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Best Practice Guidelines for Consensus Management of Common Pool Resources

Centre for Land Use & Water Resources Research, University of Newcastle

International Center for Living Aquatic Resources Management

Center for Natural Resource Studies

Centre for Economics and Management of Aquatic Resources, University of Portsmouth

Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies

Banchte Shekha

Department of Anthropology, University of Durham

CARITAS

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Best Practice Guidelines for Consensus Management of Common Pool Resources

Peter Dixon, with Julian Barr and Roger Lewins

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1. Community-Based Natural Resources Management

Community-based natural resource management (CB-NRM) is:

> *'a process by which people themselves are provided with the opportunity and responsibility to manage their common pool resources (CPRs), define their needs, goals and aspirations and make decisions affecting their well-being'* (Fellizar 1993).

Reasons for preferring a governance structure with active community involvement are that the extensive knowledge that local people have about the resources they use can assist in designing effective rules for using the resource. Self-imposed rules are likely to be better supported than externally imposed ones.

Common pool resources are natural or man-made resources used simultaneously or sequentially by members of a community or communities. Their joint use entails subtractability (one person's use substracts from another's). There are considerable variations in the type of tenure regime to which common pool resources are subject and also between formal, *de jure* tenurial status and the *de facto* access arrangements that are recognised by resource users.

CB-NRM can assist with ensuring the resource is used sustainably. It can also reduce the costs of resource management, in particular enforcement costs, provided that communities are given incentives to manage responsibly. Government must also ensure that devolution of management responsibilities does not lead to an inequitable distribution of rights to resources at the community level. If these conditions are met CB-NRM then has the potential to make a significant contribution to poor people's livelihoods and environmental sustainability.

Two levels of governance issues can be identified:

- how the external relationships between central government and local communities are structured
- how the internal relationships at community level are structured.

These guidelines deal only with issues of governance at the community level. These community structures should then link with those for devolved NRM determined by government. While these guidelines deal only with governance at community level, a short section on external relationships is however appropriate since they set the frame within which CB-NRM must be set.[1]

[1] A discussion of some competing models for governing relationships between communities and central government can be found in Townsend and Pooley (1995). One approach to the roles different actors should play in floodplain fisheries management is provided by Hoggarth, *et al*. (1999).

Government, communities and the private sector all bring different interests, abilities and perspectives to the resource management process. However, unless government and its agencies accept that authority and responsibility for NRM should and can be devolved to local level then it will either not happen due to lack of support and lack of provision of necessary inputs, or it will lead to conflicting or contradictory policies. Additionally government needs to ensure that social, economic, and environmental policies are integrated.

CB-NRM might be thought of as a step on the road to autonomous-development (a situation where communities manage without government involvement). While some NGOs may be in favour of complete control of resources by local communities, this is unlikely to be tenable or sustainable by reason of scale and systems orientation (communities manage small system that link with other communities and ecosystems) and externalities (such as legal and regulatory policies of government).

> *'User communities managing in isolation would be unlikely to be able to solve problems that originate outside the community…Successful community management requires a support framework of policies, legislation, the judiciary and other functional links with government institutions.'* (Claridge and O'Callaghan 1997)

Devolution has been a popular element of public sector reform, but with devolution of the responsibility for NRM there is a risk of social inequity, inefficiency and the degradation of resources at the local level. The devolution of property rights to communities is not sufficient in itself to ensure the sustainability of resources or social equity in their use. Governments have sought to clarify tenure issues and reinforce the rights of local communities to manage their resources through the granting of legal recognition and decision making authority. Yet this can complicate rather than solve problems associated with the management of CPRs. Rather there is a need to explore new mechanisms for management in which there is a more dynamic relationship between resources users (with the capacities and interest to manage) and the state (with its enabling, regulatory and enforcement functions).

Co-management involves a collaborative partnership with roles being taken by government, communities and other stakeholders as appropriate to the local situation (Figure 2).

Thus, it is better to see CB-NRM as a partnership between communities and government, with consensus-building as a step towards this and the goal of co-management of CPRs. This requires an integrated framework linking sustainable development, social justice and supportive environments, where changes in any one sector should be reviewed for its potential consequences in others (Figure 1).

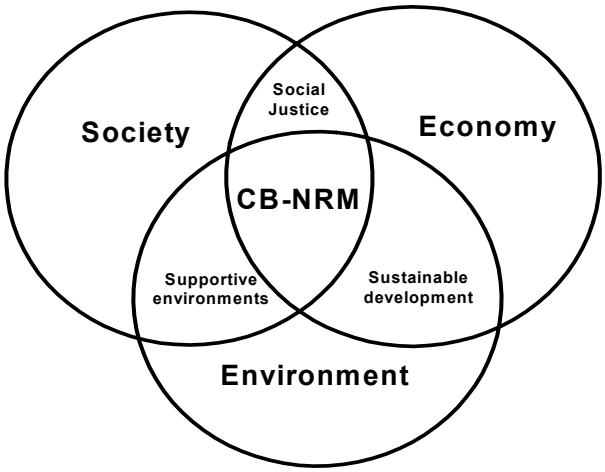


Figure 1. Dimensions of integrated CB-NRM

Co-management addresses issues beyond the community level and involves multiple stakeholders and common pool resources. However there is a broad spectrum of types of management covered by the term (Figure 2), with different arrangements appropriate for different contexts. For example in the context of floodplain fisheries

> *'the social and biological characteristics of the fisheries interact strongly with each other to determine the prospects for effective management.'* In particular *'waterbody morphology, human settlement pattern and fish mobility serve as an important influence on the types of relationship between individuals, communities and government agencies in the fisheries'* (Hoggarth *et al*, 1999).

