

ANNEXURE – 12
(See Proceedings of the Committee : Para 15 (v))

Report of the Centre for Organization Development, Hyderabad on sector institutional study to enhance Kerala Forest Department capacity – World Bank Aided Kerala Forestry Project – 2001 - Extracts

PART -II

History of forest management in Kerala goes back to early decades of the 19th century. Forest cover of 10,336 sq.km representing 26% of the total area in the state, make Kerala one of the greener states in Indian. Kerala also has very high literacy as also high density of population. Kerala also has a tradition of tree cultivation in private homes and farms. The larger extent of urbanization inevitably has implications for management of forests.

Every organization exists in a specific physical, technological, cultural and social environment. No organization is self-sufficient. In order to be successful and growth oriented, organizations have to adapt to their environment on a continuous basis, to ensure a “good-fit” between the organization and its environment. As is generally recognized, the notion of forestry itself is undergoing change due to the changing demands and the challenges posed by the physical, technological, cultural and social environment. Over the last two decades, the changes are taking place at a much faster rate. Under the circumstances, the traditional approach is not very effective in responding to these fundamental and institutional changes. Hence the need for more innovative methods of organization and the management of forests.

The Kerala Forestry Projects has formulated the following three major objectives for forest management.

- i. Protect and manage the natural forests of Kerala for sustainable ecological functions and bio-diversity conservation.
- ii. Maximize productivity of forests, especially plantations, to fulfill the industrial and local demands for forest products.
- iii. Improve the standard of living of rural people, especially dependent tribals and weaker sections of local communities by fulfilling the subsistence and income needs through appropriate institutions and mechanisms.

Essentially, institutional development means development of capability to cope with the current and future challenges with a view to fulfill the given mandate and achieve the vision and goals of the organization.

Forestry Sector in Kerala : An overview

All over India, forest sector has been traditionally identified with:

- a) Forest Departments and the forest research and training institutions (in recent times, forest development corporation also).
- b) Forest using industries like Paper Mills, Saw Mills etc. and,
- c) Lessees / contractors of forest departments.

Recently (since 1990) a new entity has also emerged, viz, the FPCs / EDCs in many states. The general perception of the roles of the traditional “members” is that while the departments have the duty to produce almost all types of forest produce, the latter two are happy to be the converter, consumer or trader thereof. They have had little interest or say in the development or management of forest resources private or public. The mild interest that the individual industries have expressed from time to time in developing the degraded forests into captive plantations has met with opposition from the Forest Conservation Act provisions as well as the body of public opinion in favour of participatory management of such forests.

In Kerala, however, because the Policy acknowledges that government alone cannot protect and manage forests, it commits support to individuals, companies and institutions in the sharing of production of forest produce on the private lands, thereby enlarging the sector beyond its traditional composition.

The Policy is however silent on the design of the new framework and seems to await its introduction in the due course to assign specific roles to each constituents; and sort out inter-sectoral issues (vide the last para of Policy).

Institutional Constraints of KFD

The historical evolution of forest departments in India shares the following features:

- a) A common legislation, some provinces/states having their own with minor differences;
- b) A common recruitment and training system for the operational cadres with minor differences;
- c) a common forest management policy based on extraction of the produce based to sustained yield calculations;
- d) a common absence of integration with district administration, in terms of territorial jurisdiction, hierarchy and sharing of power functions; and,
- e) very low pressure or competition for land in terms of forest land use.

Most forest departments are slow to feel the winds of change, due to slow cycles of forest management and their own distancing from social issues because of the exclusivist nature of their mandate. As a result, not much change has taken place in the organization structure, nor do the departments possess much clout or say in society and in policy making.

Wherever political and economic pressures were low, the above system could afford to work efficiently and exclusively for forest as well as the forest departments. The first changes in the latter involving people outside the forests could be attributed to the introduction of social forestry projects in the late 70s. Forest departments for the first time opened up to the public and to other departments and agencies, both at the district and at the state level.

Review of Sector Policy and Legislation

A. Policy

I. Background

According to the Forest Survey of India, 1997, the forest cover in Kerala amounts to 10,330 sq.km. with an “effective” forest area of 9,400 sq.km. Records of the Forest Department give the total as 11,220 sq.km, of which 9371 sq.km. are Reserved Forests and 1888 sq.km, the Vested Forests. While the per capita forest area is much less than the country’s average, Kerala has to cope with fewer people living off the forests physically than in most other states, and the degree of their dependence also does not appear to be as much as in other states. The latter factor has important implications for the applicability of the participatory forest management and model in vogue in most part of the country.

