NATURAL RESOURCES SYSTEMS PROGRAMME
FINAL TECHNICAL REPORT[1]

DFID Project Number

R8280

Project Title

Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management

Project Leader

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Organisation

Department of Geography, University of Cambridge

NRSP Production System

Semi-Arid Production System

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B2. Chaturvedi, R. and Godbole, G. 2005. *Perceptions of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department.* Project Report, Cambridge-Harda project. 55 pp.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

BGVS: Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti

DFID: Department for International Development

DFO: Divisional Forest Officer

ELDF: Enviro-Legal Defence Firm

FD: Forest Department

IEG: Institute of Economic Growth

IIFM: Indian Institute of Forest Management

JFM: Joint Forest Management

MLA: Member of Legislative Assembly

MP: Madhya Pradesh

MTO: Mass Tribal Organisation

NGO: Non-governmental Organisation

NRSP: Natural Resources Systems Programme

PRI: Panchayati Raj Institutions

TERI: The Energy and Resources Institute

1   Executive Summary

This project developed as a follow-up activity from a previous NRSP Semi-Arid Production Systems project (R7973: "Policy Implications of Common Pool Resource Knowledge in India, Tanzania and Zimbabwe"). R7973 developed an analytical framework for the understanding of stakeholder perspectives in natural resource management. This project aimed to use the analytical framework from R7973 to increase learning about differences in stakeholder perceptions over participatory forest management in one district in central India (Harda); to generate policy relevant findings that could be used to formulate inclusive policy for participatory forest management; and to communicate these findings to key stakeholders and policy actors.

The project purpose was to improve policy and institutional arrangements for pro-poor participatory forest management in India through the validation and promotion of this analytical framework. This required the validation of the analytical framework that was developed in R7973, by developing a primary research methodology that could test the analytical framework, and then implementing this methodology in a specific field location in collaboration with local in-country research partners. The second aspect of the project purpose was to promote the analytical framework to a number of key target institutions, in order to provide an input into the policy process. The mechanism for this was the discussion of the framework and project findings with policy actors and target institutions through a series of meetings and workshops at various levels.

The empirical research process involved primary research with a range of stakeholders, including twenty-four sample villages in Harda district. Qualitative research methods were used to investigate stakeholder perceptions relating to forestry and livelihood issues. The project also adapted the use of Q-methodology in order to understand stakeholder positions, as well as to identify areas of conflict and common ground between stakeholders.

The project worked towards generating dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors at multiple levels – district, state and national – in order to facilitate thinking about forest management strategies in light of its findings from the field research. The project team identified key stakeholders and policy actors, and engaged in discussions with them both within the formal auspices of project activities, as well as in other forums. However, the project could make only a limited contribution to on-going policy dialogue. The atmosphere for dialogue between policy actors reflects their longer-term interaction, and the project was not in a position to change these relationships during its lifetime. Despite these qualifications, project findings and methods were well-received, and the outputs are likely to have a lasting impact, both through their use by the project's identified communication stakeholders and target institutions, and their adoption by project partners who continue to play an important role in the natural resources sector in India.

The specific way in which this project contributes to the overall output of NRSP's Semi-Arid Production Systems Programme is by promoting more inclusive policy processes for the management of forest resources in India, based on a detailed and rigorous understanding of the perspectives and perceptions of key stakeholders. This is true specifically of the case study district, Harda, where the project's findings themselves provide the basis for inclusive policy dialogue. It is also true more widely, as the use of project methods and insights by project partners is likely to generate similar empirically grounded insights that can contribute to the policy process. The work of the project to systematically document stakeholder perspectives, especially those of the poor, helps to ensure that these policy processes do not exclude the poorest and most marginalised communities, many of whom are neglected in conventional policy processes as their perceptions are not understood or taken seriously by an elite-led decision making process.

2   Background

The goal of this project was to develop and promote strategies for improving the livelihoods of poor people living in semi-arid areas, through improved integrated management of natural resources, under varying tenure regimes. This was to be achieved through identifying and promoting strategies that improve access to, and sustained use of, common pool resources by the poor under the most appropriate tenure and management regimes in at least one target area in the target country, India.

A previous NRSP Semi-Arid Production Systems project (R7973: "Policy Implications of Common Pool Resource Knowledge in India, Tanzania and Zimbabwe"; http://www-cpr.geog.cam.ac.uk) developed an analytical framework for the understanding of stakeholder perspectives in natural resource management (Adams, *et al*, 2003). The analytical framework suggested that, in contested common pool resources, different stakeholders often brought different assumptions, knowledge and goals for that resource to their decision-making, but these positions were not always made explicit. The framework suggested that making these cognitive differences clear may help to promote policy dialogue between stakeholders. This analytical tool was discussed during the course of that project, but was not tested or validated in different field conditions. The current project evolved out of R7973, in order to test the analytical framework and to assess its utility in informing the policy dialogue over common pool resources.

The particular focus of this project was a single district, Harda, in Madhya Pradesh in central India. The project aimed to use the analytical framework from R7973 to increase learning about differences in stakeholder perceptions over participatory forest management in Harda; to generate policy relevant findings that could be used to formulate inclusive policy for participatory forest management; and to communicate these findings to key stakeholders and policy actors.

Harda has been celebrated as an exemplar of the effectiveness of decentralised and participatory forest management in India, having been in the forefront of the Joint Forest Management (JFM) process since the early 1990s. Based largely on the experiences of experiments such as Harda, the World Bank funded a large forestry sector project in Madhya Pradesh in the 1990s. While the Forest Department views the participatory forestry approach followed in Harda as a success, many others, notably a section of activist organisations working in the area, hold the view that communities have not only not benefited, but their situation has actually become worse. This difference in perception has resulted in conflicts among different stakeholders such as the FD, tribal-based organisations and communities.

