

**Evaluation and Monitoring of Forest Development Agency (FDA)
in Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka
India.**

A study report of Village Forest Committees (VFCs) in the district.

Study conducted by:

PRAKRUTI/PSK

BASAVRAJ NILAY

CHOWKIMATH, SIRSI-581401

UTTARA KANNADA

KARNATAKA

AUGUST, 2005

**WITH THE FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE NETHERLANDS COMMITTEE FOR
IUCN/TRP**

Table of contents

1.0. Introduction:.....	3
1.1. Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM):.....	3
1.2. Village Forest Committees (VFCs):	3
1.3. Forest Development Agency (FDA):.....	4
2.0. Objective of the study:	5
3.0. Methods:	6
4.0. Result:	6
5.0:Forest Development Agency (FDA) meetings	11
5.1 Workshop on Forest Development Agency (FDA)	11
Impact:	13
5.2 FDA Meeting in Sirsi Forest Division	13
5.3: FDA meeting in Honnavar.....	15
5.4: FDA Meeting in Malagi.....	17
5.5: FDA Meeting in Ankola	19
5.6:FDA Workshop Yellapur.....	21
5.7:Impact:	23
5.8:Helping in formation of VFCs and awareness meetings	23
6.0: Discussion and Conclusion:.....	24
Annex 1: FDA Workshop, 20 November 2003, Participants List	25
Annex 2: FDA Workshop, Honnavar Participants List	26
Annex 3: FDA Divisional Workshop Sirsi Participants List	26
Annex 4: FDA Divisional Workshop Ankola Participants List.....	27

Evaluation and Monitoring of Forest Development Agency (FDA) in Uttara Kannada District, Karnataka.

1.0. Introduction:

1.1. Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM):

To conserve the biodiversity in the Western Ghats with the participation of the local communities Joint Forest Planning and Management project was initiated during 1991-92 in Karnataka State.

Joint Planning is a consultative process by which Karnataka Forest Department (KFD), people and other forest users jointly discuss the ecological and condition of a specific area of the forest in the village and the scope for it to meet one or more of their specific needs.

Joint Management: KFD and forest users divide responsibility for forest management functions among them. This allows local communities to jointly manage areas of reserve forest with forest department and legally to share the benefits arising from forest protection.

1.2. Village Forest Committees (VFCs):

Uttara Kannada district: Uttara Kannada is district located on the Northern part of Western Ghats of Karnataka, has 80% of forest cover (8,271 square kilometers) out of its total geographical area of about 10291 square kilometres (Prajapati, 1997). However, in recent years due to unplanned development activities and agricultural expansion and urbanisation in the tropical forests regions has caused forest degradation.

Since the inception of JFPM more than 300 VFCs were formed in the district over last 12 years. The executive body consists of eleven members and this committee elects the President. There are representations of women, artisans, weaker sections of the society and the Secretary is the forester, a forest official.

Impact: JFPM has strengthened the capacities of villagers to protect the forest. It has also provided opportunity for local people and Forest Department to work together for conservation of forest. It has also led to decrease in the pressure on forest for fuel wood and fodder by establishing plantations, construction of fuel-efficient ovens and bio gas plants.

Problem:

- Participation of weaker sections of the society and women is less.
- Villagers were forced to participate in the project by Forest Department giving them financial benefit after cutting of the old plantations.
- Forest dependent communities were marginalised by reducing their access to resources. Natural forests were totally ignored through out the project period.
- Only 1% of total forest area was covered under JFM! After the project period (1998) and once the money has been spent many institutions including the Forest Department lost interest in the JFPM and VFCs. There are criticisms about actual participation of the people.
- Thus, the VFCs was not able to gain sustainability after the project period.

1.3. Forest Development Agency (FDA):

Central Governments Ministry of Environment and Forests (Government of India) has launched a new scheme under National Afforestation and Eco development Program for eco-development and conservation of forests. The main objectives of the scheme are to arrest and reserve the trend of forest degradation due to unsustainable removal of forest products and making the community responsible for monitoring removals from the forest. Provide sustainable and assured employment opportunities and create durable community assets to the weaker sections of the rural populations. And to involve the village community in execution of the scheme and make the exercise fully participatory.

One of the major goals of the project is to involve village community in executing the scheme. However, the preliminary surveys and three workshops organized by Prakruti have revealed that this is not happening practically at the project implementation level. There are reports that the Forest Department is implementing several activities and there is lack of transparency in these works. Illiteracy and lack of awareness among the VFC members may be the major reasons for this.

Objectives of the Scheme:

Short term objectives: -

Regeneration and eco-development of degraded forests and adjoining areas on a watershed basis. Augmentation of the availability of wood and non-wood forest products specially Fuel wood, fodder and small timber, honey, wax, fruits, nuts etc. from the regenerated areas.

Securing people's participation in planning and regeneration efforts to ensure their sustainability and equitable distribution of forest products from the regenerated lands.

Development and extension of technologies for special problem lands like saline/alkaline soils, ravines, desert areas, mined areas, Himalayas, Aravallis and Western Ghats. Employment generation for the most needy sections of society, particularly those belonging to women, scheduled castes/scheduled tribes and land less rural laborers, inhabiting the forests and adjoining areas.

Long-term objectives:

Checking forest degradation & loss of bio-diversity.

Ecological restoration & environment conservation & eco-development.

Fulfillment of the broader objectives of productivity, equity, and sustainability for the general welfare of the people.

Implementing Agencies: The State Forest Department will take up Implementation of the Projects under this scheme. Autonomous bodies like Forests/Plantation Development Corporations, DRDAs, research institutes, universities involved in the regeneration of degraded forests could also submit projects under the scheme and implement them under the guidance of the State Forest Departments. Competent Voluntary Agencies & other registered institutions of the local people could also implement or be involved in implementation of the project by other implementing agencies. In all projects, NGOs, Panchayats, Zilla Parishads, village communities' etc, are to be associated as far as possible. Joint Forest Management (JFM) will be central to all projects. It will, therefore, be necessary to constitute multi-disciplinary committees with appropriate representation from the various organisations involved. In the case of projects undertaken by autonomous bodies, their project proposals will be vetted by the Forest Department for technical feasibility etc. The Forest Department will also render advice and assistance required to autonomous agencies and inspects the work from time to time to ensure that the project is implemented in accordance with the prescribed guidelines.

