

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PEOPLE PARTICIPATION IN AGROFORESTRY PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES

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INTRODUCTION

Agroforestry (AF) interventions promote national development by increasing land productivity at the farm level thereby raising the living standards of those practising it. Farmer participation is necessary for AF to have a developmental impact at both national and farm level. The level and mode of farmer participation in AF projects is not uniform because it is influenced by the the project goals address the farmer's needs. Goals and principles governing an AF project should be developed on the basis of an understanding of: community dynamics, such as, socio-cultural factors and community normative structure; economic and political situation, such as, community power structure, dependency and fatalism, and political culture; and developmental needs of the concerned community. Further, AF projects should influence people's behaviour towards tree growing by understanding the conditions under which tree planting decisions are made at the individual farm level (Challinor and Frondorf, 1991).

A project can be logistically planned to predispose it to successful local involvement. A participatory project requires a planning and management (P&M) approach that blends both the typical top-down (P&M) approach with a local level (P&M) approach. A top-down approach is usually characterized by "blue-print" planning. This means that the project is planned and implemented by a group of "experts" without any involvement of the stakeholder community. The project should be executed as an open-ended process which means that it is flexible enough to accommodate adjustments during the five phases of a project cycle (identification, formulation, appraisal, implementation and evaluation) that may be necessitated by new information and experiences. This means that the project is an interactive learning process.

AF falls under social forestry (SF). The phrase "social forestry" is widely used to refer to different types of forest undertakings that benefit a community by providing forest products and/or services (Dunster, 1989). Simply put SF means "forestry by the people for the people".

During the 1970-80s, many community forestry projects were funded under the umbrella of social forestry programs by bilateral donors like the World Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) in many parts of Asia and Africa. Cernea (1989) reported that most of these projects failed to justify the investments made. Sen and Das (1987) related the poor performance of the community forestry projects due to lack of people's participation, the very foundation for self-help projects.

Cernea (1989) gave two reasons for the general failure of popular participation in "community forests". The first is related to the initial and invalid assumption that communities (settlements, villages) are homogeneous "units capable of undertaking collective or coordinated action in any and all respects" (Cernea, 1989). Project initiators assumed that communities would be effective actors for implementing community forestry. The second reason for failure was the absence of appropriate actors and social arrangements. Finances for CF projects were mainly directed to tree planting. According to Cernea (1989), donors failed to recognize the human and institutional processes necessary to put in place popular participation.

For SF and AF to succeed, the following have to be addressed (Cernea 1989):

1. Identification of kinds of natural resources that a given community can develop; creation of an awareness in the community of goals to be achieved, so the community can come to a consensus on work to be done and by whom.
2. Development of suitable social and institutional mechanisms for implementing community forestry through popular participation. There is a need to study and understand each community's social set-up. It is naïve to assume that each and every community has the social set-up to work toward the same common goal.
3. Development of incentives for participation and clarity on distribution of benefits.

Participatory projects form part of the community development (CD) process. The following are key principles and processes pertaining to CD and other participatory projects (Edwards and Jones 1976; Lotz, 1977):

1. Formulates goals whose meaning is known/understood by the community involved. This involves first of all taking into consideration the community's social-cultural, demographic, and ecological features in goal setting and second involving the public in the goal setting process.
2. Involves the local community in all stages of the project cycle by having project organisers that are representative of all those affected by the proposed action. Representation should be such that community people have no fears that the project organisers have a vested interest beyond that of the wellbeing of the whole community.
3. Develops procedures to achieve goals.
4. Keeps the community informed on project progress and is flexible enough to accommodate suggestions and reactions made by community members.
5. Enables the community to build a stronger and more viable economic base.

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

According to Edwards and Jones (1976), public participation takes place in the context of other issues and cannot be considered in a vacuum. New decisions made through public participation have an impact on the status quo. They reorder previous decisions or at least reinstate previous decisions supported by reason (Edwards and Jones, 1976). Therefore public participation is not a simplistic look at methods of participation but rather it calls for a deeper look at the social and political background against which participation is taking place (Lotz 1977; Cernea 1992).

