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**Structural Changes
in Forest Departments**

S. Palit

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Structural Changes in Forest Departments by S. Palit 1999

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Programme

Foreword

The National Forest Policy of 1998 and the Ministry of Environment and Forests circular of 1st June 1990 on Joint Forest Management (JFM) emphasise the importance of involving the local communities in the protection and regeneration of degraded forests. And, in the last ten years or so, JFM has spread to several States in the country. It is estimated that there are now some 35,000 Forest Protection Committees involved in the protection of about seven million hectares of forest lands in different states.

While the increasing involvement of the village communities, as also the local NGOs, in the protection and regeneration of degraded forests is a welcome development, it is necessary to analyse the constraints to the expansion and deepening of JFM practice in the country. One major constraint identified is the need for structural changes in the Forest Departments to enable them to implement the programme more effectively.

The author, Shri S. Palit, has had long experience of forestry in West Bengal and retired from the senior position of Chief Conservator of Forests. In the publication, he argues for the need to decentralise decision making in the State Forest Departments and to make the functioning more participatory and transparent. He also argues that training and reorientation of the staff of the Forest Department have an important role to play in this connection.

The publication is being brought out under a collaborative effort of WWF-India and the International Institute of Environment and Development, U.K. I hope that it will have wide readership and contribute to the ongoing debate on the issues that impinge on more effective implementation of the JFM programme in the country.



(Samar Singh)
Secretary General, WWF-India

About WWF-India

The World Wide Fund for Nature – India (WWF-India), formerly known as the World Wildlife Fund – India, was established in 1969 as a Charitable Trust under the Bombay Public Trusts Act of 1950. Today, WWF-India is the country's largest conservation NGO with a network of State/Divisional and Field Offices spread across the country. Its Secretariat is in New Delhi. The organization is part of the WWF family worldwide, with 25 independent WWF National organizations. The coordinating international Secretariat, the WWF International, is located at Gland in Switzerland.

WWF-India started life as a modest wildlife conservation organization with a focus on protecting particular species of wild fauna. Over the years, the perspective broadened to encompass conservation of habitats, ecosystems and support to the management of the country's protected areas network. In 1989, WWF-India articulated its Mission as follows, to suit India's specific ecological and sociocultural circumstances:

“The promotion of nature conservation and environmental protection as the basis for sustainable and equitable development”.

The WWF-India's Mission has five broad programme components:

- Promoting India's ecological security; restoring the ecological balance
- Conserving biological diversity
- Ensuring sustainable use of the natural resource base
- Minimizing pollution and wasteful consumption
- Promoting sustainable lifestyles.

In achieving its Mission, WWF-India uses the following *main programme methods*: **field programmes** that serve as demonstration projects, **public policy analyses and debates** through independent research, consultation, and campaigns, **education** activities for key target groups including the youth, professionals and administrators; **communication** through multimedia approaches; **networking** and supporting the work of fellow NGOs in India, and **mobilizing** necessary financial, scientific and technical resources.

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Abbreviations

FPC	Forest Protection Committee
JFM	Joint Forest Management
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
PCCF	Principal Chief Conservator of Forests
TFM	Traditional Forest Management

Structural Changes in Forest Departments

Introduction

Joint Forest Management (JFM) has taken roots in India. Eighteen States have already adopted JFM resolution and these eighteen States account for over 80 per cent of the country's forest area. Till now, about 20,000 Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) known by different names in different States and protecting about two million hectares of degraded forests have been formed. Millions of disadvantaged groups of people living in and around forests are involved in the programme. Despite imperfections and deficiencies in the functioning of the programme, forests under community protection are staging a recovery. There are instances in several States where forests have been brought back to health with minimal support from the government. Going by all these, the new system looks eminently viable provided the transition is facilitated by appropriate institutional arrangements. It is, however, a learning process all the way.

The Traditional Forest Management (TFM) based on custodial policing which continued for over one hundred years, failed to protect the country's forests. What was worse, it took us decades to realise the futility of policing public forests.

Although the experiment with participatory forest management commenced in early seventies, the countrywide movement for JFM began in right earnest following the adoption of the 1988 National Forest Policy.

The existing institutional support for forest management was built up for TFM. The administrative structure was conceived and developed on the basis of total State control. People constituted what is known as biotic interference and the existence of other stakeholders was virtually unknown. The customary user-rights of the people were considered a burden on the forests. The gender and equity issues were irrelevant in such a situation.

The main reason why JFM failed in a few States was that it was unresponsive to people's needs. JFM is a form of community forestry and the experience across the globe shows that for sustainable management of natural resources like forests, it is the only option left for developing nations faced with lack of resources and burgeoning population.

Major actors in JFM are, the forest departments and the forest-dependent people. NGOs also have an important role to play in achieving the various objectives. All stakeholders genuinely concerned with forests have to be involved in the resources' sustainable use. Some elements of the existing management system have to be modified and in some cases new norms have to be evolved. A process change is indicated here. This will also necessitate an overhaul of the budgeting system, fund allocation, decentralization and devolution of power, participatory monitoring, benchmarking and evaluation. The organizational structure of forest departments,

which is tradition-bound, regimented and inflexible will also need to be changed in favour of a more responsive structure which can effectively meet the objectives of ecosystem preservation and biodiversity, along with satisfying people's needs on a sustained basis. This will entail improving the technical and social skills of the staff to help them perform their role optimally. A very basic need is for transparency and accountability in all activities involving common people.

This paper argues that much of these can be achieved by more efficient use of existing resources at the disposal of the FD by restructuring the department in the way indicated above. Additional resources will be required in terms of higher technical inputs and social skills, besides a committed leadership. The entire process should also be cost-effective.

The author examines the whole gamut of issues from this angle, case by case, dwelling on the deficiencies and suggesting ways to rectify them. He also presents steps to enhance the capacity of the department to meet the new management imperatives.

Changes in the Forest Department in the wake of the Forest Policy

The first National Forest Policy was formulated in 1894 and it was revised in 1952. The current policy was adopted in 1988. The main features of these policy formulations are :

1894 policy

This projected fulfilling of the country's needs as the primary objective of forest management. Although management of village forests was one of the stated objectives, in practice, this was not seriously pursued. Forestry became subservient to agriculture, as forest lands were allowed to be cleared for growing more food. Production of large commercial timber and generation of more revenue became the main aim of the forest department.

1952 policy

The document again projected the country's needs as supreme. Evolving a system of balanced and complementary land use, increasing forest cover, sustained production of timber and other forest produce for national needs, and generation of revenue, were among the objectives stated. Involving people or meeting local needs, did not find any mention in it. The policy also aimed at having a minimum of one-third geographical area under forest.

1988 policy and 1 June 1990 circular of the Government of India

Environmental stability, restoration of ecological balance and preservation of biological diversity are the thrust areas in this document. Checking soil erosion and increasing tree cover are two other important objectives. It says little in terms of improvement in the conservation status, in the expansion of the department and

about promotion prospects. The 1988 policy thus constitutes a major policy reversal, calling for sweeping changes in the traditional structure. It envisages a collaborative management of forests, where the department, community groups and the NGOs have distinctive roles to play.

The document, for the first time, stressed the need for involving people, especially women, in achieving the above objectives. The importance of Non-Timber Forest Products (minor forest produce) as a means of sustenance of the forest dependent communities and the need for their proper management were highlighted. Further, in a letter dated January 1989, addressed to the Chief Secretaries of various States, the need for working out the modalities for giving to the village communities living close to forests usufructuary benefits for ensuring their active participation in afforestation programme was stressed. It was mentioned that committed voluntary agencies/NGOs with proven track record might be particularly helpful in organizing village communities for the protection, afforestation and development of degraded forest lands.

In a 1 June 1990 circular, addressed to all State Governments, the Secretary, Department of Forests and Environment, Government of India, set out the new policy on "involvement of village communities and voluntary agencies in the regeneration of degraded forest lands".

The existing structure of the forest department came into being in 1864, when the forest department was formed for the first time. Although through successive policy iterations, changes in management objectives were indicated, in practice little change was evident. Perhaps no real change was included in the case of the first two policies. The emphasis continued to be on custodial policing. Exploitation of forests for timber and revenue on a sustained basis was the primary objective of the colonial regime. Logically, therefore, the institutions set up for sustaining the management system focused mainly on timber. What little research was there was timber-oriented, and Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), which were known as Minor Forest Produce (MFP), were virtually relegated to the background. So far as staff training was concerned, the emphasis was on custodial policing. A paramilitary training curriculum was developed, with regimentation and discipline as the important elements. Discipline was stretched to a point where independent thinking was virtually discounted. Working in a state of splendid isolation was the order of the day. The 1952 policy even went to the extent of blaming the forest dependent communities in the fringes for the degradation of forests.

