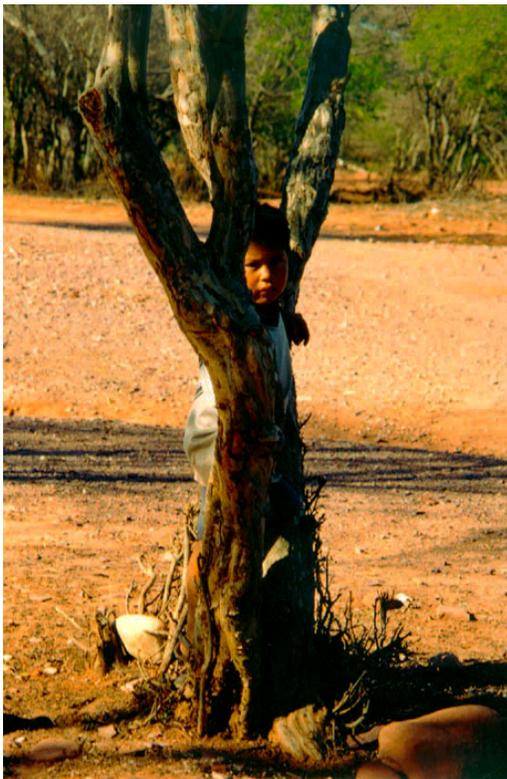




# Lessons Learned from Community Forestry and their Relevance for REDD+

## Regional Reports on Latin America, Asia and Africa and a Global Overview

### REDD+ can build on Community Forestry Lessons Learned



Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) aims to provide potentially significant incentives to developing countries to mitigate climate change through protection and expansion their forests. Forests are of vital importance to local communities and indigenous peoples, and more effectively and equitably be conserved and sustainably managed with their participation.

Since the colonial period many governments claimed rights to most of the forests although communities have been using and managing forests for millennia. Over the past 30-35 years, however, examples of “community forestry” have been recognized and new forms of community forestry piloted, replicated, and scaled up. A considerable body of experience, and lessons learned, has been gained from this work.

Lessons learned from community forestry may be highly relevant for developing REDD+ strategies, programs, and projects. The importance and means of engaging local communities to achieve forest conservation and management should not have to be “re-learned” by REDD+ planners and implementers.

### Regional and Global Reviews

Recognizing the importance of looking back to move forward, the USAID-supported Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Program undertook a review of lessons learned from community forestry relevant for REDD+, a “meta-analysis” focusing six topics: community empowerment and tenure, governance and stakeholder engagement, benefits and incentives, capacity building, scaling up, and long-term sustainability.

“**Community forestry** ... [is] an evolving **branch** of forestry whereby the local community plays a significant role in forest management and land use decision making.”

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community\\_forestry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community_forestry)

Three regional reports – for Africa, Asia, and Latin America – were commissioned. The team has reviewed over 500 documents, and interviewed many knowledgeable colleagues. A global synthesis of the three reports is being prepared.

## Preliminary Findings: Key Lessons from Community Forestry

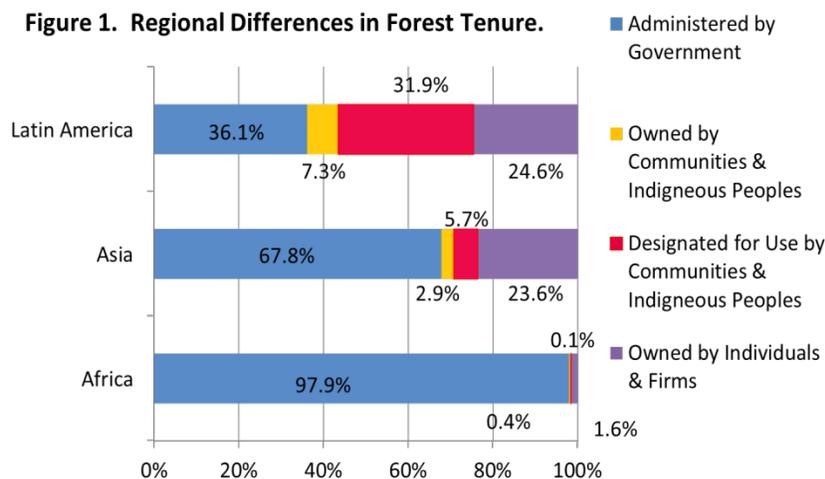
**Community Forestry:** Recent studies have shown that in many areas community forestry has been broadly effective in reducing deforestation and forest degradation, and in some places, more successful than government forest management.



Monitoring community forest, Nepal. Photo: Paula J. Williams

Community members are involved in highly diverse forms of forest management, which tend to be specific to particular contexts. One useful distinction is whether community forestry is self-generated by the community members themselves, or has been externally-initiated by projects, governments, or other outside development partners.

**Figure 1. Regional Differences in Forest Tenure.**



Source: Adapted from *Turning Point: What future for forest peoples and resources in the Emerging World Order*, Rights and Resources Initiative, Washington, DC., 2012, Figure 1, page 8. Based on best available data (Dec. 2011) from 36 of world's most forested countries, representing 85% of world's forests. Data was compiled by CIFOR, ITTO, and RRI.

frameworks for community forestry are vital. Community forestry is based on the recognition of community rights to establish and enforce rules governing the access and use of forests. These tenurial rights are relatively strong in most of Latin America but are generally much more limited in scope across most of Africa and the Asia.

