

Joint Forest Management and Gender

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Joint Forest Management programme

In India, state-owned forests represent the country's largest land-based common pool resource. Vast sections of the scheduled tribe population as well as women and men of other disadvantaged communities living in or near the forest areas, depend on them for many of their livelihood and subsistence needs. A number of programmes have been undertaken by the Government of India (GOI) to conserve and protect the forests. However, following a legacy of colonial times, most of these have provided very little space for the participation of the local, dependent communities and in the management of the resources.

Under tremendous pressure from both voluntary organisations and local communities a radical shift in forest policy occurred in the late 1980s which opened up opportunities for the community management of natural resources. The Forest Policy of 1988 not only emphasised conservation but also, the opportunities that forests provide in meeting subsistence requirements of forest-dependent people. Joint Forest Management (JFM) subsequently emerged - requiring forests to be protected and managed through partnerships between Forest Departments (FDs) and local people (Khare *et al*, 2000).

JFM can be defined as the "sharing of products, responsibilities, control and decision making authority over forest lands between forest departments and local user groups, based on a formal agreement. The primary purpose of JFM is to give users a stake in the forest benefits and a role in planning and management for sustainable improvement of the forest condition and productivity. A second goal is to support an equitable distribution of forest products" (Hill and Shields, 1998).

Currently it is estimated that 10.24 million hectares (ha) of forestlands are being managed under the JFM programme through 36,075 committees in 22 states (GOI, 1999).

1.2 Gender issues in JFM

The Forest Policy of 1988 envisaged both women's and men's participation in the protection of forests. Further, the rules of the GOI Order of 1991 specified that at least two women should be on every village management committee in the JFM programme.

However it has been observed that in many cases due to social and cultural constraints the participation of women remains on paper only. In reality women play little role in the programme and the majority of decisions are still taken by men.

As a result, concern for gender issues in JFM has grown. However these concerns have generally evolved within a context that sees 'gender' as a local and depoliticised issue and related to an undifferentiated category called women. Despite its conservative nature, a true understanding of women's resource needs has been poorly operationalised. Gender

politics has been seen as being beyond the purview of JFM. Analyses of women's resource needs in JFM continues to attempt the separation of women's resource use interests from their wider social relationships and therefore runs the risk of entrenching existing gender inequalities. As Leach (1991:19 in Locke, 1999:281) argues, an understanding of women's relationship with the environment needs to recognise the "relationships of power and authority, negotiation and bargaining and the wider social relations in which 'decisions' about land and trees are embedded".

Amongst all sections of any community in India, stronger or weaker, women are at the lowest strata, thus least considered in decision-making. As per a UNDP study conducted in 1995, India ranks 95 among 130 nations in the gender related development index (GDI), which measures achievements in basic human capabilities taking into account the inequities between men and women (Rawat and Bedi, 1996).

However, gender and equity issues have increasingly gained ground in recent times. In participatory programmes, particularly those reliant on 'outside' funding, such 'progress' has been heavily influenced by pressures from donors.

Gender relations are an aspect of broader social relations and, like all social relations, are constituted through the rules, norms and practices by which resources are allocated, tasks and responsibilities are assigned, value is given and power is mobilised (Kabeer and Subrahmanian, 1996).

Gender roles define how women and men perform different tasks within the household, earn income in different ways, have different levels of control over their respective incomes, allocate time differently, have different legal and traditional rights and possess different types of knowledge. In most cultures, while women have multiple, often disproportionate responsibilities and tasks, they have little ownership or control over resources such as land and property, education, technical skills and market information. This imbalance in the ownership and control over resources *vis-a-vis* gendered responsibilities places women in a subordinate and disempowered position relative to men. They are forever dependent and run a greater risk of being excluded from their homes and livelihoods. Due to their relatively different situations, women and men have different perceptions, priorities and goals and development interventions affect them differently (Sarin *et al*, 1996).

A participatory programme such as JFM which aims to involve women as major actors needs to be particularly sensitive to gender disparities and in addressing the constraints which prevent women from participating as equals to men. Due to the negligible ownership of private resources by women, particularly poor rural women, they have a much greater dependence on common pool resources for meeting survival needs. Independent access and entitlements to forest resources through JFM, therefore, has particular significance for resource poor women.

This paper attempts to understand and analyse women's involvement in the JFM programme together with the impacts of their participation and the factors inhibiting

and/or encouraging it. The paper is based primarily on a review of existing secondary literature and a visit to the village of Mendha (Lekha), Maharashtra state.

2. WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN JFM

2.1 Provision for women's participation in JFM orders

The Forest Policy of 1988 envisaged women's participation in the protection of forests. The rules of the GOI Order 1991 specified that at least two women should be on every village management committee in the JFM programmes. In 1998, an advisory committee to promote the involvement of women in the forestry sector was constituted by the Ministry of Environment and Forests. It submitted a number of recommendations which would increase women's participation (GOI, 1999). Following these recommendations it was decided that 50% of the members of the JFM General Body (GB) should be women and the presence of at least 50% of women members should be requisite for calling a GB meeting. In the official JFM committees in all states, established for the implementation of the programme, there is a provision for compulsory participation of a certain number of women from the concerned communities. (See Appendix 1 for women's access to local institution membership in JFM orders of various states).

However it has been observed that in many cases due to social, cultural and economic constraints the participation of women remains on paper only. And they usually play only a negligible role in the processes of planning and implementation.

2.2 Women kept out of the formal institutions

It is uncommon to see examples of natural resource management programmes, whether implemented by governments or local communities, where concerns of women or their voices are heard in the decision-making processes. Equally uncommon is it to see examples where women receive direct benefits from these programmes.

On an everyday basis women often take the initiative to protect forests and their resources, realising the long-term benefits of doing so. However, the following examples illustrate that in spite of their contribution in resource use and development women are kept outside the formal institutions set up by JFM such as the Forest Protection Committees.

Murgabani Village

The forests of Murgabani village in Pargana district of Bihar had been degraded due to overuse by both the local people and the government authorities. Women in the village had to walk 10 to 12 km to find fuelwood. As a result the women, with the help of an NGO, decided to protect the forests.

Initially they had to face tremendous problems as they decided not to cut timber for sale. This meant forgoing an important source of income, especially in the lean periods when there was no agricultural produce left to sell and no other source of income. However,

women protected their forests against all odds, sometimes even disguised as men. Despite this when the village decided to move under JFM, there was no effort to include these women in the Forest Protection Committee (FPC) that was established.

However, the women exerted pressure upon their menfolk and after a lot of effort were allowed to become members of the FPC. Today, the women feel that they get more benefits from the regenerated forests than the men do. Timber is being harvested once again and especially during the lean periods of the year. The regenerated forest has also substantially arrested soil erosion thus increasing agricultural productivity. In addition women collect non-timber forest products (NTFPs), such as leaves for making pattal (leaf plates), oil seeds, edible flowers, green leafy vegetables, and soapy plants for washing purposes. In addition the entire experience has given tremendous confidence to the women (Kapoor, 1999).

Harimari Village

Harimari village in Midnapore district in West Bengal has been protecting 100 ha of forests under a JFM agreement. Traditionally, Harimari and other surrounding villages have been dependent on these forests. The collection of dry twigs for fuelwood is still allowed and is carried out by women every other day for 5-6 hours. Villagers regularly patrol the forests and fine offenders. Women occasionally accompany men during these patrols. Yet none of the women in the village is a member of either the GB or the Executive Committee (EC) of the FPC. Some women are not even aware of the possibilities of their participation in JFM. They occasionally attend the meetings of the EC but do not participate for fear of being openly dismissed by the men. As such, all decisions regarding the management and benefit-sharing of the forest are made by the men. The proceeds from the sale of timber are distributed to the men. Men have also been selling fuelwood, generated by the occasional thinning of the forests, instead of allowing their wives to use it. More recently however and in order to overcome the problem of theft of fuel-wood from the neighbouring villages men are beginning to more seriously consider the involvement of women in the committee. Women on the other hand feel that there should be no question about their involvement as it is their 'right' to be included in the processes (Raju, 1997).

It has emerged through a number of studies in India, that the village level institutions under JFM are still male dominated and decisions are made largely by men based on their own needs, aspirations and perceptions. Women and their needs remain outside this process. Often no alternatives are available to fulfill these needs. And women may be forced to conform to these restrictions either realising the long-term benefits of restrictive use or out of sheer lack of choice (Das and Christopher, 1998). However in most of the cases women are prepared to violate the restrictions to meet the needs of their families. For this they are blamed and looked down upon by their own community. As Correa (1995) states, before the advent of JFM, women at least had support from their own men against the restriction on access to the natural resources, now they are entirely on their own. Thus these male-dominated institutions can result in the supporting of serious

restrictions and hardships for women, and negate their customary right to natural resources.