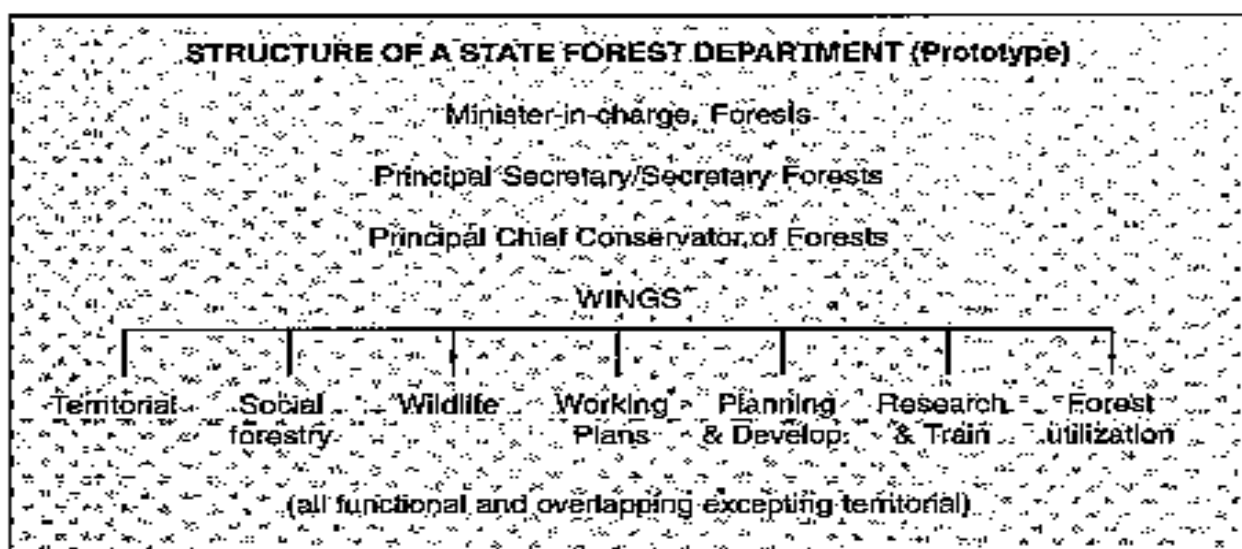
Thus despite changes in the rhetoric, the 1952 policy did not insist on or lead to any structural modifications in the forest departments. Subsequent years saw emphasis being laid on production of commercially valuable and quick growing species for industries.

The appointment of the National Commission on Agriculture in 1970 marks a watershed in India's forestry. The Commission made two recommendations (1976):

1. Man-made forests should be raised on an extensive scale with the help of institutional funds.

2. The existing system of harvesting major and minor forest produce through contractors must be replaced by doing it either directly by State forest departments, or by a network of forest labour cooperatives, or by a combination of both. In order to reduce the pressure on reserve forests, the NCA recommended growing trees on land accessible to village people. Following the NCA recommendation, social forestry was introduced on a large-scale. While the emphasis was on raising the non-browsable, quick growing species on forest lands, social forestry attempted to take the forests to people in a safe bid to meet their needs for fuel, fodder and small timber, basically to lighten the burden on production forestry. Following the recommendation number one above, Forest Development Corporations were set up in most States to eliminate contractors from forest working and also to rope in institutional finance for exploitation of the forests. Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations (TDCC) were also set up along with Large-size Agricultural Multi-purpose Societies (LAMPS) as operational agencies. In many States, monopoly rights were given to LAMPS for collection and processing of important NTFPs like bidi leaves and sal seeds, besides extraction of timber, poles and fuelwood. In 1976, through the 42nd amendment of the Constitution, the subject of forests was transferred from the State List to the Concurrent List. Following this, Forest Conservation Act was passed in 1980 to prevent diversion of forest land for non-forestry purposes.

All these measures were taken on the presumption that biotic pressure as well as political interference would continue unabated and these steps would minimize the damages. The net gain of all these measures, however, was very little in terms of improvement in the conservation status, in the expansion of the department and improvement in promotion prospects, as at the policy level upto that point of time it was not realized that conservation and development of forests was not feasible in the absence of a collaborative arrangement with the people.



Institutional constraints to change

Inside the Forest Department

Changing policies and economic realities have led to changes in forest management objectives. There has been a shift from maximisation of revenue from forests to establishment of a sustainable management system that caters to the needs of local people and at the same time looking after preservation of biodiversity and environmental conservation needs. The department, however, still retains the structure which is primarily geared to policing and protection work. This has led to the following constraints to change:

Rigid hierarchical structure and strict discipline: To suit the policing role, regimentation and strict discipline are inculcated in the foresters through a highly traditional training. This has given rise to a rigid hierarchical structure, which neither encourages independent thinking, nor freedom of expression, nor adaptation/learning/questioning.

Centralization of Power and Planning: In all the States, following the fourth Pay Commission in the eighties, the posts of principal chief conservators of forests above the chief conservators have been created. In some, posts of additional principal chief conservators have also been created above the level of the chief conservators. Despite this, the real power remains concentrated in the hands of the PCCF. Even the additional posts of PCCF and Additional PCCFs have mostly been defunct in the absence of definite job allocations. This arrangement has generated a power conflict within the department.

Similarly, planning is also totally centralized at the State level with field level officers having very little say in it. Due to their nonparticipation at the planning stage the implementing officers often feel that unrealistic targets have been thrust on them. As a result, these officers become demotivated, affecting the quality of their work.

Top down Approach: Communication in forest departments is generally one-way. Decisions are usually taken by the head of the organization to be carried out by the subordinates without questioning. Often strict guidelines are issued by the headquarters, leaving very little scope for field officers to use their discretion.

Excepting in situations of crisis, decisions are seldom made on the basis of a feedback obtained from subordinate offices.

Unplanned Expansion: Beginning with the social forestry project, especially after the fourth pay commission, there has been large-scale unplanned expansion in the forest departments. The prime motivation for this has been to improve career prospects and remove stagnation at the middle levels. The result has been creation of a number of posts at higher levels. This has generated internal tussles over the more important posts and has led to increased frustration at the senior levels. The

situation is exploited both by unscrupulous politicians as well as corrupt officials to further their own interests.

Internal Culture/Incentives: As a legacy from the British period, the internal culture continues to be hierarchical and authoritarian. Leadership is generally weak, without any commitment to better forestry. More often there is a tendency to place personal gains and convenience above the requirements of better forestry. The leadership weakness arises from various factors like lack of integrity, poor technical competence in area relevant to real needs and unclear institutional goals. The ignorance of organizational goals and objectives and absence of clear-cut strategies to achieve them have largely contributed to the institutional weakness.

Growing Corruption and Lack of Accountability: Corruption today has become all pervasive. So much so, institutions providing checks and balances no longer have the sanctity accorded to them in the past. Thus, there is almost a total lack of accountability. In the past, forest department budgets used to be low and corruption used to be on a small scale, and that too confined to the lower rungs of administration. This did not cause a serious problem as long as the upper echelons remained comparatively free from the malady. This assumption is no longer valid. Forest budgets have been expanding in recent years with money flowing in from externally aided projects. Simultaneously, corruption has pervaded the higher echelons of bureaucracy. This has led to a dim view of the FD staff by the public that foresters are little better than a band of organized exploiters.

Transfer Policy and Workload: All transfers in government departments are purported to be in the interest of public service. The optimal utilization of talents available within the department, consistent with rules and fairness, should be the guiding factor. There should be continuity in specialized areas like research and wildlife. But in practice, organizational interest is frequently bypassed in favour of individual interest. Allocation of work, even in functional areas, does not take cognizance of the technical competence of the concerned persons. In many instances, the transfer orders are initiated as a result of political influence or due to manipulations of the concerned officer. This has led to the situation where frequent transfers and short tenures are the norm. With the result there is poor utilization of skills and competence of individuals in the forest service.

Distribution of Workload: In the forest department, the distribution of work load is not even. While the territorial divisions are generally over-loaded, the functional divisions are grossly underworked. The territorial postings are considered more desirable, as they command staff, budget and are infrastructurally well served. This has encouraged the movement of staff to territorial divisions away from the equally necessary but under-valued functional divisions. Thus the officers are generally keen to move to territorial divisions. There is, therefore, a need for a rationalization of work load and removal of these disparities.

Orientation and Training: The new policies in support of people's involvement in forest management will necessitate a major reorientation of the forest department in terms of competence, systems, structures, skills and attitudes. Current efforts are confined to imparting cosmetic touches to the traditional methods and curricula, to make them look more acceptable from the new management point of view. Since the ultimate objective of training is to improve the organizational performance, this requires preparation of a comprehensive, rather than a superficial plan for the organization which includes an assessment of its management needs. Such need-based training plans are difficult to come by. Innumerable forest-based training programmes are going on in the country at the moment, but this training is mostly for fulfilling either certain contractual commitments or for carrying out Government of India directives in this behalf. Whatever is learnt during the training is quickly forgotten due to lack of application and use. This is causing colossal wastage of man power and money.

