

## JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT - DECENTRALIZATION AND DEVOLUTION : A CASE STUDY FROM KALAKAD MUNDANTHURAI TIGER RESERVE, TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU

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### Introduction

Eco-development was conceived and introduced in order to alleviate the suffering of the village people resulting from the notification of the Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) under the Wildlife Protection Act and from the depredation of wild animals. (Joseph *et al.*, 2002). The eco-development programme as a park management strategy has a strong socio-economic agenda and perhaps less obvious ecological context (Dutt, 2001).

The study area lies in Ambasamudram taluk, in the 5 km wide belt from the KMTR boundary. The Eco-development project (hereafter referred as the project) with the new approach of Joint Forest Management, with the Forest Department, NGOs and the village community as partners in the programme is operational in this region since 1997 with the objective of protecting forests and improving the environment through people's participation.

The study was taken up in three villages, Bungalow Kudiyiruppu, Kalyanipuram and Sambangulam of Kadayam range where the Eco-development project as Joint Forest

Management programme has been implemented. The results of the study undertaken in the three villages are discussed in this paper as a case study.

### Methodology

Data was collected from the study villages through a semi-structured personal interview of the members of the Village Forest Council (VFC) and group discussions with VFC President and the Executive Committee (EC) members and members of women Self Help Groups (SHGs) based on a schedule, which was prepared to meet the objectives of this study. The number of the sampled households is 35 in Bungalow Kudiyiruppu, 40 in Kalyanipuram and 40 in Sambangulam. A household was defined as comprising all those who stayed together, worked together and ate in the same house.

Right from the initiation of the project and the formation of VFCs in the study villages, the number of VFC members has been fluctuating for various reasons. In fact over the years a decline in membership has been recorded. As per the report submitted to the Registrar's office in the month of May, 2005, the number of VFC members was 115, 199 and 269 respectively

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in Bungalow Kudiyiruppu, Kalyanipuram and Sambangulam as against 145, 218 and 317 at the time of formation of respective Village Forest Committees. So it was decided to include 40 households from each village in the sample; but Bungalow Kudiyiruppu being a hamlet, only 35 households were included in the sample. Hence the sample size is not uniform and it amounts to 48.2% of the initial membership in Bungalow Kudiyiruppu, 36.69% in Kalyanipuram and 25.24% in Sambangulam.

It was difficult to measure the socio-economic status accurately, as the villagers were not forthcoming in giving information. They were reluctant and vague while giving facts and figures especially about their income from various sources, quantity of fodder and fuel collected from the forest etc. However, reasonably reliable information could be extracted through personal interview based on structured schedule. The micro plans and other documents maintained in the forest range office are the source of secondary data on the introduction and implementation of the project in the study area. The information collected covers a period from the introduction of the project to October, 2005. The project was introduced in the study villages during 1997- 98.

### ***Study area – Villages***

All the three study villages are fringe villages located within 5 km radius of KMTR Reserve forest. They are linked to the Sivasailam beat of Kadayam range of KMTR. Based on their forest dependency the communities are divided into Red, Yellow and Green groups; the Red is economically poor and forest-dependent,

the Yellow less dependent and the Green indirectly dependent.

The VFCs have been constituted as per the JFM guidelines; an adult male and an adult female from each household are enrolled as members. An Executive Committee (EC) of six members, 3 male and 3 female is elected by the VFC General body and one of them is elected as the Chairman of the VFC. Recently the representation of women on the EC has been enhanced from 3 to 4. MoEF guidelines of February 2000 on JFM emphasize the representation of women on forest committees in JFM. Their presence is to be ensured to 50% of membership on General body and 33% on Executive or Management committee and this is taken care of in all the three villages. The following are the highlights of the VFC regulations and byelaws mentioned in the micro plans :

The Forester is the ex-officio member-secretary of the VFC. The resolutions passed by the EC shall be implemented only after getting the approval of the Eco-Development Officer and the functioning of the VFC will be monitored by the Field Director, the Eco-Development Officer and the Ranger. The Ranger is empowered to expel the VFC members violating the norms of the project or indulging in any activity degrading the forest resource. The EC could only recommend such action and the Eco-Development Officer is the appellate authority. VFC chairman is entitled to handle all the legal actions with regard to the VFC with the cooperation of the EC members. The EC shall expel the members of VFC violating the rules and regulations of the VFC. Irregularities in the functioning of the VFC should be reported to the Eco-Development Officer

by the secretary. The secretary is empowered to receive the subscription from the VFC members and the donations and pay the bills.

