

Selected dynamics of collaborative protected area management in the Global North and South: Experiences from Australia and Nepal

A. Z. M. Manzoor Rashid^{1,*}, Donna Craig², Niaz Ahmed Khan³

¹Department of Forestry and Environmental Science, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Sylhet 3114, Bangladesh

²Environmental Law, School of Law, Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia

³Department of Development Studies, University of Dhaka, Dhaka, Bangladesh.

*Corresponding author, e-mail: pollen_forest@yahoo.com, rashid-fes@sust.edu

Received: March 7, 2016; Accepted: April 12, 2016

Communicated by: Dr. Sharif A. Mukul, The University of Queensland, Australia

ABSTRACT

Collaborative protected area management has of late gained growing recognition and attention in both developing and developed nations as an avenue of sustainable development that ensures biodiversity conservation as well as community development. This article sheds lights on selected dynamics of the collaborative approach to PA management in Australia and Nepal, representing North and South nations respectively with a view to eliciting experiences and lessons that may have wider relevance for developing and planning sustainable co-management systems for effective PA management. The focus of the review has been on the history and operational features, existing legal and policy framework, and the status of the community participation in the governance of PAs of these two countries. Both these countries are amongst the pioneer nations that made systematic attempts to involve local communities in forest and protected area management. Although the scope and experiences of collaborative protected area management in these countries vary significantly due to their distinct socio-economic and political contexts, they both exhibit many common features that may provide valuable clues while devising management prescriptions of PAs in other parts of the world. Some such factors that may facilitate constructing a shared vision of governing protected areas through collaborative efforts include the following: proactive community engagement, promoting private-public partnership governance approaches; valuing local and social culture, and devising a meaningful dialogue and communication channel between amongst the key stakeholders.

Key words: Co-management, protected area, environmental governance, legal framework, Australia, Nepal.

Introduction

Over the past one and a half decades there have been renewed interests and explorations by both the relevant academic and professional quarters regarding participatory governance in the management of protected areas (PAs) that build on power sharing with local communities and evolving democratic approaches - particularly rights-based

approaches that strives to achieve the sustainable development (SD) goals through ensuring biodiversity conservation and community development in a consistent way (see – Chowdhury et al. 2014; Rashid et al. 2013a, 2013b; Mukul et al. 2012; Pierce et al. 2000). Collaborative management or co-management has been argued to have shown better acceptance over other forms of participatory natural resource management (NRM) since it enables policy frameworks that support community rights as an incentive for better management as well as for promoting governance (FAO 2011). Notwithstanding the above enthusiasm and growing interests in PA, our actual understanding of the key dynamics of PA management – especially in the differentiated contexts of the North and the South remains, at best, marginal and incomplete. Orlovic-Lovren (2011), for example, noted that the governance of PAs in the North and South nations are not adequately

Highlights

- Collaborative PA management should not follow “all size fits for all” policy;
- Experiences of North can be applied in South with careful selection;
- Zeal of public-private partnership is well recognised both in North and South;
- Understanding the value of local cultural and social context are the key to collaborative PA management.

recognised and supported through appropriate methods.

In the above backdrop, this article sheds lights on selected dynamics of the collaborative approach to PA management in Australia and Nepal, representing North and South nations respectively with a view to eliciting experiences and lessons that may have wider relevance for developing and planning sustainable co-management systems for effective PA management. The focus of the review has been on the history and operational features, existing legal and policy framework, and the status of the community participation in the governance of PAs of these two countries. After this general introduction, the next section recapitulates the concept of 'collaborative management' and introduces the country cases. The third and the fourth sections focus on the Australian and Nepalese experiences. Based on the review of the country experiences, the concluding section elicits selected lessons and observations that may have wider relevance for collaborative PA management in similar contexts in other parts of the world.

