. Once they were convinced that it was a government programme they agreed. The KFD staff also said that the programme would be implemented through KRWCDS with the consultation of Apa Belurkar as the village head Mr. Thaku Ninga Gowda showed a lot of interest to form the VFC other people also gave their consent.

The VFC was registered three months after forming the Promoters Committee. The receipt of registration was given to the chairman. The forester had gone from house to house to collect Rs. 2/- for general body membership.

KRWCDS explained to the people about VFC during their regular meetings. On 30-1-1995 the micro-planning exercise was conducted for which the ODA team also attended. During this time they discussed about the usefulness of forming a VFC. During the microplan the KFD asked the people which plants they wanted planted in which area.

Thaku Ninga Gowda who is considered the most powerful man in Shirve village belongs to Hallakki Gowda community. People do not take any decisions without consulting him. He attends all the meetings. If he is not present none of the others conduct the meeting. He was proposed by the people to become the VFC chairman and he agreed. The Managing Committee was elected by the general body. Women participated only when the two women members had to be elected. There was four women present during this meeting.

The Youth Mandal and Mahila Mandal people were involved with the VFC during the time of P.R.A., Micro-planning and signing the MoU. They also attend all the VFC meetings.

Along with Shirve people, Devalamakki villagers also attend the VFC meetings. The VFC meetings are always held in the Narayana Temple. This venue was agreed by all the villagers. The forester and guard attended all the VFC meetings. There were regular VFC meetings, but after the death of the forester (Secretary) in March '95, there have been no meetings. The VFC Chairman has requested the RFO,

Madan Naik to appoint a forester to the V.F.C as early as possible. When the chairman requested the RFO to attend the V.F.C. meetings till the new forester was appointed, he refused saying that it was best to stop the VFC meetings until a new forester could take charge.

Earlier the forester and guard along with the VFC chairman would fix the date for the meetings. The Chairman would then inform the rest of the people. Apart from VFC Managing Committee members, general body members also attend meetings.

During the microplan process, KFD staff stayed for two days and had discussions, provision for food was made by the KFD and the women helped to cook the meals. In fact, when asked about women's participation in Shirve, a senior KFD official gave this as an example of how they were involved in the microplan process. KFD officials read the contract book before asking the people to sign it.

Involvement of women in JFPM

10 to 15 women participated in the micro plans. The nature of their participation to some extent can be seen from the previous paragraph.

Savitri Bandari and Mrs.Mahadevi Gowda attended the first P.R.A meeting, the Micro-planning and MoU signature meetings. They participated in the microplan exercise. The village people unanimously selected these two members. They have attended all the VFC meetings. Both the women are aware of all the decisions taken by the VFC. They take active part in the VFC meetings.

Mahadevi Gowda (Committee Member) is the Chairman of a Mahila Mandal and she clearly articulates the problems and issues of J.F.P.M. Though she was reluctant to become a committee member due to all her household responsibilities, people insisted that she become a member since she is strong enough to talk in front of people and she is experienced in working with people. So she finally agreed.

After attending VFC meetings she explains about the meeting to her sister-in-law and mother-in-law. Her sister-in-law does not attend VFC meetings because she has a small child to look after, but she attends the KRWCDS meeting once in a month to save Rs 5 per month under the saving programme.

The Mahila Mandal in Shirve has a savings scheme whereby all the members pay Rs. 5/- per month.

Savitri Bandari, the other Managing Committee member is a widow with small children. First she paid Rs. 2/- and become a general body member of the VFC and then was elected as a Committee member. She was proposed by a Mahila Mandal member Baby Govankar and all other members in the meeting agreed. They asked whether she is interested in becoming a Committee member. She agreed with great enthusiasm. She knows her rights and responsibilities as a Committee member and builds awareness among other members. She also tells smugglers not to smuggle the wood from the V.F.C area. Along with other women she attended the JFPM meeting at the KRWCDS office.

She gives herbal medicine and is the health worker of this village. KRWCDS pays her Rs. 280/- per month. She works from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily. She was trained by KRWCDS staff in herbal medicine treatment.

Several people both men and women, felt that it would be good if two more active women members join the VFC. They feel that 2 women members are not enough in the Committee. If there are at least 4 women members then if two members have important work and cannot attend the meeting, the other two can attend.

During meetings men provide opportunity to women for discussion.

Issues related to the VFC

KFD has assured the people that they will provide fruit trees, fodder plot, gobar gas units and one smokeless chulla to every house. Due to shortage of water, the fodder plot has not been developed. The other assurances are still to be met.

The main problems the village faces are lack of electricity, proper roads, water, bus facility etc. All these have been discussed in the VFC meetings. The KFD staff have assured the villagers that they will do something to solve these problems. The RFO said that poor families can be given poles to build their houses. But this has not yet been given.

People bring firewood from the nearby forests and stock for the rainy season. The KFD officials do not prevent them from collecting dried branches and fallen twigs and leaves. Smuggling has reduced after the formation of the VFC.

After signing the MoU, KFD gave the VFC seed money (Rs. 5000/-) which is deposited in the Bank. Since they do not have a meeting hall for the VFC, they had planned to use the seed money to build a meeting hall. They had already laid the foundation. As this money is not enough, they dropped the idea of using the seed money for this purpose and are thinking of asking KFD and KRWCDS for the amount.

They have not withdrawn the seed money of Rs. 5,000. After the death of the secretary the cheque is with the chairman. He informed the department. The Committee people and himself have now decided that with the seed money they will purchase table, chair and carpets which could be used for the meetings.

DWCRA Programme officials visited along with the DCF But they did not agree to give finance for a poultry due to the lack of electricity in Shirve.

Specific decisions selected for the study

VFC PLANTATIONS

This VFC has been given 200 hectares. Till April only pitting work had been taken up but the plantation had not yet started. Men and women were involved in the pitting. During the rainy months the plantation work had started. During one of the meetings KFD officials had asked the people whether they get NTFP like honey, wathehuli etc. KFD has decided in consultation with the people to raise a teak nursery, plant cashew trees, sigekai (soapnut), jackfruit, mango, wathehuli, murugulhuli etc. in the VFC forest area.

The VFC was not given any good fruit saplings as they had asked but were given acacia plants which they say are not good.

The RFO sent some men from Shirve for training in plantation work to Chitradurga.

Apart from the labour work for pitting the plantation the villagers have also got the work of harvesting the Neelgiri plantation from the KFD. The Neelgiri plantation is harvested, but poles are not yet transported and sold. So they have not calculated the profit. Half the profit from this will be deposited to the VFC. By harvesting the Neelgeri plantation men got Rs. 40/- as wages per day and women got Rs. 20/-. The VFC chairman Mr. Thaku Gowda got the contract to harvest the plantation. Before harvesting the Neelgiri plantation a VFC meeting was called. In this meeting discussions were held regarding harvesting the Neelgiri plants.

Role of NGO in JFPM

The villagers say that they got knowledge about JFPM and VFC through the NGO (KRWCDS) staff. If the NGO was not there, they would not have so much knowledge. Apart from the community organisers, senior KRWCDS staff attend most VFC meetings and have also attended the P.R.A exercises, micro-planning and while signing the MoU. People feel that because of KRWCDS, this VFC is successful. KRWCDS staff visit at least once a month and hold meetings with the villagers.

Senior KRWCDS staff explained about JFPM and VFC. They motivated the people saying that they have to protect the forest and catch the smugglers and they would have to stop cutting green trees.

KRWCDS invests a lot in terms of finance time and staff in the villages in which they work. Every year they give loans for harvesting of the first crop to whoever needs. People pay back the loan after the harvest.

The Yuvak Mandal conducts a meeting once a month and discusses about the development of the village. They contribute Rs. 10 a month in the saving scheme. In the Mahila Mandal they contribute Rs. 5 per month in the saving scheme. They get loans when they need. Two members from Yuvathi Mandal are learning tailoring. KRWCDS has provided tailoring machines to them. To avoid going outside the village for stitching, people prefer to stitch their clothes in the village.

Savitri Bandari was appointed by KRWCDS and the people of the village as the village herbal medicinal practitioner. She is expected to visit 4 houses per day for health check ups and gets Rs. 280/- per month from KRWCDS.

KRWCDS gives loans to people whenever they need it and charge Rs. 50/- as interest for Rs. 1000/- per year.

Awareness levels of people and their attitudes towards JFPM

People are largely pleased with the JFPM process and are satisfied with all the decisions taken by the KFD. They feel that they will get facilities by forming a VFC. Earlier they were stealing bamboo and wood required for their home. They were scared of encountering KFD staff due to the penalties levied for stealing. The relationship with the KFD has changed for the better after the formation of the VFC. This is because earlier there was tension when KFD caught people who collected firewood from the forests. Now with the VFC, people are following the rules strictly and do not collect firewood from prohibited areas. Now they consider the forest as `their' forest.

All the people who attend meetings discuss it with their families at home. Due to this and the presence of the NGO there is a high level of awareness among the people about JFPM. People are interested in JFPM and the future benefits they may get from it. They have not got any benefit from the VFC so far but are hopeful of future benefits. People feel that if there is any profit from the VFC, it should go to both men and women.

CHAPTER 2 - Section 2

Case studies of 3 VFCs where women are said to be active.

In the course of the research study the KFD and NGO staff were asked if they knew of VFCs in Uttara Kannada district where women actively participated. The KFD staff repeatedly mentioned Manjguni as the only VFC in which, without NGO intervention, women were strong and had one-third representation on the Managing Committee. Apart from this there are two VFCs in which both the general body and the Managing Committee are constituted of only women.

The research team visited these three villages to examine the processes that lead to the active involvement of women in the VFCs. The interview guidelines that were used for the ten cases in the study were also used to some extent here. However, the focus in these three VFCs was different in that here greater attention was paid to the factors responsible for the formation of all women VFCs (or for more than two women on the Managing Committee). For this purpose separate guidelines were used (Appendix 5).

BANASGERI

Profile of the village

This village is situated in Haliyal division, 5 kms to the east of Haliyal. It is surrounded by forests. The total population of Banasgeri is 299 (97 men, 79 women and 123 children). There are 60 families altogether (43 Hindus, 3 SC and 14 carpenters & others). 43 families are landless and very poor. They depend on labour work for their livelihood. The surrounding forests take care of their firewood and fodder needs. There is one primary school up to the 7th std.

Processes of the VFC from formation to July 1995

The village took the initiative to form the VFC through IDS. IDS held meetings to explain the concept of JFPM and VFC. There are differing views about why an all-women VFC was formed.

1) Some people say men were not ready to attend the meetings. They felt that there was no profit from attending the meetings and did not want a VFC. The women came together and decided to conduct meetings and to form a VFC of women. They felt that since women stay at home they could at least attend meetings. Since men go for work they felt it would be better if women become part of the VFC. The men supported the women to become members. So women were asked to come and thus a women's VFC was formed.

2) Others (men and women) say that from the time the NGO staff introduced the concept of JFPM, they stated that only women should be involved. Some reports say that the IDS PO had taken up a challenge at a department meeting that she would form an all- women VFC. So in Banasgeri they organised all the women and told the men that this scheme (JFPM) was only for women. Therefore, men did not know they could be a part. IDS then contacted the KFD and pressurized them to form a VFC in Banasgeri. KFD was reluctant, because there is no degraded forest in that area (except for 8 hectares which are encroached). They were also reluctant because IDS said it would be an all-women VFC. But IDS had already collected Rs.2 from each family and written to the CCF etc., to make sure a VFC was formed in Banasgeri. Therefore, KFD finally came and formed the VFC. Men did not participate at this stage since they believed it was only meant for women. Some men said they were surprised to find out later that in other VFCs men were also involved.

Now men are interested. The Forester tried to motivate men to take part and come for meetings. Recently, men from Banasgeri were invited for training in Haliyal. Different departments had come to explain their programmes. All VFC members from Haliyal division were invited. At that time men came to know that in other VFCs men are there.

Either of the above may be true but what is of interest is the people's perception of why an all-women VFC was formed.

Initially, IDS staff gave information to the people about JFPM and later the forest department held 2-3 meetings. A promoters meeting was held on 6-12-93. After several meetings the VFC was registered on 30-12-94 and the next day a door-to-door survey was made. After forming the committee, it took 2 more meetings for the MoU to be signed. The MoU was signed on 7-2-95.

During the PRA, the Forester, Guard, Watchman, RFO came. The department people worked well with the people. MYRADA was conducting a training at Tattihalla for Uttara Kannada NGOs at that time. So about 25 people came to Banasgeri for the PRA exercise. All IDS staff working in Banasgeri came.

Banasgeri VFC has a total area of 48 hectares of forest. (40 hectares bamboo plot, 8 hectares plantation area). There is a Yuvak Mandal and Mahila Mandal which are actively involved in the VFC.

VFC meetings are held every month. Twice they have been missed; once due to a festival and the second time because the President was not there. The Forester always attends the meetings and the RFO has also attended a few meetings. The sitting arrangement during the meetings is informal; all sit on the ground.

Men and women participated during the micro plan and MoU signature. Everyone attends the VFC meetings though men do not participate. Before the formation of the VFC, Mahila Sanghas were formed by IDS so women were used to participating in meetings. Most of the committee members attend the VFC meetings regularly. For the MoU signature, DCFs and RFOs (JFPM & Territorial), Forester, Watchmen, Guard all came. The RFO read the MoU in front of the people before getting their signature.

The VFC President fixes the date and time of the VFC meetings with the other Managing Committee members and then gives notice to the Forester regarding the day and time of the meeting. The Managing Committee members were elected by the women general body members. Though men attended they did not participate. The president was elected since she is more educated than the other women and she attends every Mahila Mandal and other Sangha meetings. She is well aware of her responsibilities as a VFC President.

All communities are represented in the Managing Committee of the VFC. There are no men at all in the general body.

The women have talked with neighbouring villagers about the VFC formed in Banasgeri. The other villagers are also thinking of forming a VFC in their villages. They were invited to Banasgeri when the MoU signature was done. Men and women from these villages attended. They also attended the PRA and Micro- planning exercises.

Many general body members attend the VFC meetings. If any special subject is there, then the forester calls general body members also and conducts a general body meeting. There is no need for information channels because most people attend the meetings. All meetings are open and any interested person can attend.

Membership fees and seed money (Rs.5000) are kept in a joint account with the VFC President and the forester.

Involvement of women and men in JFPM

The VFC President is unmarried. She is ready to travel and go house to house even at night. She is sincere about her responsibilities as a VFC President.

Most of the women in the Managing Committee are casual labourers. Since the Managing Committee of the VFC was going to be only of women, the men did not want to become general body members. They felt that since the women were to run their own committee it was best that the women only become members of the VFC. So the men gave Rs.2 in their wives names. Men however, attend VFC meetings.

Men say that women should come forward; they supported them to form the VFC. If any function is arranged the men help. Men are happy with women being more active in the VFC.

Women take active part in other village activities, functions and struggles. The women have a lot of exposure to other VFCs, training programmes and interaction with outsiders.

Some Committee members feel that since the Managing Committee are all women they prefer it if men do not attend the VFC meetings. They feel that it is better to conduct meetings with only women present so that they can discuss their problems freely. During the meetings they do not talk about men or to the men

whether they are present or not. Men come a bit late for the VFC meetings; after the women have started the meeting. They do not talk during the meetings as they are not allowed by the women to participate.

After women return from VFC meetings they tell their family members about the meeting and discuss the issues with them. Men usually ask their wives about what was discussed in the meetings. Many women tell their husbands since the latter expect them to since they have `allowed' them to be out of the house for so long. At times men feel some amount of resentment against women who they say come forward for everything. When smuggling is going on and the women go to catch them and call men for help some men do not come saying "You have formed VFC yourselves. So you catch them".

Women also felt that if a VFC of men had been formed, the men would not have told their wives about rules and regulations of the government and would have misused the money given to the VFC.

Issues related to the VFC

During the VFC meetings, discussions were had about

- the smuggled fuelwood that the VFC members retrieved
- the DWCRA programme to prepare leaf plates of Muttuga
- how to protect the bamboo plantation from smugglers
- making the IDS community organisor (working in Banasgeri) a representative on the VFC
- 8 acre land given to the VFC by KFD and encroached place by the B.K.villagers
- utilisation of seed money

Women want the VFC to develop a plantation since they will get work. They want a mixed plantation with trees that will give quick returns. However, they could not specify the types of trees they want since their main interest in the plantation is getting labour work.

Under JFPM scheme to this village 47 smokeless chullas and 8 gobargases have been given.

48 hectares of forest have been given to the VFC. Of these, 40 hectares are bamboo and 8 acres are vacant to grow plantation. People from neighbouring villages have encroached. They have asked the forester to vacate the encroachers so that they can get the land for a plantation - This way they can get labour work. Every meeting this is discussed and an application was sent to the B.D.O. the Conservator and the DCF. The latter said that they will be given the land. But till today nothing has been done. The people who have encroached have been there for over 20 years and are trying to get the land regularised. The 8 hectare plantation was to have been completed according to the microplan but it has not started yet. Due to this the people feel that the KFD has not fully gone according to the Micro-plan.

When MoU signature was done KFD gave seed money (5000 Rs.) With that money the VFC has planned to purchase chairs, a table, and some vessels to prepare tea during the VFC meeting if anybody comes and a gas light for meetings if held late.

The women thought that they would continue to be given money periodically and could develop the village with that.

All women, children, men bring the fuel wood from the forest. As it has to be brought by going 4 k.m. away it is a big problem for them. Some women said that earlier they brought firewood whenever they needed, but after the VFC has been formed, nobody is supposed to cut the trees in the VFC area.

The women in the VFC repeatedly told the men not to cut firewood from the nearby forests but the men did not pay heed. Once as they were returning with 4 carts of wood the women caught them and informed the department. The forester came with some other people and captured the carts and the wood was kept

in the village only. After fifteen days it was taken by the department van. At that time the VFC women asked the forester to give that wood to the VFC since it was caught by them. But they were told by the department that only bamboo can be given and not this wood. This was discussed in the next VFC meeting and the resolution was sent to the department. But till today there has been no response. There was a lot of tension between the men and women in the village because reportedly earlier the men used to pay the KFD staff some amount of money so that they would not be prevented from cutting wood from the surrounding forests. The tension has now subsided though the men do not attend the VFC meetings as much as they did earlier.

The VFC has told the department that for conducting their meetings they require an office.

Women are of the opinion that if a road is constructed to their village and any nursery undertaken by the forest department then the men and women of the village will get work in the village itself and need not go to other villages for work.

Though the women agree that less smoke comes from the smokeless chulla, they prefer to use their previous chullas since with the smokeless chulla they say it takes much longer to cook and only small pieces of firewood should be used. They have to take more effort to cut the wood into small pieces. Moreover, there are differences of opinion on the amount of firewood required for the smokeless chulla as compared to the old one. Some say less firewood is required; others say more. Some women use the smokeless chullas occasionally. The women had been asked by KFD if they wanted these chullas and all had agreed.

The main problem for women is unemployment. They were told that Agarbatti training will be given, but it has not yet been given. This was discussed in the VFC meeting and an application was sent.

KFD has told them that it will keep a watchman for 3 years for the bamboo plantation, but till today no watchman has been appointed. The territorial watchman who is appointed for that area has to watch the entire forest area and cannot concentrate on the bamboo plantation. Many people have stolen bamboos from the bamboo plantation. The women say that they cannot watch the bamboo plantation during the night.

DWCRA officials told the women that they should collect Muttuga leaves and gave them Rs. 5000 for that. They had told them to collect the leaves and that they would take care of the marketing. From the Rs. 5000 they gave money to those who had collected the leaves. But till today the leaves have not been taken over by DWCRA for sale and now they have asked the women to do the marketing themselves and return the Rs. 5000.

The women in the village collect Tumbri (Beedi leaves) which they sell directly to the contractor from Dharwad. The forester has not released the seed money. He has been delaying because he wants to purchase carpets for all the VFCs at one time. Due to this delay, women asked for the money so that they could repay DWCRA and continue with the DWCRA scheme. They said they would redeposit the amount later. He refused.

Relationship of VFC with KFD

In Banasgeri KFD did not have any plans to form a VFC, but because of IDS pressure, KFD was forced to form a VFC. KFD thought that it would be good for people to get returns immediately instead of after many years, so they decided to give the bamboo plantation (of 40 hectares) to the VFC. Only bamboo will be shared. Other valuable trees are not shared, it belongs to the government. When this was discussed with the women they said that the department had told them that 50% would be shared but did not specify that only bamboo would be shared. So they thought that valuable trees in the bamboo plantation would also be shared. (Teak and Sandalwood are there in this area).

According to IDS staff, the signature of the VFC president on the MoU was taken below the map and nothing was written. After some days the MoU copy was taken from the VFC president and then it was written that only bamboo will be shared and that all valuable trees belong to the government.

There is a cordial relation between the VFC and KFD. The forester attends every monthly meeting of the VFC.

When the women caught smugglers with cartloads of wood, they gave this to the department but no incentive money or wood was given to the VFC. They are upset and have begun to doubt the usefulness of JFPM and their role in protecting the forest.

After the incident where women caught cartloads of wood and handed them over to the KFD, the forester asked the men why they had allowed the villagers to form an all women VFC? He made some derogatory remarks about how the men were being controlled by the women. The men got very angry and wanted to stop the VFC meetings. The VFC registered a complaint to all the concerned senior KFD officials who conducted a meeting in Banasgeri during which the forester had to apologise to the women. The women forgave him and now VFC meetings are conducted regularly though men do not attend as often as earlier.

Earlier KFD had said that it would be difficult for women only to form a VFC. They suggested that men should also join. But all the women got together and said that there was no need for men and that the women could manage. The Forester said that at least 6 men should be in the committee but women insisted that no men should be members; the forester then said that at least 2 men should be there. The women said that there should be either a women's committee or a men's committee. Now KFD feels that it is good to have a women VFC committee. As men go for labour work, field work etc. and women are at home they attend regularly.

The Forester was not ready to include the IDS community organisor in the VFC as a member. He said that there was no need for IDS people in the VFC since a Yuvak Mandal was there and one representative could be taken. But the women did not want that and said that they wanted the IDS CO. Even for the function for the MoU signature, KFD did not want senior staff from IDS to be present. But all the VFC committee members said that the initial guidance to form the VFC was given by IDS so they should attend. They also told the DCF that they need IDS.

Women were told by the forester in front of the men that they could not protect the forest so there was no point in forming an all women VFC. A quarrel started and the women said that they could protect the forests as well as the men.

Soon after VFC formation, KFD used to ask IDS and the villagers before fixing dates and times for the VFC meetings. Then the relationship between IDS and KFD was good.

Involvement of NGO in Banasgeri

IDS has been working in Banasgeri since the past 2 years. First, people had too many expectations from IDS. They wanted loans, cattle etc. The staff then explained the objectives of IDS and what their role would be in the village. All KFD people also were called and they had a training on this. IDS has done a lot of work particularly in Banasgeri.

At the start of the VFC (just before formation and after) IDS used to give training almost 3 times a week to the people. They explained the GO in detail. Some women said that IDS told them that women should come together and form the VFC; the women VFC is there because of IDS.

The IDS CO attends the Banasgeri village meetings 3 days a week. These include VFC meeting, Mahila Mandal meeting and as there is one association of 10-15 members who collect Rs.2 each and that is known as 2 Rupees Sangha. On other days she goes to other villages; like this she works in 3 villages. She lives in a room in Banasgeri and hence gives guidance to the villagers.

People are full of praise for the work she does in the village. They are pleased that she is on the VFC Managing Committee. The women say that because of the NGO they have come forward; before that women did not talk in front of men.

IDS conducted a meeting on JFPM before VFC formation and called all KFD staff. Much information about JFPM was given during that meeting.

Even if the IDS CO is not there, they conduct VFC meetings but they much prefer her to be there as she gives some suggestions to the women when she attends. The women say that if IDS is not there, they will not continue with JFPM.

IDS has not given any financial help to the VFC or to the group Sangha. They mobilise the people and inform them about government funds. The Mahila Mandal was in the village before the IDS started working. The IDS CO has done a house-to-house survey to get socio-economic data and motivated them to form groups. There are 2-3 women's groups, 1 youth group, 1 children's group. All women's groups collect Rs.5 and children's groups Rs. 2 weekly for their group fund. At the time of these Sangha meetings, JFPM information is sometimes given.

Awareness levels of the people and their attitudes towards JFPM

Both men and women have clearly understood the concept of JFPM and the purpose of the VFC. People say that till today there are no benefits from the VFC but they are hopeful that they may get something in future from the bamboo harvest and the new plantation in 8 acres. Though the women like the idea of JFPM they feel that it has not been working out so far. They feel that the decisions taken during the microplan are good. But they expected more from the KFD. They would have got employment if the KFD took the microplan seriously. Women therefore doubt the sincerity of the KFD and are not sure if they will get any share after 5 years from the profits if any.

The women are pleased that the relations with the KFD have improved after formation of the VFC. Earlier they were afraid of the forest department people. But now as they jointly work with them there is no fear.

Regarding the benefits after 5 years, both men and women feel that if the benefits come in either women's or men's names it comes to both. When the women were asked why in that case they didn't give their husband's names they said it was because if husbands go for meetings they do not tell their wives what happened after coming home.

Reasons for women's active participation.

1) Men migrate a lot to Goa, etc. - come back only during the rainy months. Even then there is not much work since most people do not have lands.
2) Due to IDS influence, men support the women and want them to become more active in the village.
3) During the first training of IDS regarding JFPM very few men attended. They were not particularly interested. But women are always at home so they went for the meeting. They get work only in the rainy season. It is much easier gathering women for meetings. Men go to work coolie, those who don't migrate.
4) The previous JFPM, RFO who is now transferred, and the JFPM DCF came very often to train people about JFPM. They are one of the reasons for having an all women VFC. Both were extremely supportive.

5) Due to extreme poverty prostitution was rampant in Banasgeri (about 75% of women). The women used to go to Dandeli and Haliyal. Men would encourage their wives and daughters. Now 7 women continue prostitution. Prostitution was one reason why women became dominant; since they earn money they have decision-making power. Now prostitution has reduced because of fear of AIDS. The IDS CO has given them information about this. Also self-help groups have started and savings encouraged. These groups have started 2 years ago.

MANJGUNI

Note : This village was selected as one of the cases on the recommendations of senior KFD staff. This village is projected by them as their main success where the involvement of women is concerned (apart from the two all women VFCs in areas where NGOs are working). This is because there are four women on the Managing Committee. However, after the initial visit paid by the research team it was found that except for two women on the Managing Committee others do not actively participate nor are aware about JFPM related issues. Therefore, this village has not been studied in depth and only a brief description is given below.

This village is situated in Ankola range. The villagers belong to the Naik, Harikanth (fisherfolk) and Bhandari communities. As the villagers do not have much land and as there is no work available in the village most men go out to work in Ratnagiri, Goa etc. These men come back to the village for agricultural work during June-September. Due to this women are used to taking decisions and shouldering the responsibilities of the household.

The guard (now transferred) approached Leelavati, who is related to him and is an active women in the village and asked her to organise people to form a VFC. This was due to the fact that the neighboring village Honnebail had formed a VFC and was now preventing the Manjguni villagers from allowing their cattle to enter Honnebail VFC area. As Manjguni village does not have much forest land of their own they decided that with a VFC they could get more land.

The forest land in Manjguni actually belonged to Honnebail. There microplaning has been done. Some of that land has been given to Manjguni after the VFC was formed here. This is perhaps why no microplan has been done in Manjguni.

When the ODA team visited they called the entire village, they told them about JFPM and that one from each family should pay 2 rupees. As most of the men were away when the VFC was formed the women gave their names as general body members. During that meeting itself, they formed the managing committee. Two of the women have always been active. Leelavati is a Mandal Panchayat member and Sumitra, the Mahila Mandal President. Sumitra chose the other 2 women. Therefore there are four women Managing Committee members. The male Managing Committee members are not happy about women being on the Committee. This is because they doubt their ability to protect the forest. They expressed this doubt during the elections to the Managing Committee. Sumitra said 'Give women the entire responsibility and let only women become Managing Committee members and see how they protect the forest'. She is part of a small women's group in Ankola and has had a lot of exposure to meetings etc.

The KFD helped in the selection of the Chairman. According to people, they feel KFD selected him because he does not respect guards and other KFD staff. With Chairmanship and the responsibilities it involves he might change. The people do not want him to be the VFC Chairman since he does not tell them anything that the KFD discusses with him.