Outside the Forest Department but inside the government

Policy Dichotomy: Long-term agreements entered into with industry for supply of forest products at low prices under the old policy regime have led to over-exploitation of resources. Together with monopoly industrial agreements, nationalization of NTFP collection and marketing has also led to poor management. In most cases, nationalization has failed to protect the interests of tribals and poorer people and it has left the more vulnerable sections to the mercies of a few legal buyers.

While on the one hand, this has led to a non-sustainable use of forest produce, on the other, it has given rise to smuggling and pilferage. To maximize the collection of NTFPs, for instance, they use methods which are destructive of trees. Resin tapping, pruning of tendu bushes, extraction of bamboos and canes provide some of the worst examples. The endorsement of the policy of industrial wood production through creation of monoculture plantations of quick growing species and setting up of forest corporations for roping in institutional finance is targeted at higher productivity in terms of both timber and revenue. This is being done, however, at the cost of diversity and subsistence needs of the local people. There is one justification for such a course though; such plantations of exotic species enjoy some amount of immunity from biotic pressure on which the department has little control in the absence of a collaborative management.

The shifting emphasis in strategies and government policies on forests at both the Central as well as State levels have been coming in the way of pursuing a consistent policy for the development of forests. Similarly, lack of goal congruence in the forest departments of the government has led to working at cross purposes.

Leasing of degraded forest lands to private industry: Policy fails when its spirit is not fully understood. This is clearly manifested in States which are considering of leasing out degraded forest lands to private industry. Experience from all over the country indicates that wherever at least rootstocks are present, the vegetation is

sufficiently robust to regenerate with some protection and at minimal cost. In States like West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar and Gujarat, wherever people have been involved in JFM, the forests have regenerated. In many such instances, the forests had earlier been decimated and virtually become nonexistent. Therefore, the presumption on the basis of which the guidelines for the project were framed that "only degraded forest areas of less than 10 per cent average density will be selected" was not premised on ground realities. It will indeed be tragic if such forest lands are put under monoculture plantations with very high investments from the private sector. Again it is difficult to judge if a particular piece of land has totally lost its ability for biomass regeneration. If it has truly reached a sterile state, it is unlikely that even with comparatively high investment, the private sector venture can really be successful. On the contrary, in a number of cases farmer-industry tie ups in the forestry sector have been found economically viable.

To ensure a steady supply of raw material for industry in a mutually beneficial relationship, it would be more appropriate to support joint ventures of farmers and industry.

Besides, in States like West Bengal, where both social forestry as well as JFM have made great strides, signs of market glut are clearly visible. With the successful implementation of JFM, a similar situation is also likely to develop in many other States. Raw material flow from the above sources to industries may go a long way in avoiding any glut in market.

Outside the Government (external constraints)

The forest department has set before it the unenviable task of protecting millions of hectares of forests, from a burgeoning population, plagued by poverty and unemployment. The problem has been further compounded by a policy which is not only exploitative in nature, but also by a situation in which FD retains all control. This has completely alienated the adivasis who are dependent on the forests for their subsistence. In trying to rigidly enforce the provisions of different acts and rules, the FD has lost the sympathy of other government departments and agencies as well. The atmosphere has further been vitiated by frequent charges of corruption brought against forest personnel. Thus, on the whole it has to operate in a hostile environment. The external constraints are summarized below:

External constraints to effective forest management

1. The growing human and animal population resulting in increased biotic pressure.
2. Antagonistic relation with forest fringe dwellers.
3. Lack of political support owing to absence of voters.
4. Appalling poverty and lack of employment opportunities in forest areas.
5. Absence of alternative sources of energy and building materials in forest areas.

6. Demands of development projects, e.g. road construction, irrigation dams, mining erection of high tension lines, etc.
7. Organized groups of smugglers and poachers, equipped with sophisticated weapons and political connections.
8. Presence of extremists in forest areas endangering safety and security of forest staff.
9. Growing land hunger due to population growth.
10. Slow disposal of court cases leading to delays in awarding punishment to offenders.
11. Long gestation period of forest crop and inadequate appreciation of their tangible benefits.

Strategies needed to overcome constraints

Contrary to common belief, most of these constraints can be overcome within the framework of existing rules and procedures. Leadership has a very crucial role to play in this. "Leaders create an agenda for change. They play a significant vision, motivating employees to embrace the vision and crafting the organizational structure and culture to consistently reward those who strive towards realization of the vision. They lead people by personal example and become role models." When all such qualities are located in the head of the organization, removal of the constraints become so much easier. With a leader like this, most of the constraints should vanish.

One basic requirement is improvement of the quality of recruits to various categories of executive staff. In his report on Indian Forest Service, Dr. N.C. Saxena has recommended two ways in which the quality of IFS recruits can be improved. These are provided here as examples of simple changes that can improve quality.

1. A reduction in the number of attempts that a candidate should be allowed to make in the competitive examination.
2. Lowering of age from the present 21-28 to 20-25 years.

The suggestions are based on the fact that the average quality of entrants to the service is inversely proportional to the number of attempts allowed to the candidates. It is also true that in such an arrangement unsuccessful candidates can decide quite early about other options open to them. A similar principle may be adopted for recruitment of candidates for other levels of office. Policy change requires structural change. The current hierarchical structure similar to the police would only be justified when forest management primarily depended on custodial policing. In the new management paradigm, this will only come in the way of free exchange of ideas and information, which is vital for strengthening participatory management. Similarly, adherence to rules and procedures should not be stretched to a point where independent thinking and innovation become a casualty.

Decentralization of power in the forest department has not yet had its beginning. As already indicated, absence of devolution of power, centralized planning, and vast and unplanned expansion of IFS and other cadres have led to colossal wastage of trained manpower. This mistake must be rectified by rationalization of workload and devolution of power. In fact in the changed context, the PCCF's role should be more of a coordinator who oversees implementation of the government policy broadly and advises the minister. Because of rapid expansion of the department and formation of various wings, it is no longer possible for the incumbent PCCF to make use of the experience of all the wings. As it appears, in most States, the concept of regional CCFs, responsible for a well defined region has been accepted. The PCCF and all the CCFs may form a policy planning and budgeting unit. All proposed policy changes should be routed through this unit. Besides, all proposals for transfer and postings of officers and higher executive staff should be approved by this unit before such orders are issued. This will ensure that postings are made after taking into account the needs of various wings, the skills of the incumbents and the length of their tenure. This arrangement will provide transparency, apart from significantly eliminating personal bias and corruption.

As already mentioned, it has become most essential for the forest department to evolve a mechanism to arrest the spreading canker of corruption. For, through JFM, the FD has involved numerous disadvantaged groups of people in and around the forests and the department cannot afford to betray their trust. The forest departments have always been suffering from lack of adequate resources. The same situation is going to continue for the foreseeable future. It is extremely important, therefore, that whatever little can be allocated to sustain community efforts, should be spent judiciously maintaining in the process complete transparency. The whole procedure must be institutionalized and should not be done arbitrarily by a few key individuals. Participatory rural appraisal, participatory microplanning and other mechanisms of making financial transactions are other desirable modifications to the old system.

Funding system as a constraint to policy

One other crucial element of constraint in PFM working can be funding. The budgetary system of financial allocation does not allow for a sustained flow of fund over time. It follows a set pattern relying too much on past allocations and performance, leaving little scope for strategic planning. The plan schemes also emerge in the most unplanned way. The problem is further compounded by short tenure of people in key positions. In view of the prevailing uncertainties, no initiative is taken by the department to do long term or strategic planning. Often, as a compromise, forest departments in various States opt for externally aided projects. Since these projects have an element of foreign exchange earning, continuity of funding is reasonably assured. There are, however, problems here also. The projects are often accommodated within the normal allocation of the State plan budget at the cost of other schemes. The State Governments, therefore, have to decide whether

such projects should be taken up only to obtain additional plan assistance from the Centre or this should really be treated as an additionality to the forestry budget. Similarly, the Central Government will have to decide whether the project should be treated as a good means of improving the balance of payment situation or for a goal oriented development of the forests.

Steps to be initiated for a change to community management system

During the last 20 years or so, the world has seen growing interest in participatory methods not only in forestry, but also in other sectors. Since the conventional methods almost everywhere have failed to prevent a steep decline in natural resources like forests, efforts are being made to bring all the stakeholders to act together. What has become apparent as a result of the review of implementation experiences is that without quality, the processes and products will suffer and the policy aims will not be achieved.

