Deep REDD+: lessons from a South–South–North collaboration

Brazil and Mozambique join forces to learn about fighting deforestation and forest degradation.

Brazil's Bolsa Floresta programme was one of the first schemes to counter deforestation by paying local communities and land users to leave trees uncut. And it's become one of the largest, with 10 million hectares in 17 reserves, each managed by a community association. As more countries begin outlining strategies to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and promote conservation, sustainable forest management and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (REDD+), can they draw on the experiences of Southern pioneers like Bolsa Floresta?

Mozambique's government set out to explore this possibility, signing a Memorandum of Understanding in 2009 between the Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs (MICOA) and the Amazonas Sustainable Foundation (FAS), the Brazilian public-private partnership that oversees Bolsa Floresta. It was an unusual pairing. Many developing countries are working on plans aimed at getting them into the pipeline for international REDD+ funding, but they often consult only their own government departments.

IIED coordinated the research and consultations for this road map. We faced two problems: designing an inclusive process with limited time and resources, and coordinating across institutions.

The team recognised a trade-off between pace and inclusivity: developing REDD+ strategy fast, as Mozambique officials urged, versus involving more stakeholders and building their capacity to implement the strategy. For REDD+ to work in the long term, we had to cultivate 'deep REDD+' — enthusiasm and knowledge among national, provincial and community institutions in critical landscape corridors, such as the Beira corridor in central Mozambique.

Country exchanges, in-country briefings and consultations, and testing at pilot sites were all important. We also tailored the process to reach diverse groups more efficiently — by inviting district representatives who could take information back to their home areas, for example. One-on-one
understanding and capacity. To nurture ‘deep REDD+’, we established a multinational, multisector partnership grounded in South–South country exchanges and action learning at pilot sites. For this working group, building the knowledge and implementation capacity of stakeholders was an integral part of formal REDD+ planning. A key priority was to maintain collective effort in the face of various institutional agendas. The reward was national REDD+ planning documents ground-truthed by international learning about what had worked elsewhere, as well as by local insights about what might work at pilot sites in Mozambique.

KEY LESSONS LEARNT & INNOVATIONS

• In this South–South partnership, learning was mutual: rather than blindly replicating a ‘proven’ model from Brazil, the partners adapted the approach to Mozambique’s local contexts and capacities, drawing on field visits to both countries.

• To create strong, broad ownership of REDD+ readiness, we needed time to engage government, civil society, the private sector and local communities. We balanced inclusivity against time and resource constraints by working first in areas of intensive deforestation and degradation, which will form landscape corridors for REDD+ implementation in the future.

• While local participation and piloting is crucial, coordination at the top can make or break REDD+ readiness. Tackling drivers of deforestation requires linking champions across sectors such as forestry, agriculture, energy and mining, as well as respected business and NGO representatives.

PARTNERS’ VIEW

The Minister of Environment’s leadership laid the ground for the technical work to proceed, but South–South collaboration requires commitment and continuous engagement between all parties involved. In the future, it is important that South–South collaboration explore more exchange with other neighbouring countries such as Tanzania or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Personal opinion of Francisco Sambo, Mozambique Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs

IIED NATURAL RESOURCES GROUP

The aim of the Natural Resources Group is to build partnerships, capacity and wise decision making for fair and sustainable use of natural resources. Our priority in pursuing this purpose is on local control and management of natural resources and other ecosystems.

Mutual learning

We found that South–South collaboration was not just about Mozambique receiving a good model from a larger, more experienced country. Brazil also had to be open to learning about the context where its knowledge might be applied. Although Bolsa Floresta covers an area larger than Portugal, its communities are small and scattered. In Mozambique — where forests underpin the livelihoods of 80 per cent of the rural population, including three million small-scale farmers — officials questioned whether they could afford to scale up Brazil’s cash payments to households and communities. But they agreed other pro-poor features of Bolsa Floresta — such as local income-generation groups and community capacity-building programmes — are ripe for testing, building on Mozambique’s existing experience with community-based natural resources management.

In its first three years, the working group produced key planning documents, including the REDD+ readiness preparation proposal — which has been approved by the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility — and a draft national REDD+ strategy. Next, we hope to start taking REDD+ readiness forward at six pilot sites in Mozambique. In Manica, for example, where farming is encroaching on forest reserves, local communities are already discussing how REDD+ can work for them. We can now start to implement plans from our first phase and explore how places like Manica can become part of a larger corridor for testing and adapting solutions tailored to the local context.

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