

FOREST POLICIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Local livelihoods and state policies have a dual interface. One, policy changes affect rural livelihood practices, informal local institutions and peoples coping strategies. Two, these changes do affect resource use sustainability since local livelihoods are embedded in the local resource base. Financial constraints, land, and alternative means of livelihood are critical factors forcing many people into unsustainable patterns of natural resource use. Paucity of choices forces the poor to adopt short-term survival strategies. People without any hope for the future have little incentive to manage natural resources well. Until recently, forests were the sole objective of forest policy and people were taken as enemies of the forest. However, now there has been a realization that forestry should be an instrument of the policy rather than its objective, thus leading towards sustainable livelihoods and reducing pressure on the fast dwindling forests. This paper with focus on mainly the case study conducted in NWFP (where 40% of Pakistan's natural forests are present) emphasizes that legal, institutional and policy reforms alone are not sufficient to achieve sustainable development and poverty alleviation. Good laws and policies are useless without political and administrative will to change. Otherwise, the poor would remain mired in poverty pushing us into a spiral of over exploitation in the wake of all forest policy failures.

Introduction

Human Environment Interaction

Environment and human life are co-related, and hence, influence each other. The population explosion pollutes environment against the need for a cleaner environment, which is critical to their lives. There are three ways with which the human beings interact with environment. Firstly, they depend on environment for life; secondly, they modify environment; and lastly, they adapt to environment. These activities, if not carried out in a way to meet key aspect of sustainability - as well as in high population growth, which is partly an outcome of this process - can lead to environmental degradation (Khan and Naqvi 2000).

The concerns over the balance between human life and environment assumed international dimension only during the 1950s and the policies articulated in documents such as the Stockholm Declaration and Program of Action, the World Conservation Strategy, Our Common Future, the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, have driven the environmental agenda so far (UNEP 2002). Environment is one of the four pillars of sustainable development (Box-1). All four pillars - social, economic, institutional, and environmental - are mutually supportive and essential for achieving sustainable

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development. However, the experience of the last 30 years¹ (1972-2002) reveals that in practice it becomes difficult to maintain a balance among these four pillars. Maintaining this balance becomes even difficult when there is a strong pressure of human activities on natural resources to secure livelihoods.

Box-1: Four pillars of sustainable development.

Environmental sustainability is achieved when the productivity of life-supporting natural resources is conserved or enhanced for use by future generations.

Economic sustainability is achieved when a given level of expenditure can be maintained over time.

Social sustainability is achieved through minimising social exclusion and maximizing social equity.

Institutional sustainability is achieved when the prevailing structures and processes have the capacity to continue performing their functions over the passage of time.

Livelihood Strategies – State Policy Interface

A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. Understanding the interface between local livelihoods and state policies is of vital importance for developing sustainable local natural resources management. 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 future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Chamber and Conway 1992). State policies, and regional and international institutions² - which are exposed to and embedded in national economies, market forces and processes of globalization/global changes - have an impact on local people's sustainable livelihood practices and strategies as well as on local institutions developed by the people themselves (informal institutions). On the other hand, these institutionally shaped livelihood strategies have an impact on the sustainability of resource use. Taken together, policies and institutions form the context within which the individuals and households construct and adapt livelihood strategies. In effect, they determine the freedom with which the people have to transform their assets into livelihood outcomes. Policies and institutions determine, among other things:

- people's access to various assets (such as land or labor)
- benefits people are able to derive from different types of capital (through markets)
- environment for private sector investment
- extent to which people are able to engage in decision making process
- individual and civil society rights

In most of the developing countries including Pakistan, policies and institutions generally tend to discriminate against those people with few assets (social as well as economic) and disadvantaged poor people. Forest policies and laws enacted from time

¹ 30 years have passed since the international community laid the foundation in 1972 for collective global action to mitigate adverse impacts on the environment through United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden.

