



OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

INTEGRATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS INTO THE FLEGT/VPA IMPLEMENTATION

FAO/ACP

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GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRATING SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY LIVELIHOODS INTO THE FLEGT/VPA IMPLEMENTATION

Summary

Ghana has signed onto a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the EU to eliminate the trade of illegal Ghanaian timber and timber products on the EU market as well as the Ghanaian domestic market. As part of the preparation towards the implementation of the VPA, a number of community-based projects were supported by the ACP-FLEGT facility to prepare civil societies and forest-dependent communities towards their effective participation in the VPA implementation. The outcomes of the projects reveal that forest-dependent livelihoods will be a key issue in the implementation of the VPA and has the potential to undermine its success. This document therefore serves as guidelines for facilitating further articulation of livelihood concerns into the VPA implementation based on lessons synthesized from these projects. The guidelines cover the following areas: (i) policy support and orientation; (ii) governance of local livelihoods (iii) analysis of livelihoods; (iv) supporting existing livelihoods; (v) identifying potential alternative livelihood to illegal logging and timber trade; and (vi) building partnership between communities and other stakeholders for livelihood development. The main aim is to reconcile the objectives of the FLEGT/ VPA and the livelihood aspirations of local communities dependent on forest resources especially timber production and trade. The target users of these guidelines are civil society organizations but are also suitable for forest policy-makers, timber trade associations, international organizations/development partners and research/academia.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Local forest-dependent or forest based livelihoods are livelihood activities that directly depend on the forest. They are necessarily based on forests and will not exist without forests. Examples in Ghana are collection and trade in a wide range of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and artisanal timber milling. Some of these livelihood activities are subsistence in nature whilst others are commercial and constitute small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs) that offer employment to thousands of people.

Some forest based activities, particularly illegal chainsaw milling form a major challenge to sustainable forest management in Ghana (Mirjam et al., 2013). This is because despite their importance as source of rural livelihood most of them are carried out without the requisite permission from forest authorities and therefore remain virtually

uncontrolled. Chainsaw milling for example was outlawed in 1988 but has persisted and remains a major source of livelihood for about 297,000 people directly or indirectly. It also supplies more than 80% of the domestic lumber market. It is therefore widely acknowledged that forest law enforcement through the implementation of the VPA will have a significant effect on livelihoods of forest fringe communities, chainsaw operators and small and medium timber manufactures. A study by the Illegal or Incompatible Project Team (2010) identified six social safeguards categories and alternative options to illegal logging by local communities. These were

- Legal security for forest users — to ensure legitimate access to and control of forest resources based on sustainable resource use, for forest-fringe communities, artisanal forest exploitation and manufacturing practices;
 - Soft law enforcement — to create incentives for adaptation by designing ways for people to adapt in the long term;
 - Benefit-sharing/compensation — to formulate legal policy and administrative arrangements that guarantee socially equitable forest benefit sharing and compensation mechanisms;
 - Capacity building — to raise awareness, empower and develop the skills of the more vulnerable groups of forest users to make equitable use of forests and/or alternative livelihood opportunities;
 - Alternative livelihoods/employment — to develop options for vulnerable people who are negatively affected by the VPA implementation within the constraints imposed by limited resources.
- Expanding the forest resource base — to ease the pressure on forest resources and also create jobs. Mechanisms identified for implementing these social safeguards includes policies, legislations and regulations; programmes and projects; financial incentives; education and extension as well as partnership building.

These mechanisms however, have to be properly guided by some lessons that have been learnt in the pilot projects that sought to articulate local livelihood concerns into the VPA implementation. These guidelines are therefore derived from the following studies: Illegal or Incompatible?: Managing the consequences of timber legality standards on local livelihoods; Linking communities to forest concession holders for the production of legal lumber; Developing alternatives to illegal logging in Ghana and Guyana; and lessons derived from the Forestry

Commission's modified taungya system. Specifically, the guidelines illustrate how communities can achieve reasonable utilization of forest resources within the framework of forest law enforcement, governance and trade. The broad objective is to reconcile the objectives of the FLEGT/VPAs and the livelihood aspirations of local communities that depend on forest resources especially timber production and trade.

