Participatory Forest Management: Opportunities and Challenges

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Outline

- Defining PFM
- Opportunities and challenges of PFM
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- What distinguishes different forms of PFM?
  - Objectives
  - Ownership/rights over the forest resource
  - Level of control exercised by community
  - Access to subsistence and commercial products
  - Appropriate institutional design
  - Benefit-sharing arrangements
  - Capacity of the partners
- Improving the livelihood impact of PFM

Defining PFM

- 1970s: 'Social forestry' in India – woodlots for fuel, outgrower schemes
- Joint Forest Management – JFM (ownership and most decision-making by the state; community provide labour and derive some benefits)
- Community-based natural resource (forest) management – CBNRM/CBFM – southern African CAMPFIRE experience with wildlife
- Other terms: Adaptive co-management (ACM), Collaborative Forest Management (CFM)
- Communities and/or individuals?

Defining PFM

- Any situation that intimately involves local people in forestry activities (Arnold 2001)
- FAO: Participatory forestry refers to processes and mechanisms that enable those people who have a direct stake in forest resources to be part of decision-making **in all aspects** of forest management, from managing resources to formulating and implementing institutional frameworks
- Community forestry – the exercise by **local people** of power or influence over decisions regarding management of **forests**, including the rules of access and the disposition of products (McDermott and Schreckenberg 2009)
  - Local people – recognises complexity of defining 'community', and instead emphasises forest users (disaggregate by social groups, HH, intra-HH differences)
  - Forest – from farm & urban trees to scrub and high forest

Opportunities and challenges of PFM

- Sustainable livelihoods framework
  - Financial/economic assets
  - Physical
  - Natural
  - Human
  - Social (cultural/political)
  - Vulnerability context
- Widely used
- Does it pay enough attention to social difference, power relations and the policy context?

Opportunities and challenges of PFM

- WB 'Opportunities' framework
  - **Opportunity:** Expanding economic opportunity for poor people by stimulating economic growth, making markets work better for the poor, and working for their inclusion particularly by building up their assets such as land and education
  - **Empowerment:** Strengthening the ability of poor people to shape decisions that affect their lives and removing discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity and social status
  - **Security:** Reducing vulnerability to sickness, economic shocks, natural disasters and helping them cope when such disasters do occur.

Impacts of PFM: financial

- PFM provides a new source of community-level income (membership fees, royalties, fines, sale of products)
- Legalises pre-PFM use of the forest for subsistence and/or commercial products
- May reduce women's time on firewood collection
- Can reduce access to products, particularly initially
- Benefits associated with income-generating activities (IGAs) may be minor and captured by a few people
- Possible high transaction costs (attending meetings, forest management and guarding)
- User group fees may be prohibitive
- Provision of land to poorest for intercropping
- Jobs – forest guarding, management, timber industry

Impacts of PFM: physical

- Community-level income is typically used for community infrastructure such as electrification and the building of schools
- These can benefit all community members even those who are not members of forest associations or user groups
- But the poorest may not be able to benefit (e.g. can't pay school fees)

Impacts of PFM: natural

○ Improved forest condition

○ Improved ecosystem services (water, soil fertility)

○ Better biodiversity attracts ecotourists

○ But possible increase of pests

○ Shifting of unsustainable extraction practices to non-PFM patches of forest

Impacts of PFM: human

- Training in a range of activities from forest management to various IGAs, business management, governance literacy, facilitation, women's empowerment, etc.
- May be restricted to a few people, often only the committee members
- Increased community and household income may be spent on better education

Impacts of PFM: social/political

- Positive impact on social networks through creation of management institutions
- Better relationships with neighbouring communities where several manage parts of same forest
- Potential empowerment of women
- New institutions enabling more effective engagement with external agencies
- National networking for advocacy
- Nepal: general increase in accountability and transparency across village development institutions
- But dangers of elite capture
- Increased conflict within or between communities

Impacts of PFM: vulnerability

- Community income may be used to support pro-poor activities
- More sustainable flow of products for subsistence and income-generation
- Absolute returns are often low, but forest product income is important as a supplementary income, as a seasonal income and in emergencies
- But if value becomes too high, risk of capture by elites or external players
- Increased vulnerability of the excluded

What distinguishes different forms of PFM?

