

March 2005

# Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India:

## Perceptions of Panchayati Raj Institutions on Joint Forest Management in Harda

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Prepared for  
**University of Cambridge, UK**

This publication is an output from a project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries under its Natural Resources Systems Programme (project no R8280). The views expressed are not necessarily those of DFID.



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Project Report No. 2002 SF 43

The Energy and Resources Institute

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## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to thank Dr Bhaskar Vira, Project leader from University of Cambridge, UK and all our project partners, namely, Enviro Legal Defence Firm, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Institute of Economic Growth, Sanket, and Winrock International India.

Thanks are also due to Ms Girija Godbole, Project coordinator.

We also thank Panchayati Raj Officials at all three levels and the Forest Department for their valuable time.

We would like to acknowledge the inputs provided by Soumya Sinha.

Within TERI, we would like to place on record the help provided by the copy-editing team, Arpna and Jayaprasd for formatting the report. Special thanks are due to Mr Ajoy Acharya for careful review of the report.

**Nanki Kaur**

**Anirban Ganguly**

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## Glossary of terms

<i>Adhiniyam</i>	Act
<i>Adhyaksha</i>	President
<i>Gram kosh</i>	Village account
<i>Gram Panchayat</i>	The lowest tier of the Panchayat Raj institution, which is formed on the basis of the population and may consist of one or more villages.
<i>Gram Sabha</i>	A body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level.
<i>Gram swaraj</i>	Village self rule
<i>Jagir</i>	Landowner
<i>Janpad Panchayat</i>	The second tier of the Panchayati Raj institutions, i.e., at the intermediate level between the village and the district levels.
<i>Koshadhyaksh</i>	Treasurer
<i>Malguzar</i>	Contractor
<i>Panch</i>	The elected representative of a <i>Gram Panchayat</i>
<i>Panchayat</i>	An institution (by whatever named called) of self-government constituted under Article 243B of the Constitution, for rural areas.
<i>Panchayati Raj</i>	Institution of local rural self governance
<i>Patta</i>	Land title deed
<i>Patwari</i>	The lowest official of the Revenue Department posted at the village level
<i>Samiti</i>	Committee
<i>Sarpanch</i>	The head of a <i>Gram Panchayat</i>
<i>Sarpanchpati</i>	Husband of the woman sarpanch (de facto sarpanch)
<i>Sarvjanik Sampada Samiti</i>	Common resources committee
<i>Van Panchayat</i>	Traditional local institution that owns and manages forest land
<i>Zilla Panchayat</i>	The highest tier of the Panchayati Raj institution, formed at the district level
<i>Zilla Sarkar</i>	District government





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## Executive Summary

Participatory natural resource management, which involves joint management and devolution of management to the local level, has, in the recent years, emerged as an increasingly essential strategy for the management of common pool resources. It aims at providing a space within which multiple stakeholders can identify and address their policy problems, in contexts where resources are subject to contestation among multiple users and there is a conflict between multiple uses.

Harda has been celebrated as an exemplar of the effectiveness of participatory forest management, having been in the forefront of the Joint Forest Management (JFM) process since the early 1990s. Madhya Pradesh was also the first state to legislate *Panchayati Raj* after the 73rd Amendment and has subsequently taken significant steps to improve its legislation, in order to effectively implement decentralization and to ensure synergies between Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). However, while the Forest Department views the participatory forestry approach followed in Harda as a success, many other stakeholders, notably a section of Non-government Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) working in the area, have criticized the Harda model for not having addressed the objectives of the local communities.

The project on incorporating stakeholder perceptions in participatory forest management in India thus aims at elucidating the perceptions of diverse stakeholders in the forestry sector in Harda district. By understanding the causes of conflict, the project hopes to increase learning about stakeholder differences over participatory forest management, and generate policy-relevant findings that can be used to formulate an inclusive policy for participatory forest management.

The objectives of this paper are, first, to examine and discuss the theory behind participatory forestry management the policies that have been formulated to implement it, and the changes that it has facilitated; and second, to elucidate the perceptions of the representatives of the PRIs (one of the many stakeholders in the forestry sector) in order to understand the process by which policy problems are formulated by this stakeholder group.

Perceptions of PRIs have been analysed in relation to JFM and the extent to which it has provided the space for local

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stakeholders to participate in the management of forest resources in order to achieve ecological stability and social justice.

Based on these perceptions, the paper attempts to analyse the 'policy problem' as constructed by the respondents of the PRIs and the extent to which the knowledge of theory, policy, and change influence these constructs.

In this context, the key findings of the study are:

### Perceptions related to the decision-making process.

In the context of the decision-making process the extent to which marginalized communities and the village community participate in the decision-making process vis-a-vis the elite community and the Forest Department has been assessed.

The study findings indicate that respondents at all three levels perceive neither the marginalized community vis-à-vis the dominant community nor the village community vis-à-vis the Forest Department, as participating dynamically in the decision-making process.

At the district level, it was assessed that the perceptions of the respondents were influenced by the entrenched elite domination and the perceived superior capability of the FD to undertake forest management. At the block level, perceptions related to the ineffective impact of JFM in empowering local communities in the decision-making process were influenced by an identified 'mindset' that does not question existing power structures and the existing nature of ownership rights that favours the dominance of the FD in the decision-making process.

At the village level, perceptions were assessed to be based on a lack of change due to existing local-level power structures that enhanced elite domination instead of the empowerment of marginalized communities. The factors influencing the dominance of the FD in the decision-making process were assessed to be based on the lack of change, as the FD was perceived as the best-suited institution to undertake management and protection. This indicates that the JFM process has not fostered a local sense of ownership, or a participatory means of incorporating local knowledge in the management of forest resources.

### Perceptions related to the rights and ownership patterns

The respondents stated that the advent of JFM had not brought about any change in the pattern of rights and ownership of forest

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resources, an important indicator of effective local participation.

At the district level perceptions related to the lack of change in the nature of rights and ownership patterns were based on the perceived lack of capacity within the local community to exercise such rights.

At the block and village level perceptions related to the ineffective transfer of rights and ownership of forest resources to the local community, were influenced by the perceived ineffectiveness of participatory policies and theories being translated into practice, due to which the FD was viewed as being unwilling to devolve power.

In the context of the benefit-sharing mechanism respondents at the district level perceived the benefit-sharing mechanism as equitable. However, the actual transfer of these benefits is undermined due to the lack of awareness among the community and unaccountability on the part of the Forest Department. At the block and village levels, the PRI respondents perceived the current benefit-sharing mechanism to be skewed towards the Forest Department, which was perceived to be reaping the benefits of forest protection provided by the community.

### Perceptions related to forest conservation

Perceptions at all three levels of PRIs conform to the view that JFM has facilitated forest conservation as the status of the forest has improved and the level of protection provided has increased. Though all levels perceive JFM to have facilitated conservation, respondents at the block and village levels perceive a marked improvement only in the initial years of JFM during which there was substantial funding, key leadership, and a perceived incentive to conserve forest resources. The causes attributed to undermining the sustainability of protection activities included a lack of interest and livelihood opportunities, and an ineffective local dispute resolution system.

### The policy problem

Thus the broad policy problems, identified by the PRI respondents, relate to the lack of participation, insecure rights and ownership of forest resources, and declining conservation initiatives within the participatory forest management strategy of JFM. The findings also indicate that the perception formation process on which these problems are constructed vary between the district, block and village levels, i.e., at the village level

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perceptions are influenced by the ineffective implementation of participatory theory and knowledge into practice, due to which there is no change in the level of participation, rights and ownership patterns and a decline in the conservation initiatives. At the district level, perceptions are often influenced by the knowledge of theory and the belief in its ultimate implementation.

### Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions

At all three levels, there is a broad consensus that the role of the PRIs in participatory forestry management should be limited to that of monitoring.

PRIs are not perceived as the appropriate institution to resolve the identified policy problems and facilitate participatory forestry management due to the following reasons:

- Lack of capacity to facilitate forest management – PRIs are not perceived to have the technical knowledge or the resources (financial and human) to manage forest resources.
- Current ineffectiveness in providing social justice – PRIs are not considered as effective in facilitating social justice due to politicization of issues, elite domination, and corruption.
- No perceived overlap of institutions – the PRI respondents did not identify any overlap or conflict between JFMCs (Joint Forest Management Committees) and PRIs.

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## CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Participatory forest management, in the context of this paper, has been used as an umbrella term that broadly aims at involving multiple stakeholders in the management process through Joint Forest Management (JFM) or decentralized natural resource management, in order to foster conservation and development.

In this sense, the district of Harda in Madhya Pradesh has been celebrated as an exemplar of participatory forest management in India. It was the first state in India to legislate Panchayati Raj after the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment and has subsequently taken significant steps to improve its legislation (ODI *et al* 2002). The district of Harda is also considered the forerunner of the JFM process in Madhya Pradesh.

The effectiveness of participatory forest management, however, is determined by the extent to which such theories/policies/institutions address multi-stakeholder perceptions related to the many objectives and policy problems that forestry encompasses. Examples of the divergent objectives that forestry encompasses include: commercial, rural development (poverty alleviation, employment creation, empowerment of marginalized groups), tourism and amenity, and conservation. Due to these diverse objectives conflicts often arise between the objectives and the priorities assigned to each in a given area.

Apart from the diverse objectives, the management of common property resources encounters many problems such as environmental degradation, a lack of appropriate institutions for management, or conflicting claims over resources. A point of contention in this context thus relates to the definition of policy 'problems' amongst key stakeholders.

Forestry management thus requires a multi-stakeholder approach that can effectively provide the appropriate 'space'<sup>1</sup> for stakeholders to overcome conflicts by prioritizing and defining

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<sup>1</sup> Edmunds & Wollenberg (2003) have defined 'Space for local forest management' in terms of the extent to which the devolution policies can become a means of promoting rural people's self-determination and economic advancement in forest management, i.e., the extent to which local people, especially disadvantaged groups, exercise control over:

- Changes in the extent and quality of forest.
- Their economic assets and livelihood strategies.
- Decision-making process related to forest management.

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objectives and problems related to forestry management. It is in the context of not having addressed the objectives of the local communities and at times making their situation worse that the 'Harda model' of participatory forest management has been criticized by a section of activist Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) working in the area.

Like the NGOs and CBOs, which are important pressure groups that have brought the conflict of interests between local-level stakeholders and the bureaucracy to the forefront, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are also considered important stakeholders in the management of common pool resources. They constitutionally represent the interests of the local communities and have been entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring economic and social development, under which forestry is a component. PRIs are thus an important medium of participatory natural resource management, i.e., they provide a 'space' through which local objectives attached to forestry may be implemented.

These objectives, related to securing livelihood needs or empowerment, may often contradict the objectives of conservation or maximum timber harvest yields or centralized management policies that are constructed by the Forest Department, thus leading to a difference in the construction of a 'policy problem' and to a conflict. It is also assumed that the management role entrusted to PRIs often overlaps that of JFMCs, which would thus lead to a conflict.

At an outset, the objectives attached to the forestry sector, by the mandates of JFM and PRIs may vary to a degree. PRIs aim at increasing participative and representative governance through the representation of weaker sections like Scheduled Tribes/Scheduled Castes (ST/SC) and women and are entrusted with the responsibility to implement development schemes and prepare plans for economic development and social justice, under which social and farm forestry, minor forest produce, fuel and fodder and maintenance of community assets are components (Constitution of India). JFM on the other hand has a restricted scope as compared to the broader development mandate of the PRIs. Thus, even though the objective of the JFM programme is to provide a space for forest-dependent communities to be involved in participative forest resource management, it envisages participatory management as a means to translate the twin objectives (ecological stability and social justice) of the 1988

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Forest Policy into practice. JFM thus focuses specifically on forestry management and aims at addressing development needs and ensuring joint governance as a means to fulfil the objectives of sustainable forestry management.

It is important to keep in mind these objectives and priorities before elucidating the perceptions of the PRIs on JFM as they provide a context in which the effectiveness of either institution may be measured.

Having established that different stakeholders address the management of common pool resources with different objectives and policy problems, this paper, in order to facilitate an inclusive policy dialogue, aims at elucidating the perceptions of one of the many stakeholders (PRIs) on the current process of forestry management in Harda.

The analysis is based on how the representatives of the PRIs define policy problems in the context of the current functioning of the JFM programme. The process of defining policy problems is based on the 'analytical framework for dialogue on common pool resource management' (Adams *et al* 2002), which seeks to provide a basis to understand the knowledge of theory, policy, and change that determine the current knowledge on which perceptions are based. The paper concludes with suggestions, provided by PRI representatives, to facilitate effective forestry management.

Chapter 2 of the paper will provide the contextual basis for participatory forest management, i.e., it will outline the theoretical traditions behind Participatory Forest Management (PFM), the policies that have emerged to put the theories in place, and finally the extent of change that PFM has brought about. The last section dealing with 'change' will also highlight the areas where the expected level of change has not taken place and the causes for such shortfalls.

Chapter 3 of the paper, dealing with 'perceptions', provides an analysis, from the perspective of PRIs, of how the JFM programme has provided 'space' to forest-dependent communities in the context of achieving the twin objectives of ecological stability (forest conservation) and social justice (space in the decision-making process and extent of rights exercised over forest resources) and on how current problems can be addressed.

## 1.1 Study approach

Participatory forest management in the context of this paper has been defined as a means to create a space in local forest management that allows local stakeholders to participate in forestry management in order to facilitate social justice and forest sustainability.

JFM as an institution aims at creating this space through administrative devolution. In order to assess its impact on creating a space for local stakeholders within the management process the following indicators have been taken into account:

### 1.1.1 Space in the decision-making process

Creating a space in the decision-making process is an important element of PFM. It indicates the extent of local stakeholder participation in decisions related to forest resource management and allocation.

Participation is an important dimension in the decision-making process and plays a significant role in determining the effectiveness of a decentralized institution. At its narrowest, participation in a group is defined in terms of nominal membership, and at its broadest in terms of a dynamic interactive process in which the marginalized have an active voice and influence decision-making (Agarwal 2001).

As many studies have highlighted, participation in the local forest management process is often nominal as it is often dominated by the local elite<sup>2</sup> or by the Forest Department.

Thus for the purpose of this study, the impact of JFM on creating a space for local participation in the decision-making process has been assessed according to:

- (a) The extent of participation of the marginalized communities vis-à-vis the local elite in the decision-making process.
- (b) The extent of participation of the village community vis-à-vis the Forest Department in the decision-making process.

### 1.1.2 Rights and ownership patterns.

The extent to which local stakeholders exercise rights and ownership over forest resources has been defined as an important dimension of the effectiveness of participatory forest management. It provides an incentive for participation and a

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<sup>2</sup>The term 'elite' has been used in reference to groups that were of a higher caste, or that had a greater level of economic wealth or knowledge.



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sense of local ownership of the resource and managing institution. In this context the study assess the extent to which JFM has impacted:

- (a) The extent to which local stakeholders exercise rights and ownership over forest resources.
- (b) The extent to which the benefit-sharing mechanism has impacted the rights of local stakeholders to receive a stake in the benefits of sustainable forest harvest.

### 1.1.3 Conservation of forest resources.

As sustainable use/regeneration/protection of forest resources is an essential component of any forestry management regime, the study assesses the impact of JFM in ensuring the conservation of forest resources. The indicators used to assess this dimension include:

- (a) The status of the forest.
- (b) The level of protection provided.

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## 1.2 Study sites and methodology

This study was undertaken in 12 villages in Harda district<sup>3</sup> (Annexure 1). Insights from the full sample of 24 villages were used wherever appropriate. The villages were chosen on the basis of the following criteria:

- Presence of JFMC at any point in time in the past ten years
- In the same proportion as the forest and revenue villages in the district having JFMC (1:3)
- In the same proportion as MTO influenced villages in the district having JFMC (1:2)
- In the same proportion of the villages having JFMC in a range
- In the same proportion of the villages having JFMC in a block

The primary research is based qualitative research methods, especially key-person interviews. The research group involved representatives at all three levels of the PRIs (Annexure II). Secondary literature review; official data; field team data; and, project team reports have also been used in the study.

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<sup>3</sup> These villages form a sub-sample of the 24 sample villages chosen for the overall study.

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## CHAPTER 2 Participatory Natural Resource Management: Theory, Policy and Change

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As participatory forest management is the starting point of this paper, i.e., as a concept that has been implemented into a policy acknowledging the role and legitimacy of multiple stakeholders in forestry management, and, secondly as both Panchayati Raj and JFM aim at creating a space for participatory management, it is important to trace the 'theory' behind this concept, the 'policies' that have been formulated to implement it, and the 'changes' that it has facilitated.

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### 2.1 Theory

The rationale behind the paradigm shift, from command-and-control or exclusionary conservation to participatory conservation and management; from centralized to decentralized forms of governance; and from revenue generation to addressing forest-dependent livelihoods, has a theoretical basis in assertions, like the role of decentralized governance; pro-people approaches that prioritize livelihood concerns and poverty alleviation; and a shift in ecological concepts.

Though these factors have a specific base in the fields of governance, pro-poor development, and ecology, the theoretical basis often overlaps.

#### 2.1.1 Decentralized Governance

The theoretical basis for decentralized governance (see Box 1 for meaning and manifestations of decentralization) stems from the notion that devolution of power to the local level or within a closely interactive local community will create institutions that are more accountable to local citizens and more appropriate to locally diverse needs and preferences (Johnson, 2003). Such devolution is also believed to lead to the empowerment of marginalized groups.

This theoretical basis for a shift from centralized management is based on assertions that view centralized state policies that have been responsible for devising elaborate development schemes and governance mechanisms, to be in isolation from the masses for whom and on whose behalf they plan and govern. Such state-

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designed policies have resulted in primarily benefiting elite groups that include middlemen, contractors, officials, politicians and favoured special interest groups, and in treating people as recipient objects of the development process. They have thus met with little success. Secondly, the process of centralization taking the form of commercialization and nationalization has led to the erosion of the local commons and the appropriation of the traditional historical rights of local communities over these resources. This in turn has led to the disenfranchisement of the poor and to management by a distant bureaucracy, which is believed to have resulted in insufficient utilization of local information and initiative causing overexploitation and degradation of the commons by influential interest groups and by formerly responsible, now dispossessed, local users (Bardhan 2003).

A third view argues that unchecked authority and inadequate incentives encourage 'rent seeking behaviour' among government officials. In theory, decentralization would undermine these opportunities by creating institutional arrangements that formalize the relationship between citizens and public servants, giving the former the authority to impose sanctions on the latter (Johnson 2003).

In the context of natural resource management, decentralization of powers and responsibilities to the local level is viewed as contributing significantly to a more efficient, equitable and sustainable use of resources thus improving local livelihoods and facilitating effective management of natural resources. It also places decision-making in the hands of those who have information and an incentive advantage to ensure sustainable resource use, a characteristic that outsiders lack. Decentralization is also seen as a tool for resolving collective management problems of common property resources, like forestry and grazing, which supports the daily livelihood of the poor, particularly in rural areas.

Thus, transferring forest management authority from poorly funded, top heavy bureaucracies to forest users with interests in maintaining a healthy and productive forest will save money, improve forest quality, provide greater benefits to those who deserve them, and make decision-making more democratic (Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003).

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### Box 1: Decentralization: meaning and manifestations

Decentralization or the shift from the central authority to the local authority is a process that has manifested itself in many forms. The four major types of decentralized forms include political, administrative, fiscal, and market.

**Political decentralization** is manifested through the devolution of the authority for decision-making, finance, and management to a sub-national body of local government. Political decentralization requires Constitutional or statutory reforms and the creation of local political units. In such devolved systems, local governments have clear and legally recognized geographical boundaries over which they exercise authority and within which they perform public functions.

**Administrative decentralization** refers to the redistribution of authority and responsibility for the planning, financing, and management of certain public functions, from the central government and its agencies to field units, subordinate levels of government, or semi-autonomous public corporations.

Administrative decentralization is implemented mainly through de-concentration and delegation. De-concentration involves spreading the decision-making responsibilities across different levels of the central government. Delegation on the other hand involves the transfer of responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions from the central government to semi-autonomous organizations that are not controlled by the central government but are accountable to it.

**Fiscal decentralization** transfers funds, to deliver decentralized functions and revenue-generating power and authority, to decide on expenditure to local governments and private organizations.

**Economic decentralization** manifested through privatization and de-regulation, transfers to the private sector functions exclusively performed by the Government.

Specific to India, the theoretical basis for decentralized natural resource management may be traced to the colonial era during which time centralized management over natural resources failed and worsened poverty-environment linkages (Baumann and Farrington 2003). Evolving from this failure, the formation of *Van Panchayats* in Uttaranchal may be cited as one of the first examples of community participation in natural resource management. In the broader context the theoretical basis behind the current day *Panchayats* may be traced back to a long history that the country has had with local democracy. Historically, the institution of the *Panchayat* has been an integral part of rural Indian polity and society and has played a key role in organizing and maintaining social order in Indian villages since ancient times (Behar and Kumar 2002). The system of *Panchayat* government and the village community first began to be eroded under the Mughal rule, which introduced the *jagir* system and the collection of revenue through *malguzars* or contractors. Following this under the British period, executive and judicial powers were further centralised in the hands of government

officials and the village community was deprived of all control over the land and its produce, which became the private property of the newly created landowner. This led to the breakdown of the joint life and the corporative character of the community. However, the colonial period also introduced, the system of decentralized governance that we currently have in place, i.e., local government through a top down approach. The Charter Act of 1793 first set up municipal administrations in Madras, Bombay and Calcutta on a statutory basis. In the context of local governance at the village level, Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 marks the process of administrative devolution and political education. This was followed by Ripon's Resolution of 1882 and by the report of the Royal Commission on Decentralization, 1909, which pointed out that '*the scant success of the efforts made to introduce a system of rural self government lay in the fact that they have not been built upon from the bottom.*' The British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, 1919, which made local self-government a provincial subject and led to the establishment of village *Panchayats*. Post-independence the concept of decentralized governance through village institutions became a crucial point of discussion. It was, however, not adopted and found mention in Article 40 of the Directive Principles (Majumdar and Singh 1997). Following this, proposals for institutionalizing and strengthening *Panchayats* found mention in various committees and 5 year plans, including the 1957 Balwantraji Mehta Committee, the 1977 Ashok Mehta Committee, the 1985 Rao Committee and the 1987 Singhvi Committee and the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> five-year plans. Apart from this planning process, the theory behind decentralized governance was also influenced by international and national contexts, which included the collapse of the Soviet Union leading to a debate on various development paradigms and by the rise of social movements and civil society initiatives, which were trying to claim their legitimate space from the state (Behar and Kumar 2002).

### 2.1.2 Ecological decentralization

In terms of ecological theories, participatory Natural Resource Management (NRM), based on the idea that conservation and development is compatible, has been controversial as livelihood objectives have not been seen as consistent with conservation objectives. This led to the implementation of conservation concerns through 'exclusionary' and 'fortress' type management strategies.

