

A photograph of three women standing in a forest. The woman on the right is holding a large bundle of green leaves. The woman in the middle is wearing a white sari, and the woman on the left is wearing a blue sari. The forest has many trees and a dirt path.

Understanding and Improving Participatory Forest Management Implementation Strategies for Enhanced Livelihood Impacts in India and Nepal

**DFID FRP Project R.8101
Final Technical Report**



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Executive Summary

This project has focussed on issues relating to livelihood and forest management linkages across India and Nepal, from March 2002 to end January 2006, over 3 years and 11 months up to the. It has been based on the premise that although Participatory Forest Management policies have been enunciated in these countries, their implementation has not yet successfully improved livelihoods of the poorest forest-dependent groups, and that research to clarify ways to improve impacts, advocated in the context of policy engagement, may help improve matters.

The **purpose** of this project has been:

1. To identify and promote the locally-appropriate best practices for stakeholders to implement participatory forest management in order to maximise livelihood benefits.
2. To identify best practice in implementing participatory forest management in India and Nepal for livelihood impacts, through comprehensive comparative assessment across different areas, and implementation strategies. To identify how different stakeholders (government, donor and civil society) can best coordinate support inputs in order to achieve a cumulatively beneficial impact.
3. To promote pro-poor reforms in PFM policy and practice

In pursuit of these the **research activities** have involved, in *phase I*:

1. Developing tools and methods for comparative assessment of livelihood impacts from PFM.
2. Performing a comprehensive assessment of the different stakeholders' strategies and their livelihood impacts, using a participatory action research approach.
3. Supporting the development of livelihood impact monitoring systems.

Research activities *in phase II* the project built on these activities and their findings, with the aim of achieving pro-poor reforms in policy and practice, by:

4. Conducting policy-oriented analysis of pro-poor policy reform issues, and reasons for resistance to reform; focussing on 4 key aspects: governance (including policy process, political economy), tenure and rights issues, intersectoral issues, and information and monitoring processes
5. Further strengthening the development of livelihood impact monitoring systems in conjunction with local communities and Forest Departments
6. Facilitating bottom-up action-planning learning processes, (at village, district, state and national levels) building on established learning groups and relationships at study sites, and leading to policy lobbying and advocacy to achieve pro-poor forest policy reform. Leading NGOs will be engaged to support this process.
7. Producing a range of outputs to promote the findings – including internationally circulated book, range of reports, and a range of films.

There have been a wide range of **outputs** from these research activities. In *Phase I*:

1. Comparative reviews of PFM implementation strategies and activities in study areas.
2. Method developed for comparative analysis of PFM implementation and livelihood impacts
3. Website established and maintained
4. Comparative analysis of PFM implementation & support by different stakeholders and resultant livelihood impacts across Nepal and India
5. Analysis of factors acting as opportunities and constraints to PFM implementation
6. Film summarising project findings.

Phase II:

7. Conduct policy-oriented analysis of areas and reasons for resistance to pro-poor policy change, focussing on policy process, political economy and intersectoral issues
8. Facilitate a bottom-up action-planning learning process, leading to policy lobbying and advocacy to achieve pro-poor forest policy reform
9. Further strengthening the development of livelihood impact monitoring systems

10. Book summarising research findings and policy implications
11. Film series summarising research findings and policy implications

Contribution of the project towards DFID's development goals

The project has thereby focussed on supporting the achievement of two of DFID / millennium development goals:

- *Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger*

The poorest rural communities in India and Nepal are typically highly dependent on forest and other common land use. Changes in its management impact them more than other groups. Forest are particularly crucial as livelihood components, particularly in the hot season when they can contribute the majority of income for poor households through non-timber forest product collection. This project has sought to promote PFM implementation that would focus most directly on their needs.

- *Ensure environmental sustainability*

The project has sought to promote 'win-win' opportunities which improve both pro-poor and more sustainable forest management arrangements. Privatisation of forests and other forms of common property by elites has been a prevalent problem for the livelihoods of the poorest, particularly the tribal groups not so empowered to protect their rights.

This project has clarified the precise mechanisms through which poorest groups have been marginalised and generally not benefited from 'participatory' changes in forest management, and has sought to identify processes and ways they can receive improved benefits. Through research and dissemination activities this has increased the profile of pro-poor issues in forest management in the study areas. Towards the end of the project there has been increased concern amongst stakeholders, including state actors, to adopt and promote this agenda.

The project has prompted the achievement of these through:

1. clarifying current practices which obstruct pro-poor outcomes
2. promoting more pro-poor strategies for PFM implementation in multi-stakeholder forma
3. Facilitating reforms in practice particularly in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh

Background

Importance of the researchable constraints:

Governments of Nepal and India have made policy commitments to Participatory Forest Management (PFM), Civil society organisations are also committed to PFM, as are donors, who are supporting its implementation. PFM has been recognised as a potential means of improving entitlements and livelihood assets of the rural poor.

However the practical implementation of PFM has been confronted with a number of political, administrative and professional obstacles, the consequence of which has been slow progress to fulfil the potential of PFM for positive livelihood impacts and poverty alleviation, and uncertainty over actual progress in impacts.

