

Assessment of pluralistic advisory services: A case of Madhupur Sal forest in Bangladesh

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Abstract: *Participatory forest management initiatives in Sal forest in Bangladesh were introduced to achieve conservation objectives implemented through pluralistic advisory systems. However, the objectives were not fully achieved and involved actors faced different challenges including coordination failure. This study aims to assess the role and performance of different advisory service providers, considering the discussion on how contemporary advisory services fit in the specific context of service delivery. We employed the stakeholder analysis to identify the different advisory service providers using focus group discussion. The quality of services was discussed in a participatory workshop with clients, and nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with the heads of service providing organizations. Data were qualitatively analyzed to explore the role and performance of different service providers. Results of this study indicate that a coordination gap exists among the advisory service providers. Despite the coexistence of diverse types of advisory service providers, their social interaction depends on their goodwill towards the client members of the community. Findings also indicate that most of the advisory service providers do not ensure the quality of services, and do not structure them according to the need and demand of the forest resource users. Our assessment provides a lesson for the existing advisory service providers to consider the importance-influence, characteristics and service quality during a new arrangement of service delivery in the context of forest management.*

Keywords: *Participatory forest management, pluralistic advisory system, Sal forest, governance framework, stakeholder analysis, Bangladesh*