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“Bridging the gap between increasing knowledge and decreasing resources”

The Role of Stakeholder Analysis for Sustainable Development: Experiences from Rubber Cultivation in Southwest China

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Abstract

The objective is to theoretically discuss stakeholder analysis and its role in rural development projects, to present the overall approach and the methods being applied in the SURUMER project, and to discuss preliminary results. Emphasis will be laid on how the findings of the stakeholder analysis have been and will be used, particularly with respect to adaptive management. In nature resource management and regional development planning, one of the key factors is knowledge about the actors, understanding their different roles, functions, interests, and inter-linkage structures. Stakeholder analysis can provide such knowledge and may be therefore a solid base for developing actor-oriented sustainable development strategies and furthermore interaction between actors. The SURUMER project is developing strategies for sustainable rubber cultivation in Xishuangbanna prefecture, Southwest China. Stakeholder involvement is seen as axiomatic, whereby “Stakeholders” of the SURUMER project are those individuals or groups who are affected or can affect those sustainable rubber cultivation strategies. In general, the stakeholder analysis have been stepwise deepened while the groups of stakeholders involved have been widened: In the initial phase of the project, the main objective was to identify and to involve key stakeholders. On local level a baseline study has been conducted in eight villages which aimed at stakeholders’ problem perceptions, their interests and their formal and informal communication networks. On regional level, representatives of stakeholders have been asked to participate in workshops and meetings, focus group discussions and etc., to discuss about their roles in rubber cultivation, their expectations for future, and the communication among them. One unforeseen result was that even farmers are aware of the problems and have ideas for improvement. In the recent phase, one of the main tasks of research-practice interaction is to jointly develop future scenarios. Stakeholder analysis emphasises, with respect to ecosystem services, on practitioners indicators, their interests and their priorities. In future, the focus of stakeholder analysis will be shifting towards improving knowledge on factors of implementation. The approach therefore again deepened and as part of in-depth analysis, attention will be laid on hidden agendas of actors, the complex power structures, and potential conflicts and synergies. Implications of the stakeholder analyses, which are communicated within SURUMER, are firstly the involvement of key stakeholders (innovative farmers, village heads, prefecture and provincial authorities) into a participatory process of situation analysis and scenario definition which helps to shape the strategies mentioned above: Knowing more about the framework conditions for implementation helps in turn to plan related activities more realistically.

Keywords: Natural resource management, rubber cultivation, stakeholder analysis