

CHAPTER- 10

JOINT FOREST MANAGEMENT

Joint Forest Management (JFM) was born out of a socio-economic movement in the 1980s. The first Government Resolution — specific to Arabari socio-economic project -- was issued in 1987, just over 32 years back. The subsequent years saw not only the spread of JFM but also the evolution of its core characteristics. What was once a struggling sapling -- to borrow metaphor from forestry -- in 1980s and 90s, is now a fully grown tree. It has weathered the political upheavals, globalization of economy and an upwardly mobile society and still managed to stay relevant.

A series of Government Resolutions were passed in 1990s to institutionalize the new form of forest management, formalize the role of stake holders associated with it and spell out benefits that would accrue out of it. The initial resolution was issued for the forest areas in lateritic forest belt of Bengal where JFM really started; but as it spread geographically, new resolutions were issued specific to that geographical area. Thus we had resolutions specific for north Bengal forests, hill forests and Sundarban forests. A separate resolution was also came out for Protected Areas (for Eco-Development Committee) in 1992.

This cafeteria of Government Resolutions served the purpose very well at the initial stage. But as we progressed with their implementation, fissures started showing up. It was also felt that there should be one overarching piece of government resolution that covers the JFM all over the state.

The forest department, government of West Bengal was mulling with the idea of replacing the old resolutions with a new one for quite some time. A series of consultations were held, expert opinions were taken; and the ideas generated were examined by a committee for incorporation in the new resolution. The result of this exercise is the new JFM resolution incorporating all the Forest Protection Committees and Eco-Development Committees vide Forest Dept.'s No- 40-FOR dated 31.01.2017.