

PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES 2009

**GOVERNMENT OF KERALA
FOREST AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The National Forest Policy, 1988 envisages people's involvement in the development, protection and management of forests. It is also increasingly being felt that forest management programmes need to be reoriented to respond to the needs of the rural people living in and around forest areas and that the forest produce like fuel wood, Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), timber etc. are made available to the forest dependent villagers preferentially so that village communities are motivated to help in the development and protection of Forests. Accordingly, Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forests, in their letter dated 1-6-1990 had issued guidelines for involving village communities and voluntary agencies in regeneration of degraded forest lands. The State Governments were also requested to take appropriate action along the suggested lines. The guidelines suggested by the Government of India envisage the formulation of a Participatory Forest Management Scheme charged with the responsibilities of preparing plans (micro plans) for participation and managing the same as per the approved plan.

Increasing pressure of population on forests and the resultant forest degradation, the fragility of the ecosystem, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance of the area, are major concerns of the State. The fact that policing the forest resources alone is not enough to protect the forest from degradation and that the participatory management experience from all over the country bears testimony to the participatory approach in dealing with anthropogenic factors in forest protection, justifies the development of Participatory Forest Management (PFM) approach for protection of forests in Kerala where these factors have contributed to degradation to a sizable extent. Having realized the necessity of ensuring people's participation in effective protection and management of the forest resources in Kerala, it is decided to develop PFM programme in the State. Kerala being socio-politically different from other States in India, the PFM programme envisaged in the State was developed through a number of pilot studies in selected areas designed to address different forest management problems. With a view to evolve the modalities and the related strategies in implementing this programme, detailed workshops, seminars and discussions were also held with various

stakeholder groups. Study tours by forest officers were also conducted to other states where PFM is being practiced.

Guidelines for the implementation of PFM in Kerala were issued by the Government vide GO (MS) 8/98/F&WLD dated, 16.1.1998. As PFM was new to Kerala, initially it was taken up in selected sites only. Pilot studies were carried out in selected sites. The strategy adopted was "learning by doing". Apart from the periodical reviews, there were State level reviews of the whole process annually. The field experience generated from five years of the implementation has necessitated modifications in the PFM guidelines for the State. These guidelines are the modified versions intended to replace the earlier guidelines.

2. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the PFM programme in the State are two fold:

1. To develop appropriate participatory approaches to forest management in different forestry and socio-economic contexts.
2. To introduce and sustain it in all such areas inside as well as outside forests.

3. SCOPE OF THE PROGRAMME

One of the major causes of forest degradation in Kerala is the human pressure on forests. High density of human population, low per capita forest area and dependence of people on forests for subsistence and income generation activities, justify the development of approaches involving people living in and around forests. Moreover, the realization of PFM as a thrust area for Central assistance from 10th Plan onwards encourage us to develop PFM for protection, development and management of forests.

Major factors contributing to forest degradation related to people-forest interaction in Kerala are the following:

- Forest fires
- Grazing
- Unsustainable harvesting of NTFPs such as green manure, firewood, medicinal herbs and poles.
- Human-animal conflicts
- Forest encroachments
- Timber smuggling
- Illicit collection of forest produce
- Gunja cultivation
- Illicit brewing
- Poaching of wild animals
- Environmental degradation etc.

The PFM programme is designed to assess the potential of participatory approach to address these critical forestry problems under different socio-economic context through strategies for:

- Management of fires to reduce forest degradation
- Introduction of sustainable NTFP harvesting practices to reverse the declining trend of growth of valuable NTFPs.
- Application of indigenous knowledge of local communities on forests and biodiversity management.
- Promotion of biodiversity related intellectual property rights and harnessing this strength for forest management.
- Promotion of non-invasive eco-tourism in forest areas
- Stopping illicit collection of forest produce
- Stopping illicit activities in forests
- Stopping further encroachment into forest areas.
- Reversing localized environmental degradation such as seasonal water shortages and soil erosion resulting from deforestation in watersheds/catchments

4. AREAS TO BE SELECTED FOR PFM

4.1 General

All reserved/vested forests/Ecological fragile areas taken over by the Government where stakeholder groups depend for subsistence and livelihood income generation.

Areas outside reserved/vested forests, facing threats from ecological degradation. In all cases, participation under agreement by the landowner/custodian is mandatory.

Implementation of suitable PFM model in any of these areas is to be regulated by specific guidelines.

4.2 PFM management unit

The selection of the PFM management unit shall be done on a watershed basis. **The geographical area (functional forest along with adjacent non-forest area) shall be a cluster of neighbouring mini-watersheds in full or part.** The distance from the edge of the forest to the outer boundary of the geographical area shall be less than 2kms straight line or the outer limit of the Grama Panchayat Wards adjoining the forest, whichever is minimum. If the ward boundaries are located beyond 2kms from the edge of the forest, a permanent physical landmark (line mark) at an optimum distance of 2kms from the edge of the forests shall be identified as the limit of VSS geographical area. However, the Divisional Forest Officer can decide based on local condition, the limit of VSS geographical area in line of the above guidelines.

PFM management unit within the geographical limits of a VSS shall be the forests most frequented by the stakeholders in the VSS. It shall be surveyed and demarcated in the field.

5. PROCEDURE FOR DEVELOPING PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT (PFM)

Under PFM the agreed forest management activities will be planned, implemented, maintained and monitored by the village institutions-Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) constituted for the purpose with the help of suitable facilitators and the KFD. Participatory process first of all requires creating a good rapport, trust and partnership between the KFD field staff and the local people. The process of PFM involves the following phases: Preparatory phase, Planning phase and Implementation & Monitoring phase. Activities involved in each of these phases will be as follows:

i. Preparatory Phase

1. Site Identification
2. MOA & Bye-law Drafting
3. VSS Registration
4. Opening of Core Fund & Operational Fund Accounts
(Operational Fund is Project related and hence is relevant where there is flow of funds from external sources)

The intended outcome of the phase are:

- Identification of the problems to be addressed through PFM
- Formation of VSS and VSS Executive Committee (VSSEC)
- Finalization of bylaw of VSS.

ii. Planning Phase

1. PRA
2. Micro Plan approval by VSS General Body
3. Micro Plan approval by Conservator of Forests

The intended outcomes of this phase will be:

- The formulation of a detailed micro plan in consultation with the local community addressing all aspects of resource management of that particular locality.

iii. Implementation & Monitoring Phase.