However, failures in exclusionary conservation in a world where social and economic factors play an increasingly vital role in conservation success: the development of interdisciplinary conservation science: conceptual shifts that view ecosystems not as simple linear cause-effect thinking, requiring command-and-control resource management to one which views ecosystems as complex adaptive systems, having attributes of non-linearity, uncertainty and scale: have questioned the effectiveness of centralized planning on an ecological basis.

The issue of scale, for example, has implications for the match between institutions and ecosystems and for perspectives that may be held by different agents. Thus multiple scales in complex systems recognize that a number of agents or actors may hold different but equally valid perspectives on a conservation problem and that problems may vary at different scales. In this context, a one-size-fits-all kind of management ignores issues of scale. Such mismatches of scale may be one of the key reasons for the failure of environmental management regimes (Folke et al 2002) and have paved the way for bottom-up local solutions to cross-scale conservation. Another example of facilitating participative management is the theoretical shift in the management from the command-and-control style to that of adaptive management. Adaptive management recognizes the uncertainty in information and the complexity of risks related to natural resource management. The use of imperfect information for management necessitates a close cooperation and risk sharing between the management agency and local people. Such a process requires collaboration, transparency, and accountability so that a learning environment can be created and practice can be built on experience. This approach thus brings the community actively into the management process.

Thus, these conceptual shifts in ecology towards a systems view, towards the inclusion of humans in the ecosystem, and towards participatory approaches to ecosystem management are interrelated. They all pertain to an understanding of ecosystems as complex adaptive systems of which humans are an integral part (Berkes 2004).

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## 2.2 Policy

The theoretical framework outlined above and the context in which it is based, has led to the formation of specific policies aimed at facilitating PFM.

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The two most important policies that have been implemented to facilitate PFM in India include the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, 1993, and the JFM Circular of 1990. Both policies focus principally on facilitating administrative and political institutional frameworks conferring rights, responsibilities, and roles in decentralized natural resource management. While the JFM Circular promotes formal natural resource management partnerships between the public administration and local user groups, the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment transfers the responsibility of management and development of natural resources to PRIs at the district, block and village levels. This reform provides a legal sanction for establishing *Panchayats* as the third tier of self-government, thus strengthening local government (ODI *et al* 2002).

In the context of administrative decentralization based on the partnership model of JFM, the state of Madhya Pradesh issued a resolution (Community participation in preventing illicit felling and rehabilitation of the forests) in December 1991 to involve the local communities in the management and development of forest resources in the state. This order associated communities not only in regeneration of degraded forests as directed by the Government of India but made provision for participatory forestry in well stocked and sensitive forest areas. In order to coincide with the World Bank-funded forestry project this order was revised in January 1995 to prescribe in detail the procedure of constitution, duties, and benefits to village level Forest Protection Committees (FPCs) and Village Forest Committees (VFCs). The order attempted to link the development of village resources with that of forests under community protection through the preparation of micro plan and working plan prescriptions. In February 2000 the government resolution was again amended to take into account recommendations and suggestions. The new resolution provided a basis for community participation in forestry keeping in view the distinctive features of different kinds of forest areas. It thus made a provision for Ecodevelopment Committees (EDCs) in and around protected areas. It also made changes in the structure, functioning and benefit sharing mechanism of all the JFM committees. For instance, membership was extended to all voters of the village from that of one male and one female from each household. The participation of women was strengthened by raising the percentage of women members in the executive committee and by ensuring reservation in the post of chairperson or vice

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chairperson. The resolution also grants JFMC members the protection available to public servants, while they perform their duties. It also financially empowers the JFMC by granting 50% of the compensation/fine recovered from offenders. In terms of usufruct rights over timber, 10% share goes to the FPC and 30% to the VFC at the time of final felling. Royalty free nistar, which was earlier available only to FPCs, was also extended to all three committees (World Bank Review). The latest October 2001 order has further increased the villager's entitlements, but has not changed the distribution of power between the villagers and the Forest Department (Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003).

Table 2.1 outlines the development of these policies.



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**Table 2.1** JFM Policy review in Madhya Pradesh<sup>4</sup>

Major Issues	1995 Resolution(4 <sup>th</sup> Jan)	2000 Resolution(7 <sup>th</sup> Feb)	2001 Resolution (22 <sup>nd</sup> October)
<p>PARTICIPATION</p> <p>1 Membership.</p> <p>Membership General Body</p> <p>EC Membership</p> <p>2. Decision-Making</p> <p>Formation of Committee</p>	<p>Based on household represented by one male and female member.</p> <p>Constituted under chairmanship of the <i>Panchayat</i>. Minimum of two female and two landless members. Beat guard or forest guard will be the secretary.</p> <p>Unanimous decision between DFO (Divisional Forest Officer) and villagers. DFO presides over initial meeting and election of chair and vice chairman</p>	<p>Based on eligible voters</p> <p>Minimum 11 and maximum 21 members. 33% female representation. Strengthening of institutional linkages with other existing committees through common membership. Representation of other user groups related to village resources.</p> <p>Formalization of agreement to establish a committee through mandatory registration with the DFO. MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) between federated committees at the division-level and the district-level forest officer. Sarpanch presides over initial meeting. After approval of <i>Gram sabha</i>, committee elects chair and vice chair, one of whom has to be a woman.FD retains the power to dissolve committee if found as not discharging its duties.</p>	<p>SC/ST member, interested in conservation and having passed 8<sup>th</sup> standard, will be made assistant secretary and then elected with forest guard providing only technical advice.</p> <p>New committees to be registered under the Societies Registration Act. Gram sabha approval essential for functioning of committee.</p>
RIGHTS & OWNERSHIP	<p>Committee members to assist FD in forest protection.</p> <p>VFC have full right to MFP (Minor Forest Produce) in allotted area. Fuel-wood, fodder, bamboo etc., allocated as per micro plan.</p> <p>Right to 30% of timber felled and 30% of net sale value.</p>	<p>All committees entitled to <i>nistaar</i> on payment of extraction costs. Right to NTFP (Non-timber Forest Produce) as per State Government decisions based on provisions of PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Area). Committee members to be granted equal rights in terms of legal protection and compensation as those granted to public servants.</p> <p>FPC has right over produce of intermediate thinning and 10% of final harvest. VFC right to income from final felling. To be divided in 5:3:2 ratio as cash for members, for village development and forest development respectively.</p>	

<sup>4</sup> TARU (2002), as cited in, Panchayati Raj and NRM: Situation Analysis & Literature Review.

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In the context of political decentralization, the system of decentralized governance in Madhya Pradesh may be traced back to the traditional *Panchayats*, which followed a pattern of caste *Panchayat* and village *Panchayat*. In terms of policy initiatives, based on the recommendations of the Balwantrao Mehta Committee, the Madhya Pradesh *Panchayat Act, 1962* was enacted in the state. It gave provision for a three-tier structure of the *Panchayati Raj* institutions in the state. These levels were: the *Gram Panchayat* at the village level; *Janpad Panchayat* at the block level; and the *Zilla Panchayat* at the district level. However these institutions remained legal bodies without any ground functioning. In order to revitalize the *Panchayati Raj* institutions the Madhya Pradesh *Panchayati Raj Act, 1990* was enacted in order to transfer 'power to people' to facilitate democratic decentralization. The Act ensured direct elections to the *Panchayati Raj* bodies; involvement of political parties; transfer of resources and machinery to *Panchayats*; and a *Gram Sabha* conterminous with the *patwari* circle.

Following this, in the spirit of the 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment, Madhya Pradesh enacted the Madhya Pradesh *Panchayati Raj Act, 1993*, to create and amend existing laws for the establishment of *Panchayat* institutions. This Act has been further amended to ensure the effective functioning of PRIs. For instance, to ensure the participation of women Article 6 of the State Panchayat Act was amended to make it mandatory to have one-third of the *Gram Sabha* quorum as women members (Behar and Kumar 2002). The state has also taken significant steps to address the loopholes caused by bureaucratic domination and *sarpanch* politics. Significant early Amendments include:

1. Those that made it obligatory for the *Gram Panchayat* to implement recommendations made by the *Gram Sabha* when the annual statement of accounts, audit, and proposed works for the next year are presented.
2. The introduction of the *Gram Swaraj Amendment* of January 2001 as a means of further strengthening the *Gram Sabha* by moving away from representative democracy to direct democracy. The Amendment provides for the strengthening of *Gram Sabhas* in every village, with funds flowing automatically from the *Gram Panchayat* to the *Gram Sabha* in the village and with the creation of the post of a *koshadhyaksh* (treasurer) who is a co-signatory of the *Panchayats'* accounts at the village level. The *Gram Sabha* also comprises eight Standing Committees dealing with different subjects, including the

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management of common property resources (*sarvjanik sampada samiti*). The *Gram sabha* is also entrusted with the power of beneficiary selection of government programme and of the members of various groups.

There was also an attempt to free the local units from bureaucratic planning by providing a framework for the *Zilla sarkar*. According to the *Panchayat Raj 2001 Act* District Planning Committees were formed to formulate a district-level plan that would incorporate the plans passed by the various *Panchayats* and the *Gram sabhas* and then be submitted to the state. The system of *Zilla sarkar*, which has now been discontinued, aimed at decentralizing powers from higher administrative blocks.

In the context of decentralizing forest management to the *Panchayats*, the *MP Panchayati Raj Adhiniyam, 1993* devolved responsibility to the *Gram Panchayat* for the plantation and preservation of *Panchayat* forests subject to the availability of funds with the *Gram Panchayat*. The *Janpad* (intermediate) *Panchayat* was given the responsibility to provide for social forestry, subject to the rules framed by the state government. In the 1997 Amendment the *Zilla* (district) *Panchayat* was given an advisory role to the state government with respect to the protection of the environment and social forestry. In 1999 the *Gram Sabha* was entrusted with the management of natural resources including water, land and forests. This management role was subject to compatibility with the provisions of the constitution and other laws. In 2001 the functions of the *Gram Panchayat* in respect of plantation and preservation of *Panchayat* forests were omitted. The *Gram Sabha* was entrusted with similar responsibilities in village forests (ELDF Project Report 2005).

Based on the overview of both forms of decentralization in Madhya Pradesh, it is clear that there is a significant overlap between the institutions of the JFM and the PRIs. Significant examples of this overlap include the management of common property resources (including forestry management), development priorities, addressed by both institutions, and lastly a common general body.

The state has attempted at ensuring synergy by amending both policies related to JFM and PRIs. Some relevant examples include the 2000 JFM resolution, which envisages a role for the

*Panchayats* in the JFMCs. A few guidelines would show the relation:

1. The first meeting of the VFC is to be presided over by the sarpanch of the respective *Gram Panchayat*.
2. All the *panches* and the sarpanch of the village will be the ex-officio members of the Executive Committee of the VFC/FPC.
3. A Coordination Committee is to be constituted in each district. The *Janpad Panchayat addhyakshas* and the district-level officers of the concerned departments shall be the members of the committee. This would result in the involvement of the *Janpad Panchayat* even at the district-level.
4. The rights of the committees related to minor forest produce should be in accordance with the *Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act, 1996*.

A second example is the October 2001 Amendment, which aims to 'seek co-operation of people in protection and development of forests' (government of Madhya Pradesh 2001). To enforce *Gram Swaraj* and to give certain rights to the *Gram Sabha* the resolution says:

1. For the constitution of a FPC, a meeting of the *Gram Sabha* should be held under section 6 of the Madhya Pradesh *Panchayati Raj Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam, 1993*, and according to the procedures laid down in the Madhya Pradesh *Gram Sabha* (procedure of meeting) rules, 2001.
2. The *Gram Sabha* has the power to approve/disapprove the committee and its executives.
3. For the coordination of activities to be executed through the micro plan, in each district, the state government shall constitute a Coordination Committee under the chairmanship of the Forest Standing Committee of the district *Panchayat*. The *Janpad Panchayat* chairperson and the district-level officers of all the concerned departments shall be the members of this committee.

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## 2.3 Change

From the above outline, it is clear that the current theory and policy focuses principally on facilitating PFM by creating administrative and political institutional frameworks conferring rights, responsibilities, and roles to local communities that will enhance livelihood options through sustainable resource use and

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empowerment. It also acknowledges the viability of local knowledge in strengthening management practices.

Visible changes, brought about by the development of theory and policy in the field of PFM include the establishment of:

1. JFMCs based on *partnership models* that promote formal natural resource management partnerships between the public administration and local user groups. Currently, Madhya Pradesh, as compared to any other state, has brought the largest forest area under JFM. By 2000, the state had the greatest number of JFMCs, 12 038 in number, covering an area of 5 8000 000.00 hectares (National Forestry Action Programme 2001).
2. The Constitutional empowerment of PRIs that transfers the responsibility of management and development of natural resources to PRIs at the district, block and village levels. As an indicator of bringing about a level of change in democratic participation, Madhya Pradesh has had four rounds of PRI elections.

However, specific to decentralization theories and policies, ground realities have not noted any significant changes in the level of participation; in the level of livelihood opportunities; and, in an increase in resource base.

For instance, the evaluation report of the World Bank highlighted significant loopholes in the entire project (ODI report, 2001). It was found that community participation is still to be fully realized in JFM in Madhya Pradesh and the Forest Department still overrides the committees in a lot of decision-making and planning. Examples include:

1. The 2001 guidelines required the committees to be registered under the Societies Registration Act, which definitely gives them a legal existence. However, the registration is with the Forest Department, which is problematic. The Forest Department might take its own time to register committees as a result of which the benefits accrue to them much later than their actual setup.
2. The Forest Department has all the rights of removal of any member of the Executive Committee without even the approval of the VFCs or FPCs.
3. The selection of forest area also lies with the Forest Department, which has resulted in severing the

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traditional linkage of the community with the forest.

4. The office of the secretary of the committee is reserved for a representative of the Forest Department. The office bearer exercises important functions related to record keeping, budget allocation, etc. In most instances it has been found that this reservation makes the implementation of JFM less transparent and ambiguous.<sup>5</sup>
5. The projects of JFM are usually target-oriented where the Forest Department decides how many committees have to be formed in a year and what projects are to be assigned to the villages. This makes the process very arbitrary as the village members are left with no decision-making space. Even the micro plans are prepared with close consultation with the Forest Department and not with village-level institutions. The micro plans have not been incorporated in the working plans and thus management does not suit local conditions.

Explanations given for the same were that the committees have less technical knowledge to select the forest areas or decide on various programmes regarding forests. This makes the powers of the Forest Department more pronounced in the committee decisions.

In the context of PRIs according to Behar and Kumar 2002, significant changes have not been experienced, as *Gram Sabhas* have not evolved fully, rather critics would say that they are not workable in the field and weaken the *Panchayats*. According to Behar and Kumar 2002 the reasons cited for the low level of changes include:

1. Low level of participation and awareness from *Gram Sabha* due to reasons like strong caste, class, and local politics. It was also found that a high majority of people seemed completely ignorant.
2. Elite domination in the decision-making process - it was assessed that the sarpanches and other influential people still dominate the decision-making processes. Also villagers live in a close-knit community, which is based on interpersonal relationships, hence open confrontation is not possible. The voices of the poor, marginalized, and

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<sup>5</sup> The 2001 guidelines aim at addressing this lacuna by providing the space for the election of the secretary from the village SC/ST population and limiting the role of the forest guard to providing technical advice.

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- women remain unheard. Secondly, the traditionally influential leaders from upper castes and landowners dominate influential positions. The new *sarpanches*, elected from the non-traditional groups' face stiff resistance to their plans and developmental activities.
3. Lack of transparency and accountability caused due to the fact that most of the time the *Gram Sabha* is not aware of the *Gram Panchayat* functioning and there is a communication gap between these two bodies. Mechanisms and procedures for making the *Gram Panchayat* and other bodies accountable and transparent to the *Gram Sabha* exist within the *Panchayati Raj* system. For instance, the *Panchayat* should get the approval of the *Gram Sabha* for identifying beneficiaries for different government programmes. Similarly the *Gram Panchayat* budget needs to be presented to the *Gram Sabha* for approval. However, due to low awareness and weak participation they are unable to exercise their rights.

The causes behind the low level of change brought about by PFM and at times it having the opposite effect have also been highlighted in numerous other studies.

For instance, in the context of empowerment, participatory institutions have been ridden by the problem of 'elite capture' leading to social and economic inequalities, leaving the poor exposed to the mercies of the local overlords (Bardhan 2003).

Similarly, in administrative decentralization, the criterion for establishing rights in the commons through membership in groups like JFMCs or some other formal system have been cited as a means to formalize systems of inclusion and exclusion, which in many instances favour elite or male domination (Agarwal 2001).

The process of decentralization has also been observed as not facilitating a genuine shift in the power structure often resulting in the extension of state control to where it did not exist before or in an increase of the power of the state at the village level (Hobley 1996; Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003).

Lastly the capacity of local institutions to undertake the technical, institutional, and organizational aspects of devolved forest management requires strengthening to ensure that the benefits of

the decentralization process are appropriately imparted. The lack of this capacity has been attributed to specific historical experiences, which include the loss of local knowledge to manage forests that consist of altered species planted under centralized forestry. Also, centralized forestry has led to the breakdown of traditional management institutions and has caused local knowledge and institutional forms to develop in directions that are not helpful for an expanded set of rights to forest management (Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003).

Apart from the socio-political causes limiting change, secure property rights are considered an important means to ensure the effectiveness of participatory NRM theories and policies. Property rights are considered an incentive to conserve and ensure sustainable resource use. However, even though secure and well-defined property rights are an important element of effective participatory governance and have a theoretical and historical basis to support the claim of local rights, there has been no change in the nature of property rights with the advent of participatory governance. For example, it is interesting to note that the law on forest produce in Madhya Pradesh has still not been amended to grant ownership rights to the *Gram Sabha* especially in scheduled areas (ELDF 2005).

Property rights that traditionally belonged to local communities were converted to state ownership rights. The basis for investing property rights in the state may stem from the notion of the 'Tragedy of the Commons', due to which foresters seem to assume that they have a moral authority to own and regulate control over all the forests. Their role is justified as it claims to represent the larger 'public interest'. Claims to technical knowledge and superiority of scientific management (Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003) and the legitimate power to stop illegal activities are also invoked to justify state-owned property rights.

The conversion of traditional property rights to state rights has also been traced to the emergence of powerful leaders presiding over large territories that transcended traditional 'villages'. Natural resources thus came to be regarded as sources of revenue instead of merely sources of sustenance for the local population.

This break also facilitated the gradual breakdown of internalized social mechanisms for controlling resource demands. This process was further exacerbated by the advent of colonialism, which required the replacement of local institutions with colonial



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administrators to facilitate natural resource-based revenue generation (Bromley 2003).

On the other hand, the claim to the moral authority to manage and protect forests is also stated by local communities on the basis of their efforts to protect forests and a long history of forest management along with traditional rights (Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003). The effectiveness of this claim is also supported by literature on common property rights, which highlights that local communities have effective mechanisms and sanctions (traditional) in place to regulate rights and ensure fulfilment of duties and to effectively exclude those not belonging to the group (Bromley 2003).

What is important to note from the lack of change, be it in the context of empowerment or in the nature of property rights, is that it is the construct of the state/powerful groups or its definition and justification of 'problems' or solutions that is enforced. Thus many have questioned whether the introduction of participatory theories and policies on their own can facilitate the promised change. Such arguments highlight the challenge of encouraging participation without addressing the fact that in rural areas a large number of people are dependent on a small number of local, powerful elites and without addressing the rights entitlements that underlie political structures in rural areas (Johnson 2003).

Thus, power structures have an important role to play in the implementation of stakeholder perceptions and may at times limit or influence the perception formation process of the marginalized groups or those seeking to secure power. Thus the failure of 'theory' and 'policy' in facilitating 'change' may have important implications on the process of 'problem' definition. It may result in stakeholders making strategic choices in order to be inline with the more powerful stakeholders, thereby enhancing their power and/or avoiding further marginalization.

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## CHAPTER 3 Perceptions

As stated above, the perceptions of the PRIs on issues related to the participatory space provided by JFM and its impact on livelihoods was studied in 12 villages in the district of Harda.

In order to provide a specific context for the PRI perceptions, Section 3.1 provides an overview of the villages studied and their level of dependence on the forestry sector. Section 3.2 elucidates PRI perceptions on JFM in Harda. These perceptions are based on an analysis of responses gathered at all three levels of the PRIs and the village community. Perceptions have been analysed in the context of the impact of JFM in addressing the priorities of forestry sustainability and social justice.

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### 3.1 Profile of the study area

The study area falls under the three blocks of Harda, Timarni, and Khirkia.

#### Timarni block

The Timarni block of the Harda district has the maximum area under forest in the district. The forests under Timarni are categorized mainly as reserved forests. Majority of the forest villages are located in this block. The involvement of the Forest Department is thus much higher in this block as compared to the other two blocks.

The study villages under this block are Aamba, Bori, Dhanpadah, Dhega, Keli, Rawang, and Sigampur.

The social composition in the block includes *Korkus* and *Gonds* (the prevalent tribes), and other castes like *Gwalis* and *Golans*. The block does not have a significant population of members from the high caste.

The influence of the *Shramik Adivasi Sangathan* (a Betul-based mass tribal organization) is also the highest in this block.

#### Harda block

In the Harda block the forest area is mainly around the River Narmada. The study villages include Dheki and Unchaan. After the submergence of the villages due to the Narmada valley projects many of the villagers have encroached on forestland. The

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NVDA (Narmada Valley Development Authority) has worked in this block to improve the status of forests and the status of the rehabilitated villages.

The social composition in the block includes members of the higher castes (Rajputs and Bishnois) as well as tribal communities. Thus, intercaste conflict is most visible in the villages of this block.

### Khirkhya block

The forest cover in the Khirkhya block is also quite high and is categorized mainly under 'protected forest'. The study villages in this block include Bheempura, Chikalpat, and Jhannadeh.

The social composition in this block comprises a significant tribal population (Korkus and Gonds) and a low level of high-caste communities.

Like Timarni the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan has established a degree of influence in the forest areas of Khirkhya. However, the MTO (Mass Tribal Organization) does not have many active supporters in this block. The block profile is provided in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1** Block profile

Particulars	Timarni	Harda	Khirkhya	Total
Total Population (2001 P.)	1, 45,367	1, 90,264	1, 38,543	4, 74,174
Revenue Villages	135	196	195	526
Forest Villages	44	1	--	45
Total Villages	179	197	195	571
Area (Sq. Km.)	822.09	998.41	823.82	2644.32
Total Panchayats	61	59	61	181
Total Agricultural Land (Ha.)	56,101	65,605	53,015	1,74,721
Irrigated Land (Ha.)	41,820	48,275	20,623	1, 10,718

Source: <http://harda.nic.in/> (10.07.04)

Of the 12 study villages studied (see Annexure I), nine are revenue villages and three are forest villages. Chikalpat, Bheempura, Dheki, and Unchaan have VFCs in place, whereas the other seven villages have established FPCs. The JFMC in Dhanpadah has been dissolved.

