Social protection for forest dependent communities
in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

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Content

• Forestry and Poverty
• Social protection for forest dependent communities
• Lessons learned from country studies
• COVID-19 pandemic impacts on forest dependent communities
• Build back better
• Take away messages
Forestry and Poverty

Forest Dependent Communities (FDCs):

- Defined by both proximity and reliance on forest products and services as the main source of livelihood.

- Comprise: Indigenous people; Shifting cultivators, nomadic forest-dwelling people, hunters and gathers; Rural small farmers (or peasantry) within and in periphery of forest areas, who rely on forests for their livestock, firewood, plant and animal based food, farm fertilizers, etc. for subsistence; Rural people, living in or at the margins of forests; Forest labor; Forestry professionals; Owners and workers in forest-based enterprises; Urban dwellers who enjoy forests for recreational and environmental values; and Public at large (domestic and global) – NO AGREED DEFINITION

Forest dependent communities in extreme poverty is part of the Global Core Set of Indicators to monitor progress towards the Global Forest Goals. However, it is a Tier 3 indicator as there isn’t an agreed definition for FDCs.
Forestry and Poverty

- Low monetary income
- Isolation (social exclusion)
- Lack of access to economic infrastructure
- Lack of access to social infrastructure
- Reliance on natural resources for in-kind income
- Tenure insecurity

INFORMALITY

MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN

POLITICAL AND POLICY VULNERABILITY
FDCs living on less than $1.25 a day

Proportion of rural people living on less than $1.25 a day residing in or around forests and savannahs.

Social Protection

- Set of policies and programmes that addresses economic, environmental and social vulnerabilities to food insecurity and poverty by protecting and promoting livelihoods.

- Comprise:
  - Social assistance
  - Social insurance
  - Labour market protection

External shocks
Policy changes
Economic cycles

Mitigation of effects
Compensation
Incentives
Asset building
Social Protection coverage for FDCs

Usually very limited due to:

- Information asymmetry
- Transaction costs
- Social exclusion
- Elite capture
Typical Social Protection instruments adopted for FDCs

- Cash transfers (conditional/non-conditional)
- Rural pension insurance
- Rural health insurance
- Rural maternal childbirth allowance
- Cash/food for work

Producer organizations can complement social protection:
- Social insurance
- Risk sharing
- Social services
Lessons learned from country studies

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Key Lessons</th>
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| Tanzania | • Role of producer organizations and private sector.  
          • Importance of harnessing communication/coordination between forestry and finance/social programmes’ authorities. |
| Uganda  | • Lack of recognition of FDCs as a vulnerable group.  
          • Information asymmetry and elite capture. |
| Kenya   | • Inclusion of peoples in forest policy.  
          • Expansion of national social protection to FDCs jeopardized by lack of FDC’s data. |
| China   | • Coherence between social protection and forest policies to fight rural poverty and increase/conserve forest area. |
Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on FDCs

- Reduced income - FDCs
- Movement restrictions
- Closure of market outlets
- Difficult access to information
- Migration back to rural areas
- Increased physical isolation
- Health threat/lack of health assistance
- Disruption of government assistance programs e.g., school feeding
- Increased illegal extraction of forest products
Social protection responses

Figure 1. Trends in number of countries/territories and social protection measures

Challenges for FDCs

- FDCs are usually not part of national registries
- Weak political power
- Informal workers might be excluded of labour-oriented measures
- Avoid elite-capture
Build Back Better: adopting an inclusive approach to forestry

- Inclusion of FDCs in national social registries
- Assess and address vulnerabilities along forest value chains
- Accessible communication and information systems
- Targeted responses – identify the most vulnerable
- Innovative delivery mechanisms
- Explore the role of producer organizations
- Safeguarding of conservation efforts
Take away messages

- Vulnerabilities of FDCs were severely aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Targeted response measures open opportunities for aligning forest objectives with social protection.
- Forest authorities should work with social programmes’ authorities to ensure inclusion of forest communities in the expected expansion of social protection. Producer organizations can have a critical role in reaching FDCs.
- Innovation in delivery of services, in particular of cash payments and in-kind contributions, can contribute to mitigate effects of FDCs physical isolation.
Thank You !

www.fao.org/forestry/social-protection