With the highest literacy-level in the country and the lowest percentage of those below the poverty line (17%), Kerala's per capita income of Rs.5000 is comparable to the developed countries in terms of the human-development and quality-of-life indices.

The intensity of bio-diversity in Kerala forests is also notable whose values are comparable to those for the forests of South America and South East Asia.

Productivity of Kerala forests is estimated at 7.54 cubic meters per hectare and the growing stock 98.5 million cubic meters. Although this is more than twice the stock in the homesteads and the private woodlots, only about 10% of the wood consumed in Kerala in 1994, came from these forests, 90% being the privately grown or imported wood.

As more than 60% of the growing stock is "locked up" in the evergreen and semi-evergreen forests, the pressure of demand on the remaining forests is bound to cause their degradation especially when plantations that occupy 16% of the forest area contribute only 3-4% to the growing stock.

More than 80% of Kerala forest has a crown cover of 40%, compared with the country's average of 55% of forest with such crown cover. Nearly 2/3 of the forest area falls in 4 of the 14 districts in the State, an aspect which should be relevant to the proposed reform and reorganization of KFD. Again, 3 of these 4 districts, Idukki, Thiruvananthapuram and Wayanad, account for two-thirds the forest-based tribal population of 74,000, the highest being in the Munnar, Kottayam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kothamangalam and Wayanad (South) divisions and in the Wildlife Sanctuary in Wayanad. Of the total of 671 settlement there, only 14 have some Scheduled Castes population. The total area of settlement is recorded as 17,700 hectares. Concentration (80%) settlement is in 12 forest divisions, Konni, Wayanad (North) and Kozhikode divisions have the least number while Thiruvananthapuram alone has 178 settlements representing 25% of the total number.

The long and illustrious history of conservancy and scientific management has apparently helped ease the battle for the saving of the Kerala Forests somewhat as only 20% of them have a lower density than 40%. There is however a steep decline in the mangrove forests from about 50,000 mangroves to only 1,700 and the contraction of areas covered by the Shola Forests and by reeds and canebrakes. There is also a decline in the stocking of teak plantations and their final yields. Changes in bio-diversity values and the range and volume of non-timber forest products may not have been recorded by KFD, but, in any case, they are likely to be subjective and negative.

Kerala Forest Department has 1.55 lakh hectares of plantations, the oldest being teak. In fact, teak remained almost the only species planted in KFD until 1950, by which time nearly 22,000 hectares were planted. Up until 1989, teak plantations expanded by another 55,000 ha, most dramatically in the 60's and 70's when on an average 2000 hectares were planted per year through the conversion of natural forests. During the same period 75,000 hectares of Eucalyptus and other species was also added at an average rate of 4,500 ha per annum again by converting natural forests and grasslands. The total of 1.55 lakh hectares of plantations are thus made up of almost equal areas of teak and other species (mainly Eucalyptus). This is just 15% of the forests of Kerala and yet yield 90% of KFD revenue annually.

From the foregoing review, it is apparent that KFD is quite comprehensively empowered by law to discharge its duties of forest protection. It has ample powers of search, seizure, arrest, investigation and prosecution besides the discretionary power of compounding of offences. Such wide ranging powers of KFD are not confined to reserve or protected forests alone; they extend to all "forests", even privately owned and, in some cases, to the non-forest land also which may even be agricultural land, if say a teak tree stands there and the owner wants to cut it down.

The potential of the pro-active and people provisions of chapters III and IV of Kerala Forest Act also needs to be exploited in favour of the new policy in respect of PFM programmes.

The multiplicity of objectives in the above scheme of legislation is the whole canvas of ecological, environmental and the bio-diversity issues, including even the social and equity aspects (as in the Vesting and Assignment Act).

In this context and to give effect to the Policy in so far as it promotes private forestry, the provisions of KFPT Rules requiring private growers of teakwood to obtain passes/permits for its cutting and transport may be relaxed; on a selective geographical basis such that only those talugs are covered which contain forests or, at the most, the adjoining talugs also.

Even more conducive to the new Policy will be the deletion or amendment of the provisions of Section 4 of the Kerala Preservation of Trees Act, where by a clear signal will go out that government trusts the wisdom of the people in matters of ecology and environment and that they can grow what they plan to cut and sell in the selected talugs.

A working group of KFD in the Workshop on the first module in September 1999, offered the following vision statement:

“A modernized department professionally managing the forests and wildlife for conservation and sustainable development”.

