

SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND COMMON PROPERTY RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH INDIA: AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT IN ANDHRA PRADESH

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Abstract

In the context of high growth driven economy, the concept of social exclusion and inclusion acquired significance in academic and public policy circles. Most of studies on social exclusion focused on urban based exclusion and rural developmental interventions are not being given due attention. This article attempts to assess the performance of community forest management scheme from the prescriptive of social seclusion. Attempt is being made to indentify the multiple sources and process of social exclusion in the operational process of community forest management scheme in Andhra Pradesh and thereby locating the spaces for inclusion of excluded. The general trend is sample villages is that social exclusion of people is explicitly visible and this is product

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of collaborative effort of the nexus between forest department, and dominant social groups in village.

Key words: social exclusion, community forestry, forestry, development, discrimination.

Introduction

Much of academic discourse on common property resources (CPR) has been mainly a domain of economists until recently. It never means to say that economists did not reflect upon the social dimensions of CPR management. But social behavioral patterns and social intercourse in a community are perceived from economic prescriptive. The social dimension of community involvement in CPR management is being perceived as an offshoot of the process determined by economic rationality which influences the outcomes of group behavior. Consequently, the operational process and governing principles of alienation, deprivation, marginalization and social exclusion of certain social groups in community centered development programmes have not adequately been explored. In order to capture this phenomenon in CPR management this paper analyses the community forest management (CFM) South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh (AP). The paper proposes that the community centered development paradigm for management of forests resulted in heavy social costs which manifested in the form of exclusion and marginalization of certain social groups from their legitimate living. This process has created a wider gulf between objective and practice of the policy thereby resulted in poor performance of CFM in terms of poverty reduction in India.

Socio-cultural dimension in CPR management had acquired wider acceptance in the developmental discourse. This shift took place in the context of three macro level processes: firstly most of the third world countries in general and South Asia in particular unleashed rural development programmes by making community as a basic unit for implementation (Heller 2002): secondly the neo-liberal economic policies guided by globalization, liberalization and privatization process envisages minimization of state role and expects civil society to perform leading role in governance of local resources (Tang 1991 and Ribot 2004): thirdly politicization process in the context neo-liberal paradigm of development compelled the political parties mainly dominated by the interests of elite sections triggered the process of aggressive politicization in order to control the political power (Manor 1999, Harris, 2000). These processes created a new discourse on development paradigm based on bottom up approach. In this context the governance of CPR such as forests,

water, grass lands and etc., underwent drastic change in the name of peoples' centric or decentralized management. But the process of social exclusion based on caste, gender, religion, community, age had not been given due attention in the studies on CFM. This article attempts capture the process of social exclusion in the operational process of CFM in Andhra Pradesh.

This paper has been organized into three broad sections: first section consists of introduction, methodology and analytical approach: second section documents the implementation process of PFM with particular reference to the mechanisms of social exclusion in the selected villages of AP and the third section proposes certain broad findings and concluding reflections.

Methodology

In order to analyze the operational mechanisms of social exclusion and marginalization of the forest dependent communities this paper collected information from three villages covered by CFM scheme introduced by the government of AP in 2002. Three villages that are selected for analysis located in three districts falling under three different natural and bio-physical regions of AP i.e. Costal Andhra, Rayalaseema and Telangana. To capture the social dynamics of CFM process villages are selected on the basis of different social composition of population. Heerapur VSS in Adlabad district consists of BC and ST population, Mudireddy Palli village of Kadapa district represents the SC population consists of two sub castes and Sobhakota village of Visakapatnam district represents homogeneous tribal population (table-I). The information collected from study villages mainly of qualitative in nature through the methods of interviews with different stake holds, group discussions, transit walks, and available documents of sample village VSS committees.