2.0. Objective of the study:

- To assess and monitor the activities under FDA scheme in Uttara Kannada District.
- To promote awareness on rules, regulations and practices regarding FDA among VFCs.
- To strengthen capacity of local people and VFCs involved in executing FDA project.
- To bring sustainability to the VFCs in long run for eco development and to bring maximum benefit to the local people through this FDA scheme.

3.0. Methods:

1. Fifty Village Forest Committees were selected in Uttara Kannada district. Selection of the VFCs has been done through Stratified Random Sampling. A first stratum was five FDAs in Uttara Kannada district. Second strata were Eco zones (Coastal, Foothills of Western Ghats, Crest line and eastern plains). Attempts were made to select VFCs based on their dependency on forest, communities and socio economic condition. In these VFCs detail study were conducted about the different activities through FDA and agency involved in actual implementation of the project. Regular visits will be done to assess and monitor the activities.
2. Promoting awareness through meetings with local people, organizing workshops in Range level to district level. Circulating translated guidelines on FDA rules and regulations.
3. Training, regular meetings and creating platform to discuss with various stakeholders involved in the FDA project.

4.0. Result:

The survey and meetings with the communities were organised from September 2003 to December 2004. All the Eco-zones in the Uttara Kannada were covered for this purpose. Thirteen VFCs in Coastal Uttara Kannada, 6 in the foothills of Western Ghats and twenty-three in the crest line of Western Ghats and eight in the further eastern plains were selected for the study. People belonging to different communities, different age, and social status and having different occupation were contacted to collect data.

Awareness to VFC about Executive body:

Participation in Entry Point activity



Knowledge about FDA

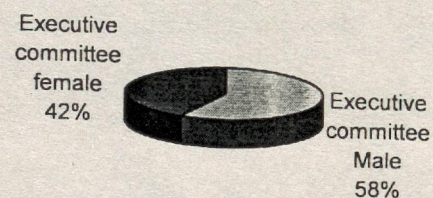


Figure 1: Percentage of local people's participation in FDA activity. Figure 2: Knowledge about FDA in the village
Entry point activity should have to be done entirely by local community.

Entry Point Activity: This activity is meant to gain the confidence of the villagers for the Government agencies for the effective functioning of the FDA and to build durable community

assets. These activities have to be decided by the local people. However, the Forest Department was able to make resolutions according to their wish. Nearly in 43% of the VFCs we visited the entry point activity are done through the Forest Department without the knowledge of the local communities (fig1).

About 58 percent of the people are aware of the existence of an executive body at each FDA level (Fig 2). In which only 42 percent of women know about the existence of the executive body.

- > However Forest Department unilaterally decided what kinds of activities were to be taken.
- > Participation of local communities in Project planning is negligible.

Transparency and implementation of the project: In the project guidelines it is clearly mentioned that the local communities, VFCs are solely responsible for the actual implementation of the project and Forest Department role is to monitor the activity. The study reveals that only eleven percent of the VFCs have actually participated in implementing the project. In many of the VFCs the VFC Presidents put their signature on blank Bank cheques to enable the Secretary (forester) to withdraw the money.

There are no reports that the training to VFC members has happened under the awareness building activity in the programmes.

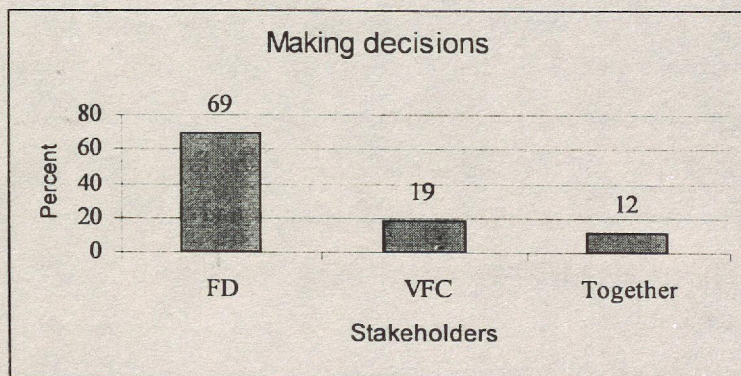


Figure 3: Decision making in FDA activity by VFC and Forest Department.

It is understood that in planning, implementation of the project, selection of species for planting, entry point activity were mainly decided by the Forest Department. According to our study Forest Department decides 69 percent of the project activity and VFCs only 19 percent (fig 3). This is in contradiction to the actual objective of the scheme to involve VFCs and local community in the project planning and execution.

NTFP: More acacia species have been planted, fewer number of NTFP species. No effort has been done to market the NTFP, primary processing and value addition. Growth of natural species in the VFC plantation area is poor because of less management and poor maintenance.

Empowering the VFCs to process and market the NTFP is very crucial for the better quality of the products and for better price. Linking with the marketing with assured quality maintenance and ensuring sustainable harvesting through regular monitoring would serve the purpose of nature conservation, eco-development and rural development.

Politics in the village also has a role in the performance of the VFCs. Smuggling, harvesting trees and plants for fuel wood is another major constraint. Uneducated and people from backward and poor communities also indirectly affected the performance of the VFC and FDA as there are hardly any attempts to enhance their capacity to handle VFC activities and to promote their livelihood.

Many of these VFC Presidents were farmers and they are busy with their farm work during monsoon where the afforestation and other eco-development program coincides with these activities. Hence the actual participation of these VFCs is not forthcoming.

Lack of information to the VFCs and local people about the functioning of the FDA, no transparency in the project implementation, language problem as the indents and other details are in English are hindering the effective functioning of the program. The study revealed that *people lost trust because some of the Forest Department staff got signatures of VFC presidents on blank cheques to draw the money to claim project money*. These people being poor and lack of education could not able resist this action of the forest staff. In some cases Forest Department did not respond positively when VFC members captured smugglers and poachers. We tried to categorise the VFC presidents in to three classes based on their education. The first group was persons below seventh standard education, second seventh to 12th standards and the third was persons having graduation or more. It is obviously the third group performed better than other categories. In the fifty VFCs selected for study, only in seven VFCs the Presidents completed their graduation and above. All these have made the participation of local community less and thus affecting the performance of eco-development and rural development programmes.

