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People's Participation in Forest Management and Some Recommendations The Case Study of Mersin (Turkey)

by Ahmet ŞENYAZ, Melekber SÜLÜŞOĞLU and Ersin YILMAZ

Several initiatives and projects of international scope have enabled Turkey to undertake a study of the situation of forest villagers and to make certain recommendations for the improvement of their living conditions. Based on the precedent of case studies of the contribution of forests to sustainable development done elsewhere around the Mediterranean Rim, Turkey in 2005 carried out a study of seven forest villages in the Mersin region. The main problems related to the participatory management of the forests and woodlands in these villages were identified, with subsequent recommendations for improvements.

Method Used by Consultants

A participatory method was used by consultants to conduct a survey on selected forest villages. This method was also used during the preparation of Turkish National Forest Programme. During the formulation of National Forest Programme (NFP), field surveys were conducted forest villages in order to integrate villager's opinions into NFP. While former forestry plans were dominated by the proposals of forestry administration and its staff (top down approach), Turkish NFP included all stakeholders' opinion in the formulation stage (bottom up approach). This approach was used for the first time in Turkish forestry planning.

The case study started with an inception meeting together with forestry staff and project consultants at the Forest Regional Directorate in Mersin. At the meeting, 7 forest villages were determined to conduct surveys. First trip to selected forest villages were taken by foresters and project consultants in order to get some general information about the villages and confirm the survey areas (Pictures 1).



Pictures 1:
Meetings with forestry staff and forest villagers



After the determination of survey villages, national consultants conducted special participatory field surveys in the villages (Pictures 2). Women, men and children were involved in the survey. At the village meetings, firstly, people were grouped and asked to draw a map of village and to mark important natural resources, their benefits and expectations from them. Secondly, in order to define their relations with the institutions and other stakeholders a Venn diagramme was drawn and their relations with the institutions were discussed. Thirdly, people's opinion on forest resources and forest administration were taken and after declaring their positive and negative opinion, their suggestions for forest management were listed and discussed.

Pictures 2:
Participatory field surveys in the forest villagers

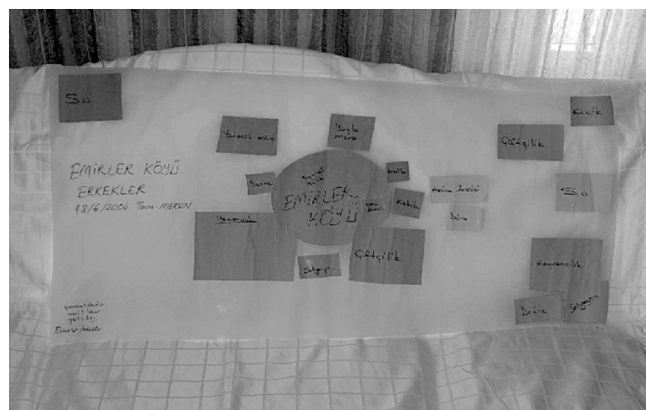
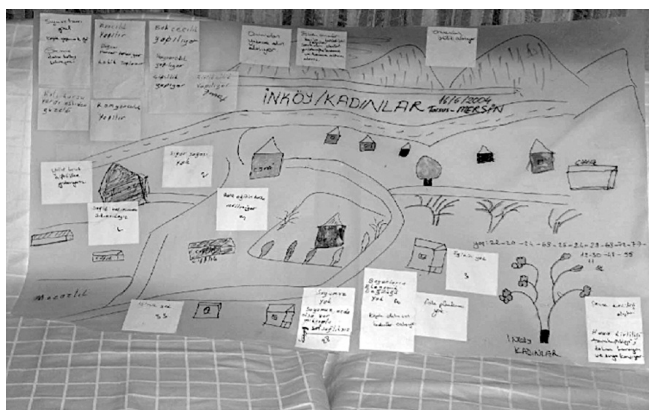
A complementary work of socio-economic conditions of the villagers and literature survey were done by the consultants at the East Mediterranean Forestry Research Institute.

In addition to the meeting with villagers, participatory meetings with representatives from local administrations and institutions were organized and their opinions were taken.

As a result of participatory meetings with stakeholders, a report was written and main findings of the report were presented in a stakeholder workshop. Resource availabilities, main actors for resource use, socio-economic conditions of the villagers, their links with other sectors, main development problems in the region etc. were discussed in the workshop. All related actors were invited to the workshop. Two scenarios, black and pink, were defined at the workshop. In order to realize pink scenario, measures to be taken by the institutions and actors and their responsibilities were identified.

