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

FOREST CARBON, MARKETS AND COMMUNITIES (FCMC) PROGRAM

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACM   Adaptive Collaborative Management [or Adaptive Co-management]

CBFM   Community Based Forest Management [The Philippines]

CBFMA   Community Based Forest Management Agreement [The Philippines]

CIFOR   Center for International Forestry Research

CFUG   Community Forestry User Group [Nepal]

CPR   Common Property Regime

DENR   Department of Environment and Natural Resources [The Philippines]

LFA   Land and Forest Allocation [Lao PDR]

FECOFUN   Federation of Community Forest User Groups in Nepal

FOMACOP   Forest Management and Conservation Programme [Lao PDR]

FPIC   Free, Prior and Informed Consent

FRA   Forest Rights Act (2006) [India]

FUG   Forest User Group

ICIMOD   International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

IUCN   International Union for the Conservation of Nature

JFM   Joint Forest Management [India]

Lao PDR   Lao People's Democratic Republic

LEAF   Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests [USAID funded project]

NGO   Non-governmental Organization

Norad   Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation

NTFP   Non-Timber Forest Product

PNG   Papua New Guinea

RECOFTC   The Center for People and Forests (Previously the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific)

REDD+   Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation

RRI   Rights and Resources Initiative

SUFORD   Sustainable Forestry and Rural Development Project [Lao PDR]

UN-REDD   United Nations REDD Programme

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The USAID-supported Forest Carbon, Markets, and Communities (FCMC) Program commissioned this review of lessons learned from community forestry in Asia over the last three and a half decades. Efforts to promote Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) can achieve greater impacts if they build upon relevant lessons learned from experiences in community forestry.

KEY FINDINGS ON COMMUNITY FORESTRY

Empowerment of Communities: The importance of clear tenure rights held by communities is widely recognized as crucial to community forestry. Community forest tenure is legally recognized in the Pacific, but rarely in Asia. With few exceptions, community rights in Asia are based on agreements arising from administrative discretion, not on legal recognition of customary rights. Community rights rely on and are conditioned by governance. For community empowerment, the existence of "effective" rights is most crucial. Governance constraints generally limit the effectiveness of community rights, even when those rights appear solid on paper. The discretionary powers of state agencies commonly diminish the rights formally conferred. Community forest tenure in Asia is usually granted only on a short or limited term basis. Complex and cumbersome regulations and high levels of oversight often undermine community rights, and these rights tend to be limited to the use of forest products for domestic consumption and sometimes for limited sale

Governance and Stakeholder Engagement: In addition to community forestry programs initiated by governments and other external partners, many examples exist of locally initiated community forestry systems. Features of successful self-initiated community institutions are extremely variable. What they hold in common are shared ideas about how forests should be managed and how decisions should be made. Even where self-initiated community forestry does not yet exist, encouraging new groups to self-identify adds to the likelihood of empowerment and success.

Benefits and Incentives: The most common benefit to communities is improved legal access to forest products for domestic consumption. There have been very few cases of significant cash income from community forestry and evidence for community forestry contributing to poverty reduction is relatively rare. The harvesting and commercial marketing of timber under community forestry is uncommon. Impacts seem to have been greater in conservation terms than livelihood and poverty reduction terms. Benefits have frequently failed to reach women and the poor.

Capacity Building needs can be broadly categorized into the fields of forest management skills and business and administrative skills. Basic literacy is also important for good governance and for the empowerment of women in particular. Capacity building for forestry departments requires more than just training and the development of new skills. It requires a paradigm shift that must include effective support to field agents from their supervisors and the forest agency itself. Development of new forms of participatory silviculture adapted to community needs and capabilities is needed, but little progress has been made.

Scaling Up: Two key conditions for scaling up are successful, proven pilot initiatives and favorable policy and legal frameworks. Good policies for community forestry generally emerge from successful field experience. Both of these elements may take a great deal of time to put in place.

Sustainability: There is a broad consensus that self-initiated forms of community forestry have made significant contributions to the maintenance of healthy forests and that externally initiated community forestry programs have maintained or improved forest quality. Most community forestry programs have benefited from long-term donor support, i.e., 15-20 years of donor support may be optimal for community

forestry to become self-sustaining. The key challenge for socio-economic sustainability is to balance the positive benefits of community forestry with the transaction costs and restricted resource access involved in externally promoted programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDD+

- REDD+ interventions need to focus on communities that have legally enforceable rights to their forests, and they should not be undermined by unnecessary administration and regulation. It is essential that REDD+ interventions minimize the tendency towards external regulation that limits community decision-making. A "minimum standards approach" to meeting government requirements would help address the problem of excessive regulation while maintaining an overall level of responsibility.

- REDD+ interventions should focus, as far as possible, on formalized community forestry groups that previously existed as self-identified groups with shared traditional tenure in informal systems. Even where self-initiated community forestry does not exist, allowing new groups to self-identify rather than being identified by outsiders adds to the likelihood that the groups will feel empowered.

- The process of registering or formalizing rights should be as simple and flexible as possible, since complex administrative processes often override working local arrangements for forest access or decision-making and can disadvantage women and other sub-groups.

- Given the need for economies of scale and improved governance in REDD+ implementation, umbrella groups, such as federations or associations of community forestry user groups, should be formed in a way that does not unduly interfere with rights and decision-making of user groups.

- To succeed in its goals of forest conservation and poverty reduction, REDD+ must avoid reducing access to existing livelihood benefits. If rules imposed to conserve forests result in lost income, REDD+ must provide adequate alternative income as compensation and incentive for REDD+ participation. REDD+ costs and benefits need to be analyzed to see whether and how much REDD+ will contribute to community livelihoods and wellbeing.

- REDD+ implementers must avoid disadvantaging communities as a whole, or individuals and sub-groups, as a result of changed forest management arrangements. To promote positive outcomes and prevent disadvantages for women and other disadvantaged groups, REDD+ requires interventions tailored to these groups. Simply assuming that benefits will "trickle down" is inadequate.

- As carbon credit payments will almost certainly not be adequate incentive, combinations of benefits from other sources will be needed. States will need to consider community rights for commercial harvesting of timber and other innovative ways of meeting needs and generating income.

- To benefit from REDD+ programs, many communities will need financial management, business and bookkeeping training. Training for government and NGO staff should provide participatory extension, community development and social assessment skills rather than skills in technical forestry. Capacity building is most likely to be effective if training includes field-based activities and follow-up mentoring and coaching once implementation has commenced.

- Pilot and demonstration projects are needed to explore models for REDD+ implementation before detailed policy prescriptions are developed. The pilots should provide benefits in the form of carbon credits as soon as possible.

- To enhance social, economic and environmental sustainability, it is vital to provide long-term support to communities. To build and maintain confidence in REDD+, significant benefits to communities in the form of carbon credits should flow as quickly as possible.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1   PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY FORESTRY REVIEW

Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) is a mechanism being developed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). REDD+ aims to provide potentially significant cash or other incentives to developing countries to protect and expand their forests, with the understanding that forests can sequester significant amounts of atmospheric carbon to mitigate climate change.

Standing forests in REDD+ recipient countries are major sources of livelihoods for rural people in those countries. Rural people have historically had restricted access to the forest products that contribute to their livelihoods. The emergence of community forestry has occurred in recognition of the need to engage them in achieving proper management and, sometimes, in recognition of the forest's importance to livelihoods. The word "sometimes" is added here because much early community forestry was motivated more by a concern for forest conservation than by a concern for livelihoods and poverty alleviation.

There are many definitions of community forestry. This document reviews other studies of community forestry and some of these may have used differing definitions of community forestry. In general, however, for this FCMC series of reviews the following definition is used:

> **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 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 plantations and woodlots.

Given the close connections between rural people and forests and the growing recognition of communities' role in forest management and protection, community forestry is relevant to REDD+. The successes and failures of community forest management provide important lessons for the effective role of rural people in forest conservation and management. This review aims to identify lessons learned from community forestry in Asia that may contribute to effective REDD+ implementation. It is part of a larger global review of community forestry lessons learned. This report focuses on South Asia and Southeast Asia and includes some lessons from other Asian and Pacific countries.

The wide experience of community forestry in the last three decades provides insights into what motivates people to become actively engaged in forest management, what discourages them from becoming engaged, and which factors enable effective collective action in forest management. Often, lessons can be learned also from projects that have had more limited success in terms of contributions to sustainable forest management, livelihoods and poverty reduction outcomes.

The review does not deal explicitly with possible negative impacts of REDD+ on community forestry, although indigenous peoples and others have raised many concerns on this point. Its task is to focus on community forestry experiences that can positively inform REDD+. Which lessons are relevant to REDD+

management of forests for sustainable carbon sequestration. However, there is wide concern amongst REDD+ proponents that communities should not be disadvantaged by REDD+, that benefits should be shared equitably and, at least among proponents who support "pro-poor REDD+," that REDD+ should actively promote poverty alleviation. This review assumes that lessons on how equity and pro-poor benefits have been achieved are relevant to the implementation of REDD+ conceived as pro-poor REDD+. It therefore includes lessons from community forestry that can inform REDD+ both as an effective tool for forest conservation and as an approach concerned with poverty reduction and livelihoods.

The connection between community forestry and REDD+ is explicit in many countries, with several pilot programs, e.g. in Nepal and Cambodia, using community forestry groups as the basis for REDD+ interventions. Many publications explore the connections between community forestry and REDD+ in the Asian region, including some prepared by the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC, formerly known as the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre) (e.g. RECOFTC *et al.* 2010, RECOFTC and RRI 2011).

1.2   METHODOLOGY USED AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is based on an extensive literature review of academic, policy and program documents, documents produced by activists, and project reports and publications. The focus is primarily on Nepal and mainland Southeast Asia, where the author has extensive expertise and experience. The information obtained from the literature review has been supplemented by many discussions with informants in various parts of the region.

Much of the available literature promotes community forestry successes from the point of view of donors or projects. Community forestry advocates tend to report benefits without balancing these with costs. The literature is often uncritical and hence a poor basis for making critical assessments and drawing out significant lessons. Linked with this is the reluctance – especially in documents linked with donors – to consider power issues. For example, the reluctance of forest departments to devolve genuine control of forests to communities is often attributed to a lack of confidence or trust in communities to manage forests sustainably, whereas it is related in reality to a desire to maintain individual and institutional power and control over valuable resources. Critical perspectives on issues of power tend to come from academic sources (e.g. Springate-Baginski and Blaikie 2007, Graner 1997 on Nepal) or activist sources (Focus on the Global South 2011). Because of these limitations, identifying lessons learned involves to some extent learning from what is missing in the literature.

