

Forest Governance and Orissa – plight of forest dwelling community

I Sri Arakhita Sahu, would like to put forth the following testimony before the tribunal. I represent Maa Maninag Jungle Surakshya Parishad (MMJSP), Ranpur a block under Nayagarh district of Orissa state. Out of 231 revenue villages, our Parishad MMJSP, represents 185 vilalges those are involved in protection & management of the forest resources. The age of protection varies from 9-10 years to 45-55 years. These initiatives have come-up as a collective response to the problems of rapid degradation of forests and scarcity of forest produces.



OJM's Protest against JBIC

Presently in Orissa, many villages are involved in active protection and management of forests. A survey carried out in 1990 indicates that around 1200 villages were involved in protecting patches that amounted to approximately 1, 80,000 acres of forestland. The latest available data from Orissa Jungle Mancha (State level federation of forest protection groups) estimates that more than 12000 villages are involved in protection and management of at least 350,000 to 400,000 hectares of forest which is about 7% of the total public forest in the state. (*Need to Look Beyond JFM; Vasundhara 2001*) This indicates the rise in communities' involvement in forest management in Orissa. Some of these community initiatives have been formalised as Joint Forest Management (JFM) groups. While some villages have been protecting forests since as long as 60-70 years, majority of these groups started protecting forests during the late 1970s or early 1980s.

The diverse, innovative and people centered initiatives in forest management exemplified by people of Orissa has been under threat since beginning. At first there was identity crisis where rather than being recognized we were being labeled by the Government and its Forest Department as playing a destructive role in forest degradation. After 1988 notification of Govt. of India, it took five long years and lot of pressure for Govt. of Orissa to declare 1993 JFM resolution. This was the point along with subsequent govt. policies and projects like National Afforestation Programme (NAP), Social forestry etc. which tried to kill the very essence and spirit of community initiatives in the following terms: (Annex 1 & 2)



Women protesting against JBIC

- There was a hue and cry to meet the dead lines by Forest Department hence creating of Van Samrakshyan Samities (VSS) haphazardly, at places without considering actual section of people who are protecting and dependent on forest, at places forcibly or deceitfully converting CFM (Community Forest Management) groups to government recognized JFM (Joint Forest Management) groups as VSS.
- Shouting of democracy, people's participation and decentralization, there was no or little consideration about marginalized

section and women in the process. They were neither the part of the committee nor in the process of decision making, be it about choosing committee members or any decision regarding management, access and control over forest and its resources.

- It became an example of snatching away power and control from people by making Forester the secretary of this committee and making it mandatory to keep all the related records and documents with the forester, which establishes the non-transparent and non-participatory approach adopted in the name of people's participation.
- The committees were mostly formed and programs like Social Forestry and NAP were enforced in the dense forest areas where already communities have been protecting forest for years where as these were mostly meant for regeneration of degraded forest.
- As per the traditional and customary practice where matters of village conflict were being resolved within the village and matters of inter village conflict were being taken up by inter-village committees, now with VSS there is influence and dominance of forest department in community forests.
- Where few villages were combindly protecting a patch of forest, now with VSS formation there is individualistic approach, breaking the unity and rising the conflict but allotting a particular boundary to a particular village and keeping the other villages in the process aloof.
- In the process of decision about village and forest development as well as benefit sharing from the resources, the poor and marginalized always faced discrimination.
- Apart from all these dilemmas promotion of the monoculture plantation of foreign species like Acacia and Eucalyptus was neither in favor of the community needs nor in favor of the health of the forest in terms of eco-regeneration and biodiversity conservation.