1. MOU Signing
2. Release of Credibility fund
3. Annual Action Plan preparation
4. Annual Action Plan Approval
5. Field Implementation followed by review and monitoring

The intended outcomes of this phase will be;

- The actual execution of the micro plan prescriptions
- Definition of the roles and responsibilities of KFD and VSS
- Monitoring

The KFD officials should actively involve in each of the above phase. The initial meeting with the villagers may be facilitated through local NGOs and Panchayats.

6. CONSTITUTION OF THE VANA SAMRAKSHANA SAMITHI (VSS)

Range Officer will convene the village community meeting on the appointed date after giving due publicity for the same in the locality and explain PFM. The doubts of the local communities would be heard and cleared. The roles and responsibilities of the partners in the programme will be elaborately discussed. Subsequently on the prescribed date, the Memorandum of Association and Bye-law of VSS will be drafted and approved at the level of the village community, leading ultimately to the Constitution of Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS). On getting application from the VSS, it will be registered by the DFO after going through due procedure. The DFO shall issue a Registration Certificate to each VSS, bearing Registration Number with date of approval.

The approval of the DFO is mandatory for the VSS.

6.1 Membership

Every household in the selected ward/hamlet/user-groups will have the option of participating in the Samithi. Any two adult members of a household can represent the household/family. Out of the two, one shall be a woman if there are adult women members in the household/family. They shall register their names with the Executive Committee on a payment of a minimum sum of Rs.5/- per household, which shall be credited to the Core Fund of the VSS. The SC/ST members may be exempted from the payment of registration fee. For the purpose of sharing the benefits as per clause 9, each household/family will be considered as a single unit.

Maximum households in a VSS shall be 365.

6.2 Eligibility for Membership in VSS

The inhabitants in the geographical area, directly or indirectly dependent on the forests located in the geographical area are eligible for membership.

The dependence on the forest will be categorized as follows:

6.2.1 Primary/Direct livelihood dependence

- (a) Those who go to the micro plan forest area for collecting forest produce primarily for own consumption.
- (b) Those who go to the micro plan forest area for collection of forest produce for sale outside

6.2.2 Secondary/Indirect dependence

- (a) Those who do not go to the forest for collecting forest produce but nevertheless get the produce in the course of exchange with primary dependent communities and live in the geographical area of VSS.
- (b) The above dependence but residing outside the geographical area of VSS.
(This category will not be eligible for membership)
- (c) Traditionally Nomadic Communities

The persons in this category may have regular/periodical livelihood dependence on the micro plan area. In the case of traditionally nomadic communities, short term and seasonal dependence is the norm. The short term and seasonal dependence of the nomadic communities can be accommodated within local rules of the VSS. The VSS will furnish the following information to the Dy. Ranger/Forester (1) the name of the community and individuals (2) the items of collection and quantity (3) season (in weeks) (4) code of conduct related to method of collection imposed by VSS on the nomadic group.

The VSS will incorporate these procedures while updating the micro plan.

6.2.3 Incorporating membership in VSS

These categories will be explained to the villagers in the village community meeting for VSS formation, by the R.O concerned. Ad-hoc Executive Committee will be constituted from the assembled, based on this categorization. Regular membership can be given during micro planning stage where the population will be divided into stakeholder groups. This process of membership will be completed by the completion of micro plan. The final membership list will be presented in the General Body for micro plan presentation and got approved and displayed in public.

For all subsequent meetings of the VSS, the member secretary of the VSSEC shall be the Convenor.

6.2.4 Contribution for Forest Protection

The member-families in the VSS shall contribute free of charge a minimum of one day's effort or the equivalent in cash (in local wage rate) in a year for forest protection and monitoring. The rules for obtaining the

contributions from its members shall be decided by the General Body. The contributions shall be credited and entered in register. Action against members in the event of non-contribution shall be prescribed as part of the local rules.

The members who do not contribute their share in one year will lose their membership. The executive committee will present the list of such members in the general body meeting. In case a member convinces the general body that the lapse was on account of unforeseen circumstances, the general body can consider the case and approve continuation of membership with the condition that the member would contribute a minimum of 2 days of contribution for forest protection in the ensuing year in addition to the subsequent year's quota of 1 day. The membership can be retained if the assigned contribution is ensured by the member. The membership shall be cancelled otherwise.

Fresh membership can be issued subsequently provided,

- (i) there shall be an unconditional apology along with the willingness to obey the decision of the general body,
- (ii) the general body accepts the apology
- (iii) impose fines in terms of cash/or a minimum contribution of 5 days for forest protection in addition to the subsequent year's quota of 1 day.
- (iv) the member obeys the decision of the general body

(Fresh membership entails all procedures mentioned in 6.3)

6.3 Enlisting new members in existing VSS

New members can be- are to be admitted to VSS only once in a year on the basis of recommendation to this effect by VSSEC to the DFO as per the following procedure:

If a person wants to become member of an existing VSS, he/she may request the Secretary of VSS for membership, explaining the nature of dependence/stakeholder ship. The Secretary shall entrust the Grievance Redress Cell (consisting of the President of VSS, Executive Secretary, one Executive Committee member and two members of VSS nominated for the purpose by the General Body) of the VSS for verification of facts. After detailed enquiries the report of the Cell shall specifically observe (1) whether dependence as claimed by the person is real or not and (2) reasons for non-inclusion/rejection (as member) previously, if any. The executive committee will examine the report in the presence of the applicant and will recommend inclusion as member if dependence is found to be real and the request as genuine. This shall be presented for the consideration of the General Body.

