**OPENING UP OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE IN INDIA WHO RELY**

**ON THE FOREST**

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According to this World Bank report, forests in India have enormous potential for reducing poverty and boosting rural economies while also advancing important national conservation goals. Around 275 million people live in rural regions and rely on forests for some or all of their income. The poorest and most vulnerable people groups in society are those who live in the forests, which includes a large percentage of tribal people. Joint Forest Management has been chosen by the Indian government as the main strategy for community-based forestry. The initiative presently includes 85,000 village committees and spans 27% of the national forest area across 27 states. The Joint Forest Management model has changed over the past ten years from one that was heavily focused on commercial timber managed by state forest departments (with communities providing labour) to one that is more supportive of forest conservation and offers communities benefits in exchange for helping with limited management activities. Although this transformation has been somewhat effective, most communities still fall short of making the most of the forest's ability to enhance local livelihoods. The primary uses of forests are as a safety net during lean economic times or as a source of seasonal subsistence goods like fuelwood and fodder. Wide-ranging and carefully planned changes are needed at the state and national levels to address the following issues: 1) greater forest rights and duties for forest communities; 2) more effective management systems targeted at people associated with forestry; 3) increased access to more efficient market systems for main and minor products; and 4) more effective and flexible institutions and capacities.

Keyword - forests, fuel-fodder, JFM, conservation, livelihood.