

# **ESPA and Forest Governance: What is the Message and Who is Listening?**

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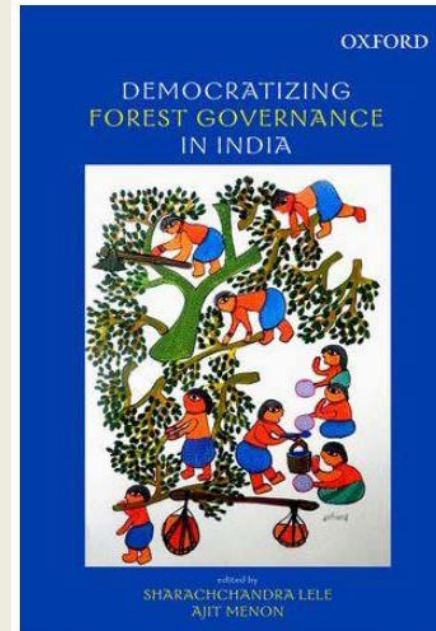
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# Forest policy debate in India...1

- Polarization: **State vs. Community**
  - **Objectives:** Timber/conservation vs. livelihoods
  - **Perceptions:** ‘communities are all bad’ vs. ‘communities are all good’
- Push for change: two alternative justifications
  - Instrumental: it’s a win-win
  - Rights-based: it’s a fundamental right
- Attempted policy resolution: JFM
  - turned out to be superficial



# Forest Policy Debate in India...2

- Major policy breakthrough: Forest Rights Act 2006 (RBA)
  - Statutory recognition to community rights
  - Tens of thousands of villages now have CFRs
- But the discourse remains polarized!
  - Tribal rights activists vs. Conservationists & foresters
- **In this context, what does ESPA research offer?**

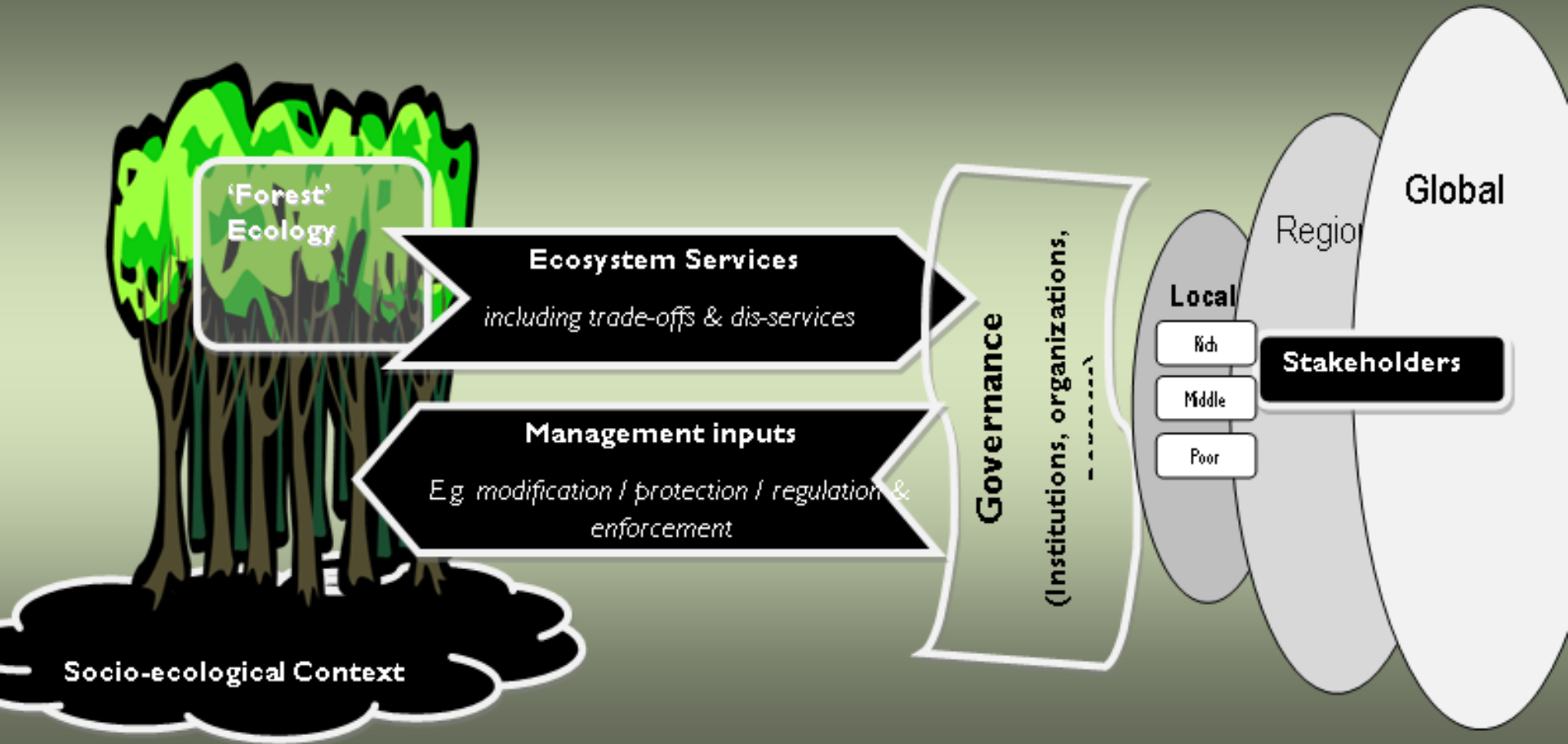
# Our starting point (& ESPA's)

