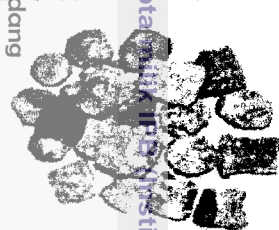# Multipurpose Forestry

Proceedings

Managing and Enhancing Ecosystem Services and Production Functions of Forests, Woodlands and Trees Outside Forests

2nd International Symposium - GAForN
9 - 13 November, 2009

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Communication Schemes to Enhance Awareness on Community Forestry in Indonesia

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Abstract

There is no doubt that the concept of community forestry has been widely accepted by foresters worldwide as one of the best alternative for multi-purpose forest management. However, in many cases community forestry gained less attention from both society and decision makers. One reason for this situation is that most discussion on community forestry focused mainly on technical aspects, and paid little attention to the means for communication. A new paradigm of community forestry should be defined by paying more attention to improve public communication effectively. Direct communication through dialogues or indirect communication through media could be very important tools in directing opinion of the society as well as influencing policy-making process. The communication schemes, directly or indirectly, should refer to the ongoing process by which people learn attitudes, values and behaviours consistent with their social setting. As sources of public information, each communication scheme must have a specific target. One scheme perhaps has particular target to influence international lobby groups as well as global society to support community forestry programme, while another scheme probably concerns to address local problems of community forestry practices. A well-planned communication scheme will help to determine people's attitude, to increase public awareness, and to ensure achievements of community forestry programme. Therefore, formulating proper schemes for communication is a must to promote community forestry. This paper will discuss the role of various communication schemes to promote community forestry and formulate strategic communication schemes to enhance public awareness towards community forestry, especially in Indonesia.

Keywords : community forestry, communication schemes, policy making, public awareness

Introduction

There are various terminologies related to community forestry in Indonesia, i.e. Pembangunan Masyarakat Desa Hutan or PMDH (forest village community development), Hutan Kemasyarakatan or HKm (community forest), Perhutanan Sosial or social forestry (Kartasubrata et al., 1995). Community forestry could be defined as the science and art of growing trees and/or other vegetation on all available land, in and outside forest areas and managing the existing forest with intimate involvement of the people and integrated into other operations, resulting in balanced and complementary land use with a view to provide a wide range of goods and services to the individuals as well as to the society. This definition refers to the term of social forestry given by Tiwari (1983).

In general, the long-term objectives of the community forestry are: successful development of degraded lands, active participation of local communities in forest development, increase prosperity of local communities, conserving the quality of environment and resources to meet the needs of people, and relieve pressure on forest resources (Perhutani, 1988). In the community forestry program, the poor people are targeted as project beneficiaries because they are often the agent of land and forest degradation and deforestation. It is assumed that forest conservation and management can be improved to the extent that the standard of living of the poor is raised through it. There are two central objectives that should be met to raise the standard of living of the poor through community forestry. First, community forestry should involve the poorest of the poor as participants. Second, community forestry projects should provide adequate income support to project participants (Sunderlin, 1997 in Nurrochmat, 1999).

Although it has been widely accepted that community forestry is one of the most important ways to manage forest resources sustainably, however, in many cases community forestry likely only gained less attention from both society and decision makers. One reason for this situation is that most discussion on community forestry focused mainly on technical aspects, but paid little mean for communication. It is reasonable because communication is one of the most important policy instruments besides administration, fiscal, and regulation (Krott, 2005).

Communication plays an important role in directing opinion of the society as well as influencing policy-making process. Therefore, communication could also be used as a key socialization method to succeed certain programs such as community forestry. Specifically, socialization refers to the ongoing process by

which people learn attitudes, values, and behaviors consistent with their social setting (Palmer, 2004). A proper communication scheme is considered to address any problems and to formulate solutions in a society. It implies that people's actions and attitudes are largely shaped and influenced by the communication scheme.

