

1-27-03
WORKSHOP IN POLITICAL THEORY
AND POLICY ANALYSIS
513 NORTH PARK
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA 47405-3186

Decentralizing the Forests, Trees and People Program

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Presented at the Institutional Analysis and Development Mini-Conference and
TransCoop Meeting, Humboldt University/Indiana University,
December 13th, 14th, and 16th, 2002, Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis,
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, U S A



Decentralizing the Forests, Trees and People Program

By Marilyn W. Hoskins, November 02

Presented to a Mini-Conference at the Workshop

Observations

This paper is an about decentralizing a community forestry program. The program was centralized but focused on understanding and fostering participatory forestry and it changed to one that was itself managed in a participatory way. A number of donors funded this program, which was coordinated by a special unit in the Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Several of the following characteristics gave this program its specific character:

It created no new institutions but instead worked through existing institutions with compatible goals to those of community forestry and which contributed from their resources to join the program. It, therefore, did not disrupt ongoing activities or develop infrastructure or positions for professionals that would be unsustainable. This factor contributed to it being demand rather than supply driven.

Facilitators, or FTTP focal people within those institutions, were dedicated to this approach so that the whole working team had a relatively homogenous set of goals. Because they designed the activities and handled the funding, they took over "ownership" of the program and built strong commitment and social capital.

The program was based on the philosophy of shared power and availability of information. Decentralization included local planning and financial management and power was shared both vertically and horizontally. Information about the entire program and the budget was transparent and available to all decision makers.

Ideas and thematic information came from and to local communities and differing levels to global networks. Ideas that came from outside the region stimulated new thinking in the local context and visa versa. Networks shared information both horizontally and vertically and these ideas sometimes influenced policy and sometimes changed the way field activities were implemented.

Recurrent and annual meetings of the same facilitators with FAO and donor representatives had a learning ambiance. The program was considered experimental and flexible, new ideas were welcomed and creativity encouraged. Unsuccessful activities could be freely discussed with ways to move on as the focus rather than assigning blame. A great deal of trust was built and a great deal of social capital was created.

These characteristics gave the program an unusual set of approaches and accounted for the impacts that it made.

I. The Context and Preliminary Steps for FTTP

A. The Problem

Even before the 1970s, global concern was being expressed in books, newspaper articles and large international meetings over deforestation and desertification. The general belief was that local people, especially the poor, were key in causing these problems because of inappropriate farming slash and burn techniques, overstocking pastures, an insatiable need for fuelwood and a general ignorance of the importance of the environment. Huge areas of forestland had been nationalized during the colonial era and this nationalization had later continued and expanded under national governments, partly in an effort to preserve the resource. However, forest services were small and under funded and appeared unable to protect the forests. Predictions were made that all of Africa, as well as many other regions of the world, would turn irreversibly into desert, unless planting was started on an unprecedented scale.

Host countries, especially in Africa, welcomed the introduction of large internationally funded projects to plant greenbelts in order to stop the desert and plantations for fuel or timber. Their motives were perhaps a mix of concern over the environment and the economic importance of trees to forest services, national treasuries and personal wealth. In project documents sometimes the motive included helping the poor by increasing the supply and thereby lowering the price of wood fuel and charcoal.

However, none of these activities were especially successful. In many places the technology was inadequate as the wrong trees were planted at the wrong sites. In 1977 The World Bank forestry policy paper said that their projects had not done well and that new approaches were needed. They identified a mix of problems and gave examples such as fences being cut to allow the animals to graze on the young plants. But the example did assign some blame on The Bank project design, pointing out that it had not considered or respected the traditional animal routes when locating the plantations. The policy paper indicated that technical solutions were not enough.

During the early 1980's some NGOs (not for profit organizations such as CARE and church groups such as Lutheran World Relief), as well as other donors, were carrying out activities of educating local people about the importance of trees. They also funded local projects of planting fodder trees, windbreaks, live hedges, woodlots and introducing wood saving stoves. Their goals were not only to limit the damage rural people created in the national forests and plantations, but also to improve rural livelihoods. Some of these activities had a very positive benefit for the locality. Others, however, used poor technology or were based on naive understandings of the local context.

