CIFOR
Center for International Forestry Research
July 2008, No. 13

infobrief

CIFOR *infobrief* provides concise, accurate, peer-reviewed information on current topics in forest research.

Adaptive Collaborative Management Can Help Us Cope With Climate Change

Key Points

- Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) is a participatory approach that links forest stakeholders, empowers local communities and their subgroups, and strengthens adaptive capacities.
- Climate change necessitates globally activating forest communities in mitigation and adaptation efforts.
- The ACM Series of books and manuals listed provides guidance and analysis of previous efforts that can be useful in structuring viable approaches to climate change mitigation and adaptation at local levels.

People living in tropical forests tend to have little money, power, or education. They often suffer from serious health problems. Their cultural systems are under attack. Yet such people have the usual human intelligence, commitments, concerns, and capabilities. They know their own cultures, goals and interests better than anyone else. With these issues in mind, adaptive collaborative management (ACM) strives to recognize, build on and strengthen local people's capabilities in addressing the challenges that their changing environments pose.

Fisher folk in Danau Sentarum National Park, West Kalimantan (Photo by Carol J.P. Colfer)

CIFOR researchers initially developed ACM also in recognition of the ubiquity of change, surprise, and uncertainty. Our observations indicated that traditional 'command and control' governmental management approaches were generally not working, indeed *could* not work.

As ACM evolved, it also became clear that there was a need for both strengthened local institutions and better links from communities to actors operating at other scales.

ACM and Climate Change

Global awareness about likely impacts of climate change has added urgency to the needs identified above and created possible funding opportunities to address them. This may be a unique opportunity in time, since there is growing recognition of the responsibility of the more privileged to address structural inequities (poverty, consumption patterns, unfair markets) that contribute to the problem. Many acknowledge the special vulnerability to climate change of already disadvantaged populations. The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), among others, also recognizes the importance of strengthening people's adaptive capacity to 'moderate potential damages, to take advantage of opportunities, or to cope with the consequences'. Although the original ACM research did not address climate change specifically, these findings are particularly pertinent, given the likely need to catalyze human action at every level.

The recent interest in climate change mitigation and adaptation has opened up new possibilities and dangers for communities living in and around forests. The "carbon forestry" and REDD (Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation) debates have brought forth a number of widely recognized challenges, particularly in cases where potential carbon buyers hope to deal directly with communities and landscape level governments. These challenges, identified by climate change researchers, include:

- Weak institutions and governance---particularly in need of greater downward accountability and transparency, which in turn call for new governance skills, forms and practice.

- Problems involving trade-offs among efficiency, effectiveness and fairness---requiring improved communication among stakeholders, the development of negotiation skills among the less powerful, and clearer definition of rights and responsibilities among forest users and abusers.
- Lack of shared visions or harmonized plans among stakeholders---and the related need for consensus building strategies and joint measurement and monitoring mechanisms to assess progress.
- Population pressures---which can best be addressed by inclusive processes that involve community members (particularly women) directly in finding solutions.

ACM addresses these issues through its success at strengthening people's collective action, learning (and rethinking), while emphasizing local initiative and drive. This process-oriented approach provides guidance on how to involve communities in ameliorating and adapting to the predicted changes in our climate.

What is Adaptive Collaborative Management?

CIFOR's ACM activities have evolved over a decade of work in a dozen countries. Box 1 provides CIFOR's original definition, with a 2008 addition. Many other organizations, networks and people have developed similar ideas during this period[1]. These actors and others have also produced useful materials, based on similar premises about the abilities of communities to pro-actively address issues they consider important.

From a philosophical point of view, ACM builds on democratic ideals and concerns for justice and equity, recognizing the importance of power and striving to level playing fields through empowerment processes. It has three themes:

- A horizontal theme in which stakeholders in a particular forest work together toward common goals, addressing and resolving issues of concern for that forest and the people who live in and around it,
- A vertical theme in which local communities and actors at other scales develop effective mechanisms for two-way communication, cooperation and conflict resolution, and
- An 'iterative' or progressive theme wherein stakeholders learn, over time, about the management of their resources and their communities, in the course of actions evolving out of that growing understanding.

[1] E.g., IUCN's Commission on Environmental, Economic and Social Policy; IDRC; Wageningen University; Mosaic International; an informal, Canada-based ACM network; the Stockholm Resilience Centre, Norm Uphoff and colleagues at Cornell University in the US; Jerry Vanclay at Southern Cross University in Australia, and others. The IUFRO Task Force on Improving the Lives of People in Forests is a co-sponsor of this Info-Brief, and its members likewise contribute to these efforts.

Adaptive Collaborative Management – CIFOR's Original Definition, Plus

First version (2001): Adaptive collaborative management (ACM) is a value-adding approach whereby people who have interests in a forest agree to act together to plan, observe and learn from the implementation of their plans while recognizing that plans often fail to achieve their stated objectives. ACM is characterized by conscious efforts among such groups to communicate, collaborate, negotiate, and seek out opportunities to learn collectively about the impacts of their actions.

