DEVOLUTION AND COMMUNITY-BASED NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: CREATING SPACE FOR LOCAL PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE AND BENEFIT?

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This paper draws together evidence from a number of studies on the impacts of natural resource devolution policies in several Asian and southern African countries from the perspective of local people. Devolution outcomes are assessed in terms of who has greater benefits and decision-making authority. Factors that have influenced the devolution process are also examined.

Policy conclusions

- Most 'devolved' natural resources management (NRM) reflects rhetoric more than substance, and is characterised by some continuation of substantive central government control and management over natural resources rather than a genuine shift in authority to local people.
- The ways in which local people realise the benefits of devolution differ widely, and negative trade-offs, mostly felt by the poor, are common.
- States, communities and other stakeholders have different visions of devolution and its mode of implementation. A shared framework, more accountable to local livelihood needs and people's rights to self-determination, is required. Careful re-assessment of the state's claim to be protecting the wider 'public interest' forms part of this process.
- Organisational models that devolve authority directly to disadvantaged resource users are more embracing of local interests and priorities than those that allocate control to higher levels of social organisation.
- More powerful actors in communities tend to manipulate devolution outcomes to suit themselves. Checks and balances need to be in place to ensure that benefits and decision-making do not become controlled by élites.
- Strong local organisational capacity and political capital enhance outcomes for local people by enabling them to mobilise resources and negotiate better benefits. NGOs, donors, federations and other external actors have a key role in moving devolution policy and practice towards local interests.

Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed a paradigm shift in conservation and natural resource management (NRM) away from costly state-centred control towards approaches in which local people play a much more active role. These reforms purportedly aim to increase resource user participation in NRM decisions and benefits by restructuring the power relations between central state and communities through the transfer of management authority to local-level organisations. Yet, the reality rarely reflects this rhetoric.

This paper examines the extent to which devolution has transferred control over NRM decision-making to local people, created the space to accommodate local interests and livelihood needs, and empowered resource users to benefit from and influence the outcomes of these new policies. In short, we ask whether devolution policies have been favourable for local people.

The paper draws on the findings of two recent studies of devolution and NRM in three Asian countries (Contreras et al. forthcoming) and eight southern African countries (Shackleton and Campbell, 2001) (Box 1).

The paper recognises that the state has a legitimate role in devolved NRM (Box 2), but questions whether in practice a balance has been achieved between local and 'wider' interests and objectives. Too often the notion of conservation as a 'public interest' area, or the need to achieve national economic development goals have been manipulated to serve the interests of NR departments and to legitimise their actions, usually to the detriment of local livelihood systems and the real choices available to people. This paper argues that 'scientific management' is often used to justify continued central control over valuable resources, when it is really about controlling profitable opportunities, often for individuals who are not entitled to them. It has also ensured a dominant role for officials in designing and approving management plans, which are often unnecessarily complex and take an unjustifiably wide interpretation of the 'greater social good' to the detriment of the fundamental rights of local people. Evidence indicates how starkly the rhetoric of devolution objectives and practice have diverged, and how doggedly the state has continued to direct and dominate local NRM.

Has devolution worked for local people?

Are there improved benefits for local communities?

Across most sites in Asia and southern Africa, local people's views were that devolution policies had yielded only limited benefits for them, of the types illustrated in Box 3. In most instances, the state provided benefits as an incentive to encourage people to support activities that met government revenue or conservation interests rather than local livelihood

Box 1 Case studies [1]

Asia	Southern Africa
India: 20	Botswana: 1
China: 14	Namibia: 3
Philippines: 11	South Africa: 2
	Zimbabwe: 2
	Tanzania: 1
	Malawi: 2
	Zambia: 2
	Lesotho: 1
• Focus on forest management under both state and communal tenure	• Cover a range of sectors on both community and state land: wildlife, forests and woodlands, and rangelands
• Consider both production and protection	
• Devolution policies in place for 10-20 years	• Devolution policies in place for 3-10 years

[1] *As context varied widely, sites are not necessarily representative of the countries from which they derive*

needs. Thus, although access to some subsistence products improved, access to other important local resources such as fuelwood or game (e.g. India, Zambia) often continued to be restricted. In the Makuleke case in Kruger National Park, South Africa, community members gained rights only to non-consumptive benefits (mainly derived from tourism). In parts of Zimbabwe and India, timber and valuable non-timber forest products (NTFPs) were reserved for state management, often increasing officials' personal incomes, but denying local people income-earning opportunities.