Some of the critical elements in this process are presented below. These were identified by ODA during a review of its PFM experience.

- Long term, secure rights to benefits are often sufficient for community forestry. It is the security and benefit which truly matter. It has been observed that a lot of confusion is persisting over the distinction between ownership and right and that this is coming in the way of further progress of community forestry. Debate over public and private sector reform signals that change is recognized as a strategic necessity.
- The following elements have been identified as necessary for sustainable sharing of forest management responsibility:
 1. long term commitment
 2. honesty and transparency
 3. an understanding at all levels of 'where we are going and why' and commitment to this
 4. flexibility
 5. a learning process approach
 6. a powerful learning team
 7. empowerment of people
 8. a big gain (in any form it will boost public credibility of participatory management)
 9. sharing of benefits
 10. learning the lessons; this is vital for large-scale implementation of community forestry

- It is recognized that forestry was failing as it had not taken people into account.
- Low involvement, high efficiency' alienates key stakeholders. Thus efficiency should not be obtained at the cost of sustainability. Community forestry can be effectively promoted only when all the stakeholders combine to improve efficiency.
- The pace of the process is very important. The participatory culture should grow at an appropriate pace and cannot be hurried
- Raising awareness is considered vital for participatory approaches to forest management. A regional forum formed with the stakeholders may facilitate exchange of information.
- The ever-increasing constraints on government spending has become a global phenomenon. Because of this, it has become necessary to ensure effective and efficient targeting of resources. The participatory management has to be installed efficiently. Bearing high opportunity costs initially, to derive longer term benefits, is a common feature with all stakeholders in participatory approaches. Genuine consultations developing from individuals to small groups, and onto larger networks are sine qua non of success .
- There are numerous examples of learning in parallel in different sectors. They involve participation, responsibility and effort. Such parallel learning and subsequent convergence can strengthen the whole movement.
- Because of the risk and anxiety involved in a change, some prefer to resist change. But if the new scenario does not give a fair share of benefits, participation cannot be sustained.

Certain missing links have also been identified. They are briefly:

- A careful matching is necessary between existing rights and potential rights. A better understanding is also needed of the way the customary rights can be reconciled within the existing legal framework.
- A better and a more transparent acceptance of the pace of participation needs entrenching at all levels.
- Public awareness which should be given primacy is frequently given only cursory attention. Training, support and resources will all need to be strategically allocated.
- The impact of community protected areas on non-protected areas and the way the product flow is changing should be known.

- Areas where further information is required include
 - change of market access for different stakeholders
 - trends in household welfare

The trends indicated above significantly tally with the Indian experience. Similarly, the missing links are also quite relevant to the Indian situation and are discussed below.

Analytical tools for monitoring progress in transition from the State to the community management of resources (including benchmarking)

Organizational change must relate to the new functions the organisation needs to perform action / learning / reflection processes. This includes development of benchmarking and monitoring systems to assess the effectiveness of the programme and progress towards achieving long term objectives. Since there are now a multiplicity of stakeholders and objectives to be fulfilled, it is necessary to ensure that information that allows reasonable assessment of progress made in the social, ecological and institutional areas is collected.

In the institutional arena some of the key issues to be addressed include, assessment of attitudes, identification of constraints to changes and pathways to overcome them: development of systems to ensure optimal utilisation of resources, development of leadership and change agents at different levels within the organisation, understanding of the dynamics and limits to management change.

One of the most important elements to change management is the identification of the role and skill requirements to implement new policy. Some of the areas which need to be brought into this assessment include: (a) career planning, (b) skill and knowledge enhancement, (c) incentives and rewards.

These combine to help develop a motivated workforce that contributes and develops the organisational vision and works out the ways in which to facilitate change.

The achievement of the department's vision depends on attaining success in five interrelated areas shown in Table 1.

Analytical framework and decision making

The analysis and interpretation of indicators and other data would be in the context of transition from State to the community management of resources. The results would be integrated into information useful to decision makers and other interest groups. The analytical framework would consist of the following:

- I. An analysis of mutual interactions and relationships among various sets of indicators.

TABLE 1		
Module	Title	Actions
1.	Goals and strategies	Maintaining a harmonious relation between goals, strategies, structure and systems, culture and human resources. The actions against each should result in agreement between the organisation and the expectations of its stakeholders.
2.	Structure and Systems	Maintain a good fit between strategy and structure, as structure follows strategy.
3.	Culture and Values	Develop core values and norms of behaviour to support new strategies and structure and promote change and innovation.
4.	Human Resource Development	Develop competence and commitment of employees for effective performance.
5.	Management of Change	Effectively implement strategies, structures and institutional process.

- II. Examining various issues and giving specific recommendations for mid-course corrections and changes to make the transition more effective.

Benchmarking as a monitoring tool

Conceptually "benchmarking is a management tool used in the corporate world to improve management performance by adopting the outstanding practices and the processes of the best organizations whether private or public, within the same industry, or outside."

The situation obtaining in the forest department hardly has any parallel outside it. Therefore, it is difficult to benchmark the forest department against any other departments or agencies outside it. However, it may be realistically and gainfully benchmarked against State forest organizations whose management performance has been outstanding.

Identification of benchmarks

The standard may be set up by the following :

1. Change the mind set. A complete reorientation is required for a shift from policing to participation.
2. Seek cooperation of all stakeholders as partners in a common pursuit.
3. Identify impediments to change and apply appropriate change management instruments.

4. Ensure optimal utilization of existing resources, before additional resources are mobilized.
5. Seek changes in legislations wherever necessary.
6. Leadership is important for facilitating change. Develop change agents at various levels to ensure continuity of thinking in the process of management of change.
7. Understand the dynamics and limits of management of change. Start with changing what we can, influence others to change what they can.

Human Resource Development (HRD): The whole exercise depends on the identification of role and skill requirements through training analysis, spelling out priority areas where HRD interventions are required and building internal capability and infrastructure.

There are three key issues in developing human resources. These are

- (a) career planning
- (b) skill and knowledge enhancement, and
- (c) incentives

(a) **Career Planning:** It is related to

- **Incentives and rewards**
- **Tenure and posting:** The postings at the ACF and above levels should be for a minimum period of three years. Transfers should be related to functions.
- **Specialization:** Emphasis should be on technical and functional specialization. Staff trained thus will be able to provide guidance in their respective areas of specialization.
- **Redeployment:** Match the technical and functional competence and attitudes of employees with their postings.
- **Performance Appraisal:** It should be linked with specific and measurable standards of performance and not merely through confidential reports.

(b) **Skill and knowledge enhancement**

Training: Training should be reoriented to match the new goals and strategies of the forest department. The nature of training will depend on

1. the new role of forest officers
2. knowledge and skills required to perform these roles
3. context of working which is going to be multifunctional in nature.

(c) Rewards and Incentives

There should be provision for reward for outstanding performance. This may be in any form administration finds it expedient. Similarly, there should be provision for incentive schemes in the form of cash or kind to motivate the employees.

Teamwork: Teamwork basically depends on leadership. Proper orientation towards the goal helps to form a cohesive team. If the performance is assessed as a group, the collective performance improves. The leader has to play a model role.

Structural Changes in Forest Management Systems

The transition to community forest management would involve some major structural changes in forest management systems. This also follows the management objectives set out in the National Forest Policy 1988. The new management objectives are :

1. Preservation of biodiversity, soil and water conservation

This will necessitate imposition of total ban on clear felling of forests and renewal of degraded forests through participation of people. Even where forests have been totally denuded, the afforestation models should be designed in such a way as to produce a multi-tiered plantation which promotes biodiversity and at the same time ensure intermediate flow of benefits to the participant communities. This also takes care of soil and water conservation needs efficiently.

2. Meeting subsistence needs of forest dependent communities as the first charge on forests

Consistent with preservation of biodiversity, the subsistence needs of people can best be met if the forests are managed for sustainable harvesting of NTFPs. A significantly large section of rural population, especially tribals and women depend on NTFPs for both subsistence and income generation. Therefore, access to collection, processing and marketing of NTFPs are issues of basic livelihood to them. In fact, due to timber and revenue orientation of the government, the potential of income generation for the forest dependent communities have never been fully exploited.

3. From timber and revenue oriented forestry to sustainable forestry, consistent with the above requirements: A shift in management emphasis from timber to non-timber forest products

Managing forests for NTFPs will also entail a review of the silvicultural methods followed in forest management. Almost all silvicultural systems followed in the country are targeted at timber production on a sustainable

basis. The methods largely failed as sustained production of timber is not possible in the absence of people's collaboration. This was not foreseen at the time of policy formulation earlier. Since sustainable extraction of NTFPs can meet both local and national needs comprehensively, some adjustments in silvicultural systems is a logical step.