The concept and the cases

Collaborative management provides strategies related to community rights to work together for common goals and to ensure varying levels of community participation in achieving SD goals (Nurse-Bray and Rist 2009; Brinkerhoff 2007). Power sharing through an agreed mechanism is the essential component of co-management that can be applied in the governance of PA management. Furthermore, increased stakeholder participation helps to enhance the efficiency, transparency and

equity of the resource management and social system (Castro and Nielson 2001). New institutional arrangements and local partnerships between various stakeholders can be effective in achieving strategic management objectives and improving the social system (Thackway and Olsson 1999). Decentralisation, devolution of power and democratisation of the process through active engagement of the community can help in this regard (Poteete and Ribot 2011). Australia, being a nation of the North, has commendably demonstrated and pioneered the co-management of terrestrial PAs and the management of Indigenous protected areas (hereafter referred to as IPAs) (Corbett et al. 2008). It is reported that Australia has successfully pursued a decentralisation process and devolution of power and practices of good governance through active community engagement. A good number of indigenous communities were brought under the umbrella of joint management through a legally recognised process and legitimacy mechanism. It is also noted that community empowerment and development, sustainable conservation goals were achieved simultaneously. On the other hand, Nepal as a nation of the South has adopted and implemented the participatory forms of governance in the name of co-management of their PAs that has not only received global recognition for its rapid expansion and effectiveness but also the trust and support of the local communities. These achievements and growing acceptance require a review of existing legal and policy frameworks in relation to community participation and governance in identifying best practices that can be applicable in the governance of the PA management in other regions. Some keyrelevant attributes of Australia and Nepal is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Background information of the study countries.

Parameter	Australia	Nepal
Population (million)	22.68	27.47
Population density (people per sq km)	2.9	209
Area (km ²)	7,692,024	140,800
Per capita income (USD)	43,300	1,300
GDP per capita (USD)	37228.2	399.7
Life expectancy at birth (years)	81.85	68.73
Forest area (km ²)	1493,000	36,360
Forest coverage (%)	19.4	25.4
Protected area numbers	10,305	37
Protected area coverage (%)	11	17

An account of protected area management in Australia

i. Genesis, typology and features

PAs and the other conservation areas of Australia play a significant role in promoting biodiversity conservation and improving its cultural and ecological integrity. Protected area management in Australia, as Worboys et al. (2001) argue, is essentially a social process. These areas reflect the historical, social, legal and political contexts of the country, and have also received considerable directions from the international organisations through the legal and policy guidelines to administer the management of PAs. Until the recent decades, however, PAs in Australia were seen as a further means of isolation and marginalisation of the local and the Indigenous people from their land in the name of conservation (Muller 2003), and indigenous people were heavily displaced from their own territory in the name of development and settlement (Adams 2004). Co-management of PAs in the name of joint management began in late 1970s.

Since 1975, the growing recognition of the aboriginal cultural and economic integrity with respect to flora, fauna, and the landscape has made possible of the inclusion of the Indigenous people in the management of PAs (Bauman and Smyth 2007). The Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 is one of the major impetuses to claim rights and recognition of the Indigenous community over their land and resources¹. The development and refinement of the governance and policy frameworks and increased rights, access and control by the Indigenous community over land and resources have made Australia an international pioneer in introducing co-management of terrestrial PAs and the declaration and management of IPAs (Ross et al. 2009). Co-management approaches have created opportunities for the indigenous and local community to participate in environmental decision-making process, particularly in PAs. Joint management is the approach through which aboriginal land owners and parks authorities work together to protect and enhance the mutual interest and values (Bauman and Smyth 2007). PAs in Australia are declared and managed under different operational levels from federal (Commonwealth) to state and territory control (Adams et al. 2008). State, territory and Commonwealth governments have so far demonstrated positive commitments to expanding the coverage of PA systems (Worboys et al. 2001). The PAs of Australia can be broadly classified into three major groups: Terrestrial Protected Areas i.e. national parks; Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) and Marine Protected Areas