Community forestry in Thailand. Photo by Robert J. Fisher.

2.0 OVERVIEW

The Asia-Pacific Region is characterized by great cultural diversity, great diversity of forest types and diverse approaches to community forestry. Several countries have large areas of remaining tropical forests, making them particularly relevant to REDD+. Notable among them are Indonesia, especially Sumatra and Borneo, which Indonesia shares with Malaysia and Brunei, and New Guinea, including both independent Papua New Guinea (PNG) and the Indonesia province of Papua. The Philippines, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Vietnam, China and Central Asia have smaller absolute areas of forests, but a relatively large proportion of forests compared with land area.

According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), their 2010 Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) indicates that Asia and the Pacific now constitute 783.9 million hectares or about 19.4 percent of the world forests (FAO 2010). Asia has 7 million ha of forests that are either existing or pipeline REDD+ projects, comprising 31 percent of the world's private market "high-quality credits" (derived from data tables used in preparation of Nimz *et al.* 2013).

The many estimates on numbers of forest dependent people are fraught with problems related to defining forest dependence (Byron and Arnold 1997) and are often widely inconsistent (Chao 2012, Fisher *et al.* 1997). Fisher *et al.* (1997: 7) decided not to provide estimates "of numbers of people closely dependent on forests for three reasons":

> Firstly, there is tendency for guesstimates, however carefully qualified, to attain the status of 'facts' after a few cycles of citation and re-citation. Secondly, broad numbers related to broad categories tend to aggregate quite different types of people-forest relationships, masking differences which have potentially quite important consequences. Thirdly, the process of generating the estimates was so arbitrary (reflecting the limitations of meaningful data) as to be quite unacceptable.

Accepting the above, it is fair to say that estimates of indigenous peoples living in forests vary widely around 150 million and estimates of forest dependent peoples in Asia vary widely around 500 million.

Discussions of forest dependent people and forest-people interactions often emphasize indigenous people. While the term "indigenous" has a fairly clear application in cases such as the Philippines, it is more problematic in counties where almost everyone is indigenous by normal definitions (PNG, Mongolia) or where "non-indigenous" people have been present for longer than some other indigenous groups (Thailand). Some countries with large ethnic minority populations, such as Thailand, do not recognize indigenous groups as a legal category, although they acknowledge the "hill tribes" as ethnic minorities. Community forestry programs in Asia generally involve large numbers of "non-indigenous" local people and not just indigenous people. The Philippines is to some extent an exception in that it has a distinct focus on community forestry in land held under ancestral domain, although non-indigenous local people are also engaged in Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM). Because of the large numbers of non-indigenous "local" people involved in community forestry in Asia, this paper is not closely focused on indigenous peoples.

While many countries have some form of community forestry, there is a great deal of diversity of community forestry programs and approaches within Asia. What most Asian countries have in common is that most forests are formally under state control. While community forestry programs differ widely, they have in common some form of decentralization of responsibility for forest management. Sometimes, but not always, local communities have rights over forests, but, in general, these rights are highly circumscribed.

In most of Asia, forests have been under state control for decades, and, in some cases, centuries. The Pacific is different. In Melanesian countries in particular, customary land ownership, including forest ownership, is legally recognized. But even where state control has long existed in Asia, local institutional arrangements

related to community forests often persisted in parallel with official state tenure. Some literature refers to these as "indigenous" systems; other literature refers to them as "traditional" systems, although the word "traditional", with its connotations of antiquity, does not always apply, since many locally initiated systems are relatively new. In the case of Nepal, **new locally initiated systems** emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the lack of effective forest management by the state (Fisher 1989, Gilmour and Fisher 1991). Other terms used are "self-initiated" and "discovered". Examples of these "self-initiated" systems have been well documented in Nepal (Messerschmidt 1987, Fisher 1989, Tamang *et al.* 1993), Indonesia, India and elsewhere. **Shifting cultivation systems** in many parts of the region – Indonesia, Lao PDR, Cambodia, the Philippines, Thailand and elsewhere – are, in effect, a form of indigenous community forestry. Although the shifting cultivation plots are almost always farmed as individual household plots, they exist in a wider forested landscape in which land is understood as collective property and in which distribution of plots, in terms of both location and distribution to households, tends to be managed collectively. In Sumatra, community agroforests are managed in more or less the same way (de Foresta *et al.* 2004).

Often, customary tenure arrangements and customary or self-initiated community forestry arrangements are not given legal recognition in Asia. The 1997 ancestral domain laws and regulations in the Philippines are a clear exception. *Adat* (customary law and practice) is legally recognized in the Indonesian Constitution, but the connection with national law is complex and unclear. The recent 2006 Forest Rights Act (FRA) in India recognizes the customary forest rights of tribal people and other traditional forest dwellers, but implementation and formalization of rights has been difficult and there is a great deal of opposition within forest departments and conservation groups. In Nepal, official community forestry follows pre-existing locally recognized rights and is built upon customary practices to a large extent.

Official community forestry programs are now widespread in the region. Community forestry programs emerged in Nepal in the late 1970s and in the Philippines in the 1980s. There were early attempts to involve communities in plantations under the guise of "social forestry" in India and Indonesia. The Joint Forest Management (JFM) approach with experiments in Haryana that emerged in India in the 1980s has since developed into an enormous nation-wide program. The early examples of community forestry in Asia as a region were documented in many publications, notably including Poffenberger's *Keepers of the Forest* (1990). There is a vast amount of community forestry-related literature available in English on several Asian countries. This is especially true of Nepal, India, the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. More limited literature is available on most other countries. Melanesia is less well documented, although there is relevant material available for PNG. More recently, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) and the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC, previously the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific) have been sources of a wide variety of material on community forestry generally.

The following is a very brief selective summary of community forestry in some Asian countries. These examples illustrate the range of community forestry types and issues.

Nepal. Community forestry experience in Nepal dates to the late 1970s. Nepal is usually held up as a prototype for community forestry in Asia, and several other countries have adopted aspects of its approach. The program is large, with tens of thousands of user groups, mainly in the middle hill region. According to the Department of Forests database in April 2009, there were 14,439 user groups involving over 1.6 million households and managing about 1.3 million hectares or about a quarter of Nepal's forest area (Ojha *et al.* 2009, quoting the Department of Forests database). The main feature of the program, supported by legislation passed in 1993, is the "handover" of permanent usufruct rights to communities in the form of Forest User Groups (FUGs), giving communities the rights to manage and use forests subject to an approved management plan.

The Philippines. A variety of programs support various forms of CBFM in the Philippines and a great deal of effort has been put into supporting these programs, including support by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) since 1982 (Clausen *et al.* n.d.). Starting in 1982, the Integrated Social Forestry Program allowed individuals to farm in upland areas in return for forest protection and reforestation. CBFM, initiated in 1996, involved a shift from individual to community tenure. Under CBFM, certificates

were issued to People's Organizations (POs) as Community Based Forest Management Agreements (CBFMAs). CBFM applied to settler farmers, and to indigenous groups holding Certificates of Ancestral Domain under the Indigenous People Rights Act (1998). An assessment of CBFM in 2012 by USAID found 1,815 CBFMAs, covering over 1.6 million hectares with 1.3 million beneficiaries (Braganza and Erdmann 2012).

Vietnam. Vietnam has been allocating forest-land to individual households since 1993. After some experiments with community forestry, it was formally legalized in the 2004 Forest Protection and Development Law, and more widely promoted with the Community Forestry Management Pilot Program of 2006, which reached 64 villages in 10 provinces (RECOFTC 2012a).

Thailand. In Thailand, community forestry is largely a people's movement supported by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and activist academics. With no clear legal framework, community forestry is widely practiced in an unofficial but tolerated form. A bill on people's rights to protected forests was debated for nearly twenty years. Alternative versions of the bill were drafted, with the Royal Forest Department's version granting highly restricted access and activists proposing relatively liberal provisions. A law passed by Parliament in 2007 was challenged in the Constitutional Court and subsequently lapsed. This aborted version granted limited community forestry rights subject to all sorts of controls (Fisher 2011). Some small experiments with official community forestry took place under Section 19 of the National Reserved Forest Act (1964), which allows unspecified activities under the discretion of the Director-General of Forests. Section 19 does not mention community forestry, but has been used to support some activities (Onprom 2012). The limitations imposed by the National Reserved Forest Act conflict with provisions of the Decentralization Act, which recognizes some areas in reserved forests near villages as community forests. This has occurred in relatively few cases, the legal status is unclear and the whole process seems to involve testing the waters under the constitution (Onprom pers comm.).

India. Attention in India regarding people and forests centers on the JFM program. JFM began with experiments in the early 1980s (see Poffenberger and McGean 1996) and has since become a massive program with activities in most states. The Indian government does not recognize JFM as a form of community forestry. Given that it essentially involves paying communities for services such as forest protection and management done for the forest departments, with no suggestion of devolved or recognised rights, it is a long way from community forestry as usually understood. Nevertheless, the experience of JFM in India does provide lessons relevant to community forestry and REDD+, so it is discussed in this review. A separate framework for community forestry now exists under the Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA)[1], which recognizes the pre-existing rights to forests of tribal people and "other traditional forest dwellers". There are also examples of self-initiated community forestry systems in India.

Indonesia. Following the end of the Suharto regime in 1998, the Basic Forest Law was revised "granting forest villages equal access to use and manage state-owned forests" (RECOFTC 2012b). Subsequently eight types of community forests backed by government policies have developed. These include community-based forests and village forests (*Hutan Desa*), both of which provide forests to communities under 35-year leases (RECOFTC 2012b). RECOFTC also mentions a variety of "community-initiated" systems that operate without policy support, but are supported by NGOs.

