



**Forest Policy and Environment Group
Overseas Development Institute**

Project Title: *Strategic Researchable Constraints in Participatory Forest Management*

Year: 2001-2

Country: Global

No of Staff: 2 ODI plus partners

Client: DFID Forestry Research Programme
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Objectives:

Participatory forest management (PFM) has been an important theme for DFID technical assistance for the last 15 years, but the subject of relatively little focused research. With a view to informing the research agenda on PFM, DFID's Forestry Research Programme (FRP) commissioned the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) to carry out an electronic survey of the members of the Rural Development Forestry Network (RDFN). The aim of the survey was to highlight researchable constraints in PFM which might inform the research agendas of various international organisations funding PFM work. It followed on from three previous surveys and drew together the results of all four during an experts' workshop in October 2002.

Results:

Despite the great variety of approaches, forest types and management objectives embraced by the term PFM, there was general agreement on key researchable constraints between the electronic survey, previous studies and evidence from national participants. Perhaps the most important issue is that, in spite of heavy promotion by donors, there is no standard definition of what constitutes 'successful' or 'sustainable' PFM, and very little documented evidence on its biodiversity or livelihood impacts. There is a widespread interest in incentives, improving the understanding of why different stakeholders get involved in PFM and how the objectives of different stakeholders may change over time. Other issues commonly highlighted as problematic are clustered around the governance theme, including questions of institutional arrangements, empowerment and politics. Although not considered a research priority at international level, technical forest management issues are still considered a constraint at local level. Finally, there is a clear need for better dissemination and methods for adaptation of existing information to local contexts.

Policy Relevance:

Providing answers to some of the researchable constraints highlighted in the [project report](#) would facilitate more successful and widespread implementation of PFM. To this end, the results of the survey will be disseminated to potential funders of PFM-related research.