It was, for instance, not at all clear that local people lacked concern about their environment and needed educational programs to understand the role of trees. In a 1977 workshop on women's agricultural issues in Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), women showed a great deal of knowledge in their discussion of the impacts of forestry projects on their families.

Voltaic Women Discuss Trees and Forestry Projects

In an emotional exchange relating to forestry and to problems with their agriculture, Voltaic women declared that forestry projects did not help them, but instead were detrimental to their livelihoods. Plantations were located on land that looked deserted to outsiders but in fact was fallow land in their farming systems. Farming could not continue if land were not allowed to rest and rebuild its "strength." This resting land was the area outsiders identified as "useless bush" to be taken for plantations. As soon as the land was identified for forestry, local people no longer had access to the succession of plants and animals that they traditionally harvested from different aged fallow. Furthermore, the forest service diminished their income by established state subsidized fuelwood and charcoal, which undermined local ability to sell their own surplus wood from land clearing or from coppicing trees. The poor did not buy wood and certainly not charcoal, but they had been in the business of selling it in urban areas, a market which forestry projects undercut.

The women also complained that the one main species used in these plantations did not address local needs for different qualities of wood, of wood structures or formation and of tree products. They pointed out that it takes a different tree to provide wood for a mortar than for a pestle, a specific growth pattern to make a "Y" shape with the strength to hold the floors of granaries, and a range of trees and shrubs to provide the fruit or other products they used for food and medicines and pods for such things as tannin for curing leather. The trees being planted for fuel were not even preferred for fuel as they had a strong odor and gave a menthol taste to the type of food they cooked. They would be good for building poles if not harvested until they were the right size the women said, but that was not the management plan. The women knew that the leaves of this exotic tree could be boiled to treat symptoms of a cold but remarked that it would not take many trees to cure all colds in the village area.

B. The Evolving FAO/Sida Community Forestry Program

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and The Swedish International Development Authority (Sida) started working with a number of Heads of Forestry from host countries in the mid 1970s to explore forestry from different

perspectives. They were not trying to change all forestry but to develop new parallel activities which would improve the lives of women and men who depend on trees for their farming systems, their products for household use and their incomes. This group carried out field visits, had workshops to discuss issues and spent several years identifying what types of forestry activities were being carried out in different parts of the world and how these related to local people. They produced a document called "Forestry For Local Community Development" analyzing the lessons they had learned and illustrating different types of activities that could improve rural livelihoods and the role local people (farmers, forest dwellers, herders, the landless) played in managing and receiving benefits from trees. This they called community forestry.

In 1979 a program entitled Forestry for Local Community Development (FLCD) was formalized between Sida and FAO. It continued until 1986. Its first thrust continued to be on creating awareness of the need for participatory forestry activities and assembling information about experience and requirements. A second phase of FLCD concentrated its field activities in a more limited number of countries that showed promise of developing sustainable participatory activities. It concentrated its conceptual activities on creating tools, methods and approaches for activity implementation. The FLCD program was designed to be a learning process and the role of the group of interested host country policy level foresters, who had been active in the preliminary phase, became formalized as an advisory body. They followed the FLCD activities in their own and other countries and gave advice to Sida and FAO for future directions through an Expert Consultation. In 1986 this group advised Sida that the first FLCD phases had been successful and were complete. They recommended Sida and FAO have a new program entitled the Forests, Trees and People Program (FTPP).

An initial phase of FTPP ran between 1987 and 1989. It had a two-pronged approach. The first was to deepen understanding of a number of critical issues and topics that had been identified during FLCD as important to community forestry success. The second prong was field projects in eight countries that formed a platform for participatory action research and testing different project implementation approaches and tools. Shortly into this phase it was seen that the goals of understanding issues and developing participatory tools for community forestry could not be done effectively by project managers who were mostly young foresters not trained in or committed to participatory approaches. It was unreasonable to expect these foresters to have community forestry goals when their reward system was not focused that way.

