Forests in the framework of local politics
Joint forest management in southern Rajasthan

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Forests in the Framework of Local Politics

Joint Forest Management in Southern Rajasthan

Winfried Süß and Klaus Seeland

Study undertaken jointly under the Postgraduate Course on Developing Countries (NADEL) and the Research Project "Indigenous Knowledge on Forests" of the Chair Forest Policy and Forest Economics, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH)

Zurich 1996
PREFACE

Village communities like those in the rural areas of Rajasthan have undergone changes in their environment and cultural patterns of resource use. Within this context of social change the study is an attempt to grasp the actual situation and political impact of joint forestry management as a development strategy that tries to unite experiments in cooperative resource use and afforestation schemes. Moreover, joint efforts through new and socially relevant forms of local organization, a previously unknown political source of legitimization, have been made. In this scenario the forest administration and non-governmental organizations work together with village communities and local leaders in order to protect their forests. The case study of Kun village, for instance, shows that creating a viable resource base for the rural public implies that institutions which have been established for a particular purpose embark on an overall community building process. The dynamics of this approach and its outcome is fairly open, but is has become obvious that communal and state decisions to distribute social wealth are beyond the scope of a mere forest sector policy. Although not all who are involved may perceive the situation in that way, the local circumstances will reveal this wider perspective. In rural India forests have thus become political arenas where social policy is made with a focus on resource use in the light of creating responsibility for a civil society.

The field-work of Mr. Winfried Süss, a German forester in an Indian NGO setting, developed out of well established contacts between the Chair of Forest Policy and Forest Economics and Seva Mandir in the wake of the research project "Indigenous Knowledge on Forests", in which both institutions are involved. This example of a fruitful cooperation in a scientific research network expresses a common interest in management practises. I gratefully acknowledge the enthusiasm as well as the sincere support that Mr. Ajay S. Mehta, Seva Mandir’s chief executive and his staff extended to facilitate this study. From our Chair’s side Dr. Seeland encouraged the research work and was active in doing the backstopping. I hope that mutual learning through common efforts may find the continuity it deserves.

F. Schmithüsen
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was compiled during a nine months field assignment under the programme of the Postgraduate Course on Developing Countries (NADEL) together with the Chair of Forest Politics and Forest Economy at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), Zürich. It developed out of the project "Indigenous Knowledge on Forests" in which the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation (FRG) through German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Chair of Forest Policy and Forest Economics ETH and several Indian partner organizations cooperate in research on the sustainable use and management of tropical forests. At the local level help was extended by the staff of Seva Mandir and partly by the Forest Department staff of the Indian and Rajasthan Forest Service, Udaipur Division.

Seva Mandir is a well established large (more than 400 fulltime employees) non governmental organization (NGO), which has worked in rural development in six blocks of Southern Udaipur District predominantly inhabited by tribal population since 1969. Within Seva Mandir the forest activities are implemented by the Community Assets Development (CAD) unit. Its multidisciplinary team, headed by a former District Forest Officer coordinates and supports the activities of four registered and four non-registered forest protection committees.

As it is impossible to thank all the people who helped to collect information and to get a deeper understanding of the importance of common property natural resource management the list of acknowledgements is inevitably incomplete. Nevertheless I want to express special thanks to:

- The villagers in Hawala Khurd, Malpur, Kojon Ka Guda, Kun, Daya Khera, Khanpa, Junapadar and Har for their hospitality and time they spent answering questions and telling about their lives.

- Shri D.N. Pancholi, my interpreter, who succeeded to act as my ears and voice in a difficult environment.

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Many thanks go to the other institutions, informants and friends who helped in different ways to complete this report.
SUMMARY

From May until December 1994 several Participatory Rural Appraisals were conducted in five regions of Udaipur District of Rajasthan to study the implementation of Joint Forest Management by different agencies. Two self-initiated “Forest Protection Committees” (FPCs), three FPCs of the Aravalli Afforestation Project, two FPCs under the supervision of territorial Forest Rangers and one committee supported by Seva Mandir were selected to examine the impact of Joint Forest Management.

Although the concept itself is promising and supported by all parties involved, the field practice shows substantial deficits. Many of these are due to vague regulations which are leading to uncertainties. Especially the distribution of bamboo and the final harvest is not yet clear to the staff, particularly in the villages. This makes it difficult to pinpoint the differences between the new afforestation concept and former practices. The extension and training of staff and committees is often neglected in favour of the realization of area and plantation targets. Most of the sites are technically successful plantations, but most of the villagers do not know and do not care more than they did for other schemes before. Nevertheless some FPCs have developed a certain identity and start to give a social and cultural meaning to the committees' activities.

