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Cultivating Multifaceted Participation in the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) Program in Communities of Northern Isabela

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ABSTRACT

Communities' participation has been the key strategy of the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) Program to achieve its ultimate goal: improving the community's socio-economic conditions and equal access to forest resources sustainably. This report cultivates the levels and forms of participation in decision-making in the Masipi and Caligayan areas of the Philippines, adapting the "Typology of Participation" by FAO (2003). The quantitative data was collected through surveys, while the qualitative data was gathered through Focus Group Discussions (FGD) among 186 community respondents from the Masipi East Upland Farmers Association (MEUFA) and Tumauni Upland Farmers Greeners Association (TUFGA), as well as the 15 implementer respondents from the Department of Natural Resources – Community Environment and Natural Resource Office (DENR-CENRO), and the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources (MENRO) of Cagayan and Tumauni, Isabela. The report found that while government personnel were actively involved, community engagement was mostly limited to consultations. Indeed, further inclusive strategies are needed. The noticeable contrast between the active implementers and the more passive community engagements highlights the necessity for strategies that enhance community involvement.

INTRODUCTION

Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) participatory methods require active engagement of local communities, stakeholders, and relevant authorities in making decisions regarding forest management. Approaches emphasize the integration of various perspectives, local knowledge, and the active involvement of individuals who depend on and interact with forest resources. Participatory approaches are designed to enable communities to assume ownership and accountability for the sustainable administration of their forests Chambers *et al.* (2022). The national program of the Philippines aims to promote reforestation and establish an effective mechanism for sustainable forest resource management (Denn-Cenro, 2011). This initiative represents a significant shift from the previous ineffective state forest governance, which failed to ensure the sustainability of forest resources and equitable access to their benefits (Guang, *et al.*, 2001). Hence, CBFM programs are designed to engage local communities in the sustainable management and utilization of forest resources. This shift from a top-down to a bottom-up approach aims to empower local stakeholders by giving them tenure rights and responsibilities (Aquino & Daguio, 2014; Dugan & Pulhin, 2023).

The DENR-AO No. 2004-09 is the recognized community-based forest management strategy (CBFMS), was revised concentrating on the implementation of EO 263. Its primary intention is to strengthen, reinforce, simplify, and harmonize the processes in implementing programs and projects supporting the CBFMS. The

document states the intention to improve people's socio-economic conditions through the promotion of social justice, and equitable access to and sustainable development of forest land resources. Active and transparent community participation and security of tenure are highlighted as crucial strategies for achieving these goals (DENR, 2004). However, according to Tarun-Acay (2005), one of the challenges faced by the People's Organization (PO) members in the CBFM program is how they can orchestrate diverse interests to address the critical issues of the low socio-economic status optimally and sustain the interest of PO members in the CBFM project undertakings.

Although this major shift from industrial forestry to "community forestry" or "participatory forestry" greatly affects the direction of forest resource management and governance (Rebugio, *et al.*, 2010) seemingly, despite this modification there are issues experienced differently across CBFM locations. Henceforth, in particular, this study examined the diverse levels and forms of implementers' participation like the Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (DENR-CENRO), and the Municipal Environment and Natural Resources (MENRO) of the Local Government Units of Cagayan and Tumauni, Isabela; and PO participation in the decision-making process being reinforced in the Masipi East Upland Farmers Association (MEUFA), formerly Masipi East Multipurpose Cooperative Incorporated (MEMPCI) CBFM Project and Tumauni Upland Farmers Greeners Association (TUFGA). The

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MEMPCI was awarded a Community-Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) on October 18, 1998, with Tenure No. 020216659 which expired on December 31, 2023. It has a GIS-generated total area of 5,000 hectares at barangay Masipi East, Cabagan, Isabela. Furthermore, MEUFA was duly registered with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on June 17, 2014, with Registration No. ISA-1527-2014 (DENR Annual Report, 2014). On the other hand, the TUFGA was awarded a CBFMA on March 06, 1998 Tenure No. 020219956. The Tumauni Watershed Forest Reserve has a total area of 6,107.73 at Caligayan, Tumauni, Isabela.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Participatory Approach to Forestry

Forestry practices around the world are moving towards involving more people as it becomes clear that centralized and authoritative decision-making methods are not enough (FAO-SFM, n.d.). According to Hazard & Audouin (2022), a participatory method involves engaging individuals directly affected by the outcomes of the problem-solving or innovation design process. When looking at the concept of “participation” from a broader perspective, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) emphasizes the various levels or forms of people’s involvement in decision-making processes. At the highest level of the spectrum, all members of a group or community are fully informed about decisions after they have been made, and importantly, they are actively engaged in information-sharing, analysis, and discussions, thus having the ability to influence decisions. It is widely recognized that the direct involvement of the stakeholders at any stage of a program is essential to establish a sense of engagement and ownership.

It is important to remember the “Ladder of Participation” introduced by S. Arnstein in the USA in 1969. This model illustrates various levels of citizen engagement and power in decision-making processes. The ladder consists of eight rungs, categorized into non-participation, tokenism, and citizen power. Non-participation includes manipulation and therapy, while encompasses informing, consultation, and placation. At the top of the Ladder is citizen power, where individuals have the most influence over decision-making. This model highlights the importance of empowering citizens and ensuring their meaningful involvement in community projects and decision-making processes (Gaber, 2019).

Levels and Forms of Participation

It is vital to acknowledge the crucial role of community members in enhancing their living conditions and effectively managing natural resources. The Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO) has devised a typology of participation to gain a better understanding of the diverse levels of community involvement in decision-making processes. This typology is particularly valuable for comprehending the extent of local stakeholders’ engagement in initiatives, particularly in fields like forestry management and sustainable development. The primary levels of participation, as defined by the FAO, are as follows:

Nominal Participation

Individuals are acknowledged as part of a group but do not actively engage in decision-making. They are included in a project without taking an active role.

Passive Participation

People are invited to express their views on specific matters, but there is no guarantee that their input will influence the final decisions. This category includes surveys and open forums for public feedback.

