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 for Deforestation and Forest Degradation, plus conservation and sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+) aims to provide potentially significant incentives to developing countries to mitigate climate change through protection and expansion of their forests. Forests are of vital importance to local communities and indigenous peoples, and can more effectively and equitably be conserved and sustainably managed through their participation.

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

Itika Guasu boy, Bolivia. Photo: Janis B. Alcorn.

Lessons learned from community forestry are 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 United States Agency for International Development-supported (USAID) Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Program undertook a review of lessons learned from community forestry relevant for REDD+, focusing on six topics: community empowerment and tenure; governance and stakeholder engagement; benefits and incentives; capacity building; scaling up; and long-term sustainability. Three regional studies – for Africa, Asia, and Latin America – were commissioned, as was a global synthesis. This brief summarizes key findings from the studies.

What is community forestry?

Across the world, community forestry tends to fall into two basic categories. First, there are systems that have been developed locally and without any external support. This "**self-initiated community forestry**" includes traditional forest management, dating back decades or even centuries, but can also include more recent measures taken by communities or groups in response to changing external threats. "**Externally-initiated forms of community forestry**" have been developed with the support of national, provincial, and local governments, donor projects, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or other external agencies, such as multilaterals or foundations.

What is community forestry?

Community forestry is an evolving subcategory of forestry under which communities or groups of people have partial to full rights over specific forests, including the rights to establish, implement, and enforce rules governing access and use of those forests. These rights may be formal legal rights, or traditional or customary rights: the latter may, or may not, be legally recognized by the State. Community forestry systems may be initiated by the community or may be developed as a result of outside intervention by governments or various development partners. Participatory Forest Management, Community-Based Forest Management or Joint Forest Management can be considered as types of community forestry if communities have rights to participate in significant decisions on how the forest is used or managed. Community forestry may include not only management of natural forests and woodlands, but also community or group plantations and woodlots.

Self-initiated community forestry is widespread in Latin America, Africa and Asia (Figure 1). It is by far the most important type in Latin America, where it is widely recognized as a legitimate land use and receives various degrees of legal recognition, including tenure rights. In Africa and Asia, nearly all forestlands are government administered (either owned by the government, or considered to be the property of the nation or of "the people" and administered by the government on behalf of the country). Self-initiated community forestry tends to exist in parallel with statutory tenure regimes, but with little legal recognition.

People and forests have co-evolved over the centuries. Across all three regions there is a long and rich history of traditional and customary management of natural forests. **The concept, and study, of community forestry began to emerge over 35 years ago**. In the 1970s, the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Forestry for Local Community Development program was initiated, and the 1978 World Forestry Congress focused on "Forests for People." In subsequent years, many communities, governments, donors and other development partners have provided substantial support around the globe for developing various forms of community forestry. Notable support was provided by FAO, the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the Ford Foundation, USAID, and many other bilateral and multilateral donors.

Communities now legitimately manage 216 million hectares (ha) of forests (or one-third of the total forest area) in Latin America. Traditional self-initiated systems covering enormous areas predominate in South America, especially in the "carbon-rich" forests of the Amazon Basin. In Mexico and Central America, traditional rights form the core, but externally-initiated, commercially-oriented community forestry systems provide some of the best examples of full community empowerment over forest resources in all three regions.

The Rights and Resources Institute estimates that 98 percent of forested land in Africa is "controlled" by national governments, while only 0.5 percent is formally "owned by" or "designated for use by communities and Indigenous Peoples" (Figure 1). Some countries, however, have higher formal community ownership or control of forests based on legal recognition of customary law. Traditional, self-initiated community forestry systems exist in parallel and over **90 percent of Africa's rural population accesses land through customary institutions, but most of this is not officially recognized** by African states. Externally-initiated community forestry systems began in francophone Sahel, West Africa in the

mid-1980s with a strong commercial focus on managing dryland forests for the production of fuelwood (firewood and charcoal) for urban markets in response to widespread concerns over the fuelwood crisis. Community forestry initiatives began later in East Africa during the 1990s, with a much stronger focus on conservation and forest restoration. Africa's largest community forestry program is found in Tanzania where 4.1 million ha are now under community ownership. A diversity of initiatives is also found in southern Africa, in the tropical forest belt of coastal West Africa and the Congo Basin. In Cameroon, for example, revisions to forestry law in 1994 have enabled community associations and cooperatives to acquire the exclusive rights to manage and exploit up to 5,000 ha of customary forest, under a 25-year contract, resulting in the creation of 147 new community forests covering a total area of 637,000 ha.