Social exclusion and natural resource management:

Social exclusion as a theoretical concept anticipated by some studies as a process to conceptualize multiple forms of exclusion of certain social groups (Sen 2004, Sunders 2004, Orr 2005). These thematic studies prepared a conceptual agenda for study of social exclusion in India as a critique to the development paradigm brought by neo liberal policies. Social exclusion approach to study the livelihoods of socio-economically marginalized people in urban areas (Lal 2003) and rural areas (Baviskar and Mathew, 2009) gained wider acceptance in India. The linkages between social exclusion approach and CPR management has been attempted by some studies (Jodha 1990, Back and Maden 2000). But South India remained to be relatively neglected region in this respect. The social exclusion frame work used in this paper proposes that CFM in India provides differential access to different

e 1: Socio-economic composition of sample village

Districts	Village VSS	No. of HHs	Avg. size of HH	Avg. size land holding (acres)	% of households belonging to various Size Classes			% of HH belonging to various Social Categories			
					Ln. Less	Mg+Sm	Md+Lg	SC	ST	BC	OC
Adilabad	Heerapur	86	5.27	15.975	23.25(20)	62.79(54)	13.95(12)	0	38.76	61.24	0
Kadapa	Muddireddypalle	73	3.90	2.575	41.09(30)	58.90(43)	0(0)	100	0	0	0
Vishakhapatnam	Sobhakota	87	4.06	3.05	26.43(23)	65.51(57)	8.04(7)	0	100	0	0

: (1) HH = Households, Ln. Less = landless, Mg+Sm = Marginal and Small Farmers, Md+Lg = Middle and Large Farmers, SC = Scheduled Castes, ST = Scheduled Castes, BC = Backward Castes, OC = Other Castes. (2) Figures in parenthesis are actual number of households in the village.

communities based upon their prior status in terms of economic, social and political position. Therefore, development interventions in the form of CFM unleashed dual process i.e., while certain communities experienced upward development trajectory and socio-economic and politically marginalized communities underwent downward development trajectory (Farrington et al 2006). It is the latter category that experienced large scale of social expulsion process.

The Community Forest Management and Policy and practice

Community forest management policy was introduced in AP in 2002. This had envisaged active participation of forest dependent communities in conservation of forests.

Under CFM, 5000 villages, spread over 14 districts and covering 13,79,862 hectares of forest area were extended funding by the World Bank with the total outlay of Rs. 652 crores for the period of five years. The CFM targeted to benefit 55,000 families living in below poverty line (GoAP, 2002). The main object of the CFM scheme is "to reduce rural poverty through improved forest management with community participation" (Go AP, 2002).

Social exclusion and CFM

While the CFM policy envisaged for sustainable forest management to enhance the livelihood status of forest dependent communities, the outcomes went towards opposite direction. To put it in nutshell, CFM practice in AP could not generate tangible results and at the same time, resulted in exclusion of existing patterns of livelihoods of forest dependent communities (Samatha (2005, Reddy et al 2005)². This trend took place due to the collaborative network of the rural elite, some NGOs and some section of FD which had control over the course of scheme attempted to maximize their selfish interests. Consequently majority of poor and marginalized priorities are not included in the process of the scheme. As a result of this, the scheme could not operate in a congenial collective action paradigm and led to poor results. This process demonstrates multiple mechanism of social exclusion either institutional or fluid in the process of CFM implementation in our sample study villages. This encompasses social exclusion in terms of livelihood dependency, governance, technological, and skills. These factors exhibit the social exclusion in terms of caste, class, gender, political affiliation, sub-caste, religion, age, ethnicity, and region.

Exclusion from livelihood dependency in ST village

PFM has been projected as a panacea for problems of forest dependent communities. But some critical studies focusing on Africa and South East Asia concluded that participatory forestry could not effectively engaged with poverty reduction process (Sunderline, 2005, Richards, 1997). In India some studies proposed that livelihoods changes after implementation of PFM experienced negative trajectory as the customary livelihood practices are distributed (Revendranath et al, 2000). The filed level analysis did reflect the similar situation.