Activity-Specific Participation

Participants are involved in carrying out specific responsibilities related to the project. This level requires more hands-on involvement than consultative participation but remains limited to predefined tasks.

Functional Participation

This level involves a group of individuals coming together to achieve specific objectives aligned with the project. Often, outside facilitators are involved, but these groups may develop the capacity to sustain themselves over time.

Interactive (Empowering) Participation

Participants engage in collaborative analysis and decision-making. This stage incorporates cross-disciplinary approaches and structured learning processes, empowering participants to influence local decisions and maintain control over local systems (Pretty & Vodouche, n.d.).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description of the Study Area

The gathering of data was scheduled from December 2023 to March 2024. The selection of the place of study is through convenient sampling due to its vicinity given the limited time frame. Hence, the study for the MEUFA will take place at Masipi Hall in Cabagan, Isabela, while the TUFGA is at Caligayan, Tumauni, Isabela. Meanwhile, LGU and DENR personnel will carry out their respective tasks at their office addresses. Below is the location map of the two (2) CBFM sites. The Masipi East, Cabagan, Isabela, and the Caligayan, Tumauni, Isabela, respectively.

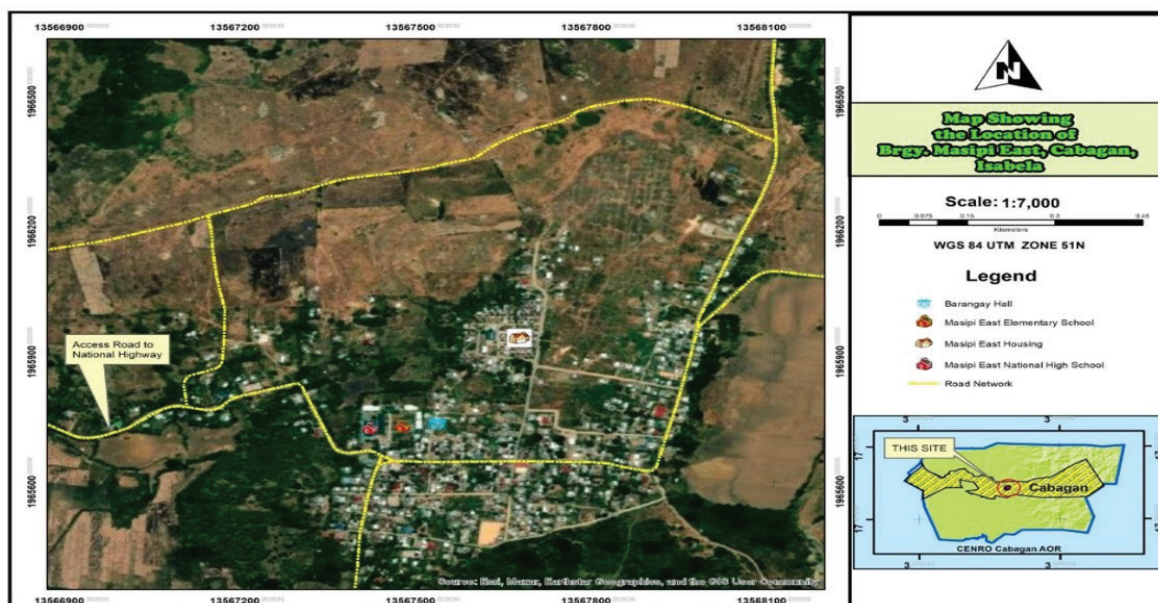


Figure 1: Location Map of CBFM Masipi East, Cabagan, Isabela (DENR-CENRO, 2023)

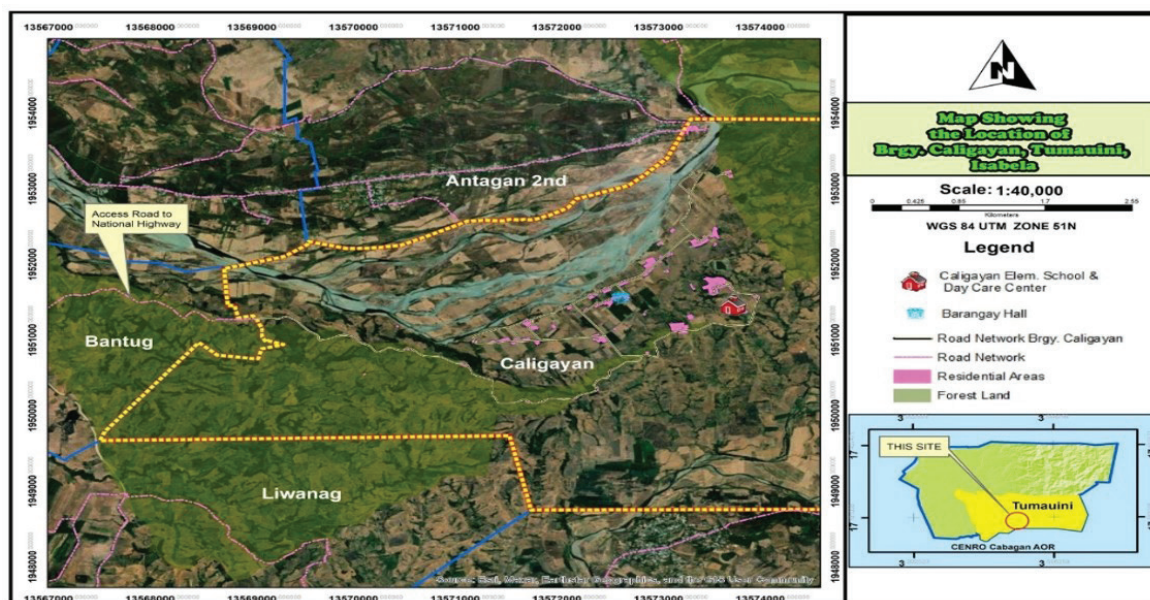


Figure 2: Location Map of CBFM Caligayan, Tumauni, Isabela (DENR-CENRO,)