Trade-offs were felt most intensely by the poor. In India, China and the Philippines, timber and agroforestry species favoured by forestry departments were usually promoted at the expense of species valued by poor people for medicine, fodder, craft materials and wild foods. In Namibia, communities were pleased to see game numbers increase, but they were also more vulnerable to crop and livestock damage by 'problem' animals. The lack of authority to make decisions locally to deal with raiding wildlife was a major area of local discontent (Box 5). Game areas or plantations were often established on land used for grazing or cropping by poorer members of communities in both the Asian and African sites.

Financial benefits from devolved management usually fell short of local expectations. Income distribution shares were generally decided at the central level, but governments often failed to deliver on their promised share of incomes, or returns were far less than anticipated and inadequate to maintain local enthusiasm. In cases where financial benefits accrued from revenues, licences, permits and leases, a disproportionate amount of this income was retained by the state at district (e.g. CAMPFIRE, Zimbabwe) or higher levels, or it was captured by local and outsider élites. Only in a few cases did communities receive substantial financial benefits (e.g. Namibia and Botswana). In these exceptional cases dividends were considerable - the Chobe Enclave Trust in Botswana received around US$200,000 per year from wildlife utilisation and tourism and 45 families shared about US$125,000 annually (Jones pers. comm.).

By contrast, in India the Forest Department often claimed more than half of the income from timber, even when they played no role in protecting the harvested trees. In southern China, after paying taxes and harvesting and transport costs, local communities were often left with only a third of the final sale price of timber. Collective expenses then accounted for a further 10–20% of this local income. In Zimbabwe, the 50% share of revenues from CAMPFIRE often reached communities after inordinate delays. In many countries,

stakeholders other than the intended beneficiaries decided how income was to be used, i.e. for household dividends or development projects. Where development projects were supported, these often favoured the better off in the community (e.g. an irrigation scheme for farmers in the CAMPFIRE case, tourism infrastructure in Palawan, Philippines).

In addition to these variable material benefits, devolution also indirectly provided other benefits in some cases (Box 3). Local people previously considered poachers, criminals and squatters were now seen as legitimate resource users in most sites. Donors, NGOs, government service providers and, in some countries, the private sector consequently took more notice of these users and provided assistance to them, including technical, managerial and community capacity building, small enterprise development (e.g. bee keeping in Malawi, tourism ventures in Namibia, mushroom harvesting in China) and agroforestry support. Devolution opened channels for rural dwellers to communicate their priorities to government decision-makers and in some places improved community-government relations (although in many sites suspicion continued to exist, e.g. Zambia, Zimbabwe, India). By encouraging local people to join new networks and forge new relationships, devolution may have also contributed to villagers' organisational capacity and political capital. In Asia, where devolution has been in place longer, local populations were demanding more autonomy, bringing about such reforms as the *Panchayat* Extension to Scheduled Areas Act in India and the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act in the Philippines. In some countries, devolution policies addressed equity issues and made in-roads to enhancing participation of marginalised groups and women in decision-making (e.g. Makulele, South Africa, Botswana).

These indirect benefits did not, however, occur in all sites. In some cases, devolution policies damaged existing organisational capacity, local enterprise and equitable social relations. In Uttarakhand, India, for example, the authority of *Van Panchayats* was undermined by the introduction of village Joint Forest Management (JFM), weakening leadership and public participation in resource management. In communities in Orissa, India forest protection committees run by poor women were taken over by élite men working in concert with forest department officials, limiting women's access to resources needed for their small-scale trade. Relatively equitable distribution of forest land in Gengma, China, was threatened by entrepreneurs working with local government to seize large tracts of land for rubber, fruit tree or other plantations, leaving poor men and women with little worth managing.