The specific opportunity that this case presented was that existing research had failed to identify the reasons behind the different opinions that key stakeholders held on forestry and livelihood issues in Harda. While participation has been widely documented in many studies of JFM, the perceptions of local level stakeholders have not been adequately studied, especially as these programmes have matured over a decade. Research on the local dynamics of stakeholder interaction over forest management in Harda provided an opportunity to develop a focused analysis of issues that arise with the maturity of such participatory programmes, and to provide policy-relevant insights that have wider applicability for strategies to improve access to, and sustained use of, common pool resources by the poor.

This project was initially discussed in July 2002 between the NRSP Programme Manager and the Project Leader, as a follow-up activity from R7973. NRSP commissioned the Project Leader to

undertake an exploratory pre-project planning visit to India in December 2002-January 2003 in order to investigate the scope for such a project. The Project Leader visited a number of research institutions, in order to develop a concept note for the project, and to identify a research team that could carry out the work. He also corresponded with, and met, the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests in Madhya Pradesh in order to get high-level endorsement of the project by a key policy actor. By the end of this visit, a project team was in place, and all project partners met together in Delhi in January 2003 to agree the broad outline of the proposed work. The proposal was developed collaboratively over the subsequent weeks, and was finally commissioned by NRSP to start on 1 March 2003, for a period of twenty-five months.

3   Project Purpose

The project purpose was to improve policy and institutional arrangements for pro-poor participatory forest management in India through the validation and promotion of an analytical framework.

There were two parts to this project purpose. The first was the validation of the analytical framework that was developed in R7973. This was to be achieved by developing a primary research methodology that could test the analytical framework, and then implementing this methodology in a specific field location in collaboration with local in-country research partners. The findings from the empirical research process were to be analysed in light of the framework, and then disseminated using the project's communication plan. The verifiable indicator for this aspect of the project purpose was that project communication and uptake activity would increase knowledge about stakeholder differences over participatory forest management among local communities, key decision-makers and the research community, with this process to be completed by December 2004.

The second aspect of the project purpose was to promote the analytical framework to a number of key target institutions, in order to provide an input into the policy process. The mechanism for this was the discussion of the framework and project findings with policy actors and target institutions through a series of meetings and workshops at various levels. The target institutions included local decision makers at the district level, state level policy makers, national level policy makers, civil society actors, as well as international donor organisations active in the forest sector in India. In addition, a key target was the community of Indian research organisations working in the natural resources sector, specifically those with programmes that relate to pro-poor participatory forest management. The specific indicator for this aspect of the project purpose was that at least three target institutions should have assessed the use of the framework in their policy planning and management by the end of the project, March 2005.

4   Outputs

The project outputs were:

1. **Enhanced learning about differences in stakeholder perceptions and sources of conflict over participatory forest management in Harda developed using the analytical tools from R7973.** This required the translation of the analytical framework into a useable research tool, and the subsequent implementation of this research tool in the field along with in-country project partners. The implementation of the framework required intensive fieldwork with stakeholders at multiple levels to understand their perceptions about

participatory forest management. The data generated by this process was subsequently analysed (in the context of the analytical framework) in order to understand the sources of conflict between key stakeholders.

2. **Strategies to manage conflict discussed and promoted with local target institutions.** The project sought to involve key local policy actors in its objectives from the outset, in order to create an atmosphere conducive to uptake and promotion of project findings. The aim was to establish good working relationships with identified individuals, and to discuss ways in which project findings could contribute to on-going initiatives to manage conflict over participatory forest management in the district.

3. **Improved dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors over participatory forest management strategies, at the local, state and national levels.** The project worked towards generating dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors at multiple levels – district, state and national – in order to facilitate thinking about forest management strategies in light of its findings from the field research. The project team identified key stakeholders and policy actors, and engaged in discussions with them both within the formal auspices of project activities, as well as in other forums. The extensive existing links and contacts of the project team facilitated this process, as the team consisted of a number of leading research institutions working in the field of natural resource management in India.

4. **Learning about the utility of analytical frameworks and tools as inputs into the policy process and for conflict management over participatory forest management.** The project conceived this learning process to be on going, throughout the life of the project (and beyond). The project approach was inclusive, and all partners as well as the Project Leader participated in quarterly team meetings, and corresponded regularly through e-mail. The process of adapting the analytical framework and developing a research methodology was conducted in a deliberative and participatory way, with inputs from the entire project team. The project team subsequently reviewed the application of the framework for research, as well as its utility in the policy process during the analytical and communication phases of the project.