None of the cases studied are neither complete failures, nor success stories. Especially the cooperation between the Forest Department and the NGOs would have to be improved, a Herculean task considering the deep mistrust found on both sides. There is a great potential of knowledge and ability that may be used for forest protection and sustainable management. Much could be achieved, if this could be tapped for the sake of the villager's economic situation in a precarious environment.
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1. JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT (JFM) IN RAJASTHAN - GENERAL ASPECTS

Nearly all of India's forests are state forests. Until 1988, the official policy was to use these forests for commercial purposes. Subsequently a new policy was introduced that forests were not to be commercially exploited for industries anymore, but are to be maintained for the purpose of soil conservation and environmental protection for those who are locally dependent on it. The focus has now shifted to ecological aspects and the satisfaction of the basic needs of the people in general and particularly strengthening the links between tribals and forests. This emphasis reflects that no program which aims to regenerate, protect and manage the forest will succeed without the cooperation of the people living in the vicinity of forests and who have traditionally enjoyed rights over forest products.

In June 1990 the Government of India issued guidelines instructing all Indian states to adopt this new concept of forest management, which is popularly known as Joint Forest Management (JFM), in which people are meant to protect forests and help in their regeneration and management in collaboration with the Forest Department (FD). Rights to collect dead wood and non-wood forest produce and a certain amount of timber at the time of final felling would be the people's compensation. The State of Rajasthan issued guidelines for people's participation in protection, regulation and management of degraded forests in 1991. According to these guidelines the revenue village in the vicinity of a particular forest had to form a Forest Protection Committee (FPC) to protect and regenerate the forest over which they have rights. This concept resulted in the formation of more than 170 FPCs in Udaipur District, especially in the southern tribal region. Some committees had already been formed before and are now to be registered as formal FPCs. At present the situation shows an enormous potential for forest protection and for activities of NGOs like Seva Mandir to work with tribal people for the restoration and protection of the environment.

The minimal unit of formation for an FPC is the revenue village, independent from the actual or traditional user group of the forest area to be developed. Each household has maximum one member, mostly a man, in the FPC. The final wood harvest is to be shared in a ratio of 60:40 between the village and the Forest Department, after the deduction of maintenance costs. Half of the village's share, i.e. 30% of the net benefits, have "at least" to be reinvested in plantation activities by the villagers (Pandey 1991:29). Bamboo is per definition not a minor forest produce and not mentioned in the regulations concerning the final harvest. Therefore it is unclear how one of the most important products of the regional forests is shared between the villagers and the FD.

Many Joint Forest Management projects in Rajasthan and particularly in Udaipur District are part of the Aravalli Afforestation Project (AAP). This project is financed by the Japanese Government as a loan to the Government of India. It is planned for five years and has ambitious objectives as far as the area to be covered and the number of committees to be formed are concerned. AAP works
in close cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP), which has itself started some committees and plantations. Both AAP and WFP support and cooperate with the Forest Department. Therefore the villagers consider the activities of both agencies to be the Forest Department’s. In the cases which have been studied the WFP has two functions. Firstly it is supplier of additional food rations as part of the labour wages of the FD (and AAP) and secondly it is a source of financing agency for non-forest-related activities. This is important especially in regions, where the development of forest or panchayat (communal) land is not a priority for the villagers, although the AAP has chosen the area for a project. Here the promises of development activities other than plantations were a precondition for the villagers to engage in a FPC without getting any immediate benefits from it. The budget of the WFP outside its own projects is very limited and there happened to be conflicts in the villages and committees where participants had been attracted by promises that were not fulfilled.

2. METHODOLOGY
The case studies are based on Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRA). After a secondary data review mapping sessions were held in the selected villages and committees. The social and resource maps were triangulated in focus group interviews with key informants. The interviews were semi-structured and additional information was gathered in informal talks and by observation, especially by drawing transsect maps. The aim was to get an overall picture of the village, but the non-members of the forest protection committees could not always be included for several reasons. The most important limitation of this study lies in the difficulties of communication which were inevitable. The communication between the researcher and the villagers went through many filters. All fieldwork had to be done with the help of interpreters. It was impossible to find a suitable person speaking the tribal language and had a sufficient knowledge of English. Particularly in the Kotra region additional interpreters were necessary to translate English into Mewari and again into the tribal language and back. Most of the information collected came from male villagers. Women were either not allowed by their male relatives or willing to talk to a male foreigner, particularly as the men considered the ladies’ views and opinions as unimportant and ignorant. Only in villages where NGOs had been working for a longer time such as in Kun, where women are active in the FPC as well, their opinions were taken into consideration. In all the other cases it were men who spoke on behalf of the village.

