

Latin American & Caribbean Group (04.02.2015)

- 1) In what ways have decentralization, devolution and work on forest governance resulted in positive and negative outcomes over the past 10 years in your area?

Positive

- Substantial progress has been made in the **development of the legal frameworks that enable decentralization and transfer of responsibilities** across levels of government.
- **Effective collaboration between central government and sub-national levels** has occurred in certain cases but **still based on good will**. Openness to collaborate depends on **capacities and alignment of interests**. This also relates to the fact that **decentralization processes have evolved but unequally in all states/regions within the countries**.
- **Increasing resources** are flowing into forest governance as a result of **international attention to forests** during the last years. This has had positive impacts on policy making, **giving renewed importance to the forest sector**.
- The evolution of new approaches (e.g. safeguards for REDD+) has **opened spaces for the participation (not inclusion) of Indigenous Peoples** and their agendas into forest governance discussions.
- The **private sector** is now part of certain governance structures and has started to be shown as a **more sensitive actor to environmental issues (not necessarily to forest sector)**.
- Better **access to education** may be start showing a **more effective participation of local people in profitable productive activities**. However actual assessment on the impact of an amelioration of education access is still difficult.
- More attention is given to **monitoring in the forest sector and information based governance**.
- Changes have been observed in the **public sector towards ecosystem-based forest management frameworks** (e.g. focused on ecosystem services) with broader goals than timber productivity.
- **Sub-national governments have reached certain level of appropriation of natural resources management** (including forests in some locations), although still heterogeneous within the countries.

Negative

- A common problem has been the **devolution and transfer of responsibilities to sub-national governments without capacity building and construction/strengthening of institutions** and in a context of **lack of human and financial resources**. And at the local level there is a lack of capacities to effectively implement governance (e.g. **planning for effective expenditure**).
- Decentralization process in Latin America has **failed to incorporate meso-scale heterogeneity** in terms of capacities, stories behind development efforts, existing institutional arrangements for natural resource management, among other dimensions. A **one-size-fits-all approach to new conservation policy development has been inadequate**.
- Lack of adequate **control and monitoring instruments** has translated into **difficulties to regulate illegal activities** (illegal logging but also illegal cropping).
- **Decentralization** is still **vulnerable to changes in political orientation** of local/sub-national governments with limited institutionalization of basic governance processes.

- Increased **resources** transferred in the context of decentralization has **not trickled down to local populations** and to the needs related to tools and other mechanisms of forest governance.
- **Forests are still missing in the agenda of regional (supra-national) governance bodies** (e.g. CARICOM, UNASUR, CAN).
- The institutional setting needed to generate robust **information to inform forest governance is still in development stages**. Public officials still do not have strong capabilities to participate in these information generation processes.

2. What changes have occurred over the past 10 years in terms of:

a) Representation of diverse groups?

- There is **increasing recognition that the inclusion of local communities in monitoring** can lead to better distribution of benefits derived from different forest conservation and management schemes, however this **has not necessarily translated in more symmetric power relations**.
- Local communities perceive that the **distribution of benefits from incentives mechanisms (e.g. REDD+) has been unequal**.
- A slow start has been made in the **recognition that local people (forest dwellers) have a diverse set of livelihood strategies**. This trend is more common in the intervention side from the civil society and less by public entities.
- **Effective participation of local population has experienced limited progress**, although **some legal instruments** have been designed (e.g. prior consultation law) but lack effective implementation.

b) Coordination among parts and between levels of the bureaucracy?

- **Coordination across scales and sectors is still a major problem**. Coordination efforts have led to **more dialogue between levels** but the real impacts on forest governance are still to be seen.
- **Fragmentation** in regional (supra-national) coordination and lack of presence of the forest discussion at the regional level beyond fragmented discussions / instruments. **Even global mechanisms have fragmented approaches** (e.g. CBD UNFCCC).

c) Devolution of authority and allocation of funds to lower levels?

- **Adequate finance mechanisms** for the forest sector at the local level **are still lacking**. Good quality investments of public funds at local scales face challenges related to capacity of local governments to reach planned expenditure.
- In certain areas/countries there is a trend towards **individual titling** (e.g. Andean region) versus communal titling.
- In contexts **where forests are under the public domain**, the discussion persists in terms of **rights and ownership of environmental services**.

3. **What are the challenges and key issues for (good) forest governance, decentralization and devolution? (following table)**

4. **What changes should we be making to address these challenges and move forward in a better way (recommendations)? (following table)**

Challenges	Recommendations
<p>Fragmentation of governance between scales and between technical personnel and decision makers.</p>	<p>Additional financial resources and capacity building still needs to foster better coordination and communication across scales.</p> <p>Stronger institutions at the sub-national level with adequate capacity to implement actions on the ground and respond to their mandates.</p>
<p>Coordinated policy making is still problematic, mainstreaming of good forest governance is not yet there.</p>	<p>Better coordination between agencies that focus on development, participation, and environmental issues.</p>
<p>Translating policy into action suffers from poor instrumental design</p>	<p>Design better tools and mechanisms that allow translation of policy visions into operations on the ground with adequate financing.</p> <p>Using existing tools and mechanisms more efficiently and in an integrated manner.</p> <p>Generating clear guidelines for environmental governance at subnational level. e.g. mainstreaming land use planning at different scales.</p> <p>Incorporate holistic approaches that address forest as part of a push towards effective environmental governance.</p> <p>Decentralized government agencies should go beyond monitor and control and transform into strategic partners for forest management.</p>
<p>Decentralization is still seen as a goal attainable in the “short” term.</p>	<p>Recognition to the fact that decentralization is actually a long-term effort that includes and needs institution making.</p> <p>Seek already existing development and social mechanisms that might be useful for channelizing resources and capacities from national to local and vulnerable population (e.g. social development mechanisms, national conservation programmes)</p>
<p>Generation and storage/management of adequate information</p>	<p>Strengthen monitoring actions and organize information in an effective manner. Include decision makers in monitoring design.</p> <p>Strengthen national and sub-national environmental information systems.</p>
<p>Persisting dichotomy between decision makers and technicians /practitioners within public entities.</p>	<p>Incorporate multi-scale land use planning and joint prioritization of areas with multiple land management goals.</p>
<p>Full value of forest is still not considered.</p>	<p>Improve participation of forest sector in national accounting systems while assessing different methodologies and means to do so.</p> <p>Improve tracking / traceability systems for forest products.</p> <p>Incorporate forest related services to risk reduction efforts and as safety nets for vulnerable populations.</p>
<p>Make effective progress in realizing the potential benefits of public – private partnerships to fund and sustain SFM.</p>	<p>A clearer set of goals and mechanisms are needed to engage market actors, recognizing the diversity of objectives of enterprises.</p>
<p>Forests are still missing in the agenda of regional (supra-national) governance bodies (e.g. CARICOM, UNASUR, CAN).</p>	<p>Assess the role of COFLAC (FAO) and its possibilities within the new IAF to start refining a roadmap based on knowledge sharing and lessons learnt exchange.</p> <p>Evaluate the feasibility / need for proposing a technical regional body to assess countries in forestry related issues and design governance structures.</p>