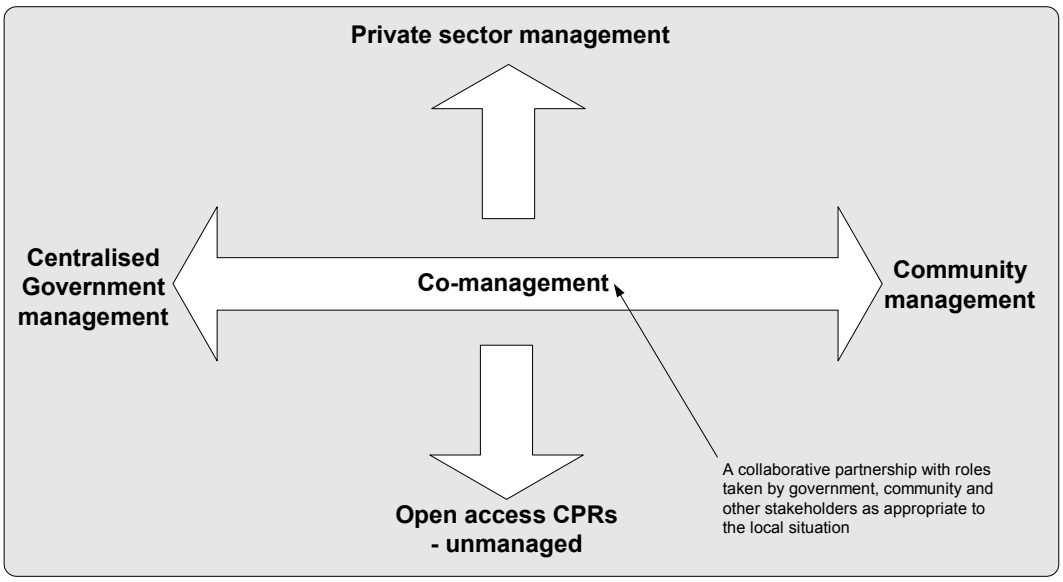


Figure 2. Co-management as a range of partnership arrangements between central government and local communities.

2. Participation by resource users in management

There is a large literature on participation, and a number of modes of participation are recognised, depending on the purpose of participation (empowering or functional) and the relationship between local and external (consultative through to the collegiate). Different modes are appropriate in different contexts, but the costs and benefits to different stakeholders must be taken into account in designing participative management structures. In its use here, participation is underpinned by the concept of social inclusion – the inclusion of all stakeholders in the process of decision-making about natural resources management. Importantly, participation enables the specialist indigenous knowledge of resource users to be accessed - particularly about opportunities and constraints in their livelihoods in the biophysical, socio-economic and institutional domains – and is fundamental to the local management of CPRs. As Carney (1998) notes:

Indigenous knowledge, also referred to as local or traditional knowledge, is the sophisticated understandings, interpretations and meanings that are embedded in communities with extended histories of interaction with the natural milieu.

> *'People aspire to a range of outcomes'*, while participatory poverty assessments *'have taught us that we should listen to those with whom we are working and learn from them about their own objectives, their own understanding of what it means to be in and to escape from poverty (as well as their own beliefs about the root causes of that poverty).'*

Participation also means empowering resource users to take responsibility for the management of these resources in an efficient, environmentally sustainable and socially just way, while supporting them in this endeavour. This means building co-management structures involving partnerships between resource users, government agencies and civil society organisations (NGOs) all of whom have with different roles.

Social benefits of participation in management

- good governance by promoting transparency, accountability, and the representation of a diversity of interests
- empowering, human and social capital building (with potential for reduction in vulnerability)
- supporting sustainable livelihoods and thus assisting in the elimination of poverty

Social justice is the right to equality of opportunity, but not necessarily to equality of outcome, and involves responsibilities to respect the rights of others. In the context of common pool resources, responsibilities include their 'wise use' and avoidance of externalities that infringe the rights of others.

Sustainable development is development that improves the quality of human life while living within the capacity of supporting ecosystems.

Poverty often forces poor people to compromise on environmental sustainability. Integrated development approaches seek to reduce poverty and thereby help people to protect NR for use by future generations.

Environmental and economic benefits of participation in management

- knowledge of local opportunities and constraints to livelihoods
- flexibility to adjust to dynamic situations
- more sustainable use of resources
- efficiency gains and reduction in transaction costs

3. Sustainable livelihoods

Previous goals in the natural resources sector have been concerned with the optimisation of natural capital use and more recently with natural capital conservation. Top-down conservation has not worked well and has alienated many local resource users whose traditional access rights have been restricted. Optimisation of natural resource use can lead to unsustainable practices and does not inherently address the issue of poverty elimination. There is a new consensus that poverty elimination should be the goal of development, and that this is best done through supporting the poor in building sustainable livelihoods. Creating sustainable livelihoods for the poor can be a key to the conservation of scarce natural resources. Participation of the poor in their own development is seen as key to improving livelihoods, reducing their vulnerability to shocks, trends and seasonality, and increasing control over their own lives.

A sustainable livelihood *'comprises the capabilities, assets (both material and social) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base* ' (Carney 1998).

The Sustainable Livelihoods framework (Figure 3) indicates what needs to be taken into account in analysing and addressing poor people's vulnerabilities, lack of capital assets or inability to put them to productive use, and the structures, institutions and processes that influence their ability to transform these assets ('endowments') into livelihoods outcomes ('entitlements') and so reduce their vulnerability. Structures, institutions and processes mediate the whole process of the livelihood transactions which transform 'endowments' into 'entitlements' (Mearns *et al* 1997). By ensuring the representation of all stakeholders in CB-NRM structures, it is possible to identify the differential impact of these mediating process on

different stakeholders. Those structures, institutions and processes that are a constraint to the livelihoods of the poor can be identified and addressed; those that facilitate access to opportunity can be supported.