Whether ecosystem conservation leads to PA **depends** on how we address:

- **Ecological trade-offs:** Which service gets prioritised?
- **Social Distribution:** Who gets access and how?
- **Opportunity costs & Dis-services:** What costs does it impose? On whom?
- **Co-production:** Through what technology, labour and capital investments?
- **Sustainability:** How is resource use is regulated?

*(Lele et al.2013, C&S)*

# In short, it depends on **GOVERNANCE!**



*See Lele et al. 2013 (C&S)*

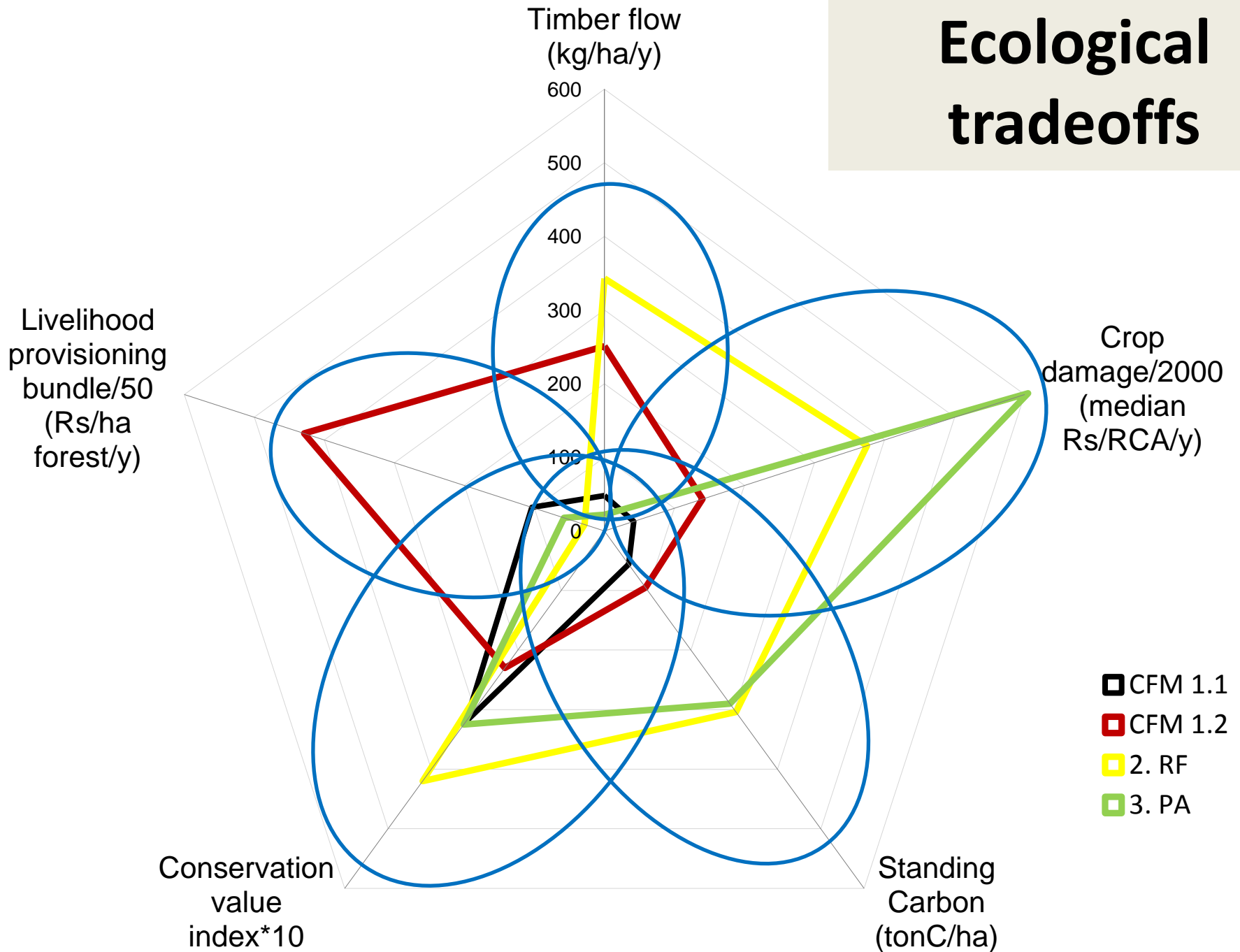
# How does this framework help?

