

# Community Restoration Network

## Project Profile: THE ANDHRA PRADESH FORESTRY PROJECT

### Project Location:

Andhra Pradesh, India

### Project Manager/ Coordinator:

The Forestry Department of  
Andhra Pradesh

### Project Duration:

6 years beginning in February 1994

### Ecosystem to be Restored:

Tropical Moist Deciduous Forest & Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest

### Area to be Restored:

The project supports forest rehabilitation and development on 354,600 hectares, although the Forestry Department eventually hopes to foster about 7,000 VSS to help manage 1.7 million hectares of forest.

### Primary Cause of Degradation:

Timber smuggling, overexploitation by industry, deteriorating law enforcement, wildfire, grazing, agricultural encroachment, unmanaged exploitation for firewood and other basic needs, quarries, coal mines, hydroelectric projects, shifting cultivation and overdependence of the local communities on non-timber forest products.

### Project Goal:

Increase the productivity and quality of forests; protect the environment; maintain and improve biodiversity; alleviate poverty; introduce people's participation in the protection and management of degraded forests (i.e. joint forest management)

### Restoration Treatments Used:

The main forestry investments focus on protecting degraded areas with viable rootstock; creating conditions favorable for natural regeneration of forest vegetation; conducting enrichment planting, particularly of nontimber forest products (e.g. bamboo); and implementing soil and moisture conservation works.

### Community Involvement:

Under this joint forest management approach, important forest resources are restored and managed jointly between the Forestry Department and grassroots village organizations called Vana Samrakshna Samithi (VSS). At present there are more than 5,000 VSS across Andhra Pradesh helping to rejuvenate more than 1.2 million hectares of degraded forests in the state.



condition before



condition after

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Most VSS range in size from 75 to 150 members. This general body elects a managing committee of 10 to 15 members, 30 percent of whom must be women, who in turn elect a chairperson to oversee and manage the affairs of the VSS. The Forestry Department participates on this committee through its field officer, who acts as a secretary.

The primary purpose of the VSS is to protect the forest from encroachment, grazing, theft, and fire, and to improve the forest in accordance with an approved joint forest management plan. All of the planting, silvicultural operations, and soil conservation works are undertaken by members of the VSS and paid for out of project funds.

### **Benefits to Local Ecology:**

With the vigilance and protection of VSS, the degraded forests have sprung back to life, and there has been a general improvement in the flora and fauna of degraded areas. Soil conservation works have resulted in higher water tables in many areas, which has led in turn to improvements in agricultural production. Timber smuggling has been stopped almost completely, and cattle grazing has been brought under control. Moreover, since joint forest management began, there have been no reported losses of forest areas to agricultural encroachment on any lands currently managed by VSS.

### **Benefits to the Community:**

Many employment opportunities have been created for local villagers, and the rate of outmigration has declined. The VSS has become an effective model for community mobilization and promises to play an important role in other aspects of rural development--e.g. drinking water facilities, alternative energy technologies, low-cost smokeless ovens.

### **Directions for the Future:**

Andhra Pradesh's benefit sharing policy stipulates that VSS are entitled to share all of the nontimber forest products (e.g. grasses, fuelwood, fruit, medicines) among themselves, and that they will also receive 100% of the income from the harvest of timber and bamboo resulting from their protection efforts, provided that they set aside half of this income for the future development and maintenance of the forest. Thus, the policy ensures resources for the long-term sustainability of the forest and recognizes that government support will be required only in the first few years while the forest returns to a productive state.

To sustain the efforts and gains of the joint forest management program, integrated development of the fringe villages is critical. This includes developing technologies to increase the productivity of forests, changing enforcement regulations, focusing on the regeneration of common wastelands to reduce pressure on forests, providing villagers with new skills and employment opportunities, and introducing measures to improve the quality of life.

### **Funding/Support:**

Funded jointly by the International Development Association of the World Bank and the Government of Andhra Pradesh.

### **References/Contacts:**

<http://forest.ap.nic.in/JFM%20CFM/JFMINDEX.htm>