2.0 METHODS

The contents of these guidelines were developed mainly from desk studies – particularly based on lessons learnt from the VPA consultation process and research/pilot projects. These were subjected to peer reviews, stakeholder comments and inputs from a workshop.

3.0 KEY TERMS AND CONCEPTS

Some key terms and concepts employed in these guidelines are defined as follows:

3.1 Sustainable livelihoods

The livelihood of a household or an individual can be interpreted as their ‘means of living’, which is based on their capabilities, assets (financial, physical, human, natural resource and social) and activities . A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, can maintain or build on available capabilities and assets, and does not undermine the natural resource base.

3.1.1 The principles of the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA)

Based on NZAID and IFAD SLA Frameworks SLA essentially comprises seven core principles namely people centered, holistic, and dynamic, builds on strength, has macro-micro linkages, counts on broad partnerships and is sustainable. These are explained in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: The seven core principles of the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (SLA)

People-Centered	Focuses on perspectives, priorities and strengths of people – especially poor and vulnerable women/girls and men/boys
Holistic	Recognizes that different factors and processes influence the livelihood opportunities and choices of people and that people have multiple livelihood strategies in pursuit of multiple livelihood outcomes.
Dynamic	Recognizes that poor people’s livelihood strategies can change rapidly.
Building on Strengths	Starts with an analysis of strengths rather than needs.
Macro-Micro Linkages	Considers the linkages between the two levels to inform more supportive policies and institutions.
Broad Partnerships	Counts on broad partnerships drawing on both the public and private sectors

Sustainability	Includes analysis of environmental, social, economic and institutional sustainability
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Source: NZAID and IFAD Sustainable Livelihoods Approach Guideline
[\[www.aid.govt.nz/...es/default/files/Sustainable\]](http://www.aid.govt.nz/...es/default/files/Sustainable)

3.2 Alternative livelihoods

These can be interpreted to mean either allowing or necessitating a choice between two or more livelihood activities, or as a way of describing livelihoods that exist outside of the traditional or established systems for a given area (Ireland and Baker 2004). The concept of alternative livelihood ventures in the forestry sector refers to business enterprises that complement local peoples’ engagement in forest activities (TBI, 2013).

3.2.1 Forest based livelihoods

These are activities that are necessarily based on the forest and will not exist without the forest. That is, they directly depend on the forest. Examples include: reforestation or tree-crop mixed (agroforestry) farming at both on- and offreserve areas, collection of NTFPs from fallow lands (off-reserve areas) and forest reserve areas, forest enrichment, woodlot establishment (Insaidoo et al., 2012)

3.2.2 Forest related livelihoods

These are related or connected to the forest but not necessarily based in the forest. Examples are snail rearing, grasscutter rearing, mushroom farming etc. The initial stock for these activities may be obtained from the forest but the onward development is not strictly dependent on the forest (TBI Ghana in 2005).

3.2.3 Timber utilization related livelihoods

Timber utilization related livelihoods in the context of Ghana refer to livelihoods derived from formal logging (with legal permit system) and illegal chainsaw milling (TBI Ghana, 2013). In recent times artisanal timber milling is also gaining popularity and is expected to replace chainsaw milling. Marfo and Acheampong (2011) have estimated that about 97,000 people were employed along the chainsaw production chain nationwide in 2008.

They work as tree hunters, chainsaw renters and operators, lumber carriers, loading boys, dealers in chainsaw accessories or chainsaw repairers, mostly in combination with farming (Obiri and Damnyag, 2011).

3.2.4 Forest revenue related livelihoods

These include timber royalties, social responsibility agreement (SRA) and crop compensation payment. The concept of royalties in Ghana's forest management relate to stool landowners who remain owners of forest lands having a percentage of the revenues generated from timber harvested from the stool land in question (TBI Ghana, 2013).