The Expert Consultation, which also included the field foresters who had been managing the eight projects, recommended that this program continue the search for understanding issues involved in community forestry but that it withdraw from the project mode. The Consultation identified the greatest weakness the project managers had faced was not having in-country support. There was no institutional capability to study issues, develop participatory tools appropriate for specific localities and to train multidisciplinary teams to design,

implement and backstop studies and field activities. It was also important that local institutions capable of carrying out these tasks would be able to work with local foresters, with farmer's groups as well as with policy makers who could help change the legal situation and the reward systems to local people as well as foresters for community forestry approaches. The expert consultation recommended that the program be expanded and that more donors be invited to participate. Six donors became involved in one way or another.

The rest of this paper looks at this second stage of FPHP, which was developed during 1989 and 1990 and continued for more than ten years.

But first it is important to remember how much the situation of community forestry changed during the timeline in which FPHP worked; how community forestry was understood even after the first 10 years of global efforts to share information and expand the understanding of community forestry. The following took place in 1990, in Bolivia, a country that did not participate directly in the FLCD and the earlier phase of FPHP.

Community Forestry in Bolivia in 1990

The first time we went to Bolivia to identify institutions and facilitators for FPHP, I was told by the Head of Forestry that Bolivia had lots of community forestry. Foresters went to villages and had people select choice land next to the village. Foresters brought trees and told the people how to plant them. The forest service took the first two rotations and then the trees belonged to the community. I asked, and he responded that a rotation was 20 years. When I asked if that meant that for 60 years the people had nothing coming from their choice land he looked surprised and said I did not understand, after that time the trees would belong to the village.

Several years after FPHP began the facilitator was asked by the Head of Forestry to do training of the field foresters in community forestry approaches, for which the forest service provided funding. This was beyond the university curriculum FPHP developed and integrated into the training of all new foresters in Bolivia. Things have changed and FPHP was part of what made things change. Curriculum and training materials and workshops on their use have been established in all regions. With changes in training in skills of working with communities, learning from community members the local use of trees before selecting species for nurseries, the role of gender analysis to designing activities which reach the appropriate family member, the importance of forestry to food security, ways communities organize to manage forests, etc. foresters have changed their understanding of the complexities of community forestry and their methods of working in all regions. Some of the early students have now reached the policy decision level and more changes can be expected.

II. Goals of FPHP

The search for participatory approaches to strengthen forestry as a resource for rural development was not new to FPHP; it had been the theme of the program from the beginning. However, until this second phase of FPHP the management of the program itself was not participatory; it had not been decentralized. Now the FPHP focused on how to work with and through local institutions to carry out the objectives. It was understood that community forestry would be more sustainable where it had the support of capable in-country and regional institutions. The audience for this program would continue to include forest policy makers and field foresters but would concentrate on reaching these audiences as well as rural people's organizations and institutions through existing national or regional level institutions with FAO playing only a supportive role.' The FPHP was now designed to reach a number of countries in four regions, East Africa, West Africa, Latin America (both Central and South American groups) and Asia. Different donors funded each region and certain global activities organized by the FAO office in Rome.

There were four immediate objectives of the FPHP II. They were:

- Deepened knowledge and more effective strategies and tools for sustained participation of rural people in forestry.
- Strengthened human and institutional ability to: more fully assess local forestry issues; adapt community forestry methods and tools to specific conditions; and, provide sustained support for people's participation in forestry efforts;
- More effective participatory approaches in ongoing community forestry activities as a result of technical assistance to field efforts applying the approaches, methods and tools developed under Objective 1;
- Expanded knowledge about participatory forestry approaches and experiences through networking, information dissemination and improved communications.

These objectives were not listed in order of importance and were sometimes represented as a diamond to illustrate that each objective was interdependent on the others. Tools were not useful unless they were used by national institutions, increased participation in field activities or projects and were shared with others in the network.

A number of issues which had emerged from the previous community forestry efforts, were seen as an important topics for developing deeper understanding, tools, methods and approaches as covered in Objective 1. From the experience in the FLCD program, eight topics had been selected as priority issues:

- participatory baseline, monitoring and evaluation methodologies;
- forestry and food security/nutrition;
- land and tree tenure;
- forest based small-scale enterprises/non-timber forest products;
- local management of trees and woodland;
- development communications, extension and training;
- local/indigenous knowledge; and,
- gender and equity.

