

Forest Management Behaviour of Village Forest Committee (VFC) Members of Karnataka State

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in three divisions such as Koppa, Karwar, and Kodagu during the year 2014-15 to analyze the forest management behaviour of VFC members. A total of 180 VFC members both male and female were interviewed using a pre-tested schedule. It was found that, 53.0 per cent of VFC members had average level of forest management behaviour, followed by better 28.0 (%) and poor 19.0 (%) level of forest management behaviour. However, there was a significant variation in the overall forest management behaviour status of VFC members in different forest area divisions in Karnataka state.

THERE have been systematic efforts by the Government to involve people in the planning and implementation of the forestry activities under the Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme. Over the past decade or so, “joint” forest management has emerged as the key concept through which afforestation and forest regeneration activities are being implemented in most parts of India. In Karnataka, Joint Forest Planning and Management (JFPM) was launched in 1993 and has been implemented with major financial support from bilateral agencies. During 1997-2002, the Karnataka Forest Department (KFD) took up the implementation of JFPM in the non-Western Ghats region of Karnataka under the Eastern Plains Forestry and Environment Project (EPFEP) with a budget of Rs.598 crores (Baral, 1993). The bulk of this budget was a loan from the Japanese Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) (Anon., 2005). Increased pressure on forest resources of the country over the last few decades has threatened the livelihoods of millions of forest-dwellers and other poor people living in the vicinity of the forests. India’s current forest and tree cover is estimated to be 96.2 million ha, constituting 23.81 per cent of the geographical area of the country (Anon., 2011). Forest resources have been important for the prosperity of any nation and its communities. However, many of the world’s most vexing conservation problems result either directly or indirectly from a growing global population of seven billion, and its enormous pressures on habitats and natural resources, contributing to air and water pollution, land

degradation and soil erosion, deforestation, species extinction, fishery depletion, water resource losses, and eventually climate change. Successful interventions to conserve species and natural resources must change human decisions and behavior, but efforts to alter the ways people think and act are often ineffective, and may result in outcomes that are counterintuitive (Milner and Gulland, 2012).

Forests provide a wide range of ecological, economic and socio cultural benefits for the communities with proper forest management behavior, enhancing their quality of life. However, the dynamics of forest management behavior in a developing country is unique, as the multiple uses of forests are clearly felt in a multi- stakeholder environment. Further, the application and monitoring of criteria and indicators by the communities together with effective institutionalization and capacity-building can provide us tools to review the progress towards our goals of sustainability. Few research studies were conducted to access the forest management behavior of people, focusing on developing, conserving and protecting the forest resources. Hence, the present research is taken up to understand the overall forest management behavior of Village Forest Committee (VFC) members in Karnataka state.

The present study was carried out in the forest area of Karnataka state during the year 2014-15. Two Village Forest Committee (VFC) were randomly

chosen from each of selected division. Thus, Six VFC was randomly selected from Koppa, Karwar and Kodagu divisions. Further, 15 males and 15 female respondents were selected from each VFC by applying the proportionate random sampling technique. Thus, a total 180 VFC members from 6 VFC was selected for the study to measure the forest management behaviour. The collected data were scored and analyzed by appropriate tests such as chi square, correlation coefficient and multiple regressions.

Overall management behaviour of VFC members in Karnataka state : An examination of Table I indicates the management behavior status of VFC members in Koppa, Karwar and Kodagu divisions separately and also the overall forest management behavior in pooled situation.

It was found that 53.0 per cent of VFC members had average level of forest management behaviour, followed by 28.0 per cent better and 19.0 per cent poor management behaviour in pooled situation.

The results also revealed that there was large difference in forest management behaviour status among VFC members. This might be due to the difference in their leadership behaviour, decision making ability, degree of involvement in preparing of micro and macro plans, monitoring the forest by VFC

members and also by internal and external evaluators. The findings of the study are supported by Moir and Block (2001), Bhanu (2006) and Jones (2013).

Comparison between levels of management behaviour among VFC members in Karnataka state : Chi-square test was applied to test the overall management behaviour status of VFC members in different forest area divisions which is depicted in the Table II. The test turned out to be significant at 1 per cent level indicating a significant variation in the overall management behaviour status of VFC members in different forest area division viz., Koppa, Karwar and Kodagu. This could be due to educational level of the family members, size of land holdings, training received, close coordination with forest department staff, VFC president behaviour, management skill of leaders and VFC members and availability of facilities in managing the joint forest area.

The forest management behaviour and Village Forest Committee (VFC) will only have a sustained involvement in forest management if the benefits they derive from it are reasonably large and secure. The size of the benefits should generally be greater than the costs. Nevertheless, the growth of trees can be quite slow and the benefits from managing degraded forests during the first few years tend to be limited. Various measures are needed, therefore, to (a)

TABLE I

Overall Management behaviour status of VFC members in three Divisions and Pooled situation

Management Behaviour status	Koppa (n1=60)		Karwar (n2=60)		Kodagu (n3=60)		Pooled situation	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Poor	13	23	12	20	10	17	35	19
Average	32	53	30	50	32	53	94	53
Better	15	24	18	30	18	30	51	28
Total	60	100	60	100	60	100	180	100

TABLE II

Variation in Management Behaviour Status among VFC members in Different Divisions

Management Behaviour Status	Divisions						X^2
	Koppa (n1=60)		Karwar (n2=60)		Kodagu (n3=60)		
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Poor(< 116 score)	13	23	12	20	10	17	63.43**
Average (116 to 121 score)	32	53	30	50	32	53	
Better (> 121 score)	15	24	18	30	18	30	
Total	60	100	60	100	60	100	

** Significant at 1 per cent level

maximize yields particularly during the early years of managing what was degraded and (b) maximize revenues. A shift to multi-purpose forest management is needed, and this would mean emphasis on timber in the long term, and more emphasis on NTFPs in the short and medium-terms. Livestock keeping is particularly important in semi-arid regions, and this needs to be recognized when forest management plans are being prepared. The perceived security of the benefits from forest management is equally important. Arrangements for sharing benefits between communities and the state need to be made as clear as possible, and communities' rights need to be given legal recognition. Legal recognition will help to strengthen the position of forest management communities' vis-à-vis the state, which is important. The capacity of communities needs to be strengthened in relation to: a) Managing forests sustainably; b) Processing and marketing forest products; and c) Effectively articulating their needs and concerns to the state.

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