The importance of considering social factors when planning for public participation in community action can not be overemphasized. In developing countries, Cernea (1992) attributed the widespread failure of public participation in government programs and donor-assisted projects to the lack of methods for organizing participation. A similar observation is made of community development projects in developed countries. Lucas (1977) noted that some communities have failed to get what they wanted because they ignored the background against which participation or decision-making was taking place. Edwards and Jones (1976) and Lotz (1977) attributed limited success experienced by most community development projects in North America to participants' lack of understanding of either community dynamics, or the community development process.

For public participation in community action to succeed, it is necessary that the participation procedure be socially organised (Cernea, 1992). Understanding community dynamics is a pre-requisite for developing such procedures (Edwards and Jones, 1976; Lotz 1977; Lee *et al.*, 1990; Cernea 1992). Because sociology of public participation is a relatively new field in forestry research, it is necessary that I discuss the following issues in some detail: community dynamics (the community, community social-cultural structure, interactions between community subsystems, community normative structure); community political and economic structure (power structure, dependency and fatalism, political culture); public motivation to participate in a community action; and lastly, a suggested social methodology for public participation.

Community Dynamics

Community dynamics, political and economic structures form background information in defining project target groups. Target groups should be described in detail during project identification and formulation phases. This constitute part of the project logic that answers the question: Why is a project needed?

The Community

The character of a community is complex and involves description of its: demographic features, e.g., size, composition and mobility of its population; ecological features, e.g., patterns of population distribution, community life cycles; relative degree of modernization/urbanization; and social-cultural structure, among others (Edwards and Jones, 1976).

Community Social-Cultural Structure

Community social-cultural structure consists of interrelationships and interactions between three units: the individual; formal and informal groups; and the family, economic, education, religious, government, and social welfare subsystems (Edwards and Jones, 1976).

Formal and Informal Groups

Social groups within a community unite people of common interests (Edwards and Jones, 1976). Informal groups, such as peer groups, are characterised by strong bonds of loyalty. These groups are therefore important influences on public participation since individual members of a group may not take part in an activity if the activity goes against group interests (Edwards and Jones, 1976). Indeed, formal groups, such as trade unions, that have an established organizational structure can be used for informing the community about a development project. Given the influence that groups have on individuals' values, one can presume that addressing the interests of social groups in a community, or gaining the support of such groups for a development project, would result in better public participation in the project activities.

Community Subsystems

The family unit is arguably the most important influence on an individual's behaviour, because the family into which one is born usually determines one's religion, social class, etc. In his studies of how families responded to new innovations, Irelan (1966) found that families at lower economic power were less likely to accept change compared to those at higher levels. This is because poor families tend to have a fatalistic attitude and base their values on the present rather than the future.

The government subsystem is responsible for maintaining law and order and provides services that benefit the whole community (Edwards and Jones, 1976). According to Edwards and Jones (1976), the government subsystem is an important factor in shaping a community's political and social culture. Even in cases where the government is not directly involved in a community development project, it still has an indirect influence on public participation because its response to public desires influences a community's sense of efficacy (Edwards and Jones, 1976).

The economic subsystem constitutes the means by which community members produce, distribute, and consume goods and services (Edwards and Jones, 1976). Community economic status shapes a community's social class stratification, political power, and social service such as education, among other factors, that directly influence public participation.

Social class

Social class stratification in a community has implications for public participation in community action because each social class has a distinct subculture that influences the interests of its members (Edwards and Jones, 1976). According to Edwards and Jones (1976) differences between social class socialization, needs, exposure to education, mass media, etc, creates the norms and values observed by each class. Participative or non-participative cultures can therefore be traced along a community's socialization and

deprivation patterns since participation differs between social and economic inequalities (Edwards and Jones, 1976; Gidengil, 1990).

