

Problems and constraints Faced by Local Community under Joint Forest Management (JFM) in Rewa Forest Division Madhya Pradesh

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Abstract

Present investigation entitled "Role of People's Participation for Increasing Forest Area in Forest Division Rewa, Madhya Pradesh" was carried out in forest division of Rewa district of M.P. A multistage random sampling technique was used in 24 out of 215 JFMCs for the present study after consultation with forest department. The data on different aspects like socio-economic, the detailed information concerning the works done by the JFMCs and the problems faced by the households were collected for the analysis and drawing the results. The average family size at overall level comprises of 6.73 persons per household. On an average, the family size ranged from 5.20 to 8.20 persons in different forest divisions. The highest sex ratio of 986 females over one thousand males was found in Atraila Range and lowest of 886 in Semariya Range. Socio-economic indicators revealed that the composition of families related to joint and nuclear families were 54.09 per cent and 45.91 per cent respectively. Joint Forest Management is operational in all the 29 states of the country, managing 22.94 million ha (29.80 %) of the total recorded forest area through JFMCs. Madhya Pradesh had 15228 JFMCs till 2017 covering the area of 6.68 million ha which accounts to 70.62 per cent of the total area under the forest. The families of general caste constitutes the major portion of the population (72.24 %) that are included in the JFMCs followed by the scheduled caste (24.71%) and the scheduled tribe families (3.05%). The major problems faced by the households were Insufficient financial backing for micro planning, Inadequate emphasis on attitude and behavior change, Lack of incentives for village leadership, Operational clash between agriculture and JFM activities, Neglect of social factors, Insufficient focus on quick economic activities, Governmental Regulations and JFMC Sustainability, Inadequate Employment Opportunities and Delay in Payments are most common.

Keywords: JFM, Rewa Forest division, socio-economic, problems faced

Introduction

India's forests stand as a vital natural asset, playing a pivotal role in the progress of human civilization. Those residing on the fringes of these wooded expanses rely extensively on them for an array of resources and services. These encompass a diverse range of offerings such as wild edible fruits, flowers, tubers, roots, and leaves for sustenance and medicinal purposes, as well as provisions like firewood, timber for constructing agricultural tools, houses, and fences, fodder for livestock, and the ability to graze animals within the forest. Additionally, these areas contribute to the collection of marketable non-timber forest

products. The forests face various human-induced pressures, including overgrazing, shifting cultivation, susceptibility to forest fires, and free riding (World Bank, 2006; Bahuguna and Upadhyay, 2002). Many of these factors are directly tied to the livelihoods of communities dependent on the forest. According to the National Forest Policy of 1988, involving local communities living in and around forest areas is crucial for both conservation and development.

In translating this policy into tangible action, the Government of India has issued explicit guidelines delineating the development and management strategies for degraded forest land. These initiatives are

orchestrated under the purview of State Forest Departments (SFDs), working in collaboration with local communities and voluntary organizations. The blueprint for such endeavors aligns with the overarching framework of Joint Forest Management (JFM), as outlined in the guidelines. States, in turn, have crafted their resolutions and strategies to implement and advance the principles laid out in JFM. In the intricate landscape of environmental management and social movements, Joint Forest Management emerges as a linchpin in driving economic development within marginalized communities and fostering social upliftment. Simultaneously, it serves as a bastion for forest conservation and the promotion of sustainable development. At its core, this initiative recognizes the inherent interdependence between nature and humanity, opening avenues for economic advancement for marginalized tribes, forest dwellers, and peasants residing within or on the fringes of forests through targeted, small-scale financing mechanisms.

The impact of Joint Forest Management is particularly pronounced at the micro-level, where the concerted efforts of Joint Forest Management Committees, comprising both men and women, have catalyzed a broadened social sphere. By integrating disadvantaged groups into the mainstream of economic and environmental progress, these committees have become instrumental in fostering grassroots-level development. The micro-level economic and environmental growth fostered by Joint Forest Management constitutes an integral aspect of national development. This article posits that the potential of Joint Forest Management to drive economic and sustainable development can be significantly amplified when accompanied by well-considered socio-political and environmental initiatives. By positioning the program within the broader spectrum of a socio-environmental movement, Joint Forest Management can transcend its current role and emerge as a potent force for transformative change. This perspective is underscored by Ghosh (2020), who argues for an expanded vision of Joint Forest Management, recognizing its potential to serve as a catalyst for socio-environmental progress.