2.3 Factors affecting the participation of women

However though much has been spoken about the lack of participation of women in the JFM decision-making bodies little work has been carried out so far to explore the reasons for this (Correa, 1995). In many states the JFM committees are formed after the proposal has been accepted by 50% of the population. Invariably this 50% are the men in the village as women rarely participate in the preliminary meetings. Thus the women are already excluded from decisions. 8 out of 21 Indian states in their JFM resolutions make the households the basis for participation in JFM committees. In these cases women become members only if there are no men in the family. For the rest of the states (excluding Uttar Pradesh) the resolution specifies that one woman and one man per household should be the member of FPCs. However, still, many adult men and women remain unrepresented, as extended families are common with several adults living under one roof. An exception is found in Uttar Pradesh where their resolution talks about including *all* the adult men and women in the JFM committees (Pathak, 2000).

Further reasons for the lack of participation of women in the JFM programme can be summarised as follows:

- *A lack of information* - women seldom know about the provisions, roles and responsibilities of JFM programmes. In addition there is *a lack of clarity* about the applicability and gains of JFM which often leads to a lack of interest.
- *Attitude of the FD staff* - FD staff generally consider the involvement of women as a mere formality. Very rarely are special efforts taken to understand women's point of view and to seek their active participation. Women's 'participation' is desirable only as a less risky and more effective mechanism for persuading or coaxing them into stopping resource extraction. A major agenda during meetings of the beat and range level FPC Coordination Committees set up by the West Bengal FD is how to increase women's 'participation' for this purpose (Raju M., 1996). As stated by a Wbfd officer, "we would really like to increase women's participation as 90 per cent of our forest 'offenders' are women" (in Sarin, 1994). In addition, *inadequate training and orientation* of the lower FD staff ranks has left them clueless about the ways and means of facilitating women's participation. And under time pressures staff may find it *too time consuming* to motivate women.
- *The notion that women's views are not worth considering* - frequently men feel that it is useless to spend time in understanding women's views on issues such as natural resource management as according to them women do not have any knowledge that would be of value.
- *Lack of wages* - women, especially those belonging to lower income groups or who are head of the household, may find it difficult to attend JFM meetings as this means loss of wages

- *Family responsibilities* - due to domestic and other chores women find it extremely difficult to find time for meetings which are often organised at times and venues inconvenient to women.
- *Social and cultural restrictions* - in many communities women are not allowed to sit on the same platform as men and they are expected not to speak in front of men. In general unmarried daughters, women with two or three older children and the elderly can express their opinions more readily than younger married women who are restricted from speaking out because 'family honour' may be compromised. Generally non-tribal women face far more restrictions than tribal women.
- *Lack of confidence* - sometimes a few women are aware of their possible roles and opportunities in JFM and want to participate actively. However often they find themselves in the minority and feel inhibited in raising issues that concern women out of the fear of being ridiculed.
 - *Lack of security* - there is no provision to ensure security for the women taking active part in the conservation activities. Indeed, instances have been noted where women have been insulted or attacked by powerful men having vested interests that conflict with women's use/conservation of the forests.
 - *Very few direct benefits* - direct benefits to women are seldom discussed in the FPC meetings and as such are not prioritised. The focus is generally on timber and not on fuelwood and fodder both of which are crucial to women. In addition, the committees look down upon fuelwood collectors and often prohibit such activities in the protected areas. No alternatives are made for women (and men) who depend on the fuelwood. As a result women can easily become resentful of JFM (Pathak, 2000).
 - *Lack of female staff in FD* - there is a general lack of female staff in the FD, particularly at the field level. In addition those that are employed tend not to be involved in the meetings for extending JFM. Generally, village women find it difficult to interact with the male staff who equally find it difficult to approach women or even to understand and incorporate their concerns. Where more women staff have been present, for example in Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, the participation of women within JFM has considerably increased (Rawat and Bedi, 1996).

2.4 Some of the strategies used to ensure the involvement of women

Being state agencies, FDs are in the advantageous position of being able to introduce progressive changes in traditional attitudes, practices and organisational norms by insisting that priority is given to gender and equity concerns in all aspects of JFM. By creating legitimate space for women and other marginalised groups within local institutions, they could not only minimise the danger of ignoring women's needs, but also initiate a progressive transformation of traditional all male, often elite dominated, community institutions.

This approach was in fact adopted while developing Haryana's JFM programme from 1989. To ensure that all women and men were able to express their rights to participate in JFM, all resident adults were made eligible for the introduced Hill Resource Management Society (HRMS) membership. In addition the acceptance of women's independent

eligibility by village men was made a pre-condition for members of the HRMS and their participation in JFM. This was supplemented by a combination of strategies to increase women's actual participation in the day-to-day interaction with the HRMSs.

The first of these strategies was to insist on the principle that the maximum number of village men *and* women must be present for all JFM related discussions. This was on the grounds that the HFD desired *everyone's* participation in improved forest management. The FD field staff were instructed to clearly communicate the need for women's presence while intimating the villagers about a meeting. This in itself conveyed a strong message both to FD's male staff and the village men about HFD's commitment to ensuring women's participation.

