Land, conflict and community forestry in Fiji

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to provide background information on the land tenure and conflict issues surrounding sustainable forestry management initiatives on customary land in Fiji.

Design/methodology/approach – An investigation of literature on land tenure, forestry and related conflict is augmented by two short case studies of sustainable forest management initiatives and the challenges in their execution attributable to customary land issues.

Findings – Conflicts occur within resource owning communities, between communities and external parties and among external parties. Often conflicts are based on confusion over property rights related issues. Conflicts stemming from differing views on ownership, tenure and property rights within forest management in Fiji, have led to delayed implementation of critical environmental management plans, loss of economic benefits and disintegration within landowning (*mataqali*) units.

Research limitations/implications – The paper highlights the importance of actively addressing conflicts in community based natural resource management initiatives in order for Fiji to reap the full benefits of community forestry.

Practical implications – The paper provides a useful general review for both researchers and forestry practitioners.

Originality/value – By providing a general overview of sustainable forest management in Fiji, the paper provides essential background for the subsequent testing of conflict management tools and conflict transformation strategies within a customary context.

Keywords Forestry, Fiji, Land, Conflict

Paper type General review

Introduction

The Fiji Islands comprises over 330 islands, of which only one-third are inhabited. It has a total population of 846, 085, the majority being situated in the country's 18 urban centres. Its capital, Suva, is the most populated urban centre (167,975) and is on the largest island, Viti-Levu (FIBS, 2006) (see Figure 1).

Fiji was first inhabited approximately three-and-a-half thousand years ago, the original settlers being the "Lapita people". According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*

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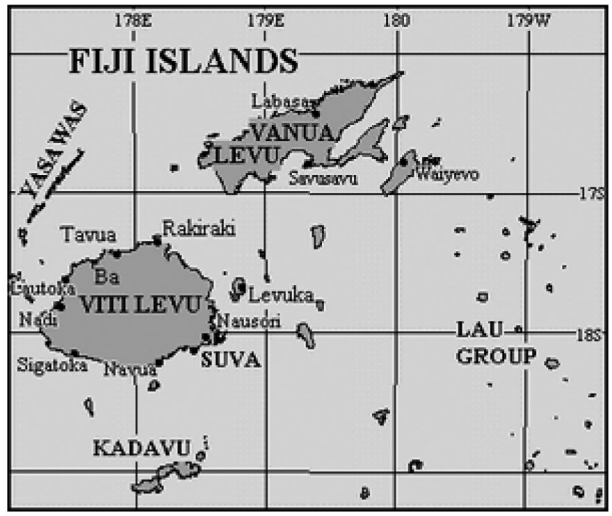

Source: Adapted from www.usp.ac.fj~gisunit/PACATLAS/CFrames/fiji/fiji.htm for this research

Figure 1.
Map of Fiji Islands

(2005) Lapita refers to the specific type of fine pottery found in most Pacific islands east of New Guinea. Linguists argue that the original settlers came from either Vanuatu or the Solomons.

Indians were brought to Fiji in the 1870s to work on the sugarcane farms established under British colonial rule. By the early 1920s Indians who opted to remain in Fiji after completing their working contracts started leasing land independently and cultivating sugarcane. The nation's economic progress saw more Indian traders, Chinese and Europeans migrate to Fiji. In 1970 Fiji became an independent nation (Ward, 1995).

Sustainable forest management in Fiji

Sustainable forest management (SFM) has been a focus of debate at international gatherings such as The Brundtland Commission sessions and The World Summit in the last few decades. Established criteria and indicators to monitor and assess SFM have assisted in a better understanding of the concept, yet incorporating it into management practices on the ground continues to be a challenge mainly due to limited implementation capacity, financial resources and political support. In discussing forest management as a global issue, Maini (1992) proposed the following definition for sustainable forest development: "Sustainable development of forest land and its multiple economic and environmental values involves maintaining indefinitely, without unacceptable impairment, the productive and renewal capacities as well as the species and ecological diversity of forest ecosystems". He argues that if existing forest practices such as harvesting according to sustained yield calculations, community forestry and multi-use forestry are promoted effectively, the global forest sector could become a leader in sustainable development. The State of the World's Forests report (FAO, 2005) emphasizes that by monitoring change through developing and applying effective indicators, the concept becomes operational at national and local levels. It

further explains that appropriate criteria and indicators assist in understanding SFM concepts by "generating better information; improve the development and implementation of forest policies, programmes and practices; strengthen stakeholder involvement in decision-making; and, enhance collaboration on forest issues at the local, national, regional and international levels".