Madhya Pradesh, even post its division, stands as the Indian state with the highest forest area, constituting a remarkable 12% of the country's total forested expanse. A significant 30.72% of the state's total land area is occupied by forest lands, further emphasizing its pivotal role in the state's ecological

makeup. The forest cover extends to 25.2% of the state's area, and when considering scrub forests and tree cover beyond designated forest areas, this ratio escalates to an impressive 29.5%. The forests in Madhya Pradesh play a crucial role owing to their rich biodiversity, acting as vital carbon sinks and possessing the capacity to absorb substantial amounts of carbon. Additionally, these wooded expanses serve as catchment areas for numerous important rivers that extend beyond the state's borders. Consequently, Madhya Pradesh's forests contribute significantly to maintaining environmental and ecological equilibrium while actively participating in water conservation efforts on a national scale.

The Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) component within the Madhya Pradesh Forestry Project exemplifies how programs focusing on degraded forest areas can simultaneously ensure conservation of flora and fauna while fostering stability in agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, and local cottage industries. This holistic approach contributes to comprehensive economic development (Bhatia, 2000). Recognizing the importance of community-led conservation and management activities prompts a critical question: are all communities equally equipped for sustainable resource management? This study seeks to address this query by examining the status and impact of community-based forest resource management under JFM in the state of Madhya Pradesh. Given that more than two decades have passed since the initiation of participatory forest management programs, it becomes commendable to assess their current status, impact on the socio-economic status of rural communities, employment generation, poverty alleviation, sustainable forest development, and their overall interaction with the forests. The study aims to investigate the reasons behind the perceived failure of forestry programs to attract widespread community participation, providing insights into areas that may need improvement or adaptation for a more effective and inclusive implementation of JFM initiatives. The study has been attempted to explain the contested role of group heterogeneity in local level collective action for research dependency and management outcomes. The research on the above points has a great significance particularly in the context of global paradigm shift in the approaches toward development, democratization and resource management. The study has also identified the problems faced by the forest department and the local people thereby suggesting the suitable

measures to make this approach more effective. The findings of the study would reaffirm the capabilities of local communities in playing a positive role in local resource management, and thereby paving a way for their own empowerment and development. The result of the study will prove useful for the field level functionaries, administrators, policy makers and village level institutions engaged in the motivation of the people to work in collective manner for the sake of forestry development in the state.

Materials and Methods

A robust and methodical approach is essential for scientific investigations, with the precision, reliability, validity, and acceptability of facts and findings contingent on the chosen methodology. A multistage random sampling technique was employed to determine the final sample. In the first stage, approximately 10% of JFMCs, totaling 24 out of 215, were chosen for the study following discussions with forest department and NAEB officials. Subsequently, in the second stage, three functional JFMCs were randomly selected from each chosen Joint Forest Management Committee. Furthermore, a minimum of 10 respondents were randomly chosen from each selected JFMC, resulting in a total of 331 respondents from the 24 selected JFMCs. Additionally, nearly 20% of the total office bearers of JFMCs were also included in the survey. Primary data for the present study was collected through personal survey method on a specially structured and pretested survey schedule. The survey schedules for the households and JFMC executive committee members were used for the collection of data. The data on different aspects like socio-economic, the detailed information concerning the works done by the JFMCs and the problems faced by the households were collected for the analysis and drawing the results. The list of studied Selected FDAs and JFMCs has been presented in Table 3.1

Results and Discussion

JFM like other programmes is also facing problems in application, which needs to be addressed so that people involve themselves in the project and accept it as their own. Hence, the situation was accessed in the JFMCs. For the better participation and ensure the viability of the project for the higher practicable utility, these parameters needed to be resolved. The problems in JFM program were identified, analyzed and discussed. The problems faced by households have been presented in Table 2.