Box 2 Devolution and the role of central state

Devolution involves the transfer of authority over natural resource decision-making and benefits from central state to local actors. The state maintains a role in:
- Protecting wider 'public goods' (watersheds, biodiversity, carbon sinks and other ecological services)
- Establishing the policy, legal and social frameworks and conditions needed for local management to succeed
- Facilitating and regulating private activity
- Mediating conflict
- Helping local organisations enforce locally designed and monitored regulations and sanctions
- Providing legal recourse
- Providing technical assistance
- Addressing local inequality and ensuring representation of marginal groups so that downward accountability of organisations receiving devolved authority is assured
- Helping communities to defend their rights, including protection against powerful external groups such as mining and timber companies and organised traders
- Supporting local capacity building

Box 3 Types of benefits observed across sites

Direct benefits
- Access to some subsistence and commercial products
- Share of revenues from hunting, tourism concessions, sales of timber, sales of valuable non-timber forest products (NTFPs)
- Share of incomes from permit and licence fees
- Employment
- Support for alternative livelihood activities
- More productive resource base
- Infrastructural development (schools, clinics, roads, etc.)

Indirect benefits
- Organisational development and strengthening
- New alliances (e.g. with NGOs)
- New channels of communication with government
- Technical and managerial capacity building
- Diversification of livelihoods/income
- Political empowerment
- Greater visibility
- Pride and identity

In reporting people's perceptions of benefits, we note that views were strongly shaped by historical context, mainly related to the degree of access people had to natural resources prior to devolution and the length of their experience with devolution policy. In many countries (e.g. China, most of the Philippines, and most of southern Africa) communities responded with initial enthusiasm to new NRM approaches, as these represented considerable progress from previous restrictive regimes. However, disillusionment set in as bureaucracies failed to meet the expectations raised by new policies. This was effectively illustrated in China and the lowland Philippines, where local participation in 'community-based' NRM has waned in recent years. Namibia and Botswana appear to be moving into a phase of reduced optimism and in Malawi communities became discouraged by bureaucratic delays and the slow progress of reforms. In other areas, e.g. amongst upland communities in the Philippines and self-initiated forest protection groups in India, devolution was seen as curtailing local rights and *de facto*

Box 4 The organisational foundations of devolution

The types of organisations that exercised 'local' authority (through devolution) and the direction and degree of their accountability had a strong influence on whether the outcomes of devolution policies were favourable for local people or not. The following organisational models were identified amongst the different cases:

- **District organisations**. These included local government organisations such as Rural District Councils in Zimbabwe and *panchayats* in India, and multi-stakeholder district structures aligned to line departments such as Wildlife Management Authorities in Zambia and forest farms in China. The measure of downward accountability varied from very little (CAMPFIRE and Zambia) to modest (as among *panchayats* in some parts of India).
- **Village committees** facilitated by government departments, e.g. Village Natural Resource Management Committees in Malawi and Forest Protection Committees in India. Here, accountability related to the degree of control transferred by the state (in Malawi and Tanzania committees could formulate their own by-laws, while committees in Zimbabwe and much of India and the Philippines were weak and largely controlled by forestry officials) and the extent to which local élites captured the process.
- **Corporate, legal organisations** composed of all rights holders and/or residents, e.g. Trusts (Botswana), Conservancies (Namibia), Communal Property Associations (Makuleke, South Africa), Villages (Tanzania), and Range Management Associations (Lesotho). Since the foundation and legitimacy of these organisations derived from the community itself, interference by the state was less pervasive than in the preceding arrangements, but it still retained ultimate authority and continued to make decisions with negative impacts on local interests.
- **Household-based and individual management** in China and the Philippines, where individuals exercised varying degrees of authority over species selection, harvesting practices, sale and consumption, and the distribution of benefits. The state maintained its control through providing access to processing technology, permit systems, planning requirements and fees and taxes.
- **Self-initiated organisations** that operated outside the state hierarchy. Cases ranged from traditional leaders in Zimbabwe (Chivi case), to Residents' Associations in South Africa (Fish River case), and share-holding schemes in China. Self-initiated schemes often were accountable to disadvantaged resource users (e.g. Orissa, India), but were co-opted by elites or officials in the absence of a supportive policy and legal framework. Where these organisations were representative and accountable, a lack of official support often limited their effectiveness in achieving sustainable and equitable NRM.