Lao PDR.[2] Community forestry in Lao PDR is closely tied to the Land and Forest Allocation (LFA) process. This process began as a movement to recognize the land rights of rural people. However, it was heavily motivated by concerns about "stabilizing" shifting cultivation and became essentially a process of demarcating village boundaries and identifying agricultural and forest zones within these boundaries. In

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[1] The full name of the Act is the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. This development corrected the expropriation of customary rights under the British, a process that was continued in Independent India.

[2] Information in this paragraph is largely based on discussions with Dr Yayoi Fujita. See also Fujita (2010) on the LFA policy.

practice, around 80 percent of village lands were designated as forests of various types. The main impact of the LFA process was restricting forest use, although collection of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) was permitted in some forest categories. A second policy relevant to community forestry involved the Forest Management and Conservation Programme (FOMACOP)[3], which started in 1995 and its successor, the Sustainable Forestry and Rural Development Project (SUFORD) from 2004 to 2011. This project involved a form of co-management in production forests based on agreements between government and villagers about distribution of benefits from timber harvesting. (SUFORD has been involved in REDD+ readiness activities.)

Mongolia. In the era of Soviet influence in Mongolia, the state owned all forests and Collective Forest Farms managed the forests. Forests remain under state "ownership". However, the government has introduced an approach of management by user groups with the support and encouragement of bilateral and international agencies. The broad concept is heavily influenced by community forestry in Nepal, even to the extent that, in English, the program is called "community forestry" and user groups are called FUGs (Forest User Groups) as in Nepal. Despite these similarities the program is closer to the Indian JFM approach. FUGs sign an agreement with the forest department and receive agreed benefits in return for carrying out tasks. The benefits include subsidized prices for forest products for household use and the right to sell specified quantities of fuelwood and timber on the market. In practice the income is limited and the forest department maintains a high degree of direct control. Marketing regulations and local government policies complicate the marketing process.

A peculiarity of community forestry in Mongolia, where forests are almost entirely located in the northern hill areas, is that most of the user groups consist of semi-nomadic pastoralists, with relatively little knowledge or interest in using forests except for fuel wood, construction timber and grazing. Further, extensive long distance migration after the Soviet period has meant that many FUG members are migrants from regions where there is no forest and who, therefore, have little direct connection with forests.

In most of Asia, official community forestry is overwhelmingly based on state owned forests with various levels of usufruct rights. There is very little in the way of recognition of permanent rights.

Discussion of REDD+ in Asia has been linked explicitly with community forestry (RECOFTC and RRI 2011). In Nepal and Cambodia, REDD+ pilots have been tied to community forestry groups. Many publications address the potential links between community forestry and REDD+ (see, for example, RECOFTC *et al.* 2010, RECOFTC and RRI 2011) and many documents express caution about threats from REDD+ implementation to community forestry, including threats to the rights of indigenous and local people (Focus on the Global South 2011). A paper on REDD+ pilots in Nepal and their impact on gender argues that women have been largely excluded from the process, that women are unlikely to benefit from REDD+ unless they are "equal participants in the decision making processes" and that REDD+ initiatives need to include affirmative action policies that are part of community forestry (WOCAN 2012: 2). Other documents stress the need for safeguards to community forestry and human rights (Sikor and Tan n.d.), including the development of guidelines for Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) prior to the activation of REDD+ (Anderson 2011).

In general, **REDD+ in Asia has rarely moved beyond the preparation phase for REDD+ readiness**. There have been a small number of pilots involving payments. One key example is a Norad-funded pilot in Nepal (Rana *et al.* 2012). REDD+ projects, usually REDD+ readiness, have been supported by a variety of bilateral donors such as Norad in Nepal, the United States in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, PNG, Thailand, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines, and Australia in Indonesia in addition to the United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD), and the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FPCF) and Forest Investment Program (FIP), managed by the World Bank.

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[3] For discussion of FOMACOP see Fujita *et al.* (2005).

Although there is increasing discussion of REDD+ in relation to forests in Asia and the Pacific, experience on the ground is limited apart from a few small-scale pilots. Much of the discussion of the relevance of REDD+ to community forestry will need to be based on inference from what has happened with other forest projects. There is some mainly anecdotal evidence that the potential availability of REDD+ funds is an incentive for forest agencies to take back rights conceded to communities and to oppose devolution.

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

3.0 KEY LESSONS FOR REDD+

3.1 EMPOWERMENT OF COMMUNITIES

3.1.1 Community Tenure

The importance of clear tenure rights held by communities is widely recognized as crucial to community forestry and will obviously be relevant to REDD+. This notion is so widely recognized that it has become something of a truism. However, close analysis of the relationship between tenure and effective community forestry, especially in terms of effectiveness in providing livelihood and other benefits to communities, suggests that, **even where community tenure is legally recognized, many factors hinder the delivery of benefits**. Understanding these factors cannot be easily separated from discussion of tenure.

Various forms of unofficial tenure are relatively common in Asia. Both indigenous peoples and non-indigenous communities have **long established systems of rights that are mutually recognized within groups and, often, by neighboring communities**. However, unlike the situation in much of Latin America, legal recognition of these rights is relatively uncommon, with partial exceptions with regard to indigenous peoples in the Philippines and India. Where rights are not legally recognized, access according to unofficial rights is often tolerated, though subject to the risk of legal action or to demands from local officials for "unofficial" payments in return for turning a blind eye.

As previously mentioned, there are **exceptions to the general pattern that customary rights are not legally recognized**, such as the cases of ancestral domain in the Philippines and the FRA in India. Customary (*adat*) rights to forests are recognized in Indonesia, but processes for delineating forests under these rights remain ambiguous and undefined. *Adat* rights are not specific to indigenous peoples but to customary practices. In fact Indonesia does not recognize indigenous peoples as a legal category (RRI 2012). The situation in Asia is quite different from the situation in Melanesia, where customary tenure has clear recognition under law and, in the case of PNG, under the Constitution. In PNG, 97 percent of the land is held under customary tenure, usually under clans that are the local landholder groups.

Although legal recognition of customary tenure is relatively uncommon in much of Asia, there is an **increasing incidence of legally recognized rights based on land that is distributed or allocated by governments**. It is important to distinguish between programs based on discretionary "granting" of rights and recognition of rights as being in some sense pre-existing and applicable to all members of a specified population. Colchester (2008) stresses the difference between a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) and a narrow focus on rights to property, i.e., tenure rights (See also FAO 2011).

A recent study (RRI 2012b) assessed legally recognized rights and examines these according to different types of rights ("bundle of rights"), including access rights, management rights, and rights to sell products. This global Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) study covers nine countries in Asia: Nepal, India, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia and PNG. The Philippines is a notable exception. Overall the study reports that 151 million hectares are held by communities under legally recognized tenure systems, representing 34 percent of forest areas in the countries studied, and 66 percent of forests are under state "ownership." The study identified a variety of forest tenure regimes relevant to communities in these countries. For example, in addition to community forests, four other types of tenure regime were identified in Nepal: community leasehold forests granted to communities; religious forests transferred to communities; and buffer zone community forests and buffer zone religious forests transferred to communities.

The RRI study then considers the different types of rights that exist under each type of regime. Sixteen of the seventeen regimes recognize the rights of people to access forests. Sixteen of the seventeen allow some

community use of timber, although some limit this to subsistence uses. Only two allow sale of land by communities. This type of analysis helps to clarify the many different combinations of rights within the "bundles of rights," but it does not, in itself, help to assess the extent to which the rights can be effectively applied. It is also important to remember that the analysis applies only to the forests that have been allocated to indigenous peoples and communities.

An analysis by RRI and ITTO analysis (2009, RRI 2012a) also broke down the tenure situation a bit differently, as show below. This analysis was based on data from China, Australia, Indonesia, India, Myanmar, PNG, Thailand and Cambodia, which represent 82 percent of tropical forests in Asia and the Pacific. It found that governments administered 68 percent of the forests in these countries, 28 percent were either owned by or designated for use by communities and indigenous peoples, and 4 percent were owned by individuals or firms.

Box 1. Asia Forest Tenure

- 68.0% — Administered by Government
- 25.0% — Owned by Communities and Indigenous Peoples
- 3.0% — Designated for Use by Communities and Indigenous Peoples
- 4.0% — Owned by Individuals and Firms

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. 2008) 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.

3.1.2 The Importance of "Effective" Rights in Tenure and Empowerment

Box 2. Effective Rights

Community empowerment under community forestry depends on rights to access and use forests based on tenure, but statements about what rights exist or do not exist often obscure the point that the existence of "effective" rights is really crucial.

Cotula and Mayers (2009)[4] point out the value of differentiating between the strength of local tenure "on paper" and "in practice." They suggest that local control can be described in a matrix showing how these features relate in a given case. The possible combinations include: strong tenure on paper combined with strong tenure in practice; strong tenure on paper combined with weak tenure in practice; weak tenure on paper combined with strong tenure in practice; and weak tenure on paper combined with weak tenure in practice. Cotula and Mayers (2009: 5) point out that: "Tenure relies on, and is conditioned by, governance. Effective tenure is both impossible to achieve without supportive policy and institutional systems, and rather useless without broader institutional capacity to do something with it."

The allocation of rights and responsibilities to communities is a major concern in the policy emphasis on decentralization in forestry. A great deal of literature has been published on the concept of decentralization and the related concept of devolution. In addition to theoretical analyses, there have been several major collections focused on Asia specifically (Enters *et al.* 2000, Edmunds and Wollenberg 2003, Colfer *et al.* 2008, Wittayapak and Vandergeest 2010).

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[4] Thanh and Sikor (2006) explore the difference between "legal acts and actual powers" in Vietnam.

It is useful to focus on the difference between decentralizing power and authority and decentralizing responsibility[5]. The two do not always go together. Experiences in Asia and elsewhere clearly show that responsibility is often passed to communities with very limited effective power[6] to make and implement decisions about forest use. Frequently, forest management plans have to be approved by forest authorities. This process is not only time-consuming; it usually involves highly detailed prescriptions. The transaction costs for communities are often high, and little space is given for making real management decisions.

