

The Negotiated Approach

towards inclusive, sustainable natural resource management



What is the Negotiated Approach?

The Negotiated Approach is an approach towards sustainable natural resource management aimed at enabling local communities to protect their rights and propose and negotiate viable long-term strategies to alleviate poverty and ensure healthy ecosystems.

Creating political space for local actors

Access to water and land is essential for the rural poor. Smallholder producers, pastoralists, peasants, fishing folk and indigenous people depend directly on these resources for their livelihoods. However, local communities often have insecure access to fishing grounds, drinking water and fertile lands and these natural resources are often managed in an exclusive and top-down manner. Local communities are rarely involved in planning and decision making and often do not have a seat at the negotiation table or any way to influence policies or planning processes. This results in policies which do not reflect, and often conflict with, the rights, needs and realities of local communities. The Negotiated Approach is an instrument designed to correct this: to create structural political space, in which local people acquire a long-term negotiating position over the planning and management of natural resources.

Negotiation: more than participation

The Negotiated Approach facilitates local communities, and locally rooted civil society organisations (CSOs) to become full-fledged players in natural resource management planning and implementation at the local and (inter) national levels. The Negotiated Approach goes beyond

merely creating a multi-stakeholder dialogue but creates opportunities for local actors to actively develop, propose and negotiate policy and investment measures, based on their own local knowledge, needs and environmental realities. This is fundamentally different to most conventional participatory processes, in which local groups merely have the opportunity to react to strategic plans developed by experts or policy makers.

Empowerment

The Negotiated Approach prioritises building the capacity of local stakeholders so they can engage effectively in negotiations with policy makers and planners and have a stronger position in the negotiation process, creating a (more) level playing field. The Negotiated Approach guarantees that local communities are well prepared and have all tools to be equal participants throughout the whole negotiation process. This includes: gathering data on the physical and biological characteristics of the local environment, understanding the institutional and legal contexts, power mapping, developing negotiation skills and creating, or linking to, strategic platforms for negotiation.

Negotiated Approach in practice

The following example illustrates how GOMUKH, an Indian NGO, has applied the Negotiated Approach in the form of organising local people, setting up platforms for negotiation and strengthening their capacity to negotiate water management issues with other stakeholders, including government agencies.

In the Bhima Basin, in the Western Ghats in India, 16 village communities were facing acute water shortages. Increasing demand for irrigation water for agriculture, urban settlements and industry and poor water management meant that these rural communities had to deal with droughts, despite heavy rainfall in the catchment.

GOMUKH set up platforms for negotiation and women's self-help groups and worked to strengthen their capacity to negotiate with government officials over ways to share the valley's water. Armed with information, provided by GOMUKH in training sessions on the water balance of the valley, annual rainfall, crop cycles and agricultural management, the villages were able to negotiate the volume of water that should be allocated to each village in the valley. This led the participants to become more confident about negotiating with government officials about water management issues and the people themselves have brought about radical changes in the management of natural resources in the catchment.

The Negotiated Approach has not been designed by experts, but has grown organically from similar, successful examples led by CSOs working on integrated water resources management (IWRM) in various parts of the world (India, Indonesia, Brazil, Costa Rica and Peru). The Negotiated Approach is not a blueprint with clearly defined steps, but is flexible and can be adjusted to different contexts.

Apart from IWRM, the approach has also been successful in the field of climate change and drylands and can be applied in land use management and land rights.

What Both ENDS can offer?

Both ENDS and five CSO partners from all over the world have extensive experience in supporting civil society in using the Negotiated Approach to address a diverse range of challenges in river basins around the world. Together with

a network of experts, including water engineers, biologists, ecologists and legal experts, we have tested, systematised and worked with the approach. This expertise is available to expand the approach further. Both ENDS can offer support for trainings and workshops on the Negotiated Approach in Asia, Latin America and Africa. We can link you to partners of Both ENDS in the region with experience with the Negotiated Approach and assist you by exchanging information, contacts and practical assistance

In 2011 a guide on the Negotiated Approach was published, which summarises 10 years of experience, setting out the principles, tools, and strategies that CSOs can use to take the first step towards inclusive and sustainable natural resource management. The guide 'Involving Communities: A guide to the Negotiated Approach in Integrated Water Resources Management' is available at:
<http://www.bothends.org/index.php?page=6&documentId=49>

For more information on the Negotiated Approach

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