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access to resources. In some cases, ordinary community members were not even fully aware of the new policies (e.g. Zambia).

Who controls and makes decisions?

At all sites effort was made to transfer some decision-making responsibility over NR from central to local level. Different organisational and institutional arrangements were used to achieve this goal (Box 4). Overall, however, the case studies showed that, despite rhetoric to the contrary, central authorities continued to drive the NRM agenda. Government departments, except where NGOs or donors played a strong role, determined the nature of the shifts in control and the types of power that were transferred. In most instances they retained key aspects of management authority, placing tight constraints on local decision-making and sometimes rendering it meaningless (Box 5). In only a few cases did local people gain ownership rights to land (e.g. Maluleke restitution case in South Africa), although there were numerous examples of communities entering into lease agreements with the state (e.g. Botswana, Philippines, China). In Botswana a 15-year lease had been agreed between land boards and communities over controlled hunting areas but this was seen as too short to provide sufficient security to encourage investment. The fact that governments have not entrusted people with rights to own the land and resources they are managing suggests that little has changed. Proprietary rights over resources such as wildlife were devolved to a local level in Namibia, Zambia, and Botswana. However, in most instances, government continued to determine off-take quotas and communities were largely prevented from hunting game for subsistence purposes. In India and the Philippines, government officials controlled planning, supervised the budgets and decision-making processes of local organisations, and, in the former, controlled the marketing of timber and commercially valuable NTFPs.

In terms of the organisations receiving devolved authority (Box 4), we found that arrangements which transferred

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Box 5 Continued control by the state

Despite Botswana and Nambia having progressive policies that devolved more power than most to communities, the state continued to assert its authority, and, in some cases, sought recentralisation of control. In Botswana, the Department of Local Government recently issued a directive for all funds earned by CBNRM projects to be transferred to District Councils. This caused an outcry and was seen as a serious threat to community incentives and the long-term sustainability of these projects. Other surprise announcements included a ban on lion hunting and a dramatic increase in game licence fees. In neither case were wildlife management trusts consulted. In Namibia, government rather than conservancies set wildlife quotas and the Ministry of Environment and Tourism renewed tourism and hunting concessions with the private sector within conservancy areas instead of passing these on to conservancy committees. Hunting game for own use without a special permit (in contrast to the situation on private farms) was banned and conservancies were prevented from deciding how to deal with problem animals. Judicial and policy decisions reversing the downward shift in NRM authority were also common in Asia. Court cases in India 'banning' logging and other forest use activities in the northeast undermined years of policy reform – and traditional forest rights – in apparent response to pressure from urban environmentalists. Policies designed to protect the Yangtze watershed in China put devolution at risk throughout southwest China, as many farmers were unable to harvest and derive income from the trees that they 'owned'. In the Philippines, a single case of illegal forest use by a local user led to a temporary ban on all use under the Community-based Forest Management programme, punishing responsible users and casting doubt on the government's commitment to devolution.

authority directly to disadvantaged people tended to be more responsive to local needs than those that allocated control to higher levels of social organisation, such as local government. These also received up to 100% of benefits. Community members were supportive of these schemes and in some countries (e.g. Namibia) a demand-driven movement to establish further such initiatives was emerging. The China cases were noteworthy for the relative independence that communities enjoyed under household management and shareholding arrangements. Households and communities had the autonomy to plan on their own and state intervention was limited to taxes and regulatory mechanisms. There was informal pressure on farmers to plant timber and other species favoured by the government, but most resisted, planting fruit trees, bamboo and species for which markets were good and regulations few. By contrast, committees that were created by forest departments tended to be upwardly accountable to them (Bullet 2, Box 4) and enjoyed little independent decision-making. Many included forestry officials as members. Where communities already enjoyed autonomy and benefits under self-initiated management, devolution policies resulted in a loss of decision-making authority and benefits (e.g. forest committees in Orissa and *Van Panchayats* in Uttarakhand, India).