Fiji's forest sector

According to the last National Forest Inventory (conducted by Fiji's Ministry of Fisheries and Forests (MFF) and completed in 1995) 47.56 per cent of Fiji's total land area is under forest cover. The current rate of deforestation is 0.5-0.8 per cent p.a. and reduction in forest cover has occurred largely due to land clearing for agricultural purposes and, in recent years, plantation establishment. At present plantations make up 6.14 per cent of the forest cover, however the prospects of earning an income from pine and mahogany provides an incentive for more landowners to consider plantation establishment on their land (Government of Fiji Islands, 2005). Fiji's Forest reserves and land use are summarised in Table I.

Integration of sustainability in forest management

The concept of sustainable forest management (SFM) was first introduced in Fiji's forest sector through the Nakavu Natural Forest Management Pilot Project (NFMPP) in 1991 by a joint initiative between the then Fiji German Forestry Project (FGFP) and MFF. The primary objective of the NFMPP was to develop silvicultural guidelines for sustainable indigenous forest management-reduced impact logging and diameter limit tables for various commercial species. The project ended prematurely in 1994 due to the termination of FGFP itself (Vletter, 1995). The Pacific German Regional Forestry

Production forestry	Hectares	%
(i) Indigenous forests	187,700	10.25
State land	5,240	
Reserve land	940	
State lease	840	
Native land	167,340	
Freehold	13,340	
(II) Forest plantations	112,490	6.14
State land	5,180	
Reserve	6,080	
Hardwood plantation lease	49,850	
Fiji Pine ltd. Lease	43,680	
Private	7,700	
(iii) Protection forests	260,330	14.22
Protection forest	242,310	
Mangrove	18,020	
Indigenous Logged Forest	309,940	16.93
Total Forest Area	870,460	47.56
Total Land Area	1,830,000	100.0

Table I.
Breakdown of Fiji's forest resource

Source: Government of Fiji Islands (2005)

Project (GTZ) replaced FGFP in 1995, with an aim to extend its technical co-operation to other Pacific Island countries. The NFMPP research was taken over by the MFF, who continue to monitor it.

The Fiji Government strategies (MFF, 2005) concentrate on the environmental conservation pillar of sustainable forest management. The economic viability and social equity components are not prioritised. According to Lenoa (2005), it is a challenging task to do so due to limited community capacity building resources, access to credit for the landowning communities and communal land tenure related issues.

"'Community forestry', the management of forests with or by local communities, is an important mechanism for addressing economic viability and social equity while pursuing the sustainability of the forest resources" (ITTO, 2005).

Community forestry

FAO (2002) defines community forestry as "any situation which intimately involves local people in a forestry activity" and elucidates the trend towards community and private sector management (of forests) as being a result of the common view that community and public ownership improves social and environmental benefits, while private ownership focuses mostly on economic benefits.

Such a relationship between people and trees has always been part of rural life globally, but it increasingly became the focus of forest management in the late 1970s due to rural development aims and concerns over energy supplies as a consequence of increased fossil fuel prices. The dependence of people in developing countries on wood as the main source of fuel was a major cause of deforestation (FAO, 2005). Since the late 1970s community forestry, as both a concept and policy, has been incorporated into forest management globally at a remarkable pace. Numerous projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America and more recently the Pacific have been established in the last few decades.

Community forestry brings about capacity building, efficiency, equity, transparency and greater accountability from all parties involved, with the goal of stakeholder collaboration and power sharing (Engel and Korf, 2005).

