

Forest governance learning group

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International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

Introduction

The forest governance learning group (FGLG) is an alliance of independent agencies which aims to exchange learning and develop ideas on forest governance – and to help make them work. Constituted by several internationally-active agencies and a range of connected sub-groups in western and southern Africa, the FGLG's participation and ambition have been growing steadily over the last year. FGLG is facilitated by IIED, at least in its initial stages, and DFID is providing support for the first year of operation of the group. Complementary work on practical governance tools is also progressing under IIED's "Power Tools" initiative with Dutch and German government support. The FGLG aims to contribute to the Africa Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (AFLEG) process.

FGLG sub-groups are up and running in Mali, Niger, Ghana, Uganda, Mozambique and Malawi. A group in South Africa has been slower to find its feet but is now doing so. In each sub-group there are broadly three interconnected parts to the work:

- ❑ A small ad-hoc group of 'governance-connected' individuals dedicated to exchanging and developing experience and ideas
- ❑ Policy research on situations where livelihoods and forests are in trouble because people are marginalized from governance. In the first year, at least, this work is focused on problems of forestry illegality and regulation
- ❑ Development of practical guidance and tools for making progress in implementing better forest governance

Participants and process

Convenors for each of the country sub-groups have been identified – with institutional homes in a range of government agencies, NGOs and academic bodies. Participants are identified on the basis of their willingness, experience, good connections and ideas, and the prospects they offer for developing strategic links between the forest sector and other sectors/influence-groups. A typical mix includes:

- ❑ A senior department or ministry level forest sector decision-maker
- ❑ An experienced forestry opinion-former – who has much experience in the sector and has the "ear" of at least some decision-makers
- ❑ A macro-planner/economist in the ministry of finance or similar agency whose decisions on Poverty Reduction Strategies, and the like, may greatly affect the forestry sector

- ❑ An interested parliamentarian or other player who can engage with the national political process
- ❑ Opinion-formers and decision-makers from a small number of other key agencies, such as lands and agriculture departments, and/or effective private sector and civil organisations.

The emphasis is on engaging with a small ad-hoc, interested and motivated group - rather than a larger forum at pains to show representation of all stakeholders and every facet of the issue. In some countries such groups almost exist already – and the intention here is to support and build, not replicate.

Internationally, active organisations in the group alongside IIED are LTS International and Indufor Oy. Practical collaboration is also steadily growing with CIFOR and ODI, and several other organisations have expressed interest in engaging with the group as it develops.

The country sub-groups have been exchanging thinking and have begun sharing draft material. Face-to-face exchanges in West and Southern Africa are planned: a West Africa learning event is set for 28th to 30th July 2004 at Akosombo in Ghana and a Southern Africa event will be held in South Africa at a date still to be finalised in September or October. Lessons are also being shared as they emerge with wider audiences and processes such as UNFF and AFLEG.

Policy research on illegal forestry and poor people

In-country partners are currently pursuing the following research work:

- ❑ *Impacts and legality of forest utilisation permits in Ghana.* Kyeretwie Opoku and Elijah Danso, Civic Response
- ❑ *Impacts of local forest institutions on livelihoods and forests in Ghana.* Emilia Arthur and Clare Brogan, Forest Sector Development Project
- ❑ *Illegality, law enforcement, and the administration of justice in the forestry sector in Uganda.* Cornelius Kazoora and John Carvalho, Sustainable Development Centre
- ❑ *Governance opportunities and constraints in making fuelwood markets work for local livelihoods in Mali.* Mamadi Cisse and Mary Allen, SOS Sahel International Mali
- ❑ *Potential for over-coming the governance challenges and expanding fuelwood markets in Niger.* Amadou Bachir and Gill Vogt, SOS Sahel International Niger
- ❑ *Law enforcement, illegality and the forest dependent poor in Malawi.* Bright Sibale and Gracian Banda, Centre for Development Management
- ❑ *Decentralisation processes and marginalisation of the forest product-dependent rural poor in Malawi.* Robert Kafakoma, Technical Support Programme
- ❑ *Impacts of recent legislation and the extent of compliance on the forest-dependent poor in Mozambique.* Simon Norfolk, Rouja Johnstone and Boaventura Cau, Terra Firma

- ❑ *Governance constraints to increasing forestry's contribution to poverty reduction in South Africa* (researchers yet to be finalised)

Drafts of some of the above studies have been delivered to the FGLG sub-groups. They will be developed, finalised and made available over the next few months (see websites and contacts below).

Guidance and tools development

Building on the above-mentioned studies and some other work, guidance material and tools for practical ways of pursuing improved governance are being developed. Prepared initially by researchers from experience in a particular context, these are then developed firstly by the country sub-group and then by FGLG participants as a whole. Tools and guidance material in the pipeline currently include:

- ❑ *How to develop forestry as a lever for better governance* (from experience initially in Tanzania)
- ❑ *Guidance for forest sector professionals on engaging and influencing poverty strategies and other wider processes at national level* (Uganda and Malawi)
- ❑ *How to assess, and improve the influence of law on, the benefits to local livelihoods from commercial forestry* (Ghana)
- ❑ *Tactics for improving governance and poverty impacts of fuelwood markets* (Mali and Niger)
- ❑ *Forest justice – combating illegality for forest-linked livelihoods* (Uganda)
- ❑ *The Good, Average and Bad framework - for scrutinising and improving the practical outcomes of forest legislation for marginalized forest-dependent communities* (Mozambique)
- ❑ *Tools and tactics to improve the participation of the poor in effective forest regulation and decentralisation* (Malawi)
- ❑ *Governance tactics for increasing forestry's contribution to poverty reduction* (South Africa)

The objectives (and working titles) of some of these tools overlap and it is likely that those with generic elements will be merged, whilst capturing context specificities.

Is it all looking useful?

This work responds to the work of many others and is trying to fill an important gap. This is the gap between the increasing prescriptions for the changes needed in forest governance and the dearth of practical approaches and real preparedness to implement them. The country groups are beginning to look like a useful route to addressing this gap.

Getting forestry department directors seeing eye to eye with ministry of finance planners, parliamentarians and other sectoral heads - and collectively recognising their understanding and power to bring about practical change – shows promise. So too does the research work that explicitly aims to bring the problems of those marginalized from governance into the frame. Drawing on both the practical

experience of the “well-connected”, and the insights from research, to identify practical tools for making progress where currently there are few – has struck a chord with many in the countries so far involved.

What's next?

Work already started will take much dedicated effort to bring to fruition over the next few months and have as much impact as possible with. If all goes well, a second phase of the FGLG is proposed which would deepen the participation and engagement with governance issues in the currently involved countries, and spread its reach to pick up on the demand of others (there is much interest, for example, in south-east Asia...Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia).

Websites:

- ***Forest governance learning group:***
<http://www.iied.org/forestry/research/projects/forest.html>
- ***Power tools:*** <http://www.iied.org/forestry/tools/index.html>

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