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“CRAFTING PEOPLE-CENTRED/ ORIENTED INSTITUTIONS FOR PROTECTED AREA MANAGEMENT: THE CASE OF A PA IN INDIA”

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I. Introduction

Broadly speaking, there are three approaches reflected in the conceptualisations and practices of Protected Area (PA) management. These are the government-centred, people-centred/oriented, and joint approaches to PA management. This paper deals with the PA management approach in India with a focus on one of the PAs in the country. It is divided into three parts. First, it deals with the approach and major features of PA management. Secondly, it specifically discusses the existing organizational structure, process and problems of management in case of the Gir PA, the only abode of the Asiatic lion located in western India. Thirdly, it presents an outline of the framework for joint PA management with a focus on the Gir PA.

Twenty-three per cent of the geographical area (329 million hectares) in India has been declared as forest area. Several forest villages have been granted the status of revenue villages. However, the number of forest villages is still around 5,000. There are around 48 million forest dwellers who live within or in the vicinity of forests (Arora 1994:591). Forests have been a source of their livelihood and survival. They depend on forests for meeting their daily needs such as food, fodder and fuelwood. Minor forest produces (such as leaves, seeds, gums, waxes, dyes, resins, bamboo, canes, bhabbar grass, etc) are collected by the poor and marginalised to earn their livelihood.

PA includes national parks and sanctuaries.¹ There are around 600 PAs in India. Most PAs in India have people living in and around them. Some initiatives have been taken by the government to promote Joint Forest Management (JFM). But this is confined mainly to government wastelands and does not include the PAs. Recently, eco-development projects have been launched in a few PAs to initiate people's participation. But this is largely experimental, project based and ad-hoc.

II. PA Management Approach

The world-wide network of protected Area (PA) has emanated from the American concept of natural areas treated as untouched and pristine wilderness. It is symbolised in the move to set aside Yellowstone National Park in the last century as an untouched area in the United States. The dominant conservation assumption in this view of nature, according to Ashish Kothari, has been that ‘ People necessarily damage natural ecosystems, therefore they should be kept away from PAs’.

The second assumption here is that only modern wildlife/ forestry science, practiced by formally trained personnel can manage wildlife habitats and species. Another assumption is that the practices and knowledge of local people are either irrelevant or contradictory to conservation necessities (Suri and Kothari 1997 : 297). Therefore, conservationists have excluded local people form the management of PAs. The main problem with this notion of PA is that it ignores the historical relationship between people and their habitat and the continuing dependence of people in many regions on the bio-diversity of forest. No wonders, there is witnessed growing tensions and conflicts between resource dependent communities and official conservation agencies, generating social injustice and threatening conservation objectives themselves due to PAs (*ibid*).²

Susan Braatz notes a general trend in many countries towards privatisation of public forest enterprises and of research and extension functions. The other major trends affecting forestry institutions worldwide, according to her, include : reductions in budgets and staff of forestry departments, decentralisation of forest administrations, and continued efforts to develop mechanisms to involve a wide range of interest groups in forestry policy formulation and planning (Braatz 1997 :25).

Similarly, D'Silva notes four major global trends altering the administrative structures and processes of government. These forces are decentralisation of government, local community participation, civil service reform, and privatisation of state-owned enterprises. They would impact the forestry sector directly or indirectly sooner or later (D'Silva 1997:52). It is observed in the forestry sector that due to the constraints of limited resources, governments in several countries are prodding their agencies to: (i)Do a better job with the private sector, NGOs and local communities; (ii)Share functions with the private sector, NGOs and local communities; (iii)Decentralise authority and accountability to lower levels of government (*ibid*:55).

For adapting to the changing socio-political environment and tackling its problems, the challenges identified for the Forest departments in the 21st century are: (i) to forge strategic partnerships with other stakeholders in forestry (e.g. local villagers, NGOs, private sector, universities, and others); (ii) get out of many forest related activities that can be managed by other entities (e.g. plantations, nurseries, processing); and (iii) focus on the core functions that a government does best, like, policy making, implementing regulations, offering incentives, and resolving conflicts in resource use (see D'Silva 1997:59).

D'Silva notes certain factors which pose obstacles. He holds that foresters are 'generally a conservative, inward looking lot more comfortable with forest botany than with social concerns that dominate forestry nowadays'. Moreover, the most forest departments (in developing countries including India) were set up in a colonial era with the objective of extracting timber and producing revenue. 'While the demands and expectations of society have changed, the structure of most forest departments have remained largely unchanged' (D'Silva 1997:51).

Further, these days the concept of joint protected area management (JPAM) has acquired importance. B.J. Krishnan favours joint management of PAs. He asserts that no conservation strategy would succeed in India unless the bio-mass requirements of the local communities are harmoniously integrated into the strategy of conservation. The problem is that the existing strategy has 'an inbuilt dimension that alienates local communities'. Local people emphasise their rights over resources in the area they live in. At the same time forests and other natural habitats require respect due to their intrinsic value. So, Krishnan suggests, 'the obligation to treat the protected areas respectfully should be balanced by the right of the people to have a say in the management of their own environment' (see Krishnan in Kothari et al. eds 1996:81). These rights include the use of biological resources in their immediate environment for daily requirements like food, fuel, fodder, drinking water, herbs and small timber for shelter. After all, it cannot be expected from the people to take up the responsibility of conservation if rights to their environment are neglected or severely constricted. Any sustainable conservation strategy must aim at an 'integrated and interdependent natural system of which flora, fauna and human beings are integral constituents' (*ibid*). An integrated approach to management may require certain steps to be taken in some areas by government such as restoration of rights of the local people, employment of local people in the forest management, formation and/or strengthening of village level protection committees and new classification/zonation of forest and PAs (*ibid*).

G. Raju advocates for giving a push to people's participation through moving from JFM to JPAM (Joint Protected Area Management).³ In JPAM, the people would, as in case of JFM be regarded as 'partners in the management'. It required "creating space and support for the emergence of vibrant people's institutions that can take part in all facets of management, and not merely protection..." (Raju 1996:109). Three major principles identified by Raju from the experiences of JFM and relevant for JPAM include: (i)Creating space and support for emergence of people's institutions for joint management; (ii)Creating an empowered management forum among FD, people's institutions, NGOs and others for policy and management lessons; (iii)Evolving flexible management plan/system in consultation with people and its implementation through a transparent system (Raju 1996:110).

Moreover, Raju proposes new zonation for overall management of a PA. The zonation includes four categories viz., habitation zone, agricultural zone, forest use zone (for grazing, fuelwood and NTFP collection), and undisturbed zone. Some developmental activities, according to him, could be participatively planned for and implemented through people's institutions. 'Participatory planning provides an excellent opportunity to combine the indigenous knowledge of people, especially about the different species (tree, shrubs, climbers, roots), and modern knowledge of foresters and researchers' (Raju 1996:111).

