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# LESSONS LEARNED FROM COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN AFRICA AND THEIR RELEVANCE FOR REDD+

FOREST CARBON, MARKETS AND COMMUNITIES (FCMC)  
PROGRAM



**NOVEMBER 2013**

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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 Janis Alcorn), Africa (by Tom Blomley) and Asia (by Robert Fisher). The global synthesis of the three regional reviews was prepared by Roy Hagen. Paula J. Williams has managed and served as the overall editor for the three regional reviews and a global synthesis. All four reports have been reviewed and edited by FCMC.

Photo credit – Villagers carrying wood, Uganda, Tom Blomley

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The author's views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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# ACRONYMS

CAF	<i>Chantier d'Aménagement Forestier</i> [Forest Management Project Site, Burkina Faso]
CBFM	Community Based Forest Management
CBFP	Congo Basin Forest Partnership
CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CFA	Community Forest Association
CREMA	Community Resource Management Agreement
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FIP	Forest Investment Program
FMC	Forest Management Committee [Guinea]
FSC	Forest Stewardship Council
GFA	Guinean francs
ha	Hectares
ICA	Indigenous Conserved Areas
IPs	Indigenous Peoples
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
JFM	Joint Forest Management
LFI	Liberia Forest Initiative
LRCFP	Land Rights and Community Forestry Program [USAID program in Liberia]
MCDI	Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative
MOMA	Monitoring Matters
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIFCI	Norway's International Forest and Climate Initiative
OFAC	<i>Observatoire des Forêts d'Afrique Central</i> [Observatory of Forests of Central Africa]
PAGE	Promoting Agriculture, Governance, and Environment [USAID program in Sierra Leone]
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
PROSPER	People, Rules, and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources [USAID program in Liberia]

REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency (now known as Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency)
VFC	Village Forest Committee
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)-supported Forest Carbon, Markets and Communities (FCMC) Program commissioned this review of lessons learned from community forestry in Africa. This review analyzes experiences and key lessons learned over three decades following the introduction of legal and policy reforms supporting community management of forests. It presents some key lessons from community forestry that are highly relevant for REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation).

## KEY FINDINGS ON COMMUNITY FORESTRY IN AFRICA

**Empowerment of Communities:** Community forestry is most successful where empowerment of communities is strongest, especially in terms of: 1) simple and practical procedures and guidelines for legalization of community tenure rights; 2) local community definition of forest management areas; 3) legally recognized community-level management entities; 4) community establishment of community forest management rules governing access and use; and 5) inclusion of marginalized groups that hold a stake in the resource. To date, however, in most African countries, the **delegation of rights to communities is incomplete, discretionary or limited in scope.**

**Governance and Stakeholder Engagement:** Effective community-level institutions are required to develop and implement rules governing access and use of forest resources, and to ensure that costs and benefits of forest management are shared equitably among local forest users. Community institutions are most effective when built on existing structures or when communities are given strong leeway in defining them. It is important to carefully consider vertical (upward, as well as downward) accountability mechanisms, appropriate scale and linkages to existing formal and traditional structures.

**Benefits and Incentives:** Community forestry is more successful where donor and/or government objectives coincide with community objectives. This is especially true when the benefits and incentives for communities are: clear, tangible and defined in national laws and policies; greater than the transaction and management costs associated with community forestry; and equitably distributed between national and local level stakeholders, as well as within participating communities. Overall, the **benefits accrued by communities have been limited**, especially where externally-initiated community forestry has focused on conservation.

**Capacity building:** Successes have been noted in building the capacities of community forestry members and foresters to support community forestry, in terms of not only skills, but also legitimacy and social capital. Local forest managers need skills and knowledge required for community forestry. These include technical aspects of sustainable forest management, forest monitoring, forest tenure mapping, record keeping (including finances), and general skills, such as leadership, governance, communication and planning.

**Scaling up:** Scaling up is possible where governments take strong ownership, donor support is sustained, and community forestry generates concrete benefits to communities. Other than Tanzania, Gambia, Cameroon and Namibia, few African countries have moved beyond a portfolio of donor-funded community forestry pilot projects to national programs anchored and supported by government institutions. Devolution of forest revenues from government to community-level is being heavily contested by powerful actors with vested interests within or connected to government.

**Sustainability:** Evidence exists of improved forest condition in community managed forests, as compared with state-managed or open-access forests. Reduced harvests in sustainably managed community forests,



however, are often offset by increased harvests in adjacent, non-managed areas, resulting in little net gain at a landscape level. Initiatives based on traditional beliefs, values and systems have a high potential for success, as do those with significant benefits and revenues. But limited financial returns at the local level threaten to undermine incentives for long-term management. Increased demand for conversion to both large and small-scale agriculture is increasing the opportunity costs of community forestry.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDD+

Until policy reforms are undertaken, forests are healthy and communities gain more tangible economic benefits from sustainable use of their forests, REDD+ payments can fill an important “incentive gap.” If REDD+ is to deliver environmental, social and economic benefits, proponents will need to:

- **Support policy reforms by national governments** to provide clear, secure, enforceable and non-discretionary tenure rights **empowering communities** to regulate access and use of forests. This effort should be accompanied by the government’s adoption of **simple, low-cost and verifiable procedures** for legalization of community forest agreements and management planning. This empowerment **should integrate all legitimate stakeholders, including women, poor households, Indigenous Peoples and other users, such as seasonal pastoralists.**
- **Significantly increase the benefits to communities** for sustainable use of forests. Reconcile externally driven management objectives of reducing deforestation and forest degradation with **local community needs and interests.** Ensure that community benefits are significantly greater than transaction, management and opportunity costs of community forestry and of REDD+.
- Give communities **legal autonomy to adapt or define their own management institutions** for community forestry. Link community management institutions with traditional or formal authorities, while ensuring measures for accountability and avoiding elite capture. Promote both vertical and horizontal equity in the distribution of costs and benefits associated with REDD+.
- Develop effective measures to **confront and mitigate the effects of vested interests** that seek to block community empowerment and restrict the flow of tangible benefits to the community-level.
- **Build capacity of community-level management institutions** to reflect a mix of technical skills (forest management, utilization and planning), administrative skills (financial management and book-keeping), and leadership skills (communication, governance and accountability).
- Foster the **conditions for scaling up** through a mix of appropriate policy reforms, development of donor-supported national government programs for community forestry and increased, more diversified, tangible benefits to community forestry managers.
- **Include measures to control “leakage”** caused by the displacement of harvesting from managed forests to unmanaged areas to ensure environmental sustainability (e.g., the application of community regulations, or bylaws, to manage community forests and working at higher levels of scale).
- **Enhance social and economic sustainability prospects** by strengthening community tenure and rights, enhancing and diversifying benefit flows to communities, and supporting the development of strong, empowered community institutions with the key capacities needed to control and manage their forest lands.

# I.0 INTRODUCTION

## I.1 PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY FORESTRY REVIEW

The success of international efforts to store atmospheric carbon in forests in Africa and elsewhere in the tropics depends on the long-term maintenance of those forests. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) leads these efforts through promotion of initiatives on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+).<sup>1</sup> Since many rural communities use, manage and depend on forests, successful community forestry projects are central to reducing deforestation. In addition to reducing carbon emissions, REDD+ is tasked with ensuring social benefits, and is challenged to "integrate outcomes of ecological sustainability, social equity, and economic efficiency in which objectives for long-term use of the resources are well-defined so that expectations of [communities] and the society at large remain consistent" (Pagdee *et al.* 2006:33). REDD+, like community forestry, is inherently a social and political process whose success is measured by the quality, presence and absence of forests.

REDD+ is more likely to succeed if it builds on the lessons learned from community forestry over the last 30-plus years – how these systems tick, what drives conservation and sound management, what interventions serve only as stopgap measures, what conflicts undermine success, and what policy and practice barriers can be avoided or removed. The road ahead will be smoother if REDD+ planners and practitioners don't have to "re-learn" these lessons.

With this in mind, FCMC commissioned three regional reports and a global synthesis report to examine lessons learned in community forestry, in particular as they relate to the special challenges and opportunities presented by REDD+. This report focuses on sub-Saharan Africa.

### Box 1. What is community forestry?

For this FCMC series of reviews of community forestry, the team members have agreed that community forestry encompasses the following:

**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 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 to be 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.

<sup>1</sup> The "+" (**plus**) in REDD+ (or REDD-plus) refers to Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus conservation and sustainable management of forests and the enhancement of forest carbon stocks. Many also understand REDD+ to encompass more than just carbon sequestration benefits, but also other benefits (referred to as multiple benefits or co-benefits), including important social and environmental benefits.

## 1.2 METHODOLOGY USED AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This review summarizes some key REDD+-relevant lessons from the tremendous diversity of context-specific community forestry efforts made by communities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), donors and government agencies over more than 30 years across Africa.

A wide range of definitions of community forestry exist. This review is a rigorous literature review of other studies of community forestry, which may have used differing definitions of community forestry.

The methodology used for this review relies on a review of existing documents, including around 100 publications and reports (see Bibliography) and field experiences shared with colleagues. The **literature on community forestry in Africa** has a number of common characteristics. Much of it is written by project proponents involved directly in the planning and execution of community forestry initiatives, such as NGOs or donor agencies. As such, it may lack an independent or critical eye. In addition, the literature is often site or project specific, with little effort made to extrapolate findings to landscape, national or regional scales. Finally, the focus is on “snapshot” assessments, as there are few quantitative assessments of change from established baselines.

Because time and resources for this review were limited, the findings presented here are based on secondary data sources rather than primary research. Literature was gathered from a range of sources, including peer reviewed journals and internet searches, as well as solicited material sourced from experts and facilitators working in the field.

The **availability of information** and published findings from different regions and countries in Africa has limited the scope and depth of this study. The study covers countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Countries with established community forestry programs – Tanzania and Cameroon and, to a lesser degree, Ethiopia and Uganda – have been subjected to numerous reviews and evaluations. In countries with newer programs, such

as Namibia, documentation is limited. In such cases, project reports and evaluations have been invaluable.

Language is also a constraining factor, and what has become apparent in preparing this review is the extremely limited exchange of lessons and experiences between anglophone community forestry experiences in eastern, southern, and parts of West Africa with francophone experiences in West and Central parts of the continent.

This report is an attempt to bridge this communication gap, but much work is still needed to strengthen these links.



**District Staff supporting community forestry** in Mufindi, Tanzania. Photo: Tom Blomley

## 2.0 OVERVIEW

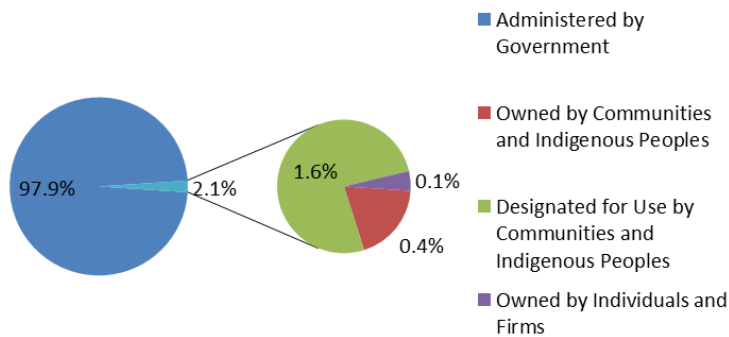
Forests and woodlands cover 650 million hectares (ha) or 21.8 percent of the land area of Africa. The continent has a diverse range of forest and woodland types, from wooded savannas and dryland forests to humid forests. The largest area of forest is found in the Congo Basin, which covers an estimated 200 million ha and is the second largest forest area in the world after the Amazon. Humid forests are also found in the Guinean forest zone in West Africa. In other parts of Africa, drier forests and wooded savannas are more common (UNEP 2011; OFAC and CBPF 2012).

