



Possible template for a simple CFR Management plan

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(Version 2; Date: 18.12.2023)

Background

The Community Forest Resource (CFR) rights provision of the Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA), recognizes the communities' rights to protect, regenerate, conserve and manage forest resources under Section 3 (1) (i). Once communities have received such CFR rights, they are supposed to make a plan for managing the CFR area. This is a requirement as per FRA Rules 2012 u/s 4(1)(e) and (f), which mandate that the Gram Sabha constitute a Community Forest Resource Management Committee among its members, and this committee will prepare a **conservation and management plan** to sustainably and equitably manage community forest resources. This plan will then be integrated with the micro plans or working plans or management plans of the forest department.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has rightly given communities the freedom to create plans in their own way. However, many groups have felt the need for some guidance. In 2017, ATREE and TISS helped draft a template for the Government of Maharashtra, which was notified in Marathi. Drawing upon feedback received from those who have used this guideline in the field as well as our own experiences, we are releasing this slightly revised and more elaborate version, that includes guidance on purpose and process.

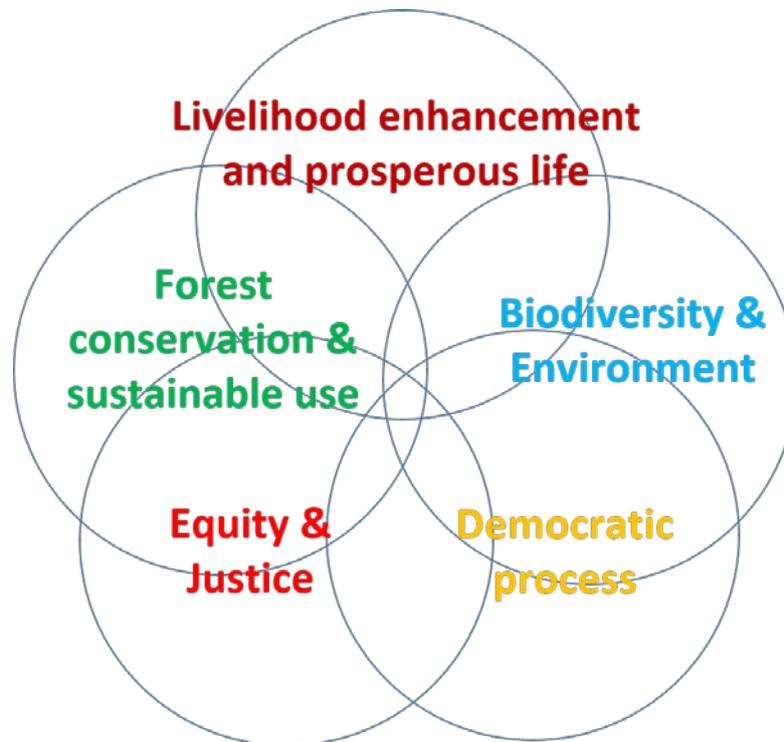
What should the goals of CFR management be?

Under Section 5 of the Act, the Gram Sabha has been empowered to-

- (a) protect the wild life, forest and biodiversity;
- (b) ensure that adjoining catchments area, water sources and other ecological sensitive areas are adequately protected;
- (c) ensure that the habitat of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers is preserved from any form of destructive practices affecting their cultural and natural heritage.

Moreover, as mentioned above, Rule 4(1)(f) clearly mentions that the management should be "sustainable and equitable". At the same time, section 3 of the FRA gives communities rights to use forest resources for their livelihoods. Putting all these together, we can see that the overall goal of

managing the CFR has to be to **enhance livelihoods** while ensuring **ecological sustainability**, protection and **conservation** of the forest and its **biodiversity**, **equitable distribution** of benefits and costs, and following a **democratic decision-making** process. The figure below captures this idea in pictorial form.



These goals (translated and reworded as per local perspectives) need to be kept front and centre throughout the discussions and planning process, and the actual management process.

Management plan

Hence, the main objective of CFR management planning has to be to help the community think through systematically how it would manage the resource and the forest-dependent livelihoods to meet these goals. It is essential that this exercise not become a bureaucratic or technocratic exercise, heavy on data collection and formal analysis, imposing a heavy burden on the community, especially those who are just starting out. It is essential that the exercise be simple, user-friendly and problem-oriented, i.e., leading to activities that address the main issues that the community is facing. The plan is primarily for the community, not for outsiders who know nothing about the community and want the plan to educate them. At the same time, it can provide an indication to the wider set of state agencies and others as to what the community's understanding, plans, and needs are.

