

COLLABORATIVE MANAGEMENT OF FORESTS FOR CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	1
Executive summary	2
Introduction	5
Co-managing protected areas	10
Collaborative management	16
Collaborative management outside protected areas	26
Implementation: Issues	27
Implementation: Methodology	39
Conclusions	44
Appendix 1: Collaborative Forest Management	45
Appendix 2: People and protected areas	46
Bibliography	48

Collaborative management

Social Forestry, Community Forestry and Joint Forest Management

All forestry is social: it is about the use or management of forests to meet social goals. Many forestry practices have been distinctly antisocial from the point of view of tribal or rural people, however. Conventional forestry science was concerned with meeting demands "expressed through either economic or political power" (Leslie, 1987). Forestry frequently implemented policies that met the interests of the economically and politically powerful.

As Leslie points out: ". . . history is replete with examples of conventional forestry extinguishing whatever rights such people [those without effective political and economic power] might have had or subordinating them to the welfare of the forest" (Leslie, 1987),

A major theme of several papers in *Keepers of the Forest* (Poffenberger, 1990) is that the history of forestry in countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand involves a shift from traditional (indigenous or local) tenure to state control. This shift has occurred in many countries and has often been abrupt. Current approaches to joint forest management and community forestry programmes might be seen as returning control to local communities.

Given local peoples' loss of control over forests, it is ironic that these same people are often blamed for deforestation. It is a fallacy that deforestation has largely been caused by the actions of local peoples, and a corollary fallacy that forest agencies are needed to save forests from the people. Historically, forest management by centralised agencies has usually involved changing forest use from relatively sustainable local use to intensive commercial operations. The concept that local management may have something to offer needs to be taken very seriously, conversely, claims that state forestry agencies have a unique capacity for conservation need to be treated with some skepticism.

In the 1970s attitudes began to shift toward forms of forestry that were more responsive to local needs. Part of the motivation for this was a recognition of the need to redress the inequitable results of much state forestry and of the pragmatic value of local involvement.

The approach was initially referred to as "social forestry". Social forestry programmes were funded by international agencies in a number of countries. Unfortunately, they often paid only superficial attention to the concerns of local people, whose participation was often limited to providing paid labour. Programmes frequently perpetuated the alienation of earlier forms of forestry, even while using the rhetoric of participation and peoples' interests. In some countries social forestry developed very unpleasant connotations; it is partly because of this that alternative integrated approaches to forestry development and conservation have emerged under new names like "community forestry" and "joint forest management".

The wide range of terminology has caused great confusion. Many different types of projects have been described as community forestry joint forest management has a similarly wide application. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) defined community forestry broadly, as "... Any situation which intimately involves local people in a forestry activity" (FAO, 1978). Gilmour and Fisher (1991) employ a more narrow definition: "...the control and management of forest resources by the rural people who use them especially for domestic purposes and as an integral part of their farming systems". This definition does not rule out sale to markets, nor does it imply full local control, but it does require some actual local control.

A. J Leslie (1987) Foreword to J. Westoby' "The Purpose of Forests Follies of Development"

...history is replete with examples of conventional forestry extinguishing what rights such people those without effective political a economic power might have

Of the two definitions the first is broad and descriptive; the second more particular. It would be useful to devise a notion of community forestry that distinguishes it from other models on the basis of some specific characteristics. Local control seems to be an important enough characteristic to delineate a specific approach. Unfortunately, people do use "community forestry" in many ways and there is little point in insisting on a narrow use. In this paper I will use the phrase when it is an official term used to define a particular policy, such as Nepal's Community Forestry Programme.

*had or subordinating them
the welfare of the forest.*

Joint forest management (JFM) is an approach to collaborative forestry that has been tried in several countries in Southeast Asia (see Poffenberger, 1990b) and in India. With support by governments and NGOs in these countries, and with strong support from the Ford Foundation, it has developed as a very credible model and has had some major successes.

In JFM the emphasis is on collaboration in management between the agencies with legal authority over state-owned forests and the people who live in and around these forests. Some authors talk about legitimizing local use (Campbell, 1992) and guaranteeing usufruct rights (Campbell et al., 1994). There is also an emphasis in many JFM programmes on agreements that specify rights of forest peoples to certain products. Nevertheless, the term JFM implies cooperation between local people and state authorities. In JFM literature there seems to be an assumption that programmes involve encouraging and legitimizing the participation of local people in forestry activities on land that remains essentially under state control.

It is tempting to differentiate between community forestry and JFM based on the degree of local control and collaboration. This is simplistic, however, as a discussion of participatory forestry in India and Nepal will show. I prefer to use the broader term collaborative forest management to encompass a variety of approaches and then to explore different programmes according to particular characteristics. While it might be possible to differentiate between community forestry and JFM on the basis of those characteristics which particular advocates think should differentiate them, in practice each term has been used to cover a wide range of projects and there is a great deal of overlap.