Insufficient financial backing for micro planning

The completion of the project is hampered primarily by budgetary limitations. During the planning and formulation phase, all financial resources were allocated for each Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) activity. However, the deficiency in adequate financial support from the government poses a threat to the success of participatory forest management. Integration of micro plans with the Forest Department's budgetary system is imperative for achieving success. Division-wise, this challenge is most pronounced in Dabhaura (69.88%), followed by Hanumna (68.94%), Sirmor (67.45%), and least observed in Semariya (28.41%). Within Dabhaura division, JFMC Pati faces the maximum problem (73.28%), followed by Khara (72.73%) and Remari (63.64%). Overall, the issue of lacking budgetary support for micro plans is identified in 57.09% of the study areas (Table 4.32).

Inadequate emphasis on attitude and behavior change

The participatory management program requires a shift in attitudes and behaviors among various stakeholders. Insufficient coordination and cooperation between local communities and the Forest Department lead to reduced participation. Addressing this issue necessitates enhancing organizational capabilities and skills among locals through a comprehensive human resource development program. Division-wise data reveals maximum concerns in Chakghat (53.10%), followed by Atraila (53.03%), Hanumna (49.76%), and a minimum in Semariya (25.84%). In Chakghat division, JFMC Dhakhara encounters the most significant problem (70.00%), followed by Kot (49.31%) and Mahewa (40.00%). Overall, the problem of inadequate focus on changing attitude and behavior is identified in 41.77% of the study areas.

Lack of incentives for village leadership

Respondents report that the lack of incentives, in the form of direct benefits, hampers the initiatives of local leadership. Fears persist among local leaders regarding the responsibilities assigned to them. Division-wise analysis highlights maximum concerns in Rewa (76.63%), followed by Mauganj (59.39%), Atraila (59.19%), and minimum in Semariya (50.81%). In Rewa division, JFMC Basa faces the most significant problem (78.57%), followed by Etar-Pahad (76.32%) and Tikar (75.00%). In Mauganj division, JFMC Uchehra encounters the most significant problem (72.73%), followed by Gadhava (60.00%) and Bhela (45.45%). Overall, the issue of

lacking incentives for village leadership is identified in 58.85% of the study areas.

Operational clash between agriculture and JFM activities

The overlap of plantation work during the rainy season, with peak agricultural operations, results in low participation in project implementation. This issue is most prevalent in Atraila (76.00%), followed by Dabhaura (75.85%), Mauganj (74.85%), and least in Hanumna (52.12%). In Atraila division, JFMC Curaili encounters the most significant problem (81.82%), followed by Latar (75.00%) and Shivpur (72.73%). Overall, the problem of clash between agriculture and JFM activities is identified in 68.49% of the study areas.

Neglect of social factors

Social construction factors demand more attention in the Joint Forest Management (JFM) program. Foresters often prioritize technical and biophysical aspects, neglecting social and political relations. There is a lack of efforts directed at intra-group connections, strengthening social harmony, and developing procedures to overcome conflict and deviant behavior. Division-wise analysis indicates maximum concerns in Chakghat (67.05%), followed by Dabhaura (56.75%), Atraila (56.06%), and a minimum in Sirmor (25.02%). Overall, the failure to address social factors is identified in 49.25% of the study areas.

Insufficient focus on quick economic activities

The majority of households owning uneconomic holdings live in poverty, and their interest lies in early gains from development activities. The lack of emphasis on income-generating activities hampers people's interest and participation in the partnership program. JFMC members lack training intervention, and poor follow-up by the Forest Department are major hurdles. Division-wise, this problem is most reported in Sirmor (89.00%), followed by Semariya (74.09%), Hanumna (73.64%), and least in Rewa (52.55%). In Sirmor division, JFMC Sarai and Ghuma face the most significant problem (90.91%), followed by Etma (85.19%). In Semariya division, JFMC Mainha encounters the most significant problem (84.62%), followed by Katai (69.23%) and Purva (68.42%). Overall, the lack of emphasis on quick economic activities is identified in 67.09% of the areas under study.