Scope of participation is not evenly distributed in a population (Sadler, 1977). As a general rule, people in the upper social classes tend to exercise greater influence in a community's economic and political decision-making structures, while lower class families tend to be more passive and reluctant to take part in decision-making (Edwards and Jones, 1976). According to Kasperson and Breitbart (1974), groups in the periphery of society are more likely to be non-participants because they feel powerless to influence decisions. Gidengil (1990) made a similar observation for communities that are economically independent compared to those that are economically dependent.

Gender issues and land tenure

AF projects should understand and consider gender relations at the local areas of project implementation. Gender relations show how roles, responsibility, decision-making power, opportunities and utilization of resources are divided between the sexes. Variation in this parameters between the sexes affect the ability and incentives for male and female participation in developmental activities. This disparity also leads to different intervention impact between the sexes. For example, women still constitute the bulk of agricultural labour. However, it is the men who tend to control basic resources such as land (Kiriro and Juma, 1989). It is necessary therefore to understand how current land tenure systems and labour distribution may hamper AF interventions.

Community Normative Structure

Of importance to CD and AF is how norms and values affect public reaction to change. According to Lucas (1977), closely knit communities have social characteristics, such as observability and conformity, that greatly influence community response to development and people participation activities.

Conformity

Lucas (1971) described characteristics of closely knit communities' that influence people participation. Such communities are dominated by primary relationships between community members, that is, family, friends and work mates. Thus the individual is obliged to stick with the ideas of these close relations - conformity. If social polarization over issues threatens to occur, "... it is broken by the interactions required for daily living and playing" (Lucas 1971). Those who choose to differ end up leaving the town, thus creating a homogeneous community in terms of attitudes and beliefs.

Conformity hinders initiation of new ideas because individuals wait to see whether anybody else in the community supports a new idea (Lucas, 1971). These individuals are careful not to undertake any activity that would threaten their economic and social security in case the activity is rejected by the community. This is because there is a high degree of observability, high levels of common knowledge and normative expectations, and a higher level of reciprocal knowledge about all aspects of each individual's life among community members (Lucas, 1971; Edwards and Jones, 1976).

Due to tradition, isolation and lack of exposure to change over many years, some rural communities develop a high degree of normative conformity that crystallize into a cultural common sense.

Observability

Since primary relationships are characteristic closely knit societies, it means that in those communities everybody knows everybody (Lucas, 1971). When something happens in the village, it becomes common knowledge. This is called observability. Due to observability, different "classes" in a community respond differently to new initiatives (Lucas, 1971). According to Lucas (1971), people with "total roles", for example, doctors, clergy, and

teachers, are more observable. They have a lot to lose if negatively sanctioned by the community. They are therefore more likely to conform to old ways of doing things

The other two "classes" of people in closed societies are the "socially vulnerable" and the "socially invulnerable". The former have jobs and positions in the community. They are less likely to risk their positions by supporting a new concept if they are not sure about it (Lucas, 1971). People in the latter "class" have little to lose even if they were to be negatively sanctioned by the community and are therefore more apt to support a new initiatives, in the hope that it will enhance their position. However, according to Lucas (1971), this "class" has the least clout in influencing the status quo.

The degree to which community members adhere to norms and values differs with the community's relative isolation, size, etc. (Edwards and Jones, 1976). From a demographic standpoint, the larger the community the more heterogenous its composition and therefore the more likely that there will not be agreement on what community action should be taken. Further, the more dispersed a community the more likely that its norms and values are divergent (Edward and Jones, 1976). Edwards and Jones (1976) noted that in nucleated types of communities, it is easier to contact people.

