

Brief Summary of "Emerging Issues in JFM: The NGOs Perspective"

(Based on the NGO Meet on 'Emerging Issues in JFM' held on 22ND February, 2002, Van Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi)

INTRODUCTION

Almost after a decade of implementation of the JFM program by various state governments, several lacunae have been observed in the implementation process. As JFM involves multiple stakeholders, the kind of problems faced at their end is also of a different nature.

In order to take cognizance of these various issues faced by the major stakeholders involved in JFM, RUPFOR organised two workshops. The NGO meet was the second in the series, the first being the [JFM state nodal officers meeting](#).

The NGO meet was organised on 22nd February, 2002 in Van Vigyan Bhawan New Delhi. 22 NGOs from across the country participated in this meeting and made presentations highlighting relevant issues from their states.

A thorough and rigorous session of discussions was followed by a set of key recommendations, which will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment and Forests for consideration. A detailed 'issue paper' outlining the discussions and recommendations which followed is being worked upon presently and will soon be circulated. A brief summary of some of the salient points that emerged in the meeting are mentioned below:

- ***Setting in a regular feedback mechanism:*** The forum recommended that periodic meetings should be organised at the Range, Division, Circle, and State level so as to ensure that there is proper and timely flow of information/feedback within and between each of these levels. It was also suggested that other stakeholders such as members of the JFM committees, researchers, NGOs etc should further attend these meetings.
- ***Granting constitutional/legal recognition:*** The forum emphasised upon the importance of having a legal/constitutional recognition of the Van Samrakshan Samiti (VSS) for further strengthening the programme. For E.g., as VSS do not have any constitutional position at present, the issue of conflict between PRIs and JFM committees are often observed in most of

the states. This is an issue which also need in-depth understanding and research.

There is therefore an urgent need for a formal agreement between Forest protection committee (FPC) and the Forest Department (FD). It was further pointed out that a process of signing of MOU between the FD and the VSS should be made mandatory as soon as possible.

It was also pointed out that instead of initiating new polices at every step existing legal frameworks- like the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (Section 28) should be further strengthened/ revised.

- ***Inclusion of 'Other Groups' into the JFM Process:*** Most of the JFM orders do not include “other” groups such as nomadic graziers, shifting cultivators, headloaders, etc. who form a substantial part of the forest dependent community and are therefore an important stakeholder category where forests are concerned. Also, the Wild life Protection Act needs to be amended so that those in fringe/ degraded areas can be brought under JFM.
- ***Strengthening existing marketing links/ creating opportunities:***
Emphasizing the importance of livelihood in the success of JFM, the role of NTFP was discussed in detail. The forum recommended that the issue of marketing of NTFP had to be carefully and properly designed before any initiative under JFM was considered.
It was suggested that existing organisations that deal with the marketing of NTFPs like the Forest Development Corporations and Girijan Cooperative Corporations should be revived or modified to function in better ways.
The issue of NTFP value addition was also discussed in details, and it was suggested that attempts at replicating models like the XIDAS case study of NTFP value addition need to be tried out in other parts of the country
While discussing the role of the government in this issue, it was suggested that the government should continue with the minimum support price to facilitate the process and check the market forces.
- ***Expediting the process of 'devolution of power':*** Noting that the process of devolution of power (especially financial) to the VSS has not been effective, the forum recommended expediting the process. For eg. JFMCs/FPCs still cannot legally penalise offenders, stop illegal

encroachments etc. It was also suggested that the Village Common Fund should be used by the FDC, VFDC and EDC's only and not by the Forest Department.

- *Increase Involvement/participation of NGO's:* The role of the NGOs should be recognised in all JFM projects. Moreover with the transition of JFM to CFM, the role of NGOs is emerging as vital input in the success of the programme,
- *Translation of JFM orders:* There are many states where the JFM resolutions have not been translated into the native language even now. Therefore all states should make it mandatory and ensure that all JFM orders are translated into the regional language
- *Increased awareness generation and participation:* There are many cases where it has been found that the community has not been mobilised and are not aware of their rights and duties under JFM ,or the changing orders. Increased awareness generation activities need to be carried out and the NGOs can play a proactive role in this.
- *Monitoring and impact assessment:* Though there has been many micro level studies indicating the impact of JFM, there are not many studies, which indicate the macro level impact of JFM. It was therefore proposed that attempts should be made to undertake a macro level impact assessment of JFM. In this context it was recommended that, maintaining a baseline data should be made mandatory at all levels.