

The Forest

By the People



REGIONAL CENTRE

National Afforestation & Eco-Development Board
(Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India)
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The Bokaro Forest Development Agency is one of the prime architects of improving the quality of the forest cover and simultaneously enhancing the standard of living for the forest fringe dwellers in Bokaro Forest Division. Established in 2002-2003 the Bokaro Forest Development Agency, (FDA) is one of the 34 FDAs in India's youngest state, Jharkhand. The area catered by the FDA has a forest cover of 22% with a per capita forest cover of 0.52 ha which is much more than the National average of 0.064 ha. The FDA has led the execution with the help of the Joint Forest Management Committees, (JFMCs). The demographic statistics depict that the population under the FDA has a share of 15% of Schedule Castes and 33% of Scheduled Tribes. The FDA has involved 105 JFMCs across its 17 beats under 6 Ranges during 2002-03 to 2011-12. With the efforts of these JFMCs, the forest protection procedures are being carried out with the combined efforts of the forest officials as well as the willing members of the forest fringe villages.



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For sustainable management of forests and effective afforestation activities, National Afforestation Programme (NAP) scheme, is being implemented across the country through decentralized approach. Through this NAP scheme microplanning and grass root decision making has been possible. The scheme has a direct fund flow mechanism ie. funding agency (National Afforestation and Eco-development Board, Ministry of Forests and Environment, Government of India) to implementing agency (FDA) bypassing the state government machinery. The NAP scheme has helped in focusing on the livelihood generation for the forest fringe dwellers.



The Bokaro FDA has been instrumental in creating social fencing to protect afforested areas as well as the naturally grown flora and existing fauna. The crux of social fencing is that the forest is being protected by the social barriers which in turn are the people. One of the major activities done by implementing this concept is the continuous patrolling of forests carried out jointly by the forest officials and the members of Joint Forest Management Committees. As per the JFM resolution of Jharkhand Govt., the JFMC members are entitled with the responsibility to protect the forest and in lieu they will receive 90% of the revenue generated by the final harvest as usufruct share. Shri Kumar Manish Arvind, DFO, Bokaro FDA has been greatly instrumental in setting high standards for the development procedures through his dedication and hard work.

With the continuous patrolling of the forests, the felling of trees has been restricted and grazing has also been reduced. Driving the cattle away from the forestland is a major task that the JFMC members are continuing. As a result, the afforested area has converted to a lush green area with multiple species which is having an average survival of 88% with very good growth and health of plants.



Sustainable use of natural resources has also been put to act as old and shaded leaves arecollected by the forest fringe dwellers and later utilized for various purposes according to their needs. As forestry has a long gestation period and benefits are not obtained in a short span of time, the forest fringe dwellers are entitled to get interim benefits and market exposure for the interim products which sums up for a supportive livelihood opportunity.



The Bokaro FDA has primarily prioritized stressing on various entry-point activities. These activities elicit the willing participation of the communities comprising the JFMCs. It can be termed as the policy needed for 'breaking the ice' and to win over the trust and confidence of the people. Their willing involvement helps the cause as well as their quality of life. The entry-point activities include the building of big wells as well as the small ones which are locally known as 'Dari-Chua' along with the setting up of the tube wells.



These are utilized for both irrigational and household purposes. Check dams on the slopes of hillocks are also the major features of this area which is essentially regarded as an instrument to conserve soil moisture.



The social life has also been given its share of space as various cemented platforms, known as 'Chabutras' has been constructed which are used by the people for social acts such as emancipating tribal culture via dances and music. Some activities like Mandap repairing, construction of community hall and pond excavation have also come up under the entry-point activities.



Besides this, a nursery –cum – training – cum demonstration centre has also been set up in Petarwar which is one of its kinds in entire Jharkhand. The nursery nurtures various medicinal plants and species which are of high commercial value as well. Trainees are being trained for providing medicinal help in the villages and performing the responsibilities of so called 'Vaidhs'.

To intensify the sense of awareness among the people is often the toughest task. To this, the Bokaro FDA has installed faith among its people and has urged for dramatizations and acts which are locally known as 'Nukkar Natak' thus awakening people regarding the adverse effect of depleting forests through an in-depth effort.



Quite often meetings are being held along with the JFMCs comprising of high officials like the Beat officers and Range officers. One prevalent characteristic of these meetings are that women empowerment is given high value and women are generally being

given the space to speak their mind and illuminate their problems by being vocal. So far, the project has directly benefited 61000 families and created more than 2,49,383 mandays which includes SC, ST and Women in the Division.

The NAP powered by the NAEB has been frequently affected by the irregular fund flow which has in turn hit the maintenance work and performing entry point activities. Irregular fund flow results in a standstill of the execution procedures and counters a loss of faith of the forest fringe dwellers and the Forest Department Officials upon the scheme. Adding to these miseries, the various extremist activities sometimes retard the pace of development. Culminating the constraints, the Bokaro FDA is trying its best to nurture methods and approaches which will serve with benefits for the present and in the days to come with regional prosperity achieved in the truest sense along with the ideals of hard work and cooperation from all levels of the society.



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