Community Political and Economic Structure

Community Power Structure

According to Bella (1984), understanding the distribution of power in a community is important to development of public participation procedures in community development action because it answers some key questions: are the power structures endemic to the community appropriate for the community action or should other structures be developed; are community power leaders involved in the community development action; and how does power leaders' involvement or the lack of it affect the success of the community action and public participation in particular?

Power hierarchy differs from community to community (Edwards and Jones, 1976). According to Edwards and Jones (1976), there are two main patterns of power distribution: the pyramidal and the pluralistic models. In the pyramidal/centralized model, a small number of people from the top economic stratum control decision-making on all major community issues (Hunter, 1958). This group of people makes decisions informally and then makes the decision known to policy executors. This model is characteristic of small communities with a narrow economic base (Clark, 1971). In contrast, persons who influence community decision-making in the pluralistic/decentralised model differ with each event such that there is no decision-making monopoly in the community (Hawley and Wirt, 1968).

Dependency and Fatalism

Another important characteristic of closely knit societies is fatalism which is a result of dependency on outside influences (Lucas, 1971; Gidengil, 1990). Dependency theory is about the stratification of capitalistic societies into "societies that influence" and "societies that are influenced or controlled" (Gidengil, 1990). According to Gidengil (1990), dependency occurs between "centres" of development (regions that have economic influence over other areas) and "peripheries" of development (regions that are economically influenced by the "centres"). Dependency occurs at both the international and national levels. International dependency is exemplified by the existence of developed versus developing countries. At the national level, dependency often occurs between the rural and urban areas.

Dependency and its relation to fatalism were addressed by Gidengil (1990). In her case study of Canada and its peripheral regions, Gidengil (1990) argued that peripheral regions (such as Northern Ontario) experience a lack of autonomy. According to Gidengil (1990), lack of autonomy has a negative influence on political efficacy. Societies that lack a sense of autonomy also have a low sense of political efficacy. Political efficacy is a person's/community's feeling of political competence.

Political efficacy can be analyzed at two levels. The first level is a person's, or a community's feelings of political competence. The second is trust in the responsiveness of the political and bureaucratic system. Whereas the former is influenced by an individual's level of education, the latter is influenced by "political memory" (Gidengil, 1990). Being located in a "vulnerable periphery", a community is likely to have feelings of political deficiencies. Political deficiency means not having faith in one's capability to influence the political system which is then manifested in a fatalistic attitude (Lucas, 1971). According to Lucas (1971), fatalism is characterised by a lack of interest in improving one's situation because of preconceptions of failure.

Fatalism is stronger where decisions that affect a community are made from outside it (Edwards and Jones, 1976). Though the community may know the branch of government that decides certain things, it cannot pin down the source of authority and power, so that hostility is directed to an "impersonal and undefined they" (Lucas, 1971). The community has no intense fighting spirit but rather adopts the attitude "if you cannot beat them, join them." To my understanding then, it is reasonable to expect dependant and fatalistic communities to be suspicious of changes initiated by outsiders, especially those initiated by government institutions.

Political Culture

Further to the explanation of how community political and economic structures influence public participation is the notion of political culture. Kasperson and Breibart (1974) reiterated that public participation or the lack of it is related to a community's traditional political culture, and social-economic order. According to Kasperson and Breibart (1974), political culture is the customary way of doing business by leaders involved in the process of transforming societal wishes into political action. It is the balance between the public and the elite (politicians, bureaucrats, etc.) (Lucas, 1977). According to Lucas (1977), the elite make decisions on behalf of the public while the public monitors new decisions and how the decisions are implemented. Sewell and O'Riordan (1976) defined political culture

as: "(that which) establish(es) roles, rules and social norms that frame all policy-making activities and permit(s) peaceful resolution of conflict". We can therefore assume that the political culture of a nation affects the direction and effectiveness of public participation both at the national and local levels.

Public Motivation in Community Action

Motivation to participate in a community effort comes about through three values (Weissman, 1970; Coleman, 1971). According to Coleman (1971), one is motivated to participate in community action if one identifies with other community members to the extent that one believes that their fate is one's own fate and vice versa. Due to the strong loyalty bond, the individual is obliged to participate in any activity that the community undertakes.

