

# **Eco-development and Tribal Welfare**

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# **State Forest Development Agency, Kerala**

### **Introduction:**

The Eco Development and Tribal Welfare wing is primarily looking after the Participatory Forest Management (PFM) programmes and Tribal Welfare in Forestry Sector. The wing is headed by the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests who is also the Member Secretary of the State Forest Development Agency, Kerala. Kerala Forest Department is implementing the National Afforestation Programme, Green India Mission Scheme, Eco Tourism, schemes funded by National Bamboo Mission, National Medicinal Plants Board and SC/ST Development Department through the Eco-development and Tribal Welfare Wing in addition to the monitoring of implementation of Tribal Rights Act and Insurance scheme for SC/ST living inside forests.

The wing issues necessary guidelines and provide guidance for effective implementation, review, monitoring and evaluation of various PFM activities to the Field Officers.

*The National Forest Policy, 1988 envisages people's involvement in the development, protection and management of forests. Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests, in their letter dated 01-06-1990 had issued guidelines for involving village communities and voluntary agencies in regeneration of degraded forest lands. The guidelines suggested by the Government of India envisage the formulation of a Participatory Forest Management Scheme including the preparation of microplans and managing the same as per the approved plan.*

Having realized the necessity of ensuring people's participation in effective protection and management of the forest resources in Kerala, it was decided to develop PFM programme in the State in 1998.

Guidelines for the implementation of PFM in Kerala were issued by the Government vide G.O.(MS) 8/98/F&WLD dated, 16-01-1998. Based on the feedback from the field, a revised guideline was issued as per G.O.(Ms)26/06/F&WLD dated, Thiruvananthapuram, 20.07.2006 for the implementation of Participatory Forest Management in Kerala. (The revised guidelines available in the link).

### **1. Participatory Forest Management:**

Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is a management tool intended to protect the forests and manage the non-wood forest resources of forests in a sustainable manner with the active participation of Forest Dependent Communities ensuring their livelihood needs. Under the PFM set up, there are Village Level bodies known as Vana Samrakshana Samithies (VSSs) in the Territorial Divisions and Eco Development Committees (EDCs) in the Wildlife Divisions. The Participatory Forest Management Programme in Kerala has Vana Samrakshana Samithi at

Implementation Level, Forest Development Agency (a society registered under Travancore Cochin Literacy, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act of 1955, constituted at Territorial/ Wildlife Division) at Facilitation/ Supervision / Division level and State Forest Development Agency (Apex Body - a society registered under Travancore Cochin Literacy, Scientific and Charitable Societies Act of 1955) at Funding/ Monitoring / State level. At present there are 389 Vana Samrakshana Samithies and 187 Eco Development Committees registered with the 35 Forest Development Agencies. (Details available in the link of PFM Status)

The VSSs and EDCs are grass root level organizations where forest dependent families are members participating in the planning and implementation of various forestry and community development programmes.

### **(1) a. State Forest Development Agency, Kerala:**

State Forest Development Agency, Kerala was constituted as per GO (Ms.) No.23/2010/F&WLD dated 21-05-2010. The registration number of the SFDA, Kerala is T-734/2010. The SFDA was registered under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act, 1956. The SFDA is vested with financial powers for fund flow mechanisms involving Participatory Forest Management and is the agency to approve and recommend projects finalized by FDAs, for sustainable forest management which aims in achieving the objectives of biodiversity conservation and improvement of livelihood of forest dependent communities.

All the FDAs in Kerala are members of SFDA as per the Memorandum of Association and bye-laws of the State Forest Development Agency.

The SFDA consolidates proposals of various programmes for FDAs and seeks approval and funds from the funding agency concerned. Funds from National Afforestation and Eco Development Board, National Medicinal Plants Board, National Bamboo Mission, etc. are some of the agencies which approve projects of afforestation and eco development and route their funds through the SFDA. The SFDA monitors the projects implemented by the FDAs and process the progress reports and submits consolidate them at State level and submits to the funding agency concerned. Recently, the Government of India has taken a stand that the funds for various developmental activities in Forest Department whether implemented by FDAs or not shall be routed through the SFDA only. The funds for the projects of NMPB implemented by the Development Wing and Japan International Cooperative Agency (JICA) project for the modernization of Forest Institutions implemented by the IFRD Wing of the Department are being routed through SFDA.

## **2. Schemes/Programmes implemented through the Forest Development Agency/VSSs/EDC:**

### **2.1 National Afforestation Programme:**

This is an amalgamated Central sector afforestation programme with 100 percent Central Assistance implemented through the FDAs. The Scheme was started during the 10th Five Year Plan and was continued during the 11<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan. The National Afforestation and Eco Development Board has issued revised guidelines in 2009 for the implementation of National Afforestation Programme. The objectives of the programme are briefly:

(a) Providing employment opportunities to the local communities through afforestation and conservation programme, thereby creating valuable forest assets for the dependent communities.