4. **From managing the forest with people being kept out, to managing it in collaboration with them (forest dependent communities) as partners**
Joint Forest Management in effect should be a fair compromise between State control and community control. The actual sharing of decision making takes place through preparation and implementation of the microplan. This is valid when the microplan is prepared following participatory methods.
5. **Reorientation of research and training to suit the new management system**

Research: To provide institutional support research must shift its focus from timber to NTFPs. It has also to be participatory and must tap indigenous knowledge which has been handed down to the communities through generations. Research should emphasize case studies which should cover causes of success and failure in non-wood forest products development, areas of community management, production of non-wood forest products, forest dependency, sustainable utilization, equity, and benefit sharing in marketing. There is also a need to develop case studies that describe and analyze the marketing channels from collectors/producers to consumers.

The investigations under research could consider the nature and extent of distribution of specific plant resources, their density of occurrence, their potential supply from wild sources, their suitability to be grown under multi-species environment (e.g. enrichment planting under natural forest cover and agroforestry) or under monoculture. Domestication of wild plants yielding non-wood forest products would involve their genetic improvement.

The Regional Expert Consultation on Non-wood Forest Products, FAO/RAPA, Bangkok, 1994 recommends that specific research should be conducted on:

- the supply and demand of non-wood forest resources, currently and in the future.
- Indigenous system of local knowledge and resource management.
- the connection between tenural security and sustainable development of non-wood forest products.
- to the role of gender in resource management, including appropriate technologies for non-wood forest products harvest, use and processing.
- the existence and effects of professional biases and inaccurate stereotypes, especially those concerning local resource users.

Multipurpose management of forests in an integrated manner calls for a high order of scientific knowledge and technology. Silvicultural systems adopted

for management of forests in the country always aimed at timber production on a sustained basis, excepting for rare few cases where, the minor forest produce is of high economic value (e.g. tendu leaves). The research problem immediately encountered is the lack of compatible forest management systems combining ecological and economic prudence to meet current needs. Evolution of such systems would involve knowledge about stand dynamics, ecology and silvicultural requirements of many of the ecosystems (especially in the tropics) about which we know very little. This could be a subject of long-term research and is considered very vital for sustainability.

Training: It has already been clarified in the Government of India's policy enunciation that three groups will be primarily involved in the successful implementation of JFM. They are the forest personnel, the participating forest communities and the NGOs. It is therefore obvious that all three groups will require orientation and training for proper implementation of the new management strategy.

The revised training curricula for foresters must include rural development (including anti-poverty programmes), sociology, tribal welfare etc. For various reasons, knowledge of other relevant disciplines has to be internalized. It has to be realized that forestry today has become more of a socio-technical subject, and the human component of it deserves more attention than technological aspects.

6. Addressing equity issues with recognition of the need to extend equal rights to women and the key role women can play in sustaining community forestry

Sustainable forest management must address equity issues. Among major stakeholders are the tribals, women and the poor, who are the most socially and economically vulnerable.

A number of tribal clans live in and around forest areas and all of them have been very adversely affected by the degradation of forests. They have their cultural and social and economic systems closely linked to forest areas and hence have accumulated extensive knowledge about local ecosystems. Another group of vulnerable stakeholders in forests is the scheduled castes and the poor who are socially marginalized and so are in need of all possible support.

7. The role of NGOs

As long as production and sale of timber and fuelwood and collection of revenue were the major concerns of the forest department, management was a simple business. A working plan drawn up for an entire division for a period of 10 to 20 years would take care of all the operational aspects. With the transition to JFM, the position has become complicated and the forester's job more exacting.

Each community area will need a plan (which is currently known as microplan) prepared out of a PRA exercise. This plan, though termed micro, may have more ramifications than a full-fledged working plan. Each forest 'beat' which is the smallest administrative unit may have upto 30 community groups each having a microplan to implement. This has implications in terms of the follow up support to be provided by the forester in charge of a 'beat'. Partnerships with NGOs may ease the burden of support. This, together with the long-term goal of developing the capacity of local organizations to support themselves, will lead to a new organisational framework for forest management.

Changes in control over the resource

There are still fundamental contradictions between the practice and spirit of JFM and the legal framework within which it operates. Through a series of enactments, the government had progressively taken control of most forest lands with corresponding reduction in local rights. Although under JFM the monopolistic government control is being slowly replaced by community control, serious anomalies still remain. Thus, what was earlier open access common property resource under government ownership has now become community controlled common property resources. It is notable here that the control being passed to the communities is conditional and can be revoked. The communities are handed over the control on the strength of executive orders and the action does not have any legislative support. The forests being under State control all products coming from forest lands are basically State property. The legal position remains unaltered. The relevant laws do not recognize any rights of forest dependent communities on collection, processing and sale of NTFPs except in some specific cases where tribals have been allowed collection of NTFPs for bona fide consumption. On the contrary, local laws in several states permit the government to declare any forest produce as specified, upon which the State government can exercise monopoly over their trade. In effect, the State controls all aspects of NTFP production and sale. The State control extends to the designated forest products found in private lands and non-forest government lands. The interests of primary collectors dependent on NTFPs seemed to have been ignored in this regard for the sake of safeguarding State revenue. The practice of giving monopoly rights of collection to TDCC was primarily designed to prevent exploitation of tribals and other primary collectors by private traders. But the performance of TDCC and LAMPS associated with it has not been entirely in the interest of the primary collectors.

Nationalization of NTFPs

Some of the important NTFPs like tendu leaves, sal seeds, etc. have been nationalized in Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar. The main objectives of the nationalization were to ensure fair deal to the primary collectors and to secure the production base. But in effect the reverse is happening. In M.P., production of

tendu leaves, for example, fell during the period 1981-82 to 1985-86. In Orissa, despite nationalization, tendu leaves production remained stagnant over a period of two decades. Similarly, the wage rates in the case of sal seeds in M.P. and in the case of tendu leaves in Orissa have significantly dropped in real terms during the period 1967 to 1984. Although no such analytical study is available for the subsequent periods, the trend seems to continue.

In the present arrangement, the FPC members/collectors are only getting wages for collection, not getting a share of the revenue, net or gross, as is stipulated in the JFM resolution. The bidi industry employs some 50 lakh labourers in a dozen States (India Today, Nov. 15, 1989) and potentially there will be substantial economic gains for these workers if the equity issues are sorted out rationally.

Transition in functions

Protection

The traditionally managed forests had to be protected by policing. The forest officers at all levels were trained to keep the forests from biotic interference which included humans, cattle and man-made fire. The silvicultural systems followed earlier were premised on the fact that there would be no such biotic interference or at least it could be effectively controlled by custodial policing. But by pursuing the forest policy that was unresponsive to people's needs, the department had alienated the forest dependent communities. Thus the system failed to prevent forests in the absence of people's cooperation. Two things happened as a consequence. The State forests, the maintenance of which was considered vital for watersheds, wildlife, etc., despite being put under protection working circles and sanctuaries, started to degrade. Similarly, the forests which were set aside for exploitation on a sustained basis failed to regenerate, as the silvicultural systems adopted for the management of the forests largely failed. The government initiative for JFM primarily emanated from this. Since securing protection of the forests was the primary objective, the community groups initially joining JFM were termed Forest Protection Committees (FPC). Because of the usufruct sharing arrangements, the people now have a stake in the preservation and protection of the forests. Being basically, the primary users of forests, they are perfectly aware of the ill-effects of fire, unrestricted grazing and pilferage. They are also aware of the fact that the degree of their participation in the JFM will be judged by the protection status of the forests and no long term dialogue is possible without securing the protection. Hence, wherever the committees are functioning effectively, the biotic interference has been checked and the forests are regenerating.

There are, however, some negative consequences to this also. With the communities taking up protection duties, the forest staff in many instances are seen to abdicate the responsibility of protection of the forests to them and relax. This is a matter of concern. Protection of the forests will remain the primary duty of the forest staff as long as the department exists. The community groups share

the responsibility but do not altogether replace them. The patrolling of forests where needed should be joint and the forest staff should lead. It is to be noted that due to scarcity and price rise the timber has become so valuable that mafia groups are finding poaching highly profitable and worth taking great risks.

The success of the new policy is bringing in significant changes to staff duties but still some of the prior duties remain of utmost importance.

