Prospects for participatory resource management in the margins of Upper Guinea forests - Sierra Leone

Ngendakumana S.1, Minang P.1, E. C. Cole2, Balinda M.3, van Noordwijk M.1, Tchoundjeu Z.1, Garnet K.M. B4

1 World Agroforestry Centre, IARM/CEPES/USAID Project, CIFOR, Ministry of Agric., Forestry & Food Security-SL

Introduction

Maintaining forests and biodiversity values remains a key challenge all over the world. Several attempts/approaches have been adopted but yet trends have been the erosion of ecosystems resources over the past several decades. Incentive mechanisms have featured as a prominent part of the battery of approaches in recent times to target interventions at landscape level. Agroforestry is believed to be a land use with potential to contribute toforest areas conservation and linking it to right incentive mechanisms could constitute strong driving forces to conserve forest ecosystems and even reverse ongoing resources losses (Tharma et al, 2007). However, little is documented on agroforestry prospective options and policy outlets to sustain forest resources in the Upper Guinea forest ecosystem. This poster presents the early results of the effects of collective action combined with agroforestry based incentives developed and tested in Sierra Leone.

Methodological approach

Data collection during the study
- Desktop review of existing literature
- Participatory diagnosis tools to understand community priorities and landscape level challenges
- Institutional mapping and policy contexts assessment through policy content analysis, focus group during policy dialogue meetings and semi-structured interviews in Tambaliba communities
- Analysis of Data collected through: Excel spreadsheet and content analysis

Results and policy lessons learnt

Main challenges and AF-knowledge based solutions

Since its establishment as a National Park, very little has been done to address local community concerns. The table below presents the current constraints versus identified potential solutions in the margins of Outamba Kilimi National Park (OKNP), as part of the transboundary conservation area between Sierra Leone and Guinea.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified constraints</th>
<th>Proposed solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forest quality</td>
<td>Participatory forest-based research programmes in forest landscapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land tenure</td>
<td>Increasing the public awareness and understanding of forest property rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soil fertility</td>
<td>Promoting soil conservation and enhancement efforts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk of fire</td>
<td>Strengthening forest fire management units and improving fire prevention and control measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy dialogue</td>
<td>Developing clear, transparent, and participatory policy frameworks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Empowering local people through group dynamics and right incentives

Farmers’ initiative and visionary approach (FIVA) applied led to rapid adoption of appropriate agricultural, forestry and agroforestry options leading to a positive and simultaneous impacts on biodiversity (forest and animal), income generation while stimulating good management of forest resources. The following action led to the mentioned impacts:
- **Capacity strengthening of forest and extension agents**, CBOS and students, in agroforestry concepts, good governance practices, biodiversity management skills, permitted to increase awareness for managing natural resources to ensure balance between livelihoods and conservation.
- **Policy dialogue** was initiated to develop adequate HRM policy and strategic framework – creation of an enabling policy environment and implementation of developed method and practices.
- Seven agroforestry based technologies and management practices were tested in 56 farmer groups. Monitoring of results over one-planting season indicates an average increase in yields of about 50%.
- **Collective tree planting** using community property high value species e.g. grafted Mangifera indica, grafted Citrus sinensis, Tectona grandis, Afzelia africana and Simelina arbores are farms cultivated for improved varieties of cash crops, and market gardening.

The preliminary Ecosystem Services mapping shows study that tree planting is expected to increase water stock capacity, biodiversity richness and productivity of agricultural lands. Communities, which are increasing rapidly, may therefore have more productive farmland, enabling them to reduce pressure on forest resources.}

Targeting policy issues to catalyze change in forest resource management

In Sierra Leone, the main weaknesses were identified in two categories: Inadequacies in existing forestry texts and cross cutting issues beyond national forestry department.

National Forestry policy texts inadequacies

- Some titles in the existing acts and policy documents are no longer in use;
- no impact assessment was indicated before any public work or mining activities;
- Ministry was given immense power and this may lead to some abuse;
- International conventions are not referred to in most cases;
- Governance related to forestry extraction and transboundary issues are absent in the texts;
- Coordination among relevant ministries is not clear;
- The role of research seems not to be recognised anywhere in the policies;
- No Capacity-building strategy for an effective Policy Implementation at the end

Governing processes model for forest resources management at landscape level

Governance of landscape resources will normally involve multiple stakeholders who not only each have their own agenda, but also have their own ways of understanding and appreciating the landscape. They may interact primarily through the ways each tries to modify the landscape to suit their needs, often leading to conflicts. A more synergetic approach to the landscape will require negotiations between such stakeholders, either directly or through active intermediaries. A first step of ’leveling the playing field’ is needed to arrive at a common understanding of how the current landscape functions and what alternative scenarios may be feasible. The process of negotiations often can be facilitated if there is a neutral meeting table and ‘safe space’ to explore options that go beyond entrenched positions. The results of such a negotiation, however, will reach the real-world landscape in a stepwise process of plans and their implementation, scrutinized by all stakeholders. Ultimate outcomes, in terms of improved livelihoods options for local communities may take time to be effected.

Policy lessons learnt

The main question emerging from high level policy makers, traditional rulers and research teams with regards OKNP transboundary conservation area was: How do we interest communities in forest reserve conservation? Hence, in order to create and maintain communities’ enthusiasm in forest reserve conservation, it appears important to work out a mechanism that tackles the following areas:
- Responding to practical needs of communities according to their priorities,
- Valuing local knowledge and traditional values (what is important to communities: money or other things? what has been going on before we got involved?)
- Empowering communities for collective actions towards Participatory Natural Resources Management (PNRM),
- Integrating appropriate biodiversity friendly technologies and management practices, and
- Setting up appropriate incentive mechanisms based mostly on non-cash options.

Conclusion

It was found that even in the context of Sierra Leone, incentive mechanisms had acted as driving forces to conserve forest ecosystems. Participatory approaches such as FIVA and collective action led to the enforcement of the spirit of being associated to the forest resources management systems through a multi-partnership platform as governance process model. PES like schemes which may have high potential for forest conservation could be Agroforestry innovations, Negotiated capacity building, conditional land and tree tenure for C-private investors & Community livelihoods alongside enabling policy environment for FRM.

Acknowledgements

This piece of work has been funded by USAID and ICRAF

References