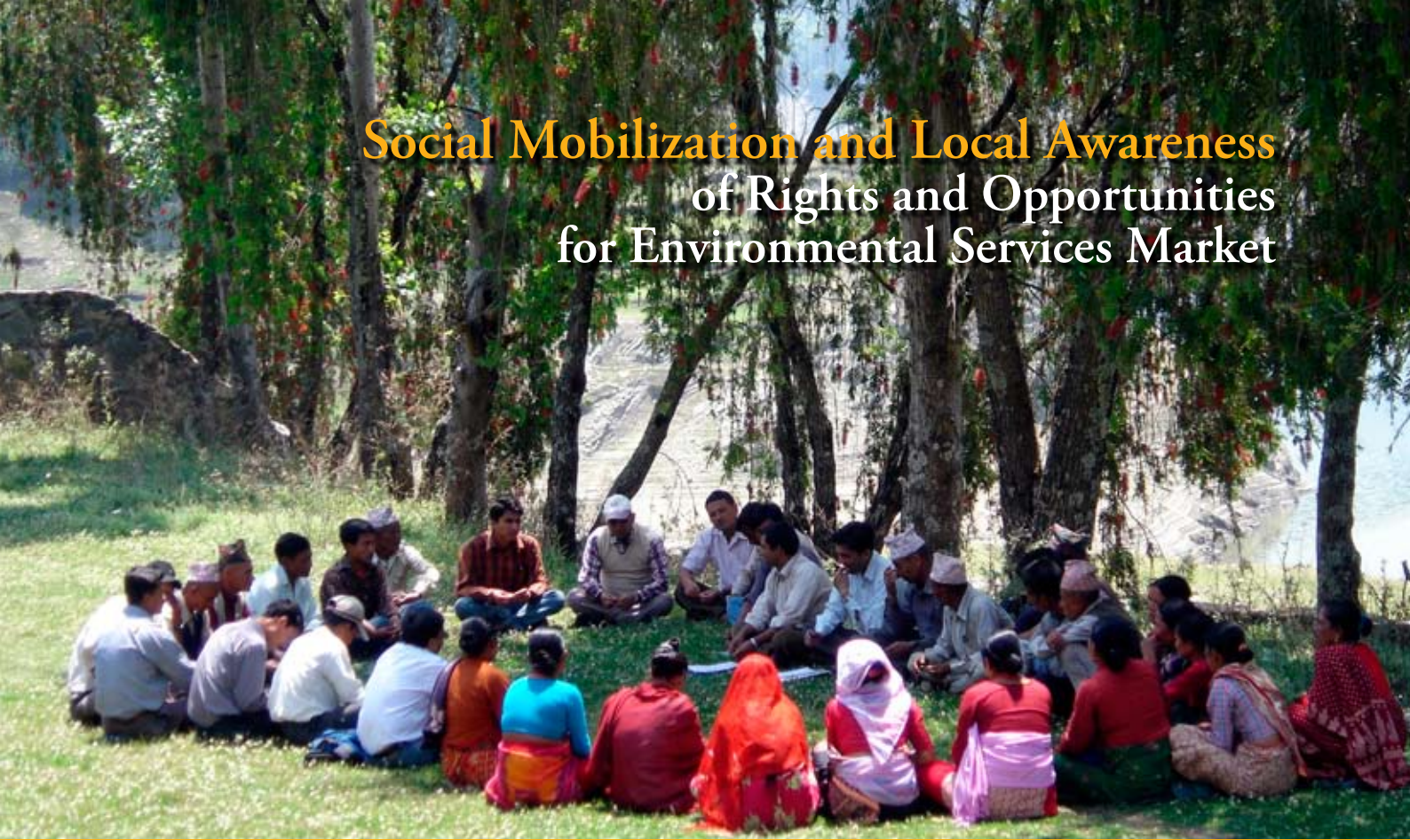


Social Mobilization and Local Awareness of Rights and Opportunities for Environmental Services Market



HIGHLIGHTS

Social mobilization is a crucial step in initiating a reward for environmental services (RES) scheme. Traditionally social mobilization is perceived as a community-based call to action for political and social commitment by strengthening human and institutional resources development at local level. As social mobilization develops, it takes advantage of constantly evolving communications tools and technologies. Different communities choose locally relevant activities and messages. Giving communities the opportunity to engage in RES schemes is one option for an effective mobilization effort. At the end of social mobilization activities, a foundation should be in place for well-functioning community-based institutions at the ecological level that are strong enough to produce environmental benefits. This note shares RUPES experiences in conducting its social mobilization efforts and laying the foundations for establishing local institutions.