**Community forestry has a long history across the African continent.** For centuries, communities have managed forests and woodlands traditionally, as a means to regulate the use of timber and non-timber forest resources, to conserve and extend grazing areas, and to maintain important cultural, spiritual or historical sites, such as “sacred forests” (Alden Wily 2012, Roe *et al.* 2009, Shepherd 1992). The advent of the colonial era across much of Africa heralded a centralization of control over forest resources, based on European models of state-administered forest reserves and protected areas. The transfer of land and resources from traditional local authorities to central governments ensured that forests, lands, resources and labor could be exploited effectively by colonial states. As a result, communities were rapidly disenfranchised from local forest resources and conflicts grew between them and emerging central government authorities. In most of Africa this trend persisted after independence (between the 1950s and 60s). In some countries, socialist models that favored centralized, state control over land and resources reinforced this trend. Severe resource and capacity constraints limited the ability of newly independent states to exercise effective management control over their forest and wildlife estates.

In recognition of the shortcomings of these “command and control” approaches (for both people and forests), new, **more people-centered approaches towards the management of forests** (and natural resources more widely) became increasingly important from the early-1980s. Starting initially in francophone Sahelian West Africa, USAID supported efforts focused on measures to manage dryland forests with the objective of rationalizing commercial firewood production and supporting local efforts to alleviate poverty as part of the perceived “fuelwood crisis” (Eckholm 1975). In the early 1990s, the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) began supporting a program to pilot new models of community-based forest management in the *miombo* woodlands in northern Tanzania, and to influence policy reforms that favor local level management. Models developed in Tanzania drew heavily on experiences from India and Nepal, countries that had been experimenting with community forestry since the late 1970s and early 1980s, as well as Zimbabwe and Zambia, which developed community-based wildlife management models as an alternative to state-driven protection.

Progress in advancing people-centered forest management across Africa is patchy, at best. A recent analysis by the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) estimates that 97.9 percent of forested land in Africa is controlled or “administered” by national governments, while only 0.5 percent is formally “owned by communities or Indigenous Peoples” or “designated for use by communities and Indigenous Peoples.” The remaining 1.6 percent is “owned by individuals or firms” (RRI 2012).

**Figure 1. Africa 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 the world's most forested countries, representing 85 percent of the world's forests. Data was compiled by CIFOR, ITTO and RRI.

At the same time, over 90 percent of Africa's rural population accesses land through customary institutions, and a quarter of the continent's land area – some 740 million ha – is made up of communal property, such as forests and rangelands, although much of this is not officially recognized as such by African states (Alden Wily 2008). Despite the governments' *de jure* management rights, customary institutions have and continue to exercise *de facto* rights to, and sometimes control over, forest resources covering large areas of forestlands. A distinguishing although not exclusive characteristic of African community forestry is the importance of customary institutions, and customary authorities, in the exercise of forest rights (Larson and Dalal 2012).

Although customary institutions are prevalent, African governments are reluctant to relinquish control of valuable forest resources to these lower-level structures. This is despite **emerging evidence that devolution of rights and resources produces more favorable forest management outcomes** than centralized state control (Box 3; Table 1). In Guinea, for example, remote imagery studies have documented improvements in forest integrity in the Balayan Souroumba Forest, between 1967 and 2008, as the forest became co-managed by local communities (Tappan 2009b).

### **Box 2. Improving Biodiversity**

After years of developing forest co-management in Guinea, a 2007 rapid biodiversity survey revealed that all the species recorded in the baselines as "severely depleted" had recovered across most of the co-managed forests. This is partially due to community prohibitions of hunting and active community involvement in the prevention of fires. Local forestry officials estimate that fires decreased by 80 percent over a three-year period. Preliminary results of an ongoing land cover change analysis, based on satellite imagery, indicate an increase in total forest area and an increase in tree density for Souti Yanfou and Balayan Souroumba Forests, respectively, between 1986 and 2007, compared with the period between 1967 and 1986 (Balinga et al 2012, Tappan 2009a; Tappan 2009b). A study of the first co-managed forest, Nialama, showed that chimpanzee habitat was better protected in a core protected zone inside the co-managed forest, as compared with the rest of the forest or a five km buffer zone, thus contributing to the continued survival of this endangered species in this location (Sunderland-Groves et al. 2011).

**Effective community forestry requires central government to divest power and control over forest resources to lower level structures.** Relinquishing control means governments who are already under-resourced will lose income. If the communities receive a share of the income from the harvest and sale of timber and non-timber forest resources, then the government's share of income may decrease, even if the communities are obligated by the state to pay forest taxes or royalties. Moreover, foresters and other government staff members may also lose the personal benefits that they obtain from rent-seeking and licensing. On the other hand, however, community forestry may offer more transparent forest management, decreases in illegal logging, and the possibility that government would receive greater taxes and royalties.

**Table 1. Comparison of Forest Quality under Community Forestry vs. Other Management Regimes**

Country	Article citation	Main conclusions	Parameters assessed				
			Management effectiveness	Mean annual increment	Stem Density	Basal area	Disturbance levels
Tanzania	Blomley <i>et al.</i> 2008	Studies covering 24 sites across Tanzania were reviewed. Community based forest management delivered improved forest management than either joint forest management or sole state management	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Persha and Blomley 2010	Six different sites in the East Usambara mountains of North Eastern Tanzania were reviewed, covering range of management regimes. Forest condition outcomes were best under community and traditional forest management regimes and worst under joint and state managed regimes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Burgess <i>et al.</i> 2013	Management effectiveness was compared across 49 forest reserves in coastal forest areas and found to be highest in village forest reserves and National Parks, and lowest in National Forest Reserves.	Yes	No	No	No	No
	Lund and Treue 2008	Conservation impacts of community based forest management were assessed in five villages in Iringa district. Mean annual growth rates exceeded harvest and forest harvesting is effectively controlled.	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Vyamana <i>et al.</i> 2009	Reviewed 8 CBFM and JFM sites in Tanzania and found CBFM sites better managed with lower levels of disturbance than JFM sites. Found leakage from CBFM sites to JFM and state managed forests	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Ethiopia	Winberg 2010	Reviewed outcomes from participatory forest management across 24 Joint Forest Management sites in Ethiopia. Concluded that disturbance levels were lower and natural regeneration higher in JFM forests than state managed ones	No	No	No	No	Yes
	Jirane <i>et al.</i> 2007	Reviewed lessons learned and impacts of PFM to date in 9 forests. Concluded that forest management outcomes had improved under JFM – including forest regeneration and levels of disturbance and illegal harvesting	No	No	No	No	Yes
Worldwide (including Africa)	Bowler <i>et al.</i> 2012	A meta analysis of 42 peer reviewed articles on the impacts of community forestry concluded that being associated with greater tree density and basal area but not with other indicators of global environmental benefits (e.g., biodiversity)	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Despite constraints, **state-sanctioned community-based approaches for the management of natural resources have expanded greatly across Africa in recent decades.** In many countries, these remain isolated “pilots,” but countries such as Tanzania, Namibia and Gambia have taken measures to scale up pilots through legal and policy reforms and national programs, jointly funded by government and donors, aimed at expanding coverage and scale. Some of the better-documented and successful examples are presented below:

- In Tanzania, over 4.1 million ha of forests are now under direct management and ownership of village councils, or under Joint Forest Management (JFM) agreements between government and local communities, in conformity with revisions to the forest policy and legislation introduced between 1999 and 2002 (United Republic of Tanzania 2008).
- In Ethiopia, various donors – principally the Japanese and German governments together with the European Union (EU) – are supporting the establishment of JFM across 27 sites covering 211,000 ha (Winberg 2010). This area is expanding rapidly due to increased support from the EU (O’Hara 2011).
- In Cameroon, 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 of humid forest (Oyono *et al.* 2012).
- In Niger and Burkina Faso, commercially oriented production and harvesting of firewood and charcoal from dryland community forests was established from 1985 onwards, and has since spread to Chad, Mali, Senegal and Guinea (Foley *et al.* 2002).
- In the Gambia, 10 percent of the country’s forested land is managed either through community-based forest management or joint forest park management (a collaborative approach), covering approximately 45,000 ha (Camara and Dampha 2008).
- In Namibia, by mid-2011, legal rights to own, manage and utilize community forests had been secured by 13 community groups, covering 465,000 ha of woodlands. A further 6.9 million ha of forestland, managed by 52 community groups was awaiting legalization or under preparation (CFN 2011).
- In the Fouta Djallon highlands of Guinea, with USAID support from 1993 to 2011, communities became involved in managing 12 forests, comprising over 93,000 ha under co-management agreements between government and local communities. The latter phase of support focused on improving local livelihoods and strengthening the institutional arrangements (Bode personal communication; Williams 1999; Kimball *et al.* 2010; Pye-Smith 2009).
- After 14 years of civil war and a “conflict timber” situation (Baker *et al.* 2003), the Liberia Forest Initiative (LFI) assisted with forest sector reform and the preparation of a new forestry law and strategy in 2006, which emphasized a new “3Cs” approach – Commercial forestry, Community forestry, and forest Conservation. Between 2007 and 2012, the USAID-assisted Land Rights and Community Forestry Program (LRCFP) piloted work on community forestry in six sites covering almost 37,000 ha of forest (Russell *et al.* 2011). Since 2012, USAID has continued support to community forestry – including training on conflict management and leadership through its People, Rules, and Organizations Supporting the Protection of Ecosystem Resources (PROSPER) program (PROSPER 2013).
- In Sierra Leone, a similar approach to promoting the “3Cs” has been adopted. The USAID-funded Promoting Agriculture, Governance, and Environment (PAGE) program (2008-2012) has been piloting three models of participatory forest management – for community forests, government forest reserves, and protected areas (Kimball *et al.* 2010). It worked with the Forest Division of the Ministry of Agriculture to establish two pilot co-managed forest reserves covering 23,000 ha and an additional 13,000 ha of community forests. The program worked with just over 100 communities in these two forest reserves (Scott Bode, pers. comm.). Co-management is being established with communities around the Gola Forest, a 75,000 ha national park on the boundary of Sierra Leone and Liberia (Massaquoi 2012).

Over the past five years, many African countries have begun establishing REDD+ preparatory activities, i.e., developing national REDD+ strategies, building capacity and systems for monitoring and reporting, and

undertaking REDD+ pilot projects to demonstrate potential REDD+ field level operations while respecting social and environmental safeguards. Many of these **pilot REDD+ projects are built on community-based approaches** using REDD+ financing to test the effectiveness of carbon payments to community managers as a means to reduce deforestation and forest degradation. For example, in Tanzania, where the Norwegian government has funded nine REDD+ field pilot projects, five are using community-based approaches to forest and natural resource management as a basic, underlying strategy (Bofin *et al.* 2011). Community forestry is increasingly seen as a delivery mechanism at the local level for social, economic, and environmental benefits from reduced deforestation. This review presents some key lessons from community forestry that are highly relevant for REDD+.



# 3.0 KEY LESSONS LEARNED RELEVANT TO REDD+

## 3.1 EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES

### 3.1.1 Community Tenure and the State's Role in Community Empowerment

Customary or indigenous tenure over natural resources remains widespread across Africa. Large areas of forests, woodlands and rangelands are beyond effective state control, and natural resources are managed through traditional norms, values and rules. These traditional management systems – sometimes referred to as “discovered” – are often more effective and functional than those introduced by government or externally supported, or “designed,” programs (Seymour 1994). These traditional systems are dynamic, and may evolve over time to incorporate new elements. Often many intersections exist or develop between customary and formal tenure systems (Seymour 1994). However, many traditional systems are threatened by factors such as population pressure, land-use conflicts and changing social norms (Roe *et al.* 2009).