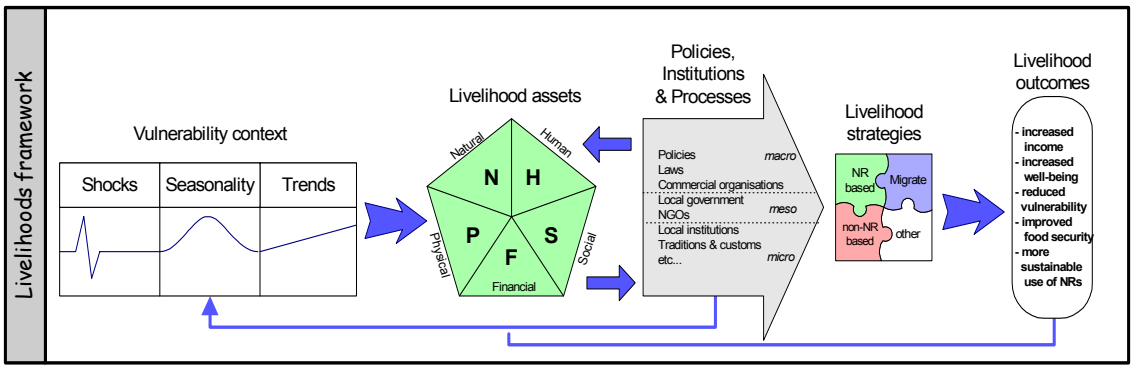


Figure 3 Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

4. Interdependencies between livelihoods

The Sustainable Livelihoods framework indicates the factors to be taken into account in analysing opportunities and constraints within the livelihood of an identified stakeholder group. However, there are a variety of stakeholder groups within any community, the members of which each have their own goals, needs and vulnerabilities. Importantly, natural resource user groups' livelihoods are interdependent. At the community level, local politico-economic and social relations between groups regulate access to and control over resources – and ultimately livelihood outcomes.

Interdependencies.
Complex biophysical, social and economic interdependencies are at play in many NRM problems. Natural resource use can be fragmented between different users both temporally and spatially, with what happens in one place and time having impacts elsewhere at different times and with consequences for livelihoods. Such problems require resource users to collaborate in their solution.

Previous approaches to natural resource development have either focused exclusively on individual stakeholder groups, as in the 'recommendations domain' approach, without considering the impacts of interventions on the livelihoods of others or on different sectors of the environment. These approaches have taken the community as the level for intervention without considering the extent of social diversity in communities or social justice issues amongst group within them. Yet failure to consider the political-economy of local natural resource allocation have resulted in failure to recognise how interventions and benefits intended for the poor may be 'captured' by influential local elites - and with continuing negative impacts for the environment. CB-NRM takes a more holistic approach, identifying targets groups but also recognising

livelihoods' diversity and the interdependencies between them. As such it seeks to create opportunities for the socially disadvantaged while minimising negative impacts on the livelihoods of others and on the environment.

To achieve this, the active participation of stakeholders and supporting agencies is necessary, and should involve a process in which stakeholders:

- recognise change is necessary (i.e. they recognise that there is a complex problem which no one group can solve on its own)
- commit to working together in understanding the dimensions of the problem and addressing them
- accept that compromise may be necessary
- seek positive outcomes for all through transparent and just decision-making and robust management systems.

5. Consensus-building

Thus CB-NRM entails a process in which consensus between the different users of common pool resources (CPRs) is sought in order to improve sustainable livelihoods for all, but with particular gains for the poor. It recognises that, despite different user groups objectives and capacities, it should be possible to identify where there are mutual interests, to develop a shared vision for the future and from these develop an action plan to reach that goal.

A 'platform for resource use negotiation' is a negotiating body (voluntary or statutory), comprising different stakeholders who perceive the same resource management problem, realise their interdependence in solving it, and come together to agree on action strategies for solving the problem' (Röling 1994).

The first step requires identified primary stakeholders to recognise the interdependencies that exist between livelihoods, and to recognise that in certain areas of resource use there are greater benefits than costs to acting collectively to address common problems. This requires a 'platform for resource use negotiation' such as the PAPD methodology that follows.

However, there are many reasons for wishing to undertake consensus building activities within a natural resources management context (Lewins *et al*, 2001). Figure 4 aims to depict the major reasons for undertaking consensus building activities in NRM and CPRM projects, and identify the most appropriate methods for different situations. Figure 4 maps out a whole decision tree for selecting consensus building methods, and as a consequence is quite complex. Figures 5, 6 and 7 reduce the decision tree to three smaller pathways that relate to the three principal reasons for wishing to undertake consensus building activities.

Development agencies may wish to create a consensus in a community so that the community signs up to and agrees with the agency's objectives,

usually for natural resource conservation. For example in order to conserve forest biodiversity, a community agrees not to harvest timber products – this is a functional consensus with resource conserving rather than livelihood improvement objectives. It requires a Model A consensus building method[2] (Figure 5).

Development agencies, including NGOs, may wish to undertake consensus building activities as an element of community-based resource management initiatives. The agencies recognise that community-based management approaches empower the communities, but that some degree of facilitation is required to assist heterogeneous communities to reach agreements over collective action for NRM. Two types of consensus building method are relevant in such situations (Figure 6). In the first situation, there is recognition of the diversity of stakeholders and their interests and motivations. Consensus building aims to understand the positions taken by individuals or groups and to create new and more productive lines of discussion and debate between local stakeholders. However, the consensus building process is designed to improve the impact and effectiveness of ongoing projects or programmes (Model B). It may be either reactive to problems as they arise (a form of trouble-shooting to redirect the project) or may draw on pre-designed and project-specific institutions as "platforms" for negotiation. Although the type of perceived problems may not be pre-empted by the facilitating organisation (as in Model A), the design of consultation processes, the role of local stakeholders, and their subsequent role in the project more generally, is largely dictated by the third party concerned.

In the second situation, development agencies are not searching for discrete solutions to single, identifiable problems. The consensus building methodology (Model C) is primarily concerned with new stakeholder interactions and mutual learning through facilitated discussion. Although collective action might be promoted, it is the reinforcement of social capital that is intended to benefit communities. In this respect, the design and application of this type of consensus building process does not presume identifiable technical constraints to development, and although it can be used effectively with a technical focus (as demonstrated in the R7562/CBFM-2 interaction on CPR management), neither the technical focus nor the outcomes are dictated by the facilitating organisation.

Finally, where consensus building is needed because local resource management has broken down into polar two-party conflict, conflict resolution/conflict management methods are required (Figure 7). Where there are local mechanisms for conflict resolution, these can be supported by projects (Model D). Where such methods are not successful, projects can help resolve conflicts by drawing on alternative dispute resolution methods (ADR) (Lewins *et al*, 2001).

