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Two Decades of Internationally Induced Forest-Biodiversity Policies in Bangladesh — Analysing Resulting Power Dynamics among Public Bureaucracies and their Implications

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the effects of forest-related biodiversity policies on the power of the main domestic and foreign donor bureaucracies in Bangladesh. In our analytical framework, we combine concepts from the power theory of development policy analysis, the theory of bureaucratic politics to increase organisation power, and the problem-solving policy and policy process. We analyse the power dynamics of public bureaucracies using Bangladesh forest biodiversity policy data (122 policies) from 1992—2013. Each policy was analysed employing a qualitative content analysis method and identified the strategic tasks, power elements (i.e., dominant information, incentives and coercion) resulting from these tasks, the assigned public bureaucracies responsible for implementing the task and the policy year. A strategic task (the main unit of analysis) for one bureaucracy consists of a task in each of the three problem-solving policy cycles (i.e., formulation, implementation and monitoring) resulting from distinctive policy data. Our analysis indicates it is the powerful domestic (e.g., Ministry of Environment and Forest, Bangladesh Forest Department) and foreign donor (e.g., United Nations Development Program, Asian Development Bank) bureaucracies that set the limits and directions of domestic forest biodiversity policy in a country. The results suggest that power elements vary for different bureaucracies and they gain and lose power over time due to domestic policy responses to international forest biodiversity issues. This research identifies policy mixes for forest biodiversity policy issues, but for sustainable forest management, climate change or community-based forestry policy issues, the resulting policy mixes may differ and will require further study. The study does not cover policy implementation data at field level, hence further studies on the power analysis of actors associated with implementation at field level are recommended.

Keywords: Bangladesh, bureaucratic politics, domestic and foreign donor bureaucracies, policy cycle, power elements