



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations

Forest and Farm Facility

Putting producers first works:
impacts and lessons learned from enabling governments and
strengthening forest and farm producer organizations

Summary report

December 2012 – December 2017









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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
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The strength of forest and farm producer organizations

Forest and Farm Producers

Forest and farm producers are women and men, smallholder families, indigenous peoples and local communities who have strong relationships with forests and farms in forested landscapes. Such producers grow, manage, harvest and process a wide range of natural-resource-based goods and services for subsistence use and for sale in local, national or international markets.

Forest and Farm Producer Organizations

Forest and farm producer organizations are formal or informal associations of such producers. They are created with the aim of helping their members share knowledge and experience; engage in policy advocacy; secure tenure and access rights to forest, land and other natural resources; improve forest-and-farm management; expand markets; build enterprises; and increase income and well-being.

Forest-and-farm producer organizations vary widely in size and institutional form and may focus on forests or combinations of forest- and farm-related activities. They may include indigenous peoples and local community organizations; tree-grower and agroforestry associations; forest owner associations; producer cooperatives and companies; and their umbrella groups and federations.

With support from FFF, drawing on their own enhanced strategic capacities and through sheer strength in numbers, FFPOs have :

- **successfully engaged with cross-sectoral processes** in government to rapidly unlock secure ownership and control over land and territories, and other enabling policies.
- **developed successful enterprises**, accessed markets through diverse value chains, added value to their products and increased their members incomes and well being.
- **ensured sustainable management of natural resources at the landscape level** through integrated management plans for forest and farms that are more resilient; and have influenced the higher level policy decisions that affect them.
- **taught and learned from each other, sharing valuable traditional knowledge** and new innovations and gained confidence as significant and valued actors in rural landscapes and economies.
- **enabled their millions of members**, many of whom are considered the poorest and most marginalized of people, to adapt to rapid changes in economies, demographic shifts and climate.
- **helped create more opportunities for women and for youth** in rural communities by increasing their capacity to engage in more sophisticated advocacy, value addition, processing and marketing. These opportunities address barriers to gender equality and provide choices for future pathways and alternatives to forced migration.



Introduction

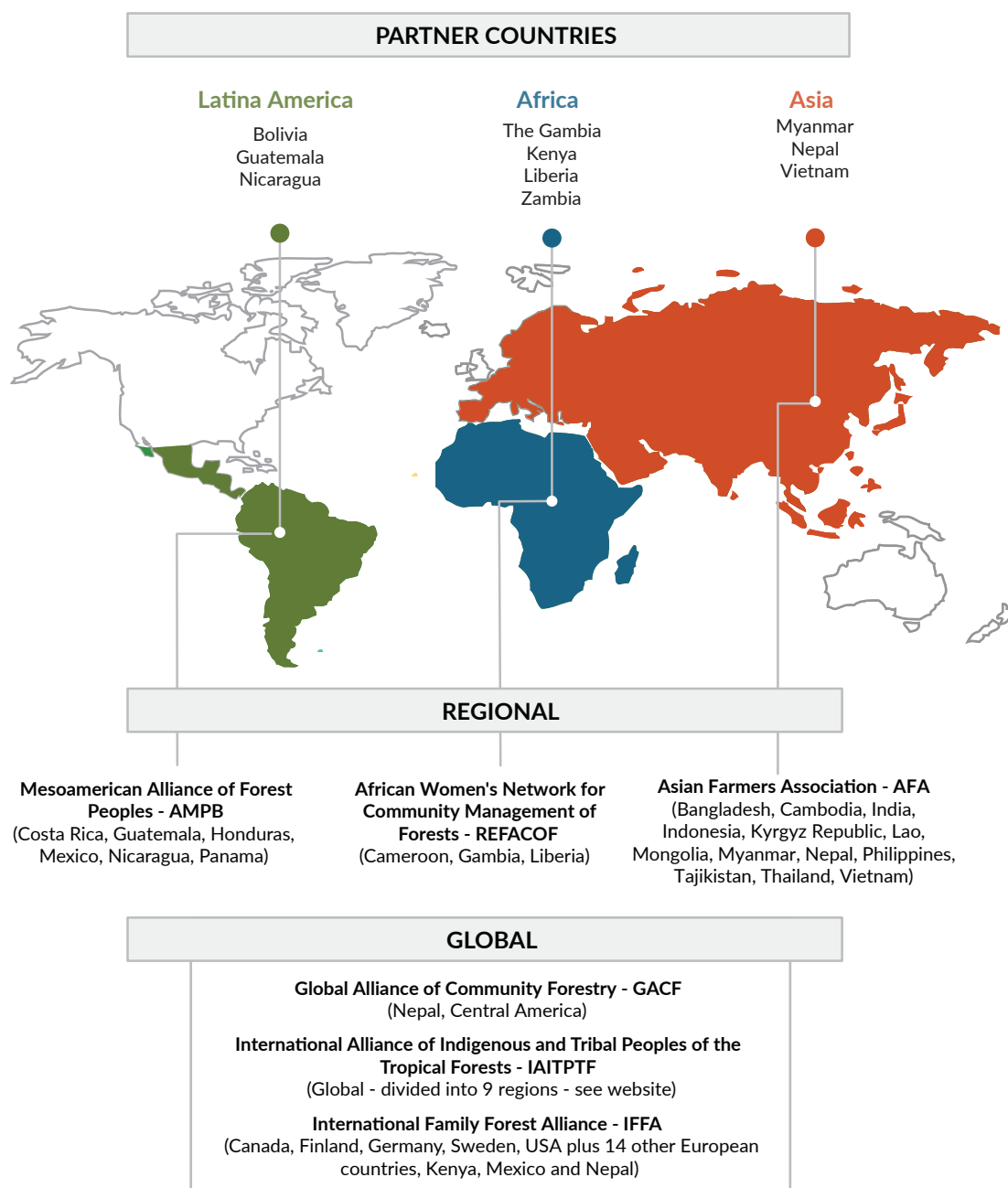
Focusing on strengthening forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) as the primary agents of change works in practice.