**Governance and Stakeholder Engagement:** Effective community-level institutions capable of establishing and enforcing rules governing access and use of forests and of equitably sharing the costs and benefits of community forestry are critical; self-generated community institutions are generally the most effective. Nonetheless, even where the legal frameworks for community forestry are strong on paper, government agencies frequently restrict the delegation of rights to

**Regional Differences:** Latin America has the most area under community forestry management (Figure 1), with diverse forms of self-generated community forestry enjoying broad legal recognition across large geographic areas. The Government directly administers most forests across Africa and Asia where most recognized community forestry has been externally-initiated by bilateral and multilateral donors, NGOs and developing country governments over the last three decades.

**Empowerment of Communities:** Clear legal

communities. It is vital that all legitimate user groups and stakeholders, such as indigenous peoples, women, migrant pastoralists, the poor, and other resource users are engaged in community-level governance structures.

**Benefits and Incentives:** Overall, the cash benefits accrued by communities have so far been limited, especially where externally-initiated community forestry has focused on conservation. Sustainable and legal use of forest resources is important to communities. It is critical that the overall mix of benefits be greater than the costs or trade-offs incurred by communities, and that costs and benefits are shared equitably between the government and the communities, and among community members.

**Capacity Building:** Community managers are more effective with a diversity of skills that include forest management, enterprise development, record and bookkeeping, planning and capacities for good governance. Government foresters and other officers are more effective when they have capacity to support community engagement.

**Scaling up to broader or national systems:** Tested, proven community forestry systems that enjoy strong community support are critical for scaling up. Policy, legal and regulatory frameworks that are clear and easy to apply are also essential for the effective empowerment of communities. Social movements have supported scaling up in many areas.

Latin America, with its extensive areas of humid forest under self-generated community forestry and relatively strong legal frameworks, offers the greatest near-term potential for REDD+ for rapid scaling up. Lessons from all three regions highlight the dangers of rapid scaling up. Early REDD+ experiences with weak community institutions and private sector carbon market actors have raised concerns that communities may be disadvantaged in such negotiations.



Villagers carrying wood, Uganda. Photo: Tom Blomley

**Sustainability:** The most critical factors determining sustainability are social and economic: effective empowerment of community managers; strong community institutions capable of developing and enforcing rules governing forest access and use; and good governance. Local, indigenous, traditional knowledge can contribute to better forest management, and environmental sustainability, by, for example, not over-harvesting the forest to maintain watershed functions.

### Initial Recommendations Relevant for REDD+

REDD+ is emerging in a different world than that in which community forestry evolved -- more population, and increased competition among land uses. In this context, harmonizing policies related to agriculture and other forest-related policies on trade, taxation, infrastructure, migration, and land tenure are critically important for creating enabling conditions for REDD+ success.

If REDD+ is to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits, developing country governments, bilateral and multilateral donors, NGOs, and communities will need to:

- **Support policy reforms** to provide clear, secure, enforceable and non-discretionary tenure rights that empower communities to make and enforce rules to regulate forest access and use. Empowerment should integrate all legitimate stakeholders including women, poor households and indigenous peoples.
- Develop effective **measures to mitigate the effects of vested interests** that seek to block the implementation of government policies in support of community empowerment. REDD+ proponents should identify the legal instruments for empowerment and enable civil society to build pressure to ensure their application.
- **Give communities a high level of autonomy** in adapting or defining their own management institutions for community forestry. Self-generated community management institutions and local knowledge should be favored wherever possible.
- **Significantly increase the benefits** that communities derive from sustainable use of forests. Overall community benefits need to be significantly greater than the transaction, management and opportunity costs of community forestry and of REDD+.
- **Develop capacity** of community members, government, and other partners to support community level management institutions and to build the mix of technical skills (forest management, utilization and planning), enterprise development skills (financial management and book-keeping) and governance capacities (accountability, communications and enforcement of rules governing access and use) to increase community forestry success.
- Respect the two most essential **conditions needed for scaling up**: favorable legal frameworks and the existence of operational, proven community forestry systems. *One of the greatest challenges for REDD+ is how to resolve the urgency of the need for climate mitigation through the rapid scaling up of REDD+ with the time frames needed for building local ownership and socially responsible programs.*
- **Enhance social, economic and environmental sustainability** prospects by strengthening community tenure and rights, enhancing and diversifying benefit flows to communities, supporting minimum standards of good governance in State institutions, and valuing local ecological and traditional knowledge regarding forest management.



*Take precautions - community members at work. Community Forestry Association of El Petén (ACOFOP) sawmill, Guatemala. Photo: Janis B. Alcorn.*

## Next Steps

In the spring of 2013, FCMC will host an experts' workshop to present these issues in more depth, and then plans to publish and disseminate the results.

**DISCLAIMER:** This fact sheet was produced for review by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The fact sheet was prepared by the FCMC program, and not by USAID. The contents do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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