



A Comparative Study  
of the Performance of VSSs  
under the APCFM and FDA  
Programmes in Andhra Pradesh



C. Nagaraju  
K. Suresh  
Dr. D. Suryakumari



**July 2009**

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## Centre for People's Forestry

### About us

Centre for People's Forestry (CPF) is a Professional NGO, registered as a public trust in 2002. It is a non-profit, non-political and secular organisation working for the development of people of India, especially the deprived and marginalised sections among the forest dwelling and dependent communities.

Title	: A Comparative Study of Performance of VSSs under APCFM and FDA Programmes in Andhra Pradesh
Authors	: C. Nagaraju, K. Suresh and Dr. D. Suryakumari
Published by	: Centre for People's Forestry
Supported by	: AEI & Oxfam Novib
Date	: July 2009
Copies	: 200
Layout, Design & Printing	: dhruti design
Contact	: <b>Centre for People's Forestry</b> 12-13-483/39, Street No. 14, Lane 6 Nagarjunanagar Colony, Tarnaka, Secunderabad – 500 017, A.P., India Tel/Fax: +91- 40 27154484 Website: <a href="http://www.cpf.in">www.cpf.in</a>

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## 1. Introduction

Centre for People's Forestry<sup>1</sup>, has been associated with the JFM/CFM programme in the State of Andhra Pradesh (AP) since 1996 and contributed to the process of its evolution at policy and field levels in partnership with the local NGOs and Vanasamakhyas<sup>2</sup>. Focused efforts were made towards strengthening the VSSs through various capacity building measures like micro plan preparation/review, forest inventory and management, gender sensitisation and mainstreaming, resolution of various kinds of conflicts, facilitation skills for collaborations in livelihood enhancement, modes of engagement with the Forest Department (FD), community empowerment processes and mainstreaming concerns of HIV & AIDS, during the period from March 2000 to April 2006. CPF, with inputs from the Andhra Pradesh Forest Department (APFD) and Vanasamakhyas, developed the methodology for participatory performance assessment of VSSs and Vanasamakhyas in 2007 – 08 which was used for the study entrusted to Vanasamakhyas by the APFD in seven forest divisions. Few more criteria were added and the method was streamlined to calculate "VSS performance index" in 2008. This was then used to study<sup>3</sup> the performance of 55 VSSs under the CPF operational area.

In the State of AP, 5000 Vanasamrakshana Samithies (VSSs) have been receiving support from the World Bank-supported Andhra Pradesh Community Forest Management (APCFM) project since 2002 and 1288 VSSs receive funding through FDA as of now. Since majority of the VSSs are being funded by the World Bank-supported project, it has been a matter of concern on what will be the future of VSSs in the state once the project is over. Whether the VSSs could establish themselves to function as effective Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) is the question that frequently bothers. It is in this background, it has been proposed to take up an independent study on the performance of VSSs in the State.

## 2. Objective

The overall objective of this study is to carry out a comparative study of VSSs under APCFM and Forest Development Agency (FDA) through the State Vanasamakhyas to understand the level of performance of the VSSs and the areas that need to be strengthened for achieving sustainability. Specific objectives of the study are:

- Understanding the current status of over all performance of the selected sample VSSs of APCFM and FDA (under National Afforestation Programme).
- Assessing the level of performance of the sample VSSs in specific aspects i.e., social, institutional, resource utilisation, livelihoods, linkages, gender and awareness on HIV & AIDS
- To identify the needs of these institutions for sustenance of the programme and capacity building in future
- To enable Vanasamakhyas representatives understand the functioning of VSSs in other areas
- To take up required lobbying and advocacy based on the study findings

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<sup>1</sup> CPF or Centre for People's Forestry is a National level Professional NGO, registered as a public trust in 2002, working for the forest dependent and dwelling communities. It functioned as an independent wing within Centre for World Solidarity (CWS) since 1996 and closely associated with the Joint Forest Management programme in the State of Andhra Pradesh. CPF played an important role in the formulation of the CFM GO and the Project Implementation Plan of the World Bank-supported APCFM project and has been contributing to the strengthening of the implementation of the same since 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Vanasamakhyas is a State level federation of VSSs networks promoted by CPF in 2003. At the State level, it is an Apex federation involving the range level networks of VSSs. Currently, 22 local networks representing 327 VSSs are member networks of State Vanasamakhyas; whereas, another 22 networks with 353 VSSs also participate in the lobbying advocacy activities of Vanasamakhyas.

<sup>3</sup> Please refer "A report on Assessment of the Performance of VSSs in CPF Project Area", Nov 2008, K. Suresh & D. Suryakumari

**Please contact CPF for copies**

**040-27154484**