## PEFESAPA research in Odisha, India

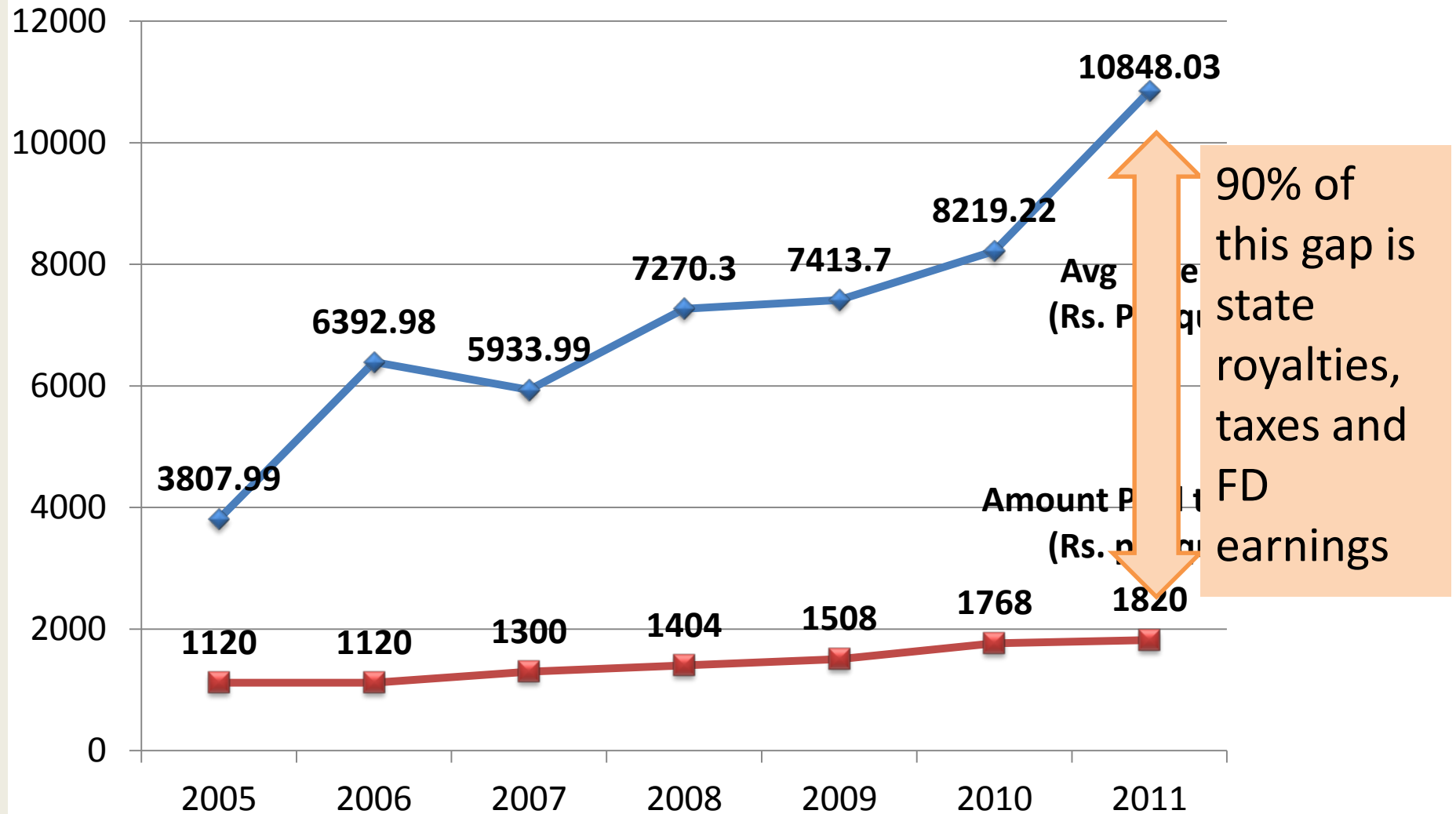
- Compared multi-dimensional outcomes across
  - Protected Area (PA),
  - State forestry (RF)
  - Community Forest Management (CFM)