A review of specific applications of community forest tenure identifies **some factors that limit its effectiveness.** In Nepal,[7] the 1993 Forest Act formalized the "handing over" of community forests to all communities that are capable of and wish to manage them. Rights to community forests were thus considered to be a right of all communities, subject to certain conditions, rather than a matter of bureaucratic discretion. Despite this ruling, actual implementation is still subject to a great deal of bureaucratic control. Before an area of forest is "handed over", a Community Forestry User Group (CFUG) with a defined membership and constitution is formed. The CFUG prepares a management plan with the assistance of, and in consultation with, the District Forest Office. This plan specifies the way the forest will be managed, what forest products can be harvested and when. Although the plan is supposed to be developed in close consultation with the District Forest Office, in practice DFOs prefer to approve plans that allow fairly limited use. The law allows timber harvesting if it is included in the management plan. In practice timber harvesting is rarely included in approved plans, apart from small amounts of timber for domestic use or local sale, and in a few cases, CFUGs running approved sawmills for commercial timber processing.

On several occasions, the Ministry of Forests attempted to wind back community forestry rights by imposing increased regulation, such as requirements for detailed forest inventory in all management plans. The Ministry has so far been relatively unsuccessful in these efforts, in part because of the political influence of community forestry activists, especially through the Federation of Community Forest User Groups in Nepal (FECOFUN).

Overall, community forest tenure in Nepal can be described as extensive rights available in principle to communities but subject to a high degree of discretionary regulation by the District Forest Offices.

In India, JFM groups enter into agreements with the State Forest Departments[8], which largely decide the details. These agreements specify what forest-related tasks the group will undertake, such as production of seedlings, plantation and forest protection, and also what benefits they will receive in return. Benefits can be in the form of rights to collect specified quantities of fuelwood and NTFPs, access to irrigation water from the forests and even rights to a share of timber harvests when forests mature, although benefit sharing from harvested timber has rarely, if ever, resulted. To the extent that there are rights, they are based on a contracted fee for service. The separate FRA specifically recognizes the rights of tribal people to live in and use forests; ownership clearly remains with the state (Bose 2011).

Community forest tenure in Asia is usually granted only on a short or limited term basis. Again, **the emphasis is on discretionary granting of rights rather than recognition of pre-existing or universally applicable rights**. Nepal is a major exception to limited term rights, where usufruct rights are permanent in principle, as is PNG where "ownership" is

> **Box 3. Discretionary Rights**
>
> In the Philippines, CBFM is approved for 25 years, renewable at the discretion of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources-DENR. In 2006, the Secretary of DENR issued an order that cancelled all existing CBFM Agreements in the country because of concerns about misuse.

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[5] Fisher (1999: 3) defines decentralization as "the relocation of administrative functions away from a central location, and devolution as the relocation of power away from a central location."

[6] Power can be defined as the capacity to make (or at least have an input into) meaningful (or effective) decisions (Fisher 2003).

[7] The description of CF tenure in Nepal is based largely on the author's personal experience.

[8] While JFM is a national program it is implemented by state Forest Departments and each participating state has separate JFM Regulations.

clearly permanent. In Cambodia, community forestry agreements are limited to a fifteen-year renewable term. As the forested areas are often in much degraded condition, this is not long enough to allow benefits to flow (senior government official, pers comm.). In addition, there is the risk that these forests will be reallocated to powerful individuals or groups once they become valuable. There are several common problems, described below, that impact the capacity of forest tenure to benefit communities and provide a basis for large-scale and sustained forest management. These issues are frequently related to constraints and limits placed on forest tenure rights.

- Concern by forest agencies with detailed management planning that limits the capacity of communities to decide about forest management according to their own priorities (as opposed to Ribot's "minimum standards approach" – see below). This problem is widely recognized (see, for example, FAO 2011).

- In most countries forest tenure is discretionary, based on bureaucratic allocation rather than the principle that people have "natural" rights to forests. Rights are "granted" or "allocated" rather than recognized as existing rights.

- Even when rights are "recognized," they are often subject to complex and sometimes counterproductive processes in implementation and formalization, as in the case with FRA implementation in India.

- Rights are often subject to arbitrary cancellation or at least potentially subject to arbitrary cancellation. Examples are the actual cancellation of all CBFM Agreements in the Philippines in 2006, and the obvious potential for this to happen in Cambodia, especially given the entrenched system of patronage in government. The aborted Community Forest Bill in Thailand placed great discretionary powers for officials to cancel community forest approvals (Fisher 2011).

- The potential for forest tenure to benefit people is often undermined by the existence of regulations and restrictions operating within the forestry sector, or in other sectors.

- In the Philippines, CBFM groups need a variety of licenses to profit from timber harvesting. They require a license to harvest and another license to transport the timber (Suzuki *et al.* 2008), which costs money. There are high transaction costs in obtaining licenses, as applicants need to visit DENR offices that are not conveniently located. Clausen *et al.* (n.d.: 70) states that the DENR "has now created a system (permits, management plan approvals, taxes, etc) that makes it virtually impossible for fledgling communities to establish sound management practices of their own." Cronkleton *et al.* (2012), in a review that includes India and the Philippines, identifies similar barriers to participation and profits for community forest enterprises. Pulhin *et al.* (2010) also discusses regulatory barriers to community benefits and Isorena (2008) points out how in the Philippines inconsistent policy shifts between permitting and not permitting "the harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products" acts as a constraint against community forestry groups moving "to the operational level."

3.1.3 Risks in Tenure Reform Processes

There is a great deal of discussion globally on the need for forest tenure reform. It is a major theme of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in forest policy (see, for example, FAO 2011) and is almost universally about reform in the direction of decentralized forest tenure. It is, however, important to remember that the trend towards changing tenure is not always a move towards reduced control by the state. Analysis of cases from Asia also indicates a high degree of persistence of state control in ways discussed above (Fisher 2010). Work by Sarin and others on JFM in India suggests that the implementation of JFM in some states included efforts to capture forests that were already operating as successful pre-existing systems, or under tenure regimes recognized by other government agencies, and incorporate them into the JFM program (Sarin 2001, Sarin *et al.* 2003; Singh 2001). This reduced the level of local control and established new committee structures that reduced the decision-making influence of women and, as a result, reduced their access to forest resources. Singh observes that imposing JFM on pre-existing systems led to a loss of forest-based income, which, under JFM, had to be split 50-50 with the Forest Department.

In India, individuals and communities may submit claims for agricultural plots and community forests under the FRA (Bose 2011). These rights are not automatically allocated and there is a complex process of surveying and recognizing rights. Bose found that in Rajasthan, the process of recognition has serious impacts on tribal women. Under traditional conditions, women and men tended to make decisions about forest use informally and collectively. Formalization under the FRA has led to decisions being made by committees dominated by men. Bose argues that because decisions are taken by committees, women have significantly reduced "individual access to forests" since the FRA was implemented. She also argues that women have been unsuccessful in their claims for individual land because of the way the law is interpreted. Officials from the mainstream Hindu background tend to be biased towards men in approving land claims. Further, while the FRA allows for individual property rights and community rights, emphasis is placed – in Bose's case study villages at least – on individual property rights over collective rights, reducing women's legal "access to forest resources for subsistence". The FRA case illustrates the way discretionary interpretations can affect tenure outcomes, and the way that well-intentioned tenure reform can have perverse unintended consequences that make some members of a population worse off.

Where tenure reform does not take the subtlety of existing tenure and decision-making processes into account, it can have severe negative impacts on group effectiveness and on certain sub-groups within a population.[9] One challenge to tenure reform is that customary tenure arrangements tend to involve mixtures of collective and individual rights. This is particularly clear in the case of swidden agriculture in which plots are farmed individually but fall within an overall community territory with collective distribution of plots and collective regulations. Tenure reform may ignore much of this subtlety, as in the Bose study described above. In the early period of community forestry in Nepal, emphasis was placed on transferring forests to the control of the village *panchayats* (formal local politico-administrative units). This presented serious problems. The *panchayats* were large units, often consisting of nine or more villages and even more hamlets. The boundaries of forests did not coincide with the boundaries of *panchayats,* and the people who used forests under locally recognized rights came from only parts of *panchayats* and often from villages in different *panchayats*. Customary users saw allocating community forests to *panchayats* as giving away "our forests". It was only with the abandonment of the *panchayat* system following the 1990 Revolution that the process became focused on forming FUGs based on pre-existing use rights. The lesson had been learned earlier, but the formal need to involve the *panchayat* added new layers of institutional complexity.

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Box 4. Secure Tenure

The importance of secure tenure, meaning at least secure rights of forest access, is clear from experiences in Asia. It is also clear that secure tenure involves more than just a formal commitment: it requires the associated power to make and implement decisions about forest management and use without undue regulation by forest authorities and other sectors. The power to make meaningful (that is, implementable) decisions is an essential accompaniment to effective tenure rights.

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There is **evidence that effective community forestry may occur even in the absence of clear rights**. A lot of community forestry in Asia is effective, at least in regard to sustainable forest management. In Nepal, experiments continued in community forestry for at least fifteen years in the absence of clear rights, before they were encapsulated in forest legislation. Communities engaged in official community forestry from 1977 to 1993 were very effective in planting new forests and regenerating older degraded forests. In addition, self-initiated community forestry effectively managed extensive areas of forest when its existence was barely noticed. As mentioned earlier, local unofficial community forestry emerged as a response to the lack of effective forest management by the government in many cases.

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[9] Fingleton (1998) identifies a number of issues related to the legal recognition of indigenous groups. A key concern, relevant to recognition of rights to forests, is that "The dilemma for indigenous groups is how to obtain the potential benefits of legal recognition while ensuring the nature of that recognition does not seriously disrupt their cultural integrity and their ability to continue operating according to community-based laws and institutions."

Clear ownership of forests by communities does not necessarily ensure that communities benefit from community forestry. In PNG, local customary ownership of land, including forests, is guaranteed by the constitution and is almost universally accepted as a principle. Nevertheless, the regulatory framework restricts benefits to communities. Not only are landowners subject to severe limitations imposed by regulation, but they are often subject to pressure in the form of land grabbing by commercial interests. Of particular relevance to REDD+ are cases of "carbon cowboys"[10] who have been "accused of manipulating local forest owners to surrender their carbon rights" (Global Witness 2011: 10).