Comparison of the actual objectives of the project with ground situations.

Government rules	Ground reality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Planning to be evolved in collaboration with FDA, VFCs and FD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of only Forest Department staff.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry Point Activity aimed at rural development and community asset building to be done according to local people's opinion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most of the activities directed by Forest Department.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of the scheme: FD role is to monitor the activity. VFCs and local community organisations should implement the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actual implementation is by FD. However, on paper it is showed that VFC has decided and resolutions were made at VFC meetings. This was done by taking signatures of VFC presidents on the resolution made/written by FD.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of local community in the entire project work and make the exercise fully participatory/ transparent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation is very less or almost dose not exist. However, on paper the participatory process exists.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation of women and people belong to poor communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very less / or not there.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regeneration and eco-development of degraded forests and adjoining areas on a watershed basis. • Biodiversity conservation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No such activity. And the total goal of the project is narrowed down to establish plantation, building of some community assets, digging of pits as water harvesting structures.
<p>Selection of VFCs based on following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preponderance of SC/ST population. • Willingness of people to participate in forest conservation efforts. • Extent of degraded forestland. • Degree of dependence on forest resources. 	<p>VFCs were selected based on following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presidents should not question the behaviour of FD staff and willing to support FD at all time. • Presidents of VFCs, who already have good rapport with FD like forest contractors, retired foresters and guards.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Augmentation of availability of wood and Non Wood Products. Employment generation, natural regeneration of these species. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No such effort on the ground.

Gender issues:

As it is illustrated earlier awareness among women and their participation in the JFM and FDA scheme is negligible. The general social conditions that prevail in villages have impact on participation of women at a larger scale. And second is not enough measures have been taken to ensure their participation.

In the plantations also priority was given to monoculture of few commercially important species were planted where as the women expressed the need for fruit trees, food, fodder and fuel wood producing species.

Positive changes:

The entire activity has brought a kind of awareness in forest conservation to some extent. This may be due to the change in attitude of Forest Department from earlier monopoly in forest protection and development to present people's participation. This may be also due to the entry of various voluntary organisations and community institutions in the JFPM and FDA process. However, these changes are very meagre, slow and are not able to address the problems of ecological conservation.

5.0: Forest Development Agency (FDA) meetings

5.1 Workshop on Forest Development Agency (FDA)

We organised workshops on FDA in four Forest Divisions.

The objectives of the workshops were:

1. To know the present situation of the FDA scheme.
2. To understand the problem in executing the scheme.
3. To create awareness on rules and regulations of the FDA scheme for the proper implementation of the project.
4. To strengthen people's participation in the formulation and execution of the scheme.

The ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India is implementing a new scheme for promoting afforestation in degraded forestland, ecological restoration and environment conservation and Eco development.

The main objectives of the scheme are:

- To arrest and reserve the trend of forest degradation. Provide sustainable and assured employment opportunities to the tribal and weaker sections of the rural population.
- Create community assets, which would contribute to overall Eco- development in the degraded areas.

One of the important objectives of the scheme is to involve the village community in the execution of the scheme and make the exercises fully participatory. In the guidelines for the creation for the FDA (Forest Development Agency) it is clearly mentioned that village level organization like VFCs (Village Forest Committees) will be responsible for actual implementation of various activities in the field.

To understand the problem in executing the FDA scheme a one-day workshop was held on 20th November 2003 in Sirsi. Prakruti and Federation of NGO, Uttara Kannda district jointly organised the workshop. 50 people including five women members participated in the workshop. Mr. Raveendra Shetty, Secretary of the NGO federation gave welcome speech and Pandurang Hegde explained the objectives of the workshop. Then Narasimha Hegde explained the rules and regulations of FDA scheme as explained in the guidelines.

There are five FDA's in Canara Circle of Uttara Kannada district. VFC's representing the each FDA shared their experiences with this new scheme.

In Sirsi one FDA meeting of Executive Committee was held. The work has been started mainly on soil and water conservation programs. However, the project preparation and implementation is

being entirely done by the Forest Department. Chairperson of the Taluk Federation of VFC's said that in the executive committee meeting resolution is passed to under take some entry point activity and afforestation programs. However, he was surprised that after few days when the Forest Department sent the copy of a resolution three more resolutions were added! Purchasing of computers, stencil machines for forest department and recruiting three staff for Forest Department are those resolutions.

VFC representative from Honnavar, Karwar, Yellapur explained their experience and problems faced in the project. They said that there is confusion and the role of VFC is unclear in the entire scheme. According to the guidelines of FDA in the Executive Committee there should be 25 members nominated from VFC. However, in Yellapur division VFC members do not have any idea about existence of such Executive Committee. In Honnavar, people do not know about the total budget for their FDA, how much is released and when did the scheme start. It is clear that the Forest Department is trying to keep the VFCs in dark regarding FDA.

The representative of the VFC's and other NGOs requested the Prakruti to translate the rules and regulations and guidelines for formulating of FDA in local language and to distribute it to concerned VFC,s.

In selecting the VFCs in FDA, certain criteria were adopted. Preponderance of the weaker sections of the society in the village, willingness of people to participate in forest conservation efforts and degree of dependence on forest resources are those criteria. However, NGO representatives mentioned that while selecting the VFCs these criteria were not followed. It is not clear why some VFCs are selected and why some VFCs left out. For example in Sirsi the Kotekoppa VFC was the model VFC in the taluk. The degree of willingness to participate in forest conservation efforts was high. However, this VFC had dispute with Range Forest Officer, which is the reason to leave this in the formation of FDA.

In many VFCs work is being done under this FDA scheme, but the money was not released for these works. It is clear that the Forest Department is already having the project money from the ministry (Central Government) about a year ago.

