This article analyses the working of Joint Forest Management and Community Forest Management in Orissa with a view to understand the incentive and disincentive mechanisms available in these institutions and how these influence the protection of forests and the livelihood of forest dwellers.

During the past two decades, extensive policy reforms have transformed the institutional conditions for natural resource governance in many developing countries. This has led to changes in institutional development that seek to incorporate participation and involvement of local communities in deciding the use of natural resources and their development. It has been argued that community-based institutional systems are superior to state-controlled systems, when it comes to managing natural resources (Baland and Platteau 1996; Ostrom 1990). At the same time, state sanction of community management institutions has been identified as one of the empirical realities behind successful and enduring community action in the management of commons (Agrawal 2001). The reasoning is that with the state legitimising the rules framed by communities, there is less likelihood of rule violation by the excluded communities. On the other side, the state can also play a disruptive role vis-à-vis local community management institutions (Mishra 2008).

The forest management principle in India including in Orissa has been evolving from a regulatory framework to a participatory form in recent years. With the introduction of Joint Forest Management (JFM) in the 1990s, a policy shift took place in the approach of the forest-related bureaucracy of the government towards the forest dwelling communities. It changed the expectations as well as the relationship between the communities and the forest department. But prior to that, community-initiated forest management had emerged spontaneously in different regions of Orissa in order to fight degradation of forests and shrinkage of livelihood options of forest dwellers.

This article analyses the working of the forest protection institutions, namely Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Community Forest Management (CFM) in the context of Orissa with a view to understand the incentive and disincentive mechanisms available in these institutions and how these influence the protection and growth of forests and the livelihood of forest dwellers.

Participatory Forest Management
Self-initiated forest protection communities (FPCS) took the Participatory Forest Management (PFM) initiative well before the forest department. The PFM approach, in its present form, i.e., JFM came as an outcome of the National Forest Policy 1988, during the year 1993 in Orissa. Theoretically, JFM resolution looked upon the local communities as equal partners with the forest department for protection and management of forests, and it is a more progressive resolution in comparison to the earlier policies. The period following 1993 witnessed the formation of Van Samaraksan Samiti (VSS), one of the main activities of the forest department, in different areas of the state. A close look at the JFM trend in the state reveals a sudden increase in the number of vss during the late 1990s. To grant legal recognition to the protection efforts, the then government made a commitment to constitute VSS in many of the forest protecting villages. In order to achieve the target, the forest department even took initiative to persuade certain self-initiated forest protection communities to convert into vss. As a result, 9,813 vss had been formed by the end of September 2006. These vss have been protecting 8,953.87 sq km of forest area in the state (Government of Orissa 2007).

As mentioned earlier, self-initiated FPCS took the initiative during the 1960s. It has been estimated that about 10,000 self-initiated FPCS have been functioning in the state. These groups are also protecting the forest within their village boundaries, of course, with or without the support of the forest department. However, many of the JFM and CFM committees are dormant in the sense that the committees have been formed, but they are not active in protection or management of forests.

About 29,000 villages have forest as recorded land. The number of FPCS, both JFM and CFM constitute about 19,000.
villages. This constitutes about 65% of the villages with forest.

**Forest Development Agency**

The Forest Development Agency (FDA) scheme was launched in 2002-03 by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MOEF) to implement the National Afforestation Programme (NAP) during the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2002-03 to 2006-07). It has been formulated by merging four centrally sponsored afforestation schemes of the MOEF. The National Afforestation and Eco-Development Board (NAEB) of the MOEF is in charge of the operation of this 100% centrally-sponsored scheme and its tenure has been fixed till the end of the Tenth Five-Year Plan period. With the introduction of the FDA scheme during the year 2002-03, a renewed drive for the formation of VSSs was started by the forest department in the state.

FDA was formulated for the regeneration of the depleted forests. However, the objective of FDA formation has not been achieved significantly. Up to 2006-07, only 1,565 VSSs (constituting 16% of the total vss) have been covered under FDA. These vss are protecting 55,000 hectares of forest area, which constituted about 6.15% of the total forest area protected by all the vss in the state during this period. Clearly, very few vss have been included under FDA. Also the selection of vss under it is often based on subjective judgments of the forest department officials. The structure of general body and executive body is designed to favour the government officials, who control the decision-making of the FDA. Active participation by VSS representatives is rarely found. Major decisions are taken by the forest department officials.

Though some developmental works have been undertaken at the entry point of NAP, transparency has not been maintained in the use of funds. Further, activities are selected mainly by the forest official and the president. The performance of FDA has not been satisfactory and participatory (Sarap 2007).

