

Local People's Constraints to Participation in Forestry Activities (White Nile State. Central Sudan)

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Abstract- The weakness of local people's participation in forestry activities in the White Nile State stays as a major constraint to achieve any progress and development in the area. Poor peasants are strongly tied to their local traditions and beliefs. Participation is a major issue to be discussed and investigated in such communities. This study attempted to point out the most common constraints that influence the locals from adopting any kind of activity aimed at their own benefit.

A random questionnaire was taken to cover most of the target groups found in the area to avoid bias in the results. The study revealed a general lack of enough education in matters related to forestry. Further, ecosystem degradation and restoration measures are not in the radar screen of the locals, which led to a lesser positive and active participation in remedial activities. This is coupled with a minimal adoption of modern afforestation activities and energy tools compared to other development activities. However, major constraints in expected successes were attributed to two reasons: First, the weak and unprofessional extension messages that were either imprecisely aimed or handled by nonspecialized personnel with no expertise. Second, the short duration of the projects in the impacted areas and the rush to quick ecological results that realistically requires time and patience due to the nature of such ecological remedial measures.

The study concludes that strengthening the existing extension units and creation of new ones in the impacted areas is of a vital importance, to influence peasants and assure them of the great beneficial return. Moreover, extension messages should be bound to forestry activities, taking into consideration softening the stiff relation between the people and forestry authority and designing long-term forestry projects in the area. This for sure will help in exerting a positive impact upon the local knowledge and pushing development in rural areas ahead.

Index Terms- Community, Constraints, Participation, White Nile, Forestry

I. INTRODUCTION

Local communities have been living in harmony with their environment and maintaining an ecological equilibrium balance, however due to rapid growth of population and their higher expectations in their lives and the use of forests' products resulted in complete forests razed to the ground. Sudan is regarded as one of the poor countries in Africa, its entire population depend upon the natural resources, particularly forests. Heavy cut of trees and inefficient management systems led to deterioration of agricultural lands and death of live stock

[1]. Introduction of afforestation programs jointly with or by foreign agencies and local people remain the solution and possible action for government to mitigate the deteriorating situation.

Participation recognizes peoples' central role in directing their own lives. They will voluntarily work towards removing those constraints and consequently better their lives [2]. Rural communities and forest users, who depend on trees and forest products, for their survival and for economic development are the primary beneficiaries of community forestry activities. [3], [4]. Rural communities rarely have common interests to participate in activities related to a society affect the basis of community participation projects activities [4].

Deterioration of the natural resources, in the area during the early eighties, was a severe one. It was coupled with negative consequences affected the lives of local communities. Lack of food, lack of fodder, animal high mortality rate, and low productivity of agricultural lands, were the major consequences resulted in hard or mostly impossible conditions of life. The government together with, foreign organizations launched forestry programs to stop or minimize natural resources deterioration. Participation was a major objective for local societies in all kinds of activities. Past participation as well as the participation in the ongoing projects proved to be remarkably lagging behind ambitions and expectations of genuine participation in forestry activities and adoption of the projects' ideas/ innovations and strategies to solve the environmental problems. Still projects in extension activities needed for better success and higher perception percentages amongst farmers. The existing situation truly calls for better sustainable management of the forests through local people's participation.

Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) contributed to mitigation environmental deterioration through locals' participation. Such participation is assessed in this study to achieve the following:

The objectives of this study were:

- 1- The role of forestry projects, with regard to environment conservation.
- 2- Explore factors that hinder participation of local inhabitants.
- 3- Explore factors that can support local people's perception of innovations and new ideas and participation in forests management.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was carried out in the White Nile state. Five villages were selected in the state for this study, namely these villages are; Ja'Alyeen(1), Al-Halba(2), Wad-Jabur(3), At-Tajammo(4) and As-Sayal(5). The area covered by this study almost is a circle of one hundred kilometer in diameter. The necessary information needed for this study was collected by using two types of data: primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected using a questionnaire that investigates the willingness of adoption of community forestry through extension efforts, and the level of perception of the people in forestry activities.

Secondary information was collected from reports of the forests national corporation (FNC) offices, as well as from personal observations and knowledge of elder inhabitants in the area. Statistical analysis was commenced through exploratory manipulations of the data obtained in the study area. This process was accomplished by critically examining the data through the

use of simple techniques of analysis. The main tools are the construction of simple tables and selected cross-tabulation which allows tentative answers for many of the questions being asked in the survey.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A: Benefits of trees as viewed by respondents:

It was found that benefits of forests or even that of trees within the forests, amongst rural poor people are not the same anyhow. Some of the people don't believe in such a benefit at all, while others believe in different kinds of benefits. The benefits accruing from forest plantations are long term benefits and environmental. Table 1 shows these variations. Protection was found to be the most important in the area; it records up to 54%. Income generating activities and increase in agricultural production stay as low as 10% for each.