Conflict is an ongoing challenge faced by community forestry (FAO, 1996; ITTO, 2005). Chandrasekharan (1996) explains that "conflicts within the context of community forestry seem to be concerned especially with competition over forest resources (such as fuel wood, timber and construction materials, fodder and grazing lands, food and medicine, etc.) and decision-making rights (specifically over land and tree tenure) relating to these resources". In some instances, "community forestry" has been a vehicle to resolve such conflicts whereas in other cases it has actually been the cause.

Traore and Lo (1996) assert that "even when community forestry activities are sensitive to local values and needs, they frequently cause changes that are disruptive, which in turn lead to conflict". On the other hand "community forestry can play a significant role in conflict management with its orientation for bringing protagonists to the forefront".

As will now be explained, Fiji's land tenure system makes it particularly vulnerable to conflicts in community-based natural resource management initiatives.

Land tenure conflicts in Fiji

In 1879 the British administration determined that communal ownership in the form of the *mataqali* ownership model would be adopted as the standard land tenure system for Fiji. 1880 saw the establishment of The Native Land Commission (NLC) to investigate indigenous landowner claims in order to register all native land and to help resolve boundary and ownership disputes (NLTB, 2005a, b). The first version of the *mataqali* ownership model was also enshrined in law as part of the first Native Land's Ordinance. According to Ward and Kingdon (1995) the model disregarded regional variation in ownership and allowed it to be held at one level of social group. The ordinance, through appointed commissioners, ordered registration of all property declared to belong to *mataqali* units and also addressed issues such as leasing of native land to non-indigenous people. Commissioner Maxwell (1910s), of the British administration, was pro-active in registering all native land ownership within the *mataqali* model and was resolute in modifying ownership, wherever required, to fit the model (Ward, 1995). "In the face of demands for more land for non-Fijians, the pressure to get the registration done expeditiously was considerable, even at the cost of over-generalisation. Because it was relatively large, it would be cheaper as well as quicker to use the *mataqali* as the unit for registration, even if it did not accord with usage or with what people on the land wished" (Ward, 1995).

According to Ward (1995) subsequent ordinances (in 1910) addressed stricter laws to stop alienation of native land and land registration continued. In employing the new model the NLC determined definite and inviolable *mataqali* boundaries, which did not address issues that were provided for prior to the model. Land area could no longer change if a *mataqali* increased or declined in size. Land reverted to the Crown if the group died out (prior to the model land was available for use by other groups in that area if the owning unit died).

The hierarchy of indigenous authority over land is summarised in Figure 2. The *vanua* (apex) is formed of agnatic descendents of a common ancestor or ancestral god. It is headed by the *Turaga-i-Taukei*. Each *vanua* is made up of one or more *yavusa* (Tribe), each of which is headed by the *Turaga-ni-qali*. Several *mataqali* (clan) make up a *yavusa* and each *mataqali* is headed by the *Turaga ni mataqali*. The members of each *mataqali* are agnatic descendents of a son of the *yavusa* founder. Smaller units known as *i-Tokatoka* (household units) make up a *mataqali* and the core members are related by the same principles (Bolabola, 1986). The same piece of land is divided into smaller portions and allocated down the hierarchy by respective heads at each level.

As mentioned, from the early 1900s Indian labourers brought to Fiji by the British, to work on sugarcane farms, started leasing land after opting to continue living in Fiji at the end of their contracts (Ward and Kingdon, 1995). Demand for land continued to increase due to sugarcane, rice and other cash crop farming. By late 1930s lack of available Crown land for leasing saw further changes in administration of native land. The Native Land Trust Act (NLTA) 1940 prioritised reserving adequate land for use by the Fijians and their future generations, while enabling surplus land to be leased out commercially. The Act established the Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) to manage the leasing of surplus native land on behalf of custom owners (Ward and Kingdon, 1995).

