
Community forest management: A new and inspiring FoEI publication

Millions of people throughout the world live in rural areas and to a greater or lesser extent depend on forest ecosystems for their livelihoods. However, forest degradation and deforestation are occurring at alarming rates, thus endangering their lives.

Whether for forest-dependent indigenous peoples and rural peasant communities or for urban communities reliant on environmental services provided by forests, these play a vital role in everyday life. Unfair distribution processes, consumerism and the lack of good governance lie at the centre of unsustainable resource management causing environmental problems and the continual impoverishment of local populations.

This new publication produced by the Forest and Biodiversity Programme of Friends of the Earth International, provides renewed impetus and documentation illustrating how innovative solutions based on the knowledge of local communities are contributing to the improvement of their life conditions while also protecting and maintaining forest ecosystems.

“Community-based forest governance refers to the regulations and practices used by many communities for the conservation and sustainable use of the forests with which they coexist. This type of governance is collective-communal, and by tradition identifies with forest protection, opposing the industrial and commercial use of forest resources”.

The publication provides community experiences from a broad array of countries, detailing successes and challenges in local peoples' efforts to control, use and protect their forests. These experiences include cases in India, Papua New Guinea, Malaysia, Indonesia, France, Greece, Chile, Bolivia, Amazonia, Costa Rica, El Salvador and Haiti. The cases offer a good basis for illustrating and motivating reflection on community forest management with the aim of encouraging the sustainable use of forests.

In addition to local community experiences, the publication includes analysis for critical reflection and discussion on a large number of threats and opportunities, with issues ranging from the role of governments and international financial institutions to food sovereignty, consumerism, climate change, peoples health, markets for local products and land tenure. The book shows how those issues affect local peoples, linking them with the broader issue of social and environmental justice.

Used as a basis for collective reflection over local level resource control, through processes of participatory decision making and egalitarian benefit sharing, this inspiring publication is a valuable tool to be used by communities wanting to exercise greater control over their lives and resources, for communities struggling to improve their lives, to restore degraded ecosystems, as well as for political lobbying against socially and environmentally destructive policies.

By: Antonis Diamantidis, email: antonis@wrm.org.uy

The book is available in electronic format in Spanish at <http://www.coecoceiba.org/images/pub91.pdf>,

and will soon be available in English and French. For further information please contact Javier Baltodano, from Friends of the Earth at: licania@racsa.co.cr