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“Solidarity in a competing world —
fair use of resources”

Sustainable Forestry Development through Livelihood Enhancement of Fringe Forest Dwellers: A Case of Gujarat, India

NIDHI SINGH, SUVENDU ROUT

Indira Gandhi National Open University, Social Sciences, India

Abstract

Since 2007, the Government of Gujarat, India with the support of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), is implementing the Gujarat Forestry Development Project (GFDP) to restore degraded forests through enhancement of livelihoods of people living in and around forest areas. The project focuses on sustainable procurement and value addition of Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) such as *Chlorophytum borivilianum*, *Butea monosperma* and agricultural produce such as turmeric and vegetables. In this light, this paper conducts a detailed analysis of the project under the analysis framework of ‘sustainable rural livelihoods’ by Ian Scoones (1998). The first part of the paper conducts a literature review of various livelihood enhancement strategies in developing and underdeveloped nations of the world. It then, focuses on GFDP and uses the Scoones’ analysis framework to conclude if the strategies adopted have been able to achieve the desired goals. The analysis finds that the project was able to encourage community participation in conservation and development of degraded forests and enhance livelihood generation capacity of these communities to reduce pressure on forest resources. Joint Forest Management Committees at village level empowered people to take decisions regarding conservation and use of resources. Various capacity development methods and entrepreneurship development through women’s groups and producers’ groups increased productive capacities and thereby earnings of local tribal communities. This encouraged the communities to protect forests and create new ones. Productive activities were linked to better markets, which meant more revenues for the same effort. Women played an important role in increasing household income through productive activities by Self Help Groups (SHGs) by undertaking value addition to NTFPs and non-farm activities. The project facilitated small entrepreneurs to establish micro-enterprises to add value to local produces, thereby increasing their market value and earning. This paper is a result of extensive qualitative research conducted with GFDP, JICA and tribal communities to gather information.

Keywords: Forest management, rural development, rural livelihoods, self help groups, sustainable development