



Food and Agriculture
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Policy brief

Social protection for forest-dependent communities

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) indicate the commitment of the international community to end poverty and hunger by 2030 while alleviating the consequences of ecological degradation and climate change. Countries are called to expand coverage of nationally appropriate social protection systems; to “achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable” by 2030 (SDG 1.3); and to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation” (SDG 15).

Most of the food insecure and poor people with the greatest need for social protection live in rural areas and depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. The challenges of ecological degradation and climate change are especially relevant to forest-dependent communities (FDCs) around the world. FDCs are usually located in

remote and disconnected rural areas characterized by low levels of market development and poor access to public goods and social services. Forest-dependent households constantly deal with the consequences of market failure and are particularly exposed to risks and repeated shocks. A wide range of environmental, economic, health-related, demographic, social, and political factors are key sources of vulnerability for these communities (Tirivayi, 2015).

FDCs include forest residents who depend on forest resources as their main source of food and livelihoods; people who reside near forests but have mainly agricultural livelihoods and use forests to supplement their consumption and income-generating activities; and rural people whose main income comes from labour supplied to forest-based commercial activities (Fisher, Somjai and Veer, 1997).





CONCEPT OF SOCIAL PROTECTION

Social protection is commonly defined as:

... a set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide social assistance to extremely poor individuals and households; social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination and abuse [Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2008].

Types of social protection instruments

Social protection instruments can be classified in five categories [Tirivayi, 2015].

- **Social insurance** comprises transfers from the pooling of contributions by individuals in public or private employment. These contributions are used to provide financial support to individuals that experience shocks and to prevent risks from old age, disability, illness, and unemployment. Examples include health insurance, retirement pensions, social security, unemployment benefits, maternity benefits and disability benefits.
- **Social assistance** comprises non-contributory transfers that are targeted to specific vulnerable and deprived populations such as people with disabilities, the elderly, labour-constrained households, women, children and poor working-age adults. Examples include unconditional cash or in-kind transfers (social pensions, cash benefits, supplementary feeding, food aid, humanitarian transfers, vouchers) and conditional transfers (cash for work, food for work, cash for school attendance, school feeding and fee waivers).
- **Labour market policies** comprise legislation to protect forest and non-forest workers and policies aimed at increasing the demand for labour and that actively encourage job searching. Examples include minimum wage guarantees, occupational safety standards, employment subsidies, wage subsidies, job training vouchers, placement assistance and job matching.
- **Subsidies** are aimed at controlling prices in order to maintain affordability of goods by the poor. They are meant to encourage consumption of a good in fulfilment of certain objectives, e.g. to promote food production and food security. Examples include subsidies on agricultural inputs (fertilizer, seed), energy, housing and food (staple foods).



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- **Social services** refer to public services in areas such as education, health, nutrition and agriculture.

Functions of social protection instruments

In general, social protection instruments are classified into four categories, according to their function [Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2008].

- **Preventive instruments** aim to mitigate exposure to risks. Examples include social insurance instruments [e.g. health insurance, pension schemes, unemployment benefits] and social assistance [cash or in-kind transfers].
- **Protective instruments** promote recovery and relief from shocks. Examples include cash transfers, public works, non-contributory social pension schemes, feeding programmes and humanitarian relief.
- **Promotive instruments** aim to enhance income earning and productive capacities of forest-dependent and rural communities. Examples includes conditional and unconditional cash transfers, asset transfers, skills training, public works and wage subsidies.

- **Transformative instruments** address power imbalances that sustain inequality and social exclusion; these typically have a broader scope than other types of instrument. Examples include laws governing forest and non-forest workers' rights, discrimination, inheritance and succession.

VULNERABILITIES OF FOREST-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

Poverty in FDCs can lead to overexploitation of the forests, which increases incidences of shocks, either natural, socioeconomic or both, hence furthering poverty [Xie, 2015]. This iterative, reinforcing process can be stopped through appropriate social protection and forest policy instruments. Deeper understanding of the interaction between these two types of policy instrument is required to design policies that appropriately address the particular needs of FDCs.

The effects of climate change, deforestation and forest degradation constitute an additional source of vulnerability, yet the extent of their effect on FDCs is still uncertain.

Box 1. Vulnerabilities of FDCs in Uganda

A case study conducted in five districts in Uganda [DRT, 2015] found evidence of the following vulnerabilities.

