Negotiation-support toolkit for learning landscapes

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40 Rapid assessment of institutional strengths, networks and actors (RISNA)

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Rapid Assessment of Institutional Strengths, Networks and Actors (RISNA) assesses the capacity of local institutions to respond to changes and opportunities in their external environment, including policy changes at higher levels. Identification of authorities to make decisions to adapt and change, and of existing modifiable rules for benefit distribution and conflict resolution are particular foci of RISNA.

Introduction

The ongoing degradation of natural resources cannot be solved by a purely technical approach. Efficient and fair governance is a prerequisite for sustainable natural resource management. Assessment of institutional capacity offers a comprehensive and holistic perspective on likely achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

There are success stories of sustainable resource management by adaptive traditional rules, as well as evidence of landscape degradation when external exploitation overrides local institutions. Under globalized economies, local institutions face challenges from outside (exogenous) as well as from within the institution itself (endogenous). Changes in the political, economic and social contexts influence institutional strategies in the use of natural resources. Broad and dynamic social networks have been built by actors through coalition or cooperation with various parties for exploitation of natural resources.

It is imperative for institutions that are in charge of natural resource management to be responsive and adaptive to the changing environment and needs. To analyze the capacity to respond and adapt, it is necessary to understand institutional structures and components, the locus of decision-making authority regarding the use of natural resources, benefit distribution and conflict resolution. Furthermore, strategies of the institutions to deal with the dynamic environment need to be identified and assessed.

Objectives

1. Identify strengths and weaknesses of existing local institutions in charge of natural resource management to face policies and environmental changes;
2. Identify particular structures and components within the institutions that should be strengthened to increase agilities in conserving and managing natural resources;
3. Provide tools for policy-makers that can be used to determine the capacity of an institution

Steps

1. Rapid assessment of changes in the landscape and environmental services (water, biodiversity, forest and land) and the drivers of changes. Choice of tools: RHA, RABA, DriLUC.

2. Rapid assessment of existing rules and regulations of utilization of natural resources, particularly in
   a. ownership and rights of use;
   b. sharing and distribution of benefits; and
   c. transfer of rights and ownership of the resources.
3. Gaps between formal and informal rules, as well as competing claims and conflicts over lands. RaTA method can be used here.
4. Rapid assessment of actors who use the natural resources in order to find out the role of the actors in terms of
   a. planning and using natural resources, including
      i. implementation and utilization of resources
      ii. processes in formulation and enforcing rules; and
   b. methods: stakeholder analysis, power analysis.
5. Rapid assessment of network development, in terms of cooperation and capacity building.
6. Analysis of institutional capacity to adapt and adjust to the changing environment.

Case study: RISNA in Indonesia

The village of Lubuk Beringin in Jambi province, Indonesia, is situated at the edge of the Kerinci Seblat National Park and its buffer zone. Road access was only recently developed. The main sources of livelihoods are traditional rubber agroforestry and rice production. The very first permit for a 'Hutan Desa' (village forest agreement) in Indonesia was given over a forested area of 3517 hectares of Lubuk Beringin in 2009. Under this permit, the community has the right to manage the area (Akiefnawati et al 2010), demonstrating the institutional capacity of the village, with support from NGOs and local government, to handle the administrative procedures, among other things. Since then, the Hutan Desa at Lubuk Beringin has become a showcase for various types of community-based forest management, including efforts to reduce deforestation and forest degradation (REDD).

Conflicting local and formal rules, local and formal institutions

However, the formal recognition, which aimed to strengthen and empower local institutions, appears to have undermined the informal rules and arrangements that guided local practices in managing natural resources. The rules of the Hutan Desa permit impose numerous formal procedures that are not be familiar to the villagers nor are they manageable under local conditions.

The risks and benefits associated with such interventions will benefit from an analysis of institutional strengths, network and actors. Application of RISNA aimed to increase understanding of the local institutional capacity. In so doing, it was clear that there was a complex network of customary and formal government rules at work, as outlined below.

