



forest managers, agricultural extension officers and researchers in participatory processes.

HLLs include universities, vocational schools and colleges offering formal programmes, as well as 'non-formal' governmental and sectoral institutions with specialised training programmes for experienced professionals.

HLLs have an important role to play in bringing about social, political and economic change. Tertiary institutions (e.g. universities) are in a good position to help institutionalise the participatory approach if they can nurture a continuous learning process.

This means confronting the tendency of academics to look down on farmers' indigenous knowledge and the elimination of any attitudes of superiority over field workers.

Conclusion

Communities using participatory processes in integrated land use planning have generated benefits in the following areas:

- * A sense of self-sufficiency in contrast to the pervasive 'dependency role' assumed by many communities (and governments)
- * Community-level understanding of resource problems and the economic opportunities of sustainable development.
- * Community appreciation of their own resources and capabilities
- * Responsible behaviour on the part of resource users
- * Establishing a common vision for the future
- * Socially permissible systems for information exchange, vertically and horizontally
- * Improved information recording and use

The challenge now is how to institutionalise the participatory approach to extend and maintain the above benefits.

References

Anderson, C.L. 2003. **Communication and participation in the Pacific: Lessons for adaptation to climate change and variability.** Background paper for 'Insights and Tools for Adaptation: Learning from Climate Variability' meeting, Washington, DC, 18–20 November 2003.

Balakrishnan, R. 1998. Rural women and food security: Current situation and perspectives – The Pacific. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Viewed 27 March 2008. <http://www.fao.org/DOCREP/003/w8376E/W8376e05.htm>.

Fung, C. & Blank, J.R. 2005. **GTZ approach to participatory extension: From international experience to the 'Drawa' Model Area in Fiji.** PowerPoint presentation given at Pacific Extension Summit, Tonga, 21–25 November 2005.

Halavatu, S. 2005. **DSAP experiences: Farmer-led participatory.** PowerPoint presentation given at Pacific Extension Summit, Tonga, 21–25 November 2005.

Hazelman, S. 2005. **Sustainable targets, sustainable structures.** PowerPoint presentation given at Pacific Extension Summit, Tonga, 21–25 November 2005.

Manley, M. 2007. **Do community-based approaches to natural resource management work?** Pacific Economic Bulletin 22(3): 100–112.

SPC Land Resources Division. 2005. **Pacific Extension Summit: Bringing about change, promoting agricultural extension in the Pacific.** Proceedings of the inaugural Pacific Extension Summit held at the International Dateline Hotel, Nuku'alofa, Kingdom of Tonga, 21–25 November 2005. Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Noumea.

Further reading:

Websites

Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, England: www.ids.ac.uk/ids
<http://www.unescap.org/mced2000/pacific/background/swot/html>



For more information, please contact:

Land Resources Division
Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
Luke Street, Nabua.
Private Mail Bag, Suva.
Fiji Islands.

Phone: (679) 337 0733

Fax: (679) 338 6323 or (679) 337 0021

Email: lrhelpdesk@spc.int

Website: <http://www.spc.int/lrd>

Prepared by SPC Land Resources Division in collaboration with our working partners.



partageons les connaissances au profit des communautés rurales
sharing knowledge, improving rural livelihoods



Participatory Approaches for Agriculture and Forestry Development in the Pacific

1. Purpose

The purpose of this brief is to provide relevant and up-to-date information and views on participatory approaches for agriculture and forestry development in the Pacific.

2. Executive Summary

Many government agencies, international organisations and policy researchers are increasingly of the view that handouts and subsidies are not only ineffective, but in fact are detrimental. Why?

The reasons are numerous. Most Pacific countries still rely on traditional delivery of extension services (agriculture and forestry), which tends to rely on a top-down approach whereby researchers produce solutions to problems (e.g. how to deal with an agricultural pest, which technologies should be used) and extension officers are expected to encourage communities to follow their recommendations.

Agriculture and forestry development efforts in the Pacific are often confined to project-based interventions, and very little effort has been made to mainstream participatory approaches in national policies.

The rural poor need to be given the means to participate fully in the development of their resources in order to maximise the benefits from them. Balancing the effective, sustainable management of agriculture and forest resources with economic, social and environmental factors has emerged as one of the key challenges in natural resource management.

Institutionalising participatory approaches to agriculture and forestry development is advocated to support sustainable development in the Pacific region.

Indigenous people and their local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognise and support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of the sustainable development.

Ministerial Conference (2000), agenda item 21

Background

Many villages in Pacific countries have their own autonomous, traditional government system based on one form or another of a council of elders. The bulk of the population of the Pacific Islands have strong ties to their village government system.

As the villagers are often the resource owners, it is this system that makes the final decisions on resource use.

Participatory planning has been advocated as a mechanism that can encourage more sustainable resource use.

By involving resource owners directly in resource use planning and equipping them with the necessary training and skills, they are made aware of the consequences of various practices and the value of moving to more sustainable resource use.

Some of the factors that can help support participatory resource use planning in the Pacific are:

- social cohesiveness of family or one-talk or religious system;
- a willingness to share with family or religious group members while the tradition of sharing is often seen as an impediment to economic development, it can support an agreement to restrict or regulate resource use;
- the ability of a community to work together, pooling labour and talent to achieve projects that are important to it; and
- traditional knowledge of plants, sustainable gardening practices and marine resources – individuals within island villages have considerable knowledge of how to use and maintain their local environment on a sustainable basis.