Figure 1. Formal Forest Tenure Rights by Region.
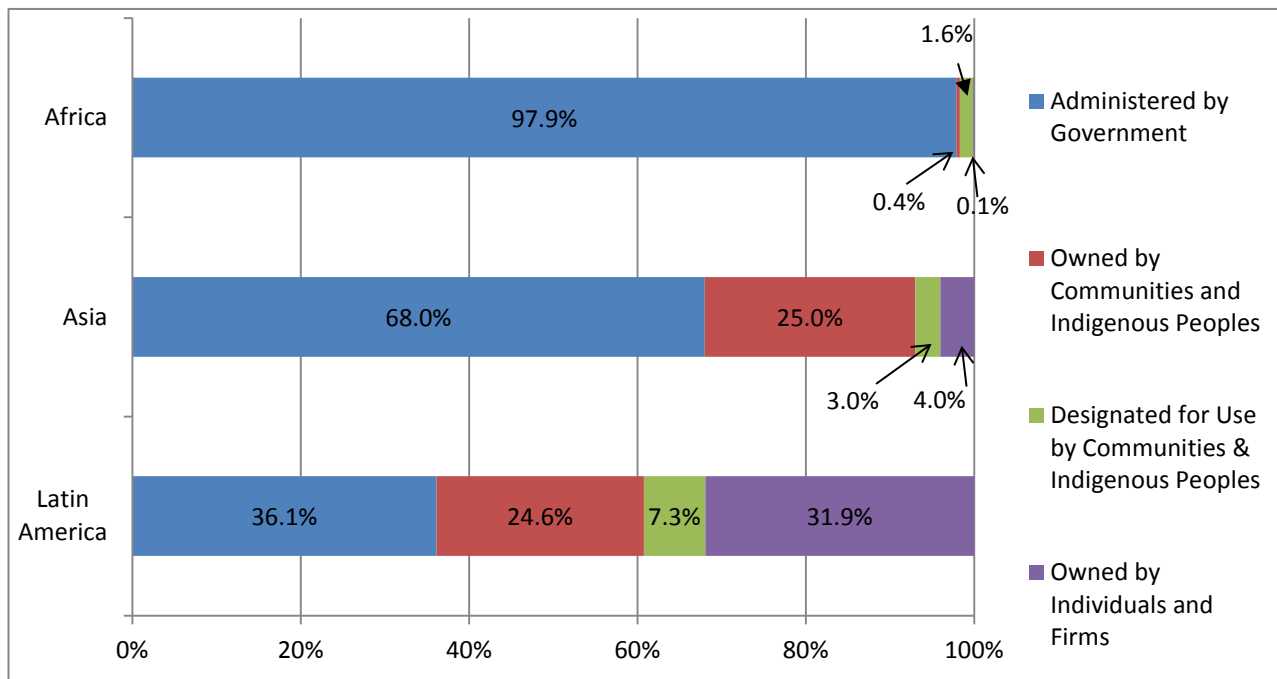
In some Asian countries, forests have been under state control for centuries. Self-initiated community forestry has generally not been given legal recognition. The ancestral domain laws in the Philippines and the recent recognition by the Indonesian High Court of the rights of local people to customary forests are notable exceptions to this widespread rule. Externally-initiated community forestry programs began in Nepal in the 1970s, triggered by growing concerns from upland deforestation and downstream flooding and sedimentation, and are now widespread in the Asian region. In Nepal, 1.6 million households are involved in community forestry covering 1.3 million ha of forest. The Philippines community forestry program began in the 1980s and now covers 1.6 million ha and 1.3 million beneficiaries. Lessons on community forestry have been shared through two important networks, the Asia Forest Network, and for Southeast Asia, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Social Forestry Network. The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC, formerly known as the Regional Community Forestry Training Center) has also been instrumental in sharing lessons learned on community forestry in Asia.

