

4. Resolution on Eco-development Committees

Resolution No. 3841-For/d/11M-795

Dated 26th June, 1996 on Eco-Development Committee

Whereas the Forest Department have taken up a massive programme of wildlife conservation and management in the State and established a number of wildlife protected areas, i.e. sanctuaries and national parks, for this purpose.

And whereas successful implementation of the programme is dependent to a large extent on active participation and involvement of the local people.

Now, therefore, the Governor is pleased to decide that Eco-Development Committee (EDC) shall be constituted for the purpose of protection and development of wildlife-protected areas (sanctuaries and national parks) and members' activities, subject to observance of the conditions provided in this Resolution.

The composition, duties and functions, the usufructory benefits and restrictive measures pertaining to such committees shall be as follows:

1. Composition :

- (i) The Divisional Forest Officer/Officer in charge of the protected area (hereinafter referred to as Forest Officer), in consultation with the "Bon-O-Bhumi Sanskar Sthayee Samiti" of the concerned Panchayat Samiti, shall select members for constitution of the EDC within the framework of this Resolution.
- (ii) The members shall ordinarily be economically backward people living in the vicinity of the protected areas concerned. Every family living in the vicinity of the protected area shall, however, have the option of becoming a member of EDC if such family, including the female members, are interested in the work of protection.
- (iii) There shall normally be a joint membership of each household (i.e. husband becoming member, wife automatically becomes a member or vice versa). Either of the two can exercise the right to represent the household at any time in the Annual General Meeting.

- (iv) Constitution of the EDC will be approved by the Forest Officer on recommendation of the “Bon-O-Bhumi Sanskar Samiti” of the concerned Panchayat Samiti.
- (v) The concerned Gram Panchayat(s) shall provide necessary support and help to such Committee(s) to ensure their smooth and proper functioning.
- (vi) The “Bon-O-Bhumi Sanskar Samiti” of the respective Zilla Parishad will monitor, supervise and review the functions of the EDC.
- (vii) Each EDC shall have an Executive Committee to carry out the various activities assigned to the Committee.
- (viii) The composition of the Executive Committee shall be as follows:
 - (a) Sabhapati or any member of the “Bon-O-Bhumi Sanskar Samiti” of the local Panchayat Samiti as may be nominated by the Sabhapati Member.
 - (b) Pradhan or any member of local Gram Panchayat as may be nominated by the Pradhan(s) Member.
 - (c) Elected representative from amongst the members, not exceeding 10% of total membership— subject to a minimum number of 6 and maximum of 11. Not less than 30% of the elected members shall be women..... Member.
 - (iv) Concerned Beat OfficerMember Convenor.
- (ix) The members of the Executive Committee shall elect a Secretary from amongst the elected members, who will function as Joint Convenor.
- (x) If any inclusion or change in the EDC/Executive Committee is necessitated, after initial constitution, the Executive Committee shall make suitable recommendation to the Forest Officer duly endorsed by the “Bon-O-Bhumi Sanskar Samiti” of local Panchayat Samiti, for approval.
- (xi) The Beat Officer, as Member-Convenor, and the Secretary shall convene the meeting of the Executive Committee, Annual General Meeting and other meetings of the EDC;
- (xii) Quorum for each meeting of the Executive Committee shall be 50% of the elected members and for the Annual General Meeting, 30% of ordinary members.
- (m) A Chairperson shall be elected for every meeting of the EDC.

2. FUNCTION :

- (i) The Secretary of the EDC shall maintain a Register showing necessary particulars of the members of the EDC, e.g. name, father’s/spouse’s name, address, age, number of family members, name of the nominee, etc. The nomination forms duly filled in and approved by the Executive Committee should be pasted in the Register. Such Register is also to be maintained in the concerned Range Offices of the Forest Department for permanent record;
- (ii) The Secretary of the EDC shall maintain a “Minutes Book” wherein proceedings of the meetings of the Executive Committee held from time to time as well as the proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the EDC will be recorded under the signature of the Member-Convenor and Joint Convenor.
- (iii) The EDC shall hold an Annual General Meeting once every year where activities of the EDC as well as details of distribution of usufructory and eco-development benefit are to be discussed besides electing

representatives of the members to the Executive Committee. Concerned Range Officer shall be the observer in this meeting.

- (iv) Every EDC shall/will have an account in bank/post office maintaining a common fund by deposits from the members and/or other source. The fund will be operated jointly by the Beat Officer and the Secretary as per written resolution of the Executive Committees. Receipts and withdrawals from this Account shall be presented in every Annual General Meeting for approval.

