

Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance

The publication *Assessing forest governance: a practical guide to data collection analysis and use* was developed by a group of organizations, including the Programme on Forests (PROFOR), a multi-donor partnership, and FAO, to collect, analyze and organize forest governance data, based on a common framework for forest governance. Robust forest governance was acknowledged as a vital component of forest management. The diversity and roles of stakeholders in forest management and use are expanding, a development that requires appropriate adaptation of forest governance.

The Chair noted that the guide is stakeholder-centered and underscored their vital role in collecting data, analyzing information and obtaining consensus on actions to be taken to improve forest governance. Future plans for the guide were discussed, including the need to disseminate it widely to stakeholders who will benefit from improved information on forest governance, to encourage countries to use practical data collection methods, and the importance of collecting feedback from users to incorporate into the guide in order to improve its usefulness. He noted that, if data collection is systematic, a baseline against which to measure impacts would be needed. An online version of the guide will be made available on the FAO and the PROFOR websites.

Several co-authors spoke about the guide: **Phil Cowling** noted that its flexible design allows it to be used in its entirety or as a reference document in various key technical areas and by a broad range of stakeholders, including government officials international and national NGOs and development partners ; **Kenneth Rosenbaum** outlined its three main sections: (i) planning, (ii) data collection and analysis, (iii) and dissemination, use and learning, and that its annexes include case studies and links to tools; **Kristin Devalue** referred to the guide's annexes and its case studies from Ecuador, Indonesia, Liberia, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania as well as its list of assessment tools and references, advice on writing budgets and work plans, and on developing indicators.

In the panel presentations, several issues were raised:

- the need to learn from forest governance assessment and monitoring processes and the importance of central government and provincial and district partner inputs in developing better data collection for improved planning as well as moving away from centralized governance to working with local stakeholders and members of civil society, including local communities. This process should be premised on dialogue and communication with multi-stakeholders and include the establishment of systems for forest governance self-monitoring and evaluation.
- In some countries, there are many forestry challenges faced by the government: very few foresters who have to cover large areas of forest; inadequate physical facilities; lack of community involvement; questions over land ownership; and illegal harvesting, transportation, and trade of forest products. The great expense of converting village lands into village forest reserves was highlighted. Collecting socioeconomic and governance data also constituted a considerable challenge and many countries would need support in collecting and analyzing data.
- The guide should be viewed as the beginning of a process of data collection on forest governance rather than a final product.
- The guide may be useful for countries in the context of REDD+, providing guidance on some social and environmental safeguards related to forest governance.

Points raised in the ensuing discussion:

- consider translating the guide into other languages, including Russian
- the usefulness of the guide to countries in the context of FLEGT and REDD+
- requested FAO and PROFOR to work to foster broad-based use of the guide, promoting results-based governance.