(b) Creating other durable community assets for the overall development of target communities/villages. The afforestation programmes includes planting of trees in degraded forests and adjoining areas.

Till the end of 2011-12, Government of India has released Rs.55.1458 crores for the project. In addition to the planting activities, NAP also provides funds for Entry Point Activities which are activities for strengthening the assets of the communities. Rs.7.6654 crores has been utilized so far for these activities. A proposal for planting up an area of 3838 hectares at a total project cost of Rs.22.96 crores had been forwarded to Government of India for the current financial year 2012-13. The NAP guidelines and detailed FDA Wise Physical and Financial achievement are available in the link NAP

## **2.2 National Bamboo Mission Scheme:**

With a view to improve the bamboo resources in the State, the National Bamboo Mission has given to Kerala Forest Department a sum of Rs.122.74 lakhs during 2008 for raising nurseries and planting. About 12 lakh seedlings have been raised by seven Forest Development Agencies and an area of 296 ha has been planted with Bamboo. The seedlings produced have been partly distributed to the public and partly planted in forest areas. Till 2011-12 an amount of Rs.72.96 Lakhs have been utilized and the project for utilizing the balance fund during 2012-13 has been submitted to the Bamboo Mission.

## **2.3 Schemes for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes living within the forests:**

The Scheduled Tribe Development Department gave a sum of Rs. 1 crore for implementation of Welfare Schemes for the benefit of tribal villages in and around forest areas. The schemes have been implemented by five Forest Development Agencies (Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, South Wayanad, North Wayanad, Peechi Wildlife Sanctuary and Periyar Tiger Reserve (East)). The activities under the scheme cover sectors such as agriculture, animal husbandry, health, self employment generation programmes etc... The VSSs/EDCs prepared their micro plans for implementation of the schemes and have progressed substantially with the works in most of the areas. Another Rs.6.00 lakhs have been provided by the STDD to Edamalakkudy in Munnar FDA (Rupees three lakhs) and the Kurumba areas of Mannarkkad FDA (Rupees Three lakhs) for preparation of Micro Plans for community development schemes. An amount of Rs.82.91 lakhs for Kurumba Project and Rs.97.00 lakhs for Edamalakkudy Project also been sanctioned in January 2010. The detailed FDA wise physical and financial achievement is provided in the link.

## **2.4 Tribal Insurance Scheme:**

The tribal insurance scheme, namely "Hospitalization Benefits and Personal Accident Benefits for the Scheduled Tribes & Scheduled Castes in the Forest Area' is being continued this year also. All the tribal populations within the forest area have been covered under the scheme at a total premium of Rs.6.75 lakhs. This is implemented through United India Insurance Company. The application for the claims has to be preferred by the claimants before the Divisional

Manager of the United India Insurance with specific recommendation of the Range Officer having jurisdiction of the area.

## **2.5 Eco-tourism and River Forest Protection Fund:**

The Tourism Department of Government of Kerala is providing financial assistance for implementation of Eco-tourism projects at the identified Eco-tourism Spots in Forest Department. The financial assistance is provided by the Tourism Department through the Director of Eco-tourism.

The GO (MS) No.18/02/F&WLD dated 02.04.02 has authorized the Vana Samrakshana Samithy to receive service charges from visitors and create River Forest Protection Fund (RFPF). The RFPF is to be utilized for forest protection, litter eradication, visitor security and conservation awareness campaigns. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests is authorized by this G.O to be the final authority in approving the rates for this purpose. The action plan for utilization of RFPF is to be approved by Forest Development Agency and funds to be utilized by FDA with the prior sanction of Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW).

*(Guidelines of Eco Tourism and River Forest Protection Fund are provided in the Eco Tourism Guidelines Link).*

Brief procedure for preparation of Eco-tourism Project is as follows:-

The Vana Samrakshana Samithy /Eco Development Committee will prepare a micro plan and the eco-tourism scheme which will be vetted by the Range Officer and submitted to the Divisional Forest Officer. The Divisional Forest Officer will submit the project to the Circle Conservator of Forests / Chief Conservator of Forests for approval. The Chief Conservator of Forests / Conservator of Forests will submit to the project to the Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW) who will place the project in the committee of Chief Conservator of Forest's constituted for the approval of eco-tourism projects of the Department. The project approved by the Committee of Chief Conservator of Forest's will be forwarded to the Director, Eco-tourism who will consider the same for sanction of funds for the Project. The schemes are implemented through Forest Development Agencies. *A status report on eco-tourism of the ongoing projects of the Department is provided in the [Status of Eco Tourism Projects Link](#). The details of eco-tourism spots are provided in the [Eco Tourism Search link](#).*

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Development) is also providing plan funds for developing Eco Tourism products in the state.