The 'rio' (local title for the head of the village) played an important role in regulating the use of land, water and fish since customary rules were still followed by the people of the village. Disputes which resulted in the death of humans and livestock would be settled according to custom. There were 12 types of cases that were resolved under customary rule, including stabbing, killing or poisoning cattle. Law enforcement was carried out through the rio with reference to customary rules as applicable. Punishments included slaughtering a buffalo slaughter and forgiveness, all of which were entered into the village records.

A Kelembagaan Hutan Desa (KHD/Village Forest Institution) was established through mutual agreement between the Consultative Agency of Lubuk Beringin and the rio. The sub-district government approved the institution and members were directly elected by all citizens of the village. Stewardship by the chair, secretary and treasurer was exercised for 1) village forest protection; and 2) use of the village forest. Stewardship of the institution itself was under the Village Board of Trustees, which governed the use of village assets. Stewardship was valid for a period of three years, after which an open election was held.

Even though the customary institution played an important role related to social interaction and use of natural resources, the KHD still needed to increase capacity, such as through introducing an administrative model to deal with the process of forest management from planning until profit distribution. Involvement of the KHD in discussions both at the national and regional levels was necessary to increase individual capacity as well as institutional networking. Documentation and administration will be needed, especially in the negotiation process with other parties, such as other levels of government, companies, NGOs and neighbouring communities.

No later than two years after the establishment of a Hutan Desa agreement, a Village Forest Working Plan (RKHD) and Annual Plan of Forest Village (RTHD) had to be submitted in the form of documents endorsed by the district government. RKHD includes aspects of regional governance, institutional governance, business management and human resources management while the RTHD includes a boundary work plan, planting plan, maintenance, utilization and protection.

However, RISNA revealed that the boundary work plans could not be fully implemented owing to the rules on the use of government funds for boundary activity, which stated they could only be used for determining the outer boundary, which separates the non-forest area from forest. Further, it seemed that in the protected areas, the budget for works would be the responsibility of the organization that has the permit, which must be financed from the rights holders (KHD). Clarification by the Ministry of Forestry was requested by the district forestry office, however, at the time of writing there had been no concrete suggestions from the central government to resolve the problem.

Conclusion

1. Rapid assessment of the strength and weaknesses of the village forest institution provided information on the gap between the formal provisions of village forest management and its implementation.
2. The forest management regulations are unclear and give rise to debate that impedes implementation.
3. The right to manage the forest given to community is treated equally with the rights granted to large investors. It is feared that these requirements would impede the village forest scheme of achieving its intended goal of forest protection.
4. Through rapid analysis of institutional resistance, RISNA, structural problems that exist in the field can be identified.

Key reference

Akiefnawati R, Villamor GB, Zulfikar F, Budisetiawan I, Mulyoutami E, Ayat A, van Noordwijk M. 2010. Stewardship agreement to reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD): case study from Lubuk Beringin's Hutan Desa, Jambi Province, Sumatra, Indonesia. *International Forestry Review* 12:349–360.

The landscape scale is a meeting point for bottom–up local initiatives to secure and improve livelihoods from agriculture, agroforestry and forest management, and top–down concerns and incentives related to planetary boundaries to human resource use.

Sustainable development goals require a substantial change of direction from the past when economic growth was usually accompanied by environmental degradation, with the increase of atmospheric greenhouse gasses as a symptom, but also as an issue that needs to be managed as such.

In landscapes around the world, active learning takes place with experiments that involve changes in technology, farming systems, value chains, livelihoods' strategies and institutions. An overarching hypothesis that is being tested is:

> Investment in institutionalising rewards for the environmental services that are provided by multifunctional landscapes with trees is a cost-effective and fair way to reduce vulnerability of rural livelihoods to climate change and to avoid larger costs of specific 'adaptation' while enhancing carbon stocks in the landscape.

Such changes can't come overnight. A complex process of negotiations among stakeholders is usually needed. The divergence of knowledge and claims to knowledge is a major hurdle in the negotiation process.

The collection of tools—methods, approaches and computer models—presented here was shaped by over a decade of involvement in supporting such negotiations in landscapes where a lot is at stake. The tools are meant to support further learning and effectively sharing experience towards smarter landscape management.

World Agroforestry Centre
ASB Partnership for the Tropical Forest Margins
AARD
Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
Norad
IFAD Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty
CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees, and Agroforestry