After formation of the Managing Committee 3 meetings were scheduled. Two of these were scheduled because visitors were expected. Since the visitors did not make it though people had gathered they did not hold the meetings. Therefore, two of the three VFC meetings were canceled. The forester has not attended any meeting (except when ODA visited). The Forester says he cannot come for meetings as he has lots of work - also he is based in Honnebail. No minutes have been kept. The villagers have been told by the JFPM DFO that he will come for the microplan. Till then the villagers are not interested in conducting any meetings. Hence, no discussions have been held on JFPM. When questioned by the research team, men said they want to discuss about NTFPs issue. Whereas women want sufficient poles for fencing their agricultural land because they face the problem of wild animals destroying paddy. They also want to ask whether KFD can help them in putting electric fencing out of seed money.

The KFD staff comes in the jeep, informs Leelavati to organise people and goes back. Every time KFD staff come to the village she gives them tender coconuts, etc. in spite of her poverty. They always visit her house when they come to the village, a fact of which she is proud.

Sumitra Naik asked the ODA RFO why they do not have more meetings. He told her to organise one and fixed a date. However, the people gathered but he did not come for that meeting.

No smokeless chullas have been given. They will be given after the microplan. People do not want them now as they have seen that these chullas are not used in Honnebail. They want to make sure of its effectiveness before installing them.

The main issue discussed in the only VFC meeting was that wild animals (cheetahs) take away cattle from the village. This is the biggest problem in the village. The department gave a cage to catch the wild animal. During this meeting, the plantation was discussed. The people want fruit trees. KFD agreed. Nothing has been started yet.

The Government had decided to sell all that land to Tata Steel one year ago. A survey was done to assess the area. The majority of the people are pleased since they have heard that they will get good compensation (much more than that given to those who were vacated for the Sea Bird Project, Karwar) and anyway they have no work in the village. Others are sentimentally attached to the land so they do not wish to vacate. They feel that they will not be adequately compensated and will have to find their own houses, land etc.

Due to this threat of being vacated the people are not very interested in protecting their land. People are still not sure of whether this project will be done since other people from neighbouring villages are actively opposing it. The villagers have not been directly asked about their views. They have heard from rumours and have stopped construction of houses, etc. They are still not sure whether they will be asked to vacate. The vocal sections have decided that if their opinion is asked they will not agree to leave their village.

The forester and guard told the people that for 3 years the KFD will protect the land and the people do not have to protect it till then. People are confused about the protection issue. Anyway, they feel that for three years protection is not their responsibility. The KFD has not told them the VFC area that has been given.

KFD had told the 4 women committee members to attend a training at Karwar head office (regarding VFC/JFPM). They were told to wait at Ankola bus stand where the department jeep would pick them up. They waited for 2 hours and no jeep came. After that they went to the office and were told the jeep was not available. They were given money to go Karwar and the address of the training. When they reached, there was no training going on, nor was anyone there aware about it. After this experience they have decided not to go for any training sessions anywhere.

The Yuvak Mandal was formed in the 1960s. Neither has it been renewed nor new members elected. No activities are held by the Yuvak Mandal. Occasionally (once in a year) a representative of Nehru Yuvaka Kendra visits the village and informs if any sports are organised at the Taluka or district level. No one in Manjguni participates. A Yuvathi Mandal and Mahila Mandal was also formed in the 1960's. They were not active. Now only the Mahila Mandal exists. Since the last four years Sumitra Naik is trying to make it active. She teaches tailoring to the girls and wants to have training on JFPM to women of this mandal. So far only the `Alcohol' problem was discussed in these meetings and they have taken out processions against arrack Shops existing in the village.

Sahakari Sangha for the fisherfolk has been formed by Indo-Dutch project. It exists in Ankola. It has been formed mainly to give `loans' to the fisherfolk whenever they need. Usually they take the loans during

rainy season because fishermen are not allowed to go for fishing because of heavy winds in the sea. Apart from a saving scheme there are no other activities.

There are 2 Anganavadis in the village. So it is comparatively easier to organise women. The Anganavadi teacher is the wife of the Forest Guard so she knows about JFPM from her husband. The women have confidence in the KFD because the guard is a local. The guard and forester say till the DCF comes they cannot proceed with JFPM. The relationship with KFD staff is good. Where women are concerned, except for Leelavati and Sumitra, others do not come into contact with the KFD staff.

The Naik and Bhandari community men and women are aware about JFPM and the formation of the VFC. They know they have to protect the land and will get some benefit later. Their main reason to form the VFC was to get some forest area for their village. The Harikanths (fisherfolk) do not know anything about JFPM. They collect logs from the forest which float down the river during the rains. This is enough for the whole year so they do not have firewood problems.

SATGERI

Profile of the village

Satgeri lies 29 kms from Karwar on the Sadashivgad - Anshi road. The total number of families is 37 (30 from the Marathi community and 7 from the Comuvarpanth community). People speak only Marathi and Konkani though the men know a bit of Kannada.

The main problem of the village is drinking water. There is one borewell for 30 houses and two private wells but there is insufficient water during summer. There are also 2 government wells in which water is not available in April and May.

There is one anganwadi school but no primary or high school, clinics or other facilities in Satgeri. For everything they have to go to Ulga-Alga which is two kms. away.

Daily the women, men and young children go to the forest to bring one headload of firewood. For fodder, they use paddy straws. No NTFPs are available. The plantation given to the VFC is immediately on the right side of the village.

Processes of VFC from formation to Aug'1995

The VFC was formed in January 1995. In the first week of April '95 the Managing Committee was formed. Ten women were elected to the Managing Committee during a meeting which the DCF and RFO attended. Before the elections it was decided that the VFC would be all-women. The Chairman was elected because she is the president of the Mahila Mandal and the Co-operative society and both KRWCDS and the village women felt that it would be best if she became the VFC president. She along with other KRWCDS staff nominated the other women to the Managing Committee.

After the formation of the VFC Managing Committee KFD did the micro-planning. So far five meetings regarding JFPM have been held; 3 meetings before the election of the Managing Committee and two after. The MoU has not yet been signed.

The PRA and micro-planning exercises were attended by both the DCFs and RFOs, the forester, guard and watchman. Almost all the women from the village attended. At that time the women told the KFD about the acute problem of drinking water in the village. They also said that they need a place for a meeting and a bus stand. At present they hold meetings in the Anganwadi Centre.

During the microplan the women discussed that they should agree to take a small area for the VFC so that they are able to protect it. If they select a large area, it will be difficult for them to protect.

The membership fee Rs.2/- has not yet been collected because they were not told to do so. However, the names of the VFC members on the general body have been registered.

There is a Yuvak Mandal and Mahila Mandal. Members of both attend the VFC meetings and actively participate. A date, time and day for the VFC meetings has not yet been fixed. The forester (Secretary) fixes the date of the VFC meetings and informs the VFC President who is expected to inform the other committee members. The forester regularly attends the VFC meetings. He comes late; after all the VFC members have assembled. The KFD personnel do not come in time for the meetings. In the rainy season VFC meetings are arranged in school. In other seasons the meetings are held in an open space.

KFD has given a carpet (jamkhana) to the VFC. During the meetings everyone (including KFD officers) sits on that carpet.

Involvement of women and men in JFPM

The women got full support from the men of the village and hence an all women VFC was formed. The men are pleased because women have come forward and have formed the VFC. KRWCDS staff encouraged and brought awareness among men that in all the government programmes men take the lead. So he said that at least in JFPM it would be good if they allow women to lead the whole process. All the men accepted.

The KFD staff wanted to know why only women were in the VFC here whereas in other areas only two women are on the VFC. The women responded that they wanted to come forward and take part in programmes since it is always the men who come forward.

When the VFC committee was formed all the women asked their husbands for permission to be on the general body or the Managing Committee.

Both men and women attend VFC meetings. But men do not participate much. After the meetings men and women discuss the issues at home.

An arrack shop exists in the village but it is not a problem in the sense men do not beat women after drinking. Among the women there is unity, they rarely quarrel. In the village also there is unity; there is no problem in the rare cases when there is a difference of opinion on any matters.

The KFD staff asked the VFC members that if smuggling goes on at night in VFC area how they would catch the smugglers. The committee members told them that they could not protect areas far away. There they would ask the men for help. The nearby areas the women could protect themselves. The committee members have decided that after 3 years once the villagers have to protect the forest, each day 5 women can protect. They can also take the help of men as during the night it is difficult for women to protect.

Issues related to the VFC

The seed money (Rs. 5,000/-) has been kept in the Bank in Karwar, in a joint account with the forester (Secretary) and the VFC President. The people have not yet decided what to do with it.

Before the formation of the VFC, the land now allotted under JFPM had an acacia plantation. It was fully cut by Alga, Ulga and Satgeri villagers for firewood and fencing. Guard could not and did not do anything about this.

In the VFC area KFD planted some acacia plants. The villagers did not work in this plantation because that time they had their own agricultural work. So the department brought other villagers for plantation work. Later, they planted all species of plants (Antwalkai, Nellikai, Seesum, Cashewnut, Atamba, Bhinda, Sagvani, Suri, Kairi, Badam, Phanas, Kaju, Thipal, Kindal, Rita and Avala). The KFD has also given to each family 5 saplings of Mango and Badam. Women have recommended more Sagvani (Teak) in their VFC area because it has got more money value.

The DCF said in a VFC meeting that there is a provision for keeping a watchman for the plantation for a period of three years. He said that if the committee members watch the forest they can get this amount. In case the committee cannot do this the KFD will keep a separate watchman for the plantation. Since all the committee members did not attend that meeting due to short notice no decision was taken about the watchman.

The land selected now is not fully degraded but has some good valuable trees like Matti, Kindal, Sagavani, Nandi etc. Right now they have not yet started protection because the forest guard is there. They

have decided not to allow the other villagers who usually entered this forest for collection of firewood and thorny bushes for fencing and leaves for manure. They do not allow outsiders to collect leaves because they put the same leaves to the plantation area for manure. In the agricultural fields, the women from other villages discussed that the JFPM land has been given to Satgeri women, and they or their men cannot enter it as they did earlier. They wonder why the same scheme has not come to their village (Alga and Ulga.)

In July, after the VFC meeting in Satgeri all the members of the Satgeri VFC told the forester to form a VFC in Ulga and Alga village also. The Forester said that he would have to ask those villagers first.

According to some women, before the formation of the VFC they had to walk about 2 kms to bring firewood. Now after the VFC formation they sometimes get firewood from nearer areas since the surrounding forest has been allotted to the Satgeri VFC and the neighbouring villages (Ulga Alga) have been prevented from entering these areas.

Regarding fodder, the villagers give paddy straws to the cattle and do not let them roam in the forest because there is no fodder in the fodder plot, only thorny bushes have grown.

In one of the VFC meetings the installation of smokeless chullas and gobar gas were discussed. KFD has installed smokeless chullas in all the 37 houses of Satgeri. The people are not using it because it takes a long time to cook. The construction of the chulla is not satisfactory. On the top of the pipe and in between tiles, cement has not been put properly and hence rain water comes inside. All women have to go fast to the fields and cannot wait for the long time they say it takes to cook on this chulla.

However, this was not discussed in the meeting when the 2 DCFs came. This was the recent meeting held in August' 95. The guard came in the morning and said that in the evening the DCFs were coming and hence women would have to assemble at 7.00 p.m. This was sudden information and hence very few women were present. KFD did not inform the NGO staff. The new DCF wanted to see how and whether women were able to run a VFC. Nothing was discussed during that meeting.

The VFC President said that the JFPM land is situated in front of her house. Hence it is easy for her to keep an eye on it. Once she guarded some wood kept by the Guard. At another time she stopped a man (who belongs to another village) from cutting leaves. The Guard says that since she is the President she has to look after the land as it is her responsibility.

The President says "The guard comes and informs me alone about meetings fixed and I have to inform all other women which is difficult. He does not take the trouble to go to other women's houses. I have gone to take out my snap in the studio at Karwar to open the VFC joint account. The money spent for the photo and the TA was spent from my own pocket and not reimbursed by KFD. How can I bear such expenses." In her opinion since she is the president of the VFC and performing duties like above, she should get `something' from the KFD. This `something' should be Rs.200/- per month. She intends to discuss this in the next VFC meeting.

The VFC president does not know about the sharing pattern stated in the Government Order. She feels that everything in the JFPM land belongs to them. For example if cashew is harvested she believes all cashew will have to be sold through the VFC and the amount earned would have to be distributed equally among all members. She says they can even share the cashews among them but doing so is not useful because members will use it for consumption or even if they sell it individually they get small amounts. Moreover, it is difficult to share cashews (anything in kind) since it may lead to fights. Also some members may not like to have cashews. But cash is needed by everybody. Hence she feels that it is good to share the cash.

Satgeri villagers do labour work given by KFD. Women get Rs. 30 per day and men get Rs. 35

Relationship between VFC and KFD

One of the Managing Committee members said they find it difficult to attend VFC meetings because they have a lot of house work and moreover senior department officials speak in Kannada and they cannot follow it. The forester and guard know Konkani. Their relation with the department is improving because of meetings.

The senior KFD staff were very pleased when the Satgeri villagers decided to form an all women VFC. The other staff were initially apprehensive but are now pleased since they see the sincerity with which women attend meetings and actively participate.

Women also say that they have always had a good relationship with KFD. The guard and forester have a better relationship with men than with women because women bring one headload of firewood which is needed for their home consumption but if men bring wood, they bring not only wood needed for cooking but valuable wood as well. Also men do not bring headloads but cartloads. Still women say that before VFC formation they had some fear of KFD staff but now they do not fear them and feel free to collect firewood.

NGO involvement in Satgeri

KRWCDS has been working since 6 years in Satgeri. A Mahila Mandal was formed by KRWCDS. Now it has completed its fifth year. It holds meetings every month, and all members contribute Rs. 5 to the fund. In this Mahila Sangha there are 26 members. 10 houses have not been included in this Mahila Sangha because in the initial stage the other women were afraid because they heard that KRWCDS had come to the village to spread Christianity. Now they have seen the Mahila Mandal activities and want to join but they are not allowed. In future they may be allowed.

The main activity of the Mahila Sangha is savings. There are 26 members and so far Rs. 10,000/- has been saved. Women are allowed to take loans for any purpose they need but have to repay in installments as decided in the meeting. So far woman have taken loans to carry out petty business, if somebody is sick in the family, to purchase gold, to celebrate marriages and for festivals. The interest rate is Rs.1 for Rs. 100/- per month.

In 5 families daughter-in-law and mother-in-law are members. The same women are in VFC. No other women has so far attended this meeting. They have not been informed by either the NGO or the KFD. Unfortunately, it was not possible to interview women who have been excluded from the VFC due to language difficulties and the fact that the KRWCDS representative showed resistance to visit these houses.

KRWCDS has been giving training to women in different areas, `Happala' training was one. KRWCDS arranged a training for making papads. Two women of Satgeri got this training. They now make papads at home and sell these in the village only. These two women gave the papad training to other ladies also.

Through the Mahila Sangha, the VFC President built one petty shop which is looked after by her daughter. This is the only shop they have in the village and hence get good business. For this KRWCDS paid some of the expenses (Rs. 5000/-) and the rest was given by the Mahila Sangha (Rs.3000) She has repaid the total loan amount of Rs.8,000. The shop was started 4 years ago.

She has also taken a loan of Rs. 1000/- from the mahila Sangha to buy a buffalo which she has repaid. Half the cost of tailoring machines to five women and half the cost of water pumps to install in the paddy fields to whoever needs have been given by KRWCDS as loans.

The Mahila Sangha women decided to rear hens (Giriraj hens which are used only for eating). Each hen cost Rs. 30. KRWCDS gave the idea to do this business but no financial help was given by them as this is

a very small amount. Women have purchased 3 to 5 hens. The KRWCDS organisor bought the hens. All the women collected the money and give it to him. They have got these hens from the Animal Husbandry Department. This activity was started in July '95.

Sanghas of children and men also exist, organised by KRWCDS. Children also save Rs. 5/- per month. This money is given by their parents. Children are organised and motivated to save only to cultivate the habit of savings in them. Men have purchased one tractor from the Sangha. Matching grant was given by KRWCDS to men's' savings to purchase the tractor.

KRWCDS has formed one Women's Co-operative Society and a Men's Co-operative Society which includes 10 villages. The members contribute Rs.10 per month to the fund. This society is not registered as it has been recently formed by KRWCDS. The president of the Women's Co-operative Society is also the President of the VFC and the President of the `Brahmadevi Mahila Sangha' since the last six years. She also seems to be the main beneficiary of most of the KRWCDS programmes. (e.g., loans from the Mahila Sangha, papad making training, etc.)

The Women's Co-operative Society has purchased in bulk Kambalis and Plastics needed for men and women in the village during the rainy season last year. This year they have purchased salt. Each house in the village needs minimum two gunny bags of salt to mix with the feed given to cattle. All these purchases are made from Ankola by KRWCDS organisors. No women from the Sangha go with them for purchasing. Next time they have decided to purchase clothes.

The KRWCDS Coordinator gave knowledge about JFPM to both men and women of Satgeri. It was due to KRWCDS that an all women VFC was formed. The KRWCDS organisors, coordinator and Balwadi teacher attend the VFC meetings.

In their regular meetings in Satgeri they do not discuss about JFPM. Only when KFD comes does JFPM issues get discussed. Women say that if KRWCDS stops working in their village, they will carry on their work, (in the VFC and other activities) since they have now got confidence and courage. The women say that even without the NGO they can work and can deal with the government departments. However, they say that if there was no NGO working in their village no women would have come forward to form either the Mahila Sangha, the VFC or the Co-operative society.

KRWCDS runs a Balawadi in this village. The Balwadi teacher takes down minutes of the meeting of the Mahila Sangha when the KRWCDS organisor is absent. Both KRWCDS and Gram Panchayath are paying her to run the same Balavadi. KRWCDS pays her 450/-, and 17 children regularly attend the classes. Now she has been selected as Anganvadi teacher. She has been working for KRWCDS since the past four years.

Awareness levels of people and their attitudes towards JFPM

All women and men know about the purpose of JFPM but many are not aware of the details. People are happy with the formation of the VFC formation due to the benefits they expect to get after 5 years.

One of the women Managing Committee members did not know much about JFPM though she regularly attends meetings. For instance she said that the sandalwood garland is the proof that she is a Managing Committee member. After formation of the Managing Committee all the members were garlanded.

Stages of formation of a VFC according to senior KFD officials

First the KFD contacts prominent people in the village and explains to them about JFPM and finds out if they want to form a VFC in their village. (In some cases villagers have taken the initiative and applied to the KFD asking them to form a VFC in their village.) These people on a voluntary basis form a committee of 5-6 people and talk to other villagers along with KFD staff. If all the villagers agree, then PRA exercises are carried out and after a general body meeting is called a managing committee is elected. The VFC then applies to the DCF for registration. Once it is registered the management plans for a 5 year period are made. The KFD and villagers are jointly involved in creating the plan. A VFC meeting is to be held once a month and general body meetings at least once in five months.

The MoU is then signed. The RFO and DCF represent the KFD whereas at least the Chairman and Managing Committee should be present. Rs. 5000/- is given as seed money to each VFC. There are no other financial commitments but schemes like smokeless chullas are given and training in skills are given. Technical support to manage the VFC resources is given by the department.

Usually a degraded area is given to each VFC towards a new plantation. However, in some cases, particularly where there is no degraded area the VFC is given an old plantation whereby 50% of the share of the produce goes to the VFC.

Most of the VFC plantations are multipurpose in accordance with the demands of the villagers. The department manages the plantation for 3 years (including financial inputs). After that VFCs have to manage them till maturity. Once they are harvested the net benefits will be shared between VFC and KFD. Preference is given to VFC members for other development projects in the village.

In theory, the KFD prefers to include registered NGOs to help in the processes of the VFC. However, in many cases when the historical relation between the KFD and the NGO has been one of mutual distrust the KFD does not want to involve the NGO in the JFPM process. At these times or when NGOs do not exist they expand the concept of NGOs to include Yuva Mandals. NGOs are involved in every stage and a representative is supposed to be on the Managing Committee of the VFC. However, if only 1 NGO exists in a large region - should they be involved in all the VFCs there? Should 1 NGO represent in all the 10-15 VFCs in that area? These questions continue to concern the KFD officials.

There has been a proposal from KFD that husband-wife should be members of general body + 30% women should be represented on the Managing Committee.

MYRADA has been given the responsibility to train KFD and NGO staff in all areas related to JFPM.

KFD staff

Most of the KFD staff in the villages in our study were interviewed at least once. These include watchmen, guards, foresters, range forest officers or RFOs (both territorial and JFPM) and divisional conservators of forest or DCFs (both territorial and JFPM).

Watchmen

They do not have any training on JFPM. According to the senior KFD officials since the watchmen are temporary they do not feel the need to give them training. Their rules do not permit. The watchmen do not have any knowledge about JFPM. In Nagarbastikeri the watchman attended the training session of our research team and said it was the first time he really found out what JFPM was about. The KFD watchmen have been employed to watch the entire area (which may or may not coincide with the JFPM area. In many places the watchmen have been removed soon after the formation of the VFC. In a couple of places the people were told to look after the plantations given to the VFC.

Guards

The KFD gives the guards two days training on JFPM. They are told that they have to look after the plantations for the first 3 years and after that it will be given to the people. They do not have the confidence that the people will protect the plantations after 3 years. Even now in Nagarbastikeri the locals cut the acacia trees in the protected area. Some people feel that the Chairman and others are hand-in-glove with the department and do not allow them to enter the protected area; so these villagers willfully cut trees in that area.

The Nagarbastikeri guard had gone for the training. He is upset with his superiors, particularly the JFPM RFO, since he does not take interest in the VFC. This is particularly related to the meetings he is told to organise. The RFO does not attend after fixing meetings; even when he does attend he does not give proper information. He makes promises and then does not discuss these issues in the meetings. The people then get upset with the guard as he has direct link with his senior officers. The guard feels helpless as he gets caught between the two. The guard also feels bad since the ODA RFO has not come even once to see the plantation. He is also aware of the existence of MYRADA as an organisation which `gives speeches on JFPM'. He is of the opinion that people are enthusiastic about JFPM but the department does not take proper care to hold monthly meetings.

The guards in Basapur and Hosalli said that they would watch the fodder plots for 3 years after which it would be given to the people to protect. Now a year and a half after the formation of the VFC the DCF is saying that the people will have to look after it. So all of a sudden the DCF has asked the guards to remove the watchmen who were getting Rs.240. So the people are angry with the guard since he is directly in contact with them. In Hosalli, the KFD has also stopped the maintenance costs like manure and the labour charges for weeding, watering etc. The DCF has not personally informed the villagers about this. According to the guard, since fodder plot was the only activity taken up by the VFC it should have been looked after well. Or at least the people should have been informed of the KFD's decision in advance.

The guards main problem with JFPM is that they get the flak from the people as well as their superiors. Also the attitudes of the guards towards the people has not changed. There have been insufficient training sessions on the concept of JFPM and how to implement it for KFD staff at this level.

The Basapur guard was a dynamic person and the people are full of praise for him. He has now been transferred and promoted to forester. He said that the KFD expects too much from the forester and guard. He says the relationship between the KFD and the people has improved since the formation of the VFC. Due to this people have gained confidence to visit other departments and they have become knowledgeable about other government programmes.

He used to give advance to villagers when he called them for work in the nursery plantation etc. This is one reason why he is so popular. He has been to Tatihalla for MYRADA training. Due to the ODA scheme some more staff have been provided by the KFD. Even so it is very difficult to cope with all the work. After the VFC, villagers have become more interested in forest protection. He says JFPM is good since now the RFO and DCF at least come to the villages, see the condition of the people and listen to their problems.

Foresters

The forester in Bogribail feels protection is the main problem. In most VFC meetings he asks the people not to enter the `protected' area. But this is ignored. He feels it is difficult to motivate the people. For example, he suggested that the seed money could be used for mango grafting; they could buy it from the KFD at the rate of Rs.25/- per sapling. The people wanted the saplings to be given free. The forester said he would look into it. But anyway the people would have to do shramdan and protect it themselves. The people were not keen on this since the question of protection came into it. This was discussed during 2-3 meetings but no decisions have been taken regarding this.

There is a new lady forester in Bogribail who has undergone JFPM training. She does not have prior experience in this work. When asked how she manages smuggling cases she said the question does not arise since she has to sit in the depot.

The Kangod forester has gained a lot of respect from the people since the first MoU was signed in this village which is why senior KFD staff even from Bangalore have visited the village. The forester had to organise the people for this. Also many promises made by the KFD have been kept. The forester keeps minutes well. His RFO was also good and took a lot of initiative. So he feels JFPM is a useful project. He has too much other (territorial) work or else he would go to other VFCs formed in the range. He finds it difficult to cope with 2 bosses (territorial and ODA RFO). He says the territorial RFO has got more powers than the ODA RFO and the priorities of the former are different. He expects the forester to do the work that he (the territorial RFO) wants.

The Banasgeri forester said that women soon forget the decisions made in the meetings. He says they cannot understand much and hence he prefers men to be on the Management Committee, and he can work with them. For example, he says that women cannot protect the JFPM area. (This is contrary to actual experience). He has asked the

women to motivate their men (husband/sons), but he says they have not done it. He has also personally discussed with men who are not taking any interest in the matter since they are not part of the VFC. So a watchman was appointed from the department.

According to the forester "The Government Order on JFPM clearly says that VFC has to inform the KFD about smuggling and if possible hand over them to the KFD. There is no sharing in this smuggled wood either in cash or kind. A small amount (in cash) will be given by the KFD to the VFC as an incentive. This has not been understood properly by women and the NGO here and the former are demanding 50% sharing either in cash or kind".

"Recently the PCCF had visited this VFC and asked women several questions. Women purposely did not answer and said that the forester had never told them clearly what JFPM is." The PCCF shouted at the forester for not having educated the women in the monthly meetings.

From most reports (including the interview with the forester) the lower level KFD staff feel threatened by an all-women VFC as in most of their dealings at the village level they do not have to relate to women.

All the lower level KFD staff (forester and below) feel that the relationship between KFD and people has worsened if at all there has been any change since the introduction of JFPM. They say this is the case even though the interaction between the KFD and the people has increased and the people are now more confident about approaching the government departments. The main reason for deterioration in the relationship they say is because promises have not been fulfilled.

RFOs

RFOs complain about the lack or delay of facilities given to them like jeeps which are used by the DCFs. They say that in spite of promising the people it is not possible to attend meetings especially since they are held at night and they do not always get conveyance. Money for the plantation is also not released on time. The RFOs find it difficult to do the microplan even though they were given training by MYRADA and were taken for other microplans. They would like at least 4-5 more trainings in microplans in different VFCs as one is not enough.

The RFOs sometimes feel hampered because they are forced to defer decisions till everything is discussed with higher authorities. Due to this they find it difficult to command respect from the villagers.

The RFOs feel that it is difficult to motivate the people about JFPM because the people feel that restrictions are being placed on them. Also, the returns are not immediate nor always visible in financial terms. One RFO from Haliyal does not feel that people can protect the forests and that the concept of JFPM itself is therefore questionable. He is anti-NGOs (in this case IDS) as well since he feels they incite the people to place impractical demands on the KFD which the latter cannot fulfill.

RFOs say that in the beginning there was a lot of difficulty to motivate and to gather people to form VFCs and as well as to give them information regarding the concept and process of JFPM. Also due to village politics it often becomes a problem to involve all the people in the Management of the VFC.

The RFOs do not feel that they have learnt anything from the JFPM process. Nor are most of them hopeful about it. They also say that women participate very little. They hardly ever attend meetings. Only the Managing committee members (women) attended the micro-plan. They admit that not much has been done to involve women in the JFPM process.

Most RFOs are of the opinion that the villagers have formed the VFC and attend meetings, etc. only due to the sharing of benefits later. But the KFD staff is very doubtful about how much benefit they will actually get. KFD feels that with JFPM, people are now protecting the land and the forests. But they feel that the villagers will not continue to protect the forest on a sustained basis. smuggling will slowly increase and the plantation will not be cared for as well as it is now.

The Basapur JFPM RFO is hopeful about the benefits of the JFPM scheme if people are actively involved in forest management after 5 years. He is hopeful that the people will protect forest from the smugglers, encroachers, illegal fellings etc. and will also make profits from the plantation.

He has motivated women to start the collection of Beedi leaves and to make plates from Muttuga leaves (Pathroli). He has also taken women to Malagi to train them in Agarbatti stick making and has motivated women to start poultry rearing under the DWCRA scheme. However, this programme has not yet been implemented due to delay in releasing DWCRA money. He is keeping touch with the B.D.O to get the DWCRA money released.

He feels that after introducing JFPM people have realised that this is their forest and they have to protect it for their own use and for the sustainability of future generations. This is why people have begun to take an interest in protecting the forest.