² Institutions or rules of the game are defined as the rules, norms and values that shape our behaviour. These institutions can be formal (e.g. land tenure laws) and informal (e.g., social customs and conventions); created (e.g. as a result of deliberate political decisions) or may evolved over time (DFID 2000).

to time to implement these policies are not an exception to this general rule. Such discriminatory policies and institutions not only exclude the marginalized groups such as women and children, but also lead to unsustainable natural resources management. Due to few choices available, the poor are forced to adopt short-term survival strategies and unsustainable natural resources management practices.

Pakistan's forest policies are tied to its British colonial past. At the time of independence, the policies, procedures and structures that administered the new nation's forests were largely left intact (Poffenberger 2000). The first forest policy of Pakistan was announced in 1955; it was revised and updated in 1962, 1975, 1980, and in 1988, as well as in 1991 as part of the National Agricultural Policy. At provincial level³, in NWFP (where 40% of Pakistan's natural forests exist) a new forest policy was introduced in 1999, whereas at federal level a national forest policy is under preparation. According to Ahmed and Mahmood (1998), most forest policies, until recently, have viewed people as the prime threat to the forests, and have attempted to exclude groups other than the government from decision making. This approach did not only affect the sustainability of the livelihood strategies of the local people, but also increased the vulnerability of the marginalized sections of the communities. It ultimately led to unsustainable management of natural resources and forest depletion.

It is a proven fact that none of the policy initiatives or the policy in itself, can be successful and effective without a legal cover. For decades, the only reference point for dealing with new problems in the forestry sector had been the 1927 Forest Act. List of important legislations governing forestry sector in Pakistan are presented in Annexure I. It is pertinent to mention here that so far the existing laws, including the recently promulgated NWFP Forest Ordinance 2002, are punitive in nature, while providing penalties for contravention of their provisions do not contain incentives for compliance, which are recommended in the National Conservation Strategy, Forestry Sector Master Plan, and forest policies of the Punjab and NWFP.

New Trends in Shaping Forest Policies

At the global level, importance of forests in poverty reduction and providing livelihood to local communities is being recognized. Forests resources directly contribute to the livelihood of 90 percent of the 1.2 billion people living in extreme poverty and indirectly support the natural environment that nourishes agriculture and food supplies of nearly half the population of the developing world (World Bank 2001). In order to utilize the potential of forests in poverty alleviation, forest policies of many countries and international lending institutions are being revised to be more policy oriented on forestry for rural development and poverty alleviation. Hence, forestry becomes an instrument of policy rather than an object of the policy. This new trend in shaping forest policies not only has a potential to maintain a balance among four pillars of sustainable development, but also covers secure sustainable livelihood. Pakistan is also attempting to adopt this trend with the financial assistance of some international development agencies as well as with a loan from Asian Development Bank (ADB). The initial period of ADB funded NWFP Forestry Sector Project was six years. However, it was extended by another year in 2002 to complete the reform process. Hence, the efforts to bring reforms in forestry are in its seventh year now and forestry sector in Pakistan

³ Forestry is a provincial subject according to the Constitution of Pakistan.

makes an interesting case study to assess the role of environmental policies in fostering sustainable development and poverty alleviation.

Forestry Sector in Pakistan

Forestry Sector in Pakistan and Its Role

There is a considerable debate over the precise area under forests in Pakistan (UNCED 1992). The problem stems from the definition of legal areas of forestland as an indication of forest cover, irrespective of the actual measure of tree cover and its condition. Areas usually described, as 'forest areas' are the lands that are under the administrative control of provincial Forest Department (FD). But areas officially designated as forests may be devoid of trees, while substantial tree cover may be found in localities other than the ones classified so. Different government departments have been publishing different forest statistics since 1947. In the recent past, data of land use including forest areas has been reported by the Forestry Sector Master Plan (FSMP) Project in 1993, with the help of satellite imagery covering entire Pakistan. According to the FSMP of 1993, Pakistan had 4.2 million hectares covered by forests and trees, which was equivalent to 4.8 percent of the total land area. However, according to the more recently released FAO State of Forest 2001, total forest area of Pakistan (sum of natural forests plus forest plantation) was reported to decrease from 2.75 million hectares in 1990 to 2.36 million hectares in 2000. Thus, there is an annual change of 0.39 million hectares (-1.5% per annum rate of deforestation) in forest cover over the last decade (FAO 2001). FAO's statistics also challenge the credibility of the Government of Pakistan (GoP)'s claim that the forests have been increased from 3.46 million hectares in 1990 to 3.66 million hectares in 1999 (GoP 2001). Asian Development Bank (ADB) also claims that forest cover in Pakistan has been dropped from 3.6 percent of the total land in 1990 to 3.2 percent of the total land in 1999 (ADB 2001). Therefore, for the purpose of academic debate, we would take FAO's statistics as reference for this paper.