## **2.6 National Medicinal Plant Board Scheme:**

During 2008, National Medicinal Plant Board has approved a project for creation of facilities for storage, value addition and primary processing of medicinal plants at a cost of Rs.174.68 lakhs. An amount of Rs.113.349 lakhs has been released till 31-03-2012 by Government of India and this amount has been distributed to 10 Forest Development Agencies for implementing the scheme. The detailed physical and financial achievement is provided in the link.

## **2.7 Green India Mission:**

The Green India Mission (GIM) has been conceived as a multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral and multi-departmental mission for the “greening” of India in the context of climate change adaptation and mitigation, meant to enhance ecosystem services, NTFPs, livelihood of local communities, conservation and restoration of biodiversity etc.

The Mission aims at increasing of forest & tree cover on 5 million hectares, and improvement of quality of forest cover on another 5 million hectares area at National Level. The Mission also targets improvement of forest- based livelihoods for about three million households living in and around forests, besides improved ecosystem services including carbon sequestration.

Situation / problem analysis should be undertaken in a participatory manner with the communities, Forests and other sectoral departments, NGO's academic institutes and other major actors.

The Kerala State submitted the one year bridge plan in the preparatory year 2011-12. Bridge Plan will be implemented in the Seven Identified FDAs. The major components of bridge plan are raising seedlings for distribution, Soil and Moisture Conservation Works, Entry Point activities, preparation of Microplan at VSS level for the formulation of Perspective plan etc. An amount of Rs.194.60 lakhs has been allotted by Government of India during March 2012 and the plan is being implemented. The five year perspective plan will be prepared in consultation with stakeholders. The plan will be built on the characteristics and priorities identified in the Situational / Problem analysis and Baseline. The implementation plan will be local in nature, following the principles of decentralized planning, addressing inter-sectoral felt needs and promoting convergence among sectors. The details of the brige plan and the advisories and brochure on the GIM is provided in the link.

## **3. Forest Right Act 2006:**

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, was passed on December 15, 2006, in the Lok Sabha and December 18, 2006, in the Rajya Sabha. It was signed by the President on December 29, 2006, but only notified into force on December 31, 2007 (one year later). The Rules to the Act - which provide for some of the operational details - were notified into force on January 1, 2008. (Act and Rule available in the link)

This wing monitors the issuance of record of rights in the Forest Areas in Kerala as per the Forest Rights Act,2006. The status of issuance of record of right as on 30-04-2012 is provided in the link. The Field officers are in the process of updating the data of record of rights in the Website of Kerala Forest Department.

## **4. Vanasree:**

The Kerala Forest Department has opened 18 'Vanasree' outlets spread across the state for marketing non wood forest products through Vana Samrakshana Samithies and Eco Development Committees and augmenting the income of the tribal communities. In the Vanasree Outlets minor forest produces, which are collected processed and packed by the Vana Samrakshana Samithies are sold in the brand name “Vanasree”. The details of Vanasree

Eco Shops are given in the link. A mobile Vanasree shop will start functioning in the State by the end of July 2012.

### The main task ahead

The wing considers that bringing about sustainable practices of NTFP management through the VSSs/EDCs is a prime task to be attended by the Forest Department. This will eventually lead to conservation of the valuable bio-diversity of our forests. The forest dependent communities and forest department should be fully equipped to undertake this extremely important task in the immediate future.

This along with sustainable development and management of non-forest resources in the villages in and around the forests through VSSs/EDCs should help the protection of forests much more effectively in the days ahead.

The FDAs should realize that the Climate change poses a serious threat to the lives and livelihoods of all people. The Joint Forest Management Committees shall be strengthened and motivated to plan programmes for addressing climate change and implement various programmes under Green India Mission, involving NGOs, line departments etc. All activities for the eco development and tribal welfare, which shall reduce the dependency on forest for fuel wood, timber and other forest produce, shall be planned and funds from various sources including line departments shall be pooled together and implemented with proper participatory planning and monitoring.

### Staff Strength

SI No	Category	Sanctioned Strength	Now in position	Vacant
<b>Office of the APCCF (E&amp;TW) &amp; State Forest Development Agency</b>				
1	Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (E&TW) cum Member Secretary, State Forest Development Agency, Kerala	One	One	Nil
2	Deputy Conservator of Forests (E&TW) cum State PFM Co - ordinator	One	One	Nil
3	Junior Superintendent	One	Nil	One
4	Upper Division Clerk and Lower Division Clerk	Three	Three	Nil
5	Confidential Assistant	One	One	Nil
6	Office Attendant	Two	Two	Nil
<b>GIM Cell (on working arrangement)</b>				
1	Assistant Conservator of Forest (GIM)	One	One	Nil
2	Upper Division Clerk	One	One	Nil

Apart from the above a there is one data entry operator on contract basis in the State Forest Development Agency

### Contact

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