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

Total Enumeration was employed for DENR-CENRO and MENRO who are directly involved in the CBFM Project. While for the MEUFA and TUFGA total enumeration was employed for the officers. However, Cochran's Formula was conducted, where n is the sample size, N is the population size, and e is the level of precision ($e=0.05$):

$$n = N / 1 + (Ne)^2$$

$$n = 349 / 1 + (349 \times 0.05)^2$$

$$n = 349 / 1 + (349 \times 0.0025)$$

$$n = 349 / 372$$

$$n = 186$$

Data Gathering

The data gathering was conducted in three forms. Firstly, the survey questionnaire was administered to CBFM's various stakeholders, such as 39 MEUFA members, 147 TUFGA members, nine (9) DENR-CENRO personnel, three (3) LGU Tumauni-MENRO, and three (3) LGU Cabagan-MENRO. These interviews were focused on understanding their perceptions of participatory approaches, the challenges faced, and the decision-making processes involved. Also, the level/forms of participation were evaluated during this phase. Secondly, the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) - Organized focus group discussions with representative groups of

stakeholders to facilitate group interactions and capture diverse perspectives on participatory approaches in social forestry. This was also to support the quantitative data that this study exported. The survey schedule and FGD were on a separate date after the quantitative data had been tabulated and initially analyzed. Thirdly, the Document Analysis - Analyze relevant policy documents, reports, and project documents to understand the formal processes and frameworks for stakeholder engagement and decision-making in social forestry. Reports from DENR and MENRO were collected for this purpose.

The data-gathering procedure involved seeking permission from the higher authorities. The researcher delivered a letter to DENR CENRO, and the same

procedure was applied to the LGU-MENRO.

Data Analysis

The collected data were transcribed, coded, and thematically analyzed for qualitative data. Themes were identified to explore patterns and variations in stakeholder engagement, decision-making processes, and perceptions of the levels and forms of participation in social forestry. On the other hand, quantitative data was used in the treatment using the mean, frequency counts, ranking, and percent values. The following scales were used for the descriptive equivalent, to wit: the respondents' Typology of Participation in the implementation of the CBFM project in the barangay was measured using the Five Point Likert Scale;

Table 1: 5-Point Likert Scale

Scale Descriptive Equivalent (DE)		
Scale	Range	Qualitative Description
5	4.21 – 5.00	Strongly Agree (SA)
4	3.41 – 4.20	Agree (A)
3	2.61 – 3.40	Neutral/Uncertain (N/U)
2	1.81 – 2.60	Disagree (D)
1	1.00 – 1.80	Strongly Disagree (SD)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Levels and Forms of Participation Perceived by Implementer-Respondents in the Preparatory Phase of the CBFM Program

Preparatory Phase

Table 2 shows the level of participation of the implementer-respondents in the preparatory phase of the CBFM program, particularly on the creation of the CRMF Facilitator's team. The implementer-respondents agree that there were discussions and analyses made between them and the beneficiaries on what they want to achieve in the project with a mean of 3.80, rank 1. This suggests an interactive (empowering) level of participation by the CENRO and MENRO respondents, based on the Typology of Participation, in the creation of facilitators in the CRMF. Per DENR Administrative Order No. 2003-11, applications for CBFMA require endorsement from the Legislative Councils of the Barangay, Municipal, and Provincial Local Government Units. To facilitate this process, the CENRO is mandated to conduct orientations for local executives to help them better understand the CBFM objectives, concepts, principles, and activities (FMB, n.d.)

The next phase is the gathering of related documents needed in the preparatory phase. The data shows that the implementer-respondents also agree that they were actively interacting with the team and their voice influenced the decisions in gathering important documents needed in CRFM, with a mean score of 3.60, rank 1, suggesting an interactive (empowering) participation by the CENRO and MENRO, as their ideas and opinions were taken into consideration.

This section presents the level of participation by the implementer-respondents in the preparation of maps. It was also revealed that they agreed to participate in finalizing and printing the CBFMA maps, with a mean of 3.47, rank 1. This also suggests that the respondents believe their involvement in the preparation of maps was significant and contributed to the project's overall success, making it classified as an empowered participation in the Typology of Participation.

The segment of the table presents the level of participation by the implementer-respondents in the coordination with the community and PO, as well as the reconnaissance survey. Overall, the respondents agree that they freely expressed their opinions and took other kinds of initiative in scheduling and setting the venue of CRMF activities, including listing key informants, with a mean rating of 3.67, rank 1). This also falls under the interactive or empowered level of participation. In general, the data suggests that the implementer-respondents had a moderate to high level of participation in the coordination with the community and PO, particularly in activities where they could express their opinions and take initiative. However, there were instances where they did not participate or only served as an audience, indicating a lower level of engagement in these activities.

The last part of this preparatory phase is the PO orientation/PO planning team's training on CRMF. It revealed that they also agreed to participate in the orientation on the importance of forest, CBFM, and CRMF formulation securing the preparation of CRMF, expressed opinions, and took other initiatives (3.67, rank 1). The CRMF is a key component of the CBFM program,

as it “shall indicate, among others, the community’s and the PO’s mission, vision and objectives; a summary of situation analysis; the guiding principles to be followed in plan preparation; indicative community resource development and use plans; internal management arrangements including benefit sharing; external supports needed; and internal monitoring and evaluation system to be adopted.” This comprehensive framework is crucial for guiding the sustainable management and utilization of forest resources by the local communities (DENR,1996).

Overall, the implementer-respondents “agree” fall under interactive or empowered participation in the preparatory phase of the CBFM program. This implies that the agreed result could be attributed to shared responsibilities among all stakeholders. The preparatory stage is very important to the success of the CBFM program. It sets the foundation for the program’s implementation and ensures that the community is equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and resources to manage the forest resources effectively.