The results and findings of the project are discussed in detail in Annex A. The main findings are summarized here:

Output 1 (learning about stakeholder perceptions and conflict): The project partners prepared a list of key stakeholders, and this was used as the sampling frame for research. Four levels of stakeholders were identified: the village population; Forest Department (from the field level to state headquarters in Bhopal); Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Mass Tribal Organisations (MTOs); and others (including Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), market actors, politicians, especially Members of the Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly MLAs), and representatives of the news media). The empirical research at the village level revealed a mixed picture – livelihoods were predominantly agricultural, with productivity highly dependent on irrigation inputs. The participatory forest management process appeared to have been most useful in providing complementary inputs to agricultural activity at the village level, such as through check dams, wells etc., and also by providing income-earning opportunities in forestry-related work (more details are available in the Village reports summary in Annex B, B1). The research suggested that Joint Forest Management (JFM) had gone through three distinct phases since its introduction in 1990 – an early euphoria about JFM, led largely by a charismatic local forest officer; a second phase, significantly supported by the Madhya Pradesh World Bank Forestry Project from the mid-1990s; and a post World Bank phase from the end of the 1990s to

the current period, with limited funding for JFM and a decline in the initial enthusiasm about the programme. The qualitative research with stakeholders suggested that perceptions varied across a range of issues, between and within stakeholder groups (details of these findings are in the partners' final reports, Annex B, B1-B9). Some areas of conflict were clearly identified, as well as areas of common concern. The key areas within which stakeholder perceptions were important were: the functioning of JFM in the district, and its impact on forest quality; (land and other) rights issues in forest areas; the relationship between forests and rural livelihoods, especially of the poor; the (changing role of the) Forest Department and its relations with other stakeholders; and the role of other stakeholders in the forest sector (these differing perceptions are documented in the Policy Papers, Annex B, B10-B15). The analytical framework from R7973 was seen (by partners, as well as other audiences) to be useful in the analysis of this empirical material on stakeholder perceptions (see Workshop reports Annex B, B16, as well as Q-analysis paper, Annex B, B3).

Output 2 (discussions with local target institutions): The project established contact with key local actors, but administrative changes and transfers led to a lack of continuity in this contact. Both the heads of the local administration (Collector) and Forest Department (Divisional Forest Officer) changed during the project period, and their engagement with the research process fluctuated depending on local circumstances (especially with state, parliamentary, *panchayat* and municipal elections, all taking place in Harda during the project period). Dialogue with these key local actors was necessarily punctuated and episodic, rather than continuous, despite the presence of a substantial field team in the district during 2003-4. The main Mass Tribal Organisation remained reluctant to engage formally with the project on account of its donor funding (by DFID), but there was significant informal contact between the project team and members of this organisation at all levels. Local NGOs were interested and supportive throughout the research process, as were local politicians, and these groups were well represented in the final project workshop in Harda (see Workshop reports, Annex B, B16). At the village level, issues of stakeholder conflict and possible responses were communicated and discussed using the medium of folk theatre (see Street Play report, Annex B, B17). Overall, the local target institutions saw the project as providing interesting insights into the dynamics of forest-livelihood relationships in the district, and perceptions of stakeholders on a range of important issues, but they did not adopt the project process as a critical part of their own work in the sector. To this extent, although these actors were willing to engage with the knowledge generated by the research process, their 'buy-in' was limited to a somewhat passive role as recipients of useful information provided by the project team. This did not undermine their interest in the findings, but it did mean that they did not take an active role in defining issues and identifying policy-relevant learning from the project.

Output 3 (improved policy dialogue): Contact was established with relevant policy actors at various levels, local, state and national. They were fully informed about the project's objectives and methods, and were kept updated on project progress through informal contact. At this level, learning from the research and communication process suggests that actors more 'distant' from the local context were more receptive to the project, as they perceived the project findings to be less threatening. Those who believed that the project findings were critical of the way in which they were functioning adopted defensive attitudes to the research, and did not engage with it openly (see Workshop reports, Annex B, B16). Interestingly, this was an attitude that prevailed as much amongst officials of the Forest Department as it did amongst members of the main MTO in Harda. Amongst the policy community (broadly defined to include state and civil society actors), interest was stimulated both because of details of the local context (i.e., the Harda case), but also because the project timing coincided with a number of broader policy processes (relating to forests and livelihoods) in which project partners were already playing key roles. This included

research support for donor funded forestry projects in other states (ELDF, TERI, Winrock); advice to the Ministry of Environment and Forests and National Forestry Commission (ELDF, Winrock); and advice to civil society actors (ELDF). The challenge here was in generalising project findings adequately, as they were based on a relatively narrow case study of a single district. Inevitably, there was a trade-off between depth and breadth of coverage, and the wider ramifications of the project's findings for the state-level and national forestry debate remained no more than speculative. However, feedback at the state and national workshops confirmed that project findings reflected the ground reality in other parts of India, and that project methods were broadly replicable for similar sorts of conflict situations in other areas (see Workshop reports, Annex B, B16).

Output 4 (assessing the framework): The empirical research process provided a systematic way of assessing the validity of the analytical framework. Debate and discussion within the project team was an important step towards developing a useable methodology, and checking on its actual implementation. Interaction with other stakeholders at meetings and workshops confirmed the framework as a useful tool for understanding policy conflict (see Workshop reports, Annex B, B16). Project partners, as well as participants at meetings and workshops welcomed the methodological contribution of the project. One way of promoting the framework tool is through greater emphasis on training related products. These training products have been successfully tested during the project (see Field Guide, Annex B, B18). However, the communication and uptake process also suggested that the ability of the framework to contribute to the management of conflict is relatively restricted, since it is part of a wider process of negotiation and dialogue over policy. The framework has the potential to contribute to more effective policy dialogue in situations where the key policy actors are willing to engage in such dialogue. Its ability to change entrenched attitudes and mindsets is more limited. Dialogue in situations of conflict requires its promotion through a legitimate intermediary; the framework tool would be most powerful if such an intermediary deployed it in the context of an on-going policy process.

