

Forest grazing and livelihoods: Case studies from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

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The case studies from Rajgarh and Sheopur in Madhya Pradesh, and Bilaspur and Pendra Road in Chhattisgarh explored the needs and livelihood strategies of migratory livestock keepers using the Sustainable Livelihood Framework. Availability of water and fodder resources is critical for the cattle and sheep herd movement and selection of migration routes. In some areas, the Joint Forest Management and growing ownership claims by the local villagers on the forest and other common resources have impinged upon access to fodder and water resources. Access regulations for the common property resources are generally favourable to the settled community, and some groups have derived benefits wherever they had developed permanent dwellings. Many areas, migratory livestock keepers are not welcome by the villagers and the local communities attribute degradation of forest and fodder resources to the migratory cattle/sheep herds. The local forest officials hold similar perception, and support the local communities. The market transactions are also perceived as skewed against nomadic herders and in favour of middlemen and merchants. Most livestock keepers feel that they do not get right price for their products. Frequent loans from middleman make them further vulnerable because they are obliged to sell their products to these middlemen at cheaper rate.