

Institutional reforms in Joint Forest Management: reflecting on experience of Haryana Shivaliks

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Introduction

Joint or participatory forest management has been a significant development in the context of institutional arrangements pertaining to forest management in India. The inevitability of continued forest depletion, much to the detriment of country's ecological, economic, and environmental stability led to the exploration of managerial alternatives, which could arrest this phenomenon. The effective involvement of village communities in evolving sustainable forest management systems was looked upon as an important approach to address the long-standing problems of deforestation and land degradation in India. As Saxena (1999) notes that India's Joint Forest Management (JFM) program provides a remarkable example of this kind of institutional innovation and represents a major effort over the last few years to make this policy work for both forests and people. There is now a growing body of evidence which suggests that forests can be protected effectively through cooperative action taken by Forest Department (FD) and rural communities (Poffenberger, 1990a, Raju et al., 1993; Dhar, 1994; Bahuguna et al, 1994; TERI, 1998, Rangachari and Mukherji, 2000).

A brief review of the literature on institutional development of JFM from across the country, shows that two key factors viz., the role of state in promoting the institutional reform and the provision of various incentives for the village communities, amongst others have been often crucial in sustaining these initiatives. JFM has been implemented in various states of the country with a variety of government regulations which has been more often than not influenced by the type of forests, the control of the state on these forests and extent and dependence of people on it. Based on it, various usufruct agreements providing increased access to fuel wood or non timber forest produce etc, lease of forest produce, revenue sharing or other instruments have been tried as incentives in various states. In this process, however, little effort has been devoted to understanding the effectiveness of these instruments in achieving long-term objectives of joint management. This has been particularly found to be further complicated in the contexts where the institutional arrangement for joint initiatives has been dependent on external market for resource utilization and vulnerable to policy modifications during scaling up of the program.

This article examines the case of the Joint Forest Management (JFM) program in Haryana, where a significant development pertaining to institutional reforms in the management of *de facto* common property resources such as forests and water harvesting dams have been undertaken in past few decades. Over the years, a closer analysis of the various developments that took place in the JFM program in Haryana brings up several issues in the above mentioned context. Taking the specific case of management of resources such as grass lease from forest areas and water harvesting dams, the proposed paper aims to highlight how institutional reforms have been working in the region and how the dependence on market for resource utilisation and policy modifications during scaling up, have affected them.

This first section of the article provides a general background of institutional evolution of JFM in India. The subsequent section then deals with the evolution of institutional reforms in Haryana. It is followed by discussion of experience of management of grass lease from forest areas and water harvesting dams as well as the impact of policy modifications during the scaling up of the program, after the initial success of the JFM in the state.

Institutional evolution of JFM in India

The genesis of joint forest management is attributed by many to the demonstration of the two successful projects in 80s, namely Sukhomajri and Arabari experiments in Haryana and West Bengal states respectively. As Mittal et al (2000) write that the indigenous approach of 'social

fencing' demonstrated by villagers of Sukhomajiri, established its functional prominence as a model for participatory management of natural resources. Similarly Joshi (1998) suggests of roots of JFM lie in the innovative experiments on joint management in Arabari. The experience of Arabari in West Bengal starting from early 1970s showed that when forest staff collaborated with rural communities, they overcame some of the problems of forest management.

Subsequently, the process of institutionalizing people's participation in forest protection and regeneration occurred. The development of JFM institutions became imperative following the June 1990 resolution, which provided the framework for the design of such institutions across the country. It also stipulated that "*access to forest land and usufructury benefits should be only to the beneficiaries who get organized into a village institution specifically for forest regeneration and protection.*" This resolution, however, did not specify the kind of institution that should be formed but allowed flexibility in those, that even *Panchayats* or village cooperatives, could be one of these institutions.