The participants decided to make a 6 members committee with representatives from all FDA to co-ordinate the project in the Canara Circle. This Committee would go to all Forest Division and to meet the Conservators of Forests to get the detailed information on various projects under FDA. To bring transparency under the project and for proper functioning of the FDA, the participants decided to bring pressure on Forest Department to transfer the project money into joint account of VFC. They had an opinion that this would enable efficient functioning of the scheme and unnecessary delay in the afforestation, soil and moisture conservation programs.

Impact:

1. The workshop helped to organize the VFC and NGO representatives from different parts of Uttara Kannada district. It created a platform for VFC members involved in FDA to discuss various issues and to have some solutions for the problems.
2. The workshop clearly exposed how the Karnataka Forest Department is handling the scheme against the fundamental objective the scheme, by ignoring the participation of the VFCs in implementation of the project.
3. Prakruti/PSK will support the VFCs by providing the information on FDA. This will be done by translation of the FDA document form English to Kannada, in the local language. This will help to reach larger section of the community.
4. A six member executive committee was formed in Uttara Kannada district to monitor and assess the functioning of FDA. The committee will meet senior Forest Officers to have clear idea of various development schemes undertaken in all FDAs.
5. The rules and regulations of FDA were explained to the participants.
6. The participation of the members of the VFCs in this meeting helped them to strengthen the view that in order to get proper implementation of the scheme, it is essential to share the experiences and the strategies to deal with the forest bureaucracy.

For further strengthening of the local community organizations they decided to organize workshop on VFC and FDA in all the five FDA regions in Uttara Kannada district.

5.2 FDA Meeting in Sirsi Forest Division

A one-day meeting was organised in Raita Bhavan, A.P.M.C Yard Sirsi on 29 June 2004.

The objectives of the meeting are:

1. Follow up of activities as discussed in the previous meetings.
2. To strengthen the Village Forest Committees (VFCs).
3. To help and guide VFCs for proper implementation of the scheme.
4. To create a platform for VFC, NGOs and Forest Department to discuss about this development project.

FDA is a new scheme under Government of India's Ministry of Environment Forestry. The rural development and Eco-development projects have to be implemented by local organisations like Village Forest Committees. The project money has to directly given to the VFCs. However, in a meeting organised by Prakruti during November 2003, it was revealed that the project money has

not been properly given to the VFCs and many people are not aware of role of VFCs in executing the project. Prakruti had tried to overcome this problem and had explained role of VFCs in functioning of the FDA. However, the VFC presidents/members and NGO representatives attended that meeting all over the district. To understand the problem and situations in detail of at each VFC level now this meeting is held in Forest Division level.

Mr. Viswanath Hegde President of VFC Federations Sirsi welcomed the participants. Mr. Narasimha Hegde of Prakruti explained the objectives of the meeting and tentative issues that could be discussed in the meeting.

Six members Executive Committee already met the Conservator of Forests and discussed with him about FDA, its functioning and degree of involvement of VFCs. However, Deputy Conservator of Forests, being the chief executive officer, they have all the details regarding the activities under FDA scheme. Therefore it is decided that this executive committee would meet all the DCFs in Canara circle and get details about progress of the scheme and different activities under taken.

Each VFC member explained and shared the work done in their area through FDA scheme.

Rural development work through entry point activity like construction of roads, school buildings, foot bridges, playgrounds were discussed. Then in the afforestation work number of plants, different species transplanted were explained by each participant. The discussion was in detail including size of the pit, fencing, different species that could be transplanted and allocation of funds for various activities including awareness, entry point activity. However, certain VFC members were not fully aware of their role and still many activities being implemented through the forest department officials without bringing into their notice. Others said that it is mainly because of the fault of concerned VFC members as they are not united and have not attended previous meetings. It is also due to disregard of Forest Officials towards VFCs. They also said that they would help to sort out these problems. All the participants opined that unity among all VFCs is very important and to achieve this goal they have to do several work in ground level with all VFCs and felt that it is very essential to organise all VFC members conference in August 2004. In the afternoon Assistant Conservator of Forests Mr. B.J. Naik attended the workshop and tried to clarify to VFCs doubts and problems. He informed that nearly Rs. 77,00,000 has been released for VFCs under FDA projects. VFC members sought clarification for certain work under FDA. Mr. Naik assured that he will give the details of these activities to all VFCs. Mr. Dattatraya Vaidya president of Kakkalli VFC said "The presidents are elected by the villagers and they are answerable to villagers. Presidents are doing the job of forest conservation and development without taking salaries or any remuneration, unlike Forest Department staff/ officers. Therefore

we expect proper behavior from the senior officials and whatever development work related to forest should be informed in advance to concerned VFCs".

Other members also urged the ACF to convey the messages to his senior officers and said that they cannot tolerate disregard or misbehavior with the VFC members.

Mr. Viswanath, Mr. Rajaram Bhat and others said that the FDA executive committee had to meet once in three months. However, this has not taken place since last one year.

They urged to call meeting of executive committee of Sirsi FDA at the earliest. To strengthen the VFCs the participants decided to organise a conference of all 93 VFCs in Sirsi Forest Division in August 2004. Prakruti/PSK agreed to patronize this endeavor of strengthening the VFCs.

5.3: FDA meeting in Honnavar

A one-day workshop was held in Kasarakod, Honnavar. Prakruti and SnehaKunja jointly organised this workshop on July 16, 2004. The representatives of Village Forest Committees (VFCs) in Honnavar Forest Division participated in this meeting.

Objectives of the workshops are:

- To create awareness among Village Forest Committees and to bring solidarity among them.
- To discuss the various activities taken under FDA (Forest Development Agency) in different VFCs.
- To create a platform for discussing the problems and doubts among VFC members and with NGOs.
- To resolve the conflicts between VFC and Forest Department.

Mr. Raveendra Shetty of Snehakunja, Honnavar welcomed the participants. Mr. Narasimha Hegde of Prakruti, explained the need to organise this workshop and briefed the objectives of the workshop.

