

Impact of Social Forestry Programme in Baramulla of Kashmir Valley

Mohammad Ajaz-ul-Islam¹

1. Department of Forestry, Faculty of Agriculture, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology of Kashmir, Wadoora, Sopore, Kashmir-193201.

ABSTRACT

A study was carried out in Ushkara village of Jehlum Valley Forest Division of Baramulla district in Kashmir valley where Social Forestry Programme was launched in 1991 aiming at popularization of tree consciousness among villagers, self-sufficiency in terms of fuel, fodder, timber and other non-timber forest products reduction of pressure in traditional forests and efficient utilization common lands. In order to assess the impact of Social Forestry Programme on its beneficiaries, a sample consisted of 137 beneficiaries, belonging to landless, marginal, small, medium and large land holding categories were selected randomly in proper proportions. Analysis of the benefit components revealed that the Social Forestry Programme has great impact on meeting tangible benefits to the beneficiaries. The programme was comparatively less effective in accruing intangible benefits to the beneficiaries. The overall level of impact of Social Forestry Programme on its beneficiaries was medium. There was significant difference in level of impact of Social Forestry Programme among various categories of beneficiaries.

Key words: Benefit accrument; Social Forestry

Social Forestry is the creation of sustained forest resources through afforestation of all available lands with the purpose of meeting the requirements of ecological and environmental security, fuel wood, fodder, timber and other Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) security, socio-economic development of the rural poor, employment generation at door step and checking migration to urban areas, soil and water conservation, reduction of pressure on traditional forests, efficient utilization of wastelands, addition of recreational and aesthetic values to the urban areas and procurement of raw materials for cottage industries (Muthuraman, 1994). In short, Social Forestry is the practice of forestry of the people, for the people and by the people. Social Forestry Programme was strengthened almost everywhere in the country along the lines of the recommendations of National Commission on Agriculture, 1976. The Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India is committed to achieve the goal of 33% of the land under forest and tree cover as per National Forest Policy, 1988. The Ministry has already taken several steps in this direction and many more are contemplated (State Forest Report, 2003). Social Forestry project was implemented in Ushkara village of Baramulla district in Kashmir valley with the financial assistance from World Bank in May, 1991. About fifty five thousands tree seedlings comprising of *Robinia pseudoacacia*, *Ulmus wallichiana* and *Malus domestica* were planted in 70 ha of village common land by the local people through the support of Social Forestry officials. Over the next few years, the

achievements from these initiatives were substantial. Although the generation of forest resources for local people outside the traditional forests through well-organized Social Forestry committee and community participation was a new concept, it has succeeded appreciably. Considering the outstanding performance of Social Forestry Programme the Ministry of Forest and Environment, Government of India rewarded the village forest committee and Social Forestry Department with Indira Priya Darshani Vrikshmitra Award. The Social Forestry Programme has given benefits to the local people in terms of all the three vital aspects namely, social, economic and environmental to a considerable extent. Keeping these facts in view, the present study was planned with the following objectives:

- (i) To assess the extent of impact on benefit availability of Social Forestry Programme by the beneficiaries.
- (ii) To find out the variation on extent of impact of Social Forestry Programme among beneficiaries of different land holding categories.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted during 2006-07 in Jehlum Valley Forest Division of Baramulla district in Kashmir valley where Social Forestry Programme was launched by State Social Forestry Department in May, 1991. From this Division, Ushkara village was purposively selected for the study. A list of beneficiary families as obtained from the concerned Social Forestry Project office. Keeping the objectives in view, beneficiaries were

grouped in five land holding categories viz., landless, marginal, small, medium and large. A sample of beneficiaries was randomly selected in proper proportion making 25% from each land holding category. The data on impact of Social Forestry Programme in terms of benefit was collected by personal interviews through a well structured interview schedule. The responses against each selected benefit component of the Social Forestry Programme were recorded on four point continuum viz; not at all, to a little extent, to a moderate extent and to a large extent with their respective scores of 0, 1, 2 and 3. On the basis of cumulative scores obtained by the respondents they were classified into three groups of impact level viz, low, medium and high following quartile deviation formulae. Analysis of variance was applied to find out the variation or similarities on extent of impact of Social Forestry Programme existed among different land holding categories of beneficiaries.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data about the impact of Social Forestry Programme on benefit accrument to the beneficiaries are depicted in Table 1 There were fifteen benefit components with mean impact score (MIS) ranging from 2.02 to 2.88. Apparently it is seen that the Social Forestry Programme has created excellent impact in terms of availability of fodder for cattle (MIS-2.88), reduction of pressure on forest (MIS-2.85), availability of fuelwood (MIS-2.76), employment generation (MIS-2.70) and proper utilization of waste lands (MIS-2.68) and these benefit components were ranked I, II, III, IV and V respectively by the beneficiaries. These benefit components were visual in nature which the beneficiaries could observe in earlier stage of the implementation of Social Forestry Programme.

