

## Simple, practical and useful: an approach for addressing grievances and disputes during REDD+ preparations

What can you do to better prepare for possible disputes or stakeholder conflicts when designing strategies to combat climate change? As it turns out, with a group of 40 or so people from different walks of life and in seven different countries across Africa, quite a lot.

We spent four days in December with a diverse group of practitioners working on strategic assessment, participation and social inclusion in the context of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation). The group was brought together by the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, a trust fund managed by the World Bank. FCPF has introduced some remarkable innovations – including making available dedicated resources for dispute resolution capacity in the project design phase. Many of the participants recognized that dispute resolution would be critical to success; but they didn't know enough about it. This led to a rich set of structured discussions, focused on three spring-board questions:



- In your respective countries, can you identify the most likely issues that might lead to disputes or conflict as REDD+ preparations proceed?
- Are there existing institutions, initiatives or places where these issues are currently being resolved?
- Given the limited funds available from the FCPF preparation grants, what actions would you take to build capacity for dispute resolution and grievance redress?



would likely arise. Almost all groups identified land tenure as a key conflict that was present now and would remain an issue during REDD+ implementation.

**Assessment of Potential Conflicts** – Identifying existing and potential conflicts proved fairly easy for most country groups. Participants cited lack/absence of consultation, poor communication, and inadequate participation as obstacles that would likely arise during the preparatory phase of REDD+ (i.e. when countries prepare national plans for managing forests and assessing environmental impacts in preparation for carbon finance). Once carbon transactions start happening, most participants said conflicts over benefit sharing and inclusion

**Identification of Capacity for Grievance Redress** – In the opening day of the workshop, participants conducted a needs assessment where they listed the strengths and weaknesses of their country's



existing grievance structures – from local village councils to national courts. Some participants from countries like Ethiopia said they had fairly good capacity – a national Ombudsman with links to the regions – but weak implementation. Ghanaian members said they had good local and regional-level institutions to manage grievances but that they weren't linked up with the federal government's working group on REDD+. The Liberians – still technically in a post-conflict country – acknowledged limited national capacity but they have already initiated discussions about how to strengthen existing teams in their national Forest and Environmental Departments.



#### **How to best invest funds allocated under readiness preparation grants**

The FCPF has allocated \$200,000 to each member country to strengthen grievance redress in the Readiness Phase. Each of the teams started to prioritise investments and identify key activities that could be accomplished in the next 12-24 months. The limited FCPF funds would not solve land tenure issues in a given country, but could be used to tackle discrete parts of the larger problem. For example, the Liberia team said they would use their \$200K to commission a study of existing grievance capacity, identify weaknesses, and propose recommendations to strengthen critical weaknesses. They knew such a study could eventually lead to stronger support at both the national and local level for existing groups that help to resolve land claims, even while not directly solving issues related to legislation and mandates.

#### **Simple, Practical, Useful.**

The insights from this work are powerful and compelling. First, when asked, groups of participants are surprisingly good at predicting the kinds of issues that will result in disputes or grievances, and there is remarkable consistency in these issues across many countries. Second, all countries have some existing capacity to address many of these issues – through informal, formal, state, and traditional institutions. Of course, the challenge is that there are some gaps, and that some of these institutions will need some support to ensure that they



are able to deliver credible services to those that need them. Finally, practical priorities are strengthening national capacities, improving awareness, and supporting opportunities to link up people and their problems to practical solutions. This group of participants created simple, practical and useful ideas that they now carry back to their home countries, better equipped for the challenges ahead.