With all these flaws in the already implemented government programmes and projects, the threats to the forest and forest people in Orissa are increasing by faulty policies of the government in the form of large scale mining and industrialization leading to privatization of forest and natural resources having its direct impact on health of forest and forest based livelihoods. The Draft 11th Five



Orissa People's protest against JBIC and demand of legal recognition to CFM groups

Fund investment in Forestry Sector in Orissa in last 15 years:

1. NAP: Rs. 6974.65 lakhs

Components of NAP:

Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR)	37928.250
Artificial Regeneration (AR)	7079.345
Pasture Development (PD)	1241.500
Bamboo	2049.500
Mixed	2164.500
Total	50463.100

2. JBIC: Rs. 560 Crores

- Forest Management- 284 Crores
- Capacity Building VSS- 120 Crores
- Infrastructure – 7 crores
- Biodiversity Management and Ecotourism – 12 Crores

3. Compensatory Afforestation

- Deposited with Govt. – Rs. 62.24 Crore
- Utilized till date –Rs. 29.59 Crore

Year plan with its approach to forestry planning and management is based on “Revenue Maximization”. It largely talks about Public- private partnership while ignoring Community efforts to meet the goals of National Forest Policy. Forest resource is no more the focus of forestry development but has more or less become a summation of plantation of alien trees and soil & water conservation works minus community rights and entitlements.

Threat from outside funding and forest privatization: The current forest development initiatives/programmes of the Government i.e. implementation of National Afforestation Programme (NAP) under Forest Development Agencies (FDA) regime, external financial support through different programmes and schemes like the Forest Development Agency, OFDC and Orissa Forestry sector development Projects (funding from JBIC – a wing of Govt. of Japan) are posing threat to community forestry initiatives. Besides, these are also being introduced to counter the non-monetary philosophy behind forest protection and management propagated by the CFM groups. (Annex- 2)

We as a federation along with the state level body of forest federations of Orissa i.e. Orissa Jungle Mancha (OJM) had widely protested Govt.’s intention of coalition with JBIC for funding the forestry sector in 2005-06. This was a spontaneous protest from all corners of Orissa against the process followed for seeking this external aid. Neither the communities, the highest stake holders were consulted before thinking of external funding to forestry sector nor were they taken in to consideration in the process the project was going to be implemented at the ground level. But to our plight, Govt. signed MOU with JBIC. Now that JBIC, a component of Japanese Government is on the floor and huge money is going to be pumped in to the Forestry Sector (details Annex 2), we condemn the whole process and project being non-democratic, non-participatory and herewith appeal the larger civil society to support us in keeping our initiatives, unity and forest intact.

Arakhita Sahu
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Annexures:

1. Testimonies of People about previous funding in forestry sector and impact on community
2. JBIC and Orissa State Forest Development Project Details
3. National Afforestation Programme and Compensatory Afforestation in Orissa
4. News Clips of Protest against JBIC

ANNEXTURE 1: Testimonies of People about previous funding in forestry sector and impact on community

Dubious Role of FD

Kodallapalli, Ranpur was one of those villages, which rebuffed the efforts of the forest department to convert them to JFMC. Several attempts of the forest department in converting the village into JFMC have already failed. The approach of the villagers in the village was best exemplified by a conversation between the *Paria Nayak* and the forest guard when he visited the village last.

Forest Guard: "*Tama gaon ku dui tini thara Kahilini JFMC karibaku kana hela*"? (What happened about your village conversion to JFMC, I already informed your village thrice)

Paria Nayak: "*Tame Maninaga jungala (The bald mountain located adjacent to forest office in Ranapur Block) JFMC kalani*"? (Why you didn't take Maninaga forest under JFMC)

Forest Guard: "*Sethi kana jungala achi je JFMC heba*"? (There is no forest, how it will be JFMC)

Paria Nayak: "*Acha ama jungala pathara dekhagala bele ta tamara dekha darsana na thila. Abe jungala bhala hela pare tamara love hauchi je JFMC gathana karibaku.*" (When our forest was bald and stony that time you are not coming here but now when forest was regenerated so you love the forest to take under JFMC)

