

**GOVERNMENT OF KERALA**

**Abstract**

Forest & Wildlife Department—Participatory Forest Management Guidelines for implementation-Orders issued.

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**FOREST & WILDLIFE (E) DEPARTMENT**

G.O.(Ms) 84/97/F&WLD

Dated, Thiruvananthapuram, 13-10-1997

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Read: 1            G.O (MS) no. 94/95/L WLD Dated 18-12-95  
      2            Letter No. PCB 658/97, Dated 20-09-97 from the Principal Chief  
                  Conservator of Forests (Development and Project), Thiruvananthapuram.

**ORDER**

1            The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests in his letter read as 2<sup>nd</sup> paper above has informed that the National Forest Policy 1988 envisages people's involvement in the protection and development of forest. The Government of India, Ministry of Environment and forest had issued policy guidelines for peoples participation in the management of forests which broadly indicate the frame work and strategy for participation of people. The State Government were also requested to take appropriate action along the suggested lines.

2            As per the Government Order read as Ist paper above, government have accorded sanction for joint Forest Management system and also issued sanction to form a committee to study certain specified forest areas and suggest suitable models. Based on the detailed study guidelines have prepared. The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests had, requested Government sanction to implement participatory Forest Management in Kerala as per the guidelines submitted by him.

3            Government have examined the matter in detail and are pleased to accord sanction for the implementation of participatory Forest Management in Kerala as per the guidelines appended to this Government Order. The said guidelines from part of this order.

(BY ORDER OF THE GOVERNOR)

Sd/-

G.LEELA

Deputy Secretary to Government

## **PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The National Forest Policy, 1988 envisages people's involvement in the development, protection and management of forests. It is also increasingly being felt that forest management programmes need to be reoriented to respond to the needs of the rural peoples living in and around forest areas and that the forest produce like fuel wood, NTEP, timber etc, are made available to the forest depended villagers preferentially so that the village communities are motivated to help in the development and protection of Forests. Accordingly, Government of India, Ministry of Environment and Forest, in their letter dated 1.6.1990 had issued guidelines for involving village communities and voluntary agencies in regeneration of degraded forest lands. The State Government were also requested to take appropriate action along the suggested lines. The guidelines suggested by the Government of India envisage the formulation of a Participatory Forest Management Scheme charged with the responsibilities of preparing plans (microplans) for participation and managing the same as per the approved plan.

Increasing pressure of population on forests and resultant forest degradation, the fragility of the ecosystem, conservation of biodiversity and maintenance of ecological balance of the area are major concerns of the State. The fact that policing the forest resources alone is not enough to protect the forest from degradation and that the participatory management experience from all over the country bears testimony to the participatory approach in dealing with anthropogenic factors in forest protection, justifies the development of PFM approach in the protection of forests in Kerala where these factors have contributed to degradation to a sizeable extent. Having realised the necessity of ensuring people's participation in effective protection and management of the forest resources in Kerala, it is decided to develop Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in selected forest areas of the State. Kerala being socio-politically different from other states in India the PFM programme envisaged in the State will have to be developed through a number of pilot studies in selected areas, designed to address different forest management problems, as part of the Project Preparation Facility (PPF) activities under the proposed World Bank assisted Kerala Forestry Project. With a view to evolve the modalities and relative strategies in implementing the programme, detailed workshops, seminars and discussions were also held with all levels of Forest Officers, Scientists, Public, Members of legislative Assembly and NGOs. Study tours by forest officers were also conducted in other state where Participatory Forest Management is practised. Based on these inputs, the following guidelines are issued.

### **2 AREA TO BE SELECTED FOR PFM**

Keeping in the view the local factors, the Range Officer shall select degraded natural forest and plantations where conditions are suitable for PFM. These area may include.

- 1 Scattered and fragmented degraded forest land in the vicinity of the villages, facing encroachment and conservation problems.
- 2 Fringes of forest area adjoining villages
- 3 Forest area adjoining villages
- 4 Forest areas encroached after 1-1-77 and evicted by Forest Department

- 5 The DFO or his nominated officer shall be responsible for the review of the activities of the VSS every quarter. The monthly review shall be conducted by the Forest Range Officer. The Conservator of Forests will review the programme every six months. The shortcomings and the observations noted during the review shall be rectified by the committee immediately.
- 6 If the DFO finds that the funds provided for the activities of the Microplan are not utilised properly, he shall stop the implementation of the Microplan.
7. The Forest Department will arrange for providing necessary training to VSS members in various forestry activities like raising nursery etc.
8. The VSS members shall be trained to maintain the accounts
- 9 Forest Officials shall inform the VSS about the various provision of Forest Act and Rules and give details of forest offenders to the committee in order to get the necessary and timely assistance of the committee, in detection of offences and successful prosecution.

