

Monitoring for good forest governance

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In this paper, the linkage between monitoring, governance and learning organization is shown and good forest governance as an integral component of Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) is defined. The authors strongly believe that monitoring is a mechanism or tool to measure good governance. Monitoring does not have its own intrinsic value but has an instrumental value for the establishment of good forest governance. In this paper, the authors argue for the relevance of effective monitoring system for which learning organizational culture is required to achieve the goal of sustainable forest management.

Key Words: Monitoring, governance, organization, sustainable forest management

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines Monitoring as “a continuous or periodic review at every level of implementation of an activity, which checks whether or not input delivery, work schedules, targeted outputs, and other actions are proceeding according to plan. However, it is not enough to verify inputs and outputs; it is also necessary to systematically review the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and impacts of activities in progress in order to guide future planning, programming and decision making (UNDP 2002). Monitoring provides signals so that decision makers can take actions at the right time and place. It may be the reason that Margoluis *et al.* (1998) mention monitoring as a tool for adaptive management.

Measurable objectives of a project or programme have to be defined before undertaking any monitoring activities and indicators have to be devised to measure these objectives. Indicators need to be relevant, simple to collect, understood by stakeholders, easy to analyse and useful to track changes over time (UNDP 2002).

UNDP also defines governance as “the complex of mechanisms, processes, relationships, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences. Governance encompasses all the methods society uses to distribute power, and manage public resources and problems. In sound governance, public resources and problems are managed effectively and efficiently, and in response to the critical needs of society. Effective democratic form of governance relies on public participation,

accountability and transparency.” Decentralization, clearly defined roles, responsibilities and authority at each levels and of stakeholders, balanced power of relationships vertically and horizontally, access to information, equity and justice, prompt service delivery system, clear performance evaluation systems, all are considered important elements of good governance.

The rule of law is another important element of good governance. Traditional practices of monitoring include the measurement of change due to the change in physical, financial or human inputs. However, changes in rules, procedures and norms have greater effects on results or impacts. Therefore, monitoring should measure changes in both types of inputs and their associated implications on output, effects and impacts.

Monitoring at the Ministry level

The priority to monitoring system has started in Nepal only during and after the Eighth Five Year Plan. Some of the official means to implement monitoring of projects and programmes at the line agency level started during the Eighth Plan and continued to date are:

- Quarterly and annual progress reporting;
- National Development Problem Solving Committee headed by Prime Minister;
- Ministerial Development Problem Solving Committees headed by respective Minister in each ministry.

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Subsequently, in 1995, monitoring cells were created in each of the ministry. This was followed up by formulating specific indicators to monitor the progress of each individual project.

In addition to the quarterly and annual progress report of development projects, each ministry has to report the performance of

- Core projects on monthly basis to the national planning commission;
- Monthly general progress report of each line agency to the cabinet.

The monitoring (progress report) formats have been developed by the National Planning Commission (NPC). It has been mandatory and has to submit to line ministries to the NPC or to cabinet on monthly or quarterly or annual basis. This practice however has little relevance to how the forests or protected areas or watershed are managed or governed at the community or district or national level.

Several lessons can be learned from the experience of the current monitoring system. These include:

- Monitoring system in line agency is geared to measure inputs and outputs of a “development project”. The system has little relevance at the strategic or policy level;
- Monitoring is an additional job. Its instrumental value has not been used;
- Monitoring of a project or programme is still a new idea which has not been valued in the system;
- Progress monitoring of investment projects is not linked to other monitoring instruments such as employee performance evaluation, financial auditing, and the processes followed to perform the tasks;
- Monitoring has not been linked to graduated sanctioning; and
- Monitoring is not tied up with governance
- Monitoring is not used for promoting a supportive ‘learning culture’

How monitoring and organizational culture promote sustainable forest management through good forest governance?

The main objectives of sustainable forest management are:

- To retain viable population and stock of flora and fauna;

- To improve the health of forests and fauna;
- To generate sustainable flow of multiple products that accrue from forests;
- To distribute forest products and services to people in an equitable manner;

In order to achieve the objectives of sustainable forest management mentioned above, robust, transparent, accountable and participatory organizations and institutions are required. These organizations and institutions should establish a culture, which supports learning, decentralizes decision-making, promotes team work, two way communication horizontally and vertically, delivers prompt services to clients, establishes networks with various organizations, flattens the organizational hierarchy, establishes transparent staff promotion, and reward and punishment system (Hampshire and Poate 2000). The authors characterize such types of organizations as learning organization, which David Garvin from Harvard Business School defines in the following way.