It was necessary to collect some basic information in the villages before the monsoon rains. Later the villages would have been inaccessible. So the main fieldwork had to be done from September until December. Eight communities in five regions that were suggested by the FD and Seva Mandir and selected to cover a wide range of ecological and social diversity: Hawala Khurd, Malpur, Kojon Ka Guda, Kun, Daya Khera, Khanpa, Junapadar and Har. The following map shows the location of the FPCs studied.
3. KUN - A VILLAGE IN SOUTHERN RAJASTHAN

The old Mewar settlement Kun is the commercial and cultural centre of Kun panchayat. The panchayat includes 10 revenue villages of about 800 households. The village Kun has 1600 inhabitants living in 320 households. 7.8% of the families belong to Scheduled Castes (SC) and 14% to Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Rawats, which are the only adivasis (tribals) in this region, mainly live in Kunia Phalla, where 36 tribal families are settled. Nine other tribal families live in Kun proper. The village has 533 ha, with 128 ha forest land, 36 ha irrigated land, 71 ha non-irrigated fields, 74 ha charnot (communal pasture land) and 224 ha wasteland. There are 249 landowners in Kun and many families are landless. More than 200 small and marginal farmers are the
backbone of Kun's economy. An influential group of businessmen dominates the social life of the village. About 30 wealthier families of Kun use gas stoves (the main source of energy is fuelwood and cowdung cakes), as they have correctly calculated that L.P.G. (Liquified Petroleum Gas) is cheaper than to buy fuelwood, even if the gas has to be purchased in the black market.

The villagers of Kun are important suppliers of *mawa* (condensed milk) and *ghee* (clarified butter) for the Udaipur markets. Many, even smaller farmers sell these items to the shopkeepers of Kun. The main source of income is agriculture as the soils are of good quality and irrigation facilities are available. With a steady increase of irrigation came a reduction in the number of cattle. The official figures of livestock in Kun are: 462 cows and bulls, 192 buffaloes, 100 sheep and 277 goats. Several informants said that about double the amount of cattle was reared in former times, but as the fodder supply decreased with the decline of the forests and the conversion of pasture land into fields, the number of livestock has diminished as well. Some innovative farmers have improved the quality of their livestock with hybrid cows and buffaloes, but most of the cattle are local breeds. Especially small and marginal farmers concentrate on sheep and goats, selling them or their wool. Sharecropping is widely practiced and the main crops are maize, wheat, barley and pulses. Some farmers who are engaged in milk and *mawa* production also grow fodder in their fields, what most of the smaller farms cannot afford. Another distinction can be made by the use of fertilizer and pesticides, which are used by the better-off farmers, whereas the small farmers find it difficult to substitute the cowdung manure. As cowdung cakes are now widely used as fuel little manure is left for the fields.

There are families in Kun who do not own land or cannot live from their small patches of land and thus work as wage labourers. They work in Udaipur, Chittorgarh or other towns as well as in Kanor or Kun itself. The richer farmers employ them on daily wage basis for grass cutting, harvesting, irrigation etc. Some employment is created by the Aravalli Afforestation Project and its plantations. Due to the regulations to distribute the grass of the plantation areas there is a shortage of labour at the time of grass cutting. This bottleneck increases the payment of the workers who do this work. Kun has a Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary School. Mainly boys attend these schools, and it is very rare that girls stay longer than till the fifth class, if they are sent at all.

### 3.1 Situation of Common Property Resources

Most of the informants described the forests as they had been in the past as "thick jungle, where many animals were living and where it was dangerous to walk alone". Large mamals like deer and wild boar were the first species to disappear, but now "even the small animals like rabbits and birds are much fewer than earlier". Similar to the fauna some tree species vanished nearly completely, only *khakra* (*Butea monosperma*) and *ber* (*zizyphus ssp.*) are left on the commons and in the forests. The tribals remember drought periods and insect pests who killed most of the valuable species. In those days these trees were cut and either charcoal was produced or they
were sold as fuelwood and timber. The non-tribals, however, blamed the Rawats for cutting and selling green wood as well as dead trees. So they claimed that "'they' destroyed 'our' forest"—although the main clients for the fuelwood and timber were non-tribals and wood-merchants from the cities.

The Rawats were always using forest products for their own consumption and to procure cash income. As the infrastructure improved and there was more demand for wood from outsiders, the 'balance' of demand and supply was disturbed. Population increase as well as illegal commercial exploitation are other important reasons, which characterize the situation in Dhariawad block. The villagers claim that the region was and is preferred by smugglers, "as the roads are good, the forest range offices distant and some of the checkpost staff is corrupt". The Rawats themselves sell timber in markets as distant as Chittorgarh, when they find the timber valuable enough to make 40 km walks on foot to sell it. A very important signal for the decrease of their forest resources was the moment when the fuelwood available did no longer suffice the amount the villagers needed for cremation. Rich villagers have to buy it from other regions, poor families have to use inferior substitutes like shrubs or dried thur (Euphorbia spec.) if they cannot get or lend the money to buy fuelwood.