(MPAs). The salient features of each category are as follows:

a) Terrestrial Protected Areas: Currently 13 percent of the total land of Australia is under different types of terrestrial PAs. There are about 9,340 terrestrial PAs in the country². Among the terrestrial PAs, six are under the management of the federal government and the rest belong to the jurisdiction of the state and territory government PA management authorities. The whole system of PA networks are supervised under the umbrella of National Reserve System (hereafter referred to as NRS) aimed at conserving the native biodiversity of Australia through establishing a comprehensive and representative PA system (Pollack 2001). According to the IUCN Protected Area Management Categories they belong to category II and IV.

b) Indigenous Protected Areas: National parks and IPAs are significant for promoting Indigenous land rights and access to resource and benefit sharing agreements. It is one of the most significant and sustainable patterns of cross-cultural resource management systems through PAs (Craig 2002). About 16 per cent of the Australian land is owned by Indigenous people although they are very unevenly distributed around the continent (Pollack 2001). Co-management offers a range of benefits to the Indigenous people (Corbett et al. 2008). The history of the management of Australian land by Indigenous communities is a rich and age-old practice. Based on this heritage and knowledge, the IPAs are owned and managed by Indigenous people under a joint management agreement between the Australian Government and traditional owner to promote the conservation of biological resources. Varying levels of government support is made available to these IPAs. The aim is to assist Indigenous owners with additional resources and management support to enhance conservation and SD outcomes on land owned and occupied by the Indigenous custodians (Bauman and Smyth 2007). IPAs are now making a significant contribution to the Australian biodiversity conservation through representing 23 percent of the Australian Reserve System³. The first IPA of Australia, Nantawarrina, was declared in 1998 by the Indigenous community in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia by the South Australian state government (Muller 2003). Currently, there are about 40 declared IPAs covering an area of 23 million hectares⁴. The largest IPA in Australia, Ngaanyatjarra situated in Western Australia covers an area of 9.8 million hectares, while

the smallest one is in Tasmania, Putalina, covering an area of only 32 hectares.

The native title system is the fundamental principle for negotiating the Indigenous issues related to NRM in general and PAs in particular, where land rights are the key determinants of negotiation (Worboys et al. 2001). The major strength of the Australian IPA system is that the inclusion of native lands for NRS is voluntary and the aboriginal community can determine the extent of state intervention in the management process of the IPAs (Birkes 2009a). Joint management agreements over PAs are the longest-established type of Australian participatory conservation regime (Craig 2002). The federal government initiative called 'Caring for our Country' has supported IPAs to develop a co-management agreement with state or territory conservation agencies (Adams et al. 2004). Recognition of Indigenous native title, especially through the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA), has created opportunities for Indigenous people to negotiate in joint management or other forms of participation in governing the PAs. The ILUAs were introduced as a result of amendments to the Native Title Act in 1998⁵. The joint management regime aims at developing the decision-making process and governance structure, employment opportunities for Indigenous communities and other management issues that need special attention.

The management plan identifies proposed interventions to manage the land and its cultural values and the governance structure in regards to the IUCN PA Management Categories that recognised management strategy and the aspiration of the Indigenous owner (Szabo and Smyth, 2003). The Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1983 is also one of the major determinants of an IPA under which there are local, regional and state level Aboriginal Land Councils helping the Indigenous community to clasp free hold titles to former Aboriginal Trust lands (Jaireth and Craig 1999).

c) Marine Protected Areas: Another form of PAs is Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and is playing an important role in managing coastal resources (Hind et al. 2010). They vary from terrestrial PAs in terms of space and time scales of physical processes (Day 2006). There are about 200 MPAs in Australia which constitute about 10 per cent of the 'Exclusive Economic Zone' of Australia with an area of 88 million hectares. The National Reserve System and the National Representative System of Marine Protected Areas are the two main policy instruments governing the operational aspects of the MPAs. All MPAs are

governed under the auspicious of the 'Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999'⁶.

d) *Biosphere Reserve*: An additional category namely 'biosphere reserve'⁷, also plays a significant role in enhancing the process of sustainable conservation and development through diverse land uses and related activities while keeping the core area fully protected (Matysek et al. 2006). Currently, there are 15 biosphere reserves in Australia representing 1.35 percent of the land area of the country.