I will now turn to a discussion of what could loosely be called collaborative forest management projects in a number of countries. I will be placing particular emphasis on Nepal and India.

Nepal

Nepal's community forestry programme is well known and is widely held to be an excellent example of successful participatory forest management. The programme has been extensively documented (for an overview see Gilmour and Fisher, 1991).

The recent history of Nepal's forest policy begins in 1957, with the nationalization of forests. The intent of this initiative was to place forests under the control of the forest department. By the 1970s, however, it had become obvious that the department did not have the capacity to manage the forest effectively and that forest regulations made life very difficult for rural people. They continued to use forests — they had little choice — but most forest use was illegal. Even though the department had no effective control of forests, illegal use meant significant penalties for those people who were caught and created inconvenience for others. Control was inconsistent; to a large extent forests in the hills were ignored by the authorities, except for attempts to police forest use.

In the late 1970s innovative thinking by a number of Nepali foresters brought a new approach. This involved handing over forests to local panchayats (official politico-administrative units) that were willing to protect them. The legislation allowed for the use and harvesting of forest products by the people of the panchayat, subject to the forest department's approval of a management plan. In practice, however, very little forest was handed over prior to the late 1980s, and very little of that was governed by management plans that allowed any significant forest use (Fisher, 1990).

Plantation establishment and natural forest protection were successful in some areas, but, with few exceptions, people received limited benefits in terms of access to forest products. A series of institutional changes took place, including the completion of a national forestry master plan in 1988, the issue of operational guidelines to assist implementation of the master plan pending revised legislation and, ultimately, new forestry legislation (The Forestry Act, January 1993). These brought significant changes, which have led to easier implementation, greater incentives for people's participation and, consequently, a rapid expansion of the programme. Significant features of the programme as it now stands are:

- Forest management agreements (operational plans) are negotiated between the forest department and user groups (i.e. groups of people with a direct interest in use of a particular forest and claiming usufruct rights) rather than larger political or administrative units.
- Under the legislation and guidelines the user groups are extensively involved in the design of operational plans. There is the potential for considerable flexibility in management and for a high level of local control, subject to the ultimate authority of the District Forest Officer (DFO). Substantial forest use and harvesting are possible. In practice many plans are not as flexible as they could be, nor do they provide as many benefits, largely because foresters find it difficult to hand over control as much as they are permitted. Nevertheless the legislation provides for flexible management and substantial benefits and there are a significant number of cases where the agreements match this potential.
- There is no benefit-sharing by the forest department. At present communities are entitled to use all products raised through management and may use all income raised for development purposes. Whether this will be extended to allow for greater levels of income from more substantial commercial use of forest products has not yet been tested.
- Indigenous systems of forest management have been increasingly recognised in Nepal (Messerschmidt 1986a, 1987; Fisher 1989, 1991a, 1993; Tamang 1990). Many of these have developed in the near vacuum of forest management that existed after the nationalisation of forests in 1957. Community forestry guidelines provide for agreements to be made with existing user groups. This is a major shift away from the previous emphasis on official boundaries and highly formal and newly-established committees. The guidelines also permit existing groups to incorporate their management practices, where they are effective, into management plans.

In Nepal, community forestry originally concentrated rather heavily on involving local people in the management of new plantations on degraded land. The focus has now shifted substantially much greater emphasis is placed on the management of natural forests and shrublands. This has important implications in the conservation of biodiversity. Unlike plantations — which are usually limited to a single species — natural forests, even degraded ones, contain a great diversity of species. User groups deciding management priorities also tend to favour multiple uses, which also works in favour of biodiversity. Ingles (1994a) stresses the importance of community forestry to biodiversity conservation. He argues: "Nepal's National Conservation strategy could be improved by increasing its emphasis on community forestry and identifying activities . . . that will increase the potential for community forestry to contribute to the conservation of biodiversity". The key to the strategy suggested in Ingles is a "simple rapid method for monitoring forest condition and biodiversity".

The implications of community forestry for biodiversity in Nepal are considerable. In terms of biodiversity of plant species the implications are clear. There is also some potential for conservation of faunal biodiversity, although the benefits so far have been less obvious.

Community forestry, by protecting or re-establishing habitat, has helped birds and animals to survive. Interestingly, operational plans often include prohibitions against hunting, included at the request of local people.

India

In India, the dominant model of participatory forest management is JFM. With support from the Ford Foundation and, more recently, from a variety of international donors, it has been promoted by NGOs (including the Society for Promotion of Wastelands Development), the Tata Energy Research Institute in New Delhi and has been presented as a national programme by the Government of India. In August 1994, 15 states had orders regarding the operation of programmes inspired by JFM (J. Campbell, pers. comm.).

