

Brief for GSDR 2015

Advancing sustainable forest-related local development

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The importance of sustainable forest management

Forests account for about one-third of the total land area of the world (FAO 2010)¹. They are essential for human wellbeing and have an important role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and ensuring the provision of crucial ecosystem services. While considerable attention has been devoted to advancing sustainable forest management (SFM)² and forest conservation, deforestation and forest degradation continue in many locations and pressures on forestlands increase threatening the provision of forest-based goods and services. The sustainable management of forests is vital for achieving sustainable development and it is a critical element in advancing forest-related local development and poverty reduction in rural areas. However, to date the general principles and recommendations for advancing SFM provided by numerous publications and various international processes and organisations have not led to sufficient changes at the local level. To address this crucial problem this research aimed at identifying conditions that foster or hinder progress towards SFM and forest-related local development, based on the analyses of 27 case studies from different parts of the world.

Different concepts, models and theoretical frameworks have guided the extensive literature that addresses natural resource use, management and conservation, as well as the governance modes that are in use to steer resource use and

management. These approaches have directed attention to different dimensions of governance and human-environment interactions and their review clearly emphasised the importance of local social, cultural, economic, political and environmental conditions in resource management and use and in mediating the influences and outcomes of interventions that aim at instituting sustainable resource management. It has also become clear that the different conditions interact in complex ways. The analytical framework used in this research presents an effort to move towards a more integrated and holistic approach in analysing the different conditions that seem to influence forest management and associated forest and livelihood outcomes.

Analytical framework

The conditions that influence SFM and forest-related local development originate at different scales, from local to global, and are commonly influenced by actors and initiatives from non-forest economic or political sectors. In the common analytical framework used to analyse the case studies, these conditions were assigned to four groups: *policies, institutions and governance (1)*; *livelihoods, capacities, cultural and socio-economic aspects (2)*; *natural resource base (3)*; and *research and monitoring (4)* (Figure 1). While presented as different groups, in practice conditions are sometimes difficult to categorise and they interact in complex ways.

¹ FAO 2010. Global Forest Resources Assessment 2010. Main Report. FAO Forestry Paper 163.

² SFM aims to maintain and enhance economic, social and environmental values of all types of forests for the benefit of present and future generations (UN 2007. General Assembly Resolution 62/98, New York, December 2007. From http://www.un.org/esa/forests/pdf/session_documents/uhff7/UNFF7_NLBI_drfat.pdf).

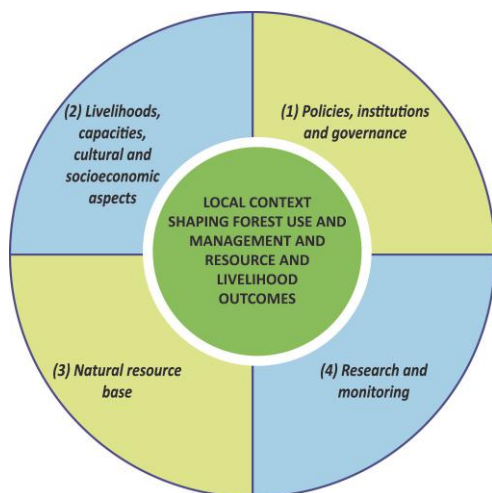


Figure 1. Analytical framework for analysing conditions that seem to influence forest management and associated forest and livelihood outcomes: (1) Including: land tenure, rights to forests and trees; public administration; participation and stakeholder cooperation; issues of power and representation; enforcement of laws and regulations; reconciliation of different land uses; long-term societal commitment to SFM. (2) Including: contribution of forest resources to livelihoods; commercial opportunities, linkages to markets, value chains; technical and managerial leadership; access to capital; security and conflict; landscape or ecosystem management. (3) Including: the extent and condition of forest resources; trees outside forests; agroforestry. (4) Including: research to support forest management decisions, utilisation of traditional and local knowledge, monitoring of the natural resource base and socioeconomic circumstances.

Main findings from the case studies

The case studies indicate that forests and trees continue to make important contributions to local livelihoods, but these contributions may be at risk in many locations in the future because of deforestation and forest degradation.