Forests in Pakistan have four important functions including protection of natural environment, regulation of atmospheric conditions, production of goods, and contribution towards a sustainable livelihood of people who are directly or indirectly dependent on them (forests) through agriculture, animal husbandry and logging. In this context, we have to maintain a balance between sustainable production and sustainable consumption of the forests. However, we are unable to strike the right balance. Also, forest depletion has emerged as one of the most serious environmental issues for Pakistan, which is accompanied with many other environmental effects such as landslide, soil erosion, floods, soil degradation and displacement of people.

Review of Past Forest Policies

Before independence, the first set of forest legislation was promulgated in 1878 to control logging. The Indian Forest Act of 1878 put the major part of forests under state management and gave limited rights to local people. The spirit of that Act continued in Indian Forest Policy of 1894. On attaining independence in 1947, Pakistan inherited the Indian Forest Policy of 1894, which it continued to follow till 1955. This policy contained guidelines for forest conservancy but noted the importance of meeting 'the reasonable forest requirements of the neighborhood' in which the forest is situated. While providing for government ownership of forest lands, and thereby, creating a small area of public forests under the Forest Department, the policy gave vast discretionary

powers to the officials of Forest Department in determining what they deemed 'reasonable forest requirement'. Thus, in practice, only the requirements of elites and notables were fulfilled.

The 1955 policy coincided with the formulation of the first five-year National Development Plan and focused very much on the role of forestry in economic development. It sought to increase the area under forests, through irrigated and linear plantations, and on unused government lands.

The 1962 policy contained some radical proposals including shifting of populations out of the hills, acquisition of rights of tree removal and grazing in public forests, and compulsory growing of minimum number of trees on private lands. While some suggestions were implemented, others such as the shifting of populations were found to be impractical, as it would have adversely affected the livelihood of local communities.

In 1972, a National Forestry Committee was constituted to review the post 1971 war situation. The committee's recommendations formed the basis of 1975 policy. The policy extinguished 'rights' of local people, focused to stop deforestation of the wooded areas, and transferred plantations to Forest Department.

The National Policy on Forestry and Wildlife 1980 formed a part of the National Agricultural Policy 1980. While recommending plantation of fast-growing species, raising of fuelwood trees outside public forests and involvement of people in tree plantation and nature conservation schemes, the policy lacked concrete initiatives for achieving its objectives.

National Forest Policy 1991 emerged after a consultative workshop of various stakeholders. It called for multiple uses and the consideration of social and (particularly) environmental objectives, although it remained vague about the means for achieving these objectives (Ahmed and Mahmood 1998).

In 1992, there were severe floods in NWFP, which were largely attributed to the indiscriminate timber logging. The federal government opted a policy of imposing a moratorium on commercial timber harvesting. That ban was lifted after nine years in 2001. However, timber mafia (comprising influential people involved in illegal timber harvesting) always remained active during the ban period and timber harvesting continued unabated (Geiser 2001).

Analyzing the consequences of forest policies adopted till 1992, the Forestry Sector Master Plan (FSMP) found that while the policing powers of the Forest Departments, exercised through restrictions on the use of forests, helped to conserve them, public apathy towards forests also developed as a consequence. People's participation in plantation and management of forests was not given sufficient attention, and social and cultural aspects of forest management were ignored (GoP 1993). In fact, it was indirectly admitted in this analysis that policy initiatives cannot achieve their objectives until and unless the sustainable livelihood of stakeholders is not taken care of.