### **3. PROCEDURE FOR INTRODUCING PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT (PFM)**

PFM means the activities will be planned, implemented maintained and monitored by the village institutions with the help of suitable facilitators and the Forest Department. Participatory process first requires creating good rapport, trust and partnership. The process of PFM essentially involves the following phases: Entry phase, preparatory phase, Planning phase, Implementation phase and Monitoring phase.

The objectives of the Entry phase is to lay the foundation for good relationship with village community and create an awareness about the forests, environment, basic expectations of PFM and also establish a pattern of Participatory learning and self help activities.

The objective of the Preparatory Phase is work with village groups to collectively discuss, plan and develop approaches to improve their livelihood and forest resources taking into consideration the problems, solutions, potential and constraints.

The objective of the Planning Phase is to prepare, review, consolidate and approve the Micro-plan by the village community and Forest Department with help from resource persons and facilitators.

The objective of Implementations Phase and Monitoring Phase are to implement the agreed microplans and to undertake systematic monitoring of the microplan implementation.

The Forest Department Officials should actively involve in each of the above phases 'Social Intermediaries' shall be engaged for working along with the villagers and forest officials in all the phases. The initial meeting with the villagers may also be facilitated through local Non Government Organisations and Panchayats.

The selection of the PFM area shall be done on a watershed basis, The selection of the participatory village community shall be done on the basis of the Panchayats ward/ identifiable hamlets/ user groups depending on the local situation and the need to have an equitable and identifiable participating community. While selecting the area and identifying the participating village community, user groups, the Divisional Forest Officer, will initiate actions for Entry Phase activities. In the course of such contacts, the Range Officer may fix up a date in consultation with the villagers for convening a meeting of the participating village community.

Range Officer will convene the village community meeting on the appointed date after giving due publicity for the same in the locality. On the prescribed date, a village level institution namely, Vana Samrakshana Samithi (VSS) shall be formed.

The field of activity of the individual samithi shall be the selected areas in the nearby forests and it shall be surveyed and demarcated in the field.

For all subsequent meetings of the VSS, the Member Secretary of the Executive committee shall be the Convenor.

#### **4. CONSTITUTION OF THE VANA SAMRAKSHANA SAMITHI (VSS)**

Every household living in the selected ward/hamlets/user-group will have the option of becoming member of the Samithi. Any two adult member from each household can become members in the VSS and out of them one shall be a woman. They shall register their names with the Range Officer on a payment of a sum of Rs.5/- per house-hold which shall be credited to the village development fund of the VSS. The SC/ST members are exempted from the payment of registraion fee. For the purpose of sharing of benefits, as per clause II each family will be considered as a single unit. The approval of the DFO is mandatory for the VSS. The DFO shall issue registration number and date of approval to each VSS approved by him. New members t the VSS shall be admitted once in a year on the basis of recommendation to this effect by the Executive Committee to the DFO.

#### **5. CONSTITUTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

After formation of the VSS as explained above, an Executive Committee shall be constituted from the members of VSS to carry out the approved participatory forest management plan, the Microplan. The executive committee shall consist of the following members.

- |      |  |   |
|------|--|---|
| i.   | Nine elected representatives from the VSS  | Members of which 3 shall be women members. Among the elected members there shall be representation of a minimum of 2 members from SC/ST |
| ii.  | Concerned Grama Pachayat member  | Ex-officio Member   |
| iii. | Concerned Forester/Forest Guard  | Ex-officio Member Secretary   |
| iv.  | A representative of an active local NGO Nominated by the Divisional Forest Officer | Ex-officio Member   |
| v.   | A nominee from the Tribal Development Department                                   | Ex-officio Member   |

(Only in the case of VSS in which tribal members exceeds  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the total membership) The committee shall elect the President from the elected members. The term of President shall be co-terminus with that of the committee. Only the elected members shall have voting rights.  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the members of the committee shall

constitute the quorum. The term of the committee shall be two years.

- vi. The Member Secretary shall call the meeting of the Executive Committee in consultation with the President and shall record and maintain the minutes of the meeting
- vii. The Forest Range Officer shall be the Returning Officer for the election of members of Executive Committee in the General Body meeting of the VSS.
- viii. The approval of the Divisional Forest Officer is mandatory for the Executive Committee.

## **6. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VSS**

A General Body Meeting of the VSS shall be held once in every six months to review the actions taken in pursuance to the approved microplan, status of forest protection and functioning of the Executive Committee. Under special circumstances, the General Body Meeting of the VSS may be convened on a request of not less than 1/3 of the VSS Members to the convenor of the General Body Meeting.

The Secretary of the Executive committee shall be the convenor of General Body of VSS and shall maintain the minutes of the meeting.

