



FOREST GOVERNANCE AND COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT IN SRI LANKA: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The forest sector of Sri Lanka is in a transitional phase of forest governance through devolution of authority by allowing communities greater access to forestlands and deriving supportive policy reforms. Forest governance in community forests addresses the relationships, rights, responsibilities and incentives among stakeholders including forest communities, industries and government. The paper reviews the literature and discusses the community forest governance of the country in terms of: history of forest management, experiences in good governance, impediments for good forest governance, forest governance programs, managerial concerns and challenges, and policy implications for good forest governance. The history discloses the ancient system of community based forest management and the shifting towards bureaucratic agencies under the colonial domination, and continued governance system until 1980s. Good governance experiences are exposed through participation, accountability, predictability and transparency. Centralized hierarchy, lack of tenure security and authority, mistrust of government, lack of legal reforms and poor law enforcement, and institutional inefficiencies are recognized as impediments. Three major governance programs/systems to promote forest governance are explained. Stakeholder participation and building consensus, and forest management plan and training are discussed as managerial concerns. Policy implications are discussed with regard to local authority and community rights, law enforcement and stewardship development, research, extension and incentives, and market reform and forest certification.

Keywords: forest governance, community forest management, Sri Lanka.

Background

Private, community, open access, and state ownership are the common variations in institutional arrangements for forest resource management at community level in different parts of the world (McKean 1992). The strengthening of government powers to create and enforce forest reservations,

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and centralized management and the corresponding weakening of community control have become major hindrances in forestry sector development in Sri Lanka. The lack of coherent capacity of provincial and local authorities in sustainable management of natural resources has ended up with satisfying the interests of a few people while marginalizing the majority of local communities and resulting in resource depletion. On the one hand, authorities at national level make planning decisions without effective involvement of local communities. Forest decision-makers at central level tend to view resource management in isolation and neglect a more holistic perspective that includes conservation of forest resources and rural development. On the other hand, the combination of population pressure and weak governance over forest resources has increased tension among local communities over access and use of forest resources (Bergman & Murray-Rust 2004).

Globally, government centralized management and parceling of Tenure to individuals have ruined the environmental resource base on which millions of people in developing countries depend for their very survival. Community property rights, common property rights as well as community-based management are considered as key to restoring sustainable use of environmental resources in developing countries (McKean 2003). The modern concept of multi-stakeholder forest management has become a worldwide trend to incorporate all the various stakeholders in making decisions about forest management and use. Community forestry is an example on a continuum of participation and involvement in resource management where local communities are involved in forestry activities from the growing of trees to the processing of forest products, and generating income through small forest based industries (FAO 1978). The decentralization of governance systems and devolution of authority to local administrations are ongoing trends in the South Asian region, allowing communities greater access to public forestlands and deriving supportive policy reforms.

The region is in a transitional phase moving from subsistence based economy to a society that is interacting with more modern economic and governance systems (Poffenberger 2000). The forestry sector in Sri Lanka can also play a diverse role in resource conservation and livelihood development, and contribute to paving the way towards rural development.

Forest governance is increasingly being recognized as an essential ingredient for achieving long term forest conservation and sustainable forest management (Broekhoven 2005). Discussions on forest governance have intensified as a result of debates on decentralization of forest management and prevention of corruption and illegal logging. Forest governance generally concerns the qualities of decision making processes in forest management. Good forest governance is achieved by clarifying the relationships, rights,

responsibilities and incentives between forest users and government on the direction and nature of how forests are used (RECOFTC 2005). According to IIED (2004), forest governance means the decisions and actions that remove the barriers and install the policy and institutional systems which spread local forestry success. On the other hand, community forestry contributes to the improvement of forest conditions and community livelihoods through capital formation in rural communities, in the process of community empowerment and social change, and policy and governance reform of related organizations and agencies (Silva 2006). In the context of community forestry, forest governance enhances the capacity of forest dependent local communities to meaningfully participate, exercise their rights and represent their interests in forest related agenda-setting and management decision-making (CIFOR 2007). Forest governance fosters participation, accountability, predictability and transparency of community forest management with equitable relations among government and all other stakeholders (Menzies 2004).

The promotion of good forest governance in community-based forest management has become of vital importance in order to achieve a sustainable forestry sector development in Sri Lanka at this juncture. Hence, the study attempts to review the past and present experiences of forest governance in community based forest management in Sri Lanka, and discuss the future prospects of good forest governance with the view of promoting sustainable forest management. The study looks at the historical perspective in forest governance, examines good forest governance experiences and prevailing impediments for good governance in community based forest management. The study also attempts to evaluate governance programs presently implemented in the country, and discuss managerial concerns and policy implications to promote good forest governance and sustainable community-based forest management.

