



The Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) Approach in Forest Management

Introduction

Forests are providing many services and are essential for the wellbeing of society. However, with a growing demand for infrastructure development, water, raw material, medicinal plants and biodiversity conservation the pressure on forest continues. The main focus of today's forest management is often still on timber and fibre production. Efforts are being made to manage forests for a variety of benefits. In this case the demands for specific Forest Ecosystem Services (FES) often interfere with each other like e.g. intensive grazing in catchments for important water supplies. To ensure the flow of those services that are most important to the key stakeholders a prioritisation of FES and a management focused on their efficient supply is required. Such an approach does not only require good technical skills in forest ecology and management, but also an intensive participation of direct beneficiaries of various FES.

Forests play a crucial role in livelihoods of people in the Himalayas. While implementing the FES approach we found that in Himachal Pradesh the most important FES are water, fodder, non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and recreation. However, the forests of the hill state also provide many other services like supply of fuel wood, maintenance of biodiversity, soil protection and spiritual inspiration.

The FES Approach

Crucial for the FES approach is:

- Shift from only timber production management towards a holistic management taking into consideration a wide range of ecosystem services

- Identification and involvement of all key stakeholders from the very beginning in the planning process and in the selection of priority FES

We define the FES approach as:
Forest Management that aims at the **sustainable provision** of a set of prioritised ecosystem services based on **stakeholder choices**.

Himachal Pradesh Ecosystem Services (HP-FES) Project

The HP-FES Project is jointly undertaken by the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department and GIZ, commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The objective of the project is to enable the Forest Department of Himachal Pradesh to introduce the FES approach to the state's forest management.

To introduce the FES approach to the state's forest management, the project first sensitises the Forest Department and local communities in the project pilot areas on the FES approach.



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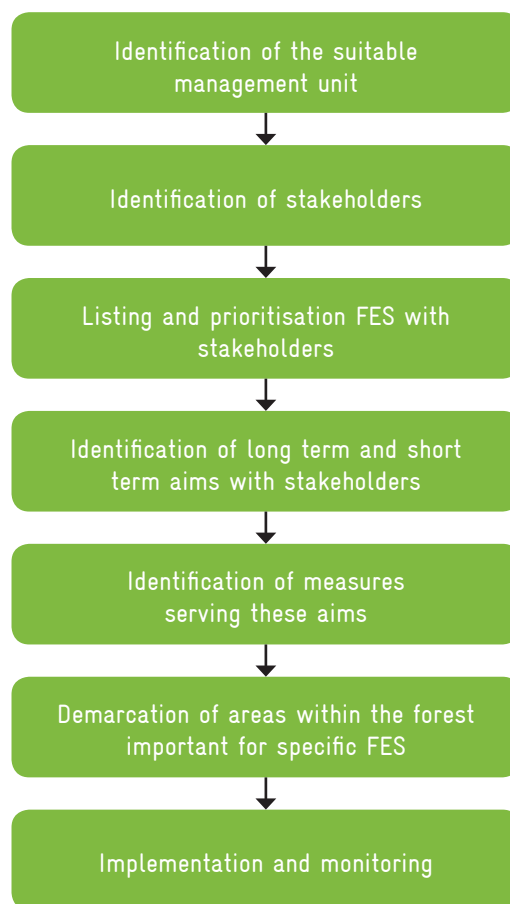
The FES Approach in Himachal Pradesh

Mircro plans:

These plans are community based and focus on forests that are used mainly by villages. Main stakehoders are village inhabitants, adjacent communities or cities and the forest department. The stakeholders are consulted in meetings prior to the planning and take part in the planning process. Together with them the areas important for key FES, long and short term aims for their supply and management strategies are identified.

Working plans:

Working plans in India for a very long time focused on timber production. The new working plan code by the Government of India released in the year 2014 sets the frame for designing working plans that focus also on the management of ecosystem services as they are provided by the respective forest area covered by the working plan. As it is important to establish a link of the beneficiaries of FES to a particular forest section, the approach starts with the identification of these forest units, that form an administrative unit and allow the allocation of key stakeholders. Together with them the FES are prioritised and areas important for their supply are identified. Also here, clear aims for the future delivery of FES are formulated and management strategies to achieve these aims are identified.



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