Amita Baviskar emphasises the need to recognise the strong linkage of coexistence between the forest and the local indigenous communities(tribals). She affirms,

The fate of the forest and the fate of adivasis are linked. As long as adivasis continue to be exploited and impoverished, so will the forest. The cause of conservation is inseparable from the cause of making adivasis' lives more secure, sustainable and prosperous (Baviskar 1994 : 2501)

In case of India, she observes that the government, particularly the ministry of environment and forest has to 'shed its unwillingness to facilitate (local) people in doing things their own way, with their priorities foremost'. The government needs to surrender power over the forest into the hands of those who have a much greater right to it. Moreover, it should ensure that development resources are invested into this process. This would involve legislative initiatives and administrative enterprise. 'For environmental conservation, popular struggles have to be met half-way by an enlightened state' (ibid).

Conventionally, the main task of the official PA authorities has been policing the forest and wildlife against the local people who are considered management problems. But now this approach is slowly changing in some parts of the world. One of the reason for this is that the PA managers and the local people have the same ultimate goal – conservation of the normal habitat for mutual benefits.

One of the alternative ways advocated today is the joint/participatory/collaborative management of PAs. Kothari (1996) has offered a working definition of Joint Protected Area Management (JPAM) as :

JPAM is the management of PAs and their surrounds, with the objective of conserving natural ecosystems and their wildlife, as well as of ensuring the livelihood security of local traditional communities, through legal and institutional mechanism which ensure an equal partnership between these communities and government agencies (cited in Suri and Kothari 1997 :300).

Suri and Kothari talks of building ‘partnerships’ between local human communities and PA management agencies. This could help to counter the threats to both natural habitats and rural communities. This is not going to be easily acceptable to either conservationists or to rights activists. However, these two warring groups need to realise,

The truth is probably somewhere in between, for top down conservation programmes are increasingly failing, while experience had shown that local people may also be prone to misusing resources under the pressure of market, politics, and increasing populations (Suri and Kothari 1997 : 299).

One of the most important achievements happening within the forestry sector in the recent years, noted by Braatz, is the increased understanding and acceptance of the concept of sustainable forest management. The concept of sustainability here means that

If forests themselves are to be sustained, and in turn are to contribute to sustainable development, their environmental values must be protected, and the decision-making process related to the management of forest must involve broad-based participation of interest groups (Braatz 1997 :25).

Raju emphasises the need for forest management to respond to the future situation of an increase in both human and wildlife populations, and change in lifestyles. It is possible for the management to tackle the problem to certain extent by raising the productivity of natural resources. But this would not ensure sustainability of the natural habitat and biodiversity for long . So, alternatives have to be found for people to settle outside the PA. Moreover carrying capacity of natural resources also have to be taken note of . The forest authority have to make suitable interventions to check that wildlife populations do not increase beyond the carrying capacity of natural resources within the region. People need to be convinced that their cooperation is sought in making future adjustments. Those who are willing to settle outside, especially youth, should be encouraged to do so and adequate resources provided for the purpose(see Raju 1996 :112).

Carel van Schaik and Randall Kramer have advocated four principles for the establishment and management of PAs . These principles are :

- (i) PAs will always be in need of active defense, no matter how great their benefits are to local communities or to society at large;
- (ii) Beneficiaries of PA services who now receive the benefits for free should be prepared to pay to support PAs ;
- (iii) Effective solutions require the involvement of all stakeholders, including representatives of both the local and the international community; and
- (iv) While delegation of management to local communities is to be encouraged, there is always a role for the national government as the representative of the nation or the international community (Kramer et al eds 1997 : 228) .

They hold that the well being of all parties - local and international, public and private, current and future could be best served over the long term by following these principles. However, they also recognise the specificity involved in PA management. They state, 'Particular courses of action for establishing and managing protected area will of course, vary among locations, ...careful analysis of the causes of protected area degradation must be done on a site-by-site basis and solutions must be tailored to the site specific needs' (ibid).

III. Management of Gir PA

Gir PA lies in the Saurashtra peninsula of Gujarat. It is a large biologically intact continuous tract of forests. It stretches over a length of about 70 kms from west to east and 40 kms from north to south. Its total area is 1882.6 sq.kms. Out of this, 1412.1 sq. kms has been constituted as Gir Sanctuary and National Park . The Park covers an area of 258.7 sq.kms. It is surrounded by the sanctuary spreading over an area of 1153.4 sq. kms (Singh et al 1996:20, Vol I).

Presently, there are 54 'nesses' (settlements) in the sanctuary area. Around 361 families of Maldharis live in these nesses. (There were 129 nesses in Gir forest before their resettlement done in 1970s and 1980s. Around 600 Maldhari families were shifted out of the forest; 55 nesses were completely abandoned and some others partially abandoned due to the resettlement). There are 14 forest settlement villages (FSVs) in the sanctuary. They cover an area of 5,176.44 ha. They have around 556 households with a total human population of 4494 and about 4241 livestock. An area of 1867.39 ha has been given to the cultivators as settlement land of these villages. (The Nawabs of Junagarh had settled some permanent labourers in the forests for the silvicultural operations like artificial regeneration through planting, coupe felling, minor forest produce collection and fire protection. The settlers were granted forest land on lease for cultivation and other purpose in open areas. They were also given timber for construction of their houses.) The lease of land given to the cultivators is for 15 years which is renewable (Singh et al 1996:85, Vol I). Moreover, there are 97 revenue villages (RVs) within a periphery of 6 kms from the sanctuary area. The major occupations of people of these villages are agriculture and animal husbandry. The total human population of these villages is 1,52,000. Out of this, 23,000 are farmers and 18,000 landless labourers. The total livestock is 95,000. Out of this, 22.5% are buffaloes, 27% cows, 25% bullocks, 12% goats, 6% sheep, and 8% others. Both agriculturists and landless keep livestock. But they do not have any right to graze their livestock in the sanctuary or collect forest produce from the sanctuary. (For details, see Singh et al 1996:83-86, Vol I).

Earlier, Gir forest had only one division for the purpose of administration/management with the headquarters at Junagarh. In 1974, it was divided into two divisions – Gir (East) and Gir (West) with headquarters at Dhari (Amreli district) and Junagarh (Junagarh district) respectively. Gir-West consisted of four ranges called Sasan, Jamwala, Chhadavadi and Visavadar; and Gir-East comprised three ranges

namely Dalkhania, Hadala and Jasadhar. In 1983, the two divisions were reorganised into 14 ranges, 60 rounds and 152 beats. Gir West comprising 9 ranges, 35 rounds, 97 beats; and Gir East having 5 ranges, 25 rounds and 55 beats (see Singh et al 1996). In addition, Gir forest has a Wildlife Division (with headquarters at Sasan) which covers both the territorial divisions. The main responsibility of this division is the management and welfare of wildlife research and tourism. The two territorial divisions have the tasks of development and protection works.