In many cases progress has been made in fostering some conditions that positively influence SFM and forest-related local development. Changes in land tenure or use rights generally favour local actors, and stakeholder cooperation and participation have progressed. However, progress has been less widespread with other important conditions:

- The reconciliation of different land uses is one of the principal challenges facing SFM. Local actors may prefer to convert forests to other

land uses or in other cases governments have encouraged foreign investment in agricultural and extractive ventures.

- The opportunities for commercialising forest products and services and the integration of primary producers into lucrative value chains continue to be weak.
- Complex bureaucratic regulations, problems of transparency, and other unfavourable administrative practices constrain local involvement in SFM.
- Enforcement of laws and regulations continues to be a major challenge (e.g. control of illegal logging).
- Capacity-building efforts are fragmented with important gaps. Capacity-building and technical assistance often depend on external funding, which undermines their continuity.
- Capital for investment in forestry operations and rural enterprises is either lacking or is derived from informal channels, increasing costs and risks.
- Problems of security and conflict undermine efforts to advance SFM.
- The effort devoted to research does not correspond to the broad knowledge and information demanded by SFM.
- Monitoring to track the implementation and emerging outcomes of SFM is not pursued in a systematic fashion or the information gathered is not effectively used.

Interaction among conditions is crucial

In many of the analysed case studies the trends in forest condition and livelihoods seem to be mostly positive. They also demonstrated that the more comprehensive and synergistic the measures implemented to advance forest-related local development, the better the results³.

- Alignment among different sectoral policies and policy implementation favours positive outcomes, as do policies that recognise and build on strong communal institutions based on long-term cultural and economic links with forest resources. Conflicting policies result in

³ The case study authors reported on the trends in outcomes related to forest condition and livelihoods in the case study areas, either based on existing data or observation.

negative interactions. For example, policies that promote large-scale investment in agriculture and mining are often incompatible with the goals of SFM and fail to take into account impacts on local livelihood strategies.

- Unclear and/or insecure rights to forest and trees undermine the effectiveness of policies put in place to promote SFM and local development. Often formally recognised local rights to land and forests have not been implemented in a systematic fashion. Lack of empowerment and/or exclusion from deliberations on forest management and decision-making further curtail participation in SFM.
- Onerous bureaucratic processes for approval of management plans, harvesting permits and commercialisation of forest products undermine forest-based local development. Policies to promote small-scale and community-based forest management are ineffective when arbitrary restrictions are placed on timber harvesting and commercialisation. High transaction costs and inconsistencies in the way forest regulations are applied weaken the effectiveness of policies that promote SFM.
- Even when considerable efforts have been made to establish favourable policies to enhance forest-based local development and encourage community involvement, corruption and illegality greatly diminish progress towards SFM. Weak and ineffective institutions often also undermine favourable policies.
- Deficient technical and managerial capacities and lack of linkages between producers and attractive market opportunities exacerbate the negative impacts of failing to align policies or their poor implementation.

Recommendations

- Responding to the diversity of situations found in different contexts requires flexibility and a more holistic understanding of the local context and the interacting processes and emerging trade-offs affecting SFM and forest-related development. Attention should be focused on how effects and pressures

originating from different scales interact and how these interactions impact on forests and local livelihoods. Adaptive and more comprehensive policies and approaches are required to address key issues in local contexts and to generate positive synergies.

- The outcomes of policies and measures that may influence the conditions for forest-related development should be tracked, recognising that adjustments to policies will be required over time to bolster favourable conditions. Monitoring outcomes is also important for detecting positive and negative interactions among conditions and the mechanisms whereby these interactions lead to changes in local livelihoods and forest conditions.
- Globalisation of markets and investments steers forest-related developments in many countries. It can lead to large-scale land concessions to the detriment of local development and livelihoods, but it can also lead to employment creation in forest-related production or forest-based services. The conditions analysed in this research shape the impacts of globalisation on local forest management and forest-related development. Synergistic interaction among the conditions that originate at different scales is possible when the conditions support sustainable forest-related development.

References

This brief is based on the book produced by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations' Special Project World Forests, Society and Environment (IUFRO WFSE):

Katila, P., Galloway, G., de Jong, W., Pacheco, P., Mery, G. 2014. Forests under Pressure – Local Responses to Global Issues. IUFRO World Series Volume 32. 561 p. From http://www.iufro.org/science/special/wfs_e/forests-pressure-local-responses/.