The Bogribail JFPM RFO as well as VFC members said that the forester attends all meetings. All senior KFD staff in Bogribail feel strongly that there should be at least 1 strong women NGO member to motivate the village women to participate in the JFPM process. Except for one woman there are no other active women from NGOs in the Ankola range.

They say that in Ankola range they have been 50% successful in the VFCs they have formed. Even in places where NGOs are working VFCs are not always successful. (They gave the example of Karwar range).

The RFOs and the villagers said that since this is an old VFC, they constantly have visitors, senior officials etc. Most often, the outsiders are late and the villagers have to wait endlessly. This upsets them and they get angry with the RFOs and not the others. This creates problems.

The ODA RFO said that the VFC meetings are a burden to the villagers since they have to give up a days wages to attend the meetings. And the KFD cannot give them anything in return except the hope of future benefits. Because the VFCs are relatively new, people are curious and interested, but he feels that people will probably lose interest after some time. According to him, those who attend should be given some monetary incentive to compensate for their loss of wages.

After the formation of the VFC, people do not feel threatened by the KFD. They discuss their problems with the staff and they also approach other departments now.

The JFPM RFO in Karwar range was in praise of the NGO working there particularly because they have been motivating women to participate in village activities and JFPM. However, he says though women come forward as a group they do not usually talk during meetings.

The Karwar RFOs say that if women are asked to become president or committee members, they ask the KFD staff to first ask their husbands. When husbands encourage their wives they show interest to become committee members. These KFD officials say that women are very much dependent on their husbands. And this is not merely a problem of illiteracy.

The Territorial RFO in Kirwatti range feels the necessity for NGOs in the JFPM process. However, though he is pleased with the JFPM concept he feels that the JFPM process will not be successful because full powers are not yet given to the JFPM DCF or JFPM RFO. It becomes difficult for lower staff to function with parallel systems of authority. Promises made to villagers cannot always be met. Since in this scheme there is direct contact between villagers and KFD staff there is greater need to reduce bureaucratic problems that come in the way of the success of JFPM.

DCFs

The DCFs have received a one-day training each on JFPM at ATI, Mysore and Tattihalla apart from occasional training sessions and meetings related to specific aspects of the JFPM process.

The Honnavar territorial DCF was possessive about all JFPM records and information relating to it. He said they have some formats for application for VFC registration, but was not ready to show these. He also does not support or allow the ODA DCF to work. He reportedly takes over the interviews especially when ODA people come though he does not give any information. He is also against the people since in spite of the fact that KFD is putting so much

effort to work with the people and `providing' things to the people, the people are not using these things and are `wasting KFD money'. The people are not `ready to change their lifestyle'.

The Haliyal territorial DCF wants JFPM since he feels that the KFD should accept the fact that they cannot protect the forests and the people should be made responsible for this. He motivates his juniors to do JFPM. In all the meetings he asks about the JFPM situation in their areas. He was upset with IDS since they were collecting the Rs. 2 from the villagers and then asking the department to form VFCs there. Since there are technical problems in forming VFCs in all areas, he feels they should have at least discussed with the department officials first before collecting the money.

The Haliyal ODA DCF is very pleased with IDS and feels KFD should work with the co-operation of NGOs. KFD cannot motivate the people as well as IDS. He feels that KFD still, after 2 years with JFPM, has not been able to establish a relationship with the people.

The Karwar territorial DCF (now transferred) spoke about how women actively participated in the microplans in one of the VFCs "Of course they participated. They were responsible for cooking meals for all the KFD staff who attended."

The Karwar ODA DCF says that people do not find anything new in JFPM since anyway they were taking firewood, manure etc. from the forest and now KFD is telling them to take it free. Other departments give loans but with JFPM nothing is visible. The benefits will be after a period of 5 years. After 5-10 years people will have lakhs of rupees to manage with their returns from the JFPM area. He is doubtful about their capacity to manage such large amounts. Disputes will arise regarding money matters and the KFD will have to resolve it, particularly the DCF. So he has told the people that the CF is the final authority. KFD has appointed him as the trainer on JFPM throughout Karnataka State. He conducts training sessions for different level officers in various parts of the State and hence is pleased about JFPM because he has received much recognition as a result of it, including from the ODA teams. On the one hand he is happy because he is consulted on all issues related to JFPM, but on the other he feels that none of the other JFPM DCFs are taking any interest in JFPM. He has prepared the present microplan and MoU format which is copied everywhere.

The Yellapur JFPM DCF does not believe at all in JFPM. They are only going ahead with it because of the large sums of ODA money the KFD has received. What is surprising however, is that he probably spends more time in the villages and attends more VFC meetings than most of the other DCFs.

According to him, people in the villages need more incentives if JFPM is to be successful. The Government Order as it is discusses only forest related issues. However, these are not of prime importance in the Uttara Kannada context. This is because firewood collection is not a major problem like it is in other areas. Therefore, in this context the GO

needs changes. It should include other things which are of importance to the people which are basic to their survival, like sources of employment.

He spoke about the smokeless chulla concept and how it was basically his initiative that got this started in the different districts. He showed us some newspaper reports which praise his efforts at enforcing smokeless chullas. (In the same breath showed us an article of his niece who has won a beauty contest in Bombay as an example of how women have come forward). Unfortunately, he does not seem to be aware of ground realities. Though he spoke of a total success rate with smokeless chullas, the fact remains that they often lie unused due to various problems - lack of motivation to use them, improper construction, disadvantages in using them, insufficient knowledge about how to use them as well as their benefits etc.

He feels that people will take a long time to grasp the idea of JFPM. It is new for the government officials as well. He was quite vague when asked the number and the types of training that have been given to the different levels of government staff regarding JFPM. He felt however that not much has been done for the lower levels of staff like foresters and guards and that not much has been done in the way of training the different levels in the same forum so that there can be interaction between the various levels. Where training in gender issues is concerned, apart from a few training sessions where only women are expected to participate nothing else has been done in the way of training. Even at these all women sessions the same input is given that is given in the other sessions. He feels that the all-women sessions are held only to make the women freer to interact since they do not talk when men are present.

Regarding women's role in JFPM, he feels that since women do not have knowledge and are ignorant about most issues, it is best that they are not on the Managing Committee. Even the two women who have to be there, are only token members and often have to be forced to become Managing Committee members. When asked whether he feels that women should be trained and what the KFD is doing to get the women to participate, his response was that women anyway do not come forward in our society (He gave a couple of examples to prove his point) and therefore, what difference did it make anyway if men took the lead. Since this is a new concept at least it will be easier to make the men accept it. After a few more questions on gender issues, he said that he had a new idea of starting an all-women VFC in one of the villages (not yet decided). "Let us see how the women will manage on their own".

Though the KFD has started some training centres for tailoring in Hosalli he said the women are not interested. He feels that tailoring classes are a good incentive for people to take more interest in the VFC. When told that other government departments give this anyway, he ran down the other departments saying that they just give machines to the richer sections and are really not concerned about how they are being utilised.

The KFD (Yellapur division) has on two occasions paid the VFCs Rs. 500/- each as an incentive. When asked whether it would not be better to give a certain fixed percentage of the stolen property to the VFC as an incentive to protect the forests, he said that there already was a provision for that - 10% of the stolen property should actually be given. However, he said that there were problems with that. People of the villages would cut down trees and bring

other material to the KFD claiming that this was stolen property. Therefore this clause had to be treated carefully. (This shows the trust between KFD and villagers).

He was also highly critical of NGOs. He did not have any specific criticism except to say that they do not do much in the area of JFPM and that they do not coordinate with the KFD in their work. He said that there was a lack of a three-way interaction between KFD, NGOs and the VFCs so now he is thinking of having meetings where representatives of all three are present.

Some DCFs, particularly in Karwar division, feel that NGOs should take an active part in the JFPM process. They feel that without NGO support it is very difficult to motivate the villagers to form a VFC. They say that NGOs are in much more contact with the people so it is easier for them to gather people for meetings. The KFD staff on the other hand, is only in contact with those who come to the KFD office. It is only after JFPM that there is more of a relationship between KFD and the people.

They feel that JFPM is definitely going to benefit the people. It is the first time that the villagers will be controlling and earning cash incomes from forest resources. Also,
as people now have direct stakes in the forest and are now planning and managing their own forests it will lead to ecological and economic sustainability.

Since the JFPM concept is new the KFD has taken the initiative to form VFCs in most villages. However, they are hopeful that villagers will start to take the initiative and approach the KFD to form VFCs in their areas.

Overall, KFD officials speak with arrogance about their junior staff. This seems to be a problem in the KFD - kick the dog syndrome - senior staff pull up their juniors in front of the villagers. Since the hierarchy in the KFD continues to persist how can one expect them to treat the villagers with respect?

In general there were mixed responses about the role that KFD envisages for NGOs in the JFPM process. While some say they should actively be involved others say that NGOs tend to worsen the relationship between KFD and the people. Though almost all the KFD officials agree that the participation of women in the JFPM process is very low and needs to be strengthened they are quite pessimistic about this. They feel that given the social structures in the village it becomes difficult to involve women. Most of them also believe that since the concept of JFPM is relatively new it is best to get men to first accept it (since they are more educated and have more exposure) and then once it is well established one can think about women's participation.

The general impression received from most of the interviews is that KFD officials at all levels feel they are doing the people a big favour by introducing the JFPM scheme and the latter should be grateful to them for it.

Introduction

The introduction of JFPM in Uttara Kannada being relatively recent, very few NGOs have got involved in this process. While one of the possible reasons is that the NGOs do not have much dealing with government staff (and JFPM is seen as primarily a government programme) another reason is that the NGOs already have their set agendas and JFPM is an additional one, which is often difficult to integrate with their other activities. Another problem may be that some of the NGOs like DEEDS and SDP focus on specific communities, and JFPM work involves working with the village community as a whole.

In the process of locating for this study NGOs working with JFPM and related issues the following were identified : Vikasa, Karwar Rural Women and Children Development Society (KRWCDS), Karwar Diocesan Development Council (KDDC) and Deeds. A brief background of these organisations, their involvement in JFPM and their work with women's issues is discussed below.

VIKASA

Vikasa was established in 1985, with its first project in Manchikeri, Yellapur. The main purpose of the project at that time was to improve the situation of the Siddi Community. They worked in the area of education, training in sports and youth development.

Within a year or two problems arose due to tensions within the Siddi community based on communal lines. Vikasa was expected to take sides, which they did not do and gradually withdrew from the area. Between 1987 - 1991 they did not work in Uttara Kannada. During 1990 forestry issues started gaining momentum and Vikasa started getting involved in these at different fora - in Bangalore, with Fevord (K), Oxfam, etc. JFPM and related issues were on their agenda even before JFPM started being implemented in Uttara Kannada.

Oxfam was interested in JFPM and development issues but did not find suitable NGOs in Uttara Kannada involved in these issues. Vikasa fitted the bill and Oxfam agreed to fund their project in this region. Vikasa returned to Manchikeri in 1991-92, but found that JFPM work could not be carried out there since the canopy cover density there was above 0.25 and the Government Order says that JFPM work can only be carried out in zones 4 & 5 (below 0.25 density).

Therefore, along with Oxfam representatives and with Sirsi as their base they explored other areas where they could carry out their work. Malagi and its surrounding areas were selected. Most of their work during 1992-94 centred around networking, going for training programmes, and discussing policy issues at various fora. They lost touch with ground issues as not much time was given to the field.

Vikasa then decided to consolidate its work in the area and evaluate what they had done. In late 1994, they decided to concentrate on field issues and community organisation and leave networking, dealing with senior forest officials, etc., as low priorities. The villages they have now started to work with intensely are Gotgodi, Kolagi and Haraganahalli. Here they want to work on all issues including JFPM - they have adopted a community organisation/ family development approach.

Staff

At the office in Malagi there are only two staff members, both men. While both are involved in community development at the village level, one has the additional responsibility of networking with other NGOs and relating to government officials.

Occasional visits (approximately 3-4 days every two months) for overall supervision are made by the project heads who are based in Bangalore.

JFPM and Gender issues

Vikasa is actively involved in JFPM issues in the villages in which they work as well as liaisoning with NGOs and government staff in this regard.

The staff of Vikasa have been making attempts to get women involved not only in JFPM but in other activities as well. However, they had also interpreted the Government Order on JFPM concerning a minimum of two women on the VFC as a maximum of two women. Moreover, during the period when the VFCs were being formed in their areas, Vikasa was not actively involved at the village level. Therefore, no attempts were made to get more women involved in the general body or the Managing Committee of the VFC.

Since late '94 there has been a community development approach and a Mahila Mandal was formed due to Vikasa's involvement in the area of our study (Gotgodi). Attempts are being made to start income generation programmes in response to the women's demands.

The Vikasa staff feels the need for women to get more involved in JFPM related issues and have gradually been making efforts to call them for the VFC meetings.

DEEDS

Deeds is a registered voluntary organisation at Mangalore, started by Dr. Desmond D'Abreo, for development training to the rural poor as well as in urban slums. The main objective of the organisation is to establish a secular institution for the overall education of villagers. This includes training of development workers at various levels to initiate and promote genuine and total development services and to undertake community development programmes.

Deeds extended its work in North Kanara for the Gowli community from 1993. In July 1992, they took up a study of the Gowli Community to assess the social and economic situation and in the later stages involved the leaders to think about the development of the community. They started leadership training and imparted knowledge of legal matters, forest regulations, equality of women, etc. At present Deeds runs 9 free balwadis/primary education centres. It also has credit union programmes, income-generating programmes, women sanghas, adult education, skill training, and motivates people to utilise Government programmes and gives guidance to run a Forest Cooperative Society at Hosalli in Kirwatti. Deeds is also interested in motivating the Gowlies to participate in cultural activities.

Staff

Deeds has five board members, each designated as office bearers. The secretary of the organisation, Ms. Merlyn Martis, is the acting director of this organisation i.e. the Gowli Project. Under the director there are three Programme Coordinators who are in charge of independent projects in different places of Karnataka. One such project is the Gowli Project, Yellapur, working in several ranges of Yellapur. At present Deeds Gowli Dhangar Development Project has 13 staff members including the Project Coordinator, three organisers and 9 Balwadi teachers. A team of 12 Gowli leaders are also involved in the education programmes.

JFPM and Gender issues:-

Deeds' involvement in JFPM is restricted to Yellapur Taluka and particularly to Hosalli VFC. The Deeds staff keeps close contact with the forest department as well as people regarding JFPM issues. However, Deeds does not consider JFPM a priority area and this gets reflected in the lack of training programmes for their staff. Apart from that, Deeds is rarely represented when the NGOs in the district meet regularly to discuss various issues including JFPM.

One of the difficulties faced by Deeds in JFPM is that Gowli hamlets are scattered and form adjuncts to larger revenue villages. Having very little contact with non-Gowlis, it becomes difficult to involve whole villages in JFPM. Also, most areas where Gowlis live have canopy density of more than 0.25 and JFPM is not possible. Even the Hosalli VFC has no land assigned to it for JFPM work - it was formed essentially to facilitate work on the fodder plot.

Where gender issues are concerned Deeds has not taken any effort to get women involved in the VFCs. They have merely been a support to the VFC in Hosalli and have not tried to question any of the KFD initiatives in this VFC.

KDDC

In 1977 when the Karwar diocese was formed, the Bishop and priests of the diocese wanted to form a body to take care of developmental activities. In 1978, KDDC was formed and registered. It is an autonomous body. Though the Bishop is President, the Executive Director makes the basic policy decisions in consultation with the team. Its operational area includes the entire district (the diocese). At that time welfare and charitable works were taken up like `Food for work' and `MCH' programmes.

There was a large KDDC project after the floods in 1980-81 to give housing in the Honnavar/Sharavati belt. About 2000 houses were built. After housing, KDDC programmes centred on health and education mainly through dispensaries and boarding facilities for students. Apart from that, income-generation activities, self-employment schemes (and on a small scale community building) etc., were carried out. The Siddi Development Programme and IRDP were taken up - with these a community development approach started.

Though first tested in 1987, it was around 1989 when KDDC started formation of self-help groups and credit unions which soon became the main activity. Small savings, self management skills, leadership generation, community organising, skill training etc., were included.

Staff pattern

Below the Executive Director are two Coordinators (or regional organisers) - both men. Under their guidance there are four supervisors (3 women, 1 men). For every 1, 2 or 3 villages there are Animators/Community Development Workers (who also function as Balwadi teachers).

The animators have not had any training in JFPM. But this is discussed during KDDC meetings. No separate training is felt necessary. JFPM is there only in a few villages and is only one of their various activities.

Out of 58 village groups/ sanghas directly under KDDC supervision, about 40-42 consist of only women. Groups are either based on credit unions or other activities.

JFPM and Gender issues

KDDC first started attending meetings relating to JFPM in June - August 1993 in Tattihalla, Karwar etc. All the senior staff of KDDC attended the Tattihalla 5-day workshop and all the staff attended a couple of one day sessions at KDDC on JFPM.

Initially, KDDC employed 2 people specifically for JFPM work. However, within 7 months both left for better jobs. KDDC is still interested in employing 2 people to train their groups on environment issues, forest etc. (JFPM will be included in this). The KDDC staff as part of their other activities get involved with VFC formation and JFPM-related activities.

There is no specific gender training but women's rights, legal aid etc. is taught to the staff at all levels. Separate days are also assigned during their regular trainings to discuss women's issues. The staff are also sent to Mysore and other places for training.

KRWCDS

Karwar Rural Women and Children Development Society (KRWCDS) has been working in Karwar taluk of Uttara Kannada district since 1987. It has recently extended its work to Joida taluk as well and now works in 40 villages of Karwar and 20 hamlets of Joida. Contrary to what the name suggests, KRWCDS does not concentrate its programmes on women and children but works with all categories of the rural poor. It is engaged both in community organisation and development activities like agricultural development, basic human health care, veterinary services, thrift and credit etc.

Unlike all the other NGOs in this study, KRWCDS gives a lot of financial inputs in the villages in which they work, both in terms of low interest loans as well as direct investments in the villages in which they work. The input in terms of staff and the amount of time spent in each of the villages is also much higher than the other NGOs. In fact, one needs to assess the correlation of these inputs with the success in motivating people to get involved in JFPM or other issues.

Staff

KRWCDS is a registered body but the role of the Board is minimal. Policy making is carried out by a team consisting of two coordinators and ten community organisers under the supervision of the Director; 50% of each sex are accordingly responsible for the women's and men's programmes. This team meets once a month to formulate policies and assess the progress of the programmes.

The community organisers who are in regular contact with the field are assisted by volunteer animators selected by the people and by an agricultural extension worker. The staff carrying out the women and child oriented programmes are supplemented by nursery school teachers, health education coordinators and part-time community health workers. The staff undergo regular training at the KRWCDS office in Karwar.

JFPM and Gender issues

KRWCDS is actively involved in JFPM activities. By and large their inputs in the villages in which they work are intensive. Therefore any new programme that is started is also taken up seriously by KRWCDS. They have done serious education and awareness raising work on JFPM and have been instrumental in the formation of VFCs in some of the areas where they work.

Before the entry of JFPM, the relationship between KRWCDS and the KFD was non-existent; they generally viewed each other with suspicion. Actually KRWCDS got to know about JFPM only after Oxfam's entry in Uttara Kannada. Their relationship with the KFD has improved considerably after the onset of JFPM. Interviews with both KRWCDS staff and the KFD staff as well as field observations showed how much the KFD depends on the former for the formation and success of the VFCs in their areas. Joint meetings are held with KRWCDS and Forest Officials on an ongoing basis regarding JFPM related issues. When JFPM was first introduced a meeting was held by KRWCDS in their campus. They had motivated 80 villagers to attend this meeting. Forest Officials explained JFPM after which people raised questions. However, senior KRWCDS staff do not feel that people have benefitted much from the JFPM process.

Attempts are gradually being made to involve women in the VFCs. The KRWCDS Coordinator who is actively involved at the village level has explained in these villages why women are mainly affected by JFPM decisions. He is in charge of the JFPM work in his organisation. It was primarily due to his motivation as well as the positive response from the senior KFD staff at that time that an all women VFC was formed in Satgeri.

CONCLUSION

NGOs and JFPM

In general it can be said that JFPM is not a priority area for most of the NGOs in Uttara Kannada. However, all the senior NGO staff interviewed felt that NGOs are necessary for the success of JFPM. All the NGOs in the district have taken up JFPM issues due to the initiative of Oxfam and most JFPM related activities are funded by Oxfam. In most cases there are no specific staff for JFPM activities.

While KRWCDS and Vikasa are quite actively involved in JFPM and liaison with the KFD in this regard, the other two NGOs, i.e. KDDC and Deeds, are not so involved in JFPM. Their priority areas are different and JFPM does not appear to fit in with these.

KRWCDS and KDDC have both taken the initiative to form VFCs in their areas of work by motivating the villagers to apply to the KFD to form VFCs in their villages. The other two NGOs, viz. Vikasa and Deeds, have not attempted to form VFCs in their areas of work. In the former case it is because VFCs

were already formed in the three villages in which Vikasa is involved. In the case of Deeds, JFPM is not their priority area and apart from Hosalli they have not done much in the area of JFPM.

Future role in JFPM as envisaged by NGOs

The senior staff of the NGOs felt that the role of NGOs in JFPM would increase with the increase in the number of VFCs in their areas of work and with the improved relationship with the KFD staff. However, the NGOs are not very sure about the role they should play in the JFPM process; whether they should be mere catalysts or play a more active role. The broad view of the NGOs can be summarised in a statement made by the Director of KDDC "NGOs involvement (in JFPM) is a must since NGOs have the know-how and the capacity to get involved. Otherwise it will be like any other government programme."

NGOs and KFD

The relationship between most NGOs and the KFD was either non-existent or one of mutual suspicion. Due to the JFPM process the relationship between NGOs and the KFD has by and large improved. The change in the relationship is much more obvious with KRWCDS followed by Vikasa than with the other NGOs in the study. With the other two NGOs, viz. Deeds and KDDC the relationship has improved overall but at times interaction related to JFPM has continued to be based on the traditional one of mutual suspicion.

The NGO staff feel that the KFD officials need to have more confidence in the NGOs if they expect the latter to motivate people to participate in the VFCs. They say that without this trust at all levels of staff it becomes difficult for them to get people to be involved in JFPM.

Moreover, they believe that in areas where NGOs are not there, the success of JFPM depends first on the officers involved and next on the capacity of the people to organise themselves.

Gender concerns in JFPM

All the NGOs in the study have programmes exclusively for women. The approach of the NGOs has been to divide the village into different groups based on age, sex, caste etc. and conduct programmes for these groups. Empowerment of women and improving their status through income generation schemes and Mahila Mandals is taken up by all the NGOs in the study. However, since the JFPM process prima facie does not seem to require the village to be broken up into convenient units, none of the NGOs have felt the need to question the dominance of men in this process. Some improvement seems to have taken place as Oxfam is keen that gender issues in JFPM be tackled by NGOs.

While all the NGOs are sympathetic to women's issues, none have made attempts to get more than two women on the Managing Committees of the VFCs. In the case of KDDC where the KFD requested the NGO staff to collect Rs. 2 from each household towards membership on the VFC general body, the heads of the household (usually men) were specifically asked to become members. The only exception is Satgeri where KRWCDS, with KFD support, took the initiative in forming an all-women VFC. However, in other villages where KRWCDS works they too did not attempt to actively solicit the participation of women in other areas where VFCs are formed.

It is only recently that the need has been felt by all the NGOs studied to involve women in JFPM related issues. Unfortunately, the trend earlier was to somehow initiate the JFPM process in their areas of work and it seemed simpler to follow the Government Order as interpreted by the KFD.

CHAPTER 4

ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED

From the observations made during the course of the research and the discussions had with men and women in the villages as well as KFD and NGO staff the following issues have been thrown up, many of which need further debate and discussion. These have been listed under several subheads to facilitate discussion and suggestions have been given to make the JFPM process more participatory.

Participation of women in the JFPM process

1. At every stage, participation of women is practically non-existent - e.g. they are not adequately involved in the PRA or microplan exercises. Given the socio-cultural situation and the danger of marginalisation in JFPM, the KFD & NGOs should actively encourage women to participate. The women members should ideally be selected by the women themselves after all the women clearly understand the importance of their opinions in the JFPM process and that the women members of the VFC are their (the women's) representatives.

2. Following from the above, separate meetings of the women should be held periodically to address their issues and priorities - before presenting these at the general VFC meetings. The same should be done when the concept of JFPM is first introduced in the village. When the KFD calls people for meetings it is assumed by everyone (the KFD and the villagers) that it is only the men who should attend.

3. In most rural studies, village women are seen as a homogeneous entity. In this study it becomes clear that women from different communities, castes etc. not only have conflicting interests and priorities but often cannot even be brought together on a common platform (where interests can converge) due to deep-seated prejudices and beliefs about each other.

4. It becomes difficult to bring about unity among the women from the different communities as could be seen from the training sessions we conducted. Class and community issues tend to take over. The lower caste landless women are employed in the agricultural fields of the upper caste landlords. It is often the landladies who oversee the work. It is obvious in such a situation that the upper caste wealthy women will decide the priorities of any `women's' group in the village.

5. All this obviously leads to the solution that the village should be broken up into numerous groups if all voices are to be heard. This would be impractical if not impossible on an ongoing basis. But could it not be possible for the KFD to at least make attempts to get the views of women from the different castes and classes? For instance, during the PRA exercises the opinions of different groups could be obtained.

6. It is interesting though perhaps obvious that in all the villages in our study not a single promoter was a woman. Though the KFD talks about women's involvements in JFPM it has made no (or very little attempt) to get women to participate.

7. In the process of obtaining membership to the VFC, the foresters have gone from house to house and in mst cases specifically asked fr the male head f the household. If the male 'head' was not at home, the forester has asked for Rs.2/- from the wife or mother of the male 'head' and written down the later's name saying that he would make another visit to explain what the money was needed for or he would do so when he met the man elsewhere in the village. From this it becomes cleat that the KFD not only has made no attempt to include women in the VFC but have deliberately, knowingly or otherwise excluded them from the process.

8. In the majority of villages, both women and men were unaware of the decisions taken by the VFC. Even after being told about the decisions (selected for the study) they were unable to discuss the possible effects of these decisions on them immediately. Therefore, though this was one of the main objectives of the study it was not possible to examine the implications of the decisions on men and women.

9. It is important to note that not only are the women's opinions unsolicited when making JFPM related decisions, but even after the decisions are made the women are not properly informed about these decisions. Most women do not know why they are asked to behave in certain ways. For example, in Beligeri, the seed money was used in the collection of Sigekai. The women were not told where the money was from but were merely paid for the amount they collected.

10. In most places women are not only unaware of the origin of the decisions but of the very existence of the VFC - even when their husbands are members. In some cases when they do know that a VFC has been formed they have no idea about its purpose and functions and are usually told both by the KFD and the men in their village that these are matters which do not concern women.

11. In such a scenario it is inevitable that women have not seen the area allotted to the VFC, or the JFPM land as it is popularly called.

12. It is commonly believed by gender experts that dispensing with the household as a unit of membership in VFCs and including all adult members in the general body will lead to more meaningful participation of women. However, we need to question whether (in traditional communities where women's participation is undervalued) wives would speak in the presence of their husbands (let alone disagree with them). The less vocal women who are the majority do not get an opportunity to participate since their husbands do not even feel the need to tell them what has happened during meetings. It is only the vocal women in the village who participate - either directly in VFCs or indirectly by making their views clear to the male members of their families who are considered the representatives of their families by the rest of society. The advantage here is that traditional roles are not questioned; men feel less threatened but at the same time take note of the views of the women in their families. The disadvantages of course, are many. Women's opinions are not publicly expressed; they are not given the opportunity to discuss and strengthen (or modify) their views with other women (and men); they may be left out of the benefit-sharing process.

13. The fact that in most areas it is only the men who become members of the general body is merely a reflection of the patriarchal nature of our society. It is inevitable that if only one person in a family has to be represented for practically any programme it will be the `male head of the household'. What is interesting to note is that this could easily be changed with just a little effort on the part of the KFD staff or the NGOs. Men are willing to `permit' their wives to be general body members if other women were also members. The problem in most places is that people do not want to take the initiative and be the exceptions. However, if this issue (the need for women to be members) were to have been discussed during the initial meetings while forming the VFC it is highly probable that many more women would be in the general body as well as the Managing Committee of the VFC. For women to take an active part in the JFPM process it needs to be a community endeavour This includes the benefit- sharing process as well as their active involvement in decision- making and deciding priority areas of the VFC.