The villages, which have a heterogeneous social composition, include Rawang, Bori, Chikalpat, Dhanpadah, Dheki, Keli, and Sigampur.

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The villages that have a strong elite domination include Dhanpadah, Bheempura, and Dheki.

The villages, which have a strong presence of the MTO, include Rawang, Bori, and Dhega. The villages of Keli and Bheempura also support the MTO but do not have any active members.

Lastly, the contribution of NTFPs in the income stream of the sampled villages is an important indicator to determine the level of importance that local communities attach to forest management. This is based on the assumption that if local communities benefit significantly from forestry resources then they will attach greater priority to manage forests at a local level. It was observed that villages with a higher level of dependence on NTFPs had a greater interest in their management and thus had stronger perceptions related to the impact of current forest management policies.

In this context it was assessed that the overall contribution of NTFPs to the total annual household income is 11.08%. In the forest villages this contribution was assessed to be higher, i.e., 15.06% of the average annual income as compared to a 10.43% contribution in the annual income of revenue villages. A further analysis highlights that the contribution of NTFPs in the income stream of villages, which have a high annual income, was lower as compared to villages that have a low annual income. For example in Dhanpadah the annual average household income is Rs 34 000 and the contribution of forest resources is Rs 720 (2.12%), whereas in Keli the annual average household income is Rs 7300 with forestry resources contributing Rs 1600 (21.92%) to the annual household income.

The contribution of NTFPs in the income stream of the sampled villages is highlighted in Table 3.2.

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**Table 3.2** Contribution of NTFP to Local Income

Village	No. of Households	Total Annual Income Per HH (In Rs) <sup>6</sup>	Annual Per-HH Income From NTFP (In Rs) <sup>7</sup>	Percentage Dependence
Aamba	46	13500	2990	22.15
Rawang	184	11000	2020	18.36
Keli	157	7300	1600	21.92
Bori	48	10000	1000	10.00
Dhega	91	9400	1200	12.77
Siganpur	65	32000	2000	6.25
Dhanpadah	58	34000	720	2.12
Jhapnadeh	57	8300	1180	14.22
Bheempura	62	11500	1750	15.22
Chikalpat	100	18000	1400	7.78
Dheki	36	15000	2480	16.53
Unchaan	53	25000	1140	4.56
Overall		14660	1625	11.08

Source: TERI field survey and SANKET field report

## 3.2 PRI perceptions on JFM

This section highlights the perceptions of the representatives of the three levels of the PRIs [District level (Zilla); Intermediate level (Janpad); Village level (Panchayat)].

The perceptions have been analysed according to the responses under the broader issues of forest sustainability and social justice, which are the two objectives of JFM. The respondents were also asked to provide their perceptions on the appropriate institutional form that can effectively address current problems and thus facilitate sustainable forestry management.

### 3.2.1 Space in the decision-making process

Perceptions under the JFM objective of facilitating social justice have been evaluated in terms of the extent to which local communities have been provided the space to participate in the decision-making process.

In the context of participation, this paper highlights how the PRIs perceive JFMCs to have empowered marginalized communities vis-à-vis the elite community and the extent to which the village

<sup>6</sup> Source: Sanket Field Team Village Report

<sup>7</sup> TERI field survey, March 2004 to May 2004. Total amount of each NTFP collected, multiplied by the Selling Price of the product.

community, as a whole, has been empowered vis-à-vis the FD to participate in the decision-making process related to forest management.

Marginalized community vis-à-vis the dominant community:

In the context of the impact of JFM on the empowerment of the marginalized communities vis-à-vis the dominant community, perceptions varied amongst the three levels of the PRI institutions.

Perceptions at the district level:

At the district level, all three respondents of the *Zilla Panchayat* stated that, on paper, JFM provided the space for the equitable participation of all the community groups. Equitable participation is ensured as the membership in the JFMCs and its Executive Committee is as per the JFM guidelines, which ensures the representation of the marginalized groups, i.e., women and the SC/STs.

In practice, however, the perception of the PRI respondents varied between membership providing a nominal space in the decision-making procedure and membership providing a space for a dynamic and interactive process in which the marginalized groups have an active voice and an influence in the decision-making process.

For instance, the PRI representative from the Timarni block perceived the representation of the marginalized groups in the JFMCs as a case of *angutha chaap*, i.e., nominal representation. He stated that the 'elite', i.e., groups that were of a higher caste, or that had a greater level of economic wealth or knowledge, dominated the decision-making process. Similarly, the representative from the Khirkiya block perceived the marginalized groups as not being represented in the decision-making procedure, as they did not have the '*capacity to take decisions on issues related to forestry management, development, or benefit-sharing*'.

On the other hand, the president of the *Zilla Panchayat* perceived JFM as having provided a space to facilitate participation within the community. He stated that the community was in the process of building its capacity to take decisions and in most of the villages the entire community was participating in the decision-making process.

One may thus conclude that the degree of variation between the perceptions of the president and the block representatives is based on the belief that capacity-building measures are in the process of facilitating greater participation and on the belief that elite class domination and the incapability of the marginalized communities is a hindrance to providing a space for the equitable participation of the marginalized communities.

Perceptions at the block level:

At the block level, on an average, all the PRI representatives of Timarni block perceive JFM as having provided an adequate space in the decision-making process for the marginalized groups, both on paper and in practice. For example, they perceive JFM to have facilitated '*participatory decision-making with regard to forestry management and the equitable representation of the interests of the entire community*'. In a slight variation of perception, the *Janpad Panchayat* president (from the Timarni block and from the general caste), stated that though the space for equitable participation has been provided through JFM, and is being effectively utilized in some villages, he feels that the role of the marginalized communities is still limited in the decision-making process, even though they have the capability to take decisions, as '*their mindset has not changed and they perceive the government officials and the village elite as their rulers*'. Thus participatory decision-making requires confidence building through awareness raising and education. This perception may be assessed as being based on the prevalent caste and political structures in rural areas that are believed to be the major causes that undermine the on-ground implementation of PFM.

It is important to point out that these perceptions, related to the effective representation and participation, do not take into account the lack of representation and participation of the members of the MTO and the lack of participation of women (both, a constituent part of the village community) in the decision-making process. For instance, representatives stated that, '*only those villagers capable of making decisions should be involved in the decision-making process*'. According to this perception women and the economically marginalized communities fall under the category defined as incapable due to their lack of knowledge and power to influence decision-making.

PRI representatives, from MTO dominated villages, perceived the decision-making process to be effective even though the MTO

members were not represented as they were against the Forest Department. The lack of participation of these members has important implications for the 'participatory' nature of JFM and on its long-term sustainability as it must effectively take into account the objectives and policy problems of the different stakeholder groups. Thus the perception, on membership, of the PRI representatives does not reflect a true picture of the level of participation in the decision-making procedure.

Representatives of the other two blocks (Harda and Khirkiya) perceived JFM as not having been able to provide the space for equitable representation of community interests. The respondents perceived the decision-making process as being dominated by the elite groups. For example, representatives stated, *'the decision-making process in every village was dominated by the economically powerful groups that did not take into account the voices of the weaker groups'*. The absence of a good leader was perceived as a significant deterrent to equitable participation.

Perceptions at the village level:

At the village level, a significant degree of variation is not observed among the perceptions of the PRI representatives of the three different blocks. Majority of the representatives perceived JFM as not having been able to provide the space for equitable participation between the marginalized and the dominant communities. For example, representatives of Aamba stated that *'on paper the JFMC representation was equitable, however in practice it was dominated by the traditional village heads, in both homogeneous and heterogeneous villages'*.

The perceptions of the PRI respondents were assessed to vary only in Sigampur and Dheki. In Sigampur, a tribal village, the JFM programme has been a success in addressing development needs. The representatives perceived JFMC membership to be an effective mechanism of participatory decision-making. For example, they stated that *'the voices of the entire village are heard in the JFMC and that the decision-making process is based on the issues raised by the general body'*.

In Dheki, a significant level of conflict was observed between the dominant (Bishnoi) caste and the marginalized (Korku, tribal) caste. The PRI respondents from the Bishnoi caste perceived JFM as having provided sufficient space for participation. However, the elite representatives perceive the rules for reservations for the



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marginalized groups to be a hindrance in the decision-making process as they consider them to be incapable of making decisions. On the other hand, however, perceptions of the marginalized sections state that the JFM programme has not empowered them in the context of providing a space for equitable dialogue in the decision-making process. For example, a *Korku* member of the *Gram Sabha* in Dheki where the *Bishnoi* community was observed to exercise significant power, stated that ‘it is no point for us to be present at the committee meeting as we do not have a voice, we will have to agree with whatever decisions are taken.’

**Table 3.3** Perception of PRI respondents on the ‘decision-making process.’

Marginalized community vis-à-vis the dominant community			
PRI Level	Perception	Reason	Knowledge Base
District	Nominal participation	Lack of capacity Elite domination	Lack of change Lack of change
Block	Nominal participation	Existing mindset Elite domination	Lack of change Lack of change
Village	Nominal participation	Elite domination	Lack of change
	Effective participation	Effective functioning of JFMC as per theory and guidelines.	Theory, policy and change.

Village community vis-à-vis the Forest Department:

In the context of the impact of JFM on the participation of the village community vis-à-vis the FD in the decision-making process, perceptions varied amongst the three levels of the PRI institutions.

Perceptions at the district level:

At the district level the PRI respondents perceive the balance of power in the decision-making process to be skewed towards the Forest Department. The respondents stated that the reason for the dominant role of the Forest Department could be attributed to the ‘better equipped’ capacity of the Forest Department to manage and protect forest resources. The representative of Timarni block also stated that the ‘*Forest Department did not take into account the traditional knowledge related to resource use and management in the planning process.*’ Apart from dominating the decision-making process, the Forest Department was also perceived as being unaccountable to the village community, which was resulting in excluding the community

from exercising equitable control over management and allocation decisions. For instance, representatives pointed out that a member of the Forest Department holds the office of the JFMC secretary and as the JFMC members were not aware of the mechanism of fund allocation, the activity was carried out solely by the Forest Department.

Perceptions at the block level:

At the block level it was perceived that JFM had not empowered the village community vis-à-vis the Forest Department. Perceptions related to the relationship between the village community and the Forest Department varied. For example, representatives of Harda block stated '*JFM had led to further marginalization of the weaker communities as the Forest Department collaborated with the dominant community in the village in order to ensure the functioning of the JFMC.*'

Representatives of Timarni block perceived that the relationship between the Forest Department and the village community to be based on the nature of rights that each stakeholder exercises, which in turn determines the level of power or equity in the decision-making process. In this context they stated that since the Forest Department exercises absolute ownership rights over the forest resources, they have the right to dominate decisions relating to management, or since the '*community was not given complete rights over the forest resources they should not exercise equal power.*'

The representatives of Khirkiya block stated that the '*decision-making procedure is dominated by the Forest Department due to which the needs of the community are not represented.*' Thus at the block level, it is apparent that the perceptions are based on the fact that JFM has not put in place an effective participatory framework, as all the respondents believe that the community has a role to play in management but has not been provided the same by the Forest Department.

Perceptions at the village level:

At the village level, the PRI respondents stated that a majority of the decisions taken by the JFMCs relate to forestry management and protection. In the context of such decisions, the PRI members perceived the decision-making process to be dominated by the Forest Department, as the community did not possess the technical knowledge to contribute.

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This perception is at variance from the one at the block level, i.e., it is not based on the current theory of participatory forest management that acknowledges the role of local knowledge in effective conservation and natural resource management. It is in fact based on the lack of change that the participatory forest management process is supposed to initiate.

PRI representatives of Dhanpadah village stated that they had dissolved the JFMC as the decision-making process was ‘top-down’ and was thus not representing the needs of the villagers.

The PRI respondents also stated that as the decisions did not address development needs, due to a lack of funds to address such priorities, the JFMC members often lost interest in participating in the decision-making process.

On the other hand village level respondents also perceived their relationship with the Forest Department to be at par, as they no longer paid bribes.

**Table 3.4** Perception of PRI respondents on the ‘decision-making process.’

Village community vis-à-vis the Forest Department			
PRI level	Perception	Reason	Knowledge base
District	Ineffective participation	Better capacity of the FD. Ineffective devolution by FD. Financial un-accountability of the FD	Lack of change
Block	Ineffective participation	Target driven approach has led to further marginalization Existing nature of rights skewed toward FD.	Lack of change
Village	Ineffective participation	Decisions related to technical forestry and protection. Local knowledge/priorities not taken into account.	Lack of change
	Increased participation	Reduction in corruption (bribes).	Change

### 3.2.2 Rights and ownership pattern

Regarding the issue of rights and ownership, on the whole, the perceptions of the PRI representatives at all three levels highlighted that JFM had given only concessions to the communities and not rights. They stated that the communities had been given only concessions in lieu of their traditional *nistaar* rights over fuel wood, collection of non-timber forest produce and grazing.

Perceptions at the district level:

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At the district level the PRI representatives did not perceive the JFM programme to have changed the pattern of rights and ownership over forestland and resources.

Again, on this issue the *Zilla Panchayat* president stated that JFM had provided resource use rights to the village community, whereas the other members stated that neither the ownership of forestland and resources, nor the right to use forest resources lay with the communities. The PRI members stated that the primary right to resource use should lie with the forest-dependent communities, and the failure of JFM in ensuring such rights would lead to a direct impact on local livelihoods and forest sustainability. With respect to this correlation between resource use rights and sustainability of forestry management, the representatives of Timarni block highlighted that the '*nationalisation of NTFPs had broken the link between the villagers and the forest,*' and they thus took less interest in its sustainable management and protection.

It is interesting to note that none of the perceptions related to the ownership pattern of forestland/resources questioned the lack of ownership rights. It was observed that all the responses were made only in the context of the right to resource use. In fact perceptions related to the ownership of resources were often observed to relate to the opposite end of the spectrum as compared to the demand of providing primary resource use rights to the locals. For instance, the representatives of Khirkiya block stated '*the ownership of forests should not be handed to the villagers as it would lead to complete degradation.*'

### Perceptions at the block level:

At the block level, the PRI respondents agreed that the forest dependent communities should exercise primary rights over the use of forest resources. Majority of the representatives at the block level perceive that JFM had not facilitated any such transfer of rights.

Representatives of Harda and Timarni blocks stated that the villagers had traditionally exercised such rights over resource use in the form of *nistaar*. They did not perceive the advent of JFM, which brought about the formalization of such rights, to have resulted in a greater level of empowerment of the local communities as it had brought about no change.

### Perceptions at the village level:

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At the village level all the PRI respondents perceive JFM to have provided only concessions and not rights over resource use.

For instance, in Rawang, where the level of dependence on forestry resources is significantly high, i.e., 18.36% of the annual household income is derived from NTFPs and there is a strong presence of the mass tribal organization, the PRI representatives perceive JFM as not only not having provided rights to resource use but also claim that it has converted traditional rights into concessions. For instance, representatives stated that *'we have been given concessions in terms of bringing head loads of fuelwood, these used to be our rights.'*

There is some difference in opinion regarding why concessions and not rights have been given. The *Janpad Panchayat* and the *Zilla Panchayat* officials of the PRI feel that the community is not ready to exercise rights over the forest, as they are not well equipped in terms of education and it will take some time for them to gain the capacity to understand all the issues regarding the management of forests. For instance, representatives of the *Janpad Panchayat* state *'since the community lacks the ability to take decisions keeping all the aspects in mind, the Forest Department has to take the decisions on their behalf. Thus, the Forest Department needs to retain more power to implement the decisions that are taken.'* The village *Panchayat* officials of Dhega and Bheempura also share a similar view. They feel that along with the ability to take a balanced decision the community also lacks the technical knowledge required to manage the forests sustainably. The officials feel that the Forest Department is best suited for taking decisions regarding the conservation and protection of forests.

The PRI officials at the village level, however, feel that the Forest Department is not ready to devolve decision-making powers to the community and thus complete rights were not given. The stature of the forest guard as *'Maharaj'* would get threatened if more rights were given to the community. According to them, in the villages where the department could not rule over the community, the JFM programme has failed. For instance, the large farmers in Dhanpadah were too powerful for the Forest Department and thus the JFMC formed in the village was dissolved. Another example is the village Unchaan where representatives feel that *'the loss of interest on the part of the Forest Department in the JFMC of Unchaan was because the forest guard could not impose his decisions on the villagers.'*

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**Table 3.5** Perception of PRI respondents on the 'rights and ownership pattern.'

PRI level	Perception	Reason	Knowledge base
District	No change	Lack of local capacity to exercise rights. Policy and implementation process does not give rights.	Lack of change
Block	No transfer/increase in rights	Lacking local capacity to exercise rights.	Lack of change
Village	JFM to have converted rights into concessions.  No increase in rights	Existing restrictions on resource use/collection.  FD resistant to share power.	Lack of change

*Benefit-Sharing Mechanism*

As described above, forestry resources contribute significantly to the income stream of the forest-dependent communities. For example, the overall contribution of the forestry sector to the total annual household income is 11.08%. In the forest villages this contribution was assessed to be higher, i.e., 15.06% of the average annual income as compared to 10.43% contribution to the annual income of revenue villages. Effective benefit-sharing mechanisms in this context are essential for fulfilling the objective of social justice outlined in the objectives of the JFM programme. Secondly, an effective benefit-sharing mechanism also ensures sustainable resource use. It thus also has important implications on the objective of achieving forest sustainability. Perceptions related to the extent to which JFM has addressed the issues of providing equitable sharing of benefits include:

Perceptions at the district level

At the district level, some of the PRI representatives stated that the design of the benefit-sharing mechanism of the JFM programme was equitable, but due to lack of awareness, the community is not able to avail of its benefits. For example, representatives of Timarni block stated that *'as the villagers had exercised traditional rights over resource use for personal consumption, the benefit-sharing mechanism was restricted to the benefits from nationalized products, labour, and the allocation of money for development purposes. The benefit-sharing mechanism under JFM is in place to facilitate the allocation of such benefits. However, the low level of awareness amongst the villagers led to an increasing level of unaccountability on the part of the Forest Department staff due*

*to which the mechanism was not being implemented.'*

Perceptions at the block level:

Representatives at the block level perceived the JFM as inadequate in securing rights through benefit sharing, as it was not designed for the equal distribution of forest benefits. For example, representatives of Timarni block stated '*the design of the benefit-sharing mechanism under the JFM programme is such that the Forest Department would gain more than the community.*' They stated that the benefits to the community are limited to wage labour and some development activities.

Perceptions at the village level:

Majority of the village-level *Panchayat* officials feel that the benefit sharing from the JFM programme has not been equal and has remained skewed in favour of the Forest Department. For instance, representatives of Rawang stated '*benefit-sharing mechanism under the JFM programme is not in favour of the community, as the Forest Department reaps all the benefits of the protection provided by the community.*' They also stated that '*a major share of the profits from the timber harvest should be given to the community and not to the Forest Department.*'

Another point to note is that at the community level, the respondents stated that benefits were lacking in terms of institutional support. For example, the JFMC members put a significant effort into protection activities and do not get any benefits or compensation when they come to harm or when their crops are raided by wild boars.

### 3.2.3 Conservation of forest resources

#### Status of forest

Perceptions at all three levels of the PRIs conform to the view that the status of the forest improved significantly in the initial years of JFM. Wherever there has not been any improvement the officials agree that the rate of degradation has reduced.

Perceptions at the district level:

The PRI officials at the district-level feel that the status of forests has improved to a large extent due to the JFM programme. They are of the opinion that the forests in the district had degraded before the start of the JFM programme and the protection done by the community in collaboration with the FD has led to an overall improvement in the condition of the forests.

The respondents at the district level are all literate and well versed with the theory of participatory natural resource management and the role that JFM envisages to implement it. Their perception that the status of the forest has improved is also based on the importance attached to the level of collaboration between the FD and the community, which according to them has resulted in lesser incidences of forest fires and illegal logging and in controlled grazing.

Perceptions at the block level:

The perceptions of the PRI representatives, on the status of the forests, vary between the blocks, i.e., majority of the respondents of the Timarni block (four out of five) perceive JFM to have improved the status of the forest, respondents of the Harda block perceive either no change or a deterioration in the status of the forest after the initial years.

In Timarni, the causes behind the improved status varied between the respondents. For example, according to the tribal respondents, the status of the forest had improved due to the increased support provided by the community in terms of controlling fires and open grazing. On the other hand, other representatives stated that the reason behind the improved status of the forest could be attributed to the fear factor that the FD officials instilled among the community and not due to an increase in awareness about the importance of sustainable forest resource use and the link between the forest and the locals. Statements related to such perceptions include, '*In areas having a large MTO following, changes in the status of the forest are not visible as there was no fear of the FD*'.

Thus as compared to the other perceptions, this perception is based on the knowledge of change in the status of the forest, however this change has not been attributed to the knowledge of theory, according to which conservation is facilitated with increased awareness and a sense of local ownership.

In the Khirkiya block, the PRI representatives perceive the status of the forest to have improved significantly with the advent of the JFM programme. For example, a PRI representative stated that, '*the tree cover has increased and so has the quality of the teak plants or bamboo clumps in the forest.*'

A variance in the perception was observed in the representatives of the Harda block. The PRI representatives of this block



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perceived the JFM programme as having a minimal effect on the status of forests in the region. For instance, representatives stated that, *'forests had improved but it was because of the activities of NVDA and not the JFM programme.'*

On the other hand, some PRI representatives perceive JFM as a complete failure as far as its impact on the improvement of the status of the forest is concerned. This contrasting perception may be attributed to the fact that the villagers of Unchaan have encroached into the forestland due to the submergence of their original village. With no other space for establishing their homestead these villagers, along with many others in the block, have encroached on forestland resulting in its degradation. Even though JFMCs have been established in these villages there is no available land for plantation and there is also a low level of interest due to the low level of forest dependency, (income from NTFP contributes only 4.56% to the average annual household income).

Other respondents, including one from Timarni, perceived JFM to have improved the status of the forest in the initial years, i.e., at the time when the programme was funded and when it was introduced among the communities with its promises. They stated that the failure in delivering the promised benefits had resulted in loss of interest among the communities due to which forest protection activities undertaken by the communities, including protection provided to the plantations have deteriorated.