The main research products produced by the project were:
  i.   A Field Guide with details about the project methodology, especially the adoption of Q-methodology (attached in Annex B, B18).
  ii.   Village level reports with perceptions relating to the current state of forests and livelihood opportunities in the sample villages (summaries attached in Annex B, B1).
  iii. Project reports produced by the project partners based on qualitative research (interviews, focus groups, Q-sort) with different sets of stakeholders, revealing their perceptions on forestry and livelihood issues (attached in Annex B, B1-B9).
  iv.   Analytical papers summarising the key issues, as well as the sources of conflict and the scope for forging a consensus on forestry issues (attached in Annex B, B10-B15).
  v.   A report on legal issues with specific insights into the legal framework governing forestry and livelihood issues, as well as a discussion relating the perceptions of stakeholders to the legal position (attached in Annex B, B4).
  vi.   A street play, which was used as the principal communication device for the village level stakeholders (report attached in Annex B, B17).
  vii. Workshops to explore implementation options and policy alternatives for forestry and livelihoods issues, targeted at key actors and policy makers (workshop reports attached in Annex B, B16).

viii. Training sessions for other researchers interested in the use of qualitative methods generally, and in particular Q-methodology (programme in Appendix to Annex A).

ix. A research monograph, summarising project findings for the research community (this is in draft form, contents in Appendix to Annex A).

Communication of project findings has involved meetings and workshops held at local (Harda), state (Bhopal) and national (Delhi) levels (the process is discussed in detail in Annex A, which also shows how the different research products were targeted at specific communication stakeholders). The workshops were attended by local policy actors, NGOs, politicians and others with an interest in the sector; at the state and national levels, the target audience are senior policy officials as well as key civil society actors (see detailed reports of each meeting in the Workshop reports in Annex B, B16). At the village level, project findings were communicated in a more accessible form by using street theatre (see CD of street theatre performance, and report on street theatre performances in Annex B, B17). Feedback and dialogue from these communication activities was incorporated into the analytical process and the final research outputs. This process allowed discussions with target institutions relating to the potential for policy intervention based on project findings, both at project meetings and at other forums in which partners are currently active.

Overall, the project was successful in achieving its outputs, and met its core research and communication objectives by translating the analytical framework into an implementable field methodology, and in conducting a series of communication and uptake activities with a wide range of communication stakeholders. A relatively abstract analytical framework was converted into a useable primary research method, and subsequent field-testing confirmed the utility of the framework as an analytical tool. At meetings and workshops, there was serious engagement with the framework at all levels, which confirmed its utility in framing policy debates. Target institutions engaged with project findings, and considered the implications of the knowledge created by the project for their on-going activities relating to pro-poor participatory forest management in India. It is too early to judge whether there has been any significant behavioural change because of project activity, except amongst the project partners themselves, who were also important target institutions because of the positions that they occupy within the natural resource sector in India. The dual role of the Indian project partners – researchers as well as stakeholders in the policy process – is likely to be a considerable asset to future policy dialogue over participatory forest management in the country.

5   Research Activities

The project consisted of two distinct, but related, sets of activities. One group of activities (1.1 – 1.5, and 4.1 – 4.4 in the project logframe) was focused on the translation of the analytical framework into a useable field methodology, and the implementation of these methods in order to validate the framework. Secondly, the project team worked towards establishing contacts with relevant stakeholders and policy actors for communication and uptake, so that the framework and research findings could have an impact on policy dialogue (activities 2.1 – 2.3 and 3.1 – 3.3 of the logframe).

Validation of the framework

Activities 1.1-1.5 (i.-v. below) and 4.1-4.4 (vi.-ix. below) of the logframe related to the research process that was followed for the validation of the analytical framework from R7973. Specifically, the activities were:

i. *Identification of key stakeholders in Harda forest division.* The partners identified four broad categories of stakeholders: village-level, Forest Department, NGO and Mass Tribal Organisations, and others (as discussed in section 4).

ii. *Documentation of socio-economic profile of sample villages.* Twenty-four villages were sampled across district, based on a sampling frame which reflected the diversity of forest status, local politics etc. Of these, twenty-one were JFM villages, while three were control (non-JFM) villages (details are available in the Village reports summary in Annex B, B1).

iii. *Documentation of broader context for forest policy initiatives in the district.* This was done using secondary material and interviews with key respondents, as well as by a careful empirical legal analysis of government orders and legal documents. This contextual material was initially prepared by project partners, and was subsequently validated through discussions with key informants (see partners' reports for details, Annex B, B2-B9).

iv. *Documentation of perceptions of stakeholders in the context of strategies for forest management.* Primary research was primarily qualitative, and consisted of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, as well as the use of Q-methodology for understanding stakeholder perceptions. Q-methodology consists of administering a common set of stimulus statements to respondents, and asking them to sort these into sets depending on the extent to which they agree or disagree with the statements (details of the method and its administration are in the Q-report, Annex B, B3). Detailed interviews and Q-sort methods were used with a large sample of respondents, reflecting all stakeholder groups (see partners' reports for details, Annex B, B1-B9).

v. *Analysis of empirical material in relation to the framework developed in R7973 to understand sources of conflict.* The analytical process involved the discussion of emerging findings by the project partners at periodic review meetings (held quarterly through the project period), and the continual refinement of these findings in the context of the analytical framework. These analytical insights are captured in the final reports by project partners, and in the crosscutting analytical papers (see partners' reports and policy papers, B1-B15).

vi. *Empirical testing of framework developed in R7973 against stakeholder perspectives.* The use of Q-methodology involved a common set of stimulus statements that were implemented with all respondents. The statements reflected the analytical framework, and allowed a systematic assessment of the framework's validity in the context of stakeholder perspectives. Field-testing of the project methodology confirmed the utility of the framework as an analytical device (see partners' reports for details, B2-B9).

