



The Initiative on Promoting Good Forest Governance in Asia and the Pacific

Summary of Workshop on Good Forest Governance

News from PREPCOM I (May 20 - June 3, 2002)

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Summary of Workshop on Good Forest Governance

Held from 1-2 June 2002, Bali Indonesia
(a full workshop report will be available soon)

Who is Responsible for Forest Destruction?	Who decides how forests are used?	Who Guarantees the Future?
National Government 35%	National Government 61%	All of Us 39%
Multinational Corporations 29.5%	Multinational Corps 12.5%	Local people 33%
Local People 12.5%	Local People 11.5%	International Community 8%
International Community/ Consumers 10%	Intern Community/Cons 6%	Multinational Corps 5%
National Companies 7%	National Companies 7%	Government 5%
United States of America 6%	United States 2%	United Nations 2%
		Others 8%

This was the response from 100 people interviewed informally during the WSSD PrepCom IV held at the beginning of this month in Bali Indonesia. As part of an initiative to promote good forest governance in Asia a workshop was held which aimed to identify priority issues of good forest governance and look at the feasibility of a regional association to promote good forest governance in Asia.

Forest governance is emerging as a new topic to link forest management to wider change processes occurring. Since there are still many unresolved challenges and questions, the theme of the workshop was "Questions are the answer". This provoked participants to exchange their own views and ideas on the three questions above and ultimately provided a more realistic picture of some of the challenges in realizing good forest governance.

As a result, some new questions generated to better understand the practice of good forest governance from international to local levels included:

- Are ethics an integral part of sustainable forest management? How can addressing the ethical challenge be integrated into good forest governance?

- Is there a need to distinguish between destruction and use? Understanding reasons for overuse of forests and identifying strategies to address this needs to be improved.
- How can the quality of decision making on forests be improved? The challenge is not just inclusivity but also ensuring that access to information and justice with regards to forest related decisions is equitable and fair.
- Which forests need governance? Are there forests for which governance is not a priority?

In the closed sessions, participants arrived at a common vision for good forest governance. This vision focused on making sure local people and communities are recognised as legitimate and important actors. This means practical ways, not just talk, need to be created to ensure they have ability to do so. Priority issues of governance identified by the group focused on this and included:

- Finding mechanisms to address power imbalances currently in place within institutional frameworks currently "governing" forests"
- The need for increased Social Learning among actors to better understand the roles and responsibilities of different actors in effectively governing forests at both local, national and international levels. This needs a more dynamic process in which people are involved in actual action oriented learning processes so they can better understand of what conditions need to exist for effective participation of communities in this process needs to be shared.
- Policy processes and legally binding documents which relate to forests need to recognise community rights in forest management. In many Asian countries this is not yet the case.
- An increased need for capacity building. Not just at community level but also among government agency staff responsible for forests and decision makers at all levels. A change in attitude towards community involvement in forest management and a need for improved access to reliable information for all actors was emphasised.

The closed session agreed that a regional association on good forest governance would enhance the commitment and implementation of community based forest management by:

- Providing an enabling environment within which community forestry can work
- Improving relationships among actors in order to recognize the community as a legitimate & key actor
- Reducing bottlenecks currently encountered in community forestry practice
- Addressing the need to bring other actors into the community forestry discourse
- Influencing decision makers in the wider political environment

A possible niche for the association was identified in the form of the following roles:

- Monitor effects of wider political processes on forest governance
- Provide a channel of communications among forest users to increase their voice and impact
- Serve as a clearing house for best practices, lessons learned and other information relevant to GFG
- Provide a role model for good governance within the association itself; "practice what you preach"
- Act as an informed outsider to support GFG initiatives in different countries
- Act as a bridging mechanism to facilitate dialogue among diverse stakeholders

Concerns were raised in terms of the need for wider consultation with regards to the mandate of the association and its membership. In the closed session the need to assess the idea with a wider group of people from different interest groups and sectors in relation to forests was also raised. Although there was a common agreement from the workshop that the focus of the association would be good forest governance in areas where communities are a primary stakeholder it was fully recognized that the idea of an association has not been widely discussed with both communities or other actors who are using and managing forests.

An action plan to do a wider feasibility analysis and get feedback on both mandate and membership issues for an association was formulated. This can be found in the full summary report of the workshop.

If you are interested in keeping in touch with this initiative please keep visiting our website. We are especially interested to hear from those in touch with the private sector, government agencies dealing with

forests, and the legal and trade sectors at all levels.

[< back to top](#)

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