

**Learning Lessons from International
Community Forestry Networks:**

Synthesis Report

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Acronyms:

ACICAFOC – Central American Coordination for Indigenous and Peasant Community Agroforestry
AFN – Asia Forest Network
AMAN – Alliance of Indigenous Peoples of the Archipelago (Indonesia)
ASOSODE - Association of Communities for Development (Costa Rica)
CBD – Convention on Biological Diversity
CBFM – Community-Based Forest Management
CF – Community Forestry
CIFOR – Centre for International Forestry Research
CSD – Commission on Sustainable Development
DFID – Department for International Development
ECOSOC – Economic and Social Council
FAN – Forest Action Network
FAO – Food and Agriculture Organisation
FD – Forestry Department
FECOFUN – Federation of Community Forestry Users in Nepal
FKKM – Indonesia Consultation Forum on Community Forestry
FSC-SWG – Forest Stewardship Council-Social Working Group
FTPP – Forests, Trees and People Programme
GTA – Amazonia Working Group (Brazil)
HKM – Community Forestry Permit (Indonesia)
IAITPTF - International Alliance Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests
ICRAF – World Agroforestry Research Centre
IFF – InterGovernmental Forum on Forests
IIED – International Institute for Environment and Development
IPF – InterGovernmental Panel on Forests
IPO – Indigenous Peoples’ Organisation
ITTO – International Tropical Timber Organisation
IUCN-CIFM – World Conservation Union - Community Involvement in Forest Management
JFM – Joint Forest Management
M&E – Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation
NTFP – Non-Timber Forest Products
RDFN – Rural Development Forestry Network
RECOFTC – Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for the Asia-Pacific
UN – United Nations
UNDP – United Nations Development Programme
UNOFOC - National Union for Community Forestry (Mexico)
UNFF – United Nations Forum on Forests
WRM – World Rainforest Movement

1. Introduction :

Since the 1978 World Forestry Congress, community forestry has become a major theme in international forestry debates. The idea that forests should primarily be managed to meet people's needs, especially the needs of the rural poor, has struck a strong chord with many developing country governments and development agencies. Just how this is best achieved and reconciled with the other demands for forest resources by industry, for export and by urban populations, has secured less unanimity and not just because of different national situations. To what extent should forests be devolved to local control, and owned and managed by local communities? Ideas that were inconceivable to mainstream foresters 30 years ago are become commonplace topics of discussion today.

Formal and informal *networking* to promote community forestry has played an important part in the spread of these ideas and the development agencies have invested a substantial amount of funding to stimulate this sharing of experiences. Since the mid-1980s, a number of formalized international networks have sprung up to promote community forestry and the rights of forest dependent people. They have sought to do this in very diverse ways, with very different mixes of people, and with very different objectives. What have been the results? What lessons can we learn from nearly two decades of networking? How can these efforts be built on and improved? What are the prospects and pitfalls ahead?

This report synthesises the findings of a year and a half long CIFOR project, which was designed to answer these questions. The research programme, titled '*Learning Lessons from International Community Forestry Networks*', was funded by the UK Department for International Development and the Ford Foundation. Under the project, researchers were contracted to review eight countries' experiences with international community forestry networks. We were also asked to review the activities of eight international community forestry networks to try to distil out the main lessons that could be learned from their experiences.¹

Our task was to review these experiences to assess how much 'value-added' they have provided or could potentially provide to activities at the local and national level and their ability to advocate for community forestry at international levels. The project's central objective was to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of international efforts to support community forestry. The project has attempted to synthesize the lessons emerging from these networks through a collective process with the aim of then sharing these lessons as widely as possible. A subsidiary aim was to help improve the programmes of the development agencies which support community forestry and help CIFOR establish better links with the community forestry world.

As conceived, the project was emphatically not an **evaluation** of the networks and country experiences. It has thus adopted an open, collaborative, information-sharing approach designed to promote 'social learning' about community forestry networking.

¹ See Annex 1 for the Terms of Reference.

Methods:

Prior to engaging in the research, the team met with a number of others, to develop a shared methodology for the investigation. A 'Methods Workshop' resulted in: agreed definitions for key terms used in the study (see box next page); an agreed framework for investigating the effectiveness of networking; a series of questionnaires for use by the researchers; proposed formats for national workshops; and a general outline for the case study reports to follow. It was agreed that all the studies should take care to contextualize information about international networking and its effects, and not focus too narrowly on the actual activities of networks alone.²

Selection of case studies:

The 'Methods Workshop' also selected the range of countries and networks for investigation. The only limit on the selection of the country studies imposed by the funders was that they had to be developing countries. The aim therefore was to select countries with a wide range of different experiences with networks and community forestry, spread across the various continents, experiencing differing degrees of donor interest, including a variety of community forestry regimes. Cost, language and researcher familiarity with the countries was also taken into account: the result was the selection of Mexico, Brazil, Cameroon, Uganda, India, Nepal, Indonesia and China. In the event, for security reasons, the Nepal study was dropped and three states of India were studied instead.