Modest local experiments in **informal tenure reform** ("tinkering with tenure") can instill confidence in continued forest access that encourages people to invest time and effort in forestry activities (Fisher *et al.* 2012). The idea of negotiated rights is important. An excellent example of this type of arrangement has been documented at Doi Mae Salong in Northern Thailand where the Royal Thai Armed Forces have developed collaborative arrangements for landscape management (Fisher *et al.* 2012, Rattanasorn *et al.* 2012). There are other cases of negotiated arrangements leading to genuinely improved access. The case of the Miyun Watershed in China (Li Jia and Emerton 2012) demonstrates this within the context of a highly centralized system. The idea of **negotiating rights and tenure through collective action** has also been applied in Indonesia (Komarudin *et al.* 2008). What the example of Doi Mae Salong and other international examples demonstrate is that there are **options short of formal tenure reform that can benefit community forestry** and also that such local arrangements can be useful policy experiments as a basis for scaling up to formal tenure change, simply by demonstrating the effectiveness of community management.

3.1.4 Essential Roles of the State in Community Empowerment

The role of the state in community empowerment raises something of a conundrum. There are actions the state can take to support community forestry, but many experiences from Asia demonstrate that the state role can often be counterproductive. The answer to the question "can the state support community empowerment?" is "yes, but…"

Ways that **the state can support community empowerment** include the following:

- States can support communities with the exclusion of outsiders. Ostrom (1990) presents examples of common property regimes (CPRs) where this is an important factor.

- States can facilitate conflict resolution within communities and between communities and outsiders. This is frequently asserted as an important role of the state in community forestry advocacy literature, but state agencies are often interested parties in disputes, so their independence is open to question.

- Provision of technical support, especially in fields such as silviculture, management planning, and nursery operations. Communities, especially indigenous groups living in forests, often have excellent knowledge on tree management, but nursery operations tend to be outside their immediate experience.

- Where community forestry is established as part of an official program, Forest Departments often play an important role in assisting with group identification and negotiations between group members. Forestry professionals generally do not have skills as facilitators, but given their formal role in approving community forestry arrangements and implementing policies, they can hardly avoid it. They can carry it out in cooperation with NGO staff or other agencies. There is extensive literature on training and "reorienting" forest staff. Foresters can become excellent facilitators if given space for this role by senior staff.

States, especially in the guise of forest departments, have historically had a great deal of control over the activities of local community forestry groups. Problem areas include the imposition of very tight conditions

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[10] Unscrupulous carbon credit dealers.

on forest management plans, interference in the internal management of user groups, imposition of standardized structures for community forestry committees and arbitrary cancellation of community forestry approvals.

3.1.5 Implications for REDD+

Tenure is important, but addressing the factors that limit "effective" tenure is even more important. It will be crucial to minimize the tendency towards external regulation that limits community decision-making. This may be a particular challenge for REDD+, because REDD+ projects need to be closely monitored and controlled to guarantee that carbon capture is not compromised. Reduction in or further restrictions on the scope of local decision-making will likely compromise local support for REDD+. Ribot (2002) has proposed a "minimum standards approach" to decentralized natural resource management that may be relevant to REDD+ implementation. Ribot discusses the tendency of government agencies to impose detailed prescriptions about what communities should and should not do in management.

The **minimum standards approach** would provide some general parameters and allow communities to decide on details. For Ribot (2002: 17),

> "The minimum standards approach complements decentralization by specifying the boundaries to the domain of local autonomy without restricting discretion within those boundaries."

An imagined example of minimum standards for community forest management would be a restriction on clear felling forests, or, more realistically, a prescription that no more than a specific number of mature trees can be felled in a given area. Decisions on exactly which trees can be harvested, when they can be harvested and how the benefits should be distributed would be left to the community. In REDD+, similar minimum standards approaches could be devised that would meet REDD+ objectives without imposing unnecessarily detailed controls on forest management.

There is also a **need to avoid complex administrative procedures** in registering or formalizing rights: such processes often override working local arrangements for forest access or decision making and can disadvantage women and other sub-groups.

3.2 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

3.2.1 Governance at the Community Level

The **design principles for common property regimes** (CPRs) identified by Nobel laureate Elinor Ostrom (1990) can help identify what makes effective governance at the community level. These principles are derived from diverse common property systems. While they should not be applied mechanically, they are an excellent indicator of what makes common property management work at the local level. The principles emphasize the importance of clear group and resource boundaries, decision making processes at the local level and the recognition of "appropriators" (users) "to devise their own institutions" without challenge "by external governmental authorities" (Ostrom 1990: 90). The full list of principles is in Annex 1.

Some lessons can be drawn from the experiences of **indigenous, self-initiated, forest management systems**. Many studies exist about indigenous systems in various countries, including Nepal. The main lesson learned from these studies is that the features of successful systems are extremely variable. In studies of "indigenous" forest management systems in Nepal, Fisher (1989, Gilmour and Fisher 1991) found that formal organizational features, such as committees, were often absent, and when they were present, frequently appeared and disappeared. What these systems had in common was a **clear understanding of who had user rights for forest products**, i.e., who the members of the user group were, and an institutional base – **shared ideas about how forests should be managed and how decisions should be made**. Of

course, formal organizational features such as committees or assemblies became necessary when a user group had more complex functions, such as marketing of forest products.

Studies of **effective local institutions** have several implications for REDD+:

- Formalized groups involved in REDD+ need to be based, as far as possible, on self-identified groups with shared traditional tenure that already exist in informal systems. Even where self-initiated community forestry does not exist, allowing new groups to self-identify rather than being identified by outsiders adds to the likelihood that the groups will feel empowered. Granting tenure rights to different groups amounts to "giving our forest away." In addition to the experience in Nepal, similar observations have been made in the Philippines (Guiang *et al.* 2001).

- Coalitions of groups can be formed if there are tasks beyond the scope of the user group as right holders, but these coalitions need to have distinct functions, such as marketing or processing forest products, that do not interfere with the decision-making of the user groups. Given the need for REDD+ to deal with social formations at a scale that is efficient for monitoring carbon, this is a challenge that must be met.

- There are risks in over-standardizing local institutions and organizations. Forest bureaucracies naturally prefer to work with organizations that are similar to each other. But this tends to ignore the decision-making processes that operate in different societies and communities. In the case of the tribal groups in Rajasthan (Bose 2011), imposing formal committees overrode pre-existing decision-making practices and disadvantaged women as a result.

- Ideally, community forestry interventions should start with an understanding of existing practices, rights and institutions. This should be a preliminary step in REDD+.

There are a number of **specific lessons from community forestry regarding gender**, partly about tenure and partly about governance. Some remarks about gender have already been made in relation to tenure. All of these issues overlap.

- Formal community forestry is often gender biased or gender blind. Community forestry groups are formed with minimal consideration of the impacts on gender, including the way women were involved in decision-making about forests prior to the development of official community forestry. This does not imply that informal community forestry is gender neutral. Many self-initiated systems are inequitable in terms of gender as Singh (2001) observes regarding Orissa. However, as the cases described by Bose, Sarin and others show, working arrangements between women and men had often evolved and were ignored in formal community forestry. Singh argues that formalizing arrangements under JFM in Orissa made things worse. Agrawal (2001), in reference to South Asia, argues that participatory processes in community forestry can result in excluding women.

- Many community forestry programs, attempting to take gender seriously, include regulations on the number of women who should be on committees. Such quotas are often ignored or lead only to token participation. Views on whether quotas benefit women's empowerment or otherwise are mixed. Yan Sun *et al.* (2012) identify arguments in favor and against quotas, comparing women-only groups, mixed groups and predominantly male groups. They find that the **dynamics of male/female interaction in groups is not well understood**. The lesson for REDD+ is to avoid prescribing quotas for women's participation from the beginning. Instead, take a facilitated approach, exploring options and allowing group structure to develop organically. This does not imply ignoring women. On the contrary, women's participation needs to be targeted and activities that provide benefits to women need to be clearly identified.

- Strongly protection-oriented regimes tend to put additional pressure on women for whom routine collection of forest products, especially for domestic consumption, is a standard role.

3.2.2 Governance and Other Stakeholders

Many important issues involving governance have been discussed in the sections on tenure and empowerment. Another issue of governance is **the need to ensure that the forest needs of stakeholders beyond communities** are considered. This is not difficult in practice, because community interests are frequently considered last after other stakeholders are consulted. Multi-stakeholder platforms are one way to enable stakeholder views to be heard and shared. A problem here is that such platforms are not level playing fields, and communities and indigenous people are often disadvantaged because they lack expertise and time to spend on projected negotiations (Fisher *et al.* 2008a).

Positive outcomes of multi-stakeholder processes using an Adaptive Collaborative Management (ACM) approach have been documented in Nepal, Indonesia and the Philippines (Fisher *et al.* 2007; for Indonesia see also Kusumanto 2005). This work was part of a CIFOR research program. ACM is a learning-based approach that involves multiple stakeholders in collaborative forest management (Fisher *et al.* 2007).

An issue faced by community forest groups is their relative lack of power vis-à-vis government and other powerful interests. In such situations, activist NGOs often support the communities. In Thailand, community forestry is strongly supported by some NGOs and activist academics and equally opposed by other NGOs and academics. In other countries, including Nepal and India, **user groups have joined federations to pursue their shared interests**. One of the most successful of these is FECOFUN in Nepal (Shrestha and Britt 1997, Ojha *et al.* 2008). FECOFUN emerged from self-initiated efforts by CFUGs to develop informal networks and was formed and registered in 1995. With a small amount of donor support, it has become a very large multi-tiered organization, with 74 district chapters in 2008. It has been so successful in representing users that the Forest Department has supported a separate federation that is less confrontational. According to Ojha *et al.* (2008), a major factor in the success of FECOFUN is that it was built on the experience of political activists. Other factors were "access to advisory and technical services from a wide range of national and international organizations" and "flexible financial support", including funds from membership fees and levies and some grants from donors supporting "organizational strengthening and consolidation, and financing projects". Various types of users' federations are discussed in Shrestha and Britt (1997).

3.3 BENEFITS AND INCENTIVES THAT LEAD COMMUNITIES TO INVEST IN COMMUNITY FORESTRY

The previous section discusses issues related to rights and empowerment in considerable detail. This is because these factors most influence the extent to which community forestry can provide benefits to communities and affect REDD+ implementation.