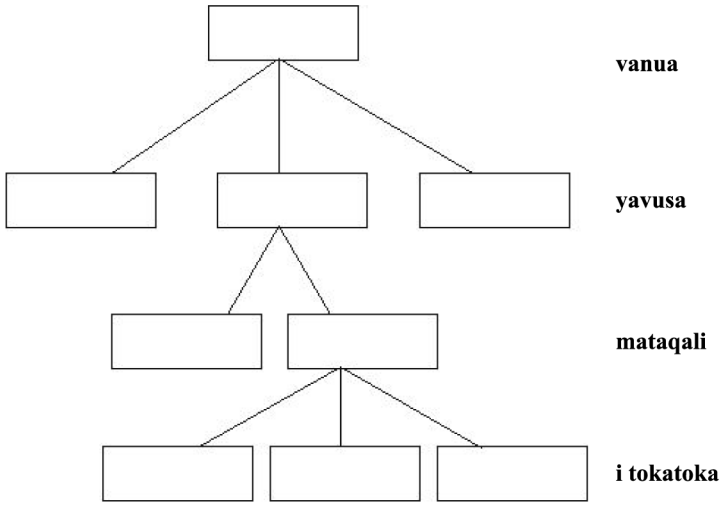

Figure 2.
The standard Fijian *mataqali* ownership model

Native Land Trust Board

The Native Land Trust Board (NLTB) describes itself as an independent body, unbound by the control of government (this is a curious assertion given that the President of Fiji is the President of Trustees and the Prime Minister of Fiji (as the Minister for Fijian Affairs) is the Chairman of the Board of NLTB) and serving the purpose of native land administration, exclusively for the benefit of Fijian owners (NLTB, 2005a, b). Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna, regarded as the champion of indigenous land rights, initiated the establishment of NLTB after suggestions from colonial administrators in 1930s. He campaigned through villages, explaining the need for NLTB in the face of increasing demand for agricultural land from the Indian labourers and its role in native land administration.

Acceptance of the proposal by chiefs saw identification of areas to be reserved exclusively for indigenous use so that rest of the land could be leased out on the establishment of the NLTB in 1944 (NLTB, 2005a, b). The areas reserved for indigenous use are divided into native land and native reserves. Native land, according to the NLTA (Government of Fiji Islands, 1985), can be sold or transferred to the State (only) with the consent of NLTB. Leases and licences for portions of native land also have to be granted by NLTB. Native reserves on the other hand, cannot be alienated and can only be leased to indigenous Fijians. Land within a native reserve, if not required by the landowners, can be de-reserved for a period of time or permanently and subsequently can be leased out by NLTB, provided the consent of the landowners is obtained (Government of Fiji Islands, 1985). Area classed as native land can also have portions of native reserves within it.

Land tenure related disputes have found their way into the core of social tensions in the past decade. Agriculture (Lal and Reddy, 2002), tourism (Waqaisavou, 2002) and forestry (King, 2001) sectors have been frustrated by setbacks and losses due to disputes, and are still battling to find solutions. Some disputes have ended up in court

and the potential for many more to do the same is immense. The following paragraphs discuss two major land tenure conflict scenarios in Fiji that have impacted on the nation's progress.

Disputes arising from land ownership have taken their toll within the sugar industry in the last decade. Use of land for sugarcane farming is administered under the Agricultural Landlord and Tenant Act (ALTA) by the NLTB, on behalf of the indigenous landowners. Expiry of these leases (starting in 1997) escalated tensions as compensation was offered to displaced farmers (mostly Indo-Fijians) whose leases were not renewed. The compensation sum, determined by the 1999 coalition government (led by Fiji's first Indo-Fijian Prime Minister), greatly exceeded the total amount of land rent received by the indigenous owners under the 30-50 year lease terms. Leases were not renewed due to the landowners' scepticism of the Indo-Fijian led government's intentions (Boydell, 2000).