The total 'Sanctioned Staff' of Gir PA (both Sanctuary and National Park) is 621. In this the number of staff is 25 at Circle level, 169 in Gir-East, 329 in Gir-West and 98 in Wildlife division of Sasan – the total being 621. As per official position/designation, this includes 1 Conservator of Forests (CF) at the circle level, 3 Divisional Forest Officers (DFOs, also called Dy. Conservator of Forests i.e. DCF) at division level, 26 Range Forest Officers (RFOs) at range level, 101 Foresters at round level, 306 Forest Guards at beat level, and the rest 181 support staff like clerk, accountant, peon, sweeper, watchman, chowkidar etc. (see Singh et al 1996).

The existing organisation for management of Gir PA is set up by the Government of Gujarat. It is the Forest Department of the government which is the sole managing authority. The functions of Gir management organisation are listed in the Bio-diversity Conservation Plan For Gir brought out by the Forest Department of the Gujarat government. The main functions of the Gir PA authority include:

- a) Protection and legal cases
- b) Land records, demarcation and boundary maintenance
- c) Wildlife monitoring studies, research and training.
- d) Wildlife welfare
- e) Development of protected area
- f) Ecological development of neighbouring areas including eco-development
- g) Preventing damage to human life and property in the neighbourhood including conflict management
- h) Interpretation, nature education and tourism.
- i) Regulation or resource uses including marketing and distribution of forest produce
- j) Crisis management (see, Singh et al 1996:188, Vol.I)

This organisational set up, which has the power and responsibility to perform the above mentioned functions is completely governmental. It is a five-tier hierarchical

bureaucratic structure of management. There are three levels of officers and two levels of lower level functionaries of the forest department. The Conservator of Forests (CF) is the boss having jurisdiction over the whole PA. Under CF come the three Divisional Forest Officers (DFO) who head the two territorial divisions (Gir-East Division and Gir-West Division) and the Wildlife Division, Sasan. The DFOs are assisted by ACFs, one each in the Gir West Division and the Wildlife Division, but none in the East Division. These three administrative/management divisions are divided into 17 Ranges which are headed by Range Forest Officers (RFOs) who work under DFOs. Each Range is divided into several Rounds (77 in all) which are manned by Foresters. Each Round is divided into Beats (160 in all) The Beats are manned by Guards. CF, DFOs, ACFs and RFOs form the officer cadre; Forester and Guards are lower level functionaries of the Forest department (the organisational structure of the existing management is given in Chart 1). There is no participation of the (local) people at any level in any form in the existing organisational structure for the management of Gir PA.

Further, the Forest Department has proposed certain changes in the organisational structure for the management of Gir PA. The changes involve addition of one ACF at the PA level (to assist the CF), one ACF and one Animal Health Officer to assist the DCF, Wildlife at Sasan, one ACF to the Gir-West Division, and two ACFs to the Gir-East Division. The number of RFOs, and Foresters remains the same as existing now. Five additional Guards are added to the Wildlife Division at Sasan for animal rescue, and prevention of damage to human life and property works. The existing RFOs along with their staff would be used for a new scheme called eco-development. It is just mentioned that few more staff would be required to take up eco-development works which is to be done in a ‘participatory way’ (the proposed changes in the organisational structure suggested by the government is given in Chart 2).

The proposed changes in the organisational structure reflect no change in the approach to management of the PA which remains completely government/department-centric and top-down and bureaucratic. Only a passing reference is made to taking up a ‘participatory way’ in case of a project called Eco-development. It may be noted here that this reference to (people’s) participation is made because the sponsoring agency of the project, the World Bank and the Global Environment Trust, make it a mandatory clause for financing the project. All other programmes of the forest department run in the PA as usual without any participation of the people at any level and in any manner.

But the proposed organisational structure reflects one marginal change. It adds to the (numerical) strength of the officers' cadre at the level of ACF. And it puts ACFs in charge of specific activities. The part of two ACFs (one each in Gir-East and Gir-West) is proposed for heading the mobile squads which deal with the activities like inspection and protection of forest. One ACF is meant to head the task of interpretation/ tourism. Two ACFs, one each in Gir-East and Gir-West, are added to look after the eco-development works. (But this is a project-bound work presently being implemented for a period of 5 years and may be extended for another 5 years by the sponsors i.e. the World Bank and GEF.) So, the proposed addition of manpower is essentially meant to strengthen protection of the PA and provide better tourism facilities for visitors. The local people have nothing to gain from this measure, and hence would not see this favourably. In fact, increased protection would mean more rigorous enforcement of restrictions put on the local people to use the PA resources and hence their aversion to it.

There is already one mobile squad in Gir-West. The second squad is to be established in Gir-East. Moreover, a van with wireless set and other equipment is to be provided in coastal zone for monitoring the movements of lions and handling problems arising out of man-animal conflicts.

Several measures are proposed for tightening security and increasing protection of the PA. There are 18 nakas (security check points) in Gir-West and 6 nakas in Gir-East. Each naka is manned by three forest guards. Two additional nakas are to be established. It may be noted that wireless network was set up in Gir in 1984 and 32 main stations are functioning there. It is proposed that old wireless sets would be replaced. Another 10 sets with high power and 100 walkie talkie would be added. All vehicles would have wireless sets. Moreover, old vehicles would be replaced and also new ones added (see Singh et al 1996). This would include Car (1), Gypsy/JEEP (12), Minibus (1), Van (1), DCM/Truck (6) and Motorcycle (25). To the existing stock of weapons, 50 more (Revolvers-10, Rifles-2, 12 Bor gun – 36, and Tranquiliser gun 1) would be added (see ibid). Residential facilities of the departmental staff would be significantly improved by replacing old quarters and constructing new ones. Additional inspection huts and watch towers (three each) would be constructed . An increase of 15% in salary is proposed as difficult area allowance to the field staff. There is stipulated an increase in the (numerical) strength of the existing 621 personnel by adding 25 more and, thus, bringing the total strength to 646 (see ibid).

A separate cell headed by an ACF would be established exclusively for survey, demarcation, erection of forest boundary pillars and boundary stone wall – to be completed within a period of five years. For research works, there is presently an ACF working under the DFO (WL), Sasan. In this connection, a qualified ACF is proposed to be posted for this job, and assisted by a research assistant. The present wildlife health unit at Sasan is looked after by a veterinarian. This unit is to be integrated with Sakkarbaug Zoo and the existing functioning strengthened.