This report focuses on the “designed,” or state-sanctioned, approaches to community empowerment. These more formal approaches entail the handing over of selected forest management and tenure rights based on agreements and management plans for fixed periods and geographically defined areas.

Generally, authorization and legalization of community-based forest management is effected by the state through central government forest agencies. Exceptions exist in Tanzania and Gambia, where community-based forest management may be granted through local government councils. In most cases, the law defines some kind of legal entity at the community-level with a mandate to enact forest management responsibilities. Often this is a NGO or community-based organization, although in a few cases, these powers are vested in village governments.

Prior to independence, traditional and customary systems of forest management prevailed in Africa. When colonial and post-colonial governments imposed state-controlled, statutory tenure arrangements, vast areas of customary lands were appropriated – and continue to be so today. Recent research in five forested countries – Burundi, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda and Uganda – analyzed the main legal developments that have affected the property rights of and access to land by Indigenous Peoples (IPs) (Couillard *et al.* 2009). That study found that IPs lost resources and land to colonial and post-colonial governments, commercial enterprises, such as timber and mineral concessions, and conservation initiatives.

In some sense, the wave of reforms that began in the early 1990s in Tanzania, Gambia, Cameroon, Guinea, and other countries was **an attempt to restore some of the traditionally held rights over forests through recognition of customary tenure and claims**. In terms of the two goals of improved livelihoods and strengthened forest management, these showed that partial restoration or transfer of tenure rights had mixed outcomes. Across Africa, formal state-sanctioned community forestry tends to limit or restrict forest management tenure and rights, as in these examples:

- Providing **upper limits to areas allowed** under community forest agreements, often with no reference to existing customary forest tenure claims (Cameroon, DRC);
- Restricting community forestry to **selected forest areas, or forest types** or classes, and often those with relatively low economic values (Zambia, Cameroon);

- **Limiting agreements** in terms of a fixed time period, after which they are subject to state-managed reviews and evaluation, despite the long-term investment needed in many forest areas for sustainable management (Cameroon, Uganda, Liberia);
- Placing **financial barriers** on community groups for certain economic activities, for example, pricing arrangements or requirements that royalties be paid in advance, as in Mozambique;
- Providing **legal clauses that allow the state to repossess forests** if management is not deemed acceptable, but in ways that are subjective and discretionary in nature, leaving communities vulnerable to manipulation (Cameroon, Tanzania, Liberia);
- **Restricting the types of harvestable products** (such as non-timber forest products in Ethiopia, Kenya, or in terms of not allowing commercial use or marketing of forest products);
- **Imposing rules that restrict harvesting decisions and procedures** (such as licensing or felling) to state foresters (Mozambique); and
- **Restricting powers of community managers with regards to law enforcement** (Zambia, Mozambique) and limiting community rights to retain confiscated goods seized from illegal loggers in community forests (Mozambique).

Cameroon illustrates how **states limit management and tenure rights**. Although an objective of community forestry in Cameroon centers on community logging, the resources available for community use fall under a forest classification<sup>2</sup> called “non-permanent forest estate,” which are forests of medium to low quality. High-quality and high-value forest is contained within the “permanent forest estate,” which falls entirely under the domain of the state and where community forestry is not permissible. The outcomes from community forestry in Cameroon have been mixed (Oyono *et al.* 2012). Community forestry agreements are 25 years in length, but subject to renewal every five years. If the state deems that forests are “poorly managed” – which is highly subjective, discretionary and open to interpretation – the state can annul the agreement and take back control. The maximum area to be assumed within a community forest agreement is 5,000 ha, while traditionally, communities exercised customary tenure rights over areas far larger than this.

Despite the challenges noted above, some communities in Cameroon have been able to capture incomes from the sale of timber stumpage to logging companies. However, in the absence of capacity and awareness within community groups – coupled with widespread elite capture – vertical integration of production, marketing and trade by communities remain limited. In effect, communities are passive participants in the exploitation of their community forests. A **particular challenge relating to humid forests** in Cameroon and the Congo Basin is the diversity and complexity of the forest structure, requiring more intricate management systems for forest management and harvesting. Furthermore, the investments required to harvest, transport, process and market large diameter timber poses significant barriers to profitable community management when compared with more simple forest management systems in dryland forests.

**Complex and cumbersome procedures and regulations** governing community forestry are often cited as a further barrier to participation and empowerment. When coupled with **pervasive discretionary powers** and **widespread corruption** these procedures mean many community groups are unable to complete the process needed to comply with all legal requirements for granting of rights. In Zambia, the application process to obtain legal rights under JFM is lengthy and complex. The **forest management plans** required for formal approval are technically demanding and require substantial amounts of technical assistance. A prerequisite for a forest management plan is a forest resource inventory requiring further specialist inputs. A review of Zambian experiences in community forestry noted that even when forest inventory reports were available, little of the information provided was used in the management plans (PFAP 2005). In Malawi, clarity is lacking over what constitutes an “approved forest management plan,” as specified in the law and the community forest guidelines. As a result, various drafts of management plans move between village leaders, district staff and forest department headquarters, and approvals are often massively delayed (FGLG 2007). An evaluation in Liberia found that the requirements for preparing forest management plans were beyond the

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<sup>2</sup> In Cameroon and some other countries, the “permanent forest estate” is land classified by the forest to be permanently managed as forest by the State. Other forestlands are classified as “non-permanent forest estate.”

capacities of communities to handle by themselves, and required technical assistance and support (Russell *et al.* 2011).

In Tanzania, although the law allows for joint management of forest reserves by communities and government, the **mechanism for sharing revenues and costs to each party** has yet to be established in law. As a result, management agreements are often submitted for signature and then shelved by government civil servants unwilling to risk legalization in the absence of an adequate legal framework (Blomley and Ramadhani 2006). A recent evaluation of USAID-support to community forestry in Liberia concluded that: “The procedural hurdles in the regulations act as a break on the widespread adoption of community forestry, and the secure continuation of agreements once they are approved. The technical requirements and procedural constraints of the current regulations effectively serve as barriers to communities to engage in rights granted by the Community Rights Law (Russell *et al.* 2011).”

Ghana provides important insight into **the challenges of overlapping tenure rights over trees, forests and land**, and how this shapes forest management outcomes. The current legal framework offers tenure security for planted trees and plantations on private or communal lands. But the rights to all “naturally occurring” timber trees on private and communal lands are vested in the state. This creates perverse incentives regarding protection and management of trees, as trees on private land are frequently allocated to timber concessionaires, often without the knowledge or permission of the landowner. Revenues from the sale of trees are shared among the district assembly (local government), the landowners (traditional authorities), and the Forestry Commission (national forestry agency). As a result, despite their potential benefits through agro-forestry, wild seedlings of valuable timber trees on private land are frequently destroyed, or standing timber is sold on an informal basis to local chainsaw operators. When trees are felled on private land, farmers are rarely compensated for damage to crops or property (Tropenbos International 2009, Marfo *et al.* 2009).

In Mali, reforms in 1995 gave village level management structures authority to regulate firewood collection and marketing from communal woodlands. This resulted in the “collective privatization” of fuelwood production by these local management structures. Harvesting and marketing was traditionally carried out by local resident woodcutters from a specific ethnic group. Following the reforms, the woodcutters, who are seen as aligned to merchants, were ostracized. Local management structures have excluded them from

harvesting and instead allocated harvesting rights to local indigenous residents (Kassibo 2008).

### Box 3. Ensuring Grazing Rights

The introduction of grazing permits in community forests was well received by Fulani herders in Benin, who were guaranteed grazing rights in designated grazing areas. As part of the planning process, herders were able to ensure that aspects such as pasture improvement, watering points and even veterinarian support were included in overall management objectives (Heemans and Otto 1999).

This raises important **questions regarding legitimate rights to forest use under community forestry** and the degree to which distant users are recognized within emerging management processes. Experience from Benin shows the risks of excluding seasonal herders from community forestry processes and the potential benefits of engaging them in terms of reduced conflicts over resource use. In the Dinderesso Forest in Burkina Faso, a USAID-supported project negotiated grazing allotments with local herders in the mid-1980s, helping to resolve local conflicts over forest use and management (Roy Hagen, pers. comm.). In Guinea, a series of key national policies adopted between 1986 and 2005 have encouraged forest co-management (Kimball, J. *et al.* 2010).

In West Africa, overlapping or fragmented legal rights to land, trees and forests create perverse incentives for long-term forest management. **Women have special interests regarding forest management, typically for non-timber forest products (NTFPs) for domestic use or trade.** Failure to grant management and harvesting roles to women leads to inefficiency and exclusion. In Senegal and Cameroon, women generate important incomes through the collection, processing and marketing of non-timber forest products, such as materials for craft making. Because women are under-represented in forest management processes or structures, community forestry consists largely of harvesting a few selected, high-value timber species, mainly of interest to men. The forest is thus underused and economic benefits

sacrificed (Bandiaky and Tiani 2008). (For more on gender issues and women's participation in community forestry, see Section 3.2.2, below.)

### 3.1.2 Conclusions and Implications for REDD+

Forest tenure claims are complex, overlapping, contested, often traditional, seasonal in nature and often undocumented. **Partial empowerment or partial devolution (handing over) of forest tenure rights undermines the success of community forestry** ventures from both ecosystem and social perspectives. The partial or incomplete transfer of forest management rights and legal tenure has been shown in many countries to constrain the adoption and viability of community forestry. **An enabling condition for effective REDD+ initiatives is the clarification and allocation of legally binding tenure regimes.** Simplification or reduction of tenure to simple user rights undermines the effectiveness of forest management measures. Providing secure, enforceable and non-discretionary forest tenure rights, accompanied by simple and affordable procedures for management planning that are within the reach of rural communities, is essential.

In addition to the legal transfer of forest tenure rights, REDD+ initiatives in community forestry require the **establishment of legally recognized community-level management entities** through which contracts can be developed for management of legally-defined forest areas. Community managers must have the legal power to establish and enforce rules governing access and use of forests within the area.

**Complex and cumbersome procedures** introduced following legal reform increase transaction costs to local forest managers and undermine effectiveness. When government foresters hold significant discretionary powers, communities are left open to manipulation and exploitation. REDD+ initiatives need to include simple and verifiable procedures for legalization and management planning that are within the reach of community groups and local forest managers.

**Failure to include specific actions to foster the participation of women, pastoralists or other marginalized but legitimate forest resource user groups** results in their exclusion or non-participation in subsequent activities. Failure to grant these users substantial use and tenure rights undermines both equity and effectiveness. REDD+ initiatives that embrace community forestry must ensure that detailed stakeholder analyses are undertaken to fully include marginalized groups in decision-making and planning.

## 3.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

### 3.2.1 Stakeholder Engagement and Governance at the Community-level

In many cases, the formalization of community forestry rights across Africa has resulted in the transfer of responsibilities for local level forest management away from traditional or customary institutions to legally recognized ones based on elected committees.

Most countries have **built local village institutions from existing user groups, community-based development units, or traditional institutions.** In a few cases, the Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) initiative has built new structures from scratch to handle Participatory Forest Management (PFM). A common forest management arrangement consists of sub-village and village-based institutions represented in a Village Forest Committee (VFC). Members include men and women who may operate in separate sub-groups. The VFC is the functional executive arm of the local resource governance structure involved in the implementation of CBFM. Similarly, in Guinea, a Forest Management Committee (FMC) represents a group of villages involved with the government in a co-management contract for a particular state forest.