SRA is an agreement between a Timber Utilization Contract (TUC) holder in both on and off-reserve production areas and the land-owning forest fringe communities. The agreement being in two parts, include: (i) the code of conduct that entails the contractors' role to ensure that all timber operations are conducted with due respect for the rights of the communities in terms of their customs, beliefs, infrastructure and livelihoods, and (ii) the social obligations, i.e. a specific agreement drawn up between the community and the contractor based on the stumpage or the monetary value of the trees removed from the TUC area (Ibid).

The concept of crop damage compensation as stipulated in Act 547 gives power to farmers regarding tree felling on farmlands. The Act indicates that a TUC holder needs the permission of the farmer before harvesting. In addition, the farmer has the right to negotiate 'fair compensation for crop damage' (Ibid).

3.3 Small and medium forest enterprises (SMFEs)

These refer to forestry related enterprises that are characterized by having minimal capital and employing informally trained workers but sometimes with a high revenue profile with the potential for value addition backed by higher capital and skill levels (Osei-Tutu et al. 2012). These enterprises serve as important additional income source for a number of people in the forest sector. However, most often such enterprises are undertaken with little attention to sustainable management and/or business focus. These include: (i) NTFP based SMFE. E.g. Honey production, game domestication, medicinal and herbal products, wild fruits, leaves and nuts, cultivation of black paper; (ii) Wood and timber based SMFEs, e.g. Charcoal enterprises, chainsaw lumber production and trade, wood carving, carpentry and chew-sticks; (iii) Payment for environmental Services, e.g. Community based ecotourism (Osei-Tutu et al. 2012; TBI Ghana, 2013).

4.0 STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING LOCAL LIVELIHOODS

The question these guidelines help to answer is what approach should be used to enable communities achieve better management and utilization of forest resources within the framework of forest law enforcement governance and trade in their livelihood schemes?

4.1 Policy support for forest Livelihoods

The 2012 Forest and Wildlife Policy of Ghana seek to promote the protection and management of the forest resource as well as sustainable forest-related livelihoods. There is also concern about how international policies like the FLEGT/VPA affect local interest especially livelihoods and the environment. The VPA between Ghana and the EU therefore explicitly recognizes the need for social safeguards in Article 17 by stating that:

1. In order to minimize possible adverse impacts, the parties agree to develop a better understanding of the livelihoods of potentially affected indigenous and local communities as well as the timber industry, including those engaged in illegal logging;
2. The parties will monitor the impacts of this agreement on the communities and other actors identified in paragraph 1, while taking reasonable steps to mitigate any adverse impacts. The parties may agree on additional measures to address adverse impacts.

Community dependence on forests for livelihoods can therefore be defended from the forest and wildlife policy viewpoint whilst the need to accommodate livelihood issues in the legal timber regime can also be justified from the FLEGT/VPA agreement.

4.1.1 What works?

Carefully considered policy options that derive their source from the national forest policy. They may or may not require changes in legislation. Such policy options naturally are easy to justify, and often constitute a good starting point for a sector dialogue on livelihoods. An example is the use of artisanal millers to produce lumber for the domestic market in Ghana

Policies that are inclusive in nature and recognize the potential of private entrepreneurship in sustainable forest management: Generally, forest policies and legislation that recognize local people's access to resources e.g. smallholder forest plantation development, are easier to implement than those that ignore local concerns and criminalize local use of resources

Policies that result in resource expansion and job creation at the same time: These are popular with governments that seek to provide jobs and expand forests. Local people also respond very well to such initiatives and often lobby for their continuity and sustainability. e.g. The modified taungya system

4.1.2 What does not work?

Policies that seek stakeholders' collaboration without corresponding reward system: e.g. In Ghana, there is a huge potential in the management of timber trees in off-reserve forest areas for local livelihoods but that potential cannot be realized under the present tenure system which excludes farmers from benefiting from timber revenue raised from non-planted trees.

Livelihood empowerment policies without legal backing: Forest related livelihood policies must be compatible with forest laws to gain acceptability. Therefore forest stakeholders and lobbyists who seek to promote policies ought to do so within the framework of existing forest laws.

