

## UNIT 5

# COMMON GOALS, AND ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT PARTICIPANTS

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### 5.0 COMMON GOALS

#### 5.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMUNITIES

#### 5.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOREST DEPARTMENT

#### 5.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NGOS

#### 5.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

### 5.0 COMMON GOALS

Village communities organised into Forest Protection Committees (FPCs), the State Forest Department and the local NGOs are the three key participants in a typical JFM programme. Other participants include, local academic and research institutions, other Government departments, Youth Clubs, village councils and Panchayats etc.

The common goals of these participants/actors in a JFM programme may be summarised as below :

- To ensure people's participation from all sections of village communities in regeneration, protection, conservation and management of forest resources.
- To prevent forest and land degradation.
- To increase productivity of hitherto degraded forests and generate income and employment and thus bring about development to the area in a ecologically sustainable way.
- To give villagers access to Government forest land and to make the production system more responsive to community needs.
- To check haphazard commercial exploitation of forest resources.
- To make the people's institutions work for integrated development and management of natural resources in the village.
- To enable people's institutions develop and manage forest-based enterprises.
- To identify the problems related to the area and act together to arrive at feasible solutions.

These common goals are achieved as the individual participants play different roles specified to them. Collective actions also at times become imperative to achieve certain common goals. However, the success of the programme depends to a great extent on the performance of the village communities. Besides, the motivating and organising ability of the officials of the forest department working at village level also play a key role in achieving the goal. Therefore, it is necessary to impart adequate training to all the participants on raising awareness, and objectives and common goals in JFM, so that they can understand their role clearly and act accordingly.

## 5.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COMMUNITIES

The village communities are the key players in implementing JFM programme. The success of JFM largely depends on their ability to organise themselves into a village level organisation which can take the responsibility to plan and implement various activities under JFM including protecting the created assets or existing resources from grazing, theft and fire, and establishing good rapport with other players/partners in the programme.

The village communities, together with the officials of Forest Department (FD) generally select the participating households from the village and form an Executive Committee (EC). This Committee usually looks after the implementation of JFM programme. Most state JFM resolutions outline separately the roles and responsibilities of the members of Executive Committees and the members of Forest Protection Committee. However, in general, the roles and responsibilities of the village communities may be summarised as follows :

- To help the forest officials in carrying out forestry development works as per approved microplan including distribution of usufructs.
- To inform FD about any person attempting to commit forest offences such as trespassing/damaging the forest/plantation etc., and give full support and co-operation to FD in punishing the offenders.
- To assist the EC in selecting and engaging the labourers from among the participating households and their families, and also to ensure participation of women in the FPCs/Executive Committee.
- To carry out all works through members of the Forest Protection Committees. To report about the members violating forest rules and the persons involved in any detrimental activities in the project area.
- To help the EC and/or FD in harvesting, extraction and safe storage of forest produce.
- To ensure protection of wildlife in the project area.
- To arrange regular dialogue among the participating villagers.
- To ensure fulfilment of the broader objectives of JFM.
- To ensure protection of forest/plantation through the members.
- To prevent trespass, encroachment, grazing, forest fire and poaching.
- To regulate shifting cultivation (*Jhum*), grazing and collection of NTFPs.
- To keep records of various activities undertaken through JFM including meetings, accounts and trainings.

## 5.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOREST DEPARTMENT

Forest Department is the representative of Government in JFM. The West Bengal experience shows that the FD plays the most important role in implementing JFM and it is their hard work and dedicated approach that have made JFM a success in the state. In the past, foresters were assigned only the regulatory role to prevent people from going to the forest. This role has drastically changed with JFM concept under which people have to be taken into confidence in forest management. People's views have to be given equal weightage and the active exercise of forest management has to be done through the participatory process. In this new role, the foresters have to meet the villagers more often and conduct participatory rural appraisal exercise to accommodate the traditional knowledge of the local people in forest management.