ii. Legal and policy framework

The legal and policy frameworks supporting the management of PAs have evolved in the name of joint management. This concept has influenced PA management against the backdrop of growing international and national evolving trends with respect to decentralisation and devolution of power to share governance responsibility and recognition of Indigenous rights and the control over their land and natural resources (Ross et al. 2009). Devolution of power through decentralisation and strengthening of local institutions are getting extra attention in Australia, as in other countries of the world, for their better performance and untapped potentials (Birkes, 2010b). The Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 is the major Commonwealth legislation for establishing and managing the PAs of Australia (Craig 2002). It recognised the contributions of Indigenous Australian in attaining the goals of SD and conserving biological and cultural diversity. Various models of co-management in the name of joint management evolved through changing legal and political realities and community expectation (Craig 2002). The Director of National Parks – an autonomous body is the outcome of the EPBC Act aimed at managing Commonwealth reserves. The Director is assisted by Parks Australia – a subsidiary of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. Various key policy documents are developed by the directorate to inform, direct and manage the conservation efforts which includes Strategy for Australia's National Reserve System 2009-2030; National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, 1992 and National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity, 1996.

It is intended that all state governments and territory organisations should work together as part of the national conservation partnership (Adams et al. 2004). Public-private partnerships are widely valued in this respect (Thackway and Olsson 1999). The NRS is the PA

network system governed by the Ministerial Council conserving natural landscape, native flora and fauna as part of the effort in achieving mission and objectives of SD goals. The NRS is also important in the evaluation of management effectiveness of the Australian PAs in line with the CBD Programme of Works (PoW) on PAs (Jacobson et al. 2008).

With a view to ensuring long term protection and sustainable management of the biodiversity, Strategy for Australia's National Reserve System, 2009-30 was formulated by a task force convened under the National Resource Policies and Programme Committee. The main objective of the task force is to guide the functional aspects of the NRS during the planning period. Furthermore, the task force also provides guidance to the federal NRS component 'Caring for our Country'⁸. Even the biosphere reserves are managed by the same agencies responsible for PAs at federal, state or territory level. Each reserve develops their own management plan which has to be consistent with the 'Australian Biosphere Reserve Management Principles' set out in EPBC regulations. However, better outcomes from the biosphere reserves of Australia is lagging behind the expected outcome of community development through addressing the livelihood aspect since it is operating only in core areas, ignoring the importance of a cooperation zone (Matysek et al. 2006).

iii. Community participation and governance issues

The positive role of participation in any NRM like PAs is to build and improve relationship between communities and the respective management agencies. (Buchy and Race 2001). Increasing importance is given to involve multiple stakeholders in the planning and management of natural resources like forests (Matysek et al. 2006). Co-management in this regard offers a range of benefits both to community and park people that ultimately help in achieving conservation and development goals in partnership (Corbett et al. 2008; Volker 2007). However, some recent instances of co-management programme in IPAs involving aboriginal communities have paved the path for local participation in decision-making process through institutional arrangements (Castro and Nielson 2001). Such developments can assist the process of empowerment and self-determination of the Indigenous communities if their land rights are established (Muller 2003). Co-management of PAs emerged as a response to growing legal recognition of the rights of the Indigenous people over the land and its resources (Craig 2002). In situations where

aboriginal people are confident to secure land tenure they have demonstrated a positive attitude in engaging and developing effective conservation management strategies (Goodall 2006). Indigenous people are now driving PA management as manager, which is substantially adding towards further expansion and acceptance of joint management concept. Giringun⁹ is a good example of such an initiative whereby they look after the interests of the traditional owner groups over a section of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area (see - Nursery-Bray and Rist 2009)¹⁰.