The forest areas have only little tree cover left. Mainly khakra (Butea monosperma) is there, from which leaf-fodder for the buffaloes is collected in winter. The majority of the people in the surrounding villages perceive the forest of Kun block mainly as pasture land, because fodder is at least as important for them as wood. This is the reason why the neighbouring villages were reluctant to build walls around their forest and accepted these only after the promise of re-opening the area after five years was given to them by the Forest Department. The idea that a dense forest should be re-established is strange to them, they rather prefer a pasture which is well stocked with trees.

There are documents in the Forest Department and the panchayat offices about customary rights which are now granted to the villagers. These rights affect the whole Kun block, which comprises 327.5 ha of forest land. Villagers of six specified settlements have the right to graze sheep, goats, camels and cattle in this area. They also have the right to collect fuelwood, grass, leaves, other forest products and small size timber for free with a permit issued by the Forest Department. The paths and roads through the Forest Department land may always be used freely. Agricultural land of 53.9 ha may be used as such according to the revenue records (out of these 53.9 ha, 7.3 ha are inside the 'Rehabilitation of Degraded Forests' (R.D.F.) plantation). Thus the villages have many rights on the forest land which is under the management of the Forest Department. Open access and the right to use most of the products without regulations had led to a situation that the villagers wanted to change.
3.2 Joint Forest Management in Kun

In 1992 a group of influential villagers heard about JFM from Bhindar Range and contacted the
Range Forest Office there. The Forest Department organised a bus tour to some existing JFM-
areas with villagers of the panchayat. Finally it was agreed to start work on 20 ha panchayat land
and 50 ha forest land in Kun. Another 20 ha ‘Panchayat Land Plantation’ (P.L.P.) and 50 ha
‘Rehabilitation of Degraded Forests’ (R.D.F.) were planned in the microplan for 1994. The
microplan, which is the central planning document and reference for all activities is set for the
whole panchayat, whereas the villagers considered only the five villages to be represented at the
constitutional meeting as members of the Forest Protection Committee (FPC). Only one other
village, Kelwa, joined later as a separate unit dealing with its own P.L.P. The microplan is based
on 351 households, which is probably the number of households in the revenue village Kun and
eventually Bera Sota. The rest of the data used for calculations refer to the revenue village Kun
only which makes calculations of fuel and fodder needs of the actual target group difficult. The
microplan was written without a clear consideration who has to be included and who already holds
rights in the respective areas. The species selected were compiled after asking the villagers'
preferences for species and some species were added to the plantations as an adjustment to the
desires felt in 1994. The Range Forest Office selected the number of plants per ha with regard to
the topography and the local ecological situation. It was the only case of the Aravalli Afforestation
Plantations, where the local staff adjusted the number of plants. The survival rate of plants in the
plantations was about 90 % in 1993. This extraordinarily high figure indicates the technical
expertise of the FD staff regarding species, site selection and appropriate plantation techniques.

3.2.1 The Kun Forest Protection Committee

The FPC Kun is a very big committee with 351 members from eight revenue villages. There are
two reasons for the specific constitution of the FPC: The first group of villagers is from one of the
villages bordering the forest and claims interests and rights on this land. It is essential that as
many families as possible are included in the FPC to ensure that nobody of those who are claiming
customary rights are bypassed when management decisions are made. The other group are mere
formal members, because it seemed to be necessary to convince 351 members to participate in
the JFM. At least 17 members of the committee are from revenue villages who are not directly
affected by JFM measures on plantation sites. They could insist on their member status and
demand a share in the distribution of benefits from Panchayat Land Plantations, although they
have no traditional claims on these areas treated. The confusion about panchayat, revenue village
and hamlets led to a registration campaigns during which some persons signed twice or non-
residents were listed, until all the 'necessary' 351 names were registered. The records of families
who are entitled to grass-cutting show a lower number of active members, but were still found to
be misleading, as the practice observed in 1994 showed a concentration of benefits for two
groups. The approximately 150 families actually involved in JFM are a considerable number and
the actual benefits from the JFM sites are a significant contribution to the welfare of these
households. The active beneficiaries comprise the marginal farmers and landless families of Kun and the middle class farmers of Kun and Andiyon-Ka-Guda who need the cheap and conveniently available grass from the commons to feed their milch cattle. Most of them belong to Scheduled Castes, or are tribals from the surrounding villages who do not have much land and sell their surplus grass cut in the plantations later to the cattle owners of Kun and Andiyon-Ka-Guda. These two groups are represented in the executive committee, where three women are members. This is remarkable as most of the FPCs do not have female members. In Kun 30 women are registered who attend the meetings regularly. The vice-president of the FPC is a lady who represents the interests of its poorer members in particular. The FPC as well as the executive committee, however, is dominated by the president, who is the local postmaster, moneylender and politician. He and some other businessmen run the committee independently from the Forest Guard, who is not frequently present and also not too well informed about the FPC rules and regulations. For them the FPC is a political arena to increase their local popularity and influence.