The conflicts arising within Fiji government's mahogany scheme have also been a focus of discussion, debate and media reporting in the past decade. The establishment of 40,000 hectares of government mahogany plantation on land leased from indigenous landowners by the government in the 1950s has seen landowners demanding a larger share of the returns after learning the world prices for mahogany. Landowners claim that they were promised a larger share of the profits than that which the Government has been paying out. Government has been delaying harvesting mature plantations of some 18,000 hectares as it endeavours to sort out best markets and lease negotiations with landowners (Pareti, 2002). Information on the conflicting lease issues is scarce. A major problem with the mahogany case has also been the transfer of plantation(s) land leases by Fiji Government to Fiji Hardwood Cooperation (government owned harvesting company with exclusive license to harvest mahogany in Fiji) without consulting the landowners (Rae, 2005).

Community-based initiatives in ecotourism, marine life management and agriculture have also been adversely affected in the past due to unresolved conflicts within the landowning communities (Warner, 2000).

Conflicts

In recent years land conflict management has increasingly become a core national issue, with many academics, experts and practitioners offering innovative yet practical ways to analyse and reconcile conflicts. In explaining the substance of conflict, Ramirez states that the gradient starts with generic elements (the first three elements presented below) and moves towards conflict and context specific elements (Ramirez, 2002):

(1) Sources of grievances.

(2) Conditions that shape the emergence and character of conflict.

(3) Levels of conflict.

(4) Stakeholders analysis: who is involved and how, what power they have, what gender they are.

(5) Rules and laws: a continuum ranging from formal laws to customary systems of rules.

(6) Institutional/organisational frameworks and relationships awareness, skills, communication, representation, leadership, legal aid, information.

(7) Legacy (history) and livelihoods (location): local economy, food security, infrastructure, inter-group relations, gender, children and vulnerable groups, ethnic and group identity, religion, culture, political structure.

The United Nations Environment Secretariat (UNES, 2002) provides an analysis of conflict using the "conflict tree". The roots of the tree represent the root causes of a conflict; underlying issues that may not be visible, just as roots of a tree (such as poor governance), the trunk being the structural causes convergence of all the roots and depiction of how one conflict can have multi-dimensions (a trigger factor – elections); and, finally the branches, leaves and fruit of the tree – the manifestations or effects of a conflict (civil war).

Conflict transformation

Lederach (1995) explains that through conflict transformation we do not simply eliminate or control conflict but rather understand and work with its dialectic nature. This refers to the change (transformation) in conditions (events, people, and relationships) that created conflict, once the conflict has occurred. It shows that the cause-and-effect relationship goes both ways - from the people and the relationships to the conflict and back to the people and relationships. Therefore, conflict transformation can be regarded as a natural occurrence and can be used to steer conflicts into something positive. Conflict transformation is also a prescriptive concept. It suggests that left alone, conflict can have destructive consequences (Lederach, 1995).

Case studies

Two pioneering community based sustainable forest management projects are currently being piloted in Fiji, namely The Drawa Block Sustainable Forest Management Project (the Drawa project) and The Sovi Basin Conservation Project. The landowning communities of both projects have been involved in ongoing lingering conflicts and the two projects provide an ideal opportunity to incorporate conflict transformation methods to resolve persisting conflicts and limit the potential for future conflicts.

Drawa Block sustainable forest management project (the Drawa project)

The Drawa Block sustainable forest management (SFM) pilot project area is located in the centre of Vanua Levu which is the second largest island of Fiji (refer to Figure 1). It is approximately 6,345.5 hectares and is classed as native land. The main management objective of the Drawa project is to maintain and enhance the long-term health and productivity of the forest ecosystems within the model area.

Its major long-term goals are:

- To maximise the economic benefits through the production of timber, and at the same time to minimise the environmental impact;
- To ensure maximum landowner participation;
- To balance the interests of the involved parties; and,
- To contribute towards sustainable rural development & poverty alleviation (Muziol, 2005).

Fung (2005) explains that "the Drawa block was identified as an ideal location for the implementation phase of the sustainable indigenous forest management project because of the largely untouched forest stands and the ready consent from the main stakeholders". A pre-harvest inventory of the Drawa block forests have been used to define a silviculture regime for economically and ecologically sustainable harvesting of the forests (SPC/GTZ, 2001). The community owned harvesting company Drawa Landowners' Forest Management Co-operative (DraFCo) has exclusive harvesting licence for the project area. Community education training, gender training, landowner awareness visits to Nakavu and close collaboration with all stakeholders have also been key objectives of the project. A land use plan has been developed to reduce loss of forest cover due to agricultural activities (Fung, 2005).