Community participation in the name of joint management of PAs started in 1981 in GarigGunakBarlu National Park (formerly Gurig National Park) whereby Aboriginal land owners and respective state conservation agency came to a mutual agreement through an agreed power sharing mechanism. Various forms of joint management have reflected the changing dynamics of socio-political attributes and community participation (Hill 2011). The Indigenous communities of Australia are now formally engaged in the PA management process through varied partnership arrangements (Muller 2003). The following models manifested the nature of partnership developed through co-management and other distinguishing features (Corbett et al. 2008):

a) The Gurig Model: Ownership lies with the aboriginal community and the management board is dominated by the Aboriginal partners. An annual fee is determined by the traditional owners for the use of their land as a national park by government. Such as GarigGunakBarlu National Park.

b) The Uluru Model: Aboriginal ownership with a majority on the board of management. However, land is leased back to government agencies on long-term basis (99 years) under a negotiated payment agreement with traditional owners. Aboriginal rights to live in; use and joint management are recognised through legal agreement. Uluru-Kata Tjuta, Kakadu, Booderee National Parks are the examples of this model.

c) The Queensland Model: It is the modified form of the *Uluru* model where ownership lies with the Aboriginal community but they do not necessarily lead the board of management. They are leased back to the government for an indefinite period without any legal provision for financial payments.

d) The Witjira Model: Land ownership belongs to the government but they are leased back to traditional owners (99 years) who also dominate the

board of management. Recognition of Aboriginal rights and interests are the salient features of this model. Such as Witjira National Park.

These initiatives have received growing recognition as they enhance the capacity of the Indigenous community to participate in environmental decision-making processes apart from developing local institutions like the Joint Management Board (Lane 2001). The case of Nantawarrina IPA is a good example of directing Indigenous control in planning and management of the PA that might help in the decolonisation process through transfer of rights (Muller 2003). Joint management also helped to avoid relocation and/or displacement of the local community whereby in many instances it has minimised the chances of conflict (Goodall 2006). The dominance of the traditional owners in the management board also signifies the practice of the democratic process is vital for increasing efficiency and ensuring equity in benefit-sharing agreements through decentralisation (Larson and Ribot 2004).

However, despite joint management having several advantages, it has got some limitations too that have been stated in a study by Bauman and Smith (2007). The criticism of the top-down nature of management is due to poor park-people relationship, and, inadequate capacity building mechanisms that also ended up with a frequent turnover of the field-level staff. Besides, the lease-back system of the Indigenous lands is still a continuation of the colonial system. Some studies have also argued that joint management has failed to reflect Indigenous interests adequately in terms of economic or cultural concerns. At earlier stages of PA management regimes, most state and federal governments opposed native title claim and were reluctant to offer land tenural rights to the communities. Some studies also suggested co-opting Indigenous and local people as active partners in conservation management instead of imposing restrictions on them (Goodall 2006).

An account of protected area management in Nepal

i. Genesis, typology and features

The history of traditional and customary forest management systems in South Asia during ancient and medieval eras has largely been the practice of participatory approaches that addressed the livelihoods of the local communities (Ojha et al. 2008; Agarwal 2001). Among the South Asian countries in general, and 'SAARC (South Asian Association for

Regional Cooperation)¹¹ countries in particular, Nepal has demonstrated notable achievements through progressive conservation policies that allows active community participation through legitimate institutions. Nepal's community forestry (CF) is a glowing example of the reflection of that conservation policy (Fisher 1995). Based on the relative success of the CF, Nepal has developed a new system of managing its PAs through a community-based conservation approach and accordingly devised institutional, legislative and regulatory frameworks needed for the programme's implementation (Mehta and Heinen 2001; Agrawal and Ostrom 2001).