A new paradigm of community forestry should be defined by paying more attention to improve public communication effectively. In today's complex and rapidly changing environment it seems evident that no single discipline alone can give all the solutions for community forestry's problems as how to cope with that environment. Combinations of different disciplines are needed. This study examines the importance of proper communication schemes to enhance awareness on community forestry in Indonesia.

Low Public Awareness on Community Forestry

In Indonesia, Community Forestry received much less attention from both government and public compared to the other forestry issues. Although almost all respondents at the international, national and local institutions stated that community forestry is very important as one of the promising system in managing forest management, however, most of them hold that community forestry has lower public awareness rather than other forestry related issues in Indonesia (Table 1).

At the international level, respondents from four institutions, i.e. CIFOR, SEAMEO-BIOTROP, ASEAN Secretariat, and AKECOP Indonesia were interviewed. Most of them though that illegal logging received the most public concerns in Indonesian context. Besides it, forest fire, flood, forestland encroachment, and forestland rehabilitation were also appointed as the other important public issues related to the recent Indonesian forestry. Although they hold that community forestry is also an important issue, however, actually it could be not categorized as a major public concern in the present situation of Indonesian forestry. Consequently, as any other minor issues, community forestry received less public awareness.

The respondents at the national institutions, i.e. national university (IPB), national forest enterprises, and national NGO (LATIN), also hold similar opinion about public awareness on several forest related issues. Major respondents stated that there are two most important forestry-related issues, which received great public attention in Indonesia, i.e. illegal logging and flood. Forest fire laid in the further list to be aware by major people in Indonesia, followed by forestland encroachment, forestland rehabilitation, and

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other minor issues such as community forestry.

On the local context, the important issues related to forestry vary from place to place, according to the local specifics. However, generally, flood got the highest level of public awareness at the local situation. To understand public perceptions at the local level, 24 respondents have been interviewed in seven provinces, i.e. Riau, Bangka-Belitung, West Java, D.I. Yogyakarta, East Kalimantan, Bali, and North Sulawesi. Majority of respondents said that flood is the most important concerns in their region, followed by illegal logging, forest fire, forestland encroachment, and forestland rehabilitation. Parallel with public perception at the national and province level, community forestry is seen only as a minor issues in general society and therefore, received much less awareness rather than other issues such as flood, illegal logging, and forest fire.

Those above illustrations appointed the contradictory situations. On one hand, usually people agreed that community forestry contains some promising elements that offering a much fairer and better alternative system for the future forest management. On the other hand, most people hold that community forestry is less important priority compared to the other forestry issues. The most important task, therefore, is to formulate proper communication schemes to improve public awareness on community forestry. In order to increase public awareness effectively, the communication strategy on community forestry should be focused on the two aspects: first, to build image to enhance priority on Community Forestry; and second, to improve practices of community forestry.

Table 1. Public Awareness Concerning Forestry Related Issues in Various Institutions.

Forestry related issues	International		National		Local	
	Score	Rank	Score	Rank	Score	Rank
Forest fire	2.25	2	2.50	3	2.79	3
Illegal logging	1.00	1	2.00	1-2	2.58	2
Flood	3.25	3	2.00	1-2	2.04	1
Forestland encroachment	3.75	4	4.25	4	3.75	4
Forestland rehabilitation	4.75	5	4.50	5	4.88	5
Other issues, incl. Com. Forestry	6.00	6	5.75	6	5.04	6

Source: Primary data (2009), n=28 respondents

Building Image to Enhance Priority on Community Forestry

It is important to note that the low level of awareness on community forestry does not reflect for unimportant means of community forestry. Public usually give more attention to the certain issues that directly relate to their own-interests or to those that had a higher emergency level. Due to those reasons, however, it is not surprising that certain issues such as flood, illegal logging, and forest fire commonly received a high awareness from society. The only argument is because those issues directly relate to the public interests and containing high risks. Consequently, they had a high priority and therefore, would get a great public awareness.

