

Original Research Article

<https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2019.811.135>

Constraints Faced by the Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) Members in Forest Management and Collection of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)

Akshata Ramannanavar* and Shobha Nagnur

Department of Extension and Communication Management, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad 580 005, Karnataka, India

*Corresponding author

ABSTRACT

Keywords

Joint forest management committee, Constraints, Forest management, Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs)

Article Info

Accepted:

10 October 2019

Available Online:

10 November 2019

Joint Forest Management (JFM) is an approach and programme initiated in the context of the National Forest Policy (1988), wherein the state forest department supports local forest dwellers to protect and manage forests and shares the costs and benefits from the forests with them. The present investigation was carried out in Uttara Kannada district to examine the constraints faced by the JFM members in forest management and collection of NTFPs. The sample size comprised of 232 JFM members who were selected by proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected with structured interview schedule through personal interview and focus group discussion. The findings revealed that major constraints of JFM members in forest management activities were: overlapping of agricultural and JFM activities, non-availability of regular work, non-uniformity in fixing the financial grants for different VFCs (Sukthanidhi) and lack of emphasis on quick economic activities. The constraints as perceived by JFM members in NTFP collection were: lack of marketing facilities, absence of fixed price for NTFPs and lack of processing units. The constraints expressed by the forest department officials in implementing the JFM activities were committee members not attending meeting, desire of forest dwellers for immediate benefits, lack of staff and procedural delays of the department in implementing the programme.

Introduction

Joint Forest Management is one of the largest co-management efforts in natural resource conservation in the world. Apart from providing livelihoods to forest dependent populations, forests provide crucial subsistence needs for housing materials, food, medicine, fuel-wood, small timber and non-

timber forest products. Since the colonial era, forest dwellers and traditional stakeholders including tribal populations have been deprived of forest ownership and usufruct i.e., the legal right given to a person or property to enjoy the use and advantage of another's property (forests) to drive income or benefits without destroying or wastage of its substance. They have been deprived because of

exclusionary, hierarchical 'command and control' management. The JFM members are given access to forest areas under JFPM for collection of non-wood forest produce and a percentage share of final tree harvests under a specific usufruct-sharing mechanism between the two partners i.e., the forest dwellers and the forest department. A memorandum is jointly signed in this regard by the State and the Village Forest Committee (VFC). The VFC takes up activities recorded in a site-specific micro-plan prepared jointly by the forest department and the VFC on a 10-year scheme basis.

Although the programme is supposed to be a win win situation for the JFMC members and the government. There are certain constraints for both the parties. This paper highlights some constraints regarding forest management and collection of NTFPs by JFM members and problems faced by the forest officials in implementation of the programme.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in the Western Ghats region of Uttara Kannada district of Northern Karnataka during the year 2018-19. By using proportionate stratified random sampling technique 70 percent of the Village Forest Committees (VFCs) in each zone were selected. Thus 4 VFCs from Coastal region, 11 VFCs from Upghat region and 7 VFCs from plain region were selected. Further from each of these VFCs 70 per cent of respondents were selected (35 % JFM & 35 % non JFM members). They include 96 respondents from coastal region, 252 respondents from upghat region and 116 respondents from plain region. Thus making a total sample of 464 respondents (232 JFM and 232 Non-JFM members). The primary data were collected from the JFM members only by using pre tested interview schedule through personal interview, informal discussion and focused

group discussion methods. The data collected was tabulated and analyzed using Garret ranking technique.

Garret ranking technique

To analyze the constraints faced by the respondents during forest management and collection of NTFPs, Garret ranking technique was used. As per this method, respondents were asked to assign the rank for all the constraints and outcome of such ranking have been converted into score value with the help of the following formula,

$$\text{Percent Position} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}$$

Where,

R_{ij} = Rank given for the i^{th} factor by the j^{th} respondents

N_j = Number of factors ranked by the j^{th} respondents.

By referring the Garrette's table, the percent position estimated is converted into scores. For each of the factors the scores of every individual are added and then mean values are converted to be the most important. First rank was given for the highest score. Second rank for the next descending order and so on.

Results and Discussion

The Garret ranking applied to the data regarding the constraints faced by the JFM members in forest management activities (Table 1) shows that, overlapping of agricultural and JFM activities was ranked first (I) followed by the non-availability of regular work (II), non uniformity in fixing the financial grants for different VFCs

(Sukthanidhi) (III), lack of emphasis on quick economic activities (IV), village politics (V), forest fire (VI) and busy schedule of forest officials (VII).