JFM in India is well documented (for general discussions see Poffenberger, 1990; Campbell, 1992 and Campbell et al., 1994). Several publications are devoted to JFM, including a newsletter (Wastelands News, published by the Society for the Promotion of Wastelands Development), a Joint Forest Management Series (published by the Haryana Forest Department and the Tata Energy Research Institute) and a series of Joint Forest Management Working Papers (published by the National Support Group for Joint Forest Management). The main characteristics of JFM in India are:

- It generally deals with agreements between forest departments and local people about forest protection. In return for protecting the forest, people receive access to a range of non-timber forest products, along with any resulting income. While actual arrangements vary from state to state, in most areas agreements include arrangements for sharing any benefits of future commercial harvests with the forest department. The size of the share varies but averages around 25 per cent (see Campbell, 1992, for a table of benefits in various states). In practice, relatively little in the way of benefits has yet emerged

from these commercial harvests, probably because few forests have matured fully. Nevertheless, there have been significant financial benefits and income generation has been widely encouraged. Recorded examples of income generation include: bamboo for basket-making (Varalakshmi 1992); bhabbar and other grasses (Arora et al. 1993); and Pisciculture (Vijh et al. 1993).

- A considerable degree of control remains with the forest departments: tenure remains unambiguously vested in them.
- Emphasis is very much on development of wastelands rather than on managing healthy or moderately healthy forests.

The Philippines

In the Philippines a number of different approaches have developed under the broad tide of social forestry. Approximately two-thirds of the country is public forest land (Gibbs et al., 1990) and the issue of forest use by local peoples has been important. In 1982 an Integrated Social Forestry Programme (ISFP) was established.

According to Gibbs et al. (1990): "The ISFP's achievements include the creation of new land-use options designed to increase the tenure security of forest occupants, expansion of public land areas eligible for settled occupancy, the development of 'bottom-up' approaches to agro-forestry farm planning, and the development of an active research and programme-support group".

One of the tenure options that Gibbs et al, regard as particularly exciting is Communal Forest Stewardship Agreements (CFSA). These are leases issued to communities, including indigenous communities and some Islamic and migrant settlements. The leases indicate the boundaries of the relevant area (generally between one and four thousand hectares in

size), but leave up to the community the further division of the land into plots (for more detailed discussion of CFSA's see Cornista and Escueta, 1990).

Gibbs et al, 1990. The Growth of the Philippine Social Forestry Programme

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Cameroon

Cameroon has recently passed new forestry legislation that provides for community forestry. However, Nurse et al. (1994) comment that the government does not yet know how to implement the new law. Nurse et al. describe a "promising test case" for community forestry in Cameroon: a model that combines development with protection of a bird conservation area. Although only in its early stages, the Cameroon experience is an interesting initiative, which potentially allows active use of forests for grazing along with collection of various forest products.

Nurse et al. make the point that local people already do manage forests under an indigenous management system. The paper is mainly concerned with the process of investigation and negotiation involved in handing over a large area of Montane forest under the new forestry legislation. An interesting feature of this model is the apparent willingness of the government and forest authorities to treat as fundamental the claims of existing forest users. There is a suggestion that these claims are regarded as legitimate rather than grudgingly conceded.

Another aspect of note is the existence of large household and essentially separate user groups. It remains to be seen how effectively these diverse local interests can be accommodated.

Other regions

I have focused on collaborative forest management in a few selected locations. Although there is not the space here to present a detailed overview, it is important to note that various approaches to collaborative forest management have been tried in other regions.

There is a considerable interest in community forestry in Latin America. (See Perl et al., 1991 and Cabarle, 1991 for broad overviews; see also Poole, 1989, for a discussion of issues involving environmental partnerships in Latin America.) Perl et al. (1991) report on a workshop in which representatives of 14 pilot projects from seven different countries in Latin America met to discuss their activities.

There are several striking accounts of struggles by coalitions of local people and NGOs. These groups, supported by some politicians, have attempted to gain control of forest resources that are being exploited by large commercial interests. Examples of such conflicts are the cases of the Sierra Juárez in Mexico (Bray, 1991) and the Chimalapas, also in Mexico (Anonymous, 1993).

Collaborative forest management is also being tried in a number of European countries, including Scotland (Dudley, 1994), Italy (Merlo, 1995) and Portugal (Brouwer, 1995). The potential of traditional common property regimes is an important theme in the latter two countries.

Similarities and differences

Several of the participatory approaches to forest management discussed earlier (notably Nepal, India and the Philippines) seem to take as a starting point the idea that the ultimate title to the land in question remains with the government. There are different ways of providing access to land, however. In Nepal, a large degree of control of the forests can — according to the law, if not always in practice — be delegated to local user groups. In India, the approach is more a case of forest departments rewarding users for assistance in forest management, on land that unquestionably remains the property of the state. Users receive benefits in the form of forest products and, potentially, cash income from harvesting. In the Philip-pines, land is leased to rural people and substantial support services are provided. In Cameroon, the government seems to be recognising traditional usufruct rights and handing over forests to be managed by traditional users, while at the same time negotiating rules to conserve wildlife.