Community forestry issues were described as being like a rope composed of many strands. The above issues had been identified as weakened strands that needed more understanding or tools to address them. Afterwards, when work had been done on a particular strand, it was woven back into the rope and other strands might be identified as future priority issues. Once a better understanding of the issues was reached, a series of documents was published, depending upon the need. In most cases a concept paper, policy papers, field manuals, teaching materials including case studies, followed a literature search and fieldwork. A number of topics were developed in multi-media presentations. On several issues comic book formats were developed with activities for schools and training manuals for grade school teachers. Many of these documents were considered generic and funding was made available for adaptation or reformulation to fit local contexts.

III. Donors, FAO and a Swedish University

Until 1990, all the funding had come from Sweden through Sida. Although some donors funded projects that had been built on information and tools coming from the FLCD program and funded or participated in some discrete activities, there was no direct participation of other donors in the FLCD or early FTTP. FAO had worked with Sida on a recurrent basis for almost ten years and had created an atmosphere of trust and open idea exchange. This working environment was carried over into the multi-donor phase. The goals of the FAO and SIDA were entirely compatible. Adding other donors allowed the program to expand but it

also created problems when the newer donors had other goals and understanding about what FFTP should be doing. Some were not ready to decentralize—to give up power.

Sweden (slightly over a million dollars a year) earmarked its funding for East Africa as well as for networking and some of the global activities. Sida was also concerned about improving Swedish managed community forestry activities it funded bilaterally and requested that the FAO work with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) so that they too would institutionalize these new forestry approaches. SLU, an excellent working partner, coordinated some of the Swedish funded activities especially in East Africa, and developed the newsletter, which went to over 10,000 individuals and institutions. The newsletter was one of the very important ways FFTP networked, introducing local ideas into global settings and visa versa.

The Netherlands joined the FFTP and directed its funding (slightly less than a million dollars a year) be used to strengthen institutions to do community forestry in Latin America. Representatives of The Netherlands participated actively in backstopping and in the annual meetings. Their goals were mostly compatible with FFTP.

Switzerland had an interest in participatory methodologies and strengthening forestry-training institutions. They took an active part in the annual meetings and contributed to the thinking about monitoring and other subjects. The funding they had available was quite limited (approximately \$300,000 a year) and they were willing to put it in any area that needed support. FFTP in Asia had little funding from any other country, and though it was the largest area, it was able to do a number of things with the Swiss funding due to the flexibility of the Swiss.

France provided funding (approximately \$100,000 total) for West Africa for a brief period but withdrew after a few initial activities because they had different concepts and goals. The French recommended that the FFTP work through a French NGO with African experience instead of a West African institution. We were willing to work through a French NGO to identify the local institutions and facilitators but then insisted it was the African not the French institutions that were needed to support local processes. The French, however, did not feel there were African institutions capable of participating in reaching the FFTP goals. When they realized that the philosophy of the program required working through local institutions they withdrew. Even during the time they had funded activities they never participated in the annual meetings. They were not interested in decentralizing.

Italy provided some funding (approximately \$600,000 per year) for FFTP that they earmarked for communications. At the same time they were also funding an FAO managed four-country community forestry project. They requested that FFTP support this project through providing communication tools, methods and approaches. Activities were designed to identify and to work with institutions in

each of the four countries and build a multidisciplinary capability to support participatory methods and communications with each of these four projects. These activities were stopped from within FAO. A change had been made in the location of coordination of the Italian funding to an office not familiar with community forestry. The funds were mostly spent on Italian consultants who, as with the French, concluded that in none of eleven countries they visited were there institutions that would be able to support communications. Italian consultants ran all activities carried out with Italian funding and the funding was quickly finished. None of the Italians participated in the annual meetings. They were not interested in decentralizing.

Norway was the last to join (in 1997). It contributed with great flexibility, helped pick up the activities in West Africa after the French withdrew, funded global events and supported work originating from the FAO Rome office. They were good partners ready to support decentralization and it was disappointing they did not join sooner.