A range of constraint / Developmental Problems were identified at the outset of the project:

1. Lack of consolidation of learning regarding the most effective means of implementation of PFM
2. Lack of understanding regarding the actual livelihood impacts of PFM, and processes of impacting them.
3. Lack of monitoring systems for livelihood impacts of PFM
4. Indian and Nepali Governments are unsure what elements and strategies to adopt from donor projects for their own PFM implementation programmes
5. Lack of effective co-ordination between stakeholders
6. Lack of effective involvement of civil society groups in policy and implementation process

Significant previous research:

This project has worked on a very broad area, and therefore there has been a great deal of work on which to base our study. There has been a range of research relating to issues. The most relevant works are:

Blaikie and Zadeque (2001) 'Policy in High Places' (ICIMOD: Kathmandu)

Graner (2000) Political Ecology of Community Forestry in Nepal

Jeffery, R. and Nandini Sundar (1999) Branching Out: JFM in India (Oxford University Press: Delhi)

Mayers, J and S Bass (Ed.s) (2000) 'Policy that Works for Forests and People' (IIED: London)

Poffenberger, M and B McGean (1996) Village Voices Forest Choices (Oxford University Press: Delhi)

How the demand for the project was identified

The concept of the project emerged from discussions with the Head of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Kathmandu, Nepal. Subsequently these issues were identified through discussions with senior members of Ministries in India and Nepal, as well as academics, donor and donor-supported project staff, and civil society groups.

Project Purpose

The project purpose has been:

- To identify and promote the locally-appropriate best practices for stakeholders to implement participatory forest management to maximise livelihood benefits particularly for the poorest.
- To identify best practice in implementing participatory forest management in India and Nepal for livelihood impacts, through comprehensive comparative assessment across different areas, and implementation strategies. To identify how different stakeholders (Government, donor and civil society) can best coordinate support inputs in order to achieve a cumulatively beneficial impact.
- to promote pro-poor reforms in PFM policy and practice

How it addressed the identified constraints:

Focus for Study

The study addressed the above issues by comparing implementation strategies and their livelihood impacts across donor project and non donor-project areas in India and Nepal, across major agro-ecological areas.

Having addressed these developmental problems in Phase I, in Phase II the crucial concerns have become how to translate identified opportunities for improved livelihood impacts from PFM into policy and practice. This requires both improved understanding of why there has been such reluctance to the adoption of these opportunities already – embracing a wider analysis of:

1. policy process and governance,
2. tenure and rights issues,
3. intersectoral issues, and
4. information and monitoring issues.

It has also facilitated action planning and advocacy processes.

Research Activities

The project has involved 3 main stages of research coordinated across five regions: in the hills and Tarai of Nepal, and in West Bengal, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh in India. :

Phase I has involved research on:

1. the policy framework for implementation of PFM,
2. actual implementation practices
3. impact in terms of local institutional arrangements, forest resource and livelihoods.

We have developed flexible and eclectic research approaches to each of these stages. For analysis of impacts we have analysed local institutional arrangements, forest resource condition and livelihoods, using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data

Sampling has involved a clustered / nested approach – selecting first regions within the research countries, then states, then districts within states, then villages (including both PFM implementation villages, and non PFM villages, then households).

In this way he has studied over 60 villages across India and Nepal, in 15 districts of 5 regions.

Phase II has then focussed on wider issues relating to:

1. Governance,
2. Tenure and rights
3. Intersectoral coordination and local government issues

For study of tenure we have sought to triangulate historical and contemporary sources in order to seek to clarify the obscurity of actually prevailing tenurial arrangements.

In both phases we have employed a range of experts, including forest surveyors, experts in land tenure, forest history and indigenous forest management practices such as sacred groves, to complement the core research team. We have also worked with a range of film-makers

The second phase has also concentrated on dissemination of research findings and seeking to build a critical mass for change through action planning activities at local, district and region/ state level.

Outputs

The research outputs have been so extensive that it would require an extremely lengthy review here if we were to do justice to each. Instead it is proposed that the reviewer consult the executive summary of each of the following:

Phase I:	
1. Website established and maintained	✓ <i>The website serves as the initial point for project information dissemination.</i> http://www1.uea.ac.uk/cm/2.117/2.124/2.125/2.126/2.197/2.347/2.348
2. Initial comparative review of PFM implementation strategies and activities in study areas	✓ Published as a series of 5 working papers <i>from each of the study regions. These are available on website:</i>
3. Method developed for comparative analysis of PFM implementation and livelihood impacts	<i>Forthcoming to be Published as a working paper</i>
4. Comparative analysis of PFM implementation & support by different stakeholders and resultant livelihood impacts across Nepal and India	<i>The main findings and commentaries on main issues will be presented. Published as a series of working papers</i>
5. Analysis of factors acting as opportunities and constraints to PFM implementation	<i>Forthcoming – to be Published as a working paper</i>
6. Film summarising project findings	40 minute film, made available on VHS / CDROM format in local languages for widest circulation. <i>The film has been completed but launch has been deferred until regional films are completed. Final cut and launch expected April 2006</i>