The power and influence of specific groups can be seen in the regulation of grass distribution. Grass is the most important product for the villagers and the only readily available benefit that JFM provides in the short run. The practice of grass distribution shows a big gap between the ideal to have an equal share for all and everyday reality. The area for afforestations was distributed between the villages according to the number of families who had bought shares. A member family of the FPC who wanted to cut grass had to buy a share to cut grass on a specific patch of land. Thus an equal amount of grass should be made available for all members. It happened that especially the families with good relations to the executive committee bought more than one share, so that some of them got more than ten times as much as the others. The villagers and the Forest Department staff accepted these inequalities and grass was abundant this year so that everyone could cut as much as he wanted in the areas of the 1995 plantations which were not allotted to specific beneficiaries. This practice may be more problematic in years of scarcity. The FPC president also thinks about a structural adjustment of the FPC to the situation that some villages have their own P.L.P.s now. His idea of "mini-committees" at the level of revenue villages seems appropriate as the neighbouring village Kelwa, for instance, did not want to form its own FPC, because it was reluctant to undergo the administrative procedures to apply for panchayat land etc. They liked to stay in the Kun FPC. Following the success of the P.L.P.s in Kun and Kelwa some other villages want to develop their charnot and ask the FPC Kun for support (Bera Sota, Sakalda). The idea of mini-committees is that these are responsible for the detail management of their P.L.P., whereas the FPC and its executives are in charge of the areas affecting more than one village.
3.2.2 The role of the Forest Department (FD)
Kun shows positive as well as negative aspects of the FDs work. Apart from the attempt to include all households formally, the FD did not succeed to control the establishment of the FPC. As the executive committee includes strong personalities with vested interests and with the intention to develop the resources of the villages, there is the problem of securing equal access to these resources for all sections of the village community. As the Forest Guard is not present in the village and might not be powerful enough to counterbalance the president of the FPC politically the Range Forest Officer would have to play this role. The FD staff, however, used to complain that there are no incentives for them to fulfill such uncomfortable and unprofitable tasks, as the success of the FPC is counted in terms of plant survival, hectares covered and income of the FPC. These quantitative indicators are very positively rated in Kun so that there seems no need for political action from the Range Forest Office's point of view.

3.3 Future prospects
The FPC Kun has a high potential for development in two extreme ways: In the worst case a small minority uses common resources for their own economic advantage, tolerated by a FD that is still able to show well growing plantations, at least until 1998. Then, as the cattle guards of the FD will no longer be paid by them and the area will be opened again for grazing, the charnot might deteriorate. But with a little more effective control over the decision makers in the FPC, it could continue to play the role it actually does, as it is the best extension site for JFM in the region. Not only Kelwa has joined the FPC and developed 20 ha panchayat land; Bera Sota and Sakalda have also asked the FPC to do plantations on their commons. The idea of mini-committees could distribute the work load on more shoulders. Thus it could also try to solve the problem of different priorities in the development of multi-purpose areas.

4. FINDINGS FROM ALL VILLAGE STUDIES
The general findings of the eight case studies lead to three core questions which are important considering the experience of different committees, villages and regions: 1. How "joint" is JFM? 2. What are the relevant forest factors decisive in it? What role does the management of forests play within the village communities?

4.1 How joint is JFM?
Normally JFM consists of three partners. One is the village, represented by the Forest Protection Committee (FPC), the institution created only for that purpose. The second partner is the Forest Department, which is present in the villages mainly through the forest guard or the cattle guard(s). Visits of high FD officials to a village are only occasional. The third partner is a non-governmental organization (NGO), which is meant to be the mediator between the other two. Until now NGOs were either rarely present in the villages or not taken into consideration by the FD, even when one has already been active in the development of village resources. Not all possible interactions
between the potential partners could be studied. In the case of Kojon ka Guda, where Seva Mandir supports the FPC, the Forest Department was *de facto* not present, as the FD reduced its participation in the administrative processes of registration and land distribution. In other cases the FD did not include other organizations, although in Daya Khera there was the "Sahayog Sanstha", a small but very effective NGO, who was working in wasteland development earlier and Seva Mandir cooperated through some activities and a functioning village committee in Malpur, even before the Aravalli Afforestation Project started its activities there.

