Guidelines for referees. In order to assist referees this section outlines the Guidelines for referees and provides and Example of a review.

GUIDELINES FOR REFEREES

General Remarks

The primary purpose of peer reviewing of submitted manuscripts is to ascertain if the paper is within the range of subjects and scope of the International Forestry Review, and that the paper is in style and content of the highest professional quality and therefore suitable for publication in the IFR.

In order to assist referees in these tasks, the following guidelines arrange the major items of a review report.

Specific Guidelines for Referees*

1. **Title:** Does it reflect the purpose and content of the paper?
2. **Abstract:** Does it effectively, succinctly and concisely highlight the content of the paper? Is its length appropriate and information content adequate?
3. **Structure:** Is the theme in general logically developed and the paper appropriately subdivided and subtitled? Are sub-headings adequately crisp and informative?
4. **Introduction:** Is the reader adequately but briefly familiarised with the background circumstances that created the conditions for the work to be carried out that led to the paper?
5. **Situation** (scenario)**:** Is the situation which created the problem or other incentive which eventually produced the basis on which the paper has been produced, convincingly and coherently described and critically analysed? Is this description adequately phrased for a diverse international readership to understand? Is relevant literature adequately reviewed and considered?
6. **Problem:** Is the problem logically derived from the situation, convincingly described and well argued?
7. **Objective:** Is the overall goal and the specific objective (target) of the project clearly stated and logically linked with the problem?
8. **Materials & Method**: Are the choice and availability of materials for study and the methodological approach (including mathematical statistics) appropriate, adequate and feasible? Does the chosen option accord with the state of the art or state of science? Is the description clear, simple and accessible for a diverse international readership? Is the choice supported by an adequate critical review of the international literature?
9. **Work Process and Progress**: Is adequate information given on the application of the methods, the progress of work and on any events which may be relevant for the readership and the referee to judge the feasibility of the method and the soundness of the results?
1. **Results:** Are they clearly, understandably and succinctly described and convincingly linked to the previous sections?
2. **Discussion of the Results:** Are the results critically compared with national and international literature, points logically and convincingly made, and evaluations well supported by convincing arguments?
3. **Conclusion/Discussion:** Are the conclusions justified, consistent with the content and result of the section, and are the implications for environmental management and policies clearly and convincingly stated?
4. **Illustrations & Tables:** Do they suitably and adequately supplement the text? Do the captions explain their contents sufficiently that they can be understood without reference to the text? Are their design adequate and their information content relevant, sufficient and accurate/precise?
5. **Style:** Is the paper easy for a diverse readership to read? Is it written in plain scientific or technical English? Are the terminology and nomenclature correct?

* With thanks to the Journal for Environmental Management

Back to Top

EXAMPLE OF A REVIEW

Review: Building participatory action research (PAR) in collaborative management: a case study of 'overlapping access rights' in forest management in Pasir- East Kalimantan

This article analyzes practical experiences in East Kalimantan using PAR with multiple stakeholders involved in forest management. It specifically analyzes how PAR can be used to help resolve issues of 'overlapping access' rights.

In general, the article provides a useful review of PAR, as well as highlights the specific experiences of PAR in East Kalimantan. The conclusions contribute to understanding of the PAR process in practice.

As it stands, the article provides an interesting picture of a local scenario. The article would be much stronger if the final analysis and conclusions related back to theories outlined in the literature review of PAR, and were more analytical of the author's own practical experiences, (i.e. WHO and HOW were decisions made throughout the PAR process).

There are strange phrasings and grammatical errors throughout the paper, which make for unclear reading and a choppy flow that allow key points to be lost. The paper should be edited thoroughly by a native English speaker.

Introduction

The opening statement is not necessarily relevant. It should be replaced by a less abstract concept related to the specific type of natural resource conflict at hand.

The introduction should better link general statements about PAR with its use in natural resource issues, the specific conflict in Pasir that is described, and the aspects of PAR the author hopes to analyze.

Participatory Action Research (PAR): What is it?

The section "Participatory Action Research (PAR): What is it?" is useful, and divides the history of action research with participatory action research as a sub-category. It highlights the weaknesses as well as strengths of PAR, from both an action and a research perspective.

Continued phrasing problems make for a less smooth read than is desirable, and make connections among and between paragraphs somewhat disjointed.

Unclear phrase p. 2, lines 4 and 5, describing "symmetrical, horizontal, or non-exploitative patterns" of relationships between "subject and subject" (of research). These terms are not further defined.