Nine networks with a variety of approaches, aims and target groups, including regional and global networks were also chosen: *Coordinadora Indigena y Campesina de Agroforesteria Comunitaria* (ACICAFOC), Forest Stewardship Council's Social Working Group (FSC-SWG), IUCN's Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management (IUCN-CIFM), World Rainforest Movement (WRM), Rural Development Forestry Network (RDFN), Forest Action Network (FAN), Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), Asia Forest Network (AFN), and the Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP).

Limitations:

The project also took stock from the beginning of its inherent limitations. The budget limited country field visits and network investigations to 12 and 7 days respectively for each study, with quite brief periods of time also allocated to writing up each study. It was recognized from the outset, therefore, that the studies would be anecdotal and impressionistic in nature and would not yield data amenable to statistical or rigorous comparative analysis.

² Colchester 2002a.

Community Forestry.

For the purposes of the review, the study used a very broad definition of community forestry. It was not limited to the management of forests by communities for timber production, or just for commercial purposes, but also included community management for non-timber forest products, subsistence, wildlife, biodiversity conservation, as well as environmental, social and religious purposes. Likewise, the scope of the survey included measures to promote community management by customary and traditional means, as well as through local and introduced innovations.

Forests

The study used a very broad definition of 'forests' and was not limited to 'natural forests' but included managed woodlands, woodlots and small plantations.

Degree of control

The study recognized that a continuum exists between state-owned exclusionary forms of forest management on the one hand, through processes of social forestry which give a little more scope for meeting local needs, through various forms of shared management, to systems where the community has more control of management and benefits. At the other end of the spectrum are community-owned forests, in which the State intervenes little if at all in forest management and use. The study focused on the extent to which forest management has shifted in favour of local control.

Community

The study did not attempt a critique of the problematic concept of 'community' but recognized that some forms of 'community forestry' actually purposefully disaggregate caste- and class-divided communities into discrete 'user groups' with the intention of ensuring that marginalized sectors have access to resources, and so that village elites do not monopolise benefits.

Network:

A network was defined as a mechanism for the **two-way sharing** of information, experiences, power and/or resources between previously distinct or discrete entities (persons, communities or groups) having a common objective. Networks range from informal, unnamed interpersonal webs to formalized, named and structured mechanisms for information sharing and coordinated action. International networks are distinguished from international organizations, in that all the activities of members of organizations are considered part of the organization's plan of activities, whereas network members only act within an agreed framework towards certain agreed goals being otherwise autonomous.

International:

An international network is one whose activities and members are in more than one country. (A national organization receiving funding from overseas is not therefore 'international'.)

Measuring effectiveness:

The effectiveness of community forestry networking can be measured in terms of the degree to which it has succeeded in promoting:

- 'empowerment' - inclusive decision-making, including marginal voices
- equitable income generation and livelihood strategies in communities
- access to, and control of forests by, the local communities
- ecological sustainability and conservation
- two-way flows of information in appropriate forms and languages

The study did not presume that 'objective' criteria exist for assessing 'sustainability' or 'conservation' and gave emphasis to local perceptions of what needs to be 'conserved' and 'sustained'.

Organising the Findings:

This survey has had to pull together information from a huge diversity of sources. The countries and networks which we have chosen to look at are extremely diverse in their character, and the studies that resulted were also varied, as much a reflection of the different backgrounds, interests and training of the authors, as of the different networks and local situations that we examined. All the studies, however, show the extreme complexity of the networking endeavour and the multiple webs of causality and interaction in which they are part.

Notwithstanding this inter-relatedness, the discussion which follows attempts to make sense of this profusion of information under eight main headings, while seeking to highlight critical connections that exist between the various categories. A final section of conclusions brings the report to a close.

- Section 2 (*Community Forestry: Origins and Trajectory*) provides a thumbnail sketch of the evolution of community forestry from the 1970s to the present, showing how the initial focus on technical concerns has expanded to address the broader framework hindering community management.
- Section 3 (*Networking for Change*) Traces the emergence of international community forestry networks during this same period. Information sharing and training approaches have been followed by campaigning groups championing structural reforms, culminating in the emergence of grassroots movements pressing their own demands for change.
- Section 4 (*The Tool Box*) summarises the main tools or techniques that the networks use to achieve their aims and picks out the main lessons that have emerged from the studies about these.
- Section 5 (*Internationals and Locals*) examines the extent to which the international networks are able to link to the local actors or accommodate their interests and perspectives in their work.
- Section 6 (*International policies and national change*) summarises the experiences with network advocacy for international policy reform. Although international agreements now give prominence to community forestry, they have not yet had much discernible effect at the national level.
- Section 7 (*Money Matters*) looks at the financial aspects of community forestry and networking. Is 'community forestry' sustainable without subsidies? Are networks viable without donors? How do the financial constraints affect the power politics of networking?
- Section 8 (*Governance Dilemmas*) examines the institutional challenges that networks face to meet their multiple aims and obligations. Different kinds of networks favour different structures: all face the same dilemma that while members want accountability and democratic decision-making, all also favour flexibility and responsiveness. Can you have both?
- Section 9 (*Linking with Social Movements*) examines the very different situation that has been created now that social movements pressing for community forestry are present on the international stage on their own account. How do networks support the community-based organizations without occupying their political space and substituting their voice for those in whose interests they claim to speak?
- Section 10 (*Towards Conclusions*) then tries to draw all these lessons together.

