

Training Module No.2

1 Day Training Programme on Building Community Institutions like VSS/ EDC, their Constitution and Functioning

Date : _____

Venue: _____

Participants: 30 Persons

- Staff members of Partner NGO
- Forester /Forest Guard

Objectives of the Training

The objectives of the training are:

1. To explain to the participants about the concept of building community institutions like VSS/EDC
2. To impart information on the process of building community institutions like VSS/EDC for sustainable forest management and developing alternative means of livelihood opportunities in coordination with the Forest Department on partnership basis in participatory method.

Training Outcomes

Participants develop an understanding on

1. Building Community Institutions Like VSS/ EDCs
2. Concept of VSS/EDC, its formation constitution and functioning.
3. The role of VSS/EDCs
4. The need of involving the communities in implementation of AJY project and their participatory role.
5. Their role vis a vis role of community in building VSS/EDC.
6. The role of other line dept in the process of VSS/EDC formation.

Registration of Participants (30 Minutes Prior to the Start of First Session)

Pre-requisite for this Training: The participants must have completed the module on community mobilisation.

Instructional Requirements

1. White board with marker
2. Over head projector/Laptop
3. Pointer (stick/ Laser)

Materials and Aids Required

1. Drawing sheet
2. Flip chart
3. Colour sketch pen (2-3 sets)
4. Markers

Detailed Session Plan:

SESSION -1 : INTRODUCTION			
Session Time/Duration	Topics	Methodology	Materials Required
30 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction – Ice Breaking • Sharing of the training objectives • AboutAma Jungle Yojana (AJY) Scheme • What is JFM Resolution? • What institutions are to be built up? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecture • Ice- Breaking Exercises/ Games • Discussion 	Training registers
SESSION -2 : INSTITUTION BUILDING			
90 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of JFM Resolution 2011 & amendment of 2015 • VSS/EDC constitution and Functions • Definition and objective and guiding principles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poster and Flip chart ▪ Lecture ▪ Discussion 	Poster, Flip chart, JFM Resolution, 2011 and 2015 and VSS/EDC Management Manual
120 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of Area • Formation of VSS/EDC • VSS/EDC membership • Constitution of Executive Committee • Composition of Governing Body • Duties and Responsibility of VSS/EDC • Duties and Responsibility of Executive Committee • Role of President, Secretary and Treasurer and members • Role of Pallisabha • Role of Grama Sabha • Explain the role of Gram Panchayat in the context of the JFM resolution • Kind of linkage the VSS/EDC should develop with the Gram Panchayat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poster and Flip chart ▪ Discussions 	Case study and linkages
LUNCH BREAK			
SESSION –III: VSS/EDCformation Processes			
60 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution of VSS/EDCas per JFM Resolution 2011 and Revised Resolution 2015 • Constitution of Executive committee and role of Palli sabha • Duties and responsibilities of VSS/EDC members and JFM- Purpose,practices, benefits and responsibilities Executive Body. • General Body and Executive Body meetings • Convergence scope, matrix of Govt. programmes for accessing entitlement 	Role play, Case study and Lecture	Handouts on the case study of convergences.

	from other line departments		
Session-IV: Role of different Players			
70 Minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Forest Department • Role of P- NGO • MOU with Forest Dept. &VSS/EDC relating to ownership, Empowerment and accountability • Intra Village Conflict • Inter Village Conflict • Open session • Post training action plan 	Group wok and presentation.	Exit interview format
20 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questions from participants Presentation of the gist of the program. • Class wrap up with concluding remarks from the trainer 	Sum up lecture by the facilitators	

Session 1 : Introduction

Forests are one of the complex eco- systems of our planet. The role of forests in conservation of the environment and economic prosperity of mankind is well established. For surviving on earth, human beings will have to live in harmony with nature. The need for conservation of forests and wildlife has been enshrined in the Constitution of India.

Odisha has 61018 sq. kms of forest area which constitutes 39.18% of the geographical area of the state. However, over the past few decades, the forests in Odisha are subject to heavy biotic pressure. The existing forest cover plays an important role in the socio- economic and cultural life of the people of the state.

National Forest Policy, 1988 envisaged the co-operation of the people in conservation and development of forests. In consonance with this policy, government of Odisha has adopted the Joint Forest Management approach and has sought community participation for protection, regeneration and management of the forest wealth.

Odisha Forestry Sector Development Society (OFSDS) has been identified as the autonomous agency under the Forest Department of Government of Odisha to take up project on Sustainable Forest Management with active participation of the forest fringe dwellers who need to be assisted not only in building of their capacity in an organised manner but also organised to have community level institutions like Vana Surakhya Samitis (VSSs) and Eco-Development Committees (EDCs). Therefore, the main goal of OFSDS is to organize the community for taking up initiatives on restoration of degraded forests and improvement of the income level of villagers by promoting sustainable forest management, thereby improving the environment and alleviating poverty of the forest dependent communities.