These new **forest management structures, established under new forestry laws, often neglect the importance of local government and its role in forest management.** A legal review of community forestry legislation in Zambia found duplication of functions between existing local government structures and new ones created under revisions to the Forest Act (1999). The law is not clear on the role of local

governments, particularly with regard to customary lands over which local governments have important responsibilities (Jere 2005). Tanzania is an exception: the Forest Act provides explicit links between forestry legislation and the Local Government Act (1982) by establishing Village Forest Management Committees as sub-committees of the Village Council and using existing legislation to enact forest management bylaws.

Experiences from Zambia point to **the need to maintain flexibility in the design of local community governance structures** while ensuring a sound legal basis for management. While larger, inclusive committees may be representative of various interests and priorities across communities, smaller, more focused, management groups made up of people with a direct interest and stake in forest management have proven more effective. The **participation of traditional leaders** with their elevated positions in Zambia has created a situation in which equal participation of community and traditional leadership is impossible. Frequent examples exist of traditional leaders capturing benefits at the expense of the wider community. Checks and balances were introduced to balance the legitimacy of traditional leaders with considerations of equity, including placing traditional leaders on forest management committees in a non-voting capacity.

A critical review of community forestry in Malawi **cautions against a one-size-fits-all approach to community-level forest management institutions**. It calls for a flexible approach fitting the diversity of local social, ecological and institutional conditions across the country (Zulu 2009). Another problem is the **proliferation at the village level of sector-based natural resource management institutions** established under different legislation. A village can have three resource management committees, one each for forests (Village Natural Resource Management Committee), wildlife (Village Natural Resource Committee), and fisheries (Beach Village Committee) (USAID 2010). This fragmentation is not unique to Zambia (DSI 2008).

A study in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa found that the **accountability of forest management institutions was largely upwards to central government ministries rather than downwards to their elected constituencies** (Matose 2008). A parallel study in the same region found community management structures with members over large geographical areas that coincided with chiefdoms, as in Zambia, administrative boundaries, as in Botswana, or resource conservancy boundaries, as in Namibia. In such cases, ordinary community members do not see themselves as members. They hardly interact with the community structure in their area, are unaware of the role and function of the management body, and they receive few, if any, benefits. The emerging lesson is that the mobilization of membership and participation over wide geographical areas is difficult and expensive. Wherever possible, the **principle of subsidiarity**, or decentralization of natural resource management to the lowest possible level, should apply (DSI 2008).

In regions where managed forests are large and stretch beyond individual villages, some countries have sought to create **second level associations, or committees, to coordinate and harmonize management at the forest level**. An innovative two-tiered management structure was established in the Nazinon gazetted forest in Burkina Faso with support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). At the upper-level, funds generated through forest management and utilization were used to employ a graduate forester and four support staff who provided technical and managerial support to lower level community management bodies responsible for forest management (Roy Hagen, pers. comm.).

In Guinea, the FMCs enable duly registered members to participate in collective decision-making, thereby directly influencing institutional policy. These collective forums enable all of the FMCs' rules to be created, modified or maintained as appropriate. The fate of constitutional rules, as well as collective decision making rules, are therefore directly placed in the hands of ordinary members of the FMC. The experience arguably qualifies as a promising democratic decentralization or devolution of natural resource management. Meaningful and effective sets of powers have been transferred to democratically constituted and legally recognized bodies close to the citizens at the grassroots level (Balinga *et al.* 2012).

The approach to participatory forest co-management developed in Guinea has subsequently been replicated in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Both of these countries experienced years of war, and forests – as well as other natural resources – were plundered to finance the fighting (Baker *et al.* 2003). The work to develop forest co-management has been important in the post-conflict period as means to develop governance over resources

and reduce conflict among stakeholders. Yet some of those efforts in Liberia have overlooked the persisting variety of customary forms of forest management, including sacred groves (Lebbie *et al.* 2009).

In Tanzania, these have proven hard to maintain in the absence of external funding, particularly where revenues generated through forest management are limited. Also, ensuring accountability between primary and second-level governance institutions is immensely challenging, as geography makes the introduction of checks and balances difficult (Blomley 2006). In Sudan, where traditional pastoralist systems of land, forest and natural resource management prevail, the resolution of conflicts over grazing and water rights could be resolved only with the involvement of higher-level traditional range management institutions (Egeimi *et al.* 2003).

In Malawi, traditional or so-called “discovered” Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) **initiatives based on traditional beliefs, values and systems have a high potential for success**, as rules and norms are crafted within a local context for specific internally identified needs. As such, traditional, organically managed initiatives may have greater local legitimacy but be unrepresentative and undemocratic in nature (USAID 2010). In the Shinyanga Region of central Tanzania, Sukuma pastoralists have traditional systems of reserving rangeland areas for dry season grazing (called *ngitili*), which have resulted in the protection and recovery of trees and vegetation. As a result of efforts led by district government, donors and NGOs in collaboration with local communities, an estimated 250,000 ha of land in the region’s 833 villages has been restored as *ngitili* (Monela *et al.* 2005). These “Indigenous Conserved Areas (ICAs)” are an important mechanism for conserving and protecting forests, but without formal legal protection, could suffer degradation through external threats (Blomley *et al.* 2005).

#### Box 4. Sacred Forest Groves

Traditional forest protection initiatives in Kenya, namely the sacred Kaya forest groves found along the Kenyan coast, are protected through traditional beliefs and sanctions and overseen by elders. To support local protection measures, the government registered individual Kaya forests as “national monuments,” and supported communities to protect them (Githitho 2003).

### 3.2.2 Gender Issues and Women’s Participation



**Women in Mufindi, Tanzania**, with mushrooms collected from community forest. Photo: Tom Blomley.

A variety of development organizations and researchers have examined the **gender dimensions of forestry and women’s roles, knowledge and decision-making vis-à-vis forestry** over several decades. Both the FAO Forestry Department and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have done significant work on this topic (e.g., Rojas 1993 FAO 1995, Aguilar *et al.* 2012; etc.).

Historically, in sub-Saharan African societies, women and men have made use of different resources in the forest, and thus had correspondingly different knowledge of forest resources and dynamics, and different interests in the forest. For example, the procurement of firewood for household use has generally been the responsibility of women, assisted by their children. When firewood is collected for sale, requires tools, is transported long distances, or becomes scarce, men increasingly become involved. These gender dynamics vary by specific culture and evolve over time (Williams 1983). As already discussed in Section 3.1.1, women are also very involved in the collection, use, processing and sale of other non-timber forest products, and thus may have different forest management interests than men.



**Engaging women in community forestry is often neglected in Africa**, despite the important role that women play in forest use and management and their high level of dependence on forest products for domestic consumption. Work and knowledge on gender issues in forestry is still not integrated into much of forestry, including community forestry, as many people continue to view forestry as a technical field and overlook some of its important social dimensions.

A common approach to increasing women's participation is to prescribe ratios for women's involvement in the committee structures and to emphasize support for women's activities. In some cases, such as Tanzania and Uganda, this is prescribed in law. Experience in Zambia is mixed. Initially and on paper, women's participation in committees was good. But a high percentage of silent women in committees did not enhance their functioning, effectiveness or representation. Women were vocal on some committees, but overall women's participation dropped when immediate gains were not seen (PFAP 2005). Women who are central to household economies have less time to attend meetings. Thus, they receive less information about JFM than men in Zambia. Also, women generally have lower literacy levels than men, and they have many short-term needs. Provision of food, clothing, children's health and school education are women's responsibilities. They have less time to plan and think of long-term gains. A final factor is that men act as "gatekeepers," and may decide whether women are allowed to participate in community events.

Years ago, Williams coordinated nine case studies of African forestry projects that successfully engaged women (in Kenya, Sudan, Somalia, Zanzibar (Tanzania), Zimbabwe, Botswana, Senegal, Mali, and Cameroon). These projects targeted specific activities with women and women's groups, employed women extension agents to work with women, and adopted other strategies to address various constraints to women's participation. These constraints included lack of; land; tree ownership and use rights; other materials resources; mobility; education and skills; cash, income and credit; labor; time; and formal and informal organizations, such as women's groups and cooperatives (Williams 1992, 1993).

A recent CIFOR study looked at women's participation in community forest management in Kenya, Uganda, Bolivia and Mexico, as well as data in 10 countries analyzed by the International Forestry Resources and Institutions (IFRI). This study found that women's participation increased when the community forestry institutions were less exclusionary. Women's participation was also correlated with education and less disparities in the incomes in general, and between women and men specifically (Coleman and Mwangi 2013). The topic of gender issues is receiving increasing attention by those working on REDD+ strategies, programs, projects and UNFCCC negotiations.

### **3.2.3 Governance and Stakeholders at Different Levels**

**Poor collaboration between national and local governments undermines efforts by communities** to secure rights over their forests. In Ethiopia, poor collaboration between state and federal governments, coupled with unclear, overlapping and divided responsibilities for forest management has created inefficiencies and conflicts. Both federal and regional authorities are responsible for designating and demarcating state, regional and protected forests. Despite the promulgation of a forest policy (No. 542/2007), lack of enforcement and shifting responsibilities among different levels of government weaken forest management and enforcement efforts (USAID 2012). In Sierra Leone, conflicts have arisen between national level government foresters who work in rural regions and local district authorities that have been recently empowered through a series of decentralization reforms. National forestry officials now have to submit forestry activity budgets and plans to the local district authorities that often do not have the technical capacity to review and approve them (Scott Bode pers. comm.).

While progressive and empowering laws and procedures may be well-defined in law, **execution and implementation is often mixed**. They encounter passive resistance from national government agencies, the unwillingness to cede power, or reluctance to relinquish personal benefits secured under the prevailing status quo. In Senegal, the 1998 forest code gave elected rural councils effective property rights over forests in their jurisdictions, thus giving them the rights under law to protect and police the resource, exploit forests and determine access. However, the national agency responsible for overseeing the forest sector has not allowed rural councils to exercise these powers. To retain control, foresters allied with merchants use pressure, bribes

and threats, and take advantage of rural representatives' lack of influence. Despite the transfer of forest rights, these foresters continue to allocate access to lucrative forest opportunities to the merchants (Ribot 2009).

In Tanzania, legislation ensures that almost all benefits are captured at the community or group level. Still, there is **little evidence that the legal transfer of forest areas has led to tangible local economic returns** from sustainable forest harvesting and utilization. The reasons for this are many: (i) low morale and capacity of government staff in forest-rich but often poor and remote areas restrict service delivery to potential beneficiaries; (ii) deliberate and accidental misinformation to community members regarding their rights and obligations under law, and low levels of knowledge among forest-dependent communities; (iii) the prevailing government narrative on conservation and protection of forests, not sustainable utilization; these are reinforced by (iv) entrenched and corrupt systems of patronage and clientelism between village leaders, district council staff, illegal timber operators and highly placed government officials (Blomley *et al.* 2008). Furthermore, local governments in Tanzania earn significant revenues from forest harvesting – revenues that should have devolved to village governments following the granting of legal rights to community-based forest management. As such, the **agendas of village and district leaders are often unsynchronized** (Mustalahti and Lund 2010). Similar outcomes in Kenya following passage of the 2005 Forests Act, are leading to disillusionment and loss of interest from participating Community Forest Associations (CFAs).