The General Body will deliberate on the list of persons for inclusion/rejection and approve or modify the list. The General Body shall

critically examine the list and check if any eligible request has been rejected. The eligibility criteria are as above. The General Body shall examine the requests purely on the basis of the above eligibility criteria and modify the list only for inclusion of eligible requests from among the rejections/non-inclusions.

In case of rejection of request by the General Body, the executive shall inform the persons concerned explaining the absence of proof with regard to livelihood dependence on the forest area covered by the VSS micro plan. The aggrieved individuals may produce proof if any for consideration of the General Body. If the General Body is satisfied with the proof rendered by the individual, favourable recommendation shall be forwarded for inclusion as member of VSS.

No new membership shall be given within one month preceding the date of the next election to VSSEC.

The Grievance Redress Cell will classify the applicant into any of the four categories viz; 6.2.1 (a), 6.2.1 (b), 6.2.2 (a), 6.2.2 (b) or 6.2.2 (c)-the nomadic. The category 6.2.2 (b) is not eligible for membership. This will be discussed in the executive and will be eventually recorded in the membership register.

6.4 അംഗത്വം റദ്ദാക്കൽ

1. വനകുറ്റകൃത്യങ്ങളിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുക: സമിതി അംഗങ്ങൾ വനകുറ്റത്തിൽ ഉൾപ്പെട്ടിട്ടുണ്ടെന്ന് ശ്രദ്ധിക്കപ്പെട്ടാൽ/ആരോപിക്കപ്പെട്ടാൽ പ്രസ്തുത അംഗത്തിന് സമിതി സെക്രട്ടറി വിശദീകരണ നോട്ടീസ് നൽകണം. വിശദീകരണ നോട്ടീസിന് പ്രസ്തുത അംഗം മറുപടി നൽകേണ്ടതാണ്. മറുപടി Grievance Redress Cell പരിശോധിക്കണം. ആരോപണവിധേയനായ അംഗം പറയപ്പെടുന്ന കൃത്യം ചെയ്യാൻ കാരണമായ സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ വിലയിരുത്തണം. ഏതെങ്കിലും നിക്ഷിപ്ത താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കടിപ്പെട്ടാണോ അതോ അറിവില്ലായ്മ, നിസ്സഹായത തുടങ്ങിയ കാരണങ്ങൾ/സമ്മർദ്ദങ്ങൾ ആണോ കുറ്റകൃത്യത്തിന് പിന്നിൽ എന്നാണ് പ്രധാനമായും വിലയിരുത്തേണ്ടത്. Grievance Redress Cell അതിന്റെ കണ്ടെത്തലുകൾ സമിതിയുടെ എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റിയിൽ സമർപ്പിക്കണം. അറിവില്ലായ്മ, നിസ്സഹായത തുടങ്ങിയ കാരണങ്ങളാണെങ്കിൽ മാപ്പ് കൊടുക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. പിന്നീട് ഇത് ആവർത്തിക്കാതിരിക്കാൻ സമിതി നടപടികളെടുക്കണം. ഇത്തരം കുറ്റകൃത്യങ്ങൾ ഇല്ലാതാക്കാനാവശ്യമായ തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ/പെരുമാറ്റച്ചട്ടങ്ങൾ ഉചിതമായ വിധം സമിതിയുടെ പ്രാദേശിക ചട്ടങ്ങളിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തണം. നിക്ഷിപ്ത താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടിയാണ് പ്രസ്തുത അംഗം പ്രവർത്തിച്ചതെന്ന് ബോധ്യപ്പെടുന്ന പക്ഷം ശക്തമായ താക്കീത് നൽകി അംഗത്വം തുടരാൻ അനുവദിക്കാം. എന്നാൽ രണ്ടാമതും ഇതേ അംഗം വനകുറ്റകൃത്യം നടത്തുകയും അത് നിക്ഷിപ്ത താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കുവേണ്ടിയാണെന്ന് ബോധ്യപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന പക്ഷം നിരുപാധികമായി അംഗത്വം റദ്ദാക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. മാപ്പ് നൽകി വിട്ടയച്ച അംഗം പിന്നീട് അറിവില്ലായ്മ/നിസ്സഹായത മൂലം മറ്റൊരു വനകുറ്റകൃത്യത്തിൽ ഏർപ്പെട്ടാൽ ശക്തമായ താക്കീത് നൽകി അംഗത്വം തുടരാൻ അനുവദിക്കാം. എന്നാൽ മൂന്ന് തവണ വനകുറ്റകൃത്യത്തിലേർപ്പെടുന്ന അംഗങ്ങളെ നിരുപാധികം സമിതിയിൽ നിന്ന് ഒഴിവാക്കണം. പിന്നീട് രണ്ടു വർഷ

ക്കാലം അംഗത്തിന്റെ പെരുമാറ്റം നിരീക്ഷിച്ചശേഷം വീണ്ടും പ്രസ്തുത കുടുംബത്തിന്റെ അംഗത്വം പരിഗണിക്കാവുന്നതാണ്.