Follow up of workshop held in November 2003:

a. Meeting with Conservator of Forests, Canara Circle:

A committee with representatives from NGOs and Presidents VFC was to meet the Conservator of Forests and discuss with him about different activities undertaken through FDA. However, the Conservator of Forests had requested the committee to meet all the DCFs separately to know the activities in detail. This has not been done so far and the participants requested the committee to meet Deputy Conservator of Forests (DCF) at the earliest.

b. Translation of FDA guidelines to local language Kannada:

Prakruti has translated the FDA guidelines to local language, which was in English, and District Federation had the responsibility to hand over the document to concerned VFCs.

Some how several VFCs that have not participated in November meeting in Sirsi did not receive this document. The participants felt that the translated guideline is very important as it gives idea about rules and regulations of FDA and role of VFCs in implementing the project. The copies of the document were now given to the VFCs.

Discussion on activities under FDA in each VFCs, problems and opportunities:

Each participant explained the activities and work under taken in their VFCs under FDA scheme. Shrikanth Bhat president of Alavalli VFC said that under entry point activity villagers wanted to construct rainwater-harvesting pits and to desilt one tank in the village. However, the Forest Department officials did not heed to villager's request and they brought wooden benches and chairs for primary school. The villagers asked for clarification that the VFC had taken resolution to do desilting of tank and construction of water harvesting structures. Why did they bring chairs and benches? However, the Forest Department reiterated that it is because of orders from their senior officials. After investigating it was noticed that they had purchased these items at a high price taking commission from the seller.

There were same stories from Ulavare, Morali, Mogata, Hadeel and Nagur VFCs.

Ganesh Upadhyaya, Parameshwar Naik, Pralhad Gaonkar, Pradeep Naik and others said that they have a serious problem in dealing with Forest Department in implementation of FDA. Forest Department does not respond or respect to villager's opinion. They always get the signature of VFC presidents on blank cheques to claim money spent for project activities.

The indents are in English and many VFC chairman do not know English and can not understand what is there in the indents. They do not know how much money is spent for what activities. It is clearly noticed that the forest officials were exploiting the weakness of innocent villagers. However, one of the important observations that emerged is clarity in the activities of those VFCs who have attended FDA workshop in Sirsi (November 2004). This was evident from Urkeri, Hosakuli, Salkod and Beranki VFCs. In these VFCs the Presidents or other active members know the different activities undertaken through FDA. Villagers decided what type of activities has to be taken in entry point activity and in afforestation and other eco-development works. There were no complaints about taking signature on blank cheques by the Forest Department staff.

The participants listed following problems and decided to discuss with senior Forest officers.

1. In Honnavar FDA several VFCs which were the actual implementing agency for FDA works do not know any details regarding the work. This is totally against the objectives of the FDA scheme.
2. In certain VFCs project money has not been utilized properly and there is no transparency in Forest Department in using the sanctioned amount.

This has happened in several VFCs while establishing plantations, water-harvesting structures and in construction of community buildings etc. It seems the money has not been used properly. Some activities were undertaken against villagers' wish and without taking resolutions in VFC meetings. Many of the activities were completed without giving any information to the VFCs and then the resolutions were ratified through signature of VFC presidents. The VFC presidents were either forced or misguided to put signature for resolutions or for the bank cheques.

3. Participants urged to give the share in the benefit obtained after cutting of old plantations in VFC area. These plantations were done prior to the formation of VFC and VFC had maintained it. Forest Department is declining to share the benefit after cutting of these plantations.
4. There is 5% budget allocation in FDA scheme to conduct awareness / training and documentation. Part of the money should be transferred to District Federation of VFCs to conduct awareness programs, education and to conduct exposure trips.
5. Recently certain forestlands, which belong to VFC, have been allocated to Karnataka Cashew Development Corporation (KCDC). This has created a problem for VFCs and senior officials should solve this problem immediately. Otherwise the Forest Department should direct the VFCs to resolve the case in court.
6. Resolutions passed in the Executive Committees (FDA) and any other circulars related to FDA should be sent to concerned VFC for better functioning of the scheme.
7. Information to form more VFCs and inclusion of new VFCs in FDA.
8. More detailed information is required about entry point activity. Considering those VFCs which may not be having land for forest plantation but have very good natural forests where conservation and protection is crucial.

In the afternoon Mr. Srikanth Hosur Deputy Conservator of Forests Honnavar Forest Division attended the meeting. He tried to give clarification on above issues and participants discussed several other issues with him.

At the end Mr. M. R. Hegde President District federation of VFCs thanked the participants for attending the workshop and requested the VFC representatives to take more responsibility for successful functioning of FDA scheme.

Mr. Pandurang Hegde, Mrs. Laxmi Patgar, Prayatna organisation Karki and Assistant Conservator of Forests Honnavar, was among the participants. Totally 35 people participated in the workshop.

5.4: FDA Meeting in Malagi

A one-day meeting was held in Malagi on 25 October 2004. Malagi is located towards the eastern part of the Western Ghats in the plain land. Majority of the people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Since the farmers grow mainly food crops and in very less quantity of cash crop like cotton, their economic condition is poor. Many farmers migrate during lean period and do agricultural laboring. These people has not attended any of the FDA meetings and they did not get translated rules and regulations regarding FDA. Many of the VFC Presidents and other members would not afford to travel to towns to attend the meeting as they are marginalised farmers and there will not be any direct financial benefit from the VFC.

Prakruti team had to make several visits to these VFCs and preliminary survey revealed that many VFCs do not have idea of FDA.

Mr. Nagappa Attikatti welcomed the participants. Mr. Narasimha Hegde, Prakruti and Mr. M.R.Hegde Kumta, President of Uttara Kannada VFC Federation explained the objectives of the workshop. Gurupada M. President of Haraganahalli VFC said that Forest Department has given one plough to each family and partial de-silting of a tank has been done. Plantation work was done in about 25 hectares of forestland.

Mr. Nagappa Attikatti, President Kolgi VFC said that Forest Department has provided one big vessel to the village to use it in special occasions. Forest Department has carried out partial de-silting of a tank, which is useful to the villagers.

Plantation work has been done for 50 hectares of land. However, he is not aware of through which scheme these activities were done. And Mr. Nagappa heard about FDA only few days' back when Mr. Mabaleshwar of Prakruti team member visited the village. Other VFC members also said that some work has been done through the forest department, but they do not know through which scheme it has happened.

