

Socio-economic and Socio-ecological Study of Sambalpur Forest Division, Orissa

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ABSTRACT The present study on socio-economic and socio-ecological aspects of Sambalpur Forest Division of Orissa reveals that forests play an important role in the economy of the State in terms of contribution to state revenue, State Domestic Product as well as dependence of people for livelihood. The people living adjacent to the reserved forests of Sambalpur Forest Division (pre-reorganised) are heavily dependent on these forests. Although the nominal forest cover of the state continues to remain unchanged one notices a gradual decline in the effective forest cover of the state. In terms of socio-economic profile, it was found that majority of the sample respondents (71.83) lived in kacha houses with only 4.83% having own toilet facilities, 92.7% depending on outside dug well and tube well for drinking water and 90.5% depending on wood litter collected from forest for fuel requirement. Cultivation is the primary occupation among Other Backward Class (OBC) group where as daily wage labours largely belong to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population. Per capita annual income stands at Rs.3684/- which is significantly low and indicates the degree of deprivation of the people. The study on extent and nature of dependence on forest and people's perceptions about the causes of degradation and methods of conservation reveals that the people living adjacent to the reserved forest areas are highly dependent on the forest for medicinal plants (about 51 species). Regarding cultural practices of the people in the sacrifice of trees and animals, only 2.3% of respondents indicated sacrifice of trees and majority of respondents resorting to sacrifice of domestic animals but not wild life. Regarding loss of forest species 92.35% of the respondents stated about 28 different species lost from the forests. Most important causes of degradation as perceived by the respondents are domestic use by villagers, business/trading, fuel wood crisis in the region, illegal forest produce sale etc. Important methods of forest conservation are Village committee, VSS, Vana Mahostava, Social forestry etc. A very high proportion of the respondents suggested that there should be more forest personnel, formation and effective role of village committees and recruitment of more village volunteers. Regarding the magnitude of exploitation, about 29% visualized that there is frequent exploitation by outsiders.