



Engaging and Empowering Local Communities in Sustainable Forest Management

CHALLENGES:

- Vulnerability of local community livelihoods to competing commercial uses for forests
- Gaining community acceptance and willingness to take on new or modified approaches to forest management
- Ensuring long-term sustainability of results after the investment is completed

SOLUTIONS:

- Provide viable livelihood alternatives through diversification of activities
- Invest in capacity building for skills development towards sustainable forest management
- Transfer tenure and user rights to local communities

*The need for community involvement in sustainable forest management is predicated on a growing appreciation of forests as an important carbon sink, as well as a crucial source of livelihood for many. In the **Forest Investment Program (FIP)** of the Climate Investment Funds, community participation plays a vital role in addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, such as agricultural expansion and the unsustainable harvesting of forest resources for commercial activities. Several lessons can be learned from the approaches FIP pilot countries have taken to encourage participatory management of land and forest resources.*

The use of forest resources for commercial activities, such as agriculture or mining, can make communities that depend on forests highly

vulnerable to physical and social displacement, potentially resulting in the loss of livelihood and an increase in poverty. In response to this issue, during the programming phase of the FIP, several pilot countries prioritized the allocation of resources towards engaging and empowering communities in sustainable forest management as a means to reducing emissions from deforestation and degradation (REDD+). This was done in the context of national planning efforts to address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

LESSONS LEARNED

Engaging and empowering communities in the sustainable management of forests offers multiple benefits, such as new or modified livelihood opportunities for local communities



COUNTRY EXAMPLES

Mexico is using FIP resources to fund a sustainable forest management project that includes a dedicated financing line for rural communities and ejidos (traditional communities) to participate in low carbon activities in forest landscapes. The project improves its sustainability by demonstrating the profitability—to both farmers and banks—of investment in these low carbon activities.

In **Brazil**, FIP resources will be deployed across 11 states of the Cerrado biome to support small farmers who are owners/occupiers of private landholdings in complying with environmental legislation and safeguards. By building the technical, financial, and legal capacities of these farmers, the project is creating empowerment at the local level.

Lao People's Democratic Republic's FIP Investment Plan engages local communities through a project designed to employ smallholder farmers in recovering degraded and underutilized lands. The project creates a viable livelihood alternative, while also reducing emissions from land degradation.

Burkina Faso is using FIP resources to implement complementary projects in 6 gazetted forests and 34 surrounding municipalities. The projects complement each other by 1) increasing the supply of timber products from municipal and private forests and woodlands, and 2) encouraging the diversification of local community incomes by supporting the development of agro-silvo-pastoral activities and corresponding value chains.

and contribution to the mitigation of climate change through the important role that forests play as a carbon sink. Effectively engaging and empowering communities and reaping the full potential of these benefits requires participatory approach to land-use planning: one that prevents the expansion of adjacent land-use systems, while also increasing the capacity of communities in the sustainable management of forests.

Creating Livelihood Opportunities

Empowering communities in sustainable forest management hinges upon community ownership of proposed plans and activities, as well as the government's willingness to transfer user and management rights to these communities. In most cases, this requires bringing about a shift in communities' attitudes towards how they engage with the environment and the dynamics that exist in the wider landscape.

Communities' readiness to engage in new activities or to modify traditional management practices can be bolstered by providing viable livelihood alternatives, particularly when resource access or use is limited. For instance, some FIP pilot countries have implemented projects that diversify community incomes by supporting the development of agro-silvo-pastoral activities, which integrate forest and agricultural activities within the same site, and their associated value chains. This can serve to reduce communities' dependence on and increase the efficient use of forests.

Building Capacity for Sustainable Results

Community-based REDD+ projects can only succeed if an enabling environment at the national level encourages local actions and transfers power to the local level. Therefore, local communities need to be equipped with the technical, financial and

legal resources they need to register their properties, implement best practices, and monitor sustained efforts towards meeting mandatory sustainable land use criteria during project implementation.

In order to ensure that the results generated by these projects continue over time, local governments can dedicate resources to further enhancing local skills for sustainable forest management over the long-term. For example, building capacity around improved harvesting techniques for timber and non-timber products can help ensure a sustainable supply chain, thereby offsetting any potential increases in demand for forest resources and further bolstering efforts towards ongoing sustainable management of forests.

LOOKING FORWARD

When designing sustainable forest management projects, the core approach should be developed with scale in mind. The positive results from individual pilot projects should be easily deployed to other communities within the country and, potentially, other countries as well. The FIP is equipping pilot countries with the resources to plan and implement sustainable forest management projects with the goal of generating lessons and best practice approaches that will facilitate continued efforts at replication, expansion, and scale through the FIP and other initiatives related to REDD+ activities.

THE \$639 MILLION FOREST INVESTMENT PROGRAM (FIP) SUPPORTS EFFORTS OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO REDUCE DEFORESTATION AND FOREST DEGRADATION AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT THAT LEADS TO EMISSIONS' REDUCTIONS AND ENHANCEMENT OF FOREST CARBON STOCKS (REDD+).