Forest Policy and Change in Managing Resources

Latest Policy Initiatives

It is already discussed in the previous section that most of the policy initiatives, until recently, were to conserve the forests and livelihood provisions of the local communities

were ignored. However, even the conservation aspects of these policies were never implemented in true spirit. Consequently, in practice, forest resources were made inaccessible for the poor and marginalized sections of the communities, whereas the influential people along with members of the timber mafia consumed these resources at their own sweet will (Geiser 2001). This dichotomy created the feeling of lack of ownership among the marginalized sections, not only adding to their miseries but also encouraging them to adopt unfair means to meet their fair requirements of forest resources.

Among the recent policy initiatives, the National Conservation Strategy and the Provincial Conservation Strategies (as strategic contexts for policy and institutional development) and the Forestry Sector Master Plan (FSMP) and Provincial Forest Resource Inventory (PFRI) are the most significant initiatives. These policy initiatives introduced a new concept of forest management giving it an environmental dimension. They also influenced the subsequent interventions in forestry sector.

The Pakistan National Conservation Strategy (NCS), approved in 1992, recognizes the need for the Provincial Forest Departments to associate local people in protection and management of forests. Indeed, community participation is a vital element of NCS implementation in all the three core program areas relating to the forest sector - supporting forestry and plantations; protecting watersheds; and restoring rangelands and improving livestock quality.

The Sarhad Provincial Conservation Strategy (SPCS) and the Balochistan Conservation Strategy (BCS) also recommend community-based management of forests (GoNWFP 1996).

The 25-year Forestry Sector Master Plan (1992–2017) calls for a greater participation of local people at every level of planning, along with extended role for the private sector. It also recommends that the existing Forest Act 1927 be updated and revised to make it less prohibitive and punitive and more participatory. It suggests that new provincial legislation be enacted to encourage people's participation in policy formulation and management of forest rangelands and watersheds (GoP 1993).

The Perspective Plan 2001-2011 adopts community participation through decentralization as one of the overriding principles governing the proposed strategy to tackle problems of deforestation and the damaged ecosystems. The plan reaffirms Government's commitment to the continued implementation of the FSMP, and mentions forest as one of the areas on which conservation efforts will be focused. The National Environmental Action Plan, approved by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Council in 2001, also provides for participation of the private sector, NGOs and citizen groups in execution of projects at local level.

After the floods of 1992, PFRI study was conducted in northern NWFP to provide maps and basic data on the distribution and condition of the forest resources in NWFP (PFRI 2000). This study challenged the statistics of FSMP and insisted that forest resources were being depleted at much intensive level and faster rate than estimated in earlier studies.

The Punjab Forest Policy Statement 1999 states the provincial government's intention to involve stakeholders in management of forests and watersheds and encourage private

sector investment in forests through joint forest management, joint ventures, long-term leases and suitable incentives.

The NWFP Forest Policy 2001 includes the participation of local communities and promotion of private sector investment among its cardinal principles. The policy also recommends revision of forestry legislation for joint forest management.

The draft National Forest Policy 2001 mentions the sustainable development of renewable natural resources (RNR) of Pakistan for the maintenance and rehabilitation of its environment and the enhancement of the sustainable livelihoods of its rural masses especially women, children and other deprived groups as its fundamental goal. The policy calls for involvement of local communities in implementation of projects, management of forests and protected areas, protection and sustainable management of mangrove and riverine forests, and implementation of social forestry programs. In order to reduce the impact of socio-economic causes of renewable natural resources (RNR) depletion, the policy proposes implementation of appropriate population planning programs in critical ecosystems; providing substitutes to firewood in the wooded mountains; reducing poverty through integrated land use projects with participation of organized local communities; programs for health and education improvement, particularly of women and children; and promoting revenue generation through timber harvesting, fuelwood collection and utilization of non-wood forest products, again with involvement of local communities.