Management

The management objectives have more or less been set out in the national Forest Policy. The adoption of JFM resolutions by different States is a follow up action. Protection of forests is only the first step. Management of forests in the revised set up will involve fundamental changes to current practices. These, which include development of partnerships based on participatory and transparent processes are:

A. From revenue and timber oriented forestry to NTFPs-oriented sustainable forestry: This has proved an important impetus to the form of new forest management practice and the type of organizational structure required to implement it. From inception the forest department was categorised as a revenue earning department and DFOs pushing up the revenue amount would get special accolades. Revenue was primarily derived from timber, but felling of trees resulted in degradation of the forests. The country has lost much forest through reckless exploitation of timber. Now felling of natural forests is banned in the wake of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. Further, in the recent judgment of the Supreme Court (1996) fellings in strategic hill areas, as well as all fellings in the plains without specific approval of the Government of India have also been banned. Thus, raising revenue by selling timber is no longer feasible. This has major implications to the future role of the department. Timber is only one of many products obtained from the forest. Studies on NTFPs (Gupta and Guleria, 1982) indicate their importance to local and national economies. For instance,

- about 40% of revenue and 55% of employment in the forestry sector are attributed to NTFPs,
- NTFPs on an average account for 60 to 70% of the total export earnings from forest products,
- current harvest of NTFPs is only 60% of the potential production.

A case study by K.C. Malhotra and others in Jamboni Range, in the Midnapore District of West Bengal in sal coppice forests (K.C. Malhotra et al, 1991) led to the following findings:

- Of all the large natural biodiversity available in sal forests, a significant portion is frequently used by the local communities for subsistence needs of food, fuel, fodder, medicine, household articles and religious and ornamental purposes.

- A large proportion of the annual income of the households comes from NTFPs. On an average, it amounts to 16.44%.
- The income from harvested-poles is one-third of that from NTFPs over the same period.

Thus studies carried out so far, although insufficient, reveal that several NTFPs do provide or have the potential to give sustainable income to the communities. The implications of changing management objectives to support production of NTFPs are still to be researched and new practices internalised. New partnership need to be developed to gain this understanding. Participatory research with forest department, villagers and NGOs acting together will be necessary to put the data in place. It is also necessary to initiate research to find out appropriate silvicultural management methods of major crop types that will ensure a balanced harvesting of both timber and non-timber products without changing the crop character. This new policy has profound technical, social and institutional consequences for the forest sector.

In this connection the recommendations of the 'Regional Expert Consultation on Non-Wood Forest Products' Social, Economic and Cultural Dimensions (28th Nov. - 2nd Dec. 1994 FAO/RAPA, Bangkok, Thailand) seem quite relevant.

Some of the more relevant recommendations are:

1. Wherever possible, communities should be given rights and authorities to protect and manage local resources by and for themselves.
2. For the purpose of monitoring, regulating and taxing, differentiation should be made between natural (collected) non-wood forest products and those which are planted or cultivated.
3. Non-wood forest product considerations should not be treated apart from broader forest management activities, but should be integrated with a wide range of projects and activities.
4. Forest management agencies should begin a process that will lead to greater emphasis on non-wood forest products. The objective should be integration of non-wood forest products into the mainstream forest management and planning.
5. Management responsibilities of forestry professionals should be expanded to cover human ecology and conservation.
6. Decentralized processing of non-wood forest products should be encouraged to enhance the likelihood of a higher percentage of economic benefits staying with local communities.
7. Communities, local people's organizations and NGOs should be involved in designing and implementing strategies for non-wood forest product development.

For appropriate management of NTFPs certain information needs have also been identified by the same committee. These are summarised below :

- a) Comprehensive inventories of non-wood forest resources and assessments of their uses are lacking for most items: such inventories are sorely needed.
- b) Surveys and analysis of the degree and extent of subsistence and local uses of non-wood forest products should be conducted prior to encouraging more intensive commercial exploitation.
- c) Marketing analysis that follow specific non-wood forest products from collection to sale to final consumer are needed for a variety of products in each country.
- d) Better linkages should be developed among the numerous networks and organizations already dealing with non-wood forest products.
- e) Producers, buyers and consumers should be sensitized and made aware of the value of non-wood forest products and the issues related to their development and exploitation.
- f) FAO and other international organizations should gather, analyze and distribute information concerning non-wood forest resources, collection, production and marketing.

B. From high cost plantation forestry to low cost renewal of degraded natural forests: JFM is a pragmatic policy designed to regenerate degraded natural forests. The country has 25 million ha. of open forests and 5.8 million ha. of scrub lands. The government, therefore, has the responsibility of regenerating over 30 million hectares of forest lands. Looking at the resource position and the annual target, it will take around 25 years to do the job. It may be clarified here that since renewal of degraded forests, especially those with coppiceable species, takes approximately one-tenth of normal cost of afforestation, sometimes even less, it follows that with the allocated budget, ten times the area can be afforested if JFM method is adopted. However, this again necessitates a major shift in thinking and practice within the departments used to implementation of high cost activities. The new approach requires no high budget and hence is of little interest to those officers whose performance is measured by the size of fund disbursed.

C. From monoculture to polyculture or biodiversity: The JFM policy states that meeting of local needs must become the first priority of forest management. This calls into question silvicultural practices that reduce diversity and promote uniformity and single products.

Community needs are best met from natural forests, with herbs, shrubs, under storeys, middle storeys, top storeys, creepers, climbers and lianas. They can collect products from such forests to meet their multiple needs. It is possible to develop analogue models which will be multi-tiered and the closest approximation of nature. Apart from meeting needs of different stakeholder groups in the community,

they will also ensure an intermediate flow of benefits. Indigenous species should be given preference unless there is some specific need for exotic ones. Again, this requires significant shifts in thinking in departments charged with delivering uniform products. Training, research, planning — all need to change to provide skills, understanding and the right environment to implement these approaches.

D. Establishment of management information systems: The management of information requires a strategy that will ensure regular flow of data. This is to help utilise the information contained in the plans during implementation and the information obtained during monitoring of implementation in the planning process. Such information flows should be developed at the divisional, circle and State levels. Monitoring and evaluation should become an integral part of the planning and implementation of the programme and not merely an instrument of surveillance as is commonly viewed. It should form part of the management process, assisting in decision making through provision of relevant data. Change in management method should be matched by information systems (including geographic) that allow decision to be taken at the local level based on the best understanding and practices available. The introduction of JFM and participatory microplan also challenges traditional methods such as working plan. A shift in planning structures will be the result. This is so because the traditional working plans are unable to meet many of today's management needs. They are not oriented towards multiple objective management. Conflicts will also arise from lack of consultation with participating communities in the design and implementation of working plans.

E. Establishment of marketing and market information systems: Marketing of forest produce is a critical area which needs urgent attention. This covers commercial and farm forestry products as well as NTFPs. Very little work has been done in the country about marketing of forest products for the reason that forestry has been timber-oriented and timber has virtually an unlimited market. After introduction of social forestry and JFM on a large scale during the past two decades, poles and NTFPs have started arriving at the market on an unprecedented scale. In the absence of market research, market information or sales promotion, signs of glut are already perceptible, especially in respect of poles. Since any fall in prices affects the community interests adversely, any glut may ultimately prove a disincentive for JFM. Besides, the NTFPs which are a sustainable source of income for the forest communities, must fetch economic returns for them. The following are, therefore, considered an immediate necessity:

- a look at the structural support arrangements for provision of market information.
- liberalization of transit rules.
- analysis of effective trading/processing
- consideration of new local organisational structures for marketing and control of NTFPs.

A marketing information system provides the foundation upon which production and marketing decisions are made. It is a structured approach to information gathering that has the goal of market transparency.

The type of information gathered will depend on local needs and priorities. To help primary producers market goods effectively, they need solid information about what the buyer needs. The more is known about a market, the more the market becomes transparent. In a situation like this, the primary producer in the forest can make informed choices about production and sale. The information can also provide bargaining power.

Development and revolving fund

Lack of resources often comes in the way of taking any major initiative in the forestry sector. Besides, some of the major JFM programmes in the country today are given specific support by international funding. The State budgets make only limited allocations. The development and protection of forests perpetually suffer from fund constraints. Even the States having externally aided projects will find it difficult to continue with the activities after the projects end. It is, therefore, absolutely necessary to build up a development fund in the State forestry department for continuity. This fund may be built up by rechanneling some of the revenue generated by the department. As a matter of fact, time is very opportune now to launch such a scheme as with the successful implementation of JFM the forests are staging a come back. Forest areas, which had earlier been completely denuded have become productive now and are yielding substantial revenue. A major share of this revenue is going to the State exchequer. A part of this revenue is also going to the participating communities as their share. The sal pole crop has become due for felling in several districts in southwest Bengal. During 1996-97, fellings had been undertaken in the districts of Bankura and Medinipur. Fund and infrastructural constraints restricted felling to less than one-fifth of the area which was otherwise due for felling. Some time is also being allowed for the market forces to come into full play. Despite this, the revenue obtained from disposal of sal pole lots amounted to nearly Rs. 15 lakhs as against less than Rs. 10 lakhs obtained prior to the introduction of JFM. It is expected that in coming years the revenue earning will rise considerably. This should be the picture, wherever similar situations prevail. Some of this extra funds thus generated should be made available to the forest department in the form of a development fund to enable it to continue its activities. So far as VPCs/FPCs are concerned, a revolving fund is required to be built up from current earnings through voluntary contribution. The contribution may be in cash or kind. Without this, the land development work or support activities, which have been initiated through government or agency help cannot be maintained/continued. Besides, the funds have immense scope to meet small cash needs and credit requirements of the local population.