When no women showed up, meetings simply weren't begun with the men being told that there could be no discussion on 'participatory' forest management with half the population absent. The men often attempted to bypass this resolve by saying that women were busy with cooking, livestock or child care, often questioning the need (or use) of their presence. However if the JFM team remained firm, the men would themselves call the women (Sarin, 1996a).

External facilitators such as NGOs can play a catalytic role in ensuring women's rights in access to common pool resources. One NGO which has been able to achieve this fairly successfully is SARTHI - an Indian organisation. They managed to persuade several exclusively male Self-Initiated Forest Protection Groups (SIFPG) in the Panchmahal district of Gujrat, to accept the equal rights of all adult women as well as men in becoming independent members of the groups (Sarin & SARTHI, 1994). The leverage was provided by the groups' interests in gaining formal recognition under JFM. While assisting them to prepare their applications to Gujrat FD, women's equal constitutional rights and the state's commitment to gender equality were used as the basis for advocating women's independent rights to group membership.

Today, about 50% of the GB and managing committee members of the formalised SIFPG are women. SARTHI has been facilitating their participation in all group meetings and building up women's self-confidence through greater exposure and access to information and promoting separate women's groups (Sarin, 1996).

In Gujrat the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme has played a major role in JFM. Under their pressure it was made mandatory for all the villages in the programme to support women extension volunteers so that women's involvement in JFM would increase and women could do tasks that had hitherto been in men's domain (Jeffery *et al*, 2000).

However, external facilitators are not always necessary and an excellent example of where a high level of participation and relative gender equity can be achieved through self-mobilisation is found in the village of Mendha (Lekha). As described in Box 1 this example illustrates how through time, self empowerment and participatory learning processes villagers have become stronger and self-confident, yet sensitive to gender and equity issues.

Box 1 Forest protection efforts in village Mendha (Lekha)

Mendha (Lekha) is a small village of 300 inhabitants, all belonging to the Gond tribe, in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra. The village has been conserving their forests for the last twenty years. The villagers realising the importance of being aware of factors that might affect their lives, such as legislation to protect their forests and ways to institutionally support such protection, have taken steps to empower themselves with information and knowledge. With the help of outside friends (NGOs and individuals) they established study circles in the village. Through the discussions in these study circles they were able to rid the village of various vices such as alcoholism and achieved milestones such as gender and class equity. They also became the first village in the state where JFM was extended to standing, dense, natural forests because of the insistence of the villagers. Since there is no provision in the state to include standing forests in JFM there now exists an informal understanding among the villagers and the FD. As a formality the village has set up an Executive Committee (EC) to make decisions about the forests. Though in reality the decisions are taken through the consensus of the *gram-sabha* (village general body) which includes all the adult members in the village and meets more than once a month to discuss various issues. There is equal participation of men and women in such meetings. Men often encourage women to speak out and express their opinions. The villagers ensure that all the sub-committees formed to execute the various plans and programmes also have equal numbers of women and men. Women also have their own *mahila mandal* (women's group), which handles issues specifically pertaining to women, including saving schemes, alcoholism, and the protection and monitoring of the forest.

Source: Personal observation, 2002; Pathak & Gour-Broome 1999

2.5 Women's capacity to handle the forest related issues well

Given proper opportunities women can participate in the JFM processes as well as men. However to allow this to happen, adequate time must be given and the opening up of opportunities must be supported so women, and other socially weak sections of communities, are able to slowly build up courage and confidence to speak out and take part. This is finally being realised (Pathak,2000).

In one particular case in Karnataka, the women are very assertive and participate in all the forest protection activities. They have shown the capacity to handle forest related issues so well that even though formally they are not included in the village institutions, informally the men do not take any decisions without consulting them (Correa, 1995).

In the Bankura district of West Bengal the FD encouraged the formation of 'all women' FPCs in the district, mainly in the places where male dominated FPCs had earlier failed. This has proved that given equal rights, responsibilities and some authority women participate actively and are confident and sincere in their work (Raju, 1997).

Another example is that of the village of Jardhargaon in Garhwal hills of Uttaranchal. Here the villages have been conserving their forests for the last two decades without any

support from government agencies. Women have played a very important role in the regeneration of these forests right from the beginning. Traditionally the villagers appoint a guard for the forests from amongst themselves. For the first time in the village history a woman has been appointed as a guard and the villagers believe that she is one of the best forest guards so far (Pathak, 2000).