How have different actors influenced outcomes?

At many sites, parallel hierarchies of traditional leadership, local government and line department-sponsored committees existed. Often these had unclear or overlapping jurisdictions and mandates in NRM that led to institutional conflict and struggles for power and revenues (e.g. South Africa, Lesotho, India). Such conflicts tended to deflect focus away from local users, sidelining or rendering them invisible. In other cases, the influence of government and local élites over joint committees was strong (e.g. Zambia, India), and community representation and input severely diluted. NGOs, donors and the private sector further shaped outcomes by allying themselves with particular local groups or government officials. The roles of these actors are examined in more detail below.

Traditional leaders

In almost all the African sites, traditional authorities continued to play a role in NRM with varying degrees of legitimacy and control. In Zambia and Lesotho, chiefs asserted disproportionate power as chairpersons of sub-district NRM structures and diverted some community-based (CB) NRM benefits to building their own power base. On the other hand, the exclusion of traditional leaders from conservancy committees in Namibia was counterproductive, resulting in conflict and delays, until these leaders were co-opted onto the committees. Traditional authorities among the Miao people in China played an important role in limiting abuses of devolution policies by local bureaucrats and traders, and maintaining traditional forms of forest protection and access. In several cases, traditional leaders were provided an ex-officio or non-executive role, for instance as patrons on committees (e.g. Namibia). In others, such as Malawi, the NRM committees reported to traditional leaders who remained external to the committee. Another model was to leave communities to decide whether or not to elect hereditary leaders onto local committees. Where traditional leadership was strong and legitimate it had positive impacts in promoting local people's priorities (e.g. Malawi, Makuleke, Lesotho and Guizhou, China). Where it was weak or biased towards certain ethnic groupings, as in the Botswana case, lineage leaders had little support or role in new NRM structures.

Local government

Like traditional leaders, local government had a mixed role in promoting positive outcomes for local people from devolved NRM. In China, local government officials had a positive influence by assuring greater benefits from protected areas in Yunnan, but their complicity in land grabbing by plantation developers put the poor under intense pressure in Gengma. *Panchayats* in India were often more accountable to disadvantaged groups than organisations that were created through JFM and nominally community-based. Other cases showed that local councils often served as a source of competition with users for control of resources and revenues (e.g. Philippines, Zimbabwe, Zambia), and challenged institutional arrangements devised by communities, compromising local priorities. On the other hand, where district or local councils had little involvement in devolved NRM, community-based organisations came to operate in isolation from broader district level planning processes, often to their detriment (e.g. Botswana). In these cases, to ensure local and district political support of NRM committees and the integration of CBNRM into regional and district development plans, community-based organisations need to mesh with local government structures and development processes.

NGOs

NGOs played an important facilitatory and capacity building role in many of the cases, helping to bridge divergent views between local people and government agencies and manage conflict within or among communities. In some countries government departments used NGOs as project implementers. In India and the Philippines the state devolved services such as building technical and financial capacity, addressing equity concerns, and establishing communication networks to NGOs or service contracting organisations. In other instances, NGOs were the power brokers between communities and government (e.g. in Makuleke, where the community was up against the powerful South African National Parks Board). NGOs generally displayed greater commitment to empowering communities than state agencies and worked better to integrate the development needs of local people with NRM concerns. They helped pioneer CBNRM in Namibia and the Philippines, and in Botswana NGOs were key players, assisting communities to prepare their management plans and lobbying to get trusts registered. NGOs offered different types of training, from legal rights to the use of fuelwood saving devices. In India and the Philippines, NGOs provided technical information about forest management and product marketing. NGOs also played a crucial role in promoting gender equity and influenced outcomes through advocacy for poor resource users, which sometimes placed them in an adversarial position with the state (e.g. in Makuleke and Orissa). The influence of NGOs was not, however, always positive for local people. NGOs sometimes sided with the state or created dependency rather than empowerment, as in areas of Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh, India and Palawan, Philippines. Moreover, as local people's representatives and gatekeepers to the world, NGOs sometimes pushed communities into decisions they may otherwise not have taken.