In order to enable the community to become an institution of self-governance and decision making, it needs to be assisted in forming a process and developing and organising the institution for the same.

1.0 About Ama Janagala Yojana (AJY)

The Ama Jangala Yojana scheme is based on the tradition of conserving forests through informal village level institutions in many forests fringe villages of the state. In the recent past for strengthening and supporting such community based initiatives, many significant efforts have been made by the State Forest Department, more particularly, through the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project (OFSDP) Phase- I, which was funded by Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA).The basic approach in this project was improving the forest cover along with generating alternate livelihood avocations to reduce pressure on forest. The experience gained under OFSDP reveals that with the support provided by the Government, in terms of finances and capacity upgradation, the outcome has further improved

both in terms of conservation and management of the natural resources as well as benefitting the forest fringe communities' in income generation activities.

Out of about 12500 VSSs, that have been constituted in Odisha so far, 2426 have already been covered under the OFSDP Phase – I project (2006-07 to 2014-15) and forests conservation and management in these VSSs is now being practiced in the Joint Forest Management (JFM) mode i.e. with active participation of the village community. However, still there are more than 10,000 VSSs that need to be assigned the task of forest conservation and management in the JFM mode. Out of these about 3000 VSSs are proposed to be covered under the OFSDP Phase- II for which a proposal has been submitted to the Government of India for accord of approval.

The present AJY scheme is, therefore, proposed for implementation in 7,000 number of VSSs/ EDCs, located in 30 Territorial and Wildlife Divisions of the state of Odisha, which have not been covered under OFSDP Phase-I or which are not included in OFSDP Phase – II proposal. The proposal in principle aims at further strengthening of the participatory forest management in the state by bringing the informal village level institutions/ bodies involved in the protection and management of forest resources under the fold of AJY in addition to creation of new VSSs. *It is mandatory that any VSSs/ EDCs covered under AJY Scheme should agree to maintain the plantation areas and forests protected by them as per the Working Plan prepared or modified by the Forest and Environment Department.*

Considering the learning from the success of the Odisha Forestry Sector Development Project, under which adequate support was provided to the VSSs/ EDCs, the scheme titled Ama Jangala Yojana (AJY) or the Community Forest Protection and Management Program (CFPMP) has been proposed by the forest & Environment Department. The objective of this scheme is to strengthen the VSSs/ EDCs in the State of Odisha, by providing financial, managerial and facilitation support. The scheme will be implemented by the State Forest Department through Odisha Forestry Sector Development Society (OFSDS), in partnership with selected NGOs and VSS members at the field level.

The AJY Scheme aims to achieve sustainable forest management in the project area through forest restoration initiatives, along with providing income generating and livelihood opportunities to the forest dependent communities, so that the pressure on adjoining forests is relieved/ reduced. The main project objectives of AJY Scheme are listed below:

1. To conserve and restore degraded forests through forest restoration initiatives.
2. To arrest further degradation of forests through participatory forest conservation and management strategy.
3. To empower forest dependent communities by building up their capacity to participate in the sustainable forest management.

4. To improve the livelihood opportunities of the forest dependent communities so as to reduce their dependence on forests.

1.1 AJY Components

It is proposed to cover 7000 VSS in 30 Territorial and Wild Life Divisions of the state of Odisha. Out of these 2000, 2500 and 2500 number of VSSs, respectively will be covered in the first three years of implementation of the scheme, i.e., during 2016- 17, 2017- 18 and 2018-19. The interventions of forest restocking in these VSSs/EDCs will be maintained for next three (i.e., in 2019- 20, 2020- 21 and 2021- 22) along with forest conservation, management and capacity building initiatives.

Under AJY, an area of up to 50 ha. will be assigned to each VSS out of which 10 ha will be maintained as the control plot, 5 ha will be the demonstration plot and the remaining 35 ha will be for taking up Aided Natural Regeneration (ANR) with gap planting at the rate of 200 plants per hectare. In about 500 VSSs, where suitable land for ANR with gap is not available, an area of 10 ha will be covered under Block Plantations.

The year wise area to be treated under the two types of plantation designs is given below:

Year	No. of VSS	ANR with Gap	Block Plantation	Total
1	2	3	4	5
2016-17	2000	70,000	2,500	72,500
2017-18	2500	95,000	1,250	96,250
2018-19	2500	95,000	1,250	96,250
2019-20	Only maintenance works of plantations			
2020-21				
2021-22				
Total	7,000	2,60,000	5,000	2,65,000

Therefore, the total area of 2,65,000 ha will be treated under AJY Scheme during the project implementation period, which will include 2,60,000 Ha under ANR with gap and 5000 ha under Block Plantation.