Further, the management plan of Gir PA talks about human resource development for promoting better management. It emphasises the need of training for both officers and staff of the department. It proposes that those officers who are untrained should be sent to Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun or other eminent institutes for short duration training. They should also be 'regularly sent abroad for training' in bio-diversity conservation and eco-development. RFOs would be sent for training at SFRC Rajpipla and other institutes. Training for Forests and Forest Guards would be held at the circle level in Gir. Trained officials working within the circle would be used as resource persons for this. In addition, Forest officers, NGOs, nature lovers, effective communicators would also be involved in imparting training to the field staff. This training package reflects that it is completely western-oriented, top-down and isolationist in character. The higher officers would draw ideas, approaches and perspectives of PA management from the West and impart the same in collaboration with others to the lower level staff. There is nothing to be learnt from the local people. Even the existence of indigenous wisdom is not acknowledged which would contribute even in a meagre way to facilitate better management of the PA

SWOT Analysis

The strength of the Forest Department in general lies, as stated, in its (long) history, (disciplined) organisation, (well trained) personnel, (sound) legal framework and (comprehensive) area of operation. Its weaknesses are tenurial, motivational, technological, financial and communicational in nature. The available opportunities relate to increased public involvement (in forestry and environment), financial (funding by international and national agencies), technological (modern technology for better management), developmental (agroforestry and farm forestry), and collaboration (working with other agencies and sector). The threats listed include factors like demographic, protective (encroachment on forest), governmental (low

priority to forestry), political (interference) and policy (conflicting policies) of other sectors.

The biodiversity plan prepared by the State government of Gujarat presents a SWOT analysis of the management of the Gir PA (see Singh et al, Vol 1, 1996: 96-103). However, the analysis is not comprehensive. It covers only a few elements essential for analysis. It puts Strength and Opportunity (SO) and Weaknesses and Threats (WT) under two broad categories. It does not separate the four dimensions of analysis separately. This departmental analysis is presented here in Chart 3.

As given in the chart, the Departmental management/ State government considers the local people as strength for management because they are very religious minded and purely vegetarian, except a few communities. Due to this, poaching by the people (for meat) is almost absent in Gir. Also there are no organised gangs operating in the area. Moreover, the people realise the benefits they derive from the PA, benefits of different types – economic, religious, cultural and recreational. This gives public support for conservation of the Gir eco-system. Another important managerial strength listed is that legal issues related to demarcation, settlement of rights and concessions have already been settled for the PA.

Chart 3 : SWOT Analysis of Gir PA by the Forest Department

Strength & Opportunity	Weaknesses & Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people supportive of conservation • Indigenous knowledge of staff, specially sikaris • Trained manpower in the department • No organised gangs operating in and around the PA • Legal issues already settled • Job opportunities in other sectors like diamond industries • Increasing productivity of land through intensive agriculture • Strengthening of forest protection measures • The Gujarat Forest (Amendment) Act 1984 (help in controlling illicit cutting) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanding agricultural activities, encroachment upon forest land is very lucrative. • Protective structures of loose stones. • Large scale industrial development done along the coastal belt near the PA • Sugarcane cultivation (man-animal conflict) • Construction of large dams in the PA • Railways passing through the PA • Pilgrimage to the temples in the PA • Development of tourism • Roads passing through the PA • Cement transport through railways and roads

Source: Drawn from Singh et al 1996, Vol. I, pp96-103.

Moreover, there is available indigenous knowledge of staff, specially sikaris and trained manpower in the department. Job opportunities exist in non-forest sectors in the region, as in diamond industries and in raising productivity through intensive agriculture. The forest protection measures could be enhanced by equipping the staff better. The Gujarat Forest (Amendment) Act of 1983 has helped the staff to control illicit cutting by putting cutting at high risk.

Certain weaknesses and threats to the management of the PA are also listed in the departmental plan. Expansion of agricultural activities in the area is considered a big threat. The forest land is black cotton type. It is very fertile. So, there is always a threat of encroachment upon the forest land by the people living in the settlement villages and the peripheral revenue villages. The forest covers a vast area and has inaccessible terrain at some places where maintaining the demarcation lines of forest is difficult. The problems is compounded by the fact that the boundary cairns and the rubble walls are made of loose stones and hence easy to alter.

Large scale industrial development which has taken place along the coastal area near the PA is considered a threat, especially the cement industry based on extraction of lime stone in the region. Many giant industrialists have plans to set up industries in the region. Also, increasing sugar-cultivation in the region raises man-animal conflict. As the PA has many rivers, big dams have been constructed for irrigation. These dams denude land and increase soil erosion. Any more big dams would further aggravate these problems. The railways passing through the western and southern parts of the PA kills/injures the wild animals and causes disturbance to the wildlife. Pilgrimage to the temples located in the PA (Kankai, Banej and Tulsishyam temples) brings disturbance to the wildlife. Development of tourism also contribute to this. Roads passing through the PA (Sapnes-Jamwala road, Visavadar- Sasan road) also lead people to trouble the wildlife. Transport of cement through railways and roads disturbs the whole wildlife.

Drawbacks in Analysis

The major drawback of the SWOT analysis of the Gir Management plan made by the Forest Department is that it is very limited in nature. It does not fully analyse the human aspects related to management of the PA. And it is largely one-sided in nature in the sense that it is mainly concerned with listing out the negative impact (threat) of the local people on the PA and not vice versa. Wildlife of the PA kill domestic livestock and injure even human beings and cause heavy damage to crops

of the people. During 1978-79 to 1994-95, the Gir lions killed 34 human beings and injured 220 persons; and leopards killed 13 persons and injured 144 persons (Singh et al 1996). Further, in 1985-86 to 1994-95, domestic livestock killed by lions and leopards was 15522 and 105 respectively (*ibid*).

A very important problem regarding the Gir PA is the conflict between the Forest Department, which is empowered for management of PA, and the local people who use PA resources in different ways. There are several reasons leading to tensions and conflicts between the two. These are very well recognised by the Forest Department and stated in the management plan, but not included adequately in the SWOT analysis.

It could be observed that the Forest Department in the main considers the local people as a big threat to the PA which is not clearly stated in its SWOT analysis. The department has mentioned in the plan several problems (not in the SWOT analysis) posed by the maldharis to the PA management. There is unregulated population growth of maldharis which may assume dangerous proportions in future. There is increasing linkage with the market economy and change in their lifestyles. Their ‘unsatisfied greed for possessing more and more milch buffaloes and thus exerting more pressure on the PA’. Moreover, in the shifting of their nesses within the forest they cause ‘great damage to the ecosystem’. They cause degradation of eco-system due to lopping of trees and by selling livestock dung mixed with top soil from the forest to the farmers outside. Another issue of conflict is their aspiration for modern amenities like roads, schooling facilities, use of pump-set for watering, and electricity in the nesses (see Singh et al 1996, Vol:84-85).