The author raises an interesting issue regarding difficulties of uniting theory and practice, p. 2, 3rd paragraph, but does not go into sufficient depth with this short paragraph, instead relying upon the vague statement of how this relationship is "the central problem of the dominant positivist social science." Such generalities should be avoided, as it is unclear what the relationship of this dominant social science is to PAR, why it is dominant, positivist, etc. This issue of theory's relationship to practice should be developed further, as it has potential for strengthening the author's later analysis of PAR experiences in East Kalimantan. This paragraph also appears disjointedly in the middle of the analysis of action research, and should be better linked to the rest of the section.

In this section reviewing PAR, it is not problematized WHO is doing both the research, and who are the participants. In this literature review, the author merely describes 'the group' and 'the researcher/s', without specifying how, in PAR, the group is selected, via what process, and how the researchers themselves are part of the process, changing and changed by the PAR. Such a focus within the literature review will again serve to strengthen later on the analysis of PAR in East Kalimantan.

PAR: Social Learning and Collaboration

This section describes social learning that can occur during PAR, and its potential contributions to promoting collaboration in natural resource management.

The final paragraph of this section describes how PAR can be used to create opportunities for social learning and collaboration to address natural resource management issues. This is a key point, but as it is presented in the middle of a paragraph of the third section, its impact, and the article's potential impact as a whole, is lost. Although the previous sections lead up to this point, this lead-in is only obvious in reverse. This key point of the article should be better packaged in the introduction, which would help link the different literature review sections together.

Case Study: overlapping access in forest management, East Kalimantan

This section describes the actual PAR process in East Kalimantan, by describing the area, listing the stakeholders, describing the concerns over overlapping access rights, the different activities and perspectives of the different stakeholders. It ends with the Research Question developed by CIFOR for the PAR process.

The last sentence of the first paragraph in this section describes the livelihood activities of the two villages. It is not defined what ladang is. The sentence as a whole does not relate well to the rest of the paragraph, which is a general description of the areas involved. A separate paragraph should be devoted to livelihoods.

A map might help better orient readers as to where this takes place, and where the villages, community lands, protection forest, production forest, etc., are.

The second paragraph describes some of the biodiversity, although using some strange reference markers, i.e, cubic meters per hectare for plants (trees?) greater than 10 cm diameter (at breast height? Or base?), and tons per hectare for rattan (production of harvestable product or total productivity?). These parameters are more reflective of floristic diversity rather than biodiversity as a whole.

The final sentence of this paragraph, "since the area has high biodiversity potential, it is no doubt that the area of concern to many stakeholders," is unclear for several reasons. First, grammatical errors. Second, biodiversity 'potential' is a vague phrase. Third, it is unclear whether the stakeholders are interested for the biodiversity per se, or rather for the products from different species.

The authors then describe the stakeholders. It would be interesting to outline the process of HOW and WHO decided who the relevant stakeholders are.

The central issue of 'overlapping access rights' is then described. But it is left out again HOW and WHO decided why this was the central issue. Describing in more detail HOW and WHO issues are central to analyzing the entire PAR process, and should not be neglected.

A table outlining the different issues of concern to each stakeholder might help in getting the issues straight.

The Research Question is in itself quite interesting. Again, it should be better developed in the introduction to help strengthen the author's key points.

PAR processes

This section outlines the actual PAR processes done by CIFOR and the other stakeholders. The breakdown of these processes into their different steps of Plan, Action, etc., is very useful and aids analysis. Some more details on the actions taken in the different steps would be useful.

The author briefly mentions that there were "challenges to delivering and simplifying the CIFOR's research question," but does not go into detail over what these challenges are, nor how the research question was transformed. Addressing this issue would relate to the theoretical issue raised by the

author in the literature review section, namely the relation between theory and practice, and would make the article much stronger.

Discussion: Leading to collaboration?

This section describes the outcomes of the PAR activities, and analyzes the PAR process. It concentrates on the relationship between community and other (government, private sector) stakeholders.

The short section on limitations of the PAR process (p. 12, last paragraph) should be better developed, instead of having key issues noted only within parentheses.

Again, the point made in the last paragraph of this section, that to "modify the approach (by addressing the local issues that were not conflicting with the agenda of stakeholders) in order to develop collaboration and mutual trust between and within them" is very important to deepening understanding of the PAR process. This point should not be lost, and indeed its analysis should be developed further.

Conclusion

The preliminary conclusion is that PAR can support collaboration among stakeholders, but that collaboration is a long term and delicate process.

The author's conclusions are important to understanding PAR, but could be strengthened further by a deeper analysis of practical experiences in East Kalimantan with PAR, linking these experiences to the theory behind PAR. They also would be strengthened by 'cleaning up' the article in general, improving grammatical problems and phrasing, which would help the article flow and prevent key points from being lost.