The **extent to which communities obtain benefits from community forestry** is not just a question of providing incentives that motivate them to participate in forest management. It is central to any vision of community forestry that includes livelihoods and/or poverty reduction as an essential objective of community forestry along with sustainable forest management. The same point applies to pro-poor REDD+. This section begins by looking at the extent to which communities and community members have benefited from community forestry. It then looks at some of the mechanisms by which benefits have been obtained and distributed and some of the factors that have limited benefits.[11]

The extent of generation and distribution of tangible benefits from community forestry to communities, and to individuals and groups within those communities is poorly documented. As with much project and program based literature, there is a strong tendency to promote the approach in terms of the benefits rather than critically assess the claims. It is common to refer to the amount of income people

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[11] A collection of papers (Fisher *et al.* 2008b) examines barriers to poverty reduction from community forestry as well as some of the policy, tenure and market reforms necessary to allow community forestry to contribute more to poverty reduction.

earn, or are predicted to earn, from activities such as gathering and selling NTFPs or from ecotourism. Discussion of how much community members receive or how equitable the distribution is rare. Onprom (2012) analyzes several examples of claims by advocates of "forests as the supermarket of the poor" in Thailand and shows how little is said about how many people share the stated amounts of income.

Even where benefits are discussed in some detail, there are **virtually no attempts to present analysis in terms of costs compared with benefits from the point of view of community members**. The tendency is to refer to income – usually from a single product or a small number of products – without consideration of costs in terms of forgone access to other forest products. Even where income is documented, it is often presented in a way that obscures the number of people who actually share in the income. This would hide the fact that some people do benefit, but others may be worse off.

For the above reasons, it is difficult to give an adequate overall assessment of the extent to which community forestry has led to significant benefits in terms of cash income. Just as benefits have been exaggerated in some cases, in other cases poor documentation may obscure success stories. It is fair to say that overall the cash returns from community forestry have generally been modest.

Box 5. Poverty Reduction through Community Management of Non-Timber Forest Products

The National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI)/International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) NTFP project in Lao PDR presents good evidence for significant poverty reduction (Morris *et al.* 2008, Ingles *et al.* 2006). This project originally aimed to provide incentives for conservation through increasing income from collection and sale of NTFPs. Through institutional innovations such as cooperative marketing, the project managed to increase the value of products sold to market, thus increasing income significantly. The innovations were in terms of institutional change and general development rather than technical change in harvesting practices. At the end of the project a participatory wealth ranking exercise found that over the six-year project households in the two highest wealth categories "each increased by 8 per cent, while [households] in the poor category had decreased by 15 per cent" (Morris *et al.* 2008: 65). The community attributed improvements to project interventions. A follow-up study five years after the project ended "suggested that the improved rankings had been maintained and that there had even been a continued improvement since the project ended" (Morris *et al.* 2008: 66), with the number of people in the poorest class falling from 33 percent at the beginning of the project to 13 percent ten years later. This case demonstrates an approach that led to a clear reduction in poverty.

In many countries, the **main value of community forestry is more secure legal access to forest products** for domestic use and consumption. Legal supply is a major positive aspect, even if the same products were collected illegally before. There are also **intangible benefits**, such as the development of social capital that enables cooperation in other activities (e.g., Kaewmahanin *et al.* 2008). Other benefits may include the development of organizational capacity and a variety of skills.

Strikingly absent from accounts of income generation is contribution from timber harvesting and processing (Suzuki *et al.* 2008). This is somewhat surprising because many community forests include significant amounts of valuable timber, both from natural forests and from regenerated or planted forests. Suzuki *et al.* ask why timber industry is not at the heart of poverty reduction in community forestry. They identify factors such as elite capture in Vietnam, opposition from the large-scale logging industry in PNG and "complex and overregulated environments" in the Philippines, mentioning the multiple licenses required for harvesting and marketing timber (Suzuki *et al.* 2008: 6)

Although the forest authorities in Nepal have been rather conservative in allowing communities to harvest and sell timber in commercial quantities, there are several examples of community sawmills processing timber from community forests. One example is from Chaubas, east of Kathmandu.

Several lessons can be drawn from the Chabas case. One is that **apparently arbitrary changes in government regulation impose serious limits on the capacity to generate income**. The second is that individual user groups can benefit from cooperation with other user groups for specific activities such as product processing and marketing without compromising their independent community forestry activities. In PNG, where small-scale timber harvesting is developing, similar cooperation is occurring between fiercely independent clans.

Community forestry in Cambodia illustrates some of the **factors that limit available benefits**. In Cambodia, communities are able to apply for registration as community forests. The process of registration has high associated costs and is deeply regulated. Blomley *et al.* (2010) note that the costs involved for a single community forest are as high as $55,000. This means that the process is highly donor dependent. The term of registration is 15 years renewable, but – as noted earlier – there is always the risk that a forest will be allocated to someone else when its value increases following protection by the community. **Given the high financial and transaction costs and poor returns, it is something of a puzzle as to why people bother with community forestry at all**. Yet, there is surprising level of interest despite the very limited benefits. It has been suggested (senior government officer pers comm.) that there are important **intangible benefits**. These include pride at being associated with a high profile government program and having a connection with officials in case their bureaucratic support is needed for other activities.

> **Box 6. Community Sawmill**
> Extensive community forestry plantation activity in Chaubas beginning in the late 1970s led to extensive reforestation and a valuable timber resource by the 1990s. Timsina (2005) reports on the performance of a community sawmill that commenced operation in 1996. The sawmill was a joint operation of four FUGs and was managed by a committee with representatives from each committee. The sawmill received a loan for equipment purchase from the Nepal Australia Community Forestry Project. In the eight years from 1996 to 2004 the sawmill earned $44,000 from timber production. More significantly, it provided 13,338 person days of employment. According to Timsina, this was its major contribution. Unfortunately, the sawmill ran at a loss most years, but the reasons for this are instructive. In 1999-2000 there was a nation-wide felling ban on green trees, and in 2002-2003, a 40 percent sales tax was imposed by the District Forest Office. Profits were achieved in the other years. (For more on the Chabas sawmill, see also Kelly and Aryal [2007]).

There are several lessons learned from community forestry in terms of poverty and obtaining equitable outcomes.

In the extensive discussion of benefits and benefit sharing from community forestry, **elite capture** is often discussed (see Phuc 2010 for a discussion regarding Vietnam). Elite capture of benefits takes two main forms. The first is capture of benefits by elite members within communities. The second is capture of benefits by outsiders. This includes land grabbing by commercial interests – often with the cooperation or connivance of governments and officials – and capture by governments themselves, as in cases where forests regenerated with community participation are reclaimed by governments. In India, forest departments often reneged on agreements to share the benefits of timber harvested from plantations and regenerated forests.

Many studies analyze the outcomes of **community forestry in terms of equity.** Malla *et al.* (2003), reporting on outcomes of community forestry in four FUGs in Nepal, found that poorer households benefitted less than wealthier households and actually became significantly worse off in some cases. A major factor was dominance of FUG committees by members of wealthier groups, meaning that decisions about access to and distribution of forest products did not reflect the needs of the poorer FUG members. Wealthier FUG members were more willing to limit collection of fuelwood because they had alternative sources on private land. The negative effect on poor members was greater. On the other hand, leaf litter, which is of greater benefit households with more livestock, was often free. Poorer households were also disadvantaged because timber could only be obtained with cash payments. There is not necessarily any formal bias in this. As Shrestha (2005) showed, **rules that insist on formal equality of access to shares of products and**

charges for forest products, often lead to inequitable outcomes because they impact poorer and wealthier households and individuals differently.

It is common for wealthier households that are not dependent on community forests to support regimes that are conservative in terms of forest product access. Since they dominate decision-making, conservative practices often predominate. Gender inequity derives from a similar pattern: products that most concern women – often fodder or small NTFPs for sale – are not a priority for men who dominate decision-making.

It is often assumed that increased generation of income translates to poverty reduction, ignoring the fact that **generating profits is not the same as distributing them to the poor**. To be pro-poor, interventions need to be targeted (Fisher *et al*. 2008a). Buchy (2012) makes a similar point in regard to gender equality: providing benefits to women and assuring that they are not disadvantaged requires targeted interventions.

3.3.1 Lessons for REDD+

There is a need for detailed and critical cost-benefit analysis of activities from the community perspective to assess their contribution to livelihoods and wellbeing. In addition to assessing benefits, serious effort must be made to assess costs, especially the costs of losing access to certain REDD+.

Clear assessment of costs and benefits associated with REDD+ agreements will help REDD+ provide adequate participation incentives and contribute to future community wellbeing. Poor assessment may disadvantage communities or sub-groups within communities, and lead REDD+ implementers to make unrealistic assessments about community participation. Capture of benefits by elites within communities and outsiders, including governments, is an issue in community forestry, and similar issues will arise and need to be addressed in implementing REDD+.

> **Box 7. Targeting Benefits.**
>
> Promoting positive outcomes for disadvantaged groups including women and preventing disadvantage requires tailored interventions that target these groups. Simply assuming that benefits will "trickle down" is inadequate.

Too much emphasis on protection rather than sustainable use may disadvantage communities in general and some community members in particular by reducing access to resources. This is both inequitable and limits the incentive to participate. It is a major challenge for REDD+ as the tendency for highly regulated forest use is strong.

3.4 CAPACITY BUILDING

3.4.1 Importance of Capacity Building at the Community Level

> **Box 7. Long-term Training Needed.**
> Two clear lessons from community forestry training are: i) training needs to be field-based, or at least to have significant field component; and ii) one-off training programs are not very effective. They need to be followed up by long-term mentoring or coaching (as suggested by Triraganon 2002 for a training capacity building program in Vietnam).

Capacity building at the community level falls broadly into the fields of forest management skills and business and administrative skills. In forest management, nursery management and reforestation skills are regularly identified where communities are involved in forest plantation. Where management of existing natural forests is involved, including regenerating forests, capacity building in silviculture tends to be identified as a need. A question arises about what capacity is needed for growing and managing forests generally, or tree growing and management according to the scientific silviculture expected by professional foresters. Clearly many community members have advanced knowledge about trees and forests. A more detailed discussion of appropriate silviculture follows in the next section as it is more related to the capacity development needs of forest officials than of communities, at least in the first instance.

