The Role of Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Forest Management

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Abstract
Forest protection and restoration in Karnataka, India, face challenges from villagers who need fuel wood for cooking, demand for other forest products in the market place, excessive grazing by livestock, and both illegally set and naturally occurring fires. Degradation of forest resources has a direct impact on the livelihoods of forest dependent villagers living in or near forests. Likewise, poverty in these villages can create enormous pressure on forest resources.

This poster showcases the successful and innovative efforts of the Karnataka State Sustainable Forest Management and Biodiversity Conservation Project in introducing a participatory and entrepreneurship-based approach to forest protection and restoration and briefly summarizes the results of a study conducted of 10 randomly selected Village Forest Committees to determine the impact of income generating activities on the livelihood of the village people and on the environment in and around each village. Opinions voiced by Village Forestry Committees regarding the quality of service from the Karnataka Forestry Department are also described.

The strategy employed by the project focuses on the improvement of livelihoods of forest dependent people who live in or near forest areas through the introduction of income generating activities, especially among women. Village Forest Committees, composed of local village people and forest department extension personnel, developed a shared goal of safeguarding natural resources while improving the livelihood of forest dependent people. In addition to providing training on income generating entrepreneurial activities, forestry extension staff trained villagers how to extract raw materials from the forest in ways that do not adversely affect the long-term viability of the forest and would not disturb the ecological equilibrium of the village and surrounding areas. As part of the project, the Karnataka Forest Department also planted a variety of trees in the forest and village common lands and the usufructs and revenue generated out of these plantations are to be shared between the Village Forestry Committee members and the Karnataka Forest Department. Such sharing helps to cement the role of forest dependent villagers as stakeholders in the preservation of the forest land.

Key Words: Extension, Social Forestry, Entrepreneurship