However, since KFD would like the consultants to recommend the vision statement, we propose the following:

Become a model organization for conservation of bio-diversity values, productivity of all responses and partnership with stakeholders.

It may be noted that the following three goals have received the highest priority:

1. Protection of wildlife.
2. Protection of forests
3. Afforestation

This response is consistent with the stated policy. However, in respect of the goal of conserving bio-diversity, almost 30% of KFD officers state that it is either not emphasized at all or is emphasized to a small extent. Cadre-wise analysis of responses brings out that the IFS officers have a marginally greater emphasis on conserving bio-diversity compared to the SFS and the Range Officers. In fact, it is interesting that the mean weighted score for another goal i.e, “generating revenue” is the same as for conserving bio-diversity. This equal emphasis can be a source of potential conflict in planning and resource allocation.

While the goals of soil conservation, water-shed management and generating employment are all emphasized to some extent, supplying industrial raw materials has been given higher priority than supplying firewood/timber. Moreover, only 25% of the officers think that the goal of welfare of tribals is emphasized to a great extent or to a very great extent, while almost 40% perceive that it is not emphasized at all or to a small extent only.

Finally it is important to achieve a match between the role profile of the organization and the competence profile of its employees. Otherwise, there will be natural preference for pre-occupation with the “administrator” role and officers will tend to adopt a generalist orientation to technical roles. One of the important implications of increasing paper work in the offices and the attendance of officers at frequent meetings is that field inspections have received less attention and the practice of camping in the forest areas has practically ceased depriving KFD of one of the best means of keeping tabs on the forest, its people and own staff, their problems etc.

1. KFD has evolved a functional structure without functional specialization, presumably because most employees are regarded as multi functional

generalists. Preoccupation with administration in the role profile of senior officers and short tenures with frequent transfers confirm this perception.

2. As an organization, KFD has multiple goals and roles, such as policy formulation, regulation, protection, production, sales, research, extension etc. Some of these are enterprise functions, i.e, production of timber, transportation and its sales which can also be performed by other organizations including private ones, while the statutory regulation/control functions are the monopoly of KFD. The organization structure has evolved in such a way that multiple roles are to be performed by the same field units, under an elaborate system of checks and controls. The structure tends to dilute accountability.
3. While almost all departments of government have evolved their organization structure around the district as unit and basis, the forest organization has evolved in a different way such that boundaries of forest administration are generally different for those of districts, taluks, blocks or mandals. This would have implications for coordination with various department at district level. Moreover, this territorial lack of identity with the district has also served to distance forestry from the main stream district administration.
4. The existing structure also seems to discourage team work and mutual cooperation in inter-functional relations. Since each wing operates independently and the point of integration is located only at the top-most level of the department (if not at the government level), much energy has to be spent on influencing the decision making level, both directly and through external mediating forces like the politicians, employee unions etc. Thus, the organization is subjected to strong external pressures. Hence the need for creating points of integration at circle level in the field and at the PCCF level in HQ.
5. The KFD structure is also top heavy with two PCCFs, 11 CCFs and a number of other senior officers in the head office. This leads to centralization and delay in decision making, dilution of role clarity and accountability. There is continuous pressure to create more senior positions for meeting career aspirations of certain cadres, which are in reality cadre management imperatives rather than forest management.

6. In spite of centralization, the complexity factor prevents the development of an organizational memory and transfer of best practices from one part of the department to other parts. This gets further complicated by the absence of a transparent transfer policy resulting in short tenures in key positions. As a consequence, in spite of high degree of formalization, individuals rather than policies impact the decision making process causing inconsistent and unpredictable behaviour.
7. KFD organization also lacks an integrated focus on management and development of employees who are the most important resource for achieving any organization's goals. While recruitment is done by the Public Service Commission, placements and transfers are made by seniors in the hierarchy, training is the responsibility of training schools. Hence, the need for an integrated focus on management of human resources.
8. Absence of a computerized information system also adversely affects the working of KFD because relevant information located in disaggregated files cannot be retrieved easily. Hence, the difficulty in obtaining a clear data based picture on any important aspect of policy and administration.
9. KFD as an organization spends considerable energy in reacting to operational problems. Since routine always takes precedence over what is important, proactive approach to strategic planning and policy formulation tends to be neglected. A telling example of this problem is that most divisions in KFD functions without their working plans being prepared.
10. Although KFD is supposed to be a technical organization, research related activities are neglected and hardly any innovative inputs seem to be available for the field operations.
11. Finally the culture of KFD has important effect on its working. Most systems and practices have been designed with control and command approach and indicate mutual distrust. Further, the tendency to pursue the interests of self and one's cadre more than the organization's is sure to lead to a dysfunctional behaviour pattern, as is indeed seen for the incidence of enquiries and punishments in KFD and the feeling of harassment experienced by the junior employees. In this connection, it may be noted that 55% of officers agree that openness in communication is lacking and 58% of them also feel that leadership at key levels is not effective.