Ownership

The project area is owned by 11 *mataqali* units of the *vanua* Drawa (refer to Figure 2) and is classified as Native Land. The existing formal lease arrangements are – Native reserves (7.75 per cent of the model area, registered with The Native Lands Commission) and mineral prospecting licence to an international mining company. For the past 35 years Fiji Forest Industries (FFI), a private timber processing company, had the logging concession lease for the entire model area. During this period logs were extracted from *mataqali* Vulavuladamu's land only. In March 2003 the concession was surrendered by FFI on request from NLTB and the landowners (Fung, 2005). Church reserves and tabu reserves (ban or restriction on landuse and/or use of resources from the land) together with traditional land access arrangements through *yavusa* kinship make up informal lease arrangements.

Conflicts

There have been intra-*mataqali* rows among *i-Tokatoka* units (household units), mainly over unclear land demarcation, land allocation and rights. Such disputes lead to lower productivity and slow down the progress of projects, according to Fung (2005).

Certain members of the *mataqali Nakase* are claiming ownership of land belonging to an extinct *mataqali*, *Tonikula*, on the grounds of enatic descending. The *yavusa Lutukina* disputes it, as customary practice dictates that all extinct *mataqali* land should revert to the *yavusa* the *mataqali* belonged to. The NLTB is holding onto the rights to the land in dispute until a resolution is found (Fung, 2005). The land has, therefore, been withdrawn from the Drawa model area.

Fung (2005) describes yet another inter-*mataqali* dispute between the *mataqali Bakibaki* and its *yavusa Drawa* to have created a lot of tension among the landowners. The *mataqali Bakibaki*'s only two members reside in Suva (capital city of Fiji) and were not consulted about the Drawa project being implemented on their land. The two women threatened to withdraw their land from the model and, as a result, they are currently negotiating their roles and involvement in the project.

The *mataqali Vulavuladamu* refused to let their land be included in the model area at the start of the project. Most of the *mataqali* members supported the project, except a few including the *Turaga-ni-mataqali* (head of the *mataqali*). This is because they were not in favour of slower, long-term returns and preferred for FFI to continue logging their forests. After consultations with the *vanua* chiefs and elders and a better

understanding of the Drawa project, they subsequently changed their decision and joined the project (Fung, 2005).

There have been disagreements regarding land boundaries of the *vanua* Drawa. The Native Land Commission's records do not correlate with boundary information according to traditional knowledge. The NLC is in the process of clarifying this (Cabaniuk *et al.*, 1995). These conflicts have slowed down the implementation of the Drawa project.

Sovi Basin conservation project

The Sovi Basin is located in the interior southeast quadrant of Viti-Levu, Fiji's main island (refer to Figure 1). The 20,000 hectares (approx.) of pristine tropical lowland forests with its unique biological and historic heritage, makes it the largest, most-diverse (ecologically) and most scenically outstanding forested area in Fiji (IAS, 2004). Its amphitheatre of magnificent volcanic peaks comprise of some of the highest mountains of Fiji and the enclosed forest area within is the largest undisturbed tropical lowland forest remaining in Fiji (Cabaniuk *et al.*, 1995). Recommendations for the Sovi Basin to be declared a nature reserve date back to 1972. Conservation International (CI), a USA-based non-government environment conservation organisation has taken up the leading role in this project since 2003. It collaborates with the National Trust of Fiji (NTF), MFF, Institute of Applied Science (University of the South Pacific) and the NLTB to conduct landowner awareness training and carry out negotiations with all stakeholders. The project aspires to nominate the Sovi Basin for UN World Heritage listing.