14. During the micro-planning process, women (in the few cases where they do participate) are divided into the groups along with men and the latter generally take over the process. Often women are not even aware of what the microplan is about. Whenever possible could not a group comprised only of women be formed - with the recognition that women from different classes/castes have different needs? This would ensure that the women understand what is required from them and will ensure their active participation. The KFD has not made any attempts to involve women in the micro-plans. Both men and women should participate in these micro-plans and in fact the issues addressed could be gender based. There should be more training sessions for women to participate in JFPM. The trainers could be KFD staff, anganwadi teachers, or outside resource persons.

15. Regarding the process of elections to the Managing Committee, all the microplan documents as well as the people interviewed (KFD and villagers) state that the members were `unanimously elected'. However, more in-depth analysis showed that the entire process is directly or subtly guided by the KFD. At times people do not agree with the suggestions or nominations made by the KFD but do not have the courage to oppose them. With women it is even less likely that any difference of opinion will be voiced.

16. The women on the Managing Committee generally belong to the dominant groups in the village and are usually nominated to the Committee by the men from their communities who have already been elected to the Managing Committee. In some cases the KFD recommends the women members. Rarely are the women members elected by the other women who have attended the meeting. At times the elected women are not interested in becoming members but are pressurised by the men from their community/ caste groups. Sometimes, these women do not participate in the VFC after the elections are over and even when they do participate are unaware of what is happening during the meetings. They are usually told quite explicitly by the KFD and the men in the village that they have been elected only because the Government Order requires that two women have to be on the Managing Committee. Apart from their signatures their participation is neither expected nor particularly desired. (Belgeri, Kangod, Hosalli, Bogribail). In some villages men have recommended the names of women because these women are active and have responsible positions in the village (Nagarbastikere).

17. In such a situation can the 2 women who are on the Managing Committee truly represent the women in the village? Are their voices heard by the other Managing Committee members? Can they communicate the outcome of the VFC meetings to the other village women? In cases where the women members do participate in the VFC and have understood what has gone on, they usually relate the outcome of the meetings to women from their own communities through informal communication channels. (Bogribail, Beliger)

18. Since the 2 women on the Managing Committee are almost always from the dominant communities would it not reinforce the dominance of these communities? Perhaps when we talk about representation of women it is important to give representation to different communities in the village. What is of prime importance in fact is that forest-dependent people, irrespective of caste and community, need to be involved more in the JFPM process.

19. Another issue that needs further discussion is the extent to which men are aware of the preferences and choices of their wives. We (gender specialists) assume, perhaps from a middle class, urban perspective, that needs and priorities are gender based for <u>all</u> groups, classes etc. Though experiences validate this assumption, is it not possible that there is a greater homogeneity of interests among certain groups, particularly when survival needs are of paramount importance and women and men depend on each other in ways that are far beyond our understanding? This is in spite of the more obvious gender division of labour that we may `observe' in rural areas. For instance, though firewood is considered a `women`s' issue, in most villages in the study both men and women go to the forest to collect firewood.

20. Moreover, it seems that women do not differ much regarding the decisions that the men have taken in the VFC (after they have been told of specific decisions - and of gender issues) though the women do not feel that the men take their wives opinions into consideration when making decisions.

21. Though women have rarely been asked their opinion in the choice of trees to be planted, the final choice made by the VFC often coincides with those women would have made anyway. This was seen through discussions with the research team. However, women's needs of forest resources are not taken into consideration either by KFD or men of the village. What is evident however, is that there is a greater homogeneity of interests between men and women in the village than between KFD staff and men.

22. There are no formal processes for the VFC to feedback information about their meetings to the rest of the village. Nor is this considered important. In most places the Managing Commit tee members do not feel the need to talk about their VFC meetings with other villagers though some informal discussions do take place with their relatives or friends - usually of the same community. It is only when all the villagers are needed to participate in some activity (like shramdan) that they are informed or their opinions solicited in a general body meeting. It is inevitable in such a scenario that women are almost always excluded.

23. In general, it is too early to say what women want from the JFPM process. The concept is still very new to them and even after the training sessions conducted by the research team they were unable to say what they want from the process. Whatever is expected is very local, specific to their problems like solving the water problem in their area or getting compensation for crops damaged due to wild animals. The fact that they can now make major decisions regarding the forest is generally beyond their comprehension. Moreover, women do not expect to get anything from the forest though they directly depend on the forests for their livelihood. They tend to ask for `favours' like water, roads, etc. that they are accustomed to getting from the Government.

24. The issue of benefit sharing was raised with both women and men. Even after being made aware that the benefits of the VFC would be in the name of the VFC member (in most cases men) women felt that it would make no difference in whose names the benefits were given. They genuinely believed that if the benefits came to one member of the family it would automatically go to the rest of the family as well. Moreover, in a society where it is very difficult for them to claim their `rights' (in case of any dispute between husband and wife), they felt that even if the benefits were in their names their husbands could use it if they wanted to for their own needs and their wives could not effectively stop them.

25. While this was the opinion of the women where benefits are to be obtained at an individual level, their views were different when it came to group benefits. Here, they felt that if a group of women shared the benefits, like in the DWCRA scheme, and where they could derive support from each other it would make a substantial difference if the benefits were in their names. In such a case their collective strength would mitigate the effects of their husbands misusing the benefits which were in their wives names. It would also increase their decision-making power and their specific needs could be met.

26. It would be useful to explore this further and accordingly recommend modifications in the Government Order. For instance, in order to increase women's participation and strength it might be useful if some benefits could be shared by groups. An understanding of how the group benefits are to be utilised could be agreed upon and signed by the persons concerned perhaps during the signing of the MoU.

27. Regarding benefit sharing, after women were told that the benefits would come in the names of their husbands they said that it would make no difference whether it came in their names or their husbands' since everyone in the family would benefit. However, they felt that it would be different if more women were on the VFC since men never tell their wives what happens outside, whereas women discuss with their husbands when anything happens outside the house.

28. Training on JFPM under the WGDP has been entrusted to MYRADA, a Karnataka based NGO. The operational instructions given by MYRADA for KFD staff state on page 2 "Identify villagers who are willing to share their experience". This would inevitably mean obtaining information from the more vocal sections (usually men from the dominant communities), thus reinforcing inequalities.

Further (on page 4) MYRADA states, " Try to follow existing social customs of the village.... Do not try to insist to much upon the women members of the family who are reluctant to talk directly or sit in the middle of a gathering. They generally participate in discussions through male members sitting in the foreground". At the same time, later in the manual (page 5) they state "Individuals trying to dominate the discussion should be prevented carefully. Intervene politely, come back to the original discussion and provide opportunities to everyone.

29. Except for one instance (page 13) where a suggestion is made to involve women and people from different classes and age groups, nowhere else is the participation of women actively solicited. On the other hand there are several suggestions to include people from different age groups at various stages.(Page 7, 13, 16) What actually happens is that since there are no attempts to include women right at the beginning then later attempts at inclusion (if at all made) usually result in the dominant groups speaking on behalf of the others.

30. Firewood does not seem to be an important issue due to the abundance of firewood available. Also, it is not as much of a gender issue as men (in many villages) go to collect firewood. Though it is likely to become an issue in the long run people have not given it any thought since it will take many years before they are hit by scarcity.

31. The two immediate and visible benefits of the JFPM process are the seed money and the installation of smokeless chullas. While the former, in spite of being a token amount cannot be spent without the approval of how it is to be utilised and the sanction of the KFD official, the latter has not been done satisfactorily. At least this issue/programme could have been discussed with women since it is directly related to them as they are mainly responsible for the cooking. People have been asked whether they want to install smokeless chullas and since it is free many of them have agreed. Very rarely have demonstrations been given on how to use these smokeless chullas. The result is that in places where they have been poorly constructed or where there are negative effects or where people have not been convinced about their usefulness they are left unused and people continue to use theoir traditional chullas. Though in some places women are convinced that smokeless chullas require less firewood, none of the women have been made aware of the larger issues of conservation of the environment due to the reduction in firewood usage.

Other issues relevant to the success/ failure of JFPM

1. Class/Caste/Committee issues should be addressed by the KFD and NGOs. This study shows how women (and men) view the JFPM process. Some communities and castes are ignorant of the entire process. The problem lies basically in viewing the village as a homogeneous entity. Throughout the JFPM process there is no attempt to include weaker sections who are forest-dependent people. In cases where it is recognised that the village is made up of different groups often with conflicting interests and needs, the attempt is made to sort these out at the level of the VFC Managing Committee (where the dominant groups) decide the priorities. No attempt is made by the KFD to actively solicit the opinions of men and women of the different committees or organise separate platforms where the views of the minorities or suppressed sections (including women) could be heard. For example, the fisher communities in the coastal villages are in a minority in the villages in our study. Their views regarding JFPM have not been solicited at any stage. Is it not likely that their needs will be different from those of the agricultural families?

2. A related issue is : what happens to unmarried adult men or women who do not belong to any `family' as defined by these Government schemes and are not eligible for membership, e.g. a widow staying with her brother? This issue was generated towards the end of the study so unfortunately no specific data on this issue has been collected.

3. The JFPM concept involves giving only degraded forests to the VFC. In areas where there are no degraded forests, good forests are not given due to the contractor lobby. There timber, NTFP and other forest produce are involved. This is why in some places like Saralgi, the villagers are of the view that KFD is not keen on forming the VFC since there is no degraded land in that area. They say that the NTFP contractors' lobby does not want the VFC to get rights over the good forest area.

4. In many VFCs the microplan and MoU books are separate and not given to the people as one document. This means that people are signing the Government Order without necessarily being aware or agreeing to what is in the micro-plan (e.g. Bogribail and Shirve).

Though certain areas have been demarcated for protection and people are not allowed to cut trees or green leaves, it has not affected them yet since Uttara Kannada is still highly forested and there is not much of a problem in obtaining firewood. In most areas people say that there is no difference between the before and after VFC formation where firewood collection is concerned. The only difference is that now they are told not to cut green trees. They say that earlier as well they did not cut green trees as enough firewood is available.

5. In some cases, formation of the VFC restricts people's use of the forest. Earlier, is spite of government regulations people would use the forests for firewood, manure and NTFP. With the introduction of JFPM, people agree not to use (or to use specified areas of) the forest for these purposes. All they appear to have got in return is an improved relationship with the KFD and promises of future benefits that even the people doubt will be met.

6. In several cases, the formation of a VFC automatically means that a certain area of the forest is demarcated for that VFC. This becomes a problem because prior to JFPM, the forest was being used by several villages as well as migrant communities who are now forcibly prohibited from using the forest. In fact, what happens is that villagers neighbouring a village where a VFC has been formed start demanding the formation of a VFC in their villages since they want a section of the forest to themselves. Does the JFPM ideology envisage a process whereby the forest is apportioned into various segments and managed by independent villages? Will the traditional relationships between neighbouring villages change as a result?

7. One solution to the above is that instead of focusing on random villages to be included in the JFPM process, a cluster approach could be adopted whereby VFCs could be formed in all the villages dependent on a certain forest area. This could be done in consultation with representatives from the different villages in the cluster. The needs of migrant communities traditionally using that forest needs also to be considered.

8. One solution to possible and existent problems is that there should be interaction between different VFCs where they can share their experiences. Perhaps as Mary Hobley suggests an apex body could be formed. Representatives from villages which do not have VFCs should be invited to these meetings so that they can also decide whether they would like to form a VFC in their villages. However, care should be taken not to use this apex body for policy formulation, so that the decentralised nature of the JFPM process can be maintained. This is because the apex body is likely to consist of representatives from the dominant sections of each village even if efforts are made to include women and other weaker sections.

9. One way of making the JFPM process more participatory is that instead of the village, a settlement could be seen as a unit for the management if not planning of JFPM related activities. This need becomes evident when we see the experience of Beligeri where the forest areas used by Jambguli and Belgeri and the resources of these areas are different.

10. The emphasis given to commercial plantations is not merely a KFD initiative. Though people are interested in NTFP, fodder, and other species, there is a definite desire to grow `valuable' trees like teak which will fetch them returns when the forests are `handed' over to them. Of course, the interest in teak and other commercial plantations is based on the assumption that they will get a share of the benefits of the forest after five years. There does not seem to be a difference of opinion between men and women on this issue irrespective of in whose names the benefits are given. It is interesting to note that, contrary to expectations, the all-women VFC in Satgeri would like more teak to be planted in their VFC area.

11. KFD, in fact, are often reluctant to plant teak in VFC areas but want these trees in the regular plantations. Planting `valuable' trees in VFC areas means giving greater monetary control to the villagers. The desire for commercial plants should be understood in the context of JFPM. The entire `scheme' has been introduced by the ODA through the KFD in terms of `monetary' returns, for example, the concept of sharing the profits 50 - 50 between KFD and the VFC. Also, KFD defines the range of vision of the VFC by introducing certain issues such as new plantations, and ignoring others. To what extent does KFD influence the issues that are discussed? They have relatively set ideas about what issues the VFC should take up e.g. plantation and protection. They make very little or no attempt to find out what people really want out of the JFPM process thereby leaving very limited scope for `alternative' visions that are people-and-environment friendly. One really needs to question the extent to which the solutions to the firewood, fodder, NTFP and other forestry issues represent the preferences/ choices of women - or men - or NGOs - or KFD - or ODA.

12. Nowhere has the issue of NTFP been discussed by KFD. One of the purposes of JFPM is to stop giving contracts to outsiders as soon as the VFC is formed. Even after signing MoUs, contracts for honey, beedi leaves etc. are given to outside contractors (e.g. Kangod).

Role of KFD in JFPM

1. In spite of the KFD saying they have made frequent visits to the villages to convince people about JFPM, it appears that in all the villages in our study a maximum of four visits were made prior to the formation of the VFC. The purpose of JFPM has usually been explained in one meeting and the Department has informed people that in exchange for protection of the forests they would be given certain benefits. The people have been told that the Department would protect the land for the initial three years after formation and then the VFC would have to look after the land allotted to the VFC.

2. The people (apart from a few members) still feel they are beneficiaries, receiving finance and inputs from the forest department in exchange for protection of the forests. The traditional hierarchy between KFD and the people does not seem to have diminished except that now the people feel that the KFD (and other government departments) have become more approachable and perhaps accessible. The dialogue between the KFD and the people has increased to some extent though the hierarchy between the two seems to be the same as earlier. From the point of view of women and KFD there seems to be no change from the earlier relationship since they have not been involved in the JFPM process.

3. The seating arrangement during VFC meetings in most villages reinforces the hierarchy between the KFD and the villagers. The KFD staff sit on chairs at a table in the front (at times with the VFC president and the NGO representative). The villagers sit in a semicircle on either low benches or the floor. In fact, some people genuinely believe that the KFD has given furniture besides seed money so that the latter have a decent place to sit during the meetings. The atmosphere during VFC meetings is often similar to a school where the teacher addresses the students.

4. Since many senior KFD staff do not genuinely believe in the concept of JFPM and are implementing it only because the ODA is investing so much and this has translated into an order from their superior officers, it raises the question of sustainability of the JFPM process when ODA finally withdraws its support. What happens to the VFCs then? What about the investment that the villagers have put into the village. Will they be cost effective? Will it further increase the mistrust and lack of confidence that the people have in the KFD?

5. Apart from a few villages, people are not motivated to protect the forest even after signing the MoU. This is because VFCs are told by KFD that for three years they will protect the land and after three years (when exactly the first year starts people do not know), the land will be handed over to VFCs and people will have to look after it. Therefore, at no stage is it a `Joint Venture' as the very concept of JFPM envisages. At no stage have the KFD and the people to work together in the management of the forest.

JFPM, as it is practiced, tends to reinforce the age old relationship between the KFD and the people, that responsibilities are not shared but allotted over different periods of time.

6. The promoters, i.e. the people whom KFD first contacts, usually end up becoming Chairman and Committee members. The KFD contacts the important and powerful people in the village and the dominance of these is reinforced in the JFPM process.

7. In many cases, the VFC Chairman is a forest contractor or a close relative of one - or has worked with the KFD. The same goes for other Managing Committee members. Would it effect the VFC functioning if committee members were being paid by the KFD e.g. when a committee member is a KFD watchman? Also, how do these people become committee members? Are they elected by the villagers or are there subtle pressures/hints from the KFD to involve these people in the Managing Committee? In some cases the VFC President has been directly selected by KFD. e.g. Hosalli and Manjguni.

8. Since attempts are rarely made to involve all sections in the village in the JFPM process one needs to ask, 'What happens to the sustainability of the VFC after the KFD withdraws from the area three years after the VFC formation, if there are large sections of people (women & weaker sections) who are excluded from it?

9. So far for VFC meetings, the people pay for tea, biscuits etc. or the seed money is utilised for this, in cases without the knowledge of the VFC Managing Committee. A recent circular (which has not yet reached the forester level) states that Rs.51/- should be provided by the KFD for each meeting.

10. Though one of the important uses of the PRA method is to avoid the cumbersome survey method, the KFD has not dispensed with the latter.

11. Promises made by the KFD have not been fulfilled. Since people expect this from their relationship with Government departments over the years, the relationship with the KFD has not changed due to this. However, this has resulted in JFPM being viewed as just another Government programme. For example, giving contracts to outsiders instead of the VFC (Saralgi, Nagarbastikeri, Bogribail) and withdrawing financial support before the completion of 3 years towards the fodder plot (Basapur and Hosalli). Hence the people have not gained more confidence in the KFD.

12. Moreover, technical guidance has not been given by the KFD as stipulated in the Government Order. For instance, the construction and use of smokeless chullas have not been demonstrated, and technical guidance solicited by the VFC in connection with the mango plot was not provided by the KFD.

13. The KFD often gets labourers from outside the village. The possible reasons for this are several. The people feel that the department avoids local people for labour since they will find out details about the department dealings. The people also say that the department has greater control over labourers from outside. According to the KFD staff, villagers are not always ready to accept the work given by the department since they say they have to work on their own fields. Also the locals do not maintain proper hours and take breaks during the day for their personal work. Though stated in the Government Order, the KFD does not inform the VFC that any work on JFPM land gives first preference to the villages and then to the outsiders. Often (on JFPM land) workers are brought from outside.

14. In many places people feel that the KFD does not give villagers due respect. Blank papers are given to the Chairman to sign, they are not informed about the amount deposited in the bank nor are they shown the registers and records of their own VFC.

15. People are of the opinion that the KFD staff are not active and do not take any initiative to make this process successful. This is evident when it is learnt everywhere that regular monthly meetings are not held.

In none of the meetings that the research team attended were issues directly related to JFPM (implementation of Management Plan) discussed.

16. The people expect higher officials (RFO and DCF) to attend VFC meetings though they are not chnically supposed to. However, this view has been reinforced by these KFD officials who often promise to attend meetings and also state that no progress is made if they do not attend as they cannot rely on their juniors. In a way, it is very positive that the KFD officials are taking so much effort to visit the villages themselves, in spite of the late hours that the meetings are usually held. What needs to be seriously considered, though, is the necessity of senior official attending the VFC meetings and for how long this involvement of senior staff can continue. Since these officials cannot rely on their junior staff for whatever reason, should not this be examined and perhaps more training be given to the junior staff on JFPM issues.

17. Usually the KFD (the forester) has to call for VFC meetings. If he (or if senior officials who have promised to attend) does not come for a scheduled meeting it is canceled. Very rarely do the members feel motivated or capable enough to hold meetings on their own. The agenda for the meetings also have to be decided by KFD staff. Though the JFPM process is in its initial stages and the concept is relatively new for how long can the KFD take the initiative and continue to sustain this `joint' endeavour?

18. Junior KFD staff and even RFOs have complained that sometimes senior officials come to the village, attend meetings and make several promises which later cause problems. These promises often cannot be kept since they go against some rule or are not part of the microplan. Also, once officials are transferred the others who come may not agree with what has been promised and may have a different way of functioning.

19. The forester (Secretary) takes down the minutes of the meetings. But this is not always sincerely recorded (consciously or otherwise). The minutes are read out quite rapidly before the meeting concludes. While only the main issues discussed are entered in the book, minor issues or issues raised by the less vocal segments do not get included. e.g. in a VFC meeting in Nagarbastikeri the woman committee member who gave the vote of thanks differed with the others about how the seed money should be utilised but this was not recorded. Perhaps there should be an alternate process (or additional one) for recording the `processes' at the meetings - who spoke, what was said, who initiated certain issues. This would aid in the process of making JFPM more participatory. The villagers should be given more responsibility for maintaining records. As of now, all literature is kept by the KFD officials - usually no copies are given to the VFC.

<u>Role of NGOs in JFPM</u>

1. The greater the NGO involvement in an area in terms of investment of time, money and staff the greater the possessiveness about `their areas' and the more the reluctance to `permit' outsiders to enter these areas. This territoriality was reflected during the entire study - initially when the research team discussed the project with the senior people in each NGO and later when the research team felt the need to contribute to each of the places that they had studied by conducting gender training for the village women.

2. Where NGOs are working, the KFD depends on them (perhaps too much) for support. Could this be seen as a delegation of the duties of the KFD staff? Does not the KFD have to establish their own rapport with the people irrespective of the NGOs involved? Could the NGO presence in this respect be seen as a hindrance to a direct dialogue between KFD and the people? For instance, in most places where NGOs are active, the KFD have not felt it necessary to explain the purpose of JFPM, feeling that the NGO would do this anyway. Moreover, the NGOs too, tend to mediate between the people and the KFD. NGO staff meet the KFD officials in connection with JFPM work instead of motivating the villagers to take the effort of meeting with the KFD officials (e.g. Saralgi).

3. The Government Order has provision for the involvement of NGOs in JFPM but is often reluctant to include NGOs in the process. They expect the NGO staff to take effort related to the VFC but do not want to give them official position on the Managing Committee.

4. Moreover, since NGOs already have their priority areas of work, involvement in JFPM usually means additional responsibilities and perhaps appointing additional staff. When the existing staff is expected to get involved in the VFCs it tends to be just one more duty to perform.

5. Most NGOs in Uttara Kannada appear to have got involved in JFPM due to the presence of Oxfam, which gives financial support if necessary and motivates NGOs to take on a more active role in JFPM in the villages in which they work. In this regard one needs to examine the extent to which NGOs are necessary to the JFPM process. Though the importance of the roles NGOs can play in the JFPM process cannot be denied, given the number of NGOs in the district, their geographical coverage and their limitations, how much should one depend on NGO involvement? From the point of view of the NGOs it is useful to get involved in the VFCs in the areas they work. However, from the KFD point of view, stress given to NGOs in JFPM seems pointless considering the number of villages in the district in which there are no NGOs working.

Attitudes of men and women towards JFPM

1. The attitudes of men and women towards JFPM are by and large based on their actual personal experience. Most people have not thought beyond their own VFCs, protection of the environment in general, or larger issues. Therefore what often happens is that one bad experience with the KFD is enough to put people off JFPM as a whole.

2. People often hear what they want to hear. Due to the age old relationship with KFD and other government departments they are not attuned to the idea of JFPM in spite of the fact that the KFD staff have occasionally taken the effort to explain the entire JFPM concept. Since the concept is relatively new it will take time for both the government and the people to fully internalise it.

3. In most places, when smugglers are caught by the villagers, the goods received are taken by the KFD. The villagers strongly feel that they should be given some percentage of the goods (or cash) for apprehending the smugglers - especially since this is a result of the VFC/JFPM process and since this is their first experience in JOINT planning and management. They feel a bit cheated when they do not get any `reward' for catching the smugglers, and begin to feel disinterested and disillusioned with the JFPM process itself. In fact, sometimes the KFD staff do not come in time after smuggling has been reported and the recovered property is with the VFC. Since people are under the impression that protection of the forest is the `sole' purpose of the VFC this makes the attitude of the KFD staff even more unfortunate. In the few cases where some amount has been given or at least promised the people feel it is too little compared to the amount that they have retrieved. This is one area that needs immediate attention. The KFD should have a consistent policy regarding the rewards or incentives to be given when smugglers are caught or stolen goods retrieved. Though the KFD has a policy to give 10% of the value of smuggled goods to the VFCs if they succeed in recovering the goods this has not yet been implemented. The main reason is that KFD believes that the people will misuse this by cutting trees themselves and claiming that these trees are smuggled.

4. KFD staff keep saying that incentives should be given to people if JFPM is to be a success. This is because forest issues are not of prime concern to the people at this point of time due to the abundance of forest resources in this district. Perhaps the definition (or the interpretation of the definition) of what constitutes forest-related issues needs to be broadened. KFD should link protection of the forest directly to incentives.

5. Some people find the idea of JFPM merely a way of passing on some of the responsibilities of the KFD to the villagers. For example, now people have to protect the forest and themselves do not get any protection against the smugglers who they say are often in league with the government officials.

Issues from the cases of women dominant VFCs

1. It becomes clear that women derive strength from numbers. Women are reluctant to attend meetings when there are not enough women to accompany them. Moreover, there is greater possibility of their participation during meetings when there are other women present.

2. However, while the importance of numbers should not be diminished it should not deflect from the more important one - quality. Increase in membership does not automatically ensure increased participation of women and in fact gives a false sense of complacency that women are being adequately represented. This becomes obvious in the case of Manjguni. Whenever KFD staff are asked to name VFCs where there is relatively more active participation of women they mention Manjguni and state that there are four women on the Managing Committee. On closer examination of this VFC we found that women are not particularly active here (see report on Manjuguni).

3. To what extent do men influence the issues to be discussed in the all women VFC meetings? In the villages which have all-women VFCs the women discuss all the issues with their husbands at home. This does not happen the other way round when men are on the Managing Committee of the VFC.

4. In some cases the VFC does not seem to have control over the seed money e.g. Banasgeri. It seems ridiculous that even the Rs. 5000, which is a small amount for the KFD, is still controlled by the KFD and cannot be used without its permission. It is paradoxical that the concept of seed money originated as an incentive amount to get villagers to form VFCs.

Conclusion

What becomes clear from the above is that apart from social structures and attitudes of people being a hindrance to the participation of women, basic policy changes are required if women are to participate more meaningfully in the JFPM process.

Appendix 1

Interview Guidelines for the first detailed visit

Background

- What do you know about JFPM/VFC etc.?
- How did you get to know about this ... through whom?
- What has been done in your village regarding JFPM, building of VFC, etc. - probe in detail - who came to the village from the forest department; what role did the NGO staff play, if any (even if Yuvak or Mahila Mandal was involved); who were the villagers who first took the initiative? note all outsiders who played any role.
- Did you play any role in the entire process?
- Are you a member of the general body? of the Managing Committee?
- How was your membership solicited? by whom? what were you told?
- Are you aware of your responsibilities and rights as a member? What are they?
- Have you attended any VFC meetings?
- Have you discussed any JFPM related issue with your family, particularly the male members?
- Have you discussed these with other people in the village? Whom?
- Have you spoken to anybody about it?
- What did you discuss with these people? - probe in detail.
- Did you attend any of the PRA or micro planning exercises, the function to sign the MoU, etc.?
- Do you know of any other village women who have participated in the above?
- Are you aware of what decisions have been taken during these processes?

Objective 1

- Did you participate in the making of these decisions?
- Did your husband/father/son discuss these issues with you?
- Did they ask for your opinions or views at any stage?
- In what spheres do you have decision-making powers e.g. with your children's education, nutrition requirements, etc.?
- Even if you did not participate in the making of these decisions did you desire to?
- Did you make this desire known? Were you prevented from attending - either explicitly or covertly?
- What do you feel about the decisions that have been taken? In general? The specific ones selected for the study? (If she is not aware of these decisions, inform her and find out her views. Give her time to think or even discuss with others and then find out her opinion at a later interview)
- Do you think these decisions will affect you? how?
- What benefits have you got or are you likely to get as a result of these decisions? Discuss each decision separately?
- What problems are you facing or are likely to face as a result of these decisions? Discuss each decision separately?
- What in your opinion should have been decided before signing of the MoU - what are your needs and priorities - have they been given adequate attention during the micro plan exercises? While the decisions were being made?

Objective 3

- What do you feel about the JFPM process in general?
- Has it benefitted or is it likely to benefit the village?
- Will it benefit men in particular - or women - or both?
- What are the differences, if any, between now and prior to the JFPM process?
- What problems did you face then?
- What problems are you facing now?
- Do you feel that women are adequately represented in the VFCs? What should be their representation? Explore in detail - qualitative and quantitative participation.
- Are there any obstacles to women's participation in the JFPM process? What are they?

Objective 2

- What role have NGO staff played in the JFPM process? Mention names of organisations or people.
- Are they members of the VFC?
- Has their involvement been useful - or hindered the process? In what ways?
- What role should they play?
- Should they play more of a role - or less - or play a different role altogether?
- How have the KFD been involved? At each stage - who were the people involved?
- Have they adequately explained the purpose of JFPM?
- Has this been done by NGOs?
- Do the KFD staff attend meetings regularly - how are the meetings fixed - unilaterally or in consultation with the VFC members?
- Are the timings convenient?