2. Community Forestry: Origins and Trajectory

Human beings living in communities have been dependent on forests for their livelihoods for tens of thousands of years. Archaeological evidence reveals that they have been managing forests for sustained timber production, through practices such as coppicing and rotational harvests, for at least six thousand years and quite likely much longer.³ However, forestry as a ‘science’ emerged in Europe during the early years of the ‘industrial revolution’ as a response to forest clearance for agriculture and to supply fuel and timber to burgeoning industries. ‘Scientific forestry’ as conceived by these early foresters thus sought to remove forests from the control and use of local communities and place them under the control of official bodies with the principal aim of ensuring sustained supplies of timber to strategic industries.⁴ This same model of scientific forestry was then imposed on the overseas dominions of the colonial powers from the middle of the 19th century in India, Burma and Indonesia and later elsewhere.⁵

From the start, colonial foresters had to struggle with the reality that the forests that were being arrogated to the colonial state as ‘forest reserves’ were in fact owned, inhabited, used and managed by indigenous peoples. Curtailing the rights of these peoples, inevitably sparked resistance, which either had to be suppressed through forced removals, fines, exactions and worse punishments or accommodated by permitting certain forest-based activities to continue as ‘privileges’ subject to strict controls.⁶ Experiments with Karen villagers in Burma, allowing them to interplant their crops between teak seedlings which they were charged with managing and protecting – the so-called *taungya* system - are often cited as among the earliest examples of ‘community forestry’.⁷

Despite these experiments and setbacks, the prevailing belief was sustained, however, that industrial forestry was justifiable in the public interest as it would generate jobs, wealth and development that would promote general prosperity.⁸ According to ‘wake theory’, ‘scientific forestry’ geared to service the needs of industry would nevertheless bring in its wake environmental and economic benefits to the wider society just because sustaining stands of trees would provide environmental services and forestry operations and the downstream industries so supplied would generate employment. It was only in the 1970s that these beliefs began to be widely challenged by professional foresters themselves. Growing evidence that commercial forestry was responsible for widespread forest degradation and loss, caused serious harm to local communities, provided relatively little, mostly temporary, employment and was enclavistic, bringing little sustained benefit to society as a whole, became hard to deny.⁹

³ Rackham 1986:73, 382.

⁴ Westoby 1987.

⁵ Guha 1991; Bryant 1997; Peluso 1992; Westoby 1987.

⁶ Gadgil and Guha 1993.

⁷ Jordan, Gajseni and Watanabe 1992.

⁸ Hobley 1996

⁹ Westoby 1987

The FAO's VIIIth World Forestry Congress in 1978, titled 'Forests for Peoples', is often identified as the 'turning point' when mainstream foresters gave international recognition to the importance of developing forests in ways that directly benefit local communities. Spurred by early afforestation experiments being carried out on collective farms in China and to establish collective woodlots in South Korea,¹⁰ institutions such as FAO and World Bank, adopted policies aimed at complementing industrial forestry in natural forests with schemes to encourage poor communities to plant trees - and reap the benefits - in degraded forests, in 'wastelands', in village woodlots, along field boundaries and on their farms. The 1970s and early 1980s, thus witnessed substantial investment and grant aid being given to developing countries to implant these schemes of 'social forestry', especially in Asia. Many of these schemes, such as those in Nepal and later Cameroon, were donor-led and did not spring from community demands.