The governing principles of social exclusion in PFM are highly context specific and differ from village to village. But generally social exclusion is a product of the attempt by collaborative interests of forest department (FD), rural elite, NGOs, politicians and sections of dominant castes/class to maximize their gains from PFM scheme. With regard to tribal areas, FD reclaimed the land under *podu* cultivation³ for PFM activities estimated to be 37000 hectares. The sample village in the Visakhapatnam demonstrates the magnitude of this problem. It is observed that most of *podu* land was taken over by FD with the promise of wage employment in VSS works and alternative source of income to tribes. At the inception of PFM scheme, FD promised that 90 days of employment to members of the forest protection committee in a year provided tribes surrender the forest land used for *podu* cultivation. FD claims that *podu* land surrendered by tribes has been voluntary. But in our filed village it is observed that the dominant clans of village who do not depended upon *podu* forced the poor tribes to surrender *podu* land to FD. In fact in some occasion, poor tribes are threatened for dire consequences if they do not surrender *podu* land. With the expectations to get alternative income in VSS works most of them surrounded *podu* land. But it is observed that wage employment in VSS works was provided for two years and gradually declined and at the same time VSS conservation

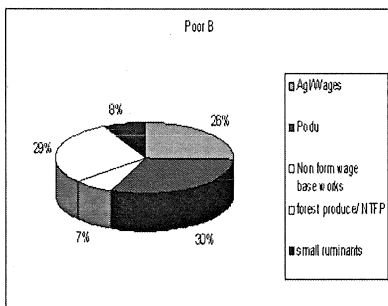


Fig 1: Income of Poor HH Before CFM in Visakhapatnam

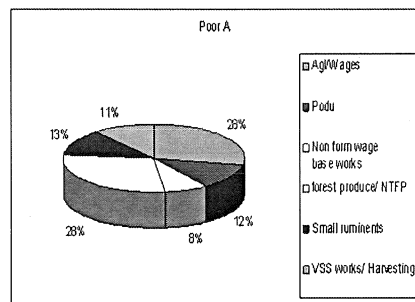


Fig 2: Change in income for Poor after CFM in Visakhapatnam

activities could not provide alternative income sources to them. This situation made poor tribes to undergo terrible income loss and food security (Fig 1-4)

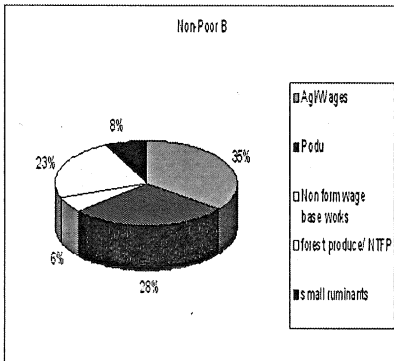


Fig 3: Change in income for Non-Poor Before CFM in Visakhapatnam

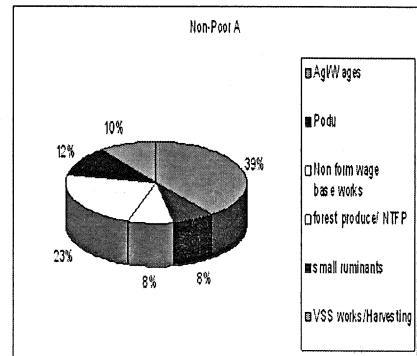


Fig 4: Change in income for Non-Poor after CFM in Visakhapatnam

In Visakhapatnam, income from podu cultivation constitutes 30% for the poor and 28% for the non-poor. Total income has declined due to the reclamation of podu lands under the CFM. This is one of the reasons for the relatively low growth in gross households' income in this district. Decline of income from podu is 18% for poor and 20% for non-poor. This decline had differential impact on poor and non poor. While the reduction in income from podu to non poor only in terms of income but in case of the poor not only income but also food security critical for their survival. Though the decline of podu income is compensated to some extent by the VSS wage works, which constitutes 11% for poor and 10% for non-poor, tribes lost their regular income and food security due to CFM (figures 1 -4).