Table 2: Level of Participation by the Implementer-Respondents in the Preparatory Phase

Item	Forms of Participation	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
Creation of CRMF Facilitator’s Team				
1	I was only informed to be one of the participants of the Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) project	2.87	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	3
2	The implementers asked my opinion about the CBFM but did not include me in the decision-making.	2.67	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	4
Creation of CRMF Facilitator’s Team				
3	There were discussions and analyses made between us and the implementers on what we wanted to achieve in the project.	3.80	Agree (A)	1
4	I willingly and actively participated in the discussion of the project during the planning stage.	3.73	Agree (A)	2
Gathering of Related Documents Needed				
5	I was only a member of the team and took no part in the gathering of related documents needed for CRFM	2.60	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	3
Gathering of Related Documents Needed				
6	I willingly took part in the gathering of related documents needed for CRMF without an assurance that my ideas would influence the decisions.	3.47	Agree (A)	2
7	I was actively interacting with the team and my voice influenced the decisions in gathering important documents needed in CRMF.	3.60	Agree (A)	1
Creation of CRMF Facilitator’s Team				
8	I was tasked to take part in securing the maps	2.93	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	3
9	I took the initiative of participating in the finalization and printing of the CBFMA maps	3.33	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
10	My participation in the finalization and printing of the CBFMA maps is valuable.	3.47	Agree (A)	1
Coordination with the Community and PO and Reconnaissance Survey				
11	I was part of the team but took no part in the decision-making of the activities being done like scheduling and setting of venue of CRMF activities including listing of key informants	3.40	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	1
12	I was a member of the team but did not participate or only an audience in the GPS reading, community mapping activities and did not familiarize myself with the CBFM Area	3.07	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	3
Coordination with the Community and PO and Reconnaissance Survey				
13	I was included in the team however I served as a listener and audience on GPS reading, identifying areas of community mapping, printing maps	3.20	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
14	I am part of the group however I did not participate in the creation of a PO resolution or planning	3.00	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	3

15	I was included in the team but did not take part in the setting of the schedule and venues of CRMF and identifying the key informants	3.07	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
16	I freely expressed my opinions and took other kinds of initiative in scheduling and setting the venue of CRMF activities including listing key informants	3.67	Agree (A)	1
	PO Orientation/PO Planning Team's Training on CRMF			
17	I was included in the orientation on the importance of forest, CBFM, and CRMF formulation including the preparation of CRMF but took no part in or only listened to the decision-making.	3.40	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
18	I was included in the orientation on the importance of forest, CBFM, and CRMF formulation including the preparation of CRMF expressed opinions, and took other initiatives.	3.67	Agree (A)	1

4.21 – 5.00 - *Strongly Agree (SA)*

3.41 – 4.20 - *Agree (A)*

2.60 – 3.40 - *Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)*

1.80 – 2.60 - *Disagree (D)*

1.00 – 1.80 - *Strongly Disagree (SD)*

Planning Phase

Table 3 presents the level of participation by the implementer-respondents in the planning phase of community mapping activities. The respondents agree that they were included in the updating of the community map, asked for their opinions on a specific matter, and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process with a mean score of 3.53. This gained an activity-specific participation in the Typology of Participation. This implies that participation is manifested in all actors of the project, the community people, MENRO and CENRO. During the KII with the LGU Cabagan, she shared, and I quote; “As to our participation, yes, we are involved in the community organizing.” In like manner, the community people were also included in the mapping activities. Based on Oy (2023) engaging the community in the planning process from the beginning, ensures that they are aware of the goals and objectives of the project. It will likewise empower the local community to determine the assets, resources, and barriers that may arise in the implementation of the CBFM program.

This segment reveals the level of participation by the implementer-respondents in the validation of community, and PO profile. The data shows a mean rating of 3.53, agree, falls under activity-specific participation, meaning they were asked for their opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process. The validation workshops are conducted for stakeholders to discuss and validate the community and PO profiles. This helps to ensure that all stakeholders are involved and their concerns are addressed (USAID-ME, 2008).

Regarding the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) Analysis, implementer-respondents

also agree that they were included in analyzing the SWOC of the community, and the PO, and asked to undertake specific activities in the decision-making process with a mean rating of 3.67, classified as activity-specific participation. SWOC analysis helps identify the internal and external factors that can impact the success of the CBFM program. According to Nzunda & Manyanda (2023), collaboration between the community is essential for effective CBFM, and a long-term conservation of forest resources is ensured.

In the section on defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives, the data shows that respondents also agree with their participation with a mean rating of 3.73, indicating activity-specific participation. This suggests that some respondents only listened to the decision-making process. The creation of VMGO helps ensure that the organization stays focused on its objectives and makes progress toward achieving its vision, it also helps to create a sense of identity and purpose within the organization, which is essential for inspiring employees to work towards a common goal (USAID-ME, 2008).

This part of the activity also reveals that the implementer-respondents agreed that they were included in the vision mapping and asked their opinions on a specific matter that influenced the decision-making with a mean rating of 3.73. This shows an activity-specific participation by the respondents. This activity is essential as it will give a clear direction for guiding the development strategies and activities (USAID-ME, 2008).

The last part of this phase is the Formulation of Strategies and Activities, wherein revealed an agreed participation by the implementer-respondents with a mean rating of 3.47 making it an activity-specific level of participation. While some respondents only listened to the decision-making, others were actively involved in the process, including providing opinions and undertaking specific tasks. This activity provides a framework for adapting to changing circumstances, ensuring that the CBFM program remains relevant and effective over time (Bacalla, 2006).