vii. *Assessment of utility of framework as a tool for understanding and managing conflict.* Periodic review of the project findings and experience with implementing the framework helped partners assess the utility of the framework in developing new knowledge about stakeholder conflict.

viii. *Assessment of utility of framework as an input into more effective policy dialogue over participatory forest management.* There was serious engagement with the framework at all levels, confirming its utility in framing policy debates (see workshop reports in Annex B, B16). Replication of project methods and processes is highly likely, and is likely to have a lasting impact as project partners are important players in the natural resources sector in India.

ix. *Assessment of needs for other products that could help the promotion and the use of the framework tool and the associated process of stakeholder interaction.* The project's internal review meetings as well as the communication and uptake process allowed partners to reflect on the research products, and adapt these in light of feedback from stakeholders and policy actors. In

particular, training-related activity, and the wider dissemination of the street play (and its messages in other formats) were identified as additional products that could be used to promote the framework tool (see proposal for uptake activity in 2005-6).

Uptake of the framework

The second phase of the project, which occupied the major part of 2004-5, involved communication of project findings with identified target institutions and key policy actors. The project communication plan was developed in detail during 2003-4, and was approved in July 2004. Activities 2.1-2.3 (i.-iii. below) and 3.1-3.3 (iv.-vi. below) of the logframe relate specifically to this process. The specific activities were:

i. *Establishment of contact with key local stakeholders and policy actors.* The project team invested a considerable amount of time in identifying key targets for the communication activity, and keeping them informed about the research process and the progress that was being made by the project. This built on early contact, which had been established with senior policy makers in the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department, as well as at the local level with the District Collector and the Divisional Forest Officer. Key civil society actors from NGOs and the Mass Tribal Organisations were also contacted at an early stage, and were kept informed about project progress.

ii. *Engagement of target institutions in the research process.* Individual meetings and workshops confirmed the successful engagement of key local stakeholders and policy actors with project findings (see workshop reports for details, Annex B, B16).

iii. *Identification and promotion of policy options to address stakeholder needs and reduce local-level conflict.* The workshop processes identified priorities for conflict management and key areas for further attention (see workshop reports, Annex B, B16). The communication of project findings through street theatre at the village level generated awareness and debate about policy options with a key target group (see report on street play, Annex B, B17).

iv. *Establishment of contact with key stakeholders and policy actors at various levels.* Here, again, the project team spent a considerable amount of time engaging with local, state and national level stakeholders and policy actors, and informing them about the research process. The project team also drew upon its other existing contacts in the policy world, especially the Delhi-based institutions that were working on a number of related projects in the forest and natural resource sector.

v. *Engagement of target institutions in sharing the learning from the research process.* Project findings were successfully communicated through meetings and workshops held at state level (Bhopal) and national level (Delhi). These meetings were attended by senior policy officials as well as key civil society actors (see workshop reports, Annex B, B16). Partners are also already using project methods and findings in their other on-going work in the sector – as partners are key target institutions because of their role in the policy debate, this has meant immediate uptake.

vi. *Identification and promotion of opportunities for dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors.* In-depth discussions were held with target institutions relating to the potential for policy intervention, both at project meetings and at other forums in which partners are currently active. The Forest Department, politicians, NGOs and the media considered the research findings and their implications for on-going work in the district, and at state and national levels (see workshop reports, Annex B, B16). The actual contribution to dialogue between stakeholders was limited, because the local atmosphere was not conducive to such engagement between the main protagonists. Actual contributions to the policy process have been made through partners' involvement in current debates over forest rights and livelihoods issues.

The research activities all took place as expected, although there were some minor adjustments to the specific timing of particular activities, due to elections in the district, which interrupted the primary research process, and due to monsoon rains, which affected the communication and uptake process. None of these interruptions led to critical delays, however, and the project was able to conclude its programme of work as planned by the end of March 2005.

One highlight of the research process was the development and implementation of a field methodology for investigating stakeholder conflict based on the analytical framework from R7973. As this was originally a relatively abstract conceptual framework, its conversion into a useable methodology in collaboration with the project partners was a major achievement. Another methodological highlight was the adaptation of Q-methodology within the project in order to provide a rigorous tool for investigating stakeholder perceptions. The implementation of this tool, including its use with illiterate respondents, was a major contribution made by the project. The major highlight of the communication activity was the conversion of project findings into a street play, in collaboration with a local folk theatre group, which was co-ordinated by the Madhya Pradesh Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti (BGVS), an NGO. This play was performed in the sample villages, and for an invited audience in Bhopal, and was extremely successful in converting relatively abstract and complex project findings into an accessible message using this medium. The communication workshops were also a considerable success, and were reported on positively by the local media in Harda and Bhopal (see copies of media reports in Annex C).

6   Environmental assessment

6.1   What significant environmental impacts resulted from the research activities (both positive and negative)?

The project did not have any direct environmental impacts, other than those associated with travel and the production of research outputs (energy, printing materials, etc.)

6.2   What will be the potentially significant environmental impacts (both positive and negative) of widespread dissemination and application of research findings?

The project relates to the creation of a more inclusive dialogue process for sustainable and participatory forest management in India. The dissemination and application of research findings and methods could impact positively on improved forest ecosystems and livelihoods in Harda district in particular, as well as more widely in the state of Madhya Pradesh and in India.

6.3   Has there been evidence during the project's life of what is described in Section 6.2 and how were these impacts detected and monitored?

There has been substantial interest in project findings, as seen throughout the project's communication and uptake phase. The translation of this interest into improved strategies for forest management, however, is a slower process and there is little evidence of this at this stage.

