An Introduction to Community Forestry

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Defining community forestry:

- Local community plays a significant role in forest management and land use decision making
Defining community forestry: Six questions to ask

community or non-community:

- Who **owns** the land?
- Who has **access/use** rights to the land?
- Who **decides** what happens on the forest area?
- Who **manages** the forest area (planning, operations)?
- Who **benefits** (economically or otherwise)?
- Is it **sustainable**?
Characterizing community forestry

- Variety of tenure and governance arrangements
- Variety of internal organizational structures
- Subsistence use and/or commercialization of products and services
  - Timber and non-timber forest products, ecosystem services
- Low to high degrees of mechanization of extraction and processing
benefit distribution from forest enterprise

- employment
- $ profit
  - exits community
  - community development
  - reinvested in enterprise
  - dividends
Benefit sharing

cases where:
- everyone benefits
- small group (employees) benefits
- elite capture (cases in Brazil, the Philippines, India, Nepal)
- inequalities (cases in Nepal)

marginalization of certain groups (cases in Cameroon, Brazil, India, Nepal)
Community Forestry on the rise

- Developing countries
  - Reserved for communities/indigenous groups: 8%
  - Community/indigenous owned: 14%
  - Individual/firm owned: 7%
  - Gov't administered: 71%

- Developed countries
  - Reserved for communities/indigenous groups: 2%
  - Community/indigenous owned: 16%
  - Individual/firm owned: 81%

Source: White and Martin 2002
Why the shift to community ownership/management?

- Broader recognition of traditional rights to lands and forests
- Move to broader decentralization of government powers (due to inefficiencies, or as condition of development money)
- Conservation efficiencies: local manager is better (?)
- Poverty alleviation/rural development
Indigenous and community forest tenure in Latin America – recent transfer of ~215 million ha

- 67% owned by community/indigenous groups
- 25% set aside for communities
- 8% govt/firm/individual

Mexico
- 20% community/indigenous
- 80% govt/ind/firm

Brazil
- 6% community/indigenous
- 94% govt/ind/firm

Ecuador
- 3 community/indigenous
- 6 govt/ind/firm

Bolivia
- 4 community/indigenous
- 5 govt/ind/firm
community forestry

community-based natural resource management
Community-based (local) managers

advantages
- more attuned to local environment
  - traditional/local knowledge
  - pick up on changes - more adaptive
- vested interest in long-term maintenance
- cheaper monitoring/enforcement
- [socio-economic and empowerment benefits]

disadvantages
- local interests may diverge from non-local interests
- may not see bigger/landscape picture
- limited capacity
- limited science
- [local tyrannies/elites; discrimination]
Forests and poverty

- many forest-dependent communities among the world’s poorest

- dependence on forests as safety net vs. daily net

- poorer households more reliant on forests for income/subsistence than moderately poor

Community forestry and community forest enterprises seen as a potential pathways out of poverty and to broader prosperity
International mobilization for community forestry

poverty alleviation & conservation combo
Wrap up

- many models of community forestry, introduced or traditional; difficult to define clearly
- promoted because it’s seen as a win-win-win situation
- many examples worldwide, some success stories, many challenges
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