#### Perceptions at the village level:

The PRI officials at the village level perceived the JFM programme to have brought about a significant level of improvement in the status of the forest in the initial years due to the fact that it promised significant benefits to the locals, increased their level of awareness, and under an effective leader the programme had ensured effective partnership resulting in local ownership of the programme and its objectives. However, they stated that in the recent years the status of the forest was once again on a decline. In the villages dominated by MTO, such as Bori, Dhega, and Rawang, some of the PRI officials blame the MTO movement for the deterioration of the forest conditions. In Dheki, in the Harda block, the PRI officials feel that the lack of an able leadership is one of the causes of the failure of the JFM programme. Respondents from the villages of Amba, Keli, Bheempura, and Jhapnadeh stated that lack of local varieties in

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the plantations had caused the locals to lose interest in the programme. For example, respondents from Bheempura stated, *'Reduction in the rate of forest degradation had not benefited the local communities, as the tree species of their interest were not grown'*. This is an important perception as it corresponds to the fact that JFM has not been effective in implementing the theories and policies behind PFM, which include addressing local needs and which recognize the importance of traditional or local knowledge in management-planning.

In Unchaan, the officials feel that the JFM programme never had any effect on the overall forest conditions. The forests had improved to some extent under the NVDA. On the other hand, in Sigampur, the community as well as the PRI officials feel that the forests have improved to a large extent due to the JFM programme and the JFMC is still functioning properly for the improvement of the forests as well as the development of the villages. The positive perception of the impact of the JFM programme on the status of the forests in Sigampur may be attributed to the effective functioning of the JFMC. It was observed that of the 12 studied villages the Sigampur JFMC had facilitated development work, it had increased the area under bamboo plantation, which has resulted in providing labour opportunities and in addressing local livelihoods based on bamboo products. The JFMC has thus succeeded in addressing the objective of social justice in the village, which has resulted in a greater degree of interest in forest management and protection.

**Table 3.6** Perception of PRI respondents on 'conservation of forest resources.'

Status of Forest			
PRI Level	Perception	Reason	Knowledge Base
District	Improved status	Effective collaboration between the FD and the community.	Theory and policy
Block	Improved status	a. Effective collaboration. b. Fear of FD	
	Decline in status after initial years	Lack of incentive.	
	No improvement	Forest conservation not a priority.	
Village	Decline in status after initial years.	Lack of incentives, leadership, MTO impact, exclusion of local priorities in the management.	
	Improved status.	Effective functioning of JFMC.	

## Level of Protection

### Perceptions at the district level:

Respondents of the *Zilla Panchayat* perceive that forest protection under the JFM programme has been of a very high standard. They stated that the incidents of forest fires and of illegal felling had reduced throughout the district. The *Zilla Panchayat* president states that, *'The forest protection activities in the district have been very effective and have improved the standard of living of the forest-dependent communities'*.

### Perceptions at the block level:

The PRI representative of the Khirkiya block also stated that the JFMCs had been effective in protecting the forest plantations from open grazing by increasing the level of awareness amongst the communities due to which villagers were now grazing their cattle in identified compartments.

The members of the Timarni *Janpad Panchayat*, however, do not attribute the increase in protection to the effectiveness of the JFM programme. They perceive that protection is carried out due to the fear of the FD. For example, respondents stated, *'All these improvements are not due to the increase in awareness within the community but it is mainly because of the fear of the FD officials. In regions where there is a significant MTO presence these changes are not visible'*. They also feel that the activities of the MTO in the block are one of the reasons for which forest protection has declined. However, the *Janpad Panchayat* member of Sigampur feels that the community is aware of the requirement of forest protection and the whole village is involved in the protection activities.

The *Janpad Panchayat* members of the Harda block feel that forest protection has not been effective. For example, representatives stated that, *'Demarcation of forestland is not taken into account and people are free to collect NTFPs or graze their cattle anywhere in the forests. Illegal felling of trees has also continued freely.'*

### Perceptions at the village level:

At the village level the PRI officials perceive JFM to have facilitated effective protection. However, the community lost interest in the protection due to the lack of development of villages, lack of recognition, unwanted risk of protection as well as the lack of available NTFPs in the forests. For example

representatives of Chikalpat stated that, *'it was not safe for the community to go to the forests as the poachers carry weapon and they do not.'*

In Unchaan, representatives stated that, *'After the NVDA activities the forests have declined continually and at present nothing is available in it.'*

In Dheki, which has a significant level of elite domination, the cause of the decline in protection activities was attributed to an ineffective local dispute resolution mechanism. The JFMC members (from the Bishnoi community) stated that they were weary of restricting the tribal communities from illegal collection of forest resources as they resorted to the TWD (Tribal Welfare Department) for dispute resolution and not to the JFMC or the village sarpanch (see Box 2). They stated that in such cases the ruling favoured the tribal communities and the Forest Department did not provide any support, thus undermining the local institutions and deterring any further protection to be carried out at the local level. On the other hand, the ineffectiveness may also be attributed to 'elite' domination in the resolution process leading to the marginalization of tribal interests.

**Box 2: Ineffective Dispute Resolution Mechanism**

**Decline in participatory protection due to ineffective local dispute resolution mechanism.**

The case mentioned here relates to an incident where the JFM president allegedly stopped tribal women from illegal collection. He was then reported to the TWD for attempted sexual harassment and was not supported by the FD in his attempt to protect forest resources. The PRI/JFM respondent stated that the incidents has proved to be a deterrent to any further attempt to protect the forest from illegal activities.

In the village of Rawang, the cause of the decline in the level of protection was attributed mainly to a lack of livelihood options, and due to the lack of partnership between the villagers. For example, the non-MTO representatives stated that they could not restrict local resource use when people had no other livelihood options. Secondly, they stated that the forests were being degraded (due to cultivation) by the MTO followers who were being instigated by their leaders to undertake illegal activities. On the other hand, representatives who are members of the MTO perceived JFM to have caused internal conflict between the villagers due to demarcation of forest area. Thus, in this case the divide in the village community was stated as hindering effective

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partnership essential for forest protection.

The PRI officials of Sigampur have an absolutely opposite view on this issue. They feel that the level of protection has been very good and has remained so over a period of 10 years. They feel that the results are also visible, as the forests, especially the bamboo forests in the region, have improved a lot. They state that, *'Forest fire incidents has markedly declined. Bamboo forests have improved a lot after the flowering that occurred a few years back at Harda'*. As a matter of fact there has not been a single report of a forest fire from the region in the last one year and the volume of bamboo collected in the Rahetgaon depot (the nearest depot of the region) is increasing every year.

**Table 3.7** Perception of PRI respondents on 'conservation of forest resources.'

Level of Protection			
PRI Level	Perception	Reason	Knowledge Base
District	High level of protection	Effective collaboration	Theory, policy & change
Block	Effective protection	a. Increase in awareness. b. Fear of FD.	a. Theory & change b. Lack of change
	Ineffective protection	No regulation.	
Village	Decline in protection after initial years.	Lack of incentive and security, ineffective dispute resolution system, lack of livelihood alternatives, lack of intra-village partnership.	
	Effective protection	Effective functioning of JFMC	

### 3.3 Definition of problems

This section aims at highlighting the problems related to the current process of forest management in the district of Harda.

As stated in the introduction, in order to be effective PFM must provide a 'space' for local stakeholders within which they can prioritize and define objectives and problems related to forestry management. JFM, which attempts at providing such a space through a partnership model, is an example of implementing PFM. It attempts at ensuring local participation in forest management in collaboration with the Forest Department through implementation of participatory micro planning; decision-making; and through a greater access to and control

over forest resources. It also attempts at ensuring the participation of marginalized communities within the village through reservation and membership in the JFMC.

Thus the definition of problems is based on the perceptions of the PRIs on issues related to the extent to which JFM has created a 'space' for local communities to participate in ensuring forest sustainability (conservation) and social justice (participation in the decision-making process and rights and ownership of forest resources).

Based on the discussion above, one may conclude that the PRIs do not perceive the current process of forest management in Harda to have provided a space for local communities to ensure forest sustainability or social justice. The following were defined as the main problems causing a hindrance in the effective implementation of participatory forest management.

### 3.3.1 Space in the decision-making process

At all three levels, the PRI respondents stated that JFM had been ineffective in creating a space for the active participation of marginalized and village communities in the decision-making process related to forest management.

The policy problem may thus be defined as 'ineffective participation.'

At the district level the causes identified for ineffective participation include:

1. Entrenched elite domination at the local level.
2. Lack of capacity of the marginalized communities caused by illiteracy and unawareness.
3. Superior capability of the Forest Department to undertake forest management.
4. Financial un-accountability of the Forest Department.

At the block level the causes for ineffective participation were attributed to:

1. Lacking capacity of local communities to exercise active participation. Factors influencing the low capacity include – a 'mindset' that does not question existing power structures; and, the existing nature of ownership rights that favours the dominance of the Forest Department.

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2. Entrenched elite domination.
3. Target driven approach leading to the collaboration of the elite and the Forest Department has further reduced the participation of marginalized communities.

At the village level the causes for ineffective participation were attributed to:

1. Entrenched elite domination in the decision-making process.
2. Superior capability of the Forest Department to undertake management and protection. This indicates that the JFM process has not fostered a local sense of ownership, or a participatory means of incorporating local knowledge in the management of forest resources.
3. Exclusion of local priorities in the planning process.
4. Lack of incentives

### 3.3.2 Rights and ownership pattern

The PRI perceptions highlight that the current forest management process has not impacted the nature of rights over forest resources in any way that will increase the level of power exercised by the local communities. According to the theory behind PFM insecure rights to forestry resources is responsible for ineffective participation of local communities and to the low level of local ownership of management institutions.

Thus the policy problem in this context may be defined as 'insecure rights to forestry resources.'

At the district level the reasons identified for the lack of change in the rights and ownership pattern include:

1. Lack of capacity within the local community to exercise such rights.
2. Policy and implementation framework was not appropriate to facilitate a transfer of rights and ownership to the local communities.

At the block level, the causes identified include:

1. Lack of capacity within the local community to exercise such rights.

### Benefit-sharing mechanisms

The PRI respondents highlighted that the current benefit-sharing policy was skewed in favour of the Forest Department and was thus not equitable. The benefit-sharing mechanism related to timber was highlighted as a special example. The PRI respondents stated *.the JFMC spent maximum funds on the protection of timber; the Forest Department however appropriates the larger chunk of the benefits of its harvest.'*

A second problem highlighted as causing inequity in the benefit-sharing mechanism relates to the fact that the community is not compensated for the support it provides in protection, i.e., in terms of physical security and for the loss of crops to increased wildlife.

### 3.3.3 Conservation of forest resources

In terms of the impact of JFM in facilitating forest conservation, respondents stated that the status of the forest and protection had improved, especially in the initial years. However, currently, majority of the respondents at the block and village level stated that conservation efforts were in a decline.

Thus the policy problem in this case may be defined as 'a decline in conservation initiatives.'

The reasons identified for the decline include:

At the block level the reasons were attributed to:

1. Ineffective regulation.
2. Lack of incentive to conserve forest resources due to declining benefits.
3. Forest conservation a low priority.

At the village level the reasons were attributed to:

1. Lack of incentives in terms of benefits and security.
2. The impact of the MTO.
3. Exclusion of local priorities from the management agenda.
4. Ineffective local dispute resolution system.
5. Lack of alternative livelihood opportunities.
6. Lack of intra-village partnership.



### 3.4 Appropriate institutional forms: PRI or JFMC

In order to address the problems defined above, the PRI respondents recommend that the following factors must be taken into account to ensure effective PFM.

- An able leader is required in the Forest Department, who can take the lead and guide the Forest Department staff as well as the community.
- The committees need to be financially strengthened so much so that they can take up certain activities without waiting for the Forest Department money to arrive.
- The members of the committee have to be given certain powers so that they can punish a criminal if caught red-handed without waiting for the Forest Department staff to step in.
- The forest watchers and also the other members need to be given some security when they move into the forest for protection to guard them from mishaps that may occur. The security can be in terms of weapons being provided or in terms of certain insurances to protect them.

In terms of the institutional structure required to implement effective PFM, none of the PRI officials' feel that the JFMC should be completely replaced by the village *Panchayat* or the *Gram Sabha*, even though they are the people's body. However, about 37.5% of them feel that the PRI should be involved in forest management to ensure proper participation of the community and also the monitoring of the JFMC accounts to ensure transparency. The rest believe that PRIs should not be involved in any form.

At the community level, the perceptions highlighted that the members were vehemently against giving the charge of forest management to the *Gram Sabha* or the village *Panchayat*. They perceived the PRI as being corrupt and dominated by the elite at the village level. They fear that giving PRIs a role in forestry management will stop them from getting whatever benefits they are getting from the forests and it would also lead to the unabated plunder of forest resources.

Thus, PRIs are not perceived as the appropriate institution to resolve the identified policy problems and facilitate participatory forestry management due to the following reasons:

- Lack of capacity to facilitate forest management – PRIs are not perceived to have the technical knowledge or the

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resources (financial and human) to manage forest resources. The respondents also stated that the role of the Forest Department was essential in effective forest management as it had the capacity to instil fear in the local communities. The 'fear factor' was identified by some as being essential to ensure regulation and avoid anarchy.

- Current ineffectiveness in providing social justice – PRIs are not considered as effective in providing a space for local communities to participate in the decision-making process or for providing secure rights to resources due to politicisation of issues, elite domination, in-capable leadership caused due to reservation, and corruption.
- No perceived overlap of institutions – the PRI respondents did not identify any overlap or conflict between JFMCs (Joint Forest Management Committees) and PRIs.

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## CHAPTER 4 Profile of Study Villages

### 4.1 Profile of Villages

Village	Type of Decentralized Institutions	Communities	Distinguishing features	Forest Type
Aamba (FV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPC</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted</li> </ul>	Korku, Golan, Harijan	The village (a forest village) has more or less equal population of Korku and Golan communities. The PRI headquarter is at Badwani and the Sarpanch does not from the village. The Koshaddyaksh and Sarpanch are from different political party and so not go well	Dry deciduous teak forests. RF
Rawang (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPC</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Gond, Harijan, Gwali, Golan	The village has a heterogeneous social composition with all the communities in similar proportions. There is some amount of inter-community conflict present in the village. About 15 – 16 households are active followers of the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan (an MTO). The PRI headquarter is in the village but the Sarpanch is from a forest village (Lodhidhana). The Gram Sabha Koshaddyaksh and Sarpanch go along well.	Dry deciduous teak forests
Keli (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPC, December, 1991</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Gwali, Harijan	It is a heterogeneous revenue village. It is the PRI headquarter. Being close to Rawang has many MTO sympathisers, but no active members. Gram Sabha Koshaddyaksh and Sarpanch go along very well	Dry deciduous teak forests
Bori (FV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPC, August, 1991</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Gond, Harijan, Gwali	The village is a heterogeneous forest village with strong MTO influence. The PRI headquarter is in the village. There is no inter-community conflict. Conflict of interests between the Gram Sabha Koshaddyaksh and Sarpanch.	Dry deciduous teak and bamboo forests
Dhega (FV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPC</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Gwali	Heterogeneous forest village with very strong MTO influence. The village has its PRI headquarter at Bori. The villagers had conflicts with the FD at a point in time. Even the DFO had to face trouble. Gram Sabha Koshaddyaksh and Sarpanch does not go along well	Dry deciduous teak and bamboo forests
Siganpur (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPC</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> </ul>	Korku, Gond, Gwali, Golan, Bansod	Heterogeneous revenue village with no inter-community conflict. The PRI headquarter at Kasarni. The community in the village supports the JFMC to a large extent.	Dry deciduous teak and

Village	Type of Decentralized Institutions	Communities	Distinguishing features	Forest Type
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>		Koshadhyaksh and Sarpanch are from different political party	bamboo forests
Dhanpadah (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JFMC does not exist</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Gond, Agarwal	Very strong elite dominated village. Huge differences in landholding and average income. JFMC formed but dissolved later. Very low dependence on forests. Koshadhyaksh and Sarpanch are from different political party	Dry deciduous teak forests
Chikalpat (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VFC January 1992</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Gond, Harijan, Dheemar	A heterogeneous revenue village with low dependence on forests. Average annual income is on the higher side. The PRI headquarter in the same village. Gram Sabha Koshadhyaksh and Sarpanch are from different political party	Dry deciduous mixed forests
Bheempura (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VFC</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Harijan	A homogeneous revenue village with only a few Harijan families. Strong elite domination in the people's bodies in the village. Has some support for the MTO movement. Did not gain strength due to the lack of support from the village elite. The PRI headquarter in Kukdapani, a village not having a JFMC. The Gram Koshadhyaksh and Sarpanch are from same political party	Dry deciduous mixed forests
Jhapnadeh (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FPC</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Korku, Gond	An underdeveloped village with very low literacy rate and very few facilities. The PRI headquarter at Pataldah. The Gram Koshadhyaksh and Sarpanch goes along well	Dry deciduous teak forests
Dheki (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VFC December 1992</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Bishnoi, Korku, Gond, Harijan, Dheemar	A heterogeneous village with strong inter-community conflicts. Strong domination by the Bishnois in the village politics. PRI headquarter at Sigaun, the Sarpanch is from the village but now stays in Handia. Gram Koshadhyaksh and Sarpanch goes along very well	Dry deciduous teak forests
Unchaan (R)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VFC</li> <li>Village Panchayat present</li> <li>Gram Swaraj enacted, 7 ad-hoc committees constituted</li> </ul>	Rajputs, Korku, Dheemar	A more or less homogeneous Rajput village with a few Korku families and one Dheemar family. The whole village is on encroached forestland as people migrated due to the submergence of the Narmada. Very developed village. High literacy rate and many private infrastructure. Strong intra-community conflict between two Patels. Very low dependence on forests. The Gram Koshadhyaksh and Sarpanch goes along well	Dry deciduous teak forests

## CHAPTER 5 Profile of Pri Respondents

PRI Level	Name	Gender	Designation	Occupation	Literacy	Caste	Village
ZILLA (DISTRICT)	Sher Singh Tomar	Male	Zilla Panchayat Addhyaksh	Farmer	Literate	Rajput	Harda
	Radhe Lal Ivne	Male	Zilla Panchayat Sadasya	Farmer	Literate	Gond	Mahukhal
	Gajendra Shah	Male	Zilla Panchayat Sadasya	Trader	Literate	General	Sirali
JANPAD (BLOCK)	Santosh Patil	Male	Janpad Panchayat Addhyaksh, Timarni	Farmer	Literate	General	Pokharni
	Imarti Bai	Female	Janpad Panchayat Addhyaksh, Harda		Literate	Korku	Ratatalai
	Jeevanram Gaur	Male	Janpad Panchayat Upaddhyaksh, Timarni	Farmer	Literate	Gond	Rahetgaon
	Rambakas	Male	Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Ratamathi
	Sukku Patel	Male	Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Kachnaar
	Shiv Lal	Male	Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni	Farmer	Literate	Gond	Amsagar
	Satnarayan Patel	Male	Koshaddhyaksh, Aamba	Farmer	Literate	Golan	Aamba
	Shiv Prasad	Male	Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Harda	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Nayapura
	Anand Kumar	Male	Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Khirkiya	Farmer and Trader	Literate	Gwali	Chikalpat
	GRAM (VILLAGE)	Prabhulal	Male	Panch, Badwani Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Golan
Prem Singh		Male	Sarpanch, Badwani Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Badwani
Sitaram Solanki		Male	Koshaddhyaksh, Bori	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Bori
Bishnu Prasad		Male	Husband of Sarpanch, Bori Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Harijan	Bori
Ram Das		Male	Upsarpanch, Bori Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Gwali	Dhega
Kende Kokade		Male	Koshaddhyaksh, Rawang / Panch, Rawang Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Rawang
Kishori Lal		Male	Sarpanch, Rawang Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Lodhidhana
Tularam		Male	Koshaddhyaksh, Keli	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Keli
Nane Lal Baghmare		Male	Sarpanch, Keli Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Harijan	Keli
Premnarayan Gaur		Male	Koshaddhyaksh, Dhanpdah	Farmer	Literate	Gond	Dhanpadah
Ranchoddi Das		Male	Sarpanch, Cheerpura Gram Panchayat	Farmer (ex-Deputy Ranger)	Literate	General	Cheerpura
Malviya							

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PRI Level	Name	Gender	Designation	Occupation	Literacy	Caste	Village
	Ishwar Das	Male	Panch, Kasarni Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Illiterate	Golan	Siganpur
	Hariom Banke	Male	Sarpanch, Kasarni Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Golan	Kasarni
	Subash Bishnoi	Male	Koshaddhyaksh, Dheki	Farmer	Literate	Bishnoi	Dheki
	Mangilal Patel	Male	Husband of Sarpanch, Sigaun Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Harijan	Dheki
	Malak Singh	Male	Panch, Nayapura Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Illiterate	Korku	Unchaan
	Shiv Shankar Rai	Male	Husband of Sarpanch, Nayapura Gram Panchayat	Farmer and Trader	Literate	Gwali	Nayapura
	Sajaram	Male	Father of Koshaddhyaksh, Chikalpat	Farmer and Trader	Literate	Gwali	Chikalpat
	Mohan Lal	Male	Husband of Sarpanch, Chikalpat Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Gond	Chikalpat
	Anokhi Lal	Male	Husband of Sarpanch, Kukdapani Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Bheempura
	Sabulal	Male	Koshaddhyaksh, Bheempurta	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Bheempura
	Mangi Lal	Male	Panch, Pataldah Gram Panchayat	Agricultural labourer	Illiterate	Korku	Jhapnadeh
	Pancham	Male	Sarpanch, Pataldah Gram Panchayat	Farmer	Literate	Korku	Pataldah
	Satyanarayan Patel	Male	Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Harda	Farmer	Literate	Gond	Beshwan



## CHAPTER 6 Perceptions

### 6.1 District Level Perceptions

#### 6.1.1 Zilla Panchayat level:

1. **Sher Singh Tomar** – President and the member of Unchaan, Harda block
2. **Radhe Lal Iwne** – Member of the tribal belt (Dhega, Bori, Keli, Rawang, Aamba, Dhanpadah, Sigampur), Timarni block
3. **Gajendra Shah** – Member of Bheempura and Chikalpat, Khirkiya block

**Name of interviewee:** Sher Singh Tomar

**Post:** Zilla Panchayat Addhyaksh

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Zilla Panchayat President feels that the membership of EC of the JFMC is per JFM guidelines and is followed everywhere. In a meeting of the EC all the people attend and take part in the decision-making process.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	According to the Zilla Panchayat President, the people have been given rights or ownership of the forest resources. He feels that the dwellers near the forests do have the first rights over them and the FD has given them the rights they needed. The forests have not been handed over to them but they have rights on the resources.  The Zilla Panchayat Addhyaksh thinks that the community is learning to take decisions regarding resources of their interest. In some villages the traditional village heads do control the scene however, in most places any decision about the village is taken by everybody in the village.  The balance of power is still skewed towards the FD, since it is better equipped to manage forests. This skew ness would reduce soon and some change to that effect is visible in some villages.
Equity	The Zilla Panchayat president feels that the benefits from the forests have been shared in a perfect manner and there is no discrepancy
Forest Sustainability	Forest protection has been very good the forests in Harda has improved the standard of living of the forest dwellers have improved quite a lot.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	According to the ZP president the PRI as well as the JFMC can do the task of village development and forest management. However, the JFMCs had been doing the work so it is unnecessary to give the charge to the PRI and increase the burden on them.