The VFCs have been registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Act, 1975, Section 14(1). The VFC of Bungalow Kudiyiruppu was registered on 25.03.1997 as 'Bungalow Kudiyiruppu Grama Vanakkulu'. The VFC of Kalyanipuram was registered as 'Kalyanipuram Grama Vanakkulu' on 27-01-1998 and that of 'Sambangulam as Sambangulam Grama Vanakkulu' on 05-10-1998.

Bungalow Kudiyiruppu is a hamlet of Alwarkurichi panchayat of Ambai Taluk. The caste structure of the village is nearly homogeneous comprising Nadar, with a population of 416 in 100 households. The primary sources of income of the inhabitants of this village are agriculture and fuelwood collection supplemented by beedi rolling and sales of agricultural produce as secondary occupations. Before the introduction of the project, 46% of the households were forest dependent for their livelihood by collecting fuelwood from the forests. Other forest-dependent activities of the villagers were cattle grazing, extraction of fodder for the cattle, cutting small trees for thatching and for making agricultural implements and hunting wild animals in the forest. Out of the 100 households 46 were identified as belonging to the Red, 35 to the Yellow and 19 to the Green. The literacy level is 40%.

Kalyanipuram is on the North of Bungalow Kudiyiruppu, 2 km away from the reserved forest on its eastern side. The total population of the village is 1,120 and the number of households is 246. The village is heterogeneous in its caste

structure, with Karayalar, Naicker, Moopanar, Chettiar, Thevar, Asari and Scheduled castes. Agriculture and beedi rolling are the primary occupations of the villagers. Government employees, employees of private enterprises and self-employed also form a sizable percentage of the population. Before the inception of the project, more than 50% of the households were forest dependent for their livelihood by way of collecting fuelwood for sale as well as for domestic use, cattle grazing and small timber extraction for making agricultural implements. Out of the 246 households 130 belong to the Red group, 85 to the Yellow and 31 to the Green.

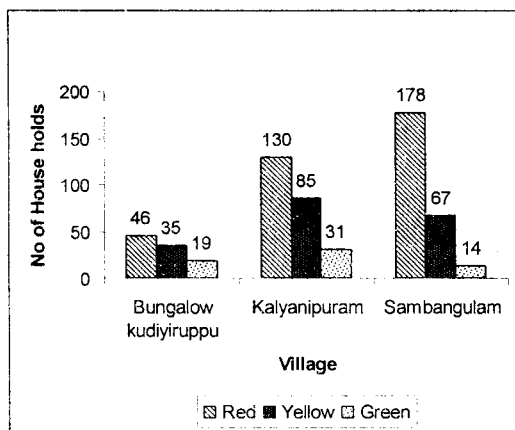
Sambangulam is situated at the foot of the reserved forest, just 1 km from the hill. The total population is 1,628 and the number of households is 259. This is a nearly homogeneous village of Muslims with only 0.02% of the population comprising Hindus. The literacy level is 56%. In almost all the families women are engaged in beedi rolling. 34 men are self-employed; about 120 men from this village are employed outside the village and outside the state and as per 1998 census 61 individuals are employed in gulf countries. The forest dependency level is the highest in this village, with 178 households falling in the Red group. The Yellow group comprises 67 households and the Green 14 (Table 1, Fig. 1).