The wide-ranging socio-economic milieu in existence across the country, along with enormous variations in the type and extent of vegetation meant that the structure of these institutions could not be uniform across the country. While some kind of a unifying framework does exist in these institutions, such as the formation of a committee, the existence of strict rules, regulations and membership norms for these committees; these institutions have taken on a bewildering variety of forms and functions across the nation. There exists great variation in the composition of the management unit in the States, ranging from a village alone (States of Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh) to a hamlet/village/cluster of villages as a management unit (State of Andhra Pradesh) to even the *Panchayats*. Some resolutions specify an entire watershed as a management unit (State of Maharashtra) while others specify the area of management rather than the managing entity itself (e.g. State of Tripura specifies 500 ha for natural regeneration, 300 ha for plantation). While most of the resolutions include degraded forests under their JFM schemes, Madhya Pradesh allows the formation of these committees even in high forests, although the usufruct sharing system varies from committees formed in degraded forests. In Karnataka, in addition to degraded forests, state forests, which are primarily inhabited by tribal, can be included in this scheme irrespective of canopy cover. Membership norms also deviate considerably, along with benefit sharing mechanisms particularly regarding the share in the final timber harvest for which people are eligible. While some States have provisions for the sharing of benefits amongst members, others legislate for the transference of fixed percentages of the final harvest to the committee for forest and/or village development activities. Overall, there exists a widespread variety in the type of institutional arrangement with differences in membership norms, provisions for participation of women, of the landless and marginalized, for *panchayats*, for NGOs, the forest department etc.

What is particularly interesting about the JFM phenomenon is the rapid pace of its establishment as from its early beginning in 1990s, the JFM programme has spread across the country and today over 18 percent of the country's forest land has been brought under JFM. In absolute terms, the area under JFM is now more than 14 million hectares and 62,890 JFM groups are involved (MOEF, 2001). Following the issuance of the 1990 guidelines, various State governments passed resolutions, specifying amongst other things, the modalities of forest protection, benefit-sharing arrangements and membership norms. Because all the States did not pass resolutions for JFM at the same time, the JFM programme is at different stages of evolution across the country.

Notwithstanding the empirical issues, the interest in institutional arrangement for sustainability of 'joint management' has also raised considerable conceptual debate and analysis (Poffenberger & Singh, 1989; Campbell, 1992). These deliberations pertain to an array of issues. As Andersen (1995) explains that it is the institutional framework, which governs the distribution of rights in resources that is important for long-term ecological and social sustainability. Most of the debate centre on what type of institutional arrangement in a given context is most appropriate and aspects of these arrangements include property rights structures as well as organizational structures (Hobley & Shah, 1996).

An important prerequisite to successfully undertake JFM is the element of the community's interest to participate in JFM. As Andersen (1995) observes, "the cohesiveness of a group would be determined by the benefit each individual member perceives to gain from such membership. Few organizations, committees, or cooperatives will evolve in a voluntary manner before it is known what will be gained by joining." Reaching a common understanding often requires attitudinal changes, and to facilitate such changes, new procedures and incentives need to be introduced (Rastogi, 1999). Several studies in the past have underlined the importance of introducing various incentives to moderate challenges involved in the implementation of JFM (Poffenberger 1990a, 1995; Bahuguna et al, 1994; Corbridge and Jewitt 1997; Ghate; 2001). However, as Hobley & Wollenberg (1996) note, that in the context of joint forest management (JFM), there is a tendency to assess progress in terms of institutional change rather than the impacts on villagers' lives. They point out that "chief amongst the questions still to be answered is how great are the real costs and benefits of participation, and how they are distributed amongst the various actors".

As far as the commitment of the state to promote institutional reforms in the forestry management is concerned, a closer examination of joint forest management programs actually adopted by the states in India, shows that the forest department still retains a tight control over the whole process of reform. The foresters try to persuade villagers to participate in protecting and regenerating the forests, but the participation envisaged is more in execution than in planning, the structures more dependent than autonomous. Village committees, which are created for purpose of management usually, have a forest department person as ex-officio secretary. These committees do not have any legal recognition and can be disbanded by forest department. The department can veto village management plans. Similarly, the benefit sharing in these programs can be changed at the discretion of the state. The experience from the field clearly reveals that in many cases this ideology has however not permeated the general forest bureaucracy to an extent significant enough to provide the impetus for the sustaining various the program in the long run.