The second motivating factor is one's belief that one will face some consequences by participating or not participating. Thus an individual chooses to participate in self interest. Weissman (1971) extends the third public motivation beyond individual self interest to an individual's interest in the wellbeing of the community. Identifying the values commonly held by the community can therefore indicate the type of project needed, the participation model appropriate, and the means to motivate people towards participation.

The following factors are important in motivating public participation: (a) a community action will thwart loss of physical property and/or is believed to result in net benefit; again, it depends on whether an individual's values are for personal or general community gain; (b) a perceived family need is achievable through the community action and/or if the activity increases opportunities for the children; (c) there is a sense of crisis; and (d) there is an animator, or leader (Bella, 1982).

Public participation in collective community action depends too upon leadership (Edwards and Jones, 1976). According to Dorsey (1982), unless organisers are able to motivate public participation in a community-based project, it cannot succeed. According to Edwards and

Jones (1976), effective leadership involves democratic procedures and the leader's consideration of ideas, wishes, and feelings of persons who are affected by decisions made.

Community development projects are controversial endeavours because they change the existing power structures (Lotz 1977). Fear that a status-quo favoured item, such as locus of decision-making power, will change if community action is taken may convince community power holders not to participate in a community development project (Edwards and Jones, 1976; Lotz, 1977). For effective leadership to occur in community action, leaders must interpret their legal duty to pursue public participation to mean participation beyond tokenism (Lucas, 1977; Sewell and O'Riordan, 1977).

SOCIAL METHOD FOR PARTICIPATION IN AGROFORESTRY

Cernea (1992) argued that people participation has extraordinary importance in programs initiated and financed by the state for two reasons. First, governments have a great potential of initiating programs that do not address the immediate needs of the public. Second, government projects become less effective and more costly if they are not supported by the public. Cernea (1992) explained further that though the term "public participation" is used for most development projects, the problems of "participation" or "non-participation" generally occur in government-induced development rather than in community-initiated projects.

Since participation depends on social arrangements, political relations, economic incentives and administrative approaches, Cernea (1992) urged that participation must be socially organised. According to Cernea (1992), one method of doing so is through social sciences that involve codifying existing social experiences, sociological theoretical knowledge, and

empirical findings into sets of procedures for organising human activities in order to achieve defined goals. Cernea (1992) suggested the following elements for social method:

1. Identification of the *social actors* who will carry out the project. In the case of AF, the some of the social actors would be a representative group of contact farmers. Excessive use of local leaders and other *progressive* individuals may concentrate benefits of change to a few people at the expense of the majority (Jones and Rolls, 1982)
2. Conceptualization of the prog'am's *goals and principles*, in line with the social-economic interests of the social actors.
3. Establishment of adequate *linkage systems and forms of cooperation* between government agencies and the social actors.
4. Establishment of *information and communication patterns*. Effective public participation requires an active and well-informed public. "If full information is not available on issues under consideration, opportunities and even rights to participate become meaningless" (Lucas. 1977). "To have information is to have power" (Draper, 1977). Indigenous knowledge should be tapped because it is cheaper than formal experimental methods both in time and funds since it is derived from accumulated experience. Time has proved that some of the previously branded primitive farming practices, such as, mixed farming and shifting cultivation are actually sophisticated once put on the scientific microscope. Local knowledge refers to knowledge of people existing as a system of concepts, beliefs, and ways of learning.

5. Establishment of *procedures for joint decision-making*; for example: public participation rights and duties provided by law, the political and administrative discretionary powers provided to the leaders, public organization to access the participation mechanisms in place as well as the resources necessary for participation, allocation of financial resources and incentives, etc.
6. Mobilization through the *structures endogenous to the group* of social actors themselves

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