Donors

Funding from donor agencies was critical in financing the development and facilitation of devolution. Donors often attached conditions to their funding, forcing governments to review their policies and practices to favour local needs. In most countries, donors, together with NGOs, were instrumental in driving the agenda towards greater local

control. However, as the case in Uttarakhand, India, suggests, donors sometimes lacked understanding of local conditions, and developed well-intentioned programmes not suited to local contexts, with negative consequences for poor people's livelihoods. In some places an unhealthy reliance on these external funds was created, resulting in the collapse of initiatives when funders withdrew (e.g. Lesotho, the Philippines).

Private sector

The private sector played a key role in income generation in some devolution initiatives. Private operators provided capital, expertise and market access. There were, however, many examples where local people benefited little from private sector involvement, particularly where the state continued to capture revenues or make decisions regarding private sector involvement. For example, in Botswana district officials controlled the tender process by which communities sell their wildlife quotas or tourism rights to private operators, opening it to corruption. In Madhya Pradesh, efforts to ensure NTFP collectors a better price for their products were thwarted by petty traders on whom collectors depended for services. Plantation developers ignored local resource management institutions in Gengma, China with impunity, leaving many villagers without access to forest resources. Thus the private sector, in alliance with other players, can shift the balance of power away from communities and their priorities.

Another class of entrepreneurs included those who used local NR but paid no resource rents (e.g. woodcarvers, firewood, charcoal and medicinal plant traders, and traditional healers). These powerful actors tended to ignore local regulations and controls, undermining the authority of community institutions and appropriating the resource base at the expense of local community members. Such entrepreneurs posed one of the greatest threats to local NRM in Malawi, where major conflicts existed between outside entrepreneurs and local people. The government attempted to assist the community to control this illegal use through roadblocks, fines and seizure of products, but with little effect. Similarly, the bamboo processing industry in Orissa worked with the state forest department to seize bamboo to which local communities were entitled, leading to intense social conflict. In some cases, negotiated agreements were useful to give outsiders with legitimate claims access to resources. This was a debate within self-initiated forest groups in India who often chose not to exclude women from neighbouring villages who had a long history of use of the local forest.

Alliances and people's organisations

In some countries effort was made to improve coordination amongst the various actors to help improve local people's influence over policy outcomes. In Botswana, district and national CBNRM forums helped to coordinate activities amongst different stakeholders. In India and the Philippines, federations of NGOs and local groups increased the ability of forest users to pressure government into meeting their needs, for example by pointing out shortcomings of existing programmes. In India, the formation of umbrella user organisations provided a channel through which people lobbied for collective priorities at national level, although these groups were not necessarily representative of users on the ground. Such activities led to changes in provisions (but not necessarily in their implementation) regarding the gender composition of JFM committees in India.

Within-community interests and power relations

In cases where significant authority was devolved, local politics and power relations often intervened to prevent more democratic control. At most sites problems occurred because of local élites seizing control (Box 6). In some locations, checks and balances were in place to ensure committee accountability to the community at large. For example, in Malawi a mechanism existed to remove committee members with whom the community is unhappy.

Local capacity: the key to making devolution more responsive to local interests?

