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Performance of success and Failure at the grassroots Conservation and Development Interventions: Gender dynamics in Participatory Forest Management in India

Co-governance of Indian forests, where communities participate in their management, has a long history in the Indian context. This initiative started in the 1990s as Joint Forest Management (JFM), where the local communities worked in the supervision of various state Forest Departments. Later on, this intervention graduated to Community Forest Management (CFM) model, where communities managed the forest based natural resources with minimal interference from the Forest Departments.

Major actors involved in this intervention include the local forest dependent communities, foresters and the non-governmental organizations which acted as the facilitators between the people and the officials. Role of non-state actors spanning various local, global scales (eg. the World Bank, NABARD etc.) in funding these interventions and in ensuring accountability in the functioning of the grassroots level institutions contributed to the popularity of this intervention among the rural communities.

Throughout the two decades of its practice, a pivotal position was given to gender mainstreaming in its implementation through Forest Protection Committees (FPCs). This study shows that communities, and especially the women FPC members were often found performing success in these initiatives, despite complaining of the shortcomings in practice. Thus, the central question investigated by this paper is- "Why women performed success for the impact evaluation, while they have experienced marginalization in the FPC?" Consequently, this paper deals with the politics of performance of success by these women members, with the help of an in-depth ethnographic case study of a village in Andhra Pradesh, and presents a thorough analysis of the performance of success and the resulting dynamics of gendered participation. This paper uses an ethnographic case study methodology (immersion) to explain the nuances of the

performance of success and failure in the Conservation and Development Interventions. The concept of 'situated agency' of the community actors is explored here, in order to understand the performance of success and failure in Conservation and Development interventions implemented in highly stratified rural communities in India and elsewhere.