4.2 Governance of local livelihoods

The essence of the VPA initiative was about effective law enforcement which thrives in an environment of good governance (Beeko and Arts, 2010). Therefore the implementation of the VPA should necessitate change that results in better control and responsible use of power and authority that ensure broad social acceptance of the VPA implementation outcomes. The VPA in principle recognises that good forest governance and forest-related livelihood issues are inseparable. For instance, the involvement of multiple stakeholders in the VPA process will be less meaningful if the needs and concerns of local people regarding their forest use were not included in the agreement. As a forest governance regime, the scope of the VPA will be incomplete without due recognition of issues like the legal duality between the formal timber industry and the informal form of forest usage. Also a rights-based and social justice approach to livelihoods is a better way to deal with local livelihoods from a governance perspective. The purely business approach that looks up to and sources clients from the business elite may frown on equity and other forms of good governance principles. It is worth noting that sometimes good governance of local livelihoods may lie in change in forest policy or practices and therefore stakeholders should be prepared for this.

4.2.1 What works?

Appreciate the forest management problem that a particular livelihood is creating and the livelihood needs of the community at the same time: Good forest governance should provide answers to the aspirations of local livelihoods. In doing this forest actors including SMFEs operators, farmers, traditional authorities, government agencies, NGOs, and the community in general should be able to appreciate the need to manage the forest on sustainable basis and situate livelihood concerns within that context. This is more likely to offer holistic and realistic solutions and at worse find a middle ground between local livelihoods and forest protection needs. *Structured dialogue targeted at*

a solution: It is important that a platform is established with skilled facilitators to offer stakeholders the opportunity to negotiate and reach an agreement on how livelihoods should be managed to ensure livelihood security and sustainable forest management. The dialogue should result in a solution which should be binding on stakeholders. A strong and well-committed community/trade association is vital for community representation and negotiation of livelihood rights on the platform.

Scientific insights: To have an informed debate, stakeholders should be provided with scientific information to guide the course of the dialogue. Scientific information can be provided through commissioned research or assemblage of existing research results. Facts, realities and evidence-based claims help stakeholders to shape their perspectives and adjust their positions on issues.

Application of conflict management mechanisms: Conflicts are inherent in forest-based livelihoods due to poor forest governance and resource scarcity. Where there is need to settle conflicts, the necessary conflict management mechanisms to be decided on by the platform have to be put in place.

Approaches that seek to achieve equitable access to forest resources: Admitting local forest rights as legitimate is not often a pleasant choice however it may constitute the only viable solution for a long-standing and pervasive forest conflict. Besides, livelihoods options that are economically rewarding to communities cannot be promoted without access to high-value forest resources. There should also be balance of power among stakeholders who share the forest resources.

4.2.2 What does not work?

Unwillingness to dialogue and make concessions: Protracted conflicts often result where government agencies or entities who wield power refuse to dialogue and make concessions with local people concerning forest-related livelihoods. The authorities can prescribe solutions with legal backing but experience shows that they never work.

Forest use rights that restrict community forest use to low-value forest products: Communities are well aware of the economic potential of various forest products and will therefore not invest their time and resources on low-value products in addressing poverty or livelihood issues. This means use rights that restrict community forest use to low-value forest products can best be described as a source of conflict rather than a livelihood empowerment mechanism.

Threats of livelihood loss and the use of excessive power to curtail livelihoods which appear controversial: A quick fix solution devoid of extensive stakeholder engagement and weighing of options: Solutions to livelihood problems hardly lie within easy reach. Therefore be prepared for a lengthy discussion which has the advantage of weighing

various options and settling eventually on those with the highest potential for success. Do not quickly dismiss suggestions and ideas from community members although you may not agree with them.

Community livelihood promoting committees without an external facilitator: Even with capacity building, local committees are very slow in producing results in the absence of a facilitator and often collapse soon after projects that established them have ended.