The diversion of podu land to VSS work was done with the forceful persuasion of elite families who were also political leaders of the village, NGOs which mainly belong to sections of upper strata of tribal society. It was done with the promise of provision of alternative employment to people who surrender podu land. With no time this choice proved to be wrong. Consequently poor tribes are under tremendous pressure having lost their source of livelihood. It shows the operational forms of social exclusion which manifests in the form of cumulative upper class interests in rural areas led to social exclusion which pushes socially marginalized people to further frontiers of deeper marginalization.

Under PFM scheme, income generating activities such as tamarind pressing machine, leaf plate making machine, and honey processing were purchased in

our sample villages. But in all our sample villages this machinery was kept in the house of VSS president and unused. It was due to lack of adequate training skills neither imparted by FD nor by NGOs. FD had shown keen interests in purchase of this machinery than to make it operational. Due this sustainable income generating sources were not created in implementation process of PFM. As some studies argued that PFM could not create adequate income sources consequently forest dependent communities gradually lost faith which manifests in the form of decline in participation of people in VSS activities. One of the MC members in Sobhakota village narrated that 'PFM was introduced with much pomp and created serious hope to villagers who always strive to come out of the shackles of poverty. But all our hopes are shattered after five years of implementation of the scheme. Majority of houses do not have even ten rupees money in the village. If anybody falls sick we depended upon local traditional medicine man. If it cures fine otherwise people die'. This testimony reflects the attitude of people towards PFM policy.

Exclusion from Governance

CFM policy envisages for making people as managers of forests allotted for conservation with the assistance of FD, NGO local panchyats. Peoples' participation was given an institutional form consisting of general body (GB) in which all villagers who wanted to become members of VSS are allowed to join, and management committee (MC) is an elected body for governance of VSS consists of 15 members, chairperson and vice-chairperson. This institutional form is often referred to as decentralized forest management (fig-1).

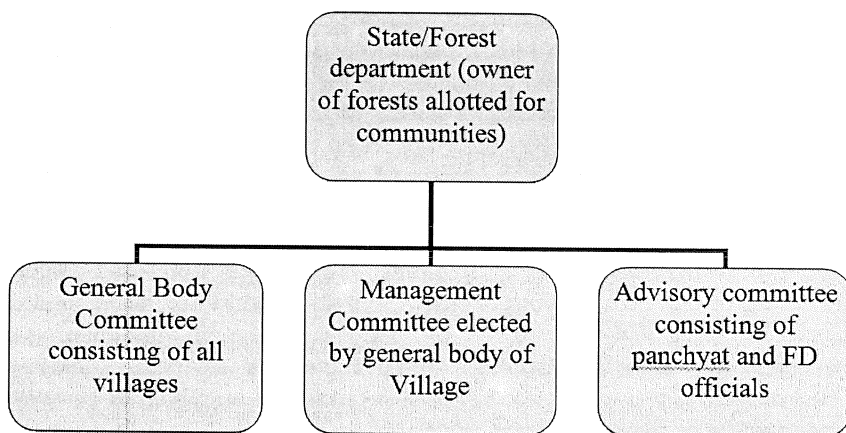


Fig-5 Institutional forms of VSS governance

PFM policy aimed at strengthening of rural democracy by making all villagers in GB committee. It has been declared all SC/ST members of village automatically became members of VSS without any formal enrolment. But in our sample villages it is observed that participation of VSS members consists of two categories i.e., active and passive. Active membership and participation means participation in wage employment under VSS works, taking part in decision making process. But this phenomenon confined mainly to dominant sections of village and their followers who had close rapport with FD. Passive membership or participation experienced by socio-economically and politically weak groups in terms of caste, clan and religion, old people, and gender that were not provided wage employment and did not participate in decision making process. It is this section of people that undergone social exclusion process in implementation process of CFM.