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Issue	Perceptions
	development purposes. The ZPS stated that benefit-sharing mechanism for the allocation of such benefits (development and nationalised products) was in place. However the low level of awareness amongst the villagers led to increasing unaccountability on the part of the FD staff and to corruption. The ZPS did state that the villagers, especially the marginalised, had benefited in terms of labour.
Forest Sustainability	
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>Both the PRI and JFM undertake the same development work and since the decision making body of both institutions is the same the process is transparent, accountable and is not replicated. The JFMC is responsible for Protection also and pays a chowkidar to do so.</p> <p>Both PRI and FD are corrupt and do not use all the money for development purposes. – “all development is on paper with no signs on the ground”. This is relevant as he stated that fund allocation and accountability are important aspects of institutional sustainability.</p> <p>GRAM SWARAJ – makes the Sarpanch more accountable, especially in areas where people are illiterate and unquestioningly believe whatever is said to them. The Koshadhiyaksh is selected annually and thus must work efficiently.</p> <p>If the Gram Samiti has the capacity (literate, know how to oversee pass book) then any of the institutions will be more effective as they will be more accountable and will not be able to suppress the population.</p> <p>FD – an important observation made about the role of the FD was that the rangers are paid a salary by the department and they are transferred often – they thus do not have a stake in the protection of the forest and are not as dependent – they thus extract more.</p>

**Name of interviewee:** Gajendra Shah

**Post:** Zilla Panchayat Sadasya

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	<p>According to the ZPS, the EC of the JFMC is represented by the “knowledgeable” people in the village. However, he observes that villagers from all the communities in a village society are not capable of taking decisions in every issue.</p> <p>Women in the present village society are not capable enough to influence decision-making and their opinions are mostly left out.</p>
Empowerment	
(a) Rights & ownership	According to the Zilla Panchayat member, the people have not given any rights or ownership of the forests in terms of both land and resources. He feels that the dwellers near the forests do have the first rights over them. At the same time he feels that the forests should not be handed over to the community. The forests will be ruined if such a step is taken.
(b) Decision-making	The Zilla Panchayat member thinks that the community is learning to take decisions regarding resources of their interest. He feels that it will take time for them to get empowered

Issue	Perceptions
	<p>enough to come up against the traditional village heads of the village.</p> <p>The balance of power, according to the ZPS, is still skewed towards the FD. This according to him, will continue until the people get educated enough.</p>
Equity	The ZPS feels that under the guidelines of the JFM program the FD is designed to gain more than the community. The profit of the community is mainly limited to the wage labour.
Forest Sustainability	Forest protection has been of a very high standard under the JFM program, as according to the Zilla Panchayat member. The forest fires have reduced remarkably throughout the district. There is a drop in the incidences of illegal felling of timber too. Other aspects like grazing are also taken care of by the community. The overall conditions of the forests have improved in certain areas.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	According to the ZP member the PRI is not suitable to replace the JFMC as they do not have the technical knowledge about forest management. He also feels that the Panchayats do not have enough funds to do the management. The funds that the FD can generate will not be possible for the Panchayat bodies to generate.

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## 6.2 Block Level Perceptions

### 6.2.1 Janpad Panchayat level

1. **Santosh Patil** – Janpad Panchayat President, Timarni Janpad Panchayat
2. **Imarti Bai** – Janpad Panchayat President, Harda Janpad Panchayat
3. **Jeevanram Gaur** – JP member (vice-president), Timarni JP, represents Dhanpadah, Aamba
4. **Rambakas** – JP member, Timarni JP, represents, Bori, Dhega
5. **Sukku Patel** – JP member, Timarni JP, represents, Keli, Rawang
6. **Shivlal** – JP member, Timarni JP, represents, Sigampur
7. **Sattyanarayan Patel** – JP member, Harda JP, represents Dheki
8. **Shiv Prasad** – JP member, Harda JP, represents Unchaan
9. **Anand Kumar** – JP member, Khirkiya JP, represents, Bheempura and Chikalpat

**Name of interviewee:** Santosh Patil

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Addhyaksh, Timarni Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	<p>He agrees to some extent that the decisions of the EC are that of the village. However, he observes that villagers from all the corners of the village are not capable of decision making and thus does not come up with positive suggestions. Therefore, some decisions are required to be taken that do not benefit all the communities. The people who are left out thus feel offended.</p> <p>Women in the present village society are not capable enough to influence decision-making and their opinions are mostly left out. According to him, it will take time for the women to play an active role in this society.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>According to the Janpad Panchayat President, the people have not given any rights or ownership of the forests in terms of both land and resources. He feels that the dwellers near the forests definitely has the first rights over them and the FD through its JFM program has not been able to provide them with the rights. However, the forests should not be handed over to the community and in that case the forests would be cleared off overnight (<i>"raaton raat khali ho jayega"</i>). The FD should be acting as a guide to the community and not a dictator. According to him the change in the mindset of the FD is coming over slowly. He is very much in favour of the concept of Joint Forest Management and feels that a proper implementation is required at the field level.</p> <p>In the context of the role of the marginal communities in decision-making in JFMC, the Janpad Panchayat President thinks that the community is learning to take decisions regarding resources of their interest. However, the mindset of the community has not changed and they perceive the government officials and the village elite as the rulers. This creates a hindrance within themselves to come up clearly in front of them. According to him the community has learnt to give proposals and not take decisions per se. He feels that the community gets involved in the decision making process and also has the capability to generate ideas but they need more confidence to do so. This confidence would come with education and not just literacy.</p> <p>The balance of power, according to the Janpad President, is still skewed towards the FD and they do not remain accountable to the villagers for all their actions. The lack of education in the people is responsible for this. A complete account of the expenditure of the JFMC may not be understandable to the community either.</p> <p>The presence of the JFMC has improved the relationship between the FD and the community. However, the relationship is no where near an equal relationship and not even good in some places. The mindset of the Department as well as the community is changing but it will take some time for this change to be prominent.</p>
Equity	<p>Equity in terms of sharing of benefits from the forest resources has not at all been attained through the JFM program. The Janpad President feels that under the guidelines of the JFM program the design is such that the FD would gain more than the community by the whole program. The profit of the community is mainly limited to the wage labour. There are some other benefits like the common assets built.</p>

Issue	Perceptions
Forest Sustainability	In terms of forest protection the JFMC has been able to gain in several aspects. The forest fires have reduced remarkably throughout the district. There is a drop in the incidences of illegal felling of timber too. Other aspects like grazing are also taken care of by the community. The overall condition of the forests have improved in certain areas. However, the Janpad President feels that all these improvements are not due to the increase in awareness within the community but it is mainly because of the fear of the FD officials. In regions, which have large number of MTO followers these changes are not visible
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	According to the JP President there cannot be any alternative for the JFMC in the issue of forest management and the Panchayat is certainly not one. He feels the Panchayat has a lot of corruption in it and the money from the government would be misused. Even in cases where there is no corruption among the Panchayat officials it is not possible for the PRI to manage the forest resources. This is because the people are not aware of the consequences of forest degradation. They follow the guidelines and protect the forests out of fear and for the protection money. There is no sense of belongingness among the people.

**Name of interviewee:** Imarti Bai

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Addhyaksh, Harda Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	She does not feel that the JFMCs in the Harda block is doing any meaningful work as of now. In the initial years during the presence of Dr. BMS Rathore the committees were functional and he enforced proper representation of all the communities in each village. However, now due to the absence of a good leader in the Forest Department the JFMCs exist only by name. On paper all the communities are well represented but in practice the decisions are taken by the JFMC president and the Forest Guard and the people are not interested.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The JP President does not think that the FD had given any rights to the community regarding forest resources. All that the community has received is some concessions on NTFPs and fuel wood. However, she thinks, that the people already used to exercise these so-called rights by any means. The government has just formalised it but there is not much change in the situation. The FD officials still now harass the community at certain points in time and they somehow manage to get access to these resources.
(b) Decision-making	In every village, according to her, the economically powerful group of people takes the decisions. The weaker sections are normally ignored and they remain unheard.  Places where the FD can make an understanding with these powerful groups the JFMCs can work properly. This is a feature is observed in this district at a large extent.  The relationship of the community and the FD has improved to a large extent due to this program.
Equity	The benefits accrued from the forest resources is mainly accrued by the FD. The community does not get an equal share for their efforts.
Forest	Forests have deteriorated over the past ten years. There was a little improvement when the NVDA had been working in the Harda block but after it was taken off the forests started degrading

Issue	Perceptions
Sustainability	again.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The PRI can be used as an agency to provide some assistance to the JFMC in terms of people's participation. However, because of the widespread corruption in the village Panchayats it should never be included in the financial matters relating to forest management.

**Name of interviewee:** Jeevanram Gaur

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	According to the JP member, who is also the vice-president of the Janpad Panchayat, the membership in EC of the JFMC does not have any problem on paper. In practicality, things worked properly for a few years, after which people lost interest in JFM. This led to lack of participation on the part of the people and thus the committee was not representative enough.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>As far as the rights are concerned the Janpad Upadhyaksh feels that the community was never designed to give any rights over the forestland and not even over certain forest products. They were given creation concessions on the forest products. However, at the same time he feels that the community is not capable enough to exercise complete rights over the forests. Therefore, on the issue of community having the first rights over the forests, he observes that they have rights over some of the forest products and not all.</p> <p>In the context of decision-making the JP member feels that the decision-making is done by only a few in the village scenario. He feels that this is not absolutely wrong because all the people are not capable enough to take decisions keeping all the aspects in mind. It is best to give the decision-makers some proposals so that they might not forget that aspect while taking the decisions. Biases do creep in such situations but complete participation in decision-making would lead to complete anarchy</p> <p>This is true with the FD too. The community, which cannot be given the complete rights over the forests, should not have equal powers too. The FD, which has to control the forests, has to have more powers than the community for the proper functioning of the system.</p> <p>The relationship between the FD and the community has definitely improved due to the JFM program owing to the increase in interaction between them.</p>
Equity	The share of benefits is not equal between the FD and the community but the JP Sadasya feels that the sharing of benefits is definitely equitable. Taking into account the responsibility that the FD undertakes they need to have a larger share of the benefits from the forests.

Issue	Perceptions
Forest sustainability	The conditions of the forests improved throughout the block in the initial one or two years of the functioning of the JFM program. However, people lost interest due to lack of proper development of the villages, which was in turn due to the lack of funds, and therefore the maintenance of certain activities and structures were not done. Thus, the forests are degrading once again. Then again, there is the problem of the MTO in the Timarni block, which instigates people to destroy forests.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community has been given the Gram Sabha; however, they are not educated or capable enough to understand the powers of the GS. The widespread corruption in the village level Panchayat also a reason people do not trust it.  The technical know-how of the FD is a must for forest management. Thus, either the GS or the Village Panchayat cannot replace JFMC.

**Name of interviewee:** Sukku Patel

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The entire village is equally represented. There is no case of elite domination. The demands and decisions of the village are fulfilled.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	Resources use rights have been provided in the forests. No restrictions on <i>Nistaar</i> . Land use rights are not there but should not be there either considering the MTO movement in the area.
(b) Decision-making	The entire village is involved in the decision-making process the FD does not force its decisions on people.
Equity	There is proper equity in benefit sharing. Timber is available from <i>Nistaar</i> depots, no restrictions on fuel wood. NTFP collection is also not restricted
Forest sustainability	Fire incidences have reduced. Forests have improved a lot. However, it would have been better had it not been for the MTO movement which instigates the uneducated
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	PRI cannot replace the JFMC in the area of forest management. It is highly dominated by the village elite, there is widespread corruption. Above all, the Panchayats do not have either the technical expertise or the financial strength to manage forest resources.



**Name of interviewee:** Rambakas

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	He completely agrees with the statement that the decisions taken by the Executive committee is the decision of the village and is of the opinion that the JFMC takes decisions based on the needs of the community.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	Resource use rights restricted only in plantation areas where the Nistar rights are not applicable. MTO Hamlets are cultivating in forest area and are being supported by MTO leaders to establish their right over such areas.
(b) Decision-making	The entire village is involved in the decision-making process and effective partnership has been established between the FD and the village.
Equity	All funds are lost to corruption, no matter which institution gets them. Returns from Tendu were better under the contractor as they got higher returns. After nationalisation they can collect only for a few days due to the application of quotas. The JFM programme has benefited the BPL families in terms of providing labour opportunities. JFM has also helped those in need by providing loans, especially for illness.
Forest sustainability	JFMC has had beneficial impacts on the forest due to protection provided by villagers in terms of fire fighting and stopping illegal felling.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	"PRI cannot replicate the work of the JFMC under the FG, because people at all levels of the PRI will eat all the money and no work will be done" The Sarpanch was identified as being corrupt and responsible for not having any work done and he stated that "whoever is elected becomes corrupt and development goes down the drain". For example the money under the Jeevan Dhara scheme had not been given out.

**Name of interviewee:** Shiv Lal

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	He feels that the JFM committee in Sigapur is one of the rare examples of participatory decision making with regards to forest management. The whole community has benefited from it. Forests have improved and the village has also developed after the JFMC came into being.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The JP Sadasya feels that the community has not been given just concessions on the forest. However, complete rights on forest resources have also not been given by the FD through the JFM program. They have the rights to take decisions about their needs of fuel wood collection or for sections that should or should not be closed for grazing etc. However, in the issues like choosing the species for plantation, the community does not have any rights. As far as ownership is concerned he feels that ownership on forest resources without

Issue	Perceptions
(b) Decision-making	<p>ownership on forestland is meaningless.</p> <p>The JP member feels that decision-making is absolutely participatory in this village. The general body meetings of the JFMC are held every month. From the activities taken up by the JFMC, he feels that it really supports the views of the people. Thus, there is no problem of the dominant class suppressing the lower castes, at least as far as the JFMC is concerned.</p> <p>The Beat Guard stays in the village and is a person who listens to the views of all the people. Though he has more power in decision-making, he uses it very infrequently. He has a very good relation with the villagers and though "begar" is illegal, the villagers do provide with his requirements freely. However, he feels that in this region Siganpur is a village that is different from the others, where the JFMC has not worked as well.</p>
Equity	<p>According to Shri Shiv Lal there is an absolute equity in benefit sharing between the FD and the community. The community can take whatever they need from the forests. They have even passed rules to take dried branches of Teak for the repairing of their houses. The benefits from the timber share also come into the account of the JFMC and that is used for the development of the village.</p>
Forest sustainability	<p>Forests around Siganpur have improved markedly. There has been a marked improvement of the bamboo forests. The protection done by the JFMC has brought about the changes. There were no forest fire incidences last year. The JP member attributes this to the protection of forests done by the villagers and the maintenance of fire lines etc. Grazing is also controlled properly and the bamboo plantations or any other plantations are well protected.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>According to him, the JFMC is doing a perfect job of forest management; therefore there should not be any issue of replacing the present system by including the PRI. The PRI may be included for the monitoring of the expenses in some places but handing over the job to the PRI is not required.</p>

**Name of interviewee:** Sattyanarayan Patel

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Harda Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	<p>The Janpad Panchayat member feels that the JFMCs exist by name in this region and thus the issue of membership and representation is no longer important. On paper they are well represented in practicality people seldom attend the meetings so there is no proper representation, which is mainly because of the lack of interest among the community.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	<p>The community has been given the task of protection. They have not been given any recognition, leave alone rights. There are a few concessions given to them but that is not enough. The community does not even have the power to take any action against a poacher.</p>
(b) Decision-	<p>The village heads and the people from the powerful communities take decisions in behalf of the whole village. It is right to some extent, as the uneducated tribal people cannot take decisions</p>

Issue	Perceptions
making	<p>keeping all the aspects in mind.</p> <p>The FD officials have more knowledge than the community as far as forest related issues are concerned. Therefore, the decision-making power is vested upon them. An equal power balance would make the management of forests difficult.</p>
Equity	The FD, according to the JP member, has shared its share of profits to some extent with the community as recognition to the community's efforts to protect the forests.
Forest sustainability	Forests have not improved initially under this program. During the period when Dr. BMS Rathore was the DFO of Harda, the forests had improved. Later on some improvements was observed during the functioning of the NVDA (Narmada Valley Development Authority).
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The Panchayats, according to the JP member, are not good enough to look after the management of forests as they are very corrupt themselves. Moreover, the presence of the FD is required to keep the community under control.

**Name of interviewee:** Shiv Prasad

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Timarni Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	In all the villages of the region the JFMC is working well and it is well represented by the villagers. In Unchaan, the Rajput community does not take much interest in the working of the JFMC. The JFM guidelines are not strictly followed in the region and thus their presence is not felt with regards to the usage of the forest resources.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>According to the JP member the community has been given some limited rights on some of the forest products. The decision-making power on most of the products, the forest protection and village development still remains with the FD.</p> <p>According to him, normally the Rajputs or the Bishnois in the area take decisions wherever they are there in the village. The tribal people are left out of the decision-making process. Their views, in most cases are not taken into account.</p> <p>The power balance is in effect not tilted in favour of the FD since they cannot ignore these higher castes. However, the real users of forests, the major users of forest resources are normally ignored in decision-making. However, the relationship with the FD has improved over the years due to the presence of the JFMC.</p>
Equity	There is an equal share of benefits among the community and the FD according to the JFM guidelines. The community is allowed to take all that they used to take from the forests and there are some restrictions.

Issue	Perceptions
Forest sustainability	According to the JP member there has not been much effect of the JFM program on the forests. The community does not cater to the principles of the program. Demarcation of forestland is not taken into account and people are free to collect NTFPs or graze their cattle anywhere in the forests. he also feels that illegal felling of trees has continued freely and the JFMC has been an utter failure in terms of forest protection.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	He is not much aware of the situation in Unchaan but feels that being in the same village and working together for the development of the village they must be working together.  However, he does not feel that the whole charge of forest management should be given to the Gram Sabha because the community is not yet capable enough to do forest management on there own.

**Name of interviewee:** Anand Kumar

**Post:** Janpad Panchayat Sadasya, Khirkiya Janpad Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	Not all the members of the EC of the JFMC are informed during the meetings. Thus, the whole village is never represented properly in JFMC meetings
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	The JPS feels that ownership rights have not been provided to the community though they actually possess the first rights over the forests since they are the primarily dwellers.  The FD takes all the decisions including the decisions in consultation with some people in the village. The whole community does not have say in the decision-making process. Due to this the needs of the community is not always addressed.  The relationship between the FD and the community has improved due to the JFM committees.
Equity	Share of benefits has not been equal under the JFM program and the FD gets the major share.
Forest sustainability	According to the Janpad Panchayat member the forests have improved a lot after the advent of JFM. The tree cover has increased and so has the quality of the teak plants or bamboo clumps in the forest.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	He feels that if the PRI could be involved in the monitoring of the JFMC activities it would have been better for the village as well as the forests as a whole. This is because the PRI could ensure a better participation of the community in the decision-making process..

## 6.3 Village Level Perceptions

### 6.3.1 Aamba

#### Overview of the village

Aamba is a forest village in the Temagaon range of Timarni block. It is situated on top of a hillock with forests surrounding it. The major occupation of the community is agriculture and agricultural labour. The main community staying in the village is the Korku community, there is also a few houses of the Golan community.

The average annual income of the village is around Rs.13,000/- and its monetary dependence on NTFP is one of the highest among the sample villages and is around 22.15%.

<b>Range</b>	Temagaon
<b>Block</b>	Timarni
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Badwani
<b>Village type</b>	Forest
<b>MTO presence</b>	No MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Reserved Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Forest Protection Committee (FPC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Golan

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Prem Singh

**Designation:** Sarpanch, Badwani Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Sarpanch is of the view that the membership in the JFMC is perfect on paper. In practicality the village elite and the FD take the decisions. The other people are there to complete the quorum.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The FD has not given any rights to the community regarding the forest resources or the forestlands. They have been given a few concessions on some of the forest products. He feels that the community is not even capable of using the ownership rights in a proper way.</p> <p>The decision-making power, according to the Sarpanch, is vested upon the village elite and the FD. The marginalised communities are not heard and they feel deprived. This happens in the forest villages and even in a homogeneous village of a single community. There are traditional village heads who take all the decisions on behalf of the community.</p> <p>With regards to the JFM program the decisions are taken by the FD, the villagers have little knowledge and thus little say in the issues of forest protection. The JFM committees do not have enough money to do the development of the villages thus the villagers do not have any say and they eventually loose interest in the program.</p>
Equity	The Sarpanch does not feel that the benefits from the forest produce is equally distributed among the FD and the community. He feels that the community should get more money for the development of the village, since without the development of the surrounding villages, forest protection is impossible.
Forest sustainability	<p>Forest cover had improved initially but after the people lost interest the plantations were not taken care of and thus the forests deteriorated again.</p> <p>About the reasons for the loss in interest among the people the Sarpanch had to say that the main reason was the lack of development of the villages. Again there was no observable increase in the tree species of interest for the villagers. The reduction in number of the <i>Achar</i> or <i>Mahua</i> trees did not stop. This demoralised the community to a large extent.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The Sarpanch feels that the PRI should be involved in the JFMC, however, he does not feel that it can completely replace the JFMC. According to him, the PRI can do the monitoring of the activities of the JFMC and ensure proper participation in it.

**Name of interviewee:** Prabhulal

**Designation:** Panch, Badwani Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Panch is also of the view that the membership in the JFMC is perfect only on paper. In practicality the village elite and the FD take the decisions.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The JFM program does not give any rights to the community regarding the forest resources or the forestlands. They have been given a few concessions on some of the forest products.  According to the Panch, remains with the village elite and the FD. The marginalised communities are not heard either in the general body meeting or the EC meetings of the JFMC. They are not even heard in Gram Sabha meetings.
(b) Decision-making	With regards to the JFM program the FD takes the decisions. The villagers normally do not have much knowledge and thus do not voice their opinions on the issues of forest protection. The JFM committees do not have enough money to do the development of the villages thus the villagers do not have any say and they eventually loose interest in the program.
Equity	The Panch feels that the villagers have their proper share of benefits as per the JFM guidelines but he also feels that there is no transparency in the system and so the villages are not developed
Forest sustainability	Forest cover had improved initially but after the people lost interest the plantations were not taken care of and thus the forests deteriorated again
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The PRI, according to the Panch is the worst alternative for the JFMC as the Sarpanch is extremely corrupt and there is absolutely no transparency in the system. He thinks that the Sarpanch will loot the government money if such a thing happens.  The Panch is also not in favour of the Gram Sabha being given the charge. He feels that the village treasurer is as corrupt as the Sarpanch, as he had built a 50 m road in village and claimed that it had cost him Rs.50,000/-.