4.3 Analysis of livelihoods

In issues of livelihoods, the common approach in most projects is to undertake livelihood analysis. Livelihoods can be analysed in relation to the five capitals in the Sustainable Livelihood Approach (DFID 1999) and the NZAID principles.

4.3.1 What works?

Use of tried and tested framework and social research methods: In undertaking livelihood analysis, tried and tested frameworks, and social research methods such as the DFID (1999), NZAID, among others, need to be used. However, the user(s) needs to learn to adapt. For instance, the DFID sustainable livelihood approach (SLA) has the following elements: assets, vulnerability context, structures and processes, and outcomes. The DFID approach is based on the principle that people require basically five assets (human, social, natural, financial and physical capitals) to achieve positive livelihood outcomes (DFID 1999). According to NZAID, the SLA essentially comprises six core principles - people centered, holistic, and dynamic; building on strength, macro-micro linkages and sustainability, most of which are also dealt with in the DFID (1999) framework. The FAO's Marketing Analysis and Development (MA&D) framework is another useful analytical tool which promotes sustainable enterprise development based on forest products and services.

Use of inter-disciplinary teams: (Integrated approach) Communities have diverse assets and different socioeconomic needs. Assessment of livelihood portfolios for communities therefore need research teams with different backgrounds. The research team should preferably include social scientists, foresters, agriculturalists, business experts as well as civil society (NGO) activists who can demonstrate a good understanding of the issues being analyzed.

Conversational approach to information gathering: In such socio-economic surveys intended for analyzing livelihoods, researchers and research assistants (enumerators) need to strive to obtain the confidence of the

respondents in question, to be able to get the right information from them. This can be done by using the local language of target communities (respondents) in asking questions in a number of different ways during household surveys to ensure that respondents understand the questions properly to enable them provide appropriate responses.

Making proper definition of unit of analysis: (social research methods) Smolkowski (2007) has defined a unit of analysis as the object under study, the entity expected to produce a change in some outcome, the thing about which a researcher wishes to generalize. Against this background, a proper definition of unit of analysis need to be made based on the major entity being analyzed in the study. This is to ensure that appropriate interpretation and generalization of results are made.

Identifying positive factors first: In analyzing livelihoods, positive factors including the potential of the livelihood strategies under study in creating employment, providing cash and non-cash incomes, among others need to be identified first.

Sharing of results with respondents: This activity, often improves the interpretation and eventual practicability of the research results. However, researchers should be able to demonstrate a good understanding of the many factors that influence livelihood choices and opportunities in the area. It can be done through organizing community meetings, focus group discussions, seminars or workshops; during which livelihood options or portfolios of majority choices and ways of adopting them are explained to stakeholders present.

4.3.2 What does not work?

Use of inexperienced enumerators: The use of inexperienced research assistants (enumerators) who are only interested in figures and interpretation of results with no linkage to the problem to be solved i.e. livelihood promotion, does not help provide solutions to livelihoods problems at stake.

Treating the community as a homogenous group: Another issue that does not promote effective livelihood analysis is treating a community as a homogenous group. That is, taking the individual households or people in the community as being the same, and therefore trying to prescribe one type of solution for all of them. A community should be treated as a heterogeneous group. This implies that detailed analysis of their livelihood problems and solutions, cutting across the different sexes, age groups, educational levels, tribes, socio-economic backgrounds, among others, should be made.

4.4 Identifying potential alternative livelihood to illegal logging and timber trade

Alternative livelihood support schemes create employment avenues for people involved in them. Hence, as means to curtail indiscriminate felling of trees, alternative productive ventures that can effectively replace the illegal logging activities need to be proposed. Viable livelihood options may not necessarily be available. However, the process of identification and implementation of the new option can be done in a way that makes it practicable. Integrating such relatively new ventures requires an adaptive approach to co-management, with mechanisms in place that ensure feedback, joint learning and building of mutual support among the partners (Berkes 2004). Here, adaptive co-management is defined as ‘a process by which institutional arrangements and ecological knowledge are tested and revised in a dynamic, ongoing, self-organized process of learning-by-doing’ (Folke *et al.*, 2002:

20).

