

Forestry Extension Model for Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

Papua New Guinea (PNG) boasts of it being part of the Islands of New Guinea that hosts the second largest landmass covered with virgin rainforest and the richest in biological and cultural diversity in the world. PNG is one of the few countries in the world that the indigenous peoples own and manage majority of the land. About 97 percent of land is held and managed under customary tenure systems. These customary groups managed the land and its resources for thousands of years without depleting its values and its production potential until the recent intrusion by foreigners with modern tools and advanced technology. With the new technology and increasing population, the demands for goods and services and cash there is drastic shift in the way indigenous peoples have managed their land and forest resources. In the early 1950's leading up to the early 1970's when PNG was preparing for political independence, the pressure to generate more revenue was paramount. Hence the colonial administrator identified timber resource as the key source of quick revenue to contribute to the nation. Massive extraction of timber resources then began. Legislations were adopted from the colonial administration to deal with the management of timber resources. Since the focus was on quick revenue generation, the legislations focused on acquiring enough forest areas to harvest and export in order to bring in more revenue. Huge forest areas were acquired from the customary landowners which saw influx of foreign logging companies. While the timber resources were being exploited by large logging companies the government had established forestry extension services under the forestry commission (later Department of Forests). Forestry extension offices were established throughout the country to provide extension services to the communities to encourage landowners to grow trees and participate in the management of their forest resources. In the late 1980's to early 1990's an enquiry into allegations of corruption and malpractices in the forestry sector was conducted. The recommendation from the findings of the enquiry was then implemented which saw major shift in the Forest Policy and legislations giving birth to the Forestry Policy (1991) and the Forestry Act (1991). These changes resulted in the establishment of PNG Forest Authority (PNGFA). The new structure then excluded the forestry extension service, thus result in the demise of forestry extension services in the country.

When the Forestry Act (1991) was passed the Provincial Forest Management Committee (PFMC) was established. Hence, the extension division became a minor function under the PFMC (Forestry Act 1991 section 30 (1)(f) and Forest Policy 1991). Thus, the forestry extension services to empower landowners to fulfil the national constitution's 2nd and 3rd goals were made less significant and diminished in the forestry governance and management. The government's forestry extension service to the people is currently limited or non-existent in PNG. Only the non-government organization (NGOs) are providing forestry extension services. However, NGOs are donor funded and focus on conservation and development agendas of their funders. There is no support, monitoring and control from the government. The question coined by the national NGOs and communities was "If forestry is now being dominated by foreign-owned logging companies and the rights to develop forest resources are acquired by government and given to foreign companies then what can the indigenous landowners do? And if they want to develop their own forest resources then where can they get help? These questions then provoked some thinking Papua New Guineans to pursue alternative forest management model which is described in this presentation. The forestry extension model is presented in 3 sections: *1. Community Entry, 2. Program Design & Implementation and 3. Program Evaluation & Exit Strategy*. The main aim of this model is to transfer knowledge and skills to empower indigenous people to become self-reliant in the management of their land and natural resource to improve their wellbeing. Secondary aim of the model is to inform and influence policy decisions on government's forestry extension service to the indigenous landowners.

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