Due to the difference in the philosophies and goals of different donors, it took a while to build the open trust between donors that FAO had enjoyed with Sida. Close collaboration and open exchange is not so common between donors and implementers of development activities. Mostly meetings between these two actors are for control, to see if the money and activities have taken place exactly as represented in the project document. FFTP meetings were open and focused on learning. The donors with different goals tended not to take part in the annual meetings and therefore had no chance to experience this difference first hand.

IV. Selecting Institutions and Facilitators

When we started to select institutions we were hopeful of finding "regional institutions" that were involved in community forestry. Only one institution, however, fit that description, The Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC) located in Bangkok Thailand. FLCD had helped originate this center some years before. Members of its staff travel throughout the region and work with various training and other institutions and know the regions forestry activities well. Participants in RECOFTC training come from many countries, but are mostly from Asia. This institution was eager to act, and was chosen to act, as the focal coordinator of FFTP in Asia. RECOFTC selected a young Thai forester who was returning from education abroad and was joining their staff to be the Asian FFTP regional facilitator. FFTP funded his travel throughout Asia accompanying an experienced RECOFTC staff member, in order for him to have the opportunity to learn more about community forestry field realities, gain regional experience and to make contacts with the institutions in the region.

But even though we did not find other regional centers we identified national centers, some of which were functioning somewhat regionally or were interested

in doing so. Some were rural development groups open to incorporating forestry; others were forestry groups open to incorporating community approaches. We had ground rules for identifying and selecting the institutions and the facilitators within them. The institutions that were contacted in the first place were ones that had a long-term local reputation for working in a participatory manner "in the field with grass roots groups." Even if they were universities they could not be academic with no applied field experience. They had to be stable, that is, appear to be institutions that would be active for years to come. They had to be interested in joining a network of institutions focused on community forestry and have similar goals to FTTP. We requested the organizations contribute from their own resources such things as staff, office space etc. Further, selected institutions had to designate someone on their staff to act as facilitator.

The FTTP had little money to offer. We did not supply jeeps and office infrastructure. What we offered to supply in the first place was funding to expand fieldwork, activities or training or develop materials that these institutions were already interested in producing. Institutions were both selected and self-selected. A number decided that the FTTP brought small resources or their goals were somewhat different. Others decided they were too busy to take on this new program. Facilitators were selected for their professional skills and commitment to goals compatible with FTTP and they also sometimes self-selected out because of other commitments or interests. The types of institutions selected differed depending upon what institutions were available in the various countries. Some selected focal centers were NGOs, some were universities, and some were even governmental offices supportive of community forestry.

In West Africa the regional facilitator was a social scientist from an NGO that worked in community development in several West African Countries and was interested in incorporating forestry concerns. Several of the West African national facilitators work from within the Forestry Ministries, at the invitation of governments interested in expanding community forestry in their countries. In East Africa the regional facilitator is from an environmental NGO and some of the national facilitators are located in forestry faculties of universities. The facilitator in Central America was first located within an international environmental NGO. However, as FTTP was just beginning it became known that this NGO had financial irregularities and the facilitator requested a change to a more permanent place in a regional inter-governmental body. The collaborating national groups in Central America include representatives from Indigenous organizations, farmer unions, projects, forestry extension programs and a social science university. The South American coordinator is based in an activist NGO working with local communities on such issues as land rights in relation to oil companies.

Originally a participatory method of management, one that was truly decentralized was difficult for local institutions to understand or believe. In a number of cases institutions were very competitive with each other for the funding. We, therefore, started out by requesting each institution submit a very

simple proposal for a discrete activity. When they finished the first activity they could apply for more funding. This changed the competition from being against each other to a focus on completion of their own work to be able to access more funds. Later, as the program took shape, relations with the focal institutions were formalized and trust and the philosophy began to be mutually adopted. From then on there was no need to control the funding and the lead or focal institution organized the planning and the budget for the region and worked the same way with the national facilitators. The way these facilitators manage the program is discussed in the next section.

I am convinced that it was thanks to this careful selection process, which paid a great deal of attention to the individuals' personal commitment to the overall goals and philosophy of community forestry that we were able to build shared understanding within the FPHP program. It was this commitment to a philosophy of development that explains why FPHP managed to function as one decentralized structure.