4.4.1 What works?

Survey: In identifying the potential alternative livelihood options, there is the need to undertake socio-economic surveys in order to identify the right needs of the target group (local people).

Development of capacities: The development of the capacities of target community and beneficiaries through engaging them in focus group discussions or workshops to open their eyes on issues like factors to consider in choosing the right livelihood options, marketing, among others may be necessary.

Demonstration and minimum support: Sending target community members on field trips to identified viable small and medium scale enterprises in full business as means of demonstrating how one can go about such business enterprises with minimum supports can be helpful. This is because effective on-site demonstrations can help ensure better understanding of the principles involved in business or enterprise development when one engages in them. It will also help to ensure effective implementation of similar enterprises that the target community members may want to adopt.

Use adaptive management principles: Adaptive management together with co-management principles can be introduced to target communities as means of identifying potential alternative livelihood, whereby target beneficiaries can be organized through the process of ‘learning-by-doing’ particular livelihood enterprises of their choice. This can be done with mechanisms in place that ensure feedback, joint learning and building of mutual support among the partners.

Documenting lessons learnt and sharing: In the process of identification and implementation of potential alternative livelihoods, lessons learnt by various groups at different locations need to be documented and shared.

This will ensure gaining of additional experience by beneficiaries for enhancing livelihood options being adopted.

Linking livelihood option to sustainability of the resource: Livelihood options that result in resource creation or conservation and pay well at the same time are easier to promote in terms of sourcing external support and gingering local interest.

4.4.2 What does not work?

Assessment of sustainability potential based on local conditions only: Where assessment of sustainability potential does not look at the analysis of environmental, social, economic and institutional conditions, but based on local conditions only (e.g. only food or cash needs of the local people) will not have the desired impact.

Less financially rewarding alternatives: Introduction of alternative livelihood options that are less financially rewarding will not help local people to achieve better management and utilization of forest resources within the framework of forest law enforcement. It is argued that if the package involved in the alternative livelihood venture is not attractive enough it would not have the required impact since chainsaw operators earn huge sums of money from illegal logging

Failing to consider special knowledge needs: In some cases, there may be need to acquire special skills on the enterprise. An example is tree seedling production whereby participants must know basic nursery techniques, seasonality of activities, etc.

4.5 Supporting existing livelihoods

Sometimes there may be some existing livelihood activities such as the traditional farming, animal rearing system or a tree farming project that may need special support - financially, technically or materially. Of course, representatives of beneficiary communities and supporting institutions need to be engaged in dialogue, during which the capacities, strength and differences in livelihood needs of the beneficiary communities can be found. This will complement the type of interventions as well as enhancing the implementation of the prescribed interventions.

4.5.1 What works?

Intervention depending on knowledge: Credible background knowledge preferably based on research and/or practice will help to provide appropriate interventions that will improve upon the existing livelihoods towards enhancement of the standards of living of beneficiary communities.

Capacity and dialogue: Engaging in effective dialogue with the community members will help in the selection of appropriate livelihood interventions and understanding of capacity building aimed at equipping the beneficiaries in the introduced interventions.

Recognize livelihood dynamism: Beneficiary community households may show interests different from existing livelihood portfolios, and this needs to be recognized to ensure that different households are free to choose preferred livelihoods for supplementing or replacing existing ones.

Building on strengths: Supporting beneficiary community members based on strengths in terms of what they already know and can provide in support is necessary in ensuring ownership of new interventions aimed at supplementing existing livelihoods.

Linking responsible resource harvesting to resource creation: To ensure sustainable forest plantation management, FC/FSD need to help put in place strategic resource (e.g. timber) harvesting plans for community members who are already involved in tree farming, whereby logging companies or property owners think about the environmental impacts of the logging, and provide a clear list of ways to mitigate these impacts. In this case, supporting institutions such as FC/FSD need to facilitate the provision of a harvesting guide (document), with a projection of which trees will be felled and when, how and where access roads will be cut, and which waterways may be impacted¹. The harvesting plan can also indicate strategies for enrichment planting to complete the cycle of sustainable forest plantation management.