Early experiences quickly taught lessons (though not all were quick to learn them). Not all 'wastelands' are wasted, many are essential to the livelihoods of the very poor. Fields farmed for trees may displace landless labourers and sharecroppers. Growing trees just for woodfuel, rather than multi-purpose species, may be seen as an extravagant way to use scarce land and labour by risk-averse poor people. Without secure rights, poor and marginal groups gain little from woodlots. Forestry officials need a deal of retraining to relinquish control of trees and harvests.¹¹ The late 1980s and early 1990s thus saw the development of more participatory forms of forestry, which shifted management responsibility to local 'forest user groups', either through co-management schemes (as in India's Joint Forest Management [JFM]), through leases (such as the Forest Stewardship Agreements in the Philippines and, later, Indonesia's HKM) or through actual transfers of tenurial rights (as in Nepal).¹² At the same time, appreciation grew that rural communities' own knowledge, institutions, management systems and practices were not only well adapted to their environments but also highly adaptable to changing circumstances. This strengthened arguments for greater devolution of authority to local communities.¹³

Wider agendas:

The 1980s also saw the emergence of wider social movements demanding ecological justice and a curb on destructive development schemes.¹⁴ Growing public concern about the escalating rates of tropical forest destruction,¹⁵ were fuelled by targeted campaigns, which linked up with campaigns for the recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples¹⁶ and highlighted the social and environmental impacts of World Bank-funded projects, such as dam building in the Philippines, road building and forest colonization schemes in Brazilian Amazonia and Transmigration in Indonesia.¹⁷ These laid the ground for international campaigns for an overhaul of forestry policies of institutions like the World Bank and FAO, focusing initially on the Tropical Forestry Action Plan.(see box on WRM) The emphases of these campaigns was

¹⁰ Westoby 1987; Arnold 2001.

¹¹ Hobley 1996; Arnold 2001.

¹² Colchester 1992; Hobley 1996.

¹³ Arnold 2001.

¹⁴ Taylor 1995.

¹⁵ Caufield 1985.

¹⁶ Davis 1977; Bodley 1982; 1988.

¹⁷ Bello, Kinley and Elinson 1982; Rich 1985; Colchester 1986; Mikeswell and Williams 1992.

exposure of the underlying political ecology of forest destruction in order to justify the demands of social movements calling for radical reforms in policy, aid, trade, debt relief and land tenure regimes and give space for local alternatives, such as community forestry.¹⁸

Intergovernmental policy-making about forests had to wait until the late 1980s, before there was official recognition that the overwhelming majority of industrial logging in the tropics was unsustainable.¹⁹ International attention meantime, focused on the social impacts of logging in Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo, where Dayaks were being arrested for blockading logging roads in defense of their ancestral lands.²⁰ Efforts to bring about forestry reform through the International Tropical Timber Organisation were, however, rebuffed²¹ as, in the run-up to the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Southern governments reacted strongly against what they perceived to be unilateral efforts to impose standards on tropical forestry without similar measures being taken to control forestry in the North. The Rio Summit thus saw a reassertion of the principle of national sovereignty over natural resources and a ‘legally non-binding statement of principles’ was agreed to apply to **all** types of forests.²² Learning the lessons, NGOs responded by focusing their attention more evenly on temperate and boreal forests.²³ However, calls for the ITTO, then being renegotiated, to broaden its mandate to encompass boreal and temperate as well as tropical timbers were again rebuffed, this time by the North.²⁴

Table 1: Changing visions of ‘community forestry’

Reforestation Model:	Customary Rights Model:
Technical Innovation	Customary knowledge
Reforestation/ plantations on ‘wasteland’	Natural Forest Management/regeneration
Timber and fuelwood	Multiple use, sustainable livelihoods
Collaborative management	Local control
Training	Collaborative learning
Forest management	Governance reform
Conflict management	Land rights and agrarian reform
Silviculture	Exposing underlying causes
Forest department reform	National policy reform
Consensus building	Advocacy
Multi-stakeholder approaches	Connecting with social movements

¹⁸ Peet and Watts 1996; Bryant and Bailey 1997; Keil et al. 1998.

¹⁹ Poore 1989.

²⁰ Colchester 1989; WRM/SAM 1990.

²¹ Colchester 1993.

²² Kolk 1996.

²³ Dudley, Jeanrenaud and Sullivan 1995

²⁴ FoE/WRM 1994; Gale 1998.

Changing Models of 'Community Forestry':

These broader changes in debates about forestry, coupled with an exponential increase in understanding of both the immediate and framing obstacles to successful community control of forests,²⁵ have brought about a general change in civil society's perceptions of what community forestry **is**. Since the 1980s, the emphasis has gradually shifted from a focus on community forestry as a technical innovation, in which knowledge about forest management is passed down to farmers and authority is shared with or devolved to them, to one with a focus on the validation or revival of customary systems of forest management controlled by communities. Correspondingly, the forestry focus itself has shifted from woodlots and reforestation to natural forest management and natural regeneration. A focus on promoting tree-planting for timber and fuelwood supplies has likewise shifted to multiple use forestry, non-timber forest products and the promotion of wider livelihood strategies.

At the same time, the community forestry debate can also be seen to have significantly widened its agenda. Community forestry actors now focus as much attention on the reform of the national and international policy frameworks that constrain or make possible community forestry as on the delivery of ideas, resources and practical advice to foresters and communities. This shift in emphasis of the key issues and major activities addressed by community forestry advocates, can be represented in a highly **simplified** table (see Table 1 above).