The reasons for tension with the forest settlements is that the villagers want parity with maldharis regarding grazing in the sanctuary. The forest land has been granted on lease to the cultivators for agricultural purposes. The cultivators have no ownership and cannot sell, mortgage or gift this land for any purpose. Hence, they are not eligible for getting facilities like loans for purchase of tractors, installation of tubewells and even crop loans from banks. Agricultural development is hampered due to resource constraint. The development works carried out by the Forest department in these villages is very limited. So, the villagers demand for converting into their villages revenue villages. The department regard it as ridden with several problems for management of the PA (see Singh et al 1996, Vol I:85).

There are many problems identified by the Forest department regarding the peripheral villages. It is stated in the plan that there is constant pressure from the cattle of these villages on the sanctuary, but tremendous pressure during monsoon. The fertile land surrounding the PA involves the problem of encroachment. The damage caused to the agricultural crops leads sometimes to killing of wild animals. The cases of poaching are reported occasionally, by a few communities (see Singh et al 1996, Vol I:86-87).

The problem of most of the peripheral villages is that they have very less or no area left as government wasteland or gauchar-land. They have either very less or no area at all for grazing their cattle. They do not have much land even for further residential purposes which they need due to increase in their population. They are not allowed to take stone and soil for their houses and agricultural fields even from the protected forests area. The protected forests are not properly demarcated which is problematic both for the people and the staff (see Singh et al 1996, Vol I :87).

IV. Proposed Participatory Management

It is clear that a substantial number of people live within and around the Gir PA. The people and the forest have co-existed here for a long time. There is a pressure on the forest due to people's dependence on it for meeting certain needs, like, fodder and fuelwood. But it needs to be understood that the PA can meet these needs to a certain level. The matter to be concerned with is that the level of resource use should not go beyond the sustainable limits of the PA.

There could be identified three broad organisational approaches for the PA management.⁴ One approach could be completely state-centric, top-down, bureaucratic, autocratic and exclusionary in nature. In this, the local people have no role in the PA management. They are considered the biggest threat, and hence completely excluded. The fate of both the PA and the people is determined by the State, particularly the Forest Department, and the political regime. This is the approach the Gujarat government has adopted so far for management of the Gir PA. A clear example of this was the project of the state government implemented in the late 1970s and early 1980s to resettle the Maldharis outside the Gir forest. Though resettlement was done, it was highly unsuccessful. The most important reason of its failure was that it was exclusionary in nature in the sense that the affected people i.e. the maldharis were not even consulted in the project.

Another approach which is advocated by many activists treats the State machinery as untouchable and wants all powers and responsibilities of management assigned to the local people. But the critics of this approach find it faulty in many ways. The basic argument is that the people on their own cannot manage. Given their increasing population and changes in attitude, the people won't be able to control the increasing pressure on the forest resources. Their traditional knowledge also won't be sufficient for proper management. The local power dynamics and lack of proper organisational structure would lead to neglect and degradation of the forest resources. Whatever the merits and demerits of this approach, it needs to be accepted that the State cannot afford to completely withdraw from PA management at one go given the absence of the people's organisations to take over the management of the whole PA area. This approach has not been adopted so far in any region enabling us to learn from experiences and go a whole hog in this direction. So, this has to be ruled out in the immediate context.

What is possible at present is to adopt the third approach which implies pulling together the strength of both the State (Forest Department) and the local community to manage the PA better in a sustainable way. There is no question of unilateral decision by the State/Forest Department to evict or relocate the people from the PA without their willingness. Rather, this approach requires that the government recognises the relevance of traditional wisdom of the local people in forest management and tries to blend it with the modern scientific management practices in which the department personnel have training and proficiency. The people are made a joint partner for the purpose of protection, conservation and development of forest resources including wildlife. Further, it may be noted that the government in India already has some experience in promoting/recognising people's participation in forestry through the programmes, like, social forestry and JFM in different parts of the country including Gujarat implemented with varying degrees of success and failure. But these programmes are very limited in character. They are mainly confined to the government wasteland, community land, and some private farm land. They do not cover the PA.

Given the constraints of the Government/Forest Department (in terms of material and manpower resources) and the global currents advocating transparency and better governance, it is essential that a participatory approach is adopted for the purpose of PA management wherever people live within and around the PA, as in case of the Gir PA in Gujarat. However, this requires that a participatory organisational set up is constituted and developed slowly but steadily in phases for

the management of PA. The organisational structure proposed specifically for the Gir PA is given in Chart 4.

This structure takes the existing departmental structure as the base and puts other important stakeholders, particularly the local people together with the Forest Department personnel at all levels of management of the Gir PA. Presently the official administrative/management units in the PA from the bottom to the top respectively are beat, round, range, division and the whole PA. These units are headed and managed in a top-down manner by the CF, the DCF (DFO), RFO, Forester and Guard respectively without any participation of the local people in any form and any aspect of management of the PA.

This proposed organisational structure suggests the formation of management committees at four levels –village level, range level, division (territorial) level and PA level. In the course of implementation of the ongoing Eco-development project in Gir PA, the Forest Department has already constituted Eco-development Committees in several nesses, FSVs and RVs. The Executives of these committees are elected by the villagers themselves. The local Forester or Guard works as secretary to the village level committee. As a first step, these Executives of EDC need to be made statutory and permanent in character, and not ad hoc or bound to the period (5 or 10) of the project.

Further, management committees need to be constituted also at range, division and PA levels. There is no provision of forming management committees at these levels even under the Eco-development project which is said to be operated in a participatory manner. These committees have to be constituted and made statutory in character and ensured that they are not abolished by officials at will. At the range level, Range Management Committee may have as members RFO, Foresters and Guards on the official side, and Presidents of village level EDCs on the side of local people. At the division level, the Divisional Management Committee will have as members, DFO, RFOs, Foresters and Guards on the official side, and elected representatives from amongst the presidents of EDCs who are members of the Range Committees. At the PA level, PA Management Committee may have as its members CF, DFOs and RFOs, on the official side, and elected representatives of EDC Presidents from amongst those who are members of the Divisional Committees.

Besides nesses and FSVs, there are large number of revenue villages lying on the periphery of the PA. They are an important stakeholder of the PA. In contrast with nesses and FSVs, they have Panchayati Raj system as the statutory local level people's institution for managing the local affairs. The PR system is a three-tier structure operating at village, taluka and district levels. Presently, under the Eco-development project, the Forest Department has constituted EDCs in some villages which are composed of PR members on the village side and Forester/Guard on the official side. But there is no interaction between the PR system and the Forest Department at the higher levels. Hence, it is essential that some linkage is built between the PR system and the Forest department at these levels. Here it is proposed that sub-committees of the PR bodies should be formed at all the three levels specifically for the purpose of conservation and development of the PA. EDCs formed under the Eco-development project would operate at the village level. Representatives of Taluka Sub-Committee would be made members of Range Management Committee. The representatives of District Sub-Committee would be made members of both Divisional Management Committee and PA Management Committee. No alternative institution to the PR system is proposed in case of the revenue villages because that may generate internal tensions and conflicts and affect the prospect of desired people's participation in the PA management.