The scheme will be implemented in the 30 forest divisions of the state over a period of 06 years, commencing from 2016-17 and up to 2021-22. The year 2015- 16 will be the preparatory phase year of the AJY Scheme. While the main interventions of the scheme will be for the initial three years i.e. from 2016-17 to 2018-19, the maintenance of plantations raised under the scheme and other consolidation works along with capacity development initiatives will be carried out in the remaining three years, i.e., during 2019-20 to 2021-22.

Session 2 : Steps in organisation and building of Village Level Institutions

The organizational model of Joint Forest Management brings a forest dependent community out of isolation and organizes them into an institution through which sustainable forest management is achieved. The people of such communities, inclusive of women, are connected to a dense network of social relationships which reduces the risks associated with the process of change. Hence when communities are organised as institutions of Joint Forest Management of natural resources, they bring collective strength and help in increasing the protection and security as well as bargaining power of the community. This in turn, gives an identity to the community as workers and a voice to represent and decide for themselves. Hence, the forest dependent communities need to be organised into institutions which empowers them as decision makers and caretakers of the natural resources on which they depend.

2.1 Raising of awareness and building of self-confidence: mobilizing community for formation of small-scale institutions

The first step to any change process is to raise community level institutions as a whole into self-confident entities, so that the risks due to uncertainty and instability associated with any change will be minimized. Sometimes, the community might resist change (risk aversion situation) and hence it is necessary to create an atmosphere in which community understand how they will benefit from change.

OFSDS can initiate a mass mobilization through the “formation of VSS/EDC” to educate and generate awareness among the community on sustainable management of degraded forest, protection of environment, technical advancement, inputs and requirements of advanced research and marketing trends for better livelihood options. The community needs market information, linkages, and access. It is also required to develop bargaining power to get a fair price and currently, it is devoid of all of these. As a result, forest dependent communities in Odisha remains poor and backward. Thus, formation of VSS/EDC (community institutions) involve constant participation and collective decision making through regular meetings at village level.

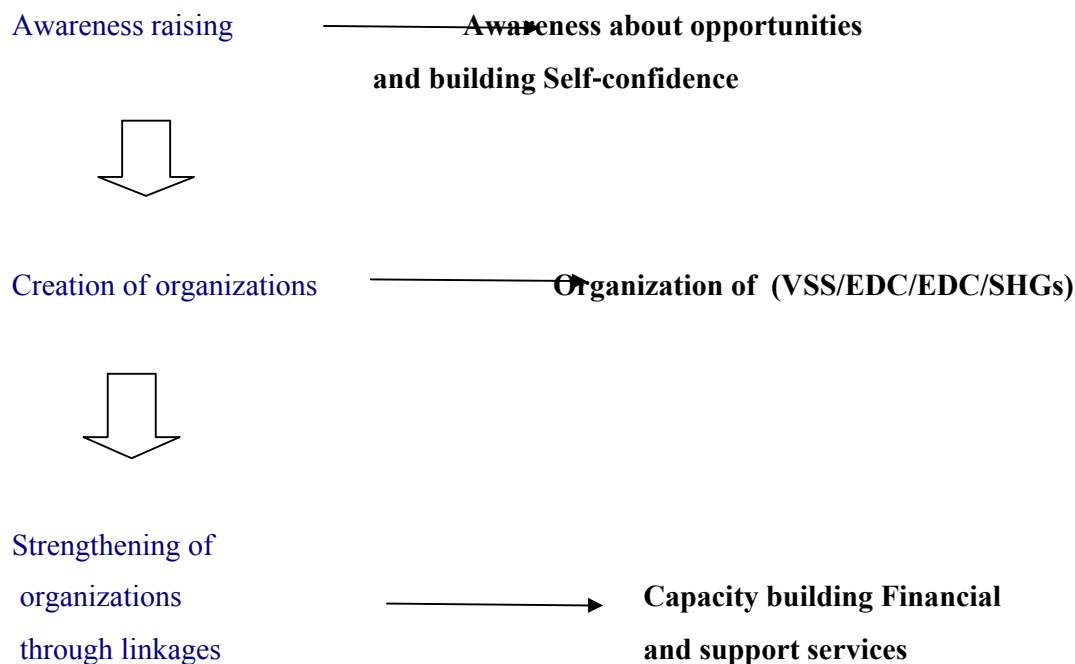
Community mobilization can be supported through :

- i. Informal visit to the village & data collection
- ii. Discussion with villager Head, Teacher, Pandits and Anganwadi workers
- iii. Connection with villagers and rapport building
- iv. Assembling villagers with the help of Village head
- v. Proposal to conduct a small meeting with villagers
- vi. Conduct 2nd round meeting with most of villagers inclusive women
- vii. Make the villagers to understand about the aims and objectives of VSS/EDC/EDC
- viii. Clearing the aims and objectives of VSS/EDC with examples, if not understood

- ix. Fixation of VSS/EDC date and time for formation of VSS/EDC/EDC
- x. Naming of VSS/EDC during date of formation of VSS/EDC/EDC
- xi. Participatory Role of organization and community

These institutions will give villagers, for the first time, an opportunity to come together, share their concerns and discuss potential solutions. Raising of awareness has been therefore considered a major preparatory and fundamental step in promoting a successful self-driven development strategy for any institution building.