The Joint Forest Management approach emerged in India in the 1980s and developed into a nation-wide program. The Forest Rights Act of 2006 resulted in the Indian forestry department recognizing indigenous peoples' rights to forests and a modification of their approach to working with forest-dependent communities was adopted. Community forestry has been given legal recognition across many countries in

South East Asia, including Vietnam, Laos PDR, Cambodia and others. In Papua New Guinea and across the Pacific sub-region, self-initiated community forestry is the predominant practice, though not fully supported by law in all Pacific countries.

Overall, **community forestry has had a number of positive outcomes**:

- Improving forest management and forest condition, particularly when compared with forests managed exclusively by the state (as state forest reserves);

- Improving or maintaining local access, use and/or benefits of the forest, whether in direct terms (resources or revenue) or indirect terms (improved hydrology, increased crop or livestock yields), and ensuring access by different user groups, such as farmers, herders and nomadic pastoralists, hunter-gatherers and indigenous peoples;

- Improving forest governance by promoting transparency, accountability and autonomy in local decision-making and reducing un-regulated forest use;

- Supporting general trends towards decentralization and devolution; and

- Building community and individual skills and capacity.

As a result of these recorded successes, community forestry is increasingly seen as an attractive delivery mechanism for REDD+ that can both reduce deforestation while also delivering social, economic and environmental benefits. South America has advanced many REDD+ pilots and there are a modest number of REDD+ pilot initiatives in Africa and Asia. REDD+ is sometimes welcomed by civil society, but there are also fears that REDD+ will disenfranchise local communities if proper safeguards are not incorporated. Some vulnerable populations and NGOs view REDD+ with suspicion, and fear that its implementation will revert to old-style "command and control" management regimes that marginalize them. Vulnerable groups that may either benefit or suffer from REDD+ include indigenous peoples, as well as non-indigenous forest-dependent communities with weak or limited rights. Women also risk marginalization if their concerns and priorities regarding forest management are not heard and addressed.

What have we learned about community empowerment and forest rights?

Communal property rights and tenure security is the single most important determinant for the success of community forestry. Tenure consists of a "bundle" of rights that include some or all of the following:

1. Access – the right to enter the forest area being managed;

2. Use – the right to use forests and forest products for domestic or commercial use;

3. Management – the right to regulate internal use patterns or to transform the resource;

4. Exclusion – the right to decide who can or cannot use the resource; and
5. Alienation – the right to sell or lease the land.

Ostrom's Law

Much of what we know today about effective community empowerment and rights for community forestry can be traced back to the pioneering work of Nobel Prize winner Elinor Ostrom who **effectively argued that '"If it works in practice, it can work in theory"**. She challenged prevailing theories that suggested open access areas, such as rangelands and forests, would inevitably be subject to overuse and degradation, as individual, short term interests dominated collective, long-term ones. **Rebutting this "tragedy of the commons" theory, Ostrom proposed that under the right conditions, collective institutions can effectively manage common property resources**. She proposed a number of principles for effective community property management: the importance of clear group and resource boundaries, decision-making processes at the local level, and the need for local users to devise their own institutions without challenge by external governmental authorities.

Across much of Latin America, Africa and Asia, it is rare to find communities with all five of these rights legally recognized and protected by the state. It is more **common to find that some of these rights are restricted**, such as limitations on the rights to extract specific resources from forests (such as timber, firewood, fish, wildlife, water). Use rights for forest products may be for domestic use only or may include commercial rights for harvesting and marketing, depending on the country and existing customs and laws. In many parts of the world, such as across much of Africa, communities may have customary rights over forestland, but these rights are poorly or partially recognized under prevailing statutory law. In other countries, national laws provide a strong legal basis for community forestry, but for a range of reasons (including factors such as vested interests), these laws are not being implemented. As such, if rights are to be effective, it **is important to distinguish between "rights on paper" and "rights in practice."** Furthermore, experience from many countries has shown that responsibility is often passed to communities with very limited effective power to make and implement decisions about forest use.

Villagers carrying firewood, Uganda. Photo: Tom Blomley

Bureaucratic and discretionary powers can severely limit the empowerment of communities. In most countries in Asia, rights are "granted" or "allocated" rather than recognized as existing rights. In Nepal, the 1993 Forest Act authorized the handing over of community forests to all communities capable of and wishing to manage them. The actual implementation, however, is subject to a great deal of bureaucratic control. The law allows commercial harvest of timber by communities, but this is rarely included in approved management plans because of the discretionary powers of district forest offices.