Supplement (2008): Working with a given group of people requires involving other people acting on other scales---usually at least one level down and one level up (e.g., user groups within a community and district officials above, as in Zimbabwe, Nepal, Indonesia, Philippines). Effective facilitation can act as a catalyst to empower communities to improve their own conditions, both human and environmental.

ACM - What are the Results?

The most general results of interest to policymakers are the strengthened capacities of communities and local governments---capacities that will help populations cope, both with the new opportunities/dangers of mitigation efforts and in adaptation to the other surprises that climate change will foster.

Because activities and goals are developed within and tailored to individual contexts and participants, each site has different results. However, typically improvements can be seen in the following local level skills: situation analysis, planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring, negotiation, conflict management, facilitation, proposal and other kinds of writing, and networking.

We see improvements in people's understanding of the views of other stakeholders, abilities to act collectively and to learn from their mistakes, and to deal effectively with more powerful stakeholders. We also see broader definitions of leadership, as people come to recognize that effective leadership can mean being inclusive, listening, pulling together diverse views, rather than only being directive and decisive.

But ACM successes go beyond the psychological. The following are just a potpourri of concrete examples:

- Baru Pelepat (in Jambi, Sumatra) selected a 900 ha area in their traditional territory for a 'customary forest'. Village, district and provincial officials have now recognized it (in a context where the central government normally controls forests); and villagers have agreed, legalized and enforced their management rules. In a nearby village, user group members managed to prevent corruption by their own village headman in negotiations with higher levels of government and an

oil palm company and negotiate a better deal for their village, reducing the control of large companies and powerful individuals.

- In Nepal, actors at the community, district and national level started interacting and planning together constructively, with regard to forest management and other issues. Out of this effort came the National Policy Learning Group, which has been able to influence national forest policy, incorporating views and experience through multi-stakeholder consultation at various levels (e.g., allowing forest user group formation in the forest rich *terai*).
- In Gokwe, Zimbabwe, a local women's group came together to address their management problems related to broom grass. Using participatory modeling and other ACM-derived methods, they analyzed the situation and, among other things, developed a sustainable method for managing broom grass harvests (a source of supplementary income for poor families), and solved related marketing problems by creating more attractive broom designs and strengthening their own links with district officials.
- In Bolivia, the indigenous community of Cururú developed a timber management plan with help from local NGOs. They created a transparent monitoring system to control wages and other costs as they built a community-owned commercial logging enterprise. This helped them to avoid conflicts related to the sudden influx of cash, and to maintain an enterprise that provides jobs for residents and finances community development projects. The monitoring of logging impacts has also led to increased concern over forest regeneration (especially protecting mahogany for seeds to regenerate this, locally nearly extinct, species).

In addition to these practical field results---most directly useful in the climate change context---the comparative, multi-country research has led researchers in promising directions. These have included a strengthened emphasis on community-district-national linkages and networking as bases for empowerment; cross-site comparisons of social learning, monitoring, and equity-enhancing approaches; a variety of uses for modeling (both participatory and otherwise); and a rich repertoire of decentralization cases around the world.

Many more examples are available in the materials listed on page 4.

ACM - How is it done?

ACM researchers begin with a series of context studies to examine historical and political trends, and initial status of human well being and environmental health. In this and subsequent steps, ethnographic skills help them understand how socio-cultural systems work.

Researchers have usually begun at the community level. A central method in the ACM approach is the process oriented participatory action research (PAR). PAR is a long term, collaborative process in which groups of people act together in iterative cycles of goal setting, analysis, planning, implementing, monitoring, and reassessing progress (See the 'worm', below). This approach requires the skills of a facilitator of such processes. In ACM, this facilitator/researcher also serves as a node, linking groups of people, and, over time, training them in the required skills---to strengthen the sustainability of effort.

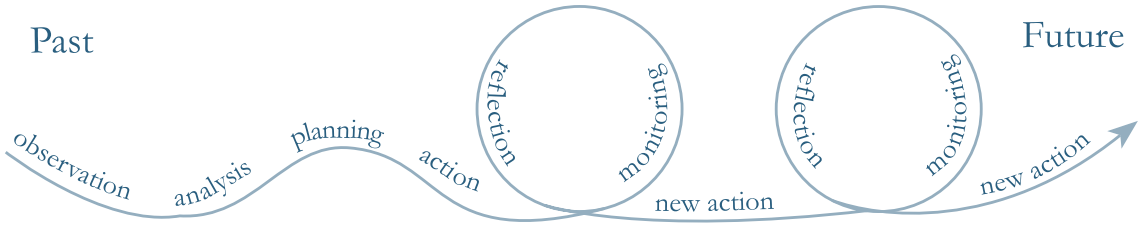
Such facilitators/researchers also bring a repertoire of other methods on which they draw, as the information and analysis needs of the participants become clear.