Table 2. The role of community forestry to address flood, illegal logging, and forest fire.

High Priority concerns	Role of community forestry		
	Rationale	Preventing Instrument	Problem Solving Instrument
Flood	Flood occurs among other caused by deforestation and forest degradation.	By implementing Community Forestry, local community would be more responsible to manage their forests and consequently could reduce deforestation and forest degradation.	Community Forestry would be involved in the participatory planting schemes and forest rehabilitation programs.
Illegal logging	Illegal logging is a complex social phenomenon, which closely related to the improper and unfair forest management system.	Community forestry will prevent illegal logging activities, particularly which is practiced by large - capital actors.	Community member group could actively participate in supporting actions to combat illegal logging in remote areas.
Forest Fire	Forest fire is mostly triggered by human activities.	Community member groups will p revent fire within and around their community forests.	Community member groups could be involved to any actions against fires within and around their community forests.

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Accordingly, a discussion on community forestry should pay more mean for communication. One of the promising ways to improve public communication is building image to enhace priority on community forestry, which could be done among other by giving more information that community forestry is one of the most promising ways to address several high priority problems such as flood, illegal logging, and forest fire (Table 2).

Table 2 shows that community forestry plays important role both in preventing and solving the most popular problems related to forestry, i.e. flood, illegal logging, and forest fire. By improving public knowledge, more people will understand the roles of community forestry to be one of the promising problem's solutions and of the preventing ways for some risks of forestry-related activity. The more people understood the role of community forestry, therefore, the public awareness towards community forestry would also increase.

Improving Performance of Community Forestry

Improving performance of community forestry is another important communication strategy to increase its public awareness. Since major parts of rural community are believing on the factual experiences their have seen rather than hearing normative arguments, direct communication through dialogues or indirect communication through media about factual benefits of community forestry could be very important tools in directing opinion of the society as well as influencing policy-making process. Therefore, any communication schemes, directly or indirectly, should refer to the ongoing process by which people learn attitudes, values, and behaviours consistent with their social setting.

As sources of public information, each communication scheme must have a specific target. One scheme perhaps has particular target to influence international lobby groups as well as global society to support community forestry programme, while another scheme probably concerns to address local problems of community forestry practices. This paper, however, only focused on discussing the communication schemes on community forestry while considering local specifics. An adaptive local specific's communication scheme will help to determine people attitude, to increase public awareness, and to ensure the community forestry programme's achievements.

Therefore, considering local specifics for communication is a must to enhance public awareness of community forestry.

(i) Increasing Time Expenditure for Community Forestry

One of the most important socio-economic aspects shall be considered is the portion of income from community forestry contributing to the total income of participants. It is important to note that usually its contribution differs greatly among locations, depends on cropping technique, weather conditions, size and quality of the community forestlands and market price of the products. Besides those factors, time expenditure of participants for community forestry also influences the income contribution. Nurrochmat (1999) reported the level of participation could be caused by a difference of behavior of the participants - in the most cases the participants of community forestry are farmers. Prosperous farmers usually have a farmer's behavior. Poor farmers, however, have a behavior much closer to laborers than to farmers because of landlessness. Poor farmers tend to divide their time and energy for a multitude of income sources, inside and outside the agricultural sector. This forces them to look for work outside the village and consequently the poor do not have time to work on their community forestlands.

(ii) Promoting High Educated Motivators to Lead Community Forestry Member Groups

To implement community forestry effectively, special care must be taken in maintaining a bias to the poor section of the community. The poor people should be encouraged to participate in the community forestry program and to look for a fair distribution of community forestry allotments. Intensive extension should be given to improve the motivation of poor people.