Throughout the program FAO made an effort to offer professional opportunities to the facilitators. The annual meetings were planned in various countries with interesting forestry issues to observe and discuss. The annual meetings had a preliminary week of information exchange with guest speakers providing new ideas. When facilitators had opportunities for short-term training or to attend international meetings etc. these were usually funded. Sometimes special study tours were organized.

V. Planning and Reporting

After the program began, plans were made in the countries (or regions) through a consultative process. Planning began, in most places, by the FPHP facilitator inviting local organizations involved or interested in community forestry to discuss ongoing activities as well as major constraints and opportunities for community forestry. Depending on the region, participation might include forestry officials, project staff, university faculty, NGOs, farmer organizations or unions and Indigenous group representatives. Together they learned what each group was doing and planned what each would do in the coming year. After this process the FPHP facilitators made their plans and budgets. They knew exactly the funding available for their region and were able to make their plans accordingly.

Many of those who participated in the planning did not require or receive funds from FPHP; they were interested in information exchange and being involved in the process. Frequently joint activities were identified or FPHP was asked to carry out an activity funded by others. There were cases where as much as 60% of the funds a facilitator used during the year came from other sources. For example, sometimes governments organized and funded the costs of a training program, which a facilitator would animate. Sometimes organizations requested

development of materials and covered a large part of the costs. The facilitators did not consider the flag of FTTP as important as the spread of the philosophy of community forestry, so they did not think in terms of losing credit or identity when they gave support or integrated components into the activities of other organizations.

The following is one illustration from a regional planning meeting showing a type of interaction that took place.

An Asian FTTP Planning Meeting

FTTP had a very small amount of funding in Asia and participants in an Asian planning meeting of collaborating institutions recognized this. The participants agreed that FTTP was important as a network, bringing them together, and the FAO based network provided respectability for the community forestry ideas. They felt FTTP presented a challenge to see what they could do for themselves/each other. At that meeting they decided to make a list of training their institutions were giving and a parallel list of identified training needs. The plan was that each time one of their organizations carried out specific training they would invite those who had listed a need for such training and would carry all the in-country costs (people sharing homes and meals etc).

The second step in the planning process was the annual meeting. The first week was facilitators, FAO and SLU to share ideas and develop collaborative activities. The second included the donor representatives and was to discuss the plan of work and budget. At this meeting facilitators started by describing what they had planned to do in the previous year compared with what they actually had done and reasons for any changes. Programs were not forced to keep to a specific timetable or schedule but facilitators needed to describe why they had made a change and sometimes to defend it with the donor. Then they reported on the planning process for the coming year, who had taken part and what the overall situation was, after which they presented the FTTP plan of work and budget.

The process allowed discussion of changes and supported the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities that presented themselves, such as all effective businesses and organizations do. The open atmosphere provided an opportunity to learn from each other. The donors played an important part in the process and facilitators said they often learned important things from the donors. I am sure the process worked both ways. Facilitators also commented that this program was the first time they had worked with international organizations which valued their ideas, opinions and professional skills, rather than just using them to carry out someone else's ideas. This same feeling was expressed by a number of collaborators from Indigenous and farming groups as well as by faculty in universities.

VI. Topics and Activities

The first week of the annual meetings was very intense with conversation and negotiation on topics. Even though the eight topics had been identified, there was much flexibility to explore various aspects of these topics. Each facilitator made presentations about the topics they were exploring and what new aspects they were interested in addressing. Experts were brought in to explore new issues and sub-groups organized and met on themes they felt were priority topics in their region. It was here that facilitators identified topics on which they would collaborate. Global themes were also proposed by FAO and they were either selected or rejected for a focus in the national or regional programs by some or all of the facilitators. Some sub-groups participated in a global theme, which was not a priority in other regions. Never was a facilitator required to focus on a global theme or something FAO had identified. All were invited to participate in any theme.