Steps involved in Community Mobilization



2.2 Empowering village community for formation of VSS/EDCs

Once a relationship of trust has been created and villagers understand the benefit of being members of VSS/EDCs, the next step is to support the villagers in creating the institutions of VSS/EDCs, to be formed by all adult members of the village. This helps in organizing them and further strengthening the rapport amongst the members. VSS/EDC usually meet quarterly in a common place or in community rooms. Members share their experiences, issues and areas requiring interventions. They are encouraged to express and discuss their views on different issues. They gradually understand that they are not the only ones facing a certain problem related to natural resource management, which reduces the isolation that many economically and socially marginalized members of forest dependent communities experience. This brings collective strength among the members and also increases their negotiation skills and collective bargaining power. As a result of being organised, the members collectively develop a voice.

2.2.1 An action-learning approach

Institutions like VSS/EDC provide a structure that enables community to encourage and support each other in facing change by identifying common issues and solutions and by establishing a platform for collective problem solving and decision making. The VSS/EDC enables also collective recognition of solutions and the building of collective strategies to cope with risks. Together members identify hidden opportunities for income-generating activities and encourage each other to think in an entrepreneurial manner, to learn how to calculate risks and to find the right balance between strengths and weaknesses. VSS/EDC is a very formal organization and a proper management of VSS/EDC requires registration, maintenance of records, formal elections which is very difficult to maintain for each and every village especially if the community consists of a majority of illiterate individuals. A VSS/EDC is an institution which provides a platform where action towards addressing common issues are initiated. Within groups **women identify their own challenges, learn to take decisions and calculate risks independently**. Ultimately, this step of exchange and mutual assistance is the first milestone to build self-confidence and their capacity to initiate and drive their own development.

2.2.2 The grass-root leader as a *change agent*

The VSS/EDC needs a leader whom the other members trust and with whom they can discuss their issues. He/ she is the main driving force for this institution and is a change agent. The grass-root leader can be chosen based on his/ her personal skills, ability and commitment to implement the solutions agreed upon collectively. He/ she has a major responsibility for the institutional building process, thereby, facilitating members' participation, addressing interests and concerns, and leaving choices open for collective decision making. He/She therefore acts as a change agent, by:

- creating a common vision in the group,
- mobilizing members to support each other
- allowing time to adapt to the change

The grass root leader is further assisted by a group of elected/ selected leaders who form the Executive Committee. The main task is divided into sub tasks which are assigned to each member of the Executive Committee.

2.3.2 Strengthening VSS/EDC capacity and providing access to assets through linkages

In order to allow the VSS/EDC to access the resources necessary for improving livelihood opportunities and decreasing their dependence on forests, an intricate network between the VSS/EDC and SHGs has to be created and linked to external organizations at local, regional and national level for providing alternative livelihood options and opportunities. The external organizations at different levels provide the necessary funding for creating of assets required for alternative livelihood opportunities. Further, they also provide the inputs required for capacity building of the communities for accessing and utilizing the whole set of

services and resources like information about markets, marketing linkages, financial and support services, access to credit and other financial services like insurance, pension, etc. Funds can also be pooled in the form of convergence of various programs being run by other line departments.

Thus, the participatory model encompasses:

- An acceptance that local participation is about facilitating a long term process of social change; where actors with conflicting interests have to co-operate through existing local institutions and arenas.
- Interventions must have explicit aims to increase social security, incomes and reduce costs for involved actors in long run.
- Local institutions or principles for resource management, should preferably be built on or constructed from existing institutions, styles of thinking, sanctioned social relationship and experience based on local knowledge.
- Public bodies and officials should understand and have competence on institution building and local participation and how to work with complex processes of social change.
- There must be public acceptance to give up authority, resources and control to local level bodies and to civil society

The Joint Forest Management (JFM) in Odisha is being implemented with the objectives of forest restoration, promotion of sustainable management of forest by strengthening participatory forest management and improvement of livelihood of forest dependent community. Various participatory forest management programmes are supporting the JFM Committees in field towards strengthening and development of the village community. The AJY has a village specific need based approach and the interventions are in JFM mode through the village based community institutions. These forestry based community institutions are VSS in the peripheral degraded forest areas and EDC in the case of protected areas. AJY emphasizes the importance of JFMC by assigning it the central role, in terms of deciding the required interventions, their execution and financial decision making. This participatory forest management aims to provide uniform and smooth functioning of VSS/EDC in accordance to the JFM Policy Resolutions of the Government of Odisha as well as in implementation of the Programmes for participatory forest management with communities.