[2] For further details of the consensus building models used in this report, see Lewins *et al*, 2001, Section 6 – A Typology of Consensus Building in NRM.

Figure 4.

Figure 5. Consensus building pathway 1: Functional consensus

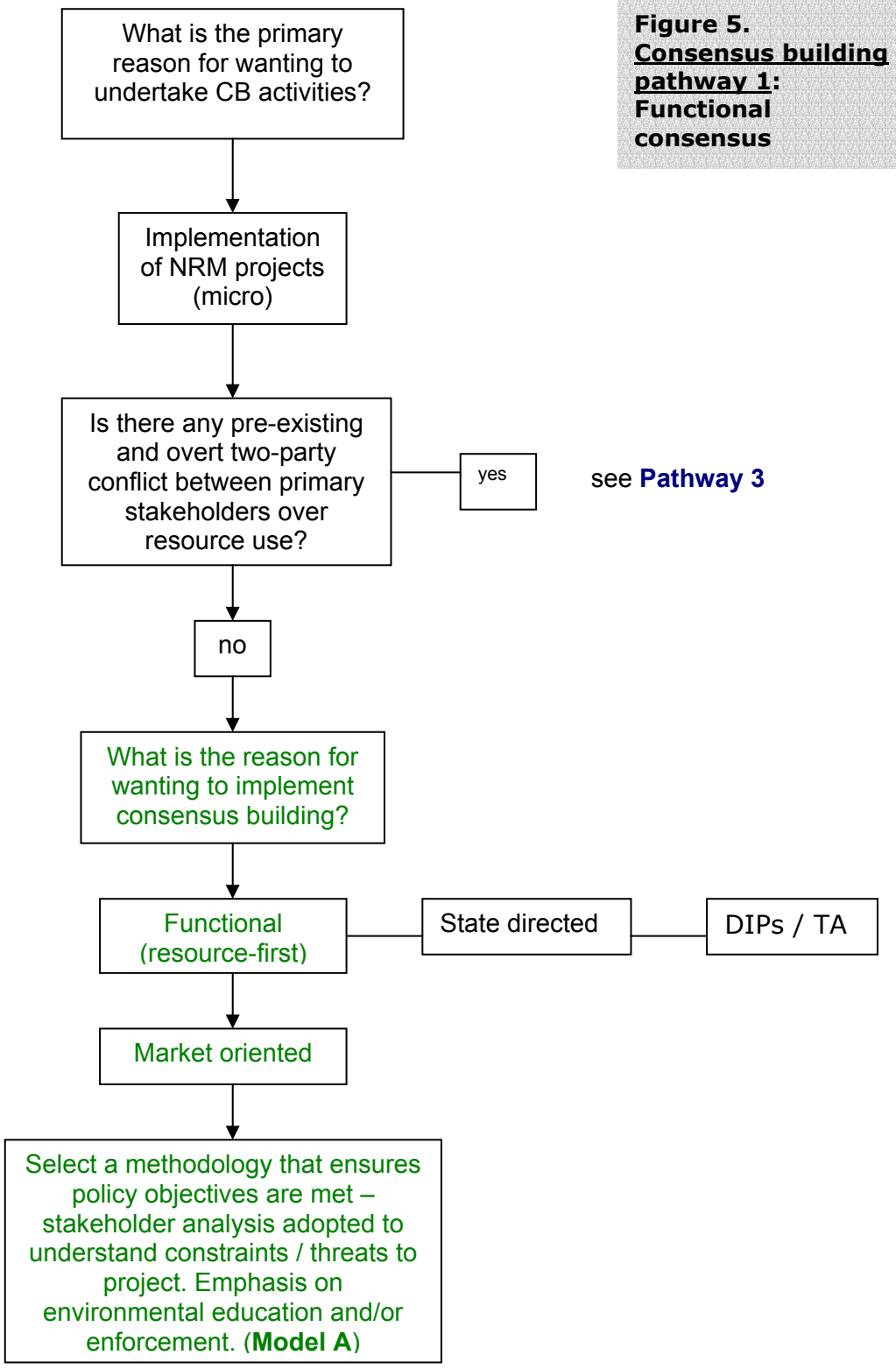
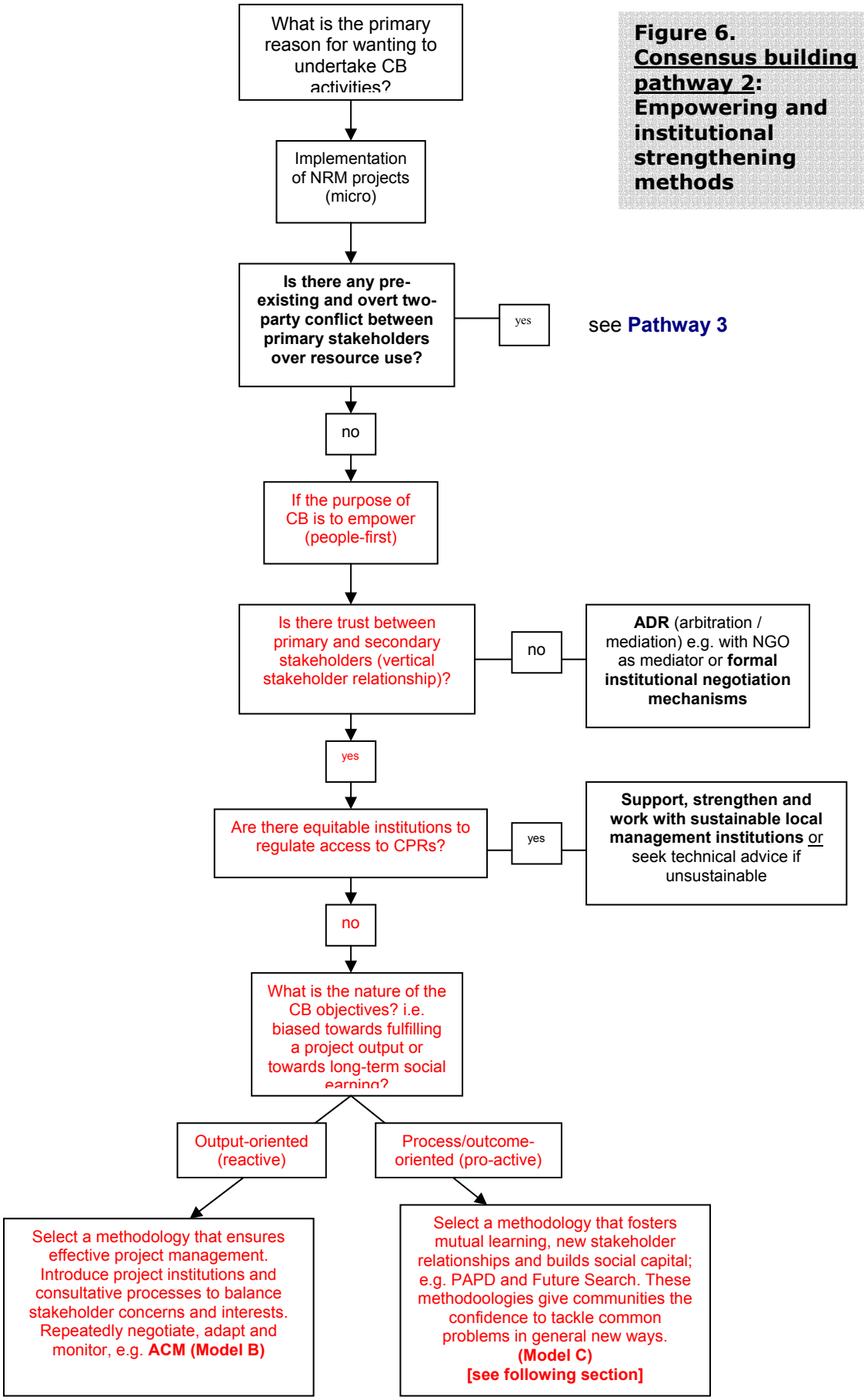