Working with the Local Knowledge Theme

Local knowledge had been a topic in the FFTP "master list" of themes. FAO developed several concept papers e.g. on how herders used traditional knowledge to manage their herds and how they passed this knowledge to their children. This type of material was developed for training, in order to make young foresters aware of the knowledge available from farmers and herders. In East Africa local groups used video to film their own management knowledge and skills when they were having problems communicating with government agents that traditional management was not destructive. In Thailand a group took photos and a video to show the government how farmers were managing runoff through careful erosion control. Both of these activities were attempts to strengthen their case for land rights with policy makers.

Another audience for this type of information was the agroforestry research centers. Farmers in Costa Rica who had been urged to adopt a "cocoa agroforestry package" with special seed and fertilizer had discussed the fact that the recommended "package" had not worked and many farmers had lost a great deal of time and money. So, a case study was designed to show how farmers do their own kind of research in agroforestry. The idea was if that research centers were to identify what problems farmers were trying to solve they could perhaps support the farmer's own processes with their skills and knowledge rather than develop something "invented" in a laboratory. All regions found the topic interesting and decided to carry out case studies for which they developed common terms of reference. The material was brought together and presented in a global meeting in India. The results were presented to the three major agroforestry research centers and to a number of smaller ones. The facilitator in Central America discussed the local case studies and the publication with the director of CATIE, a major center, the one that had developed the cocoa package. The director was so interested he asked FFTP to organize a workshop for their staff on supporting farmers' efforts rather than presenting results tied in a bow.

Sometimes it looked to outsiders like there were too many topics being explored, but that was partly because the "rope" looked different in different countries and regions. Because the program reported global work on topics all of them were

listed, but not all of them were being addressed in all places. In some places collaborative management of forests by farming communities was at issue; in other places tenure issues relating to pastoral communities were primary. In some places working with agroforestry systems led to the need to develop local market information systems so the participants could profit from their input.

Local Woodland Management

One topic identified for FTTP was local management of trees and woodlands. It was of great concern to understand more about when local management would create environmental and livelihood benefits and when it might fail. Many policy makers were concerned about the risk to the resource if local people were allowed to have a part in the management. FAO did a literature search to see what was known in different parts of the world about local management. An advisory group was formed to review the document and to advise what FAO should do next. The advisors stated that there was not enough actual information to be able to move further. What was needed was improved baseline that integrated the biophysical and socio-economic and institutional information, a method robust enough to follow forest and livelihood changes over time and compare different management strategies, tenure regimes and contrast effects of different policies, etc. The advice was to go to Indiana University and ask Elinor Ostrom who had worked on irrigation systems to see if something similar could be done for forestry. This was the initiation of the International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI) research program for which the funding has been carried on by a number of donors. Several facilitators or staff from one of the FTTP collaborating institutions have taken training in this methodology and have established IFRI Centers. One used IFRI in project evaluation, another in studying effects of decentralization and yet another used it with local people in order to help them obtain land rights.

In almost all regions the facilitators identified training foresters in participatory methods as being a priority, but they worked in different ways. In Asia, several workshops were held in which the institutions participated in drafting the training materials. In South America a regional socio-economic university requested information on gender, on traditional agroforestry and on communications and collected case studies to be incorporated into training of foresters.

Participatory methods were the focus in all areas. In East Africa a manual of participatory monitoring and evaluation of local activities was developed, tested and revised with NGO and government extension workers and the communities. In Central America a community group designed a participatory evaluation of an internationally funded field project that was applied, published and shared with neighboring projects.

Forestry and Food Security/Nutrition

Another topic was forestry and food security/nutrition. It was evident that changes in access to land changed local livelihoods. Although foresters cannot be held responsible for the nutrition of a community there is no reason they cannot become aware of the issue and support better nutrition and identify and mitigate any negative impacts their programs may cause. Working with nutritionists and social scientists several activities were carried out. One was identifying "hunger foods." These were the plants that grow in the wild and are often very rich in energy but very time consuming to process. Unless they are identified they tend to be cleared by forestry projects creating worse effects during the recurrent droughts. Second, we worked with local people to develop a method to identify what indicators they use for an adequate diet. Some judged a "good year" by the number of months of grain in the granary, others by availability of specific products including forest products such as honey. Third, simple indicators were developed for looking at health records to see what nutritional problems might be possible to address with forestry. For example, in many countries vitamin A deficiency is quite serious and foresters can add trees to the nurseries that have vitamin A rich fruit or leaves used locally. They can sponsor school nursery programs to produce seedlings for children to plant around their homes. Materials were developed at workshops and case studies were carried out in Asia, East Africa and Latin America. In one workshop in Thailand the local people were the teachers of nutritionists and foresters with a demonstration and exhibit of all the food items they obtained from the forest. Policy level material was produced and even a comic book entitled, "I'm so Hungry I Could Eat a Tree" explored these issues with children. The facilitator in West Africa worked with a large FAO project to adapt these materials for use in that project and for other activities in that region.