3.1 VANA SURAKSHYA SAMITIES (VSS/EDC/EDC)

3.1.1 Definition of VSS/EDC

Vana Surakshya Samiti is an independent, formal, democratic "village based community institution" comprising inhabitants of a village constituted for the development/management of assigned forests as per section 3 of the Odisha JFM Resolution, 2011.

Forests are assigned as per section 2 of the said resolution for being managed on sustainable basis by the VSS/EDC. These forests may be from Reserved Forests, Protected Forests, Village Forests, Revenue Forests etc. and may include Protected Areas.

Similarly, for participatory modes of management in the Mangrove Wetlands and the Protected Areas of National Parks and Sanctuaries excluding their Core Areas with a strategy of Eco-development, Eco-Development Committee has been constituted under section 2(i) (b) of the JFM Resolution, 2011 in order to improve their livelihood and to secure conservation.

Ordinarily there will be one or EDC for a single village. One VSS/EDC may also cover more than one village.

3.1.2 Objectives of VSS/EDC

The main objectives of a VSS/EDC are as mentioned below:

- i. To protect, manage, and develop forest areas under its management.
- ii. To receive the benefits/concessions/incentives (in any form) and distribute the same among the members.
- iii. To plan interventions for management of the assigned forest area based on scientific principles.
- iv. To serve as interface between villagers and forest department, villagers and other line departments, villagers and other community based institutions.
- v. To represent the villagers in VSS/EDC related matters in any public forum.
- vi. To facilitate and promote the activities, which are integral part of the programme,

- including Micro Planning, Restoration of degraded forests, Income Generating Activities, or any other activity in furtherance of the programme.
- vii. To form and manage producer groups under the ambit of National Rural Livelihood Mission.
 - viii. To form and manage other institutions (such as SHGs) within the VSS/EDC for the benefit of the programme.
 - ix. Revolving fund with soft - loans to SHG.
 - x. Corpus fund.

3.1.3 Guiding Principles of VSS/EDC

- i. VSS/EDC will proactively protect and develop forests and forest based resources in the assigned area.
- ii. VSS/EDC would maintain fair play, equity and transparency in all its actions.
- iii. VSS/EDC would function in harmony with the existing institutional arrangements for community at the Village and at their Gram Sabha/ Palli Sabha, as well as regulations under PESA, FRA and Conservation of Biodiversity Act.
- iv. VSS/EDC would function as a producer group, which is an informal business organization.

3.1.4 VSS/EDC in Overall Framework of Ama Jangala Yojana & Other Programmes)

VSS/EDC would serve as the foundation of organizational pyramid of the Programme as far as the implementation is concerned. The Programme further conceptualizes that after the VSS/EDC becomes functional, all decisions regarding forest management, livelihood options, benefit sharing etc. would originate from the VSS/EDC. The decision taken by VSS/EDC would not be ordinarily altered by FMU (Forest Range) or DMU (Forest Division) unless it contravenes the Working Plan (Management Plan) prescription, legal and technical parameters and is not in the interest of Forests.

3.1.5 Formation of VSS/EDC

The FMU will organize a village meeting. The NGO will mobilize community members for the meeting where the members of the Field Management Unit (FMU)/Forester/ Forest Guard concerned will explain the following aspects:

- i. JFM- Purpose, guidelines, programmes, practices, benefits and responsibilities.
- ii. Structure and Functions of VSS/EDC.
- ii. Duties and responsibilities of VSS/EDC members and Executive Body.
- iv. The Programme objectives and strategies.

Following a detailed discussion on above aspects, the FMU Chief (Range Officer) will decide on inclusion/formation of a VSS/EDC for participating in the Programme based upon the assessment of community willingness.

The target communities along with representatives of Gram Panchayat, FMU and NGO would conduct series of meetings with all the forest dependent stake holders in the community. The consensus in the meeting, with presence of not less than 50 percent of all adult members of the village, would result in formation of the VSS/EDC/EDC. All adult members in the village would constitute a General Body. The hamlet can also form a VSS/EDC on the similar principle.

Every VSS/EDC shall have a unique name (based on the name of village, local dignitaries, or any other name on which all members agree). The Palli Sabha shall elect the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson, the Secretary and the Treasurer and a minimum of other 11 (eleven) members to constitute the Executive Committee. At least 10% of the members of the EC shall be women. The number of SC & ST members in the Executive Body shall be in proportion to their membership in VSS/EDC/ EDC. There should also be representation from the group of community, who do not have any livelihood support other than depending on the forests.