Experience in community forestry in Mali points to the **dangers of well-intentioned, but externally-driven, policy reforms** designed to decentralize forest management. Following documented successes with reforming local fuelwood markets in Niger, donors lobbied hard for similar reforms in Mali after Moussa Traoré fell from power in 1991. The World Bank and other donors pressured the new government to introduce measures designed to decentralize the collection and allocation of taxes from firewood collection and sale. As a result, Decree 422 was introduced in 1995. Rural management structures were to receive 40 to 60 percent of revenues from firewood marketing, with the balance going to local councils. While welcomed by many rural Malians, the law met with a **high level of resistance**. Actors such as firewood traders, whose former privileges were threatened, quickly mounted a rearguard action designed against the law. The law passed, but was quickly rescinded and replaced by a second law that deprived rural management structures of income and returned financial control to the central government. The state took back with one hand what it had given with the other (Kassibo 2008). The result was frustrated, demotivated local management entities and more corruption, illegal logging and mismanagement.

Experience in Zambia and Tanzania indicates that **successful community forestry is linked to a broader environment of sound forest governance and law enforcement**. In Tanzania, the effectiveness of JFM has been significantly undermined by the failure of government to support law enforcement by responding to reports of illegal activities. Widespread evasion of forest harvesting licenses and levies for forest products such as charcoal mean that the market is flooded with forest products well under their true prices and undercut efforts by community managers to sell products that meet legal requirements for trade (Blomley and Iddi 2009). In Zambia, the differential application of law enforcement to those engaged in illegal activities, by protecting certain “untouchables” while prosecuting others, acts as a significant disincentive to communities seeking to create a level playing field (PFAP 2005).

### 3.2.4 Conclusions and Implications for REDD+

Effective community-level institutions are required to oversee the development and implementation of agreed forest management actions and ensure that costs and benefits are shared equitably among local forest users. If current or planned REDD+ interventions are to build on effective community forestry experiences, stakeholder engagement and governance processes will need to address the following challenges:

- **Vertical accountability:** Local forest management institutions need to foster the creation of downward accountability mechanisms between forest management institutions and local forest users. Village institutions should take into account national policy and law, as well as contractual arrangements in the context of agreed management plans and rules.



- **Scale:** Accountability and engagement may be low in institutions covering wide geographical areas that are too large and remote for many of their members. Institutions covering a smaller area and fewer people provide greater opportunities for accountability but incur higher overall costs. Where multi-tier institutions are established for forest management, mechanisms are needed to ensure accountability between different levels.
- **Sectoral limitations:** In many countries, separate legislation from forestry, fisheries and wildlife has resulted in a proliferation of sector-oriented, parallel village institutions, rather than an integrated management body. REDD+ processes need to take account of the potential multiple income and benefit streams for sustainable natural resource management and ensure that duplication of institutions is avoided.
- **Linkages to traditional structures:** Where traditional institutions are strong and have influence over forest management and use, REDD+ processes need to engage directly with such institutions, even if they are less democratic and equitable than newly established and elected ones.

Several **governance challenges or barriers** undermine the effectiveness and efficiency of REDD+. These include: weak coordination and conflicting roles between national, sub national (state, federal, provincial or regional) governmental bodies; policy “push-back” from governments following governmental reforms in the forest sector; entrenched and corrupt systems of patronage and clientelism that exists between village leaders, government staff, illegal timber operators and highly placed government officials; and the failure of government to support a broader environment of sound forest governance and law enforcement.

### 3.3 BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES FOR COMMUNITY INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY

#### 3.3.1 Forest Management Benefits, Incentives and Costs

Despite considerable investment in securing and maintaining forest management, **transfer of forest management rights and responsibilities has not been reinforced by economic benefits.** Over four million ha in Tanzania are now under community management or co-management, but revenues from forest management are small and confined to a few well-documented cases (Blomley and Iddi 2009). The reasons for this apparent paradox are numerous and complex, but essentially revolve around the fact that **community forestry was contrived as a strategy for restoring degraded forests in places where previous efforts to do so had failed.** As such, community forestry, at least in its earlier stages, was seen as a means of co-opting communities into forest protection and restoration. Utilization was not given much attention. **Efforts to establish community logging were met with resistance** from government quarters that saw community forestry essentially as a tool for forest conservation and restoration and not for sustainable use. In Ethiopia, as in Tanzania, the government conceived community forestry as a tool for restoring heavily degraded forest areas. But local communities have more pressing and immediate concerns, namely income and livelihoods (Winberg 2010). Hence, many in Ethiopia perceive that the costs of establishing and maintaining community forests far outweigh the benefits (O’Hara 2011). In Mozambique, most community forests are located in conservation areas, totally degraded forest areas or areas with only low-value timber (Mustalahti and Lund 2010). In Kenya, even though forests under management agreements have significant value, allowable use is limited to non-timber forest products supplemented by “alternative livelihood” projects designed to reduce dependency on forest harvesting (Mogoi *et al.* 2012).

In contrast to East African policy objectives, community forestry in Namibia was established to encourage sustainable forest use and management. As such, community groups have been able to diversify income streams to include revenues from timber and firewood, poles, wild fruits, devil’s claw, thatching grass, honey from beekeeping, basket weaving and crafts (GiZ 2011). Still the economic value of forest resources devolved to communities was less than anticipated, as accessibility and distance to markets often meant that harvesting costs exceeded potential incomes (*ibid.*). In Cameroon, community forestry was conceived as a means to establish sustainable, community-based logging within the “non-permanent forest estate.” Despite these

noble intentions, while some communities have generated significant revenues from logging, **overall revenues remain relatively small**. In 2005, while the central state collected \$80 million in forestry taxes, the estimated revenue from community forests under exploitation was approximately \$150,000 (Oyono 2009).

A very different situation prevails in French-speaking Sahelian countries such as Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. **Relatively successful early community forestry programs** were established across each of these countries, among them the well-documented, but short-lived, program at Guesselbodi Forest, Niger.

The primary driver of these Sahelian community forestry initiatives was not forest restoration, but a recognized **need to reform firewood supplies to urban centers**, such as Niamey and Ougadougou, that grew from widespread concerns by northern donors over the impending “fuelwood crisis” (Eckholm *et al.* 1984). Under these schemes – largely funded through French and Danish government support – communities

#### **Box 5. Firewood and Charcoal Production**

A successful example of community forestry is the Nazinon gazetted forest in Burkina Faso, where between 1987 and 1993 over 82,000 ha were under FAO/UNDP-supported community forest management. Community managers organized the harvest and sold firewood and charcoal to truckers and wholesalers. Community members harvested the wood and received 40 percent of the sales price. Thirty percent of the revenues went into a management fund used to employ permanent staff and to hire community members. Ten percent of the revenues went to the community as a whole for communal projects and about 20 percent went to government as a tax (Roy Hagen, pers. comm.).

were organized into fuelwood marketing associations (“*Marchés ruraux*”) and made responsible for sustainable harvesting and sale of firewood from dryland forest areas. Management was simple and non-technical – four species above a minimum diameter size were harvested within parcels of approximately 500 ha. A cutting cycle of ten to 15 years was applied, giving sufficient time for the predominant species to regenerate. Research conducted across sites suggests that these simple management techniques resulted in both improved and secure incomes for firewood associations, and improved management practices for dryland woodlands and forests (Fries and Heemans 1992). More recent analyses, however, indicate some level of overharvesting and lack of respect for harvesting quotas (Rives *et al.* 2010).

In Guinea, forest co-management was initiated to improve forest management and to reduce conflict between the government forestry authorities and the local villages. The first forest, Nialama, was chosen as it occupied over 50 percent of the watershed in which it was located, and also contained an important population of endangered chimpanzees. This approach was successful and replicated elsewhere (Paula Williams pers. comm.). After some years of implementation, work was undertaken to strengthen institutional governance, increase timber revenues for the FMCs, and improve livelihoods through improved agricultural and agroforestry practices. Data from a 2007 Programmatic Assessment reported that all the FMCs were stronger institutionally and financially compared to 2005. For example, the committees have more savings in the bank from the increased revenues from timber sales. The Nialama FMC annual timber sales increased seven-fold (1,000,000 Guinean francs (GFA) to 7,000,000 GFA) between 2005-2007 (Bode 2007).

Another driver of community forestry in dryland regions is the need to establish **dry season grazing reserves** for pastoralists and herders. This is particularly the case when increasing population pressure and demands for land result in conversion of traditional common grazing lands into private agricultural lands. In Takiéta forest, Niger, increasing conflict between pastoralists and sedentary agriculturalists, coupled with encroachment and conversion of a 6,700 ha forest reserve, was the primary reason for establishing a collaborative management approach with different interest groups represented on a common management body (Bachir *et al.* 2005).

**Few critical and empirical analyses** exist in either published or unpublished data on the livelihood impacts of community forestry in Africa. Following legal and policy reforms in the Uganda forestry sector, community groups were given rights to co-manage forest areas through collaborative forest management. A key driving force behind these changes was the explicit goal of fostering poverty reduction among rural Ugandans. A recent study in Uganda sought to establish whether forest sector decentralization increased forest incomes for the rural poor in line with policy aims. The study found that, for communities engaged in

co-management of Budongo forest reserve jointly with the National Forest Agency, households in the highest income quartile experienced increases in income of \$162 per annum, a 25 percent increase in their total share of income derived from forest products, while households in the lowest income quartile saw a reduction in income of \$15 per annum, a 15 percent decrease in their total share of income derived from forests (Jagger 2008). The underlying reasons for this were many. Firstly, there is no established legal mechanism that allows smallholder timber production in jointly managed forest areas. But the larger-scale timber operations that are backed by wealthier households continue and have benefitted from improved protection provided by community guards. Similar income shifts occurred in JFM arrangements in centrally-administered forest reserves in Tanzania. **Community forestry “costs,”** mostly transaction costs, were found to be most often **evenly distributed** across poor, medium and wealthy households, while **benefits strongly favored the richest households**, with poorest households receiving the least benefits overall (Meshack *et al.* 2005).

### 3.3.2 Benefit Distribution and Capture

Questions of governance, accountability and how benefits are shared among stakeholders at different levels recur and present challenges in many countries. In East African community forestry, the **apparent failure of governments to specify legal mechanisms for sharing benefits and costs in jointly managed forests** presents a first set of challenges. In the absence of these mechanisms, communities are understandably reluctant to enter into joint management arrangements, and government bureaucrats are equally unwilling to sign legal agreements (Odera 2004, Blomley and Iddi 2009, EMPAFORM 2006).

#### Box 6. Avoiding Elite Capture

Despite the challenges, community forest systems based around fuelwood harvesting and marketing in dryland Sahelian forests offer unique benefits when compared with systems operating in other parts of the continent. Individuals harvesting firewood are paid for volumes sold, just as individuals are paid for labor provided in supporting forest management (Noppen *et al* 2004, Foley *et al* 2002). Thus, **much of the benefit from forest management is individual, rather than communal.** Because few barriers exist for poorer members to become woodcutters, problems of elite capture are avoided.

Where legally defined measures exist for the sharing of benefits from forest management, as in Ghana, the **capture of benefits by local leaders at the cost of local forest managers** presents a second set of challenges. In Ghana, an analysis of forest royalties identified widespread capture of benefits by local leaders. This situation was caused in part by overlapping legal jurisdictions between traditional institutions and elected local governments and the different values and principles underlying these systems. Customary and statutory laws exist with parallel jurisdictions and autonomy. Local authorities, whether traditional or governmental, captured forest management benefits intended for communities. While traditional authorities and district assemblies have agreed on their shares of proceeds from forest harvesting levies, no such

agreement exists on how forest revenues will be distributed within stakeholder groups. As such, any revenue distribution decisions are left in the hands of local elites. For example, local governments tend to use forest revenues to cover operational costs and allocate only a small proportion to development. Of this, an even smaller proportion is given back to the forest-rich communities where the timber was harvested (Hansen and Lund 2011).