Exclusion of certain social groups from active participation in VSS works explicitly visible in our all sample villages. In tribal village of Visakhapatnam political parties involved in election process of MC. After getting elected to chairperson of MC leaders of MC systematically excludes the villagers belong to opposite political parties. Besides this political exclusion, people following Christianity are not given membership in GB. In SC village of Kadapa district, socio-economically dominate caste among SC Mala community not only occupied chairperson post but also excluded SC sub-caste Madiga community which considered to be poorest from active participation in VSS works. In ST and BC village similar trend persist where BC occupied most of the positions in MC and excluded tribe from decision making process. However, in three villages the forms of social exclusion differ. In tribal areas politically and ethnic induced exclusion is visible, in SC village sub-caste based exclusion and in BC and ST village exclusion of ST is done based on the religion. Thus, social exclusion is highly context specific.

In or filed villages many GB/MC members not even aware of what is the membership meant for. In this context most of the important decision making positions in MC are occupied by families of socio-economic and politically dement families of village with whom FD officials and NGO had good rapport. This nexus is responsible for exclusion of most of poor class of villages such as land less, old age men and women, religious minority, women and dalits. In PFM implementation process consists of preparation of micro plan, selection of VSS works, selection of species to be planted in forests, purchase of machinery, sharing of income sources, arrangement of meetings, etc majority of GB and even MC members are unaware. Many a times, it was the MC and FD department take decision and convey this to other members (table 2). Thus, exclusion of certain sections of people starts at the beginning it self.

Table: 2 General pattern of decision making process in sample villages

Functional aspects	VSS/ GB	FD/ MC	NGO
1. Organization of meetings, GB/MC	√	√	√
2. Selection of Forest areas for VSS		√	
3. Micro Plan preparation	√	√	√
4. Identification of works		√	
5. Species selection		√	
6. Carrying out of works		√	
7. Supervision of works		√	
8. Estimating the costs		√	
9. Funds allocation		√	
10. Distribution of harvesting income		√	
11. Distribution of forest products	√		
12. Entry point activities	√	√	√
13. Minute writings	√	√	√
14. NTFP value editions		√	
15. Distribution of livelihood enhancement activities		√	
16. Marketing of forest products		√	
17. Selection of training programme		√	

Decision making process in GB/MC and exclusion of tribes from governance

VSS management in village consists of the conservation works carried out under the supervision of MC. This process expected to be decided by the consent of GB/ MC members. But VSS consecration works such as selection of conservation works, species to be planted, distribution of revenue and others are taken by Chairperson and Vice-chairperson of VSS (Table-2). Consequently, wider inclusive participation in VSS works could be translated into reality. With regard to tribal village of Visakhapatnam, it is FD which dominates the decision-making process. Due to low level of education MC dependents on FD officials for all activities of VSS. Especially, women are afraid of interacting with FD. In Shobakota village, it is observed that chairperson and lower staff of FD takes all important decisions related

to VSS management. MC meetings supposed to be held every month were not organized. This process led to explicit divisions within tribal society. Thus, PFM implementation process crystallized the group differences in tribal areas. The envisaged inclusive participation with collective action for management of forests turned out to be exclusion of certain tribes who depended upon forest for survival (fig-2).