A learning organisation is one which is “skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge, and at modifying its behaviour to reflect new knowledge and insights”

It can be said in this context that sustainable forest management requires to have a good forest governance, for which all institutions and organizations working in forestry sector should be able to operate as learning organization. Since Nepali organizations and institutions operate at three levels – firstly, community; secondly sectoral (district, regional and department and ministry) and lastly national level, therefore the issue of governance should be considered in all three levels. Development of indicators of good forest governance, therefore, requires assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of sustainable forest management. For discussion purpose, some of the indicators of good forest governance can be as follows:

- Rule of law in both formulation and implementation of policy, programmes, projects, procedures, sanctioning
- Transparency in activities pursued;
- Accountability in both upward and downward direction (even some argue to have 360 degree accountability);
- Efficiency in resource management and use;

- Participation in decision making process;
- Equitable sharing of benefits;
- Use of authority without prejudice and discrimination;
- Graduated sanctioning of rule breakers;
- Decentralization and devolution of power and authority
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

Assessment of the current status of forest governance, existing status and practice of monitoring and the examination of the current organizational culture are required to develop monitoring strategy of the forestry sector, more specifically of the Ministry of Forests and Soil

Conservation. A checklist of various elements of governance, monitoring and organizational culture is presented in Annex 1. The annex provides the basis for appraising the current status and help look for strategy to be developed to improve the system (Pokharel and Grosen 2000). Similarly, Annex 2 presents the examples of the relevance of good forest governance (Brown *et al.* 2002), which demonstrates the relevance of effective monitoring to be in place for good forest governance to achieve the goal of sustainable forest management. Many authors reported the issue of governance and monitoring in changing context (Koirala and Gautam 1998; Shrestha *et al.* 1998; Hoblely and Shields 1998; Caney and Asley 1999; and RECOFTC 2001).

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Annex 1

Checklist for the assessment of the status of Governance, monitoring system and organizational culture

1a. Checklist for the assessment of the status of governance

Kindly assess the status of forest governance by using the checklist given below in 4 point ranking (Worst 0,1,2, Best 3).

Elements of governance	0 point	1 point	2 point	3 point
Rule of law and monitoring of their compliance				
Of Product/targets				
Of Finance/expenditure				
Rules, decisions made, policy				
Decentralisation				
Clearly defined roles, responsibilities and authority at each levels (TOR)				
Balance of power relationships vertically and horizontally				
Upward Accountability				
Downward Accountability				
Horizontal Accountability				
Transparency				
Access to information				
Equity in resource allocation (incentives, carrier)				
Participatory decision making process				
Prompt service delivery system				
Clear and transparent performance evaluation system for reward and punishment				

1b. Checklist for the assessment of the status of monitoring system

Kindly assess the monitoring system of your organisation by using the checklist given below in 4 point ranking (0,1,2,3).

Elements of monitoring	0 point	1 point	2 point	3 point
1. Baseline information 1.1 Forest resource 1.2 Socio-economic 1.3 Governance (accountability, responsibility, transparency and devolution)				
2. How monitoring is understood and practiced by majority of people in the organization 2.1 Is it fear or a means of feedback? 2.2 How about the concept of 360 degree monitoring 2.3 How about self monitoring				
3. Presence of indicators				
4. Format Ownership in developing monitoring formats Ownership filing out formats To what extent the numbers of formats are manageable and appropriate.				
5. Indicators are users' friendly				
6. System in place in collecting monitoring information				
7. Type of information 7.1 Qualitative 7.2 Quantitative				
8. Information flow 8.1 Two way horizontal 8.2 Two way vertical (upward and downwards)				
8. Information processing, analysis and summarizing				
9. Information dissemination practice to wider audience				
10. Access to information to all staff, concerned stakeholders, people including illiterate				
11. Resources for monitoring 11.1 Budget 11.2 Manpower (skill, knowledge, expertise) 11.3 Organization/unit				
12. Monitoring is embedded in day to practice or it is practiced as separate events				
13. Monitoring types and their integration 13.1 Activity monitoring 13.2 Process monitoring 13.3 Output monitoring 13.4 Staff monitoring 13.5 Financial monitoring				
14. Documentation as a means of verification of the performance				
15. Joint or collaborative type of monitoring between various organizations				
16. Differentiated type of monitoring 16.1 At socio-economic level (to see the effect on rich, poor, dalit, women) 16.2 At governance level • Accountability • Responsibility • Transparency • Decentralization 16.3 At resources level (regeneration, density, crown cover, wild life, soil and so on)				

1c. Checklist for the assessment of organizational culture (How much is an organization as learning organization?)