Moreover, an awareness visit was organized to two sample villages, Üçtepe and Küstülü, which have success stories on rural





development. Local authorities and representatives from public institutions, forestry staff, representatives from 7 survey villages, representatives from NGOs attended the field trip. Success stories in these villages were listened and improvements were observed by the participants. Forest villagers coming from 7 forest villages had an opportunity to see the achievements made by host villages.

Participatory Problem Analysis in the Villages

This activity includes mapping of the village and drawing a Venn diagramme and drawing a H form. During the survey, consultants required villagers to draw their village on a paper and to mark important resources and activities (forested area, crop lands, roads, bridges, water resources, other facilities etc.). Mapping of a forest village enables forest villagers to concentrate on their forest resources and other natural resources and perceive the main problems and bottlenecks related to them. In this way imagination of the village and its resources by mapping makes it simple for women and children, even for illiterate villagers, to participate in discussions about natural resource use in the village (Pictures 3).

Drawing a Venn diagramme enables villagers to determine the relations with institutions, providing a tool for simple stakeholder analysis. In the center of the paper forest villagers were attached. Every stakeholder was represented by a shape and color.

The size of the figures indicates the influential power of the stakeholders, while distance between the shapes give some opinion about the relation level between the parties.

At the third stage of the situation analysis, consultants required villagers to draw an H shape and write a heading on the center like "status and performance of forest administration at the village" and to score it between 0 and 10. Horizontal line on the H was used as a score line. Later, according to their score, they list their negative opinions on the left hand side of the H shape, while summarizing positive ones on the right hand side. Finally they list their recommendations under the score line (Pictures 4).

Pictures 3: Village map and Venn diagramme drawn by the villagers

Pictures 4: H form filled by forest villagers



Main Stakeholders in the Region

Before starting the case study activities, main stakeholders are determined. These are local governors, municipalities, forestry department, agricultural department, education department, health department, religion department, rural services, poultry firms and NGOs in the Region. During the survey, contribution of forestry department was very high, because all the villages selected for survey are considered as forest village and their relations with forestry department was very firm. All stakeholders were negotiated respectively and information about stakeholder activities in the villages was integrated into a report. The report findings were presented and discussed with stakeholders in a participatory workshop. At the workshop all stakeholders had an opportunity to see forest villagers' expectations from them and to exchange information about their activities in the villages.

At the workshop two scenarios were foreseen for 20- year outlook. Black scenario foresees that villagers will continue to use all resources unsustainable and they won't try to deal with new income generating activities, finally they will have to move to urban areas. Pink scenario foresees that villagers will have enough financial and technical support for their development. Taking as an example of two success stories in the Region, they will be able to increase their income. The roles of stakeholders in the development of villages were also discussed in order to realize pink scenario.

At the end of the workshop, two sample wealthy villages in the Region were decided to visit together with all stakeholders. An awareness trip to these villages was organized with the participation of stakeholders. Good development samples and stories were demonstrated and their results were discussed with the participants.

Main Income Sources and Development Problems Defined in the Villages

During the survey, it was observed that every village has both common and different

characteristics with each other. Average altitude of the villages is 1000 m and while three villages (Ardıçlı, Olukkayağı, İnköy) are located on the western part of Mersin, other four (Keşli, Eminlik, Kuşçular, Emirler) were located on the eastern side.

Main activities related to forestry are harvesting, fuelwood collecting, grazing animals in the forested areas and collecting non-wood forest products. On the other hand, there are limited number of activities other than forestry in the villages such as crop production, animal husbandry (dairy cattle, goats, sheep, poultry, bee-keeping) vegetable and fruit growing.

Main development problems in the villages are summarised as unproductive agricultural and forest lands, erosion risk, lack of pasture land and goat grazing in the forests, insufficient incomes from forest, lack of insurance for forest workers, high cost of fuel woods, lack of non-wood forest products (NWFPs), lack of opportunities and marketing skills and failure to mobilize the potential of other income sources by the villagers. Also, lack of agricultural land and high input costs for vegetable and fruit production, high costs for livestock breeding can be mentioned as important problem.

Conclusion

While a lot of positive progress and results have been made since the year where survey conducted, some bottlenecks remained unresolved in the survey area. Lack of real commitment to participatory forest management, assumptions that participatory approaches are too costly and time-consuming, lack of confidence in the ability of untrained local people to manage resources, tendency to ignore local institutions and local decision-making mechanism are main bottlenecks. Also the politics of participation, legal aspects and conformity of participatory forest management philosophy with culture in the region are the main issues that influence participatory forest management.

In the participatory forest management, people are seen as a main agent for success, rather than the cause of failure. There is still hesitancy and debate on the participation level of forest villagers to forest management. Ownership and use right are impor-

tant issues in formulating participatory forest management. While the forest ownership belongs to the government, some improvements for use right in Turkish forest law have already been accepted. Permissions for animal grazing, collecting some NWFPs from forest by the villagers can be mentioned. Forestry extension services must be provided by forestry administration.