2. സമിതിയുടെ ബൈലോയ്ക്ക് വിരുദ്ധമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുക: ഒരംഗം ബൈലോയ്ക്ക് വിരുദ്ധമായി പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് ശ്രദ്ധയിൽപ്പെട്ടാൽ സമിതി എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റി ഇക്കാര്യം Grievance Redress Cell വഴി അന്വേഷിക്കണം. ആരോപണവിധേയനായ അംഗം പറയപ്പെടുന്ന കൃത്യം ചെയ്യാൻ കാരണമായ സാഹചര്യങ്ങൾ വിലയിരുത്തണം. ഏതെങ്കിലും നിക്ഷിപ്ത താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കടിപ്പെട്ടാണോ അതോ അറിവില്ലായ്മ, നിസ്സഹായത തുടങ്ങിയ കാരണങ്ങൾ/സമ്മർദ്ദങ്ങൾ ആണോ ലംഘനം നടത്തിയതിന് പിന്നിൽ എന്നാണ് പ്രധാനമായും വിലയിരുത്തേണ്ടത്. Grievance Redress Cell അതിന്റെ കണ്ടെത്തലുകൾ സമിതിയുടെ എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റിയിൽ സമർപ്പിക്കണം. അറിവില്ലായ്മ, നിസ്സഹായത തുടങ്ങിയ കാരണങ്ങളാണെങ്കിൽ മാപ്പ് കൊടുക്കുന്നതാണ്. പിന്നീട് ഇത് ആവർത്തിക്കാതിരിക്കാൻ സമിതി നടപടികളെടുക്കേണ്ടതാണ്. ലംഘനങ്ങൾ ഒഴിവാക്കാനാവശ്യമായ തീരുമാനങ്ങൾ ഉചിതമായ വിധം സമിതിയുടെ പ്രാദേശിക ചട്ടങ്ങളിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തണം. നിക്ഷിപ്ത താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കവേണ്ടിയാണ് പ്രസ്തുത അംഗം പ്രവർത്തിച്ചതെന്ന് ബോധ്യപ്പെടുന്ന പക്ഷം ശക്തമായ താക്കീത് നൽകി അംഗത്വം തുടരാൻ അനുവദിക്കാം. രണ്ടാമതും ഇതേ അംഗം ലംഘനം നടത്തുകയും അത് നിക്ഷിപ്ത താല്പര്യങ്ങൾക്കവേണ്ടിയാണെന്ന് ബോധ്യപ്പെടുകയും ചെയ്യുന്ന പക്ഷം അംഗത്വം മരവിപ്പിക്കാം. പിന്നീട് നിരുപാധികം മാപ്പ് അപേക്ഷിക്കുന്നപക്ഷം സമിതിയിൽ (GB) ഉചിതമായ തീരുമാനമെടുക്കാവുന്നതാണ്. സമിതിയുടെ ബൈലോയിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ തുടർച്ചയായി ലംഘിക്കുന്ന അംഗങ്ങളെ സമിതിയ്ക്ക് പിരിച്ചുവിടാവുന്നതാണ്.

3. തുടർച്ചയായി പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാതിരിക്കുക: സമിതിയുടെ പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ അംഗമോ പ്രതിനിധിയോ തുടർച്ചയായി മൂന്നു തവണ കാരണം ബോധിപ്പിക്കാതെ പങ്കെടുക്കാതിരിക്കുകയാണെങ്കിൽ മൂന്നാമത്തെ പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ അംഗത്തിന് വിശദീകരണ നോട്ടീസ് നൽകാൻ തീരുമാനിക്കണം. പ്രസ്തുത അംഗം അടുത്ത പൊതുയോഗത്തിന് മുമ്പായി വിശദീകരണ നോട്ടീസിന് മറുപടി നൽകേണ്ടതാണ്. മറുപടി എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റിയിൽ പരിശോധിച്ച് ചർച്ച ചെയ്ത് തൃപ്തികരമാവുകയും നാലാമത്തെ പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കുകയും ചെയ്താൽ അംഗത്വം തുടരാവുന്നതാണ്. നാലാമത്തെ പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ പങ്കെടുക്കാതിരിക്കുകയോ, വിശദീകരണ നോട്ടീസിനുള്ള മറുപടി തൃപ്തികരമല്ലാതിരിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്താൽ പ്രസ്തുത അംഗത്തിന്റെ അംഗത്വം റദ്ദാവുന്നതാണ്. പിന്നീട് നിരുപാധികം മാപ്പ് അപേക്ഷിക്കുന്നപക്ഷം സമിതിയുടെ (GB) തീരുമാനപ്രകാരമുള്ള ഉപാധികളോടെ പുതിയ അംഗമായി ചേർക്കാവുന്നതാണ്.

4. സ്വയം പിരിഞ്ഞുപോകൽ: അംഗങ്ങൾക്ക് സ്വയം അംഗത്വത്തിൽ നിന്ന് പിരിഞ്ഞുപോകാൻ അവകാശമുണ്ട്. അതിന് ആഗ്രഹിക്കുന്ന അംഗങ്ങൾ അപേക്ഷ തയ്യാറാക്കി അപേക്ഷയിൽ പിരിഞ്ഞുപോകാനുള്ള കാരണവും കാണിച്ച് അംഗത്വ രജിസ്റ്ററിലുള്ള രണ്ടുപേരും ചേർന്ന് ഒപ്പിട്ട് സമിതി പ്രസിഡന്റിന് നൽകേണ്ടതാണ്. അപേക്ഷ ലഭ്യമായാൽ സമിതി എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റിയിൽ പ്രത്യേക അജണ്ടയായി ചർച്ച ചെയ്ത് പിരിച്ചുവിടൽ മിനിറ്റ്സിൽ രേഖപ്പെടുത്തുമ്പോൾ മാത്രമേ അംഗത്വം റദ്ദാക്കൽ നടപടിക്രമം പൂർണ്ണമാവുകയുള്ളൂ.

5. വനസംരക്ഷണത്തിന് സേവനം നൽകാതിരിക്കൽ. സെക്ഷൻ 6.2.4 അനുസരിച്ചുള്ള നടപടിക്രമങ്ങൾക്കു വിധേയമായി അംഗത്വം റദ്ദാക്കും.
6. ഏതെങ്കിലും ഒരു എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റി അംഗം വനസംരക്ഷണത്തിന് നിശ്ചയിക്കപ്പെട്ട സന്നദ്ധസേവനം നൽകാതിരുന്നാൽ പ്രസ്തുത അംഗത്തിന്റെ എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് പദവി ഇല്ലാതാകും.

7. STRUCTURE OF VSS

7.1 General Body -Duties and Responsibilities

A General Body Meeting (GBM) of the VSS shall be held once in every six months to review the actions taken in pursuance to the approved micro plan, status of forest protection and functioning of the VSSEC. Under special circumstances, the GBM of the VSS may be convened on request of not less than 1/3rd of the VSS members to the Convenor of the GBM. Quorum for GBM will be 1/3rd of the total members.