Cumbersome and complicated regulations create very real constraints to the adoption of community forestry. For example, many countries have developed complex requirements for forest management planning, above and beyond what can reasonably be expected to be within reach of poor, rural communities. Long review and approval time means that formal agreements may take years to be issued, which can lead to loss of interest or disillusionment among community-level forest managers.

Community forest tenure across Asia and Africa is usually granted only on a short or limited-term basis, such as a lease, and again is most often on a discretionary basis rather than in recognition of pre-existing or universally applicable rights. In Cambodia, community forestry agreements are limited to a 15-year renewable term. In Cameroon, community forest agreements are negotiated on a 25-year term, but are subject to reviews and renewal every five years and may be subject to cancellation if forests are deemed to be "poorly managed." In many cases, the forested areas subject to community forestry are in very degraded condition, and short periods may be insufficient to allow significant benefits to flow from sustainable forest management. Forest leases are also common instruments used by the state in Honduras and Guatemala, two Latin American countries where country tenure rights are very restricted.

Forest resources may have significant economic value, and transfer to communities may represent loss of income for government agencies and government employees. The design of natural resource institutions and their policies are often driven not by considerations of efficiency and effectiveness, but rather by a set of personal interests, patronage networks and political considerations. In Africa, a failure

to implement policies in favor of community forestry may be due to passive resistance from national government agencies, unwilling to cede power downwards, or reluctance to let go of personal benefits that have been secured under the prevailing system.

The strongest tenure rights for community forestry are generally found in Latin America, where they are primarily based on self-initiated systems that have received varying levels of legal recognition by the state. In some cases, community rights over forests are even specified in a country's constitution – particularly the many countries in Latin America that revised their constitutions to incorporate the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO) 169 Convention responsibilities that support the customary rights of indigenous peoples. The question of who should qualify as indigenous peoples is much less clear-cut in Africa and Asia, compared to Latin America. This situation is due in part to the fact that protections afforded to indigenous peoples under ILO 169 and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) only apply to indigenous peoples who self-identify as such. Moreover, only a limited number of countries have signed ILO 169. UNDRIP, although supported by most countries, is not legally binding.

Civil society plays a vital role in many countries in advocating for legal recognition of customary rights or the creation of communal rights of rural communities over forest land. Civil society plays essential roles in service delivery, lobbying and watchdog functions. In Nepal, where community forestry has become a national social movement, community forestry membership organizations play a vital role in holding government to account and preventing "back-sliding" on government commitments. In India, the Forests Rights Act was enacted in 2006 and aims to correct the "historic injustice" done to forest-based people. The Act addresses issues of land tenure, ownership and rights by granting secure forest land titles and use rights, either, individually or collectively to the claimants. Grassroots civil society organizations played an important part in lobbying government for this change in the law.

What have we learned about stakeholder engagement and governance in community forestry?

Community-level forest management structures take a variety of forms in different countries. In general, however, **such institutions tend to be strongest and most resilient when they allow for the self-identification of user groups**. Management structures should be based on legally recognized management and user rights, and sufficient flexibility should be permitted to allow for a range and diversity of forms.

A **basic principle in community forestry is the "principle of subsidiarity,"** which states that decisions should be handled at the lowest (or least centralized) level of authority capable of addressing such matters effectively. Community forestry laws and regulations should aim to empower local management units and provide them with autonomy over decision-making.

Community institutions work best when they are accountable to their members (such as user groups). This ensures that management decisions are made in ways that represent the interests of members, rather than managers. In many cases, however, the accountability of community-level forest management institutions is upwards – to central government forest agencies – rather than downwards to members of forest management groups. Poor downward accountability can lead to the widespread phenomenon of "elite capture" – whereby forest managers capture a disproportionate share of forest management benefits, such as revenues from licensing of forest harvesting, due to their level of education, political influence and position within the local society. This situation has been reported in countries that have large externally-initiated community forestry programs such as Nepal and Tanzania. The potential for this problem is higher in communities with low levels of literacy and numeracy, and among communities that have little tradition of transparency, open communications and accountability.

In many countries, such as Nepal, **umbrella organizations or federations, constituted from individual user groups, have been effective** in lobbying local or national governments for favorable community forestry laws and policies. In Guatemala and Mexico, second-level community forestry organizations

operating at the local level have been useful in achieving economies of scale in community forestry enterprises for services, such as sawmilling and timber marketing. While this two-tier approach offers many opportunities, ensuring accountability between primary and second-level governance institutions has proven immensely challenging.

