

Partnership Forestry

The Concept

The concept of partnership forestry was introduced during the Independent Forest Sector Review (IFSR), as a decentralised approach to forest management. It focuses on partnerships between commune councils and the Forestry Administration, which aims to establish 'prior claims', keep forest rent in the public sector, and ensure holistic and sustainable forest management.

The Partners

The adoption of this approach will lead to partnerships between the national authorities and commune councils, as the elected local level administrative bodies, in the form of a Commune Forest Plan (CFP). The attached SWOT analysis highlights the potential roles of commune councils, civil society and the Forestry Administration within the partnership. The IFSR states a role for the Forestry Administration as the regulatory authority, and in setting guidelines for the CFPs. However, it does not address its role in implementation, nor does it provide any direction for the implementation of commune forest plans.

The attached structure builds on the existing procedure for commune development planning, whereby each village is responsible for the preparation of its own development plan, which is submitted to the commune council. The commune council is responsible for approving the village plans and combining them into the commune development plan. Funding for implementation is sought from relevant local authorities, NGOs, and other donors during the annual integrated planning meeting.

This approach encourages the participation of civil society and local authorities in the development of CFPs. Their implementation will require considerable financial and technical support by NGOs, donors and the private sector (see 'Challenges' below).

Management Options within the CFP

Forest management options could include community forestry, joint forest management, private sector contracting, and individual family tree planting and management activities.

Challenges drawn from Community Forestry Experiences

Experiences gained and lessons learnt through community forestry within Cambodia have clear implications for the partnership approach, and need to be given careful consideration. They include :

- ◆ Level of RGC support for community participation in forest management
 - “However, even in these enlightened times many senior Government officers give the impression that they believe that community led forest management warrants little attention” (IFSR, Chapter 4, p21).
 - to date, communities have mainly been allocated degraded forest of no commercial value
- ◆ Experiences of RGC and civil society in public participation
 - requires capacity development within government to work with, and within civil society to effectively engage in, public participation processes
- ◆ Trust-building between FA and communities
 - reorientation of forestry officials, especially the triage level, towards placing people at the centre of forestry

- ◆ Financial and technical support
 - community forestry initiatives have been, and remain, largely dependent on external funding, without which they cannot not be sustained
 - within partnership forestry, the commune is expected to assume responsibility for the preparation of professionally prepared commune forest plans. Given the fact that previous forest concessionaires were not able to do this (IFSR, Main Report, p59), considerable financial and technical support will be required

Risks

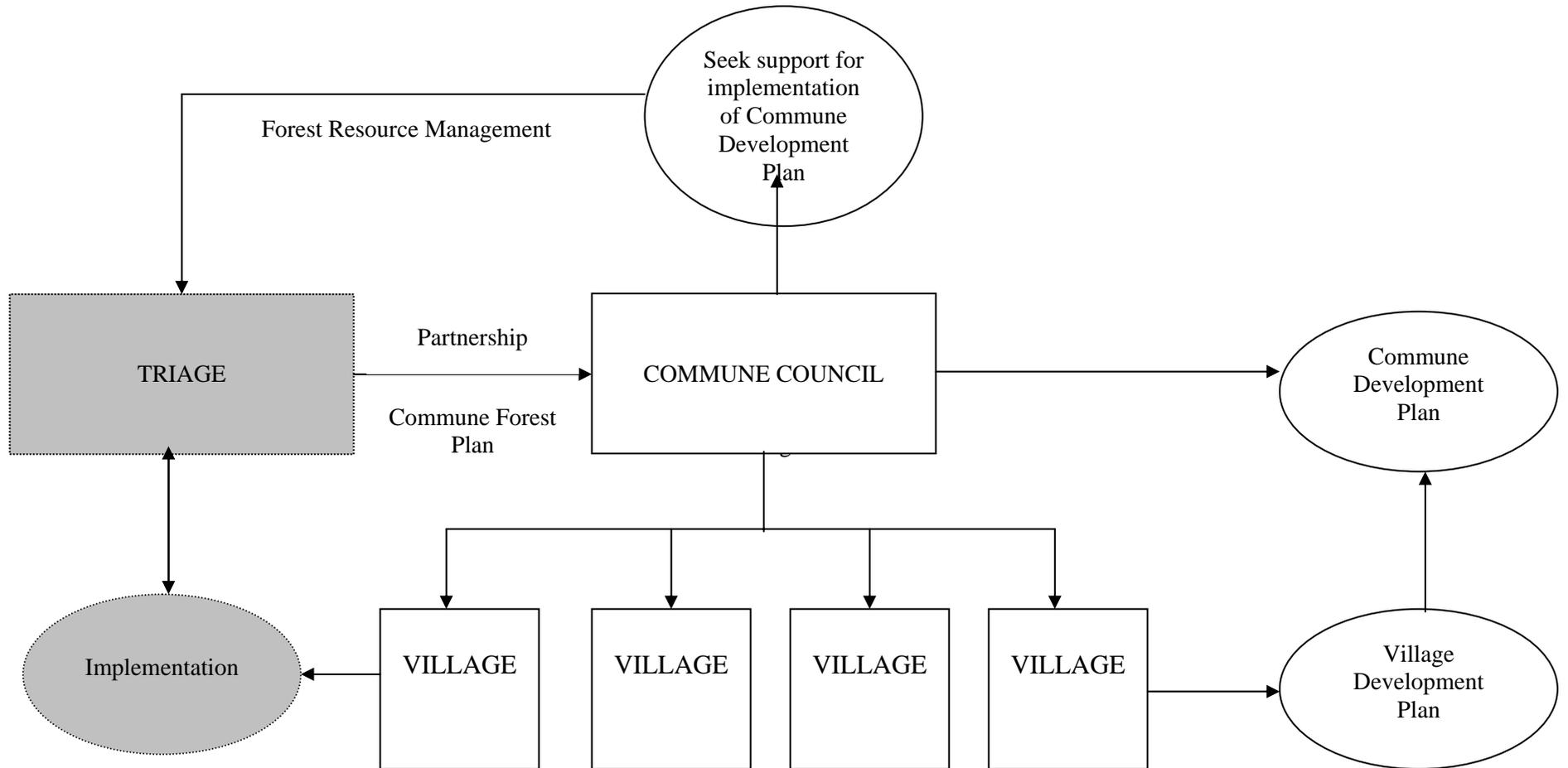
The IFSR (Main Report, p98) describes partnership forestry as a ‘high risk endeavour’, and the team itself questions the legality of this approach, raising the question as to whether the time is right for its adoption. These issues must be addressed, and consensus gained on the roles of the forestry administration, commune councils and villages within both the planning and implementation of commune forest plans.

