



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

CIFOR Day at USAID

Integrating biodiversity and forests into key development objectives



[USAID's Office of Forestry and Biodiversity \(FAB\)](#) and the [Center for International Forestry Research \(CIFOR\)](#) teamed up this past October to host a series of seminars focused on integrating biodiversity and forests into diverse development objectives including food security, the fight against zoonotic disease, improved governance, secure land rights, gender equality, and mitigating and adapting to climate change.

In their opening remarks, Carrie Thompson, Deputy Assistant Administrator for the Economic Growth, Education, and Environment Bureau, and Saharah Moon Chapotin, DAA for the Bureau for Food Security, emphasized the value that USAID places on science, research, and evidence.

CIFOR Director General Peter Holmgren updated USAID on the Center's new strategy, which closely aligns to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). CIFOR scientists and staff from USAID, CIFOR, USDA, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and USAID Biodiversity Results and Integrated Development Gains Enhanced (BRIDGE) project participated in the sessions.

LINKING FORESTS AND FOOD SECURITY

In her welcoming remarks, Chapotin said “research through partnerships like ours informs USAID’s approach to development. The work you are doing on forests, food security, land tenure and gender has elevated natural resource management to the fully integrated result that we seek in development.”

The mini-summit that was organized in the morning allowed for knowledge sharing, learning, and discussion on a range of topics around two central themes: landscape approaches to food security and nutrition, and bushmeat and food security.

Sunderland of CIFOR described how the Center's forests and food security research program aligns with and supports both the USAID Biodiversity Policy and with the new Global Food Security Act. He noted that consideration of forest landscapes has only recently entered the lexicon of [key food security](#) and [nutrition fora](#).

CIFOR, he said, has played a key role in introducing those concepts. “A [landscape approach](#) needs many voices at the table including the public and private sectors, civil society organizations and whole communities.”

He went on to note that a diverse group of partners are keen to help with the conceptualization, frameworks and design of approaches. “And bringing women into the process results not only in better governance but better conservation because most often it is women, and children, who are harvesting food and fodder in forests and across landscapes.” Dr. Sara Carlson of the FAB Office provided an overview of work on food security-landscape linkages that counterparts in Bureau for Food Security and the Africa Bureau supported. She shared the latest findings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services on the increasing threats to pollinators, and she presented an analysis of their role in pollinating crops within USAID’s food security portfolio.

Nutrition was also highlighted at the summit, with findings from CIFOR and case studies that Dr. Anila Jacob of the BRIDGE project engaged in, showing a correlation between [forest cover and improved nutritional outcomes](#).

BUSHMEAT AND BIODIVERSITY

Natalie Bailey of the FAB Office hosted the second session of the morning, which addressed the critical problem of how increased consumption and commercialization of wild meat (bushmeat) impacts both biodiversity and food security. While [bushmeat](#) is a traditional and culturally important source of food for many, increased demand, commercialization, and elevated offtake levels means that consumption of bushmeat is unsustainable. As well, protected species such as bonobos and gorillas are caught both deliberately and as bycatch, adding to the dire threats they face.

Discussants included staff from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which recently hosted a meeting for grantees from Central Africa focused on addressing the commercial bushmeat trade and Dr. David Wilkie of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) who stated that his organization would be working with CIFOR on a new project to understand better and address the bushmeat crisis in Central Africa.

For CIFOR’s Dr. Robert Nasi, Deputy Director General for Research, this issue hits home. He has been researching the impacts of overhunting and the [bushmeat trade](#) for decades. He presented alarming figures on the levels of offtake while cautioning that replacing bushmeat with domestic meat also has consequences for clearing habitats and raising greenhouse gas emissions. He noted that there are no simple solutions regarding alternative protein, especially in areas where overfishing is also showing impacts.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION, DISEASE AND PANDEMIC THREATS

The afternoon session sought to identify areas of useful collaboration among four programs concerned with [consumption and movement of wild meat in Central Africa](#). It started with overviews of each program, identified potential areas of collaboration, and selected a few steps to take to improve collaboration and also concrete collaboration actions.

THE FOUR PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- USAID Global Health’s PREDICT-2 activity, part of the Emerging Pandemic Threats program
- [CIFOR’s Bushmeat Research Initiative](#), supported by USAID E3/FAB
- CAFEC and EMAPS components of USAID’s CARPE, managed out of USAID/Kinshasa
- Grants, Cooperative Agreements, CITES and Mentor Program efforts supported by USFWS

Participants from the morning meeting on bushmeat and food security were joined by members of USAID’s Global Health Bureau and UC Davis Veterinary Medicine / One Health Institute, lead on PREDICT-2.

KEY COLLABORATION AREAS THE GROUP AGREED TO PURSUE INCLUDE:

BUSHMEAT ALTERNATIVES: Work together on understanding and enhancing wild fish as an alternative to bushmeat.

MARKET DATA: Share bushmeat market data collected separately by partners, and ensure future market surveys ask questions useful to the whole community and we don't duplicate effort.

BEHAVIOR DATA: Share research to understand what drives bushmeat consumption in rural and urban communities, and look at ways to reprise old studies for better longitudinal data, understanding change over time.

WILDLIFE POPULATION DATA: There is relatively little data on the species most impacted by bushmeat trade. Congo Basin-wide studies of elephants and great apes also note non-focal species observations. Mining this data and adding it to what has been directly studied i.e. antelope, monkeys, bats could be useful. SMART law enforcement monitoring and other surveys do track carcasses observed in the wild, in the single digits usually.