Villagers discussing monitoring of community forest, Nepal.
Photo: Paula J. Williams

There are **significant gender differences in terms of how men and women perceive, use, value and manage forest resources**. In many parts of Africa and Asia, rural women tend to prioritize the use of forests for domestic and subsistence uses (such as firewood, fruits and non-timber forest products), while men tend to be involved in the harvest of timber, firewood, charcoal and commercial uses of the forest.

Despite these clear differences, **many externally-initiated community forestry initiatives are often either gender blind or gender biased**. The use of simplistic formulas, such as the prescription of quotas for women's participation in local forest management committees or workshops, may not be sufficient to ensure gender equity and specific measures may be needed to work with and support female forest users to ensure that their concerns and priorities are reflected in management plans and practices.

Community forestry governance works best at the local level, generally that of the village, where all members can be directly engaged. REDD+ should take advantage of the economies of scale presented by multi-tiered community forestry institutions, but only if the upper level(s) is (are) fully accountable to the lowest community-level.

What have we learned about benefits and incentives in community forestry?

Forest management benefits must exceed costs if the interest and motivation of local-level forest managers is to be maintained over the medium to long-term. Costs include time spent by communities in meetings, as well as managing, restoring and protecting the forest; opportunity costs – foregone costs from alternative land-uses such as agriculture – as well as other costs that occur as a result of improved forest management, like wildlife damage and crop raiding due to increase in wildlife within forests. REDD+ payments can potentially fill an important "incentive gap" for communities during the time that forests are being restored and before more tangible economic benefits from sustainable use become available.

Benefits and costs may be unevenly distributed within communities. Studies in Nepal, Laos, Cambodia, Uganda, India and Tanzania suggest that those who benefit most from the introduction of community forestry are middle or upper income households, while those who benefit least, or even face negative impacts, are poorest households. It is often the poorest and most forest-dependent households who are impacted by the introduction of community forestry, particularly when this results in restrictions on forest use and harvesting to allow for regeneration and recovery of the forest.

In self-initiated community forestry, forests are maintained without external incentive payments. The

internal benefits generated have served as an adequate incentive for the maintenance of the forests up to the present time. The adequacy of benefits and incentives from externally-initiated forms of community forestry are difficult to judge until some period of time after the end of donor or external support to the target communities. This factor needs to be considered in the development of REDD+ programs, as there is a danger that external REDD+ payments may "displace" existing management incentives and create external dependence patterns.

In Africa and many parts of Asia, benefits from community forestry have been small when compared with the costs incurred by communities in establishing and maintaining community management systems. This is especially true in externally-initiated programs, where the main motivation behind donor and government support for community forestry was forest conservation and restoration. Community forestry in Tanzania was conceived as a strategy for restoring degraded forests, and use and harvesting were given little attention. As a result, revenues to date from forest management are small and confined to a few well-documented cases. **Too much emphasis on protection, rather than sustainable use, can disadvantage communities and may negatively impact the poor in particular**. If REDD+ programs are to succeed, they must integrate sustainable forest use and management into community forestry activities, as payments from carbon alone may be insufficient to create long-term incentives for management by communities.

Latin America offers examples of where community forestry over large areas has generated significant financial, livelihood and environmental benefits. A number of countries have developed national Payments for Environmental Service (PES) schemes to encourage tree planting and forest protection. REDD+ can learn from the analyses of lessons learned from the many PES schemes that have been applied in Latin American community forests. Mexico is the leader in commercially-oriented community forest management that generates significant income from sustainable logging, and it has been successful in integrating these initiatives into existing PES and REDD+ schemes to provide additional funding and incentives.

What have we learned about capacity building for community forestry?

Capacity building of community institutions (particularly for externally-initiated community forestry) is an essential, but often neglected part of a community forestry program. Technical skills in forest management are needed, as well as broader skills in governance, leadership, record keeping and accounting.