(Table 1): Benefits of trees as viewed by respondents:

| Village | N | Benefits of Trees | Types of Benefits of Trees % | | | | |
|---------|-----|-------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------|-----------|--------|
| | | | Income | Agric. Production | Protection | Fuel wood | Others |
| 1. | 21 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 14 | 1 | 5 |
| 2. | 32 | 25 | 3 | 3 | 18 | 4 | 12 |
| 3. | 16 | 12 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. | 14 | 9 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 1 |
| 5. | 17 | 13 | 1 | 1 | 8 | 6 | 3 |
| Total | 100 | 72 | 10 | 10 | 54 | 15 | 25 |

N: Number of respondents.

Peasants in the area usually bound to the daily need supply works, so they pay more attention to activities which generate more income. Other activities always stay in the second priority. Fuel wood supply recorded only 15% which marks a small percentage for the locals. Therefore, participation in activities related to trees or forests is traditionally kept very low.

B: Participation in projects' activities:

Participation recognizes people's central role in directing their own lives. In many cases the proposed programs, are hardly accepted by aid agencies unless the involvement of people is guaranteed ([5],[6]. In the study area a good proportion of the respondents (76%) participated in the projects activities (Table 2). The projects were able to recruit the local inhabitants through different methods. Meetings were the main method for encouraging people's participation as ted by (36%) of the

respondents followed by mass media (31%). Illiteracy in the study area may restrict the possibility of using other methods like posters and written instructions. Rural communities and forest users who depend on trees and forest resources for their survival and for economic development are the primary beneficiaries of community forestry activities [3]. Only 9% of the respondents showed their keenness to participate in the projects activities irrespective of the extension method for recruiting the local inhabitants. This percentage is very low compared to the challenges that threaten the study area, like desertification and erosion. This clearly reflects the poor perception of the local inhabitants to the environmental issues and automatically necessitates intensification of the extension efforts to make positive change in the attitudes and awareness of the local people.

(Table 2): Participation in projects in the study area:

| Village | N | Participation in Proj. Act. | Channels for Drawing Participation | | |
|---------|----|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| | | | Meetings | Mass Media | Voluntary |
| 1. | 21 | 18 | 7 | 8 | 3 |
| 2. | 32 | 27 | 11 | 13 | 3 |
| 3. | 16 | 12 | 8 | 4 | 0 |
| 4. | 14 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 3 |
| 5. | 17 | 11 | 6 | 5 | 0 |

| | | | | | |
|-------|-----|----|----|----|---|
| Total | 100 | 76 | 36 | 31 | 9 |
|-------|-----|----|----|----|---|

N: Number of Respondents.

It is worthy here to mention the difference between genuine participation and passive participation. The former the local people participate physically, mentally and emotionally, while in the latter is deprived from such traits. According to the findings of the results discussed earlier in this chapter, it seems that the participation of the local people is passive because it was not reflected in a tangible development in the field of environment.

C: Constraints to people participation in forestry activities in rural areas.

There are different factors that hinder commitment to genuine participation as viewed by the respondents. Participation is a voluntary contribution that is people’s share in establishment of community forestry [7]. The people are engaged in some activities that make it difficult for them to participate in projects activities. [8] Stated that the local people of the region are not capable of managing their local woodland resources rationally and sustainably. About 45% stated that their priorities were directed to agriculture and animal rearing (Table 3).

(Table 3): Obstacles to Participation in Projects Activities:

| No of Respondents | Obstacles to Participation in Projects Activities % | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----------|------------------|--------------------------|--------|
| | Land Scarcity | Mistrust | Other Priorities | Contribution unimportant | Others |
| 100 | 7 | 18 | 45 | 13 | 17 |

This fact is further supported by 13% of respondents who stated that it is not important to participate in forestry activities. Moreover, the rural people are suspicious towards outsiders. Local institutions are weak and slow in activities and sometimes have no power to exert upon the community members [9]. In addition to 18% who stated that they mistrust the project initiatives. Those factors mentioned above could sum up to 76% of the respondents. On the other hand this may reflect the weakness of the extension units that fail to reveal the ambiguities and follow the process inducement, awareness, and reflection to act which are important in combating mistrust and suspiciousness.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- Existence of an effective extension unit is a top priority to attain fruitful achievements in the field of rural development.
- 2- Adoption of woodlots, agro-forestry and farm forestry activities will mitigate reliance on natural resources for fuel wood.
- 3- FNC should strengthen its relation with the local community for conservation of the natural resources.
- 4- Expanding community forestry is an essential objective to be practiced by FNC.

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