Figure 6. Consensus building pathway 2: Empowering and institutional strengthening methods



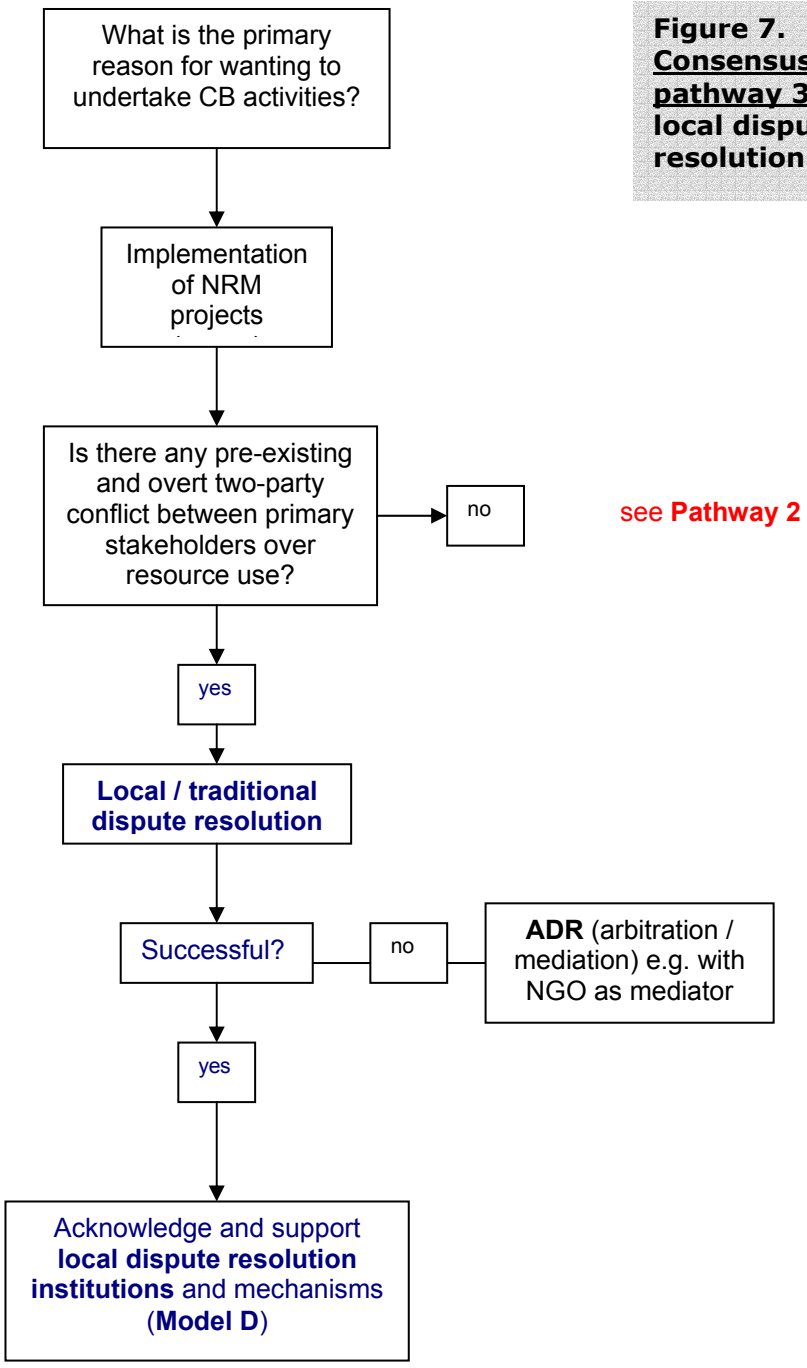


Figure 7. Consensus building pathway 3: local dispute resolution

6. Participatory Action Planning for Development

Participatory Action Plan Development (PAPD)[3] is a methodology that, as used in Bangladesh, seeks to build consensus between the different users of common pool resources to improve NRM for better floodplain livelihoods. It is a 'Model C' consensus building methodology (Figures 4 & 6).