Appendix 2

Information to be obtained from all VFCs - second visit

- Who were the promoters? Were any women? If there were meet them and obtain information (Use interview guidelines). Obtain information on caste, community and specific status of the promoters.
- How long did it take for the actual formation of the VFC - from the first visit till the registration? What was the actual process? Who initiated it? What problems, if any, did they face? Were women involved at any stage?
- Find out if any women whose husband is living with her is a member of the general body member of the committee.
- Get some information about the 2 women who are on the Managing Committee - do they represent the women in the village?; do they attend meetings regularly?; do they communicate the VFC decisions (or outcomes of the meetings) to other women?; which ones? through what channels?; are their voices heard by other MC members?; What problems do they face?; Get examples of their experiences.
- Find out promises made by KFD - which have been kept and which have not - what men and women feel about the KFD staff (mention persons/designations) - do they feel relating with KFD has changed after the formation of the VFC? - in what ways?
- Find out what has actually been done, how much of what is mentioned in the microplans has been fulfilled - for example smokeless chullas, teak beds, etc.
- Find out about women's participation during the micro-plan process.
- Find out specifically what women went from the JFPM process (could be done during the input sessions.)
- Find out how seed money has been utilised -or plans to utilise.
- During VFC meeting find out seating arrangement. To what extent KFD or certain groups dominate.
- Find out if the women are aware that the benefits will be in the men's names. Do the women feel it will be beneficial to them as well? That the benefits will come to the whole family? What are their views about this? Would things be different if they (the women) were made members instead of their husbands?
- Who makes the final decision in any matter- The KFD or the people? Who initiates? What happens when there is a difference of opinion?
- Find out how much was really told to the people about JFPM - Why it came into being, what the peoples rights and responsibilities are, etc., On what understanding was the VFC formed?
- Find out the venue and timings of the VFC meetings and if that hinders or facilitates the participation of women (or any group of people).
- Find out who decides the date, time etc., of VFC meetings. Find out the processes by which the members are called for the meetings. In places where more than the MC members attend, find out who the others are who attend the meetings.
- Find out, if any, the channels for information flow between MC and general body and women (not part of G.B.)
- Find out the positive and negative effects of specific decisions on women (discuss separately for each place) and the role women have had in making those decisions.
- Find out about social problems in the village e.g. alcoholism
- Find out how positive and negative or neutral people are about JFPM/VFC etc., - both the ideas behind it and its actual implementation. For example, they might think its a good idea in theory but that KFD is not implementing well.
- Find out about smokeless chullas and gobar gas - in what ways does it benefit men and women? Especially since both men and women are responsible for firewood collection.
- What is the process if they (the people or KFD) want to remove any member of the Managing Committee? e.g. in Kangod.
- Who has collected the membership fee (if not forester)? What has been done with this amount?
- When KFD (Forester) has collected the membership fee from each house did he 1)specifically ask for the head of the household (or the male) to become a member?
2) did they tell people that they had the choice to make any one person in the family a member?

3) did they actively try to get women to become members?
- At any stage before membership was solicited did the KFD (or NGO) attempt to get women to become members (of general body or managing committee)?

For NGOs

- Discuss NGO involvement (see interview guidelines) - also find out how much each NGO has invested in that particular village - in terms of time spent, staff present - full time or periodically, financial investments. Get this information from both NGO staff and the villagers.
- Have the NGO staff made specific attempts to involve women and actively solicit their participation in VFCs.

Appendix 3

Interview guidelines for KFD staff at all levels

- Find out the extent to which they feel NGOs should be involved in the JFPM process - in detail. (note the level of staff interviewed - get names and designation)
- Find out their views about the JFPM process - the differences before and after the process was initiated.
- Do they feel it will benefit the people - in what ways?
- Do they feel that there are or will be any problems - in what ways?
- What has been their personal experience - response from people?
- What efforts have they personally had to put into the process?
- What additional input has the KFD made - in their personal experience - i.e. related to their own work?
- Do they feel the relationship between the KFD and the people have changed in any way since the VFCs have been formed?
- How long did they take to form the VFCs - who initiated the process?
- What hurdles did they face if any, in forming the VFCs?
- Which people (or groups) were most supportive?

Appendix 4

Interview guidelines for NGOs

- History of NGO
- Activities of the NGO
- Staff (sex ratio) - how many men and women in each particular level
- History of NGOs involvement in JFPM
- Any women issues taken up by NGOs
- To what extent are women involved in all the NGO activities and in JFPM related activities
- NGOs present involvement in JFPM
- Future plans
- What do they feel the role of NGO in general should be where JFPM is concerned
- Gender sensitivity within the organisation
- How do they feel they have helped the JFPM process? Have they taken the initiative in getting people involved? What obstacles have they met?
- What has been their relationship with the KFD staff in this regard?
- What do the villagers expect from the NGO in the JFPM process?
- How much has been invested by the NGO in terms of staff, finance and general input in the areas of study?
- What types of JFPM related trainings have been conducted - for whom - by whom?
- What are their views about the JFPM process in general?
- Have they made specific attempts to involve women in the process? What are these?

Appendix 5

Interview guidelines for the all women VFCs

Why have women become active in this village?
What are the issues they have discussed during the VFC meetings?
What are women's needs and priorities?
What are men's views on women's participation? Have they been supportive of the VFC?
Why have men not become members (both general body and M.C.)?
Do women take part in other village activities/functions/struggles?
Find out the extent of their dependence on the NGO.
When did the NGO start working in this village?
Discuss NGO involvement (see interview guidelines) - also find out how much each NGO has invested in that particular village - in terms of time spent, staff present - full time or periodically, financial investments. Get this information from both NGO staff and the villagers.
What is the relationship between the VFC and the KFD?
What are the KFD's views on a women-dominant VFC?
To what extent has the VFC been successful in handling smugglers and other so-called male areas of work?

Appendix 6

GENDER AWARENESS RELATED TO JFPM FOR VILLAGE WOMEN

The following issues were included in the training sessions given to village women towards the end of the data collection period:

- Relationship between forest and women and how their daily lives are related to the forest.
- Problems regarding women's use of forest - firewood collection, NTFP etc.
- Sources of these problems - KFD social sanction.
- What is JFPM?
- Why should women be involved?
- What is the difference between JFPM and regular plantation work of the Forest Department.
- People's (both men and women) involvement in forest management.
- What is the importance of micro planning, signing of MoU and implementation of management plan.
- Government order and women's involvement.
- Role of women in JFPM.
- How can women increase their strength in the management committee?
- Specific roles and responsibilities of the two elected women members to the management committee. How can the 2 VFC women members be empowered to represent the village women?
- How can women bring their problems to the VFC?
- How can the VFC solve these problems?
- Roles and responsibilities of women members of the general body of VFCs.
- If NTFP extractions done by the village women, how they are extracted - sold - difficulties faced in extractions and selling.
- What are the institutional linkages/supports for women e.g., DWCRA, TRYSEM etc., - JFPM included.
- Legal issues - e.g., 33% reservation for women, minimum wages, forest laws and forest protection.
- What support they should expect from the KFD (ask what they want from KFD and from NGOs).
- Importance of organisation, skills and women's role in organisation as well as the importance of leadership among women. For all the above they should work collectively - form groups.
- What type of groups they can form.
- Where they should raise forest related issues - in which fora and which are the concerned people.
- The importance of their involvement in public meetings.
- Caste feelings in different communities often leading to problems of working together.

What are the difficulties faced by women in general - related to JFPM in particular? Discuss towards end of training.

Do they feel the need for further meetings like these? What issues would they like to discuss?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arora, Dolly : `From State Regulation to People's Participation: Case of Forest Management in India, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXIX. No. 12, 1994.

Chatterjee, Mitali - `Women in Joint Forest Management; A Case Study from West Bengal', IBRAD, Calcutta.

Dogra, Bharat - `UTTARA KANNADA : Portrait of an Endangered District' Bharat Dogra, New Delhi, 1992.

Fernandes, Walter and Sharad Kulkarni (eds) : 'Towards a New Forest Policy : People's Rights and Environemntal Needs,' Indian Social Institute, New Delhi, 1983.

Gadgil, Madhav - `Reforestation: Problems and Prospects', SPWD Foundation Day Lecture, May 12, 1989, Society for the Promotion of Wastelands Development, New Delhi;

Gadgil, Madhav (1983): `Forestry with a Social Purpose' in Fernandes, Walter and Sharad Kulkarni (eds), 'Towards a New Forest Policy: People's Rights and Environmental Needs,' Indian Social Institute, New Delhi.

Gadgil, Madhav and Ramachandra Guha : 'This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India,' Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1992.

Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operation, National Commission on Agriculture, Part IX, Forestry, New Delhi, 1976, p 25.

Government of Karnataka - G.O.NO. AHEF 232 FAP 86, Bangalore, dated 12-04-93.

Guha, Ramachandra - `The Unquiet Woods - Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya', Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1989.

Guha, Ramachandra -'A critique of the draft Forest Bill", draft Paper, 1994.

Hegde, Panduranga : `Joint Forest Mismanagement'. Deccan Herald, January 1 1995.

Hobley, Mary - PPST Document No 12, WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT', Karnataka Forest Department, Overseas Development Administration and Centre for Development Studies, Swansea; Discussion Note No 11; Preliminary findings from visits to Village Forest Committees in the Project Area, September 1994

Jennings, Mary - PPST Document No 13, WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT, Karnataka Forest Department, Overseas Development Administration and Centre for Development Studies, Swansea; Gender Issues: Initial Visit; October 1994

Karnataka Forest Department - "Western Ghats forestry Project, Karnataka India: Project Proposal Document" April 1991.

Kant, Shashi, Neera M Singh and Kundan K Singh (1991):'Community Based Forest Management Systems (Case Studies from Orissa)', Indian Instite of Forest Management, Bhopal.

Kulkarni, Sharad : `Proposed Forest Act: An Assessment', Economic and Political Weekly, July 13, 1994, pp. 1909-12.

Malhotra, K.C. and Mark Poffenberger (eds) -'Forest Regeneration through Community Protection: The West Bengal Experience', West Gengal Forest Department, West Bengal, 1990.

MYRADA - Joint Forestry Planning and Management - PRA Techniques for Microplanning, 1995

Nadkarni, M.V. et al. :'The Political Economy of Forest Use and Management', Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1989.

Poffenberger, Mark - 'Joint Forest Management in West Bengal: The Process of Agency Change, Sustainable Forest Management', Working Paper No 39, Ford Foundation, New Delhi.

Poffenberger, Mark -'Joint Management of Forest Lands: Experiences from South Asia', Ford Foundation, New Delhi, 1990.

Raju, G. Vaghela Raju and Maju S Raju (1993):'Developement of People's Institutions for Management of Forests', VIKSAT,Nehru Foundation for Development, Ahmedabad.

Roy, S.B. - `Forest Protection Committees in West Bengal', Economic and Political Weekly, July 18, 1992, pp 1528-30.

Sarin, Madhu - `Leaving the Women in the Woods', Down to Earth, September 30, 1994.

Singh, Chattrapati -'Common Property and Common Poverty: India's Forests, Forest Dwellers and the law,' Oxford University Press, Delhi 1986, p,10.

Singh, Chhatrapati - `JFM: Analysis of Forestry Notifications', Wasteland News, Vol VII, No 1, August-October 1991, pp 36-38.

15. SPWD - Joint Forest Management; Regulations Update, SPWD, New Delhi, 1992.

Tinker, Irene - `Women and Community Forestry in Nepal : Expectations and Realities'

SOCIAL ISSUES IN

THE WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT,

KARNATAKA, INDIA

A REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH
THE WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT

June 1996

Dr Catherine Locke
School of Development Studies / Overseas Development Group
University of East Anglia
Norwich NR4 7TJ

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 1

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2

MAIN REPORT 4

1. Introduction 4

2. Social Issues in Community-Based Forestry 4

3. Project Formulation in the Western Ghats Forestry Project 5

4. Building on The Model of Joint Forest Management 6

5. Strategic Decision-Making in the WGFP 7

6. Separation of Responsibility for Assuring Social Objectives 8

7. Interpretation of JFPM in Project Policy 9

8. Evolution of New Working Practices 10

9. Project Approach: Pilot and Process 11

10. The Way Forward 12

KEY DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES 15

ANNEXURE I: IDENTIFYING PEOPLE'S NEEDS: SOCIAL RESEARCH IN THE WGFP

Executive Summary 1
Patterns of Forest Resource Use 1
Community Organisation and Social Relations 2
Main Report 3
Coastal Village Case Study 5
Up-Ghat Village Case Study 10
Transitional Village Case Study 15
Conclusions 20
Annexures 23

ANNEXURE II: MATERIALS PREPARED FOR THE NGO WORKSHOP

The Evolution of Joint Forest Management in West Bengal
Gender Issues in Joint Forest Planning and Management

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) who funded this research under the Associate Professional Officer Scheme. In particular, I would like to thank the staff at the Forestry Management Office (FMO) in New Delhi and, especially, Dr Eric Hanley and his wife, Jo, for their constant interest and support throughout the period of my fieldwork. At the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), I would like to thank Professor Alan Rew and Dr David Mosse for their supervision of various stages of my thesis and Dr Ian Clegg for his support as Research Coordinator. In Bangalore, fellow academics from the Centre for Ecological Science and the Institute of Social and Economic Change, of whom Dr Gopal Karanth deserves particular mention, were encouraging and assisted me in collecting secondary data.

I would like to thank Karnataka Forest Department (KFD) for giving me the opportunity to carry out this study and supporting me in my work. In particular, I am grateful to Mr Parmeshwarappa, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF), Mr Sadashivaiah, Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Mr Palanna, Conservator of Forests Canara Circle, and Mr Venugopal, Deputy Conservator of Forest, for their guidance. The Divisional Forest Officers and their JFPM teams assisted me in practical matters and Mr Naik (DCF JFPM Yellapur) for his help in organising accommodation.

I would also like to warmly thank the Non-Governmental Organisations of Uttara Kannada, Fevord-K and Oxfam who were a constant source of advice and insight. In particular I would like to mention Sam Kenrick, Gerry Pias, Gopi Krishnan, Pandurang Hegde, Shyamala and SR Hiremath, KM Hegde, and Prabhakar Bhat who were particularly supportive during my research.

I am indebted, both personally and professionally, to Ms Sheela Khare and Mr Achut Rao of Vikasa Rural Development Organisation. Ms Sheela accompanied me tirelessly to the Transitional Village and her assistance was essential to my understanding of rural life in India. Ms Sukanya Hegde worked for me as a translator/research assistant throughout my stay with sincerity and competence.

Finally, I am immensely grateful to the people of the villages studies. Families from all classes and communities welcomed me into their homes and tolerated my endless questions even when tired or busy.

Whilst many of these people provided invaluable guidance in my work, the responsibility for the opinions expressed here remains my own. This report does not reflect the views of either ODA, KFD or the NGOs connected with the WGFP.

Catherine Locke
14 June 1996

SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT, KARNATAKA, INDIA

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report reviews social issues in the Western Ghats Forestry Project (WGFP) in Karnataka, India. It focuses on the process of project formulation, the social context in which it is situated, and the first two years of project implementation.

Review of experience in developing countries confirms the extreme importance of attention to social issues in community-based forestry implemented by government departments. Despite enthusiasm for government-sponsored community-based initiatives in forestry with both environmental and development objectives, the evidence suggests that social development gains may be particularly difficult to realise (2.1-2.2). The underlying problem in project formulation is to put social issues more effectively on the agenda (2.3).

The capacity to achieve social development gains relies on the capacity of a project to effect a real shift in the control over forest resources towards local communities, and towards disadvantaged groups within local communities (2.4). The process of formulation of the WGFP recognised potential conflicts between environmental and social objectives, but had in 1993 failed to incorporate specific mechanisms to address these conflicts (3.1). As a result, the WGFP, as it was in 1993, was unlikely to safeguard livelihood needs in general, and those of disadvantaged groups in particular (3.3). At that time, ambiguity remained over the extent to which the meaningful participation of local communities in forest management was the real focus of the project (3.4).

The Joint Forest Management (JFM) model may need innovative adaptation for the Western Ghats. There are indications from West Bengal that participation in JFM can be limited, that government implementation can tend to be formulaic and that JFM may a negative impact on some high dependency groups (4.1). Furthermore, the JFM model may be particularly inappropriate for villages with complex socio-economic variations and overlapping patterns of forest use, as in Uttara Kannada (4.2). The Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) of the WGFP builds on the original model of JFM by introducing the concept of participation in planning as well as implementation (4.2). However, the KFD did not perceive the WGFP as a replicable approach and were simultaneously undertaking JFM throughout the State with fewer financial and human resources (4.3).

Fieldwork during 1993 examining the existing patterns of forest resource use and its inter-relations with the prevailing social structure, indicated that social concerns warranted more attention than they had received in the WGFP by late 1993 (5.2). Strategic decisions in project design had been made in the absence of detailed research and the recommended socio-economic planning studies had not been initiated by early 1994 (5.1). Economistic or productionist understandings of forest dependency that underpin micro-planning techniques mis-represent the role of forest exploitation in different livelihood strategies (5.5). Disadvantaged forest users are extremely vulnerable to changes in forest management practices (5.4) and are unlikely to be able to participate meaningfully in village-based organisation for forest management without specific support and encouragement (5.6-5.7).

Responsibility for addressing the key social issues had not been firmly linked to the project's implementing agency (KFD) by late 1993. Although the parallel JFPM Support Project run through Oxfam had a distinctive, but small scale, remit for addressing social issues, its relationship to the WGFP was loose and informal (6.1). This led to a less than explicit approach to social development issues in JFPM. If unaddressed, this could potentially lead to a reduction in welfare for disadvantaged users whose access to forest resources is altered by the project (6.2-6.4). In Uttara Kannada, the 'pilot' circle of the WGFP, the initial capacity for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) to provide support on social issues to the JFPM process was particularly weak, but grew significantly during 1993 partly as a result of Support Project (6.5).

The initial two years of project implementation were characterised by a limited interpretation of JFPM as visualised in the process of project formulation (7.1). The Government Order (GO) created a restrictive framework for participation in which JFPM was limited to degraded forest lands and the structure for Village Forest Committees (VFCs) was weak, prescriptive and likely to marginalise female forest users (7.2-7.4). No progress had been made in conceptualising or implementing a process of participatory zonation by early 1994 (7.5).

Although change was expected to occur slowly and incrementally, procedures and practices within the KFD had remained firmly orientated towards traditional priorities during the first two project years (8.1). The impact of new postings and additional training had been disappointing (8.2-8.3). In late 1993, JFPM activities had been orientated towards traditional departmental objectives (8.4-8.5). The perception of JFPM as a tool to encourage cooperation with pre-determined departmental activities was deeply rooted both in real concerns about community forestry and in issues of control and authority (8.6). Livelihood security cannot form the basis of management decisions in the WGFP unless this perception is effectively challenged (8.5-8.6).

The process project approach in the WGFP had facilitated progress towards project objectives that would not have been possible with more remote ODA management or a blueprint approach (9.1). However, project partners had a limited understanding of this project approach (9.2). By late 1993, the Consultative Committee Structure had not effectively facilitated participation for stakeholders in the iterative specification of project policy. However, NGOs and commentators had used existing state-level consultative mechanisms to make important contributions to ongoing debates about the project (9.3). The 'pilot' circle had not utilised the opportunity to concentrate the skills and authority to experiment efficiently with community-based approaches (9.4). The weakness of existing monitoring arrangements, hindered both stakeholder monitoring and the evolution of new working practices within KFD (9.5).

In order to meet social development objectives, **the clear conceptualisation of social development milestones, processes for reaching them and qualitative monitoring to evaluate them, is a priority issue** (10.2). The process approach of the WGFP provides continuing opportunities to reprioritise social development issues in the WGFP (10.1). In order to optimise the contribution of the Support Project, a legitimate, integral, and independent role needs to be created for NGOs in JFPM (10.3). Critical project improvements might include adopting a more action-research approach to implementation, recruiting specialists in community resource management to KFD, increasing the authority of JFPM staff, revising the GO, extending JFPM beyond degraded lands and developing processes for participatory zonation (10.4). Social issues must be upgraded if wide-spread social development gains through government-sponsored community forestry are to become feasible in the WGFP (10.5).

SOCIAL ISSUES IN THE WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT, KARNATAKA, INDIA

MAIN REPORT

Introduction

1.1 The Western Ghats Forestry Project (WGFP) is one of a growing number of projects funded by the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), and other international donors, which attempts to tackle deforestation through the creation of strong community-based organisations for forest management. This report reviews social issues of concern to project partners arising from research undertaken on the WGFP during an Associate Professional Officer (APO) Scheme placement.

1.2 The report focuses on policy-level and operational issues relevant to community-based forestry projects arising out of the WGFP. It focuses on the process of project formulation, the social context in which the WGFP is situated and the early stages of implementation[1].

1.3 This report emerged from a concern that timely reports from the researcher had not been circulated widely. The project has moved on and many of the issues it raises may have been successfully tackled already. However, no attempt has been made to include more recent developments from a distance. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the report at minimum stands as a useful perspective on events during the first two years of the WGFP. Annexure I contains an initial report on social issues in identifying people's needs at the micro-level which was aimed at foresters. Annexure II reproduces the materials prodived for the Tattihalla NGO Workshop in September 1993.

Social Issues in Community-Based Forestry

2.1 **Enthusiasm for community-based initiatives in forestry is driven by the apparent potential for such projects to pursue environmental and development objectives simultaneously.** The stated social objectives of the WGFP are "to assure the sustainability of the living standards of those people whose livelihoods currently derive in whole or in part, from the forest" through a strategy of "ensuring poor people, women, tribals and other disadvantaged groups are not worse, and preferably better off" (KFD 1991:3).

2.2 **Review of the experience of donor-funded community-based forestry management projects implemented by government departments confirms problems in achieving social development objectives.** In particular, projects had a poor record of achievement in poverty alleviation, in securing livelihoods, and in gender-sensitive implementation. The reasons identified for these failures are, commonly, inability to create viable local institutions, non-responsiveness to livelihood needs and the persistence of wider socio-economic inequalities in community-based forestry.

---

[1] The WGFP was initiated in April 1992. This research placement began in August 1992 and was completed in December 1993, as the project neared the end of its second year of implementation.

2.3 **These failures are symptomatic of the underlying problem of putting social issues more effectively on the agenda.** The neglect of social issues has long been recognised as a problem in environmental projects and can no longer be attributed to sociological naivety. Rather difficulties in addressing social issues effectively arise from the institutional and political economic contexts in which projects are situated. Existing patterns of resource control create disincentives for various parties, including the state and forest contractors, to support or facilitate more open-ended involvement of local people in forest management. Similarly at the village level community management projects can potentially entrench, or even exacerbate, existing inequalities within local communities. Local organisations may present obstacles, as well as opportunities, to participation for disadvantaged groups.

2.4 **The potential to achieve social development gains in such projects is strongly influenced by the extent to which social issues are explicitly prioritised.** Of particular importance are the capacity of the project to effect a real shift in the control over forest resources towards local communities, and to disadvantaged groups within local communities, by facilitating equitable institution-building at the local level.

Project Formulation in the WGFP

3.1 **In the WGFP the potential conflicts between environmental and developmental objectives were clearly recognised at appraisal.** Social and environmental activists and organisations warned that a 'neutral' approach towards Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) would marginalise disadvantaged groups, potentially to the detriment of their welfare. The social development consultant employed by ODA identified the danger of short to medium term conflicts between conservation measures and livelihood needs. Therefore it was suggested that a link organisation would take prime responsibility for ensuring the prioritisation of social objectives. It would do so, firstly, by generating creative tension within JFPM teams that shifted power towards local communities, and secondly, by facilitating a process of equitable community organisation that would ensure the meaningful participation of disadvantaged groups within communities.

3.2 **However, the suggested structures, mechanisms and processes designed specifically to meet the project's stated social objectives were not incorporated in the final project design.** As a result of staff changes within the KFD and within the ODA management team after appraisal, the consideration of alternative arrangements to meet social development objectives was pre-empted. Social 'solutions' involving link organisations necessitate a process approach whereby potential partner organisations can enter negotiations and create a real basis for collaboration. Continuity and a more open-ended approach are necessary for social development consultants involved in appraisal.

3.3 **In the absence of link organisation arrangements the capacity for the WGFP design to realise social development gains was severely curtailed.** Despite the absence of critical components, the project's stated social objectives remained unchanged in final document and the original social development consultant was only re-engaged in 1994, the third project year. Reasonable means, or processes of arriving at reasonable means, of meeting the stated social objectives should have been an integral, and explicit, component of the final project design.

3.4 **The ambiguity over the real focus of the project that characterised the various stages of appraisal, was not resolved in the final project agreement.** In late 1993, confusion still existed over the nature of participation, particularly in the zonation process, over the extent to which the WGFP was poverty-focused and over the reflection of stated objectives in the pattern of project spending. This ambiguity, if uncorrected, will create difficulties in implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Building on The Model of Joint Forest Management

4.1 In India community forestry has been interpreted as Joint Forest Management (JFM) as pioneered by West Bengal Forest Department. Despite the absence of in-depth analysis, **the evidence available suggests that, in practice, participation in JFM can be limited. Government implementation of the model can tend to be formulaic and unresponsive to specific variations in livelihood needs. Furthermore, there is reason to believe that JFM may have a negative impact on some high dependency groups.**

4.2 The WGFP builds on the model of JFM by introduction participation in planning as an essential ingredient. However, there are indications that **the JFM model as it stands may need innovative adaptation in the Ghats.** West Bengal's relative success in JFM was predicated upon several factors absent in the Western Ghats of Karnataka[2]. In particular, the creation of mutually exclusive joint management areas for coresidential forest users may prove difficult in villages with complex economic and social variations and presently overlapping patterns of forest use. Alternative models of local participation may need to be developed through local experimentation.

4.3 **The replicability of the WGFP's approach to JFM in 1993 was questionable.** The WGFP was in the anomalous position of implementing the same policy as the rest of the state but with more resources and specialised staff[3]. KFD did not perceive the WGFP as a pilot for JFM for replication throughout the State.

---

[2] The initiative introducing JFM occurred spontaneously within the Forest Department in West Bengal and emerging partnerships with NGOs at field and policy-making levels assisted its development. West Bengal has a long tradition of social justice and its villages are more homogeneous and have a greater proportion of tribals than those of the Western Ghats. The regenerating forests of West Bengal support a high value of non-timber forest produce (NTFP) providing a supply of intermediary benefits, thus minimising conflict between environmental and livelihood needs in the short to medium term.

[3] The Government of Karnataka had passed the JFPM Order for the whole state and the Chief Minister had set a target of forming 300 VFCs before the end of the financial year 1993/1994. In addition, KFD had formed a Central JFPM Coordination Committee of which the WGFP Coordinator was not a member.

Strategic Decision-Making in the WGFP

5.1 Strategic decisions **in the WGFP design were taken in the absence of any detailed study of the appropriate nature of JFPM in the social context of Uttara Kannada and other Ghats districts.** The socio-economic planning studies, suggested by the social development consultant at appraisal, had not been initiated by the start of the third project year. This was due to an inappropriate structure for the commissioning of this particular research. It was envisaged that the new Forest Research and Training Institute (FoRTI), once created, could enlist outside academic institutions to undertake the studies. A procedure whereby the skills of local development professionals were concentrated in partnership with KFD at the field level in an action-research approach would have been more suitable. Such a mechanism could have ensured the timeliness and relevance of findings to guide the direction of the project.

5.2 **Fieldwork indicated that social development issues in JFPM warranted more attention that they had been given in late 1993.** Patterns of forest resource use and its inter-relations with the prevailing social structure suggest that social gains were unlikely, given the interpretation of the framework for JFPM (section 7), the low priority accorded to mechanisms for achieving social objectives in project design (section 3) and the marginalisation of community organisation skills (section 6) in the project at that time.

5.3 **The extent of common interest between villagers in forest resources may be limited as a basis for joint management.** Significant differences of interest in forest resources exist which are variously structured along lines of caste, livelihood strategy and gender. Present patterns of forest resource use are complex, not clearly bounded and are overlapping. Moreover, the impact of the scarcity of forest resources is dissipated by the varying capacities of different users to access alternative resources in the face of scarcity.

5.4 **The dynamics of the relationship between inequalities in access to forest resources and general disadvantage is complex and sometimes unpredictable.** Dependence upon forest resources is clearly mediated by the role that forest exploitation plays in the livelihood strategy of different users. The absence of complementary private productive resources may restrict the role that forest exploitation plays in the livelihoods of the disadvantaged. Disadvantaged groups may be excluded from productive forest resources and degradation may facilitate a greater monopoly over a specific resource for these groups. Dilemmas may also occur between practical and strategic gender needs where a sharp sexual division of labour exists in forest exploitation. Importantly, individual and group claims of entitlements to particular forest resources tend to reflect pervasive power relations of rural society.