Mr. Manjunath Katler said that earlier NGO like Vikasa and Chinyard are working in these regions and now they do not operate here. Therefore it has become difficult to organize the local people. In order to strengthen the VFCs and to fulfill the objective of the FDA, it is decided to organize a meeting in Mundagod taluk.

5.5: FDA Meeting in Ankola

Venue: Taluka Panchayat Bhawan, Ankola

Date: July 30, 2005

A one-day workshop on Forest Development Agency and Village Forest Committees (VFCs) was held in Ankola on 30 July 2005. Mr. Ramesh welcomed the delegates and M.R Hegde president of District VFCs Federation explained the objective of the meeting and expected outcome of the workshop.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To strengthen the VFCs for effective implementation of the scheme.
- To understand the problems within the VFCs and to know the success stories in VFCs while implementing the rural development and eco-development activities.
- To share the experience and work done in different VFCs under the scheme.
- To discuss the problem and find possible solution in implementing the project.

Mr. N. R. Hegde, Field Organiser, Prakruti explained in brief about the details of study conducted by the organisation on evaluation and monitoring of the FDA in Uttara Kannada district. He said that the participation of the local people in actual planning and implementation of the project is subordinated and many of the activities are guided through Forest Department, which is against the actual goal and objective of the scheme. Aims of the schemes are narrowed down from broader perspective of biodiversity conservation, rural and eco-development activities to few activities like construction of some community buildings, plantation of few species and digging of water storage pits under soil and moisture conservation activity. Participation of women and of poor communities is also less or negligible in the process. Social and economical conditions of the local people may be one of the reasons for this. However, there is need for strengthening the VFCs and involvement of all stakeholders in the project is essential.

Each member representing different VFCs explained different activities undertaken through FDA and difficulties experienced during the project period. Mr. Ramadas Naik, Bidralli VFC President, Mr. Shankar Naik, Hosagadde, Shankar Hullusvar Nilampur, N.D Hebbur, Kodlagadde, S. M. Gowda Heggarmakki Venktraya Belse shared their experience.

Ramakrishna Nayak president of Surli VFC and Taluk VFC Federation said, " The Forest Department has planted some the species in places not suited for these species and without consulting the local people or VFC members. The result is that the failure of the plantation. He

urged that in future plantations has to be established in consultation with local people and which species are suitable to local conditions has to properly judged". He also stressed that all the VFC members should come forward in actual implementation of the project.

Mr. N.D Hebbar said " had it been the VFC members and local villagers involved in planting the species and in other development activities the result would be much better instead of doing it hiring outside laborers".

Other issues emerged during the discussion are:

- Details of all the work and activities completed under FDA should be given to concerned VFCs.
- There is need for transparency on past of Forest Department in case of handling the money.

Relationship between Forest Department and local people has increased after the introduction of JFPM and FDA. However, it would be much better if the objectives of the project are met from the Forest Department. Very little or no efforts were made to improve the livelihood conditions of the local communities and activities aimed at employment generation. Watchers payment shall be made through VFCs then they will come under VFCs and possible to monitor their activities.

People have participated in protection of the VFC plantations and natural forests as well by controlling the forest fire and informing about illegal cutting of trees and smuggling. However, local people expect quick and reliable actions against the culprits, which is not taking place. Benefit sharing is also not happening properly in many of the VFCs.

Mr. Khaleel Ahmad Range Forest Officer Ankola, Mr. K.G Prakash Range Forest Officer Mastikatta, Mr. A. Y. Dhuri Range Forest Officer Ramanguli were present in the workshop. They discussed about the problems they are facing like small amount of money to raise the nurseries that is not sufficient to establish NTFP species and cane. They requested all the VFC members to discuss the problem with them while implementing the project activities in selecting the species for plantation. They urged to come forward and initiate the project activities otherwise they have no alternate to start the work leaving beside the VFC members.

OUTCOME OF WORKSHOP:

- It was decided to work together with all stakeholders for the proper implementation of the project activities.

- VFCs and Forest Department should increase communication and better relation and take actions to solve or reduce the problem.
- It was also discussed to take some actions to involve other VFCs in the development and forest conservation work presently not included in the FDA.
- Decided to organise Range Forest level meetings in each Taluks in Uttara Kannada to understand the problem, share the experience and try to reduce these problems.
- Forty members including women participated in the workshop.

5.6:FDA Workshop Yellapur

A one-day workshop was held in Adike Bhavan, Yellapur on 29th August 2005. The objective of the workshop is to discuss the status of FDA project with the VFC representatives, NGOs and other stakeholders. This was a preliminary workshop prior to the workshop of FDA in Yellapur Forest Division level.

Mr. N.K. Bhat Yeallapur welcomed the participants.

Mr. Narasimha Hegde explained about the main findings of the study conducted by Prakruti on the activities of FDA and role of VFCs in implementation of the project.

President of Federation of VFCs , Yellapur Taluk Mrs. Leela Ambiga said that we are not able to achieve the desired goal of the project due to following problems.

- Lack of cooperation from the Forest Department.
- Lack of unity among the VFCs.

It is possible to do some good work in the future should we work together.

Then each VFC representatives explained the activities undertaken in their VFC region through FDA and their experience in implementing the project.

Following issues were discussed in detail.

- Forest Department is not taking enough measures for the security of VFC members when VFC catch smugglers and people cutting the trees illegally. In order to ensure the security it is decided to discuss the issue with senior Forest Department Officials and to distribute identity cards to VFC members.
- The Secretary being the forester engaged in different activities and is showing least interest to VFC programs.
- Forest Department should supply dead and fallen trees to local farmers required for the construction of house/ cattle shed in a subsided rate. Now the contractors get all these timbers and poor farmers had to cut trees to use as poles.