The PAPD process can be represented as a three phase process:

- a pre-workshop 'scoping' phase
- a participatory problem identification and investigation (workshop) phase
- a post-workshop phase

The scoping phase - normally carried out by a development NGO with a NRM remit - consists of an informal situation analysis to gain an overview of the socio-economic and institutional characteristics of the communities in the location, and obtain an appreciation of their systems of natural resource use. Local functionaries and key informants are consulted and their information cross-checked, and NRM systems observed first-hand.[4] The second phase is the PAPD workshops, entailing knowledge generation, empowerment and the building of social capital between participants. The third phase is the post-workshop phase of developing appropriate institutions, building community support for and implementing agreed action plans. These phases, and associated activities, are summarised in Figure 8.

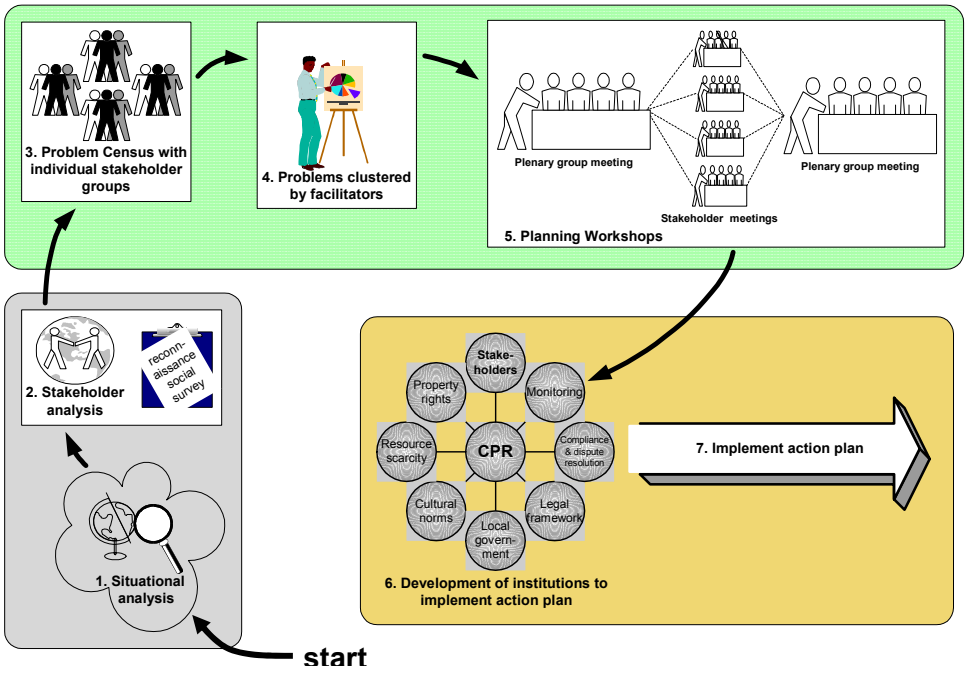


Figure 8. The three phases of the PAPD process with associated seven activities.

[3] Full details and discussion of the PAPD methodology can be found in R7562 FTR Vol. 3.1, and in Barr *et al* 2000)

[4] A flexible guideline produced by CNRS for undertaking a situational analysis is included in FTR Volume 5, Annex 5.

6.1. Identifying and selecting workshop participants

Stakeholder analysis underpins the PAPD methodology (see Barr *et al* 2000). Initially, discussion with key informants identifies the principle locally relevant stakeholders groups. In rural Bangladesh these tend to relate to the main resource use activities. However, socio-economic status and gender are also taken into account to ensure coverage of the livelihood problems of the most disadvantaged groups on the floodplains. A reconnaissance social survey (RSS), which includes questions on locally relevant indicators of socio-economic status as well as land ownership and principal occupation, is then administered to all households and used to categorise them into one of several stakeholder groups. The key assumption is that this process clusters households with broadly similar livelihood strategies.

The concept of social inclusion is central to CB-NRM. Therefore an active approach to meeting design and the recruitment of participants - particularly from marginalized groups - is necessary to ensure full representation of stakeholder groups throughout the process of resource use negotiation. However, where local populations are large, involving all villagers in a single meeting is impractical. Therefore, 15 - 20 households from each stakeholder group are randomly selected to participate in the PAPD process. NGOs must, however, use their own best judgement in determining the number and type of groups to be formed for workshop purposes, while checking the validity of workshop findings more broadly in the community later.

There is also a 'paradox' in participation due to the inverse relationship between people's willingness to express their views frankly and the number and diversity of people participating.

> '*Public and collective events…tend to emphasise the general over the particular (individual, event, situation), tend towards the normative ('what ought to be' rather than 'what is'), and towards a unitary view of interests which underplays difference…These 'rhetorical expressions of integrity of the community' are not to be mistaken for the absence of distinct and perhaps conflicting interests*' Mosse (1994).

The PAPD methodology addresses this paradox of public and private voices through a series of separation and aggregation steps. The separation steps are exercises undertaken by stakeholder groups separately. The aggregation steps are facilitated plenary sessions where all groups are represented (Table 1).

6.2. Facilitation issues

Prior to workshops the facilitation team should be clear as to the goals of CB-NRM and of the PAPD process. Goals can be multiple and include both process- and product-oriented outcomes – for example empowerment and agreement between participants representing different stakeholder groups on ways forward in CPRM. Importantly, facilitators also need to be clear that an overarching goal is poverty elimination and that CB-NRM is one approach

to achieving this. In the context of the PAPD exercise, facilitators also needed to have a grasp of the Sustainable Livelihoods approach within which poverty elimination is set, government's framework for CPRM – particularly in relation to aquatic resources in the Bangladesh context – and the new thinking behind CB-NRM, as well as a high standard of facilitation skills.

Unless the PAPD is being implemented for research purposes, facilitators should be clear that the main purpose of the process is to facilitate social learning by stakeholders from each other, while the generation of information to inform the NGO is a secondary goal. Facilitators need to ensure the methodology is not implemented mechanistically, and takes locally-relevant social factors into account. This also applies to the kind of NRM arrangements emerging from the process. NGOs should use 'best judgement' as to whether to promote new NRM organisations (which may meet resistance) or seek to adapt traditional ones (which may be implicated in constraints to opportunity by the poor).