Ideal Organization

Of a possible scenario, KFD in 2025 will have to acquire an entirely new look with some of the following features.

1. KFD will be a lean organization with perhaps a thousand employees, who will be trained in multiple skills. Many of the services will be outsourced. Most of the employees will have contract appointments, which may be renewed based on performance review and the merging needs of the organization.
2. Protection of forests and wildlife will not be the sole concern of KFD because the local people will also be eager to protect them. KFD's role will be more in terms of developing strategies and master plans. The core functions of KFD will be establishment of forest policies, guidelines and regulation for preservation of biodiversity and the conservation of natural forests. KFD will also withdraw from enterprise functions and plantation management.
3. Participation of people in planning and management processes will be a common practice and the KFD employees will act essentially as facilitators, trainers and counselors. It is noteworthy that 38% of KFD officers in the present study were keen to bring about policy changes that facilitate participation and sharing their mandate with people.
4. There will be a smaller number of forest guards who will move around in their 'beats' with greater mobility and communication support. They might be equipped with hand held communication equipment connected to the base camp or even with mobile satellite phones and night vision equipment.
5. Airborne surveillance of sensitive forest areas that are remote or inaccessible will be mounted as a bought-out activity, procured from the private sector or the military / civil aviation.
6. Range will be the basic unit for planning and management. Forest stations and sections will cease to exist. The range office will be equipped with computers and communication facilities. There will be comfortable quarters, like the officers messes in the army cantonments, which will provide facilities for the rest and recreation of the field staff.

7. The pyramidal hierarchy will be less steep and there will be only one level of coordination between the range office and the head office. The field organization will be empowered to take all operational decisions.
8. The head office of KFD will be a compact and efficient office. The small number of officers each with a high level of expertise, will be based there to monitor respective operations on the basis of online information and provide strategic decisions and resources on time to the field offices.
9. The employees of KFD will function in an 'open' system. Very few of them will aspire to have a lifetime career with KFD, since due to enhanced market value of their expertise there will be demand for their services elsewhere, in India and abroad.

Guiding Principles

The journey from the current situation to the ideal future will not be easy because the transition calls for reversal of several past trends. Nonetheless, the vision of future offers a direction towards which small steps can be taken even now. For this purpose, it is useful to reach agreement on a few guiding principles:

1. Structure of KFD must arise from strategy and not from schemes. Adhoc scheme-to-scheme basis changes in structure should be outlawed unless it is understood that, on completion of a scheme, the structure that was made for it shall be abolished.
2. Unity of command both in the HQ and field units and the concomitant integration of various activities both at the unit and the HQ level is essential.
3. Decentralization of decision making authority to the field level units will reduce work load in the department.
4. Employees are the most valuable resources of KFD. Their empowerment and investment in their development must be built into the organization's policies and processes.
5. KFD should initiate institutional mechanisms for promoting cooperation with other departments / agencies and NGOs for ensuring conservation of forest and biodiversity.
6. It is important to provide timely and adequate infrastructure facilities to improve productivity and effectiveness of employees.

7. The organization structure should shift focus from present to future by emphasizing and according respectability to activities like planning, research and training.
8. It is also important to recognize that career aspirations of all employees, especially the senior officers, cannot be met by KFD without compromising on its functional purity. Change in structure to provide promotion opportunities should therefore be discouraged strongly.

Recommended Changes

It is necessary to take a few steps now in order to manage the transition of KFD from its existing situation to the desired one of the future. Using the bottom-up approach to organizational transformation, some basic suggestions and recommendations are made here for the purpose. The proposals are based on:

- a) rationalization of the size of field units
- b) integration of all functions at the circle conservator level and
- c) redesigning the HQ as an apex strategic unit to interface with the external environment of KFD.

As mentioned earlier, over dependence on manpower, without technological resources is unlikely to yield expected results in protection and conservation.

The services of one Asst. Conservator of Forests should also be made available to assist the DFO in specified functions, wherever the divisions are headed by a DCF.