Fortunately, such a movement is gaining momentum in the States adopting JFM as the study carried out by the Ford Foundation in eight States reveals. For optimal use of such funds, efforts would need to be channelized towards capacity

building in areas of fund management, book keeping, maintenance of records and basic accountancy skills.

Policy and legal framework

In India, the legislation still overrules the policy although it must be the other way round. The policy expresses the national will, and aspirations, and legislation must facilitate the implementation of the national will (Laitalainen 1996). The following major policy and legislations on forestry in India governed its management over the decades (in chronological order) :

- Indian Forest Act 1865
- Indian Forest Act 1878
- National Forest Policy 1894
- Administration of forests became a state subject 1921
- Indian Forest Act 1927 (still in force)
- National Forest Policy 1952
- National Commission on Agriculture 1970
- Wild Life Act 1972
- Forest transferred from State list to concurrent list 1976
- Forest Conservation Act 1980
- Amendment of Forest Conservation Act 1988
- National Forest Policy 1988
- Government of India Policy circular, 1990

Besides these, there are a host of State legislations and rights within the purview of the Acts. Though the old Acts are no longer valid, a review of all these Acts and policies is necessary to find out whether the Acts militate against the policy. And if so, the Acts need to be suitably amended. A better understanding is also necessary of the mechanism by which to accommodate customary rights and potential rights arising out of community forestry within the legal framework. The position regarding policy vis-a-vis law is quite clear in Nepal. In the last two decades, different laws to facilitate implementation of community forestry have been passed in that country where unlike in India there has been a convergence of policy and legislation.

Sustainability of the changed system

In many parts of the world today the need for collaborative management of fragile natural resources is no longer questioned. Planners, foresters, environmentalists, social scientists, donors and NGO leaders around the world acknowledge the need for people's participation in the conservation and development of public forest lands. That local people should have a greater role in the management decision making is the emerging consensus which bridges national boundaries and political blocs. A recent participant in the FAO e-mail conference stated: "The whole notion of joint forest management, which has swept through India and revolutionized the way people think about forests, and is now spreading to Africa, was unthinkable 15 years ago."

The sustainability of the new system can be meaningfully assessed only when it has been properly installed. Nations opting for community participation across the world are now busy developing processes that facilitate the transitions in policies and operations. The country case studies conducted by ICUN recently clearly demonstrate that management transitions tend to follow a limited number of patterns. And that with growing resource constraints, even developed nations will have to opt for collaborative management.

Changes in the organizational structure to effect the transition

An organization can function optimally, when both its structure and system are effective. The deficiencies in the system have been identified and ways to remove them have been discussed at length in the foregoing paragraphs. It is now necessary to examine what structural changes it should undergo in order to be fully effective as a delivery system vis-a-vis its new management objectives. Currently, absence of any strategic focus and vision has led to a sense of lack of purpose and consequently loss of morale among the large number of trained and professional manpower. The department has been reduced to a mere channel for flow of funds and resources and a vehicle for carrying out activities over whose impact it has no control. The staff infrastructure for the forestry sector was conceived at a time when colonial power was reigning supreme. With independence a process of democratization began which was marked by a steady erosion of respect for authority in tune with prevailing political tenor. The staff infrastructure that was deemed adequate was now found to be grossly inadequate to contain the onslaught on forests. With the adoption of JFM, while the pressure of policing has reduced, there has been a steep rise in supervision duties. So a structural reorganization should be undertaken keeping in view three factors:

1. The management problem that will arise when thousands of VPCs/FPCs will have been actually formed.
2. The forestry is no longer the exclusive preserve of the forest department. There is an increasing number of stakeholders, who have interest in forestry and also have the ability to influence government policies and decisions. Forest department has to co-opt these stakeholders and work in partnership with them.
3. The forest today and in future cannot be managed without the active participation of the people who are actually dependent on the forests.

The major thrust of the reorganization should be to enhance the capability of the organization to achieve its goals by effective implementation of the new strategies. The exercise should not degenerate into one which only promotes the career advancement, upgrading of posts and opportunities for personal gains.

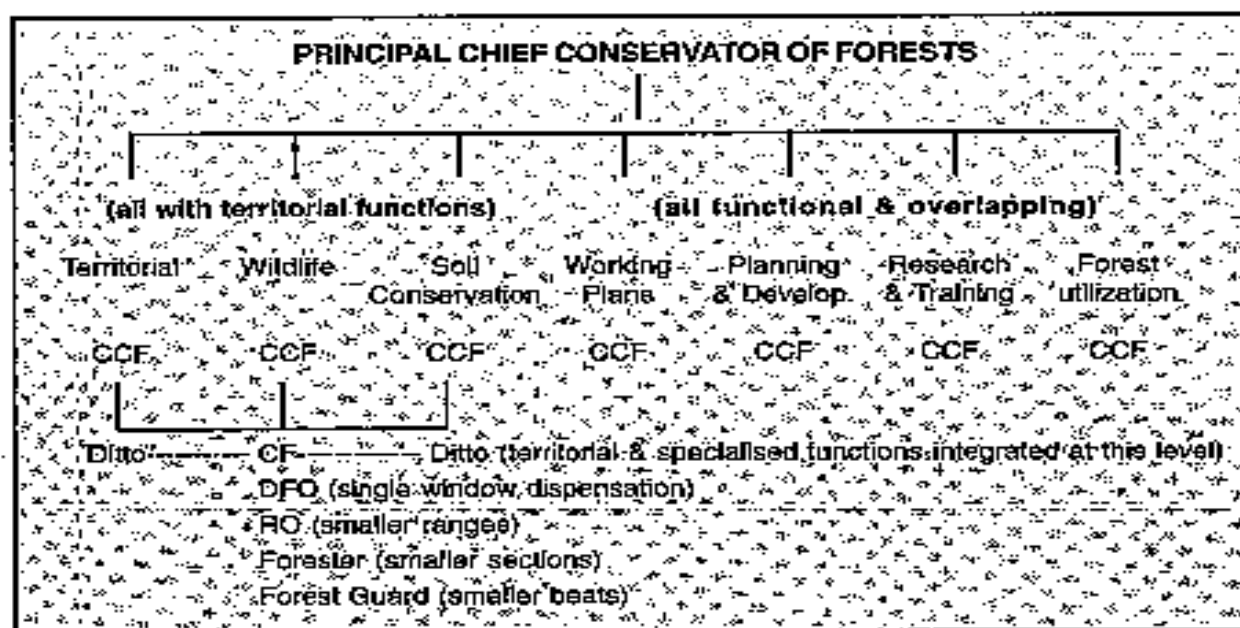
In West Bengal, over 3000 FPCs have already been formed and most of these are functioning. The number of FPCs in a beat varies from 1 to 30. Frequent and effective interaction between staff at the interface level and FPC members is the

key to sustain JFM. This obviously necessitates breaking down range and beat areas into smaller units. As a follow up action, size of the divisions and circles may have to be reduced. These steps may necessitate extra hands. Another point is that village communities will benefit by a single window dispensation. The existing large scale overlapping of functions have led to role conflicts, larger resource requirement and diverse approach to the same beneficiary groups.

All these call for a reorganization of the department for optimal use of human resources. Such reorganization would involve reduction of overlap, rationalization of workload, re-deployment of staff and a single window dispensation at the interface between the department and the community.

A comprehensive reorganization exercise of this nature will have to reckon with two basic issues. These are: integration vis-a-vis specialization, and status vis-a-vis needs. It is admitted that some amount of specialization is a must if forestry has to flourish as a science. Outside India, forestry science has been making rapid advances resulting in productivity. Similarly, wildlife preservation in the face of competing demands on forests and a burgeoning population needs very specialized handling.