Lastly, CB-NRM implies responsibilities as well as rights – particularly in seeking social justice and the wise use of CPRs. Facilitators have a responsibility to represent the interests of the wider/global community with regards any planning proposals which emerge from the workshops (e.g. proposals which might affect the sustainability of NRs – for instance, the integrity of wetlands).

6.3. The stages of the process

The workshop phase of PAPD has 6 stages (Table 1)[5].

Table 1. Activities in the PAPD workshop process

Stage	Purpose	Format
i.	Problem census	Individual groups
ii.	Cluster and review group findings	Facilitators only
iii.	Group introduction and Problem census synthesis	Plenary
iv.	System appraisal & feasibility analysis	Individual groups
v.	Compile group findings into summary charts	Facilitators only
vi.	Developing a shared framework of understanding and taking steps to an action plan	Plenary

The duration of the participatory planning phase is dependent on the number of stakeholder groups and the number of facilitators. Typically with six stakeholder groups and enough facilitators to run two stakeholder groups concurrently, this phase lasts up to 10 days.

[5] These stages are discussed in greater detail in R7562 FTR Vol. 3.1

6.3.i. The problem census

This is based on the conviction that resource users can identify constraints to their livelihoods and should be consulted about these prior to technology or policy development. However, problem censuses do not necessarily identify all (or even the main) problems that stakeholders face in their livelihoods. NGOs should therefore not rely on problem census alone, but supplement the information gathered using longer term engagement using anthropological and PRA methods.

The essence of the Problem Census is that stakeholders groups, working in smaller 'buzz' groups, brainstorm and then rank their main livelihood constraints[6]. The main group then reforms and the constraints are collated and re-ranked (Barr *et al*, 2000). In the PAPD use of the Problem Census, a Cause & Effect analysis (problem tree) is developed for the highest priority problems from each group. This is used to stimulate a discussion of possible solutions to these problems, and then the possible solutions are prioritised.

6.3.ii/iii. Cluster and review group findings

The Problem Census produces lists of problems and possible solutions across the different stakeholder groups. Given the heterogeneity of floodplain communities, identifying a single priority problem that all stakeholder groups can agree to address, is not always straightforward. To reduce the large number of key problems to a workable level, facilitators cluster similar problems (or problems with similar causes) into 'problem areas'.[7]

Problem areas are also sorted into NR and non-NR problem areas, with non-NR problem areas being taken out of the process and passed to an appropriate agency for action.[8] Some NR problems are also removed if facilitators consider their solution is unlikely to have positive environmental benefits.

The resulting list of approved NR clustered problem areas is explained to the gathered plenary as part of a larger introduction to the further PAPD workshops. Participants then split into sub-groups of mixed stakeholder constituency and prioritise the problem areas according to a set of defined criteria, for presentation back to plenary:

- *Donor goals*: women, poor & landless people, poverty, sustainability,…
- *Project goals*: e.g. environmental issues, wetlands & fisheries management,….

[6] Throughout the participatory planning phase, ideas are recorded on flip charts and coloured cards, and participants present these back to their groups, vote on ideas on them, or use them as the focus for discussions.

[7] For example, each stakeholder groups may list 10 - 15 priority problems, which multiplied by six groups can potentially lead to 60 - 90 problems to be dealt with. For details on the clustering process see FTR Vol. 3.1.

[8] It is stressed that they are still valid constraints, but fall outside the capability of the facilitating organisation to deal with.

- *Government agendas*: legal aspects, government projects on the topic,…
- *Local concerns*: minimising social conflict, adhering to local customs, community benefits, benefits to own household.

A summary matrix of priority problems identified by the different mixed sub-groups is created. This is the starting point analysis by stakeholder groups (Stage iv).

6.3.iv. System appraisal & feasibility analysis

In Stage iv, separate stakeholder groups undertake two activities on the top priority problems that were agreed at the reconvened plenary (above):

- Appraisal of key actors in the stakeholders' livelihood system
- Analysis of the feasibility of different solutions to the key problems[9]

In the first, participants undertake a stakeholder analysis - identifying all those types of person who influence their livelihoods and including the other stakeholder groups.[10] This starts to draw out the idea of inter-dependencies between floodplain dwellers. Participants then carry out a force-field analysis - indicating the significance of each stakeholder in their livelihood.

In the second activity, analyses of the top priority two or three problems and as many solutions as possible is undertaken. To assess the feasibility of different proposed solutions, a number of simple matrices are compiled by the participants[11].

Starting from a problem tree diagram, a Purpose and Alternative analysis is undertaken to clarify the participants' rationale for suggesting particular interventions, and to explore if there are interventions that may have been overlooked.

Next, participants undertake a STEPS[12] analysis for each proposed intervention. Firstly, political/institutional problems and technical or economic (cost) problems affecting their feasibility and practicability are assessed and listed on a flip chart matrix. The first exercise is particularly germane given the significance of 'transforming structures and processes' in complex CPR problems.

[9] Workshops should not seek solutions to all problems that groups identify, but select a small number of the most important across the groups - and including where possible problems of concern to women and the poorest – and use these to demonstrate and develop analytical and planning skills for NRM among participants. The desire of participants to investigate all problems should be resisted. There is a need particularly to bring out the diversity of perspectives on CPR use and the interdependencies between livelihoods.

[10] Full details of these exercises are to be found in R7562 FTR Vol. 3. 1.

[11] Where participants are illiterate, helpers are provided, and symbols drawings used to represent the main points.

[12] The feasibility of interventions are assessed according to Social, Technical, Economic/Environmental, Political, and Sustainability criteria.

Then each intervention is assessed according to environmental and sustainability factors affecting its feasibility and practicability.

Finally, for all suggested interventions, participants complete a social impact matrix for all stakeholders listed in their earlier stakeholder analysis, and indicate whether they consider the proposed intervention(s) will benefit, negatively affect, have no affect, or the affect is unclear for each stakeholder groups.

These appear simple, even simplistic, outputs. However, taken together these matrices provide a sophisticated and comprehensive analysis of possible interventions. They demonstrate the ability of fishers, farmers and other stakeholders to undertake detailed analysis of actions that may affect their livelihoods.[13]

6.3.v. Compilation of group findings into summative charts

After completion of all the intermediate days with the separate stakeholder groups (Stage iv), there is a set of 3 summative charts for each group: **Alternatives analysis, STEPS analysis, Social impact matrix.**

Each set captures the particular perspective of each stakeholder group. To share these outputs with other participants, the facilitators summate these onto 3 large posters for display at the final plenary (Tables 2 to 4).