LEVERAGING RELATIONSHIPS: CIFOR, conservation NGOs, Metabiota (PREDICT) have relationships with logging companies and other extractive industry that could be useful to each other. Conservation NGOs work with or co-manage many protected areas. [Law enforcement monitoring](#) and community engagement provide opportunities for data collection and public awareness.

COLLABORATION SYSTEMS NEEDED:

- List of POCs for partners and donors for particular countries
- Map(s) of study sites
- Periodic, regular call to stay in touch and keep coordinated
- Consider a bushmeat conference in Central Africa next year to bring different "lenses" together and really tackle underlying drivers of bushmeat consumption and trade.

OTHER: Much collaboration could be supported with existing funds. USAID E3/FAB's BRIDGE program could be a resource to support evidence gathering -- to inform policy and program design. Policy collaboration needs and opportunities should be explored further.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOREST RESTORATION

Dr. Manuel Guariguata, Team Leader & Principal Scientist, Forests Management and Restoration and his team have contributed to ecological restoration in Colombia and Mexico and are focused on ways to scale up restoration as there is significant global demand.

For instance, many Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) incorporate restoration. Countries want to conserve and restore ecosystem services and to enhance forest cover, but there is limited knowledge of the size of emissions reduction that could be achieved through restoration.

Additionally, degradation maps most often show biophysical dimensions, not socioeconomic trends including leakage. Guariguata noted that there is a lot of terminological confusion around restoration: *Is it afforestation or restoration?* In the end, countries decide what they call restoration yet there is a clear need for developing and/or adapting existing decision support systems and prioritization tools for optimizing the allocation of [restoration actions](#) either for conservation or production purposes.

MANAGING WETLANDS

CIFOR is leading the [SWAMP](#) project, with US Forest Service as a partner, which is focused on sustainable management of wetlands. There is also a restoration component to this work. In Phase 2, governance and tenure issues with relation to mangroves are being studied.

The group discussed situations where restoration presented challenges and had potential, for example, a project in Uganda that introduced invasives and a watershed restoration project in Haiti that provided farmers baskets of fruit and nut trees to plant in the watershed; these were high market value products. Valuing a whole area as in the *terroir* approach (think wine and cheese) is a way to maintain a landscape.

The group discussed how to balance competing demands across large space, including the use of multi-criteria analysis and optimization tools. Incorporating the marine and coastal dimensions using a ridge to reef approach is important.

GOVERNANCE, LAND TENURE AND GENDER

Lead scientist for CIFOR's Equity, Governance and Tenure team, Dr. Steve Lawry, presented research to address the question of what is holding up effective forest rights devolution in some countries.

Lawry said that “forest authorities can interpret laws governing conservation and natural resources management but if they don't invite communities to the table—especially communities that interpret laws and their rights differently—tension emerges.”

Women, he said, are critical to the process and there is evidence, in Nepal, that the recognition of people's' rights over forests has restored and deepened community cohesion and catalyzed collective problem solving.

[A “rights first” approach](#) preceded other development benefits because when people, especially women, have tenure rights then other benefits from economic activities can accrue. When these rights are absent there is little incentive or framework for benefits to flow, he added.

Regarding community-based NRM, a key question is the implications for community identity, their interests, and how these might contrast with plans and objectives of governance. Forest authorities can interpret laws of bringing communities on board to support their objectives in their conservation or NDC agenda.

There emerges tension when communities see it differently—compared with their goals. Dr. Lawry described a case study on forest rights in Nepal: 25 years ago on a major reform of forest tenure, investment in forest user groups to share management rights to local communities. There is strong evidence that forest degradation has arrested and forest reforestation has occurred through natural regeneration. What is not known is the impact of land tenure changes.

Preliminary findings: transferring forest rights are necessary to the investments that have occurred. Nearly all investments have been spawned or sanctioned and approved by forest user groups. The regulatory burdens remain considerable; regulations are applied inconsistently. Reasonably strong provision is made to ensure disadvantaged communities benefit from investment and enterprises. Rights over forests have restored and deepened community cohesion and catalyzed collective problem solving.

SOME ADDITIONAL TOPICS THAT CIFOR IS EXPLORING INCLUDE:

- How current rights and governance arrangements affect conservation and other outcomes of mangrove systems. Mangrove tenure and governance research will be integrated into SWAMP web-learning platform.
- Contributions of non-state actors and can climate policy can take better account of on-state contributions
- The internal and external investment effects of long-term common property reform initiatives that have successfully devolved forest rights to communities
- How indigeneity is a factor in community-level forest outcomes. Looking at indigenous peoples' trying to retain culture and also indigenous peoples' changing-modernity. Three pillars to this effort: research, outreach to partners, capacity-building.
- On gender and mangroves – women have assisted in restoration but also gained from benefits regarding resources and services. The key is community engagement and community-driven restoration. Local control of mangrove restoration results in better outcomes.

A key principle that has emerged is that rights need to precede alternative livelihood approaches. People will benefit when they have rights. [Intersections of gender and tenure](#) are critical to outcomes. When women secure rights, their health and well-being outcomes improve, less at risk of domestic violence and HIV exposure as their status rose. In Mali, a study found that there were further delineations among women given status. Women who are married and older have more tree rights than young single men as an example.

NEXT STEPS FOR PARTNERSHIP

At the end of the day, Chapotin invited participants to engage in “enriched discussions” and continue with professional networking, learning, knowledge sharing and collaboration.

CIFOR and FAB are undergoing a partnership assessment over the next few months to identify ways to enhance and scale up the impact of the research both within USAID and within the international agricultural, conservation, and natural resource management communities.

Key findings from the sessions will be shared within FAB's integration working for groups and to other interested stakeholders, with links to the AidConnect recordings, presentations, and key publications.