However, it is pertinent to mention that legislation measures taken so far to implement the policies from time to time including the recently promulgated Forest Ordinance of NWFP (Forestry is a provincial subject, and provinces have to make their own laws) contradict the spirit of different policy measures. They are punitive in nature and tend to increase the policy role of Forest Department. For instance, NWFP Forest Ordinance 2002 designates Forest Department staff a uniform force bearing arms and also enhances their police powers, which go against the intent of the forest policy that enshrines the principles of participatory social forestry. Similarly, the discretionary powers of forest officers to revoke a community-based organization (CBO) /Joint Forest Management Committee (JFMC) agreement as provided in this ordinance would result in uncertainty and insecurity among different JFMCs/CBOs.

NWFP Forest Sector Project (NWFP FSP) and Institutional Reforms

Different policy and community initiatives and planning documents mentioned in the previous section evolved new dimensions in the concept of forestry management and opened up the doors to forestry reforms. Based on Forestry Sector Master Plan (FSMP), a feasibility study was carried out with the assistance of ADB, which ultimately led to the formulation of the NWFP forestry sector project. The Forest Sector Project (FSP) commenced in 1996 with the help of a loan from Asian Development Bank (ADB) (US\$ 26.95 million) while the Government of the Netherlands provided a grant for consultancy, capacity building and farm forestry. Various FSP components have to address the institutional capacity of the DFFW, legal reforms for social forestry, resource mapping and management planning, physical development work including afforestation/reforestation, rehabilitation of rangelands, and farm forestry. It also aims to provide/upgrade physical office facilities and community infrastructure schemes (ADB 1995).

To ensure the effectiveness of the participatory and sustainable natural resource management process, in NWFP FSP, the field interventions were to be supported by institutional reforms in provincial Forest Department (FD). Initially the progress in institutional reforms was slow, which upheld the release of capacity - building funds by donors until the mid-term review of the project. In 1999, the Forest Sector Project (FSP) made some moves with institutional reforms (Hussain and Khan 2000) ⁴. The FSP, together with the Institutional Transformation Cell (ITC), a joint Dutch-Swiss-assisted project, devised a set - up to improve decision making and ownership of the institutional reforms in DFFW, making use of existing experiences and proposals generated by other projects. Thematic working groups were established which developed a number of proposals between March and June 1999. These proposals were submitted to an internal department, Support Group, chaired by the Secretary of DFFW. Decisions surpassing the competence of DFFW were referred to the Steering Committee chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary. The four thematic working groups dealt with the reorganization of the department, capacity building, role of civil society, and institutionalization of positions and role of women in the forestry sector. At the same time, a new forest policy was prepared and promulgated in 1999. Moreover, a new forest ordinance was drafted, a forum called the Provincial Forestry Round Table was set up, and recently, members of the Forest Commission have been nominated.

Impacts of Institutional Reforms on Poverty/Poor and Women

The ongoing institutional reform process in NWFP forest department, which is meant to cater the enabling environments for enhanced participation and project implementation, is being criticized by various stakeholders. In 1995, GTZ study of the forest sector recommended the creation of the Forest Commission. The commission was to be supported by the Forestry Round Table. To kick off the process, the Government of NWFP constituted a high level Forestry Steering Committee that came up with the first Action Plan in February 1996. Contrary to the primary objective of creating effective platforms for the interface between the key stakeholders including Forest Commission and Forestry Round Table, the FSP transferred the control of the process into the folds of the Forest Department on the pretext of ownership. This move took the process away from its key objectives because many stakeholders were critical to the procedures adopted and the working of these institutions. As a result, the forest policy, though sounding progressive, remains a piece of paper with the Forest Department that continues to enjoy power and control over the forestry resources.