Testing

The partnership approach requires careful testing on a pilot basis in selected areas, where strong commune councils (perhaps SEILA supported communes) have knowledge and experience of participation in forest resource management. Activities could include:

- ◆ identification of stakeholders
- ◆ mapping of present and future forest areas within the commune (as part of the land use planning process)
- ◆ evaluation of management options for each area according to the end-use objective
- ◆ formulation of commune forest plan and consensus on the roles and responsibilities of the forestry Administration, commune councils and villages
- ◆ identification of financiers (donors, NGOs, private sector)
- ◆ implementation
- ◆ monitoring
- ◆ etc

Overview of Structure and Procedures



Partnership Approach to Forestry Management Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p><i>The Partnership Approach has potential to draw upon the experiences gained through forestry initiatives</i></p> <p>Forestry Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - adoption of decentralised structure for forest management - technical expertise, - some technical expertise in extension and mgt plan preparation <p>Commune Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - elected local level administrative body - expected to assume full responsibility for other part of NRE mgt. <p>Civil Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communities already manage forest resources soundly 	<p><i>The Partnership Approach is not yet clearly defined</i></p> <p>Forestry Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - little attention paid to community participation in forest management - communities allocated degraded forest areas - lack of capacity to work with public participation processes - may require further restructuring <p>Commune Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of capacity in decentralisation processes - lack of financial mechanisms - weak organisational and management structure <p>Civil Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of capacity to effectively engage in public participatory processes - weak organisational structures - lack of marketing knowledge
Opportunities	Threats
<p><i>The Partnership Approach provides potential for sustainable forest management and improved livelihoods, involving minimal costs to the government</i></p> <p>Forestry Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of resources to manage nation wide forest areas on a day to day basis - implementation of the national community forestry programme <p>Commune Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - holistic approach to land use, and commune development, planning - forest revenues available for local development, without being minimised through bureaucratic governmental routings. - becomes responsible NRE managers <p>Civil Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - poverty reduction, and improved livelihoods - long-term resource rights secured through the recognition of ‘prior claims’ and legalisation of ‘grey areas’ - access to services and developments established with forest-based funds 	<p><i>The Partnership Approach is a ‘high risk endeavour’ the legality of which is questioned by IFSR</i></p> <p>Forestry Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - maintenance of control of forest lands, and separation from other natural resource management issues - unequal cost/benefit sharing by the commune councils and not sufficient tools for the FA to intervene. <p>Commune Councils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of financial resources to implement development plans - resource management decisions over-ruled at higher levels of government - elite capture of revenues and exploitative alliances - illegal logging <p>Civil Society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - communities in non-forested areas unlikely to benefit - communities in forest-rich areas become communities of loggers - inter-commune conflicts over claims to forest resources