- Agriculture expansion in the VFC area: In Kavale Village in Yellapur Forest Division, some people have encroached the plantation area belongs to VFC. They are influential people having political clout. The VFC member requested senior Forest Officers to intervene in the matter. However, VFC members claim that no action was taken yet and members have to spend money to travel to Bangalore several times to meet with senior Forest Officials and discuss possibility to go to court.
- More transparency is needed from the Forest Department side while executing the project and details of activities should be made available to VFC members.
- Relation between Forest Department and local community improved after the implementation of the JFM and FDA.
- Forest Department has established plantations natural species. However, more number of acasia species were raised in the plantations.
- JFPM and FDA envisage the development and marketing of NTFP (Non Timber Forest Products). However, no such activities were taken in the grass root level. There is potential for marketing of several products like honey, Garcinia indica, Garcinia gummigutta, Acasia concinna, Phyllanthus emblica and other species. Proper actions were needed to market these products.
- On the other hand cutting of cinnamon leaves, Garcinia indica, Artocarpus lakoocha and cane are being harvested in an unscientific method. Immediate action is required to halt such destructive methods of harvesting.
- Inclusions of remaining VFCs in FDA that are not involved in the project.
- Efforts shall be made to conserve the natural tropical forests apart from concentrating on the VFC plantations with these issues the participants decided to organise workshop for Yellapur Forest Division shortly and to invite all the stakeholders like Forest Department, research organisations, NGOs and forest contractors.

Outcome/Results:

- Interaction of VFC and Forest officials.
- Awareness about FDA.
- Sharing experiences, problems and enhancing confidence among VFCs.
- Better functioning of FDA/VFC.

5.7:Impact:

1. These Workshops helped to discuss problems and clarify confusions to VFCs and also provide an opportunity to express solidarity among them.
2. Brought confidence among VFCs members after interaction with the NGO and Forest officials. Hope fully this would pave way for proper functioning of FDA by bringing transparency in executing the project.
3. Translated FDA guidelines were handed over to all VFCs who attended the workshop and rules, regulations and role of VFCs in implementing the FDA scheme were discussed.
4. Exposed the weakness of certain VFCs where the Presidents belong to weaker sections, illiterate or innocent. In this VFCs the Forest Department officials were able to use the project money according to their own wish-disregarding villagers request. In these VFCs the interaction was sought from District Federation of VFCs taking help from NGOs.
5. To strengthen the VFCs and to achieve the goal of eco-development it was decided to organize more workshops at Forest Sub-Division level. Prakruti is assisting them to organise several such meetings in different places even after the project period.

5.8:Helping in formation of VFCs and awareness meetings

With the president of VFC federation of Uttara Kannada district we have visited several villages to create awareness on JFPM and VFCs. We conducted meetings at the request of villagers in Garkinabena, Gonsar, Chipgi, Jajigudde and in Kademane region.

In these villages need of strengthening the communities and community organisation for the protection of nature were explained to the villagers.

6.0: Discussion and Conclusion:

- It is evident that implementation of the project is being done by the Forest Department ignoring the guidelines in the scheme. The VFC or the FDA activities are narrowed down just to plant some species, construction of community assets, digging pits for water harvesting under soil and moisture conservation activity. Several other aspects like biodiversity conservation, empowering the local communities and rural development. Augmentation of the wood and Non Wood Forest Products that was mentioned in the objectives of the scheme was not undertaken in the project.
- One of the major goals of the project as it is clearly mentioned in the project guidelines is to involve the local people and make the exercise fully participatory. However, this aspect was completely ignored through out the project period.
- Several aspects were mentioned to build the community assets and employment generation activity in order to gain the confidence of the local people for the effective functioning of the scheme and achieve the over goal of eco-development. However, the irony is that Forest Department has created a negative atmosphere by taking signature of VFC presidents on blank Bank Cheques and denying participation for local community in the scheme.
- Discussion meetings, workshops with all the stakeholders, translation of project guidelines from English to local language Kannada, discussion with Forest Department and VFC federations for the proper implementation of the project has helped to reduce the problem. However, since the area and people involved are at larger scale, additional efforts and continuous monitoring of the project activity is required.
- Proper implementation of the scheme in those VFCs who attended the workshops and meetings organised by Prakruti/PSK brings a ray of hope in the proper eco-development of the region and thus strengthening the community organisations to conserve the tropical forests in the Western Ghats.
- Prakruti's intervention has helped VFCs, the community to resolve many conflicts with forestry staff and to create positive atmosphere for participatory approach to forest conservation.

Annex 1: FDA Workshop, 20 November 2003, Participants List

Sl.No.	Name and Address
1.	Jatti Ganapa Naik, VFC Berunki, Honnavar.
2.	R.V.Hegde, VFC Yalavalli.
3.	D.T.Hegde, Jalimane. President, VFC Hitlalli.
4.	Narayana Tippu Naik.
5.	Krishni Basavannappa Naik.
6.	Keriya Bangari. President VFC Gudnapur.
7.	Seeta Mallappa Naik President VFC Hallikoppa.
8.	Shivu Rama Naik, VFC Hallikoppa.
9.	Ramachandra Narayana Naik President VFC Borangudda.
10.	I.M.Kadler, Kolagi President, Mundgod taluk VFC Federation.
11.	S.C.Kaller, VFC Kolagi, Mundagod.
12.	Ganapati N Hegde, VFC Muregar, Sirsi.
13.	Gangadhar M Naik VFC Terakanalli.
14.	Nagesh Ganapa Madiwal, VFC Uoorkeri, Kumta.
15.	Kuppayya Narayana Patagar, VFC Holanagadde, Kumta.
16.	Rama Venkatraman Madiwal, VFC Holanagadde, Kumta.
17.	Raveendra Shetty, Snehakunja, Kasaragod, Honnavar.
18.	Babu Krishnappa Naik, VFC Aghanashini.
19.	Shiva Govinda Naik VFC Aghanashini, Kumta.
20.	Shivaji Apa Rane, President, Karwar taluk VFC Federation.
21.	Apa Belulkar – KRWCDS – Karwar.
22.	Ghanashyam Marate. VFC Satgeri, Karwar.
23.	Anandu Velipa VFC Barge-Madakarni, Karwar.
24.	Govinda Paya Gaovkar, VFC Myngini, Karwar.
25.	Laksmeesh N Naik President VFC Salkod, Honnavar.
26.	Umamaheshwar G.Bhat , President, VFC Hosakuli, Honnavar.
27.	Narashimha S. Hegde Badalkoppa, Sonda, Sirsi.
28.	Ibrahim Nabhisab Sayed, Bachagaov.
29.	Shripati R Hegde President VFC Tyagali.
30.	V.M.Hegde, Kabbe.
31.	Gurupada N Hegde. President VFC Kabbe, Unchalli, Sirsi.
32.	Chandrashekar G Hegde VFC Ansalli, Navilgon , Honnavar
33.	Channappa N Gowda, President, VFC Karkinbail, Yallapur.
34.	Nehru Nagesh Naik, President, VFC Beeluru, Sirsi.
35.	Zafarulla A Khan, President, VFC Goudalli.
36.	Vishwanath R. Hegde, President VFC Shigehalli, & Sirsi taluk VFC Federation.
37.	Dattatraya Vaidya. President VFC Kakkalli , Sirsi.
38.	Bhaskar Ganesh Hegde, President VFC Gerala, Yellapur.
39.	Aruna Rijit Goudru, Gadigeri.
40.	Veena Naik Vikasa , Sirsi.
41.	Kuppayya Narayana Patagar VFC Holanagadde, Kumta.
42.	Rama Venkatraman Madiwal, VFC Holanagadde, Kumta.