Government officers often complain of a lack of cooperation from communities regardless of the ownership rights of the resources.





There are innumerable examples throughout the Pacific of rural communities degrading their own resource base, practising irresponsible and destructive agriculture and fishing, selling forests and allowing local or foreign companies to clear-cut mountain slopes and pollute water supplies the villages depend on.

Even though the communities know such practices are degrading their resources, factors such as economic pressure to earn cash income, ingrained habits, a lack of education on how to do things differently, and relatively high discount rates – i.e. valuing the future much more than the present – play a part in this continued behaviour.

Issues/Problems

Top-down Approach

Historically, extension systems in Pacific countries have been arms of government used to promote economic development. They have tended to be export-commodity oriented and mainly based on technology transfer. The drivers of the system have been export needs and central government.

More recently, extension systems have emphasised agricultural diversification, where community development, commodity approaches, training and visit systems, and farming system research and extension are buzz words.

These two systems have not been sustainable and can create more problems than solutions.

Problems have emerged, such as their tendency to promote a feeling of inadequacy among the rural communities they are trying to assist, which in turn creates dependency and subservience, depriving people of their self-respect.

People often become accustomed to handouts and subsidies, and even come to expect them. Handouts and subsidies can also blind people to the need to solve their own problems.

Bottom-up Approach: Participatory/Community base

Participatory approaches to agriculture and forestry development have been advocated as means of supporting sustainable resource use. The drivers of these approaches are food security and sustainable land use development, globalisation and environmental concerns.

Participatory approaches refer to processes and mechanisms that enable those people who have a direct stake in agriculture and forest resources to be part of decision-making in all aspects of the resource management, from managing the resources to formulating and implementing institutional frameworks.

Participation can provide tremendous advantages from a development perspective. Involvement of local communities helps to ensure that policies, programmes and projects respect local cultural values and are continually oriented towards the needs of the people and the community as identified by themselves.



The involvement of villagers and communities helps the people to appreciate the difficulties faced in implementing programmes and dispels suspicions as to motives.

Villagers who are participating fully in a programme are more willing to commit themselves and their resources to agricultural and forestry development. Another important reason for community participation is that it may be essential to the sustainability of the programme or development.

Community participation provides a series of additional benefits for community members: through their own experience, they learn to plan, find solutions to their problems, teach others and organise themselves to work together.

They learn skills such as how to give and take and how to correct each other without causing offence – skills that are essential to a community in forming and managing their own organisations successfully.

Examples of Participatory/Community-Based Programmes

Drawa Model Area (Fiji)

The Drawa project has focused on forestry and agricultural activities. The area was identified by the Fiji Forest Department in 1994 as one that would be suitable for trialling a participatory approach to forestry and land use management.



The project is located in Vanua Levu, Fiji's second-largest island, and comprises 6345.5 square hectares of virgin forests.

One of the lessons learnt from the Drawa project is that through participation, agricultural activities can integrate well with forestry development.

'Agriculture development is often seen as a threat to effective forest management. Any approach to forestry management therefore needs to pay sufficient attention to the agricultural needs of communities to ensure that agriculture becomes part of the solution rather than the problem.'

Manley 2007

Through participation, Drawa communities have gained self-confidence and experienced the satisfaction of having made significant achievements. They have developed ingenuity and creativity that will enable them to continue improving their lives. The people of Drawa have also learnt how to express themselves in public, analyse and verify information, make decisions and resolve conflicts. Participation has necessitated mutual trust, honesty and concern for others.

Tonga Community Development Trust

Participatory approaches have been used to establish income-generating projects such as the cultivation of peanuts, potatoes, pandanus, kava, yam and paper mulberry; compost making; raising poultry; designing textiles; and drip irrigation systems.

The activities have been supported by the Tonga Community Development Trust through the Development of Sustainable Agriculture in the Pacific (DSAP) project. As part of the Disaster Preparedness Strengthening Project, participatory approaches have been used to develop plans, and develop and implement training activities for 1000 vulnerable households.

'The major lesson learnt in the DSAP project is that involving the people at every step in the research and extension process – diagnosing their problems, identifying solutions, planning and implementing interventions and monitoring and evaluating the results – is an essential step towards sustainable livelihood.'

Halavatu 2005

Challenges to Extending Participatory Approaches

- * Lack of experienced people to promote and extend participation, and lack of necessary resources to train staff.
- * The attitude and behaviour of technical staff, perhaps as a result of a reluctance to try new ideas, can affect the effectiveness of the participatory approach.

To promote participation there is a growing need for experienced people who are open to its meaning, methods and practice.

IDS 2003

- * Current participatory approaches are implemented in an ad hoc manner despite their widely documented benefits. The challenge now is how to institutionalise the participatory approach to extend and maintain its benefit.



Institutionalising the Participatory Approach

Integrating the participatory approach with higher learning institutions

By developing collaborative and participatory learning approaches, higher learning institutions (HLIs) can help strengthen the capacity of