Table 1. Impact of Social Forestry Programme on benefit realization by the beneficiaries

S. No.	Benefit component	Not at all	To a little extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	Mean impact score	Rank order
1.	Availability of fuelwood	01	03	24	109	2.76	III
2.	Reduction of pressure on forest	02	03	09	123	2.85	II
3.	Proper utilization of waste lands	02	07	24	104	2.68	V
4.	Availability of fodder for cattle	-	02	13	122	2.88	I
5.	Improvement in socio-economic condition of the people	11	16	32	78	2.29	X
6.	Checking soil erosion	09	12	34	82	2.38	IX
7.	Availability of small timber	06	06	30	95	2.56	VII
8.	Employment generation	03	08	16	110	2.70	IV
9.	Microclimatic amelioration	13	16	39	69	2.20	XIII
10.	Availability of fruit	03	07	31	96	2.61	VI
11.	Increase in income from plantation	10	08	32	87	2.43	VIII
12.	Increase in soil fertility	08	17	41	71	2.28	XI
13.	Meeting recreational need of the people	14	21	44	58	2.07	XIV
14.	Retention of soil moisture	11	15	42	69	2.23	XII
15.	Harbouring forest birds and animals	16	21	45	55	2.02	XV

The Social Forestry Programme was also effective in availability of fruit (MIS-2.61), availability of small timber (MIS-2.56), increase in income from plantation (MIS-2.43), checking soil erosion (MIS-2.38) and improvement in socio-economic condition of the people (MIS-2.29) to the beneficiaries and these benefit components got the rank VI, VII, VIII, IX and X respectively. The efficacy of these benefit components to the beneficiaries was moderate because these benefit components accrued to the beneficiaries at later stage of the implementation of the Social Forestry Programme and even some of the beneficiaries could not perceive these benefits for themselves. The benefit components like, increase in soil fertility, retention of soil moisture, microclimatic amelioration, meeting recreational need of the people and harbouring forest birds and animals were intangible to the beneficiaries and less observable in nature

and were ranked XI, XII, XIII, XIV and XV respectively. The findings are in conformity with earlier studies of Mesare *et. al.* (1999) and Ray (1996).

The data pertaining to the level of impact of Social Forestry Programme on its beneficiaries is given in the Table 2 The results show that majority of the beneficiaries (58.14%) had experienced high level of impact and rest 41.86% fell in medium impact level among landless. No beneficiary was found having low level of impact in this regard. As far as the marginal farmers were concerned, about 44.44% of the beneficiaries fell in medium level of impact followed by 41.67% in high and 13.89% in low level of impact category. Almost similar trend was noticed among small farmers. In case of medium farmers, majority of beneficiaries (63.16%) belonged to medium level of impact category followed by low (21.05%) and high (15.79%). Among large farmers, it is interesting to

note that no one represented high category of impact level. However, medium level of impact was observed in 72.73% of beneficiaries and rest 27.27% had low level of impact.

Table 2. Distribution of beneficiaries based on extent of impact of Social Forestry Programme

Sl. No.	Impact Level	Land holding categories					Pooled N=137
		Landless n=43	Marginal n=36	Small n=28	Medium n=19	Large n=11	
1.	Low	-	05 (13.89)	06 (21.43)	04 (21.05)	03 (27.27)	18 (13.14)
2.	Medium	18 (41.86)	16 (44.44)	15 (53.57)	12 (63.16)	08 (72.73)	69 (50.36)
3.	High	25 (58.14)	15 (41.67)	07 (25.00)	03 (15.79)	-	50 (36.50)

Figures in parentheses show percentages

Based upon the above findings, it could be inferred that the level of impact of Social Forestry Programme was higher among the beneficiaries having lower size of land holding and it was decreasing as the size of land holding increased. It is because the beneficiaries with lower size land holding were resource poor in terms of these benefit components of the Social Forestry programme. Due to insufficient production and over-exploitation of the nearby protected forest, the meeting of these benefit components from these forests to the beneficiaries has failed. As a result, the accrument of these benefit components became a source of motivation making the beneficiaries more aware and participant of the Social Forestry programme. The findings are similar to the studies made by Singh (1991) and Ray (1996).

Table 3. ANOVA for variation among various land holding categories of beneficiaries

S. No.	Source of variation	Degree of freedom	Sum of squares	Mean sum of squares	F-calculated
1.	Land holding categories	4	2231.11	557.78	15.42*
2.	Error	132	4775.39	36.18	
3.	Total	136	7006.50		

* Significant at 5% level of probability

Analysis of variance was done for impact scores of Social Forestry Programme to find out significance of difference between different land holding categories of beneficiaries and is presented in Table 3. The data indicated that calculated F value for impact scores of

Social Forestry Programme is greater than tabulated value at 0.05 level of significance. Based on these results it could be inferred that the level of impact of five land holding categories of beneficiaries differed significantly. The findings are in line with the findings of Shrotriya and Kumar (1991) and Rajendran (1994).

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study led to conclude that the Social Forestry Programme has succeeded in creating excellent impact on benefit accrument to the beneficiaries in terms of all the vital aspects namely, social, economic and environmental. Thus, it can be undoubtedly said that the Social Forestry Programme has achieved its objectives to a remarkable extent. The findings related to overall impact of Social Forestry Programme suggests that the beneficiaries have perceived medium level of impact and the percentage of beneficiaries perceiving high level of impact was also considerable. The efficacy of benefit accrument was higher among the resource poor farmers belonging to weaker sections as compared to resource rich farmers. The level of impact of five land holding categories of the beneficiaries differed significantly. The study indicated that stress must be given on accrument of observable benefits of Social Forestry Programme in motivating the farmers and some sort of biasness towards involvement of resource poor people in the programme is also essential for its successful implementation and execution.

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