### ***Study area - Forest***

The Kalakkad -Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR) established in 1988 is situated in the southern Western Ghats region (8° 25 - 8° 53 N latitude and 77° 10 - 77° 35 E longitude) in the biogeographic provinces 4.14.4 (Deccan thorn forest) and 4.1.1 (Malabar rain forest). The reserve

**Table 1***Forest Dependency Groups*

Village	No. of households			
	Red	Yellow	Green	Total
Bungalow Kudiyiruppu	46	35	19	100
Kalyanipuram	130	85	31	246
Sambangulam	178	67	14	259

**Fig. 1**

Forest Dependency Groups

comprises two adjacent protected areas the Kalakkad Wildlife Sanctuary and the Mundanthurai Wildlife Sanctuary both in Tirunelveli District, Tamil Nadu and has been principally known for its immense species richness. An estimated 145 revenue villages occur in the immediate vicinity of the park's eastern perimeter in a 5 km broad strip. There are 28 enclaves (Ali and Pai, 2001) within the Tiger Reserve. In addition to tourism pressure, fuelwood lopping and livestock grazing by the landless and low income group individuals of these villages are the major forms of anthropogenic pressure on the foothill

forests, constituting the buffer zone of the park causing degradation of wildlife habitat.

Generally the project is implemented in the vicinity of the buffer zone of the reserved forest. The forest area maintained as buffer zone is 358 km<sup>2</sup>. The buffer zone is characterized by Carnatic umbrella thorn forests, Southern dry mixed deciduous forests, Southern moist deciduous forests, Tirunelveli semi-evergreen forests and Tropical riparian fringe forests, Dry teak forests and grasslands at low altitudes. The study villages about the Sivasailam beat of the Mundanthurai Eco-range (Kadayam forest range) of KMTR reserve forest. Sivasailam beat has a forest area of 3335 ha. *Tectona grandis* is the predominant species of this area and *Ziziphus xylopyrus* and *Careya arborea* are the sub-dominants. *Albizia lebbek*, *Aglaia elaeagnoides* var. *courtallensis*, *Terminalia bellerica*, *Streblus asper* and *Anogeissus latifolia* are some of the tree species recorded from this forest area (Viswanathan and Asir Raj, 2001) Sivasailam beat is divided into 4 'saragams', namely Pathaivazhikadu, Thioniyar, Kallar and Vazhaiyar. An estimated 40 tonnes/year of fuelwood was collected from the forest and 150 tonnes/year of coconut and palmyra leaves and *Acacia* twigs were collected from dry lands and plantations before the initiation of the project in this area. On an average cattle grazing in the forest was 5 hrs/day.

## Results and discussion

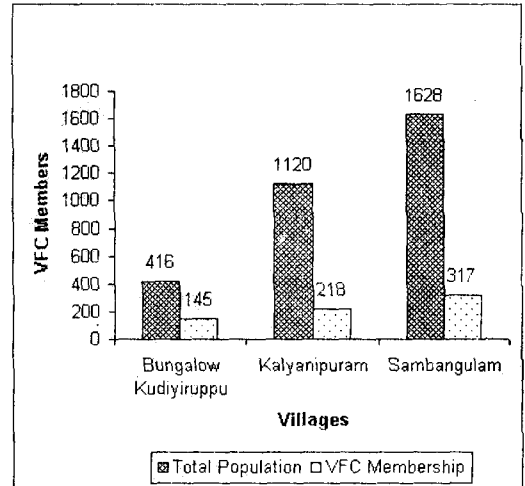
*Initiation of the project and institutional structure* : At the entry point of the project (Participatory Rural Appraisal) PRA was done in the study villages by the Forest Department involving the local

communities and the NGOs, Vivekananda Kendra, Avvai Ashramam, Sivasailam, Tirunelveli Social Service Society, Tirunelveli and Palmyra Workers' Welfare Association. With the help of the NGOs cultural programmes were conducted to create awareness among the target villagers about their role in eco-development, forest protection and biodiversity conservation. Successful Joint Forest Management depends on a good relationship between the forest department and the local communities, so that they can work together to meet the common objectives (Samra, 2002). Frequent meetings with the villagers made it possible to convince them and form the Village Forest Councils (VFCs). But the enrollment of villagers as the VFC members is inadequate to achieve the target of the project. The members form only 34.85% of the total population in Bungalow Kudiyiruppu and 19.47% in Kalyanipuram and Sambangulam. Moreover, over the years following the formation of the VFCs the membership has not been enhanced; rather there has been a decline in the membership. The number of VFC members has decreased for reasons of death, resignation and expulsion from the committee. (Table 2, Fig. 2)