- Objectives
- Ownership of the forest resource
- Specific rights permitted
- Level of control exercised by community in decision-making
- Access to subsistence products
- Ability to generate an income from forest products
- Appropriate institutional design
- Benefit-sharing arrangements
- Capacity of the partners

Objectives of PFM

- Conservation and sustainable forest management
  - More cheaply and effectively than under-resourced forest departments
- Decentralisation/rights
  - Indonesia, Guatemala, Honduras – decentralisation to provincial authorities (downwardly accountable – differs from deconcentration to local forest depts)
  - Bolivia – move to hand land to indigenous groups
- Improving livelihoods, sometimes specifically for the poorest
  - Nepal: 25% of income to be spent on forest management; 35% on pro-poor activities

Ownership of the forest resource

Ownership categories may include:

- Public bodies
  - National or state governments
  - Local governments at regional, provincial or district level
  - Local administrations at city, municipality, village or other levels
- Private bodies
  - Individuals or companies
- Community groups
  - Under some circumstances resembles 'privatisation' of the resource
- Indigenous or tribal groups

[Outright ownership, time-bound or leased]

Specific rights permitted

Schlager and Ostrom (1992) define 5 main rights with respect to resource management:

- Rights of access – who can enter the forest? [define and mark boundaries]
- Rights of withdrawal – who can harvest which products? For sale or for subsistence? [dispute resolution mechanisms]
- Rights to manage – who defines regulations and is responsible for implementing them?
- Rights to exclude others – who is responsible for excluding others? [legal support?]
- Rights to convert, sell or transfer land – who can decide about alternative uses of the land?

Level of control exercised by community in decision-making

- ○ Is forest user group independent of Forest Dept or is FD rep on the committee?
  - ● Latter leads to accountability to FD rather than community
- ○ How long are agreements for?
- ○ Can agreements be revoked without compensation (e.g. India JFM) or are they ensconced in bylaws (Tanzania)?

Access to subsistence products

- The right to harvest subsistence products can benefit a household's livelihood, and enable it to engage in other income-generating activities
- But is commercial use necessary to <u>improve</u> livelihoods?
- Can the forest produce sufficient subsistence products to meet needs of all participants?

Ability to generate an income from forest products

- Potential value of resource depends on:
  - Size of forest (per capita)
  - Type and value – degraded or high forest
  - [Access to markets and credit schemes]
- Do PFM users have the right to make a profit from the resource or do profits go to the state?
- The right to sell forest products can greatly increase HH or community financial capital
- May require upfront payments (e.g. logging licenses) and investment in costly management plans
- And if commercial use is permitted, the higher financial flows may require new governance and decision-making structures.

Appropriate institutional design

- PFM may be a state or a civil society activity
  - Existing community structures: may reproduce traditional power structures and include people who do not depend on the forest
  - New user groups: but who are they accountable to and what right do they have to make decisions over the resource?
- Skills in organisational capacity building are as important as access to finance
- Ensure transaction costs are appropriate to value of forest and objectives – design the system accordingly
- The value of networks to
  - augment and exchange knowledge
  - advocate for policy change

Benefit sharing arrangements within communities

- Within communities benefit-sharing can be organised to be:
  - Equal – all HH receive the same regardless of need
  - Equitable – a more needs-based approach that provides HH with different levels of products they can actually use

- In cash or in kind?
  - Subsistence products often harvested daily or weekly by users
  - Commercial products (timber) may be harvested by community and income distributed to all

- Distributed to individuals or held at community level?

Benefit sharing arrangements between communities

- Do forest resources under PFM remain a national public good? Do communities involved in PFM have the right to benefit more than others that are not? This determines whether:
  - Govt should receive a tax from products that are sold outside the community to allow for redistribution to communities with low value forest
  - The FD should receive some of the benefits in return for the technical inputs they provide?

Capacity of the partners

- Capacity of the community
  - Internal organisation, knowledge of rights, negotiating skills, capacity to implement plans
- Capacity of civil society
  - Critical facilitation role
  - Support to networking for info exchange and advocacy
- Forest Dept capacity
  - Work with community on governance and technical forest mgmt issues
- Extent (time and space) of the programme; more experience leads to:
  - Fine-tuning of relevant legislation and procedures
  - Existence of suitably qualified cadres
  - Development of networks of user groups to exchange info and advocate for policy change

Improving the livelihood impact of PFM

Improving the livelihood impact of PFM: Lessons for implementation

- Ensure whole community agrees the pro-poor objectives
- Identify and review the poor category
- Enable poorest to make their voices heard to ensure they benefit from their share of community-level benefits
- Understand how the poor use the forest and the constraints they face
- Activities to overcome constraints faced
  - Subsidised membership
  - Targeted activities (e.g. NTFP cultivation in Nepal)
  - Focus forest management on products used by the poor
  - Equitable rather than equal sharing of benefits
  - Use community funds to support the poor
  - Reduce transaction costs

Improving the livelihood impact of PFM: Policy lessons

- Need for incorporating context into design
  - Fine tune legislation and procedures for different contexts
  - Allow for flexibility and responsiveness to local needs
  - Sufficient incentives for all stakeholders
- Define clear benefit-sharing mechanisms
  - incl. credit schemes, access to markets as necessary
  - Transparency, accountability, M&E
- Importance of identifying possible 'losers' through PFM and considering ways of compensation
- Understanding that PFM is a dynamic process which requires long-term commitment from all partners
  - Capacity-building and networking

Thank-you!

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