4.2 The relation between the Forest Department and the villages

It is the Forest Department that generally decides (especially in the case of the Aravalli Afforestation Project) where to launch a Joint Forest Management project. After surveying the respective areas the villagers are informed that they should form a committee in order to manage the plantations that the FD wants to establish. This was the procedure in all cases except Kun and Kojon ka Guda, where villagers were involved in the initial phase of JFM. In the cases of Malpur, Junapadar, Khanpa and Daya Khera the registration of members as well as the election of the executive members was done in the first meeting. In some villages a number of persons engaged in JFM intended to change the executive committee. But the lower and middle FD staff did not know how to deal with such unusual intentions of the FPCs and did not know the regulations either. Only the District Forest Officer in Udaipur knew about the legal situation for such changes. But it is not only the lower FD staff who does either not know the policy ideas and regulations regarding JFM or hesitates to interfere with vested interests. Similarly villagers often do not seem to know that there is a JFM site for which they are responsible. Some efforts are undertaken by the FD to improve the flow of information to the villagers about the scheme. Events like the bus tour to Bhindar Range and an Aravalli Afforestation Project workshop held in Hawala Khurd had a very good feedback. The instructions by the FD and attempts to raise the awareness of the villagers in the FPC meetings which are documented in the records of the FPCs, however, had no visible effects. The more intensive extension work of the FD is only for executive members or opinion leaders. Most of the staff realizes these shortcomings, especially as they usually face the lack of interest and involvement among the common villagers drastically. But the FD has too much other working priorities, so that they are not in a position to embark on more extension activities.

In none of the registered committees did the villagers take over responsibility and authority independently. Especially the forest protection is eagerly delegated to the cattle guards who are posted and paid by the FD. This does not foster the villager's own responsibility for forest protection, although this aspect is always emphasised in FPC meetings. However, the villagers are reluctant to complain about the uncomfortable and conflictuous protection task as long as the cattle guards care for it. Their only responsibility is to make sure that the cattle guards, who are often not from the village or region, do their job. The most effective cattle guards are those from of the region itself, especially as they know the potential offenders and are under the social pressure
of the village. The cattle guards do neither have the power nor social position to enforce protection without the backing of influential parts of the village population. This could be seen in Kun, where a cattle guard had to tolerate a certain extent of grass cutting to keep social ties with the villagers. Thus it remains essential that the desire to protect their resources is strong among the villagers themselves in order to enforce an effective protection.

Sometimes there is polarisation between the village and the FD when the FD administration is not sensitive enough to take the social situation of the tribal population into consideration. In Khanpa the villagers had to wait for three months to get paid for their plantation work. Thus it was impossible for the forest guard to get further voluntary contributions or engagements from the villagers. He had to face the anger, distrust and frustration of 80 tribal families who urgently needed their wages. Moreover, the occasional involvement of forest contractors is not appreciated by the local tribal population due to their bad experiences in the past.

Another important aspect of the relations between villagers and the FD are the promises made regarding activities, funded by the World Food Programme, which are not related to forests. Even if they might not have been meant to be promises, the villagers took them as such and were disappointed that fund raising to repair *anicuts* (water check dams), biogas plants or other development activities was not done by the FD. Some of the Range Forest Officers used their private connections to other departments to maintain their credibility in the villagers' eyes. The non-forest related activities are often the biggest incentive for villagers to participate in FPC and accept temporary restrictions of their customary or legal rights on forests or forest products.

In Har the villagers are depending on the forests as well as on the employment and avoid any conflict with the Forest Department. In the past the lower FD staff tolerated the raise of illegal "protection fees" that the village authorities asked from the contractors cutting timber or bamboo in the village forest. This created in some villagers an identity to act as caretakers of the forest. Hawala Khurd, however, is less a protection than a management example, as it is the harvest of grass that is the prevailing motive behind the care for Thurmagra, the main common property resource area. Here the FD staff has proved that it can be really diplomatic and patient, correctly analyzing that any hurry would hamper the building of FPCs. So the discussion about the registration of a FPC is going on with some support from the FD, but it is up to the villagers to decide. It is a general observation and therefore remarkable that the staff who was posted in a region for a longer time has a deeper understanding of the communities they are supposed to work with. This is especially important in the predominantly tribal areas like Kotra or Dhariawad, where outsiders need a long time to learn but a little about local social life.
4.3 The NGOs and their approach to the villages

The involvement of NGOs aims at catalyzing the cooperation between partners of different social and local background and tradition. In the past the FD acted predominantly as forest police and an institution to collect revenue from the forests on behalf of the state. As these traditional roles were no longer suitable in a democratic and post-colonial context, the FD sought for a new profile. Apart from the control over the forests and the enforcement of forest laws its assignment was now to cooperate with tribals and non-tribal village communities. The experience and expertise of NGOs regarding communication and cooperation with communities could thus be tapped for a joint management of forests. Some NGOs, however, refuse to cooperate with the FD whom they perceive as their "old opponent". But others see an opportunity for the village communities to regain at least some control over resources which traditionally belonged to them. Seva Mandir and Sahayog Sanstha, for instance, use their contacts with village groups and inform them about the chances and limitations of the JFM scheme. As NGOs have to concentrate on the priorities of the villagers, they often decide to use the limited resources of the community for projects which are more urgent or tangible from the villager's point of view and this would not necessarily always be forest management. The involvement of an NGO does not mean that there is a genuine interest of all villagers to join activities like forest management. So Kojon ka Guda did not approach Seva Mandir to develop their forest land, but it were Sahariya villagers who asked for assistance in soil and water conservation in the watershed area of a small river nearby their fields. After finding that Joint Forest Management was the only way to get permission for the construction of check dams on Forest Department land the proposal was put forward to join the JFM scheme.