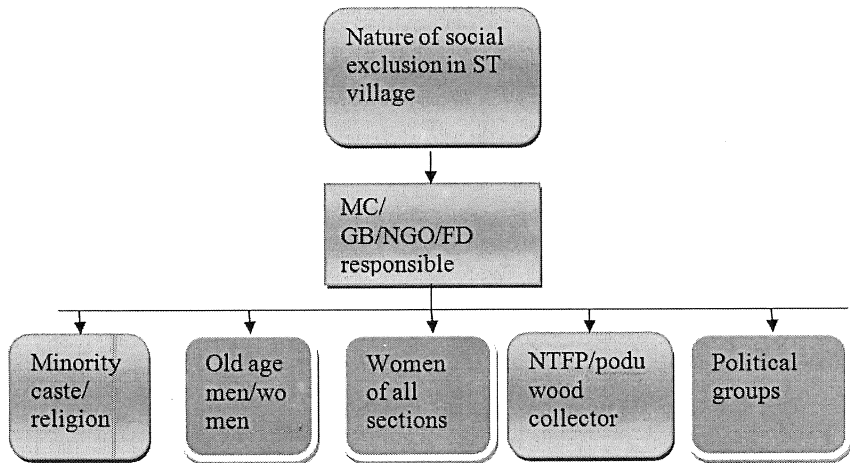


Fig. 6: Decision making process and forms of exclusion in ST village

Decision making process in SC village

VSS village consisting of SC population represent inter and intra community forms of social exclusion. Sub caste conflicts within SC community consist of Madigas and Malas on the one hand and the upper caste domination in VSS management affairs on the other undermined the performance of PFM in Mudireddy Pally village of Kadapa district. Reddy casts here is dominant caste and NGO activists and panchyats surpanch also belong to the same caste. While Madiga community numerically larger community and economically and socially backward and Mala community numerically smaller, but economically advanced and socially vibrant. The Mala community occupied chairperson posts with the blessing of politicians belong to Reddy caste. Important decision related to VSS management such as selection of species, conservation works to be undertaken in VSS are taken by chairperson a women belong to Mala caste. In fact Madiga caste people were not

only prevented from VSS wage works but also prohibited from rearing goats and collection of forest products which are important sources of livelihoods. With regard to upper caste domination, even after formation of VSS Reddy caste send cattle, collect wood and other forest products. Due to these conflicts, VSS conservation works derailed and poorest among SC community, women, and old people who live by selling minor forest products became victims of the scheme (Fig. 3).

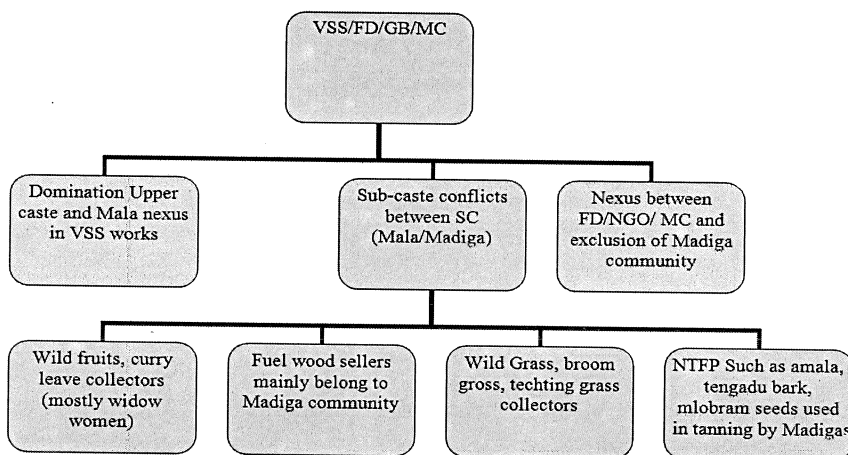


Fig.7. Decision making process and social exclusion in SC village (sub-caste)

Decision making process and exclusion in Backward Class (BC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) village

The process of social exclusion due to the fact that it mainly depends upon the contextual environment in which particular process takes place. For instance, in the realm of political discourse there exists a slogan of SC/ST/BC communities should work together. When come to sharing resources, there emerged a conflict between BC and ST. Heeraur village in Adilabad district experienced conflicts between BC and ST communities. In this village BCs constitutes 68% population and rest of the population belongs to ST community. As a result most of the membership and key position in MC like chairperson and vice chairperson are captured by BCs.

