

Making community forestry work for the poor

Lessons from Nepal and Tanzania

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Some of the questions covered in this presentation

1. Community forestry in Tanzania and Nepal – an overview
2. Why are the poor are being left out of community forestry?
3. What is the difference between “pro-people forest management” and “pro-poor forest management”?
4. What do we mean by a pro-poor approach to community forestry?
5. What are some specific measures that can be introduced to support pro-poor forest management?

Background - Tanzania

Joint Forest Management

- Forest management rights and responsibilities are shared between government and communities
- JFM covers around 1.7 Million ha (13% of reserved forests) and 150 villages
- Management institution = Village Natural Resource Committee (VNRC) – sometimes forest level committees

Community Based Forest Management

- Forests are owned and managed by communities – and 100% of benefits goes to them
- CBFM covers around 2.3 M ha (around 12% of unreserved forests) and 1450 villages
- Management institution = VNRC, but options for group-based PFM (Community Forests) – although little progress in rolling this out to date

Background - Nepal

Community Forestry

- Involves the transfer of government owned forests to local users. Users harvest and use forest for own benefits, following operational plan.
- Management body at community level – Community Forestry User Group
- Approximately 1.2 million hectares of forest land have been handed over by the government (25% of forest area) to 15,000 user groups in the country providing direct benefits to around 35% of the country's population

Other forms of PFM operating in Nepal - namely “collaborative management”, “leasehold management”, “buffer-zone management” and “watershed management”.

However, this study focuses mostly on Community Forestry – most widespread and widely known

Why are the poor being left out of PFM?

- Management committees – prone to elite capture – richer, more vocal, literate, members
- Without deliberate interventions (or legal requirements) it is difficult to hold management committees accountable
- Following introduction of PFM – initially at least – reduced harvesting and increased control – impacts upon poor
- Licensing of forest use under PFM, even for domestic purposes, places high prohibitively high costs on the poor
- Deliberate exclusion of the poor, fuelled by the widespread belief that the poor are responsible for forest destruction as well as a belief that the poor are unable to contribute in a useful or constructive manner

Why are the poor being left out of PFM?

- Seasonal forest users (such as grazers / pastoralists) may not be included in planning processes – either as they are not in the village at the time key decisions are taken, or because they are not viewed by the village as having a legitimate claim on forest use and management
- Policy gaps or the misinterpretation of existing policies in ways that undermine efforts to increase the participation of the poor
- Income generating activities (IGAs) tend to be poorly selected and by their very nature, exclude the participation of the poor
- IGAs tend to be provided on a demand-driven basis, or through existing groups (which generally do not include the poor) – and rarely, if ever, are targeted towards the poor.
- Increased incidence in crop raiding / damage from wild animals, due to increases in wildlife following improved protection through PFM. This places additional costs on those living close to the forest who tend to be impacted most greatly.

“Pro-people” approaches and “pro-poor” approaches

Confusion appears to exist around two similar - but distinctly different – strategies that seek to link poverty reduction and community based NRM:

- Trying to ensure that forest / NRM benefits are equitably shared between forest dependent communities and higher level stakeholders (maximising total level of benefits at community level) – “**Pro people**”
- Trying to ensure that forest management benefits are equitably shared within a community (and avoiding problem of elite capture) – “**Pro-poor**”

Some practical suggestions...

Recognising and acknowledging poverty and its manifestations

Raising awareness and acceptance of poverty among village leaders:

- Broaden understanding of poverty and move away from the “we-are-all-poor” syndrome.
- Use of participatory poverty profiling tools.

Moving away from stigmatisation of poverty:

- Poor often blamed for unregulated forest harvesting.
- Tendency towards for paternalistic “hand-outs”
- Focus instead on interests / stakes and take discussion from there

Some practical suggestions...

Promoting more inclusive and equitable planning processes

- *Ensuring that marginalised groups are identified and included in the planning process and that their views are taken account of*
- *Working with seasonal forest users*
- *Identifying and including working with existing forest users*

Reforming the delivery of income generating activities at the community level

- Working with the poor to identify and screen potential income generating activities (IGAs) for their suitability to the poor

Some practical suggestions...

Improving the accountability, legitimacy and representativeness of village forest management institutions

- *Improving the representativeness of village management institutions*
- *Building the capacity and voice of specific forest user / interest groups to raise concerns at community level*
- *Raising awareness among the wider community regarding the role and function of the forest management committee*
- *Identifying opportunities for village forest management committees to report back to constituents on their actions and expenditure*

Some practical suggestions...

Making forest management plans, bylaws and rules more pro-poor

- *Subsidised or staggered payments by the poor*
- *Accommodating harvesting priorities of the poor.*
- *Providing the poor with higher quotas of useable products (eg firewood, building poles)*
- *Agreeing and formalising the use of forest revenues generated from PFM – and making the expenditure pro-poor*