We should strongly recommend that the concept of an integrated circle should be implemented for any meaningful enhancement of capacity of KFD. If, however, for reasons of expediency such change has to be deferred, then the following changes can be considered as an interim measure.

Head Office

If authority and accountability for performance are decentralized to the field organization as proposed above, the head office will have a clear focus and mandate on the following roles.

1. formulating future strategies
2. long term planning and updating forest inventories
3. resource mobilization and coordination with concerned departments

4. managing external environment and
5. monitoring and evaluating performance of the programmes / department

Part III

Delegation of Powers

Delegation reduces workload at senior levels. Increased delegation of powers to the operating levels helps in reducing delay in the decision making process and also motivates the employees by means of empowerment. This should improve performance and also enhance role clarity and accountability.

Research has highlighted that perceptions about possession of powers are more important than formal office orders and rules. It is also observed that, generally there is a sense of powerlessness at the top management level as well as the first level of supervision.

Further exploration of the responses suggests that while a majority of IFS officers do not have powers commensurate with their responsibilities, three fourths of the promoted Range officers indicate that they have adequate powers for role performance expected of them.

Thus an analysis of these responses indicates that senior officers in KFD, especially at the Conservator and above levels, feel the need for enhanced delegation of powers for more effective role performance.

In the working plan unit itself, software and hardware will have to be provided to run the programmes required to compile, generate and access information from the field as and when required by the strategic planning unit. In the proposed set up, where the Working Plan Officers will be attached to the Conservators in each circle, working plan preparations as well as monitoring and evaluation of various plans and schemes on the ground, will serve to integrate the plan making process with the execution on the ground on one hand and with the strategic unit at the Head Office on the other hand. Part of Working Plan Officer's responsibility will be to try and integrate planning of forestry in the KFD forest areas with the forestry outside whether on private lands or Government lands. In fact, this arrangement will strengthen the links between the District level planning and forest planning also.

It is expected that the proposed use of VSS as an institution for forestry works will become a viable alternative to the convener system.

While it seems to have served the objective of strengthening the presence of the protective force, it has also demonstrated the basic difference that while it is the

victims of crime who approach the police station for help, the victims of forest offences are trees and wild animals that have no use for the forest stations.

One of the fundamental changes introduced in the Forest Policy both at the national and the state levels is to secure protection through partnerships with local people. To work through this strategy, it would be necessary to reconsider whether KFD has to revert to the system of beats and sections not only to restore ownership and respect of the foresters, but also to instill confidence and goodwill between them and the local people constituted now as samrakshana committees.

The duties of section officers enjoined by the code can obviously be discharged equally well by forester or a deputy ranger.

At the level of the range officer and the DFO, the failure to complete the time bound decision making, to prosecute, compound or withdraw the cases also needs to be corrected.

1. Monitoring and review of the status of protection, right down to the boundary conditions should be made as an important duty of the DFOs. In addition, the regional CCFs should also be made responsible for inspecting each forest in their jurisdiction at least once in a year.
2. Intelligence collection should be made an important part of the duty of the forest stations. If necessary, purchasing of such information in respect of ganja cultivation and other major offences should also be allowed.
3. Infrastructure, such as housing, telephone lines, and transport should be provided at each and every station and range. Many range offices are yet to have telephone connections in the absence of which the entire scheme of communication and intelligence gathering will be a non-starter. In addition to the wireless network, therefore, all territorial range offices and forest stations must be equipped with both telephone and wireless systems.
4. Offences should be classified as major, minor and petty, depending on the type of produce involved, its value and volume and whether it has commercial purpose or is self consumption.
5. The ambiguity with regard to the powers of the DFOs to withdraw the undetected cases should be removed.
6. The Conservators may be given discretion to approve proposals for engaging selected advocates from a panel of private advocates maintained by the division.

7. Annual assessment of range officers and the officers in charge of the forest stations should incorporate a critical evaluation of their achievements and failures in respect of protection.
8. Survey maps and boundary notifications of each forest block are essential documents for effective protection and also prosecution of offences, including encroachment. Very few range offices are presently equipped with these documents. A special drive may be launched to procure / produce these maps and notifications for supply to the range offices.
9. Periodically, the Conservators may launch offence clearance drives, so as to instill a sense of urgency on the part of the DFOs and Range Officers to clear the long pending cases for what they are worth.
10. Periodic review of protection issues should be done at the level of PCCF.
11. To keep up the morale of KFD employees, legal protection should be available to them for acts done in good faith. Lawyers services should also be available to them free to defend themselves in private complaints.