Collaborative Management of Protected Areas in Lao PDR


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SYNOPSIS

Protected are management in Lao PDR began 6 years ago. Only 9 out of 20 declared areas are actively managed. Human resources are lacking and institution capacity is low. The managed protected areas are dependent on foreign aid and only few have so far achieved credible management standards. Subsistence use of protected areas is widespread and collaborative management seems the most appropriate form of management.

The law has basic provisions in support of collaborative management but local interpretation of the law stresses state control and detailed regulations are absent. Major drives are underway to address shortcomings. Land and forest allocation is enhancing tenure security. Proposed regulations provide the basis for legally recognizing village forestry organizations. A proposed revision of protected area legislation requires compulsory consultation on matters pertaining to people's livelihood. It would specifically allow the option to delegate management responsibility to villages and five commensurate authority an other benefits.

Collaborative management within protected areas ranges from the merely consultative to the truly participatory. However, all efforts are still in their early stages. A functioning management system is a major prerequisite for collaborative management. Protected area extensionists have yet to define their professional niche. Three issues are highlighted as decisive, creating local rules and regulations and selecting appropriate incentives. For collaborative management to catch on it needs to prove itself through monitoring.

Friendly peer reviews of collaborative management efforts at field sites are advocated as a means to build on and improve ongoing efforts. This should be done under professional guidance and should be associated with action research.