The composition of the Executive Committee (EC) (as per Section 4 (iii) of JFM Resolution, 2015) shall be as follows:

1. Chairperson	1	Elected Member
2. Vice-Chairperson	1	Elected Member
3. Secretary (Local forest Guard/Forester)	1	<i>Ex officio</i> Member
4. Treasurer	1	Elected Member
5. Ward Member (s) concerned	1	<i>Ex officio</i> Member(s)
6. Members	11	Elected Members

The Range Officer concerned will act as the Returning Officer for conducting the election of the EC. It shall be the responsibility of the Returning Officer to ensure that the representation in the EC is in accordance with reservation specified above. The EC will have tenure of 3 years at a time.

The Palli Sabha shall send its Resolution to the FMU Chief concerned regarding constitution of VSS/EDC/ EDC for his record and communication to the DMU Chief concerned for registration at the Division level vide Annexure I of this VSS Management Manual.

The General Body of the VSS/EDC (existing as well as newly constituted in 2014 & onwards) would also resolve and will formally agree to work for the Programme (Form 2.1 of this Manual). The Range Officer will send a copy of the resolution to the DMU along with his recommendation in Form 2.2 of this Manual to the DMU Chief. After taking into account all relevant factors (evaluating the motivation of the villagers), and after being satisfied about the feasibility of the committee, the DMU Chief would include the VSS/EDC in the Programme concerned and send a recommendation to the CFPMP Cell in

the OFSDS to assign a Code to the VSS/EDC which would be reference for Microplanning, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation. The VSS/EDCs so included shall undertake programme implementation and shoulder the responsibilities under the Programme, and also to distribute the benefits accruing from the Programme. FMU Chief would sign on the MoU with VSS/EDC on behalf of Programme if earlier not performed. A copy of this shall be kept in the records of VSS/EDC with EC, at FMU and at DMU.

3.1.6 Duties and Responsibilities of VSS/EDC

- i) The members of the VSS/EDC shall individually and collectively protect and manage the forest, wild life and biodiversity as per approved action plan/scheme..
- ii) The VSS/EDC shall put in necessary efforts so that adjoining catchments area, water resources and other ecologically sensitive areas are protected.
- iii) The VSS/EDC shall place adequate emphasis on plantation of indigenous medicinal and NTFP species in the forests as well as outside the forest area adjoining the village.
- iv) The VSS/EDC shall ensure that the decisions taken in the Palli Sabha to regulate access to community forest resources and stop any activity which adversely affects the wildlife, forests and the biodiversity, are complied with.
- v) The General Body of the VSS/EDC shall have the powers to remove and/or substitute any elected member of the EC by a two third majority of the members if the concerned member does not discharge his/her duties satisfactorily.
- vi) The VSS/EDC members shall ensure that all the Executive Committee (EC) members discharge their duty satisfactorily. If any member of the EC fails to discharge his/ her duties satisfactorily VSS/EDC will remove and substitute him /her.
- vii) Book keeping.
- vii) Fund management.
- ix) Distribution of usufructs.
- x) Soil and Moisture Conservation.
- xi) Livelihood support and IGA through SHG.

3.1.7 Duties and responsibilities of the Executive Committee (EC):

- i. The EC shall carry out the day-to-day business of the VSS/EDC. The EC shall prepare the Micro Plan and Annual Work Plan for the assigned forest area and integrate other developmental activities outside the forest area associated with the forest based livelihood system and get it approved by the VSS/EDC after technical scrutiny by the Forest Range Officer concerned. The EC shall be responsible for managing and implementing the Micro Plan and Annual Plan and other decisions of the General Body of VSS/EDC.
- ii. The EC shall be responsible for protection of the forests assigned to the VSS/EDC and extend their assistance to the Forest Department for apprehending the offenders who

commit forest offences. If the members of the VSS/EDC play a significant role in detection of forest offence and seizure of the forest produce within their village limits, they will be entitled for a fixed percentage of the value of the forest produce (except in case of WL Trophies) so seized.

- iii. The EC in consultation with the GB shall evolve methodology on all issues relating to membership, conflict resolution, and prevention of encroachment, exercise of customary rights and use of the permissible forest resources such as NTFP including Bamboo.
- iv. The EC shall be responsible to account for and manage the funds and other resources received from the Government, other agencies and funds internally generated, if any. For this purpose a joint account called VSS/EDC account shall be opened in any commercial, rural or Co-operative Bank recognized by the RBI or in any post office, which shall be operated, jointly by the Secretary and the Treasurer of the VSS/EDC. Utilisation Certificate relating to the expenditure incurred shall be jointly signed by the Chairperson and the Secretary and submitted to the authorities concerned.
- v. The EC shall be responsible for managing funds received by VSS/EDC by maintaining and operating VSS/EDC account vide Annexure A of JFM Resolution 2011 and detailed accounting guidelines of this Manual at Chapter 4.
- vi. The EC with the help of Co-ordinator shall try to establish marketing linkage for various NTFP items and other micro-enterprise products for securing better returns for the members.
- vii. Annual account of VSS/EDC/ EDC shall be placed before the GB for its approval.
- viii. Fire control in the vicinity within the village limit

3.1.8 VSS/EDC Membership

There would be three types of membership of the VSS/EDC.