Keeping the above in mind, we have drafted a simple template that could be followed for the preparation of CFR Management Plans. We have only identified the major steps that are required, leaving the details of each step flexible and context-specific. The template is not to be mechanically filled in; guidance is provided (*in italics*) at each stage on what the focus should be.

The main parts of the template are:

1. Current status of the CFR area
2. Needs from the CFR
3. Threats to the CFR
4. Plan for addressing the threats and the needs
5. Support and assurances required from state agencies and others
6. Forest-based livelihood enhancement
7. Duration of the plan

We end by highlighting the importance of following a democratic process in plan-making, and indicating some of the likely variations and alternative types of plans that might be possible.

In the Annexure, we provide a draft of a resolution that the Gram Sabha could pass when adopting the plan, so as to spell out its conditions and expectations from government departments, and that its plan supersedes the Working Plan.

A simple template for a CFR Management Plan

- The cover page of the plan can include details such as the name of Gram Sabha, Panchayat/Block/ Taluka, District, dates of preparation of the plan and any other details/photos the Gram Sabha wants to add.
 - **Brief description of the village:** *(Before writing about the CFR area, give a brief description of the village. It may include the following details.)*
 - a) Population (Scheduled Tribe, Scheduled Caste, Extent of Landlessness, Extent of Literacy)
 - b) Land area, agricultural land, irrigated land
 - c) Types of livelihood activities in the village
- 1. Current STATUS of CFR area :** *(As the plan is focussed on CFR area, the current status of the CFR area can be described with the help of the following points.)*
- i. Total extent of CFR granted as per CFR title/record: ____ ha or acre *(Title copy can be attached)*
 - ii. Compartment numbers *(if known):*
 - iii. Local/ Traditional name(s) for the different forest patches/ areas under CFR: *(they can be listed and location can be shown by participatory mapping method such as nazri naksha and attached here)*
 - iv. Area estimated after GPS survey: ____ ha or acre *(If GPS survey not done, say NOT AVAILABLE) (If GPS survey done then CFR boundary can be printed on Google Earth imagery and attached)*
 - v. Current condition of the CFR area:
 - a. Area under dense tree cover (as % of total CFR) (approx.)
 - b. Area under sparse tree cover (as % of total CFR) (approx.)
 - c. Area under pure grass cover (as % of total CFR) (approx.)
 - d. Area under Forest Department plantations (as % of total CFR) *(estimated)*
 - e. Area that is barren but can be regenerated (as % of total CFR) *(estimated)*
 - f. Area that is barren and rocky & cannot be regenerated (as % of CFR) *(estimated)*

- g. ANY OTHER FEATURES OR LANDUSE SITUATIONS THAT COMMUNITY FEELS ARE IMPORTANT
- vi. Qualitative description:
 - a. Most common species of tree, shrub, and grass: *(most common 10-20 species seen can be listed)*
 - b. Most common animal species (birds, land animals, reptiles, etc.): *(most common 10-20 species seen can be listed)*
 - c. If any ponds are present, how many:

2. Needs from CFR and its importance in other ways

The needs from the forest can be listed under following categories:*(The lists given are indicative—change as required. List the most important ones first, then less important ones)*

- i. Products needed for subsistence
 - a. Fire wood
 - b. Grass / grazing
 - c. Timber for house repair and fencing
 - d. Bamboo
 - e. Mahua flowers
 - f. Charoli
 - g. Honey
 - h. Food species
 - i. Medicine plants
- ii. Income generating products/activities:
 - a. Tendu patta
 - b. Timber from coupe felling
 - c. Mahua flowers
 - d. Bamboo
- iii. Cultural needs:
 - a. Sacred places (list)
 - b. Protecting catchment of village pond/tank/stream
 - c. Some special species of plants or animals (list)
- iv. Agricultural needs:
 - a. Timber for agricultural work
 - b. Bamboo
- v. Miscellaneous needs (Any other needs):

(Details of existing community management practices for community forest resources and common lands, including cultural/religious practices, if any, may also be included here.)

3. Biggest internal and external THREATS or CHALLENGES to the CFR:

The Gram Sabha should discuss freely and note down the threats or challenges to sustainable forest management - whether internal or external- that they observe. Some examples are enumerated below, but they are only indicative. Also, different parts of the CFR may face different threats.