Women's efforts in Dulmoorth village in the region of western Uttar Pradesh is perhaps a more unique example of how empowered women cannot only improve their own socio-economic condition but also protect the forests much more effectively. In this village, approximately a decade ago and under the encouragement from an NGO the women got together and took charge of the Panchayat forests, which were previously managed by the men and mainly for timber and paper production. Under the men the Panchayat was a much less effective institution because it was answerable to the local administration and dependent on government funds for any activity and/or labour in the forests. The women however believed in *shramadan* (voluntary labour) for any activity that they carried out in the forests, thus saving on resources and having more control over the administration processes (such as taking action against offenders or conducting their meetings) not having to depend on the local authorities. In addition they have effectively controlled grazing and illegal felling through for example extracting fines based on the economic status of the offender rather than following what is prescribed by law.

Today, these forests have greatly regenerated, meeting all the NTFP, fodder and fuelwood requirements of the women as well as other benefits including the fact that they now have to travel less distance to collect them. With the help of an NGO they have also been able to procure smokeless *chulhas* or cooking gas at subsidised rates. And they have found time to grow nutritious vegetables and grains, which has not only improved family health but also increased family revenue substantially (Kapoor, 2000).

2.6 Class, caste and other factors in JFM

The communities participating in JFM are not homogenous entities but consist of diverse groups differentiated by caste, class, tribe, religion and/or ethnicity and within and between each of these groups, by gender and age. It is normally the poorest and most marginalised constituent groups within communities and households who are acutely dependent on forest resources for survival and livelihoods. In contrast, the relatively better off and more powerful, may have limited or no forest dependence. Yet, due to the dynamic hierarchy of social and power relations, it is often the powerful non-forest dependent groups who have the greatest visibility and voice.

Women from different communities, castes etc. not only have conflicting interests and priorities but often cannot be brought together on a common platform due to deep-rooted prejudices and beliefs about each other (Raju, 1997). Even in the 'all women' committees in West Bengal it has been noticed that higher caste and richer women tend to dominate the discussions and decision-making. In such instances the less powerful women feel ignored and uninvolved in the process and thus are not inclined to participate. In such

cases an external intervention may be necessary to make the institution more equitably represented (Pathak, 2000).

3. IMPACT OF JFM

3.1 Price of JFM paid by women

Women in general pay a higher price to make JFM successful. They have to face severe hardships by walking long distances and facing assault or abuse for extraction of the woody bio-mass that they need. Even in cases where women themselves have taken a decision to conserve the resources, in the initial stages they manage with great difficulty (Pathak, 2000). Women who have to spend more time in forests are less able to give attention to the family and children which may then effect their physical and social health (Daniel and Hegde, 1993).

Grazing bans imposed by the Tree Growers Co-operative Societies (TGCSs) in their JFM forests in Sabarkantha district of Gujarat, for example, have added an estimated 2 to 3 hours of work to the women's daily burden. Although both women and men complete the annual one-off harvesting and carrying of fodder grasses from the forest, it is the women who now have to clean the cow sheds, transport dung to the fields and feed the livestock on a daily basis (Raju, M.S., 1997).

In addition rules and regulations which, for example, ban the harvesting of tree leaf fodder to protect trees both deprive the poorest women of access to fodder often during periods of maximum scarcity and increase the time and labour required to find alternatives and/or hand-pick leaves where tools have been prohibited (Sarin, 1994a).

3.2 Impact of JFM on women dependent on NTFP and/or fuelwood as a livelihood

In India a large number of families depend on forests to fulfill their subsistence and other livelihood needs. *Shramshakti*, the report of the National Commission on Self Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector set up by the Government of India (GOI, 1988) provides a focussed overview of the appalling conditions of poverty and exploitation of poor rural women struggling to support their households. One of the Commission's significant findings was "that one third of all households were solely supported by women and in another third, 50 percent of the earnings were contributed by women" (GOI, 1995). Due to not owning any productive assets, many of these women collect NTFPs for survival income for their households when no other employment is available (Ogra, 2000). However, they receive abysmally low returns for their labour. Such women's economic productivity is particularly critical for the 60 million Indian households below the poverty line. The poorer the family, the more it depends for its survival on the earnings of its female members (World Bank, 1991).

Box 2 "What Shall We Eat ?" - The Women Headloaders of Bihar

A study of 20 Village Forest Protection and Management Samitis in Santhal Parganas in Bihar found that forest protection in most of them had collapsed within a year of them

being set up. In all cases, women headloaders had the same question: “*what shall we eat?*” They wanted alternative employment to be able to stop cutting firewood and marketing support to increase their income from the sale of NTFPs.