The Secretary of the VSSEC shall be the Convenor of the GBM of the VSS and shall maintain the minutes of the meeting.

The members of VSS individually and collectively shall be responsible for

- a) ensuring protection of the PFM areas from encroachment, grazing, fires, illicit felling, poaching, thefts etc.
- b) ensuring execution of the activities in accordance with the approved micro plan through the executive committee.
- c) making other Villagers are of the importance of nature conservation and forest protection.
- d) ensuring protection of neighbouring forest areas not covered under PFM
- e) helping Forest Department in protection of other forest areas not covered under PFM

Members of VSS shall have the power to:

- apprehend the forest offenders and hand them over to the forest officers for taking action under the provision of the relevant Acts and Rules. Where forest offenders have been handed over to the concerned forest officers, the concerned officer shall be responsible to report back to the VSSEC the action taken by him.

7.2 Formation and functioning of Sub-groups for Specific Tasks

The General Body of VSS will constitute sub-groups with members from various stakeholder groups. These sub-groups will be assigned specific tasks, related to forests or otherwise useful to community, and report to the General Body. They will meet at least once a month. The leaders of the sub-groups will interact with the executive once in three months

The nominated members from stakeholder groups will be given the responsibility for the functioning of the sub-groups.

7.3 Executive Committee

7.3.1 Structure of Executive Committee

Structure of Executive Committee: After formation of the VSS as explained above, VSSEC shall be constituted from the members of VSS to carry out the approved PFM plan, *the micro plan*. The VSSEC shall consist of the following members.

i	Nine elected representatives from the VSS (of the 9 members; at least 3 shall be women. Out of 9 members 6 shall be from the categories 6.2.1(a) and 6.2.1(b), 2 from 6.2.2(a) and 1 from 6.2.2(c). In case there is no representations of 6.2.2(c) category, the chance can be given to the category 6.2.2(a). There shall also be proportional representations from SC/ST communities (rounded off to the higher number.	Member
ii	Grama Panchayat member of the concerned Panchayat ward.	Ex-officio member
iii	A nominee from the Tribal Development Department (only in the case of VSS in which tribal members exceed 1/3 of the total membership)	Ex-officio member
iv	Forester/Forest Guard having jurisdiction over the area.	Ex-officio member Secretary.

7.3.2 Duties and Responsibilities

- i. The VSSEC shall meet at least once in every month.
- ii. The member Secretary shall be responsible for sending the minutes of the meeting of the VSSEC to the RO for information and advice. In case the Forest Range Officer finds that the decisions of the VSSEC are contrary to the approved micro plan or to the relevant Acts and Rules, he shall report the matter in writing to the DFO & the Conservator of Forests (CF) immediately and also inform the committee. The decision of the DFO on this will be binding on the committee.
- iii. If any member of the VSS is found to indulge in acts against the various forest laws and rules and becomes an accused in a forest offence or acts against the approved micro plan, he shall be debarred from the VSS by the VSSEC.
- iv. The VSSEC along with the Member Secretary shall be responsible for preparation and execution of the micro plan.

- v. The VSSEC shall be responsible for ensuring the general protection of forests.
- vi. The VSSEC shall be responsible for maintaining the **VSS Core Fund** and **VSS Operations Fund** (wherever provided) and for keeping proper accounts of income and expenditure in the prescribed formats.

7.3.3 Eligibility to become Executive Committee Member

Since VSS is an integrated body of different types of stakeholders (dependent communities) on the forest area protected and managed by them with the support of Forest Department, the Executive Committee shall necessarily have members representing all types of stakeholder groups in the VSS.

Out of the nine-elected Executive Committee Members, 6.2.2(a) category members shall be limited to two and representing two different families. One among the two shall be a woman. The remaining seven members shall represent different 6.2.1(a) and 1(b) categories of stakeholders. The tribal representation shall be proportional to their population in the VSS. Women representation shall be a minimum of three.

The eligibility to become an Executive Committee Member is minimum 2 years of active participation in PFM on behalf of the VSS. This eligibility criterion is not applicable during the first two years of formation of VSS, but is intended to be binding on members in the case of subsequent executive committees. Executive Committee Membership cannot be borne by anyone for more than two **consecutive** terms. Return to EC membership is possible only after a gap of four years from the last term of membership.

The Committee shall elect the President from the elected members. The term of President shall be co-terminus with that of the committee. The President of the VSSEC will be the ex-officio President of the VSS also. Only the elected members shall have voting rights. **50% of the Executive Committee Members (ie; 5 out of 9) shall constitute the quorum of the VSSEC.** The term of the committee shall be two years.

The Committee shall elect a Vice President. If the President is a male, the Vice President shall be a female and vice-versa.

One executive member shall be elected by the committee as Treasurer.

The Ex-officio member Secretary shall call the meeting of the VSSEC in consultation with the President and shall record and maintain the minutes of the meeting.

The RO shall be the returning officer for the election of members of VSSEC in the GBM of the VSS.

The approval of the DFO is mandatory for the VSSEC.

7.3.4 Election to the Executive Committee

The procedure for election to VSSEC should be outlined in the by-law of VSS. There it should be ensured that there is proper representation from each stakeholder groups in the VSSEC.

The election procedure of the Executive Committee should be completed before the end of the term of office of the incumbent Executive. The General Body for electing the new office bearers should be convened and the election procedure completed by the Range Officer during the last 30 days of the normal term of office (two years) and the list of the future office bearers should be kept ready. The new team of office bearers shall take charge at the end of the normal term of incumbent office. The Range Officer shall report the fact to the DFO (with a copy for information to the Conservator of Forests).