Though FDA has provided a few days of employment to the poorer sections of the society, it has left out communities depending on timber, fuel wood, bamboo and charcoal trade for their livelihood. It has left out problems like encroachments, salinity, desertification, vulnerability of members, etc. In some vss, plantation has been done without a micro plan. Moreover, selection of species of plants is in favour of commercial rather than mixed variety of species, which support livelihood of forest dwellers through use and sale of non-timber forest produce (NTFP). Cooperation between the villagers and the forest officials has not been encouraging (RCD 2004).

The FDA scheme has further created a rift between those villages which receive FDA assistance and those which do not, as forest officials concentrate their resources and time more on FDA-assisted villages than on non-FDA villages. This acts as an incentive for many CFM groups to convert the CFM into VSS in order to get financial help from the scheme. Considering the need for enhancing the livelihood options of the people living in and around forests and rejuvenating degraded forests, the state government...
has launched the Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project (ORSFP) with financial help from the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC). Its goals will be realised by promoting sustainable forest management through the JFM and community/tribal development. It is a seven-year project (2006-07 to 2012-13), and has been implemented in 14 forest and wildlife divisions covering 10 hinterland districts of the state. The first year of the project was devoted to preparatory work and entry point activities in some of the villages with a view to form forest protection committees.

Problems with PFM

Even though local forest institutions have been working in the state for the last several years, they are besieged with a number of problems in their functioning (see Sarkar 2008 for experience in other areas). Some of the problems are as follows:

Benefit Sharing: The 1993 resolution of JFM by the government of Orissa provides for 50% share in the profit earned from sale of timber (final harvest) and a 100% share of intermediate produce to the VSS members. There is a feeling in the community that 50% of the benefits are taken away from it. As such there is a problem of incentive for hard work faced by members of the PFM. In future, benefit sharing may become a cause for resentments and conflicts among the VSS communities and the forest department.

Tenure Security: Under the existing JFM framework, villagers hardly have any secure rights over the forests. As such the incentive to the members to ensure the growth of forest products on a long-term basis is minimal. Even today the forest department is the senior partner in the control of forests and systems of management.

Conflicts: Conflicts of various kinds, including intra-village and inter-village are found in the forest area. For instance, Sarap (2007) has found several types of conflicts present in his study villages located in Bolangir, Sambalpur and Phulbani districts of Orissa. These conflicts arise over products, sharing benefits, usufruct rights, illegal felling, forest boundaries and forest mafias. Mining, mostly located in forest areas, has led to conflict between forest-fringe communities and mining lease-holders. The VSS or the CFM institutions are unable to resolve such conflicts and even when resolved, it is temporary in nature and occurs again after a point of time due to lack of their legal authority. The recent industrialisation policies in the state, where mining-based industries form a significant component and are generally located in forest areas, have aggravated the conflicts between the forest-dependent communities and mining lease holders significantly due to displacement of local people from the forest area. As the traditional livelihood options of local people are affected because of this policy, the conflict has become recurrent (Mishra 1998).

Issues in Equity: It has been found that poorer members in the group, whether in JFM or CFM, are unable to realise fully the benefits accruing from the forest protection. The participation of women is also
weak. In some cases, groups dependent on their traditional activities such as bamboo work, find it difficult to get benefits because the JFM executive committee prohibits utilisation of bamboo for certain years. Such situations lead to exclusion of many poor from benefit sharing.

The PFM in the state as an institution is weak, which reflects the weakness of the Orissa forest department as well as of the FPCS. The JFM committee has been formed on the basis of an administrative order of the MOEF. There has been a lack of proper participatory process, either at the outset or post-formation: local people’s participation in the preparation of the “micro-plan” is generally marginal, as the forester experts major control over this. In the vss executive committee and general body meetings, important decisions are taken by elites, including the forester (who is the secretary). Self-initiated groups were found to be relatively more participatory than the vss, although few women are involved in either type of management (JFM or CFM) (Sarap 2007).

These forest management systems were meant to include and empower the community, but the nature of empowerment remained very limited (Saxena 2003). JFM has been in the state for more than a decade, but the progress in terms of institutional development as well as impact on the livelihood of local people has been weak. CFM groups who have been converted into JFM groups find the vss institution uncomfortable since it tends to erode the decision-making authority at the community level. It also disregards the traditional knowledge system of the community and instead has introduced a situation where the forest department plays an important role in decision-making relating to forest protection and development including choice of species for plantation.