Besides problem of bias allocation for community forestlands, in some cases of community forestry practices, particularly when agroforestry is applied, a diminishing income from community forestry is recognized. Income of community forestry participant tends to decrease due to several factors. First, there is shading by the canopy of forest trees after several years of planting. A shading problem is rarely found in certain agroforestry system that allocates space for crops with a relatively longer distance between forest stands. Second, generally community forestry participants have only the means to seriously manage their community forestlands as long as they still get subsidies from government or other parties. When the subsidies have been over, they loss their motivation resulting for decreasing quantity of community forestry yields. This also explains the reluctance of community forestry participants to invest, in terms of financial inputs and energy, in their community forests. It could be said that a lack of motivation is the most significant argument for the diminishing income of community forestry participants.

Accordingly, it is extremely important to strengthen motivation of community forestry participants. Nurrochmat (1999) reported that the presence of a highly educated motivator influenced significantly to the success stories of many community forestry programs. Highly educated persons, such as teachers, were synonymous with higher social status and a closer relationship to both the village leaders and forestry officials. In effect, high education person tends to be chosen as a leader in the community forestry member group. As leader, the teachers could motivate and explain their knowledge to all members effectively, because besides they had high education background, they are also real farmers, who give an explanation not only theoretically but also demonstrates using facts in the field.

(iii) Improving Community Forestry Management Plan

Most community forestry participants are traditional farmers. As is common for traditional farmers, a main orientation would be a high volume of yields without seriously considering the net benefits, both in terms of money and non-money. Serious attention should be paid to improve knowledge of community forestry participants because in many cases, they focused only on production aspect while ignoring economic efficiency and ecological aspects. A better communication scheme is required to enhance integrative knowledge of the community forestry participants in order to achieve sustainable forest management.

Such commonly found in the modern marketing theory, product planning is also the first important factor in improving community forestry management. A planting and harvesting plan should be involved in the whole community forestry management plan by considering both value of products and suitability of forestlands. A community forestry management plan should be evaluated periodically to ensure the suitability of the existing management plan to the changing environment.

Pricing is a further important factor to be communicated in community forestry product's management. Because of low market share, the community forestry products usually tend to be categorized as price takers. It is important to note that only community forestry products with a price maker's characteristics enable price increase. By a better communication scheme, increasing price of community forestry products may be done as long as the raising their market share. The other pivotal factors of community forestry product's management are distribution and promotion. Distribution shall consider the optimal role of the each actor in the distribution channel of the community forestry products. The most effective promotion of community forestry products is usually

Concluding Remarks and Policy Recommendation

Although community forestry has been widely accepted by forester worldwide as one of the best alternative for multi-purpose forest management, however, in many cases community forestry likely only gained less public awareness. This situation occurs because most discussion on community forestry focused mainly on technical aspects, but paid little mean for communication. Accordingly, community forestry could be successfully implemented and received a better public awareness by paying more attention to improve public communication effectively.

Considering the problem of low public awareness towards community forestry in Indonesia, it strongly recommends to make efforts by promoting two kinds of scheme, i.e. first, building image to enhance priority on community forestry; and second, improving practices of community forestry.

Building image is very important to enhance public awareness on community forestry, which could be done among other by implementing communication scheme to intensively promote community forestry as one of the most promising ways to address some high priority level of forestry-related problems such as flood, illegal logging, and forest fire.

Besides building image, the much more important is improving practices of community forestry because most people will be more believing on facts rather than words. Community forestry will gain a higher awareness from the society, if and only if, it could meet the common interests. In achieving a better awareness of community forestry and in order to improve implementation of community forestry, any communication schemes should consider the following situations:

First, to develop a progressive community forestry member group, more assistance is needed from formal and informal village leaders. Village teachers can be useful as a go-between community forestry participants and forestry officials to lessen the top-down approach. Moreover, a village teacher also can be a good leader for community forestry member group and a good motivator for the poor, since community forestry participants usually spend less time for working in their community forests.

Second, the role of forestry officials may include sharing information about integrative community forestry management, involved communicating a planting plan, product pricing, distribution, as well as establishing forward linkage with processing companies to obtain a more reasonable price. Consequently, a much better performance of community forestry would be able to enhance its public awareness.

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