That is the most important message following more than four years of experience by the Forest and Farm Facility (FFF), a proven implementing mechanism set up as a partnership between FAO, the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and AgriCord. During its first phase, from December 2012-December 2017, the FFF has worked in 10 partner countries, regionally and globally to provide direct support to the people whose livelihood depends on landscapes of forest and farms, and to leaders in government looking for cross-sectoral solutions. There are an estimated 1.5 billion forest and farm producers, comprising 90 percent of the world's farmers. These producers supply approximately 80 percent of food supplies in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, managing 500 million family farms and approximately 30 percent of forest lands in the global south, including over 400 million ha managed by indigenous peoples. These family farmers (both women and men), indigenous peoples, communities, small scale producers or processors also constitute a large proportion of the rural poor, most of whom are highly dependent on adjacent forests or growing trees and related products on their farms. FFF's work has borne out a vital proposition on which the programme was founded: that these producers are indeed powerful when they are organized and their FFPOs provide a vehicle to improve well-being at scale - making them indispensable partners in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement.

The first Phase of the FFF (from December 2012 to December 2017) has therefore focused on strengthening FFPOs as primary actors, delivering major impacts through support to 937 FFPOs on the ground in 10 countries: Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala, Liberia, Kenya, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, The Gambia, Viet Nam and Zambia.

It has also engaged with producers and their organizations and government in 25 additional countries through exchange visits, south-south cooperation, regional and global conferences and direct support to a number of regional and global federations of forest and farm producers.

FFF has catalysed 51 government processes and helped governments and FFPOs to contribute to 51 specific policies in support of those impacts.



Source: FFP

With generous support from the governments of Germany, Sweden, Finland, the US Department of State, AgriCord, through its Farmers Fighting Poverty Programme, and funds from the EU-FLEGT programme and FAO through the FAO Multi Partner Programme Support Mechanism (FMM) (supported by Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland), the FFP has expended just under USD 16 million (approximately USD 4 million/year).

This summary attempts to highlight the major impacts and learning at the global project level, while the full report gives much more detail and provides country and operational level examples.


Rationale

Each entry point in the quest towards empowerment and development comes with its own limitations. Often these are defined by institutional, administrative or resource silos and by the tendency to try and address problems within vertical worlds: forestry, agriculture, fisheries, value chain development, public-private partnerships, rights, education, climate change, governance etc. Yet in the same way that the underlying principle of integration seeks to tie together the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the FFF partnership sees the need to build cross-sectoral processes and facilitate organizations that can take a more comprehensive and holistic approach. FFF sees the need to provide those still “left behind” with opportunities to take their own action to address the many barriers that still remain. Ironically the indicators of the SDGs themselves are almost all focused on accounting for changes in the lives of individual producers and very few outside of the SDG 17 on Partnerships mention the vital importance of groups, organizations, cooperatives, associations - which are often the most obvious proof that people are working together to achieve change.

FFF helps bring producers together to work more effectively.

In spite of the growing understanding of the importance of forest and farm producers, a relatively low proportion of funds from major sustainable development programmes and initiatives on climate change, food security and nutrition or agricultural productivity are channeled to forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs). While participation of FFPOs in consultative processes is deemed necessary, insufficient effort is given to helping producers build the critical capacity they need to fully participate. As investors turn their interest to more sustainable supply chains that enhance the SDGs, FFPOs still need support to develop finance-ready business plans, or translate the diversity of landscape scale production systems into more **culturally supportive market mechanisms**. In addition, attention is urgently required to address major barriers facing women, youth and **the unique cultural context and rights of indigenous peoples**.

In a world where the private sector is increasingly expected to play a greater role, the large scale commercial actors - corporations - are only the visible tip of a rural iceberg. The vast bulk of the private sector lies in local producers, traders, processors and enterprises which FFF sees and supports. Formal and informal FFPOs exist all over the world and are growing in both number and in demand.



FFPOs are the only organized groups in many remote areas and they depend on public services and infrastructure needed to achieve sustainable development. However, government institutions and large scale private sector businesses are not always equipped to effectively reach and support producers to optimize returns from value chains and market systems. The FFF and innovative governments have found that capacity development of the organizations that represent and support these actors, (as often women as men), whether through associations, federations, cooperatives, **indigenous peoples governance structures or informal networks** is one of the most respectful, quick and cost effective ways to achieve impacts at scale. It offers unparalleled value for investment.

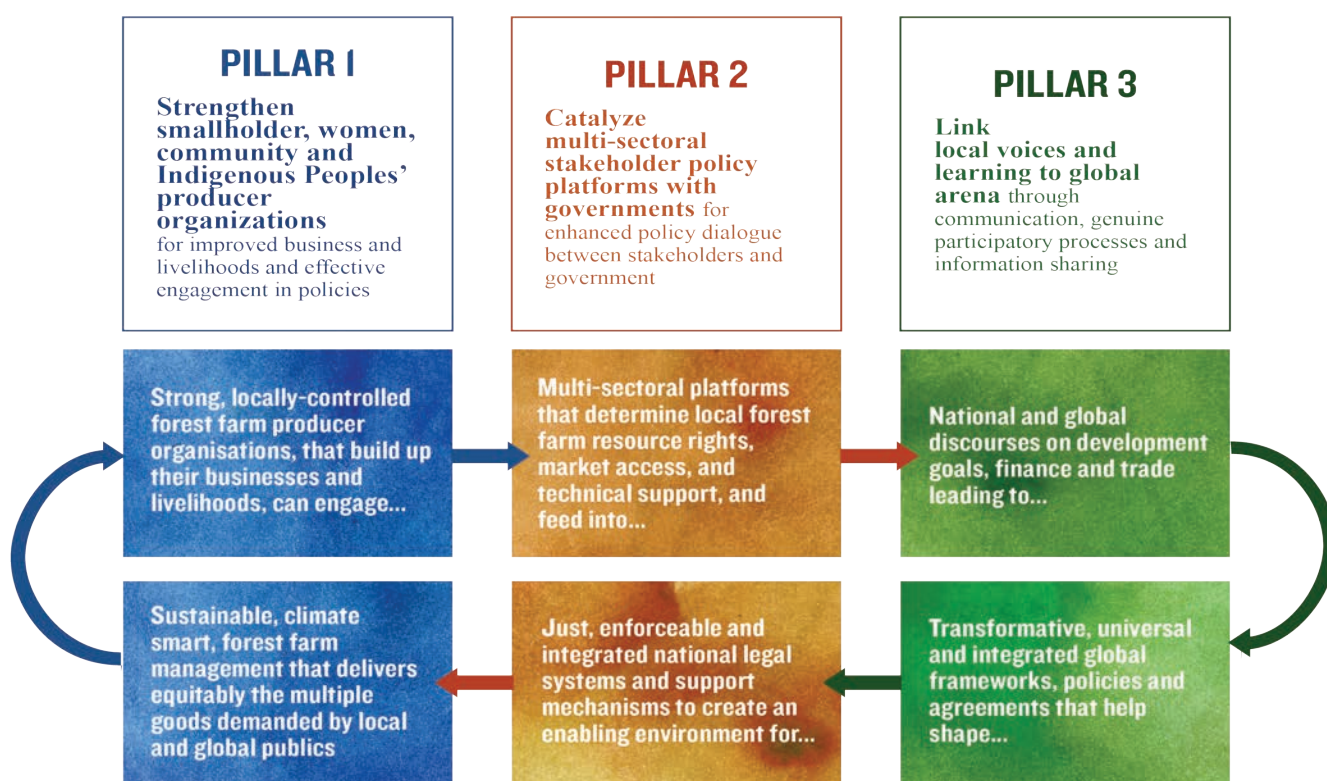
This summary shares some of the evidence provided in a full report on progress that has been made towards addressing some of the gaps above, providing an overview of the impacts of the first Phase of the FFF.