The PAs of Nepal are recognised as the most effective means of conserving biodiversity '*in-situ*' and also influence the livelihoods of the local people (Straede and Treue 2006). PA management and related issues received attention in the 1970s when there was a growing recognition of the inadequacies of the exclusionary approach to forest management (Acharya 2005). Most of the PAs were established following a strict protectionist approach that exhibited initial success in conservation, but also developed a number of issues such as park-community conflicts and displacements of communities from their land (Bajracharya et al. 2006). Re-engaging community people in the management is seen as the paradigm shift through policy changes and directives on community forestry (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003). The establishment of PAs and the increasing momentum for effective management for protection and conservation is the outcome of this paradigm shift. The Chitwan National Park was the first official attempt to establish a PA in 1973 and the Annapurna Conservation Area was the first conservation area of Nepal that directly involved local community in the management of that PA (Bajracharya et al. 2006). Twenty PAs of various categories have so far been established, covering 23.23 per cent of the total land area of Nepal. These PAs also meet the standard of the IUCN PA Management Categories. According to the categories, the PAs of Nepal belong to II, IV and VI.

Many of these PAs consist of buffer zones¹² and are set aside around the national parks and reserves aiming at providing a sustained source of forest resources to local communities in order to reduce pressures on core areas¹³. The legal and policy framework that influenced and shaped the development of the participatory forestry and PA management is delineated in the following section.

ii. Legal and policy framework

The community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) has been in progress since 1970s in the name of CF (Sunam and MacCarthy 2010; Timsina 2003). However, the organised form of participatory NRM evolved during 1990s by recognising management rights of the local communities and by institutionalising the system by giving legitimacy (Dahal et al. 2010). The Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation (DNPWC) is the principal authority responsible for providing general management and policy support for effective management of the PAs in Nepal. The Department of Forests has the mandate to manage the country's forest resources for the conservation and sustainable supply of forest products to meet local and national needs. Both departments are under the direct control and supervision of the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation and play an important role in providing legal and policy support for community participation (Baral 2007).

Various legal and policy frameworks have so far been developed in Nepal, reinforcing the importance of wildlife conservation and sustainable PA management. The National Park and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1973(amended up to 1989) is the legal basis in establishing PAs in Nepal (Seedland 2000). The Act has created the provisions of establishing national parks, wildlife reserves and multiple-use conservation areas. It has also created scope for the NGOs to participate in the management of PAs through their engagement in buffer zones (Bajracharya et al. 2005).

PAs are recognised as one of the most efficient strategies to address biodiversity conservation (Persha et al. 2010). Supportive legal frameworks for the management of conservation areas and the site-specific regulations formulated by local institution and NGOs is a step forward in addressing the issues of SD goals such as poverty alleviation, sustainable use and conservation of biological resources (Pathak 2006). For example, the Buffer Zone Management Act of 1993 and the Conservation Area Management Regulation of 1996 allowed local communities with management and user rights of the PAs. A National Conservation Strategy, formulated in 1988 in line with the World Conservation Strategy, has also influenced the process of PA establishment (Seedland 2000). A revenue sharing mechanism has developed through the Buffer Zone Management Act for generating revenues (30-50 percent) to support local community development programmes. This mechanism facilitates the process of conservation and strengthens local community institutions like the Village Development Committee

(VDC) that represents forest user groups and user committees (Mehta and Heinen 2001).

iii. Community participation and governance issues

Community participation in forest management is receiving growing recognition and importance in Nepal (Poffenberger 2000). The government therefore invited community participation through formalised institutions with a view to providing shared or collective management responsibility and property rights to the local community living in and around the forest and PAs (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003). The basic idea behind engaging local institutions is that devolution of power and management decisions helps generate people's participation in the process (Dahal 2003). With these benefits in view, government has supported the decentralisation and devolution of management rights and responsibilities to forestry user groups (hereafter referred to as FUGs) in the buffer zones of the forests and PAs (Agrawal and Ostrom, 2001).