Moreover, the Forest Department avoided forging an effective linkage between the devolution of power plan and sectoral reform process that was underway much before inception of the devolution plan of the incumbent government. One was expecting that the Forest Department would take a lead to bring the lessons it learnt from the reform process into the devolution plan itself. Rather than being proactive, unfortunately, the Forest Department by choice remained reactive to date for obvious reasons to protect their power base to the maximum possible extent. They have been successful in remaining at the provincial level and decentralizing the most important functions to the

⁴ This paragraph is aimed to record the sequence of events as they occurred and does not discuss the merits and de-merits of these institutional reforms. The impacts of institutional reforms on poverty/poor and women would be discussed in the next section.

district level. Thus, they have missed a chance to achieve sustainable natural resources management that was possible through enhanced participation and inclusion of marginalized sections of the society, which could have been the ultimate result of decentralization of powers. Specific impacts of institutional reforms in forestry sector in NWFP on poverty, poor and women may be observed through a case study of selected villages where FSP was implemented. Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) conducted this study in 2001⁵ (ADB 2002).

Case Study of Selected Villages where FSP was Implemented: Issues and Options

Background

The objectives of Forest Sector Project (FSP), as stated in the project documents, is to steer the Forest Department towards true spirit of social forestry. It aims at a joint forest management, gender sensitized policies, and enhanced participation. It is to do so by developing and applying an integrated, participatory natural resources management methodology to foster socio-economic and environmental well being of the people. In order to ensure participation of communities according to social forestry principles in the planning and implementation process, NWFP is divided into different units and subunits. Resource Management Subunit comprising many villages is the planning unit for project interventions, while village land use plan (VLUP) at each village level serves as a tool for participatory planning and the organization of the village community and natural resources management. Village community is responsible to implement the village land use plan (VLUP) through Village Development Committees (VDC) and Women's Organizations (WO) (FSP-revised PC1).

As mentioned in the previous section, different institutional reforms in NWFP forest department were initiated to cater the enabling environment for project implementation. It was in this context that SDPI conducted an empirical study to assess the impacts of various reform processes initiated through FSP in selected villages of civil divisions (An administrative unit comprising two or more districts) of Hazara, Mardan and Malakand in NWFP. Community mapping, focus-group discussions, and individual interviews were used as tools to collect data for this study. A checklist of topics (Box 2) was prepared for fieldwork to assess the impacts of FSP on pro-poor growth, social development and good governance.

⁵Details of the study are available at Asian Development Bank website
http://www.adb.org/projects/forestpolicies/case_studies.asp

Box 2: Issues and topics explored during fieldwork in project villages.

Governance
A. Level and extent of public participation and involvement in: VDC/WO preparation VDC/WO decision making Resource contribution [to investment and community infrastructure (CIS) Development] Implementation, administration, and coordination Benefits (actual and perceived) Level and extent of FSP/FD staff participation and involvement in implementation of the project activities.
Social Development
A. Human capital development and physical well being: Level of knowledge and awareness of existing Natural Resources Management (NRM) practices Land tenure and how it affects the implementation of the project Existing income-generation and livelihood measures Coping mechanism in case of any financial difficulty
B. Services: Level of existing social services in the community such as drinking water, health, and education Level of existing infrastructure for the social services available CIS development plans of the VDC/WO What sort of interventions the community was expecting from the project?
C. Social capital and social inclusion: Status of non rightholders/non-landowners Status differential Social organization in the village and their main functions Coping mechanism in case of any financial difficulty
D. Rural energy (commonly-used fuels, any impact of project interventions)
E. Gender and equity development: Status of women in rural societies The say of women in decision making and other household matters Role of women in Natural Resources Management (NRM) Workload distribution (Is FSP causing any extra burden on women?) Effectiveness of WOs

Summary of Findings

It was observed that the project implementation process, including formation of village land use plan, VDCs, and WOs, was not pro-poor. The VDCs and WOs were neither representative nor functioning in a democratic way. Village notables and elites had dominated the VDCs and WOs. The benefits of project interventions tend to accrue to village influential. The poor and landless could be benefited only either from village infrastructure investment that benefit all, or/and from increased labor or sharecropping opportunities. It was also noted that the interventions that supported the livelihood strategies of the individual community members (such as plantation of fruit trees in

private farms or house yards) were more successful than those without a direct positive impact on local livelihoods (such as plantation in the communal areas or along the road sides).