- i General:** All adults of the village/hamlet will be members of the VSS/EDC. General Body may prescribe payment of enrolment fee per person.
- ii Nominated:** These members would be nominated by either VSS/EDC General Body or by the Programme authorities with consent of GB. Such members will not have voting right and can't be elected to the Executive Committee. Usually people like local school teacher, representative of other NGO working in that area, local health worker, Anganwadi worker, Panchayat representative, Government Department Representatives at GP/Block level can be considered for such membership.
- iii Ex-officio:** The Forester/ Forest Guard would be ex- officio member of the VSS/EDC. The ex- officio member shall not have voting right and can't be a candidate for elected position in the EC.

3.1.9 General Body of VSS/EDC

General Body of VSS/EDC would comprise all the general members, nominated members, and ex-officio members.

3.2 Role of Specific Constituents

i. Role of Villagers

- a. Villagers would be the members of the VSS/EDC and would be responsible for all the decisions taken by the VSS/EDC. The members shall pay monthly membership fee, if decided by the GB of VSS/EDC.
- b. The members shall rise above the local considerations, conflict, self-interest, political conflicts in the interest of forests and larger interest of the village.
- c. Villagers would also help the fellow villagers to understand the issues of discussion and decision making.
- d. It would be the responsibility of local village opinion leaders and elderly respected members to encourage those members who are usually indifferent or get ignored in decision making process. Actual participation of women and consideration of their points of views shall also be responsibility of the members.
- e. Villagers shall abide by the provisions of the Manual, all Acts/ Rules and sincerely work for implementation of Micro Plan.

ii Role of Forest Department

- a) To register the VSS/EDC and maintain close liaison with them.
- b) To support the VSS/EDC in identifying and apprehending the forest offender(s).
- c) To take action as per law in cases where VSS/EDC members have handed over the offender(s) and forest produce involved in the offence.
- d) To assist in capacity building of VSS/EDC members on different aspects of forest management, planning, silviculture, nursery technology, forest laws, accounting, book keeping, micro enterprise development, value addition and processing of NTFPs etc.
- e) To provide technical help to the VSS/EDC in preparation and implementation of the Micro plan/ annual work programme.
- f) To invite suggestion from the VSS/EDC while preparing the Working Plan / Management Plan/ Scheme of the concerned Forest area / Protected Area.
- g) To sign Memorandum of Understanding with the VSS/EDC and ensure sharing of benefit as per norms in vogue.
- h) To establish coordination with other departments/ agencies for successful implementation of the micro plan and related area development programme.
- i) To facilitate the process of discharging the duties and resolving the conflicts by the ECs.
- j) Evaluating the success parameters.

k) Soil and Moisture Conservation.

l) Fund management.

iii. Role of NGO/ Team Leader

NGOs / Team Leaders of old partner NGOs will undertake the following activities as the part of micro planning preparation process:

- Preparation of Micro Plans for target area / villages
- Identification of different Entry Point Activities and mentioning in micro planning
- Identification /selection of SHGs and assisting SHGs in preparation of plans for micro enterprise development and placing them in micro planning
- Preparation of income generation programmes for participating VSS/EDC/communities based on all the natural resources (Forest, Soil Moisture Conservation Measures, Animal & Husbandry, Land etc.).
- Exploring different livelihood programmes can be possible through convergence
- Exploring market access
- Preparation of plans and estimates for EPA, IGA, LLI and capacity building activities
- Any other works ancillary for preparation of micro plan and necessary in execution of Micro-plans as advised by DMU.

iv Role of Gram Sabha &Palli Sabha

Gram Sabha &Palli Sabha has been playing important role in administration and management of forests, biodiversity, non-timber forest produce, village forests and forest rights. As per the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution, certain powers and responsibilities have been vested on the PRIs. Therefore, it is necessary for VSS/EDC to have relationship between village level institution like VSS/EDC and the Panchayati Raj Institutions and to establish a linkage with the Palli Sabha.

Regarding protection and conservation of forest, soil and moisture, wildlife and environment, the EC shall work as a Sub-Committee of Palli Sabha.