*Representation of Women on the committees and their participation* : About 50% of the VFC membership is represented by women and out of 7 members of the EC 4 are women. A perusal of VFC records clearly shows that after the inception of JFM, the participation of women in the open meetings of villages to discuss the implementation of JFM has increased considerably. In the beginning women were hesitant even to attend the meeting and the participation was only passive. But the repeated and frequent meetings

**Table 2***VFC Membership in the project villages*

Village	Total population	VFC members	% of the total population
Bungalow Kudiyiruppu	416	145	34.85
Kalyanipuram	1120	218	19.47
Sambangulam	1628	317	19.47

**Fig. 2**

VFC membership in project villages

convened by the Forest Department have opened up a new dimension of their role. In the study villages the attendance of women in the GBMs and review meetings attended by the forest officials is not only encouraging but sometimes surpasses the attendance of men. In Kalyanipuram men and women attend the GBM meetings in almost equal numbers, 42 and 42. In Bungalow Kudiyiruppu the average number of men attending the GBMs is 50 while that of women is only 35. In

Sambangulam the situation is different. Women attend the meetings in large numbers than men. In this village on an average 68 women attend the meetings whereas only 58 men attend the GBMs (Table 3).

But the attendance of women in ECMs is not as regular as that of men in all the three villages. In Bungalow Kudiyiruppu, the number of ECMs attended by all the male members is 79 out of 113 whereas only 58 out of 113 meetings were attended by all the female members. In Kalyanipuram the number of ECMs with

100% attendance of men is 68 out of 114 as against 48 with 100% attendance of women. In Sambangulam also a similar trend is observed; the number of ECMs with 100% attendance of male members is 73 out of 103 while the number of ECMs with 100% attendance of female members is only 32 out of 103 (Table 4).

The unequal distribution of work provides women with little time to accommodate their active participation in planning, implementation and monitoring of schemes for natural resource management. It is evident from experiences from various corners of the country that a blend of gender sensitive planning with empathy to rural scenario helps in realistic development approach. The increasing awareness among forestry personnel on conscious involvement of women at every stage of micro planning, implementation, monitoring and decision making has to be increased further by designing and delivering appropriate training modules for the inservice personnel in State Forest Department. (Pandey, 2000) Moreover women's

**Table 3***Attendance in GBMs*

Village	Average Attendance		
	Male	Female	Total
Bungalow Kudiyiruppu	50	35	85
Kalyanipuram	42	42	84
Sambangulam	68	58	136

**Table 4***Attendance in ECMs*

Particulars	Bungalow Kudiyiruppu	Kalyanipuram	Sambangulam
Total No. of meetings held	133	114	107
No. of meetings with 100% attendance of men	79	68	73
No. of meetings with 100 % attendance of women	58	48	32
No. of meetings with 1 male member absent	47	37	30
No. of meetings with 1 female member absent	69	48	49
No. of meetings with 2 male members absent	7	9	4
No. of meetings with 2 female members absent	6	17	25
No. of meetings with 3 male members absent	0	0	0
No. of meetings with 3 female members absent	0	1	1

participation is governed by extra-monetary factors such as religious or cultural ethos (Bhojvaid and Pawar, 2000).

*Alternative employment* : As many as 18 alternative employments including tea stall, petty shop, vegetable sale, idly shop, cut piece sale, tailoring, broiler shop and masala powder sale were identified in Bungalow Kudiyiruppu and loan was provided for the same at a very low rate of interest. 173 persons have availed loan from VFC fund for income generating activities. Of them 90 are men and 83 are women. An individual VFC member has availed of as much as Rs. 69,000 as loan for income generating activity and a VFC household Rs. 1,39,000 within a span of 9 years.

In Kalyanipuram, 94 men and 103 women availed of loan from the VFC fund for income generating activities. In this village loan was provided for about 25 income generating activities including tea stall, pickle preparation, tailoring, idly shop, vegetable sale, mat weaving, appalam preparation, wire basket making and cut piece sale. Loan was provided for carrying out various cultivation practices improving agricultural productivity also.