BCs are economically advanced and possessed land as assets and do not depend upon forest for survival. They wanted to convert the forest land allocated for management of VSS into mono plantation mainly of teak as it gives handsome

income in the long run. STs opposed this measure as their dependency on forests would be restricted if forest were converted into mono plantations. However in spite of this opposition, VSS MC dominated by BCs opted for teak plantation which starts giving income after 20 years. Hence, tribes' dependency on broom stick collection, dry wood collection, tendu leave collection, *muhva* flower and wild fruits collection severely affected by restrictions. In fact many old women deepened upon minor forest products lot lost livelihoods potions. In the absence of possession agriculture land tribes were severely affected excluded from livelihood dependency and governance.

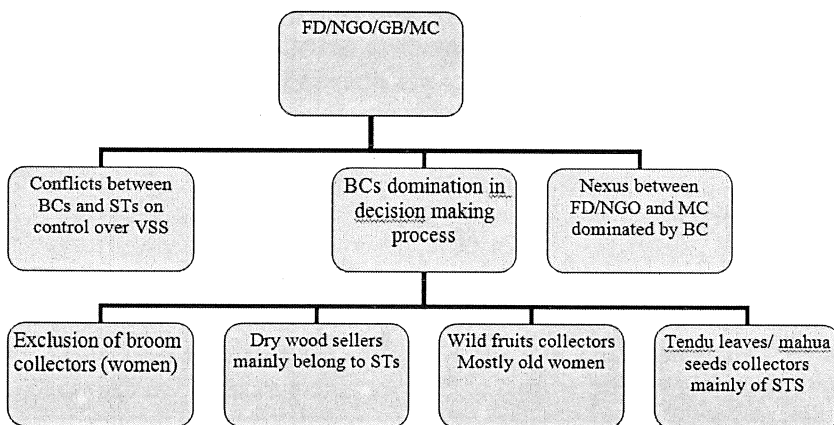


Figure. 8 Process of social exclusion in BC and ST village

Exclusion of Women

Discourse on eco-feminism proposes for the involvement of women in PFM because of their everyday proximity to forests (Shiva, 1988). Women participation in participatory development schemes has been perceived as an important factor for success of PFM. CFM policy proposed 50 % membership for women in GB/ MC. Besides either VSS chairperson or vice-chairperson post is reserved for women. In spite of this mechanism for women empowerment in CFM, women, and mostly poor vulnerable women are excluded from the process of PFM scheme.

Though the CFM rules ensure the membership for women in GB/MC, women participation in VSS activities was undermined by three factors: first FD staff exclusively consist of men dominate women chairpersons and on the other, women members could not interact with FD staff due to social inhibitions; second is lack of information

on GB/MC meetings and VSS works. Most of the times women do not participate in meetings of VSS, if they participate remain to be passive participants. For instance, a women member from Mudireddy Pally SC colony felt that “we hardly know when the management committee meetings take place. In fact, many members of the management committee do not know what decisions were taken in meetings. Forest officials and NGO members come to village and talk to Chairperson and launch the works. We are informed about VSS works only after the decision was taken”.

In tribal village of Visakapatnam district, it is evident that women in MC do not participate and unaware of any decision being taken by MC. The egalitarian ethics of tribes are fading due to development interventions such as CFM. The customary dependency of women on forests was restricted by VSS conservation works. At the same time, the wage employment that was promised of was not fulfilled by the government. Consequently women always attempted to breach the rules of VSS and resorted to everyday form of resistance against VSS management.

Conclusion

Branching out a decentralized institutional forest management system to cater to the needs of forest dependent communities require a sincere effort by stakeholders involved in the operational process of PFM. The present paper shows that in all stages of implementation process of PFM, important stakeholders like women, landless and other marginalized sections were excluded from the benefits. In fact, socio-economically backward people in villages were further marginalized due to PFM scheme. This process was done by the collaborative interests of rural elite, politicians, NGOs and FD nexus to maximize gains from the scheme. It is these groups that attempted to acquire maximum benefits out of PFM at the costs of livelihood needs of the poor and vulnerable.