- FDCs have high rates of poverty and are asset poor.
- They lack formal tenure rights and thus fear eviction from the forests. The lack of tenure rights has created a perception that private landowners are favoured, and FDCs consequently engage in “retaliatory exploitation” of the forest.
- They are socially excluded and are thus not represented in forest-management programmes. An important characteristic of social exclusion is the lack of connectedness with service points. For example, in one of the studied districts, the nearest water source provided to upland communities by the government is a borehole 7 km down the mountain.
- Women report that they are openly ignored when discussing forest management plans in their communities.
- A high population density among rural households who solely rely on subsistence agriculture has increased agricultural pressure on forest land.

However, FDCs are not recognized as a vulnerable group in government policy. Overall, rural development programmes lack a specific focus on FDCs.

FDCs are particularly exposed to the following types of risk.

- **Environmental and health risks:** Environmental risks such as fire, plant diseases and pests and natural disasters such as droughts and floods have direct effects on forest products and services. In addition, climate change and environmental degradation lead to variable and extreme weather patterns which increase economic uncertainty, instability and food insecurity [DRT, 2015].
- **Economic risks:** The usually remote location of FDCs, their limited access to economic resources and poorly functioning markets increase their vulnerability to economic risks and shocks that threaten livelihoods. A lack of alternative livelihoods could lead to adverse coping mechanisms, e.g. increased use or sale of fuelwood and other forest products which could lead to deforestation and threaten future livelihoods. Furthermore, most FDCs engage in informal forest work typically associated with illegal logging, low pay and poor job security, which increase vulnerability to risks [Tirivayi, 2015; DRT, 2015].
- **Social and demographic risks:** The remoteness of FDCs commonly results in their isolation from social networks, marginalization and exclusion. FDCs often include indigenous groups and (ethnic) minorities that have historically been displaced towards less productive, more fragile areas lacking access to and/or quality of social services [Tirivayi, 2015]. In Uganda, for example, FDCs are poorly connected to other communities and lack representation in forest management programmes [Box 1]. In addition, high population density among rural households relying on subsistence agriculture can increase agricultural pressure on forest land [DRT, 2015].
- **Gender-related risks:** Women may be at higher risk in remote rural areas experiencing forest degradation. For instance, they must travel long distances to collect fuelwood, incurring risk of gender-based violence [Tirivayi, 2015]. Although they are usually the main users of forest resources, they are often excluded from management roles, the education system and overall decision-making [Xie, 2015; DRT, 2015]. In the shea butter industry in Burkina Faso, for example, women are employed in the entire value chain, yet they are excluded from high managerial levels, while high-paying positions are occupied by men [Chen, 2015]. In China, ethnic minority women are the main users of forest resources but do not speak Chinese properly and are usually excluded from management and decision-making [Xie, 2015]. In Uganda, women report that they are openly ignored when forestry management plans are discussed in their communities [DRT, 2015].
- **Political and policy-related risks:** The uneven design and implementation of forest policies is another source of risk. Most forest policies are implemented without complementary support

Box 2. The shea butter industry in Burkina Faso: forest products enhance resilience, but men benefit more than women

A case study conducted in the Central, Hauts-Bassins and Central-West regions of Burkina Faso [Chen, 2015] found, based on a survey of 183 women and 6 men, that participation by women in the shea butter industry improves social and economic resilience. Women are employed at all stages of the chain and reported gains in income and greater recognition within their households. Women spend the income earned from shea butter on child education, housing and health care. They also produce shea butter for domestic use.

Women have developed shea butter groups which encourage collaboration and organize training to enhance their skills. The women's groups also enable them to set aside and pool profits, savings or contributions in a mutual fund that members can turn to during financial shocks (e.g. funerals, illnesses, weddings) or use for investments and purchases. The groups also serve as a source of information on women's empowerment and as a platform for providing emotional support and encouragement to women.

However, management positions in the industry are mainly occupied by men, and men earn 44 times the income of women leaders. Men's roles include control of shea production and trading of shea nuts or derivatives, while women are mostly engaged in labour-intensive and less profitable jobs.

measures. Those that focus on ecological restoration and protection may not sufficiently compensate forest producers for losses experienced from terminating or reducing previous forest production. The conversion of cropland to forest land can reduce food supply or induce price hikes which can lead to food insecurity [Xie, 2015]. Logging bans and protected areas can limit the main source of income for FDCs. The underrepresentation of FDCs in governance may leave them excluded from political decision-making processes [Tirivayi, 2015]. Uncertainty in land tenure can prevent smallholder producers from planning and investing [Xie, 2015]. The case study in Uganda indicated that FDCs fear eviction because they lack clear or formal tenure rights [DRT, 2015] [Box 1]. In China, a logging ban enacted in 2000 resulted in substantial income losses for forest enterprises and forest workers [Xie, 2015].