History of Governance in Community-Based Forest Management

Forestry in Sri Lanka has more than two thousand years of history reflected in the records left by the ancient kings. Sri Lankans have a long history of referring to tree planting since the year 543 B.C., and this tradition lies deep in the Buddhist culture (Nanayakkara 1987). The ancient historical chronicles "Maha-Wamsa", "Rajaratnacari" and "Rajawali" reveal that village communities were well organized and lived in harmony with forest environment during the period of King Vijaya in 543 BC. They managed sustainably the surrounding forest environment and enjoyed some privileges and a good deal of self-administration. The establishment of rules and regulations for the protection of forest and use of forest produce could be drawn back to King Dutugamunu period of 161 ~ 137 BC (Maddugoda 1991). The King was considered as the rightful owner of the forestlands (Troup

1940). Although the Kings were the nominal rulers of the forests, communities held clear usufruct rights and were supervised by members designated as managers (Nanayakkara 1996). Forests were managed under a common property regime with norms and conventions to regulate individual rights while social obligations also prevented the misuse of forest resources (Kariyawasam 2001). The existence of forest reserves for the royalty (*gabdagam*), monastic institutions (*nindagam*), public temples (*viharagam*), and other purposes (*devalegam*) has been documented in the ancient inscriptions. Forests were allocated to people for services performed for the ruler (*rajakariya*), while forest officers (*kele korala*) were appointed to regulate uses (Poffenberger 2000). Taxes paid to the rulers over private forest gardens are documented since the sixth century. Felling of certain tree species and poaching in royal forest lands and gardens were prohibited. All these rules were continued till the end of Sri Lankan Kingdom in 1815.

Government authority and communal systems of forest resource use began to change with British colonial authority. Then, the rights and responsibilities of communities to manage the forests were shifted to bureaucratic agencies run by the government. The colonial regime in the country undermined the cohesion of rural communities, and systems of common property management were eroded. British colonial policies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries however recognized community dependence on forests and granted them free collection rights of firewood and minor forest produce within a 3 mile radius of their villages (Poffenberger 2000).

Since 1950's after independence, forest management is administered by technically trained officers from the forest department. In general, officers are not trained to properly recognize indigenous rights, appreciate local knowledge, and understand the economic dependency of the communities on forest resources. The traditional institutions and leadership have often been marginalized or entirely ignored. Eventually, outsiders from urban areas particularly timber merchants took over the control of forest resources, the production system central to local livelihoods and way of life of local forest communities. Many migratory herding routes that had functioned for centuries were closed. The forest authority, however, was unable to control fuelwood gathering, shifting cultivation, plantation agriculture, mining, logging and other activities in the forests done by the local communities illegally.

Presently, the ancient resource use strategies and traditions are becoming important components in management of the forest resources of the country. Traditional functions of the community in managing forest resources are necessary and require strengthening (Poffenberger 2000).

National Forest Policy in 1980 has promoted the modern concept of community forestry followed by the international agenda. Community forestry is considered as a promising strategy about local control over and enjoyment of the monetary and non-monetary benefits offered by local forest resources, leading to sustainable rural development. Since 1982 ADB projects as well as other bilateral and multilateral projects and programs funded by UNDP, USAID, AUSAID, DAD etc., are implementing a range of community forestry approaches in the country. The Community Forestry Project (CFP) and Participatory Forestry Project (PFP) launched in 1982 and 1993 respectively were the largest operated through the Forest Department with financial assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Further, a different form of social forestry has been supported by over six Integrated Rural Development Projects (IRDPs) (Skutsch 1990). More than 400 NGOs are also engaged in various forestry related activities at the community level.

The Community Forestry Project (CEP) in 1982 embarked on community forestry programs to involve local communities to plant, manage and harvest fuelwood on State lands (Bharathie 1985). The main components/schemes of tree planting included: farmers' woodlots (FWLs), community woodlots, demonstration woodlots and block fuelwood plantations. Individual blocks on degraded state lands were distributed among community members under FWL component. Community groups were responsible for establishment, management and harvesting of community woodlots under common property rights.

The objectives of the Participatory Forestry Project (PFP) commenced in 1993 focused on: homestead garden planting of fruit, timber, and multipurpose trees to improve families' livelihoods; Farmer Woodlots (FWLs) on degraded government land, using agroforestry approach for both promoting a wood supply and improving their livelihoods; Protective Woodlots (PWLs) for soil and water conservation and rehabilitation of erosion-prone government land by local communities; and miscellaneous plantings in public areas to provide an amenable environment and raise public awareness (ADB 2003). The Small Grants Programme for Operations to Promote Tropical Forests (SGP PTF) is a European Commission (EC) funded program initiated in 2004 to promote sustainable forest management in direct partnership with buffer-zone communities of state forests (EU-UNDP 2004). The program focuses on the following thematic areas: biodiversity conservation; alternative livelihood initiatives; sustained delivery of better forest services; development of forest services and goods through multi-sector partnerships; and promotion of alternative forest resources bases (UNDP 2006).