Governmental Regulations and JFMC Sustainability

Government policies play a crucial role in shaping the perspectives of policymakers regarding

forests and asset-based livelihoods. It is essential to ensure that environmental regulations do not impede the growth of small-scale forest enterprises and management. Although Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) have been established statewide for forest management, there is a glaring lack of initiatives to fortify these committees. Financial support to these committees diminishes significantly a few years after their formation, leaving them to fend for themselves. The forest-dependent communities live in constant fear of eviction due to temporary rights, as they lack trust in the forest department's fairness. There is a pressing need to devise mechanisms for new plans that promote greater public awareness and participation. Achieving improved political commitment and institutional changes is imperative, but it requires a sustained and ongoing process. This issue is most pronounced in Dabhaura (71.63%), followed by Rewa (69.32%), Hanumna (58.48%), with the minimum observed in Semariya (42.31%). In Dabhaura division, JFMCs Remari and Khara face the most significant problem (72.73%), followed by Pati (69.42%). In Rewa division, JFMC Basa encounters the most significant problem (78.57%), followed by Etar-Pahad (71.05%) and Tikar (58.33%). Overall, the problem related to government policies is identified in 55.34% of the study areas.

Inadequate Employment Opportunities

The level of people's participation in any program is contingent on the employment opportunities it generates. However, a reduction in funding has diminished the program's capacity to create jobs. The weaker sections of society, dependent on employment for their livelihood, prioritize programs that offer job opportunities. Division-wise data highlights maximum concerns in Dabhaura (91.00%), followed by Sirmor (90.13%), Hanumna (87.27%), and the minimum in Mauganj (68.49%). In Dabhaura division, JFMC Khara reports the most significant problem (100.00%), followed by Pati (91.18%) and Remari (81.82%). In Sirmor division, JFMC Sarai faces the most significant problem (100.00%), followed by Etma (88.57%) and Ghuma (81.82%). Overall, the issue of insufficient employment-generating activities is observed in 80.72% of the study areas.

Delay in Payments

In some JFMCs, wages are not disbursed on time due to fund shortages, leading to a decline in people's trust in such programs. Delayed payments demotivate individuals from participating in activities

under Joint Forest Management (JFM). Division-wise results indicate that this problem is most prevalent in Rewa (52.46%), followed by Sirmor (48.49%), Semariya (44.87%), with the minimum in Mauganj (18.18%). In Rewa division, JFMC Tikar reports the most significant problem (83.33%), followed by Etar-Pahad (52.63%) and Basa (21.43%). In Sirmor division, JFMC Saari and Etma encounter the most significant problem (54.55%), followed by Ghuma (36.36%). Overall, the issue of payment delays is identified in 35.72% of the study areas.

Conclusion

The findings of present study concludes that the major problems faced by the households were Insufficient financial backing for micro planning, Inadequate emphasis on attitude and behavior change, Lack of incentives for village leadership, Operational clash between agriculture and JFM activities, Neglect of social factors, Insufficient focus on quick economic activities, Governmental Regulations and JFMC Sustainability, Inadequate Employment Opportunities and Delay in Payments are most common.

Table 3.1: List of the Selected FDAs and JFMCs

Ranges	JFMC's		
Rewa	Basa	Tikar	Itarpahad
Semariya	Katai	Mainha	Purva
Sirmor	Sarai	Ghuma	Etma
Atraila	Kuraili	Shivpur	Latar
Dabhora	Remari	Khara	Pati
Hanumna	Jhari	Lodhi	Bhati
Mauganj	Gadhava	Bhela	Uchehra
Chakghat	Kot	Dhakhara	Mahewa