JFMC is family business

"*I attended the last JFMC meeting the one held in March 2004. On that day, I put my signature in the resolution register of the JFMC.*" But the resolution book states that he has attended all 7 meetings of the JFMC held so far. As a ward member of the village nobody had informed him about the proposed activities of the JFMC. During plantation works once Sri Jhasaketan Mahanta asked him for his signature in a blank paper showing some official urgency to expedite the on going plantation work, but he denied him to do so assuming something wrong in his intention. According to him, "*What is JFMC? It is a family business of Sri Debananda Mahanta. The Forester is also with him. Others are mere wage holders. Is anybody aware of the financial transaction of the JFMC? What meeting? We have decided one species but they have planted another!*"

Sri Abhimanyu Naik, Age-40, Caste- Gonda(ST), Ward Member, Mahulata.
Member of EC, Mahulata JFMC

Consultation not taken in Consideration

"*Before plantation work, Mishra Babu (the Forester) consulted with us on the selection of species and entry point activities. Keeping the food and livelihood options in view we opted for mango, jack fruit, guava, acacia, gambhari and teak, but he had its own micro planning and planted some other trees. If they had to do their own then what is the need of such micro planning?*"

Sri Dangu Mahakud, Age-55, Caste- Gouda(OBC),
Member of EC, Talabahali JFMC.

Bloodshed and unrest

"*My son was killed only due to the FDA fund which came to our village. Before this fund, there was no such type of incident happened in our village. It is really shameful for our village that village peoples are killing somebody only for money*"

Joginder Behera, father of victim Bhisma
Goplapur Village, Block Badmba, District-Cuttack

ANNEXTURE 2: Data from Website (Dept. of Forest and Environment, Govt. of Orissa)

Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project

The Orissa State government have launched the Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP) with the support from [Japan Bank for International Cooperation \(JBIC\)](#). The Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project is register under Societies Act bearing [registration no 022321/49/2006-07](#).

The major objective of the project is to restore degraded Forests and improve the income level of villagers by promoting sustainable forest management JFM and community/tribal development, with the improving environment and alleviating poverty of overall goal. degraded forests and create forest cover for increasing flow of forest produce in a sustainable manner. Conserving the bio-diversity, improving livelihood of the people



[View OFSDP Profile](#)



Project Areas

The Project is implemented in 14 forest divisions in 10 different administrative districts of Orissa. These areas are in 5 forest circles of the State

ITEM	TARGET
Restoration of Degraded forests (Forest Management under JFM & Non-JFM Mode & Farm Forestry)	196650ha in 11 districts of Orissa
	1. ANR 138000 ha
	2. Block Plantation 39650 ha
	3. Artificial Regeneration 19000ha
Coastal Plantation	2810 ha for 2 districts
Bio-Diversity Management	1 Eco tourism development : 5 sites
	2 Establishment of community reserves/ heritage sites: 5 sites
Community/ Tribal Development including capacity building of VSSs	Entry point Activities
	Income generation Activities
	Livelihood Improvement
	Formation of 2.275 VSSs and 4.550 SHGs
Supporting Activities	Preparatory Works
	Strengthening of Executing Body
	infrastructure Development
	Forest Research
	Publicity and communication
	Monitoring and Evaluation
	Phase-out / phase-in activities

C.M.'s (Navratil)
Statement in O.A.
Dt 14-12-06 afternoon 12:30

JBIC assisted Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project

I am happy to announce that Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) have sanctioned Rs. five hundred sixty crores or thirteen thousand nine hundred thirty seven million Japanese Yen for the Orissa Forestry Sector Development Project to be implemented in the next 7 years.

The Project area has been selected on the basis of poverty index, scheduled tribe population, natural forests with biodiversity and wildlife, as well as need for livelihood improvement of people dependent on forests. The beneficiaries consist mainly of our Adivasi people.

The project aims to promote sustainable forest management and to enhance poverty alleviation in the project area covering twenty two thousand six hundred and fifty square kilometers of forest land as its overall goal.