Table 3: Level of Participation of the Implementer-Respondents in the Planning Phase

Item	Forms of Participation	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
Community Mapping				
1	I was included in the updating of the community map but took no part or only listened to decision-making.	2.87	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
2	I was included in the updating of the community map and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.53	Agree (A)	1
Validation of Community and PO Profile				
3	I was included in validating the community and PO profile but took no part or only listened to decision-making.	2.67	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
Strengthens Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) Analysis				
4	I was included in validating the community and PO profile and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.53	Agree (A)	1
5	I was included in analyzing the SWOC of the community and the PO but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.53	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
6	I was included in analyzing the SWOC of the community and the PO and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.67	Agree (A)	1
Defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives				
7	I was included in defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.53	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
8	I was included in defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives and asked for my opinions on a specific matter, and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.73	Agree (A)	1
Vision Mapping				
9	I was included in the vision mapping but took no part or only listened to the decision-making.	2.47	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
10	I was included in the vision mapping and asked for my opinions on a specific matter related to mapping and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.73	Agree (A)	1
Formulation of Strategies and Activities				
11	I was included in the formulation of 25-year strategies and activities and a five-year work Plan but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.67	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
12	I was included in the formulation of 25-year strategies and activities and a five-year Plan and asked for my opinions on a specific matter related to strategies and activities and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.47	Agree (A)	1

4.21 – 5.00 - *Strongly Agree (SA)*

3.41 – 4.20 - *Agree (A)*

2.60 – 3.40 - *Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)*

1.80 – 2.60 - *Disagree (D)*

1.00 – 1.80 - *Strongly Disagree (SD)*

Implementation Phase

Table 4 the key points regarding the level of participation of the implementer-respondents in the implementation phase of the CBFM program in Masipi East, Cabagan, and Caligayan, Tumauni, Isabela. The first activity in this phase is to focus on the integration/ consolidation of outputs for the packaging of CRMF. It seems that the

implementer-respondents agreed with the 3.53 mean rating, that they were included in the packaging of CRMF such as validated community and PO profile, updated community CRFM areas, statement of VMGO, and the 25-year and the-year matrix of strategies and activities, and took part in a specific activity that influence the decision. This resulted in an activity-specific level of participation of the respondents. This activity serves as a comprehensive framework that guides the sustainable management and utilization of forest resources by the local communities (DENR, 1996). The data implies varied participation by the CENRO and MENRO, while

this level requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders to ensure that the CFMF is aligned with the community's needs and priorities and that the local stakeholders are committed to its successful implementation. However, based on Asad, *et al.* (2024) it is very challenging to successfully implement a plan that requires the collaborative participation of government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and local communities.

This section pertains to the consultation and ratification of CRMF. The data indicates that the average score for this activity is 3.60, falling within the agreed-upon descriptive range. This suggests that the implementer-respondents actively participated in the process to ensure

that the CRMF would be beneficial for the sustainable management and utilization of forest resources by local communities. The level of participation in this section is specific to the activity, based on the typology of participation. Furthermore, it seems that the participation ranges from passive to active in the consultation and ratification of the CRMF, indicating the need for empowered participation to be observed.

On the affirmation of CRM, Issuance, and Approval of CRMF, the respondents also agree with a mean score of 3.67 that they took part in the specific task and their opinions were valid in the decision-making process. Making this an activity-specific participation.

Table 4: Level of Participation of Implementer-Respondents in the Implementation Phase

Item	Forms of Participation	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
Integration/ Consolidation of Outputs for the Packaging of CRMF				
1	I was included in the packaging of CRMF such as validated community and PO profile, updated community CRFM areas, statement of VMGO, and the 25-year and the-year matrix of strategies and activities but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.67	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
Integration/ Consolidation of Outputs for the Packaging of CRMF				
2	I was included in the packaging of CRMF such as validated community and PO profile, updated community CRFM areas, statement of VMGO, and the 25-year and the-year matrix of strategies and activities and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.53	Agree (A)	1
Consultation and Ratification of CRMF				
3	I was included in the ratification of CRMF but took no part or only listened to the decision-making.	2.80	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
4	I was included in the ratification of CRMF and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.60	Agree (A)	1
Affirmation of CRM, Issuance, and Approval of CRMF				
5	I was included in the affirmation of CRMF but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.73	Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)	2
6	I was included in the affirmation of CRMF and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.67	Agree (A)	1

4.21 – 5.00 - *Strongly Agree (SA)*

3.41 – 4.20 - *Agree (A)*

2.60 – 3.40 - *Neutral/Uncertain (N/U)*

1.80 – 2.60 - *Disagree (D)*

1.00 – 1.80 - *Strongly Disagree (SD)*

Levels and Forms of Community-Respondents in Decision-Making Processes

Preparatory Phase

The data shows the community respondents rate their level of participation in the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) program in various steps of the preparatory stage. Kinyili (2023) pointed out that conservation management plans are increasingly seeking to integrate the perspectives of local communities. The

CBFM creation of the facilitator's team indicates that most respondents do not feel included in the decision-making process, with 2.42 and 2.07 being the average ratings for the first two statements. However, with a rating of 2.71, the third statement received a higher rating, indicating a more neutral response. Based on Jallah, *et al.* (2017), this can be attributed to several factors such as lack of representation, resources lack, and capacity lack. The fourth statement received the highest rating of 4.02, indicating that most respondents actively or collaboratively participated in the discussion of the project during this stage, based on the "Typology of Participation". According to FAO (1998), participation is crucial to ensure that planning reflects the priorities and

interests of all major groups and that they are committed to translating planning into action. The President of the MUEFA shared their experience during the creation of the CRFM Team, below is his statement:

“Kami po ang nagdetermine ng officers, kasi yung team na binuo namin, ako yung magdedecide pero siyempre pinagbotohan lapa namin. Ang DENR ang nagfacilitatie. Andito naman ang board of directors namagdesisyon sa mga gagawin namin na projects.” (We determined the officers, the team we created, I was the one who decided but it was still undergone voting facilitated by the DENR. The Board of Directors (BOD) are the ones to decide for the project that we are going to pursue).

The President of TUFGA stated:

“Dakami ti nagboto ti officers’ Sir. Pero adda ti DENR nga nagfacilitate diyay eleksiyon. Isuda ti nagpreside. Mabuti at active ang support ng LGU at DENR sa amin Sir. Sa katunayan madami na kaming miyembo.” (We are the ones who voted Sir but the DENR was there to facilitate the voting of officers. We are glad that the LGU and DENR are very supportive of our association. In fact, our members were increased).