5.5 **Economistic or productionist understandings of forest dependency underpinning micro-planning and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) methodologies may be misleading as a basis for JFPM[4].** They have the potential to mis-specify and undervalue the exact nature of the dependency of different groups on forest resources. In particular issues of primary collection entitlements, local trade, seasonality, continuous access and free supply, that may be extremely important to more disadvantaged users, may be neglected.

5.6 **Village-based institutions are unlikely to automatically foster equity.** Existing village institutions reflect pervasive power relations and are based on socially selective memberships, which almost always exclude women. Even though some disadvantaged villagers may participate in village institutions, they are usually unable to set the agenda. Notions of equity articulated in village institutions are conditioned by perceptions of entitlements that justify the status quo. Without specific support and encouragement Village Forest Committees (VFCs) are unlikely to effectively represent the interests of disadvantaged groups.

5.7 **In conclusion, disadvantaged forest users are highly vulnerable to changes in existing forest management practices.** Moreover, the needs of the most disadvantaged will not automatically be safeguarded by an initiative that rests decision-making power over forest management options with village-based organisations. A strong emphasis on equity and the facilitation of a corresponding process of institutional change within villages, together with a clear shift away from traditional KFD priorities, are necessary if the WGFP is to realise its stated social development objectives in Uttara Kannada.

Separation of Responsibility for Assuring Social Objectives

6.1 **Prime responsibility for ensuring that local people, and disadvantaged forest users in particular, can meaningfully participate in the JFPM process had been vested in external agents and not with KFD.** Myrada training and support for JFPM teams and Oxfam's JFPM Support Project for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) were the remaining 'inputs' specifically designed to assure that appropriate concern for social objectives was given in project design.

---

[4] Economistic approaches perceive dependence as the percentage of imputed household income derived from forest exploitation while productionist approaches see dependence as the per capita consumption of forest biomass for a household. However, forest use may be tightly integrated into other components of a household's livelihood strategies and may facilitate seasonal survival for the poorest. Furthermore, different households have varying capacities to access alternative resources or to adapt livelihood strategies in the face of scarcity. Finally, gender conflicts over resource use are concealed in such approaches. Dependence can only be fully understood when the role that forest exploitation plays in livelihood strategies is examined more broadly.

6.2 **This separation of responsibilities, if it continues, is likely to lead to continuing neglect of social issues in JFPM and potentially to a reduction in welfare for disadvantaged users whose access to forest resources is altered by the project.** The capacity and motivation to handle social issues effectively, or to work in close partnership with organisations who can, needs to be fostered within KFD. Substantial attention had been given to insisting that JFPM agreements are enforceable, but **the process of community organisation**, equally important in realising agreements, **had been neglected.**

6.3 The contractual nature of the trainers' involvement inhibited their capacity to address social issues and delayed their involvement in the WGFP. Independent funding as project partners with a legitimate role in facilitating micro-planning might have increased the potential impact of trainers' involvement in the first two years of the project.

6.4 An informal relationship between the JFPM Support Project and the WGFP was envisaged in the WGFP proposal document. The absence of institutionalised NGO involvement inhibited the development of a close working relationship. In the absence of an institutionalised, yet independent, role, it is unlikely that the Oxfam Project will be able to provide **specific** support to JFPM except in a few instances. However, it is likely to impact on local development in the areas where its partners work in a more generalised way.

6.5 **In Uttara Kannada district, the 'pilot' circle of the WGFP, the initial capacity of NGOs to provide support on social issues to the JFPM process was particularly weak.** Poverty-focused NGO's were less numerous, and less developed, than in other Ghats districts. The Oxfam JFPM Support Project is substantially increasing the institutional capacity of some of these groups to respond to the WGFP. Although there are strong environmental NGOs in the district, who are well placed to provide technical support to JFPM, politics between these various groups in the district were tense and complex in 1993. In the emerging debate over the choice of a second circle for implementation, ODA should consider the existing capacity of NGOs to respond to the challenge of JFPM as an important factor.

Interpretation of JFPM in Project Policy

7.1 **The first two years of implementation were characterised by a limited interpretation of JFPM as visualised in the process of project formulation** It is expected that practice will change gradually, however the new legal framework for JFPM had already defined narrow limits for participation. The Government Order (GO) provisions facilitated considerable departmental control over forest management decisions in VFCs. District NGOs and those connected with the Support Project made forceful criticisms of the GO and appropriate suggestions for its revision in 1993.

7.2 **The GO facilitating JFPM restricted JFPM to degraded forest lands.** The project was therefore restricted in its ability to tackle the issue of the preservation of natural forests through people's participation. Most of the forest dwellers and the majority of the forest areas in Uttara Kannada were thus excluded in late 1993, thus undermining the major justification for the district's selection as the pilot circle[5].

7.3 **The structure for VFCs stipulated by the GO was weak and prescriptive.** KFD reserved powers of dissolution of VFCs and of arbitration of conflicts arising in JFPM to the department. Measures to ensure the democratic and responsive functioning of Managing Committees with respect to General Body members were absent. The unit for which a VFC may be formed was restricted to one or more Revenue Villages and the composition of the Managing Committee was inflexible in the face of social variations. There was no provision for reaching binding agreements with more selective user groups.

7.4 **The structure of General Body membership and reservations to the Managing Committee of VFCs, as they were in late 1993, will marginalise women's participation.** The registration of a single member of each household to the General Body is likely to lead to the registration of male household heads, thus ensuring women's exclusion from this forum. The reservation of women's seats without specification of other social or economic characteristics is likely to ensure the election of higher status women who may not be primary collectors of forest resources.

7.5 Ostensibly the zonation process was the linchpin of a strategy that locates participation in a bureaucratic department. **However, no progress had been made on conceptualising or implementing a process of participatory zonation.** No criteria had been decided for the resolution of conflicts between local priorities and top-down planning requirements within the Working Plans Division. Such decisions are likely to remain beyond the review of those outside KFD and therefore have the capacity to ensure the continuance of traditional departmental practice. Moreover, the GO preempted participatory zonation by adopting a technical definition of zone IV and restricting JFPM to degraded forest areas. As a result, confusion remained about the extent to which the project was committed to participation in the zonation process.

Evolution of New Working Practices

8.1 **KFD procedures remained firmly orientated to traditional priorities in late 1993.** The WGFP envisaged that planting would only begin to reflect JFPM processes by 1995. However, in order to achieve this, satisfactory participation in micro-planning should occur during 1994. At the end of 1993, the impact of new postings, training and the evolution of new working practices had been disappointing and had not laid the necessary foundations for successful micro-planning in the following year.

---

[5] The selection of Uttara Kannada was primarily justified on the basis that it contained forest conditions of all types thus allowing experimentation with participation in all proposed management zones.

8.2 **Problems had occurred both in recruiting officers to key JFPM posts** and in insisting that officers trained under ODA programmes were posted in the project. These problems arose from the political nature of postings within the department and the perceived undesirability of these posts. JFPM posts had no clearly defined powers, potentially posed a threat to territorial seniors and were seen as depriving officers of gaining the experience required to progress within KFD. The upgraded Assistant Conservator of Forests (JFPM) post had in several instances been used to promote officers due for retirement, rather than to promote promising officers from non-traditional backgrounds.

8.3 **JFPM postings had little impact upon existing structures of authority.** The impact of the Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) and the Project Monitoring Cell (PMC) was mediated by the Project Coordinator and Circle Conservator and had yet to find an effective role for themselves. JFPM teams did not have the authority to question traditional working practices or to deviate from pre-determined targets[6]. The reluctance of middle managers in territorial positions to implement JFPM inhibited the implementation of 'micro-policy reforms'[7]. Local needs forestry is not an important component of regular forestry training and short orientation courses by Myrada were alone insufficient to impart the skills, understanding or confidence to facilitate community forestry. At the end of 1993, KFD were not yet ready to engage in 'real' collaborative micro-planning exercises with Myrada.

8.4 **The activities of JFPM teams had been organised around traditional planting practices.** At the end of 1993, JFPM was planting-led and rejected a holistic approach to forest management issues. The planting models specified in WGFP document reinforced the narrow perception of participation as consultation over species mix. No implementation manual had been developed by KFD in collaboration with Myrada to guide JFPM teams. The remoteness of PMU/PMC to the field prevented the concentration of skills and authority required in the early stages of implementation to evolve new practices and monitor new experiences. As a result the Management Information Systems (MIS) consultancy was premature since the design of new information systems necessitated the prior evolution of new working practices.

---

[6] Despite orders to the contrary, bureaucratic culture and its hierarchical structure of authority is such that these orders are ineffective.

[7] "Micro-policy reforms are those which depend for their implementation on the accomplishment of sometimes highly complex and difficult institutional changes commonly involving the development of significant new institutional capacities and norms and a redefinition of institutional roles" (Korten 1986:310).

8.5 **Inevitably differences of interest between KFD and local communities in JFPM negotiations had been, and will continue to be during micro-planning, centred on traditional bones of contention.** It is unreasonable to expect KFD to significantly alter its position until it has confidence that JFPM can work effectively, that it has both the institutional capacity to facilitate it and the technical expertise to service local needs forestry in the WGFP. KFD had real concerns about JFPM that needed to be addressed and that were unlikely to evaporate under pressure from advocates of community forestry. The weakness of the existing legal framework for JFPM, and early field experiences, indicate that KFD may avoid situations in which micro-planning 'solutions' are unlikely to coincide with its traditional priorities.

8.6 **JFPM was conceived by foresters as 'social forestry on forest land' which enables KFD to encourage people to cooperate with departmental management decisions.** Implementation based on this conceptualisation may damage the livelihoods of high dependency groups whose livelihoods are seen as deleterious to forest, such as headloaders. Furthermore, this approach risks obscuring real opportunities for KFD collaboration with local communities. These preconceptions are based on issues of control and authority over the forest, its produce and its management and must be confronted if livelihood security is to form the basis for JFPM.

Project Approach: Pilot and Process

9.1 **The process project approach had facilitated progress towards certain project objectives which would not have been possible with more remote ODA management or a blueprint approach.** A good example, would be the combination of consultancy, research and workshop approaches which were utilised to redefine salient livestock issues. This style of management facilitated closer project monitoring by stakeholders, the greater involvement of stakeholders in policy formulation and provided opportunities to renegotiate existing interpretations of project policy.

9.2 **However, project partners had a limited understanding of this project approach and how to manage its processes.** The process of making decisions on new kinds of information is central to the projects objectives and should be located within the PMU and the PMC. A more systematised approach was emerging as a result of the requests from ODA for working papers and the holding of workshops on major issues. Guidelines for ODA project partners familiar with blueprint planning may be useful in encouraging a more proactive approach to process projects and in avoiding mis-understandings.

9.3 **Stakeholders who are not project partners require interim up-dates on policy decisions emerging from the project process.** Although the Consultative Committee structure represents a major innovation, its meetings had not yet facilitated sufficient opportunities for stakeholders to participate in the process of iteratively defining policy in late 1993. KFD control over nomination to committees prevented the vertical integration of non-official participation in this structure. KFD chairmanship, the lack of information provided by KFD and the absence of defined powers rendered the committees below state-level non-functional in late 1993. Nevertheless, NGOs and commentators had used other institutionalised channels of consultation in the state to press their concerns about the project and its progress, thus making important contributions to policy debate despite the malfunctioning of the project's own consultative mechanisms.

9.4 A pilot project is designed to facilitate efficient experimentation and learning by concentrating skills in a limited trail. **However, the 'pilot' nature of implementation of the WGFP in Uttara Kannada circle, was questionable.** JFPM teams did not concentrate the appropriate expertise nor authority to experiment in the field. It seems likely that experimentation, and importantly learning from experimentation will occur too slowly, given the arrangements in place in late 1993.

9.5 Monitoring is an important element of a Process Project which facilitates the iterative specification of policy. **An emerging problem in the WGFP was the weakness of existing monitoring arrangements.** KFD monitoring remained absorbed with traditional indicators and had, so far, not conceptualised indicators of social process salient to community-based forestry. External monitoring had yet to be initiated despite its importance. This situation provided obstacles both to KFD in developing working practices based on new flows of information and for other stakeholders, including ODA and local NGOs, in monitoring project progress.

The Way Forward

10.1 In order to meet social development objectives, the WGFP needs to focus upon two critical problems: **first, the necessity of shifting power towards local communities and, secondly, of shifting power away from local elites to disadvantaged forest users.** The process approach provides continuing opportunities to adjust the direction of the WGFP and is the means by which ODA and local NGOs could effectively reprioritise social development issues in the WGFP and ensure that the Support Project is able to play a significant role in JFPM.

10.2 If progress is to be made in this respect then **clarification of, and agreement on, the social development objectives of the WGFP is of paramount importance.** This is a matter for ODA and KFD in collaboration with the Support Project NGOs and consultation with other interested stakeholders.

10.3 If the Support Project is to contribute effectively to the realisation of social development objectives, **the WGFP needs to create a legitimate, integral and independent role for NGOs in JFPM.** If NGOs are to have a greater impact on policy making, monitoring and evaluation, it will be necessary for the Consultative Committee Structure to function effectively. In order for NGOs to enhance the process of community organisation and to empower disadvantaged groups to participate effectively in the WGFP, NGO participation in JFPM at the field level needs to be institutionalised and contingent only upon approval by the NGOs' District level forum and by the local community's acceptance.

10.4 Major obstacles to addressing social development objectives in the WGFP arise from difficulties in evolving new working practices. The following measures might facilitate experimentation with and adoption of new working practices:

1. **An action-research approach to project implementation could be adopted.** Concentrating skills and learning efficiently in the pilot project would assist in the creation of a role for the PMU/PMC and generate the information required to enable development of a new MIS for JFPM.

2. **Innovative recruitment mechanisms or working arrangements could ensure that JFPM teams have sufficient expertise and authority to introduce new working methods to KFD.** Competent community organisers with a thorough understanding of variations in resource use patterns could be seconded to KFD to participate in micro-planning alongside senior KFD representatives.
3. **The GO could be revised to shift power towards local communities and to facilitate more responsive development of agreements on forest use.** This will create a sound basis for the long term evolution of JFPM as well as leverage that well organised communities or effective NGOs could exploit in the short term.
4. If the WGFP is to facilitate participation in the management of natural forest or to influence the relationship of forest dwellers with KFD, the project will need to **prioritise the evolution of participatory zonation and to establish that JFPM does not occur only on degraded lands.**

10.5 In conclusion, fundamental redirection of the project is needed if wide-spread social development gains through government-sponsored community forestry are to become feasible.

KEY DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Ashley, S.D., Pasha, S.A., Mahale, P., Hendy, C.R.C. and Hegde, G.R., 1993, A Study of the Role of Livestock in the Livelihoods of Communities in Uttara Kannada, ODA Forestry Office, Delhi.

Fevord-K (Federation of Voluntary Organisations for Rural Development of Karnataka), 1990, Western Ghats Forestry and Environmental Project, Karnataka - Response from Federation of Voluntary Organisation for Rural Development, Fevord-K, Bangalore.

Fevord-K, 1993, Fevord-K Response to the Government Order of 12th April 1993 on Joint Forest Planning and Management, Fevord-K, Bangalore.GoK, 1992, Government Order No. AHFF FAP 88 (P) dated 21-7-92 on Implementation of Western Ghats Forestry and Environment Project - Constitution of Committees for Monitoring and Reporting, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Forest Department, GoK, Bangalore.

GoK (Government of Karnataka), 1993, Government Order No. AHFF 232 FAP 86 dated 12-4-93 on Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) Scheme, Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Forest Department, GoK, Bangalore.

Hendy, C.R.C. and Ashley, S.D., 1994, Western Ghats Forestry Project Workshop on Livestock Management, Bangalore, 20-21 April, 1994: Conclusions, Recommendations and Proposals for Supporting Research, ODA, Delhi.

KFD (Karnataka Forest Department), 1988, Project Report on Integrated Development of Forests in Western Ghats, 'The Red Book', KFD, Bangalore.

KFD, 1991, Western Ghats Forestry and Environmental Project: Project Proposal Document, 'The White Book', KFD, Bangalore.

KFD, 1992, Proceedings of the First Steering Committee Meeting held on 14th December 1992 at the Chambers of the Development Commissioner, Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore, KFD, Bangalore.

KFD, 1993a, Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the Steering Committee of Western Ghats Forestry and Environment Project held on 22nd of March, 1993 in the Chambers of the Development Commissioner, Vidhana Soudha, Bangalore, KFD, Bangalore.

Korten, D.C. (ed), 1986, Community Management: Asian Experience and Perspectives, Kumarian Press, Connecticut.

ODA (Overseas Development Agency), 1992b, Aide Memoire, Western Ghats Forestry Project, First Annual Monitoring Mission, 12th - 21st October 1992, ODA, New Delhi.

ODA, 1992c, Terms of Reference for the First Annual Monitoring Mission in ODA 1992b, Aide Memoire, Western Ghats Forestry Project, First Annual Monitoring Mission, 12th - 21st October 1992, ODA, New Delhi.

ODA, 1993b, Aide Memoire, Western Ghats Forestry Project, Annual Review Mission, 2nd - 12th November 1993, ODA, New Delhi.

ODA and KFD, 1990, Western Ghats Forestry and Environmental Project: Project Proposal Document, 'The Grey Book', ODA, London.

OFI (Oxford Forestry Institute) and KFD, 1990, Western Ghats Forestry and Environment project: Draft Project Proposal Document, 'The Green Book', OFI, Oxford.

Oxfam, 1992, Project Proposal for the Western Ghats Joint Forest Planning and Management Support Project, Oxfam, Oxford.

PCCF (Principal Chief Conservator of Forests), 1993a, Official Memorandum No. C.PCCF.78/90-91 dated 20-8-93 on Implementation of Joint Forest Planning and Management, Office of the PCCF, Karnataka Forest Department, Bangalore.

PCCF, 1993b, Model Memorandum of Understanding for Joint Forest Planning and Management in PCCF, 1993a, Official Memorandum No. C.PCCF.78/90-91 dated 20-8-93 on Implementation of Joint Forest Planning and Management, Office of the PCCF, Karnataka Forest Department, Bangalore.

PCCF, 1993c, Official Memorandum No. C.PCCF.CR.78/90-91 dated 18-8-93 on Constitution of Central JFPM Coordination Committee, Office of the PCCF, Karnataka Forest Department, Bangalore.

PCCF, 1993d, Official Memorandum No. C.PCCF.79/90-91 dated 21-8-93 on Training of Range Officers, Foresters and Forest Guards in Joint Forest Planning and Management, Office of the PCCF, Karnataka Forest Department, Bangalore.

STF-STP (Save The Forests - Save The Planet), 1990, Memorandum to the British ODA Regarding Community Participation and Forest Conservation in the Western Ghats, dated 25 November, 1990, STF-STP, London.

SPV (Sahyadri Parisara Vardhini), 1993a, Comments and Criticisms of the Government Order of 12th April 1993 on Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) Scheme, Proceedings of a Workshop held at Sirsi on 26-6-93, SPV, Yadalli.

SPV, 1993b, Letter dated 26-7-93 regarding Joint Forest Planning and Management Scheme under GO No. AHFF 232 FAP 96 dated 12-04-93 of the Government of Karnataka, SPV, Yadalli.

Thin, N., Watt, G. and Harrison, M., 1992, Report on a Visit to Karnataka to Review Socio-Economic and Environmental Research Requirements for the Western Ghats Forestry Project, 25 November - 13 December, 1991, ODA (Overseas Development Administration), New Delhi.

IDENTIFYING PEOPLE'S NEEDS:

SOCIAL RESEARCH IN THE WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT

March 1994

Catherine Locke
APO Social Development
Western Ghats Project

ANNEXURE I

IDENTIFYING PEOPLE'S NEEDS:

SOCIAL RESEARCH IN THE WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

Patterns of Forest Resource Use 1
Community Organisations and Social Relations 2

MAIN REPORT 3

Objectives of the Report 3
Methods 3
Organisation of the Report 4

A. COASTAL VILLAGE CASE STUDY 5

Village Profile 5
Patterns of Forest Resource Use 5
Community Organisations and Social Relations 6
Project Interventions 7
Potential Obstacles and Opportunities For JFPM 8

B. UP-GHAT VILLAGE CASE STUDY 10

Village Profile 10
Patterns of Forest Resource Use 10
Community Organisations and Social Relations 12
Project Interventions 13
Potential Obstacles and Opportunities For JFPM 13

C. TRANSITIONAL VILLAGE CASE STUDY 15

Village Profile 15
Patterns of Forest Resource Use 15
Community Organisations and Social Relations 16
Project Interventions 18
Potential Obstacles and Opportunities For JFPM 18

CONCLUSIONS 20

Patterns of Forest Resource Use 20
Community Organisations and Social Relations 21

ANNEXURES 23

I. CLASS DEFINITIONS 23

II. REFERENCE TABLES 24

A. Coastal Village 24
B. Up-Ghat Village 25
C. Transitional Village 26

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Western Ghats Forestry Project (WGFP) is designed to address deforestation through the creation of strong community organisations for the Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM). Its social objectives are "to assure the sustainability of the living standards of those people whose livelihoods currently derive in whole or in part, from the forest" through a strategy of "ensuring poor people, women, tribals and other disadvantaged groups are not worse, and preferably better off". Failure to meet these social objectives could undermine the project's wider environmental objectives since those whose needs are not met will be unwilling to cooperate with JFPM in the long term, and may even be forced to violate JFPM agreements in order to maintain their livelihood systems.

This report presents three village case studies which dis-aggregate forest users by class, gender and livelihood system. The studies identify their different patterns of forest resource use and examine the relative positions of different forest users in village society. In each case study, the baseline data is analysed to assess potential obstacles and opportunities for creating equitable and sustainable community institutions for joint management with KFD.

There are wide variations throughout the project area and although the issues identified in the case studies are site specific, many will recur elsewhere. The final section of the report draws out conclusions of general relevance from the case studies and argues that an understanding of social issues could assist JFPM teams to facilitate JFPM agreements that are more sustainable in both the environmental and institutional sense. These general conclusions are summarised below and are cross-referenced in the main report.

Patterns of Forest Resource Use

Since JFPM will alter access to forest resources, it is important to understand present patterns of forest resource use. The case studies show that there are significant differences in the patterns of forest resource use of different social groups. In particular there are variations between groups in:

- the specific forest products used
- the areas from which they are obtained
- the way in which they are obtained
- the role that they play in the livelihood of the user

Some general conclusions which have operational implications can be drawn from the case studies:

1. The current model of JFPM envisages the evolution of community protection as the creation of mutually exclusive use of forest areas assigned to specific villages. However, the bureaucratically defined unit of the village may not be an appropriate unit for community management in many cases and the creation of exclusive use areas may curtail the access of some groups to forest resources.

2. Different institutional arrangements will be required to meet the needs for the use of different forest uses, such as grazing, inputs to agriculture and the collection of other non-timber forest products, within one village.

3. JFPM will have to address the requirements of villagers in a holistic fashion in order to avoid shifting the burden of biotic pressure to better quality forests, or undermining livelihoods where alternative resources are not available.

4. In order to assure the livelihoods of forest users, JFPM teams will have to identify user groups who cannot substitute for present forest use and actively safeguard their access to these critical resources.

5. Unless the needs of groups whose survival strategies depend on the forest are adequately catered for by the JFPM agreement, they may either suffer a decline in their welfare or may be forced to violate the agreement.

Community Organisations and Social Relations

JFPM is creating new organisations at the village level in order to manage the forest more sustainably. It is therefore important to understand how community organisations function. Information from the case studies illustrates that village organisations:

- are not representative
- meet the needs of wealthier and more powerful groups
- generally exclude women
- can be disrupted by conflicting interests

A number of implications for JFPM arise out of these observations:

1. It is unrealistic to expect consultation with the village forest committee (VFC) alone to adequately reflect the needs of poorer and less powerful social groups, including women. JFPM teams may have to take positive action to understand the needs of disadvantaged groups, including women, if they are to ensure that these needs are reflected in JFPM agreements.

2. Understanding the needs of different groups in the context of village power relations would help JFPM teams to facilitate negotiations, to manage conflict between different groups and to effect suitable compromises. Emphasising the reliance of the majority of villagers on multiple forest products and reflecting these common needs in planting decisions could assist this process.

3. In cases where patterns of collection of forest resources are sharply divided on gender lines, failure to actively consult female primary collectors is likely to affect their individual income and status as well as the livelihoods of their families. In all situations, failure to involve a majority of women actively in the General Body and meetings of the VFC defines JFPM as a male arena.

4. The formalisation of control over forest resources may disrupt the survival strategies of poorer forest users. Understanding the timing, practice and purpose of resource collection for different groups has important implications for creating appropriate institutional arrangements under JFPM.

5. JFPM will have to facilitate the active participation of villagers since passive cooperation with, what they may perceive to be, a government controlled scheme may undermine the objective of creating institutionally sustainable village organisations.

The evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the identification of the different needs of forest users, and of disadvantaged users in particular, must be used as a basis for decision-making in the micro-planning process if the WGFP is to meet its social objectives. Addressing social inequalities through the process of community organisation will be essential for assuring the institutional sustainability of JFPM and for safeguarding the livelihoods of disadvantaged forest users in the longer term.

IDENTIFYING PEOPLE'S NEEDS: SOCIAL RESEARCH IN THE WESTERN GHATS FORESTRY PROJECT

MAIN REPORT

The Western Ghats Forestry Project (WGFP) is designed to address deforestation through the creation of strong community organisations for the Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM). Its social objectives are "to assure the sustainability of the living standards of those people whose livelihoods currently derive in whole or in part, from the forest" through a strategy of "ensuring poor people, women, tribals and other disadvantaged groups are not worse, and preferably better off"[1].

Objectives of the Report

This study assumes that the needs of disadvantaged groups, and potential conflicts between these and the needs of more dominant groups, must be recognised if the social objectives of the project are to be met. Failure to meet these social objectives could undermine the project's wider environmental objectives since those whose needs are not met will be unwilling to cooperate with JFPM in the long term, and may even be forced to violate JFPM agreements in order to maintain their livelihood systems.

This report presents three village case studies which dis-aggregate forest users, identify patterns of forest resource use and examine the relative position of different forest users in village society. In each case study, baseline data is analysed to assess potential obstacles and opportunities for creating equitable and sustainable community institutions for joint management with KFD.

It is recognised that there are wide variations throughout the project area and that specific conclusions will be site specific. It is the intention of this report to illustrate that an understanding of social issues in general could assist JFPM teams to facilitate JFPM agreements that are more sustainable in both the environmental and institutional sense.

Micro-planning is the tool that will be used by JFPM teams to understand local variations as a basis for planning decisions at the village level. Explicit attention to social issues and the social objectives of the WGFP during the micro-planning process could facilitate the incorporation of these concerns into implementation.

Methods

After a general orientation to the district three revenue villages were selected, one from each of the major agro-ecological zones of the district: Coastal, Up-Ghat and Transitional. The villages were purposively selected for their heterogeneous populations since it is generally believed that such situations will raise more difficulties for project implementation. Nevertheless these villages also reflect resource use issues typical of the zone in which they lie:

---

[1]Karnataka Forest Department, Western Ghats Forestry Project: Project Proposal Document, 1991:1.

A. **Coastal Village:** A foothills village surrounded by barren forest land, some of which has been planted with acacia in recent years.

B. **Up-Ghat Village:** A high forest village with a dispersed settlement pattern which nevertheless experiences perceptible deforestation.

C. **Transitional Village:** A village on the boundary of Dharwad district at the edge of the, mainly teak, Reserved Forest.

Informal interviewing was combined with more structured surveys and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques as appropriate. Primary data was supported by secondary information from the KFD and the Revenue Department.

Organisation of the Report

The case studies are each divided into five sections as follows:

Village profiles: outlining the village's history, socio-economic structure, agricultural activities and labouring opportunities in order to provide sufficient context for the subsequent discussion.

Patterns of Forest Resource Use: discussing the present status of access to forest, and examining the major dependencies of different social groups upon forest resources within each village.

Community Organisations and Social Relations: identifying the patterns of leadership and power relations operating in each village. It further examines the extent to which villagers act collectively and the ability of disadvantaged groups to express and satisfy their needs at the village level.

Project Interventions: summarising the interventions and their impact in the Coastal and Transitional villages, where JFPM has begun, and examining the status of the third village in relation to the project framework.

