

Role of NTFPs Among Forest Villagers in a Protected Area of West Bengal

Bidhan Kanti Das

*Institute of Development Studies Kolkata, 1, Reformatory Street, Kolkata 700 027,
West Bengal, India*

E.mail: bidhan_d@rediffmail.com / bidhan@idsk.org

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ABSTRACT People of rural India especially forest dwellers extract non-timber forest produces (NTFPs) from forest for both commercial as well as consumption purposes. Various studies showed that poorest forest dwellers are highly dependent on NTFPs to sustain daily requirements of family needs. In protected areas, people's access to collect NTFPs has been either prohibited or restricted as per Wildlife Protection Act. The present study is an attempt to assess the extent of dependency on NTFPs after declaration of Buxa as protected area, dynamics of collection of NTFPs, people's perception about NTFPs collection etc. The study reveals that more than half of total families are dependent on NTFPs to supplement their daily requirements. Moreover, tribal populations are most dependent on NTFPs at BTR among all the social categories. It is observed that number of species as well as quantity of NTFP collection for sale increased considerably over the years. This might be due to the fact that villagers are increasingly dependent on NTFPs as potential income source as employment opportunity reduced drastically due to ban on clear felling coupes and artificial regeneration of plantations with the creation of Tiger Reserve. It is revealed that primary collectors i.e. local villagers are not getting remunerative price though secondary and tertiary collectors, in particular, are making maximum profits from NTFPs. Forest villagers of BTR regard NTFPs as more consistent and stable source of income with declining forest departmental works and crop depredation by wild animals.