On the aspect of gathering related documents needed to facilitate the contract for CBFM. These responses indicate that most individuals did not feel fully involved in the gathering of related documents for the CBFM project. The first statement received a neutral rating (3.31), suggesting that some individuals were merely present but did not actively participate. The second statement received a disagree rating (2.33), indicating that most individuals did not feel their ideas were taken into account during the gathering process. A neutral rating of 2.90, was received by the third statement, suggesting that some individuals were involved but their voices were not influential. The results indicate that some people were involved in gathering related documents, while others did not feel fully included. This shows the need for more inclusive and participatory approaches to forest management. According to the Typology of Participation, this only qualifies as “consultative participation.” This means, accordingly, that the decision-making lies in the hands of an external group. Mohan (2008) suggests that involving the individuals who stand to benefit from development programs can lead to increased sustainability and success in the execution of such projects.

The result suggests that most individuals did not feel fully involved in the map preparation process. The first statement received a neutral rating of 3.39, indicating that some individuals were assigned specific roles but did not feel fully engaged. The second statement received a disagree rating (2.55), showing that most individuals did

not take the initiative to participate in the finalization and printing of the maps. The third statement received a neutral rating (2.92), suggesting that some individuals felt their participation was valuable but did not feel fully included. Based on the data, it revealed that their participation was likewise a “consultative participation”. It means that their participation is not a guarantee that influences the decision-making processes. However, based on the FGD with the officers they shared at random:

“Kasama po kami sa mapping, pumunta kami sa area tapos nagworkshop po kami gamit ang manila paper at ginuhit namin kung saan banda ang mga kahoy, mga gulay at iba pa pong meron sa aming komunidad. Siyempre tinulungan po kami ng tiga DENR” (We are included in the mapping activity, we went to the area after which we had our workshop using manila paper, we drew the location of the trees, crops and other forest and community resources).

On the coordination with the community and PO and reconnaissance survey. The dominant or rank 1 statement with a 4.04 rating is “I was included in the team however I served as a listener and audience on GPS reading, identifying areas of community mapping, and printing maps. This means that the level of participation by the beneficiaries in this activity is “passive participation”. They do not form part of the decision-making or the so-called ex-post facto (FAO, 2003). Nevertheless, the sixth statement received an agree (3.81, rank 2) rating, suggesting that some individuals freely expressed their opinions and took other kinds of initiative in scheduling and setting the venue of CRMF activities including listing key informants. This means that this group of participants has “active (collaborative) participation.”

The last section of Table 15 presents the PO Orientation/ PO Planning Team’s Training on CRMF. These responses indicate that most individuals were included in the orientation on the importance of forest, CBFM, and CRMF formulation, including the preparation of CRMF. However, there is a difference in the level of participation and engagement. The first statement suggests that some individuals were included in the orientation but did not participate in decision-making (3.85, Agree), while the second statement suggests that some individuals not only participated in the orientation but also expressed opinions and took other initiatives (3.51, Agree). A study released in the Journal of Environmental Management (2019) revealed that involving the community in forest management can result in more sustainable and efficient outcomes. The research concluded that “community involvement in forest management can enhance the effectiveness of forest management by garnering greater community support and minimizing conflicts among various stakeholders”.

Table 5: Level of Participation of Community Respondents in the Preparatory Phase

Item	Forms of Participation	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
	Creation of CRMF Facilitator’s Team			
1	I was only informed to be one of the participants of the Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) project	2.42	Disagree	3

2	The implementers asked my opinion about the CBFM but did not include me in the decision-making.	2.07	Disagree	4
3	There were discussions and analyses made between us and the implementers on what we wanted to achieve in the project.	2.71	Neutral	2
4	I willingly and actively participated in the discussion of the project during the planning stage.	4.02	Agree	1
Gathering of Related Documents Needed				
5	I was only a member of the team and took no part in the gathering of related documents needed for CRFM	3.31	Neutral	1
6	I willingly took part in the gathering of related documents needed for CRMF without an assurance that my ideas would influence the decisions.	2.33	Disagree	3
7	I was actively interacting with the team and my voice influenced the decisions in gathering important documents needed in CRMF.	2.90	Neutral	2
Preparation of Maps				
8	I was tasked to take part in securing the maps	3.39	Neutral	1
9	I took the initiative of participating in the finalization and printing of the CBFMA maps	2.55	Disagree	3
10	My participation in the finalization and printing of the CBFMA maps is valuable.	2.92	Neutral	2
Coordination with the Community and PO and Reconnaissance Survey				
11	I was part of the team but took no part in the decision-making of the activities being done like scheduling and setting of venue of CRMF activities including listing of key informants	2.89	Neutral	4
Coordination with the Community and PO and Reconnaissance Survey				
12	I was a member of the team but did not participate or only an audience in the GPS reading, community mapping activities and did not familiarize myself with the CBFM Area	3.30	Neutral	3
13	I was included in the team however I served as a listener and audience on GPS reading, identifying areas of community mapping, printing maps	4.04	Agree	1
14	I am part of the group however I did not participate in the creation of a PO resolution or planning	2.70	Neutral	5
15	I was included in the team but did not take part in the setting of the schedule and venues of CRMF and identifying the key informants	2.63	Neutral	6
16	I freely expressed my opinions and took other kinds of initiative in scheduling and setting the venue of CRMF activities including listing key informants.	3.81	Agree	2
PO Orientation/PO Planning Team's Training on CRMF				
17	I was included in the orientation on the importance of forest, CBFM, and CRMF formulation including the preparation of CRMF but took no part in or only listened to the decision-making.	3.85	Agree	1
18	I was included in the orientation on the importance of forest, CBFM, and CRMF formulation including the preparation of CRMF expressed opinions, and took other initiatives.	3.51	Agree	2

4.21 – 5.00 - *Strongly Agree (SA)*

3.41 – 4.20 - *Agree (A)*

2.60 – 3.40 - *Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)*

1.80 – 2.60 - *Disagree (D)*

1.00 – 1.80 - *Strongly Disagree (SD)*

Planning Phase

The text below explains the phases of planning in the CBFM program, highlighting eight sub-activities that will be discussed to assess the level of participation by the respondents. It seems that most people were involved in

updating the community map, but there were varying levels of participation. The first statement implies that some individuals were involved but didn't actively contribute to the decision-making process with a rating of 2.62 (neutral), while the second statement suggests that some individuals were both involved and actively participated in making decisions (3.88, Agree). This reveals that respondents agree that they have an "activity-specific participation", based on the Typology of Participation. Based on the FGD they also revealed their participation in this:

“Ang ginawa po namin ay community mapping, kung saan dinrowing po naming kung saan ang school, residential areas, church, lalong lalo ng po ang CBFM sites. Linagyan naming ng marka kung saan ang mga puno at crops ganun sa mga bahay at iba pang nakatayo sa aming komunidad” (What we made was community mapping, we drew the school, residential areas, church, and most especially the CBFM sites. We made markings where are the trees, and crops, houses and other infrastructures in the community).