The working definition of 'community forestry' adopted at the outset of this investigation thus proved to be far too broad, as far as many of our interviewees were concerned. The case studies from China, Indonesia, India and Uganda all noted that key actors in the networks and community forestry movements repudiate government notions of what community forestry is, explicitly noting that China's social forestry programme, Indonesia's 'HKM', or India's 'Joint Forest Management' (JFM) are not '**real**' community forestry. Even members of the Madhya Pradesh Forestry Department noted that JFM was not really community forestry. In Uganda, the split between these two approaches is institutionalized at the government level, with the Ministry of Agriculture overseeing agroforestry, while the Ministry of Forestry oversees community based timber extraction in natural forests.

Regionally, however, differences are also very apparent. In Brazil, civil society advocacy in the 1980s **started** with a preoccupation with shifts in power and control over forests – goals which have been to a significant extent achieved through the slowing down of colonization schemes, the recognition of indigenous peoples' land rights and the setting up of extractive reserves. The networks in the State of Acre, for example, are now moving towards a greater focus on community forest management for timber and away from the original emphasis on non-timber forest products. The exception does however also prove the rule. A major focus in Brazil is now also on promoting workable market conditions so that community forestry schemes can be economically self-sustaining. Successful community forestry thus requires both adequate frameworks – policies, tenure regimes and markets - and solutions to the practicalities of forest management – technical know-how, viable community

²⁵ Utting 1993; Barraclough and Ghimire 1995; Gibson, McKean and Ostrom 2000.

institutions and workable relations with forestry departments and the local administration.

3. Networking for Change:

The international community forestry networks reviewed in this study emerged at very different moments in this history and in response to very diverse challenges and perceived needs. The earliest networks such as the RDFN and RECOFTC were formed principally as mechanisms for sharing the growing knowledge and experiences of community forestry among professional foresters and students, through information dissemination and training. While RECOFTC focused on sharing the message within Asia, the RDFN, which has a long record of academic excellence, gave a strong emphasis to transferring the experiences and lessons learned in Asia to practitioners in Africa, where 'community forestry' got going somewhat later. The FTTP, which was generated within the bureaucratic FAO, aimed to spread knowledge and ideas more broadly, principally through a lively newsletter with a light, readable and popular style, and also through other publications, meetings and capacity building. It secured budgets to promote the development of networks in the regions, first linking up with RECOFTC and then stimulating the emergence of regional networks in Central America and Africa. Although structurally quite different, the AFN emerged with similar broad aims, substantially out of the early experiences of professionals working in Asia, as a means of sharing lessons among promoters of community forestry in different parts of Asia.²⁶

By contrast, other networks reviewed in this study, came into being as part of the broader social and environmental movements pressing for more radical reforms. The WRM was created explicitly as a response to the FAO, UNDP and World Bank's 'Tropical Forestry Action Plan', which was seen by NGO campaigners as a fundamentally flawed attempt to impose the old model of industrial forestry on developing countries with inadequate consideration for the rights and interests of local communities. A number of other networks also coalesced later with the main aim of challenging the framework in which forestry was implanted and pressing for reforms of global forest policies by then being debated at the subsidiary bodies of the UN's Commission on Sustainable Development. A temporary NGO Coalition hosted by the WRM and the IUCN-Netherlands was, at least temporarily, successful in focusing intergovernmental attention on the underlying causes of deforestation.²⁷ Regional networks, like FAN which also emerged at this time, joined in these efforts. At the same time a more focused community forestry lobby, coordinated by the IUCN secretariat in Gland, invested huge efforts in documenting the advances in community forestry achieved over the past 15 years and getting the InterGovernmental Panel on Forests to make declaratory proposals for action in favour of community forestry.(see box IUCN-CIFM)

The early 1990s also saw the emergence onto the global stage of new networks that were genuinely rooted in community organizations themselves. In 1991, in Central America, ACICAFOC was established by a coalition of indigenous and peasant

²⁶ Poffenberger 1990.

²⁷ Verolme and Moussa 1999.

Table 2: The Emergence of International Community Forestry Networks

Date	Events	Networks	Key objectives/context
1978	World Forest Congress		Community forestry achieves first international exposure
1985		RDFN	Share technical insights among practitioners
1985	Regional FAO meeting	RECOFTC	Train community forestry practitioners in Asia
1986	FAO/WB/UNDP/WRI launch TFAP	WRM	Campaign to counter top-down forestry and support community rights
1987		FTPP	Information sharing, developing tools, promotion of national initiatives
1991		ACICAFOC	Link community-based organizations and promote community forestry
1992	UNCED	AFN	Share lessons learned from community forestry experience in Asia
1992	UNCED	IAITPTF	Political alliance of indigenous forest peoples demands recognition of rights
1993	ITTO rejects labelling in 1991/2	FSC	Promote independent voluntary certification with attention to human rights
1995	IPF	FAN	Promote national and regional forest policy reform
1996	IPF	IUCN-CIFM	Promote Community Forestry in International Forest Policy regime
2002	WSSD	Global Caucus on CBFM	Promote policy reform to favour community-based and indigenous forestry

Why network?