- a. Uncontrolled use/extraction from **neighbouring** villages or outsiders? What kind? Grazing? Firewood collection? Illegal timber felling? Poaching? Is there constant conflict with neighbouring villages about this?
- b. Uncontrolled use/extraction from **within the village**? What kind? Grazing? Firewood collection? Illegal timber felling? Poaching?
- c. Too much fire being set by Mahua or Tendu patta collectors? Or by someone else?
- d. Coupe felling or other activities by the Forest Department?
- e. Threat of mining or dams or road development?
- f. Forest has already degraded and is now not productive enough—so people are losing interest in it?
- g. Forest has already degraded, and that is causing village tank to silt up or water levels to drop
- h. Forest has lost some economically important species, such as bamboo
- i. Forest has been invaded by lantana or other such outside species that prevent tree or grass growth

4. Plan for protection, regeneration, management and use of the CFR:

What is to be done to reduce or solve the threats that have been identified above? Some examples are given below. Communities may consider making a table: one row for each type of threat with its solution in the next column, the area it would apply to, and some costing where relevant.

- i. **What activities are to be carried out:**
 - a. Regulating wood harvest, or grazing, or NTFP harvest
 - b. Natural regeneration by fully protecting some patches
 - c. New plantations (what kind: Grass? Bamboo? Trees?)
 - d. Fire protection: fire lines, fire watch
 - e. Soil and water conservation activities
- ii. **How are they to be implemented?**
 - a. Protection/watching against violations by insiders/outsideers:
 - i. Patrolling of forests by all members? Or by some members? Paid or unpaid? Etc.
 - ii. How will violations of the rules be dealt with? For insiders? For outsiders?
 - b. Plantation-type activities
 - i. How will nurseries be raised? Or where will seeds/saplings be obtained from?
 - ii. How will plantation and protection work be shared? All members? Only some? Paid/unpaid?
 - iii. Will funds be required? Will they be raised internally?
 - c. Fire protection:
 - i. Who will do fire watching?
 - ii. Who will make the fire lines?
 - d. Soil and water conservation:
 - i. Increasing infiltration using check dams or gully plugs or CCTs (need to understand where recharge will go, who will benefit)
 - ii. Capturing some rainwater: using bunds/bandhara (need to understand where recharge will go, who will benefit)
- iii. **How will funds for these activities be mobilised and work executed?**

This section may be optional as it may not be possible at the time of writing the plan to figure out where the funds will come from.

 - a. Will the Gram Sabha use some existing funds of its own? Or collect from its members?
 - b. Will it use special funds from TDD or other sources?
 - c. Will it ask for other funds (various departmental schemes)?

5. Details of the ASSURANCES and SUPPORT (technical, financial and physical), that the Gram Sabha desires from District administration (Revenue, Forest, Panchayat, Tribal and other line departments) and other agencies (CSR) (Some possible requirements are given below):

- a. Protection support by the Forest Department (FD) against outside poachers?
- b. Assurances that coupe felling will not be done or done only with Gram Sabha permission, with sharing of all coupe felling plans beforehand?
- c. Support by FD in fire control?
- d. Mapping and marking of CFR boundary (who will be approached: college, NGO, Tribal Dept.)?
- e. Help in assessing biodiversity and planning for conservation and management: college, NGO, or FD?
- f. Help in conflict resolution with neighbouring village (who will be approached: NGO, Gram Sabha federation, Tribal Dept., District level committee)
- g. Financial support from Tribal Welfare Department (Tribal Sub-plan) or Rural Department (various schemes) as grants for watershed development or protection or planting activities
- h. Financial support in the form of working capital for marketing activities
- i. Other support in marketing of tendu patta or bamboo or other products: NGO, other experts, Tribal Dept., other departments

6. Forest-based livelihood enhancement

Forest based livelihood enhancement is an important part of CFR management. This can be accomplished in different ways depending on the local context. For example -

- a. Collective sale of forest produce: It has often been observed that by selling forest produce together, the whole village or many neighbouring villages get a good price for that product. e.g. - Sale of tendu leaves.
- b. Storage of forest produce: By storing the forest produce for some time and selling it when the demand is good will fetch a good price. e.g. Mahua flowers

- c. Value Addition: If the forest produce is processed and sold, then their market value increases manifold. e.g. Mahua laddos, bamboo mat/basket, Sargi (sal) leaf etc.
- d. New products: The Gram Sabha may try to market new products found in the CFR area.
- e. Adoption of government schemes: Livelihood can also be increased by adopting many government schemes such MNREGA for employment generation, removal of invasive species, funds for plantation in CFR area.
- f. Eco-tourism: Tourism in the CFR area can become a medium of livelihood enhancement. The Gram Sabha will have to ensure that this does not disturb the way of life and environment of the village.