The Garret ranking applied to the data regarding constraints in the NTFP collection by JFM members is shown in Table 2. The important constraints in the order were: lack of marketing facilities (I), absence of fixed price for NTFPs (II), lack of processing units (III), ignorance of people about the availability of resources (IV) and outbreak of diseases (V).

Table 3 indicates the constraints faced by the forest department officials in implementing the JFM activities. Constraints expressed by the forest officials were absence of committee members in meeting (I), followed by; desire of forest dwellers for immediate benefits (II), lack of staff, (III), procedural delays of the department in implementing the programme (IV) and limited decision power of lower forest staff (V).

Constraints faced by JFM members in forest management

The JFM is relatively a new beginning in forest department and still a challenging task to succeed. There are various threats in the forest management.

Major constraints faced by the JFM members in forest management (Table 1) is the overlapping of agriculture and JFM activities during the months of June-July when both agriculture and forest department need to be taken up. The monsoon season is the right time taken up these activities, if one can concentrate on agriculture then JFM activities neglected and vice versa. So this was a major constraint. It is difficult for the members to attend forest activities because they will be having pre sowing activities work in their own

fields and for some members who work on wage labours in others field. So it is difficult for them to attend both the activities.

The non-availability of regular work was ranked second (II). The JFM members get work only during plantation activities, harvesting of timber and soil & moisture conservation (SMS) works that are available in the department, otherwise they don't have any work earn wages.

Non uniformity in fixing the financial grants (sukthanidhi) for different VFCs (III) was another constraint faced by JFM members. The sukthanidhi (1,00,000/- per VFC) is given to the VFCs which are established under JICA (Japan International Co-operation Agency) and JBIC (Japan Bank for International Co-operation) assistance, whereas the VFCs which were established under the forest development agency (FDA) are not receiving this fixed grants. Therefore the VFC members who have not received the grants are unhappy because they feel injustice has been done to them. All VFCs members irrespective of old or new committees perform the same work hence they expect fair financial assistance.

Lack of emphasis on quick economic returns was ranked fourth (IV). It is because forest plantation require long gestation period before they start yielding for e.g. Kokam plantations start fruiting after 6 years while timber from teak is ready for harvest only after 15 years. JFM members have to wait for a minimum 5-10 years to get benefits. As majority of the members were from low income group so, their desire for immediate benefits is understandable.

Village politics was ranked fifth (V). The VFC executive committee members are generally politicians, influential families and of affluent status. These members along with officials take major decisions regarding forest

management activities. They do not involve all the JFM members in decision making process. They take decisions suited to their interest and not of the common forest dwellers.

There are some minor problems like destruction of plants due to forest fires. Some members expressed that forest officials do not always attend to the JFM member's complaints. This may be due to their busy schedule or indifferent attitude of government officials.

Constraints faced by JFM members in NTFP collection

Regarding NTFPs (Table 2), lack of marketing facilities was ranked first followed by absence of fixed price for NTFPs (II), lack of processing units (III), ignorance of the younger generation about the availability of particular resources (IV) and outbreak of diseases (V).

Marketing is a major problem for NTFPs collectors. The forest department calls for tenders once in two years and even that is only for major NTFPs like Kokam and Uppage. For the remaining NTFPs like Shikakai, Jamun, Wild Mango, and Amla there are no tenders called nor is there a fixed price. The NTFPs are collected and sold to local village merchants at the price determined by them. Same time the local merchants quote very low price and the NTFP collectors are forced to sell them at that price only, as they do not have any other outlet. The local buyers therefore exploit the NTFP collectors. Lack of processing units for NTFPs, due to perishable nature NTFPs spoil quickly if not processed in time. Either the fruits go waste or they are sold at very less prices in the local market. Another constraint was ignorance of the younger generation about the availability of NTFPs. In

recent days the youth are not only not aware of many NTFPs but also do not know where to look for them, how to harvest, when to harvest. Outbreak of diseases was another constraint. This year (2017-18) many of the NTFPs were not harvested due to the spread of monkey fever. Since the monkey virus disease could spread by using the fruits touched by monkeys, it was not considered safe to harvest and sell/use the fruits.

Constraints faced by the forest department officials

There are certain constraints faced by the forest department officials in managing the JFM and VFCs (Table 3).

