

P R E F A C E

The issues on conservationism, climate change and livelihoods of forest dependent communities are omnipresent in the world we live in. As a result, there has been a barrage of works that echoes on the explanations for and replies to the dilemmas on conservation policies. Forest policies and Acts in India are examples of such issues which have long-term impact on both forest ecology and forest dwellers livelihood. Forest policy interventions are of paramount importance on ensuring conservation of forest and wildlife as well as livelihood of forest dwellers. Reserves of different kinds always demanded a strict regulation on traditional use of the forest, regardless of its good or bad impact on the forest's ecology. Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 coined the concept of protected area, as a result, more and more forest areas are declared as wildlife sanctuaries and national parks. All these concepts of conservation are based on a presupposition that recognizing the rights of forest dwellers has a negative impact on the sustainability of forest in the long run. Hence, the concepts of conservation visa-a-visa forest dwellers' livelihood have attracted considerable interest of the researchers and the academicians during past few decades. It assumes further significance with the introduction of *Panchayat* (local Government) in the forest villages and the enactment of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, as the new institutions are supposed to generate alternative livelihood options for forest dwellers. It is critical for the forest villagers to accustom with those new developments and fine-tune the traditional livelihoods they practiced. This study is an honest attempt at investigating the forest policy intervention on the livelihood of forest villagers. For the purpose of the study, Buxa Tiger Reserve (BTR- A tiger reserve in North Bengal), has been selected as the field since it has witnessed commercial forestry as well as protected area management; and it is home to 37 forest villages. In this sense it is a comparative study on the available livelihood options before and after the declaration of the Tiger Reserve in Buxa. The emphasis is given on examining what kind of change has occurred in the traditional livelihood, rank of the new livelihood options, and the status of the incentivized programs (JFM) undertaken by the forest department in BTR. Since the concept of livelihood has a wider connotation which denotes not only the capabilities, assets and activities required for a means of living but also capacity to recover from stress and shocks, enhance capabilities, and access to material and social assets. Hence, the study examined the multidimensional phenomena like educational facilities, healthcare facilities, veterinary

facilities, telecommunication and electric facility etc. which in several ways encompass livelihood.

The results of this study provide the policy makers and activist groups (both wildlife & human rights) with useful information about the problems of livelihood of forest villagers, their role in forest conservation and the livelihoods that are strongly associated with their household expenditure level. The results of the study should be useful for Indian forest policy packers while developing forest and wildlife conservation strategies, the recommendations of the study may be fruitful in developing working plans.