Origins and theory of change

The work of the FFF grew out of several predecessor efforts: the National Forest Programme Facility and the Growing Forest Programme and has evolved to a theory of change. The FFF focused on three interrelated elements as key to leveraging transformational change. These evolved into the three pillars of Phase I:

1. Strengthening forest and farm producer organizations for business, livelihoods and policy engagement.
2. Facilitating cross sectoral, multi-stakeholder platforms and processes which would help government coordinate, develop and implement enabling policies.
3. Knowledge generation, shared learning and communications through exchanges and linkages at and between local, regional and global processes.

Cutting across these pillars was a focus on catalyzing and facilitating existing processes and programmes, increasing gender equality, especially the capacity of women's enterprises and leadership, leveraging resources, adaptive learning and working in partnership with other organizations and efforts.

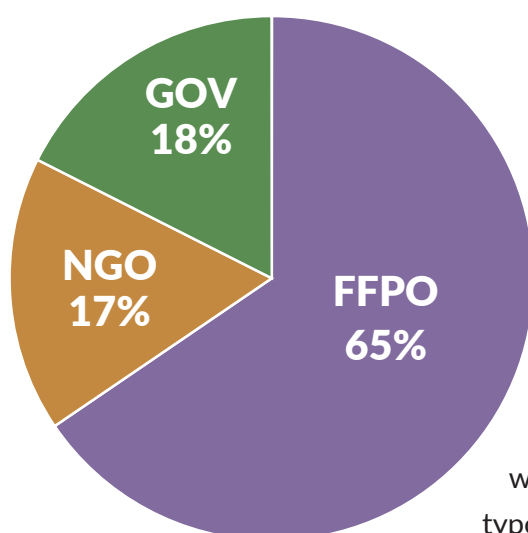


Governance and management

A global Steering Committee provided strategic guidance to the FFF. The Steering Committee is gender balanced and majority driven by representatives of **key indigenous peoples**, forest and farm smallholder and community organizations together with representatives of business and finance, academia, government and international research organizations. It has helped guide the FFF, together with a donor support group, advising on policy matters and reviewing progress that has been informed by an active Monitoring and Learning System. The management team included a secretariat based at FAO (overall coordination – coaching country implementation – communication and primary resource mobilization) and teams within IIED (leading the knowledge management and monitoring and learning), and IUCN (regional and global support), with AgriCord providing links to its Agri-Agency partners and strategic support. FFF Facilitators guided the work in each country, located in FAO offices, an IUCN country office and in several national CSO or FFPOs.

After partner countries were selected, (the first six by the Steering Committee and then four more through a call for expressions of interest), lead government agencies provided guidance through cross-sectoral platforms or multi-stakeholder advisory bodies. Scoping exercises and participatory multi-stakeholder planning and learning meetings were held at the launch and then annually, in an effort to ensure free, prior and informed consent processes. Support was provided through direct funding, capacity development and training, exchange visits, knowledge generation and communication. It was overseen by the management team at the global level providing back-up and coaching to Facilitators working with lead government agencies, FAO and IUCN partners in country offices. 106 partnership agreements (contracts) directly funded work plans developed in a participatory manner with umbrella or “apex” forest and farm producer organizations at national (and some at regional and global) levels and to support

Recipients of FFF Letters of Agreement



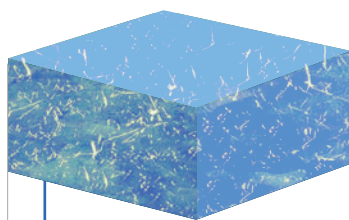
organizations providing services to FFPOs. Cross-sectoral platforms in government were directly supported through 17 Letters of Agreement, and 137 small grants were given to smaller producer organizations and group enterprises linked to the larger associations. A total of 164 of the agreements went directly to FFPOs at different levels. Given the variety of country contexts, different strategies were followed and the mix of local FFPO and government actors varied accordingly. In almost every country the focus was on both the national level and on helping demonstrate the capabilities of FFPOs with sub-national approaches that could be scaled up. A typology of these approaches is given in the main report at the beginning of the chapter on impacts.

A strongly positive mid-term evaluation completed in August 2016 cited the work of the FFF as substantially on track to meet most of its objectives, efficient in terms of delivery mechanisms and output per investment, with a high degree of buy-in from governments and producer partners. The headline of the summary was that FFF was a “missing link in rural development”. Useful recommendations to increase even further the focus on gender equality and strengthen the work on value chain development allowed for a deepening of work in these two areas in the last year and a half.



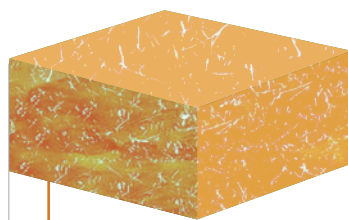
Making a difference – a review of impacts

The short summaries of impact below are taken from the full report with more detailed examples from individual countries, regional and global activities that provide reflections on lessons learned. The annexes of the full report include a completed log-frame for the monitoring and learning results by country under each Outcome and Output.



