

Decentralization & Participation in the Forestry Sector of NWFP (Pakistan) The Role of the State

Since Pakistan's forest resources are decreasing at an alarming rate, several donor agencies helped to restructure the Forest Department, and to introduce participatory approaches on local level. A study by the NCCR North-South tries to understand why they failed.

In Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), traditional and modern, legal and illegal types of forest use have coexisted for decades. A huge variety of demands and uncoordinated forms of access led to severe deforestation.

Reforming the Forest Department

Responding to these threats, donor agencies (among them ADB and SDC) initiated a reform process of the NWFP Forest Department (FD). Core issues were a decentralization of the department's colonial hierarchy, and the introduction of participatory approaches on local level, allowing local people to gain more control over forest resources.



Planning Level vs. Local Realities

A few years after the reform process had been started, the present study investigated practices in forestry on local level. Focussing on four main stakeholder groups (see right above) it tried to find out to what extent the reforms had been implemented in the field. Results could show that

- a huge gap between *de jure* and *de facto* situation on local level forestry exists.
- the way local level FD staff practice forestry is influenced by their often threatened livelihoods rather than by the forestry laws they should enforce.
- low salaries and the absence of any incentive for the staff to support the reform's participatory approach lead to widespread corruption.
- a lack of communication between the planning and the field level results in indifference towards the reform.



Forest Department

Various stakeholder groups shape the daily practice of local level forestry. Most conflicts (red arrows) arise where the reform threatens the importance of the 'old' staff and widens its responsibilities

- the 'participatory approach' is often limited to standard trainings for local people and does not allow them to gain more control over forest resources.

The study thus could show the importance of a thorough understanding of – often complex – field realities in order to make a reform implementable.

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