

Ethical appeal

Tool

Purpose:

Ethical appeal is a lobbying tool for marginalized forest groups aggrieved at decisions that do not take their beliefs and values into account. It aims to readjust the values that shape what happens. It covers:

- What is a forest ethic?
- How do you appeal using it?
- When might this be useful?

Activities:

Broad consensus exists about what humans aspire to:

- material needs
- security
- relationships
- creative work
- appreciation of beauty
- sense of identity

Forests contribute to many peoples' aspirations, but may not be able to satisfy them all at once. We therefore need an agreed set of rights and values (a 'forest ethic') to govern forest use. Not everyone agrees on the weight that particular types of aspiration should have in making decisions – e.g. forest beauty versus material needs. But when decision makers completely overlook certain types of aspiration, it is time to appeal!

Keep in Mind

★ Ethical appeals help marginalized groups in three ways. They make their views known. They expose adversarial positions to the light of day. And they show the comparison to people who might be able to do something about it.

★ Make the process of ethical dialogue as inclusive as possible. Broaden your support – especially with people who have influence over your adversaries.

★ Remember that long-term awareness of the importance of your values may be as important as any short-term gains.



The following steps can prove useful.

Formalise a forest ethic

- Look at your aspirations. What aspirations are important to your group?
- Understand the underlying causes. Are aspirations founded in human reason, values intrinsic to other life / objects, or divine will?
- Describe forest's contribution. How do forests help to meet these aspirations?
- Define acceptable practice. For each of your aspirations, what would acceptable forest practice involve?

Build your case

- Clarify the problem. What threatens the aspirations of your group?
- Use legal support. How might international conventions, national laws and local traditions support your case?
- Target your audience. Who must be present and who would help if they were there?
- Create pressure for change. How can you spread your concerns to build pressure in advance?

Make your appeal

- Conduct dialogue on your terms. Establish rules: everyone expresses an opinion - everyone listens - reason guides discussion.
- Introduce 'ethical formats'. Encourage looking from the other's point of view. What would be reciprocal give and take?
- Try it. Set out offending practice, legitimate aspirations that it overlooks and reasons why this is not acceptable
- Learn from experience. Record reactions and outcomes for what you did.

★ But - make sure you time your preparation and appeal while it is still possible to change specific offending practice.

Further information

Find full tool and other related tools and resources at:

www.policy-powertools.org

For further networks of contacts with experience in ethics see the International Development Ethics Association:

www.development-ethics.org/

For an example of an ethic that has received broad support look at the Earth Charter Initiative:

www.earthcharter.org/

or contact:

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