Potential Obstacles and Opportunities to JFPM: assessing, on the basis of the evidence presented above, the potential obstacles and opportunities in each village for the WGFP to create equitable and sustainable Village Forest Committees (VFCs) for JFPM.

The concluding section of the report brings together findings of general relevance from the case studies. The casual reader is advised to concentrate on the final sections of each case study, as well as the general conclusions, which have both been cross-referenced so that points of specific interest can be followed up in more detail.

Annex I contains the definitions of class that are employed in this study. Annex II contains reference tables of the caste and class structure and the control over private resources in each village.

A. COASTAL VILLAGE CASE STUDY

Profile

1. This village has been transformed in the last 20 years by the impact of Tenancy Reform and the subsequent crisis in agriculture due to the breakdown of flood control systems protecting paddy lands. Prior to 1974, land was concentrated in the hands of a few Havik Brahman and Sonar families and was farmed by tenants using labour exchange. Today the majority of households own small, non-viable holdings, labour exchange has disappeared and flooding has rendered the majority of the most productive lands uncultivable in the monsoon.

2. The major communities are Namdharis Naiks and Scheduled Caste Mukris which are followed by Havik Brahmans and Vokkaligas and an even smaller community of Sonars. The majority of Brahmans are small farmers and few households are now able to command the resources and patron-client relations to be considered a dominant caste. The crisis in agriculture and the reduction in the economic status of the big landowners has severely curtailed labouring opportunities in the village. As a result many households contain job holders or receive remittances from outside the village.

3. The inability to cultivate paddy land during the monsoon drives labourers and marginal farmers to neighbouring villages and to Up-Ghat areas for work. While almost all landholders have some areca, half have less than 0.25 acres. For poorer farmers arecanut serves as a form of savings, as opposed to a regular source of income, the harvest being sold in small amounts to local traders when cash is required.

4. The absence of labouring opportunities has led poorer women to engage in low return activities such as the collection of dry leaves, green leaves and cow dung for sale to agricultural households when other work is not available for them, especially during August to October and January and February. The poorest households are those without able-bodied workers, such as elderly couples, widows, or the sick.

Patterns of Forest Resource Use

5. The 115 acres of Minor Forest in this village are essentially barren hillside with rocky outcrops and small scattered bushes, of which 48 acres was planted with acacia plantation in 1987. Aside from the remaining tree growth on the 42 acres which has been encroached as hadi[2], only one large Banyan, protected for religious worship, still stands on the hillside.

6. Degradation of forest in this village has occurred over a long period of time. While some villagers claim that thick forest existed in the 1930's, colonial forest officers note serious degradation of these tracts even then. Consequently, in the Forest Settlement of 1932 the agriculturalists of this village, together with 10 neighbouring villages, were allocated privileges in an area of Minor Forest,

---

[2] Hadi is forest land to which private use rights have been granted for the purpose of extracting green leaf manure and for grazing for arecanut gardeners. According to Departmental records no such rights have been granted here, however in all cases hadi's adjoin houses and gardens and are therefore within the village rather than outside its boundaries as some paddy lands are.

between 5-10 kms further inland. While wealthier households can purchase dry leaves, for organic manure, from the privilege area for Rs 150-200 per bullock cart and firewood from the KFD depot at Rs 26 per quintal, poorer households must make do with dry acacia leaves[3] and stolen firewood from the plantation.

7. The scarcity of fodder has made it impossible for households without sufficient complementary resources to own livestock. Consequently poorer households with arecanut rely on cow dung collected from the hillside to mix with green leaves to produce organic manure for their arecanut gardens, and must hire bullocks for ploughing their fields. Ironically the flooding of paddy lands has improved the fodder available to buffaloes in the monsoon season, however throughout the summer they must be stallfed, again placing them beyond the reach of poorer groups.

8. The collection of green and dry leaves provides an important source of income for poorer women at times when other labour is not available within the village. A basket of dry acacia leaves is sold for Rs 4, a small bundle of green leaves for Rs 2 and a gunny sack of cow dung for Rs 10. Many women from marginal farming households combine collection for sale with collection for compost to fertilize their own gardens.

9. Before the acacia plantation existed, poorer villagers used thorns or roots from the hillside, supplemented by firewood headloaded from the privilege area, as fuel. Although the plantation is officially closed to cutting it has provided a major source of firewood for poorer households and lessened the tremendous burden of collection for women. Women from neighbouring villages also collect dry leaves for sale and cut firewood for consumption and local sale from the plantation.

Community Organisations and Social Relations

10. The semi-nucleated settlement pattern is dictated by the boundary between forest land and garden land in the valley and the inhabitants clearly identify themselves as a community. The pattern of traditional intra-caste leadership dominated by the Havik Brahmans was disrupted by the impact of Tenancy Reform and the subsequent breakdown of labour exchange and flood control systems. The undermining of patron-client relations and the creation of new working patterns has eroded the traditional basis of both intra and inter caste relations.

11. The villagers directly perceive the absence of effective leadership in the village as an obstacle to tackling the problems they experience collectively, of which the most significant is the flooding of paddy lands. However those individuals who are motivated to take leadership roles complain that it is new differences of interests between villagers which prevent cooperation.

12. Flooding of paddy lands was prevented in the past by dams maintained by the Government. The reorganisation of local government and restructuring of vested interest resulted in the auctioning of valuable contracts for fishing rights overcoming the priority of flood control for local government officials. Villagers explicitly feel that if they pressed their interests collectively local government

---

[3] Acacia leaves are considered to be unsuitable for composting owing to their long decomposition time.

would take corrective action. However the majority of villagers own such small holdings that the effort required to do so is not perceived as being worthwhile.

13. The system of crop protection illustrates that a village response to a perceived need is possible in some circumstances. Cattle graze unattended and a watchman is appointed by the village to guard the paddy that is cultivated in the summer season. Payment is 'enforced' by the system whereby the watchman cuts his payment directly from each field at harvest time thus eliminating the danger of non-payment.

14. The structuring of gender relations is to some extent negotiable with some women taking greater control of their own earnings and household income, either as a result of negotiation between husband and wife or as a response to alcohol abuse by husbands. While women do not generally attend village meetings, they will do if specifically called on matters of direct relevance to them.

15. The absence of agreement about the relative positions of lower castes illustrates the fluidity of the situation where none command the resources required to dominate. While unable to cooperate in solving their internal problems, the absence of any politicians means that the village is unable to manipulate external Panchayat structures for its benefit. Although Gram Sabha meetings are held reasonably regularly they are regarded solely as opportunities for making applications to local government which are subsequently ignored.

Project Interventions

16. In 1993 a 10 hectare plantation was raised on lands belonging to three villages under the JFPM programme and subsequently a VFC was formed. There are a total of 362 households in the three villages and a total of 53 hectares of fuelwood plantations raised in previous years.

17. The 11 members of Managing Committee, of which 3 members are from the village studied, were selected by consensus. Villagers, assisted by KFD, explicitly balanced the representation of different castes and villages through discussion, which was at points heated. The inclusion of a politically active Vokkaliga from one of the other villages was done to prevent jealousy, although the majority consider him disruptive. The selection of the President was not based on his leadership qualities, but his good character. In this way villagers tried to contain potential conflicts and prevent capturing of the VFC by any powerful or disruptive person. The statutory two female members were selected from the three women who were present, one of whom had been a Mandal Panchayat member. Both are from small farmer households and neither collect forest resources themselves.

18. Prior to formation of the Committee concern was expressed by several villagers about potential conflicts of interest between agriculturalists, requiring leaf manure and grazing, and labourers, requiring firewood. While support for pure stand acacia is limited to labourers, the largest single class in all villages is marginal farmers who balance both requirements. 75% of seedlings planted are acacia or casuarina and both villagers and KFD officers recognise that other species will die unless corrective management is taken to protect them from suffocation by the fast-growers.

19. Planting was done without reference to the preferences of villagers owing to delay in the issuing of the Government Order. However the Forester subsequently collected information about species preferences, seasonality and village history by questioning a group of villagers and displaying their answers in graphical form. It is unclear to the villagers, what the purpose of information collection was and the villagers complained "we did not understand his map". The response of villagers to the foresters mapping reveals that 'PRA' tools can be alienating and unhelpful if villagers are not given a high degree of control over them.

20. Villagers repeatedly requested KFD to set up a firewood depot in the village and asserted that they were unable to stop cuttings unless alternative sources were provided. It seems likely that this may be resolved by allocating older fuelwood plantations to the villagers, thus legitimising present practices. All registered members contributed Rs 2 which is perceived by the villagers not as a commitment to participate in joint management, but as a payment to the Department which confers eligibility to be a beneficiary. It is clear that villagers perceive JFPM as another government programme in which KFD 'does' and villagers receive hand-outs.

Potential Obstacles and Opportunities For JFPM

21. The areas from which different groups obtain forest resources overlap village boundaries. The privilege area granted to the village's agriculturalists lies far outside village boundaries but nevertheless constitutes the sole source of non-acacia dry leaves for compost (para 6). Poor women from the neighbouring village use the acacia plantation as their only source of firewood and to earn a small income through its sale (para 6). This has important implications if JFPM becomes an attempt to restrict future use to areas within village boundaries. If this were to happen the needs of local agriculturalists for forest resources would not be met and poor women from the neighbouring village would be excluded from plantation use.

22. The patterns of forest resource use also vary significantly between different groups in terms of products used. The focus on densely planted acacia considers only firewood needs to the exclusion of all other uses of forest and forest lands. Despite the apparent barren condition of the hillside it nevertheless provides a grazing area for cattle, green leaves and cow dung for agriculturalists (para 7), as well as a source of income for women from poor households (para 8). While villagers may cooperate in protection of the new plantation in the short term, there is a need in the longer term to build an appropriate resource base for the future that can meet the demands of villagers for multiple products from the forest.

23. Recognising the role that the use of forest resources plays in the survival strategies of disadvantaged groups is important if JFPM is to safeguard livelihoods. The collection activities of poor women on forest land are low return and represent primarily an absence of alternative income generation options (para 4). For these women it is not the resource itself that is important but the role that collection and sale plays in their survival strategies. However, unless alternative sources of income are created, restricting these collection activities could have a disastrous effect on the survival strategies of these households.

24. Formalising village control over plantations may undermine the present position of poorer households and especially poorer women who derive income (para 9), firewood for consumption (para 6) and dry leaves for compost, from them (para 7). Present plantation users, as 'thieves', are only from lower status groups and those forced to invest in low return activities out of poverty. Present use patterns ensure that resources are always on-line for collection in small quantities when other employment is not available for petty income and consumption. Legitimising plantation use and formally dividing its benefits between all village members may jeopardise the critical dynamics that make these activities important in the survival strategies of these groups.

25. Villagers' own perception of conflicting requirements for forest resources by different social groups underestimates the common interests of the majority of marginal farmers (para 18). Almost all households are involved in the extraction of leaf manure either as collectors for consumption, collectors for sale or as purchasers, and have an interest in grazing either as livestock owners, stockless farmers relying on dung from forest lands or as labourers selling dung collected from forest land (para 8). Emphasising the common interest that villagers have in balancing multiple needs for firewood, income and inputs to agriculture, could assist the process of creating and managing a sustainable resource base.

26. Despite the selection of two women for the Managing Committee in accordance with the Government Order (para 17), no attempt has been made to consider women's interests or participation, in spite of the important role that forest land plays in the livelihoods of poor women (para 8). Neither of the selected women collect resources from forest land themselves and only one other woman attended the meeting at which the VFC was formed. The fact that the Managing Committee contains two women does not, in itself, guarantee that the interests of female forest users are represented.

27. Encouraging active participation by villagers can assist in the process of JFPM by drawing on villagers' knowledge of their community and gaining their commitment. There is a clear contrast between the process of member selection, where decisions were clearly taken by villagers although supervised by department (para 17), and the process of collecting information using 'PRA'(para 19), where the department failed to explain the exercise and to involve villagers actively. The attitudes revealed when KFD collected contributions from villagers (para 20) confirm this finding. The active participation of villagers in JFPM can only be gained by enabling them to fully understand the objectives of the project and the process of implementation, and by allowing them to take as many decisions as possible for themselves.

B. UP-GHAT VILLAGE CASE STUDY

Profile

1. This village is an administratively defined grama and not a village community in the sociological sense. The grama was severely depopulated at the turn of the century due to malaria and the constant menace of wild animals, in particular elephants, which hindered areca cultivation. Thus most of the inhabitants have settled here during the past 50 years and obtained their lands through occupation of abandoned revenue lands or by clearing forest land. While earlier settlers, who acquired substantial high quality lands, subsequently received land grants, later settlers, who occupied small areas of poor land, remain encroachers.

2. The dominant community both numerically and in terms of social and economic status are the Havik Brahmans, the majority of whom are capitalist areca farmers. The other important caste groupings are, in order of socio-economic status, the Namdharis Naiks, the Kare Vokkaligas and the Poojaris/Kotharis. While most of the Naiks and Vokkaligas are small or marginal farmers the majority of Poojaris/Kotharis are labourers. In addition to the remaining 3 Madival households and 5 Siddi families, there are 9 households of labourers living on their landlords' property and an unknown number of migrant labourers.

3. 60% of the cultivated area is under paddy and the remainder under areca, representing an extension of the proportion of cropped land under areca over the past 30 years. Fields are rarely double-cropped even if sufficient moisture exists for summer crops and investment is concentrated in developing gardens.

4. As a result of the prevailing labour shortage, labourers are able to command relatively high wages and employment throughout the year. Most small farmers rely heavily on labour exchange, being unable to pay labourers. Many of the labourers are attempting to develop areca on their encroached lands but lack the ability to provide adequate investment to bring the gardens to fruition. While some of the 'permanent' labourers have gardens elsewhere, which are not yet mature, others are life-long dependents who rely upon their landlords for everything.

Patterns of Forest Resource Use

5. 95% of the total area of this grama is forest land. Of the 5,502 acres of forest, 84% is Reserved, 9% is classified as Minor for the exercise of privileges and 7% is betta for the exclusive use of arecanut gardeners. While the bulk of the Reserved area is thick forest, the Minor forests, most bettas and forest adjacent to dwellings are visibly degraded with a marked absence of growth in the understorey. However any scarcity of forest resources is highly localised.

6. In view of the fact that many dwellings are surrounded by Reserve Forest, KFD have allowed the exercise of Canara privileges in adjacent areas. While the wealthy are generally aware of forest demarcations and privileges, they can and do secure substantial encroachments and other illegal gains from the forest. Furthermore there is a strong lobby of wealthy gardeners for the extension and outright ownership of betta lands. In contrast, poorer groups are not aware of forest regulations and, as a result are vulnerable to petty harassment, although poverty protects them from serious extortion.

7. Although forest has represented agricultural land to many of its settlers, encroached lands are a negligible proportion of the total area of the grama. The encroached area for housing and garden development by labourers totals 29 acres, or 1.72 acres per labouring household, while encroachment for betta alone by other classes totals 40 acres, of which 88% has been encroached by 3 larger farmers. In total 91% of fenced betta land is under the control of larger farmers.

8. Only more powerful groups are able to physically annex substantial portions of forest as illegal betta. However, betta-style use of Reserve and Minor Forest is prevalent and accounts for the honey-comb pattern of degradation around dwellings. The convenient 'by-products' of lopping for green leaf manure include good quality firewood, improved grazing area and crop of dry grass, and the creation of a buffer against wild animals, all of which are also highly valued. Consequently opening of the canopy is accelerated by cutting of trees for construction and agricultural purposes. While from a forestry perspective areas used in this way are degraded, they are extremely important complementary productive resources for small and marginal farmers.

9. Cattle in this grama are generally left to graze unattended in the forest and frequently bettas are fenced to protect agricultural lands from animals and to allow a good growth of dry grass for fodder. Despite the extensive forest area, the closed canopy and invasion of eupatorium in open canopy areas means that little grazing is available. The high requirement of areca for organic manure, and the increasing area under areca, has created an upward pressure on animal numbers and as a whole this grama imports manure, usually from Yellapur Gowlis. The limiting factor on animal holdings is generally the capacity of the farmer to produce or to purchase sufficient straw as fodder for his herd. More progressive arecanut gardeners have intensified their livestock management practices by stallfeeding improved breeds and using gobar gas plants to generate cooking energy and improve the quality of their organic manure.

10. While use of the forest for collection of inputs to agriculture tends to be intensive, the collection of NTFPs, in particular for lower status groups, is extensive[4]. Almost all households collect some NTFPs other than leaf manure and firewood and the extent of reliance on NTFPs, especially for income, is almost certainly underestimated by this study. Although women may not climb trees, they are involved in the collection of NTFPs and often do the majority of the processing work related to collection. While Brahman men are skilful weavers of buti and chuli baskets, weaving of chape mats is confined to women in lower status groups, notably Kare Vokkaligas. Markets for woven goods are extremely localised with produce being sold direct to the consumer since trade in these items is banned by KFD. Other traded NTFPs are sold to village agents for contractors or to other travelling traders or wholesale outlets who provide a better rate to collectors.

11. 80% of larger and small farmer households only collect for household consumption and betta owners frequently only collect NTFP for sale from private access land. In contrast a minimum of a third of labouring households and 40% of marginal farming households collect for sale from forest areas. NTFP collection and processing forms a major element in the livelihood systems of at least 3 of the four Siddi families and provides a significantly better income than labouring work

---

[4] See Annexure I Table 5.

during particular seasons, despite exploitation by NTFP contractors. NTFPs, especially the weaving of mats for sale, provide an important supplementary source of income for marginal farming households where women are often reluctant to work outside the home, except for transplanting and weeding of paddy.

Community Organisations and Social Relations

12. This grama consists of 27 dispersed hamlets of which half are single households. Another 8 are single caste hamlets, mainly divided joint families, and the remaining six hamlets are of mixed composition. There are few strong social ties or collective activities outside the extended family or caste. There are no public meeting places and the focus of wider social relations is on a nucleated village in the neighbouring grama, which has a couple of shops, hotels, school and branch of the agricultural society. The 'chairman' of the now moribund Mandal Panchayat, who comes from another nearby grama, is the only widely recognised community leader.

13. Whilst Brahmans are most strongly united in terms of congruence between their caste and class position, they tend to be individualistic and their dominance is mitigated by the labour shortage situation. Small farmers and all Naik and Vokkaliga households have strong intra-caste ties fortified by extensive labour exchange. Their economic independence affords them freedom from Brahman domination.

14. Labourers in the grama are relatively powerful in relation to their employers as a result of the labour shortage and their ownership of at least houseplots. For many of these households, encroachment signified an escape from being dependent labourers, and wealthy gardeners who have 'lost' dependent labourers through this process portray their occupation of the land as illegitimate. Despite the general failure of their attempts to cultivate areca, these families have self respect and the freedom to speak their minds in their own house. Labourers possess a certain solidarity, exemplified by the Sheragar system[5], that cuts across caste lines to some extent. The character of the Sheragar system here is unusually egalitarian in that the contractor works alongside his labourers as well as for other contractors, and labour exchange is frequently used to fulfil contracts.

15. Women are expected to withdraw when male visitors arrive although women in poorer households have greater freedom to move around alone. Although there is exchange of women's labour, especially for paddy cultivation, this system is entirely controlled by men and many women from marginal households who labour are only allowed to do so in the company of male family members. Women of all classes are unsure about forest regulations.

16. Owing to the dispersed nature of settlements and social relations, few resource use issues are experienced as 'common' issues in the grama. In several notable instances Brahman families were able to appropriate 'common' resources, namely Minor forest, in one case depriving a Vokkaliga family access to their traditional water supply for irrigation. However, in a different incident, Siddis were able to resist the attempt by a Brahman family to evict them from forest land

---

[5] Under the Sheregar system, work is given on contract to an individual contractor, for a fixed amount, who then hires labourers to complete the work.

which they wanted for areca cultivation. While control over a water source could not be maintained by a socially and economically inferior group, 'ownership' of a houseplot could be sustained. While both were structured as 'private' conflicts, they illustrate the parameters of Brahman dominance in the grama: Brahmins do not have the social control over poorer groups to evict them but they do have the power to buy officials.

17. In an area of Minor Forest that has been effectively privatised by the neighbouring Brahman families, the perception of degradation motivated a limited form of 'social fencing'. The users stopped the practice of cutting seedlings for green leaves and collected leaves individually leaving at least one branch with foliage. Even this minimal protection has resulted in improvements in the understorey.

Project Interventions

18. This grama has been designated as a Conservation Zone under the WGFP. Forests in Conservation Zones are deemed to be ecologically important, but many are both inhabited and subject to exploitation. It is understood that inhabitants in Conservation Zones will need to be involved in forest management in these areas. However, the present Government Order does not alter the access to forest resources in these areas, and there is not yet an agreed plan for dealing with such areas within the project.

19. Although KFD is currently holding the line against further encroachment, the pressure for land will increase as families divide. There is a need to address the already visible degradation resulting from intensive, and sometimes profligate, use of forests adjacent to dwellings.

Potential Obstacles and Opportunities For JFPM

20. Although local people perceive forest degradation, they do not experience it as a 'common' problem, owing to the dispersed settlement pattern (para 16). Nor do they experience it as an acute problem, forest resources being abundant in the grama (para 5). The lack of perceived interdependence in resource management issues by dispersed householders means that any joint management system would be difficult to organise and maintain at any level much bigger than a few neighbouring hamlets. In many cases this may amount to semi-privatisation of the forest by an extended family (para 17). This would require a strong partnership from KFD if the threat of encroachment and extension of betta-style forest use were to be controlled.

21. For wealthier groups, use beyond the intensive extraction of resources from the adjacent forest or betta is generally confined to grazing and the extraction of wate cane (para 8). For poorer groups, particularly Siddis, who engage in collection of NTFP for sale, use is extensive, exceeding a 5 km radius of Reserve Forest (para 10). While the use area for a hamlet of larger and small farmers may be relatively easily defined and possibly exclusive from those of other hamlets, use areas for NTFP collectors are overlapping and extensive.

22. Larger farmers who have encroached for betta, have annexed a minimum of 10 acres per household, while labourers have encroached an average of 1.7 acres per household (para 7). Two thirds of all encroachment is accounted for by 3 larger farmers (para 7). Nevertheless wealthy farmers frequently demand extension, and outright ownership, of betta (para 6), whilst portraying

labourers' encroachments as illegitimate (para 14). At present labourers who are encroachers do not currently feel insecure, but the recovery of forest land occupied by labouring households here would have a serious impact on their status and in some cases on their future incomes (para 14).

23. Present privilege arrangements legitimise use of the forest for inputs to agriculture and for consumption (para 6), but penalise those who seek income through collection and processing of forest resources (para 10). The collection of NTFPs for sale is an important source of income for tribal households, but the payment they receive from the contractor is exploitative (para 11). Weaving activities can provide petty income for women from marginal farming households, but markets are limited by the KFD ban on trading these items (para 10-11). There is considerable opportunity to improve the security, as well as income, of marginal households and labourers who collect or process NTFP for sale by clearly establishing collection privileges, curtailing contractors and legitimising trade by grama inhabitants.

24. The failure of present privilege arrangements to operate satisfactorily is partially due to lack of knowledge of poorer local people and manipulation by contractors leading to bribery, illegal cuttings and lower returns to NTFP collectors (para 6). Enforcement of regulations by officials has proved ineffective since the elite simply buy illegal gains, however adjudication by consensus of all inhabitants and KFD together through a village committee could be more successful. Where lower status groups perceive a resource as theirs, they are sometimes capable of resisting its encroachment by more powerful groups, so long as the matter is settled between the parties involved, without recourse to officials (para 16). Significant gains could be made by making poorer local people fully aware of forest privileges and giving them the right, and respect, to become joint protectors of the forest.

25. Any consultation with local people about potential changes in forest management will not be effective if directed at the elite members of the grama. Not only do elite groups have different interests compared to poorer groups, in this situation they also lack social control over them. The absence of strong community ties and the strong mistrust of wealthy, high caste groups means that a concerted effort to gain the support of all sections of the grama would be an essential prerequisite for any joint forest management.

26. Although the emphasis in Conservation Zones will be on preservation, there are already partially degraded areas, especially around dwellings (para 5). A pragmatic approach could be to accept the endurance of betta-style forest use and to focus joint efforts on managing these buffer zones more productively and more sustainably. However joint management could only be successful if it met the priorities of all parties.

C. TRANSITIONAL VILLAGE CASE STUDY

Profile

1. More than 10 years ago there was a steady immigration to this village of landless families from neighbouring talukas in Dharwad district. Of the three major caste groupings, the Lingayat Gowdas are dominant both in terms of socio-economic status and numerically. However a quarter of Lingayats are labourers and the majority are small farmers. The Ambigar community numbers less than half that of the Lingayats. Although about one fifth of Ambigar households are marginal farmers, the majority are labourers. The scheduled caste community is about half the size of the Ambigar community. Harijans have a greater proportion of marginal farming families than Ambigars, although they have significantly lower social status owing to their caste position.

2. About a third of the land owned by villagers is irrigated by two tanks and is concentrated in the hands of larger farmers. However there is rarely sufficient water to allow the growth of summer crops. The remaining agricultural land is dry, vulnerable to uncertain rainfall, and low yielding. A significant proportion of this land is left fallow, either for grazing purposes, or because it is not considered worthwhile investing in its cultivation. Farmers generally report decreasing crop yields, increasing reliance on chemical fertilisers and reduced livestock numbers.

3. Labourers constitute 40% of the households and consequently the wage rate is low, although it rises significantly during peak agricultural periods. The essential timeliness of many operations in paddy cultivation means that even marginal farmers may employ some labourers at peak periods and that labour exchange is rare. Very little work is available during the summer months and after harvesting and many labourers migrate to the Up-Ghat Zone for several months a year. Women-headed households or those without able-bodied male adults are disadvantaged in terms of labour power, as well as social status.

Patterns of Forest Resource Use

4. The village's 81 acres of Minor Forest lies between neighbouring Dharwad District and the Reserve Forests of Yellapur Division. As a result it has been vulnerable to illegal cuttings, mainly for firewood, by people from the neighbouring district where forest is scarce. Overuse by the villagers and outsiders, coupled with lax implementation of forest regulations, resulted in the serious degradation of the area. KFD have year by year closed the Minor Forest for enrichment planting, predominantly with teak seedlings, and the full extent of this area is currently closed to local use. Consequently the Reserve Forest areas usually used by villagers are at a distance greater than 2 kms from the village and fall outside its boundaries.

5. The major use of forest resources in the village is for firewood, with almost all families entirely reliant on the forest. In wealthier families, men collect the year's firewood in a week during summer using a bullock cart and a labourer. However in poorer households, women, sometimes assisted by men, headload wood throughout the year, stockpiling it in the summer season to last through the monsoon.

6. All stockholders report substantial reductions in herd size as a result of inadequate grazing owing to the closure of local forests and the invasion of eupatorium. This has meant that the employment of herders, who can take animals

longer distances to where grazing is available, is non-viable for individual households. Grazing is usually accompanied however by unpaid family labourers, often old men or boys. One village herder remains, who takes the animals from several households a distance of 8 kms daily. Many households have responded to the decreased availability of grazing by reducing animal numbers, stall feeding for 9 months of the year, retaining a portion of dry land for growing grass, and grazing only during the monsoon. Fodder for stall feeding is usually cut from field boundaries and rarely taken from the forest.

7. While non-farming households' requirements for timber and bamboo for construction are infrequent, farmers require some of these resources annually for making agricultural implements, as well as thorns for fencing. To meet these needs villagers cut trees from surrounding forests in the night 'like thieves'. However, foresters do not punish those caught if they can show that their needs are genuine.

8. While many villagers in the Transitional Zone collect green leaves during the monsoon and dry leaves during the summer for compost for paddy cultivation, this practice has died out in this village. There appear to be multiple causes: the availability of credit for chemical fertilisers, declining animal numbers, the relatively long distance to the nearest patch of forest, the closure of surrounding forests, and the growing predominance of teak species[6]. Farmers blame excessive reliance on chemical fertiliser for declining yields and increased indebtedness with the local agricultural society.

9. Although the Minor Forest previously provided an abundance of NTFP, degradation and enrichment planting has eradicated almost all NTFP. As one village elder remarked "Now..the forest is recovering. However it is no longer a jungle but only a teak plantation. If we want a jungle like before we will have to protect it for 30 or 40 years." Nevertheless a small number of women, predominantly from farming households, still collect cashewnuts for oil extraction. Women are able to market the oil themselves to travelling businessmen, frequently keeping such transactions secret so that they can retain these earnings.