But why network anyway? **Networking**, as an activity, is not an end in itself but a means to an end. The main reasons given for **networking** that emerge from the case studies and workshops are the following:

- Share information and experiences
- Share resources and expertise
- Identify hot topics
- Avoid the repetition of mistakes
- Building consensus
- Establishing shared values
- Research
- Publish findings and results
- Give people confidence in their work
- Building up recognition and self-esteem
- Encouraging younger people to take up the issues
- Create a framework for local actors
- Provide a platform for the voiceless
- Counter threats
- Build credibility

Most networking on community forestry is informal. People share information and interact without the need to formalize their connections. Informal networking was repeatedly noted as a preferable form of networking as it encourages creative innovation, without formality, obligations and legal constraints. A number of country and network case studies urged the virtues of keeping networks as informal as possible, especially for advocacy work. The finding is confirmed by a review that the FAO has carried out of the 135 networks in which its own staff have been involved: *‘the effectiveness of networks is not necessarily influenced by the extent to which it is formalized’*.²⁸ Formalised networks, as institutionalised arrangements, like the ones that this review has examined, emerge from informal connections for a number of additional reasons:

- Secure legitimacy for new approaches (in some countries informal networking may even be illegal)
- Secure funding (donors need clear agencies with specific goals: networks need to reassure members that money raised in their names is well used)
- Cost effective financing to reach a maximum number of beneficiaries
- Create a sense of identity among distant partners who share a common vision
- Or contrarily, create a mechanism for forging a common understanding among diverse actors with very different viewpoints.

Do networks have a ‘natural life’? A number of commentators suggested during this investigation that networks have a ‘natural’ cycle, being born to achieve a certain shared goal, often catalysed by a charismatic individual or organization. The networks evolve, grow to include a wider range of members and then gradually fizzle out because: the original goal is achieved; the context changes; membership becomes diffuse; goals become too general or ambitious; structures become over-formalized; or mutual trust weakens. Networks then die a ‘natural death’. Our study neither confirms nor denies this observation but does suggest that at the least the periodicity of this ‘natural cycle’ would vary greatly from case to case. It may indeed be logical for some networks set up for very specific, short-term objectives to fold up once those objectives are achieved. The IUCN-CIFM, set up to ensure attention was paid to community forestry in intergovernmental forest policy fora, has logically come to term once the IPF and IFF had passed their resolutions. On the other hand, other networks with more ambitious or long term goals can be observed going through cycles of transformation: specific actions and campaigns may come to an end but the enduring commitments of members and

²⁸ FAO 1992. The FAO study defines a network as a *‘voluntary cooperative arrangement among individuals and/or institutions in two or more countries, set up for a period of at least several years, to carry out jointly certain specified activities for the purpose of direct exchange of relevant techniques and experiences on common development issues’*.

their underlying goals carry the networks forward into new phases of work. Yet, other commentators warned against networks trying to spread themselves too thin. A common message we heard is that networks that try to achieve too much often fail. Trying to do everything means you do nothing.

associations to press for reforms in favour of communities. The following year, the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests also established itself, led by the effective regional indigenous peoples' coalitions which had emerged in Amazonia and the Philippines in the mid-1980s.²⁹ The Alliance positioned itself around a strong human rights agenda and was successful in getting the InterGovernmental Panel on Forests to take into account indigenous rights.³⁰ A cumulative result of all this advocacy was that future policy-makers could no longer limit forest policy debates to negotiations between governments and with the private sector. The voice of communities also had to be taken into account.³¹ The emergence of national forest users' associations, such as the Jan Sangharsh Morcha, a coalition of tribal organizations in India, the Assembly of the Poor in Thailand, FECOFUN in Nepal which emerged in 1995, and AMAN in Indonesia in 1999, can be seen as part of this mould-breaking trend.³² The creation of the Global Caucus for Community-Based Forest Management, set up in the context of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, is as another step in this process.³³

The emergence of market based approaches;

As noted, concern about the impact of logging on forests became an international issue in 1980s, with much of the focus being on tropical forests. In the mid-1980s, NGOs from Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines called for a moratorium on tropical forest logging, which led supportive NGOs in developing countries to call for boycotts of tropical timber imports and the labelling of timber to reveal its provenance. Many of these same NGOs took their concerns to the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO), where they called on governments to label timber and develop mechanisms to trace timber from forest to consumer. These ideas were rejected by the ITTO, especially by southern governments who felt that such measures would lead to unfair discrimination against tropical timber. Faced with government resistance, NGOs and some of the more progressive elements in the timber industry pushed ahead with proposals to promote voluntary labelling. This was to be based on the certification of forests, according to agreed standards, independent of governments, along the same lines as certification pioneered for the promotion of 'organic' farming. The result was that, in 1993, after some 18 months of hectic preparations, these civil society and industry groups founded the Forest Stewardship Council.(see box on FSC)

Although expectations were high that the FSC's principled insistence on adopting social standards in line with international human rights law would give a market advantage to small-scale producers and community forests, in the event the relatively low premium offered for certified timbers has meant that industrial-scale logging, benefiting from economies of scale, has cornered the emerging niche market for

²⁹ Alliance 1996.