Most of the debate on benefit sharing in community forestry concerns how benefits are shared between the state and local forest managers. Experience in Tanzania shows that it is equally important to consider how benefits are shared within communities to avoid poorer or more marginalized community members losing out from the direct benefits of community forestry (Vyamana 2009). In Tanzania, **poorer households participate less and receive fewer benefits** for several reasons. The poor have limited representation in management committees and cannot hold management committees accountable. Because licenses, fees and other upfront payments are imposed for harvesting from village forests, only middle income and richer members of the community can take advantage of the economic opportunities presented by community forestry (Blomley and Franks 2009). Displacement of forest-based incomes is common among poor, forest-dependent users following the introduction of protection and conservation measures through community forestry.

As in Tanzania, **elite capture within communities** implementing JFM is reportedly widespread in Zambia (PFAP 2005). Several village communities deliberately tried to exclude entire villages from participating by not informing or inviting them to meetings. In at least one case, a village directly denied a neighboring village admission to the JFM arrangement. Careful facilitation of a third party is necessary in such cases. In Kenya, elite capture appears to be occurring within CFAs despite the low revenues derived from harvesting non-timber forest products. Similar experiences are reported in Malawi (USAID 2010). In Mali, executive committees of rural management structures, which oversee community-based firewood marketing, are elected on an annual basis and are theoretically responsible to all local residents through the general assembly. However, powerful local interests have captured many of these committees and rendered them largely unaccountable and undemocratic (Kassibo 2008). Perhaps in recognition of these challenges, community forestry committees in Namibia are required by law to develop a **Benefit Sharing Plan** that defines not only how revenues are shared between traditional authorities, management bodies and communities, but also how revenues are shared within participating communities before approval of legal status is granted (Kothari 2012).

Experience in Guinea and Sierra Leone suggests, however, that creation of local forest management committees provides the structure for accountability and does provide benefits for the poorer households. When such structures function and generate revenue that is transparently managed, they reach a broader (and poorer) group of stakeholders than would otherwise occur without these structures in place. Moreover, when forest co-management provides positive environmental benefits, such as improved water service delivery and improved forest management, all community members benefit (Scott Bode, pers. comm.).

### 3.3.3 Conclusions and Implications for REDD+

Although considerable effort has gone into community forestry in Africa, the **economic benefits received to date are small and generally exceeded by the costs of management responsibilities**. One reason is that forests transferred from the state to communities are frequently of limited economic value as a result of widespread degradation and unregulated use. Until more tangible economic benefits from sustainable use come online, REDD+ payments can potentially fill an important “incentive gap.”

**The rationale and original policy objectives for establishing community forestry vary from region to region.** In East Africa, forest conservation and restoration drove initial policy moves and pilots. In Southern Africa, community forestry is an integrated part of community-based wildlife management. In parts of West and Central Africa, community forestry was conceived for developing community-based logging in tropical high forest, although profitable and sustainable initiatives are limited. In Sahelian West Africa, efforts to establish community forestry were directly linked to rationalization of the fuelwood supplies to urban centers. **Where state policy objectives match the interests of community-level managers, community forestry appears to be expanding and developing.** In regions where national objectives conflict with local ones, results are mixed. This conclusion suggests that if REDD+ programs, with their goal of protecting and conserving forests, fail to integrate local interests for utilization and sustainable use, incentives, even additional payments from REDD+, they will not sustain long-term interest in forest management.

Vertical sharing of **benefits and costs** between national and local stakeholders often receives more attention than horizontal sharing within participating communities. While elite capture at supra-community-levels is a concern, elite capture is also widespread within communities and undermines its long-term viability and social benefits. If REDD+ is to be effective in reducing deforestation and equitable in terms of shared benefits, specific measures must be introduced to **promote both vertical and horizontal equity**.

## 3.4 CAPACITY BUILDING

### 3.4.1 Importance of Capacity Building at the Community-Level

Community forestry is based on the premise that a functional, representative body at the community-level is capable of managing community forests on behalf of local people. Limited capacity and skills undermines the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of local level management, particularly in “designed” initiatives where local traditions and norms are lacking. **Key capacity gaps** noted within community management institutions include skills in the following areas: technical, including forest management; leadership and adaptive management; communication; planning, monitoring and evaluation; record keeping; accounting; and forest-based enterprise development. A high turnover of members within community management committees means that **capacity building needs to be a continuous** rather than a one-off process.

A frequent capacity gap relates to limited **“legal literacy,”** manifested by weak skills in negotiating rights and responsibilities with national government agencies. In Malawi and Tanzania, reviews point to an uneven playing field during community forestry planning processes, which leaves them open to manipulation and skewed outcomes (FGLG 2007, Blomley and Ramadhani 2006). These and other reviews indicate the need to go beyond traditional views of capacity, namely the more technical and procedural skills related to effective forest management and leadership, to one that embraces **governance, representation and accountability.**

In a review of community structures for natural resource management across Southern and Eastern Africa, **management and organizational capacity at the community-level was seen as a function of “internal” and “external” legitimacy.** External legitimacy refers to the extent to which prevailing policy and legislation creates an enabling environment. Internal legitimacy refers to the participation of members in decision-making and to the integrity of leaders. Capacity constraints in local executive committees reinforce poor performance. The review highlighted how **community members easily lose interest** when they receive inadequate information or are excluded from decision-making. Sometimes this loss of interest is based on actual incidences of abuse of authority or lack of accountability and transparency in financial management. Lack of accountability and transparency and poor perception of leadership by the general membership induces apathy and negatively affects participation (DSI 2008).

In Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, the local forest management committees chose a user-defined model for how citizens participate in FMCs. They participate in three major ways: membership; elections; and decision-making. FCM members must register and pay a small (US\$0.50-1.50) subscription fee as well as purchasing at least one share or annual membership fee (worth approximately US\$2.30-4.00). This arrangement yields a model of membership that is “user-defined” arising from “coalescence of interest” (Murphree 2000). User-defined models of membership differ from community forestry arrangements that extend membership to all people living in specific geographic or administrative areas. Programmes based on the latter, such as Zimbabwe’s Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) are sometimes hampered by low per capita benefits (Bond 2001, Emerton 2001), high transaction costs (Frost *et al.* 2007), and institutional conflict and inertia (Campbell *et al.* 2001).

Research conducted in conjunction with a REDD+ pilot project in the Equateur province of the DRC suggests that **social capital** is an important determinant of the degree to which locally-developed forest management rules will be followed with minimal external costs. Social capital refers here to how people interact with one another and is shaped by their mutual trust, norms of reciprocity, social relationships and networks, and by the collective benefits derived from cooperation<sup>3</sup> As such, capacity building for community forestry should be recast as a means to strengthen social capital. Within the DRC project working area, social capital was low because of ethnic differences and tensions. Other factors included limited voluntary participation due to low socioeconomic status and a tendency for local NGOs to “buy participation” through payment of allowances. Addressing deep-seated structural challenges requires an in-depth analysis of local

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<sup>3</sup> The term “social capital” has a wide range of meanings and uses, depending on its context. For a discussion of this matter, see: “Definitions of Social Capital” at <http://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/literature/definition.html>



actors and structures, including rights and duty structures, an understanding of local authority, and cognizance of local decision-making processes and civil society structures and processes. Above all, researchers caution against an oversimplification of community structures and processes, and of overriding traditional structures with new imposed ones as a way of building local capacity (Samndong *et al.* 2011).

### 3.4.2 Capacity Building of Community Forestry Support Institutions

**Working through government agencies offers particular challenges** for local actors. Government foresters in Africa are often educated in agricultural programs, which pay little attention to forest management, production forestry or social and institutional aspects of forestry. Some are trained at conventional forestry schools that may be oriented towards commercially-oriented forest management and timber experts, and have little training on community forestry or extension work. Until recently in West Africa, especially in francophone states, the role of government foresters has been one of enforcement, protection and exclusion. In Benin, for example, foresters have an authoritative status on a par with gendarmes and custom agents. Mistrust and enmity existing between foresters and the rural populations comes from abuse of this authority. At the root of the problem is the colonial forest code that empowers foresters to threaten, extort and abuse villagers whenever they need cash. Many foresters collaborate with local woodcutters to systematically harvest the biggest and best trees (Heermans and Otto 1999).

Under these circumstances, it is no easy task to **transform a state forest service into one that supports and enables community participation**. In some cases, it will take a generational change to effect this transformation. As foresters' roles change from policemen to extension specialists, they need technical training to prepare them as partners in CBFM. They also need skills in conflict mitigation, operational planning, facilitation of meetings, participatory monitoring and evaluation methods, and time management. Because men dominate state forestry services, **attention to gender aspects** is often neglected. In Tanzania, early experiences of community forestry involved a complete re-orientation of district forest staff. With this new orientation, foresters suddenly found themselves in the driver's seat of local development efforts and experienced a newfound respect among local communities (Alden Wily 1998). Similarly, in Guinea over the past two decades, a marked shift has occurred in the attitudes of the forest service towards local communities, and a marked improvement in relationships. Many government foresters now have close working relationships with members of FMCs (Scott Bode, pers. comm.).

### 3.4.3 Arenas of Successful Local Capacity Building

An essential element of building capacity is forest monitoring, which serves two basic purposes. First, it allows community managers to assess whether forest management actions, such as harvesting and protection, are resulting in the desired forest condition outcomes. Second, it enables local forest managers to demonstrate management effectiveness to higher-level managers and regulators in government. Historically, government foresters and other external agents undertook forest monitoring. There is now a **growing trend towards locally-based monitoring systems** (Fry 2010). Recent findings from a global initiative called Monitoring Matters (MOMA), working in Ghana, Namibia and Tanzania among other countries, demonstrated that with one day of training, local monitors could produce data on forest disturbance and condition comparable to that collected by persons with formal scientific training. Furthermore, while costs per ha of monitoring executed by scientists came to approximately \$5 per ha/year, local monitoring costs by community members were estimated to be in the region of \$0.05 per ha/year (Danielsen *et al.* 2011). Guidelines for supporting locally based monitoring of forest and carbon stocks have been developed by the Think Global, Act Local project following field development in Mali, Senegal, Guinea Bissau and Tanzania, and selected countries in Asia (Verplanke and Zahabu 2011). In Tanzania, many of the REDD+ pilot projects being implemented by NGOs are building on locally managed monitoring systems and verified using more technologically-focused methods, such as satellite imagery and aerial photography.

**Community forest tenure mapping** is a tool developed in the DRC to support **documentation of customary rights** to land and natural resources. There are also national level initiatives in the DRC that engage in mapping or zoning, but most of these are undertaken with little or no local consultation, and are

primarily designed to build national government capacity to manage and regulate natural resource use. In response, local NGOs representing Indigenous Peoples (IP) and local communities supported a community mapping exercise covering over a million ha in the Territory of Inongo, Bandundu Province. At present, the methodology used allows community members to choose what to map and then equips them to produce their maps, while a final geo-referenced version is produced by a collaborating local NGO and validated by the community that has produced it. As a starting point, the maps have focused on forested areas that communities are using for cultivation and other practical and cultural ends. Data from official maps showing the boundaries of logging titles, national parks and other land use allocations is included so that all actors can clearly visualize the challenges that communities face. This has already allowed communities to clearly demonstrate the superposition of external actors over their own interests. Similar participatory community mapping has also been used in community forestry and other projects in Liberia, and also in several other African countries (Thomas 2013). In some cases, the maps have been used as an **effective lobbying tool to assert rights and negotiate** with other actors (Rainforest Foundation n. d.).