As mentioned in point 5, financial support in the form of working capital for marketing activities or other activities such as construction of storage places or ecotourism can be sought from government departments or other agencies.

- 7. **Duration:** What should be the duration for which the CFR plan is applicable ? Ideally 3 years, but the plan should be adaptive and can be reviewed whenever the Gram Sabha feels the need.

Democratic process and regulation

CFR management planning is not meant to be a process controlled by a few, whether experts from outside or leaders from inside the village. Ensuring widespread consultation and involvement is essential. Different people in the village have different preferences when it comes to forest use. The most vulnerable sections are often the ones most forest-dependent. Women are enormously dependent upon the forest, but are often reluctant to engage in such planning processes. Everyone's views need to be brought into the planning process.

Hence it is very essential that the Gram Sabha should try to solve the various problems, needs and solutions of the village by following a democratic process. It is important to consider the participation and opinion of all the people of the village, especially the women and the marginalized, not only in the preparation of the management plan, but in each and every stage of **management itself**.

Active participation of all the constituents of the Gram Sabha is important in decision-making on all issues. From our experience, some important issues are:

- timing of and quorum for Gram Sabha meetings,
- how the accounts of Gram Sabha funds will be maintained
- how will the bank account be controlled
- where to permit or ban grazing and for how long
- how to augment water sources and which ones,
- how to ensure sustainable harvest of species important for livelihood,
- fair distribution of livelihood gains from collective marketing
- how much dry wood can each family bring for domestic use
- what role will be played by each family in forest protection

Concluding Remarks:

1. In the above template, we have kept the focus on forest management and forest-related livelihood activities. But if the village wishes, other activities necessary for the development of the village can also be added.
2. This is just a suggested format. Gram Sabhas are always free to devise their own formats and methods.
3. The management plan should be made according to the CFR situation. For example, if the CFR condition is good and spread over a large area, then the Gram Sabha may focus on how to market available forest produce such as bamboo or tendu for higher incomes. But if the CFR is highly degraded, then it may focus on restoration and regeneration, using various government schemes/funds such as MNREGA and CAMPA to carry out tree plantations or construction of soil water conservation structures. Where a forest has tourism potential, the CFR management plan may essentially be a community ecotourism management plan.
4. In all cases, rules of CFR management such as those pertaining to patrolling, fire management, resource extraction, and rules regarding Gram Sabha functioning, such as procedures for decision-making and for and management of gram sabha funds, are very important and should be included in the plan.

If there are any suggestions please send them to Dr. Sharachchandra Lele-slele@atree.org and Geetanjoy Sahu - geetanjoy@tiss.edu

ANNEXURE

Gram Sabha Resolution (Format)

Gram Sabha name:

Gram Panchayat name:

Taluka name:

District name:

Date:

- a. It is hereby resolved that the CFR Management Plan attached herewith was discussed and adopted for a period of _____ years / months starting today.
- b. The Gram Sabha reserves the right to modify this plan as and when required.
- c. It is also hereby resolved that the attached CFR management plan stands duly integrated with the forest management/ working/micro plan as below:
 - i. The above CFR management plan shall be considered to be included forthwith in the management plan / micro plan/ working plan of the forest department.
 - ii. The parts in the management plan/working plan/micro plan of the forest department which are contrary to the above CFR management plan are deemed to be deleted forthwith. The same may be immediately ensured by the forest department
- d. The CFRMC (or Gram Sevak) is directed to send a copy of this plan to the local DFO.
- e. It is also hereby resolved that the Gram Sabha reserves its right to further modify the CFR management plan, as also parts of the forest department's micro/ management / working plan, as and when felt necessary by this Gram Sabha.
- f. It is further resolved that any management, harvesting, afforestation, and regeneration activities, by any entity shall not be conducted in our CFR areas without the prior informed consent of this Gram Sabha.