6.4   What follow up action, if any, is recommended?

Further work to disseminate project findings to key stakeholders and policy actors, as well as through training programmes to create awareness about project methodologies. These activities will increase the potential impact of the project, and promote the uptake of project insights in relation to the forest and natural resources sector in India.

7   Contribution of Outputs

This project relates to Activity 1.4 of the NRSP Semi-Arid Production System Logframe "Strategies to improve livelihoods of specific groups of the poor through improved integrated management of CPR developed and promoted", and is one of a suite of projects in India, Kenya, Tanzania and Zimbabwe that are focusing on the promotion and development of CPR management strategies. The work relates directly to the overall output of the Semi-Arid Production System: "Strategies for improving the livelihoods of poor people living in semi-arid areas, through improved integrated management of natural resources, under varying tenure regimes, developed and promoted."

The specific way in which project outputs will contribute to these objectives is by promoting more inclusive policy processes for the management of forest resources in India, based on a detailed and rigorous understanding of the perspectives and perceptions of key stakeholders. This is true specifically of the case study district, Harda, where the project's findings themselves provide the basis for inclusive policy dialogue. It is also true more widely, as the use of project methods and insights by project partners for their on-going work in the forest and natural resources sectors in India is likely to generate similar empirically grounded insights that can contribute to the policy process. The work of the project to systematically document stakeholder perspectives, especially those of the poor, helps to ensure that these policy processes do not exclude the poorest and most marginalized communities, many of whom are neglected in conventional policy processes as their perceptions are not understood or taken seriously by an elite-led decision making process.

One key finding from the communication and uptake phase of this project was that research projects can make no more than a limited contribution to on-going policy dialogue. The atmosphere for dialogue between policy actors reflects their longer-term interaction, and the project was not in a position to change these relationships during its lifetime. For some actors, especially those from civil society, dialogue with the Forest Department had been tried previously, and had failed because of perceived intransigence on the part of the state, and its reluctance to accept the validity of the claims being made on behalf of local and tribal populations. On the other hand, some Forest Department officials perceived civil society actors as troublemakers, and felt that it was meaningless to open up a dialogue with them. This meant that the possibility of actually using the framework and project findings to encourage the key policy actors to engage with each other was limited.

This raises important questions about the legitimacy and 'stake' of externally funded research projects as part of on-going policy dialogue. For research to have any real policy impact, it is clear that projects need much greater 'buy-in' of the key policy actors from the inception stage. In situations of conflict, this may not be straightforward. The project experience suggests that it is difficult to work both with the local state and with groups that are hostile to the administration (such as MTOs), since each side perceives the other as the real cause of conflict. In such an atmosphere, working closely with all stakeholders is not possible, but this is precisely what the dialogue process that the framework seeks to promote is premised on. Indeed, in some cases, dialogue may be perceived as undesirable, if some actors believe that engaging in such negotiation undermines their credibility and effectiveness.

Despite these qualifications, the experience during the communication phase of the project suggests that project findings and methods have a wider appeal. Project outputs will have a lasting impact, both through their use by the project's identified communication stakeholders and target institutions, and their adoption by project partners who continue to play an important role in the

natural resources sector in India. By the end of the project, in-depth consultations had been held with the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department in Harda and Bhopal, and the Ministry of Environment and Forests in Delhi, all of whom had seriously engaged with the project's outputs and the use of the framework in their policy planning and management. In Harda and Bhopal, local civil society actors had also engaged with project findings in this way. The detailed workshop reports in Annex B (B16) provide evidence of this uptake, as do the media reports on project workshops in Harda and Bhopal (in Annex C). Moreover, at village level, a key target group had been exposed to project findings in an innovative way through street theatre, and this had stimulated debate and dialogue amongst the poor themselves about options and alternatives for more effective participatory forest management (see Street Play report in Annex B, B17).

The project has had some significant beneficial side effects, most notably in building capacity amongst the Indian project partners, and in establishing a foundation for networking and collaboration amongst these organisations, which had not cooperated in this manner in any earlier work. There was a real sense of teamwork amongst the project partners, who have all gained a great deal through the interaction during the project period. The project strategy of regular review meetings helped achieve this sense of common purpose. Replication of project methods and processes is highly likely by these research partners, and is likely to have a lasting impact as project partners are important players in the natural resources sector in India.

An important output of the project was the development of methodologies for the understanding of conflict situations. The qualitative research methods used by the research partners, as well as the use of Q-methodology to understand stakeholder perceptions, were important ways in which the analytical framework from R7973 was translated into a useable field research methodology. The uptake and communication process focused on wider dissemination of these methods, at the workshops at various levels, but also in a specially organised Management Development Programme at the Indian Institute for Forest Management in Bhopal. Project partners now have the capacity to deliver such programmes at other locations, and there is a concrete possibility of running a further programme at the Indira Gandhi National Forest Academy in Dehra Dun.

Further dissemination is possible, in forms that were not envisaged as part of the original communication plan. Three specific suggestions in this context have been submitted to NRSP as separate proposals for uptake activity in 2005-6: (i) a professional quality version of the street play performance on video; (ii) a documentary film; and (iii) English and Hindi comics based on project findings (targeted especially at children). These products will be produced as stand-alone project outputs, and will be distributed to a wider audience through project contacts as well as the NRSP network.

8   Publications and other communication materials

8.1   Books and book chapters

[in preparation] Vira, B. (ed.) 2005. *Conflicting Perceptions: Forestry and Development in Central India.* India Research Press, Delhi.

8.2   Journal articles

8.2.1   Peer reviewed and published

None.

