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Science and Power in Participatory Forestry



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Project progress and preliminary results

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Partners:

A joint research and education capacity development project between four institutions:

- The Faculty of Forestry and Nature Conservation, Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania.
- The Institute of Forestry, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
- The Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University , Denmark.
- The Department of Food and Resource Economics, University of Copenhagen, Denmark.

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Project goal:

To promote approaches to participatory/community forestry planning and management that support equitable, environmentally sound, and economically rational forest management.

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Capacity and dissemination objectives:

- To award 4 PhD degrees within the project.
- To develop and implement teaching curricula in adaptive forest management planning.
- To develop practical guidelines on adaptive participatory forest management planning.
- To disseminate project results to the international scientific community and stakeholders in partner countries (Nepal and Tanzania).

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Anticipated output:

- 4 PhD graduates (two from Nepal and two from Tanzania).
- International peer-reviewed publications (8).
- Policy briefs (3).
- Guidelines on forest management (1).
- Teaching curricula workshop for MSc in PFM (1).
- Enhanced research capacity through 7 faculty research grants and two IOF PhD thesis partial support.
- PhD students present their research findings in national and international seminars

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Progress so far:

- 1st national stakeholder forum meeting in Nov 2014
- Tanuhun and Lamjung Districts were selected for detailed field studies of forest management practices (together by Danish and Nepali counterparts)
- PhD students' double degree arrangement between TU/IOF and IFRO/UoC 90% course work completed at UoC
- Despite the earth quake and fuel-crises substantial field data collection has take place (75%) completed
- To 2 PhD and 11 MSc theses on-going at IOF
- 6 short-term small research grants to IOF faculty
- 2 Policy briefs published
- Project mid-term review by DFC, Ministry of Foreign Affaris and Danish Embassy representatives completed in Nov 2015

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Way ahead:

- Project consortium partners meeting/workshop in Tanzania, August 2016
- PhD students spend 1-3 months in UoC for course work completion and thesis write-up
- International peer-reviewed publications (6-8).
- Policy briefs (3).
- Guidelines on participatory forest management planning (1).
- Teaching curricula workshop for a new IOF MSc students in PFM (1).
- Enhanced research capacity through the 7 faculty research grants and 2 IOF PhD thesis partial support.
- PhD students present their research findings in national and international seminars (2 each).
- 3rd national stakeholder forum meeting early next year
- 2 PhD theses submitted and defended by the end of 2017
- Project's final dissemination national seminar towards the end of 2017.
- Research collaboration with partners strengthened.

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Project Background:

- Scientifically sound forest management planning intends
 - to safeguard nationally important environmental resources.
- The requirement of scientifically sound forest management plans in community forestry is
 - justified by the expectation that they steer day-to-day management, thereby safeguarding the nationally important environmental resources.

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Key dilemma of scientifically sound forestry:

- The technical quality of an operational plan depends on
 - the data informing it which, to be of high quality, requires detailed forest inventory work.
- Yet, statistically sound forest inventories are demanding in terms of knowledge, money and time
 - so CFUGs cannot perform them and resource strained forestry officials as well as technical service providers could be tempted to take ‘shortcuts’.

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Key hypotheses and rationales:

- **Operational plans are sometimes (mostly?) based on inventory data that are more or less fabricated/imagined**
 - to save costs and/or to satisfy bureaucratic needs that will protect DFOs from investigations by the Commission for Investigating Abuse of Authority (CIAA).
- **Local communities don't follow their operational plans (OPs)**
 - because they know they are more based on fiction than on facts and because, in practice, they draw on other than scientific forms of knowledge to manage their forests as per their objectives.

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Key hypotheses and rationales (cont.):

- **In community forestry:**

- The technical quality of (most?) operational plans is poor and their silvicultural relevance minimal.
- Operational plans have little impact on actual management practices - fortunately or unfortunately?
- Other political ecological/economical agendas, like fear of CIAA investigations and the Department of Forests' (DoF's) wish maintain access to timber and non-timber forest revenues, dominate the content and actual use of operational plans.
- The concept of scientifically sound forest management is used for window dressing vis á vis donors and the general public behind which the MFSC/DoF, CIAA, and other institutional stakeholders struggle over how much and to which ends, the governance of community forests should be re-centralised.

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Specific research objectives are to understand how the concept of scientifically sound forest management planning influences:

- The professional values of the forest bureaucracy including the CIAA.
- The rhetoric and actual actions of the forest bureaucracy including the CIAA.
- Communities' forest management and planning practices.
- Communities' relations with the forest bureaucracy.
- People's participation and inclusion at the CFUG level.
- The biophysical outcomes of *actual* CF management practices.

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Purpose of this stakeholder forum

- To enhance the academic as well as practical/policy relevance of our research by getting feed-back on our:
 - Ideas and approaches.
 - Interim results and associated draft policy analyses.