Source: Satya Narain *et al*, 1994

Women's role as gatherers includes the collection of firewood for sale and self consumption, fodder for livestock and NTFPs including food, medicines, seeds, leaves, and building materials. In 1986, NTFPs accounted for "nearly two fifths of forest department revenue and three fourths of net export earnings from forest produce" (Commander, 1986). Two of the main cash earners among NTFPs, *sal* seeds and *tendu* leaves, are collected primarily by women. It is estimated that more than 350,000 tonnes of *tendu* leaves are harvested annually by 600,000 women and children (Kaur, 1991).

Silvicultural practices may affect the availability of NTFPs adversely. For example increasing the height of protected *sal* (*Shorea robusta*) trees can lead to useable new leaves growing beyond women's easy reach, reducing the number of leaves that they are able to collect.

In a study conducted in Midnapore district of West Bengal, it is indicated that JFM has failed in many areas due to the desperate nature of the poorer women in the communities who depend entirely on the sale of firewood for subsistence. Such women are difficult to 'control' either by the FD or the FPC members because desperation makes them stubborn and aggressive. Alternatively where women have found self-employment or other sources of income JFM has been more successful (Mukherjee, 1999).

Today, FPCs often appoint women as forest watchers to prosecute women offenders instead of trying to understand the roots of the problems and for example, help women to find alternatives. Such policing may solve the problem in the short-term but ultimately will lead to deprivation in some sections of society and subsequent resentment similar to those held against the government exclusionary schemes of conservation. Yet neither at the policy level nor at the local level, has any effort been made to understand the problems of the women and their reasons for resisting the enforced protections (Pathak, 2000).

3.3 Reduced access, harsher responsibilities: Gender and equity impacts of increased firewood scarcity

Several studies on JFM/Self-Initiated Forest Protection (SIFP) indicate the following impacts on women and marginalised groups in areas characterised by resource scarcities through such as forest closure for regenerating timber:

- Manifold increase in poorer women's labour and time required for firewood collection from more distant areas. Women from better off households are able to switch to agricultural residues from private lands or to purchasing fuel from headloaders. Women from landless and small land holder households have no such options.

- Poorest women compelled to switch to poorer quality fuels like leaves, husks, *lantana*, weeds and dung. These can be smokier and/or increase women's time spent on cooking besides being ecologically damaging.
- Increased vulnerability to humiliation not only from forest officials and outside villagers, but also within their own households and communities due to the compulsion to 'thieve' from the protected forests.
- Increased tension and conflict, sometimes turning violent, between the poorest women and men and better off villagers.
- Transfer of pressure for firewood to other areas.
- Loss of the primary source of livelihood or supplementary income for those dependent on headloading.
- Particularly adverse impact on artisanal producers such as potters and blacksmiths.
- Impoverished women (and men) become easy pawns in the hands of middlemen and private contractors for indulging in 'mass loots' for survival income, making the long-term sustainability of the arrangement precarious.

(Sarin *et al*, 1996).

It has been suggested that for those women whose livelihoods have been directly hit by the protection activities taken up under JFM, arrangements should be made so that they derive monetary benefits along with other tangible benefits (GoI, 1999). For example, planning and management of NTFPs should be integrated into micro-planning exercises. And NTFP collectors should have explicit rights to all NTFP from their JFM areas both for meeting their domestic needs and for earning income through processing and/or sale.

4. GAINS ACCRUED THROUGH JFM

4.1 Financial benefits

In some areas the JFM programme has created employment opportunities for the local people. Women are often preferred by FD for various forestry operations, such as nursery raising, but they are paid much less than men. In certain states women are paid 50% of the minimum wages in forestry operations, on the grounds that their output is low. However women are not told that the payment is on the basis of output (GoI, 1999). A bold step in this regard is taken by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, who announced in 1999 that in all JFM committees female members would be paid as much as men for any daily wage labour (Hindu, 1999)

It has been recommended by various researchers and field level workers that all the payments to be made for any work done by women should be directly handed over to the women themselves instead of giving it to their men. And saving schemes and self-help schemes such as DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas) should be encouraged to take up labour and other income generation activities on a group contract basis (GoI, 1999).

4.2 Regeneration more beneficial than plantation

Regeneration of degraded forests is often less expensive, more successful and more beneficial to women than plantations (Saxena, n.d.). Regenerated forests are more biologically diverse and provide a variety of resources throughout the year. Yet in most areas emphasis is being given to the plantation of economically important tree species. Due to the primary focus being timber, the production of the commercially less valuable bushes, shrubs, grasses, creepers, climbers and herbs extensively used by the poorest women and men for subsistence and income, becomes incidental (Sarin *et al*, 1996).

4.3 JFM can help to build capacity of the women:

In addition there are certain social benefits that women receive through involvement in the JFM programme. They gain the capacity and knowledge to manage local resources, which in turn increases their confidence. Particularly active women gain social recognition and financial independence. This gives them increased power and the encouragement to be more assertive about their rights and responsibilities. There are examples where awareness through programmes like JFM have led to women educating themselves and motivating other women into doing the same.

