

## IMPACTS OF TIMBER HARVESTING BAN ON JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT IN UPPER SIRAN VALLEY, NWFP

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### ABSTRACT

Ban on commercial harvesting of timber in the uplands of the country was imposed by the Government of Pakistan in October 1992, in response to the catastrophic floods. The primary motive behind the imposition was to restore and improve the forest cover in critical watersheds. As an aftermath of 1992 floods and timber harvesting ban (THB), "participatory forest management" became popular to manage forest resources in a sustainable manner. Thus the government of NWFP started pilot testing of the concept through donor assisted projects in the designated forests of Hazara. The concept of JFM (Joint Forest Management) is based on mutual trust and defines roles and responsibilities for the management of forest resources and at the same time independent decision making with regard to the priorities of the communities.

The present study was designed to monitor the effect of ban on timber harvesting through the JFM activities, compare the state and management of forests with post ban conditions, and study the impact of JFM on socio-economic conditions of local people. The analysis revealed that majority of the local people are supporting the JFM approach as well as THB as imposed by the Government but a fewer number of people are against the THB as they think that they are being deprived of their ancestral rights. Forest department is supporting the system as per the policy requirement but is not in favor of the THB because it is hindering in the scientific management of the existing forests. The study concludes that activities undertaken by the JFMCs under the current scenario of THB are mainly related to creating awareness about the resource among the masses, forest protection and capacity building. So far, local communities are not fully and actively involved in the sustainable management of the designated forest resources.

### INTRODUCTION

The relationship between human behavior and forest change poses a major challenge to the policy makers, development projects, and environmental organizations when endeavor is to improve forest management. That is why past practices of deforestation in the mountainous areas of Pakistan caused rapid decrease in their protective and productive functions.

The traditional forest management prevailing is in the area characterized by hierarchical top down administration, policing attitude of field staff, the exclusion of the vast majority of forest users from participating in the forest management and lack of legal access to the forest products. The local demand for goods and services also went up with high population growth during last about 50 years. Inadequate forest management practices and outdated legal and institutional framework of the whole forestry sector led to a situation where local population, in search of satisfying their needs for fire wood, construction timber, grazing and income, does not care anymore about the property rights and ownership of forests and ruling sets. The prevailing circumstances the appropriate management of forests can be pursued only if the local communities, being

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the main users of forests, are actively involved in the planning and management of natural forests and afforestation.

The importance of forests for the country came into line light through media when the extensive floods of 1992 were imputed to deforestation. As a result, commercial timber extractive ban was enacted in the same year. First attempt, to lift the ban, was made by the government of NWFP in 1998. The provincial administrative department constituted a committee of forest professionals to analyze the question of lifting the ban. The ban was relaxed on a trial basis in 2001 for one year, but was again put in force and still continues.

As an aftermath of 1992 floods, which lead to timber harvesting ban, "Participatory Forest Management" became a popular prescribed strategy to suction the forest resources over longer times. The government of NWFP in response started pilot testing of the concept through donor assisted projects in the designated forests in pilot villages of Hazara. To register the participation of people in the management of forests and to give legal coverage to management of state forest jointly by the FD and the local people, amendments were made in Hazara Forest Act 1936 vide Provincial Assembly Secretariat NWFP notification No. PA/NWFP/Lefis/97/14908, dated 17/07/1997.

JFM is a strategy under which the FD and the village community enter into an agreement to jointly protect and manage forest lands of adjoining villages to share responsibilities and benefits, the village community is generally represented through a committee formed for this purpose. The committee is known by different names but most commonly referred to as "Forest Protection Committee" (FPC) or "Joint Forest Management Community" (JFMC).

Rishi (2002) concludes that awareness and knowledge at cognitive level acts as a constraint in the institutionalization of JFM. Thus, efforts are required at micro level through village workshops to have knowledge and sustained awareness by means of study tours; exposure visits etc to rise achieve the broader objective of institutionalization and sustenance of JFM programme.

Singhar and Sreedharan (2007) are of the view that JFM should not be seen as a panacea for deforestation or for alleviation of rural poverty. In itself JFM sets out the minimum conditions necessary for halting land degradation.

According to Burman (2006), JFM does not have the scope for genuine participation of the local people and is mean of ensuring protection of the forests at a very low cost.

Bhagat (2006) termed JFM a concept which is based on the principle of rights of local communities in forests.

Sial (2005) saw it as a mechanism to manage the forest that is owned by the state but appropriated by local communities.

Ahmed (2000) identified JFM as an approach involving the evaluation of a very complex property rights regime to generate a sustainable interface between the forest department and the local community.

## **MATERIAL AND METHOD**

### **Study Area**

The tract covered by this study is situated between 34°33' 35" and 34°33' 30" north latitude; and between 73°13'38" and 73°22' 40" east longitude. The forests form part of the Devli and Munda Gucha Ranges which were constituted in 1990 for JFM by dividing the defunct Upper Siran Range.

### **Legal Status**

The forests of Siran valley were demarcated in 1872 at the time of the settlement under the rules of 1870. They were then handed over to the forest department. Various revisions of the forest laws have taken place since that time, including the Hazara Forest Act. 1936.