³⁰ IAITPTF and EAIP 1997; Griffiths 2002.

³¹ Humphreys 1996.

³² Britt 2002; Apte and Pathak 2002.

³³ WRM 2003.

certified timbers. Notwithstanding these barriers, certification continues to be favoured in some regions, notably Central America and Brazil, as a way of providing recognition of community forestry and securing access to global markets even though it may be dependent on significant grant aid to help communities get their forest management systems up to certifiable standards. Such interventions may not be without their own problems however. An extensive review of certified community forests carried out for IIED found that:

*Certification has invariably been externally driven, often by donors, who have enabled communities to meet these challenges with significant subsidies that can undermine sustainable commercial decision-making by community enterprises.*³⁴

Optimistic expectations that FSC certification would also open up political space for marginalized communities to get their voice heard in national standard-setting and assessments of industrial operations have not been fully borne out either. There are thus still doubts about whether certification will, on balance, provide a useful multiplier mechanism to secure community rights in forests. The indications are that the potential of the approach varies substantially, depending on local and regional circumstances. A detailed review of certification in Sweden and Indonesia, for example, concluded that certification cannot substitute for the need for reforms in policy frameworks and, where these frameworks are unsuitable, will only have a marginal effect until such changes occur.³⁵ More recent reviews demonstrate how easily community voices and even NGOs can be marginalized in FSC processes, when the national policy framework is hostile and tenurial rights insecure. In these circumstances added vigilance is needed to ensure that certification provides real political space for reform rather than legitimizing the perpetuation of the status quo.³⁶

Network strategies:

Given their very different objectives, backgrounds, constituencies, targets and styles, not surprisingly the strategies adopted by the different networks to effect reform is also very different. Yet, notwithstanding this variety, our survey suggested that there is a growing sense of frustration among all the networks with the slow pace of reform and the extent to which forest department bureaucracies retain control of forests. This has spurred many of the networks, especially those linked to or embedded in social movements to advocate for more far-reaching reforms. More radical and analytic examination of the vested interests opposing community control of forests and investigations of the 'underlying causes of deforestation' have formed part of this trend. Emphasis has shifted towards advocacy for national policy reforms, implying much greater mobilization of civil society to overcome resistance to change and correspondingly the need for stronger links with social movements.

Although networks share, broadly, a similar vision of what is needed to effect change towards community forestry (see diagram below), they have chosen very different approaches towards achieving this reform, depending on national political processes and the make up and proclivities of members. They have thus focused their efforts on

³⁴ Thornber and Markopoulos 2000:2.

³⁵ Elliott 2000: xix, 232; see also Elliott and Schlaepfer 2001a, 2001b.

³⁶ Counsell and Loraas 2002; Colchester, Sirait and Wijardjo 2003.

very different pieces of the puzzle, reflecting their different histories and ideologies. Historically, relatively few networks focused on national policy reform but many are increasingly recognizing that this is the main need today.

Conflict ‘management’ or structural reform?

Many of the networks have promoted ‘conflict management’ as an integral part of their service to communities.³⁷ They do this even though some of them accept that:

*Ideally, one should work towards the resolution of each and every conflict; however, providing ultimate resolutions is not an easy matter. True resolution may require sweeping political, economic and other changes at the national and even global level, such as formal recognition of indigenous land rights, land reform, devolution of authority, or the reduction or curtailment of certain economic activities.*³⁸