In addition, the NGOs, operating particularly in and around the PA area need to be given representation at all the proposed four levels of the PA management. Other stakeholders like officials/functionaries of other government departments, hotels, tour operators and business interests would also be inducted at appropriate levels of the PA management.

What on the whole is proposed is an integrated organisational structure for the management of the Gir PA. The exact size of the different committees and the members from official and non-official/people sides can be worked out through participatory workshops to ensure effectiveness. Similarly, the powers and responsibilities of the committees could also be discussed and decided. The manner of their operation could be discussed and evolved.

Major Obstacles

The first major obstacle in introducing the proposed participatory organisation for the PA management is legal. The government has to make a legal provision for this through amending the concerned laws. The other very strong obstacle would be

expected from the Forest Department. Like many other departments of the government, this department also is a ‘gift’ of the colonial rule. It is completely bureaucratic and autocratic in nature. It is used to ruling over the people rather than managing resources with people’s participation. The officers are ‘lords’ in their regions without whose permission nothing would move. Experiences show that most officials treat facilitating people’s participation as a burden and constraint rather than an opportunity to rope in people for better PA management. Some of them categorically say that eco is not ok, and they have to use dicko (stick). Lack of people’s participation and unrestrained powers of the department breed corruption, though some officials and functionaries may be honest.

Further, obstacles in promoting people’s participation would also come from the side of the local people. This happens due to internal struggles for positions of power within the village. In many nesses and FSVs, there is a lack of appropriate institutional structure for promoting participation.

In this context, especially given the inherent opposition against and scepticism of the Forest Department about people’s participation, what is needed to try to promote participation in phases – starting from setting up the participatory organisational unit at village level and then moving on to range, division and PA levels. Moreover, it is well known that there are different modes/degrees of participation such as co-option, consultation, cooperation, co-learning and collective action. The Forest Department can always move from a lowest degree of people’s participation viz co-option (nominal representation) to the highest degree (collective action) in a phased manner at different levels of the proposed organisational structure moving from the bottom to the top. However, a time limit has to be set for this and the departmental functionaries rewarded or penalised as per their performance of this task in this connection. It has to be clearly recognised that the ad hoc and volitional approach to promote people’s participation will not work. The attitude and behaviour of the government functionaries are shaped to a large extent by their privileged power positions in relation to the people. Hence, the management structure and the department has to be made participation-oriented.

At the same time, NGOs and other concerned individuals and institutions need to raise awareness of the people, help in their capacity building and mobilisation so that people participate actively and effectively in management for mutual benefits to them and the PA. However, the whole effort has to be made in such a way that the deprived sections of society i.e., the poor, SCs, STs and women gain an effective

say and benefits in the PA management. The need of ensuring social equity is very important in this matter lest the existing privileged sections will further reinforce their power positions.

V. Conclusion

It is evident from the foregoing analysis that the existing structure and orientation of the management of Gir PA set up by Forest Department of the Government of Gujarat is completely government-centric, bureaucratic and top-down in nature. In fact, this is the general approach followed for PA management by the Government all over India. The chain of authority and decision making in the management of Gir PA completely excludes people from any kind of participation. In this sense, it is simply a remnant of the non/anti-people British colonial administration. Its organisational structure provides no place to the people living in nesses and FSVs within the PA. In fact, the people in the nesses and FSVs have no local statutory body for their local governance like the RVs which have PRIs. The orientation of the PA management is protectionist and regulative in character, without much concern for development of the local people. There is no concern to blend conservation of the PA with simultaneous efforts for development of the local people. The local people are completely isolated from the management affairs. Obviously, they have no real stake in and concern for conservation of the Gir PA.

In India, the predominant concern of the government is PA conservation. The question of development of local people remains very marginal. The approach is protectionist, regulatory and exclusionary. It would require large additional human and material resources if it has to continue. But the government has severe financial constraints. It has to move towards downsizing.

Further, the exercise in SWOT analysis made by the official Gir management is very limited in nature. It is concerned with arresting the negative impact of the local people on the PA, but does not even acknowledge the negative impact of the PA over the people in the analytical framework. The proposed organisational changes by the official Gir management just makes addition of a few more personnel mainly at the higher level, and refers to some specification of responsibilities at this level. In all other respect, it remains the same old government-centric top down bureaucratic set up devoid of any people's participation.

Taking note of the present currents in the thoughts on PA management in general, and the existing situation of management in the Gir PA, there is a need for organisational reorientation of the Gir PA management on a participatory line by introducing a four-tier integrated organisational set-up in a phased manner within a definite time-frame. It would mark a shift from the prevailing government-centric, bureaucratic, autocratic and top-down approach to a people-oriented, and later people-centred, management of the Gir PA in particular, and the PA in general wherever a substantial number of people live in and around the PA. JPAM would provide local people, NGOs and other stakeholders adequate scope for contributing their knowledge, expertise and resources and thus resolve the problems of PA management. Given the reluctance and resistance of vested interests including the Forest Department bureaucracy, one could move, as a part of strategy, from the existing government-centric top down approach to people-oriented and finally a people-centred participatory approach to PA management.

The main point here is to make the management set-up of the PA transparent and also directly accountable to the people. The Forest Department personnel, has to undergo training for change in their attitude and behaviour for promoting people's participation. Training programme has to focus particularly on the lower level staff who at present generally do not have much scope for this. Norms and rules of promotions of all the personnel have to be modified to incorporate effective accountability to the people. This would enhance better governance.

However, it would be a genuine apprehension to think of local political pressure over the machinery of PA management. However, if the dealings are honest and fair, nothing would throttle the right voice and right conduct of the management. Moreover, once the local people also are made a part of the management system in a meaningful sense at different levels, they would gradually understand and appreciate more the significance of conservation of the PA and develop stake in it. The task, of course, of the proposed participatory PA management would be to ensure sustainable management of the Gir PA.

But all this cannot happen unless a concerted move is initiated for this purpose. NGOs and civil society organizations need to pull their strengths together to effect this change. Moreover, they can also promote capacity building of the people to become an effective partner in PA management. So, steps have to be taken at the

Government, NGO-civil society, and local people levels to constitute a truly joint PA management regime in India.

Finally, it has to be understood that this kind of participatory and accountable management would remain rather weak and shaky unless a concerted effort is made to restructure and reorient the whole administrative and management set-up of the State apparatuses on people-oriented, and people-centred, lines. This is a real need and a great challenge facing the country today. Obviously, it would require efforts from all the actual and potential quarters of support.