The most lucrative and easily accessible economic market for the landowners of Sovi Basin is timber. Inventories have revealed as much as $19 million dollars worth of standing timber in the area (Cabaniuk *et al.*, 1995). The government is currently calculating a compensation proposal for the landowners of Sovi Basin for reserving this timber source as a conservation area – with a provision for a certain amount to be paid in perpetuity. Initiatives to establish a trust fund for the landowning community are also ongoing. The compensation sum will also account for the landowners having to give up traditional uses and non-timber forest products from of the forests as well (hunting, fishing, and utilising plant produce for various purposes).

Ownership

The Sovi area is owned by 13 *mataqali* units belonging to four *vanua* (see Figure 2). The Sovi Basin remains uninhabited due to poor soil fertility, restricted access and mobility (due to the rugged terrain) and the fact that *mataqali* members live in the more fertile river valleys outside the Basin (Cabaniuk *et al.*, 1995). Currently, the Sovi Basin conservation area to be declared as a nature reserve has been leased to Conservation International for five years from 2004 pending completion of negotiations. Once compensation sum and leasing terms are negotiated a 99 year lease will be issued to the National Trust of Fiji, who will then manage the reserve.

Conflicts

The 13 *mataqali* units waited 15 years (1980-1995) for a Court battle between a logging company that was granted a logging license to harvest timber in the Sovi region and the NLTB (Cabaniuk *et al.*, 1995). The logging company blamed NLTB for not

consulting the landowners in negotiating the license. While under the consideration of the court, the land could not be utilised by anyone. A further delay in the court ruling led to an additional ten years of waiting and eventually, through the assistance of CI the logging licence was finally revoked on 30 June 2004 (Cabaniuk *et al*., 1995). This incident has caused distrust and scepticism from the landowners towards MFF and NLTB.

Landowners were also very distrusting of CI and NTF initially, as a similar conservation initiative by another conservation organisation collapsed in 1996 due to lengthy bureaucratic processes (IAS, 2004). The landowners supported this project mainly through the involvement of CI and NTF. The initial five year lease, instead of an immediate 99 year lease is also a result of this case. The main challenge for CI was to obtain the trust and interest of the landowners. To achieve this, regular visits to the villages and consultation with the landowners were carried out to demonstrate commitment to the process of declaring Sovi Basin as a nature reserve.

Comparing the two case studies

The Drawa project is the first natural forest management project as well as the first community-based SFM project, in Fiji. An understanding of issues regarding property rights, stakeholder participation and existing and latent conflicts will provide valuable information in establishing future community forestry projects with regards to social concerns. The project will also benefit from this research as it is still in its implementation stage. Yet another reason for including this project as a case study is that there is a high level of appreciation for this research from the landowners. Their willingness to participation and contribute accurate information should not be taken for granted in a racially fragmented country like Fiji, with a much politicised history of land tenure conflict.

Unlike The Drawa Project, The Sovi Basin Project is entirely conservation/protection driven. This will provide for interesting comparisons of conflict situations. The project is in its initial consultancy phase. This research can assist in identifying issues of concern and reaching satisfactory negotiations (and consequently reduce the possibilities of conflicts). Similar projects in the future could also benefit from this.

Conclusion

By providing a background to land, tenure, and conflict, and the nexus of conflict in the role of community forestry in SFM, this paper has investigated the role of land tenure in shaping potential conflicts and provided a background to the need for conflict management strategies. While land tenure is a continually changing paradigm in all societies, the situation is exacerbated in addressing community forestry in an environment of complex customary stewardship of land.

The two case studies elaborated on – The Drawa Project and The Sovi Conservation Project – provide ideal scenarios to assess the relevance and effectiveness of conflict transformation methods. Land tenure conflicts feature in both projects. Stakeholder engagement and dialogue through this research also have the potential to contribute towards acknowledging underlying issues of concern and identifying collaborative challenges.

The case studies also exemplify how environmental protection for the benefit of the wider community is undermined when natural resources are commoditised in favour of an economic paradigm. The ensuing challenge is to investigate how best to manage the power plays and self-interest to minimise/transform potential conflict through community appreciation of the long term positive benefits of sustainable forest management in a country like Fiji.

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