Table 2: Problems Faced in JFM Program

Forest Ranges	JFMC	Lack of involvement of local institutions in micro plan	Lack of budgetary support to micro plan	Inadequate focus on changing attitude & behavior	Lack of incentives to the village leadership	Clash b/w agriculture & JFM activities	Failure to address the social factors	Lack of emphasis on quick economic activities	Government Policies	Lack of enough Employment Generating Activities	Delay in payments
Rewa	Basa	28.57	64.29	35.71	78.57	71.43	35.71	35.71	78.57	85.71	21.43
	Tikar	33.33	25.00	16.67	75.00	50.00	41.67	66.67	58.33	66.67	83.33
	Etar-Pahad	44.74	52.63	39.47	76.32	65.79	39.47	55.26	71.05	76.32	52.63
	Average	35.55	47.31	30.62	76.63	62.41	38.95	52.55	69.32	76.23	52.46
Semariya	Katai	23.08	30.77	23.08	61.54	76.92	38.46	69.23	46.15	76.92	69.23
	Mainha	38.46	30.77	30.77	46.15	69.23	53.85	84.62	30.77	69.23	15.38
	Purva	28.95	23.68	23.68	44.74	73.68	52.63	68.42	50.00	76.32	50.00
	Average	30.16	28.41	25.84	50.81	73.28	48.31	74.09	42.31	74.16	44.87
Sirmor	Sarai	9.09	54.55	36.36	63.64	81.82	18.18	90.91	45.45	100.00	54.55
	Ghuma	45.45	81.82	27.27	36.36	36.36	27.27	90.91	45.45	81.82	36.36
	Etma	34.81	65.97	30.65	60.78	67.53	29.61	85.19	42.60	88.57	54.55
	Average	29.78	67.45	31.43	53.59	61.90	25.02	89.00	44.50	90.13	48.49
Atraila	Kuraili	72.73	63.64	72.73	45.45	81.82	72.73	81.82	63.64	72.73	27.27
	Shivpur	36.36	63.64	36.36	72.73	72.73	45.45	36.36	36.36	72.73	27.27
	Latar	46.88	56.25	50.00	59.38	75.00	50.00	65.63	50.00	68.75	18.75
	Average	51.99	61.18	53.03	59.19	76.52	56.06	61.27	50.00	71.40	24.43
Dabhora	Remari	63.64	63.64	45.45	45.45	54.55	54.55	72.73	72.73	81.82	27.27

	Khara	27.27	72.73	27.27	72.73	100.00	54.55	45.45	72.73	100.00	27.27
	Pati	58.13	73.28	49.31	54.55	73.00	61.16	57.02	69.42	91.18	40.50
	Average	49.68	69.88	40.68	57.58	75.85	56.75	58.40	71.63	91.00	31.68
Hanumna	Jhari	60.00	50.00	40.00	60.00	70.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	90.00	30.00
	Lodhi	85.00	75.00	82.00	80.00	50.00	80.00	80.00	80.00	90.00	30.00
	Bhati	45.45	81.82	27.27	36.36	36.36	27.27	90.91	45.45	81.82	36.36
	Average	63.48	68.94	49.76	58.79	52.12	52.42	73.64	58.48	87.27	32.12
Mauganj	Gadhava	30.00	40.00	40.00	60.00	70.00	30.00	80.00	50.00	60.00	0.00
	Bhela	72.73	63.64	72.73	45.45	81.82	72.73	80.00	63.64	72.73	27.27
	Uchehra	36.36	63.64	36.36	72.73	72.73	45.45	36.36	36.36	72.73	27.27
	Average	46.36	55.76	49.70	59.39	74.85	49.39	65.45	50.00	68.49	18.18
Chakghat	Kot	58.13	73.28	49.31	54.55	73.00	61.16	57.02	69.42	91.18	40.50
	Dhakhara	70.00	50.00	70.00	50.00	70.00	90.00	80.00	50.00	80.00	30.00
	Mahewa	60.00	50.00	40.00	60.00	70.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	90.00	30.00
	Average	62.71	57.76	53.10	54.85	71.00	67.05	62.34	56.47	87.06	33.50
	Overall	46.22	57.09	41.77	58.85	68.49	49.25	67.09	55.34	80.72	35.72

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