The introduction of the co-management of PAs gained impetus through the CF programmes. Thus it is relevant to examine the basic characteristics and evolving trend of the CF in Nepal. The CF is the participatory environmental governance approach that is designed and supported by a well-defined policy and institutional framework with a view to ensure community empowerment for participation in forestry programmes (Ojha et al. 2009). Beginning with the technical support and financial incentives from multi-donor agencies, the programme was later owned and sustained by local actors and institutions. Various policy interventions were attempted to scale up the CF. Under this surge, two amendments took place in the Forest Act in 1977 and 1978, whereby forests were handed over to 'Panchayat'¹⁴ as a transferred responsibility. However, this system failed to address the livelihood issues of the community as responsibility was transferred without ensuring definite authority and rights. With the formulation of the Decentralization Act 1982, 'Panchayat' was empowered to form a people's committee for the management of the forest, and consequently evolved as an influential political power at village level. They were given authority to oversee forests on behalf of the 'Panchayat Forest'¹⁵ and the 'Panchayat Protected Forest'¹⁶. Despite the efforts for decentralisation and devolution of power, 'Panchayat' was still acting as a platform for elite people in forest management. Consequently more participation by the poor community members was urged (Ojha et al. 2008).

With these developments in progress, a major breakthrough occurred when the Forestry Sector Master Plan 1988 announced the handing over of all accessible forest of Middle Hills to Community Forest User Groups (hereafter referred to as CFUGs). The CFUGs emerged as an independent institution responsible for organising the CF projects while the 'Panchayat' system was abolished in the 1990s. With this declaration, the power dynamics were reshuffled whereby VDC took the place of Panchayat. Subsequently, CFUGs were provided with a strong legal basis to operate independently by forming a management committee that represents the group's responsibility for development and execution of village-level management plans. This concept received formal recognition through the Forest Act 1993¹⁷ and the Forest Regulation 1995, which provided them with a legal and procedural basis to evolve as local-level autonomous management bodies (Neupane 2003). Efficient mechanisms and dynamics in the formation of CFUGs and the monitoring and evaluation processes are perceived to be the key factors behind the success of the CF. CFUGs are united under the umbrella of a nationwide federation called Federation of the Community Forestry User Groups in Nepal (FECOFUN) that represents all the federation groups enlisted with them and subsequently they have emerged as a strong political force (Springate-Baginski et al. 2003). In addition, NGOs and community-based organisations were also playing substantial roles in strengthening the CFUGs (Paudel and Vogel 2007). National forests were handed over to the CFUGs, provided the group was registered with the divisional forest office (DFO). CF policy continues to play significant role in transforming the power structure.

Like CF programmes, community user groups are established in buffer zones of PAs whereby they are given access for a certain period to PAs and have harvest rights of certain products like grass and firewood. Although the decentralisation mechanism has some influence at the operational level, the community is still lacking in active participation to influence management or conservation outcomes (see - Agrawal and Ostrom 2001; Müller-Böker and Kollmair 2000). Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA) the first PA in Nepal engaged the local community directly to the conservation programme, thus managing to bring significant outcomes through co-management, such as better access to forest resources, improved livelihood and infrastructure support and the strengthening of local institutions (Baral et al. 2010; Bajracharya et al. 2005a) These Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) are managed under the sole supervision of an NGO named the King Mahendra Trust for Conservation (KMTTC) and

the community is engaged at the local level through the Conservation Area Management Committee (CAMCOM) for conservation planning and management (Bajracharya et al. 2006b). The project has managed to sustain itself through tourism and multi-donors support¹⁸. Non-bureaucratic self-governing local management and empowerment of the community were considered to be the salient outcomes of the participatory management approach of the ACA (Baral and Stern 2011).

Another PA, the Kanchenjunga Conservation Area has started operating under the joint initiative of DNPWC and WWF (Nepal) where CAMCOM was formed and given overall responsibilities of dealing with issues of conservation and community livelihood development (Parker and Thapa 2011). Kanchenjunga, with its decentralised management authority, has created a better platform to interact with state agencies, which added positively towards increased participation (Parker and Thapa 2011).

The Chitwan National Park demonstrated a conflicting scenario at the beginning and urged for more initiative to meet subsistence requirements of the forest-dependent community, although it realised the importance of the PA as a social institution. Sustainable resource management, with a clear understanding of the social and economic needs of the community, was recognised as imperative for active and successful community participation (Sharma 1990). The same feature was noticed in the case of Bardia National Park, which is also managed by DNPWC, where KMTTC was engaged in socio-economic development of the community, living around the periphery of the national park (Allendorf et al. 2007).