In case the Range Officer does not take timely action to convene the General Body Meeting for the election within the last 30 days as prescribed above, the President of the VSS shall officially request in writing to the Divisional Forest Officer (by registered post or in person) before the end of the 30 days period, with a copy to the Conservator of Forests. The Divisional Forest Officer shall ensure that the election is completed within 30 days from the last day of the normal term of office of the incumbent Executive Body and the new team of office bearers are in position by the 31st day, and report to CF about timely elections and transfer of power in all VSS in the Division. The CF will review to see that the above action is taken in time.

The normal term of office of the new Executive Body shall be two years from the date of assuming office. The previous Executive Body will function as the caretaker until the new Executive Body is in position. However, the authority of the caretaker EC will be limited to activities leading to election as well as overseeing timely operations dealing with forestry and forest protection. Expenditure, if any, during this interim period should get the approval of the General Body. The General Body convened for the purpose of election to the Executive shall settle the above expenditure before the election process begins.

- ആദ്യമായി 6.2.1 (a), (b), 6.2.2 (a) എന്നിങ്ങനെ ഏതു വിഭാഗത്തിൽ ഓരോ അംഗവും പെടുന്നുവെന്ന് അംഗത്വ രജിസ്റ്റർ നോക്കി പറഞ്ഞുകൊടുക്കണം. ഒരു ചെറിയ തുണ്ടു കടലാസിൽ ഇത് എഴുതി കൊടുക്കാം.
- പിന്നീട് പൊതുയോഗംഗങ്ങളെ സ്ത്രീകളടങ്ങുന്ന ഒരു സംഘമായും പുരുഷന്മാരടങ്ങുന്ന മറ്റൊരു സംഘമായും വേർതിരിക്കുക.
- സ്ത്രീകളുടെ സംഘത്തെ തടിയിതര വനവിഭവങ്ങൾ ശേഖരിക്കാൻ പോകുന്നവരും അല്ലാത്തവരും എന്നിങ്ങനെ രണ്ടായി തിരിക്കുക.
- പുരുഷന്മാരുടെ സംഘത്തെ തടിയിതര വനവിഭവങ്ങൾ ശേഖരിക്കാൻ പോകുന്നവരും അല്ലാത്തവരും എന്നിങ്ങനെ രണ്ടായി തിരിക്കുക.

അങ്ങനെ നാലു സംഘങ്ങളായി വേർതിരിയുന്നു.

- സ്ത്രീകളുടെ ഇരു വിഭാഗത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഓരോ വിഭാഗവും അഞ്ചുപേരെ വച്ച് അതതു വിഭാഗം നാമനിർദ്ദേശം ചെയ്യുന്നു. പുരുഷന്മാരുടെ ഇരു വിഭാഗത്തിൽ നിന്നും ഓരോ വിഭാഗവും അഞ്ചുപേരെ വച്ച് അതതു വിഭാഗം നാമനിർദ്ദേശം ചെയ്യുന്നു. 6.2.1 (a) & (b) വിഭാഗത്തിൽപ്പെട്ടവരുടെ പ്രാതിനിധ്യം ഇതിലുണ്ടായിരിക്കണം.
- നാമനിർദ്ദേശം ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ട 20 പേരും പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ നിന്നും മാറിയിരുന്ന് അവരിൽ നിന്നും മാർഗ്ഗനിർദ്ദേശപ്രകാരമുള്ള 9 പേരെടുത്ത എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റിയെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നു. (see 7.3.1 above)
- എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റി സമിതി പ്രസിഡന്റിനെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുക്കുന്നു
- എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റിയെ പ്രസിഡന്റിനെ തെരഞ്ഞെടുത്ത ശേഷം എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റി അംഗങ്ങളുടെ പട്ടിക റെയിഞ്ചാഫീസർക്ക് സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നു.
- പൊതുയോഗത്തിൽ റെയിഞ്ചാഫീസർ അതു പ്രഖ്യാപിക്കുന്നു
- റെയിഞ്ചാഫീസർ സത്യപ്രതിജ്ഞാ വാചകം ചൊല്ലിക്കൊടുത്ത് എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റി സ്ഥാനമേൽക്കുന്നു.

ഏതെങ്കിലും കാരണവശാൽ ഒരു എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റി അംഗം വിരമിക്കുകയാണെങ്കിൽ ആ ഒഴിവ് നികത്താൻ മേല്പറഞ്ഞ പ്രകാരം നാമനിർദ്ദേശം ചെയ്യപ്പെട്ടവർ കൂടിയിരുന്ന് അവരിൽ നിന്ന് മറ്റൊരാളെ നാമനിർദ്ദേശം ചെയ്ത് റെയിഞ്ചാഫീസർക്ക് സമർപ്പിക്കണം. പൊതുയോഗത്തിന്റെ അംഗീകാരത്തിന് വിധേയമായി ഈ അംഗത്തെ എക്സിക്യൂട്ടീവ് കമ്മിറ്റിയിൽ ഉൾപ്പെടുത്തുന്നു.

7.4. Termination of VSS/ VSSEC

The DFO for sufficient reasons on record shall have powers to dissolve the VSSEC and/or the VSS after conducting due enquiry. The VSSEC shall be given an opportunity to appeal against such orders to the CF within one month. The order of the CF in the matter shall be final.

In case the registration of a particular VSS is cancelled, the respective DFO or the R.O designated by him shall function as the Administrator to have control over the assets of the VSS. As soon as the new VSS is constituted for managing the same area, or inclusive of the same area managed by the previous one, these assets shall be transferred to the new VSS and utilized as funds for future management by it.