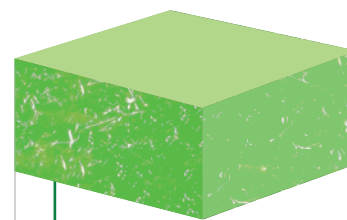
PILLAR 1

Strengthen smallholder, women, community and Indigenous Peoples' producer organizations for business, livelihoods, policy engagement



PILLAR 2

Catalyse multi-sectoral stakeholder policy platforms with governments at local and national levels



PILLAR 3

Link local voices and learning to global arena through genuine participatory processes, communication and information sharing

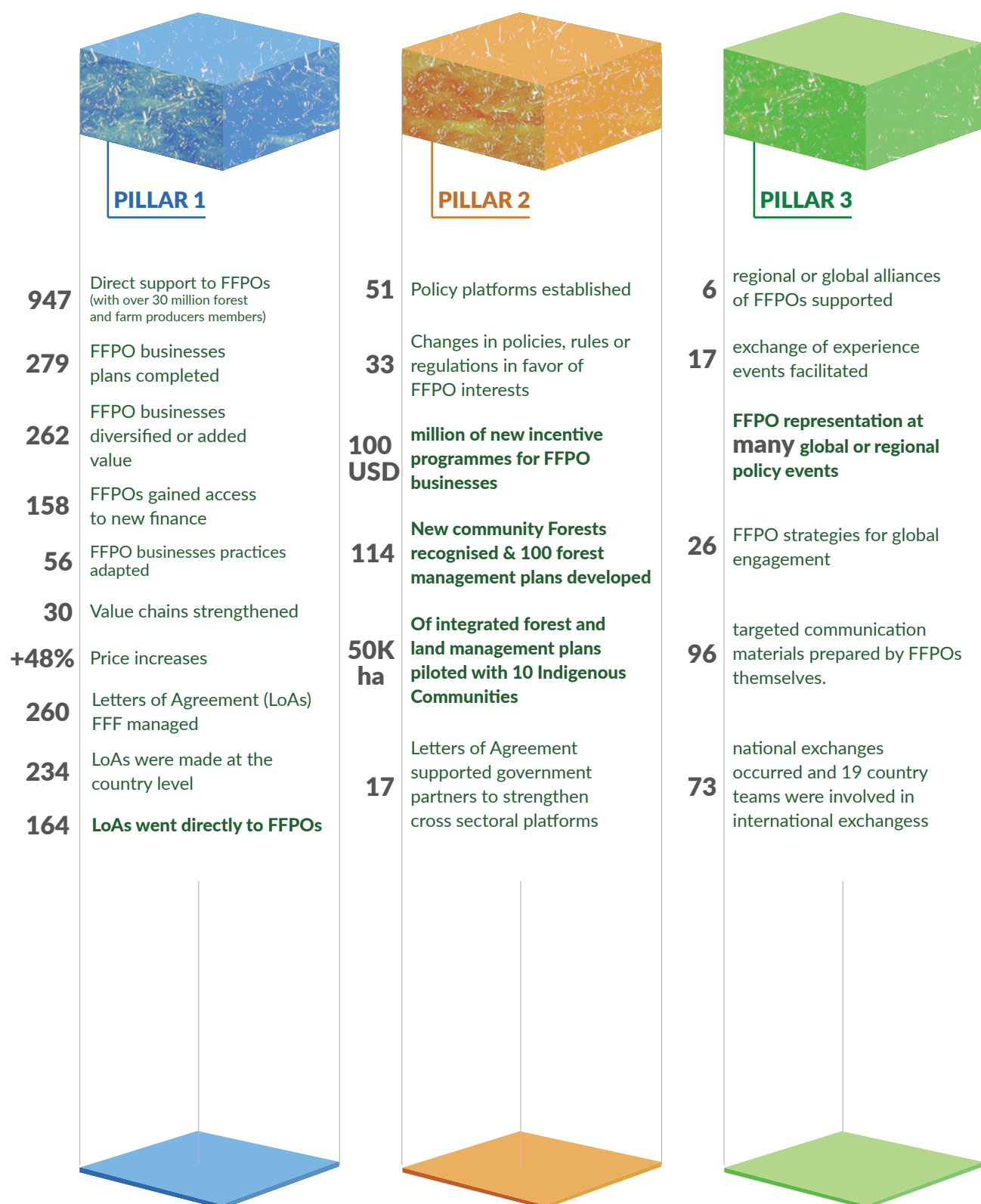
MAJOR CHANGES ON THE GROUND

- Scaled-up organisation of, and support for, FFPO businesses in value chain clusters
- New business organisations improving income generation
- Increased women's leadership in business
- Improved access to finance
- Inward investment from private sector for value addition
- Diversification of income generating options
- Higher prices and larger profits
- More sustainable production
- New commodity associations and business incubation capacity installed
- Business school developed for other FFPOs

- Policy change at multiple levels through nested multi-sectoral policy platforms
- **Forest land tenure rights secured**
- Financial incentive programmes catalysed
- Gendered investment funds for FFPOs created
- Greater awareness of production issues for FFPOs widely spread
- **New legislation approved to advance problematic sectors**
- New structures in support of FFPOs created
- Greater staffing, and policy implementation in support of FFPOs
- Forest and farm product businesses actively promoted and nurtured
- **Laws and incentive mechanisms tailored to FFPO needs**

- Increased reach beyond FFF core partner countries
- **Developed common regional and global policy messages**
- Examples of FFPOs in action enhanced the understanding and value of family forestry
- Scaling-up occurred through regional farmer organizations
- Messages and capacities were enhanced through strong networks

SOME IMPACTS BY NUMBERS





Pillar I: Strengthen smallholder, women, community and indigenous peoples' producer organizations for business, livelihoods and policy engagement

Under the first pillar, FFF support has **directly reached 947 FFPOs**: three global, three regional, 10 national and 931 local or provincial (comprising 21-79 percent women depending on country/region) and indirect support to many hundreds more.