Good Governance Experiences in Community Forestry *Community Participation in Management of Forest Resources*

There seems to be general consensus that, communities, in groups or individuals, have to participate in a resource development process to ensure that their needs rights are addressed, not only as the ultimate beneficiaries, but also as the agents of development (Asian Development Bank 2007). The farmers involved in the PWL program are permitted to plant cash crops under the woodlots, and collect fruits and fuelwood for domestic and commercial uses. Protective Woodlots (PWL) under CFP and PFP were planted and managed with the participation of local communities in order to protect the watershed areas and other environmentally vulnerable areas including steep terrain, areas prone to landslides and rocky areas (Sathurusinghe 1998). FWL under CFP and PFP are individual blocks, on government lands, which were distributed among community members (FAO, 1998). The model allowed for planting of field crops as intercropping by the farmers during the woodlot establishment, and the farmers have the right to reap the benefits as sole owners (ABD 2003). The SGP PTF program funded by the European Commission is managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in the country (EU-UNDP 2004). The objectives of the multiple use forestry program are ranging from conservation to market orientation through sustainable forest management with the active participation of buffer zone communities (UNDP 2006). Homestead garden planting is expected to increase the tree cover. Moreover, the trees planted would provide farmers with forest-related resources to fulfill their needs, increase income and create employment opportunities through their own resources (FAO 1998). The other success story of community participation is that the Forest Department granted a 100-hectare pine plantation in Matara to the community on a 30-year lease, in order to convert it to natural forest patches by inter-planting with indigenous species. The community members were allowed to tap resin from the pine plantation and sustainably collect non-wood forest products. Based on the success, the Forest Department is making arrangements to renew the lease for 30 years and to extend the lease to a 1000-hectare area (Sandiford 2007). Since ancient times, the "Veddas" communities of the country, who are considered the Indigenous Peoples, are still living in a few remote forest habitats and live from hunting and gathering. The few existing Veddas communities are still enjoying strong traditions of non-exploitative forest use and access rights to well-defined forest areas (Bergman and Murray-Rust 2004). There is a long tradition of involvement of local communities in participatory resource monitoring in the wildlife corridors that contain the largest extent of good forests in Sri Lanka Hotspots (Conservation International 2007).

Accountability in Community in Forest Management

The public sector institutions are accountable for the effectiveness of policy formulation and implementation as well as efficiency in resource use; they control the expenditure and provide citizens with an acceptable level of public services (Asian Development Bank 2007). However, community forestry shifts the government responsibilities substantially to the local communities for protecting and managing the forest resources.

The IUCN (2006b) in Sri Lanka is developing and negotiating the tripartite joint forest management model. It is expected to be a bridge for greater accountability among governments, the private sector and communities in the Knuckles forest range. Under FWLs of CFP and PFP, 0.2-1.0 hectares of degraded government lands have been allocated on a 25-year lease agreement to selected farmers who have the right as well as responsibility to maintain woodlots (FAO 1998). They were given food aid as part of incentive packages until the agricultural crops in the woodlots could generate subsistence benefits (Carter *et al.* 1994). They manage the woodlots during and after the project as the owners of woodlots (Sathurusinghe 1998).

Village Forest Societies (VFS) were formed in 1985 under the Social Forestry Program of CFP. The members of VFS were provided with technical knowledge to act as motivators within their communities. Furthermore, they were trained in seedling production and given responsibility to set up village nurseries and to carry out tree planting campaigns (Carter *et al.* 1994). The SGPPTF projects established youth committees as a strategy to stabilize the existing community-based organizations while shaping the values of future leaders in rural societies to protect and manage sustainably forest resources in natural forest buffer zones (Sandiford 2007).

Predictability of Resource Conservation and Rural Development

Predictability of flow of benefits from the forest resource system is one of the very important characteristics relevant to effective governance of forest commons (Agrawal 2007). Since 1980, National Forest Policy and forestry Sector Master Plans in Sri Lanka have promoted the concept of community forestry with the active participation of forest fringe communities. The aim was to create effective participatory forest conservation, while distributing forest resource benefits among local communities equitably, to alleviate rural poverty (De Zoysa & Inoue 2007). The implementation of community forestry projects between 1982-1990 reflected the change in government policy to involve rural communities in the development of private woodlots and forestry farms in order to secure their rights and benefits through forest based business activities. The creation of a Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources in 2001 also has paved the way for a more integrated approach in

the decision-making process in forest related environmental management activities with the involvement of local communities (UNCSD 1997).