As Chaterjee (2001) notes that in India, while radical transformations have occurred in reforming public forest management systems over the past decade, political and operational constraints have slowed the devolution of rights over forestland to user communities. Some of the issues, which demand greater attention, are commitment to JFM, need for procedural, tenurial and legal changes, and the importance of training and restructuring programs to build capacity for co-management etc.

The subsequent, taking the case of Joint Forest Management program in Haryana, elaborates on some of these issues.

Joint Forest Management in Haryana

Haryana State is one of the younger and smaller states of India. Geographically, it is situated in the Indo-Gangetic plains of northern India. The entire northern border of Haryana state falls in the Shivalik hills belt, which is 5 to 15 km in width and runs for about 100 km from the south-east to north-west, parallel to the outer Himalayas, at a distance of 10 to 15 km from it. Haryana has about 82% of its area under cultivation. The recorded forest area is only about 3.8% of the total geographic area of the state, whereas the per capita forest area is only 0.013 ha. About 40% of the forests are concentrated in the Shivaliks belt, lying in the Ambala, Panchkula and Yamunanagar districts, which form the northern boundary of the State.

Historical perspective

Since the early 1800s the Shivalik Hill Forests have been used as grazing areas by neighboring village communities. Agriculture being labor intensive people kept large herds of cattle as well as sheep and goats and grazed them in the forest. The open access resource system in the hills led to severe erosion and poor agricultural production. Decreasing agricultural production led to increased pressure in the forest area and thus to decreased productivity. Restrictions on access to the forest were imposed on communities by the State. With the uncertainty of dry-land agriculture

and the reduction of the area under communal farming, the pressure on the forests for grazing areas, fodder grass and timber increased.

The hills of this region, which were once covered by dense forest growth with a variety of flora and fauna, soon after the British occupation of the Punjab in the early 19th century, were subjected to devastation. The destruction of the fragile ecosystem of Shivaliks began as a result of fire, reckless felling to provide timber to Royal Navy, settlement by the people from the plains who bought large herd of cattle to hills for grazing and cleared large areas for agriculture. This led to dense forests being replaced by bare hill slopes with scattered thorny bushes. Serious soil erosion became quite common and the once perennial streams became seasonal torrents (*Chos*) washing tons of sand and boulders down from the hills. The sudden and the violent character of floods was a clear indication of the complete denudation of the catchment areas. Denudation of the Shivaliks was a matter of serious concern even before independence of the country.

Problem and Strategy

The ecological equilibrium of the Shivalik belt, which has a fragile geological structure, was severely affected due to a combination of climatic factors and biotic interference. The loss of tree and ground cover resulted in the exposure of the top soil to forces of wind and water. The degradation had gone beyond such limits that all attempts to re-vegetate the area remained unsuccessful as extreme forces of nature on the barren land took its toll. There were extreme temperatures going up to 47° Celsius in summers, frost in winters while extensive biotic pressures continued to cause high water and soil run-off, resultant flooding of the rivers and streams causing enormous damage to the predominantly agricultural economy of the region.

The seriousness of the problem of soil erosion in the Shivaliks came into sharp focus in mid-1970s when deforestation in the catchment of Lake Sukhna, the source of water to the capital city of Chandigarh, was causing serious siltation of the lake. The rate of erosion in the catchment was estimated to be nearly 700 tons per hectare per year with 70% of the rainfall lost as run-off from the catchment. This was symptomatic of the problems of the majority of the area in the Shivalik.

After considerable analysis, it was found that the villages adjacent to the catchment area of the lake were important factors to be reckoned with in the process of finding a solution. Twenty five percent of the catchment area of the Sukhna Lake was adjoining the Sukhomajri village, and was a single major source of sediment. Various vegetative and engineering measures to restore a vegetal cover on these barren hills to reduce siltation of the lake proved ineffective because of lack of peoples' cooperation in maintaining these measures.