Recent users of the ACM approach have more explicitly involved community, district, and sometimes national level actors (e.g., Bolivia, Indonesia, Nepal, Zimbabwe, and 6 new sites in the CIFOR-ICRAF Landscape Mosaics project) using the same iterative processes. Changing attitudes and approaches among development and research organizations has proved to be an important but slow process.

Why do we Need ACM Now?

There is growing recognition that many efforts to address problems at local levels have in the past been unnecessarily passive, reactive, and/or purely technological. Effectively addressing climate change will require moving forward with more process-oriented approaches that look to the future, acknowledge local capabilities and opportunities, and build analytical and adaptive capacities at several levels.

To activate communities and local governments on the scale needed for these changes, global actors must recognize the need for clear and meaningful response to



The Worm, adapted from Colfer 2005b

local needs. This means that global actors (donors and governments in particular) should:

- recognize that such processes may take a long time, and uncertain amounts of time,
- tolerate more uncertainty and variation in program direction due to local choices and a changing world,
- encourage more, even risky, innovation, and allow more flexibility in work plans and activities at all governmental levels, and
- strengthen capacities to learn systemically from both successes and failures and from the facilitation of social processes in the field.

The availability of many products listed below is timely. The analyses, manuals, and advice provided in them will be invaluable in improving ongoing forest management, enhancing human well being, and strengthening local mitigation of and adaptation to the effects of climate change. ACM can contribute solidly in efforts to design, implement, and where appropriate, expand such strategies.

Recent and Forthcoming Books in English from the ACM Series[2] (other languages also available, see www.cifor.org)

Colfer, C.J.P. (ed.) 2005a. The Equitable Forest: Diversity, Community and Natural Resources. Resources for the Future/CIFOR, Washington, DC.

Colfer, C.J.P. 2005b. The Complex Forest: Communities, Uncertainty, and Adaptive Collaborative Management. Resources for the Future/CIFOR, Washington, DC.

Diaw, M.C., Aseh, T. and Prabhu, R. (eds.). Forthcoming. In Search of Common Ground: Adaptive Collaborative Management of Forests in Cameroon. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Fisher, R., Prabhu, R. and McDougall, C. (eds.) 2007. Adaptive Collaborative Management of Community Forests in Asia: Experiences from Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Guijt, I. (ed.) 2007. Negotiated Learning: Collaborative Monitoring in Forest Resource Management. Resource for the Future/CIFOR, Washington, DC.

Kusumanto, T., Yuliani, L., Macoun, P., Indriatmoko, Y. and Adnan, H. 2005. Learning to Adapt: Managing Forests Together in Indonesia. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Mandondo, A., Prabhu, R. and Matose, R. (eds.). Forthcoming. Coping Amidst Chaos: Studies on Adaptive Co-Management in Zimbabwe. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

McDougall, C., Ojha, H., Banjade, M., Pandit, B.H., Bhattarai, T., Maharjan, M. and Rana, S. Forthcoming. Forests of Learning: Experiences from Research on an Adaptive Collaborative Approach to Community Forestry in Nepal. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

McDougall, C., Pandit, B.H., Banjade, M., Paudel, K.P., Ojha, H., Maharjan, M., Rana, S., Bhattarai, T. and Dangol. S. Forthcoming. Facilitating Forests of Learning: A Guidebook to Enable an Adaptive Collaborative Approach in Community Forestry User Groups. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Moeliono, M.M., Wollenberg, E., and Limberg, G. (eds.). Forthcoming. The Decentralization of Forest Governance: Politics, Economics and the Fight for Control of Forests in Indonesian Borneo. Earthscan/ CIFOR, London.

Vanclay, J., Prabhu, R. and Sinclair, F. 2006. Realizing Community Futures. Earthscan, London.

Yasmi, Y. 2007. Institutionalization of Conflict Capability in the Management of Natural Resources: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Experience in Indonesia. Wageningen University, the Netherlands.

Yuliani, L., Tadjudin, D., Indriatmoko, Y., Munggoro, D.W., Gaban, F., Maulana, F. and Adnan, H. (eds.) 2007. Multistakeholder Forestry: Steps to Change. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Manuals

Cahyat, A., Gönner, C. and Haug, M. 2007. Assessing Household Poverty and Wellbeing: A Manual with Examples from Kutai Barat. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

CIFOR. 2007. Towards Wellbeing in Forest Communities: A Sourcebook for Local Government. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Colfer, C.J.P. 2007. Simple Rules for Catalyzing Collective Action in Natural Resource Management Contexts. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Evans, K. and Guariguata, M.R. 2008. Participatory Monitoring in Tropical Forest Management: A Review of Tools, Concepts and Lessons Learned. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

Wollenberg, E., Anderson, J. and Lopez, C. 2005. Though All Things Differ: Pluralism as a Basis for Cooperation in Forests. CIFOR, Bogor, Indonesia.

[2] The ACM Series editors are Carol J. Pierce Colfer and Ravi Prabhu.

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