Availability of reliable indicators to predict conditions of resources, resource flow, and long-term benefit stream improves the capacity of users to understand and manage forest resources. The CFP in 1982 expected to utilize unproductive, scattered lands and the unemployed rural communities to increase tree cover of the country. The fuelwood plantation of the CFP was predicted as an interim solution to address fuelwood shortages during the period (FAO 1998). PFP commenced in 1993 focusing on tree planting by farmers to create employment opportunities, raise incomes and reduce poverty in farming communities (ADB 2003). The SGPPTF program has selected 12 key forest areas which had been ranked as highly important forests by the National Conservation Review in 1995 for the community-based forest buffer zone development (UNDP 2006). Further, the program has identified the key activities: forest related micro enterprise development; credit and savings programs; community skills development initiatives; agro-based small scale enterprises; development of marketing skills; and creation of awareness on the natural resource conservation for communities predicting the forestry instigated rural development with the popular participation of local communities (EU-UNDP 2004).

Transparency in Forest Management Activities

Appropriate measures of transparency catalyze greater sustainability in forest management and more stable investment environment (Munilla and Pories 2006). Transparency in government decision-making and public policy implementation reduces uncertainty and can help inhibit corruption among public officials and entrepreneurs involved in forest resource management. Availability of information to the general public and clarity about government rules, regulations, and decisions create greater transparency in forest resource governance (Asian Development Bank 2007).

In an effort to create more transparency in forest management, several legal reforms were completed by the government of Sri Lanka, including: the revision of the Forest Ordinance; access to Genetic Resources; and deregulation of private timber transport permit system. However, the Forest Department is yet to grant legal authority and issue long-term leases the forest fringe communities under the reform of community based forest management (Bandaratillake 2002). Despite the delay in legal arrangements, at local level forest management development activities are presently implemented with greater transparency and participation of the communities. For instance, in homestead garden development projects, the village maps are prepared with the participation of local people who incorporate their individual home gardens currently degraded and/or idle for future

interventions (Sandiford 2007). In the case of forest certification, regulations at local, national, and even regional levels have to be formulated in order to improve transparency in forest practices, and contribute to good governance and sustainable forest management (Segura 2004). Sri Lanka exports many wood products mainly to the United Kingdom, United States, India, France, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and the Maldives (EDB 2006). These countries have shown an increased interest in having Sri Lanka provide FSC-certified timber and wood products. As a result of the market pressure, Sri Lanka has adopted Forest Stewardship Council certification linking environmentally and socially conscious consumers with like-minded producers, retailers, and distributors. Many companies involved in forest-based products export are still interested in the benefits and opportunities they can derive through certification (Perera *et al.* 2006).

Impediments to Good Governance of Community Forestry

Centralized Hierarchy of the Forest Department

The Commonwealth Forestry Conference held in Sri Lanka in 2005, has recognized that the top-down, centrist approaches to forest governance in many developing countries often failed either to achieve social justice or sustainable forest management. Similarly in Sri Lanka, a major effort has to be made in order to decentralize the government system of forest management from national to provincial and district levels through consultative coordination mechanisms. The country is presently administered through nine provinces (Central, North Central, Northern, North Eastern, North Western, Sabaragamuwa, Southern, Uva, and Western) consisting of 25 districts by nine Provincial Councils. However, the Forest Department is still operating in a highly centralized and hierarchical manner under the Central Government. Although land management has been decentralized to provincial and local authorities, the authority of forest land management is still vested in the central government, and multiple agencies within the central government. As a result, inappropriate land allocation, conflicting interests, delay and inefficiency in decision making have become main drawbacks in forest land management under community forestry regime. The head of the Forest Department, Bandaratilake (2002) himself has admitted that the government's monopolistic control of forest (over 98%) has adverse impacts on participatory forest management and benefit sharing with local communities.

The centralized management system provides very little opportunity for the communities to play a major role in forest resource management (Bergman and Murray-Rust 2004). The Forest Department, based on the colonial model, has an extremely rigid, hierarchical structure, and views itself as superior to communities. Communities are seen as potential law-breakers

who should be stopped by force from destroying the forest, and taught the value of trees (Carter *et al.* 1994).