The project has the following components :

- An amount of Rupees two hundred eighty four crores would be invested for forest management towards increasing forest cover and tree cover in the project area. This will be done mostly through Joint Forest Management (JFM) with the help of Vana Samrakshyan Samities (VSS). The activities will include plantation of casuarinas and mangroves in coastal belts which will act as a barrier against cyclones and tidal surges.



- An amount of Rupees one hundred twenty three crores will be spent for capacity building of V S S and communities protecting forests and helping regeneration of forests.
- An amount of Rupees seventy crores would be invested for supporting activities of infrastructure development including marketing linkages of minor forest produce etc.
- An amount of Rupees twelve crores will be spent for biodiversity management and eco-tourism in five sites such as Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary, Kotgad sanctuary, Lakhari Valley Sanctuary etc.

The project would cover 11 Forest Divisions for forest management, 1 Wildlife Division for biodiversity conservation and 2 Wildlife Divisions for coastal plantations.

We hope the project will be of great help in a sector dealing with Forests, Ecology and Tribal development - which are major concerns of my Government.

Annexure 3: National Afforestation Programme

An amount of Rs. 6974.65 lakhs have been sanctioned by Govt. of India for implementation of NAP through above 40 FDA projects during 10th Five Year Plan Period, out of which a sum of Rs4917.87 lakhs was released for utilization during 2003-04 & 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07 till dec 2006 1565 VSS have been covered under the program and an area of 50463 Ha have been taken up for treatment out of targeted 55022 ha. Work such as renovation of tank and other water harvesting structures, construction of awareness sector, repair of village road etc. have also been taken up as decided by VSS members.

NAP Components

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Compensatory Afforestation:-

A number of development activities in different sectors of economy like Irrigation, Mining, Railways, Roads, etc. are in progress. These development projects involve diversion of forest land for non-forestry purpose. In the state of Orissa since 1980 up to 131-03-2007, 295 Nos. of project proposals under different Sectors have been approved by the Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests under Forest Conservation Act involving diversion of 331.36 sq km of forest land. The Government of India while giving their permission, have stipulated for undertaking compensatory afforestation in lieu of forest areas diverted for non-forestry purpose. For this purpose the various agencies have deposited Rs.62.24 Crores with the State Govt.upto march-2007, Compensatory Afforestation has been done over an area of 31082.4 hect. Including forest and non-forest land, with an expenditure of Rs. 29.59 crores.

Sl. No.	Name of Scheme	Achievement (Physical in Hects & Financial in Rs. Lakhs) upto march-2007	
		Physical	Financial
1	2	3	4
1	RLTAP(KBK)-ACA Assistance		
	(a) Normal RLTAP Afforestation	8500ha	2188.35
	(b) Employment generation through Medicinal Plant cultivation	-MPP-	
	(c) Seedling distribution (in lakhs)	2.35	
	(d) Block plantation at Titilagarh (Heat wave Project)	120	
	(e) Avenue Plantation	30RKM	
	TOTAL RLTAP	8500 ha+ 120ha+ 30 Rkm + 52.51 lakh seedling distribution	2188.35
2	National Aforestation program (NAP) through forest development agencies	11729	1287.83
3	Jagannath Vana Prakalpa	-MPP-	27.85
4	MFFWP/NRFGS/RSVY/DRDA and Others	3612	
5	Vanaspati Van Project	1732	
6	Compensatory Afforestation	4682	
7	Economic Plantation including lalitgiri heritage plantation	3703	300
8	TFC Grant	1200ha	
	Total	35278+30rkm avenue + 2.35Lakh Seedling Distribution	2230 +4765 MT Rice

PLANTATION PROGRAM of Government of Orissa FOR 2007-08

TFC GRANT	27815	3390	2069	33274
National Afforestation Program (NAP)	20143	1753	165	22061
Economic	3000	1200		4200
Plantation in KBK		750		750
Compensatory Plantation	2569	1107		3646
Mangrove Plantation		225		225
CAMPA	40000			
TOTAL	93527	8425	2234	104186