The degree of organisation amongst poor resource users and awareness of their rights were critical factors influencing devolution outcomes. Where local people were well organised and had alliances with NGOs (see above) or other influential groups, they managed to secure greater control and benefits. In Maputi (the Philippines), local users got an Integrated Forest Management Agreement with outsiders revoked, thus protecting local access; in Orissa (India) federations of forest user organisations pressed the government to honour agreements over rights to benefits from NTFPs. Where local people were aware of their rights and knowledgeable of the constitutions that guided their NRM committees, they were able to challenge élitist and self-serving behaviour within these committees (e.g. Malawi, Namibia). Local users also fared better where they had strong tenure rights or where they had been able to influence the design and implementation of devolution policies. The latter occurred where communities had either initiated their own resource management systems (e.g. Malawi, India), responded quickly to new approaches with demands to suit their needs, or where corporate, rights-based organisations formed the primary locus of devolved authority (Bullet 3, Box 4). By contrast, poorly organised communities, such as in Gengma, China, were at the mercy of grasping local officials and outside investors.

In this context, to have capacity building include ways of improving representation, accountability and transparency is important (Box 7). Assistance should allow for diverse constitutional forms to exist, providing certain democratic standards are met. Promoting pluralistic processes that involve and protect disadvantaged groups will be especially important. Decisions on day-to-day management can then be left for users themselves to make once democratic decision-making is assured.

Conclusions: whose agenda for devolution? How can the state play a more positive role and move devolution forward?

As the cases show, devolution policies have often had disappointing impacts on local livelihoods and the 'space'

Box 6 Local élites: a hindrance to effective devolution

In each site, more powerful groups consistently attempted to seize any increases in authority or benefits created by devolution. Local élites took over leadership of self-initiated forest management committees from poorer forest users in Orissa, India and manipulated lease agreements in China. Men, especially the existing village leaders and those close to them, dominated committees, decision-making and training at most sites. Even where donors or NGOs created pressure for devolution to disadvantaged groups, such as the appointment of women on Forest Protection Committees, women's participation was token because decision-making power traditionally lay with men. Political rivalry sometimes developed between local government bodies and community management groups, making it more difficult for the latter to achieve their purposes. These trends suggest the need to be vigilant of adjustments intended to benefit marginalised groups. Special facilitation may be needed to assure that disadvantaged groups are effectively empowered in the implementation of policies (as in Botswana).

that communities enjoy to make their own management decisions. Though the explanations for failures varied from country to country, one consistent pattern was that state officials and local people had different expectations of what devolution was supposed to achieve and how. State interests in timber production, revenues and environmental conservation tended to override villagers' interests in livelihood security and income. State constructs of devolution assumed that public officials had the knowledge and moral authority to make decisions about NRM 'in the public interest'. Bureaucratic modes of action generally favoured formal, generalised resource management rules, while local users favoured site-specific norms adaptable to changing local contexts. The state's use of contractual agreements, regulations and organisations accountable to the state as instruments of devolution allowed officials to impose their own constructs and modes of action on villagers at the cost of local self-determination. In its extreme, devolution has been abused by governments to cheaply extend control where it was previously absent, and to shift the locus of state control from NRM and production to the extraction of revenues.

Different measures will be needed in different contexts, and the more common requirements are spelled out in Box 7. Most fundamentally, governments need to enable a situation where resource users have the rights and power to bring about a fair division of control, responsibility and benefits between government and themselves.

Box 7 How can the outcomes of devolution policies for local people be improved?

- Start with what resources users know and do.
- Promote flexible approaches rather than tightly worded contractual agreements.
- Create opportunities for pluralistic decision-making by establishing platforms for discussion, debate and planning.
- Improve legal literacy so that local people can make informed responses to existing policy.
- Improve larger scale popular mobilisation over NR issues, by, for example, encouraging the formation of federations.
- Assure accountability of local organisations and assist in conflict management.
- Monitor policy impacts.
- Create fuller and clearer property rights at a local level.
- Make livelihoods enhancement central to devolution policies.
- Build local capacity in technical skills, marketing, organisational development, communications, and political mobilisation. Two areas needing particular attention are: a) dealing with local inequalities and exploitative social relations, and b) addressing inter-community problems and opportunities.
- Shift focus of state and NGO interventions to issues of political process and away from technical and managerial aspects. Support the building of democratic organisations that are representative, accountable, and transparent. Technical choice in NR management should be left to users.

Source: CIFOR (2000)

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