The members of VSS, individually and collectively shall be responsible for.

- a) ensuring protection of the PFM areas from encroachment, grazing, fires, illicit felling, poaching, thefts etc.
- b) ensuring execution of activities in accordance with the Microplan through the executive committee
- c) making other villagers aware of the importance of nature conservation and forest protection.
- d) Ensuring protection of forest areas not covered under PFM.

Members of VSS shall have the power to:

Apprehend the forest offenders and hand them over to the forest officers to take action under the provision of the relevant Acts and Rules. Where forest offenders have been handed-over to the concerned forest officers, the concerned forest officer shall be responsible to report back to the Executive Committee the action taken by him.

## **7. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

- I. The Executive Committee shall meet at least once every month
- II. The member secretary shall be responsible for sending the proceedings of the executive committee to the Range Officer for information and advise. In case the Forest Range Officer finds that the decisions of the executive committee are contrary to the approved microplan or the relevant Acts and Rules he shall report the matter to the Divisional Forest Officer & Conservator of Forests immediately and inform the committee also. The decision of the DFO on this will be binding on the committee.
- III. If any member of the VSS is found to indulge in acts against forest laws and rules and become an accused in a forest offence or acts against the approved microplan such member shall be debarred from the VSS by the executive committee.

- IV. The Executive Committee along with the Member Secretary shall be responsible for preparation and execution of the microplan. The Committee shall take guidance of the Conservator of Forests in preparing and executing the microplan.
- V. The Executive committee shall be responsible for ensuring the general protection of forests.
- VI. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for maintaining proper accounts of the expenditure incurred in the prescribed formats and procedure.

## **8. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF FOREST DEPARTMENT**

- i. Forest Department shall provide all technical assistance in the formulation and implementation of the Microplan.
- ii. They shall make all efforts to get the finances for the implementation of the annual activities specified in the Microplan. For activities outside the Microplans, the forest Department shall facilitate in procuring sufficient funds from other Departments.
- iii. If the DFO is convinced that the VSS has carried out their duties satisfactorily in the protection of forest from encroachment, theft, illicit felling, fire, grazing etc and the activities specified in the microplan, the amount earmarked for these works will be credited in the account of the committee. The fund can be utilised by the committee for the Implementation of the development programmes as decided by the committee.
- iv. The DFO or his nominated officer shall be responsible for the review of the activities of the VSS every quarter. The monthly review shall be conducted by the Forest Range Officer. The conservator of Forests will review the programme every six months. The shortcomings and the observations noted during the review shall be rectified by the committee immediately.
- v. If the DFO, finds that the funds provided for the activities of the Microplan are not utilised properly, he shall stop the implementation of the Microplan.
- vi. The forest Department will arrange for providing necessary trainings to VSS members in various forestry activities like raising nursery etc.
- vii. The VSS members shall be trained to maintain the accounts.
- viii. Forest officials shall inform the VSS about the various provisions of Forest Acts and Rules and give details of forest offenders to the committee in order to get the necessary and timely assistance of the committee, in detection of offences and successful prosecution.

## **9. MICROPLAN**

The executive committee shall prepare a microplan for a period of 10 years in consultation with the participating community, user-groups, NGOs and Forest Officers. The microplan shall be prepared through a process of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) involving all sections particularly women, SC/ST and user-groups. The plan shall include the management of forest & village resources of the VSS. It shall contain the details of production of fuel, wood, timber, fodder and other forest produce. The plan shall prescribe measures for control of excessive biotic pressure on forests. It will provide expected annual yields of forest produce, the areas from where it can come and the quantities of forest produce which help in reducing dependency on forest. In short, a microplan should essentially cover various aspects related to resource management and development such as:

- i. Forest Protection: (ie. Demarcation of areas, prevention of fire, grazing, unauthorised entry, felling of trees, green manure collection, harvesting of forest produce etc.)
- ii. Forest maintenance: (ie. Silviculture, protection of plantation, regeneration, rehabilitation, soil and water conservation etc.)

- iii. NTFP Development: (ie. Planting and maintenance of fuel, fodder, medicinal plants, pasture, green manure & other activities promoting harvesting and marketing of NTFP)
- iv. Agro/Social Forestry: (ie. Soil and Water Management measure in villages, raising strip plantations, raising wood lots in community land, supply of seedlings to farmets etc.) and
- v. Other activities: Infrastructural and other development activities in the village

The microplan, thus prepared shall be presented in the general body of the VSS for its approval. It shall be then sent to the DFO who in turn shall forward it to the conservator of Forests with his comment and modifications, if any the CF will formally approve the plan for implementation. The CF will have authority for effecting amendment in the plan if need be. All activities covered under any other approved plan/project for the area selected for the PFM shall be included in the microplan. But, no non-forestry activity or any activity contrary to the existing Acts and Rules shall be undertaken in the forests areas.