The following **types of capacity building measures are important** for REDD+ initiatives that are seeking to integrate community forestry:

- Training to manage and collaborate on the technical aspects of sustainable forest management;

- Development of governance capacities for community-level internal enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance with forest access and use rules for enhanced carbon sequestration;

- Development of low-cost tools and expertise for community-based managers to monitor forest conditions as well as carbon stocks;

- Training and support to effectively analyze and address gender and other social diversity issues, and engage all key stakeholders, including women, indigenous peoples, and vulnerable or marginalized people;

- Development of basic business and financial management skills, including cost-benefit analyses and financial planning; and

- Contract and negotiation skills of community forestry managers for understanding and negotiating equitable and viable contracts, based on agreed performance to reduce deforestation. Most community forestry managers are very ill equipped to understand, let alone negotiate with, the modern world of finance. A major current concern for community forestry capacity building in

relation to REDD+, especially in Latin America, lies in the immediate danger presented by "carbon cowboys," who offer contracts that conflict with all of the social and environmental guidelines being developed for REDD+ or that are fraudulent in nature. Communities need capacity building to handle offers of fraudulent contracts. There is a need for adequate grievance and recourse mechanisms, which can be used by communities when their rights are infringed.

In addition to community-level capacity building efforts, it is **important to work with community forestry support institutions (such as national and local governments, or national and local NGOs)**. Government forestry departments who have for decades acted as "enforcers" and "regulators," need to be fundamentally reoriented and retooled to act as "facilitators," "trainers" and "supporters." Such reorientation cannot be undertaken through short training courses, but **requires a "paradigm shift,"** i.e., a long-term process of change management and reorientation.

What have we learned about scaling up community forestry programs?

Self-initiated forms of community forestry already have functioning community institutions and present the greatest potential for scaling up through REDD+. Community forestry in South America has already been "scaled up" in the sense that it covers wide geographic areas and receives widespread legal recognition. Half of the Amazon forest, a key focus for REDD+, is under protected areas and vast indigenous territories. Where community forestry has been externally-initiated, key conditions for scaling up include the development of tested, proven pilot initiatives and the development of policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for the empowerment of community managers. Local level demands for scaling up will occur when community forestry delivers concrete and tangible benefits for communities. This needs to be matched by capacity building community support agencies (national and local government agencies, NGOs and private sector bodies) to respond to the growing grassroots demands.

Working through local governments for scaling up can be effective, but requires dedicated resources, including adequate time and capacity building to be effective. Conflicts between national, regional and local levels of government, or among different natural resource management bodies and sector agencies, may hinder the expansion of community forestry programs.

Most REDD+ interventions that seek to build on community forestry will **require significant injections of funding** beyond those provided through carbon payments alone. This is due to the significant costs that are incurred in supporting community forestry initiatives at landscape level and in ways that will have a widespread impact on reducing deforestation. Nonetheless, insofar as REDD+ programs build upon community forestry systems, then potential international funding for REDD+ could be a way to broaden and lengthen donor support for community forestry.

Community sawmill belonging to ACOFOP (*Asociacion de Comunidades Forestales de Petén*/Association of Forest Communities of Petén), Guatemala. The Spanish sign translation is: "Caution - Community Members at Work." Photo by Janis B. Alcorn.

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What have we learned about sustainability in community forestry programs?

Studies conducted across Asia, Africa and Latin America point to the **impact that community forestry is having in terms of restoring or conserving forest cover**. At landscape levels, this can play an important role in reducing deforestation and forest degradation. However, more detailed studies conducted in parts of East Africa suggest that community forestry can lead to the **displacement of harvesting impacts** to other unmanaged forests (known within the context of REDD+ as "leakage"), especially when areas managed under community forestry agreements are subjected to reduced harvesting.

Fire poses a major risk for humid forests when the forest is disturbed beyond a critical point. Frontier areas of the Amazon are riddled with gaps from agriculture and pasture clearings, and these gaps can allow fire to spread into the forest during periods of drought, such as the two exceptional droughts in 2005 and 2010. Climate change is predicted to increase the frequency of fire in forests such as the Amazon. The assisted natural regeneration and enrichment techniques of community managers in the Amazon can be used to aid forest regeneration after fire and could at least partially counteract the increased fire risks.

In the Congo Basin and parts of Southeast Asia and the Amazon, the **uncontrolled bush-meat trade** has resulted in the "empty forest syndrome" over broad areas and the impacts of wildlife absence on forest sustainability are not well known. Experience from Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia and Guinea suggests that wildlife populations can increase with improved forest condition under community forestry, generating important additional biodiversity benefits.