In total these FFPOs represent more than 30 million forest and farm producers. Considerable work has gone into **strengthening the internal organizational management** of these FFPOs to improve the diverse aims for which they were set up - including, in some cases, encountering and helping resolve internal corruption.

Strengthening FFPOs for business has focused primarily (but not exclusively) on the 931 local and provincial FFPOs supported. FFF has facilitated links to 80 new financial or business service providers which, together with FFF's own capacity development activities, have had the following impact: 279 FFPO businesses completed business plans, 262 FFPO businesses diversified or added value to their products, 158 FFPOs gained access to new finance, and 56 FFPO businesses that have adapted their business practice, design, plans or systems following exchanges. The combined progress on FFPO businesses has substantially raised incomes for hundreds of thousands of forest and farm producers, many of them indigenous peoples e.g. with ranges of specific income increases documented for FFPO businesses, for example, between 35-50 percent in The Gambia, 46-65 percent in Kenya, 12-18 percent in Myanmar, 30-50 percent in Nicaragua, 10-20 percent in Viet Nam (with several outliers in excess 500-1 000 percent in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Myanmar, and The Gambia).

Specific diversification and improvements in market access have been documented in over 30 forest-based value chains including: acaí, bamboo, tuno bark, broom grass products, cashew, charcoal, chicken under forest cover, cinnamon, cocoa, coffee, craft, ecotourism, elephant foot yam, furniture, goat raising, green tea, fish, honey, juice, livestock, mushrooms, palm heart, palm thatch, pomelo, pottery (wood fired), Ramón Nuts, star-anise, sawn timber, tree nurseries, rattan, sterculia resin, and vegetables.





Pillar II: Catalyse multi-sectoral stakeholder policy platforms with governments at local and national levels

Under Pillar II, FFF has facilitated the **establishment of** (or greater FFPO representation) **51 policy platforms** at national or regional level. The combined total of 817 local FFPOs have held over 2 820 management meetings during the period of FFF support, of which 248 involved planning meetings to target FFPO engagements in policy processes relating to 59 selected policies, rules and regulations. Direct FFPO engagement in such policy processes by more than 140 representatives of FFPOs (12-45 percent women across ten countries) led to **33 changes in policies, rules or regulations in favour of FFPO interests**, with a further 18 changes due to indirect effects of FFF in-country activities. Among the more impressive policy gains were the creation or **shaping of major new incentive programmes for FFPO businesses** in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala, Viet Nam collectively worth in excess of USD 100 million - at least five times the total expenditure of FFF.





Pillar III : Link local voices and learning to global arena through genuine participatory processes, communication and information sharing

Under Pillar III, FFF has also **supported six regional or global alliances of FFPOs**, facilitated **17 exchange of experience events internationally** (not counting in-country exchanges) including nine peer-to-peer learning exchanges and eight international or regional meetings. Additionally, FFF has supported FFPO representation at a range of many other global or regional policy events (including the World Forestry Congress, the UNFF, UNFCCC COP and the World Conservation Congress, Global Landscape Forum).

FFF support has involved **resourcing of 26 FFPO strategies or mechanisms for regional or global engagement** through such work, involving 96 targeted communication materials prepared by FFPOs themselves. The impacts have been seen in 13 examples where FFPOs felt that regional or global agendas had been shaped by their engagement. FFF facilitated the **participation of FFPO leaders and innovative government actors at major advisory meetings** at FAO including two Committee on Forestry meetings, the Committee on Food Security, and events related to Agroecology, **indigenous peoples, poverty** reduction, family farming and cooperatives. The FFF was acknowledged as a flagship mechanism for implementing FAO's strategic Output 3.1.1 on Empowerment and rural institutions as part of the Poverty Reduction work of SP3.

Exchange visits proved an especially valuable tool. During the implementation of FFF Phase I (2013 – 2017), 73 national exchanges occurred and 19 country teams were involved in international exchanges. As result of these exchange visits, 56 changes to practices, designs, plans and systems were subsequently reported.

WFC2015
Forestry Congress

WFC 2013
XIV World Forestry Congress
2013 SOUTH AFRICA



XIV World Forestry Congress
7 - 11 SEPTEMBER 2015, DURBAN ICC, SOUTH AFRICA



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Some highlights from partner countries

Bolivia (Plurinational State of)



©FAO/Boris Fernandez

Leveraging funding: FFF catalyzed government incentive funds, investing USD30 million and USD37 million annually over five years in FFPOs, mostly to indigenous producers of coffee (ANPROCA), cacao (COPRACAO), and Amazon products.

Higher prices and larger profits: ANPROCA: 85 first-tier FFPOs (17,500 households); Cochabamba coffee wins competition; new European market developed via Bistrot/Autogrill.

Guatemala



©FAO/Ogden Rodas

Empowering youth capacities: Rural business school of agroforestry developed by producer organization (FEDECOVERA with 25,000 families, mostly indigenous, as members) with capacity for 90 students and certificates for “producer and entrepreneur”.

Laws and incentive mechanisms tailored: National Alliance political advocacy strategy - 20 members in 15 processes; PROBOSQUE Law approved in September 2015, technical and judicial design of the law, regulation and strategic plan for 30-year forest incentive fund worth one percent of national budget.

Kenya



©FAO/Philip Kisoyan

Scaled-up organization of FFPO businesses in value-chain clusters: Strengthening of the Farm Forestry Smallholder Producers Association of Kenya (FFSPAK), now a member of the Kenya National Farmers Federation (KENAFF) representing 2.2 million members. Twelve county associations increased membership by 800 percent (20 000 people/3,492 households); increases in income between 46 and 65 percent



Liberia

Improved governance and outreach of FFPOS:

Producers and traders of the National Charcoal Union of Liberia (NACUL) registered; 357 members advocated for the official regulation on charcoal; Farmers Union of Liberia incubating 60 small FFPO businesses and developing forest commodity associations. Womens community forestry network (REFACOF Liberia) connects 25 womens' organizations with Ministry of Gender and Forest Development Authority.



Myanmar

From users to producers: FFPOs were built tier-by-tier, resulting in income generation for producers. That included a 450 percent increase in price for tea; 20 percent price increase for mangrove palm leaves, coffee, honey, rattan, and other products.