Conclusion

During all the years those of us worked with community forestry we were constantly amazed at the complexities involved. Community forestry cannot take place as an isolated activity without reflecting on the role both men and women play in carrying out family responsibilities and their access to needed resources. It cannot take place in isolation from farming and livestock systems and from local livelihood strategies. It is not likely to be successful unless the local technical and organizational knowledge is integrated into the planning and unless the technology proposed is viable and sound. The national laws concerning association, tenure, land and product access and use, as well as local and state regulations about who has rights to do what, are all elements in developing forestry related strategies. One cannot work only at grass roots or only at policy levels as these two groups are dependent on one another in community forestry. But we did learn that one needs local institutions to continually support the processes, as outsiders cannot do the job.

This program affected policy directly in many cases. In one case in East Africa the facilitators took some of their budget to arrange for policy makers from several countries to go to India to observe joint forest management. Later they brought some managers from India to talk with more of the decision makers.

Policies were changed and an African version of joint forest management is not written into policies especially in Tanzania.

This program also affected the place local people had at the table. Through support of the development of forest user groups and the creation of a federation of user-groups local people in Nepal have more voice. In Central America the FTTP arranged for a parallel forest-planning meeting for Indigenous people and its conclusions were integrated into the regular planning process. In many countries the farmers are now organized better to negotiate with industry or government. A video the Masai people made to object to the land use plans limiting their access to pasture was presented to a planning meeting and helped make their concerns known.

There are still many topics to understand and many activities to integrate local concerns into national policies, but the FTTP worked with many other groups to start a process that will not be easy to reverse. After the program was decentralized, the knowledge base grew exponentially. Many activities were planned in the countries that would never have been imagined from headquarters but that answered local needs in creative ways. Decentralization was not always easy but the results were very worthwhile.

FTEP-II Objectives

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Increased sustainability of the livelihoods of women and men in developing countries, especially the rural poor, through self-help management of tree and forest resources.

IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVES AND OUTPUT CATEGORIES

Objective 1

Deepened knowledge and more effective strategies and tools for the sustained participation of rural people in forestry.

Outputs:

- o An understanding of critical factors underlying the active and sustained involvement of rural people in self-help forestry activities;
- o Documented effective methods, tools and approaches;
- o A monitoring system for the programme.

Objective 2

Strengthened human and institutional ability to: more fully assess local forestry issues; adapt Community Forestry methods and tools to specific conditions; and, provide sustained support for people's participation in forestry efforts.

Outputs:

- o National forestry, development and research institutions capable of supporting community forestry activities;
- o Well-trained trainers in some relevant aspects of community forestry in each of the four regions (Latin America, East Africa, West Africa, and Asia);
- o Appropriate training materials;
- o Appropriate community forestry curriculum in forestry training institutes.

Objective 3

More effective participatory approaches in ongoing community forestry activities as a result of technical assistance to field efforts applying the approaches, methods and tools developed under Objective 1.

Outputs:

- o Selected NGO and GO field projects strengthened through applying new approaches;
- o Strengthening Forestry Design Missions;

Objective 4

Expanded knowledge about participatory forestry approaches and experience through networking, information dissemination, and improved communications.

Outputs:

- o An active network of individuals and institutions/ organizations for information exchange related to community forestry activities;
- o A network of collaborating institutions actively involved in developing materials and skills suitable to local realities in support of community forestry;
- o Those who are generally voiceless more able to communicate their knowledge and concerns effectively to extension, research and policy level decision makers and to other communities.