ADDRESSING VULNERABILITIES IN DIFFERENT WAYS

Forest resources

Forests serve as a safety net and increase resilience for communities that reside in the forests: They are a direct source of food; they provide income from forest products, environmental services and employment in the formal and informal forest sectors [Box 2]; they provide fuelwood for energy and products used for housing and medicinal

purposes; and they also serve as natural insurance, as they can be used as a coping mechanism during shocks and when households are asset poor [Wunder *et al.*, 2014].

Forest policies and social protection: coherent design can be mutually beneficial

Forest policies can have positive impact on the social and economic situation of FDCs. Payment for ecosystem services (PES) programmes, protected areas and forest tenure reform coupled with community forestry can improve community incomes and livelihoods, reduce poverty and enhance food security [Tirivayi, 2015]. Forestry programmes can also include specific social protection elements intended to produce social and economic impacts, such as social insurance, granting forest tenure rights, provision of grain, cash or subsidies and/or provision of inputs. Such elements can strengthen forestry programmes' effectiveness in promoting sustainable land use while enhancing livelihoods. For example, China's Conversion of Cropland to Forests Programme (CCFP) has provided grain, cash subsidies, seedlings and technical assistance, offering the potential to improve household incomes, reduce inequality and stimulate local employment [Xie, 2015] [Box 3].

Forest policies may also have negative socioeconomic impacts if not appropriately designed. Protected areas, afforestation and reforestation policies often mainly focus on environmental and conservation goals and restrict



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the use of land for agriculture and the extraction of forest products for income and food, consequently reducing incomes and food security [Blom, Sunderland and Murdiyarso, 2010]. PES programmes may create social tensions between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, and their benefits may be mostly enjoyed by rich households [Wunder, 2008]. When land tenure is insecure, PES programmes could motivate powerful beneficiaries to crowd out smallholders and forest-dependent communities [Landell-Mills and Porras, 2002]. In Cameroon and

Ghana, tenure reforms failed to enhance social inclusion, empowerment and incomes because of elite capture of community forest revenues [Marfo, 2009; Oyono, Samba and Biyong, 2012]. Protected areas and logging bans can displace FDCs [Clements *et al.*, 2014; Durst *et al.*, 2001]. In Uganda, the gazettement of a national park in 1991 displaced FDCs, which remain resentful of the park authorities [DRT, 2015]. Logging bans can force timber enterprises to reduce production and downsize the workforce, and the subsequent rise in unemployment and

Box 3. Strengthening coherence between social protection and forest policies in China

China has made efforts to increase the coherence between social protection and forest policies and has implemented forest policies that incorporate social protection elements. Under the Natural Forests Protection Programme (NFPP), State forestry enterprises subsidize forest workers' insurance fees. Forest workers have been provided medical, work-related and maternity insurance, which has improved their well-being.

The Conversion of Cropland to Forests Programme (CCFP), also known as the Sloping Land Conversion Programme, was launched in 1999 with a view to alleviating poverty among poor farm households in mountainous and environmentally degraded areas and converting marginal lands and steep slopes to forests to prevent soil erosion and desertification. At its outset it provided farmers with an annual grain subsidy of 2 250 kg per hectare in the Yangtze basin and 1 500 kg per hectare in the Yellow River basin in exchange for planting forests. In 2004, grain subsidies were replaced by cash subsidies of about US\$36 per hectare per year. The subsidies last for eight years if farmers plant ecological forests, five years if they plant economic forests, and two years if they plant grasses. In addition, the programme provided a seedling package worth approximately US\$91 and technical assistance. About 29.4 million hectares have been covered, including 9.26 million hectares of sloping land converted to forest. CCFP has increased household incomes, reduced poverty and enabled income diversification from off-farm activities [Xie, 2015].

Box 4. Social protection instruments that are effective for forest-dependent communities

Conditional and unconditional income transfers have shown positive outcomes for FDCs. In a few recent randomized control trials in Bolivia, a one-time unconditional in-kind transfer (rice transfer) provided to the poorest households in indigenous Tsimane' FDCs increased household monetary income and the acquisition of physical assets (Behrman *et al.*, 2011). Longstanding conditional cash transfer programmes such as Oportunidades in Mexico and Bolsa Família in Brazil have also shown positive impact on FDCs.

