

CHAPTER 16

Publicity and Extension

1. Adequate publicity & forestry extension activities are of utmost importance when the Forest Department has chosen to involve people at large in all its activities. However, publicity & extension has been a serious weakness of the State Forest Department. A modest beginning was made with the initiation of the World Bank and USAID aided National Social Forestry Project (NSFP) from the year 1985. This project ended in 1994. The work of publicity & forestry extension started under NSFP and was later on effectively supported by three OECF/JBIC aided projects namely; Aravalli Afforestation Project, Afforestation and Pasture Development in I.G.N.P. areas & Forestry Development Project. The emphasis given to the Publicity & Extension has yielded rich dividends. There is increased awareness about the importance of forests & support of public is also forthcoming in the forestry activities. Still there is long way to make forestry & environment a people's programme. A lot of awareness is required to make people aware of positive role played by plant life, bird life and wild life for the ultimate benefits of the humanity as a whole. It is, therefore, essential to have a proper extension network at appropriate levels so as to promote forestry development in the State. For this purpose the following activities must be taken up:

2. **Awareness**

2.1 Raising of awareness is one of the most important activities of forestry development. Extension units set up in the State Forest Department should have the following responsibilities:-

2.2 Proper documentation: It should be the responsibility of the Extension units to prepare, develop and disseminate publications, pamphlets, posters and any other relevant publicity material. Setting up libraries and related documentation facilities should also be their responsibility.

2.3 Organising film shows, exhibitions, chaupals, puppet shows, etc.: The extension units should organise film/video shows, puppet shows, chaupals, exhibitions, etc., both for rural and urban populace. Extension services should be extended to schools and educational institutions. Folk dances, songs, bhajans, generating awareness about forests, as well as trees, birds and wild life must be organized right from village, town, street, colonies to city levels.

3. Experience sharing workshops & Exchange visits:

3.1 In order to ensure bi-directional feedback, the extension units should be responsible for organising exchange programmes and workshops for all categories of forestry personnel, extension workers, VFPMC members, Eco-Development Committees, Local Self Government representatives etc. In the normal course, exchange visits should be followed by a workshop where sharing of field experience and cross fertilisation of ideas can take place.

3.2 Any publicity and extension activities which are going to generate awareness and importance of plant life, bird life, and wild life in the minds of people must be organized right from village, town, streets, colonies to city levels.

4. Use of mass media:

4.1 The importance and capabilities of mass media as tool for extension needs no acknowledgment. In order to have maximum publicity, TV programmes and advertisements, radio talks, press releases, etc., should be handled by these units.

4.2 At times police bands and other useful sources for forest, forestry & environment as a whole available in the other government departments must be used for enhancing and enriching awareness and productivity enhancement programmes.

5. **Organization of Environmental/Awareness camps** should also be taken up by extension wings in various institutions in order to educate children and students. In these camps various participatory and competitive activities like quizzes, essay writing, paintings, posters, cultural programmes like music, dance, songs etc. should also be organized.

6. Slogan writings on the walls, erection of hoardings, boards etc. should be done right from village to megacity levels.

7. Sensitization of Politicians, Public servants, Media personnel etc.:

- 7.1 The need to sensitize politicians, public servants and media personnel to the needs, requirements and performance of the State Forest Department is of paramount importance. They need to know, appreciate and, when necessary, critically analyze the forestry activities. For this purpose the extension units should be in a position to cultivate this very vital target audience by preparing reading material, references, training and should also organize field visits from time to time so that interaction among field functionaries, locals, other departmental staff should start taking place and first-hand knowledge of the methodology adopted should also be available.

8. Agriculture Extension Network

- 8.1 The Extension wing of Agriculture Department is well equipped in terms of trained personnel and equipment. Their grass root level network should be used regularly in creating awareness, especially with regard to the benefits of Agro/Farm forestry. However, these workers should first be put through orientation courses so as to sensitize them about the modalities and needs of forest & forestry development. It would prove advantageous for the State Forest Department if the officials of the extension units regularly participate in the training, workshops and field visits organized by the Extension wing of the Agriculture Department. The Forest Department extension units should liaise with the Agriculture extension wing.
- 8.2 There is a felt need to educate NGO's, and other functionaries like ecological task force etc. who are working in the filed of forest and environment.