**Name of interviewee:** Shankar Patel

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Koshaddhyaksh feels that the membership in the JFMC is perfect only on paper. In practicality the villagers do not attend meetings and a few people have to take the decisions.
Empowerment	

Issue	Perceptions
(a) Rights & ownership	The village treasurer feels that the villagers have not been given any ownership rights over all the forest products. Being the dwellers of the forest they should have had all the rights over at least all the forest products, if not the forestlands.
(b) Decision-making	Decision-making is done with the participation of every one available. Now the community largely being agricultural labourers it is not always possible to have all the members. Thus, some decisions are taken without the involvement of all the people.  The Forest Guard often takes control over the decision-making process. The villagers normally do not challenge them, as they are concerned with the labour available. Therefore, they are happy when the JFMC takes any forestry activity as the community gets wage labour for these.
Equity	The benefit share is not equal but the Koshaddhyaksh feels that the community is happy to get the labour work more than anything else.
Forest sustainability	Forest cover had improved initially but after the people lost interest the plantations were not taken care of and thus the forests deteriorated again.  According to the Koshaddhyaksh, the reason for this loss of interest is the lack of funds of the JFMC because of which, the village development work could not be undertaken.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The PRI, according to the village treasures is the worst alternative for the JFMC as the Sarpanch and the Secretary are extremely corrupt and they would plunder the government money.

### The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The EC of the JFMC is constituted of the village elite. There are members from the poorer sections of the society who is not even sure whether he is a member. The community feels that they are not even heard, in case they voice their opinions.
Empowerment Rights & ownership	The community feels that the only benefit accrued from the JFM program is the availability of labour. They have not been given any ownership rights on either forest products or forestlands.
(b) Decision-making	Decision-making in the village is done by the <i>Patel</i> of the village and normally the community does not talk against him. Even if they do so they are normally not heard by any one.  The community feels that the decision making power vests mainly with the FD. Though the relationship with the FD has improved after the JFM program started still the forest guard is the one he takes the major decisions in a JFMC meeting



Issue	Perceptions
Equity	The benefit share is not equal but the community is happy to get the labour work more than anything else.
Forest sustainability	Forests had improved initially but after the people lost interest the plantations were not taken care of and thus the forests deteriorated again.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community is absolutely against the PRI being handed over the charge of forest management. The community feels that the Sarpanch, Koshadhyaksh and the Secretary are extremely corrupt and they would plunder the government money

### 6.3.2 Bheempura

#### Overview of the village

The village is divided into three hamlets about a kilometre away from each other. It is a homogeneous village of the Korku community with a very few Harijan families.

Bheempura has 62 households with an average annual income of Rs.11,000/-. The average monetary dependence on NTFP is about 15.22% of the income.

JFM was initiated in year 1992. Village Forest Committee was constituted on 25/1/1992. A bank account no. 4911 was opened in Regional Rural Bank, Sirali branch. Till May 2002 VFC has balance of Rs.158880 in the bank A/c. This VFC was funded under M.P. World Bank project. A separate account 6060 was opened to regulate the fund. Rs. 77701/- is balance as on May 2002. (Source: Village Report of the Field Team)

<b>Range</b>	Makdai
<b>Block</b>	Khirkiya
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Kukdapani
<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	Some MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Village Forest Committee (VFC)

<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Harijan
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**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Smt. Nila Bai / Shri Anokhi Lal

**Designation:** Sarpanch, Kukdapani Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Sarpanch himself has never been informed about the JFMC meetings in Bheempura. Some of the villagers decide things with the Forest Guard they just inform the others.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The Sarpanch feels that the JFM program has not at all helped the community in terms of providing them with ownership rights over forest resources. He feels that the community should ideally have the first right over the forests.</p> <p>The FD takes all the decisions including the decisions in a JFMC meeting. The Sarpanch has some serious doubts on the credibility of the JFMC as an institution promoting participatory decision-making.</p> <p>The JFM program has definitely improved the relationship between the FD and the community to some extent, to the effect that the community are not terrorised by the presence of the FD officials any more.</p>
Equity	The Sarpanch feels that the JFMC was not formed by the FD for participation but is a new technique for management, which reduces the cost of the FD and gets them a few labourers at lower cost.
Forest sustainability	According to the Sarpanch, the forests have not improved but the rate of degradation of the forests has stopped. However, he feels that this has not benefited the community at all, as the tree species they are interested in has not grown in numbers.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	He feels that PRI should be given charge of forest management but the presence of the FD is required to provide the technical and the infrastructural support.

**Name of interviewee:** Sabulal

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	Membership in the Executive Committee is basically on paper, as according to the Koshaddhyaksh of the village. He feels that the decisions are taken by the FD in consultation with some of the villagers who may or may not be in the EC.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	Ownership rights on forests be it the forest resources or the forestland, has not been given to the community through this program. There are some concessions, which are enough for the community in terms of their dependence on forests. the Koshaddhyaksh feels that the community is not yet capable enough (due to lack of education) to exercise rights over forests in a proper manner. Thus, if rights are given away then there is a high probability of misuse of these rights.  In a very similar manner, the Koshaddhyaksh also feels that everyone in the village is not able to understand all the aspects, which are required to be considered while taking any decision. Thus, the whole community is not capable of taking decisions or even play a positive role in the decision-making process. Thus, the best way of management and decision-making is to let the capable people do the job. The concerned people should of course consult the whole community and know their requirements and keep these in mind while taking any decision. The decisions taken in the JFMC in Bheempura follows a similar process. The FD is involved and some of the villagers are involved in the whole process. Issues are raised in the general body. Decisions are taken on the basis of these issues.
Equity	Equity in benefit sharing is not there. However, the villagers have gained more than before the JFM program. These can be called concessions. They even use the money in the JFMC account to lend loans to farmers, which is very useful for them since they do not have enough savings for the initial investment.
Forest sustainability	Forests around Bheempura were very dense at some point in time. Over the years they had degraded at a very fast rate. The tree cover has dropped like anything. The JFM program has not been able to improve forests but definitely it has stopped the degradation of the forests for the past ten years.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	Owing to the reservations in the government system, the Panchayat bodies have a large number of incapable people at higher positions. These people are not capable of decision-making or for that matter any sort of management. They easily become puppets in the hands of others. Transferring the power of forest management to these people will lead to the degradation of forests. Corruption is also there in the Panchayats but it is secondary in front of the incompetence among the people.

## The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	According to the community the village heads takes all the decisions regarding the village. They are informed about meetings but it is not possible for them to attend the meetings every time. Therefore they accept all the decisions that are taken.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	They feel that they get whatever they require from the forests without the harassment of the FD. Though they do not have rights they are happy with what they get.
(b) Decision-making	There are some people in the village who are MTO followers and feel that the forests including the resources and the lands belong to them. The FD should transfer the ownership rights of the forests, completely to them.  Decisions are taken by some of the villagers along with the FD. The non-followers of the MTO movement feel that this actually expenses them of some job. The followers feel that they are deprived of their rights, as they are not even informed about the meetings of the EC of the JFMC.
Equity	The community does not feel that the benefits are not equally shared between the community and the FD and the latter gets the major share. However, the non-followers of MTO movement do not have any problem with that too as they feel that the availability of labour and commodities like fuel wood is more important.
Forest sustainability	Forests, according to the community, has not improved. Grass is almost absent in the forest. The NTFP species are getting rarer by the days. The JFMC, according to them, has failed to improve the condition of the forests at all.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The MTO followers does not feel that any government body including the Panchayat would be any good for the forests. The forests should be under the control of the local dwellers.

### 6.3.3 Bori

#### Overview of the village

Bori is divided into three hamlets and has around 50 households in the village. The MTO following is there in some extent in all the hamlets. Intra-village conflicts are also present due to the MTO activities regarding forestry related and land related issues.

The village is situated in the Reserved Forests and is on the hilly regions of Harda district, where the quality of soil is not suitable for agriculture and the production per acre is quite low.

Agriculture and agricultural labour are the main occupation of the community. The average annual income per family is around Rs.10,000/-. The monetary dependence on NTFP is around 8.7% of the average annual income, which is unusually low compared to the other forest villages and the other villages having an average annual income of less than Rs.18,000/- per family.

<b>Range</b>	Temagaon
<b>Block</b>	Timarni
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Bori
<b>Village type</b>	Forest
<b>MTO presence</b>	Strong MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Forest Protection Committee (FPC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gond, Harijan, Guali

### Perceptions:

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Bishnu Prasad

**Designation:** Sarpanch Pati

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	Membership is as per JFMC guidelines with mandatory female representation in the EC. The present president is from the Golan caste and resides in the adjoining hamlet as this was the villages decision. I.e. they did not want the PRI and JFMC representatives to be from the same hamlet. It was observed that the Sarpanch Pati viewed this selection as compensatory "Even though the President is not knowledgeable we agreed on his selection".
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	Do not feel that JFMC compartmentalisation and plantations have curtailed rights. Villagers are allowed to use other areas. The SP stated that "The forest is ours, why won't we protect it? It is like saying that we will force ourselves onto someone's standing fields if we were to say that we mind regeneration of forest area."

Issue	Perceptions
(b) Decision-making	The SP informed that the decisions were taken by the FD and the villagers were participating only by ratifying these decisions by signing their agreement. In decisions related to conflict resolution – the role of the JFMC is to fine individuals caught for illegal logging. If the case involves MTO members then the role of the JFMC is restricted to that of an informant and decisions on resolution and implementation are left to the FD.
Equity	The JFMC fund receives money every year and the pass book is managed by the Satchiv. The JFMC money is used for village development and to help the needy in the village. The villagers also benefit from the sale of tendu patta (Rs 40 per senkra plus bonus). JFMC has also provided employment to 24 BPL people @ Rs 1200/month. MTO members not a part of this mechanism – they have cut the forest and converted it to agriculture land.
Forest sustainability	JFMC has been responsible for forest protection, which has led to regeneration and watershed management. The villagers have thus got access to a better forest and more employment.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	“Management of forest resources should not be handed over to the PRI because this will lead to the degradation of the forest. Control ‘danda’ is a necessary component of forest management without which the villagers will not protect the forest or use it sustainably – ‘Who will stop whom?’. For example, the FD is responsible for ensuring that people go for fire fighting when required. Without his presence this would not be possible”. “The Forest area is for the forest, hence forest work should be carried out in the area. Forests are not a mandate of the PRI and hence there is no overlap” a problem that needs to be solved is that of the MTO villagers demand – if they have no land then a livelihood option must be provided otherwise it leads to insurgency.

**Name of interviewee:** Sita Ram Solanki

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	JFM has created a sense of 'belongingness' which is significant as the village is a forest village.
(b) Decision-making	Decisions are formulated with the participation and the consent of the entire village. The Ranger informs the villagers of the available funds and the feasible options for its utilisation and the villagers make a decision accordingly. The MTO hamlet does not participate in the decision making process due to an intra-village conflict. the KA stated that they had been “Bharkaod” by the MTO leaders and were no longer following the laws and process laid down by the FD.
Equity	JFMC fund has helped those in need by providing loans. It has benefited all equally. The JFMC gives priority to the poor and landless in allocating wage labour under forestry activities.

Issue	Perceptions
Forest sustainability	Have been protecting the forest and FD has advocated that the forest belongs to the villagers and they thus have a stake in it. However the JFMC has not been able to resolve the conflict with the MTO followers and their activities are taking a toll on the forest resources.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	There is sufficient space for interaction between the PRI and JFMC as the members of both general body committees are common.

### The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The community says that the village elite rules the JFMC as well as the Gram Sabha meetings. The community initially attended the meetings but now they have lost interest. The membership in the Executive Body of the JFMC is perfect on paper. However in practicality only a few people can voice their opinions. General body meetings are seldom held. The community basically does not feel that the JFMC in its present form, that is, with the FD at the helm, would not be of any help.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The villagers feel that they do not have any established rights over either forestlands or forest resources. They feel that they do not have the freedom to take decisions about the forests and that the FD acts as the dictator. The FD officials also discriminate between people on the basis of the bribes that one can pay. <i>"kabhi kabhi paise ke liye sarbojha bhi atak le te hai"</i> (they sometimes even stop us from carrying head loads (of fuel wood) for money). They do not feel that the FD staff would ever be willing to transfer any sorts of power or rights to the people.</p> <p>According to the followers of the MTO movement the FD gives preferential treatments to some villagers, who gain power and try to suppress the others. These villagers do not include everyone in the decision-making process either in the Gram Sabha or in the JFMC meetings. The MTO followers have thus taken the support of the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan (the most prominent MTO of the region).</p> <p>The non-followers of the MTO movement feel that the FD tried to incorporate the feeling of ownership of forests among the people, they also tried to make them aware. The <i>Sangathan</i> instigated a section of the community to go against the FD. The community thus needs to exclude these people from the decision-making procedure. All the rest are included and there are no conflicts between the non-followers of the MTO.</p> <p>In the context of the power balance between the village and the FD, the MTO followers feel that the FD behaves as a tyrant and tries to confiscate their lands and also put restrictions on their rights over the forest resources.</p>



Issue	Perceptions
	<p>The non-followers feel that the FD is trying to help the people to improve the forests, which in the long run would help them. In this aspect the Department has to lead them in certain aspects, as the FD officials are more knowledgeable.</p> <p>The only aspect on which the community comes into a consensus is that the relationship between the FD and the villagers has improved due to the presence of the JFMC due to more interaction. However, none of them feel that they have an equal relationship as of now.</p>
Equity	The villagers, who are not the follower of the MTO movement, do not feel that the benefits accruing from the forests are shared equally between the FD and the community. They definitely feel that they are deprived but most of the people do not agree that the only benefit they get is from the wage labour.
Forest sustainability	The non-followers of MTO feel that the forests started improving initially. However, the advent of the MTO forced a decline in the forest conditions. Trees were felled at random and the stumps burnt off to stop regeneration. This led to the loss of NTFP, as well as timber.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>The community does not feel that the Panchayat bodies can replace the JFMC. The non-followers of the MTO movement feel that the PRI does not have the technical know-how to manage the forest resources and the FD must be included in it.</p> <p>An important statement highlights this perception – “ Don’t give nay work to the Sarpanch, because then we will get nothing – no wages, no protection and no tendu patta. Foe example the Sarpanch got money to get work done but has still not paid the labourers whereas the FD the 24 people employed under JFM regularly”</p> <p>The MTO followers feel that the handing over the job to PRI will not make any change in the situation since the PRI being led by the village elite is very corrupt and the government money would be mis-utilised.</p>

### 6.3.4 Chikalpat

#### Overview of the village

Chikalpat is a revenue village in the Khirkiya block. The forests allotted to the village are in the Makdai range of the Harda division. The soil conditions are poor and the land is rocky as the village is in the foothills.

The village has around 100 households in the village and the average annual income is about Rs.18,000/-. This village can thus be called as one of the richer among the sampled villages. The monetary dependence on NTFP is around 7.78% of the average annual income.

<b>Range</b>	Makdai
<b>Block</b>	Khirkiya
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Chikalpat
<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	No MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Village Forest Committee (VFC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gond, Harijan, Dheemar

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Nani Bai / Mohan Lal (Sarpanchpati)**Designation:** Sarpanch, Chikalpat Gram Panchayat

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
Membership	Not all the members of the EC of the JFMC are informed during the meetings. Thus, the whole village is never represented properly in JFMC meetings. The Sarpanch himself has never been informed about the JFMC meetings and he has only attended the general body meetings.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The Sarpanch feels that ownership rights have not been provided to the community though they actually possess the first rights over the forests since they are the primarily dwellers.</p> <p>On paper the decisions are taken by the community in consultation with the FD. However, in practice the FD takes all the decisions including the decisions about the development of the village. This sometimes creates problems as the FD officials are not always aware of the needs of the villagers and they waste the government money in building unnecessary assets. For example, the JFMC has made a dam on the rivulet close to the village. However, the dam is positioned in such a way that the water does not reach the fields of the farmers in drier seasons.</p> <p>The JFM program has definitely improved the relationship between the FD and the community. This has occurred due to the increased interaction between the two because of the</p>

Issue	Perceptions
	formation of the JFM committees.
Equity	Share of benefits has not been equal under the JFM program and the FD gets the major share since 70% of the profits from the timber harvest goes to the FD.
Forest sustainability	According to the Sarpanch, the forests have improved by 75% after the advent of JFM. The improvement is in terms of reduction in forest fires, illegal felling, control of grazing etc.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	He feels that if the FD helped the PRI to manage the forests it would have been the best option. This is because the PRI could ensure the proper usage of the funds used for the development of the village, which the JFMC somehow cannot. However, the FD is essential for the management of the forests because without them the forests would have been depleted.

**Name of interviewee:** Shankar / Sajaram

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Koshaddhyaksh feels that the membership of the EC in a JFMC does not influence anything. According to him, the decisions are taken by a few and the others are there to fill up seats
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>About the ownership rights, the village treasurer feels that though the community has the first rights over the forests in theory they are not capable enough to exercise these rights. The concessions given to the community are the most they can be entitled to at present with the present level of awareness that they have</p> <p>Very similarly decision-making also cannot be given away to the community, as they are not capable enough to take proper decisions. They are in a dilemma between their long-term and immediate need. They do understand the requirement for forest protection but are forced by their immediate needs, which would be dangerous for the environment. Therefore, decisions are to be taken by the FD and some people in the village. The community accepts the decisions not because they are forced to do so but in a sense they really understand the need. However, they feel that the decision-maker is not keeping their needs in his mind, as they do not understand the gravity of the situation.</p>
Equity	The FD should have taken care of the need for timber of the community. The benefits should have been shared in such a manner. Otherwise the benefits are equally shared.
Forest sustainability	Forests initially improved but then the people lost interest because they wanted safety and recognition. It was not safe for them to go to the forests as the poachers carry weapon and they do not. The Koshaddhyaksh feels that giving weapons to the uneducated mass is again very dangerous and may result in widespread killing but he feels that insurance policies of some kind and identity cards for JFMC members can be tried out to give people some recognition. Any proper solution can never be easily reached
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The Panchayats, according to the treasurer is not capable enough to tackle the problem of forest management. According to him it is not the issue of corruption, which though is very pertinent, makes them incapable. He feels that the institution lacks the power to give the people the recognition that they need. The government should either transfer powers to the Panchayats or treat them as monitoring bodies, not involving them in decision-making.

## The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The community feels that the village is well represented in the EC but they have minimal say in the decision-making. It is the JFMC president and the Forest Guard who takes all the decisions
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership         (b) Decision-making	<p>The community does not feel that they have been given any ownership rights over the forestlands or resources through the JFM program. The only benefit that they have is from the wage labour that they get. Even the protection money that comes into the JFMC account is not properly utilised for their benefit. That is why they are not interested to know about the accounts. The head loads of fuel wood that they are allowed to carry are the only concession that they have. The availability of NTFP has reduced over the years and the villagers are no longer as dependent upon the NTFP as they were before. The main problem that they face is with the timber that they need for their houses.</p> <p>Chikalpat is a heterogeneous village and there is some conflict regarding decision-making in the JFMC. Some parts of the community do not accept the decisions but do not voice their opinions in the general body meetings.</p> <p>The community feels that the FD takes the decisions in consultation with certain people in the village and the rest of the village just agree to it. The reason being that they do not see any benefit from the program any more and thus find no interest in it. The [power balance is so much skewed towards the FD that the community does not have any interest in the whole process.</p>
Equity	The community does not feel that there is any equity in the benefit sharing mechanisms of the JFMC. They feel that under the program the FD takes the major benefits and they feel deprived. According to them, they have to face the risk of forest protection. However, the forests they are protecting only provide them with fuel wood and no other major benefit.
Forest sustainability	According to the community, the forests had initially improved. Nowadays they are no more interested in the program and so the forests have deteriorated again.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community feels that the Panchayat bodies do not have the proper knowledge to manage forest resources but their help can be sought in the monitoring of the activities of the JFMC. The Gram Sabha should be the best institution for such activities since it can concentrate on a particular village. However, the presence of the FD is required for the technical guidance regarding forest management.

### 6.3.5 Dhanpadah

#### Overview of the village

The village is close to Rahetgaon Range head quarters. The forests are a little far away from the village. The main occupation of the villagers is agriculture and agricultural labour. The Gond community (Raj Gond) are large and medium farmers having an average of 12 to 15 acres of agricultural land. The Korku community are mainly labourers and mostly landless.

The average annual income of the community is Rs.34,000/-. Among this the 35 Korku households out of the 58 households have an average annual income of about Rs.8,500/-. The dependence on NTFP is the lowest among the sampled villages and is around 2.12%.

<b>Range</b>	Rahetgaon
<b>Block</b>	Timarni
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Cheerpura
<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	No JFMC (formed but dissolved)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gond,, Agarwal

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Ranchhoddi Das Malviya**Designation:** Sarpanch, Cheerpura Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Sarpanch of Cheerpura Gram Panchayat, who is also a retired Deputy Ranger of the FD, feels that the membership of the Executive Committee is not of any importance because the Forest Guard takes the decisions that the higher officials ask them to take. According to him the whole system of JFMC is a process through which the FD takes its own decisions with the cover of community participation.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The FD has not given any rights to the community, all that is given to the people is some concessions on some of the forest products.</p> <p>Decision-making, as according to the Sarpanch, is done by the Range Officer of the FD, which the JFMC formalises through a meeting. These decisions are taken by the Range Officer or the DFO at a higher level trying to keep the needs of the people in mind. According to him, the approach is completely a top-down one, which is given a shape of a bottom-up approach through the formation of the JFM committees.</p> <p>This, according to him, is the reason for the dissolving of the JFMC in Dhanpadah, since the traditional village heads could not agree to the FD in this procedure of working and vehemently opposed the decisions of the JFMC.</p>
Equity	The Sarpanch does not think that there is any equity in the benefit sharing and the requirements of the community is not properly taken into account. Even if the some of the higher officials felt the needs they could not change the rigid systems of the government in favour of the people.
Forest sustainability	Forests had definitely improved due to these activities. However, the rate of improvement has reduced as the people started realising that their views are not properly taken into account.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>In this context, the Sarpanch felt that the PRI in its present form would be a worse option because it would also go for the same top-down approach, where the decision-makers are not as qualified as the DFO or the CF of the region.</p> <p>Then again, the inclusion of the Gram Sabha into the system and creation of the post of Koshadhyaksh has slowed down the process in places where the latter is in conflict with the Sarpanch.</p>

**Name of interviewee:** Premnarayan Gaur

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Koshaddhyaksh feels that in the JFMCs the people were not allowed to take decisions, which could go against the decisions of the FD. There was no requirement for such an institution in Dhanpadah and the villagers in a Gram Sabha meeting dissolved the committee after two years of its formation.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	The village treasurer feels that there were no properly defined rights given to the community. Some concessions were given, which were unnecessary for the villagers of this village.  Decisions, as already stated, were taken by the FD on behalf of the people. The community had no role to play in decision-making. Therefore it is immaterial whether there is any intra-community conflict regarding the decision-making process.
Equity	The share of benefits, as according to the Koshaddhyaksh, is completely skewed towards the FD.
Forest sustainability	
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	

### The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The community feels that the membership in the EC of the JFMC was never an issue because the FD had taken all the decisions that were taken in the two years that the JFMC worked.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	The Gond community (the larger farmers) feel that the JFM program was not even giving them any concessions, leave alone any rights.  However, the Korku community (the landless labourers) feel that the JFM program was giving them concessions in some of the forest products, like fuel wood.  The Gond community feel that the FD was the decision-maker and there was no intra-village conflict on decision making. The decisions in the village are taken unanimously but for the FD the decisions of the villagers was not important.