In Mexico, Oportunidades reduced child labour and increased school attendance among indigenous children (Bando, López-Calva and Patrinos, 2005). Studies also showed that Oportunidades narrowed the gap in school enrolment between indigenous and non-indigenous children and reduced the likelihood of school withdrawal in times of shock (Tirivayi, 2015). The programme also reduced gender inequality within indigenous households (Gomes, 2013).

In Brazil, there is evidence that Bolsa Família increased the height of young forest-dependent males in the Amazon region and increased school enrolment among indigenous children and other minorities (Tirivayi, 2015).

poverty among former timber workers may encourage illegal logging, as witnessed in Sri Lanka and Thailand (Bandaratillake, 2001; Lakanavichian, 2001). These negative impacts justify the need for relevant social protection instruments in forest policies and/or social protection programmes to protect FDCs from the negative consequences of forest policies (Tirivayi, 2015).

Social protection instruments

The vulnerability of FDCs can be alleviated directly through social protection instruments

(see examples in Box 4) or by incorporating social protection functions into forestry programmes. Social protection interventions can:

- help households avoid negative coping strategies that lead to forest clearance, e.g. through cash transfers that are regular and predictable;
- provide additional income that can lead to investments in non-forest employment, which diverts labour and pressure away from forests;
- compensate for forgone forest production income through income transfers that are conditional on forest conservation to reduce forest clearance;
- improve the working conditions and wages of forest workers, thereby helping to mitigate risks;
- enable beneficiaries to acquire knowledge and skills in reforestation or afforestation, e.g. through public works programmes.

Public works that promote environmental restoration work can also have positive impacts on forest conservation. The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) public works scheme in Ethiopia, for example, promoted reforestation, increased tree and vegetation cover and sequestered 1.45 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in sampled watersheds (Andersson, Mekonnen and Stage, 2011; Metafarria Consulting Engineers, 2013). The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme in India resulted in greater area of tree plantations and fruit orchards in four districts.



Forest producer organizations as key players

Forest producer organizations or associations can also be important providers of social protection, combining forest conservation and poverty reduction goals (Box 5). Forest producer organizations or associations represent a large proportion of the forest private sector and can therefore be key players in setting forest conservation and poverty reduction goals (Tirivayi, 2015). In general, these groups seek to gain bargaining power that will allow them to compete in the forest production sector and gain access to the benefits of formal markets. Most forest

producer organizations or associations promote the economic interests of their members but do not focus on protecting members against risks or shocks (Bose *et al.*, 2006). However, some may provide social protection through social insurance mechanisms such as life and accident insurance (Bose *et al.*, 2006) or may offer informal social protection services by pooling financial resources in savings and credit funds (Kazooraa *et al.*, 2006; Chen, 2015).

MAIN CHALLENGES FOR PROVIDING SOCIAL PROTECTION TO FOREST-DEPENDENT COMMUNITIES

Although FDCs are exposed to various risks and vulnerabilities and are therefore significantly in need of social protection, coverage of social protection interventions is limited (DRT, 2015). Coverage is hindered by several challenges associated with the characteristics of FDCs such as their location and marginalization. These challenges include the following.

- **Targeting bias:** Because the communal and individual traits of FDCs and their particular contexts are not generally fully understood, FDCs are generally underrecognized and underrepresented as a vulnerable group. For this reason, they are not particularly targeted by social protection schemes. Moreover, social protection programmes are not specifically designed to address the vulnerabilities of FDCs. In some instances, FDCs benefit from social protection programmes fortuitously rather than because of an explicit government effort. Even in these cases, elite capture is common (DRT, 2015).



Box 5. Social protection services provided by forest producer organizations

In India, a federation of forest producers provides members with life and accident insurance (Bose *et al.*, 2006). In Uganda, forest producer associations facilitate access to training, resources and financing for members and provide informal social security through savings and credit funds created from pooled financial resources that can assist members affected by financial shocks such as illness and death. The mutual fund established by women working in the shea nut industry (see Box 2) is another example. In addition, some organizations promote community health and education (Kazooraa *et al.*, 2006).

In China, associations based on voluntary and contributory membership not only assist members by controlling or managing the production and marketing of forest products, but also indirectly help forest producers manage risks by protecting forest assets from fire, theft, pests and diseases; reducing the costs of managing and protecting trees; and allowing members to engage in non-forest work (Wang, 2012).