Please rank (0= Worst; 1= Fair; 2= Medium; 3=Best) from your judgment to characterize the organizational and management system of the forestry sector at the national level.

Attributes of organizational culture	Score 0, 1, 2 or 3
1. Learning from experience is seen as "everyone's business" and not left to specialist units or senior managers.	
2. The organization has mechanisms for 'remembering' the experience of its current and previous work through the development of readily accessible databases, resource/information banks and information retrieval systems.	
3. The organization documents and makes its experience available for a wider audience without using unnecessary technical jargon e.g. through publications, newsletters, providing training, etc.	
4. Policy making involves people at most levels in the organization, according to what they can contribute to the process and not simply their status.	
5. Monitoring and evaluation reports (and field visit reports where appropriate) are routinely analyzed to identify what has been learned from the work and what lessons could be applied in the future	
6. The organization has a wide range of mechanisms for sharing experience between staff in different teams, section, departments and locations (e.g. regular meetings, action-learning sets, coaching and mentoring, newsletter production, organizational intranet, and/or the development of written procedures and induction/training manuals)	
7. The organization enters into open co-operative relationships with other organizations in order to share and encourage mutual learning from each other's experience.	
8. Managers at all levels create a climate which encourages experimentation and acknowledges that mistakes are an inevitable part of this e.g. managers admit their own mistakes; blaming is minimized so that people can openly and honestly discuss the issues.	
9. The organization creates and encourages formal and informal opportunities for individuals to share with others the lessons they have learned.	
10. It is easy to access information on the lessons learned from other parts of the organization.	
11. The organization is prepared to change its practice and priorities to reflect new knowledge and insights in its efforts to constantly improve its effectiveness i.e. the organization does not hold on to outdated work practices and priorities simply because change is 'uncomfortable'.	
12. Learning is built into the organization through the development and updating of systems, operational procedures and other ways of sharing the lessons gained from individuals' experience.	
13. Individuals, groups and sections view each other as working partners and constantly strive to find out and meet each others' expectations and need.	
14. People feel able to enquire about and challenge each others' (and their own) assumptions and biases.	
15. The organization is linked to a wide range of networks and uses its contacts with other agencies to gather useful knowledge and skills and to benchmark itself against best practice.	
16. The information function is given sufficient prominence and is resourced adequately to enable the organization to keep its information system and record-keeping up to date.	

Annex 2 Forestry as an Entry Point for Governance Reform

Tropical forestry provides a useful entry point for governance programs. The very factors which make it a challenging sector for development assistance commend it also as a crucible for governance reform: its inclusive focus, linking the global to the national and local; the high levels of income and other benefits which it generates; its local fiscal base; the centrality of issues of tenure and collective rights; and its importance in rural livelihoods, all reinforce the linkages between good governance, public accountability and poverty alleviation. Ensuring that the forest sector fulfils this brief is a major challenge not just to host country governments but also to the donor community.

Some of the policy conclusions include:

- Tropical forestry has experience of more general relevance to the good governance debate, and may offer an important source of learning for other aspects of governance reform.
- Progress in the forest sector can secure wider gains in governance.
- The governance challenges, and the potential contributions of the forest sector, vary according to the nature and management of the resource.
- Tropical forestry's experience shows that a combination of pressures - both 'bottom up' and 'top down' - may be needed to build public accountability.
- The transfer of rights over resources is important for turning 'participation' into citizenship. Forestry's local fiscal base can strengthen decentralized government, and contribute significantly to poverty alleviation.
- Forestry offers experience with a wide variety of pro-poor growth strategies, and the legal, institutional and policy reforms necessary to secure these.
- Pro-poor regulatory reform can be a challenging task, combining de-regulation with new and additional safeguards to meet multiple goals.
- The national resolution of conflicts related to international policies is a more pressing issue than their resolution at the international level.
- Important questions need to be asked about the governance implications of internationally funded initiatives, particularly in the area of conservation.

Source: David Brown, Kate Schreckenber, Gill Shepherd and Adrian Wells. ODI Briefing Paper No. 1, April 2002 http://www.odi.org.uk/publications/forestry_briefing.html