New policies and staffing: Support to Community Forestry National Working Group (Myanmar)– Community Forestry Instruction (CFI) revised; new Community Forest CF Unit created – district FD staff assigned; transfer of tenure affecting some 740 to 3,000 CFs (200,000 ha).



Nepal

Identifying investment for FFPO businesses:

Enterprise skills training provided for 51 producer groups representing 934 FFPO members, of which 67 percent were women and 50 percent of groups led by women. 45 Enterprise Development Plans (EDPs) developed; 38 FFPOS with new skills in financial literacy; 26 successfully secured finance.

Women's financing improved: Federation of Nepal Cottage and Small Industries (FNCISI) Central Women Entrepreneurs Committee (CWEC) lobbied for Women Entrepreneurs Development Fund (Ministry of Industry).



Nicaragua

Increased leadership by women in business: Among the 18 first-tier FFPOs supported, 75 percent were women, both Mayangna Indigenous and Mestizo women. Seven out of 18 FFPOs entirely composed by women; new products designed and household incomes increased by approximately 35 percent. Businesses became more sustainable. Government of Mayangna's Women supported as an umbrella organization for over 13,000 Indigenous women. Regional cross-sectoral platform established in Siuna municipality and more than 80 government forest technicians supported for capacity development.



Gambia

Unlocking the country's Community Forestry tenure-reform process: 116 Community Forests (CF) transferred to local communities (9,408 ha and 30 percent of all CF tenure agreements); more than 50 percent of supported FFPOs added value to the products commercialized from their forests. **Diversification of income:** 100 CFMCs trained in Market Analysis and Development; now focused on six main products, 50 percent increased diversification and value addition; prices increased by 20 to 500 percent.



Viet Nam

©VNFFU/Tài Thắng Phạm,



Engaging members with smallholder tree plantations to organize around forest business: Round table discussions at commune, district and provincial levels including government representatives resulted in enabling policies, such as forest land-use certificates, finance support for value addition (50 percent of machinery costs); new decrees (credit to 10 years); provincial cinnamon development programme.

Investment attracted: Yen Bai cooperative, 18 households; FSC certified 1,000 m² sawmill, 500-700 m³ of Acacia timber/month; incomes per household rose by seven to 10 percent.

Zambia

©FAO/Vincent Ziba



Establishment of the Choma Charcoal

Association inspired new charcoal regulation:

Training on sustainable resource management, Market Analysis and Development resulted in rapid increase in the number of formal charcoal licenses and taxes paid. Shift from individual to collective, and sustainability through collaboration with Provincial Forestry Office.

Zambia National Forest Commodities Association registered as an apex body for small holder forest producers. FFPOs integrated into four local Ward Development Committees influence programmes.



©FAO/Jeffrey Campbell



Communications and knowledge generation

Knowledge generation and communications have been a major aspect of FFF's core mission. FFF's communications strategy was developed around the FFF pillars with several key priorities:

1. To amplify the core message concerning the role and impact of producer organizations and multi-sectoral platforms. (related to Pillar 1 and 2)
2. To share learning between partners in FFF countries and between local, regional and global audiences. (related to Pillar 3)
3. To strengthen the local capacity of producer organizations and partners so they can clearly articulate and disseminate their messages and tell their stories.

FFF knowledge generation and communications have developed substantive bodies of new knowledge (led by IIED) and a large package of tools and activities related to the objectives of the communication strategy. Broadly, knowledge products under the three FFF Pillars can be divided into four main knowledge areas, each with its own specific audience: benefits of FFPOs, how to engage government support for FFPOs, how best to install business incubation for FFPOs, and how to expand partnerships in support of FFPO. Collaborative peer-reviewed research was commissioned spanning multiple countries. Novelty, accuracy, practical utility, and transferability were key concerns. Longer analytical pieces were frequently converted into practical briefs or toolkits through participatory design processes. The intention has been to generate knowledge only when this serves FFPO interests.

Local capacities for communications by partners in the countries and at regional level were empowered through support to activities in collaboration with the Communication for Development Team of FAO and processes at the global level to raise local voices and provide them with channels of dissemination.

In addition, a global component on the promotion of the FFF mission and activities has been included through the FFF website, social media and outreach activities - alongside FFF webpages on the sites of the co-management partners IUCN and IIED.

FFF, via its website, has delivered an enormous amount of relevant, interesting and accessible information concerning the details of FFF work with its partners, including its numerous accomplishments and highlights. This shareable information, constantly updated and delivered via multiple channels, conveys voices from the land; the strength producers can find by working in numbers; the important connections between forest and family farming, food security and nutrition, and between FFPOs; and how this all contributed to achieving 12 out of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

During the five years of FFF Phase I, more than 50 substantial knowledge products were produced, widely distributed and used including: two brochures, 14 briefings, five books, four toolkits, three FFF Working Papers, two infographics, ten conference proceedings, several flyers and two book chapters.





Gender equality

The FFF is a gender-mainstreamed programme committed to gender equality and equity as key objectives. A set of tools, activities and events were used to strengthen women's organizations and promote effective participation of women in FFPOs. On the level of the FFF management, the following was achieved:

- A continuously gender-balanced Steering Committee guided the programme;
- two gender trainings were held for the team members and in-country facilitators;
- sex-disaggregated indicators were integrated in the M&L framework and a gender strategy was published based on a comprehensive gender assessment in the partner countries.

Within the implementation of the programme, participation by women was encouraged at all capacity development activities with some trainings (leadership, business skills, gender equality in FFPOs) and exchange visits (in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Nepal, the Gambia) having specifically targeted women and female farmers. A particularly successful partnership was established with REFACOF, reaching 114 women's producer organizations in Cameroon, the Gambia and Liberia. The percentage of female members within FFF's partner organizations ranges from 21 percent to 79 percent in mixed groups, while others were women-only organizations. Whenever applicable, priority was given to these, e.g. for small grants, participation in exchange visits or capacity building events.

There will be an even stronger focus on the crucial role of women in forest and farm landscapes in Phase II with a significant upscaling of achieved efforts through: specific budgetary allocations; carrying out comprehensive baseline studies of partner countries and organizations; conducting more gender-sensitive research; and developing practical guidance and tools with partnering FFPOs that can help reduce internal barriers for female members to participate more actively in the leadership and business side of FFPOs.