8.2.2 Pending publication (in press)

None.

8.2.3 Drafted

[in preparation] Dasgupta, P. and Vira, B. 2005. "Adapting Q-methodology to investigate stakeholder perceptions in participatory forestry in India" to be submitted to *Environment and Development Economics.*

8.3 Institutional Report Series

None

8.4 Symposium, conference and workshop papers and posters

None

8.5 Newsletter articles

[forthcoming] Vira, B. 2005. *Getting to Common Ground.* NRSP Research Highlights, DFID Natural Resources Systems Programme.

8.6 Academic theses

None

8.7 Extension leaflets, brochures, policy briefs and posters

Vira, B. *et al* **2005.** *Joint Forest Management in Harda.* Cambridge-Harda Project Policy Paper 1. 4 pp.

Vira, B. *et al* **2005.** *Rights Issues in the Forest.* Cambridge-Harda Project Policy Paper 2. 4 pp.

Vira, B. *et al* **2005.** *Forests and Livelihoods.* Cambridge-Harda Project Policy Paper 3. 4 pp.

Vira, B. *et al* **2005.** *The Forest Department.* Cambridge-Harda Project Policy Paper 4. 3 pp.

Vira, B. *et al* **2005.** *Other Stakeholders in the Forest Sector.* Cambridge-Harda Project Policy Paper 5. 4 pp.

Vira, B. *et al* **2005.** *Summary of Findings.* Cambridge-Harda Project policy brief. 16 pp.

8.8 Manuals and guidelines

Vira, B. *et al* **2005.** *Field Research Guide.* Internal project document, NRSP Project R8280 (Cambridge-Harda project). 56 pp.

8.9 Media presentations (videos, web sites, TV, radio, interviews etc)

None

8.10 Reports and data records

8.10.1 Project technical reports including project internal workshop papers and proceedings

BGVS. 2005. *Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India: Street Play Report.* Madhya Pradesh Bharat Gyan Vigyan Samiti, Bhopal. 14 pp.

Chaturvedi, R. 2005. *Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India: Communication Workshops – A Report of Proceedings.* Project Report, Cambridge-Harda project. 75 pp.

Chaturvedi, R. and Godbole, G. 2005. *Perceptions of the Madhya Pradesh Forest Department.* Project Report, Cambridge-Harda project. 55 pp.

Dasgupta, P. 2005. *Q-Methodology for Mapping Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management.* Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi. 44 pp.

ELDF. 2005. *Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management: The Law and Policy Context.* Enviro-Legal Defence Firm, Delhi. 117 pp.

Krishnakumar, K N. 2005. *Media (Print) Perception, Coverage and its Agenda-Setting Effect in Relation to JFM Issues, Special Reference to Harda.* Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal. 35 pp.

Shankar, M. 2005. *Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India: Summary of Village Reports.* Sanket Information and Research Agency, Bhopal. 35 pp.

Singh, R K and Sinha, V K. 2005. *Legislators' Perceptions about Participatory Forest Management and their Role: A Case Study of Madhya Pradesh Legislative Assembly*, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Bhopal. 54 pp.

TERI. 2005a. *Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India – A Study on Market-related Actors in Harda.* The Energy and Resources Institute, Delhi. 58 pp.

TERI. 2005b. *Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India: Perceptions of Panchayati Raj Institutions on Joint Forest Management in Harda.* The Energy and Resources Institute, Delhi. 122 pp.

WII. 2005. *Incorporating Stakeholder Perceptions in Participatory Forest Management in India: Perceptions of Sangathans and NGOs.* Winrock International India, Delhi. 116 pp.

8.10.2   Literature reviews
None

8.10.3   Scoping studies
None

8.10.4   Datasets
None

8.10.5   Project web site, and/or other project related web addresses
http://www-harda.geog.cam.ac.uk

9   References cited in the report, sections 1-7

Adams, W., Brockington, D., Dyson, J. and Vira, B. (2003) "Managing Tragedies: Understanding Conflict over Common Pool Resources," *Science*, Volume 302, pp.1915-6.

10   Project's Logical Framework

R8280-SA	PS ref: SA/1.4.1 (f)

Narrative summary	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
Goal			
Strategies for improving the livelihoods of poor people living in semi-arid areas, through improved integrated management of natural resources, under varying tenure regimes, developed and promoted	By 2005, strategies that improve access to, and sustained use of, common pool resources by the poor under the most appropriate tenure and management regimes identified and promoted in at least one target area in target country	Reviews by NRSP management Reports of research team and collaborating /target institutions Appropriate communication materials Local, national and international statistical data	Target beneficiaries adopt and use strategies and/or approaches Enabling and receptive environment exists Budgets and programmes of target institutions are sufficient and well managed
Purpose			
Policy and institutional arrangements for pro-poor participatory forest management in India improved through the validation and promotion of an analytical framework	By March 2005, at least three target institutions have assessed the use of the framework in their policy planning and management. By December 2004, increased knowledge among local communities, key decision-makers and the research community about stakeholder differences over participatory forest management.	Policy documents and plans developed by target institutions. Record of deliberations at communication and dissemination meetings & workshops with target institutions. Project documentation and publications. Internal and external review of project materials. Media reports.	Target institutions receptive to research findings. Conducive policy environment.