In addition in areas of traditional suppression women who are more aware of their rights have managed to carve a respectful space for themselves in male dominated societies. Frequent participation in meetings and constant interaction with village members as well as outsiders on issues other than family matters increases the confidence of women. Empowerment of women also leads to their participation in various other social activities and movements such as the anti-alcohol and environmental movements (Pathak, 2000). However, while it is often assumed that women's presence in itself is enough to guarantee representation of their interests, what often happens is that male members of the villages continue to dominate village politics "behind" their wives or other women who have been elected into position (Ogra, 2000). Care should be taken therefore to ensure that 'participation' is truly meaningful.

CONCLUSION

Women often play a significant role in the protection and conservation of natural resources. As such they are more likely to be directly effected by forest protection measures and/or the degradation of natural resources. Yet still, in general, they are left out of the planning and implementation processes that are structured by formal institutions to control such resource use. Such marginalisation may grow as the formalisation process progresses. FDs and local authorities remain prejudiced to women. Men still dominate the decision-making processes. In the JFM programme though there is provision for the participation of women, it has been observed that due to a variety of factors they remain, in general, at the periphery. Where the participation of women has increased there still remains a failure in linking such participation to increased rights and responsibilities. As a result the sustainability of such participation must be questioned.

As such, JFM programmes should be more gender sensitive to ensure the active involvement of women. Meetings should be organised at times and places convenient for

women to attend and their participation encouraged and supported. In addition taking a few of the specific needs of women into consideration such as cleaner and quicker forms of cooking and/or easy availability of water and medical facilities would leave women with more time and inclination to participate in the JFM activities. The different gender roles and their impacts on the use and conservation of resources must be recognised and incorporated into programmes and processes. For example the conflicts that might arise over different priorities between men and women for forest use should be resolved in an equitable manner such as those found between male preferences for timber production and women's needs for fuelwood/fodder collection.

It must also be realised that such gender roles are continuously changing as attitudes, culture, environments and the socio-economics of communities change over time and from place to place. It is therefore important that JFM programmes are flexible enough to accommodate such changes and the site-specific needs of local communities and the different groups found within them.

If JFM is to be sustainable then the gender equities inherent in communities and institutions must be recognised and addressed. Though this may mean tackling sensitive issues such as 'power relations', it may be the only way forward to move beyond the 'lip-service' paid to addressing women's needs, rights and responsibilities that has been seen so far. However, as this paper has shown, the impacts of JFM have not all been negative and in certain states and localities examples can be found where women's participation has proved more fruitful. These examples should be recognised as positive contributions to more equitable conservation and development processes and built upon to take such positive processes further forward.

Appendix 1

Women's Access to Local Institution Membership in JFM Orders.

State	Eligibility for General Body membership	Women's Representation in Managing Committee (MC)*
Andhra Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/household	One third out of 10 to 15 village members. 5 nominated non-village members additional. Quorum for meeting - 50% members.
Bihar	1 rep/household	Min.3, max.5 women out of 15 to 18 total members. Quorum for MC meeting 10.
Gujarat	'Any interested person' can become a member	Not specified. Min.2 women on 'working committee' for preparing JFM plan.
Haryana	All F & M adults	Min.2 women.
Himachal Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/household	Min.5 village reps out of 9 to 12 total members. Out of village reps, 50% to be women. Mahila Mandal rep to be on M.C. (i.e. 3 to 4 women out of 9 to 12 total members).
Jammu & Kashmir	1 F or M/household	Min. 2 women out of 11 total members.
Karnataka	1 rep/'interested' household with automatic membership of spouse	Min. 2 women out of 15 total members.
Madhya Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/household	Min. 2 women. 1 MC member per 10 families. Total members will depend on size of village.
Maharashtra	Unspecified	Min.2 women out of 11 members.
Orissa (1993 order)	1 F, 1 M/household	Min.3 women out of 11 to 13 members.
Punjab	No provision for a general body.	1 woman out of ?
Rajasthan	1 rep/household	Nothing specified
Tripura	1 rep/household	Nothing specified
West Bengal	Joint membership of husband & wife	Nothing specified
Tamil Nadu	1 F, 1 M/household	Min.2, max.5 out of total of 5 to 11 villagers. Nominated members additional.
Uttar Pradesh	1 rep/household (F or M). No minimum membership of women specified.	One third out of elected members plus 5 nominated members.

* In all states, even in A.P. and U.P. with one third of total village MC members being women, the M.C. meetings can be legitimately held with none of the women members present unless a proportionate presence of women is made mandatory to complete the quorum.