Lessons learned

Pillar I: Strengthen FFPOs for business, livelihoods and policy engagement

Efficiency of business support initiatives is enhanced by strong national apex-level FFPOs (at national, regional or Indigenous peoples territorial levels). In order to provide sustainable and efficient business incubation, second or third-tier FFPOs can play a vital role provided the capacity of those apex level organizations is itself built up through training and exchanges. These apex bodies can ultimately fund service delivery to their members at very low transaction cost, ensuring long term efficiency and sustainability.

Where apex FFPOs do not exist they must be built tier by tier. For sustainable service provision by second-or third-tier FFPOs it is vital that they represent and respond to their member organizations. Building the strength of these first tier groups comes first.

The advantages of organizational scale need to be demonstrated and repeatedly communicated to new FFPOs. Benefitting members needs to be the bottom line for higher level FFPOs. They need to offer a viable function that members can take pride in, and be willing to contribute their time to, and even pay for. This can be done either through the value addition that they can make through marketing and sales, services that their members are willing to pay for, or access to projects and credit that is difficult to reach by members themselves, or by achieving important policy gains such as tenure and other rights.

Business incubation and ongoing support services to member businesses requires the development of broader support networks. No single staff member has all the expertise relevant to multiple business support and value chain development activities. Business is a dynamic not static reality. Networks of experts have to be cultivated who have specific knowledge on emerging markets, technologies, research developments, financial opportunities, legal requirements, and social organisation skills. A combination of Market Analysis and Development Training, connections to buyers and small grants can help enterprises become “bankable” and access finance. But each of these elements needs follow up and support.

Support networks for FFPOs can often draw on other cooperative organizations and medium to large scale actors in value chains for this support but also for investment, learning and bargaining power.

Business resilience and landscape level productivity can be enhanced by diversifying into baskets of business activities and value chains. Financial sustainability in FFPO businesses often hinges on developing several product lines and markets (e.g. diversification) and too much work on value chains is based on singling out one commodity, simplifying production patterns and reducing or under-valuing diversity.

Indigenous peoples, local communities and local government can develop innovative Integrated landscape planning at the territorial level that includes forests, farms, pasture and other resources – at relatively low costs when coordinated by apex producer organizations, federations and government counterparts. These integrated plans offer huge potential for climate resilience the landscape level.

Pillar II: Catalyse multi-sectoral stakeholder policy platforms with governments at local and national levels

Federated producer organizations have an undisputed power to effect policy change. The collective action of myriad voters organized within FFPO federations can rapidly shift policy. But this process depends on a combination of advocacy and communications capacity, connections and entry points into decision making processes, timing – both persistence and readiness to take advantages of opportunities, and champions within government or other sectors.

Nested policy engagement at different levels can improve government responsiveness. FFF has learned that engaging government at different levels (from village or commune to district to province to national) can unblock support and overcome a range of legislative barriers - while also improving how government staff interact internally to offer FFPOs greater support. Finding the optimal entry points to help FFFPOs to effectively influence and provide inputs into decision making at the level where it is needed - which may often be the most local level may be one of the most dramatic ways to influence policy implementation on the ground.



Cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder platforms work but require political will.

The efforts to support and institutionalize cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder platforms beyond the life of the programme have been variable across countries, and depend greatly on the willingness and leadership within government to promote these efforts.

The importance of independent facilitation. FFF has learned (rather unexpectedly) that even with direct channeling of funds to FFPOs, policy engagement benefits from active facilitation by an independent party. FFF in-country facilitators (drawn mostly from FFF Management Team partners and more rarely from a lead FFPO agency have proved pivotal to policy engagement strategies by the FFPOs directly funded. Policy advocacy capacity development and linkages to decision making fora are vital.

Tracking policy gains requires careful reporting. Following the policy advocacy positions of multiple FFPOs and their influence over subsequent policy change is perhaps the hardest element of the M&L system. Critical reflection is needed on how better to support FFPOs to articulate and document exactly what they wish to change in which policies, laws or regulations - and then document resultant changes following processes of policy engagement.

Pillar III: Link local voices and learning to global arena through genuine participatory processes, communication and information sharing

Strengthening of regional and global organizations and complement the work national FFPOs but efforts need to be made to ensure the links are made and maintained. The processes of grassroot consultations have led to an expansion of membership of the national FFPOs belonging to regional and global federations and the articulation of important local issues at regional decision making bodies (like ASEAN and SAARC and major global meetings like the UNFCCC, Global Landscape Forum, World Farmers Organization and others). But while such complementarity exists, the possibilities to translate regional and global policy advocacy work into tangible benefits at local level remains a challenge. Balancing the upward mobilization of issues and ideas for advocacy at regional and global levels with the need to get information and global decisions back down to the national level can be a challenge for larger federations.

Integration of forestry groups and issues in agriculture organizations works. FFF has learned that putting forest issues on the map within large regional farmer federations can hasten the scaling-up of national FFPOs that represent producers on forest policy issues, and can also lead to the rapid spread of ideas, approaches and mechanisms between countries. Also when large agricultural producer organizations start advocating for forest access and thinking about the trade offs between agricultural expansion and deforestation and the impacts on women - new actors and energy (and political power) is brought to bear on issues concerning the sustainable management of landscape as a whole, and therefore integrated responses build resilience to climate change. Indigenous peoples organizations, on the other hand, have been effective by maintaining their own identity but are expanding their agendas to extend beyond land rights to self-determined economic development.

Policy influence can be enhanced through common messaging at multiple levels. The efforts of regional and global FFPOs to refine common policy messages can be highly effective, and can enable and strengthen broad alliances that work together to achieve change.

Exchange visits, if well designed can be inspirational and effectively spread and upscale innovations. Forest and farm producers learn rapidly from peer-to-peer exchanges - both around particular business opportunities, and about models of business organisation and partnerships that they then adapt to their own context. The inclusion of government authorities in such exchanges can also bring support for those desired adaptations within and between countries through South-south collaboration. Organizing the exchanges well with clear outcomes in mind, selecting the right participants and following up to support transfer of ideas and tools is vital.