JFM regulations do not allow any flow of benefits to NGOs, so that they are in a neutral position of mediation between the interests of the villagers and the FD. In most cases a long cooperation between the villages and a NGO has built mutual confidence, which the NGO does not want to spoil if they would argue for a cooperation with the FD as long as the wider impact of the scheme would be beyond its control. NGOs are able to integrate other village development activities effectively if they themselves have the infrastructure which is required in order to provide synergetic effects for village development. A change had to be made, for instance, regarding the target group of JFM as the forest land belonged to another revenue village than to that of the initial applicants. JFM was started in one village to meet the objectives of a group outside. This is definitely not the intention of JFM, but Seva Mandir undertook great efforts to raise awareness in the "new" village and invested a lot of time and manpower to make JFM a people’s concern beyond village boundaries. This process took a very long time, but the villagers did the physical work as well as the financial management of the whole site.

A very clear and important advantage is the involvement of women in the process, as the female staff of an NGO would contact the village women easier and represent their views and interests clearly in the executive committee. It also improves the situation and status of the women in their
own community when they are asked first about their priorities and rankings concerning resource management. Women tend to be more outspoken, although still all final decisions are made by men.

4.4 The cooperation between the FD and NGOs

NGOs and FD are cooperating occasionally and NGO-assisted FPCs are by and large less bureaucratic in the way they work and were established than FPCs which are initiated by the FD. Among other differences both groups have different perceptions of the definition of "degraded forest land". As Seva Mandir, for instance, applied to establish a FPC in Mohandungri, there was a long discussion to exclude a small patch of land within the proposed area, as it did not meet the official definition of degraded forest land, i.e. did not have a canopy density below 40% per ha. The FD practice of classification, however, is quite flexible in its definition of what is to be regarded as degraded forest land to obtain a similar standard for all applicants ready to participate in JFM. Another problem in the cooperation between NGOs and the FD is the role of the forester as member secretary and representative of the FD in the Joint Forest Management projects assisted by NGOs. There are NGO-led committees and FD-run committees in different villages of Udaipur District, but rarely there are joint efforts between the three parties involved. The poor teamwork is deplorable, but mistrust and prejudices on both sides often hamper a better cooperation. The FD does not see the necessity to include NGOs in the sites projected, although their mediating work is essential in the microplanning process.

4.5 Intra-village dynamics

Even if the contact between the FD, an NGO and the FPC might be good it does not necessarily mean that all social sections of the village would benefit equally from JFM activities. The cases of Malpur and Kun show that a substantial part of the village population has not been integrated in the decision-making process. One reason for this is that not all villagers are equally interested to participate in JFM, nor are they equally dependent on forests and their products. The problem of equal distribution of major and minor forest produce is a very sensitive matter and has to be decided in each case by the whole village community, not only the executive committee, irrespective of its formal or informal status. The role of outsiders like NGO workers or FD representatives in a village context can be seen in avoiding inequalities and to advocate the weaker social sections of the village community having little bargaining capacity. Intra-village relations are to a great extent gender problems, as in most of the cases the women's interests are rarely taken into consideration. Another problem is the increasing power that a FPC-president can get and which might nourish political ambitions at and above the village level. As good as an ambitious politician might be in the beginning to run a viable committee, this may lead to a dominating leadership and factionalism and even communalism may arise after some time, particularly in larger communities.
The FD has proved its expertise in the reafforestation of degraded or barren land. The vast majority of the informants in all villages accepted its decisions made in the management plan regarding tree species selection. There are some problems about the objectives concerning harvesting and the priorities of products, but both sides, the villages and the FD, are generally cooperative and compromise whenever "technical" decisions about the management are to be taken. Yet logging has not started and no property conflicts of major importance have arisen so far. There are examples of non-registered FPCs in Southern Rajasthan which show that it is not necessary to give detailed instructions to villagers how to manage their resources. These examples indicate that the institutions within the village community are sufficient to find solutions for conflicts and to decide effectively without a formal delegation of powers. Unfortunately not all communities have this high degree of self organization so that the need to issue guidelines for the management and the sharing of future benefits might be taken as one of the important reasons for establishing JFM.