Issue	Perceptions
	The Korku community feels that the FD took the decisions of the JFMC and their views were not taken into account. However, they felt that the committee provide them with some labour if it had not been dissolved
Equity	The community feels that the share of benefits was never equal and the FD had more benefits than the community.
Forest sustainability	
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community feels that the Panchayat as well as the Gram Sabha can handle the job quite as well if they get some support from the FD in terms of some functionaries and technical know-how.

### 6.3.6 Dhega

#### Overview of the village

Dhega is divided into three hamlets and there are around 90 households in the village. One of the hamlets, Munda Burru, has a complete MTO following. There are around 35 households in this hamlet.

The village is in the hilly regions of the district and is mainly populated by the Gwali and the Korku communities.

There is presence of intra-village conflicts due to the MTO activities regarding forestry related and land related issues. Agriculture and agricultural labour are the main occupation of the community.

The main occupation of the community is agriculture and agricultural labour. The average annual income is around Rs.9500/- and the dependence on NTFP is around 12.77% of the average annual income.

<b>Range</b>	Temagaon
<b>Block</b>	Timarni
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Bori
<b>Village type</b>	Forest
<b>MTO presence</b>	Strong MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests



<b>JFMC</b>	Forest Protection Committee (FPC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gwali

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Ram Das

**Designation:** Panch (Upsarpanch), Bori Gram Panchayat

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
Membership	<p>Excepting for the Munda Burru hamlet (the MTO followers) the other hamlets do participate in JFMC meetings. The Executive Committee has members from all the communities. Nowadays due to the MTO activities the Forest Department has stopped all types of programs in the village. Therefore there is no requirement for decisions like beneficiary selection etc.</p> <p>Decisions about forest protection are taken mainly by the Forest Guard and the department does not support the villagers due to the activities of one of the three hamlets of the village.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The Panch of the village feels that the villagers are not given any ownership rights over the forestland or even the forest resources. They have been given some concessions or allowances on certain forest products like fuel wood or NTFPs like <i>Mahua</i>. However, they have to follow the FD guidelines and cannot take any decisions regarding them. They can take decisions on the grazing pattern of the village cattle, that is, the area where the cattle would be allowed to graze.</p> <p>There is no intra-community conflict in the village regarding the decision-making process. The villagers of Munda Burru do not involve themselves in the decision-making procedure at all. The villagers of the other two hamlets are united and they do not feel unheard. However, since the FD has stopped giving programs to the village there are not many decisions to take, which needs the involvement of the community.</p> <p>The decisions that need to be taken are only about the protection and conservation of forests. The FD having more technical know-how is better off in taking such decisions. The villagers normally agree to these decisions. However, the people have lost interest in the program since they do not have any benefits getting accrued from it.</p>
Equity	<p>The Panch feels that the benefit is not equally shared among the FD and the community. At present, with no development programs going on in the village and also with the absence of any wage labour, the villagers are having absolutely no benefits from the JFMC program. This, according to the Panch is acting as disincentive for the villagers, who are still loyal to</p>

Issue	Perceptions
	FD even after repeated instigation from the MTO.
Forest sustainability	Ram Das feels that the forest fires had reduced and people had also worked hard to stop illegal felling. However, later on with the advent of the MTO the villagers of Munda Burru started plundering the forests. The conditions of the forests have been gradually degrading since then.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The forests cannot be managed without the help of the FD. <i>"raja ke bina praja kaise kam karega"</i> (how can the subjects work in the absence of the king). He feels that the people do not have the proper knowledge about forest management and would not be able to control the others. With the present MTO activists around the forests will be cut down within a short time if the FD moves out of its management.

### The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	<p><i>Gwalidhana and Barradhana:</i></p> <p>The whole of the committee is defunct thus the membership is practically unimportant. Munda Burru being closer to the connecting road was better represented in the earlier JFMC and the other two hamlets were left out.</p> <p><i>Munda Burru:</i></p> <p>The FD forces its decisions on the community. Membership and representation are all on paper. The Forest Department officials favoured people who could pay them money. They would even give forestlands to them for agricultural use. The JFMC had no power over these people.</p> <p>There were stretches of barren forestlands near the village that the villagers of Dhega wanted to use for agricultural purposes, which the Forest Department refused. Later on, these same stretches of lands were captured by villagers from other villages. When the JFMC of Dhega opposed the FD did not take any action.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	<p><i>Gwalidhana and Barradhana</i></p> <p>The community does not feel that they have been given any proper rights over the forest or forest resources. The FD, according to them, has given some concessions to them with regards to some of the forest resources. They also feel that the community should be given some more share of the benefit accruing from the sale of timber.</p> <p>Munda Burru</p>
(b) Decision-making	The community in this hamlet feels that they ought to have rights over the forest resources as well as the forestlands. According to them, the FD behaves like a tyrant and the JFM program is just a covering for them. There is no participatory decision-making in the JFMCs. Thus, the community should be handed over the forests and given complete decision-

Issue	Perceptions
	<p>making rights on them.</p> <p>This village has two very strong groups – the followers and non-followers of the MTO movement. There are some people in the Gwalidhana and Barradhana who are sympathisers of the MTO movement. They do not join the decision making process. However, there is not any more intra-village conflict. This does not affect the decision-making process.</p> <p>As far as power balance is concerned, the FD has more power than the community. The non-followers of MTO accept the FD as “kings” and accept all its decisions. The villagers of Munda Burru are completely against them and do not want to go into any participation with the FD.</p>
Equity	
Forest sustainability	
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>The villagers of Gwalidhana and Barradhana feel that it is impossible for them to manage the forests without the “kings” of the forests. The technical knowledge of the FD is essential for the management of forests. The fear factor is also required for the community to abstain from plundering the forests.</p> <p>The villagers of Munda Burru feel that anything connected to the government will not help in any case because the whole system is corrupt. Therefore, neither the PRI nor the JFMC should be given the charge of forest management.</p>

### 6.3.7 Dheki

#### Overview of the village

Some latent conflicts are present in the village among the different communities living in there. The *Bishnois* are the dominant caste and the other castes have grievances against them. The other castes are mainly agricultural labourers in the fields of the *Bishnois* who have comparatively larger landholdings.

The average annual income of the villagers is calculated to be Rs.15,000/- and the monetary dependence on NTFP is around 16.53% of the average annual income.

<b>Range</b>	Handia
<b>Block</b>	Harda
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Sigaun

<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	No MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Village Forest Committee (VFC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Bishnoi, Gond, Korku, Chamar, Dheemar, Kurmi

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Dhepu Bai Patel / Mangilal Patel (Sarpanchpati)**Designation:** SARPANCH, Sigaun Gram Panchayat

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
Membership	<p>The Sarpanchpati is also the vice president of the JFMC of Dheki. According to him, the JFMC has members from all the communities in its EC but the community has lost interest in the activities of the JFMC and thus the meetings have become very irregular and all the members are not present. The decisions are taken by the President, Vice President and the Secretary (the Forest Guard) of the JFMC.</p> <p>In this aspect of membership, the Sarpanchpati is against the rules of reservations for lower castes and women as he feels that these reservations bring in incapable people at the helm and slow down the progress of the society.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>According to him conflicts are no longer solved at the village level through the Gramin Nyalaya. He stated that the villagers no longer respected the authority of the Sarpanch and cited the main cause as being the lack of knowledge of the Sarpanch (woman). He stated that as she had only been concerned with cooking and tending to the fields, she had no knowledge on issues pertaining to governance</p>
Equity	
Forest sustainability	<p>He stated that the JFMC had contributed significantly to the protection and rehabilitation of the forest, which was like a desert before the activities started. The villagers were now involved in fire fighting and guarded against grazing and illegal felling. Villagers also felt a part of the JFMC and thus were more effective in carrying out conservation activities as compared to the FD,</p>

Issue	Perceptions
	which was located at a distance and thus had little stake or awareness of ground activities.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	Stated that leadership was essential for the success of the JFMC – not political leadership – but it should be knowledgeable and supported by the law. He stated that the FD should be accountable to the Panchayat in the event that it does something wrong. This was specially required where there was lack of a supportive leadership. For example, with the exit of Rathore the FD had reverted back to taking bribes and ‘chhalaoing danda’ and did not support the villagers.

**Name of interviewee:** Subhash Bishnoi

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh, Sigaun Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Koshaddhyaksh is the President of the JFMC and feels that membership aspect has been theoretically taken care of but practically very few people attend the meetings. He also feels that inclusion of the tribal people in the decision-making does not help much since they are not capable enough to take decisions.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	In matters pertaining to intra-village conflict, the entire village participates in decision-making. However he stated that the adivasi's were increasingly making use of the police station to file a report and were using this mechanism as a threat against the Bishnoi community. He also cited an example where a tribal woman had reported a Bishnoi male under the charge of sexual harassment when he had tried to stop her from collecting forest resources as per the JFMC rules
Equity	
Forest sustainability	Plantation activities had been undertaken successfully, however no one working in them now due to loss of interest/leadership. The system of clearing the undergrowth by fire during Mahua collection was stopped. Other villages were initially stopped from using forest resources for fuelwood and fodder purposes. However due to political interference this decision was not supported and exacerbated inter-village conflict. (The matter of this ban was taken up to the minister who supported the continuance of grazing activities).
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	He stated that the JFMC and the Panchayat had never interacted or conflicted with each other. He stated that the Gram Sabah did not have the capacity or the interest to carry out forest related work and it should thus be undertaken by the JFMC. He stated that JFM was still supported by the villagers but required the support of the Forest Department to carry out its activities and ensure benefits. He stated that even the JFMC was extremely politicised. For example they had no control over the adivasi's who have a great deal of power due to the support of the Tribal Welfare Department.



Issue	Perceptions
	Bishnoi community to settle on forest fringe land. Even though this practice is not legal, the respondent was confident that the Bishnoi community had the power to facilitate it through the JFM or the PRI.
Forest sustainability	Forests had improved in the initial years during the tenure of Dr. BMS Rathore. Infrastructures were built in the village plantations were done. Now due to the lack of interest among the people the maintenance of these plantations is not done any more. Lack of funds is another reason any activity cannot be taken up by the JFMC.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community feels that the Sarpanch, who remains away from the village cannot take charge of the management of the forests and the Gram Sabha is incapable of doing so.

### General Pra Discussion

The FD and the police have been kept as separate from the PRI as they are more 'control' oriented i.e. to enforce law and order, whereas the other line departments are more development oriented, which is what the PRI does. 'The CM has kept them more centralised to keep control' – they thus work in coordination with the PRI not under them. No examples of any conflicts were cited in this manner of functioning.

### 6.3.8 Jhapnadeh

#### Overview of the village

Jhapnadeh, though a revenue village is surrounded by forests. There are four compartments allotted to the village. Two of which is in Magardha range and the other two in the Makdai range. The JFMC formed in 1992 is under the Magardha range.

The village is more or less homogeneous as there are only tribal communities, the Gonds and the Korkus. The literacy rate is very low and none of the adults encountered in the village were literate. There are not many infrastructures, the village does not even have electricity.

The primary occupation of the people is agricultural labour and the entire family migrates in the harvesting seasons. The villagers have some amount of agricultural land but the status of agriculture is poor.

The village has 57 households and the average annual income is Rs.8300/-. The monetary dependence on NTFP is around

14.22%.

<b>Range</b>	Magardha
<b>Block</b>	Khirkhya
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Pataldah
<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	No MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Forest Protection Committee (FPC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gond

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Pancham

**Designation:** Sarpanch, Pataldah Gram Panchayat

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
Membership	The Sarpanch is of the view that the membership in the JFMC is perfect on paper. In practicality the village elite and the FD take the decisions. The other people are there to complete the quorum.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The FD has not given any rights to the community regarding the forest resources or the forestlands. They have been given a few concessions on some of the forest products. He feels that the community is not even capable of using the ownership rights in a proper way.
(b) Decision-making	The decision-making power, according to the Sarpanch, is vested upon the village elite and the FD. The marginalised communities are not heard and they feel deprived. This happens in the forest villages and even in a homogeneous village of a single community. There are traditional village heads who take all the decisions on behalf of the community.  With regards to the JFM program the decisions are taken by the FD, the villagers have little knowledge and thus little say in the issues of forest protection. The JFM committees do not



Issue	Perceptions
	have enough money to do the development of the villages thus the villagers do not have any say and they eventually loose interest in the program.
Equity	The Sarpanch does not feel that the benefits from the forest produce are equally distributed among the FD and the community. He feels that the community should get more money for the development of the village, since without the development of the surrounding villages, forest protection is impossible.
Forest sustainability	<p>Forest cover had improved initially but after the people lost interest the plantations were not taken care of and thus the forests deteriorated again.</p> <p>About the reasons for the loss in interest among the people the Sarpanch had to say that the main reason was the lack of development of the villages. Again there was no observable increase in the tree species of interest for the villagers. The reduction in number of the <i>Achaar</i> or <i>Mahua</i> trees did not stop. This demoralised the community to a large extent.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The Sarpanch feels that the PRI should be involved in the JFMC, however, he does not feel that it can completely replace the JFMC. According to him, the PRI can do the monitoring of the activities of the JFMC and ensure proper participation in it.

**Name of interviewee:** Mangi Lal

**Designation:** Panch, Pataldah Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Panch shares a similar view with the Sarpanch and believes that the main aim of the JFM program was the protection of forests and other aspects like village development or participation had always been secondary. Therefore, though there are members from every part of the village in the EC of the JFM committee their presence is not important as the Forest Guard takes the decisions.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The Panch feels that the community has just been given few concessions on the forests. They are now being allowed to bring head loads of fuel wood, which was difficult before as the "Maharaj" (Forest Guard) used to ask for money even for bringing fuel wood. He feels that the community has not been given the rights to get timber to repair their houses whereas the FD cuts down the trees for profit.
(b) Decision-making	<p>The ward member does not believe that there are any such intra-village conflict regarding decision-making. Many of the villagers being agricultural labourers cannot attend the meetings held in the village and the people who attend take the decisions. However, the people who did not attend do accept such decisions.</p> <p>The JFMC, as according to the Panch, is not a very transparent body and the FD keeps all the accounts with it. Since the community is not properly educated they do not insist upon knowing the accounts and it becomes easier for the FD to avoid the same. The decisions taken are normally the ones the FD wants to do for the forest protection and the community has minimal say in it.</p>

Issue	Perceptions
	The community now shares a better relationship with the FD due to constant interaction. "Begar has stopped and the villagers are even empowered enough to refuse such requests. The presence of the JFMC has definitely helped the community in this way.
Equity	The community has not had any material gains from this program. The only gain that they have had is in terms of the labour that they have had when they have joined FD programs. The improvement in forests has harmed them in an indirect way. There has been a marked increase in the number of wild boars, which harm their crops to a large extent. The FD has not helped them in this regard.
Forest sustainability	Forests have improved and forest fire incidences or incidences of illegal felling have decreased. There is some increase in wildlife too. However, increase in the number of trees of NTFPs has not increased at all.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The task of the JFMC cannot be taken over by the Gram Sabha. The Panch feels that the community is not yet capable of handling this vast resource on its own. The people are not aware enough to do a proper conservation. They also do not have the proper technical knowledge required for forest management.

### The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The community feels that the village is well represented in the EC but they have minimal say on the decision making. It is the JFMC president and the Forest Guard who takes all the decisions.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The community does not feel that they have been given any ownership rights over the forestlands or resources through the JFM program. The only benefit that they have is from the wage labour that they get. Even the protection money that comes into the JFMC account is of no good for them. That is why they are not interested to know about the accounts. The head loads of fuel wood that they are allowed to carry are the only concession that they have. The availability of NTFP has reduced over the years and the villagers are not very dependent upon NTFP as they were before. The FD, as according to most of the villagers has put restrictions on their rights of forest usage. The main problem that they face is with the timber that they need for their houses. They are the ones who need the timber as an essential commodity but the FD uses it for their profit.
(b) Decision-making	Jhapnadeh being a more or less homogeneous village there is no inter-community conflict. There is no conflict regarding decision-making. Any decisions taken in the general body meetings of the JFMC or the Gram Sabha meetings are acceptable to the whole community because many of them cannot join the meeting since the majority of the villagers depend on agricultural labour.  The community feels that the FD takes the decisions and the people just agree to it. The reason being that they do not see any benefit from this program any more and thus find no

Issue	Perceptions
	<p>interest in it. The power balance is so much skewed towards the FD that the community does not have any interest in the whole process.</p> <p>The relationship of community with the FD has improved and the differences that was there before the commencement of this program has reduced markedly, making the community much more free and frank with the FD.</p>
Equity	The community does not feel that there is any equity in the benefit sharing mechanism of the JFMC. They feel that under the program the FD takes the major benefits and they feel deprived. According to them, they have to face the risk of forest protection. However, the forests they are protecting only provide them with fuel wood and no other major benefit.
Forest sustainability	According to the community, the forests had initially improved. Nowadays they have lost interest in the program and the forests have deteriorated again.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community feels that the Panchayat bodies do not have the proper knowledge to manage the forest resources but their help can be sought in the monitoring of the activities of the JFMC. The Gram Sabha should be the best institution for such activities since it can concentrate on a particular village. However, the presence of the FD is required for the technical guidance regarding forest management.

### 6.3.9 Keli

#### Overview of the village

Keli is a revenue village in the Timarni block. It is divided into two hamlets, both of which have equal concentration of the Korku and the Gwali community. There are only a few households of the Harijan community. The forests are around one to two kilometres away from the village.

There is no active members of the MTO movement in the village however, being very close to Rawang the community is influenced by the MTO philosophy and has quite a few sympathisers. Being a more or less homogeneous village there are no inter-community conflict and very few intra-village conflicts.

There are around 150 families in the village and the average annual income is around Rs.7500/-. The monetary dependence on NTFP is around 21.92% of the average annual income.

<b>Range</b>	Borpani
<b>Block</b>	Timarni
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Keli

<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	No MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Forest Protection Committee (FPC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gwali, Harijan

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Nane Lal Baghmare

**Designation:** Sarpanch, Keli Gram Panchayat

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
Membership	<p>The Sarpanch of the Keli Gram Panchayat is of the view that the JFMC is not an institution for participatory decision making. According to him it is just an institution created by the FD to help them work in an easier way and not as an institution for participatory forest management.</p> <p>According to him the JFMC is “<i>Van vibhag ki nimay ko logon pe thopne ka zariya hai</i>” (a way to enforce the decisions of the FD on the people). Proper representation and proper participation was never a goal of the FD and therefore this aspect was never looked after.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	<p>According to the Sarpanch, the villagers have not been given any ownership rights on the forestlands or resources. There are lots of restrictions imposed on them and the JFM committee is only concerned with the forest protection. Providing rights and decision-making power to the villagers was not the main aim of the Department. He feels that the rights on the forestlands may well not be given to the community, they should be handed over the complete decision-making power on forest resources, especially the ones they are most dependent on. They even should have the rights to take decisions on timber, which is a product they are dependent upon too.</p>
(b) Decision-making	<p>The Sarpanch is of the opinion that the problem of marginalised community being unheard is not common in the village. Though there are different communities living in the village there is no such stratification within the village. Thus, everyone do participate in the decision making process.</p> <p>The FD , as according to the Sarpanch, has all the power regarding decision-making in the context of JFM program. The people’s body is just a cover for them to impose their</p>

Issue	Perceptions
	<p>decisions on the community.</p> <p>However the relationship between the FD and the villagers have definitely improved due to the presence of the JFMC. the people nowadays are more free with the villagers and they are learning to take decisions. The community has not been able to implement any of the decisions they have taken regarding usage forest resources for grazing etc. However, this shows that the community is getting empowered at least to some extent.</p>
Equity	<p>According to the Sarpanch most of the money of the JFMC is used for the protection of the tree crops in the forests. However, the benefits from these go almost completely to the FD. This fact itself, according to him, is enough to speak about the equity in benefit sharing.</p>
Forest sustainability	<p>The JFM committees have been able to protect the forests from the forest fires and illegal felling and poaching of timber. The community as of now goes to protect the forests for the protection money and also out of fear of the FD officials. However, there is definitely some increase in the level of awareness within the community. This increase in awareness will in the long run be helpful for the conservation of forests.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>The Sarpanch is not in favour of the JFMC being completely replaced by the Panchayat bodies or the Gram Sabha. He feels that though the community has become aware about forest protection but the level of awareness is not as much. The Panchayat bodies without the presence of the government officials would not be able to control the community. The Panchayat bodies may at best be used to ensure proper representation of the society, participatory decision making and monitoring of the funds. For the management of the forests the presence of the FD is essential.</p>

**Name of interviewee:** Tularam

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh and Panch, Rawang Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	<p>The Koshaddhyaksh shares a similar view with the Sarpanch and believes that the main aim of the JFM program was the protection of forests and other aspects like village development or participation had always been secondary. Therefore, though there are members from every part of the village in the EC of the JFM committee their presence is not important as the decisions are taken by the Forest Guard.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	<p>The Koshaddhyaksh of Keli feels that the community has just been given few concessions on the forests. They are allowed to bring head loads of fuel wood, which was supposed to be their rights (<i>"abhi to sarbojha la ne diya jata hai. yeh to hum logon ka haq tha"</i>). Sometimes, the Forest Guard stops them and takes money for the head loads. Though such incidences have not happened in the village he has heard that such things have happened in Rawang. He feels that the community has not been given the rights to get timber to repair their houses whereas the FD cuts down the trees for profit.</p>