By reviewing the extent and nature of the community participation in the CCAs and NP, it has been revealed that joint management and active community participation were pronounced in CCAs, supported by legislation and institutional mechanisms, while in the case of the NP it was less focused

Conclusions and lessons learned

The basic features of the participatory approaches to NRM are widely recognised and increasingly integrated in forest PA management. Although the scopes and experiences of North and South nations vary significantly due to their socio-economic and political contexts, they both exhibit many common features that can be applicable while devising management prescriptions of PAs in other geographic locations. These are:

1. The salience, need and zeal for community participation are felt explicitly on both sides. Dependency on top-down management in this regard is considered inappropriate, thus constructive and active community engagement is urged both in North and the South perspective (Karanth and Nepal 2012).

2. Despite socio-economic-political variations and limitations, private-public partnerships are getting momentum whereby the two sectors mutually agree on engaging in biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource development initiatives (Thackway and Olsson 1999).

3. A pro-active role of the state and respective agencies revealed as a pre-requisite in order to achieve conservation goals with a view to facilitate involvement and active participation of the community at various levels on the basis of equity, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness which is also revealed in a study by Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff (2011).

4. Understanding the value of local cultural and social contexts and designing adaptive management strategies and approaches revealed as an important requirement for forest and PA management.

5. Developing a meaningful two-way dialogue is essential to bringing communities into the active participation process of PA management (Carmody and Prideaux 2011). The success of the participatory approach like co-management in Australia and in Nepal can only be apprehended if the entire stakeholder groups manage to construct a shared vision and are ready to accept less than ideal outcomes (Buchy and Race 2001).

Notes

¹See Australian Government Comlaw, Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976; available online: www.comlaw.gov.au/Details/C2012C00123 (Date of access: 27 December 2011).

²See Australian Government, Caring for our Country, National Reserve System; available online: www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/science/capad/2008/index.html (Date of access: 12 September 2012).

³See Australian Government, Indigenous Communities and the Environment, Indigenous Protected Areas; available online: www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/index.html (Date of access: 12 September 2012).

⁴Australian Government, Indigenous Communities and the Environment, Indigenous Protected Areas; available online: www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/ipa/index.html (Date of access: 12 September 2012).

⁵available online at: www.nntt.gov.au/Indigenous-Land-Use-Agreements/Pages/Aboutindigenouslanduseagreements.aspx (Date of access: 29 October 2012).

⁶ see Australian Government, Marine Protected Areas available online: <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/mpa/legal.html> (Date of access: 10 September 2011).

⁷A unique concept that includes one or more protected areas and surrounding lands that are managed to combine both conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. More details available online at: www.environment.gov.au/parks/biosphere/ (Date of access: 30th April, 2012).

⁸See Australian Government, Caring for Our Country National Reserve System, Governance Arrangements; available online: www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs/about/governance.html (Date of access: 12 September 2012).

⁹Aboriginal corporation representing the land and sea interest of nine traditional owner groups within the Hinchinbrook section of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA).

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation established in the year 1985 to enhance the economic, technological, social and cultural development among the member states that includes Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka along with some countries with an observer status.

¹²An area of controlled land use separates the protected areas from direct human or other pressures and provides valued benefits to neighbouring rural communities. Buffer zone often considered as a means to substitute local people's use of protected area resources.

¹³Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation, Official website of the Government of Nepal; available online: <http://www.dnpwc.gov.np/> (Date of access: 18 October 2012).

¹⁴The lowest political and administrative unit at village level established between 1960 to 1990.

¹⁵A village degraded forest handed over to the village Panchayat for reforestation purpose.

¹⁶A village forest handed over to the Panchayat for protection purpose.

¹⁷Article 26 of the act says that local people once organized under the umbrella of CFUGs will have the unalienable rights over forest hence can enjoy 100 % products generated from the forest. The CFUGs remains perpetually self-governed and autonomous.

¹⁸Ibid 2770.

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