Lack of Tenure Security and Authority for Communities in Forest Management

Even the Forest Department in Sri Lanka has recognized that the lack of land and forest tenure security, lack of authority on land and forest land management on the part of the communities are key problems in the governance of community forest management (Bandaratillake 2002). Forest officers are unwilling or unable to realign with local communities and forestry stakeholders. This makes it difficult for them to arrive at consensus with forestry stakeholders particularly the communities. The reorganization of Forest Department in order to decentralize and delegate authority to lower levels is still under consideration. Other aspects that need to be addressed are how to ensure the involvement of communities in planning and management; and how to strengthen the skills of the staff in participatory forest management under community forestry approach (Bandaratillake 2002). The forestry initiatives of the country in the 1980s started to call for a social or participatory approach almost entirely in response to world trends in forestry development and under international and donor pressure. In reality, local communities are yet to be fully involved in forest management as partners, rather than subordinates, to the Forest Department. Although under the rural reforestation program, contracts were given out to small farmers; it was mainly a way to provide employment and money to the communities. The latter did not effectively participate in any sense beyond the provision of labor.

Farmers were allocated government lands to plant trees as Farmers Woodlots (FWL) under a lease agreement under CFP and PFP. However, the program has been hampered to some extent due to insecure land tenure, lack of legal guarantee, and the history of mistrust between local communities and the Forest Department (Carter *et al.* 1994).

Mistrust of Government Decisions by the Communities

Existing efforts to enforce forestry and conservation laws in many countries have had significant negative impacts on the communities and their livelihoods (CIFOR 2004). Very often the forestry and conservation laws restrict the access rights to forests and usufructs of the communities, creating mistrust and tension between communities and foresters. However, under the new regulations enforcing community forest management systems, local communities in Sri Lanka expect to gain access rights to government forest resources under community forest management. While communities' expectations are raised when the government makes promises, these are often

made in isolation without a full understanding of the forest resource base and pre-existing legal or customary rights of the communities. As a result, promises are often broken. With new government regulations such as creation of forest reserves and national parks, communities are still poorly positioned to preserve their access rights to traditionally utilized forest resources (Bergman & Murray-Rust 2004).

Unfair laws of the government on forest related activities particularly collecting and transporting raw materials used for local small industries also undermine the basic human rights of poor local communities and affect their traditional sustainable livelihood activities (IUCN 2006b). The fines and sanctions used as mechanisms to discourage communities from felling trees in forests are often imposed in arbitrary manner preventing the communities from negotiating more lasting settlements and encouraging community forestry initiatives (Bergman and Murray-Rust 2004).

Lack of Legal Reforms and Poor Law Enforcement on Community Forests

The primary concern of local communities in Sri Lanka over loss of access to forest resources is the use of resources by outside parties. The government regulations often override long-held customary or traditional rights of local communities in forest resource management (Bergman and Murray-Rust 2004). Illegal logging and other forest-related unlawful practices are also the result of dysfunctional forest governance arrangements (IUCN 2006b).

It has been widely recognized that illegally logged timber destroys lives of the communities by perpetuating a vicious cycle of violence, intimidation, corruption and environmental and social degradation (Greenpeace International 2008). The local communities in Sri Lanka usually either stand back or call the police as mediators when they become enraged over outsiders' use of forest resources, rather than opting for direct confrontation. The outsiders tend to be more powerful errant timber traders. They may have political connections and often be armed to make offensive against the communities (Bergman & Murray-Rust 2004). Apprehending and prosecuting forest encroachers and illicit fellers is a major part of the work of many forest staff and cause continuing hostility between them and local communities. Moreover, large businessmen with political influence are also often involved in encroaching forest lands for extremely profitable vegetable growing and gem-mining. In their activities, they make use of local labor and in the end are prosecuted by the forest authorities (Carter *et al.* 1994). Some of the laws of the country related to forest resources are outdated, conflicting and overlapping. Law enforcement is slow and difficult due to the difficulty in arriving at a consensus among all forestry stakeholders, and the inevitable procedural delays (Bandaratillake 2002). Although the National Forest Policy statements in 1980 were amended to involve local communities in forest resource

management, no revision in forest legislation nor change in the structure of the Forest Department have been carried out to support the statements (Carter *et al.* 1994).

Institutional Inefficiencies Concerning Community Forest Management

The Forest Department in Sri Lanka has recognized knowledge and technology development in community forestry as a priority area for investment under its capacity building program (Bandaratillake 2002). It has been recognized that the low productivity of the forests of the country are mainly due to improper species choice, poor quality seeds, inappropriate planting methods, lack of knowledge of methodologies for plantation on degraded lands, improper care and maintenance, and lack of protection of trees during the initial years after planting (Perera *et al.* 2003).

Evidently, the Forest Department had decided to plant Pine trees in many degraded forest lands in different parts of the country under several community forestry programs, often considering only the silvicultural adaptability. But the communities have not gained much from this choice. They have been hit by both the loss of “degraded” land formerly used for grazing, and the planting of Pine trees have provided them with little benefit except some fuelwood. Moreover, the pine trees are viewed as being detrimental to the environment (Carter *et al.* 1994).