**Impact on Livelihoods**

A number of factors influence the livelihood of forest dependent communities including the size and quality of the forest, access to forest produce and reasonable income derived by households from such produce from value addition and selling it at reasonable prices. Proper working of institutions encourages the actual users to utilise, safeguard and develop the resources properly. However, malfunctioning of institutions and unfavourable government policies affect the livelihood of local population adversely.

In the absence of adequate resource endowments such as land, human capital and access to the service sector, forests play a crucial role in the livelihood strategies of many rural households in Orissa. Beyond subsistence, fuelwood and fodder collection, there is a wide range of forest products which households depend on, particularly for consumption and income in the lean season. Similarly, NTFP is a major source of employment for the majority of the poor households and more so among women belonging to tribals. Several studies have highlighted significant dependence of the poor on forests as a source of income. In the tribal districts, the dependence of poor on forests is much higher in comparison with the poor in other areas. Women play an important role in the collection of NTFP (Khare and Rao 1993; Mallik 2000; Sarap 2007). Further, NTFP collection works as an assurance against starvation and hunger for the poorest groups during the lean season. But absolute income from the forest is low and below the poverty line income for these groups. The NTFP trade is besieged with a number of problems and hence the forest dwelling communities are unable to realise reasonable prices while exchanging their products.

**Problems with NTFP Trade**

The NTFP policy in the state has been repressive in comparison with policies of other neighbouring states. Up to the late 1990s, most of the marketable items (28 items) were leased out to private traders. The marketing structure for the sale of NTFP is exploitative to the sellers, because they are mostly illiterate and resource poor, and have to deal with powerful middlemen and buyers, who are generally traders/moneylenders.

Interlocking of credit and output markets force the gatherers to sell their produce to the moneylenders at predetermined prices. Further, pressing needs to generate cash and the limited surplus of forest products erode their bargaining capacity and makes them more vulnerable to exploitation. Even the price realised by selling of nationalised forest products such as kedu leaves is very low. Often the sellers do not receive the price in time. Another reason for low prices for the produce is the lack of value addition at the village level. For instance, the sale of cups and plates made of sal/siali leaves could be done through a low priced machine (rather than the current practice of handmade, machine stitched products) which could have fetched a better price to the sellers. There is hardly any effort by the forest department or NGOs in such value addition.

Due to concerted efforts by the civil society, the state NTFP policy was changed in March 2000. The new NTFP policy seeks to give primacy to welfare of forest-dependent poor over revenue objectives of the state. It also seeks to deregulate NTFP trade and encourages competition for NTFP procurement by conferring rights over 68 NTFP items to the gram panchayat as opposed to the earlier policies of monopoly leasing.

But the panchayati raj institution at the local level is weak and has no capacity to deal with NTFP trade. In reality its role has been marginal. In operational terms, now the traders who want to operate in any area have to register with the respective panchayat and pay a fee fixed by a district level committee. Overall the panchayats have been provided with the responsibility and authority of managing non-nationalised NTFP, but lack the capacity (both in terms of manpower and funds) to exercise these powers, and in many cases they are not aware of their powers. As such, the recent changes in the policies of NTFPs are yet to improve the livelihood condition of the forest dwellers.

**Conclusions**

The forest institutions, whether JFM or FDA, are characterised by inefficiency, inequality in access and exclusion of certain groups in the state. There is a lack of participation of the poor and women. There is a need to revitalise these institutions through their democratisation by effective participation of different groups in the decision-making. This will empower them in their access to forest resources, and enhance their livelihood options. This would also help in the management of various types of conflicts prevailing in forest-dependent villages.
Provision of tenure security through proper implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 to forest-dependent communities will go a long way in motivating the members for a long-term interest in their involvement in the protection and growth of natural resources. Promotion of mixed species in plantation activities, value addition and enterprise development, improvement of marketing networks through public and semi-public institutions and increased investment in forestry sector especially in value addition related activities would go a long way in raising their level of income.

On the whole, the PFM should be viewed as a comprehensive process focusing on the development of institutional dimensions such as provision of legal status to the FPCS, decentralisation and devolution of power to forest dwellers to raise efficiency in the working of the PFM and bringing about equity and economic sustainability among them.

**Note**

1. Integrated Afforestation and Eco-Development Projects scheme, Area Oriented Fuel Wood and Fodder Projects scheme, Development of Non-Timber Forest Produce including Medicinal Plants Scheme and Association of Scheduled Tribes and Rural poor in regeneration of degraded forests.

**References**