This led to the evolution of participatory approach to forest management by enlisting people's participation in the protection and management of forests jointly with the Haryana Forest Department (HFD). The strategy adopted for obtaining the willing cooperation of the local people was the construction of water harvesting structures to provide irrigation water to rain-fed agriculture, increasing yields by two to three times. This proved very effective in soliciting the participation of the local communities. This strategy captured the attention of the farmers and gave a new direction to the concept of watershed rehabilitation. This experimental program, started by the Chandigarh center of Central Soil and Water Conservation Research and Training Institute (CSWCRTI) and the HFD in Sukhomajri watershed, and successfully replicated at village Nada, was designed to achieve increased productivity and effective resource conservation. The villagers cooperated in protecting the catchment area. Water, stored in the earthen dams, was distributed equally among all households, irrespective of land ownership, helping communities to gain confidence in the participatory management approach.

Institutional Formalization

For sustaining the interest of the villagers, in protection and management of the forest, it was considered essential to share the increased productivity of forest produce between the HFD and village community. For this purpose, the Water Users' Associations were reorganized into Hill Resource Management Societies (HRMS), registered under the Societies Registration Act (1860)

with responsibilities of: (i) protection of forests against grazing and illicit felling (ii) distribution of irrigation water (iii) fixing of rates for water, grass etc. (iv) maintenance of dams and water distribution systems (v) maintenance of accounts and (vi) cooperation and interaction with the staff of the Forest Department.

HRMS is generally constituted by a hamlet, village or a group of villages located within or near forest areas. As per the 1990 guidelines of the government, the household was the basic unit of the society's general body membership. The early order prescribed the eligibility of only one 'representative' per household as a general body member. This rule, however, denied the majority of women and many marginalized men, often those acutely dependent in forests, the right to participate in JFM on their own behalf. It prevented them from gaining an institutional identity and therefore direct access to all the tangible and intangible resources and benefits available through the new 'community' institutions being promoted.

Later, in subsequent modifications of guidelines issued by the state government in 1998, it was prescribed that all adult men and women from all households residing in the above locations and who have usufruct rights in the management areas (MA) as per last forest settlement or have traditionally been collecting/using forest produce from there are entitled to become members of HRMS.

Each HRMS annually elects an executive committee in a general body meeting to carry out its tasks. The executive committee shall have 7 to 9 members who should ideally be the persons who go to collect produce from the forest themselves. At least one third of the total members shall be women.

The JFM program in Haryana, was formally supported by Ford Foundation since 1990, which appointed TERI, a not for profit organization based in Delhi, as a facilitating agency to provide technical and managerial support to the program.

Management of common pool resources

The two most important common property resources managed by the HRMSs under the program are the forest lands adjacent to the villages and water storage reservoirs. In comparison to the private land, village forests comprise an important asset in the Shivalik foothill villages. The villages are heavily dependent on forests for their daily fodder and fuel needs. It is only because of this, that the institutions governing the use of forest land and its productivity have become of vital importance to such village economies. As a result of the institutional reform and *social fencing*, the productivity of forests increased and also the productivity of private agricultural lands due to provision of water from water harvesting structures.

The increased forest productivity has been possible because of three specific institutional changes brought about and accepted by these villages. First, the villagers resolved to opt for stall feeding of cattle throughout the year and to share irrigation water equitably. Secondly, the village society was given the lease of *bhabhar* (*Eulaliopsis binanta*, a commercial grass used for making paper and rope) and fodder grass by the HFD instead to the private contractors. It was a significant departure from their usual practice. Thirdly, norms of fodder harvesting from forest area by individual households were decided and regulated by the HRMS. It was agreed upon that from each household only one member would go to the forest to cut fodder grass. The landless and widow were given a few concessions. Part of the increased grass yield was also attributable to different mode and institutional arrangements in the management of this common property resource.