While community-based forest enterprises, such as sawmills, can be operated as self-financing entities with paid labor, it is **relatively rare for community-level forest management itself to be managed as a self-financing business**.

Financial benefits of community forestry are usually small because **communities generally gain limited, if any, rights for commercial uses of the forest**. In Mexico and Guatemala, communities have established commercially viable enterprises from the harvesting and export of certified timber harvested sustainably from community forests. Other examples can be found in West Africa (Box 2).

Community forestry has been supported by donors in many countries in Africa and Asia, sometimes for decades. Nepal has had donor support for community forestry since the late 1970s. India, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand have also enjoyed long-term donor support.

Financial sustainability of community forestry

One of the best and most unique cases of financial sustainability comes from the *Chantier d'Aménagement Forestier* (CAF) community forestry initiative in Burkina Faso. Nearly 30 percent of the revenues from firewood sales go into a management fund that pays support staff salaries, local labor and other forest management costs. Each of the six federations of community management units employs a university graduate forester and other staff that support the community-level CAF managers. This self-financing mechanism has been sustained since the end of donor funding in 1993. In Senegal, the seven community forestry management groups supported by the USAID-funded Wula Nafaa program generated $700,000 in revenues for themselves from charcoal sales in 2012 from the management of their dryland savanna forests.

In Tanzania, community forestry has been supported by donors since the early 1990s. **While this long-term support does allow for institutionalization by government systems**, with a view to long-term

sustainability, there are no known examples of national community forestry programs in Africa, Asia or Latin America that are currently operating without significant external donor support.

Recommendations

If REDD+ is to fully deliver environmental, social and economic benefits to society, all REDD+ partners - governments, donors, NGOs, the private sector 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 regulating access and use of forests. This should be accompanied by simple, low-cost and verifiable procedures for community empowerment and for approval of forest management agreements. Empowerment should integrate all legitimate stakeholders and user groups including women, poor households and indigenous peoples.

- **Develop effective measures to confront and mitigate the effects of vested interests** within state institutions that seek to block the implementation of government policies in support of community empowerment, restricting the flow of tangible benefits to the community-level.

- **Give communities a high level of autonomy** in adapting or defining their own management institutions for community forestry. Self-initiated community management institutions should be favored in national policy and regulations wherever possible.

- **Significantly increase the benefits to communities and community incentives for sustainable use of forests**. Externally-driven management objectives for reduced deforestation and forest degradation need to be reconciled with local community needs and interests to assure sustainable forest outcomes. Community benefits must be significantly greater than the transaction, management and opportunity costs of community forestry or REDD+.

- **Develop capacity support** to community-level management institutions to reflect the mix of necessary 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).

- Respect the **two most essential conditions needed for scaling up**: favorable legal frameworks and the existence of operational, proven community forestry systems.

- Include **measures to control "leakage"** caused by the displacement of harvesting from managed forests to un-managed areas. Such measures are needed to ensure environmental sustainability and may include the application of local bylaws to neighboring forests, and working at higher levels of scale. Communities must be empowered by the state to enforce local regulations.

- **Enhance social and economic sustainability prospects** by strengthening community tenure and rights, enhancing and diversifying benefit flows to communities and by supporting minimum standards of good governance in state institutions.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the issues raised in this document, consult the full report:

Hagen, Roy. 2014. *Lessons Learned from Community Forestry and Their Relevance for REDD+.* Report prepared for USAID. Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Program, Arlington, VA. Available at: www.fcmcglobal.org

All citations and an extensive list of references are found in the full report.

This report is one of four reports on *Lessons Learned from Community Forestry and Their Relevance for REDD+*. The series comprises three regional reviews on this topic, prepared for Latin America (by Dr. Janis B. Alcorn), Africa (by Mr. Tom Blomley) and Asia (by Dr. Robert Fisher). The global synthesis of the three regional reviews was prepared by Mr. Roy Hagen. All four reports have been reviewed and edited by FCMC. Dr. Paula J. Williams, former FCMC SES Task Lead, has managed the reviews and served as overall editor.

Community Forestry in Central Java, Indonesia. Community forests were better managed than adjacent forests managed by state forest enterprise. Photo by Paula J. Williams