In Sambangulam, the total number of loan beneficiaries is 308, out of which 122 are men and 186 are women. An individual member has availed of as much as Rs.55,000 as loan from VFC fund with in a span of 7 years. As many as 28 income generating activities including idly shop, mat weaving, broiler shop, dried fish sale, tailoring, cut piece sale, wire basket making, mutton stall and vegetable sale were identified and loan was provided from the VFC fund. In Bungalow Kudiyiruppu and Sambangulam the repayment of loan

is 95% and in Kalyanipuram it is 85%. The regular repayment of loan by the beneficiaries has enabled the VFC to extend more financial assistance to more people. The revolving fund mechanism is operating successfully. Table 5 shows the financial assistance extended by the project to the beneficiaries in the target villages. But the EC could only identify and recommend the loan beneficiaries to the forest department within which is retained the loan sanctioning power. Moreover the distribution of loan is not need based and equitable because the loan beneficiaries are recommended based on their repaying capacity. This particular act of the organization defeats the very purpose of helping the poor, landless and forest dependent villagers.

*Energy conservation and reduction in fuelwood and fodder requirement* : Before the inception of the project more than 50% of the inhabitants of the study villages were forest-dependent for fuelwood. In Bungalow Kudiyiruppu out of 35 households sampled 18 were forest dependent for their livelihood and collected fuelwood from the forest. They traveled a distance of 4 to 5 km in the forest to collect fuelwood. In Kalyanipuram out of 40 households sampled 22 were forest

**Table 5**

*VFC Revolving fund*

Village	Forest Department Contribution (Rs.)	Total Amount sanctioned as loan (Rs.)
Bungalow Kudiyiruppu	2,95,000	38,04,000
Kalyanipuram	2,52,800	10,55,000
Sambangulam	3,02,000	39,29,400

dependent and they traveled up to 5 km to collect fuelwood. In Sambangulam out of 40 households sampled 27 were forest dependent and they traveled up to 5 km in the forest area to collect fuelwood. The frequency of collection ranged from fortnightly to daily. On an average an individual spent 6 to 7 hours a day in collecting fuelwood. A man used to carry 35 to 90 kg of fuelwood per head load or cycle load and earn Rs 25 to 70 per load whereas a woman could carry 20 to 40 kg of fuelwood per head load and earn Rs 20 to 30 (Table 6).

Energy saving devices are provided to the villagers under the project. 31 VFC members in Bungalow Kudiyiruppu, 39 in Kalyanipuram and 33 in Sambangulam were provided with loans for the purchase of micro hot point stove, pressure cooker and LPG stove. Adoption of alternative sources of energy such as kerosene oil and LPG has increased resulting in reduction of distance traveled and time spent for fuelwood and fodder collection. Reduction

in the number of cattle and adoption stall feeding also add to this effect. Mode of collection has changed from lopping of branches to collection of dry leaves and twigs. This is an indicator of social change. Table 6 shows the fuel-use pattern in the study villages after the initiation of the project

In Sambangulam, out of the 40 households sampled 19 use LPG, 19 use kerosene oil and firewood, and 2 use LPG and kerosene oil. No household uses firewood alone as the fuel. In Kalyanipuram out of the 40 households sampled only 1 household uses firewood alone as the fuel, 5 use LPG, 16 use LPG and kerosene oil, 13 use kerosene oil and firewood for cooking purposes. In Bungalow Kudiyiruppu out of the 35 households sampled 18 are using firewood alone. Six households use LPG, 4 households use kerosene oil, 2 households use LPG and kerosene oil and 5 households use kerosene oil and firewood for cooking purposes. In all the three villages firewood is the only fuel used in the tea stalls and in the hotels (Table 7).

**Table 6**

*Frequency of Firewood Collection*

Frequency	No. of households		
	Bungalow Kudiyiruppu	Kalyanipuram	Sambangulam
Daily	0	2	10
2-3 days/week	2	5	7
4 days/week	9	3	6
5 days/week	4	2	2
10-15 days/month	3	10	1
Fortnightly	0	0	1
Total	18	22	27

The fuelwood users collect fallen dry leaves of coconut and palmyra trees and dry twigs from the nearby private plantations or buy from the fuelwood shop. Especially in Bungalow Kudiyiruppu collection of fuelwood is not a problem as most of the people of that village own plantations from which they collect fuel. This saves much time for both men and women and that could be spent on attending VFC or SHG meetings and on income enhancement activities. The continuity of this benefit serves as an incentive for protection of the adjoining forests as the communities are motivated to preserve these natural resources that