Phase II:	
7. <i>Conduct policy-oriented analysis of areas and reasons for resistance to pro-poor policy change, focussing on policy process, political economy and intersectoral issues</i>	Assessments of policy processes and key issues supporting or constraining positive livelihood impacts from PFM, at state and national levels.
<i>Nepal</i>	<i>forthcoming</i>
<i>India</i>	<i>2 of 4 reports delivered. – 2 forthcoming</i>
<i>West Bengal</i>	<i>Forthcoming</i> - additional study on the link between sacred groves management practice and JFM completed
<i>Orissa</i>	<i>forthcoming</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>Forthcoming</i> - additional study on history of forest land tenure in Andhra completed
8. <i>Facilitate a bottom-up action-planning learning process, leading to policy lobbying and advocacy to achieve pro-poor forest policy reform</i>	Lobbying for policy change process through bottom-up action-planning. Based on PFM public audit, monitoring and action planning processes at study sites, bringing these findings up for review at district level, and subsequently State/ National level. Multi-institutional multi-level action plans will be developed.
<i>Nepal</i>	<i>forthcoming</i>
<i>India</i>	<i>Forthcoming national after regional workshops. scheduled with Winrock for early May</i>
<i>West Bengal</i>	<i>✓ completed – now state commission for PFM has been constituted - policy reform constituted documentation produced</i>
<i>Orissa</i>	<i>Forthcoming</i>
<i>AP</i>	<i>District action planning workshops are ongoing – and state action planning workshop will be completed by end April forthcoming</i>
9. <i>Further strengthening the development of livelihood impact monitoring systems</i>	Developing Monitoring processes for Livelihood Impacts and institutional development, based on pilot processes at study sites, and promoting these within FD information systems. <i>Report forthcoming</i>

10. Book summarising research findings and policy implications	✓ Draft chapters produced and under editing currently for May submission to Earthscan for November launch
10. Film series summarising research findings and policy implications	Five Films have been developed for each region, addressing the process issues involved in implementing Participatory Forest Management and the livelihood impacts, in order to maximise the impact of the research project on forest management policy.
Nepal	✓ Completed
India	Overall film will be finalised once regional films completed
West Bengal	✓ Completed
Orissa	✓ Forthcoming – currently mid-editing
AP	✓ Forthcoming – currently mid-editing
	Additionally five training films have been developed to raise awareness amongst foresters, local people, donor project staff and policy makers regarding the opportunities for improving the livelihood impact of forest management. The films have been developed in parallel to the 'dissemination' films. The audience will be primarily those involved in field practice of PFM, both forest staff and local people. The films will also designed for use in forestry training institutes at state and national levels
Nepal	✓ Completed
India	Forthcoming - Overall film will be finalised once regional films completed
West Bengal	Forthcoming
Orissa	Forthcoming
AP	Forthcoming

Contribution of Outputs

Include how the outputs will contribute towards DFID's developmental goals. The identified promotion pathways to target institutions and beneficiaries. What follow up action/research is necessary to promote the findings of the work to achieve their development benefit? This should include a list of publications, plans for further dissemination, as appropriate. For projects aimed at developing a device, material or process, specify:

- a. *What further market studies need to be done?*
- b. *How the outputs will be made available to intended users?*
- c. *What further stages will be needed to develop, test and establish manufacture of a product?*
- d. *How and by whom, will the further stages be carried out and paid for?*

These outputs are directly influencing thinking of the role of PFM in poverty alleviation in the context of sustainable forest management. Within the project we have targeted academic audiences (through the book), the sphere of policy and practice through engagement and action planning workshops, as well as general public and rural populations through field based participatory action research.

We have disseminated our work through a range of channels to these groups including briefing papers, email discussion groups, workshop presentations and booklet publications in local languages.

We cannot hope that our work will have uniform impact across the study areas, but rather we are finding that in some areas the constellations of 'epistemic communities' around the work are able to influence policy more positively. In West Bengal for instance there is now a JFM policy commission formed to review policy, and this has been formed directly due to the project efforts. In Orissa on the other hand we have produced detailed findings which may be taken up once there is a more conducive policy environment, and it will certainly be of value to the forthcoming DFID-funding and JBIC funded forest sector projects about to commence in the state.

The main follow-up need now is for lobbying efforts – recurrent policy workshops to emphasise the changes to policy and practice needed – to keep these issues at the top of the agenda until reform is ensured. The project has been a great help in clarifying issues. Over the next year each of the research teams is committed to maintaining the profile of this work to try to maximise its impact. The project leader has been invited to a number of workshops to present findings, including at the Indian Institute of Forest Management Bhopal in late April. Interest in the project remains high as the final outputs are launched.

Yet one additional complementary need if the se findings are to have a major impact on livelihoods of the forest dependant rural poor are concomitant reforms in wider governance. IN Orissa for instance the state governance structures are so poor and so corrupt that reforming forest management alone will only partially achieve DFID aims.

If reforms in policy and practice are achieved they will certainly positively benefit the very poorest groups in India in a major way. We cannot though hope for overnight change as the forest governance structures are so large and inertial.