



## Vineet Sahai Sarin

Principal Development Specialist, JICA India

Vineet Sahai Sarin has over 24 years of experience in the development sector. He started working with JICA (then OECF) in 1991 and is currently the National Sector Leader for Forestry & Natural Resource Management (FNRM), cumulative commitment for which by JICA to India stands at JPY 225.8 billion, as of 2016, covering 13 states across India, through 23 projects.

Since the commencement of JICA assisted FNRM projects in 1991, forestry management in India has shifted from government controlled to community based through the Joint Forest Management (JFM) approach. Forest fringe villages in India are generally very poor and suffer from poverty. Thus JICA worked towards improving the socioeconomic conditions of the village communities by blending forestry management with community and livelihood improvement through JFM.

“It was challenging in the beginning, as Forest Department officials believed that forests would be plundered if communities were involved and community development was not their mandate,” he explained. Sarin persisted with project implementing agencies to make JFM an integral part of the implementation strategy. Finally, in 1998, Tamil Nadu state agreed to include community and livelihood development activities through JFM approach, as

a component under the project. The results were outstanding and thereafter, all JICA projects were required to adopt and pursue a similar approach to maximize the socioeconomic impact of the projects.

Sarin says, “JICA projects can credibly reach poor remote villages and bring happiness to the people. This provides me with a great sense of pride and motivation.”

As the main author, Sarin was instrumental in preparation of the ‘*Guidelines for Designing Forestry Projects for JICA (then JBIC) Assistance*’, in 2005, which were concurred by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.

Further, amongst various other initiatives, he also took the initiative of encouraging the project implementing agencies to organize annual national workshops, wherein even non-JICA supported states are invited for cross learning and experience sharing.

“Working for JICA has been a very rewarding experience, as I have had the privilege of being an integral part of JICA’s journey in the FNRM sector in India for the past two and a half decades. Further, I want to formulate new projects by incorporating innovative and practical ideas from field experience to improve future JICA projects.”