KEY FINDINGS

1. RES negotiation will succeed if the community appreciates its opportunity, role and impact as 'ES sellers'. Acting as 'ES sellers' does not mean only involving communities in conservation efforts, but also recognizing of their rights. The communities should be involved in the scheme voluntarily and understand their bargaining positions based on 'optimal threat and cooperation'¹ with other stakeholders.
2. Community-based institutions should have a well-functioning structure in order to effectively support an operational RES mechanism. A well-functioning structure means that the institution should have the accountability of local representation to resolve poverty problems and be able to make independent decisions on community-based management.

IMPLICATION FOR RES PROJECT

1. Be creative in conducting social mobilization activities by maximizing the use of available communication tools and technologies.
2. Support capacity building on ES issues and interactions with intermediaries and potential buyers of ES.
3. Support community organizations to be sensitive to gender issues and to represent the 'poorest of the poor' and their interests.
4. Facilitate the creation of a local 'prospectus' of options for voluntary conservation efforts when an RES scheme is secured.

SECTION I. INCREASING LOCAL AWARENESS THROUGH SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

Social mobilization capitalizes on people's energies and commitments, on available resources, and on situations that can help move a group of people to achieve a common goal and understand why it matters to them. In the case of RUPES, our common goal is to bring local attention to ES and their reward mechanisms and to mobilize action to establish local institutions for pro-poor RES schemes. Social mobilization begins with a conscious recognition of the problem to be addressed. It involves planned actions to reach, influence and involve all relevant stakeholders to reach a common goal. RUPES experience shows that each site has different opportunities to raise awareness about the state of RES. Voluntary actions to engage in RES schemes can take place only when people become aware of how this effort benefits them and what action they can take – two essential factors for true social mobilization to begin.

The RUPES sites split into two approaches in conducting their social mobilization efforts. The Kulekhani (Nepal), Bakun (the Philippines) and Singkarak (Indonesia) sites started with intensive social mobilization activities since these three sites have clearer mechanisms that they want to develop. These full-scale social mobilization efforts help identify the responses of the community when an RES mechanism is being introduced. Wider and expanding introduction of the RES scheme also increases the opportunity for the project to find 'pioneers' among community members. Clear understanding about the RES concept will make it easier to have transparent discussions on the possible mechanisms that would most effectively respond to a certain area and the communities in that area. This will enhance the success of the scheme by strengthening the foundation at the local level. However, there is the risk that community expectations could be unrealistic if the RES scheme cannot operate in a timely fashion, resulting in disappointment which could prevent real solutions from emerging later on in the process.

Box 1. Empowering communities to make their own decisions

A joint resolution endorsing the formulation of an Integrated Watershed Development and Management Plan for the Bakun Ancestral Domain was prepared with the assistance of RUPES' Technical Advisory Group and Bakun Integrated Watershed Development Management Plan Technical Working Group. Among the highlights of the resolution are the urgency of having a comprehensive watershed development management plan, integrating RUPES' concept for development and management of watershed as a unique strategy, and establishing a venue for different stakeholders to provide complementary projects and programmes geared toward the maintenance, protection and sustainability of watershed.

Stated in the resolution are the possible commitments and support of the Bakun Municipal Government and the Bakun Indigenous Tribe Organization once the resolution is approved. Furthermore, RUPES' Coordinating Office in the Philippines, along with its National Technical Committee, expressed their support by providing technical assistance in the formulation process.

In another interesting development in Kulekhani site in Nepal, the Makawanpur District Development Committee (DDC) tried to ignore its commitment to follow the guidelines of the Environmental Management Special Fund (EMSF), an ES reward transfer mechanism to set aside 20 percent of the hydropower royalties received by the district (from Kulekhani hydropower plants) for Kulekhani watershed, in recognition of the valuable environmental services provided by upland people.

The DDC followed its usual internal procedures for selecting development projects without consulting the upland people of the Kulekhani watershed. The upland people organized quickly and protested this decision. A group of about 60 people went to the Makawanpur DDC office at the district headquarters and warned DDC officials to honour their commitments. They publicized the issue in local and national newspapers and broadcast it during radio programmes. They also approached political leaders to put pressure on the DDC.

The DDC bowed to public pressure and acknowledged its error. The DDC officials and the representatives of the upland people met in the watershed to re-select EMSF projects through participatory planning processes. This incident demonstrates that the social mobilization initiatives of the RUPES Kulekhani programme can produce results.