In addition to forest and soil conservation, water management played a significant role in initiating the process of institution building for managing common property resources. Until the construction of water harvesting reservoirs in these villages, there was no source of irrigation. However, with the success of reservoirs in Sukhomajri, this scheme was extended to 60 other village situated in Shivalik foothills. Initially, the distribution of water was a problematic resulting in conflicts or disproportionate distribution. With the formation of HRMS, the water distribution was streamlined as the societies established a system of water distribution by fixing charges for water on hourly basis with the consensus of general body and giving the responsibility of

distribution to a local person. To ensure equity, in many villages it also gave selling rights to those who could not utilize their share themselves. Creation of water tanks also enabled the villagers to reap benefits from sale of fish also.

Overall, as a result of these reforms, the HRMS could earn income from (i) sale of *bhabhar* and fodder grasses, (ii) from irrigation charges and (iii) from leasing out the reservoir for fish culture. These benefits ensured the interests of people in participating in the JFM program. Various HRMS utilized these funds for development activities of villages which hitherto was either the work of *panchayats* or other development agencies. It is worthwhile to mention, that this model of joint management was contrary to the ones practiced in many other states where the donor aid or loan were used to create village funds. However, over the years a closer analysis of the various developments that took place in the joint forest management program in Haryana have affected the flow of benefits to the village communities and thereby affecting their interest to participate in the program and hence the sustainability of the institutional reforms. These pertain mainly to the management of water harvesting structures and impact of new benefit sharing arrangement on leasing of forest area for *bhabhar* and fodder grasses.

Management of water harvesting structures

The development of societies as participatory institutions was never free from constraints arising out of the specific nature of the activities they undertook. In the early stages of society formation, the distribution of irrigation water itself gave rise to disputes. For instance, equal water rights norms were established among all the members of societies as per society bye-laws. This never came into practice in many villages. A review of the experience of various villages provides few general observations on the mode of participation in the evolution of institutions for the management of water harvesting structures. First, ensuring equity in access and benefits of water to each farmer has been the major challenge. The emerging water distribution system in various villages showed that the water allocations under exclusive community participation could not ensure equal access. In some villages, allocation and utilization of water has been individual demand driven during complete community management. Hence, the large and the powerful landholders used to capture most of the gain. In others, the benefit of water was shackled in the hands of socially and economically dominant local elite.

The second key issue has been the maintenance of these structures and resource mobilization for it. Here, too, the status of collection of water use charge so as to mobilise resource for maintenance of the dams was poor earlier. The responsibility of collecting water use charges was laid on management committee members, mostly the cashier of the committee as a voluntary service. In absence of any material reward for the task, the opportunity cost became too high. In most of the cases users paid the money at the time of major investment when some repair needed to be done. Therefore, the system never ensured the regular supply of money and hence regular maintenance of structures was not possible.

As a result of these problems, a new system for management of distribution by auctioning the water to a local village contractor, who acts as water manager, under mutually agreed terms and conditions by the general body is now commonly used in many HRMS. Under this system HRMS auctions the water in the month of June in the general body meeting to a person residing in the same village. The distribution method is based on rotational water distribution system with the hours of supply to certain ceiling. Water charge and the time ceiling for each water supply cycle are decided unanimously in the meeting prior to auction. With the transferring the responsibility of water allocation to the water manager, HRMS has taken the role of regulator. Norms and sanctions have been formulated to monitor the distribution system. In the present system the water manager takes the distribution responsibility as an entrepreneurship. The concept of profit and loss plays great role in motivating water manager to collect water user charge from all users. The auction amount generates a substantial income and to the committee this fund comes at one time at the beginning of the season. It gives the opportunity to spend the money immediately in case of any eventuality. In

many cases, HRMS spent this amount for extending the distribution network also. Besides this, regular systematic supply of water motivates the community to voluntarily contribute their labour to clean the area near the structures once in a year. This however, has not helped the benefit to landless villagers.

