Rights wronged
People depend on over 31 million ha of forests in India. The government recognises rights over 2.5 million ha.

"Mexico’s community forestry programmes are designed to suit the specific needs of communities and reflect their collective decisions"
— Gerardo Segura, Sr Rural Development Specialist, World Bank and former head of PROCYMAF

The Mexican government had realised this at the outset. “So the new agencies first focussed on building the organisational capacity of communities,” says Bray. When villages got community forestry rights, politicisation, corruption and disputes were rife within and among communities. It monitored general assembly meetings and imposed strict conditions to ensure proper functioning of grassroots institutions before granting them government aid,” says Bray.

The contexts of forest governance is changing, says Arvind Khare, executive director of rri. “Forest-governing agencies seem to be losing their economic influence and political constituency. This is because in most developing (and quite a few developed) countries, the fate of forests is intricately linked with communities. This is a major reason for insurgencies in countries like India.” The real test for forestry now is to regain this constituency.

The reporter’s travel to Mexico was supported by Society for Promotion of Wasteland Development in Delhi and Rights and Resources Initiative in Washington DC.