According to Perera *et al.* (2003), major factors affecting the high cost of raising forest trees for energy under community forestry regime are inefficiencies in government institutions, especially: delays in decision-making and implementation, high organizational costs, leakage of funds and non-accountability. In addition to government institutions, even existing social organizations at community level have often latent organizational structures mobilizing communities only in times of need. They have limited experience and capabilities to promote their forest resource interests or channel information related to resource management within the community and between other stakeholders or decision makers. They have little experience in engaging in conflict prevention dialogue with other stakeholders over community forest management (Bergman & Murray-Rust 2004).

Implementation of Forest Governance Programs

Global Forest Governance Project

Sri Lanka has become a component of the IUCN global project on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) supported by the European Commission. The Global Forest Governance Project is planning to support the country in improving forest governance and forest law enforcement, test approaches or technologies, and support for triangular (South-South-North)

cooperation in forest management involving civil society and the private sector (EU 2007). The project attempts to identify policy, legal, institutional and economic obstacles that have so far hampered good governance in forest management in Sri Lanka; it then tries to improve it by building new partnerships and actively supporting government, civil society, NGOs and the private sector. Community forestry is one of the strategies recognized under this pilot, innovative approach. The main means by which to facilitate and promote sustainable and equitable forest conservation and management is by enhancing the capacity of key stakeholders and encouraging forest governance reforms (Broekhoven 2005). The Forestry unit of the IUCN Sri Lanka country program, initiated in 2007, is responsible for projects relating to governance and human well-being issues (Hennayake 2007). The project aims to support arrangements to improve income generating activities that offset economic loss from new forest law enforcement restricting access of communities to natural forest reserves. The private sector and communities are expected to work together to improve market and small business development. The Forest Department and civil society have to agree on negotiated access and use rights (Maginnis 2007).

Forest Resource Management Sector Project

The Forest Resource Management Sector Project started in 2007 with funds from Asian Development Bank. The project attempts to address the problems of loss of forest cover and conservation of forestlands by improving livelihood opportunities, reducing poverty, and promoting forest sector governance. It attempts to increase the value and sustainability of forest resources by creating a policy and governance framework to enable local communities and the private sector to participate in forest resource development and management. The project will help improve the skills of communities to enable them to influence decisions and access programs that have an impact on their livelihoods. The project design incorporates community participation and bottom-up planning to ensure full commitment of communities and their continued participation in the project implementation (ADB 2007). Governance is to be improved by adopting multi-stakeholder and community-based regimes and making the forest sector more accountable. The project aims to ensure transparency through deregulating sectoral operations and implementation arrangements. It also plans to develop benefit-sharing mechanisms from forest resources through the institutionalization of participatory forest management. The project is planning to cover 17 of the 19 forest divisions and help the government to improve forest governance by establishing legal and functional boundaries of the forest areas. The project attempts to deregulate timber transport and trade, phase out monopoly of State Timber Corporation in timber harvesting, and

rehabilitate state forest lands by local communities and the private sector (ADB 2000).

Anti-Corruption, Forest Law and Governance Program: Transparency International (TI) Asia Pacific

TI, an organization founded in 1993 and active in 107 countries including Sri Lanka, defines corruption as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. The main objectives of the program are: to identify forestry related risks of corruption and assess their negative socio, economic and environmental impact; to explore areas of corruption risks not covered by existing interventions; and to build a picture of existing regional and global initiatives and instruments relevant to governance issues and corruption in forestry. The overall goal of the program is to contribute to transparent, accountable and responsible forest governance in Asia Pacific: more specifically, the program intends to increase transparency and reduce corruption risks in the transactions linked to forest management and trade in timber and wood products in Asia Pacific. The program focuses on the following five categories of transactions and issues which contribute to poor and illegal practices in the exploitation of forest resources in Asia Pacific: 1. Bribery of public officials; 2. Poor land reforms, forest licensing and concessions; 3. Timber laundering; 4. Lack of judicial integrity; and 5. Unsustainable demand for wood derivatives. Furthermore, TI warns that the rainforest is endangered. In many parts of Asia Pacific the rainforests have been exploited for construction timber and the furniture industry, or cut down to clear land for oil palm and other plantations.

Although these three main programs have already been started in Sri Lanka, the impacts of these international programs funded by donors have yet to be felt at the local level. Since the forestry sector in Sri Lanka is scattered and distributed throughout the country with the characteristic of a large number of poverty stricken local communities, urgent and comprehensive managerial and policy interventions in community forest governance has become a vital issue.