Besides, the issue of distribution management, another experience which has been noteworthy has been the technical design of the water harvesting structures. As Kurian (2000) notes that approximately thirty four percent of dams that were constructed in one of the forest division silted up almost immediately after construction and did not provide irrigation for a single year. This was primarily due to the fact that inadequate attention was paid to technical issues like site selection and rates of sediment delivery. A review by Arya and Samra (2001) of about 53 such structures suggest the main reasons as lack of proper treatment of the catchment area either with vegetative or mechanical measures.

Management of *bhabhar* and fodder grass lease by HRMS

Bhabhar (*Eulaliopsis binata*) is one of the most important non-timber forest produce of Haryana Shivalik. Of the 68,000 hectares of forest land in Haryana's Shivalik belt, approximately 20,000 hectares produce *bhabhar* (Arya and Samra, 2001). It is an important source of fibre grass, which provides long fibre pulp for paper manufacturing and is primary raw material for rope making industry. Moreover, villagers living within or near forest areas collect small quantities of *bhabhar* for making rope for their own cots, for tying thatched roofs and agricultural produce (Poffenberger and Sarin, 1990). Similarly, fodder grasses in the Shivaliks have always occupied an important place in the subsistence economy of the people living in the foothills. Shivaliks have always functioned as crucial seasonal grazing ground for pastoralists like *Gujjars* and *Gaddis*, as well as for settled agriculturists in the plains.

Before institutionalization of HRMSs the *bhabhar* grass was given on long term lease to a paper mill in the region or in some cases was given on lease private contractors who used to charge arbitrarily very high amount from the poor villagers for fodder after the *bhabhar* grass was cut. After formation of HRMS it was thought that the benefits of increased production due to protection by the villagers should go to them to sustain their interest. As a result, it was decided by the HFD that the *bhabhar* grass contract was given to HRMS on the condition that the amount equivalent to the average income of the preceding three years shall be deposited by the society with the HFD. The rationale was that HFD should not loose its revenue what it was getting before and the benefit of increased production should go to the villagers. Initially, the *bhabhar* lease price was payable by HRMS was increased by 7.5% annually; the fodder grass lease was increased only by one percent each year since, 1993. Over this, income tax @15% and sales tax @8.8% was added in the lease price. This was however, ironical as the paper mill, which was obtaining the lease prior to HRMS, enjoyed an exemption from income tax. Initially, for two to three years, most of the HRMS used to sell part of the *bhabhar* locally for rope making and remaining was truck loaded and sold in the market. But, as was the case with water harvesting structures, the societies could not manage themselves the marketing of *bhabhar* and started sub-contracting their *bhabhar* leases to private contractors.

The sub-contracting to private contractors was considered very much illegal initially by the department because it involved profit motive of the societies or some of the executive members who controlled the financial transactions of HRMS. Also, the prime motive of generating wage employment within the village was also not being served. A meeting of HRMS, HFD and the facilitating agency TERI was held to resolve this issue. The societies put their case of lack of managerial expertise to manage the lease of forest area. Also giving the example of water harvesting structures, they argued that since they had no other source of income, they were compelled to sub-contract because of their inability to raise the large amount to pay for the lease, for lump-sum payment to HFD in advance. Some of the HRMS, have also been sub-contracting the lease for want of more money, so that they can recover the lease cost as they have giving the *bhabhar* and fodder free to economically weak people in their villages.

After repeated meetings, HFD was finally convinced that it was not possible for the HRMS not to sub-contract the *bhabhar*/grass lease. So, in 1992-93 a revised terms and conditions were issued which provided the HRMS to manage the lease as per their convenience with emphasis on maintaining the transparency in accounts. It was also agreed that there shall be not increase in lease prices due to lower yields in all the catchment areas as observed by all the HRMS. However, subsequent experience revealed that self-managing *bhabhar* lease by HRMSs was not an easy task and there were a number of problems which were encountered during subsequent years. These problems pertained to interests of different groups in cutting the *bhabhar* grass at different stages of its growth. For instance, there was a conflict between *Jhohuwal jats* (traditional users), who are only marginally dependent on forests to supplement their fodder requirements, and *Moinawali Banjaras* (more recent settlers) who are primarily dependent on grass from the forests to make ropes, their primary livelihood sources. For the former, cutting of the grass/*bhabhar* in period between July-September was mote useful as it was palatable by the livestock they had. Whereas, the cutting the juvenile *bhabhar* during that period not only decreased its productivity but also affected the strength of fibre derived from it for the making paper. There were also problems in keeping records of labour, lack of timely payments by contractors etc.