Perhaps a higher priority area for capacity building at the community level relates not to technical forestry skills, but to business and management skills. The need for training in administration, especially accounting, is recognized in many projects. An associated need, particularly relevant where women and other community members have low levels of literacy, is for literacy and basic numeracy education. This is directly relevant to participation in community forestry organizations, because lack of literacy reduces the capacity of individuals to fully understand many institutional issues. It reduces transparency and, thus, the extent to which leaders can be held accountable. Significantly, the fact that women are illiterate is presented as an excuse for their low levels of involvement in community forestry committees.

3.4.2 Capacity Building of Community Support Institutions

Community support institutions include government agencies, especially forest agencies, NGOs and projects. During the 1980s and 1990s much of the discussion about community forestry focused on the need for a "paradigm shift" in the way forestry was practiced and in the thinking of forest professionals (Gilmour and Fisher 1991). For forest departments, a key issue is the need for staff to develop the skills commensurate with the often-identified need for them to change from forest law enforcers to group facilitators and providers of technical advice. To achieve this "paradigm shift," more is required than new skills and knowledge; support from the forest agency and superiors is also needed. Capacity development in new approaches to forestry field work has been supported by several international projects focusing on curriculum change in forestry training institutions, such as the USAID supported project at the Institute of Forestry in Nepal (Clausen *et al.* n.d.) and by in-service training courses by organizations such as RECOFTC.

> **Box 8. Building Capacity to Support Communities.**
>
> Rather than more technical knowledge, forest professionals need to develop capacity for a more experimental, adaptive and participatory approach to forest management. Basically, they need to know how and when to let go of technical forestry knowledge.

Although some training programs in "reorienting forest professionals" have been successful, it is unrealistic to expect technically trained foresters to develop high level social science skills through brief training programs, so mentoring in the field by trained social scientists may be necessary.

Forestry professionals also need to build capacity in modified forms of silviculture. There has been interest in developing alternative approaches to silviculture appropriate to community forestry. In 1998, at an international conference aimed mainly at participants from Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok (Victor and Barash 2001), there was enormous interest because of the obvious need for modified and appropriate silviculture. Significantly, the conference attracted a considerable variety of papers, but most of these concentrated on presenting modified ways for community members to perform procedures that are standard practice for foresters rather than different ways of approaching forest management (personal observation, the author). Alternative approaches to silviculture were tested in Nepal in the late 1980s and 1990s (Gilmour *et al.* 1990). These approaches involved simple procedures aimed at producing a variety of forest products such as grass, fuelwood and small poles, depending on what communities needed, using simple selection procedures and prescriptions without requiring detailed inventories.

3.4.3 Successful Approaches to Capacity Building

RECOFTC has been running training courses for forestry departments and NGO staff for 25 years, as international courses for participants from multiple countries and as tailored courses in particular countries. Historically, the courses have focused on participatory approaches to field-work and extension in different contexts, such as forestry extension, extension for protected area management, community-based tourism, and marketing of tree and forest products. RECOFTC has advocated experiential learning and adult education approaches. Publications by RECOFTC do not reflect this, but some training reports and training assessments do (see for example Triraganon 2002). In the late 1990s, an intensive training program for village forestry was piloted in two provinces in Lao PDR during the Forest Management and Conservation Program (FOMACOP). Training courses were followed immediately with application in the field before progressing to the next training course. The program worked with 60 villages in developing management plans for 100,000

ha. According to the World Bank Project Completion Report, the training was highly effective in building technical forestry, community forestry group management and development skills, but the government decided for various reasons not to continue the approach (P. Williams, personal communication).

3.4.4 Implications for REDD+

Experience in capacity building for community forestry highlights several issues that are relevant for REDD+ implementation:

- Major capacity development needs for communities are often in the areas of business management, administration and accounting.

- Government and NGO staff working with communities in REDD+ needs to have the social science skills necessary to understand how institutions work for effective community forestry. They need understanding of existing community forestry activities, skills to identify existing users, and the ability to facilitate community-level decision-making.

- Capacity building is most effective if training includes field-based activity, follow-up mentoring and coaching once implementation has commenced.

3.5 SCALING UP COMMUNITY FORESTRY INITIATIVES

Scaling up community forestry initiatives refers to the need for community pilots to be replicated by larger numbers of groups covering larger areas. It also includes scaling up through creating facilitating policy environments.

One lesson emerges from the creation of policy to support effective community forestry: good policy usually emerges from small "policy experiments" that precede highly formalized national policy. The gradual emergence of community forestry in Vietnam is an example, and the case of the IUCN NTFP project in Lao PDR is another. Ingles *et al.* (2006) examined the influence of that project on policy and practice some years after it was completed. In addition to apparent influence on policy, they also showed that there was a "scaling sideways" impact that involved other communities copying and modifying practices developed under the project, often based on informal contacts and "passing by."

Community forestry's long history in Nepal illustrates **the process of gradual scaling up over an extended period based on "policy experiments."** The policy was not formalized until 15 years after community forestry started. The delay in formalizing the policy was beneficial as it meant that policy was not locked into unworkable practices. The developmental phase included exploration of what worked socially and the development of an extension model for forestry staff working with communities. There was a long period of experiment accompanied by extensive training of field staff. Once the policy was developed and the program elements were in place, the growth of community forestry became largely demand driven.

> **Box 9. Community forestry in Nepal** commenced in the late 1970s with small trials involving community participation in forest protection and reforestation with nurseries and plantations. The earliest approach did not involve active forest management, but by the late 1980s, the need for active management to provide benefits to communities was recognized and emphasis shifted to forest user groups developing and negotiating management plans.

Another aspect of scaling up is the need to have **user groups, which operate in relatively small areas of forest, link up with other groups to carry out joint functions such as sawmilling or marketing**. This can be done through various cooperatives, structures or networks. The difficulty with linking various groups together is that common property management operates best when groups have clear-cut membership and exclusive rights. Umbrella structures need to be developed in ways that do not infringe on such groups. In other words, they need to have distinct objectives and clear accountability to the member user groups. The

Chaubas sawmill is one example of a consortium of separate user groups that carries out collective functions without compromising the rights and integrity of the separate CFUGs. In PNG, efforts to promote joint ownership of mobile timber saws by separate clans involved in "ecoforestry" meet the need for economies of scale without compromising the ownership of forest resources by separate clans (Yati Bun, pers comm.).

Scaling up in small steps over a long period represents a challenge for REDD+, which needs to operate on a reasonably large scale to capture sufficient quantities of carbon at relatively low cost to be cost effective. Working with a plethora of smaller groups will be difficult, so the challenge is to establish arrangements that enable cooperation at a larger scale without compromising local priorities. The development of extension and community facilitation skills for REDD+ implementers is extremely important.

3.6 SUSTAINABILITY OF COMMUNITY FORESTRY

3.6.1 Environmental Sustainability

A detailed overview of the environmental sustainability of community forestry is not possible in the space available. Comprehensive data is not available. There is a **broad consensus that self-initiated forms of community forestry have made significant contributions to the maintenance of healthy forests** in many parts of Asia and the Pacific. But it is important not to romanticize this point, as not all self-initiated management systems are sustainable. There is also a consensus that community forestry programs – that is, externally initiated or recognized – have maintained or improved forest quality.

This consensus is generally clear in Nepal (under community forestry) and India (under JFM). However, the data available tend to be based on individual projects and, as Porter-Bolland *et al.* (2012) suggest in the context of an assessment of "conservation effectiveness across the tropics," the documented case studies may tend to represent a biased sample of "successful" projects. It is only possible to mention a few examples here.

Dahal *et al.*(2010) examined the outcomes in terms of forest condition and livelihoods of forest tenure reforms (essentially towards community rights) in a number of global case studies. The analysis was based on existing literature. In terms of forest condition in the Asian examples they found that community forestry in Nepal led to "increased forest cover, species diversity, [and] fire control," improved forest condition was also reported for cases from the Philippines and India.

In the case of Vietnam a review of the project "Strengthening community-based forestry in Vietnam" found significant improvement in sample plots on forest land allocated to communities in terms of standing volume (Gilmour and Diem 2013) based on measurements in 2006 and 2013. The authors see this as evidence of improved quality of forest condition. One particularly interesting early study from Nepal, is a comparison of changes in forest resources in a specific village from 1980 to 1990 (Fox 1993). Fox found that forest condition had improved greatly despite population change. He attributed this change to a number of factors including tenure changes under government Panchayat Forest and Panchayat Protected Forest policy. This policy was an early form of community forestry in Nepal. Other studies from Nepal have reported significant positive change at a local basis (Niraula *et al.* 2013).

3.6.2 Financial Sustainability

The extent of dependence on donors for community forestry programs justifies concern about its financial sustainability. In many countries in Asia, community forestry has been strongly encouraged and supported by donors. This is especially true of Nepal, which has had donor support for community forestry since the late 1970s, with several donors – USAID, the Swiss, the Australians and the United Kingdom – providing continued support for two or more decades. In the Philippines, USAID has been involved in community forestry since the early 1980s, building on earlier forestry support. **It may well be that the long term commitment of donors is an advantage rather than a disadvantage**. In both the Philippines and Nepal it

gave time for policies to evolve and become fully institutionalized. Significantly, community forestry continues in Nepal, with strong support by communities even as donor support has declined. Equally significant, JFM in India operates as an extremely large national program with little or no external support. Long-term support by the Ford Foundation for developing the approach was significant, but the model, once developed, continued without significant external donor support. Donors, where they are involved, need to continue support beyond the common 3-6 year project time frame, perhaps for 15-20 years. Insofar as REDD+ programs are planned to be of this longer duration, if they build upon community forestry systems, then potential international funding for REDD+ could be a way to broaden and lengthen donor support.

3.6.3 Socio-economic Sustainability

The key challenge for socio-economic sustainability is the **need to balance the positive benefits of community forestry with the potential loss of access to resources and the transaction costs** involved in participating in externally promoted programs. As argued earlier, the benefits from community forestry have frequently been in the form of improved legal access to subsistence resources, along with some access to NTFPs for sale.

REDD+ is likely to result in an increase in restricted access, imposing greater costs to communities that will need to be adequately compensated to incentivize participation and maintain equity in outcomes.

In many cases the financial costs to communities in managing community forests have not been great, especially where forests have been managed mainly for domestic use. This changes when communities become involved in business operations or when government agencies impose requirements for bookkeeping, auditing or other administrative or management activities. REDD+ is likely to impose costs related to monitoring or patrolling forests. These costs will need to be subsidized, or covered by income from REDD+ payments or other forest activities.

