

Forests of Cooperation and Conflict: A Study on Joint Forest Management in Jungle Mahals, India

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ABSTRACT Joint Forest Management (JFM) is a programme that aims to manage the forests of India and to socio-economically develop the forest-fringe communities. A study on JFM was conducted in some forest-fringe villages of Jungle Mahals region of West Bengal. The main objective of the study was to see how JFM is functioning at present in those villages. It is revealed that the local forest department encourages the villagers to use, manage, protect and regulate the forest and its products. However, the villagers have some unfulfilled demands with the forest department. Furthermore, they cooperate with each other within the village but also are engaged in conflict with neighbouring villagers on the matter of the protection of forest and to access its resources. The paper suggests that the local forest department should negotiate with the local communities to resolve such conflicts and to make the JFM programme work more efficiently.