Source: Sarin *et al*, 1996.

Appendix 2
Women's Access to 'Benefit Sharing' in JFM Orders.

State	Eligibility for General Body membership	Entitlement to benefit-sharing*
Andhra Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/household	Upto 50% of harvested timber/poles for distribution among members. Unspecified whether shares will be distributed on a household basis or separately to the M&F members.
Bihar	1 rep/household	MC to decide 'rightful owners' of 80% of the harvested produce handed to it for distribution among members.
Gujarat	'Any interested person' can become a member	50% of the produce to be 'suitably distributed'.
Haryana	All F & M adults	No provision for distribution of shares among individual members but women & men could equally access community fund for loans or influence priorities for its use.
Himachal Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/household	"Entire quantity of usufructs to be distributed to villagers". 25% of income from 'final felling' to go to LIs common fund. Existing rights to be protected.
Jammu & Kashmir	1 F or M/ household	CI to decide basis of sharing in consultation with all members.
Karnataka	1 rep/'interested' household with automatic membership of spouse	25% sale proceeds for distribution among "beneficiaries". Whether spouses made members automatically will get separate shares not specified.
Madhya Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/household	30% of produce from 'final' harvest either in kind or as net sale proceeds to be distributed equally among all 'members'. In practice, household being treated as unit for benefit distribution.
Maharashtra	Unspecified	50% income to be distributed in cash to members.
Orissa (1993 order)	1 F, 1 M/household	50% produce or cash to be distributed equally using household as unit. Whether M or F member will get share unspecified.
Punjab	No provision for a general body.	Household as unit.
Rajasthan	1 rep/household	Equal shares for members.

Tripura	1 rep/household	50% of net receipts to be distributed among members.
West Bengal	Joint membership of husband & wife	25% of net income from cashew & 'final fellings to be distributed equally among all 'joint' members. Household used as unit for sharing.
Tamil Nadu	1 F, 1 M/ household	Free firewood to head loaders & landless identified by MC, also some free NTFPs & grasses to particular groups. All cash income to be distributed to individual members.
Uttar Pradesh	1 rep/household (F or M). No minimum membership of women specified.	Only NTFPs. After meeting 'demands' (of members ?), rest to be sold. 25% of net proceeds to go to LI & 25% to be shared among members based on their contribution.

F= Female; M= Male;

* In the States where only one representative per household is eligible for general body membership, the majority of the members are men. The shares of benefit will automatically go to them. In the States where 1 man and 1 woman per household are general body members, although many orders entitle all members to shares of benefits, in practice, the household is being used as the unit of benefit distribution with no clarity about which of the two members will be given the household's share.

Source: Sarin *et al.* 1996.

Appendix 3
Women's Access to Local Institution Decision Making in JFM Orders.

State	Eligibility for General Body membership	Structured access to Information/decision making forums*
Andhra Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/household	Separate meetings with women's groups & other disadvantaged groups to explain concept. Reps of 50% households quorum for initial village meeting. No minimum %age women's presence specified.
Bihar	1 rep/household	50% adult population of village quorum for initial village meeting. No min. women's presence specified.
Gujarat	'Any interested person' can become a member	Nothing specified.
Haryana	All F & M adults	Nothing specified.
Himachal Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/ household	50% members quorum for G.B. and MC meetings. Women's presence to complete quorum not specified.
Jammu & Kashmir	1 F or M/ household	No quorum or women's presence specified for G.B. or M.C. meeting.
Karnataka	1 rep/'interested' household with automatic membership of spouse.	30% members quorum for M.C. meetings.
Madhya Pradesh	1 F, 1 M/ household	50% village adults required for initial village meeting.
Maharashtra	Unspecified	Nothing specified.
Orissa (1993 order)	1 F, 1 M/ household	All adults to be invited to initial village meeting but no quorum specified. 66% members quorum for MC meeting.
Punjab	No provision for a general body.	Nothing specified.
Rajasthan	1 rep/household	Nothing specified.
Tripura	1 rep/household	50% quorum for G.B. meeting.
West Bengal	Joint membership of husband and wife	Nothing specified.
Tamil Nadu	1 F, 1 M/ household	Nothing specified.
Uttar Pradesh	1 rep/household (F or M). No minimum membership of women specified.	66% quorum for GB meeting for MC election.

- Except for Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, where 50 per cent of the village adults must be present for the initial meetings, all the JFM local institutions proceedings in the other States can take place without any women necessarily being present. Due to the difficulty of assembling 100 per cent of the men, in Bihar and M.P. at least some women would be needed to complete the quorum for the initial meeting.

Source: Sarin *et al*, 1996

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