Managerial Concerns in Promoting Good Community Forest Governance Stakeholder Participation and Building Consensus

Participation of different stakeholders is vital to good governance in community forest management. Bringing communities, civil society, government, and the private sector together and facilitating multi-stakeholder partnerships under the umbrella of forest governance seems to offer hope and opportunity for all concerned (Maginnis 2007). The government has to impose laws and policies that effectively regulate use and management of forest resources and work to mitigate overuse or hazards. The private sector

involvement in community forest management should be framed by market mechanisms through the adoption of standard procedures and negotiated agreements. The communities have to work with different forestry stakeholders in the process of decision making through various ways and means in order to reach clear agreements under the community based forest management. Clear and concise information is necessary for analyzing the problems of community based forest management and good community forest governance. Good community forest governance would recognize the identities and traditional practices of local communities and facilitate to manage social changes within the community forestry programs.

According to IUCN (2006b) the tripartite approach to governance by building bridges between government, private sector and civil society is an essential strategy in working towards sustainable community forest management. The strategic engagement and real connection of these three parties is vital for greater accountability. The multi-stakeholder participation would not undermine, but complement, the government's key role in negotiation, legislation and regulation. The tripartite approach would facilitate stakeholders' input and commitments; build trust among different stakeholder groups; share lessons learned from the field and feed them into policies; and generate information on legal, economic and institutional constraints (Maginnis 2007).

Forest Management Plan and Training

The forest management plan describes and regulates multi-stakeholder agreements and collaboration of the community forestry programs. The multi-stakeholder agreements and collaboration through good community forest governance enhance the social and environmental outcomes of the community forest management through communication, collective reflection, and shared learning and action. In order to promote good forest governance in Sri Lanka, local forest authorities and communities have to prepare management structure, rules and regulations governing forest use, through discussions and dialogues.

The establishment of large scale fuelwood plantations can be promoted and managed more efficiently and effectively through participatory forestry projects designed and planned with the involvement of government, community, private sector and multinational companies (Perera *et al.* 2003). CIFOR (2004) argues that the management of forests by government and communities can ensure the equitable sharing of benefits and resolving conflicts in a fair and transparent manner, if it is implemented through well-prepared comprehensive management plans. For instance, the forest management plan and lease agreement drawn on mutual understanding and collaboration between the Forest Department and communities, whereby

stakeholders agreed to convert part of the pine plantations into indigenous tree species plantations while allowing communities to tap resin from remaining pine plantation as well as sustainably collect non-wood forest products from the plantation, is a successful story of good, local community forest governance (Sandiford 2007). Good local forest governance enriches bonding among local forestry stakeholders and communities, and bridges their social capital for developing local forest management (Hyakumura & Inoue 2006). Human and social capital have to be developed in forest environments through community organizations, local communities and interest groups in order to promote good community forest governance. In addition, training based on need assessment for forest staff and communities is a major requirement for promotion of governance and sustainable community forest management.

The Forest Department in Sri Lanka has guided departmental operations for many years on forest protection and control under a strongly hierarchical management structure. Therefore, the officers have to be trained and re-oriented to build their capacity to implement true community participation in forest governance (Carter *et al.* 1994). Curriculum development at the Sri Lanka Forestry Institute and participatory planning with village level institutions could be important strategies for human resource development in forest governance (Hitinayake & Nurse 2001).

Policy Implications for Good Community Forest Governance

Local Authority and Community Rights

The government of Sri Lanka has to support the sustainable management of forest resources by decentralizing authority from central to local levels (Brown *et al.* 2002). Accountable and representative local institutions or local government with decision making powers, skills and resources are key determinants of successful local forest governance (Ribot 2002). Forest governance creates connectivity, while organizing of communities; decentralization and recognition of local rights and authority enhance rural economy. The process of integrating customary institutional arrangements into a formal government system at local level can proceed by establishing good local governance. The customary council also may function as an institution of conflict resolution.

Forest authorities have to meet public demands granting more direct power to forest communities. Effective forestry regulations and land tenure are required in order to have strong community forest governance. Securing land and tree tenure for forest dependent communities, and delineating and demarcating permanent forest estate can positively influence the development and effectiveness of community forest governance (ADB 2000). Community forest governance opens the space for local voices to be involved

in planning and management of forest resources (Menzies 2004). The recognition of community rights and improving community forest governance are politically feasible and also cost effective strategies for rural poverty alleviation in Sri Lanka (De Zoysa & Inoue 2007). Local forest governance will allow for greater recognition of culture and the human spirit, thus securing the place of local people in forests and forest management (UNDP 2006). Local collaborative forest governance recognizes the communities as the primary stakeholders who participate in forest protection and management (IUCN 2006a). Forest governance ultimately will be a societal responsibility and the forest administration will have to work with different sectors of the society to catalyze commitment to change in the forest management strategies (IUCN 2006b).