People should believe they can do more. Not only in the villages but also in other institutions people must be open to new ideas related to collaborative management and partnership. At this point training of forestry staff is important issue. Forestry extension requires people well qualified with social development issues. Forestry staff should understand that managing forest resources are not only producing timber but also interacting with people for providing them with economic, social and environmental needs. It is necessary to strengthen state staff capabilities by practical training and workshops.

Despite the importance of people's participation in the forest management is being recognized by the forestry department, it is likely that putting participatory forest management into practice will take time. Efforts of forestry department to improve living conditions of the forest villagers are not enough. There is no doubt that forest-based poverty alleviation can't be carried out in isolation. It tends to be linked to other land uses, in particular agriculture, grazing and mixed systems of crop and tree growing. Multi-sectoral approach is needed and local authorities must be key supporters.

Women are important stake in managing forest resources. They are not only involved in household works but also in income generating activities. They must have a say in natural resource management in the village.

Finally success stories are vital to villagers who want to see some beneficial and promote collaboration with other villagers who have success stories will enable skeptical villagers to be encouraged and convinced.

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Summary

People's Participation in Forest Management and Some Recommendations for its Improvement: The Case Study of Mersin

Turkish forests are one of the most important natural resources of the country, covering about 27 percent of total land area. While the size of forested area remains steady for years, expectations from Turkish forests are multiplying over time. In recent years, there is an increasing demand for social and environmental functions of the forests as well as the basic forest goods. While people in the urban areas mostly demand for protective services and recreational amenities from forests, forest villagers living within or in vicinity of forests are directly dependent on the forests for their subsistence. Population of forest villagers in Turkey, which is 10 percent of the total population of the country, represents the most vulnerable segment of the community.

Given the importance of forest villager's development needs, the Turkish constitution and other forest related codes have special provisions for forest villagers. However, the limited contribution by forestry department to the forest villages and lack inadequate integration of other line agencies into forest village development are the main challenges.

In addition to surveys conducted at national level, international initiatives and projects provide great opportunity to determine the situation of forest villagers and make some recommendations for improvement of their conditions. A project named "Contribution of Forestry to Sustainable Development" was formulated by FAO Silvamediterranea and Plan Bleu in order to conduct case studies seeking for the contributions of the forestry to sustainable development in the Mediterranean countries. Under this project, one of the case studies was decided to conduct in Turkey. 7 forest villages were selected for the case study in Mersin provenance in 2005. Main problems related to participatory forest management in the villages are defined and some recommendations for its improvement are made.

Résumé

Participation citoyenne à la gestion forestière et recommandations - Etude de cas à Mersin (Turquie)

Les forêts turques constituent l'une des plus importantes ressources naturelles du pays, couvrant environ 27 % de la superficie totale. Bien que cette superficie boisée reste stable depuis plusieurs années, on constate ces dernières années, une demande croissante pour les fonctions sociales et environnementales des forêts ainsi que pour les produits forestiers de base. Alors que les habitants des zones urbaines recherchent principalement des services de protection et des équipements récréatifs, les villageois qui vivent dans la forêt ou à proximité des forêts, sont directement dépendants des forêts pour leur subsistance. La population des villages forestiers en Turquie, 10 % de la population totale du pays, représente le segment le plus vulnérable de la population.

Étant donné l'importance du développement et de la satisfaction des besoins des villageois forestiers, la constitution turque et d'autres législations relatives aux forêts ont des dispositions spéciales pour les villageois de forêt. Toutefois, le soutien limité du Département des forêts à destination des villageois forestiers et le manque d'intégration adéquate d'autres agences dans le développement des villages forestiers constituent les principaux obstacles qu'il s'agit de surmonter.

En complément d'enquêtes menées au niveau national, les initiatives et projets internationaux fournissent une excellente occasion de déterminer la situation des villageois forestiers et de faire quelques recommandations pour l'amélioration de leurs conditions. Un projet nommé «Contribution de la foresterie au développement durable» a été formulé par la FAO (Comité Silva Mediterranea) et le Plan Bleu afin de mener des études de cas analysant la contribution des forêts au développement durable dans les pays méditerranéens. En vertu de ce projet, l'une des études de cas a été menée en Turquie. Ainsi, en 2005, sept villages forestiers ont été sélectionnés pour l'étude de cas dans le secteur de Mersin. Les principaux problèmes liés à la gestion participative des forêts dans les villages ont été identifiés et des recommandations pour son amélioration ont été proposées.