

Are Non-Wood Forest Products Okay for Economic Capacitating of Forest Dwellers? A Case Study of Mandla District of Madhya Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

There is abundant natural resource available in the states situated in central part of India. Various forest products are produced under various legal frameworks which vary state to state. In Madhya Pradesh, all the Non- Wood Forest Products (NWFPs) except *karaya* or *kullu* gum (*Sterculia urens*) are categorized under the non-nationalized items. Based on sustainable harvesting and economic value M. P. State Minor Forest Produce (T & D) Co-op. Fed .Ltd. has the monopoly rights for value added processes and marketing of NWFPs under lease agreement. Scientific lac cultivation method is the key for higher and sustained profit for the forest dwellers. To train about the improved packages of practices, a group of forest dwellers was identified under a capacity building programme during 2009-10. A survey was carried out in 2012-13 to assess the impact of technological intervention. A total of 50 households including 30 beneficiaries and 20 non-beneficiaries were selected randomly from the 4 villages of Nainpur block of Mandla district. By explicitly inclusion of Non- Wood Forest Products NWFPs in livelihood options, this paper examines the role and significance of NWFPs for economic capacitating of forest dwellers.

Using data from 50 randomly sampled forest dwellers; forest resource use was measured with a knowledge level continuum and compared with the scientific practices. It was observed that lac cultivation represent an important component in rural livelihoods and after training it was transformed from unfelt need to felt need in the study area. Rural households were using *Butea monosperma* (*palas*) for *rangeeni* lac cultivation. Our analyses indicate that farmers were acquainted with the advantages of scientific practices over conventional method. It was observed that income from lac cultivation occupies the second largest share in average total household income next to crop income for both of the household

categories. But, existing gaps in input supply and output disposal at competitive rates was the major hindrance in adoption. Infrastructure including roads (transport/market facility), banks (credit facility) and input supply (service providers) were the major key factors influencing the adoption level. Analysis shows that incorporating income from lac cultivation in household accounts significantly reduces measured rural poverty and income disparity among beneficiaries. It is okay for economic capacitating of forest dwellers to maintain and enhance the flow of economic benefits through NWFPs with scientific interventions.

Keywords: Felt need, forest dwellers, income, *rangeeni*, livelihood