The participatory planning process fosters trust within your organization, among the community, and the individuals involved. This trust forms a solid foundation for future community development and actionable initiatives FAO (2003); Tufte & Paolo (2009) It is recommended that active participation from local citizens and other stakeholders during the design stage should improve the quality and relevance of the proposed interventions.

The second activity revealed that the beneficiaries have a neutral rating (3.36) on the statement “I was included in validating the community and PO profile and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process”. On the other hand, some respondents were included in the validation process but did not participate in decision-making with a 2.77 or neutral rating. This activity was revealed to have “activity-specific participation” by the respondents. This implies that the respondents’ participation is being assigned to them because of the nature of the activity. It requires indigenous knowledge about the community. The data reveals the responses of respondents on their levels of participation in the Strengthens Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) Analysis conducted in the community. These responses indicate that most individuals were included in the analysis process, but there is a difference in the level of participation

and engagement. The first statement suggests that some individuals were included in the analysis but did not participate in decision-making (2.75, Neutral, rank 2), while the second statement suggests that some individuals were included and actively participated in decision-making (3.53, Agree, rank 1). This activity falls under “activity-specific participation” wherein they were asked to undertake specific tasks during the conduct of SWOT analysis.

This portion tackles the participation level of the respondents in defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives (VMGO) of their association. Based on the data, respondents “Agree (3.36, rank 1) that they were included in this activity and asked for their opinions to arrive at a decision. On the other hand, 3.02 or Neutral, rank 2 responded that they only listened in the conceptualization of their VMGO. This data shows that they have activity-specific participation.

On the aspect of vision mapping, the data revealed that 3.86 of the respondents agreed that they asked for their opinions related to vision mapping and took part in the decision-making processes, while 3.06 of the respondents were neutral saying that they were included in the vision mapping but took no part or only listened to the decision-making. This shows that have activity-specific participation in the vision mapping sessions.

This section on the formulation of strategies and activities presents the responses as follows: 3.37 individuals agreed that they were included in the formulation of 25-year strategies and activities including the five-year plan and asked for my opinions on a specific matter related to strategies and activities and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process. On the other hand, 2.75 or neutral revealed that they form part of the planning but as a listener in the process. This likewise reveals that respondents demonstrate a specific activity participation.

Table 6: Level of Participation of Community Respondents in the Planning Phase

Item	Forms of Participation	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
Community Mapping				
1	I was included in the updating of the community map but took no part or only listened to decision-making.	2.61	Neutral	2
2	I was included in the updating of the community map and asked for my opinions on a specific matter, and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.88	Agree	1
Validation of Community and PO Profile				
3	I was included in validating the community and PO profile but took no part or only listened to decision-making.	2.77	Neutral	2
4	I was included in validating the community and PO profile and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.36	Neutral	1
Strengthens Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Challenges (SWOC) Analysis				
5	I was included in analyzing the SWOC of the community and the PO but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.75	Neutral	2

6	I was included in analyzing the SWOC of the community and the PO and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.53	Agree	1
Defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives				
7	I was included in defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	3.02	Neutral	2
8	I was included in defining the vision, mission, goals, and objectives and asked for my opinions on a specific matter, and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.63	Agree	1
Vision Mapping				
9	I was included in the vision mapping but took no part or only listened to the decision-making.	3.06	Neutral	2
10	I was included in the vision mapping and asked for my opinions on a specific matter related to mapping and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process	3.86	Agree	1
11	I was included in the formulation of 25-year strategies and activities and a five-year work Plan but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.78	Neutral	2
12	I was included in the formulation of 25-year strategies and activities and a five-year Plan and asked for my opinions on a specific matter related to strategies and activities and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process	3.87	Agree	1

4.21 – 5.00 - *Strongly Agree (SA)*

3.41 – 4.20 - *Agree (A)*

2.60 – 3.40 - *Neutral/Uncertain (N/U)*

1.80 – 2.60 - *Disagree (D)*

1.00 – 1.80 - *Strongly Disagree (SD)*

Implementation Phase

This phase consisted of three major sub-activities such as the integration/ consolidation of outputs for the packaging of CRMF, consultation and ratification of CRMF, and affirmation of CRM, issuance and approval of CRMF. The responses in this activity indicate that most individuals were included in the packaging process, but there is a difference in the level of participation and engagement. The second statement in the activity ranks 1 with a 3.86 mean with a descriptive rating of agree by the respondents. It states that respondents were included in the packaging of CRMF such as validated community and PO profile, updated community CRFM areas, statement of VMGO, and the 25-year and the-year matrix

of strategies and activities and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process, while 3.47 also agreed on their participation as merely listener of the decisions about this matter. If we look into the level of participation, they performed activity-specific participation.

Consultation and ratification of CRMF was one of the activities in this phase, it has revealed their participation as activity-specific participation because they only undertake a specific task with a mean rating of 3.86 (Agree). But then a 2.67 mean rating (Agree) revealed that they took no part in the decision-making.

For the ratification of CRM, issuance, and approval of CRMF, a 3.73 mean rating (Agree) has responded stating that they were tasked to perform a specific undertaking that influenced the decision falls under activity-specific participation. On the other hand, 2.68 (Neutral) shows that their participation is nominal or took no part in the decision.