8. KERALA FOREST DEPARTMENT - Duties And Responsibilities

- KFD shall provide technical assistance in the formulation and implementation of the micro plan.
- KFD shall make all efforts to get the finances for the implementation of the annual activities specified in the micro plan. For activities outside the micro plan, the KFD shall facilitate in procuring sufficient funds from other departments.
- If the DFO is convinced that the VSS has carried out their duties satisfactorily in the protection of forest from encroachment, theft, illicit felling, fire, grazing etc, and for the activities specified in the micro plan, the amount earmarked for these works will be credited to the VSS. The fund, barring the amount to be compulsorily deposited as per KFD directions, can be utilized by

- the VSS for the implementation of various development programmes after approval of the general body.
- iv) The DFO or his nominated officer shall be responsible for the review of the activities of the VSS. The monthly review shall be conducted by the RO. The CF will review the programme every three months. The shortcomings and the observations noted during the review, shall be acted upon by the VSS.
 - v) If the DFO finds that the funds provided for the activities in the micro plan are not utilized according to the plan or agreed conditions, he shall stop the implementation of the micro plan.
 - vi) The KFD will arrange for providing necessary training to VSS members in various forestry activities like raising nursery, planting, sustainable resource use and rural development etc. and organizational matters.
 - vii) The VSS shall be trained to maintain the accounts books and registers.
 - viii) Forest officials shall educate the VSS and explain the provisions of Forest Acts and Rules. They shall exchange details of forest offenders in order to get the necessary timely assistance in detection of offences and successful prosecution.
 - ix) The Forest Department officials shall see that provisions in the micro plan are in consistent with the provisions of approved Working Plan. In any contradiction, the prescription of Working Plan will prevail.
 - x) The Forest Department officials shall consult the respective VSS before any departmental management intervention, contrary to the PFM micro plan, becomes unavoidable in the management area of VSS as, may happen in some exceptional situations.
 - xi) Providing Credibility Fund to VSS--This is given as a grant to the VSS as a gesture of good will for establishing the credibility of the Forest Department and also for establishing the basic infrastructure such as office, records and seed money for initiating various activities identified by the VSS.
 - xii) Channeling financial support to VSS through Operational Fund for activities under PFM.
 - xiii) Timely revisit of micro plans.
 - xiv) The functional areas of VSSs and the essential PFM prescriptions along with other relevant/important information shall be added in an appropriate section in the working plan of the forest division, where working plans are in vogue. In other locations the prescriptions shall be entered in the land use prescriptions of the area.

9. SHARING OF BENEFITS.

On satisfactory achievement of the aims of VSS in terms of protection of forests and implementation of the activities in the micro plan, the VSS will be entitled to the benefits given below. The benefits will be sanctioned

only on the recommendations of the VSSEC. Harvesting of all the forest produce in PFM area will be as per the silvicultural principles.

1. The VSS shall be entitled to collect the specified quantities and items of NTFP from the PFM areas as per the prescriptions in the micro plan.
2. The VSS shall be entitled to collect the specified quantities of fodder, fuel-wood, green manure or such other produce from PFM area for bonafide use of its members as per the prescriptions in the micro plan.
3. The VSS shall be entitled to collect specified quantities of bamboo and reeds for the bonafide use of its members from the VSS management area as per the prescriptions in the micro plan and at seigniorage rates or at any other concessional rate fixed by the Forest Department. Traditional Bamboo workers in the VSS are exempted from payment of value for bamboo/reeds vide G.O (MS) No. 12/2001/F&WLD dated 2.2.2001.
4. The VSS shall be entitled to 10% of the net revenue of the harvested forest produce from the plantation raised and protected by VSS under PFM, the VSS will also be entitled to 100% of the net revenue from the NTFPs from the forests and services rendered within the PFM area. The amount so received shall be credited to the VSS Core Fund. 75% of this amount shall be utilized (as Village Development Fund) for the village development activities, and the balance 25% will be kept under a separate head as Reserve Fund for Sustainable Forest Management.

10. MICRO PLAN

10.1 Description

The VSSEC shall prepare a micro plan for a period of 10 years in consultation with the local stakeholders, NGOs and the KFD. The micro plan shall be prepared through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) involving all stakeholder particularly women and SC/ST user-groups.

- The plan shall include the prescriptions for the management of forests and village resource under the control of the VSS.
- The plan shall contain the details on production of fuel-wood, timber, fodder and other forest produce and annual harvestable quantities.
- The plan shall prescribe measures for the control of excessive biotic pressure on forests, for protection and restoration of forests to ensure sustainable flow of goods and services.
- The plan shall provide sustainable management prescriptions for the area by detailing harvesting practices, areas to be tackled and the yield. It shall also contain stakeholder-wise utilization plan for all forest benefits.
- The plan shall be prepared by judiciously integrating traditional/indigenous knowledge with modern scientific knowledge.
- The plan shall include other development programmes required by the communities, which will help in reducing dependency on the forests.

- The plan shall specify the activities to be supported by the KFD. Activities shall be monitored. The plan can be amended/re-visited when that becomes unavoidable for attaining the basic objectives.
- The plan shall essentially cover various aspects related to sustainable resource management and development such as:
 - i. **Forest Protection** (i.e., demarcation of areas, prevention of fire/ unauthorized entry/ grazing/felling of trees/green manure collection/harvesting of forest produce etc.)
 - ii. **Forest maintenance** (i.e., silvi-cultural practices, regeneration, rehabilitation, soil and water conservation etc.)
 - iii. **NTFP Development** (i.e., planting and maintenance of fuel, fodder, medicinal plants, pasture, green manure and other activities promoting sustainable harvesting and improved marketing of NTFP by value addition)
 - iv. **Resource Management on Non-Forest Lands** (i.e., soil and water conservation measures in the fringe villages).
 - v. **Other activities** – Community development requirements of the village.

The micro plan, thus prepared shall be presented in the GBM of the VSS for its approval. It shall be then sent to the DFO who in turn shall forward it to the CF with his comments and modifications, if any. The CF will have the authority for effecting amendments in the plan, if need be. All activities covered under any other approved plan/Project for the area selected for PFM, shall be included in the micro plan. But no non-forestry activity or any activity contrary to the existing Acts and Rules and to Working Plan prescriptions shall be undertaken in the forest areas.

The approved micro plan will be implemented through the VSSEC.

The Conservator of Forests shall ensure that the micro plan is revised and the new plan is ready for implementation by the end of the 10th year of the currency of a plan.