# Ecological tradeoffs



# Livelihood returns could be much higher: Beedi leaf in Odisha





# More evidence of poverty alleviation potential after FRA implementation

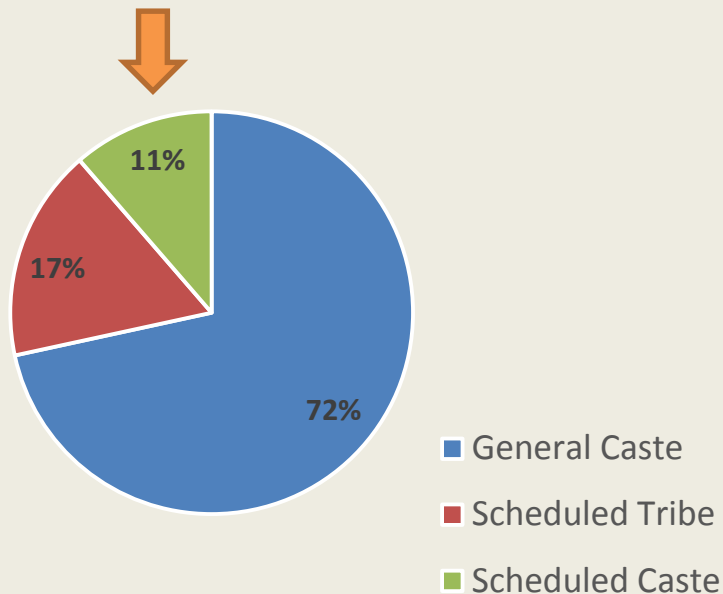
- Community Forest Rights → Some villages taken over beedi leaves and bamboo auction → per unit incomes risen 100% to 400%!

# But intra-village distribution...

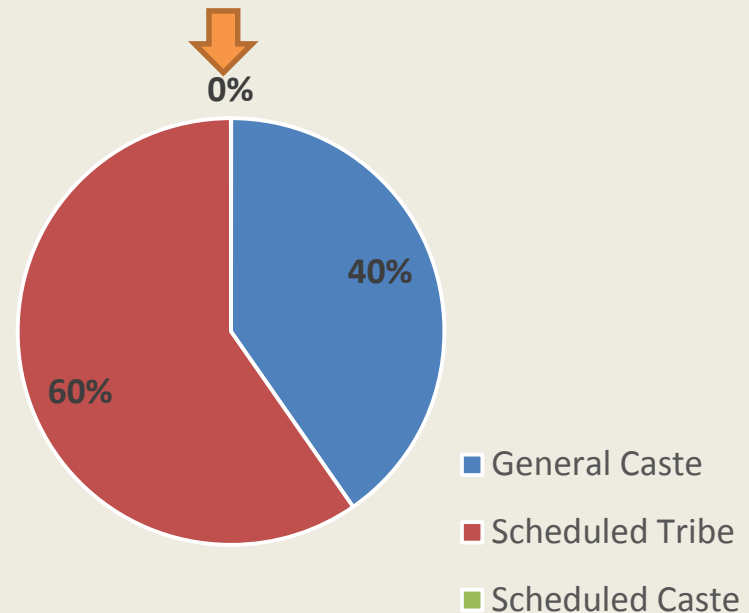
- Within CFM, access was differentiated by upper caste vs. lower caste vs. Scheduled Tribe

(Lakerveld et al. 2015, ES)

Number of households



Total bamboo use



# Key Messages

- **For ES:** Decentralised Governance offers a **fair balance:**
  - high livelihood gains, **significant conservation value**, even if low sequestered carbon/zero net sequestration
- **For PA:** Decentralised Governance must include economic rights
- **Decentralised Governance is not sufficient:**
  - CFM requires external support AND regulation
  - (but not a return to whimsical state control!)
- Hence **multi-layered, democratic** governance

# What post-ESPA needs to focus on

- How can upper levels of forest governance be restructured?
- How can protected areas also go from ‘participation’ to democratic governance?
- How can other developmental policies complement forest-based rural development?
- How does one meaningfully engage with “ES-destroying” development projects?
  - Mining, Dams, Thermal power
- *We will not be heard if we don't engage with the last two!*