Annex 2: FDA Workshop, Honnavar Participants List

Sl.No	Name	VFC
1.	Mahadev. T. Saralagi	President, VFC Saralagi, Honnavar.
2	Imdad Ali abdulvahab Shek	VFC Member Saralagi, Honnavar.
3	Jatti Ganapa Naik	President, VFC Beranki, Honnavar.
4	R.V.Hegde	President, VFC, Yalavalli, Kumata.
5	Shrikanth Shripad.Bhat	President, VFC Alavalli, Honnavar.
6	Nagesh Ganapa. Madival	President. VFC Urakeri, Kumata.
7	S.R. Gunaga	President VFC Aghanashini, Kumata.
8	Huliyappa Ramadasa Gowda	President VFC Ulavare, Ankola.
9	Pralhada Narayana Gaovkar	President, VFC Mogata, Moralli, Ankola.
10	Mahendra Gajanana Bhat	President, VFC Yana, Kumata.
11	Umesh Bhat	President, VFC Hosakuli, Honnavar.
12	Rama Mola Gowda	President, VFC Hamakki, Honnavar.
13	Chandrashekar Hegde	President, VFC Amsolli, Honnavar.
14	Dharma Narayana Naik	President VFC Hinnur, Honnavar.
15	Lakxmeesh N Naik	President VFC Salkod, Honnavar.
16	Pradeep Nagesh Nayak	President, VFC Kenkani Shivapur, Ankola.
17	Parameshwar D Naik	President,VFC Nagoor, Ankola.
18	Seetaram Timmayya Hegde	President, VFC Vandoor, Kumata.
19	Ganesh Upadyaya	President, VFC Hadeel, Bhatkal.
20	Narayana Bhandari	Snehakunja, Kasarkod, Honnavar.
21	Laxmi Alagod	Prayatna Organisation , Karki Honnavar.
22	Nagappa Deva Gowda	President VFC Keraval, Honnavar.
23	Pradeep V Nayak	President VFC Morali, Ankola.
24	Rabaira S Seni	President VFC Balavalli, Kumata.
25	Rajesh S Nayak	Achave, Kuntagani.

Annex 3: FDA Divisional Workshop Sirsi Participants List

Sl.No.	Name,	Organisation/Village
1	Dattatreya Vaidhya, ,	VFC Kakkalli
2	Ganapati N Hegde ,	VFC Muregar
3	Rajaram N Bhat,	VFC Dhoranagiri
4	Indumati Manjunath Hegde	VFC Honnekoppa
5	Ibrahim Nabi Sab Saiyad, ov	VFC Bachaga
6	Bangareshwar K.Gouda.	VFC Bikkanalli
7	R.N. Naik	VFC Bornagudda
8	Sita Mallappa Naik	VFC Hallikoppa
9	Smt. R. Shakuntala	VFC Hutgar
10	Smt. Prabhavati. Vasanth Aryar	VFC Landakanalli
11	Veena Naik	Vikasa Sirsi
12	Narasimha Hegde	PSK Sirsi

13	V.M. Hegde Kabbe	VFC Kabbe
14	Gurupad Hegde	VFC Kabbe
15	Vishwanath R Hegde	VFC Shigehalli
16	Prakash V Hegde	VFC Keregadde
17	Gangadhar M Naik	VFC Terakanalli
18	R.P. Hegde	Gornmane, Nanikatta
19	Jairam Gouda	PSK Sirsi
20	B.J.Naik	ACF, Sirsi Forest Division

Annex 4: FDA Divisional Workshop Ankola Participants List

Sl.No.	Name,	Organisation/Village
1	Shankar Rama Hulswar	VFC Neelampur
2	Shankar D.Naik	VFC Hosagadde
3	Subraya Ganapu Agera	VFC Rajanaguli
4	K.N.Vannoor	VFC Bidralli
5	D.B. Gajinakar	VFC Rajanaguli
6	N.K.Parawar	VFC Vajralli
7	S.Y.Ulger	VFC Bornagudda
8	Sita Mallappa Naik	VFC Honnali
9	S.M.Gowda	VFC Heggarmakkigadde
10	Ramadas Naik	VFC Bidralli
11	Pandurang Naik	VFC Vajralli
12	H.V.Naik	VFC Heggarmakkigadde
13	Venkatraya G Nayak	VFC Belase
14	Naraya Dttatrya Hellar	VFC Koodlagadde
15	Shanti B Agera	Women Association Hadava
16	Khema Sing D Rathod	S.F. Shiroor
17	Vinayak P. Naik	S.F. Ankola
18	Ganapati V.Naik	S.F. Hattikeri
19	Ullas V Shenai	VFC Belambara
20	Ramakrishna G Nayaka	VFC Soorve
21	M.R.Hegde	District VFC Federation,
22	Khalif Ahemed	R.F.O Ankola
23	K.G. Prakash	R.F.O.Mastilatta
24	Y.Y.Dhuri	R.F.O Ramanaguli