3.6.4 Implications for REDD+

Dependence on time-limited donor support for REDD+ may present a real challenge for REDD+, especially as funds from the private carbon market are not yet apparent in Asia. In fact, unless funds start to flow to communities for REDD+ initiatives, as opposed to funding for REDD+ preparations, sustainability seems questionable.

Community Forestry in Nepal. Photo by Robert J. Fisher.

4.0 EMERGING REDD+ AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY ISSUES

The rapidly growing level of interest in REDD+ in Asia is evidenced by an extraordinary level of activity in REDD+ readiness and enthusiasm amongst governments and NGOs. This is accompanied by a considerable level of caution about possible negative impacts of REDD+ on people living in and around forests. There is a lot of discussion about safeguards (Sikor and Tan n.d.) and guidelines for benefit sharing (UN-REDD Vietnam Programme 2010). The concern with safeguards includes advocacy of the principle of FPIC as a prerequisite for community involvement in REDD+ (Anderson 2011).

The linkages between REDD+ and community forestry are explicit in much of the discussion and planning for REDD+. This is absolutely clear in the cases of Nepal and Cambodia, but is also relevant elsewhere. However, there are only a few cases of REDD+ pilot sites and even fewer cases where REDD+ payments have been made. This makes it difficult to learn from experiences in REDD+ implementation as opposed to extrapolating from experiences in community forestry.

One of the few cases in Asia in which some funds have been distributed to communities is a REDD+ pilot project in Nepal. In this case some funds have been transferred to user groups in exchange for REDD+ activities. The project operates in three watersheds and is implemented locally by three Watershed REDD+ Networks. The project is funded by Norad and implemented by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and others (Rana *et al.* 2012, Skutsch *et al.* 2012). In 2011 a payment of $95,000 was made to the involved CFUGs. The recipients come from 105 different CFUGs with approximately 18,000 member households and a population of about 90,000.

The amounts distributed to particular CFUGs varied according to a complex formula. Funds received as payments were spent on activities such as "forest enhancement," forest monitoring and measurement and "capacity development/awareness raising." In each watershed 65 percent or more of the funds received was spent on these forest management activities and the three watersheds spent from 32 to 35 percent on various income generating activities. This amount averages out to about 35 cents per person in the overall population, apparently none of which is paid to any individual. Assuming that the poor are the main beneficiaries of the income generating activities, the amount spent on them would amount to several dollars at most. The local communities may, however, benefit from improved forest management, and the range of non-monetary social and environmental benefits associated with improved forest management. No cost-benefit assessment from the community point of view is reported.

A major issue here is the likelihood that cash payments are so low as to provide neither incentives for REDD+ involvement nor compensation for loss of access to previously available resources. It is important to note that this is a preliminary payment and further distribution is intended, although the donor funds are available only until 2013, raising questions of sustainability (Rana *et al.* 2012). Detailed assessment of the costs and benefits of REDD+ to communities should be essential.

The Nepal project is very much a learning project, which aims to build and test a governance system for REDD+ community forestry (Karki *et al.* 2011). One issue raised by the project relates to user rights:

> "One of the central rationales of REDD is that the main stakeholders must have secure rights over their forests… Although Nepal's CFUGs have use rights over their forests, political insecurity and frequent changes in forest policy mean that these rights are not secure. The government is proposing to revise the

1993 Forest Act to impose much higher government taxes on products harvested from community forests. Another related issue is the lack of clear policy on who owns soil carbon (roots); CFUGs have management rights only over the above-ground parts of trees and other vegetation in their forests." (Rana *et al.* 2012: 173)

Another REDD+ pilot is the Oddar Meanchey project in Cambodia (Sepahri 2011, Pact n.d.). This involves thirteen community forests, 58 villages and 67,783 hectares of forest. The project involves a wide range of implementing partners, and is intended to draw on investment from the voluntary carbon market, but no source of funds has yet been identified. According to one informant (a senior Cambodian government official, pers comm.), community members are beginning to express frustration at the unfulfilled promises. This is consistent with experiences in community forestry where failure of promised benefits to eventuate has led to serious loss of interest. This project deliberately draws on community forestry groups. The emerging issue here is the need for benefits to flow after several years of REDD+ preparation. Without this, maintenance of community enthusiasm seems likely to become problematic.

Cambodian villagers looking at a forest map. Photo by Paula J. Williams.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

The Asia-Pacific Region is characterized by a wide variety of forest types and considerable cultural diversity. The variety of different approaches to community forestry reflects this biological and cultural diversity.

Community forestry was initiated quite early in Nepal, the Philippines and India, if JFM is classified as community forestry. Subsequently, the idea of community forestry has been adopted in many countries and is at the center of forest policy dialogue. The results of community forestry programs are generally positive in terms of reduced deforestation and improved forest cover. Despite the spread of community forestry, however, the results of increased community access to and control over resources are mixed at best. The major benefit in many cases has been improved legal access to forest resources, apart from timber, but the extent to which this access has led to increased cash income and poverty reduction is limited.

While increased legal access to forest resources is important, there have been some negative consequences, especially in terms of focused pro-poor and equitable outcomes. Some people have been disempowered by community forestry interventions and individuals and groups have been made absolutely worse off. The lessons to be learned about how the various outcomes occurred are relevant to the outcome of REDD+.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.2.1 Empowerment

REDD+ interventions need to be based on legally enforceable community rights to forests and should not be undermined by unnecessary administration and regulation. It is essential that REDD+ interventions minimize the tendency towards external regulation that limits community decision making. A "minimum standards approach" would help address the problem of excessive regulation of community activities, while maintaining an overall level of responsibility.

Formalized groups involved in REDD+ should be based, as far as possible, on self-identified groups with shared traditional tenure that already exist in informal systems. Even where self-initiated community forestry does not exist, allowing new groups to self-identify rather than being identified by outsiders adds to the likelihood that the groups will feel empowered.

The process of registering or formalizing rights should be as simple and flexible as possible. Complex administrative processes often override working local arrangements for forest access or decision-making and can disadvantage women and other sub-groups.

5.2.2 Governance

Given the need for economies of scale and improved governance in REDD+ implementation, umbrella groups (groups with the function of representing a number of smaller groups) should be formed in a way that does not unduly interfere with the rights over and decision-making of user groups about forests.

5.2.3 Benefits and Incentives

To succeed in its forest conservation goals and pro-poor/equity principles, REDD+ must avoid reducing access to existing livelihood benefits. It must provide adequate alternative income to compensate for the loss of access to forest products resulting from rules imposed to conserve forests and provide incentives for REDD+ participation. REDD+ costs and benefits need to be analyzed to see how much and whether REDD+ will contribute to community members' livelihoods and wellbeing.

REDD+ implementers must avoid disadvantaging communities, individuals and sub-groups as a result of changed forest management arrangements. To promote positive outcomes for disadvantaged groups including women and prevent disadvantage, REDD+ requires tailored interventions to target these groups. Simply assuming that benefits will "trickle down" is inadequate.

As carbon credit payments will almost certainly not be adequate incentive for participation, combinations of benefits from various sources will be needed. States will need to consider rights for commercial harvesting of timber. Innovative ways of meeting needs and generating income need to be considered.

5.2.4 Capacity Building

To benefit from REDD+ programs, some communities will need financial management, business and bookkeeping training. Training for government and NGO project staff needs to provide participatory extension, community development and social assessment skills rather than skills in technical forestry. Capacity building is most likely to be effective if training includes field-based activities and follow-up mentoring and coaching once implementation has commenced.

5.2.5 Scaling Up

Pilot and demonstration projects are needed to explore models for REDD+ implementation before detailed policy prescriptions are developed. The pilots should provide benefits in the form of carbon credits as soon as possible.

5.2.6 Sustainability

To enhance social, economic and environmental sustainability, long-term support to communities is vital. To build and maintain confidence in REDD+, significant benefits to communities in the form of carbon credits should flow as quickly as possible.

ANNEX I. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Box 10. Design Principles Illustrated by Long-enduring Common Property Regime (CPR) Institutions (Source: Table 3.1 in Ostrom 1990).

1. **Clearly defined boundaries**

   Individuals or households who have rights to withdraw resource units from the CPR must be clearly defined, as must the boundaries of the CPR itself.

2. **Congruence between appropriation and provision rules and local conditions**

   Appropriation rules restricting time, place, technology, and/or quantity of resource units are related to local conditions and to provision rules requiring labor, material, and/or money.

3. **Collective-choice arrangements**

   Most individuals affected by the operational rules can participate in modifying the operational rules.

4. **Monitoring**

   Monitors, who actively audit CPR conditions and appropriate behavior, are accountable to the appropriators or are the appropriators.

5. **Graduated sanctions**

   Appropriators who violate operational rules are likely to be assessed graduated sanctions (depending on the seriousness and context of the offense) by other appropriators, by officials accountable to these appropriators, or by both.

6. **Conflict-resolution mechanisms**

   Appropriators and their officials have rapid access to low-cost local arenas to resolve conflicts among appropriators or between appropriators and officials.

7. **Minimal recognition of rights to organize**

   The rights of appropriators to devise their own institutions are not challenged by external governmental authorities.

For CPRs that are parts of larger systems

8. **Nested enterprises**

   Appropriation, provision, monitoring, enforcement, conflict resolution, and governance activities are organized in multiple layers of nested enterprises.

ANNEX 2. MULTILATERAL SUPPORT FOR REDD+ IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Table 1. Multilateral Support for REDD+ in Asia and Pacific Countries.					
Country	FCPF Partner Country	FCPF Country Candidates	UN-REDD National Programme	UN-REDD Partner Country	FIP Country
Bangladesh				X	
Bhutan		X		X	
Cambodia	X		X		
Fiji		X			
Indonesia	X		X		X
Lao PDR	X			X	X
Malaysia				X	
Mongolia				X	
Myanmar				X	
Nepal	X			X	
Pakistan		X		X	
Papua New Guinea	X		X		
Philippines		X	X		
Solomon Islands			X		
Sri Lanka		X	X		
Thailand	X				
Vanuatu	X				
Vietnam	X		X		

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