

Module 6

Governance, accountability and transparency in the forest sector

Why governance is becoming a critical factor

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Summary of governance sessions

This is the first of three sessions on governance:

Session 1: Generic discussion of governance,

Session 2: Governance in the Pacific,

Session 3: Approaches to assess quality of governance and strengthen it.

Outline of governance session 1

- Brief presentation on generic aspects of governance (20 minutes)
- Group work (30 minutes)
- Presentation and discussion of results of group work (10 minutes)

What is meant by governance ? (1)

- No widely accepted definition--different people adopt different definitions.
- Because governance definitions are “fuzzy” this impedes efforts to improve it.
- Governance includes much more than government, because decisions about forests are shaped by a wide range of public and private actors.

What is meant by governance ? (2)

Adapted from UNDP definition, governance is:

“..the exercise of authority (political, economic and administrative) to manage a country’s affairs at all levels.” It “comprises the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations.”

This definition underlines the “process” nature of governance, which happens on all geographic levels, national to local.

It is a dynamic interplay between different actors: civil society, governments and the private sector.

What is meant by governance ? (3)

We can describe governance in terms of “good” or “bad” or “weak” or “strong.”

Examples of weak governance

FAO report the impact of weak governance in many countries, including:

- illegal logging,
- land encroachment,
- illegal wildlife trade,
- wildland arson,
- tax evasion,
- corruption,
- money laundering,
- other forest crimes.

Consequences of weak governance

- Policy failure,
- Encouragement of illegal activities—“timber mafia”,
- Inequitable benefit sharing,
- Degradation or destruction of forest assets.

Benefits of strong governance

Strong governance emphasises the benefits for society at large, including:

- Effective forest law enforcement,
- Provide an encouraging environment for investment,
- Generate national revenue,
- Strengthen democratic institutions,
- Move towards SFM,
- Provide equity in benefit sharing.

Governance principles (1)

In general, a governance framework can be thought of as incorporating five principles:

- Transparency (so that actions can be scrutinised),
- Participation (engagement with a wide range of stakeholders),
- Accountability (actions and decisions are subject to oversight),
- Coordination (different actors work together to advance common objectives),
- Capacity (financial, human, technological, legal, and institutional resources to adopt the previous four principles).

Governance principles (2)

- These principles provide a benchmark against which each component of forest governance can be assessed. For example, an indicator may show the extent to which a government actor performs his/her job in an accountable manner, or the degree to which a law promotes transparency by guaranteeing public access to information.

Important aspects of governance

- Rules and values (legal framework and societal values).
- Power (distribution, relations, decision making, area of influence).
- Structure and organisation (stakeholders, roles and responsibilities, organisation and mode of work).
- Processes (implementation and interplay between stakeholders).
- Tends to take a landscape perspective (sees forests within a wider context).

Group work

- List five examples of the effect of weak governance from your experiences.
- List five examples where strong governance has resulted in improvements to local livelihoods and forest condition.

Thank you