A critical problem which however, affected the program was that of sole dependence on paper mill based in the area for its utilisation. After the termination of lease of *bhabhar* to the mill and management of harvest and sale by HRMS though contractors, the paper mill was forced to increase the purchase price and also introduce grading in the quality of produce. Facing an increased cost of the raw material, the mill which used to consume about 80% of the *bhabhar* , from 1996-97 changed its raw material to soft wood, which was increasingly becoming available in the area due to promotion of farm forestry in region. This was a major set-back, as many of the HRMS were forced to sell at loss in 1998 and hence after. This caused a decline in the interest of many HRMS in taking lease of forest area and hence their efforts in protection.

In another development, as mentioned earlier the Government of Haryana issues a modified notification in 1998 for JFM, based on their past experience. Amongst other aspects, one which was not favourably agreed by the HRMS was new benefit sharing arrangement. As per the notification, the net profit accrued to HRMS after the sale of *bhabhar* was now to be divided between the government and the HRMS in the ratio of 25:75. Further, the HRMS was to contribute from its share about 30% towards the plough back fund for further improvement of the jointly managed forest area and 10% for a fund called *Kalyan Kosh*, which was to be kept for any training needs of HRMS etc. Going by these calculations, the villagers are now left with 45% of what they used to earn earlier.

As a result of this change and decline in the market of *bhabhar* there has been a major decline in the source of income to HRMS and hence their interest in the joint management. The villagers requested the forest officials to reconsider this modification, which was however, turned by the local officials on the ground that forests were still the property of the governments and in many cases lease was given of the reserved forest areas where rights of the people have been settled. Another justification provided by the forest department has been of that the villagers will be benefited from the share of 30% from the sale of timber if any done by the HFD. However, in case of timber, the gestation period for harvesting wood is too long to attract partnership of people. Hence, the Haryana JFM program, which was once considered as a successful model, and was even awarded by UNEP, is now facing a situation where the gains made during initial phase of programs were frittered away due to arbitrary changes made in the benefit sharing mechanism by the forest department.

Conclusion

From the Haryana case study it is clear that the adoption of rhetoric of joint management does not guarantee the implementation of new participatory form of forest management as the field level. One of the major constraints in terms of implementation of the programs faced by the department is the rigidity of the approach. The implementation of the programs calls for radical

changes in the role of bureaucracy and need to build credible commitment to one another and this is not possible without bureaucrats changing their attitude (Jeffery and Vira, 2001).

Across the country, the experience of JFM has shown that it was initiated with the claim of shift in the attitude of the government from centralized to decentralized management, from revenue orientation to resource orientation and from restricting people to working with people with the objective of halting the forest degradation and to help alleviate poverty (SPWD, 1992). However, many now criticise that it is an effort by the forest departments to garner increased financial outlays and expand its territories and sphere of jurisdiction to more and more areas (Arya and Samra, 2001). As Baumann (1998), says that JFM does not have the scope for genuine participation of the people and is a means of ensuring protection of the forests at very low cost. Saxena (1997) summarizes the progress made with JFM in the country since its inception that the adoption of JFM has not made any major change in the prevailing position of relations between the state and the people nor has it heralded the beginning of a new era of people's power. He further adds "state government look upon JFM as cost effective method of forest protection and economically rewarding activity for the people. The aim is neither to empower people nor to make committees autonomous". While recognising that the policy reform and implementing joint management programs with the dialectic of a complex, transitional and pluralistic setting is an intricate process, the Haryana Shivalik experience demonstrates what Poffenberger (1990b) observed that the implementation of participatory natural resource management "demands a strong political commitment to the devolution of power on the part of the bureaucracy".

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