### **Population**

The study area (according to the selected methodology) consisted of 13 hamlets. The total number of households in all of these hamlets was 790 and total population was 6756. Totally, 198 respondents from 13 hamlets were selected randomly and interviewed through structured questionnaire for gathering information.

### **Methodology**

The objective of methodology was to have an unbiased selection of respondents, where every eligible household had an equal probability of selection. In order to achieve this objective mainly two major strata were planned as the target source of the study.

1. Community Respondents
2. Departmental Staff

### **Tools Used For Exploration**

1. Map of the selected villages.
2. Transect work on the mapped villages with the criteria of covering as much bio-physical diversity as possible.
3. Identification of the target respondents, both in the communities and the departmental staff.
4. Questionnaire was developed on the basis of checklist of the various aspects for the issue related to the theme of the research.

5. In order to supplement and verify the information collected through the above sources, few selected respondents among the following categories were also interviewed.

- Non-user community
- Forest staff

#### Records

- The working plan of JFM area for period 1995-96 to 2004-05 was also consulted for information and statistics.
- The forest damage records of the DFO Siran forest division Mansehra were also used for comparative study.

The results thus received have been used for extrapolation using appropriate statistical tools like confidence level and error calculations.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data analyses show that conflicts over J.F.M adoption do exist among and between the beneficiaries and staff of forest department. Majority respondents (79.48% viewed that the locals cooperated with JFMC in this activities. However some of the sampled population observed that the attitude of locals was non cooperative towards JFMC.

Table 1. Status of conflicts within beneficiaries and between JFM partners

Conflicts	Percentage
Does not exist	79.48
Exists	20.52
Total	100

In response to enquiry dealing with the main achievements of JFMCs (Joint Forest Management Committees). The respondents pointed out that they have socially organized the community on a single platform. Forests are now more protected and people extend help in forest management. 48% were of the opinion that the income level of the community has also gone up.

Table 2. Main achievements of JFMC under THB

Main activities	Increased (%)	Not-increased (%)
Forest Management	52	48
Livelihood	48	52

The majority sample populations (77%) were of the view that JFM as a new approach of management is better than the old traditional system practiced in the past.

Table 3. Comparative perception of JFM and old system

System Perception	Good (Percentage)	Not good (Percentage)
Old	23	77
JFM	77	23
Total	100	100

Majority of the respondents (94%) also claimed that there was decrease in the forest damage after the introduction of JFM and THB.

Table 4. Status of forest damage after JFM under THB

Forest Damage	Percentage
Increased	2
No change	4
Decreased	94
Total	100

They pointed out positive change in the areas of forest protection, rights and concession, forest regeneration, and in the forest health, and proper land use

Table 5. Change and improvement in the forest with JFM under THB

Function	Increase (%)	Decrease (%)	Constant (%)
Forest Protection	70	10	20
Regeneration	40	30	30
Rights & Concessions gained	70	20	10
Check on smuggling	70	30	-
Employment generation	60	10	30
Community Support	75	151	10

A very few people were of the view that there is no change has occurred in the management system and benefit associated with the resource. They also revealed drawbacks associated with the system of JFMC, that the in form of less powers to exercise, lack of funds, slow pace of correspondence with forest department, less meetings, non settlement of ownership disputes etc.

Majority (90%) of the forest staff is against THB. They think that it is hindering in scientific management of the forest, revenue generation is less and that it will not sustain in the long run. The forest department is supporting it because of policy matter.

Table 6. Attitude of Forest Department

Particulars	Percentage of Attitude before JFM
Supportive	10
Non-supportive	90
Total	100

The analysis also revealed that many people were caught for violating THB. They were also caught for illicit cutting, fire damage, illegal grazing, etc. But due to JFMC the offenders could not be brought to trial in the absence of witness against them because of relationships with the local committees.

## CONCLUSION

The status of forest damage has been not reduced to the required extent after the introduction of JFM. The community was benefited through timber, fuel, wood, employment, training and skill improvement.

The local populations view it as successful technique of forest management and cooperate with JMFCs. The attitude of forest officials was not viewed as friendly by the respondents after the introduction of JFM system. The field staff and community are working in emotionally isolated environment and local cooperative attitude of the players on both sides is necessary to manage the resources on proper lines. The income status of the people has increased. Majority of the respondents were of the view that there were no conflicts among the forest department staff and local people about the JFM activities; the community has been organized socially after the introduction of JFM. The reasons for failure of JFM enumerated by the parties were: less protection, injustice in distribution of benefits, political influence and favoritism. People are deprived of their rights due to the entrance of 3<sup>rd</sup> party i.e. the contractors. The community was found to be aware about the objectives and goals of JFM and THB but was unable to perform up to the desired level of FD and general public. The opposition to JFM and THB is politically, socially and economically stronger due to their vested interest. They exploit the situation to a greater extent whenever, chance is provided by the committee and FD. In principal, the approach is bottom up but in practical it remains top down. This also contributed to the in-efficiency of the new approach Minimal preparation and the lack of a comprehensive strategy before launching of logging ban have also caused confusion, difficulties in balancing wood production and consumption, and major challenges in achieving forest conservation. A detailed study and research is needed to comprehend the negative and positive impacts of JFM in the target area before reaching to reliable conclusions.

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