3. DUTIES :

- A. (i) To ensure protection of the forest and wildlife inside the forest and those straying outside, through members of the EDC jointly with Forest Department Staff;
- (ii) To inform forest personnel about any person or persons attempting trespass and wilfully or maliciously damaging the forest(s) and/or wildlife therein;
- (iii) To prevent such trespass, encroachment, grazing, fire, poaching, theft or damage jointly with Forest Department staff;
- (iv) To approach or assist the Forest Department staff in apprehension of such person(s) committing any of the offences mentioned above.
- B. (i) To assist Forest Department staff in smooth and timely execution of all Forestry works taken up in area protected by the EDC;
- (ii) To involve every member of the EDC in the matter of protection of forest and wildlife as well as other duties assigned to the EDC;
- (iii) To assist the concerned forest officials and the Panchayet in the matter of selecting/engaging labourers required for forestry works.
- C. (i) To ensure implementation of eco-development programme so that the members of the EDC get maximum benefit;
- (ii) To ensure that eco-development funds provided by Govt. and usufructory benefits by Government are not in any way misused by any of the member(s) & Forest/Plantation sites are kept free from any encroachment whatsoever.
- D. (i) To prevent any action in contravention of provision of the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 as amended from time to time;
- (ii) To report about activities of a particular member which are found prejudicial and detrimental to the interest of forest/wildlife, to the concerned Beat Officer/Range Officer, which may result in cancellation of membership of the erring member;
- (iii) To assist the forest officials to take action under Indian Forest Act, 1927, the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and the Rules made thereunder, against the offenders, including any erring members of the EDC.

4. Eco-Development Activities:

- (i) Microplans in respect of eco-development activities will be drawn up in a participatory manner prior to commencement of the activities, involving the Range Officer and Beat Officer of the Forest Department and the members of the EDC. Need-based and site-specific work programme, out of a basket of options,

will be chosen within specific monetary limits, both for community and individual benefit, for implementation. Every selected eco-development activity shall have direct or indirect linkage or relation with conservation of biodiversity and such linkage/relation is to be mentioned against each selected activity in the microplan.

- (ii) Protection provided to the wildlife-protected area against theft, grazing, fire, etc. would be considered as the involvement and contribution of the EDC. The forest officer may not release fund for village eco-development unless he is satisfied that contribution by the EDC, as stipulated above has been fulfilled.
- (iii) Members of the EDC shall share a percentage of investment for every village eco-development work in cash, labour and/or physical resources. Agreed cost sharing arrangement will be incorporated in the microplan.
- (iv) The microplan will be signed by Range Officer on behalf of the Forest Department and the Secretary on behalf of the EDC.

5. USUFRUCTUARY BENEFITS:

A. From Wildlife Protected Area:

- (i) Upon satisfaction of the State Government that collection and removal of certain items of forest products from identified zone(s) of a protected area is necessary for the improvement and management of wildlife therein, the Chief Wildlife Warden may grant permission for such collection and removal. Members of the EDC shall be eligible for getting in equal proportion such forest products free of royalty but on payment of collection cost, when collected by Government agency, as follows:
 - (a) 25% share of poles (up to 60 cm b.h.g. for teak and 90 cm b.h.g. for other species) obtained from drift and overwood removal;
 - (b) 100% share of firewood (obtained from drift and overwood removal), thatch/amlisho/other grass (obtained from firelines and fire prone zones), specified non-edible fruits, pods, flowers, seeds, decorative fungus and leaves.
- (ii) The members of the EDC will have to protect and manage the protected area to the satisfaction of the forest officer for a minimum period of one year to become eligible for 25% share of Government receipts on account of tourist and transport entry and photography and such other related activities in the protected area.
- (iii) Usufruct sharing, as mentioned above, will be subject to restrictions imposed from time to time on wildlife management and other related consideration.

B. From Non-Forest Area:

- (i) Produce obtained from plantations raised on public lands as village eco-development activity will be shared as follows :
 - (a) 100% share of intercrop to identified members of EDC who raise the crop(s);
 - (b) 100% share of thinning produce & firewood obtained from final harvest to each member of EDC in equal proportion;
 - (c) The forest officer shall deduct the cost of re-forestation from the sale value of final harvest

of timber and poles for deposit in the EDC fund. Balance amount will be distributed to each member of the EDC in equal proportion.

(ii) Goods and services generated by community benefits oriented village eco-development activities will be enjoyed by each member of the EDC in equal proportion. Those generated by individuals benefit oriented eco-development activities will be enjoyed by the individual concerned.

6. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP, DISSOLUTION OF EDC, APPEAL ETC. :

(i) Failure to comply with any of the conditions laid down hereinbefore as well as contravention of provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 or any Rules made thereunder, may entail cancellation of individual membership and/or dissolution of the Executive Committee/or the EDC, as the case may be, by the officer of the Forest Department as stated in (ii) and (iii) below;

(ii) The Forest Officer shall be entitled to take appropriate action including dissolution of any Executive Committee/EDC on the grounds stated above, on the recommendation of the “Bon-O-Bhumi Sanskar Samiti” of the Panchayat Samiti concerned;

(iii) The concerned Range Officer may be authorised by the forest officer to take proper action including termination of an individual’s membership on the above-mentioned grounds on the recommendation of the Executive Committee of the EDC;

(iv) Appeal against any such penal action by the Range Officer may be preferred to the forest officer through the local Panchayat Samiti;

(v) Appeal against any such penal action of the forest officer may be preferred to the concerned Circle Conservator of Forest or the Chief Conservator of Forests, as the case may be, through the concerned Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad, whose decision shall be final.

ORDER

Order that the Resolution be published in the Calcutta Gazette and copy sent to all concerned.

By order of the Governor

Sd/-(S.M. Chaki)

Dy. Secretary to the
Govt. of West Bengal