If the work of the EC of any VSS/EDC is found to be detrimental to forest conservation and against the larger and long term interests of the people, the VSS/EDC may recommend for dissolving and reconstituting the EC. The Palli Sabha, on receipt of such recommendation may enquire into the matter and forward its findings to the Divisional Forest Officer for necessary action. The Divisional Forest Officer, after examining the merit will dissolve the EC and advise the GB of VSS/EDC/ EDC for its reconstitution. DFO can suomoto dissolve the EC if he feels that the functioning of EC is not in accordance with guidelines or in the interest of natural resources.

3.3 Rights of Members

All the general members shall have voting rights in all matters of VSS/EDC and also would be entitled to the benefits and incentives. Whereas other two categories of member would neither have voting rights nor would they be entitled to benefits and incentives. However, any of the members can represent VSS/EDC and be the speaker on behalf of VSS/EDC and when required provided he has been duly authorised by the Executive Committee. If action of any member will be detrimental to the VSS/EDC's interests or the member flouts the decision of VSS/EDC deliberately, the GB/EC can deprive him from usufructory and other benefits.

3.4 Meetings

i The first meeting of General Body

The first meeting of the VSS/EDC General Body would be convened by the Secretary which would also be attended by FMU Chiefs, Forester, Forest Guard and Co-ordinator. The meeting would also be attended by Sarpanch and other representatives of other community based organization in existence, if any. Participation of Women should be ensured. In the meeting, the FMU Chief shall explain the project objectives, expected role of VSS/EDC members, executive committee, roles of project team and Co-ordinator, and expected benefits to the community. This meeting would be used to take the commitment of members, Panchayat and also to assure community about the full support of the project. Project team should be prepared to answer wide variety of questions.

The date of next meeting would also be discussed and announced during this meeting.

ii Subsequent meetings of General Body

The GB meetings of VSS/EDC shall take place at least once in every six months. However, for the first six months it can be held bimonthly or as frequently as may be required, and then for the next one year the meetings can take place once in three months. However, this increased frequency of meetings shall be decided by the President, the Secretary, Co-ordinator in consultation with Range Officer.

The Chairperson, with an advance notice of one week, will convene the meeting of GB. He shall be careful about deciding the date & time so that maximum number of members can attend the meeting. Special care should be taken to ensure the presence of women members. The meeting would be presided by the Chairperson and in his/her absence by the Vice Chairperson. Minimum 50 percent of members will constitute the quorum out of which 10% at least should be women. However, due to some genuine reasons, if the number of members present is not 50 percent, the meeting can be reconvened with at least 40 percent of the members. However, in the next meeting the quorum would be 50 percent.

No member of the GB would have any veto power and all the decisions would be taken by consensus or majority vote.

However, if VSS/EDC feels that a decision has been wrongly taken or general body intends to change the previous decision; it can be done in next meeting but in presence of members numbering more than 10% of the number present on previous occasion.

A decision in GB meeting cannot be changed in EC meeting and it will be deemed to have been 'approved' by the EC.

iii Meetings of Executive Committee (EC)

- i) EC would meet as often as possible and necessary, but not less than once in two months.
- ii) The meeting will be presided over by the Chairperson and in his absence by the Vice-Chairperson or any- body authorized by the Range Officer.
- iii) The quorum for any meeting of the EC shall be 50 % of its membership, out of which at least one- third shall be women.

iv Special Meetings

Under special circumstances, GB meetings can be convened as and when so required. In this case at least one third of members have to request the chairperson in writing. For such meetings, at least 3 days' notice indicating the purpose has to be communicated to all. In such meeting presence of Chairperson / Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and NGO representative would be must and quorum for such special meetings would be 50 percent of total members. The decision in such meeting shall be taken by a minimum of 2/3rd members of VSS/EDC/ EDC.

v Record of Meetings

The proceedings of all meetings of VSS/EDC shall be recorded in Odia and maintained by the Secretary. All decisions taken in such meetings shall be recorded in form of 'resolutions' duly signed by the Chairperson and the Secretary (Form 2.6). A copy of the proceedings would be either pasted in a register or preserved in a guard file. All the resolutions passed by the VSS/EDCGB in a financial year are to be given running serial numbers. A copy of the proceedings is to be forwarded to the GP and the Range Officer and the Divisional Forest Officer. The Secretary shall be responsible for communicating the decisions in the form and language so that villagers understand it clearly. If the resolution requires specific activities to be undertaken by specific individual members, the Secretary will inform the same to the concerned person(s).

The forthcoming EC will be elected in the last meeting of the GB convened (quorum would be 50 percent) one month before the end the term of the EC. It shall be binding on the part of the Chairperson to convene this meeting at least one month before the expiry of the term of the EC. In case the EC is not re-constituted as above, the VSS/EDC will be deemed to have become dis-functional and the VSS/EDC account will remain inoperative during this period. The Range Officer will take immediate steps for reconstitution of the EC.