Given growing concerns over elite capture identified in a number of studies, capacity building is increasingly looking to improve capability to assess and communicate issues of governance and representation. The use of tools such as “**governance dashboards**” is increasing within CBNRM initiatives. In Tanzania, dashboards are being used to assess the performance of community forestry executive committees by identifying and prioritizing concerns or governance shortfalls of both leaders and those represented. The assessment provides a simple status report, along a key number of variables and an agreed action plan for addressing problems. The assessment is undertaken after an agreed period, typically six months. The results of the dashboard are compared with earlier results to assess whether performance has improved (Ishabaki 2012).

### 3.4.4 Conclusions and Implications for REDD+

Building capacity of local forest managers for REDD+ initiatives requires emphasis on the **technical aspects** of sustainable forest management and the **development of robust government-backed community rules and enforcement mechanisms at the community-level**. New approaches are being developed that provide community-level forest managers with the tools and expertise they need to monitor forest condition and carbon stocks. Local managers can provide accurate data at lower costs than outsiders, and local managers gain information that can feed back into decision-making. Given the more contractual, results-based nature of REDD+, community-level forest managers will also need **capacity in negotiating contracts** that are equitable and viable, and based on agreed performance regarding reduction in deforestation levels.

There is a further need to look beyond traditional perceptions of capacity as skills to one that includes the **capacity to assess internal and external legitimacy and social capital**. Building capacity in **other non-technical areas**, such as leadership, adaptive management, monitoring and evaluation, and bookkeeping, is necessary if community institutions are to remain viable and accountable entities.

## 3.5 SCALING UP COMMUNITY FORESTRY INITIATIVES

### 3.5.1 Experiences from National Community Forestry Initiatives

There are relatively **few examples of national community forestry programs in Africa** as compared with other continents, and the primary modality for delivery in Africa is project-based. As such, scaling up has not occurred on the scale witnessed in India or Nepal.

One exception is Tanzania, which has a **strong legal framework for decentralization**. A national program of community forestry was developed in 2003 with support from several donors and the Tanzanian government. The program aimed to scale up community forestry interventions from a series of

#### Box 7. Legal Framework

In Tanzania, where forest management rights and responsibilities are fully transferred to community managers, demand for community-based forest management is growing. Often demand exceeds government capacity, financial and human, to respond.

donor-funded pilot projects by integrating them into national processes such as decentralization reforms. In a key reform is transfer of responsibility for delivery of forest extension services from central to local district governments. Block grants from bilateral donors were allocated to local governments to support district-wide community forestry. In all, the block grants supported 47 district councils and resulted in a massive expansion of coverage of community forestry beyond the limited scope of individual area-based projects (Blomley 2006).

In Gambia, **local partners and outsourced extension services** were used to address capacity gaps and limited staffing at the national Forestry Department. Staff reductions mean that the extension unit is now largely involved in coordination rather than service delivery. Private service providers and NGOs engaged by government provide core expertise in communication and extension, and their independence from government allows them to act as neutral facilitators (Brown 2000).

In Ethiopia, where attempts have been made to transfer responsibilities for community forestry from national to state and regional-level bodies, **several challenges** were reported. These include high staff turnover; lack of skills and understanding of changing roles and expectations on the part of state government staff; low allocation of government resources; and overall, a low prioritization of community forestry within the government. As such, securing strong government involvement and support has proven challenging, and consequently, community forestry is largely seen as donor-driven (MELCA 2008).

In Zambia and Tanzania, **community forestry is largely “supply driven” rather than demanded by community members**. Lack of demand results from many factors, but mainly people are not aware of the potential benefits or have seen relatively few benefits so far. In Zambia, suspicion and mistrust of government intentions undermines community forestry. In particular – and based on sound historical precedents – many rural people suspect that community forestry is simply a means for central government to extend control over customary land and resources, rather than a means to formalize traditional claims (PFAP 2005). In Kenya, many CFAs were established without external assistance from donors or NGOs and are able to function using internally generated funds. An increasing number of associations are generating limited funds from the sale of forest products (Mogoi *et al.* 2012).

In Gambia, which has a national community forestry program financed by international donors and the national government, demand for community-based forest management is growing. This is mainly because direct benefits accrue to communities implementing the program. Although forests in this semi-arid environment have little value in terms of timber resources, benefits are realized through the licensing and sale of firewood to urban fuelwood traders. As a result, demands for support are increasing and the government is experimenting with new models of service delivery through outsourcing to NGOs (Brown 2000).

Experiences from community-based wildlife management and tourism in Botswana and Namibia indicate that **engaging with responsible private sector agencies** can provide an important avenue for scaling up interventions beyond donor-funded project sites. Unfortunately, the history of community-level engagement with logging interests in Africa is poor and mostly characterized by exploitation and mistrust. As such, considerable time will be needed to build confidence and develop models that provide returns for private sector investors and community-level managers. One notable exception is the Mpingo Conservation and Development Initiative (MCDI) in Tanzania, which has supported the establishment of the only Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)<sup>4</sup>-certified community forests in Africa to date. MCDI works with private sector buyers to extract, process and export high-value ebony wood (*Dalbergia melanoxylon*, or *Mpingo* in Kiwahili) used in the manufacture of musical instruments such as clarinets and oboes. MCDI has established a **group-based certification scheme** open to any community-managed natural forest in Tanzania. Start-up costs were high, but additional costs to expand to new communities are likely to be significantly reduced (Ball 2010).

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<sup>4</sup> FSC has developed standards for voluntary certification of sustainable and socially-responsible forest management.



### 3.5.2 Conclusions and Implications for REDD+

Based on this review, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- **Few countries in Africa have moved beyond a portfolio of donor-funded community forestry projects to national programs** anchored and supported by government institutions. Where this has happened, donor funding has been essential and government commitment has not always been forthcoming. It is unlikely that this trend will change significantly in the near future. As such, REDD+ interventions that seek to build on community forestry will require significant injections of funding beyond those provided through carbon payments alone.
- As community forestry initiatives scale up, increasing areas of forestland, and the revenues that go with them, will go to communities and away from direct state control. This expansion may **result in the loss of government revenues** and the loss of personal benefits that foresters and other government staff members obtain from rent-seeking and licensing. These vested interests work against community forestry initiatives and REDD+ interventions.
- **Scaling up of community forestry has often necessitated greater engagement from local government authorities.** Experience from some countries indicates that working through local governments provides many benefits, but requires dedicated resources and capacity building programs. Conflicts among different parts of government, and among different natural resource management bodies and sector agencies, results in inefficiency and uncertainties at the local level.
- **Moving from a “supply-driven” to a “demand-driven” approach** is key to scaling up interventions. This requires capacity within government or service delivery agencies to respond to growing grassroots demands, and the demonstrated presence of concrete and tangible benefits to local managers.
- **Engaging with responsible private sector entities and high-value markets** for sustainably harvested forest products, although not without risks, represents a promising avenue for scaling up interventions to new areas and in ways that create additional incentives for forest management.

## 3.6 SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY

### 3.6.1 Environmental Sustainability

Studies and reviews in Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia and Guinea show that **where forests are managed by communities, forest condition is improved when compared with state-managed or open-access regimes** (Blomley *et al.* 2008, Lund and Treue 2008, EMPAFORM 2009, Jirane *et al.* 2007; Sunderland-Groves *et al.* 2011; Table 1). However, more detailed analyses in Tanzania, Gambia and Ethiopia point to the **displacement of harvesting impacts** to areas not covered by community forestry agreements (referred to as “leakage” in the REDD+ context). This occurred especially in areas under community forestry agreements where harvests were reduced to allow for forest restoration and regeneration (Winberg 2010, Vyamana 2009, O’Hara 2011, Brown 2000). In Tanzania, leakage was evident in areas where JFM was established, but less widespread in places where full management rights and responsibilities were handed over to community-based forest management (Vyamana 2009).

Experience in countries such as Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia and Guinea suggests that **where forest condition improves, wildlife populations may also increase. This produces additional biodiversity benefits** but can also have negative livelihood impacts through damage to crops. Giving communities accompanying rights over wildlife management could potentially mitigate the problem. **Human-wildlife conflicts** often affect the poorest households (especially women) most strongly because their fields are usually located closest to the forest and they lack the means to protect their crops (Schreckenber and Luttrell 2009, Jones 2012).

Experience in Tanzania suggests that **for community forestry to generate long-term economic and environmental returns, market forces must be neither too high, nor too low** (Blomley *et al.*, 2009). Where demand for forest products, such as charcoal, near urban centers is extremely high, community-

enforced rules are often insufficient to withstand heavy external harvesting threats from illegal cutting (Blomley *et al.*, 2009). The same holds when high demand for agriculture or other development generates increasing opportunity costs. Where forests are far from markets, population pressure and corresponding deforestation rates are low and incentives for communities to engage in community forestry are limited (Forest Trends 2009).

### 3.6.2 Financial Sustainability

For the implementing or facilitating agency, financial sustainability has to be at both community and programmatic levels. At the community-level, a paucity of financial benefits generated from local management acts as a major disincentive to long-term management and sustainability. As such, many

#### Box 8. Revenues and Financial Sustainability

Through the USAID-supported Wula Naafa Program in Senegal, 77,000 ha of forest have been transferred to community management. This initially generated approximately \$25,000 per year, of which approximately \$15,000 was reinvested into forest management – boosting chances for sustainability once project support ended (USAID-Senegal 2008). In 2012, seven community forestry management groups in the Wula Naafa program generated \$700,000 in revenues for themselves from charcoal sales from management of their dryland savanna forests (John Heermans, pers. comm.).

community forestry initiatives depend on voluntary labor, which impacts sustainability over time. **To be financially sustainable, community forestry must generate revenues that can be ploughed back into offsetting management costs.** Where revenues were collected, useful experiences emerged for establishing sustainable management systems – in particular in West Africa, where revenue generation is most marked. In the Nazinon gazetted forest in Burkina Faso, where 30 percent of revenue from firewood sales was used to employ a graduate forester and associated support staff who provided services directly to community groups, a community forestry project has operated successfully for at least two

decades. Recent news reports indicate that the scheme at Nazinon continues today, and together with three other sites at Bounounou, Cassou, Sapouy-Biéha, provides 40 percent of the firewood supplies of Ouagadougou (Sienou 2012). Under the system of *marchés ruraux* introduced in Niger in the 1990s, 50 percent of taxes levied on the transport of firewood to urban centers was retained by local management structures and largely used to defray management costs (Noppen *et al.* 2004).

At the level of national or regional programs, **almost all initiatives are heavily reliant on donor funding.** There is no known functioning example of a national community forestry program in Africa operating within government budget allocations and without external donor support. This trend appears likely to continue in REDD+ pilot projects that are now being implemented in countries such as Tanzania and the DRC.

**Although the forest sector generates considerable revenue for government in many forest-rich countries, little of this revenue is reinvested in the forest sector.** Where it is reinvested, priorities of central government forest agencies usually revolve around law enforcement, licensing and production aspects, rather than supporting community forestry. One notable exception to this rule comes from Gambia, where the national community forestry program has introduced a series of regulations that mean that any revenue accrued from a community forest is subject to a 15 percent state tax, levied by the Forest Department and held in the National Forestry Fund. These revenues are used to scale up these interventions to other parts of the country without external assistance from donors (Brown 2000, Jammeh 2008).