The project interventions were not gender oriented. According to the project documents, the recommendations of WOs for village infrastructure development schemes were to be given priority over the recommendations of VDCs. However, in practice, most of the WOs were non functional and VDC members were proposing the infrastructure development programs without consulting the WOs. Thus, VDCs were asking for construction of road to the village whereas the women informed the research team that provision of drinking water and trained birth attendants were their main demands. It was also observed that project interventions ignored the livelihood strategies of women and some of the project interventions such as putting a ban on grazing in the local pastures and firewood collection from the local forest these interventions had increased the hardships of women, and children and landless shepherds who were using these sites either to graze their livestock or to collect firewood.

It was learnt from the case study findings that empowerment of communities is still not up to the mark and in many instances the ‘pro-poor dimensions’ of the project interventions are masked largely due to poor governance, a desire to maintain status quo, and/or due to lack of capacity at the executing end. The study concluded that it would be a combination of improved governance and pro-poor development, focused on local livelihood strategies that would lead to poverty alleviation and gender empowerment.

Conclusions

The dilemma with most of the natural resources management policies in the recent past has been the absence of human dimension and a focus on ‘pro-conservation’ approach even at the cost of local livelihoods. Part of the problem stemmed from non-participatory culture that prevailed (mainly) in most of the developing countries. However, the trends are changing now and today the world is no more involved in the ‘conservation’ versus ‘development’ debate. Rather, a new approach ‘conservation as well as development’ has now emerged. The proponents of this approach including many governments, international donors and international lending agencies are revisiting their ‘vision and mission statements’ to articulate themselves in a scenario that leads to development without distorting the conservation of natural resources.

On the face of it, the above-mentioned trend seems very good, and in this context, the journey of forest policies in Pakistan that started from the Indian Forest Act of 1878 to the Draft National Forest Policy of 2001 (at federal level) and NWFP Forest Policy 2001 (at the provincial level) is a giant leap. However, for any development effort to be pro-poor, good governance is a must. Unfortunately, Pakistan (like other developing countries) lacks good governance as well as the political will to change the status quo. Although during the formulation of new policies, consultation with a group of experts has become a common practice in the recent past, yet the consultation process (if any) remains confined to the folds of professional circles. Thus, the policies become stronger on technical consideration but lack the required flexibility to be workable in real life situation, presenting multiple sets of actors and factors.

Consequently, the stakeholders often find themselves in a situation where state policies either do not support or have harmful effects on their livelihood strategies. It is in this scenario that policies do not meet the expectations of people who, in turn, are forced to utilise the natural resources unsustainably to secure their livelihoods. Consequently, neither the developmental nor the conservational objectives are met with. Forestry Sector Project in NWFP is an example of one of these situations. The project finished by the end of year 2002 (1996-2002) and despite its ambitious aims and radical goals, there is no let up either in the miseries of the stakeholders or in the depleting forest stocks.

There is a sheer need to put people at the centre of development. This focus on people is equally important at higher levels (when thinking about the achievement of objectives such as poverty reduction, economic reform or sustainable development) as it is at the micro or community level. At a practical level, this means before formulating and implementing a policy, the policy makers should:

- begin with an analysis of the people's livelihoods and how these have been changing over time
- involve people and respect their views
- focus on the impact of the proposed policy and institutional arrangements upon people/households and the dimensions of poverty they define
- have enough flexibility in their proposed interventions to promote the agenda of the poor (a key step is political participation by poor people themselves)
- work to support people to achieve their livelihood goals (though taking into account considerations regarding sustainability)

Sustainable livelihood would be secured only if policies work with people in a way that they congruent with their current livelihood strategies, social environment and ability to adapt. *People – rather than the resources they use or governments that serve them – are the priority concern.* Adhering to this principle would not only ensure provision of sustainable livelihood but would also enhance involvement of all sections of society in sustainable natural resources management. In this context, it should be realized that generation of income and employment is as important as generating government revenue alone; and forestry should be an instrument of sustainable forest management policy rather than its objectives. Otherwise, the poor would remain mired in poverty pushing us into a spiral of over exploitation in the wake of all forest policy failures.

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