- **Geographic remoteness:** The remoteness of most forest-dependent communities imposes high costs of compliance on FDCs and high administrative costs on providers of social protection and social services, which limits coverage and access to benefits and services [Tirivayi, 2015]. Social protection instruments such as cash transfers might also not be appropriate in remote forest areas with less developed markets and weak institutions, as the costs of administration, transport and delivery of transfers to forest-dependent households would be high.
- **Social exclusion and discrimination:** FDCs are usually ethnic minorities or indigenous communities that are marginalized from social protection programmes. Women from FDCs face difficulties in access to health and financial services provided under the cash transfer programmes in Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia. Indigenous women in these countries also reported racial discrimination and mistreatment by staff in health centres. Social protection programmes also often do not provide culturally appropriate information and disregard the cultural practices and risk-

sharing arrangements of FDCs. Most of the support from social protection instruments is provided in non-indigenous languages, which leads to unintended exclusions from programme information, thus impeding access by indigenous populations and generating further discrimination.

A robust knowledge base is necessary to identify FDCs as a vulnerable group and to strengthen the instruments required to support them. At present the literature assessing the socioeconomic impacts of social protection interventions among FDCs is sparse. Few studies focus explicitly on FDCs or forest conservation; most address rural and poor urban beneficiaries. Because of their different cultural norms, FDCs would likely experience different impacts from those observed in social protection interventions targeting the rural and urban poor. Greater attention to FDCs is therefore needed in future impact evaluations of social protection instruments. It is necessary to gain insight into their behavioural processes; to map their risks and vulnerabilities; to assess the extent of their dependence on forests; to characterize their markets (or lack thereof); and to depict the set of possible results from policy interventions.





OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING COHERENCE BETWEEN FORESTRY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The similar risk-reduction impacts of forestry and social protection policies support the rationale for building linkages and exploiting synergies to leverage complementarity in objectives and coverage. Coherent “packages” of social protection and forestry interventions [FAO, 2016] can be developed through:

- freestanding programmes, such as social protection interventions that take into account and support FDCs’ livelihood strategies and forest conservation objectives, or socially protective forestry programmes;
- joint programmes that layer instruments within one programme or sequence them over time;
- aligned programmes that avoid potentially negative interactions between [sectoral] instruments, even those with different objectives, and exploit positive ones.

Freestanding programmes

Freestanding social protection programmes can embed environmental objectives and support FDCs’ livelihoods. Current practices include public works schemes that provide food and/or cash in exchange for reforestation and afforestation work; and conditional cash or in-kind transfers that use conditionalities to promote forest conservation. Examples include Brazil’s Bolsa Verde, which provides conditional cash transfers [CCTs] in return for the maintenance of forest cover, and Sociobosque in Ecuador, which aims to increase income and human capital and also to conserve forests and ecosystems in poor rural areas [Rosa, 2014].

Joint programmes

Potential practices include extending social insurance schemes to forest-based small-scale enterprises or community-based forest producers’ cooperatives to ensure coverage for current and former forest workers [Tirivayi, 2015]. Conversely, policymakers could consider embedding social protection instruments into freestanding forestry programmes. For example, in China a logging ban has been combined with subsidies for pensions,

health, unemployment, injury and maternity insurance; property rights could be provided to rural households as part of tenure reforms, accompanied by subsidized insurance to enhance resilience; and food subsidies and cash transfers can be provided in exchange for the conversion of cropland to forests, as China has done in its CCFP [see Box 3] (Xie, 2015).

Linking freestanding social protection and forestry programmes can be easier to administer and to justify politically where targets overlap, for example in terms of geographical areas and intended beneficiaries [demographics]. REDD+

initiatives [reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries, including sustainable forest management and conservation and enhancement of carbon stocks] present opportunities for linkages, as they target forests and may overlap with social protection instruments targeting people residing near forests. Forestry and social protection interventions that are similar in design and function and that target similar beneficiaries also offer opportunities for integration or linkages. For instance, CCTs and PES both provide incentives in exchange for socially desirable behaviours, and both are used to correct market failures.