The implementation process of PFM shows the changing character of social system in India. The development paradigm influenced by the globalization process, mainly target specific policies in CPR management such as water, forests and soil fertility management. But the implementation process of these schemes lead to polarization in rural areas in terms of caste, religious, ethnic and political. These differences are articulated with new tone of aggression in order to maximize the benefits from CFM scheme. This trend led social exclusion of silent actors in society such as landless, old, women, religious and ethnic minorities. This exclusion was resisted by them within their own limitation largely on the modal of everyday form of resistance. This means the excluded people not only practice non-cooperation but also attempts to sabotage the implementation process of CFM. This phenomenon led to wider gap between policy objectives and implementation of CFM. Hence, inclusion of the

excluded in forest dependent communities needs to take the social dynamics carefully into consideration.

End Notes

- ¹ Number of VSS committees constituted under Participatory Forest Management in Andhra Pradesh has significantly increased, at present 8,343 VSS are in function and covers 23.18 Lakh Hectares of the Forest land under the control of the Forest Department. (Government of Andhra Pradesh, Economic Survey 2005-06, Hyderabad, 2006, p. 46).
- ² Samatha is a Nongovernmental organization which fight against the exclusion and displacement of people due to development projects, mining, and other state or private intervention. It has undertake evaluation study in 2005 and demonstrated the way CFM implementation process excluded poor tribes from their legitimate livelihood in AP.
- ³ Podu is the name of shifting cultivation practiced by tribes in especially in the Eastern Ghats of AP.
- ⁴ This is general phenomenon of CPR management policy. In 1930s the British government introduced similar experiment with to that of CFM under the name of forest panchayats in several parts of south India. But these have lost existence within 20 years of their inception. Soon after independence, government of India terminated the policy in the name of miss-management.

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Glossary

AP	-	Andhra Pradesh
GB	-	General Body
BC	-	Backward Caste
CFM	-	Community Forest Management
CP	-	Chairperson
FD	-	Forest Department
HH	-	House Holders
JFM	-	Joint Forest Management
MC	-	Management Committee
MP	-	Micro Plain
NGO	-	Non-Governmental Organization
NTFP	-	Non Timber Forest Products

- PFM - Participatory Forest Management
 SC - Schedule Castes
 ST - Schedule Tribes
 VCP - Vice Chairperson
 VSS - Vana Samrakshna Samithi

Appendix

Table-1: Change in income before and after (data pertain to fig.1-4)

Village Name	Items	Non - Poor		% Change	Poor		% Change
		Before	After		Before	After	
Adilabad (district)	Agri .	4800	7200	50.00	3000	5000	66.67
	NFL	1400	1800	28.57	1750	3000	71.43
Heerapur	NTFP	1800	2200	22.22	2300	2600	13.04
	VSS works	0	600	0.00	0	600	
	Total	8000	11800	47.50	7050	11200	58.86
Visakapatnma (Dist)	Agri.	2500	3500	40.00	1500	2500	66.67
Gudlamveedi	Podu	1500	0		1800	1000	-44.44
	NFL	600	1050	75.00	800	900	12.5
	NTFP	1500	2000	33.33	1500	2000	33.33
	SR	500	1000	100	500	1000	100
	VSS works	0	900		0	1000	
	Total	6600	8450	28.03	6100	8400	37.71
Kadapa (district)	Agri.	4500	6000	33.33	4000	5000	25
MRpalli SC colony	NFL	3600	6000	66.67	2000	2750	37.5
	NTFP	450	800	77.78	600	800	33.33
	SR	0	0		500	750	50
	VSS works	0	900		0	900	
	Total	8550	13700	60.23	7100	10200	43.66

NFL: Non forming labor, NTFP: Non-timber forest products, SR: Small ruminants