4.5.2 What does not work?

Simple capacity building and support without proper identification of livelihood viability: The identification of viability of livelihoods to be adopted by any group of people at a given area needs to be done with proper

¹ www.wisegeek.com/what-is-a-timber-harvest-plan.htm

consultation with the target beneficiaries, as well as undertaking feasibility studies to ensure the appropriateness of the livelihood options. However, if this is not done, and instead beneficiary communities are trained in livelihood options that may seem suitable from the perspective of the supporting organization only, it may be difficult for the target community members to own such introduced livelihood options themselves. It may consequently create problems for the implementation of such activities.

Building on needs rather than on strengths: Some target community members may report of needs, particularly material and financial support. However, the solution to their challenges may be the need for skills (knowledge) and encouragements in how to improve upon the implementation of the existing livelihoods. Hence, building on needs rather than on strengths may not help to ensure sustainability of the existing livelihoods.

4.6. Building partnership between communities and other stakeholders for livelihood development

Partnership building is one of the seven core principles of sustainable livelihoods approach and can be instrumental in enhancing community involvement in sustainable forest management as well as the outcomes of efforts aimed at reconciling conservation and development aims. Partnership development between multiple actors allow the parties involved to achieve more than they would be capable of achieving on their own, by joining assets and power (RosTonen et al. 2007). They do not only bring out the strengths in partners but also enable communities to achieve heights hitherto unimaginable under the resource constraints under which rural livelihoods are pursued. The MTS and the Linking Communities to Concession Holders Project are examples that show how state organizations and the private sector can work together as business partners in promoting community livelihoods and other economic objectives.

4.6.1 What works?

Transparent and documented arrangements: This may not only fulfill a legal requirement, it also demonstrates the importance or profile of the partnership and protects the interests of partners in any eventuality. Communities show more commitment and positive attitude to partnerships that are covered by official documents. Agreements among partners can also be enforced through signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), putting in place simple by-laws and operation regulations.

Multi-stakeholder governing and monitoring arrangements: Multi-stakeholder groups interact through dialogue and consultations in arriving at the right partnership design in terms of responsibilities, benefits, rules and mode of implementation of the scheme.

Presence of strong community associations: These are necessary to press for communities' interest and increase the negotiating capacity of the group. However, it should be noted that associations can remain strong only if they are transparent and accountable to the community. Often the use of sub-committees contributes to efficiency and inclusiveness although it comes along with its own challenge of finding competent community members. Moreover, strong community associations can be achieved by drawing on lessons from existing forest-related community associations that have been noted to be functioning effectively.

External facilitator or party to the agreement: The idea of partnership here is in respect of the pivotal role played by third parties, including the central and local governments (in providing the governance framework and conditions in which partnerships can operate); forest officers (in brokering, mediating and monitoring); farmer associations (which can increase negotiating capacity); NGOs (as brokers, lobbyists and watchdogs); development agencies (in providing means to improve local livelihoods); banks (in providing loans to cover tree planting and maintenance costs and to overcome the problem of long time scales involved in tree-growing); business experts (to provide techniques such as marketing promotion, packaging, etc.); and traditional authorities, who guarantee continued access to land.

4.6.2. What does not work?

Partnership with short-term benefits to communities: Communities' commitment to collaborative projects can be assured only when their interest is at stake. Therefore partnerships that are based only on short-term benefits to communities are to be discouraged.

Non-negotiable position of collaborator: Stakeholder seeking to go into partnerships with communities must be willing to negotiate on their positions. Non flexibility on the part of collaborators raises suspicion among communities about the intentions of the collaborator as a genuine business partner. Flexibility on the other hand boosts communities' investment confidence and draws them closer to the partner.

Promises of benefits or assistance that are not secured yet: In their bid to stimulate community interest in projects, officials of government agencies or NGOs often make promises of benefits or assistance to communities. However, when such promises are unrealized over long periods they tend to undermine whatever relationship and trust that might have been built within the partnership.

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