

Climate Change: Readapting Forest Management in South Asia

Forests are one of the most significant natural assets which not only play an important role in maintaining a balanced environmental system but also are a source of livelihood for millions forest dwellers. Forests are home for animals and plants alike, but their role extends to being a major source in provision of numerous goods and environmental services (IUCN 2010).

However, the climatic changes, which have become more apparent in recent years, have accentuated the role of forests in human lives beyond its traditional importance of being a source of livelihood. Climate change manifests with detrimental effects in every part of the world by affecting the ecosystem. Pakistan's geo-physical location, mostly arid and semi-arid landscape (60%) (TFCC, 2009), makes it more vulnerable to the climate change. The detrimental effects of climate change pose serious threats to its fragile environment, security, social and economic life.

“Forest management has the potential either to exacerbate or reduce the effects of climate change” (Noss 2001). Deforestation and forest degradation produce about 17-20% of the world's green house gas emissions (IPPC 2007) or on the contrary has the potential of sinking the same amount of carbon through sustainable forest management. Sustainable forest management provides the “...most practical and cost effective mitigation measure...” (The Forest Dialogue 2008). Unfortunately, Pakistan is among those countries where biomass endowment was further reduced from 6 to 2.5% (FAO 2009) in the last three decades.

The complexity of interests of different stakeholders makes sustainable forest management further difficult. However, the response of society to sustainable forest management is by and large “...determined through political process. If educated to understand the multiple benefits of sustaining diverse, healthy, resilient forests, people will place value on protecting these forests” (Noss 2001).

In fact, sustainable forest management is not just a mere scientific issue; it involves a complex political, social and economic processes and decisions that require a holistic approach, innovations and policy measures through informed dialogues and close coordination among the stakeholders to address the ever surfacing concerns.

Based on the presented argument, speakers are invited to contribute papers on following issues and challenges relating to sustainable forest management: forest governance; statutory versus customary approaches; dilemma of forest ownership and rights; best practices with innovation in sustainable forest management; and, sustainable forest management as a mitigation response to climate change.

References

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Panel Organiser: Mr. Talimand Khan, Survey Unit, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Islamabad.

Email address: talimand@sdpi.org