

Community-based Forest Resource Management: A Comparative Study in Cambodia and Fiji

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1. Background and Objectives

Community-based Forest Resource Management (CBFRM) is a way of management by which a community takes initiative on how to manage natural resources from a long term perspective. Previous studies on CBFRM argue that there is no single pattern of successful CBFRM, and it is always case-specific and dependent on local context. Therefore it is meaningful to look at the macro and micro context of each local community to fully understand CBFRM. This thesis aims at clarifying the challenges and prospects for CBFRM in Fiji and Cambodia. These two countries were selected because both countries have CBFRM activities, but there are various different aspects. Most importantly, the underlying objective for CBFRM in Fiji is environmental conservation, while in Cambodia it is poverty alleviation. These differences are expected to influence how CBFRM works in these varied contexts and what the significant factors that affect the outcomes are. The villages of Navala and Natahradave in Fiji and Pong commune in Cambodia were selected.

2. Methodology

This thesis focuses on six basic features which were induced from previous studies for further comparative study: law/policy features and regional context; community features; physical features, rules and perspectives on forest; condition of forest utilization; project background and institutional design; and stakeholders' relationships. The raw data collected through literature reviews and fieldwork were categorized into these six basic features, and additionally analyzed through GPS mapping, coding by software, Atlas.ti, and stakeholder's analysis. Based on analyses of each site through these six interconnected features, this study examines the original drivers of CBFRM and what kind of management is required in order to understand what role CBFRM is expected to play and how CBFRM is implemented in each site.

3. Results and Discussion

Navala village's case describes how traditional land and forest use, based on mutual trust among family groups, contributes to form CBFRM. In addition, varied sources of income and access to employment in urban areas mitigate threats of exploitation of forest resources. In the case of Natahradave village, successful CBFRM activities resulted mainly from the institutional design, which enabled the local community to practice their customary decision-making, and convey their opinions and demands directly to the upper level management committee. The case of Pong commune illustrates the complexity of CBFRM from the view of socioeconomic and political context and stakeholder's obligations. Although there is an immediate need to establish CBFRM for poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability, no collective action has been taken because of a lack of local recognition about CBFRM and a lack of incentive due to the poor forest condition, which cannot provide short-term benefits.

4. Conclusion

CBFRM plays a major role of fair forest management as the threat to and awareness of natural and socioeconomic sustainability increase. CBFRM must be carefully designed and implemented in accord with these local contexts, and appropriate institutional settings and stakeholders' partnerships that promote recognition, participation, and communication among residents are influential to CBFRM performance.