**Table 7***Alternative Fuels Used*

Fuel	No. of households		
	Bungalow Kudiyruppu	Kalyani-puram	Samban-gulam
Gas	6	5	19
Gas + Kerosene	2	16	2
Gas + Kerosene + Firewood	0	3	0
Kerosene	4	2	0
Kerosene + Firewood	5	13	19
Firewood	18	1	0
Total	35	40	40

they need to meet their basic needs (Gupta *et al.*, 2004)

Cattle grazing has been significantly reduced due to a marked decrease in the number of cattle owned by the villagers and the adoption of stall feeding. Out of the sampled households only 6 in Kalyanipuram and 7 in Bungalow Kudiyruppu are rearing cattle at home and all them are either stall fed or grazed in the private fields and plantations. Agriculture being the main source of income in the study villages, raising plantations of fodder crops or developing pastures in the vicinity of the buffer zone by the forest department involving the local community will create job opportunities for the villagers and will strengthen the relationship with the local community.

After the inception of the project in the village illicit felling of trees in the

forest area for fuelwood has been gradually reduced to a very great extent and consequently there is a reduction in the number of recorded forest offences (Table 8).

*Self Help Groups* : The concept of Self Help Groups (SHGs) has been evolved to organize the rural poor to meet their productive and consumption needs out of the saving supplemented by institutional credit support provided by rural financing institutions. Many Indian states have created women Self Help Groups which have taken up the role of savings and credit and helped them to take control of their lives (Singh and Varalakshmi, 2000) but rarely are the link

**Table 8***Recorded Forest offences*

Year	No. of Forest offences
Before JFM :	
1991	14
1992	28
1993	14
1994	9
1995	12
1996	11
After JFM :	
1997	9
1998	14
1999	8
2000	4
2001	2
2002	7
2003	8
2004	4
2005	4

built to track back to the aims of forest management (Debnath and Dasgupta, 2000). In the study villages there are a few SHGs which are designated as subcommittees of VFCs. In Bungalow Kudiyruppu there are 2 women SHGs named as Thoniyar and Iluppaiyar, which are defunct and are about to be dissolved soon. In Kalyanipuram there are 4 women SHGs namely, Shenbagappoo, Thamarai, Malligai and Roja and 3 men SHGs have recently been formed. In Sambangulam there is only one women SHG, Mayil which needs proper guidance and assistance. Paradoxically there are so many SHGs formed by NGOs functioning successfully in the very same villages. The villagers need intensive training in functioning as a group to make the best use of the group. The Forest Department should take necessary actions towards this.

### **Decentralization and Devolution**

Decentralization is a geographical concept by which the bureaucratic functions are transferred from central to local offices. Devolution in contrast is transference of power as well. The potential goal of transcending forestry among many others is bringing about decentralization and to become the likely model and harbinger of devolution to local people. (Banerji, 2000) In the study villages the JFM based Eco-development project was initiated during 1997-1998. The functioning of the VFCs has been regularly monitored by the forest department. The Forester represents the forest department on the VFC as the member secretary and guides and assists the EC in identifying beneficiaries and recommending loan and to pass resolutions on the requirements of the villages to be attended by the forest

department. But these resolutions passed by the EC have to be approved by the Eco-Development Officer for implementation. The functioning of the VFC is monitored by the Field Director and Conservator of Forests, the Eco-Development Officer and the Ranger. Moreover the Forest Guards who are directly involved in forest protection find no place in the JFM institution but for attending the EC meetings in the absence of the Foresters. This form of decentralization is inadequate to involve the Foresters and Rangers with commitment in the implementation of the project.

Initiation and implementation of the eco-development in the study villages has brought about a number of changes in the mindset of the villagers; the villagers have become more concerned about forest protection and have developed a friendly attitude towards the forest department officials. Moreover there has been an obvious reduction in the number of recorded forest offences, reduction in fuel wood consumption and a change in fuel use pattern in the study villages. The revolving fund availed of by the VFC members as loan for alternative income generation activities and energy saving measures is enough proof for the utilization of the project fund by the villagers. But the personal interview clearly showed that most of the VFC members utilized the amount availed as loan from VFC fund either to clear the old debts or for improving their socio-economic status (buying new assets, renovating the existing residential buildings etc).