The role and responsibilities of the FD can be summarised as follows :

- Preparation and execution of forest management plan is to be done through the FPC maintaining complete transparency in all transactions.
- The FD is to provide technical guidance to the FPC for various activities.
- The FD is supposed to have sufficient knowledge of the area and based on that they select sites and participating villagers.
- The FD officials together with the village communities are required to collect data on socio-economic conditions of the people and biophysical resources of the JFM areas, based on which suitable site-specific microplans are prepared.
- Funding for JFM will be done by FD. Therefore, FD has to plan, control and regulate the flow of funds for JFM.
- The FD is to provide training to the FPC members on forest management, nursery techniques, plantation methods, species selection, microplanning and other related subjects.
- The FD should have its own extension officers to work with the people. The foresters should sit with the village people at the same level, discuss various aspects of JFM and microplanning and act as mediators on conflicts. They have to act as an omnipresent catalytic agent and come into operation only when the committee desires their intervention.
- The forest departments should always maintain transparency in all their activities and try to bridge the gap between them and the villagers. They should be careful enough not to take any step that upsets the villagers.
- Interaction between local communities and foresters is a critical factor in JFM. High level of motivation of the field staff of the FD can result in greater participation of the local communities in the protection and management of degraded forests. The lowest functionary of the FD, namely, the Forest Guards have to play the most important role. Considering their proximity to the user groups and their familiarity with the local practices, they serve as a crucial link between local communities and senior officials of the FD. This link assumes importance in the context of JFM, where the twin objective of meeting local biomass needs and regenerating the natural resource base constantly engages the attention of the policy makers.
- Moreover, the Forest Guards/Foresters often will directly participate in JFM by being the ex-officio member of the FPCs at the village level. In this capacity, they will resolve disputes that may arise over the use of forest resources, clarify rules and bye-laws of the FPCs, offer technical know-how etc. With the establishment of FPCs the Forest Guard/Forester is expected to convene meetings of the village institutions, inspect accounts and organise annual EC elections for the FPCs.

Other responsibilities of the FD could be as follows :

- To assist people's institution in preparing forest management/action plan.
- To provide relevant documents, maps and permits required by people's institutions for the purpose of official recognition and render assistance for procurement of funds from government departments.
- To inform the people about the objectives and various provisions of forest acts and rules and enable their enforcement.
- To render timely and full assistance to the people in the protection of forest against encroachment, cultivation, fire and felling besides necessary security from offenders.
- To provide employment opportunities to FPC members through :
  - (a) Direct involvement in forestry programmes.
  - (b) Collecting, processing and marketing of NTFPs.
  - (c) Support activities like sericulture, orchid propagation, weaving, mushroom cultivation, sale of cut flowers, pisciculture etc.

### 5.3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF NGOs

The primary responsibility of implementing JFM lies with FD, but there are several other agencies that can be involved in order to make JFM more functional, e.g., the local NGOs and research institutions. The NGOs can play a very vital role in implementing JFM. They have greater interaction with local people and are more responsive to people's aspirations. Moreover, they are inherently blessed by organisational flexibility and hence can act as an important partner in implementing JFM.

The main responsibility of the NGOs is to raise awareness among the people in and around JFM areas. They will also act as a motivator to organise and convince the people about the benefits of JFM. The NGOs enjoy the advantage of being close to the people and the people also have confidence in them. Capitalising on these advantages, the NGOs together with other participants can arrange training programmes, workshops and other programmes on JFM and related aspects among the communities.

NGOs can also help in conflict resolution, monitoring and evaluation on a continuing basis. The prime task would be to make the forest users more accountable for the consequences of overuse and misuse. The NGOs also provide the needed co-ordination and advocacy work between various departments.

Another important role to be played by the NGOs is to co-ordinate among the participating bodies, and bridge the gap between FD and the villagers.

The NGOs have to play the role of an advisory body to the communities. They can also involve themselves in the monitoring of the JFM but should not take themselves as a direct monitoring authority.

#### 5.4 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

The academic institutions have an important role to play in implementing JFM as its main objective is to involve people in developmental works, at the same time ensuring management and protection of the forest resources.

- The academic institutions can conduct training and educational courses related to JFM for the participants. Even if they do not conduct such courses directly, they can help others in organising the same. They can share their valuable knowledge with other participants.
- They can also conduct research in the field of JFM and try to identify the hitherto unknown problems and also suggest solutions based on the study.
- The academic institutions can conduct comparative studies in different JFM areas and thus find out the reasons of success and failure. Thus, they can enrich the approach to JFM in specific areas, as the condition and background of JFM areas differ widely from place to place. Based on their studies, the institution can provide other concerned departments with success indicators which will be of great help to them.
- Certain academic institutions can also provide technical know-how to FDs and FPCs.
- Academic institutions can contribute a lot by conducting ecological evaluation and cost-benefit analysis of the project proposed or already undertaken. Especially, identification of the social costs and benefits will be a great contribution in the field. They can also undertake evaluation works of JFM at state or country level and provide feedback for policy changes and long-term planning. •