Soil conservation is another area which needs to be carefully developed through skilled implementation of appropriate schemes. Research and planning is another area which provides vital support services that can take forestry forward. Social forestry wing normally functions outside forest areas. Thus it would be seen, each wing has a specific role to play. While it is clear that research and planning have to be left alone, in others overlap reduction may have to be considered case by case. Such an exercise may aim at retention of the functional character of the unit while still loading it with territorial functions. This may not necessarily lead to a reduction of the existing jurisdiction and thus avoid the ego tussle which is very real. The picture after the proposed reorganization will be more or less like this:



Despite a most comprehensive reorganization, it is felt the tasks involved in effective management of the forests with the people cannot be accomplished by the forest department alone. The non-governmental organization has a significant role to play. In recent years, the NGOs have contributed towards the growth of JFM in a number of ways. But looking at their number and strength, it is felt, their actual contribution has been way below the potential. This is despite the fact that some of the NGOs have developed specializations and quite a few of them have highly qualified and dedicated workers. Full realization of the NGO potential would have gone a long way to strengthen JFM in India. The basic problem here has been a lack of trust between the forest bureaucracy and the NGOs. Although at the policy level NGO role is lauded everywhere, in practice, the required degree of collaboration is seldom evident. New policies require new institutional frameworks and partnerships including active collaboration between NGOs and FD. In some States, working groups have been formed for implementation of JFM with NGOs as members.

Staff orientation

Administrative and structural changes alone will not help foresters perform their new roles effectively: staff need to develop a positive attitude and acquire relevant skills. In the absence of proper orientation, the foresters' mind, which is obsessed with policing for conservation, is unlikely to respond positively to this new paradigm of management. Conventional forest management which is dependent on custodial policing is more than 100 years old. This has been pursued throughout the country with dogged persistence, despite reverses. The strong motivation towards this was built up through a process of rigorous training at the forestry institutes as well as by strict enforcement of discipline later in service by senior officers. The shift towards JFM, therefore, constitutes a major change for most foresters who might legitimately feel a sense of insecurity.

A support system at the highest policy level is, therefore, very necessary. Thus motivation should preferably begin at the top with the concerned minister and the principal chief conservator along with other senior officers. It may not always be necessary to have formal orientation course for them. In-house informal discussions could as well bring about the necessary motivation. Senior foresters once motivated transmit the desired zeal to their subordinates.

In 1988, National Forest Policy clearly envisaged people's participation in the management of forests on the strength of which to-date as many as 18 States have come up with JFM notifications. Despite this, only 2 per cent of forest lands is actively protected by community groups; and adoption of JFM has been painfully slow. A significantly large number of foresters still believe that large-scale adoption of JFM as a management strategy is fraught with grave risks and may eventually lead to destruction of forests (i.e. their focus is still on forests and not on people). They often contend that the JFM notifications have been issued only for degraded

forests, hence the so-called 'good' forests should not be brought under JFM purview. Degraded forests have not been clearly defined anywhere. This policy issue is still being treated as open and debated at all levels. It seems that till such time as the inevitability of the new system is recognized, implementation of JFM will largely remain a matter of personal choice. Therefore, the first step in the transition from traditional forest management to JFM would be to ensure that senior officers in State forest departments are committed to the implementation of the policies laid down both by the central and the State governments. To change the mind-set, one has to develop a concern for the environment, for the people in and around the forests, for the employees who will be actually at the interface, and a willingness to cooperate with other departments and agencies. People at the top must discourage all concerned from criticising accepted goals, targets, norms and decisions, and they should be encouraged to express appreciation, support and contribution from juniors as well as peers.

To implement JFM successfully, all categories of executive staff will have to function as good resource managers. The preparation and implementation of microplans will necessitate extended capability on the part of foresters as it will eventually be a single window dispensation and, therefore, their major responsibility.

Unlike the current mode of functioning, foresters may be called upon to handle many new areas to which they might not have been exposed during their forestry training. These new areas may be social forestry, non-timber forest products, horticulture, sericulture, lac cultivation, mushroom cultivation, bee-keeping, conflict management, use of participatory tools, a shift of power from FD to its sharing jointly with FD and local people.

All these require significant changes in attitudes, skills, systems and structures. If any one of these elements is missing, the change will not be sustained and the policy will fail.

Summary of recommendations

The transition from Traditional Forest Management to JFM involves intervention in many areas as discussed above. Evidence in the field suggests that JFM is the only option left to save the country's forests. The various steps discussed in the foregoing paragraphs may help effect this major shift in the management paradigm. The change is process-oriented and has to be gradual. It has to be cost-effective also. The recommendations made here are premised on the fact that most of these can be effected by structural changes in the Forest Departments.

- a. The Forest Department has to take up a process of democratization and decentralization. The rigid hierarchical structure has to be made flexible through a process of training and orientation. Discipline should not come in the way of free exchange of ideas and innovation. The flow of information and ideas should be two-way.

- b.* The planning should be bottom up instead of top down as at present.
- c.* There should be optimal utilization of manpower through a process of re-allocation of duties and responsibilities and devolution of power.
- d.* A committed leadership is an absolutely vital element in the change process. Perhaps the only way to generate this is through rigorous selection at different levels with meritocracy stressed at each level.
- e.* Lack of transparency and accountability will breed corruption. This will seriously undermine all endeavours towards installation of a collaborative management. It is only through an institutional mechanism establishing transparency that corruption can be controlled.
- f.* Implementation of JFM will need continuous fund flow both for project as well as non-project expenditure.
- g.* Since community forestry is being practised in many developing countries in varying forms and with different degrees of success, the experience gained may guide the steps to be initiated here in the long run.
- h.* A baseline study is required to identify the tools for monitoring the transition from State to community management.
- i.* The analysis and interpretation of indicators and other data should be integrated into information useful for management decisions.
- j.* Benchmarking may be used as a management tool to improve performance.
- k.* The structural changes in the forest management systems would include:
 - a ban on clearfelling of natural forests and renewal of degraded forests through people's participation.
 - meeting the subsistence needs of forest dependent communities.
 - shifting management emphasis from timber to non-timber forest products and consequent changes in the silvicultural systems.
 - reorientation of research and training to make them supportive of the new management system.
- l.* identifying a clear role for the NGOs to enable them to contribute their mite in the change process.
- m.* the monopolistic government control should slowly give way to community control.

- n. a broad review of the order nationalizing NTFPs.
- o. recognizing that even after the introduction of JFM protection remains a joint venture.
- p. The management of forests in the revised set up may include among other things :
 - actual sharing of power with people
 - shifting of emphasis from high cost plantation forestry to low cost renewal of degraded natural forests
 - establishment of M.I.S. (Information)
 - establishment of M.I.S. (Marketing)
- q. For long-term sustenance it is necessary to build up a development fund for continuity in forestry activities in the forest department and a revolving fund in the FPCs.
- r. In India, the legislation overrules the policy though it should be the other way round. Acts militating against policy should be amended. The customary rights and potential rights should be accommodated within the legal framework.
- s. Effecting changes in systems alone will not make the department function optimally. Some structural changes in the organization would also be necessary to achieve this. The major thrust of such an exercise should be to enhance the capability of the organization to achieve the goal by effective implementation of the new strategy. The process may involve reduction of overlap, rationalization of workload and single window dispensation.
- t. A proper orientation is the sine qua non of success in this bid. This may begin at the top to provide a support system. The debates on policy issues should be set at rest. People at the top should discourage all concerned from criticizing accepted goals, targets, norms and decisions and they should be encouraged to express appreciation.

A comparison of the forest management strategies is given below in a bid to understand how forestry may change in the 21st century in response to wider societal pressures. These relate to management strategies now adopted and the switch to JFM.

Issues	Management as per working plans	Management scheme based	Management client focused
Policy objectives	Maximum sustainable yield/revenue	Employment generation asset creation	Meet local needs to conserve forests
Type of objective	Single objective	Parallel objectives	multiple objectives
Clients	Industries, Defence, Govt. Departments	Labour, Society	Local people
Role of FD	Policing, Management	Execution	Collaboration, creation of FPCs, technical advice, sharing power and usufructs
Unit of Planning	Division, site specific	Scheme, area specific	FPC site specific
Source of information Objectives Data	Top down site specific	Top down Broadly area specific	client specific site specific
Management focus	Maximization of yield	Maximization of benefit	Total Quality (Relevance and fit)
Responsibility	FD alone	FD and Panchayats	FPC NGO Front-line staff

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Structural Changes in Forest Departments

Forestry practices by the forest department of various states till a decade ago was the same that was introduced by the British more than 100 years ago. It considered local people as biotic interference and the existence of other stakeholders apart from the state was virtually unknown. The customary user-rights of the people were considered a burden on the forests and the gender and equity issues were irrelevant in such a situation. Though a beginning towards JFM was made in the early 1970s, it failed in most of the states as the authorities were unresponsive to the people's needs. However, the adoption of the 1988 Forest Policy gave a big boost to the foresters' efforts.

However, for JFM to be really successful at the grassroots level, certain elements of the existing management system have to be modified and in some cases new norms have to be evolved. It will also necessitate an overhaul of the budgeting system, fund allocation, decentralisation and devolution of power.

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