

## **Joint Forest Management in West Bengal: A Long Way to Go**

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**ABSTRACT** Joint forest management (JFM) in West Bengal set an example of participatory development in which panchayats have played a crucial and positive role. But in recent period, the JFM movement has become sluggish and is gradually losing its pro-people character. The present anthropological study of the functioning of a forest protection committee in a village situated near to Arabari in Medinipur district of West Bengal, reveals the various shortcomings of the implementation of the JFM programme by the forest department. The study followed a descriptive and narrative method which clearly demonstrate the 'social fencing' of the forests cannot be sustained without satisfying the socio-economic and cultural needs of the villagers who depend upon an agriculture based peasant economy.