From RUPES experiences, negotiations with buyers on payment delivery can be a long and cumbersome process. For sites with uncertain opportunities for finding buyers and settled mechanisms, such as Bungo and Sumberjaya sites at their initial project implementation, gradual and step-by-step social mobilization will be more suitable and can prevent creating unrealistic expectations and ‘strategic behaviour’ at the local level. Once there is certainty about the buyer and mechanisms, full-scale and intensive social mobilization activities can begin. In this case, the ES intermediary might face negative responses due to the ‘secrecy’ of not having been up front – there could be suspicions or doubts about the real purpose of the ES intermediaries. Do they only conduct training? Are there any follow-up actions? Do they really care about the community’s needs and priorities?

Box 1 shows RUPES experiences in conducting social mobilization programmes for communities in the RUPES sites in Bakun and Kulekhani. In Bakun, RUPES facilitation resulted in a joint resolution between the indigenous community group and the local municipal government for a watershed management plan. In Kulekhani, support from the RUPES project has empowered the community to fight for its rights and for its voice to be heard.

SECTION 2. ENCOURAGING THE COMMUNITY TO ESTABLISH A WELL-FUNCTIONING GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION

At the end of social mobilization process, there should be a well-functioning grassroots organization that has local accountability and represents the community in achieving its common goal, such as poverty alleviation. This organization’s governance also enables the community to make independent decisions about how it wants to manage its natural resources (see also Box 1). The composition of the members of such organizations should represent all levels and ‘layers’ of the community by considering gender and wealth status, and by prioritizing women and ‘the poorest of the poor’.

To achieve the conservation outcome, these grassroots organizations have ample areas of coverage for managing the landscape, which are usually determined by an appraisal of environmental services.² Box 2 shows how RUPES Singkarak builds cumulative local institutions for managing the lake, starting from a single ‘champion’ *nagari* (village). Nowadays, the lake conservation is not only the issue of a single *nagari* but a major concern of other *nagaris* surrounding the lake.

Box 2. Grassroots organizations increase the effectiveness of RES

Enabling local institutional systems to implement ES programmes is one of the objectives of the RUPES Singkarak project. To meet this objective, a number of meetings and discussions were held to develop the institutional design and process of a village-level environmental management body or Badan Pengelola Lingkungan Hidup (BPLH) in the nagaris surrounding Singkarak Lake in West Sumatra of Indonesia. Nagari Paninggahan was the first village to pioneer the establishment of BPLH. Currently, a total of 13 BPLHs have been established and are committed to support activities to enhance the local role in environmental management. The structure of a BPLH is nagari-specific, meaning that local conditions and needs are taken into account.

The development of rules and an operational system for the BPLH is still in progress. The RUPES Singkarak team is working closely with each BPLH to establish rules for establishing BPLH internal organizational rule, a proposal concerning the rights and obligation of ES providers, and reward mechanisms and distribution among the providers. In the future, each BPLH will have an opportunity to submit a proposal for an ES programme to a joint committee, where potential buyers and sellers (e.g. BPLH or nagari) will discuss and agree on an RES programme.



Farmer group meeting in Sumberjaya, Indonesia

Further reading and references:

¹ see RUPES Synthesis Notes No. 1 'Dealing with Myth-Perceptions: how to reduce communication and perception gaps before Rewards for Environmental Services negotiations can start?' about optimal threat

² see RUPES Synthesis Notes No. 1 'Dealing with Myth-Perceptions: how to reduce communication and perception gaps before Rewards for Environmental Services negotiations can start?' about various tools for appraising environmental services

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The RUPES Project:

Throughout the world, upland people, many of them poor, earn their livelihoods from land and landscapes that, when properly managed, provide valuable environmental services to others. However, management practices that maintain or increase environmental services often carry a cost to upland people in terms of time and/or income. Regulations and prescriptions of land use aimed at securing environmental services are often ill-designed and exacerbate rural poverty. RUPES aims to work with both potential users and producers of environmental services to find conditions for positive incentives that are voluntary (within the existing regulatory framework), realistic (aligned with real opportunity costs and real benefits) and conditional (linked to actual effects on environmental services), while reducing important dimensions of poverty in upland areas.

At each of the six RUPES action sites, local institutions partner with the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) to implement action research aimed at developing effective reward mechanisms in the local context. The sites are Muara Bungo, Singkarak, and Sumberjaya in Indonesia; Kulekhani in Nepal; and Bakun and Kalahan in the Philippines. National policy dialogues are aimed at making policy frameworks more conducive to positive incentives.



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