

Introduction to Participatory Action Research (PAR) for Community Forestry in Indonesia: Research as a tool for empowerment

Makassar, 25-28 November, 2014

Introduction

Research is a cornerstone of sustainable forest management. If the research is conducted in a sound and resilient manner then it can go some way to ensuring, for example, a sustainable yield of timber and non timber forest products (NTFPs) from the forests, but also improving the livelihoods of the people dependent on the forests. Of key importance is using the appropriate research method, on a scale that makes the results valid with the ultimate aim of developing knowledge and improving understanding of the subject at hand.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) is one such method. This method is notable in social and environmental, including forestry, research in that the research process itself is designed to have direct positive impacts on the research group, i.e. the research stakeholders. In other words the research processes, as well as the results, are likely to have implications for the research subject. At the center of this is the fact that research in PAR is ideally conducted by the local people, working with other stakeholders for the local people, and other stakeholders creating a win:win situation. PAR is defined as 'systematic inquiry involving the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied for purposes of education and taking action or effecting change' (Green et al. 2003), with the belief that this research method can contribute to increasingly resilient ecosystems and communities. A key component of which is that faced with complex social and ecological systems PAR uses both traditional and scientific knowledge, as well as addressing the fundamental social (and political) context in which the knowledge is utilized (Ballard and Belsky 2010).

Forest management in Indonesia, like in other countries in Southeast Asia, is extremely complex making their sustainable management a significant challenge. PAR could be an important tool in facilitating this, based on the need to make management inclusive, with PAR being at the core of this.

Course objectives

The objectives of the course are to help participants (i.e. researchers from the University of Hasanuddin (UNHAS), local communities, forest management unit (KPH) managers): 1. Examine basic principles of PAR and its application in the context of community forestry in South Sulawesi; 2. Explore opportunities and challenges in conducting PAR; 3. Develop understanding of importance of planning in PAR and 4. Convert PAR results into products for learning and sharing with other interest groups.

Key topics covered in the course are: 1. Importance of participatory action research; 2. Principles of collective and adaptive learning; 3. Basic tools for conducting successful PAR; 4. Developing research plan for PAR and 5. Communication tools in supporting sharing and learning.

Course contents

Time	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
AM	<p>Session 1: Welcome and introduction</p> <p>Session 2: What is social research</p>	<p>Session 5: Research mapping</p> <p>Session 6: Participatory action research tools</p>	<p>Session 9: Fieldwork</p>	<p>Session 11: Review of research plan</p>
PM	<p>Session 3: What is Action Research?</p> <p>Session 4: Participatory Action Research</p>	<p>Session 7: Research planning</p> <p>Session 8: Introduction to field site and preparation for fieldwork</p>	<p>Session 10: Reflection of field work</p>	<p>Session 12: Finalization of research plan</p> <p>Session 13: Evaluation and closing</p>

The course includes a half-day visit in the field (day 3) where the participants are able to meet community to practice the skills and knowledge they have developed in the preceding days, as well as in the previous courses. The suggested site for field visit is location near UNHAS where the participants (working in groups) can meet community (e.g. agricultural community, forest community or other community groups in the area) to practice 2-3 different PAR methods to address question(s) identified during the course.

In order to ensure that the participants further develop their skills, they will have the opportunity to return to the field following the course to conduct their PAR on some topics that will be decided during the course. According to the discussion during RECOFTC's scoping visit to UNHAS in September 2014, some potential research topics and sites include: 1) Forest Management Unit (KPH) and natural silk culture in Wajo District; 2) Community involvement in conservation in Babul National Park in Maros District; and 3) Honey or coffee enterprise development in village forest in Bantaeng District.

References

- Green, L.W., M.A. George, M. Daniel, C.J. Frankish, C.P. Herbert, W.R. Bowie, & M. O'Neill. 2003. Appendix C: Guidelines for participatory research in health promotion. In: Community-based participatory research for health, ed. M. Minkler and N. Wallerstein, 419–28. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Ballard, H.L., & Belsky, J.M. 2010. Participatory action research and environmental learning: Implications for resilient forests and communities. *Environmental Education Research*. 16(5): 611-627