The approved microplan will be implemented through the Executive Committee of the VSS

## **10. CORE FUND**

A core fund shall be constituted by the VSS for the sustained management of the PFM areas. The VSS will contribute to this fund from the benefits received by it by way of implementation of the Microplan. The VSS can utilise this fund, preferably the interest accrued, for the protection of the PFM areas perpetually.

## **11. SHARING OF BENEFITS**

On satisfactory achievement of the aims of VSS in terms of protection of forests and implementaion of the activities in the microplan the VSS may be entitled to the benefits given below. The benefits will be sanctioned only on the recommendation of the Executive committee and on the certificate and passes issued by the Range officer and agreed by DFO. Harvesting of all the forest produce in PFM area will be as per silvicultural principles.

1. The VSS shall be entitled to collect the specified quantities and items of NTFP from the PFM areas as per prescriptions in the microplan.
2. The VSS shall be entitled to collect the specified quantities of fodder, fuelwood, green manure or such other products from PFM area for bonafide use of its members as per prescriptions in the microplan.
3. The VSS shall be entitled to collect specified quantities of Bamboo and Reeds on seigniorage from PFM area for bonafide use of its members as per prescriptions in the microplan.
4. The VSS will be entitled to 10% of the net revenue of the harvested forest produce from the plantation raised and protected by VSS under PFM and 25% of the net revenue of the forest produce from other forests within the PFM area as per approved Microplan. The amount so received shall be credited to the account of the VSS. 50% of this amount shall be utilised for the development activities, 25% shall be credited to the Core Fund and the balance 25% may be distributed among the members or utilised as decided by the Executive Committee.

## **12. MAINTENANCE OF ACCOUNTS**

All financial transactions of the VSS shall be carried out through an account jointly operated by the Member Secretary and President of the Executive committee in any nationalised/scheduled bank. The accounts shall be kept and audited as per the prescriptions in Microplan.

## **13 TERMINATION OF VSS/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The Divisional Forest Officer for sufficient reasons on record shall dissolve the Executive Committee and the VSS after conducting due enquiry.

The VSS/Executive Committee shall have the opportunity to appeal against such order within one month to the conservator of Forests whose order shall be final.

## **14. REVIEW/FURTHER EXPERIMENTATION**

As PFM is new to Kerala, it will be taken up in selected sites initially. Pilot studies will be carried out in six sites in the first year. The strategy adopted will be '*learning by doing*'. Apart from the periodical reviews as already mentioned, there shall be a State level review of the whole process after two years after a thorough evaluation of the programme. Modification, if any, will be resolved after this biennial review.

The above guide lines outline the general principles of PFM. "Considering the prevailing socio-political conditions in Kerala, PFM may require many models. Therefore adequate freedom and flexibility in design and implementation of the programme shall be given to the Divisional Forest Officers. DFOs should be encouraged to take up experimental PFM projects with the approval of the concerned Conservator of Forests, CCF (WBP) and PCCF. The objective of such experiments is to develop appropriate location specific PFM models suitable to Kerala."

## **15. MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

The format for the Memorandum of Understanding to be signed between Executive committee of VSS and Forest Department is appended.



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING**

A memorandum of understanding in the following format shall be signed between the Executive committee of the VSS and the Range Officer (on behalf of forest Department) before the starting of the implementation of the Microplan.

We, the President and Secretary of the Executive ommittee of the VSS of ..... Village of ..... Forest Range (on behalf of the VSS) do hereby undertake individually and collectively to perform the duties and shoulder the responsibility as detailed in Government Order No. .... dated ..... for proper management, planning and protection of the forest areas as per the Appendix given below.

**APPENDIX**

- 1. Name of the Committee :
- 2. District :
- 3. Forest Division :
- 4. Forest Range :
- 5. Village :
- 6. PFM Forest area (Surveyed sketch should be signed by both the parties)
- 7. Legal status of the PFM forest area :
- 8. Boundaries of the PFM forest area : North –  
South –  
East --  
West –

We understand that the usufructory benefits as detailed in the aforesaid GO shall be allowed only upon satisfactory observance of rules by this Executive Committee and by members of the VSS as per the aforesaid GO. A copy of the aforesaid GO is annexed herewith duly signed on every page in evidence of our having understood the same in letter and spirit. It is hereby agreed that this MOU will come into effect from .....

President of the Executive Committee : Signature .....  
Name and Address

Secretary of the Executive Committee : Signature .....  
Name and Address

Forest Range Officer (on behalf of KFD) : Signature .....  
Name and Address

Witnesses 1. Signature .....  
Name and Address

2. Signature .....  
Name and Address

Place:

Date :