All the three VFCs have made the maximum use of the project fund in an organized manner. In turn they have taken

up the responsibility of protecting the forest and are adapted to social fencing successfully. But the project guidelines do not give any right to the local community over the forest or any stake in the forest produce nor the forest department has taken adequate measures to compensate for the damage caused by the wild animals to the agricultural fields. Tamil Nadu JFM guidelines 4 (10) empower the EC “to impose fines against erring individuals/hamlets for illicit removal of firewood or illicit grazing of cattle” (Anon., 1997). But in practice the forest and wildlife offences are dealt with only by the Forest Department. At the same time, it is interesting to know that the VFC of Bungalow Kudiyiruppu is imposing a penal interest of Rs. 25 per day for delayed repayment of loan amount. All these clearly indicate that there is only partial decentralization as far as the Forest Department is concerned and the villagers have no power to plan, to make decisions and to allocate funds for the various activities related to regeneration and protection of forest.

JFM in its present form has become instrumental in showing the way of decentralization. Decentralised programmes require strong local organizations. When the local organizations get opportunity to manage the resources and support development they can become stronger. So legal status to and devolution of the VFC will be the appropriate action towards sustainable forest management.

### Conclusions and Implications

- Greater awareness has been created among the target villagers on the need

to conserve the forest and biodiversity of the Reserve.

- Formation of VFCs has resulted in increased interaction between the Forest Department and the village community and strengthened the forest department's efforts to conserve natural forests and promote regeneration in the degraded area.
- Revolving fund mechanism operates successfully enabling the VFC to provide financial assistance to more beneficiaries.
- The number of forest offences has been significantly reduced reflecting the health of the forest.
- People have opted for alternative non-conventional energy source in a significant way but still the use of firewood continues.
- Micro-plans should be comprehensive and should cover activities that aim at sustainable management of not only the forests but also all land and water based resources.
- Involving a larger proportion of the local community in forest protection and extending the benefits of the programme to the entire community will form a broader base for Joint Forest Management.

At present the communities are performing their role of protection of forest effectively. However their roles in management, decision making, access to information etc need to be transparently strengthened.

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### SUMMARY

**Joint Forest Management (JFM) is an organic process targeting the regeneration of degraded forests by involving the local community and operates on the interaction between the Forest Department and the local community. Successful formation and functioning of Village Forest Councils (VFCs) is the key factor that decides the success of the entire programme. Involvement of women and the marginalized in the programme will serve the purpose of benefiting the poor and the landless forest dependents. Responsibility of protection combined with the right over the forest produce will help achieve the target of the programme.**

**Key words :** Joint Forest Management (JFM), Village Forest Council (VFC), Regeneration, Responsibility, Rights, Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve (KMTR), Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.

संयुक्त वन प्रबन्ध-विकेन्द्रीकरण और निपेक्षन, तिरुनेलवेल्लि जिला, तमिलनाडु के  
केएमटीआर में किया गया विशेष अध्ययन  
आर० शंकरवदम्ल व कैलाश पालीवाल  
सारांश

संयुक्त वन प्रबन्धन एक जैव प्रक्रिया है जिसका लक्ष्य व्याहसित हुए वनों का पुनर्जनन कराना है जिसमें स्थानीय समुदायों को साथ लिया जाता है और जो वन विभाग और स्थानीय समुदाय के मध्य होते अन्तर्क्रिया पर आगे चलती जाती है। इसमें ग्राम वन परिषदों का सफलतापूर्वक बनना और कार्य करते जाना ही प्रधान कारक है जो संपूर्ण कार्यक्रम की सफलता को निर्णीत करता है। कार्यक्रम में महिलाओं और सीमान्त पर पड़े वर्गों को साथ लेने से ही गरीबों और भूमिविहीन वन आश्रितों को उनसे लाभ पहुँचाने का प्रयोजन सिद्ध हो पाएगा। सुरक्षा की जिम्मेदारी सौंपने के साथ वनोपजों पर अधिकार देना मिलने से ही इन कार्यक्रमों का लक्ष्य प्राप्त करने में सहायता मिल सकती है।

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