### 3.6.3 Socioeconomic Sustainability

Increasing demands for land-based investments in Africa, such as for large-scale commercial agriculture and biofuel development, is an important **driver of land-use change** in Ethiopia, Mozambique, Sudan, Nigeria, Liberia and Ghana (World Bank 2011). It is already leading to **conflicts with local residents over land use** and placing increased pressure on areas set aside for community forestry purposes. As populations expand and local demand grows for conversion of forestland to small-scale agriculture, these pressures are likely to grow. Given the relatively limited financial contribution of community forestry to community income, its long-term viability is uncertain without the creation of additional financial incentives from the sale of forest

products or environmental services. Some REDD+ projects in Tanzania use community forestry as a core strategy and address deforestation drivers such as agricultural expansion and charcoal production. Recent analyses of these projects indicate that **REDD+ transaction, institutional and opportunity costs are likely to exceed any potential revenue generated solely through the sale of carbon credits on the voluntary or future compliance markets**. Clearly, additional revenue streams from sustainable forest or natural resource management will be needed if opportunity costs are to be met (UN-REDD Tanzania 2012).

### 3.6.4 Conclusions and Implications for REDD+

Experience shows that community forestry can lead to **improvements in forest condition** by reducing deforestation and forest degradation, thereby generating important benefits for climate change mitigation. However, for community forestry to be effective at a landscape level, measures are needed to stop leakage from community forests to adjacent forests managed under different regimes.

Many questions have been raised about the **sustainability of community forestry**, particularly in places like Ethiopia and Tanzania where community forestry has been accompanied by heavy investments by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies and NGOs. Limited financial returns to local level forest managers and users threaten to undermine incentives for long-term management. Although REDD+ offers the promise of income to local forest managers and users, analysis of opportunity costs undertaken within the context of REDD+ projects in Tanzania suggest that revenues have been insufficient to meet transaction and opportunity costs. Furthermore, despite the clear benefits of improved forest management, limited investment by governments in supporting and expanding community forestry means that, to date, it remains heavily dependent on external donor financing.

The **relative absence of financial returns from community forestry** from most sites, coupled with increasing demands for land for agricultural purposes – both large-scale commercial and small-scale production – is raising the opportunity cost of protecting forests by communities. If REDD+ is to be an effective tool in competing with alternative land uses, and community forestry is to remain an economically viable land use option, **alternative streams of benefits** will be needed from sustainable forest management.

# 4.0 EMERGING REDD+ AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ISSUES

**At least half of the countries in Africa are establishing REDD+ pilot projects or national programs.**

Twenty-five countries participate in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), UN-REDD, and/or Forest Investment Programs (FIP), and many are receiving donor, foundation, or voluntary market support for pilot projects. Twenty-eight African REDD+ projects have been submitted for validation and verification by the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Standards (CCBS), of which ten have completed the process. The pilot projects aim to demonstrate the overall viability and feasibility of local level REDD+ initiatives and test various approaches to establishing and verifying emission reductions through reduced deforestation. Currently, Africa has three million ha of REDD+ private carbon market (compliance grade or “high quality credits”) projects, representing 13 percent of the global total (based on data collected for Nimz *et al.* 2013).

**Table 2. Multilateral Support for REDD+ in African Countries**

Country	FCPF Partners	FCPF Country Candidates	UN-REDD National Programme	UN-REDD Partner Country	FIP country
Benin				X	
Burkina Faso		X			X
Burundi		X			
Cameroon	X			X	
Central African Republic	X			X	
Chad		X			
Côte d’Ivoire		X			
Democratic Republic of the Congo	X		X		X
Ethiopia	X			X	
Gabon	X			X	
Ghana	X			X	X
Ivory Coast				X	
Kenya	X			X	
Liberia	X				
Madagascar	X				
Morocco				X	
Mozambique	X				
Nigeria		X	X		
Republic of the Congo	X		X		
South Sudan		X		X	
Sudan		X		X	
Tanzania	X		X		
Togo		X			
Uganda	X			X	
Zambia			X		

In countries with a strong community forestry history, **REDD+ pilot projects have built upon existing legal and institutional frameworks**. Tanzania, with significant funding from the Norway's International Forest and Climate Initiative (NIFCI), has channeled funding to REDD+ pilot projects across the country. Five of these have specific interventions focused around community forestry. Launched in 2008 and 2009 specifically to achieve early results and inform the development of the national REDD+ strategy, these projects are already generating useful lessons about how community forestry in a REDD+ context can benefit people and forests. A recent external evaluation of these projects generated important conclusions (Deloitte 2012). Several of the Tanzanian REDD+ pilot projects have produced policy briefs, lessons learned documentation and other thematic reviews (TFCG 2009). In addition to issues already identified in this review, the following relevant issues emerged:

- Important questions remain regarding **tenure rights over forests and by implication, revenue that is accrued from carbon payments**, especially in areas of shared forest management (JFM).
- **Transaction costs** of starting community forestry are high, as forest areas are fragmented and dispersed. Costs can be reduced through aggregation of individual forest areas and a collective marketing process. National associations of community forestry groups on mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar are planning to act as “carbon co-operatives” through an aggregation of payments.
- Specific community-level measures are needed to reduce the **risks of leakage from community forestry areas to forests not covered by these agreements**. This may include working at higher levels of scale and looking beyond specific forest areas covered by community forest agreements.
- As REDD+ projects look towards community forestry as a foundation for launching community-level initiatives, **national safeguard and related grievance and redress mechanisms** are needed to minimize the risk of elite capture and other potentially negative social or environmental impacts.
- Improvements in village-level forest governance alone will not be sufficient to ensure long-term management of forests at any meaningful level of scale. Local governance changes have to be implemented together with measures to change the **broader environment of forest sector governance**.
- Experience from a REDD+ pilot project in Tanzania suggests that individual carbon payments, rather than group-based payments for carbon credits, may be more likely to benefit individuals and lead to positive behavioral change. **Where agricultural expansion by individual smallholder farmers is a key deforestation driver, individual payments may be more likely to reduce deforestation**. Payments made at the individual level, even if small, have the potential to reduce poverty and remove barriers to entrepreneurship (Campese, 2012).

Ghana has made the strongest moves towards establishing CBNRM approaches in both forestry and wildlife sectors. REDD+ initiatives have targeted areas outside government protection that are managed by communities for long-term natural resource management purposes, such as under the Community Resource Management Agreement (CREMA). However, as in other countries, the **issue of tree (and ultimately carbon) property rights remains unresolved** and is resulting in limited progress in project implementation. The IUCN-supported pro-poor REDD+ project operating in the Wassa Amenfi West District is developing tools to address this issue by registering planted trees in collaboration with the national Forest Commission.

The DRC has embarked on an ambitious set of pilot projects largely funded by the Norwegian government through the Congo Basin Forest Fund. Of the ten projects currently in operation, four have specific activities that focus on the implementation of community forestry. However, unlike Tanzania, many of these projects are either recently started or under preparation, and **the legal framework for community forestry in DRC is legally ambiguous and still awaiting formal sanction** (Bofin *et al.* 2011). As such, drawing conclusions at this stage from the DRC REDD+ experiment is premature.

# 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 CONCLUSIONS

This review highlights the diversity of experience across Africa with regard to the evolution and development of externally-initiated community forestry. Results and progress towards implementing community forestry are mixed. While many countries have made policy moves to reverse the “command and control” nature of state-administered forestry over the past two decades, progress towards field level implementation has been mixed.

In countries that have provided a **legal basis for full delegation of forest management rights and responsibilities** through community-based forest management (as for example in Namibia, Tanzania and Gambia), demand has grown and adoption has spread – generating both environmental, as well as socio-economic, returns to local managers and benefits to nation states.

In most of the countries reviewed, however, the **degree of delegation appears to be incomplete, discretionary, impartial or limited in scope**. Furthermore, the influence of powerful actors in terms of reestablishing control over resources (such as timber interests in West and Central Africa), coupled with government push-back, appears to be undermining initial policy goals. Unduly complex and bureaucratic requirements placed on community managers (in terms of management planning, resource assessment and local rule-making) is increasing transaction costs on community-level managers and undermining benefits. The creation of undemocratic and unrepresentative forest management committees at the community-level has, in many cases, resulted in forest management benefits being accrued by village elites.

In part, as a result of these limited delegations of powers and the risk of elite capture, the **benefits accrued by communities from forest management have, so far, been limited**. Given the high levels of poverty across many parts of rural Africa, and high demands for time and labor, questions remain regarding long-term sustainability of many community forestry initiatives. Where financial resources are being generated (with examples in Namibia, Burkina Faso, Tanzania and Senegal), communities have taken rational decisions to ensure that a good portion of finances are reinvested into offsetting forest management costs and the balance allocated to pressing local development needs.

Rural communities across Africa have managed forest commons for centuries through the application of traditional rules, norms and customs. However, externally-initiated community forestry is unfamiliar to many rural Africans, and as such, most community forestry initiatives have been supply driven. As a result, the objectives of the host agency (whether government forest agencies or donor projects) have dominated. Where this **objective has coincided with those of communities (sustainable forest management), successes have been achieved**. All too often, however, the implicit or explicit objectives of the external agency have been conservation and protection, which has had little resonance with local interests or has simply displaced harvesting impacts to other adjacent areas.

## 5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

For projects, donors and government agencies wishing to integrate community forestry processes within the context of REDD+, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Policy reforms** are needed in many countries to provide clear, secure, enforceable and non-discretionary tenure rights over trees, forests, and by extension, carbon. This should be accompanied by the passage of simple, low-cost and verifiable procedures for legalization of community forest agreements and management planning.
- **Legal rights** over forest resources need also be accompanied by the legal mandating by government of community-level management institutions, granting them the rights to make and enforce rules that regulate access and use over defined areas of forest.
- Empowerment implies the definition and **inclusion of all legitimate stakeholders** in the forest management. This should include “invisible” groups such as women, poor households, IPs and distant users, such as seasonal pastoralists.
- **Externally-driven management objectives** regarding reducing deforestation and forest degradation need to be **reconciled with local forest management interests** if sustainable forest outcomes are to be assured. This may involve the inclusion of sustainable forest management within REDD+ plans.
- REDD+ projects need to be aware of and **include measures to address vertical, as well as horizontal, equity** when negotiating the distribution of forest management costs and benefits (including payments).
- Careful attention should be paid to the **development of community-level forest management institutions**, taking account of factors such as geographical scale and the inclusion of accountability mechanisms, as well as links to traditional structures.
- **Support to civil society organizations and associations** is needed to ensure that the potential gains from reforms in forest legislation are not lost through policy “push-back,” complex and cumbersome procedures, or the capture of benefits by political and administrative elites at local, provincial or national governmental levels.
- **Capacity support** provided to community-level management institutions, local forest managers and foresters and other development agents needs to reflect a mix of **technical skills** (forest management, utilization and planning) and **administrative skills** (financial management and book-keeping), as well as **leadership skills** (communication, governance and accountability). Capacity in terms of legitimacy and social capital also need to be enhanced.
- Measures to **control “leakage”** caused by the displacement of harvesting and demand from managed forests to unmanaged areas are needed. This may include the application of local community forestry bylaws to neighboring forests and working at higher levels of scale.
- REDD+ carbon payments may help to offset some management costs, particularly when forests are being restored and are unable to generate financial returns. However, **in many cases REDD+ payments are unlikely to meet the total implementation, transaction and opportunity costs of forest management, and alternative income streams** (from sustainable forest management, for example) will be essential in the medium term. In this respect, support to community forestry systems from governments, multilateral and bilateral institutions, private and foreign investments, and other development partners will be essential.

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