Joint programmes can be particularly useful when social protection interventions are needed to complement forestry approaches to address their gaps or shortcomings. For instance, implementation of logging bans in parallel or in sequence with unemployment benefits or cash transfers for former workers can prevent deprivation resulting from job loss and may help to prevent illegal logging. Cash transfers can also compensate forest-dependent households residing in or near protected forests for lost earnings and consumption. Overall, these linkages create administrative synergies [shared information and targeting] and ensure that costs are shared [Tirivayi, 2015].

Aligned programmes

Aligned programmes go one step further and exploit positive interactions between or among [sectoral] instruments. Interventions that target different locations or beneficiaries can be aligned. Freestanding programmes that are delivered in the same location can also be coordinated and harmonized. In Brazil, Bolsa Verde provides quarterly cash transfers for poverty alleviation in return for the maintenance of forest cover and other conservation activities. Bolsa Verde shares targeting and cash transfer channels with Bolsa Família, a prominent social protection programme [see Box 3]. Alignment can also ensure that different programmes address the needs of different groups and prevent negative externalities. For example, non-beneficiaries of social protection or forestry programmes may engage in retaliatory forest clearance practices; but where non-beneficiaries can participate in PES programmes and where cash transfers are targeted to the poorest FDCs, they may refrain from engaging in deforestation.

POLICY SUGGESTIONS FOR THE WAY FORWARD

Opportunities for building linkages and coherence between social protection and forestry policies may be threatened by conflicting objectives. Effective design of policy packages thus requires a careful assessment of trade-offs among these objectives, based on knowledge and understanding of the context of targeted groups. The following recommendations can provide for increased social protection for FDCs through enhanced coherence between forestry and social protection.

- **Identify forest-dependent communities as vulnerable groups:** Identifying the particular needs, risks and vulnerabilities of FDCs, in terms of well-being, culture, assets and displacement, can facilitate their appropriate inclusion within the targeting criteria of social protection interventions. It can also encourage the design and implementation of social protection schemes tailored for their needs.
- **Raise awareness of the potential synergies between social protection and forestry interventions:** Recognition of the interplay among policies can lead to more coherent design of national-level systems (e.g. a social protection framework or agriculture–forestry policy) [DRT, 2015]. For instance, in the design of environmental CCTs it is necessary to understand the interaction of environmental incentives and those for social protection.
- **Take advantage of similarities in design and overlapping geographical areas and beneficiaries:** Governments should consider linking social protection with forest policies in areas of geographic and beneficiary overlap. REDD+ programmes in rural areas overlap geographically with most social protection instruments. Forestry and social protection interventions that are similar in design and function and that target beneficiaries in the same geographic areas offer viable opportunities for integration or linkages. CCTs and PES are examples.
- **Include environmental and poverty alleviation objectives in social protection and forestry interventions:** Environmental objectives can be embedded into social protection interventions so as to simultaneously fulfil the objectives of poverty alleviation and forest conservation. For instance, well established CCTs can include conservation goals as a conditionality. Poverty alleviation and social protection objectives can also be embedded in forestry interventions in order to protect livelihoods and help FDCs manage risks.
- **Build on the infrastructure of established social protection programmes:** Combining environmental and forestry goals in national social protection systems and integrating social protection instruments in forestry policies can result in stronger harmonization and reduce inefficiency, especially through sharing of targeting methods and beneficiary registries.

- **Establish robust legal and policy frameworks:** Governments should set up laws and policies that define usufruct, ownership or control rights over land and empower forest-dependent people. Such a framework would create an enabling environment that would enhance the effectiveness of forestry and social protection interventions, building resilience among FDCs.
- **Strengthen evidence of the impacts of social protection on FDCs:** Monitoring and evaluation systems with a broad set of indicators should be implemented or strengthened to measure the results and impact of social protection for FDCs.

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ABOUT THIS POLICY BRIEF

Since the implementation of FAO's five new strategic objectives, social protection has become an important area of focus for the Organization. Over the last biennium (2014-2015), FAO has explored the topic of social protection for forest-dependent communities through a global literature review and three country case studies in Burkina Faso, China and Uganda. This policy brief, developed in collaboration with the United Nations University – Maastricht Economic and Social Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (UNU-MERIT), is mainly based on these four studies.

The brief was prepared by Nyasha Tirivayi and Omar Rodriguez of the UNU-MERIT, together with Thaís Juvenal and Qiang Ma of the Forestry Policy and Resources Division of FAO.



For detailed information, please contact:

Qiang Ma

Forestry Officer
Forest Governance and Economics Team
Forestry Policy and Resources Division
Qiang.Ma@fao.org
fao.org/forestry