Table 7: Level of Participation of Community Respondents in the Implementation Phase

Item	Forms of Participation	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	Rank
Integration/ Consolidation of Outputs for the Packaging of CRMF				
1	I was included in the packaging of CRMF such as validated community and PO profile, updated community CRFM areas, statement of VMGO, and the 25-year and the-year matrix of strategies and activities but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	3.47	Agree	2
2	I was included in the packaging of CRMF such as validated community and PO profile, updated community CRFM areas, statement of VMGO, and the 25-year and the-year matrix of strategies and activities and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.86	Agree	1

Consultation and Ratification of CRMF				
3	I was included in the ratification of CRMF but took no part or only listened to the decision-making.	2.67	Neutral	2
4	I was included in the ratification of CRMF and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.64	Agree	1
Affirmation of CRM, Issuance, and Approval of CRMF				
5	I was included in the affirmation of CRMF but took no part or only listened in the decision-making.	2.68	Neutral	2
6	I was included in the affirmation of CRMF and asked for my opinions on a specific matter and asked to undertake a specific task in the decision-making process.	3.73	Agree	1

4.21 – 5.00 - *Strongly Agree (SA)*

3.41 – 4.20 - *Agree (A)*

2.60 – 3.40 - *Neutral/ Uncertain (N/U)*

1.80 – 2.60 - *Disagree (D)*

1.00 – 1.80 - *Strongly Disagree (SD)*

CONCLUSION

The CBFM implementation at Masipi East and Caligayan by the DENR-CENRO and MENRO showed strong engagement in creating the CRMF Facilitator's team, gathering documents, preparing maps, and coordinating with the community and PO. Active participation also appeared in community mapping, profile validation, SWOC analysis, defining VMGOs, and formulating strategies. While in the implementation phase, implementers were involved in integrating CRMF outputs, consulting and rectifying CRMF, and issuing and approving CRMF.

On the contrary, the community members had limited involvement in the decision-making processes for creating the CRMF team, gathering documents, and preparing maps. Mainly, their participation was passive. However, they are involved in validating profiles, updating CRMF areas, and formulating strategies, but still, their authority is limited in the decision-making. Community's participation in consulting and ratifying CRMF were also low, especially during the ratification, issuance, and approval of CRMF. Based on the study's findings, it is noticeable that more inclusive strategies are needed. The obvious contrast between the active implementers and the more passive community respondents' engagement highlights the necessity to enhance community involvement.

Encouraging them to be actively involved in decision-making from the preparatory, planning, and implementation phases is given emphasis. Support and nature of their engagement by providing training and necessary resources to empower them to take on more responsibilities within the program. Organize regular training sessions to equip participants with the skills and knowledge needed for effective engagement. Establish continuous feedback mechanisms to capture and incorporate participant input and adjust the program accordingly. It's crucial to create a collaborative

environment where participants feel that their contributions are valued and impactful, particularly in mapping and community coordination activities. Encouraging active engagement and enhancing the capacity of community members is essential for inclusive participation. Prioritize transparency and communication efforts to ensure that decision-making processes are clear and that participants' inputs are used to build trust and foster empowered participation. Additionally, increase the representation of stakeholders in decision-making forums to reflect the diverse perspectives and needs of the community.

Novelty of Research

The research introduces a fresh perspective by highlighting the contrast between the active involvement of implementers and the relatively passive role of community members in implementing the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) program. The findings emphasize the necessity of more inclusive strategies that prioritize and empower community participation in decision-making processes from the preparatory stages, planning stages through to the implementation phase.

The study underscores the importance of promoting active community involvement by providing training, and necessary resources, and fostering a collaborative environment where their contributions are valued. It recommends the organization of regular training sessions to equip participants with the skills and knowledge required for effective engagement, the establishment of feedback mechanisms to capture and integrate participant input, and the prioritization of transparency and communication efforts to build trust and ensure clear decision-making processes.

By advocating for enhanced capability building, empowered engagement, and increased stakeholder representation in decision-making forums, the research underscores the significance of fostering inclusive participation within the CBFM program. This approach seeks to empower community members, enhance their decision-making authority, and create a more inclusive and impactful environment for sustainable forest

management practices.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes significantly to the existing body of knowledge in several ways. It emphasizes the disparity in engagement, underlining the contrast between active (empowered) implementers and passive community members, and stresses the importance of addressing power imbalances in conservation programs. Furthermore, it advocates for inclusive strategies that empower community participation in the three phases of carrying out the program: the preparatory, planning, and implementation phases, addressing a gap in the current literature. The research also highlights the importance of capability building, training, and the creation of a collaborative environment to enhance community engagement initiatives. Additionally, it emphasizes the vital role of transparency and communication in building trust, clarifying decision-making processes, and improving conservation outcomes. By advocating for increased stakeholder representation in decision-making forums, the research recognizes diverse perspectives and aims to create a more inclusive environment. Overall, this study provides valuable insights into community-based forest management, emphasizing the significance of inclusive participation, capability building, transparency, and stakeholder engagement in promoting sustainable practices.

Fulfillment of Research Gap

This research addresses a critical gap in the current literature by examining the dynamics of community engagement in conservation programs. It emphasizes the imbalance between active (empowered) implementers and passive community members, highlighting the importance of addressing power differentials. By advocating for inclusive strategies, the research accentuates the significance of empowering community participation during the preparatory, planning, and implementation stages, thus filling a notable void in the existing literature. Moreover, it reinforces the need for capability building and training to establish a collaborative environment that enhances community involvement in sustainable forest management. The study likewise identifies transparency and communication as crucial for building trust, clarifying decision-making processes, and improving conservation outcomes. By promoting increased stakeholder representation in decision-making forums, the research recognizes the value of diverse perspectives and aims to cultivate a more inclusive environment. In summary, this study offers valuable insights into community-based forest management (CBFM) stressing the roles of inclusive participation, capability building, transparency, and stakeholder engagement in promoting sustainable practices.

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