Absence of committee members in meeting was the major constraint as expressed by forest officials. Although membership is voluntary and members have joined of their own accord men do not attend the meetings regularly, either due to lack of time work load or sheer negligence. Whereas in case of women they do not attend due to inconvenient time, household activities and family & social restrictions in attending meeting along with men.

Another constraint mentioned by the forest officials was the villager's desire for immediate benefits. The JFM members have to wait for 10-12 years for maturity and harvesting of timber species. After harvesting the timber is sent to the timber depot.

The forest department then invites tenders to sell the produce. This is followed by bidding, billing and cheque distribution. All these official procedures take a minimum of two years. For the poor JFM members this is a long wait of 15-17 years. So by their the JFM members lose interest to take up new plantation.

Table.1 Constraints faced by the JFM members in forest management

n=232

SL. No	Constraints	Total	Percent	Rank
1	Non-availability of regular work	15812	68.15	2
2	Overlapping of agricultural and JFM activities	16184	69.75	1
3	Lack of emphasis on quick economic activities	12464	53.72	4
4	Village politics	8464	36.48	5
5	Forest fire	7156	30.84	6
6	Busy schedule of forest officials	6884	29.67	7
7	Non uniformity in fixing the financial grants for different VFCs (Sukthanidhi)	12612	54.36	3

Table.2 Constraints faced by the JFM members in collection of NTFPs

n=232

SL. No	Constraints	Total	Percent	Rank
1	Absence of fixed price for NTFP	14170	61.07	2
2	Lack of marketing facilities	14650	63.14	1
3	Lack of processing units	12920	55.68	3
4	Ignorance of people about the availability of resources	11398	49.12	4
5	Outbreak of diseases	6318	27.23	5

Table.3 Constraints faced by the forest department officials

n=44

SL. No	Constraints	Total	Percent	Rank
1	Villagers desire for immediate benefits	2715	61.70	2
2	Absence of committee members in meeting	2725	61.93	1
3	Procedural delays of the department in implementing the programme	1491	33.88	4
4	Limited decision power of lower forest staff	1281	29.11	5
5	Lack of staff	2700	61.36	3

They also expressed some organizational problems like lack of staff, rules and regulations to be followed by the department in implementing the programmes and limited decision power of field level forest staff. Since the field level staffs are working at the grass root they understand problems better, but are not in a position to take major decisions. For instance there may be difference of opinion regarding the species of trees or medicinal plants to be planted between forest dwellers and forest department staff. The final authority is the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) and

Conservator of Forests (CF) and who do not actually work at the field level. The field level workers will have to bear the brunt of both local people and higher officials.

The sustainable utilization of forest resources requires a holistic multi-disciplinary approach along with local people's participation. All dwellers in forest ranges must be involved by the forest department in policy making and planning to ensure the most productive and efficient use of forest resources to improve their livelihoods. To make communities more

self-reliant, capacity building of community institutions sensitization of local people will motivate forest dwellers for long-term protection and management of resources. Monetary incentives like provision of funds for village development funds, income generating activities and training for marketing of cottage industry products will ensure lasting commitment. The implementing agencies including state departments and NGOs have to work as facilitators in addition to providing technical inputs. Monitoring and evaluation of programs provides valuable assessments of the extent of fulfillment of community's needs and aspirations. This information on constraints faced by forest dwellers and the forest department officials can help tailor programs and policies to mainstream natural resource management into rural development and people centered programs.

References

Choudhary, B. B. and Srivastava, S. K., 2014,

Constraints faced by stakeholders of joint forest management (JFM) program: a study in Nainital district of Uttarakhand. *Envir. Ecol.*, 32(3): 1066-1069.

Himberg, N., Loice O., Petri P. and Olavi, L., 2009, The benefits and constraints of participation in forest management. The case of Taita Hills, Kenya. *FENNIA*, 187(1): 61–76.

Nathan, I and Boon, T. E., 2012, Constraints and Options in Local Forest Management in Cambodia: Is Decentralization a Solution? *J. Sustain For*, 31: 396–420.

Puneeth, J., Nataraju, M. S. and Lakshminarayan, M. T., 2016, Collection and marketing of non-timber forest products by tribals in Sirsi forest division of North Canara district. *Mysore J. Agric. Sci.*, 50(1): 98-103.

How to cite this article:

Akshata Ramannanavar and Shobha Nagnur. 2019. Constraints Faced by the Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) Members in Forest Management and Collection of Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). *Int.J.Curr.Microbiol.App.Sci*. 8(11): 1147-1152. doi: <https://doi.org/10.20546/ijcmas.2019.811.135>