10.2 Re-visiting Micro Plans

Whenever the VSS and Forest Department feel that the existing micro plan is too insufficient to address the emerging real life situation there, such micro plan may be subjected to revision, with the approval of the General Body. The steps for revising the micro plan shall be the same as that for preparing a new one. The expenditure for such revisions within the period covered by the existing micro plan (10 years) shall be borne by the VSS.

11. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU)

A memorandum of understanding in the following format shall be signed between the Executive Committee of the VSS and the Range Officer (on behalf of Forest Department) before the starting of the implementation of the Microplan.

FORMAT OF MOU

We, the President and Secretary of the Executive Committee of the VSS ofVillage of.....Forest Range (on behalf of the VSS) do hereby undertake individually and collectively to perform the duties and shoulder the responsibility as detailed in Government Order No.....dated.....for proper management, planning and protection of the forest areas as per the Appendix given below.

APPENDIX

1. Name of the VSS :
2. Registration No. of VSS :
3. Forest Division :
4. Forest Range :
5. District :
6. Taluk :
7. Village :
8. PFM Forest area (Surveyed sketch should be signed by both the parties) :
9. Legal status of the PFM forest area :
10. Extent of PFM forest area (in ha.) :
11. Boundaries of the PFM forest area :
North—
South—
East—
West—

We understand that the usufructory benefits as detailed in the aforesaid GO shall be allowed only upon satisfactory observance of rules by this Executive Committee and by members of the VSS as per the aforesaid GO. A copy of the aforesaid GO is annexed herewith duly signed on every page in evidence of our having understood the same in letter and spirit. It is hereby agreed that this MOU will come into effect from

President of the Executive Committee	:	Signature
		Name and Address
Secretary of Executive Committee	:	Signature
		Name and Address
Forest Range Officer (on behalf of KFD)	:	Signature
		Name and Address
Witness	1.	Signature
		Name and Address
	2.	Signature
		Name and Address

Place:
Date

12. VSS OPERATIONAL FUND

1. The VSS operational fund is the fund received as an advance from the funding agency to carry out forest development and protection activities. Each funding agency may have its own stipulations regarding maintenance of separate Operational Fund account.
2. All the forest development and protection activities would be funded through this fund in accordance with the provisions built in the micro plan. Outflows from this fund would be
 - Cost of planting and other forestry investments in accordance with the provisions of the micro plan.
 - Share of benefits to the VSS/member of VSS as agreed and set down in the guidelines.
 - Funds for entry point activities and other development activities.

The VSS operational fund shall be operated by the VSS President and the Secretary subject to decision of Executive Committee.

13. CORE FUND

13.1 Description

Core Fund is the asset of VSS consisting of various contributions and savings. This is sub-divided into (1) **Reserve Fund for Sustainable Management of Forests** (2) **Village Development Fund**.

VSS will initiate the Core Fund by depositing the membership fee collected. Benefits received by the VSS by way of implementation of the micro plan and from other sources shall also be deposited in this fund. This fund will be utilized as (1) Reserve Fund for Sustainable Management of Forests and (2) Village Development Fund.

The VSS Core Fund shall be jointly operated by Secretary of VSS and at least 2 members (one female) of the Executive Committee, chosen for the term for Executive Committee.

13.2 Reserve Fund for Sustainable Forest Management

The funds set apart as *Reserve Fund for Sustainable Forest Management* shall be utilized for forest management in the PFM area based on approved micro plan. The transaction and expenditure for management shall be controlled by Forest Department. The expenditure so incurred shall be audited by the internal audit system to be developed for the purpose by the DFO.

It is expected that after some time the VSS would be able to attain self-reliance and the funds at its command would be sufficient to meet the requirement. The fixed deposit kept in reserve for this purpose should be sufficiently large by then, so that the Government assistance could be withdrawn safely. A target of 10 years, ie the original micro plan period, should be taken as the normal duration to attain this level of self-reliance. Hence the VSS should be empowered to utilize the reserve fund from the 11th year onwards of formation.

The funds shall be kept as fixed deposit in Nationalized or Co-operative banks. The Secretary and President of VSS shall be joint signatories for maintaining the fixed deposit.

13.3 Village Development Fund

VSS shall prepare a budget for the Village Development Fund and utilize it after getting approval of the General Body. The implementation and expenditure will be monitored by the VSS and reported duly in the periodical review.

13.4 Auditing

The VSS has to follow the general procedure outlined below:

The auditing should be done half yearly and yearly. The half yearly auditing is to be done during January by two members of the General Body (not Executive Committee members) chosen for this purpose

Annual auditing is to be done during July by the above two members along with the representative of the Divisional Forest Officer appointed by him for the purpose.

The above audit reports should be presented in the ensuing GB and submitted to the Divisional Forest Officer through the Range Officer.

14. REVIEW OF PFM

The VSS Executive will evaluate the VSS performance for the pervious month and submit to the section Forester/Deputy Ranger who will in-turn review and record specific remarks. This will be submitted to the Range Officer who will review PFM every month and report VSS wise to DFO. The DFO will consolidate the inputs from the Range Officer for Conservators review every quarter. The Conservator will submit quarterly report on PFM and submit consolidated report to Regional CCF. The Regional CCF will review the report and submit consolidated report to Principal Chief Conservator of Forests. Principal Chief Conservator of Forests will submit half-yearly report to the Government.

15. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT FOR TRAINING, MONITORING, REVIEW AND EVALUATION

The staff of KFD and members of VSS will be given adequate training in PFM. Government will appoint a forest officer not below the rank of a CCF as State Level Co-ordinator.

A PFM Cell for the State will be constituted to explore possibilities of PFM to suit various forestry situations. The PFM Cell will help in developing such models, test and modify them in the field, provide training in various aspects of participatory approaches to forest management, conduct internal assessment and studies. The PFM Cell will be headed by the State Level PFM Co-ordinator.

Evaluation of the performance of PFM will be done by the Forest Department through an independent agency as and when it is required.
