

**Yogesh Jadhav**

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“If we don’t involve communities, we get a lopsided view of the results of any developmental intervention.”

With a background in forest management research, human resource development, and project management, Yogesh Jadhav became involved in encouraging community participation in sustainable forest management, including implementation, monitoring, and project evaluation, in 2001 through the Operational Strategy for Sustainable Forestry Development with Community Participation in India. This action-research project, funded by the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) employed a holistic approach to sustainable forest management and is considered a success story for forestry in India. It focused on sustainable forest management, as well as on the conservation of water and soil and livelihoods enhancement.

However, initially, the project did not specifically factor in climate change mitigation, which emerged as a co-benefit as the initiative evolved. Jadhav sums it up concisely: “Normally the co-benefit of climate change mitigation is sustainable forestry development, but this project is forestry development with the co-benefit of climate change mitigation.”

Following the Earth Summit in 1992, which spurred global action on sustainable forestry, the Indian Institute of Forest Management, a leader in forest management education in India whose flagship program focuses on forestry and development education, took up the newly developed criteria and indicators (C&I) evaluation approach developed by ITTO. This was subsequently adapted and modified in several other international initiatives, which featured built-in indicators specific to tracking sustainable forest management and encompassing climate change as well.

Using ITTO’s C&I as the foundation, the Indian Institute of Forest Management collaborated with forestry department officials to ensure that the C&I approach was communicated and suitably adapted by a select group of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs), who represent forest communities in the region. The communities who make up the JFMCs are the people whose lives revolve around forests and forest products and, thus, are best placed to participate in and contribute to the management of forests as well as the evaluation process.

With the eventual contribution of the international donor community, capacity was built at the JFMC level to enable people to use the C&I approach, and a mechanism was established to ensure that the approach was adapted with local input to suit community needs and ensure long-term forest sustainability. From this grew the concept of people’s indicators, designed to translate people’s direct, hands-on experience in forest areas into meaningful information that feeds into the evaluation process.

In India, people’s indicators were successfully introduced in two states and eventually replicated in four more, showing that there is a need for evaluation tools that are locally adaptable. As Jadhav put it, “People’s indicators are a marriage between global and local,” where there is harmonization between internationally agreed on indicators and