Issue	Perceptions
(b) Decision-making	<p>The village treasurer does not believe that there are any such intra-village conflict regarding decision-making. Many of the villagers being agricultural labourers cannot attend the meetings held in the village and the people who attend take the decisions. However, the people who did not attend do accept such decisions.</p> <p>The JFMC, as according to the Koshadhyaksh, is not a very transparent body and the FD keeps all the accounts with it. Since the community is not properly educated they do not insist upon knowing the accounts and it becomes easier for the FD to avoid the same. The decisions taken are normally the ones the FD wants to do for the forest protection and the community has minimal say in it.</p> <p>The community now shares a better relationship with the FD due to constant interaction. "Begar" (providing free entertainment to FD officials) has stopped and the villagers are even empowered enough to refuse such requests. The presence of the JFMC has definitely helped the community in this way.</p>
Equity	<p>The community has not had any material gains from this program. The only gain that they have had is in terms of the labour that they have had when they have joined FD programs. The improvement in forests has harmed them in an indirect way. There has been a marked increase in the number of wild boars, which harm their crops to a large extent. The FD has not helped them in this regard.</p>
Forest sustainability	<p>Forests have improved and forest fire incidences or incidences of illegal felling have decreased. There is some increase in wildlife too. However, increase in the number of trees of NTFPs has not increased at all.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>The task of the JFMC cannot be taken over by the Gram Sabha. The Koshadhyaksh feels that the community is not yet capable of handling this vast resource on its own. The people are not aware enough to do a proper conservation. They also do not have the proper technical knowledge required for forest management.</p>

## The Community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	<p>The community feels that the village is well represented in the EC but they have minimal say on the decision making. It is the JFMC president and the Forest Guard who takes all the decisions.</p>
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	<p>The community does not feel that they have been given any ownership rights over the forestlands or resources through the JFM program. The only benefit that they have is from the wage labour that they get. Even the protection money that comes into the JFMC account is of no good for them. That is why they are not interested to know about the accounts. The head loads of fuel wood that they are allowed to carry are the only concession that they have. The availability of NTFP has reduced over the years and the villagers are not very dependent upon NTFP as they were before. The FD, as according to most of the villagers has put restrictions on their rights of forest usage. The main problem that they face is with the timber that they need for their houses. They are the ones who needs the timber as an essential commodity but the FD uses it for their profit.</p>

Issue	Perceptions
(b) Decision-making	<p>Keli being a more or less homogeneous village there is no inter-community conflict. The main intra-village conflicts are with the Kotwar of the village. There is no conflict regarding decision-making. Any decisions taken in the general body meetings of the JFMC or the Gram Sabha meetings are acceptable to the whole community because many of them cannot join the meeting since the majority of the villagers depend on agricultural labour.</p> <p>As far as the power balance between the village and the FD is concerned, the community feels that the decisions are taken by the FD and the people just agree to it. The reason being that they do not see any benefit from this program any more and thus find no interest in it. The power balance is so much skewed towards the FD that the community does not have any interest in the whole process.</p> <p>The relationship of community with the FD has improved and the differences that was there before the commencement of this program has reduced markedly, making the community much more free and frank with the FD.</p>
Equity	<p>The community does not feel that there is any equity in the benefit sharing mechanism of the JFMC. they feel that under the program the major benefits is taken by the FD and they feel deprived. According to them, they have to face the risk of forest protection. However, the forests they are protecting only provide them with fuel wood and no other major benefit.</p>
Forest sustainability	<p>According to the community, the forests had initially improved. Drawing of fire lines etc. had reduced forest fire incidences. However, some people believe that the incidences of illegal felling has increased. This is because the community was afraid of the FD and did not dare to enter the forests before. Nowadays they freely enter the forests. Then again, their fear of the FD staff has also decreased. Now, when people started feeling that they do not have enough benefits from this forest protection, they started felling trees for their personal benefits.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>The community feels that the Panchayat bodies do not have the proper knowledge to manage the forest resources but their help can be sought in the monitoring of the activities of the JFMC. The Gram Sabha should be the best institution for such activities since it can concentrate on a particular village. However, the presence of the FD is required for the technical guidance regarding forest management.</p>

### 6.3.10 Rawang

#### Overview of the village

Rawang is divided into three hamlets and has around 80 households in the village. One of the hamlets, Baniadhana, is completely devoted to the Shramik Adivasi Sangathan, an MTO under Ms Shameem Modi. This hamlet has around 16 households, who are mainly from the Korku community.

There is presence of intra-village conflicts due to the MTO activities regarding forestry related and land related issues. Agriculture and agricultural labour are the main occupation of the community. Though the average landholding is around 2 to 3 acres per family the poor quality of the hilly soil has made it difficult for the farmers. Thus, the migration rate is high, about 50% of the village population. During the season of wheat and Soya bean harvesting the whole family of the villagers migrate to other villages to obtain agricultural labour.

<b>Range</b>	Borpani
<b>Block</b>	Timarni
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Rawang
<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	Strong MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Forest Protection Committee (FPC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gond, Harijan, Guali, Golan

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Kishorilal

**Designation:** Sarpanch, Rawang Gram Panchayat

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
Membership	<p>The Sarpanch of the Rawang Panchayat is of the view that the village is well represented at the JFMC level. The villagers are active and share their views freely in the general body meetings of the JFMC. All the people are not able to come for meetings because the villagers are mainly agricultural labourers and migration is quite prevalent in this region.</p> <p>The different members of the Executive Committee are from the different hamlets of the village. The villagers of the Baniadhana (the MTO followers) do not attend meetings. Some women attend the meetings when they get time. They normally do not speak up in front of the men. "yahan ke baian mardon ke samne mu nehi kholti hai" (the women here do not speak in front of men).</p>



Issue	Perceptions
<p>Empowerment</p> <p>(a) Rights &amp; ownership</p> <p>(b) Decision-making</p>	<p>The Sarpanch feels that the villagers have not even been given any concessions leave alone rights over the forest resources. The community is kept away from the forests though they have the actual rights over the forestlands. The FD reaps the benefits from the forests and the community has to remain happy with the nominal wage labour that they get. This according to him has given rise to the MTO movement in the region.</p> <p>In the context of decision making the Sarpanch does not feel that there are marginal communities in the village. All the villagers re always free to voice their opinions in the general body metings of the JFMC as well as the meetings of the Executive Body of the JFMC. However, what portion of these opinions actually becomes a decision is something very important. <i>"sujhav to sab de te hai par nakedar mane tab na"</i> (we all suggest but the Forest Guard does not accept them).</p> <p>Thus, the decision making power completely vests on the FD and the JFMC is just a way of making these decisions effective.</p> <p>The relationship with the FD, especially the Forest Guard and the Deputy Ranger has improved due to the presence of the JFMC as interaction with them has increased. Nowadays the FD is not oppressive any more in terms obtaining chicken or liquor for free from the villagers.</p>
Equity	<p>The benefit sharing mechanism under the JFM program is not in favour of the community at all, as according to the Sarpanch of the village. He feels that the community is been made to protect the forests with the Forest Department reaping all the benefits. The share of benefits from the timber harvest is a point in which he has reservations. According to him, a major share of the profits from the timber harvest should be given to the community instead of being with the FD.</p>
Forest sustainability	<p>The Sarpanch feels that there was some improvement in the conditions of the forests in terms of reduction in forest fire and illegal felling. However, the discriminatory behaviour of the FD towards some of the villagers in the region forced the oppressed to go for drastic measures. Thus, the forests are now in a poor condition.</p> <p>Restrictions on grazing are imposed by the FD through the JFMC but the community has a lot of problems due to that. The Gwali tribe has actually lost their traditional occupation and benefits from livestock have become negligible.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>The Sarpanch feels that the presence of the FD is important for the management of the forests but the Gram Sabha and the other bodies of the Panchayat needs to be involved at least for the monitoring of the expenditure of the JFMC. The involvement of the Panchayat bodies is required to reduce the corruption that is there in the FD.</p>

**Name of interviewee:** Kende Kokade

**Designation:** Koshaddhyaksh and Panch, Rawang Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The treasurer of the Gram Kosh, feels that even being a heterogeneous village the villagers are united. Representation is not a problem in the JFMC as well as the Gram Sabha. Excepting for the Baniadhana all the people try to attend the general body meetings of the JFMC and the Gram Sabha as well. As the people are mainly labourers it is not always possible for everyone to attend meetings. Women also attend meetings, there are women members in the Executive Body too. However, they seldom speak.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>On the issue of rights and ownership the Koshaddhyaksh is of the view that the community has not been given any ownership rights on the forests, though being the local dwellers they do have the first right. The FD has just given them a few concessions regarding the collection of the essentials like fuel wood and NTFPs. According, to him the FD has started listening to the community but they would be reluctant to give complete rights to the community. He also feels that even the community is not capable, in terms of awareness and education, of exercising the rights if awarded to them.</p> <p>The Koshaddhyaksh feels that all the communities in the village share similar views and there is no feeling of any community being marginalised by others. Every one in the village freely voice their opinions in the general body meeting as well as the Executive Body meeting of the JFMC. the JFMC also tries to keep these opinions in mind while taking decisions about the forests.</p> <p>According to him, though the decision making power is more with the FD but the Department listens to the views of the people and takes the decisions in consultation with the JFMC President [incidentally the Koshaddhyaksh is the JFMC President himself].</p> <p>The relationship between the FD and the villagers has definitely improved. Though the two are still not in equal terms, the FD officials now pay some heed to the views of the community. However, the present MTO activities in one of the hamlets of the village are hampering the relationship to some extent.</p>
Equity	The village treasurer does not feel that there is an absolute equity in the benefit sharing, however, the community also has a lot to gain from the JFM program. He feels that the share of the community on timber harvest should be increased and the funds for the development of the village should also be increased with respect to the funds available for protection.
Forest sustainability	According to him, the forests had improved quite a bit due to the JFM program but the recent MTO movement in the village has plundered the forests. Trees have been felled to clear the land for agricultural purposes leaving the forests in poor condition.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	He does not feel that the Gram Sabha or the Panchayat bodies are capable at all to handle the task of forest management. According to him the community lacks in the technical knowledge required for proper management. Then again, the community is not aware of the necessity of the forests. According to him the instigating factors like the MTO would make the people create havoc in the forests destroying it in matter of no time.

## The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	<p>The community says that the village elite rules the JFMC as well as the Gram Sabha meetings. The community attends the meetings and speaks out their problems but they are seldom heard. They are never included in the decision making in any of the institutions.</p> <p>The Harijans in the village feel that they are absolutely unheard. It is the Korkus who rule. People from the Gwali tribe feel that there is certain inequity in the village and the people who are close to the FD staff get more benefits. Representation is poor in the village and the representatives of the hamlets like Lohardhana (resided mainly by Harijans) are not heard in the meetings of the Executive Body of the JFMC.</p>
Empowerment Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The community does not feel that they have been given any rights over the forests through the JFM program. They had the freedom to graze their cattle any where in the forests nowadays there are restrictions. The biggest problem that they face is the infertility of their lands but the government does not help in any way. The FD talks about ownership and rights but the only reason that they are connected with the FD is for the labour that they get.</p> <p>There is some intra-community latent conflict present in the village. The Harijan community feels absolutely unheard. According to them the Korkus dominate the decisions taken in the village. Though they come up with suggestions these are not taken into account.</p> <p>The people from the Gwali community feel that the people, among the Korkus, who are close to the FD staff are listened to. The Gonds and even some of the Korkus agree that there is some inter-community disparity and the tribal people get the preference since they are in the majority.</p> <p>The community does not feel that they have any power in front of the FD. It is the village elite, the JFMC President (also the Koshadhyaksh), and the FD staff who take decisions and the rest are bound to follow. There has been no change in the scenario over the years even after the JFMC came into being. They believe that the <i>Sangathan</i> (MTO) has given power to the villagers of the Baniadhana (the hamlet having MTO followers), who can fight for their rights.</p>
Equity	<p>The share of benefits as according to the JFM guidelines is not equal at all. The FD keeps the major share of the benefits and the community is limited to the benefits accrued from the wage labour available.</p> <p>The nationalisation of <i>Tendu</i> leaves has reduced the gains accrued from the same. Before this the contractors used to pay at a lesser rate but they did not stop the collection after any targets as it happens after the nationalisation.</p>
Forest sustainability	<p>There was some improvements in the conditions of the forest but that was not of any help to the community. There was no rise in the number of NTFP species. Grazing was restricted at certain places. The forest protection and improvement in the forests helped the FD only as the tree species improved.</p>

Issue	Perceptions
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community does not perceive the Panchayat or the Gram Sabha as a replacement of the JFMC. They feel that the Panchayat being elite dominated is even worse than the FD if some power is given to them. The Gram Sabha too is not very participatory and it helps certain sections of the society.

### 6.3.11 Sigampur

#### Overview of the village

Sigampur is a village having two hamlets separated by half a kilometre, having 65 households. The main communities living in the village are the Gond, Korku and Gwali communities. There are few Golan families and a Bansod family too.

The major occupation of the villagers is agriculture and agricultural labour. The irrigation facility in the fields is not very good but the soil being fertile the production of crops is satisfactory.

The average annual income of the village is around Rs.32,000/-. The dependency on NTFP is also on the lower side and is around 6.25% of their average annual income.

<b>Range</b>	Rahetgaon
<b>Block</b>	Timarni
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Kasarni
<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	No MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Forest Protection Committee (FPC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Korku, Gond, Gwali, Golan, Bansod

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Hariom Banke

**Designation:** Sarpanch, Kasarni Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Sarpanch feels that the membership in the EC of Sigapur is not for namesake. Both the general body as well as the executive committee meeting of the JFMC is participatory. The Sarpanch is also informed but he has not been able to be present in most of the meetings.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	He feels that the JFM guidelines do not provide rights to the community. From a situation where the FD had restricted everything for the villagers, this program has been able to give some concessions to the community. Ownership rights, according to him was never on the cards.  There are no problems of dominant class rule in Sigapur. All the tribes are well represented in the village. People do not stop questioning any one in the village.
(b) Decision-making	The relationship with the FD has also improved by this program. In this particular village the power, though in favour of the FD, is not used in case of decision-making.
Equity	The Sarpanch does not feel that the JFM program lists down an equitable distribution of the benefits between the community and the FD. The community should have had more shares on the timber harvest. However, the benefit sharing that ought to be is perfectly followed in Sigapur and there is a complete transparency in the accounts.
Forest sustainability	Forest in the region has certainly improved after the JFMC started operating. According to the Sarpanch the two most noticeable changes are the increase in the bamboo forest and the decrease in the number of forest fire incidences.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The PRI can at best be the monitors of the expenses, as according to the Sarpanch. He feels that is also not required as far as Sigapur is concerned. With the lack of technical knowledge and managerial skills the PRI would not be able to do a better job in the absence of the FD.

**Name of interviewee:** Ishwar Das

**Designation:** Panch, Kasarni Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The JFM committee has really worked well in Sigampur. The decisions that are taken about the forest protection are accepted by all. People also see to it that the decisions of the committee are properly enforced.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership  (b) Decision-making	<p>The Panch feels that the FD would never give the people the ownership rights on the forests, be it the resources or the lands. The Department has given the people rights on the minor forest produce but rights on timber have not been given. Therefore, he feels that the FD has given partial rights to the community.</p> <p>The JFMC in the village is perfectly participatory and none of the communities in the village feel unheard. Decision-making is done in the EC of the JFMC but the issues discussed are the ones raised in the General Body. In the general body all the people voice their opinions freely. Women do not normally attend these meetings. They do not voice opinions even if they attend the meetings.</p> <p>The relationship of the villagers with the Beat Guard is very good. The latter promotes discussions in meetings and he gives reasons for any step he undertakes.</p>
Equity	The Panch does not feel any discrepancy on this issue. According to him, the FD has allowed them to take whatever they need from the forests and the community is also happy with the share of benefits.
Forest sustainability	According to the Panch, the forests have improved. Proper protection and maintenance on the part of the villagers has made this possible in Sigampur. Forest fire incidences has markedly declined. Bamboo forests have improved a lot after the flowering that occurred a few years back at Harda.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	According to the Panch, replacing the JFMC with the PRI would undo all the good work done. He believes that the Sarpanch does not believe in participatory decision-making or even transparency. Thus, giving the charge to him, or bringing him in the management would bring in a lot of corruption.

### The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The community feels that the JFMC has worked for the people and has helped in the development of the village as well as the surrounding forests to a large extent. The decisions are normally taken on the issues raised in the general body meetings. The villagers freely voice their opinions in these meetings.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The community feels that they have been given proper rights over the forests. It is not difficult to get fuel wood as it was before, when they had to pay for the head loads they brought.

Issue	Perceptions
(b) Decision-making	<p>Nowadays the Forest Guard even allows them to carry dry branches of teak for their houses. The community feels that he is justified in not allowing them to lop the branches.</p> <p>The one Bansod family in the village feels that they do not have the rights over forest resources. This is because they are not allowed to take bamboo from the forests and they have to buy it from the depots, where quality bamboo is seldom available.</p> <p>In the decision-making process none of the communities the Gonds, the Korkus or the Gwalis feel that they are left out. There is no inter-community conflict in terms of decision-making in the JFMC. All the villagers play an active role in the decision-making procedure. They also feel that they are free to express their views with the FD and the Beat Guard pays heed to their views.</p> <p>The Bansod family does not feel that they are heard since they are a minority in the village.</p>
Equity	<p>Excepting for the Bansod family all others feel that the benefits are equally shared between the FD and the community. They feel that they get all that is essential for them from the forests. They also get proper wage labour for the programs conducted by the FD. The protection money is used for the development of the village.</p>
Forest sustainability	<p>The forest fire incidences has not occurred in the last year. The plantations are also well maintained and the bamboo forests have improved quite a lot in the past few years. Soil erosion has reduced due to some contour bunding done in some parts of the forest.</p>
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	<p>The community perceives the Panchayat to be highly corrupt and the least transparent body. According to them the inclusion of the Sarpanch and the Secretary of the Village Panchayat may lead to an increase in corruption and a marked decrease in the development that is going on in the village due to the presence of the JFMC.</p>

### 6.3.12 Unchaan

#### Overview of the village

The village Unchaan is situated near the river Narmada in the Handia range of Harda division. At a point in time it was situated on the banks of the river but later the villagers shifted towards the forests due to submergence. It is divided into three hamlets. There are some villagers still residing in the banks of the river. The villagers who shifted stay in two different hamlets about one kilometre from each other.

It is an agro-based village where most of the people being farmers and a few being landless agricultural labourers. The average landholding is about five acres per family and the average annual income is around Rs.25,000. The monetary dependence on NTFP is one of the lowest and is around 4.56% of the average annual income.

The main communities living in the village are the Rajputs. There are also a few Korku (tribal) families and one or two Dheemars (fishermen) families.

There is another revenue village called Bheempura, about one or two kilometres away from Unchaan. This village is taken into the same JFMC as Unchaan. They also share the same wards in the Nayapura village Panchayat. The main community living in this village is the Korkus.

<b>Range</b>	Handia
<b>Block</b>	Harda
<b>Village Panchayat</b>	Nayapura
<b>Village type</b>	Revenue
<b>MTO presence</b>	No MTO presence
<b>Forest around</b>	Protected Forests
<b>JFMC</b>	Village Forest Committee (VFC)
<b>Communities residing</b>	Rajputs, Korku, Dheemar

**Perceptions:**

Gram Panchayat Level

**Name of interviewee:** Suman Ray / Shiv Shankar Ray (Sarpanchpati)

**Designation:** Sarpanch, Nayapura Gram Panchayat

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Perceptions</b>
Membership	The Sarpanch feels that the whole village is well represented in the Executive Committee of the JFMC. However, whether everyone participates equally cannot be gauged since the JFMC is practically defunct. According to the Sarpanch the JFMC never started working properly and even the Forest Department did not take much of an interest in it.  In practical terms the few decisions that are taken by the JFMC is done by the Forest Guard and the JFMC president. Many of the villagers are not aware of the JFMC at all since there



Issue	Perceptions
	had only been one or two general body meeting of the JFMC.
Empowerment Rights & ownership	The Sarpanch feels that the community has been given enough rights on the forest resources since they have been given the rights to extract fuel wood and NTFPs that are important for them. Ownership rights on forestland should not be given to the community.
Decision-making	In Unchaan the whole community takes the decisions regarding the Panchayat programs. The JFMC being present just for namesake there is no question of any decision-making  In the JFM program in most of the villages the power balance is in favour of the FD. In Unchaan, the Forest Guard could not impose his decisions on the community and thus the committee is almost non-functional.
Equity	The sharing of benefits is equal between the FD and the community. However, the people in this region is not very dependent on forest products so little discrepancies in the benefit sharing does not bother the community to a large extent.
Forest sustainability	The forests improved initially but it was not because of the JFM program but the NVDA (Narmada Valley Development Authority). After the NVDA was dissolved the forests degraded at a fast rate. At present it is in a poor state and there is nothing of much interest for the community.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The PRI should be involved in the management along with the JFMC and not completely replace the latter. The role of the PRI should be monitoring the activities and ensuring that decisions are taken regarding forest management.

**Name of interviewee:** Malak Singh

**Designation:** Panch, Nayapura Gram Panchayat

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	The Panch was not aware of any JFM committee and any involvement of the Forest Department with the people
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	According to him, the rights on forests remain completely with the FD and the community has absolutely no power. He feels that the JFMC, if existed, does not have any influence on this.
(b) Decision-making	Decision-making in the village is normally done by the Rajput community and the few Korkus in the village as well as the people in Bheempura are completely ignored. It would have been very similar in case of the JFMC and probably they are not even informed about the meetings.
Equity	The community has nothing to gain from the forests the FD and the upper castes extract all the benefits that are to be extracted from the forests. The FD officials take bribes for almost

Issue	Perceptions
	everything that the villagers take from the forests. Only collection of fuel wood is allowed from the forests.
Forest sustainability	Forests, according to the Panch, had improved during the NVDA activities however, it has continually degraded since then.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The Panch does not feel that the Panchayat may help in any way since corruption is much more in the Panchayat than anywhere else. The Panchayat is completely captured by the village elite and it should not be included in any way with the forests.

### The community

Issue	Perceptions
Membership	People are not much aware of the presence of such a committee. There has never been a general body meeting of the committee, according to most of the villagers. Some of the EC members do not know that they are in the committee and the JFMC president takes the decisions in consultation with the Forest Guard.
Empowerment (a) Rights & ownership	The community does not feel that they have gained rights on forest resources or forestlands in the last few years.
(b) Decision-making	Decisions are taken by the village heads and the people are not consulted. This does not trouble most of the villagers as they are well off and does not depend on the government for sustenance. However, the few landless Korku families in the region feel deprived and hope that the Panchayat or any other government official listen to their grievances.
Equity	
Forest sustainability	The forests around Unchaan are in a poor condition it had improved during the NVDA however, it degraded once this program was called off. Forests are not looked after by the community.
Managers of forest resources PRI or JFMC	The community does not feel that with the corruption that is in the Panchayat cannot do any good to the community in any respect. Even if the Panchayat is included they should not have the access to money at any cost.