Narrative summary	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
Outputs			
1. Enhanced learning about differences in stakeholder perceptions and sources of conflict over participatory forest management in Harda developed using the analytical tools from R7973.	Empirical, background and contextual research completed by March 2004. Findings analysed and disseminated by March 2005. By March 2005, a useful critical mass of stakeholders and target institutions indicate their positive engagement with the research findings.	Research programme reports and process documentation. Workshop reports. Published outputs.	1. International security environment permits air travel to India. 2. Project team able to gain appropriate access to all stakeholders.
2. Strategies to manage conflict discussed and promoted with local target institutions.	From June 2003, process and dialogue for conflict management documented and fed back into the consultative process. By April 2004, meetings and workshops held with key local stakeholders and policy actors to identify priorities for conflict management. By December 2004, at least two local target institutions have considered the knowledge generated for output 1.	Research programme reports. Documentation of meetings and workshops. Published outputs. Media reports.	3. Seasonal and local factors allow field team to complete primary research. 4. Project team is able to engage key policy actors, target institutions and experts in dialogue. 5. Policy environment is receptive to findings and messages from research. 6. State elections in Madhya Pradesh do not disrupt research process at crucial stages in year 2.

Narrative summary	Objectively verifiable indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
Outputs			
3. Improved dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors over participatory forest management strategies, at the local, state and national levels.	By April 2004, meetings and workshops held with key stakeholders and policy actors to identify priorities for participatory forest management. By August 2004, policy-relevant insights generated interactively from stakeholder and target institution dialogue. By December 2004, potential for policy intervention discussed and promoted with target institutions. By March 2005, process of improving policy dialogue documented.	Research programme reports. Documentation of meetings and workshops. Published outputs. Media reports.	
4. Learning about the utility of analytical frameworks and tools as inputs into the policy process and for conflict management over participatory forest management.	Field research guide completed by June 2003. By December 2004, main elements of the application of the framework tool discussed between research team and with key stakeholders. By March 2005, revised manuals and guides completed, and other related promotional material produced.	Field research guide. Research programme reports and documents. Published outputs. Manuals and guides for wider use and replication of methods.	

Narrative summary		Important assumptions
Activities	**Milestones**	
		As above.
1.1 Identification of key stakeholders in Harda forest division.	Project partners meeting in Harda, March-April 2003.	
1.2 Documentation of socio-economic profile of sample villages.	Recruitment of field research team to be based in Harda and project co-ordinator to be based in Bhopal by May 2003. Field team trained and based in Harda by July 2003. Field research period July 2003-March 2004.	
1.3 Documentation of broader context for forest policy initiatives in the district.	Project partners and field team meeting to finalise empirical research process in Delhi, June 2003.	
	Background and contextual research by project partners, April 2003-March 2004.	
1.4 Documentation of perceptions of stakeholders in the context of strategies for forest management.	Primary research by partners with key stakeholders at various levels, June 2003-March 2004.	
1.5 Analysis of empirical material in relation to the framework developed in R7973 to understand sources of conflict.	Progress review meetings between project partners and field team – August 2003, December 2003, March 2004.	
	Workshop to share findings, December 2004.	
	Publication of research findings and documentation of project process (including on the internet) by project-end, March 2005.	

Narrative summary		Important assumptions
Activities	**Milestones**	
2.1 Establishment of contact with key local stakeholders and policy actors.	Initial contact with DFO, Harda Forest Division and Collector, Harda district, March-April 2003.	
2.2 Engagement of target institutions in the research process.	On-going contact between field team and project partners with key local target institutions at village and district levels during research period (July 2003 - March 2004).	
2.3 Identification and promotion of policy options to address stakeholder needs and reduce local-level conflict.	Meetings with forest management committees in sample villages to discuss research findings April 2004. Purposive meetings and workshops with key local target institutions to discuss research findings and identify implications and options for conflict management from April 2004 till December 2004.	
3.1 Establishment of contact with key stakeholders and policy actors at various levels.	Initial contact with key stakeholders and policy actors at local, state and national levels, to appraise them of the research process, March 2003-July 2003.	
3.2 Engagement of target institutions in sharing the learning from the research process.	Identification of learning needs and priorities of target institutions in the context of policy towards participatory forest management through purposive meetings and existing on-going contacts of project partners, July 2003-March 2004.	
3.3 Identification and promotion of opportunities for dialogue between key stakeholders and policy actors.	Sharing of research findings with target institutions, using small, targeted workshops and purposive meetings, in addition to existing on-going contacts of project partners: July 2003-December 2004. Policy workshops at local, state and national levels to promote dialogue between stakeholders and identify policy interventions: April 2004, August 2004, December 2004.	

Narrative summary			Important assumptions
Activities	**Milestones**		
4.1 Empirical testing of framework developed in R7973 against stakeholder perspectives.	Conversion of insights from R7973 into a useable field-based manual for investigating stakeholder perceptions in participatory forest management, April-June 2003. Finalisation of field guide and manual at project partners' meeting, June 2003.		
4.2 Assessment of utility of framework as a tool for understanding and managing conflict.	Utilisation of field guide for empirical research, July 2003-March 2004. Iterative dialogue between field team and project partners to refine methodology and update field guide.		
4.3 Assessment of utility of framework as an input into more effective policy dialogue over participatory forest management.	In March 2004, project products and communication strategy reassessed in light of progress in year 2.		
	Process documentation of team meetings and dialogue with stakeholders and target institutions, on-going July 2003-December 2004.		
4.4 Assessment of needs for other products that could help the promotion and the use of the framework tool and the associated process of stakeholder interaction.	Development of manuals and guides for wider use and replication by project end, March 2005.		
		Pre-condition	Stakeholder conflict over forest and natural resource management strategy; reasons for this not understood or reflected in policy dialogue.

11   Keywords

Madhya Pradesh, India, conflict, forests, rural livelihoods, stakeholder perceptions, dialogue