Community Organisations and Social Relations

10. The almost 3 fold increase in households in the village over the past 50 years has been accompanied by the progressive undermining of the dominance of the old Patil (headman), and the absentee landlords. Tenancy Reform and the division of joint families has resulted in the dilution of their economic powerbase. Although this remains a 'united' village, the character of local leadership has been significantly altered towards a relatively more transparent and egalitarian system. The major function of this leadership is to adjudicate conflicts, regulate use of village resources, namely tank water and gautana land[7], and manage the village fund.

---

[6] Teak leaves are not considered good for compost.

[7] Gautana is officially under the control of the Revenue Department, however, villagers perceive it as their common land and effectively control decisions relating to its use.

11. Many villagers report that the traditional elders misappropriated village funds and used their power to monopolise tank water and gautana land for both housing and cultivation. All households participate actively in the present system and report calling elders to account if there is any doubt over the use of funds or disagreement over the decisions taken by elders. The present village elder stresses that his leadership rests solely on taking the correct decision and that his role involves careful balancing of justice with the disturbance of social relations.

12. The village fund is used to supply credit at interest rates below those offered by external money lenders on an annual basis, to all households. The timing of disbursements and repayments are designed to meet the needs of agriculturalists. These arrangements are not responsive to the needs of labourers for consumption in lean periods, or for asset acquisition to improve their lives in the longer term.

13. Women do not attend village meetings and all feel powerless to influence decisions taken in that arena. The experience of the adult literacy programme[8] in this village showed that unless male family members actively motivated women's participation, it was not possible for them to come forward. For poorer women the burden of labouring and house work prohibits any such possibility, which is reinforced by mockery from their menfolk at their pretensions. While women from small farmer households who cannot labour for status reasons frequently express a private desire to move outside the home to generate additional income, their experience when tolerated by their own menfolk has taught them that doing so is punished by slander from other villagers. Women who are household heads complain of physical insecurity arising from the absence of a male adult to prevent harassment.

14. Traditional segregation of living areas by caste has been disturbed by immigration and although caste barriers remain they have been significantly eroded. Harijans may enter the village temples, although not their inner sanctums, and use of the tank and government well is unrestricted. One of the older Harijan families has provided two Scheduled Caste members to the Mandal Panchayat over the years. Harijan men claim that they participate fully in village institutions but despite these changes the touching of a Harijan remains problematic, especially for the Lingayats, and entry to their houses is forbidden.

15. The changing balance of power in the village has increased competition for leadership status. Prominent Lingayats were eager to dominate the participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) methods used in this study and resisted strategies of positive intervention to involve Harijans. They perceive that JFPM, and in particular the formation of a VFC, will generate a new arena in which jostling for power has to be played out.

16. Villagers cooperate readily over limited objectives. Although social justice through community institutions is mediated by present power relations, a degree of egalitarianism is required for its present functioning. The exclusive use of village funds for building temples and celebrating festivals illustrates the

---

[8] The adult literacy programme is a government initiative that relies upon village volunteers providing intensive teaching to all willing illiterate men and women.

limitations of this kind of institution. Villagers explicitly felt that funds could not be used in a progressive manner, to help poorer families, as this would be unfair and cause conflict. Leaders felt that funds had to be spent in a conspicuous manner or else they would be accused of misappropriating them.

Project Interventions

17. In the 1993 rains, the remaining open portion of the Minor Forest was planted under the JFPM programme, two thirds of the seedlings being teak. Just before the rains a public meeting was held in the village to discuss the programme. However six months later, no further interactions had occurred. Although KFD were planning to follow up by forming a VFC and carrying out a micro-planning exercise in the village, the villagers express concern that no subsequent meetings have taken place. Many of the villagers see JFPM as an opportunity to generate income, and consequently supported the selection of teak species by KFD.

18. Despite the absence of follow up, the single public meeting had a significant impact on villager's attitudes. Subsequently villagers have arrested two outsiders who were cutting in the forest. While previously people came from Dharwad district in the daytime for cutting firewood, usually for local use and sale, now they only come in the night. A village elder remarked " Before that meeting we had no authority to prevent outsiders doing illicit cuttings but now KFD have given the people the power to do so". The section forester reciprocated their cooperation by presenting a chape mat to the village which they intend to use in their new temple.

Potential Obstacles and Opportunities for JFPM

19. At present villagers cannot use the Minor Forest that falls within their village boundary and rely instead on adjoining Reserve Forest areas which are used by many surrounding villages, including villages outside the district (para 4). In particular, grazing by the village herder occurs over a wide but defined area (para 6). It seems likely that the creation of mutually exclusive village forests, especially along existing grama boundaries, may create difficulties for these villagers and those from surrounding villages.

20. The small initiative by KFD to encourage forest protection has resulted in an impressive effort by villagers to prohibit cutting by outsiders. They have demonstrated their interest in the scheme and their capacity to take control of local resources (para 18, para 10). However, implicit expectations motivate villagers present cooperation (para 17). If these prove to be unfounded, their future cooperation could be withheld. Villagers express concern about the failure of KFD to contact them regarding the scheme in the 6 months following their meeting. The JFPM team envisages that its next meeting will be for micro-planning (para 17). However, frequent contacts are necessary between JFPM teams and villagers to build up trust and a good dialogue in order to enhance the quality of micro-planning.

21. The Minor Forest is not especially close to settlement so the extent to which active protection by villagers would be required to prevent night cuttings is an important issue (para 18). The nucleated settlement pattern makes it easy for

villagers to detect 'illegal'[9] cutting by insiders. However to date there is no regulation of 'legitimate' cutting by insiders, and it is unclear at present whether or not this will prove to be a sustainable approach. Villagers' present involvement is informal and passive; micro-planning needs to address the extent to which active protection and regulation of use by villagers is required to manage the Minor Forest sustainably.

22. Despite the general approval voiced by villagers for planting teak (para 17), focusing on income generation possibilities creates a conflict with the objective of regenerating a natural forest which can meet the villagers consumption needs for forest resources. Since it is likely that substantial areas of adjoining Reserve Forest will not be placed under community management in the near future, there is a danger of shifting biotic pressure to higher forest areas. Since these villagers have already diverted the major part of their forest use away from their village forests this may not impose any greater cost on them (para 4). However from the department's perspective the objective of forest protection could be seriously jeopardised.

23. The opportunities of the village using its collective portion of rewards for developmental purposes are slim. The village has proved itself incapable of spending in a progressive manner, which is seen as unfair (para 16). Additionally, the present timing of disbursements, and arrangements for repayment, do not respond to the credit needs of the poorest (para 12). The village's present fund is used to serve the needs of agriculturalists and to enhance the status of village leaders. Moreover, a second collective fund may prove redundant or worse a tool for competition for village leaders seeking power.

24. The difficulties faced during this case study in using PRA tools in the village indicate that micro-planning exercises will run up against the perception that JFPM, and the VFC itself, is a new arena in which jostling for power has to be played out (para 15). It is likely that a VFC will be unresponsive to the needs of the poorest and to the needs of Harijans and women in particular (para 13). If JFPM is to meet the needs of the disadvantaged, then JFPM teams will have to invest time in building a relationship with excluded groups.

25. Women's exclusion from decision-making arenas is total (para 13). Nevertheless, women are involved in forest use in varying ways; higher caste women as consumers of firewood or collectors/sellers of cashew, lower caste women as headloaders of firewood (para 5, para 9). Unless JFPM teams positively intervene, women will remain excluded and their needs ignored. Positive intervention would involve a commitment to consult women from different groups, insist upon their participation in the future VFC, persuade village men of the necessity of that participation, and build up a rapport with women informally and separately from men.

---

[9] 'Illegal' cuttings are seen by villagers as being cuttings for sale for individual profit.

CONCLUSIONS

The case studies have raised important social issues which will have to be addressed for JFPM agreements to be effective and sustainable. The particular configuration of different social groups, their varying patterns of forest resource use and the social context are site-specific. However, this final section of the report draws out conclusions that are of general relevance from the case studies.

Patterns of Forest Resource Use

Since JFPM will alter access to forest resources, it is important to understand present patterns of forest resource use. The case studies show that there are significant differences in the patterns of forest resource use of different social groups. In particular there are variations between groups in:

- the specific forest products used
- the areas from which they are obtained
- the way in which they are obtained
- the role that they play in the livelihood of the user

Some general conclusions which have operational implications can be drawn from the case studies:

1. The current model of JFPM, derived from West Bengal envisages the evolution of community protection as the creation of mutually exclusive use of forest areas assigned to specific villages. However, in many cases the administrative boundaries delineating villages are not sociologically meaningful (para B1) and those delineating forests within village boundaries are equally meaningless, in terms of describing current resource use patterns (para A21, para B20, para C19). This indicates that the bureaucratically defined unit of the village may not be an appropriate unit for community management in many cases and that the creation of exclusive use areas may curtail the access of some groups to forest resources.

2. In addition, resource use patterns vary significantly across different socio-economic groups within villages (para A22-25, para B21, para C5-7). For example, NTFP collectors use forest more extensively, receive inadequate payments from contractors and are prohibited to trade directly (para B23). Stockholders may rely on grazing lands beyond the forest areas used for other agricultural purposes (para C6). Different institutional arrangements will be required to meet the needs of different forest uses, such as grazing, inputs to agriculture and NTFP collection for sale, within one village.

3. The present focus on plantations is in danger of creating production forestry for villagers and may not succeed in fostering sustainable resource use practices (para A22, para C22). If the problem in the Western Ghats is biotic pressure, then 'social forestry on forest land' will not solve problems of overuse, even though villagers may eagerly cooperate as beneficiaries of a scheme that promises a windfall. JFPM will have to address the requirements of villagers in a holistic fashion in order to avoid shifting the burden of biotic pressure, to better quality forests, or undermining livelihoods where alternative forest resources are not available.

4. In order to assure the livelihoods of forest users, JFPM teams will have to identify user groups who cannot substitute for present forest use, and actively safeguard their access to these critical forest resources. For example, while all agriculturalists rely on forest resources for inputs to agriculture, larger farmers are able to provide or purchase substitutes or to adapt present management systems if access to forest resources is restricted. However, small and marginal farmers are unable to purchase substitutes, lack private resources on which to develop alternative resources, cannot invest in intensification, and commonly experience labour constraints. Therefore there is danger that they may experience a decline in their standard of living, or even a crisis in their livelihood system, if the supply of critical forest resources is limited (para A6-7, para B8, para C6).

5. For the most disadvantaged groups, including tribals and poor women, the role of forest resources in income generation and/or for direct consumption is most important (para A23-24, para B23, para C5). These groups cannot afford to purchase substitutes for consumption, and sale of forest resources can play an important part in survival strategies during lean periods. Unless the needs of groups whose survival strategies depend on the forest are adequately catered for by the JFPM agreement, they will either suffer a decline in their welfare or may be forced to violate the agreement. In some cases the concerned resource is of no intrinsic interest and its use is symptomatic of the absence of other income generating opportunities (para A23). In these cases, even if the priorities of the poorest groups may suggest non-forestry solutions, restructuring access to forest resources will endanger their livelihoods unless alternative income generation opportunities are being created simultaneously.

Community Organisations and Social Relations

JFPM is creating new organisations at the village level to manage the forest more sustainably. It is therefore important to understand how community organisations function. Information from the case studies illustrates that existing village organisations:

- are not representative
- meet the needs of wealthier and more powerful groups
- generally exclude women
- can be disrupted by conflicting interests

A number of implications arise out of these observations for JFPM:

1. While the needs of wealthier groups are well expressed and their unequal access seen as legitimate, the needs of poorer groups engaged in marginal activities with low returns may not be articulated as clearly or granted the same kind of legitimacy (para A24, B22-23, C24). It is therefore unrealistic to expect consultation with the VFC alone to adequately reflect the needs of poorer and less powerful social groups, including women. JFPM teams may have to take positive action to understand the needs of disadvantaged groups, including women, if they are to ensure that these needs are reflected in JFPM agreements.

2. Different social groups may have competing needs for forest resources and all user groups will have an interest in maintaining their present access to forest resources. Their capacity to reach a stable JFPM agreement with KFD will depend on the extent to which the needs of different groups can be accommodated (para

A26, B22). Understanding the needs of different groups in the context of village power relations would help JFPM teams to facilitate negotiations, to manage conflict between different groups and to effect suitable compromises. Emphasising the reliance of the majority of villagers on multiple forest products and reflecting these common needs in planting decisions would assist this process.

3. In cases where patterns of collection of forest resources are sharply divided on gender lines, failure to actively consult female primary collectors is likely to affect their individual income and status as well as the livelihoods of their families. It is crucial to recognise that interests of women in forest resources, as with men, are structured by class (para A26, B27, C25), and that the representation of female non-collectors on the VFC does not ensure that gender issues are addressed. In all situations, failure to involve a majority of women actively in the General Body and meetings of the VFC defines JFPM as a male arena.

4. The formalisation of control over forest resources may disrupt the survival strategies of poorer forest users (para A24, B22, C24). Where non-primary collectors are given rights to equal shares, primary collectors may lose their monopoly over the resource and find their share diminished. Unless explicitly planned, new arrangements are unlikely to meet the requirements of poorer forest users for the frequency, timing and nature of disbursement of benefits. Understanding the timing, practice and purpose of resource collection for different groups has important implications for creating appropriate institutional arrangements under JFPM.

5. Active participation of all social groups could enable villagers to balance the power of different groups in the VFC (para A27), may be necessary to manage the forest sustainably (para C21) or even be essential to implement agreements at all (para B25). This kind of participation would be encouraged if JFPM teams are responsive to villagers' needs, maintain a dialogue with all village groups, enable villagers to understand the process of JFPM fully and allow them to take as many decisions as possible for themselves. Passive cooperation, as opposed to active participation, of villagers with what is perceived to be a government-controlled scheme, could undermine the institutional sustainability of VFCs.

In conclusion, there is strong evidence to support the case that identifying and addressing the needs of forest users in general, and of disadvantaged users in particular, may be critical in negotiating effective JFPM agreements at the village level. This process of identification of the different needs of forest users must be used as a basis for decision-making in the micro-planning process if the WGFP is to meet its social objectives.

The case studies further illustrate that fostering the development of responsive and sustainable VFCs will require a concerted attempt to encourage the active participation of all social groups in JFPM as well as a deliberate effort to strengthen the capacity of disadvantaged groups to advance their interests in the VFC. Addressing social inequalities through the process of community organisation will be essential for assuring the institutional sustainability of JFPM and for safeguarding the livelihoods of disadvantaged forest users in the longer term.

ANNEXURES

I. CLASS DEFINITIONS

While remembering that economic classes may contain several distinct livelihood systems, class has nevertheless been used as the basis for dis-aggregating forest users in this report.

The classes employed are defined as follows:

> **Larger Farmers:** Those who are making significant profits, usually from areca cultivation, but in a few cases in the Transitional village from field cultivation systems[10].
>
> **Small Farmers:** Those who are self sufficient and generally do not hire out their labour to others. Although they may have a surplus of paddy, or areca, for sale, they do not make significant profits.
>
> **Marginal Farmers:** Those who cannot produce enough for consumption needs and must sell their labour on a seasonal basis.
>
> **Labourers:** Those who must work throughout the year. Although in the Coastal and Up-Ghat villages they may be attempting to cultivate some areca they are currently receiving negligible income, if any, from farming.

The particular method of delineation of class used encompasses differences in survival strategies to some extent and users are dis-aggregated in a way that can easily be related to social status and political power. Where important differences in livelihood systems do exist within a class, these have been discussed in the relevant case study. Finally, the class based approach provides a context in which to situate an awareness of gender.

---

[10] Since the focus of this study is on poorer groups, who lack extensive private resources, medium and large farmer households have been aglomerated. While all households in this category make secure and significant surpluses, the absolute sizes of these surpluses varies widely.

II. REFERENCE TABLES

A. Coastal Village

Table 1: Caste and Class in Coastal Village

HOUSEHOLDS	LARGER FARMERS	SMALL FARMERS	MARGINAL FARMERS	LABOURERS	TOTAL
BRAHMAN	2	12	0	0	14 (19%)
SONAR	0	7	1	0	8 (11%)
VOKKALIGA	1	0	4	9	14 (19%)
NAMDHARI	1	6	12	0	19 (25%)
MUKRI	0	1	15	4	20 (27%)
TOTAL	4 (5%)	26 (35%)	32 (43%)	13 (17%)	75 (100%)

Table 2: Class Control of Land in Coastal Village

HOUSEHOLDS	GARDEN[1]		ALL PRIVATE LAND		HADI		LIVESTOCK	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	C	D
LARGER FARMERS	37%	2.7	36%	11.3	38%	4.0	22%	10.0
SMALL FARMERS	35%	0.4	38%	1.8	46%	0.8	51%	3.6
MARGINAL FARMERS	28%	0.3	26%	0.9	16%	0.2	27%	1.4
TOTAL (ACRES)	29	0.5	125	2.0	42	0.7	182	2.8

A: % land held by a class
B: Average acres held by class
C: % animals held by class
D: Average number of animals by class

[1] Two households classed as labourers own 4 guntes of areca garden each and have been excluded from this table. All other labourers are landless in this village.

B. Up-Ghat Village

Table 3: Caste and Class Composition

HOUSEHOLDS	LARGER FARMERS	SMALL FARMERS	MARGINAL FARMERS	LABOURERS	TOTAL
BRAHMAN	25	1	2	1	29 (36%)
NAIK	0	5	4	2	11 (14%)
KARE VOKKALIGA	0	4	5	6	15 (19%)
POOJARI/KOTHARI	0	0	4	8	12 (15%)
OTHER	1	0	1	11	13 (16%)
TOTAL NO.	26 (33%)	10 (13%)	16 (20%)	28 (35%)	80

Table 4: Class control of Cultivated Lands[2]

	GADDE		GARDEN		CULTIVATED LAND		BETTA		LIVESTOCK	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	C	D
LARGER FARMERS	61%	3.4	67%	2.5	64%	5.9	91%	10.7	58%	11
SMALL FARMERS	18%	2.5	11%	1.1	15%	3.5	7%	2.1	15%	7
MARGINAL FARMERS	19%	1.8	14%	0.9	17%	2.7	2%	0.4	21%	6.9
LABOURERS	1%	0.1	7%	0.4	4%	0.5	0%	0.0	6%	1.7
TOTAL	137	2.0	94	1.4	231	3.4	294	3.7	481	6.0

Table 5: Major NTFPs and Their Uses

SPECIES	PART	SALE	PURPOSE	PRICE
Betha	Cane	Yes	Weaving Buti and Chuli Baskets	Buti Rs 115 Chuli Rs 50
Wate	Cane	Yes	Making kadike and Rope	—
Ichalou	Grass	Yes	Weaving Chape mats	Rs 10-15
Soapnut and Shikekai	Nut	Yes	Washing Clothes, Body and Hair	Soapnut 8 Rs/kg Shikekai 10 Rs/kg
Murugalu and Wate	Fruit	Yes	Cooking	Murugalu 3 Rs/kg Wate 8 Rs/kg
Rampatre	—	Yes	Cooking	60 Rs/kg

[2] Including encroached lands.

C. Transitional Village

Table 6: Caste and Class Composition

HOUSEHOLDS	LARGER FARMERS	SMALL FARMERS	MARGINAL FARMERS	LABOURERS	TOTAL
LINGAYAT GOWDAS	10	15	7	10	42 (54%)
AMBIGARS	0	1	5	15	21 (27%)
HARIJANS	0	0	6	6	12 (15%)
OTHERS	0	1	2	0	3 (4%)
TOTAL	10 (13%)	17 (22%)	20 (26%)	31 (40%)	78 (100%)

Table 7: Class Control of Land and Livestock

HOUSEHOLDS	WET LAND		DRY LAND		ALL LAND		LIVESTOCK[3]		SMALL STOCK	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	C	D	C	D
LARGER FARMERS	57%	6.0	34%	6.4	42%	12.4	40%	9.4	9%	0.4
SMALL FARMERS	36%	2.4	45%	5.3	42%	7.6	38%	5.6	0%	0.0
MARGINAL FARMERS	7%	0.4	21%	2.0	16%	2.4	17%	2.1	47%	1.0
LABOURERS	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	0%	0.0	5%	0.4	44%	0.6
TOTAL	105	2.2	188	4.0	293	6.2	236	3.0	43	0.6

A: % of land owned by class
B: Average land holding by class
C: % of animals owned by class
D: Average animal holding by class

[3] Excluding smallstock

ANNEXURE II

MATERIALS PREPARED FOR

THE NGO WORKSHOP AT TATTIHALLA IN SEPTEMBER 1993

THE EVOLUTION OF JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN WEST BENGAL

West Bengal has the highest population density and the lowest per capita forest area, at 0.2 hectares per person, of any State in India. Nevertheless it was in West Bengal that one of most influential models in participatory forest management was developed. Efforts to involve local communities, which evolved out of the failure of traditional forest management, began 20 years ago with the Arabari Experiment, see box 1.

BOX 1: THE ARABARI EXPERIMENT

In 1971, AK Banerjee DFO realised that the dependency of local people on forest resources made it difficult to protect Arabari forest without their active cooperation. He contacted the forest villages and began an informal dialogue with them concerning the problem of degradation. He found that villagers understood the effects of deforestation and that poverty was forcing them to over exploit the forest. The DFO agreed to provide employment to the villagers in return for their cooperation in forest protection. The 618 families in the 11 villages formed an informal committee and were given rights to all NTFP in the 1272 hectares under their protection. Villagers took it in turn to guard the forest and offenders were fined by the committee. The Arabari experience demonstrated that communities could effectively protect state forest and became a model for West Bengal.

The encouragement of senior Departmental officers facilitated the extensive replication of the experiment. Although the promise of employment to Forest Protection Committee (FPC) members quickly proves unsustainable, the department continues to place an important emphasis on addressing the livelihood needs of the FPC members.

Throughout South West Bengal sal forests are dominant. Good coppicing of degraded forest enabled successful regeneration at low input costs. As sal recovered, companion species flourished and led to a steady increase in the value of non-timber forest produce (NTFP). Major NTFP includes sal, kendu, mahua, discori, tubers, tassar, mushrooms, fuelwood, fodder and medicinal plants.

By 1989, 1,250 villages were involved in protecting 152,000 hectares of forest land. There was a growing concern that joint protection arrangements would not be sustainable unless the rights and obligations of local communities were formalised. In the same year the first Government Order of West Bengal on the sharing of forest produce was issued, see box 2.

BOX 2: SHARING OF FOREST PRODUCE

FPC members receive;

- 25% of timber harvested
- 25% of cashew harvested
- all NTFP available

Sal seeds and kendu leaves must be sold through LAMPS. There is no forest or village development fund. Members receive their share in kind or in cash directly.

Although the Department had initiated forest protection through community management, they were soon joined in their efforts by concerned NGOs. These groups worked both at the field level and at the policy making level. Their inputs included community organisations, development of support activities training and research. Prominent actors were the Institute for Bio-Social

Research and Development (IBRAD) and Ramakrishna Mission (RKM), both of whom undertook diagnostic research and were crucial participants in the Working Groups.

The Working Group was founded in 1989 as an informal forum in which the Department and NGOs could learn from analysing the successes and failures in the field. Many of the major policy changes in West Bengal's development of JFM emanated from Working Group discussions, see box 3.

Coordination and collaboration between field-based NGOs and the Department has now been institutionalised through the formation of Divisional level Working Groups.

BOX 3: MAJOR POLICY CHANGES

1989 1st GO: FPCs were to be registered and given legally defensible sharing rights to forest produce. FPC membership was reserved for "economically backward" classes only. This led to resentment and non-cooperation on the part of excluded communities.

1990 2nd GO: Enabled all willing households to participate in the FPC. Explicitly state that women could become FPC members. However, since membership was restricted to one adult per household, womens participation remained marginal.

1991 3rd GO: Creation of joint membership whereby both husband and wife became registered as FPC members.

The high potential of regenerated sal for income earning opportunities led to resistance in the older FPCs to final harvesting for timber. In a study of 12 FPCs in Jamboni Range the mean annual income for tribal households from NTFP was Rs 2523 or 22% of total family income. In contrast timber is worth only Rs 511 per hectare per annum to the FPC as a whole.

In areas where sal is too degraded to regenerate, alternative production systems are being developed, such as tassar silk cultivation, intensive fodder production, cashew orchards, etc.. However establishment costs are 20 times that of regenerating sal, gestation periods are long and once mature, the FPC as a whole can expect to receive only Rs 86-250 per hectare per annum.

As of 1992 there were 2055 registered FPCs protecting 300,000 hectares of forest. An IBRAD study of 42 FPCs found that 74% were functioning well. Smaller FPCs with a greater percentage of tribals were more effective. The greater the percentage of village households participating in the FPC the better its management of the forest.

The issue of equity, between different FPCs, and of high forest dependency households within FPCs, continues to raise problems. To date FPCs major role has been in protection and participation in planning is a recent refinement in West Bengal. As with other policy changes, including those on womens' participation, communication of microplanning to field staff and FPC members is not always effective. There remains a need to give FPC greater autonomy from the Department for running their own affairs.

A recent study by Veigas and Menon concluded "though ownership is only symbolically vested in the forest dwellers, the feeling that the forests belong to them and that they have rights in it, is in itself a significant achievement". This was achieved in South West Bengal without additional funding until 1991 and through changes in the way the Department related to local communities.

GENDER ISSUES IN JOINT FOREST PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT (JFPM)

Projects which are not specifically targeted at women tend to marginalise their participation owing to the poor status of women in society. This note summarises the arguments for making special efforts to include women as equal partners in JFPM.

1. **Forest degradation often has a more serious impact on women because of the responsibilities they are assigned by the sexual division of labour.** Women are usually responsible for the collection of fuel, fodder and water on a daily basis.

2. **Access to common property resources is more important for women given the difficulties they face in communities where access to private resources is controlled by men.** Poor women may generate income from the collection and processing of "free" forest resources. For example, in Uttara Kannada many women are involved in the collection of uppage.

3. **Despite their dependence on natural resources, women may also engage in activities which degrade these resources.** For example, in Uttara Kannada large numbers of Hallaki Vokkaliga women headload firewood to local towns for sale. The reason for this is poverty and the absence of other opportunities for income generation. Unless efforts are made to develop alternative and sustainable forms of income generation for these women they will either persist in their occupation or suffer from a reduced standard of living.

Therefore, it is not only desirable for humanitarian reasons, but may also be essential for environmental reasons, to include women fully in JFPM. In addition, experience from other states shows, in the following paragraphs, that women may be more motivated partners in JFPM than men if the constraints to their participation are overcome.

1. **Women are better placed than men to protect forest areas and monitor their recovery on a day to day basis, and their cooperation in changing resource use patterns is crucial.** Women use a greater number of forest products for a wider range of uses than men. Women are often more knowledgable about the forest and visit the forest on a daily basis.

2. **Women are more interested in sustainable management of forest resources as opposed to final harvest.** Women are more interested in a steady flow of intermediate products for the forest while male leaders often perceive community forestry as an opportunity for the cash-cropping of monocultures to yield high financial returns. Women are therefore more interested in the protection of natural forest and the objective of permanently increasing tree cover.

3. **Income generation activities which can be based on the collection and processing of NTFPs are more attractive to women.** They are often seasonal or part time activities with low or no financial investment required. They are therefore adaptable to womens' other work responsibilities and unaffected by their constraints in accessing credit.

However, ensuring the participation of women will require a determined effort on the part of project designers and implementers. In order to bring women into the mainstream of JFPM as equal partners, we must make a commitment to:

1. **Understand more about the ways in which women use the forest and its resources.** Womens' needs differ from mens' needs and vary between community and income group. The requirements of less vocal community members must be balanced with those voiced by community leaders in planning for JFPM.

2. **Recognise and address constraints to womens' participation in decision-making forums.** One strategy might be to organise women separately and then encourage this group to participate in community meetings. It may also be necessary to convince male leaders of the importance of involving women in decision-making.

3. **Take special care to consider womens' interests when formalising either access to forest resources or collection arrangements for NTFPs.** In West Bengal, men frequently sought greater control over, or even displaced women workers in, NTFP collection and processing activities, as they became more profitable.

Adopting a gender neutral attitude has proven time and again to lead to womens' marginalisation. Addressing gender issues at an early stage will not only safeguard womens' livelihoods, but also strengthen JFPM.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Some literature on the involvement of women in forest management is available in English.

Workshop on the Involvement of Women in Social Forestry, NWDB, 1989

Women in Forestry for Local Community Development: A Programming Guide, Marilyn Hoskins, USAID, 1979.

Women and Agroforestry: Four Myths and Three Case Studies, Louise Fortmann and Diane Rocheleau, 1985.

Proceedings of the ILO Workshop on the Involvement of Women in Wasteland Development

Copies of this literature can be obtained from Sheela Khare at Vikasa (Malagi) on request. Further references are available and if there is a demand some material can be translated into Kannada.