

## **Chapter 5: Recommendations**

The project has been successful and has made considerable improvements in several facets of the life of the forest fringe dwellers. In addition there has been improvement in ecological parameters like regeneration of forests, more availability of water and biodiversity. It has succeeded in weaning the Jhumias away from shifting cultivation. It has been successful in augmenting the income of the targeted villagers. The income sources have also become more reliable and consistent. There has been a significant increase in the availability of NTFP, not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of quality and variety.

### **JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES**

The project has been successful in the institutionalisation of JFMCs in the project areas with their active involvement in sustainable forest management. A process has been established for strengthening participatory forest management institutions. The SHGs as well as the JFMs institutions are quite robust as of now. It is required to carry the process further and sustain it, so that the grass-root level institutions are in a position to identify the emerging challenges and respond to them on their own, in a coherent manner, even when the government support is tapered out. Handholding support to JFMCs from time to time is required to enable them to demand and draw benefits from other Government schemes (e.g., sanitation) as well. This will further reduce their dependence on forests.

**Theme Wise Federation of SHGs:** In addition it is proposed that the SHGs and JFMs could be federated theme wise. The SHGs and Joint Liability Groups (JLGs) created under the Project can be federated at the level of the district and subsequently even at the state level. This will create a platform for exchanging best practices, creation of common markets and addressing other common problems and issues. There are several NTFP value addition models which could provide a larger production base for that product. This would also generate the necessary impetus for marketing of the products all over the state and even outside the state.

In addition, it is seen that convergence with line Departments such as Handloom, Handicrafts, Sericulture, Agriculture, Fishery etc. has played a very important part in the successful implementation of the IGA component of the project. At times this has also been done in coordination with Central Govt schemes, through the line departments. Therefore the theme wise federated bodies which will be specialising in the particular IGA, would be in a position to formulate their own microplans in consultation with and direct support of the line department. They can also mobilize finances for livelihood activities as permissible under the scheme.

To encourage the functionaries further, evaluation on objective criteria of the best performing committee at each level could be done. The winners could be felicitated publically to encourage and motivate others.

**Aadhar linkage and cashless fund transfer:** Most of the SHGs under the project do have bank linkages. It is recommended that Aadhar linkage to banks accounts could be insisted upon. This will have a benefit in the long run whenever other Aadhar linked schemes of the government are to be implemented. This linkage will give a readymade platform in future for such schemes that may come about.

In addition, digital cashless system of fund transfer including loans could be implemented so that fund trail is traceable.

## DOCUMENTATION AND REPLICATION OF BEST PRACTICES

The record keeping and monitoring methods of this project are worth emulating. It is suggested that the Standard Operating procedures for various activities of the project could be documented so that they can be replicated in other similarly placed states. Similar projects could be taken up (even domestically funded) so that the success can be replicated.

The best practices that have evolved over time could also be documented so that they can be disseminated centrally to other similar states doing such projects. The SOPs, micro plans, the agroforestry and other models developed over time that the project has used successfully need to be showcased and other states may take benefit from them. Similarly any learning from the project in things that may have gone wrong and had to be rectified should also be documented so that other states could benefit from the earlier experience and not repeat the same mistakes.

## REPLICATION OF MODELS IN NON PROJECT AREAS

Project has fostered enhancement of livelihood activities by forming new SHGs & revival of old SHGs in Project area and by dovetailing funds from other government schemes as well. Local capacities have been enhanced through training and capacity building to diversify livelihood options. The project has also excelled in enhancing ANR & plantation by involving JFMCs for rehabilitation of degraded forests for meeting local needs.

Effective livelihood packages (agroforestry, fish rearing, soil & moisture conservation structures, cane & bamboo crafts, etc.) have been developed. Innovative, agroforestry models for scientific management of RoFR land have been introduced. There are at least six Agroforestry models developed in the process, which have also been accepted by the people. In addition there are at least 6 very successful NTFP value addition models developed under the Project. All these need to be showcased and replicated in even the non-project areas. Existing schemes of the Government should be converged at the Scheme level and Agency level, which can be replicated beyond the project area. The assured flow of funds under the statutory employment generation Scheme of the Central government such as MGNREGA can be dovetailed with the Departmental Schemes to augment the productive assets which can lead to better sustainable income of the people.

## AUGMENTATION OF SCALE OF MARKETING

The brand name “Crafts & More” created under Tripura JICA Project can be popularized and an assured production line of forest based products can be established to sustain the brand.

The products of ‘Crafts and More’ and other produce could also be marketed internationally. As of now only the domestic market is being targeted. This could be taken a step further and awareness in the larger forum for these products generated and the markets could be expanded. For this the quality of the products could be improved to make them of international standards.

The online system for selling and marketing the produce could be further strengthened. More tie ups could be done with a larger number of agencies. For example, tie up with the Department of Posts could be done for delivering of the products. The department has a very wide reach in every nook and corner of the country. Such a tie up would help in targeting a larger population, particularly in two tier and three tier cities and towns. Even international deliveries could be done through this network.

## SUSTAINABILITY OF INSTITUTIONS

The project has over the years, put in place several institutions. The JFMs are now a vibrant and active mechanism. There is also a robust IT based Management Information System (MIS) in place where periodical monitoring takes place. It is understood that a Call centre based MIS is also operational at PMU for daily monitoring. There are online systems in place for obtaining regular real time feedback from the field. In addition there is a system for bi-monthly review at each RMU. This system can even be used by the state government/ forest department for monitoring other schemes. The expertise built up can be put to use by developing a panel of State level monitors and a system of cross-checking of the implementation can be made a part of the routine monitoring process of the Department.

It is suggested that the state government could put these institutions including JFMs to further use e.g. the project area could be made entirely Open Defecation Free. This could be done with the help of the network of the JFMs operating in the project area and also using the already established monitoring and other mechanisms.

The NCE is another excellent institution developed under the project. This too would require to be sustained after the project is over. It has already proved itself to be a very effective organisation for research, awareness generation and value addition of the NTFPs. This could be taken over by the state government to ensure its continued support to the people of the state.

The project has brought about a perceptible attitudinal change in the rank and file of the Department. Further orientation of more staff of the Department and the line Departments will consolidate the gains.

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

It is seen that women are playing a very active role in the implementation of the project. Many of the SHG members are women. They are also involved in most of the income generating activities. However it is felt that the role of women could be enhanced further and even institutionalised. During discussions with officials of India JICA office in Delhi, it was brought out that in some states like Rajasthan, the JFMC resolution is designed by the state government in such a manner that a vote for a women member from each household is ensured. It is suggested that this could be examined and if required, necessary amendments in the JFMC resolution in Tripura could also be brought about to further leverage the role of women in the decision making process.