4.6 Distribution of forest products and the villagers' perceptions of afforestations
A circular dated 15/3/91 issued by the Rajasthan FD says that the "government expenditure on tree plantation" as well as "other development activities" have to be deducted from "the income from the felled trees as well as from forest development". The net income will be divided in a 60 to 40 ratio for the village and the Government exchequer. In the more detailed regulations about the agreements between NGOs and FD the amount to be deducted is called "maintenance expenditure incurred by the Government". The most important effect of this is that some lower forest staff members including rangers are so doubtful about the prospects of sharing of timber that they do not inform the villagers about this point. Most of the villagers in all study areas consider the plantations still as those of the FD without seeing any difference to former practices. If at all, only a few executive members seem to know that there is a new concept behind them. As long as the basic idea and future implications of the concept are not transparent to the villagers it will be very hard for the FD to convince them to accept the responsibilities which arise from it.

4.7 Sustainability of JFM efforts
Although the prospect of increased grass production is the predominant incentive to involve a major part of the local communities in JFM, there is also the question regarding the sustainability of the scheme. The villagers were given a planning horizon for the plantations of five years. After that time they want to re-open the areas and start grazing their cattle again. This perspective made most of them to agree that the areas, which the majority considers as charnot, are used for plantations. As the protection responsibility often lies with the cattle guards, no feeling of a common protection task has arisen in the newly installed FPCs until now. It is one of the greatest challenges for the FD staff to encourage and support a common responsibility for the plantations among the villagers. Otherwise the regulations of the microplanning might be without any effect, as the villagers will perhaps open the boundary walls, because they understand the microplan that
the grazing will be allowed later. So the FD as well as the NGOs have to develop alternatives or solutions to the question of grazing, otherwise the ambitious and well planned silvicultural measures (including non timber forest produce) are threatened by uncontrolled grazing and other illitigimate activities. Then problems of an open access economy would start again and the Joint Forest Management plantations may in fact become just another FD plantation. The future will show whether the FD and the NGOs will succeed in guiding the communities to a joint management of their forests. That seems easier in the areas which still have some forests and traditions of forest life and communal management left and do not yet fall under the category of "degraded forest land". This, however, will somehow punish those villages which have not exploited their forests in the past. It would be difficult, for instance, that the villagers of Har were to be provided with a legal share of the final wood harvest in the forests which they succeeded to protect against outsiders for generations. Due to their protective forest management the forests never underwent a degradation and therefore they would not be legally entitled to participate in the JFM scheme.

5. CONCLUSION
Entitlements to use resources at the local level are sensitive political issues that have to be reflected in administrational matters of development schemes like joint forest management. Once resources like secondary forests are established after a phase of deforestation and denudation of a landscape, the question of customary claims and legal rights to use and share in these resources arises. To decide upon matters of resource distribution is to demonstrate legitimate political power and enact local professional competence through extension in technical questions of afforestation. To mediate state power locally and care for the participation in afforestation schemes and acceptance of policy measures is an important aspect that shows how NGOs have become a subtle element in a regional social and political fabric. Their potential of structuring rural life in times of social transition is not to be underrated. The Forest Department, being a service with a colonial tradition of resource management and revenue procurement on behalf of the state, is burdened by its image that it has hardly ever succeeded to establish an atmosphere of mutual confidence and credibility between itself and forest-dependent village communities. In a nationwide aggravating dispute over the access and usufructuary rights to resources such as forests, the Forest Department has the chance to revise its image in the rural public and to define a new scope of activities. Out of these a new understanding of social competence and professionalism may arise. Provided it succeeds in this ambitious task, it will surely add to the overall political legitimation of a modern nation state to distribute natural wealth with a mindful and meaningful concept of social justice and equity in the use of resources. Sustainability is perhaps such a concept that has yet to prove its appropriateness and success in rural forestry schemes. In these schemes, problems of sheer survival of the rural poor are often dominating the political discourse on the legitimacy of power and political leadership. How attractive plantation schemes can be for a local population depends on their mode of mental appropriation and sharing of the benefits in the
short and in the long run. Ultimately it is more the attractiveness than the mere consciousness of the villagers that will decide upon success or failure of JFM. This study of a number of JFM examples shows that apart from general phenomena of unequal distribution of power and related bargaining capacities it is the local performance of all political actors involved in the process of negotiating the future resource policy of a village that matters. Likewise it is their readiness to participate in the establishment of resource use patterns which are agreeable to most of the villagers or at least negotiable with them. Where the administration of local resources of national importance fails to check and satisfy divergent interests it runs the risk to be regarded as an alien authority. Where it succeeds to develop a sense of cooperation and responsibility in the interface of the public and the administration it has gained more democratic legitimacy than the power it seems to have lost over the forests.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY
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