Each of these approaches represents some differences in the attitude of governments about who should have ultimate control. I would suggest that the crucial differences in the approaches lie not in actual tenure. but in such matters as:

- relative access to benefits;
- the extent to which local practices and traditional rights are part of the process — programmes that are strictly standardized are less able to achieve flexible agreements that meet local needs; and
- the extent to which a genuine local role in decision-making is encouraged and honored.

Examining different programmes suggests that there is no simple relationship between the presence of these characteristics and terms such as "social forestry", "community forestry" and "joint forest management". The terms do not clearly represent the different approaches, making it impossible to construct a typology of approaches to participatory forest management on the basis of them.

Some recent papers (Campbell and Denholm, 1993; Holey et al., 1994) have pointed out that India's JFM programs and Nepal's community forestry programme have not made much use of each other's experiences. At this point it maybe worthwhile to identify some differences between the programmes in India and Nepal:

- Holey et al. argue that Nepal could learn from India in terms of emphasis on income generation. There has certainly been much greater emphasis on income generation in India on the part of various agencies. Malla (1992) shows that there is a great deal of economic activity based on forest products in some districts of Nepal, but that it is largely unrecognised in forest policy. Malla argues that the community forestry programme must recognise this activity and treat it as an integral part of community forestry. Current efforts to establish sawmills for user groups in at least one district may indicate a shift in this direction. In fairness, however, the Nepal programme has in many cases provided significant benefits in terms of the increased legal supply of forest products (including fuelwood and timber). In addition, cash income from sale of forest products does go to the user group.
- Community forestry policy in Nepal has gone much farther than in India to recognize the legitimacy of existing user groups and practices, and guidelines require forest department staff to try to increase this. In contrast, JFM in India generally requires new structures (often based on local government

organisations) to be set up for the purposes of management agreements. Forest use seems to be more of a concession than a right.

- Hopley et al. feel that, in India, the JFM approach provides an incentive for foresters to remain involved in villages. This is because the forest departments continue to receive a share of revenue (from timber harvest, not from non-timber forest products). They suggest such incentives may be lacking in Nepal. This may not be such an important difference, on the other hand, since the departments, not the foresters, receive the share of revenue.

Conservation potential

Collaborative approaches to forest management have clear advantages in their potential to provide benefits to local people in exchange for the costs of conservation. They accomplish this by providing continued access to forest products, or through income generation, or both. At the same time, they have the potential to contribute to conservation. Unlike traditional industrial forestry, which tends to focus on extensive harvesting for industrial cellulose (such as chips and timber), JFM and community forestry have often focused on production of non-timber forest products (NTFP), or on the selective harvesting of trees. These activities can often be compatible with biodiversity conservation. Conservation is frequently a goal of collaborative forest management projects, although environmental concerns have often been phrased in terms of soil conservation priorities rather than biodiversity. An awareness of the economic value of NTFPs or of selective harvesting of mixed forests can allow collaborative forest management to become more explicitly focused on conservation values while still allowing some forest use.

Clay (1988, 1992) has shown how income from NTFPs from the Amazon rainforests can provide economic benefits without threatening biological or cultural diversity. The Cameroon case study mentioned earlier also suggests possibilities for combining conservation values with more deliberate economic strategies involving forest use. There is no obvious reason why these lessons could not sometimes be applied to protected area management as well as outside protected areas. In fact, Mitchell et al. (1990) describe a social forestry project in the Cyclops Mountain Conservation Area of Irian Jaya which explicitly links conservation and forest use.

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The Borana Collaborative Forest Management Project was established by SOS Sahel (a UK-based development charity) in 1999/2000. The project aimed to address a set of specific problems related to the juniper forests of Borana. The forests are used by settled and semi-settled agro-pastoralist villages for subsistence, income generation and within drought-coping strategies. Pastoralists also use them as a critical source of dry season grazing. The primary objectives of the project were:

- Long-term revitalisation and conservation of major elements of the forests.
- Improved and sustainable livelihoods

1 Chief technical/Collaborative Management Adviser, Mount Elgon Conservation and Development Project 2 Uganda Wildlife Authority, Mount Elgon National Park. The Mt. Elgon Conservation and Development Project receives technical support from IUCN - The World Conservation Union. Efforts to develop collaborative management arrangements for the management of Mt. Elgon National Park began following a mid-term review of Phase II of the Mt. Elgon Conservation and Development Project. The review highlighted the ineffectiveness of traditional protectionist approaches to conserving Mt. Elgon National Park and the need to develop links between conservation of the Park and sustainable development of communities living around the Park.