Forest Law Enforcement and Forest Stewardship Development

Forest law enforcement promotes greater transparency and accountability, and improves public confidence in community based forest management. Law enforcement has to be focused on the uncovering and tracking of illegal logging and trade from community managed forests. The Multi-Annual Indicative Program (MIP) of the European Commission will work with governments and local communities on forest law enforcement and trade focusing on how to curb illegal logging and enhance forest governance in the Asia region including Sri Lanka (EU 2007).

Local communities have to act as forest stewards in community forest governance for sustainable community based forest management (Evans et. al 2006). The procedures and rules by which decisions are made and consensus is reached, and mechanisms to hold decision makers accountable are included in the community forest governance (Menzies 2004). Local collaborative forest governance takes over industrial forest management as part of the latest paradigm in forest policy. The history in Sri Lanka clearly reveals that forest conservation in the country was an integral component of the indigenous resource management systems of local communities. Therefore, recognizing the rights, capabilities, and responsibilities of communities to manage local forests is not only socially just, but may result in better stewardship even under the present context (Poffenberger 2000). In support of sound forest stewardship, community forest governance will provide a framework to coordinate public sector, private sector and communities' actions required for sustainable community forest management. Similarly, conservation organizations, research institutions and communities in partnership with government agencies could be encouraged to assume stewardship of evergreen protected areas in Sri Lanka, in order to enhance management and maintain biodiversity (Conservation International 2007).

Forestry Research, Extension and Incentives

Good quality information, together with improved means of dissemination, are essential for effective monitoring and evaluation. Quality information also helps create transparency which is a crucial catalyst of good community forest governance. The success of technology transfer and its actual implementation depend on the economic conditions, social structures and institutional frameworks. Therefore, the staff of Forest Department in Sri Lanka requires training in interactive techniques to involve communities in management decision making and joint planning exercises in community forestry programs (Poffenberger 2000). At the time the National Forestry Extension Service was established in Sri Lanka in the early 1980s, it had been proposed to recruit one Forester, one Ranger and two Forest Guards assigned to each of the 24 Districts in order to disseminate forestry related knowledge and transfer required technologies efficiently and effectively (Carter *et al.* 1994). However, forest officials in district forest office are still engaging in policing other than disseminating knowledge and technology transfer for the promotion of community based forest management.

Investment in community forestry in Sri Lanka is required not only to increase the productivity of forest lands, but also to reduce poverty among the forest dependent communities through improved forest governance. Financing is one of the major factors to expand the production to meet required biomass which accounts for about 55% of the energy consumption of the country. However, only government, private sector and multinational companies can afford the financing of large-scale plantations under participatory forestry projects (Perera *et al.* 2003). It has been argued that incentives to change forest use patterns can form an effective part of good community forest governance strategies of the country.

Market Reform and Forest Certification

There is a need for reform of forest policy in Sri Lanka to focus on community management of revenues earned from possession of local forest resources which encourage a quantum shift in social and economic relations under community forest governance. Reforms in markets for forest products and ecosystem services would provide opportunities for communities and the government to encourage industrial development that promotes economic growth in a socially responsible manner. The creation and expansion of markets for fair-trade timber and premiums for sustainably produced forest products under community forestry programs would significantly improve returns for local communities and greatly contribute to local livelihoods and poverty reduction among the rural poor. Forest certification should be further popularized to promote fair trade practices while preventing illegal utilization of forest resources that presently disrupt good forest governance and

sustainable community forest management. According to O'reilly (2006), forest certification can have a positive impact in national and international policy arenas, and help create better overall governance arrangement. Forest certification and third party wood chain monitoring are valuable tools for promoting forest governance and improving corporate social responsibility in multi-stakeholder arrangements for forest management.

Conclusions

Ancient Kings in Sri Lanka were the nominal rulers of the forest resources of the country while communities held clear usufruct rights. During the colonial times and later, forest management did not properly take into consideration the stakes of local communities and the civil society in the maintenance and use of forest resources. Most of the community based forest management initiatives implemented are seen as a means of obtaining local labor rather than facilitating true community participation in forest governance. Ineffective management, lack of stakeholder collaboration, and centralized bureaucracies with outdated laws and regulations are the main challenges to good forest governance. It might be too soon to be able to measure the impacts of the new forest governance programs. Comprehensive management plans have yet to be scientifically developed to incorporate scientific inputs and the stakes of local communities, civil society and industry through multi-stakeholder partnerships. Institutional development to address corruption, illegal exploitation of forest resources, and regulations to promote land tenure arrangements and develop fair trade practices need special consideration for good forest governance and sustainable community forest management.

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