Table 2. Poster 1 – Summary alternatives analysis

Intervention	Purpose	Alternative	Proposer

Table 3. Poster 2 – Summary STEPS analysis

Intervention	Political Issue	Technical Issue	Sustainability

Table 4. Poster 3 – Summary social impact matrix

	Impact of Intervention No.					
Stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5	Remarks

[13] R7562 FTR Volumes 4.1 to 4.4 should be examined for examples of complete matrices.

6.3.vi. Developing a shared framework of understanding and taking steps to an action plan

After a restatement of the purpose of the workshop and of the exercises they have undertaken, participants and secondary stakeholders from NGOs and local government are split into 3 mixed groups to review in turn the three poster displays. One or two facilitators are present at each display to explain how the poster was created, bring out key points – differences and similarities between groups' findings - answer questions, and stimulate discussion.

Through the poster observation, all groups become acquainted with the perspectives of other groups, and can compare the solutions and recommendations from other groups with their own. This exercise is fundamental to reaching a shared understanding of the problems. [14]

Thereafter, there is a moderated discussion at which remaining misunderstandings, points of clarification and minor areas of dispute can be raised. However, the major objective is to focus on commonalities and areas of agreement between the groups, and provide a forum at which participants can express how they have broadened their understanding of NRM problems and their impacts on others' livelihoods, and *vice versa*. The focus on commonalities paves the way for a session on developing an action plan for better management of natural resources or at least a 'next steps' plan for taking the process forward.[15]

7. Post-workshop considerations

The consensual identification of a way forward should emerge from this learning process. The next step involves wider consultation throughout the community to ascertain that there is strong support for the proposed actions, and to consult with external agencies as to the technical and legal feasibility of proposed actions, and to clarify their role in the intervention.

The support of a third party (e.g. NGOs, altruistic elites, government agencies) that can mediate between groups and bear a significant portion of the transaction costs involved is important. Without a supportive third party, individual groups may well seek their own solutions which, while they may lead to the emergence of rules for resource use, may well be detrimental to the livelihoods of some groups and to the environment. However, external civil society bodies should look to empower local people to manage their own resources sustainably and equitably, and should look

[14] A detailed diagram of the whole process from disaggregating the community into stakeholder groups through to agreeing to take action is to be found in Barr *et al* (2000).

[15] While developing an action plan is fine in theory, in practice there can be a number of constraints to developing an action plan immediately – for instance workshop participants are not legitimate representatives of anyone and may not be willing to develop an action plan until any proposals are supported more broadly in the community, and appropriate organisations for taking them forward are identified and accepted as legitimate by external bodies and community influentials. Enthusiasm for new stakeholder understandings and the desire for action should not be allowed to rush this part of the process to a false closure point.

to exit at an appropriate point, while government agencies should consider how they can best support communities over the longer term.

The consensus-building process – which develops shared understanding and action plans – needs to link to existing or newly established organisational structures which can implement agreed ways forward in CPR management, and can influence local decision-making. These structures need to be representative of stakeholders, transparent and participative. Adapting existing structures is to be preferred to the creation of new structures if they fulfil these requirements.

Benefits of CB-NRM

- recognition by stakeholders of the diversity of resource users' interests but also of livelihood interdependencies and of sectors where there are common interests and problems
- leveraging of the knowledge and capabilities of different user groups to resolve mutual problems and pursue mutually beneficial opportunities
- empowering through increasing social cohesion and human and social capital
- flexibility to adjust to dynamic situations while minimising negative impacts for livelihoods and thus supporting sustainable livelihoods
- efficiency gains and reduction in transaction costs
- more sustainable and integrated use of resources with benefits for the environment

8. CB-NRM Conclusions

CB-NRM seeks to tap into the altruistic side of human social life, but also recognises that people are motivated by self-interest, particularly when seeking to improve the well-being of themselves and their families. Different stakeholders have different views on collective goods and those who have power and influence may seek to exercise it in their own self-interest and in pursuit of their own perception of that good.

It is important therefore, to consider the benefits and costs to the different stakeholder groups of participation in CB-NRM as well as the transparency and robustness of management systems. It may be that the performance of some services (i.e. transaction costs) can be born by better-off individuals rather than equally with poorer ones for no significant additional economic return (e.g. for reasons of status), or that these costs may be allocated to some individuals in return for a greater share of the benefits. What benefit distribution pertains is something that stakeholders, with support from agencies, have to decide in relation to the local context.

As a socially inclusive process, CB-NRM does not adopt an exclusive focus on poverty elimination. However, it can provide useful support to poorer people and has a role in a pluralistic institutional development process. Additionally it may form a useful platform for development efforts targeted more specifically on the poor, while generating greater social cohesion at the community level.

CB-NRM is an externally driven process – part of public sector reform, supported by the international donor community and a developing in-country civil society. There are opportunities here for greater primary stakeholder empowerment, and gains for them through greater development relevance, and democracy, as well as the possibility of more effective partnerships with civil society bodies. But there are also threats – in particular as to who may actually benefit from devolution and the extent to which the state may actually cede control, while local level government agencies may still pursue their own agendas.

The challenge is therefore to achieve good governance, accountability, knowledge generation (i.e. lesson-learning), clarity in stakeholder group relations and in the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in the management process –that is addressing the two levels of governance previously identified:

- external relationships between central government and local communities
- the internal relationships at community level.

Acronyms

ACM	Alternative conflict management
ADR	Alternative dispute resolution
CB-NRM	Community-based natural resource management
CPRs	Common pool resources
CPRM	Common pool resource management
DIPs	Deliberative and inclusive processes (for environmental planning)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NR	natural resource
NRM	Natural resource management
PAPD	Participatory action planning and development
PRA	Participatory rural appraisal
RSS	Reconnaissance social survey
STEPS	Social, technical, economic/ecological, political and sustainable

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