Maintaining a strong focus on gender equality and empowering women's enterprises and leadership is critical, as many barriers still exist within FFPOs themselves for the full participation and provision of more gender specific support and services. Very few of the top leadership positions in large apex, regional and global FFPOs are held by women – with some exceptions. It has been important to directly fund women's organizations as well as work to increase their presence in mixed organizations.

Additional emphasis is also needed on youth and on the special needs of indigenous peoples.




Challenges

Elite capture, internal transparency and smooth leadership transitions remain a challenge in some organizations and FFF has had to take strong positions by withdrawing support from organizations where there has been evidence of corruption or operational failure. Continual efforts are needed by members and supporters to undertake organizational assessments and use other tools to increase open and shared management, gender equity and transparent decision making. On the other hand there are some remarkable examples where national federations have maintained strict rules for 50:50 male and female leadership at each tier, and held successful leadership transitions every five over 24 years.

Changes of government and leadership transitions and the movement of officials can slow progress but also create new opportunities, this is a perennial problem but takes patience and engagement.

Financial self-sufficiency is still a challenge. Few apex FFPOs have yet been able to develop fully self-sustaining income streams, though there are a few noteworthy examples of larger cooperative federations which are very close to this goal. Better business development and technical service delivery capacity has clearer revenue streams attached, but policy advocacy, representational work, social and cultural services with longer term less easily clarified benefits are more difficult to charge for. This is an ongoing challenge which needs more thought.

Availability of finance and investment and matching finance ready business plans – both need much more attention. New ideas around better business incubation capacity, risk management strategies, guarantee schemes and blended finance are evolving and need more development. Small enterprises often have equipment and input needs that are different for forest enterprises, the size, timing and durations of loans are different for long gestation forest and tree crops and for multi-product value chains, collateral can be an issue. FFPOs have different needs like group forest fire insurance and women's equality requires more innovative social and cultural service provision – day care, health, literacy and educational assistance – which are strong mandate for many community enterprises and cooperatives. When efficiency is measured only in terms of capital accumulation and does not account for effective distribution of economic, environmental and social benefits, more “caring and sharing” FFPOs face extra costs and reduced competitiveness.




Operational challenges are manifest but manageable in a partnership between four implementing partners, supported by multiple donors through different funding sources, working in 10 very different countries, regionally and globally. FFF has worked to combine direct funding to, and implementation by, in-country government and FFPO partners, with hands-on capacity building and technical support, using a participatory Monitoring and Learning system and adapting to natural crises like the Ebola epidemic and earthquakes, with a context specific approach. Indeed Phase I was not without operational challenges.

Lack of secure multi-year and predictable funding and disbursement over the project cycle has called for annual re-adjustments in the pace and scale of expenditure and called for extra effort on the part of all the team and partners to flexibly adjust and look for ways to optimize results within these uncertainties. Expanding the number of resource partners has been more difficult than anticipated, partly due to the comprehensive and integrated approach of the FFF which defies a single “value proposition”. Ironically this is the very reason which FFF may have more success in reaching a large number of SDGs and guaranteeing real results on climate responses called for in the Paris Agreement.

Effectively balancing the trend towards decentralization to country offices and regions with the need to maintain a cohesive and integrated global programme has required the active engagement of country FAO offices in ownership and management support for contracts and activities. This has required extraordinary financial monitoring to track disbursements against final expenditures, against a number of different budget codes and different timelines. Additionally the context specific nature of work plans and activities, has created some tension between the universal indicators and learning questions in the M & L system (needed to insure project level impact and comparability) with the need for more country-specific indicators.

The use of in-country facilitators was vital. Initially considered transitional to full implementation by FFPOs and government partners within one or two years, FFF facilitators turned out to be more important and instrumental in brokering relationships, facilitating cross sectoral activities, monitoring and leading exchanges and technical back-stopping activities than imagined. There were pros and cons to having Facilitators located in FAO offices versus in CSOs and apex producer organization partners.



Even better use could have been made of all of the knowledge generation and communication materials. It turns out that a significant proportion of in-country communications materials were also developed, both in video and print media, and through traditional methods such as drummers and community radio. An excellent website and large number of publications, fairly significant amount of interviews and newspaper coverage could still have had much larger readership and use.

Planning and budgeting for synergies between the implementing partners and their roles, including travel to countries, participation in planning meetings, conferences, publications and monitoring and evaluation has worked well but required significant effort on all sides. The workload for staff and teams was exceptional and budgets available per country relatively small in relation to the task it is to their credit that they managed it so well.



Unique and catalytic niche of the FFF

Finally, and in closing it turns out that the Forest and Farm Facility and the term Forest and Farm Producers Organizations has itself become a kind of brand, widely used in country by partners to announce events, publicize activities, refer to a producer based approach, and even to help market and sell products. In all 10 countries, and through regional and global networks partners have made plans to continue the work in different ways, and of course most will also put in expressions of interest for Phase II – though they will have to compete with at least 50 countries and 75 apex producer organizations who have expressed a similar interest and demand. Advocacy campaigns for land tenure and access to rights and services will continue to build and grow. A number of cross-sectoral platforms will continue and are being institutionalized or replicated. Producers who have incorporated themselves into value chains will continue to grow as their knowledge and experience expands. Governments and investors are taking much greater note of the potential and role of FFPOs as vital players in the private sector. Forest and tree products are being included in government procurement and school feeding programmes improving food security and nutrition.

Most importantly hundreds of thousands of members (and their families) of FFPOs have been supported in their own efforts to transform their futures. Putting producers first has worked in 10 countries, regionally and globally. Now FFF would like to try and help make it work at scale with a more ambitious programme in many more countries in Phase II.

FFF has helped to raise the profile of forest and farm producers and their role in advocacy, in small-holder value chains, and in enterprises, which is now being included in a numerous other programmes. However FFF fills a unique niche through its focus on forest *and* farm producers, tying together the forestry and agriculture sector actors at landscape scale and on strengthening the *FFPOs themselves* to play the leading role across different sectors - they are *the* central focus not additions within broader objectives - and this we feel is what gives the FFF the catalytic power to achieve impacts considerably above our resources.

Forest and farm producer organizations and the 17 sustainable development goals



Forest and Farm Facility

www.fao.org/partnerships/forest-farm-facility
www.fao.org/forestry



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
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Resource partners:



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