Endnotes

1. National Parks and Sanctuaries are declared as per the provisions of Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972. The procedure prescribed for constituting these protected areas include: declaration by state government to this effect, proclamation by collector, inquiry about people's claims over resources, settlement of claims involving acquisition of rights and passing of the awards. No rights of people (even grazing) is allowed in a national park which implies a virtual cessation of human activities. However, people are allowed to have some kind of rights in case sanctuary area if required. The number of sanctuaries and national parks has increased about five times in the last two decades. This covers around 4.5 per cent of the landmass in the country.
2. Kothari has noted the prevalence of highly antagonistic, not only different , views and a bitter debate about the justification, planning and management of India's wildlife PAs. On the one hand are forest officers urban conservationists, wildlife ecologists who want complete protection and conservation of forests and wildlife without any presence of human existence / interference in the PA area. This approach is reflected in the statement, 'Don't the wild animals (and plants) have a right to at least a small part (4 per cent) of the country as their exclusive home, undisturbed by humans?' (S Singh cited by Kothari et al 1995 : 2755) . On the other hand are social activists, local community representatives, and human rights advocates who give priority to people's rights over the PA. For instance, M.D. Mistry avers, 'A poor country like ours cannot afford the luxury of keeping thousands of square kilometres of land under forests and wildlife sanctuaries at the cost of millions of people' (Mistry cited by Kothari et al, ibid). Suri and Kothari (1997 : 299) observe,

Many conservationists believe that a strong legislation supported by vigorous law enforcement is the best option for long term conservation. Community rights activists have often argued on the other hand, that only local communities can conserve habitats.

These are two extreme views. What is missed in this bitter debate is the fact that ‘ both wild life and local communities are today more threatened than even before’. In reality, they have a common adversary in elitist state policies and the urban industrial development process’ (Kothari et al 1995 : 2755) . But the mutual hostility between conservationists and rights activists has ignored the possibilities of these two forces coming together to counter the destructive influence of the modern industrial economy supported by the state. The need is for a ‘reconciliation’ between the two which some conservationists and social activities advocate today.

3. G Raju distills certain important lessons from the experiences of JFM in the country. These lessons are:
 - i) People are only too willing to protect and manage forests, and have demonstrated their capabilities to do so.
 - ii) People have tremendous knowledge of their forests and the species found in them. Such knowledge and skills of people can be gainfully used in developing the management plan for the protected area.
 - iii) There is a need for space and support for the emergence of vibrant people’s institutions.
 - iv) Forums or federations for interaction among individuals, and between individuals, NGOs and the Forest Department, serve the useful purpose of exchanging experiences, learning from each other about conflict resolutions.
 - v) Management practices of vibrant people’s institutions are being supported by FD officials, although tacitly they may violate the India Forest Act and prescribed working plan practices. Flexibility is necessary to accommodate people’s needs in the joint forest management system.

- vi) Need for transparency of the implementation process in order to check corrupt practices and minimise conflict.
- vii) TRAITS as a tool to strengthen people's institution.
- viii) Solutions to conflict, etc., can be found outside the legal/administrative framework. Forums can play a useful role here.
- ix) People disown departmental plantations of inappropriate species. Often it is found that people do not extend their protective cordon for these plantations.
- x) There is tremendous scope for viable cooperatives-controlled NTFP enterprise activity for income generation
- xi) Training programmes for a mix of FD officials, NGOs and communities help build rapport and better understanding of issues in forest management. This is also true of joint tours to successful experimental sites for direct interaction.
- xii) Working groups at the state level, consisting of foresters, NGOs and research institutions, serve the purpose of increasing quality implementation in JFM. However, people's representations have to be included so that they have direct access to policy-making bodies. (see Raju 1996:107-109).

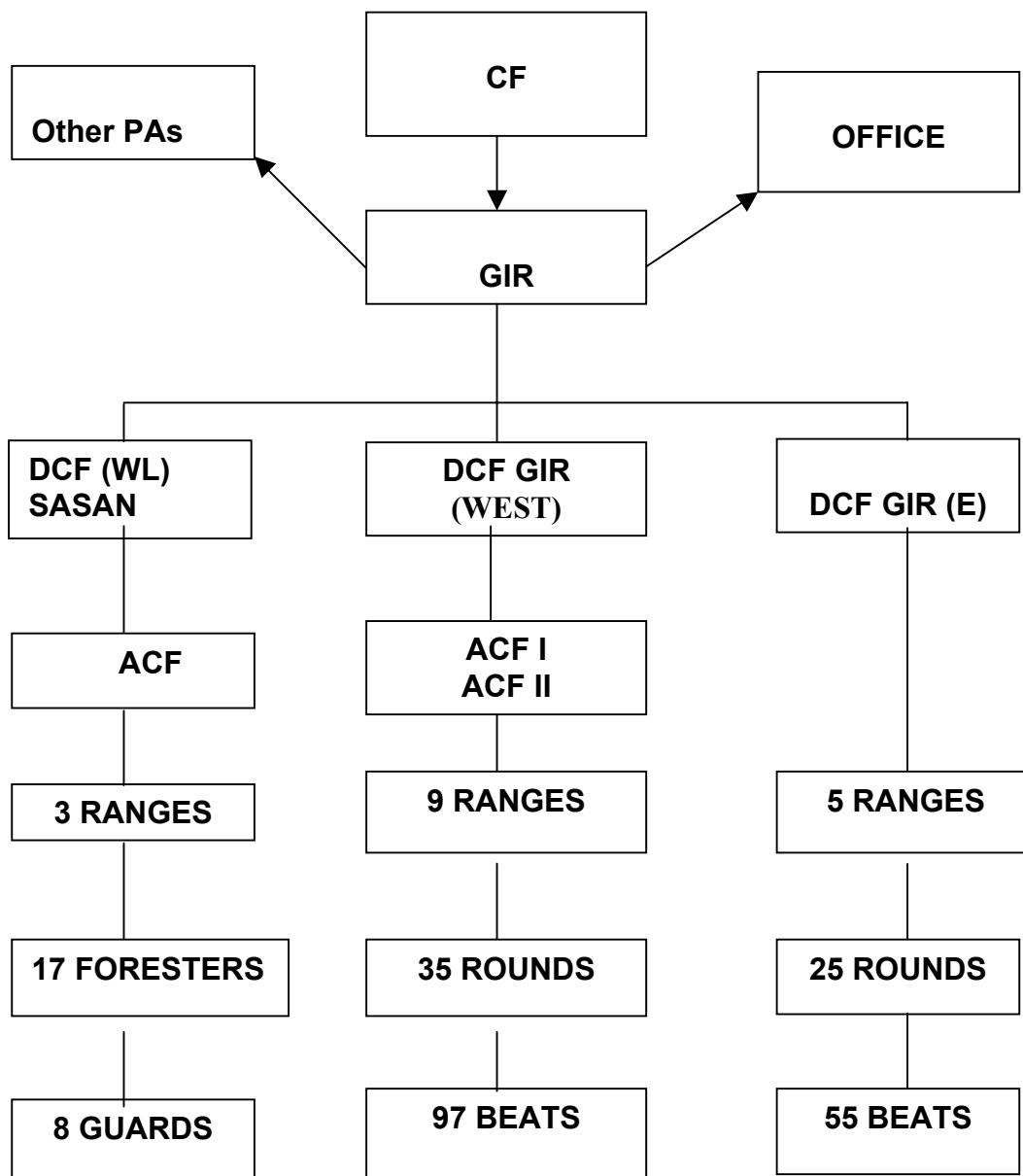
Further, commenting on the JFM scheme, Arora (1994:697) says that it is 'unlikely to accomplish much even in terms of its own proclaimed objectives'. This is because the present framework of the scheme is conceived without any effective mechanisms for people's empowerment, autonomy, self-realisation and secure implementation. So, she emphasises the need of strengthening the participatory space. She affirms, 'Policy changes introduced through JFM rules will not imply anything significant unless participatory spaces are strengthened through state policy as well as people's own actions'.

