

Negotiation Support in Watershed Management: A Case for Decision-Making beyond the Farm Level

External support for participatory watershed management often assumes a technological orientation, with limited attention to the level at which decisions are taken (individual vs. collective). Yet many watershed problems can only be solved through collective decision-making rooted in equitable negotiation processes.

Most agricultural research and development programs in support of rural livelihoods share an implicit emphasis on individual decision-making. While farmer groups are increasingly being used as an organizational structure through which external interventions are channeled, decisions on technology adoption and land management are still made at the level of the household or individual. However, many livelihood and natural resource management (NRM) problems will remain poorly addressed unless collective decision-making is encouraged.

Watershed Problems Requiring Negotiation Support

- ✓ *Negotiating Program Benefits.* The tendency to favor farmers who are most willing to innovate or can most easily benefit—the youth, “model” or “innovative” farmers, and landowners—can lead to elite capture of program benefits. Collective decision-making is required to openly negotiate the distribution of benefits.
- ✓ *Managing Common Property Resources (CPR).* Low productivity and degradation of CPR require that new management strategies (including who must invest and who benefits) be openly negotiated.
- ✓ *Natural Resource Governance.* Many land management decisions require changes in natural resource governance, including local by-laws, managerial structures and functions, and mechanisms for effective



Multi-stakeholder negotiations for improved management of a Mission boundary in Lushoto District, Tanzania. Participants negotiated replacement of Eucalypts with Markhamia obtusifolia, a tree exhibiting favorable characteristics according to each stakeholder.

representation that must be collectively negotiated.

- ✓ *Investments in Collective Goods.* In the absence of collective decision-making, most land users will seek to optimize livelihood benefits to the household (individual goods) rather than benefits to the community at large (collective goods).
- ✓ *Managing Biophysical Processes that Cut Across Farm Boundaries.* Collective strategies to control pests, disease and wild animals; manage nutrient and water flows across the landscape; and manage farm boundaries will be more effective and socially beneficial than individualized efforts.
- ✓ *Agricultural Productivity and Income.* Often times, collective decision-making can even help increase returns from private property, for example through the pooling of resources (labor, capital, land), sharing of information and germplasm, purchasing inputs at lower cost, or marketing.

KEY CHALLENGES	NEGOTIATION SUPPORT STRATEGY
	<i>Stakeholder identification and negotiation support as a function of "stake," for example among:</i>
Soil fertility improvements are complicated by: the removal of dung and crop residues from outfields; free movement of livestock (compromising physical and vegetative structures); unequal incentives to conserve among upslope and downslope farmers; the heavy burden on households with limited labor; and trans-boundary effects of both conserving (water diverted to other farms) and failing to conserve (water from unconserved plots compromising structures).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Upslope and downslope farmers, given that the costs and consequences of soil conservation vary as a function of landscape location. ✓ Farmers with neighboring landholdings who must negotiate the location of common drainage ways and equitable contributions to gully stabilization efforts. ✓ Owners of protected (ungrazed) outfield areas, and other farmers who must receive their livestock for grazing until agroforestry and conservation investments mature (to ensure cooperation among and benefits to early and late beneficiaries when temporary restrictions of livestock movement are implemented to establish conservation structures).
Niche-compatible agroforestry is required to increase biomass in the system to alleviate fuel constraints (and thereby improve soil fertility) without compromising water discharge from springs. Yet it is complicated by: free movement of livestock (requiring inordinate investments in labor and materials to fence individual trees); and failure to establish or enforce laws to regulate the use of individual land (undermining water conservation and incentives for niche compatibility).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Stakeholders involved in niches where current incompatibilities exist, including farm, mission and estate boundaries (landowners and affected farmers); springs (landowners and affected users); and forest margins and roadsides (the State and neighboring farmers). ✓ Nursery managers and watershed residents, to negotiate how individual and collective interests can be balanced (i.e. species that enhance economic returns from nurseries vs. niche compatibility). ✓ Women and men, whose customary <i>roles</i> structure different needs from trees (fuel vs. fodder vs. income) and <i>property rights</i> differentiate access to tree products.
Water conservation requires negotiation to support physical protection of springs (water quality) and investments in long-term supply.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Owners of land around springs (who want to maximize economic returns from the land), spring users (who wish to maximize spring discharge) and catchment residents (whose aggregate land management practices have a strong affect on water quality and quantity). ✓ All water users, to negotiate a balance between responsibilities and rights in spring maintenance and use.

Table 1. Collective Action Challenges in Watershed Management and the Role of Negotiation Support

Case Study—Ginchi Benchmark Site

A more detailed look at the Ginchi Benchmark Site in West Shewa Zone, Ethiopia, illustrates how negotiation support can be used to foster collective decision-making for improved NRM. Ginchi has a mixed crop-livestock system and complex tenure system. Outfields, used for the cultivation of cereals and livestock grazing, are individually owned but shift seasonally between restricted access (rainy season) and open access (dry season). Periods of open access complicate efforts to improve outfield productivity, as livestock consume what is left of crop residues and may trample trees and conservation structures. Coupled with perceived tenure insecurity and the absence of regulations on dung collection, this situation creates strong incentives to mine the outfields of nutrients (through the collection of dung and crop residues) and invest only in the more secure homestead plots. As a result, outfields are almost devoid of trees and conservation structures and soil fertility has exhibited a steady decline that is exacerbated by increased use of dung for fuel.

The Role of Negotiation Support

Negotiation support is complementary to technological interventions, enabling

solutions that address system-wide problems while avoiding appreciable harm to any land user. The approach consists of stakeholder identification for each problem and for specific dimensions of the problem, and negotiation support so that the needs of diverse interest groups are met. Approaches for specific challenges are highlighted in Table 1.

The Approach

The following basic steps are utilized in negotiation support:

1. Identification of watershed problems requiring collective action;
2. Identification of local stakeholders with divergent interests around each issue;
3. Meetings with individual stakeholder groups to elicit their perceptions on the problem and solutions, and agree upon an approach for engagement with other stakeholders;
4. Multi-stakeholder negotiations with action planning; and
5. Implementation and periodic monitoring/adjustment of resolutions (technical, social or policy).

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Livestock in Ginchi are free grazed in outfields, limiting options for technological innovation.



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Key partners in methodology development have been research specialists from AHI's NARI collaborators (EARO, DRD) and various NGOs and government extension officers.

We gratefully acknowledge donor support from SDC; Netherlands, Norwegian and Italian governments; IDRC; the Rockefeller Foundation; DfID and the European Union.