INNOVATIVE NTFP MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE RURAL LIVELIHOODS – A CASE STUDY OF GOVERNMENT FACILITATED COMMUNITY INITIATIVES IN CENTRAL INDIA

Introduction
The Central Indian state of Chhattisgarh has taken several initiatives to ensure livelihood security to the local population. The objectives of the study are:

• To explore Government initiatives for the endowment of ownership rights to the local population
• To examine impact of removal of exploitative practices in NTFP trade due to the formation of the Minor Forest Produce Federation in improvement of livelihood of the collectors
• To examine whether the state government's initiative for 100% income distribution from Nationalised NTFP trade by the MFP Federation is being properly implemented
• To examine whether the JFM approach has had any impact on the attitudinal change and motivation levels amongst the people and forest personnel and its consequent effect on better community management of NTFPs

The study area: CHHATTISGARH STATE, INDIA

• Location: Central India: lat 17 0 46’ n to 24 0 6’ n - long 80 0 15’ e to 84 0 15’ e
• Catchment: four main river systems Mahanadi, Godavari, Narmada & Ganga
• Mahanadi: over 2000 km long, 6000 sq kms
• Mahanaksh: 1.3 million sq kms
• Godavari: 1.6 million sq kms
• Narmada: 1.9 million sq kms
• Ganga: 2.4 million sq kms
• Forests:
  - Bambooforests: 6,074 sq kms
  - Teakforests: 5,600 sq kms
  - Salforests: 24,245 sq kms
  - Openforest: 17,136 sq kms
  - Denseforest: 39,557 sq kms
• End to migration self employed rural youth through micro credit from societies

End to migration self employed rural youth through micro credit from societies

Findings
1. Awareness of rights over NTFP amongst collectors as envisaged under the various endowment initiatives of the government-led to increased social cohesion amongst NTFP collectors
2. People have been motivated by the facilitatory approach of the forest department and have started to sustainably manage NTFPs like Tendu Leaves
3. Massive control over exploitative practices achieved in Nationalised NTFP trade by MFP Fed Proper distribution of collection wages ensured
4. JFM approach succeeds in becoming a peoples' movement with NTFP playing major role for motivating people to sustainably manage forests to improve their livelihood security
5. Profit sharing mechanism well placed and being implemented in time- US $ 15 million distributed from state to communities each year
6. Decentralized decision making process has set in due estab., of three tier co-operative structure
7. Visible attitudinal change towards collaboration with people amongst all layers of forest administration
8. Exemplary institutional development-JFM societies (6687), primary coops, women self-help groups

Some key livelihood support initiatives
- Rate of pruning increased from INR 10 to 20 per bag
- Collection rate of tendu leaves raised from INR 400 to 450 in 2001 (INR 85 in 1989 Time of Nationalisation)
- 16.77 lakh bags tendu leaves collected in 2001 with wage distribution of INR 621 million
- 4,74,225 quintal sal seed collected in 2001- wages INR 152 million distributed
- Sal seed collection rate increased from INR 3 to INR 5 per Kg in current year

INCOME DISTRIBUTION AT A GLANCE
(IN MILLION Indian Rupees)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Prof</th>
<th>Bonus to coll</th>
<th>Infra dev</th>
<th>Forest Dev</th>
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<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>585.4</td>
<td>292.7</td>
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Discussions
- The giant steps taken by the Government of Chhattisgarh to facilitate community empowerment and establish an innovative NTFP management has been extremely successful in improving rural livelihoods especially in the stress period of summer months when in most of the area no employment opportunity is available
- Ploughing of income from NTFP to rural infrastructure has improved yield in agriculture and ensured food security
- The proposed steps will go a long way to establish the large basket of NTFPs available from the forests of the state as a vehicle of ensuring higher returns to collectors especially each year
- Large scale diversification in primary processing and value addition will provide sustained NTFP based rural livelihood
- Need of the hour is to ensure investments from end-users through consent or legislation, ensure marketing, standardize raw material as per demand, set up IPR wing to protect local knowledge and coordinate R&D effort development of plant resource including genetic engineering and large scale propagation of improved varieties of plants of NTFPs

The study area: CHHATTISGARH, INDIA

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THE STUDY AREA: CHHATTISGARH, INDIA

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