4. Ashish Kothari lists seven important factors which require that India's conservation strategy is made 'more participatory than they are at present'. These factors include:
- i) Substantial dependence for survival and livelihood resources continues in a majority of natural habitats including most PAs. It is not possible even if the government had the good intentions, to resettle or provide non-ecosystem based alternatives to the several million people with such dependence.
 - ii) People have a right to the resources on which they have traditionally depended, particularly when their access to such resources pre-dates official conservation efforts.
 - iii) The urge to decentralise decision making is catching up everywhere, including in and around areas important from a conservation point of view. People want a say in decision making which affects their lives.
 - iv) The wildlife wing or department continues to be given step-motherly treatment by governments, with serious shortages of funds, human power, equipment, and training. At least in the near future these shortages are going to continue. The only hope of obtaining the ability to protect wildlife against destruction is to involve local communities as protectors.
 - v) Public and political support for conservation has declined considerably, and politicians are unlikely to see the need for change unless a substantial part of their electorate were to demand it unless it has a stake in it i.e., if it does not see some benefit in conservation.
 - vi) Considerable knowledge and experience about natural habitats and wildlife exists even now with traditional communities. This is fast eroding, and needs to be protected, respected and built on for conservation programmes.
 - vii) Serious new challenges have come from the commercial-industrial world, especially in 'liberalised', 'globalised' context. It is only committed partnerships between local people and outside conservationists/officials which is going to be able to face these challenges (Kothari 1998:1-2).

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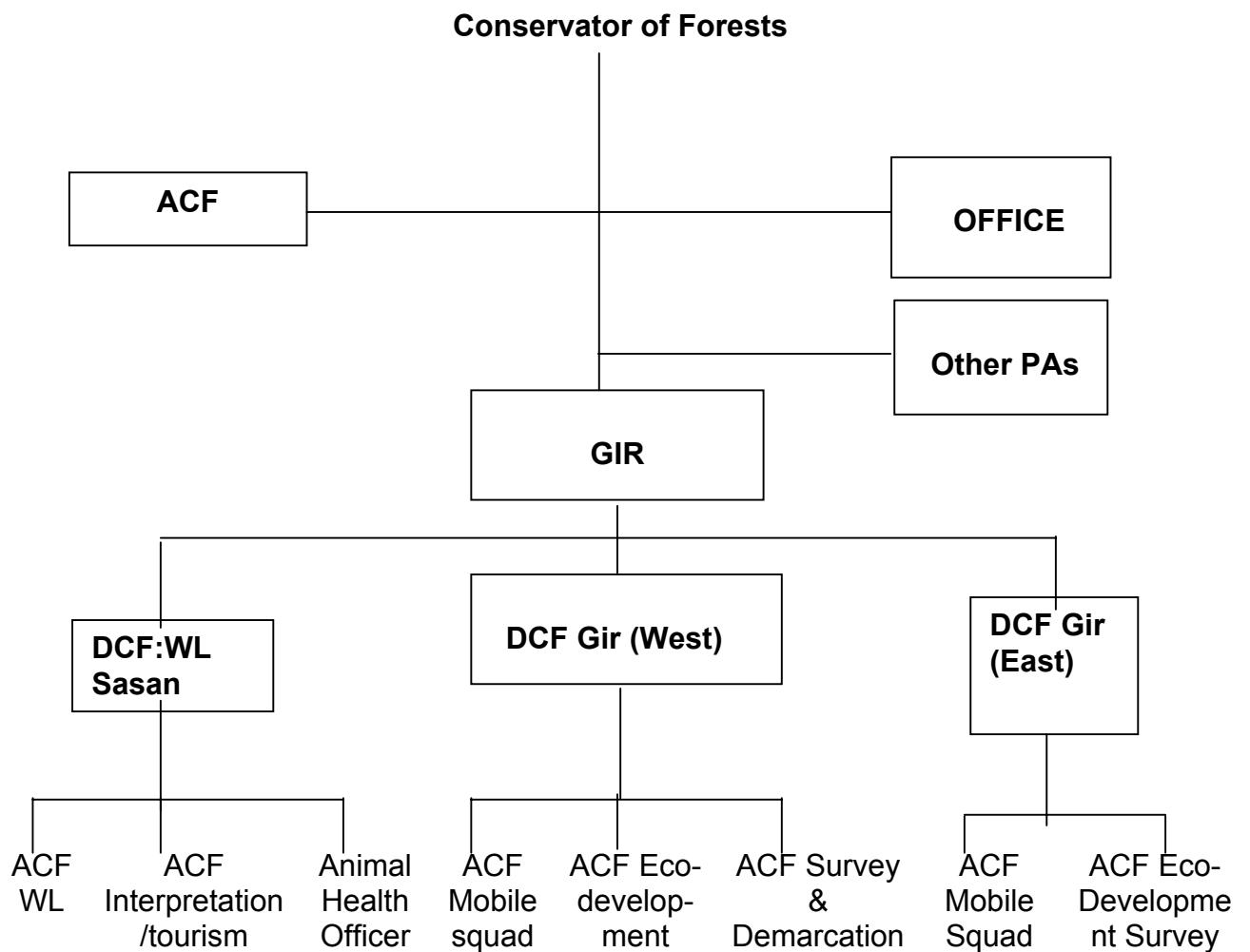
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Chart 1: Organisational Structure of the Existing Management of Gir PA



Source : Singh et al 1996, Vol I, p 188.

Chart 2: Proposed Changes in the Organisational Structure by the Government



Source : As in Chart 1, p 189.

Chart 4 : Participatory Organizational Structure for Gir PA Management

