

Bulletin Scale Up Edition III/2011

Published by Scale Up with the support of Ford Foundation

Conflict and Collaborative Management of Natural Resources

Collaborative management involves shared decision-making by governments, communities, NGOs and the private sector relating to access and utilization of natural resources. Borrini-Feyerabend et al. (2000) states that collaborative management is a situation in which two parties or more discuss, determine and ensure the sharing of management functions, proprietary rights and responsibilities for certain natural resources.

Institutional arrangements for the management of shared resources can be done in many forms, ranging from official recognition of indigenous property rights to annual contracts that allow villagers access to manage state lands. Government agencies can share resources allocation or management responsibilities with communities, including indigenous peoples and other parties, such as resource user groups, NGOs and enterprises / corporations (Castro and Nielsen, 2000). These forms of management can be found for resources such as forests, grasslands, wildlife, fishery and protected areas, where competition over natural resources is unavoidable.

Although each of the stakeholders may have different interests, the basic assumption is that sharing authority and decision-making will improve resource management process and make it more responsive to all needs. In particular, collaborative management is seen as a way to introduce and achieve public welfare and conservation in an efficient, fair, peaceful and sustainable manner. Many such arrangements are made through cooperation as an innovative response to prolonged conflict regarding the use and management of natural resources. This reinforces the idea that conflict can be a creative element in society. Shared management of contested resources can be beneficial in resolving conflict and realizing otherwise unachievable progress in this respect.

However, these processes of collaborative management can also lead to conflict. This is partly due to people, groups and institutions involved having different interests concerning the utilization of natural resources, as well as different levels of ability to influence the negotiation process. In addition, the groups and people who have greater access to power tend to influence decisions with their own interests in mind.

It is clear that effective collaborative management requires paying attention to issues of conflict management. Disagreements regarding rights of access, lack of agreement on management objectives as well as misinformation or misunderstandings frequently arise. Managing differences in perspectives is crucial to creating an atmosphere in which solutions to conflicts can be identified and implemented. Dealing with conflicts involving a range of societies, cultures or stakeholders (including state institutions) is not easy. Urbanites often face difficulties in finding their way through institutions or administrative law, while legal access is difficult for rural people because of distance (both physical and social), costs and lack of interest and expertise of lawyers in matters relating to natural resources. For most rural people, access to conflict management, even within their own communities, can be a challenge. This is especially true for women, poor people, the landless and other groups.

In many places, there is a great need to strengthen local capacity to deal with conflict situations that arise as a result of collaborative management. Rural communities often lack the capacity to handle the conflicts associated with the formation of collaborative management (Castro and Nielsen, 2001). While they may be accustomed to conflict management approaches such as negotiation or mediation, these approaches may not always be suitable for the particular conflict being faced (Castro and Ettenger, 1997).

Collaborative management approaches have two main objectives:

- Manage the use of land, forests and marine areas through negotiations on principles and practices that can be agreed upon jointly by the stakeholders;
- Establish ways of sharing power among the stakeholders to make decisions and control resource utilization.

For this reason, anticipating and managing conflict is a crucial factor in the collaborative management of resources. One feature of collaboration is that decisions are made by consensus. This does not mean that the agreement is taken unanimously of that is it necessarily the preferred option. Rather, a deal is reached when each stakeholder feels that its interests have been addressed. Development agreements are designed to avoid trade-offs (i.e. when at least one party must give in or compromise).

Approaches in the development of consensus do not stand on their own. They are far more helpful when fully integrated into the framework of an extensive collaborative management, and build upon processes that together create benefits and achievements.

Successful conflict management in the management of collaborative natural resources depends on the following conditions:

- All parties in a conflict have the power or influence to negotiate: the division of certain powers in making decisions and monitoring results is an important precondition for collaborative management. Without the division of powers, it is doubtful that all parties can effectively participate in conflict management and achieve agreements acceptable to all parties. Significant inequalities of power hinder collaboration because relatively more powerful groups can take action on their own or force decisions on the weaker party, thereby undermining the collaboration process (FAO, 1999).
- Conflict must not be manipulated by politicians or group leaders for the sake of wider political interests: these actors may use conflict for their own political ends and not in the interest of conflict resolution. If this happens, the space available to work towards collaborative resolution becomes restricted.

=====
Picture page 1: Consensus is achieved when all stakeholders feel that their concerns have been taken into consideration. Developing consensus is intended to prevent trade-offs. (Photo: Scale Up)

Photo page 3: Photo gallery of the signing of the MoU between the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) and Scale Up

Photo page 4: MoU between the Indonesian National Human Rights Commission (Komnas HAM) and Scale Up

=====
Scale Up Bulletin

Responsibility: Ahmad Zazali

Advisor: DR. Iwan Tjitradjaja, Gama Pasya, Ph.D

Chief editor: Mu'ammam Hamidy

Editing team: Ahmad Zazali, Harry Oktavian, Mu'ammam Hamidy

Translator: Sophie Chao

Our contact details:

Jalan Ketitiran No.26 Kel. Kampung Melayu

Sukajadi, Pekanbaru – Riau – Indonesia

Tel/Fax: +62 761 40028. Email: infoscaleup@yahoo.com

www.scaleup.or.id – Partner for Sustained Social Development

Supported by: FordFoundation