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“Competition for Resources in a Changing World:
New Drive for Rural Development”

Collaborative Forest Management: It Takes two to Tango!

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Abstract

To millions of local communities in developing countries, forests play important roles for their means of subsistence and source of safety net. Limited access, lack of knowledge and skills of powerless people make them difficult to express their interest to involve in managing the forest. In the other hand, the dominant stakeholder tends to exclude local communities' perspective and concern in forest management practice which somehow generates problems in maintaining the forest productivity. This situation creates gap among stakeholders with potential of conflict in the long term.

Collaborative Forest Management (CFM) as partnership scheme is not a new concept; but to link with the empowerment and negotiation functions to less-power people provides an added dimension. Our goals were to have sustainable forest management and to improve local communities' well-being.

Participatory action research and environmental mediation process were implemented to improve local communities' power and capacity. Our focus is on the processes where multi stakeholders are collaborating in managing forest; how to engage powerless people in ways that it would empower rather than dominate them, to explore with them the existing resources, potential market and opportunities to generate income, and how to develop such institutional arrangements to govern these activities.

This paper describes the process and some key elements to levelling the multi stakeholder's playing field for collective action toward fair collaborative forest management, and evaluates the key questions of how and to what extent collaborative forest management could address poverty issues of local community who live in and depend on the forests.

Keywords: Collaborative forest management, empowerment, negotiation, participatory action research, partnership