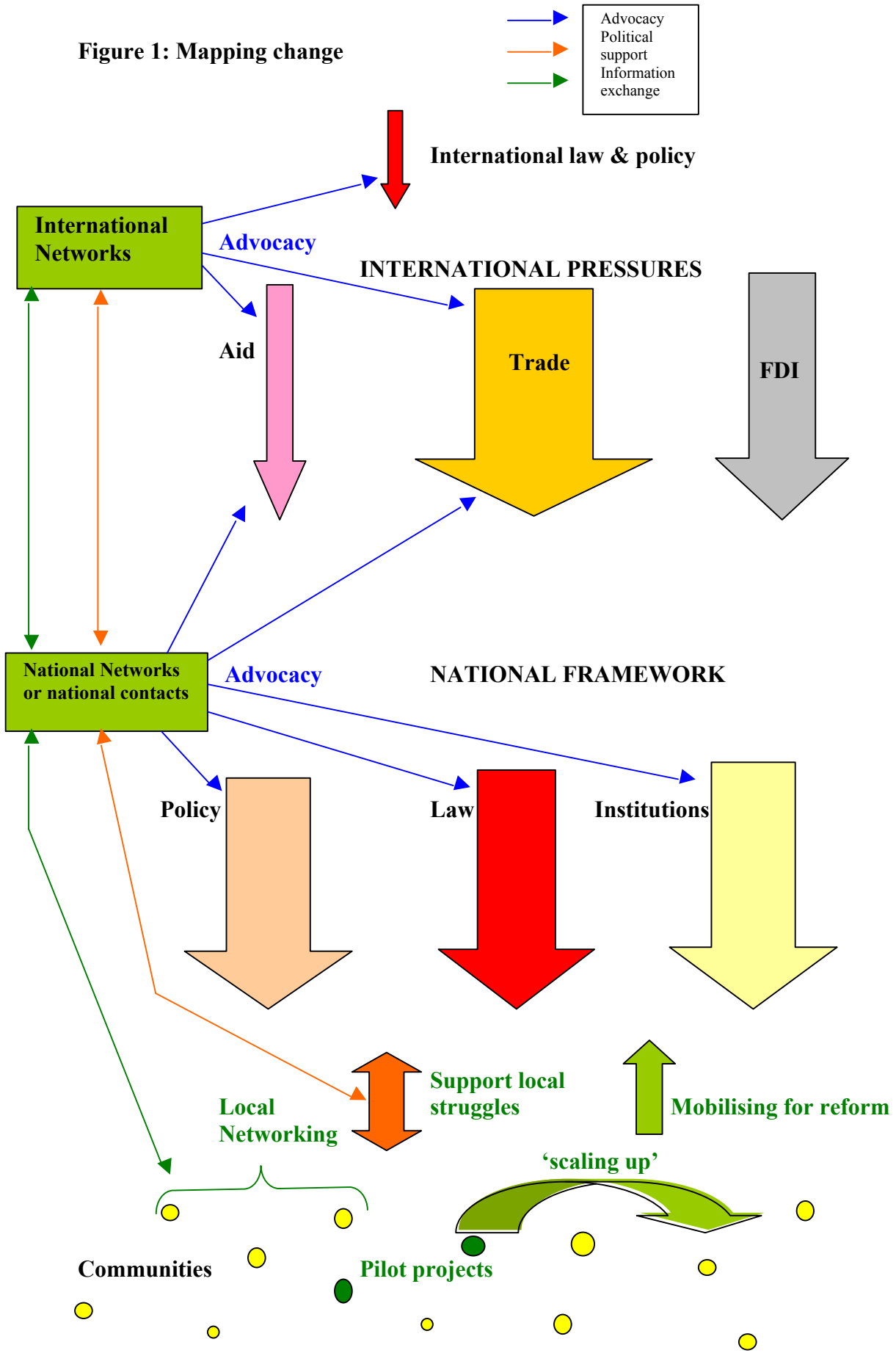
Yet our survey found that some local organizations are critical of this approach, insofar as it implies getting local communities to reconcile themselves to existing power structure and tenure regimes, when what they are calling for are exactly these reforms.

Figure 1: on the following page illustrates schematically the way some national and international networks envisage their promotion of community forestry and framework reform. Starting on the ground, the aim, often through ‘pilot projects’, is to assist targeted communities to secure control over forests resources, which are then backed up by efforts to ‘scale up’ from these local experiences to reach additional communities. Local networking, exchanges and institution-building form part of this work. Many of the national networks and a few international networks see part of their role also being to provide support for ‘local struggles’, using their national and international advocacy skills to heighten the leverage and profile of local actors who face specific threats to their rights and livelihoods. Grassroots mobilization of community-based organizations is also supported as a means of pressing for reform from the bottom-up. However, this may not be enough to promote changes in the legal, political and institutional frameworks which hinder community forestry and so are backed up by national networks and coalitions, which press for policy reforms through targeted advocacy at the ‘national level’. Other networks prioritise awareness-raising, consensus building and retraining of forestry officials to encourage forestry departments to adopt more participatory approaches more sensitive to local needs and rights.

³⁷ RDFN, RECOFTC, FTTP and FAN all have extensive publications and training materials on this theme, which is a favourite of the FAO.

³⁸ Means and Josayma et al. 2002 Vol 1:5

Figure 1: Mapping change



However, the international networks recognize that national frameworks are in turn, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced by international pressures. Advocacy for international policy reform, changes in international law, targeted aid and market transformation may encourage or pressurize national frameworks into forms more amenable to community forestry. Different networks have prioritized very different parts of this puzzle. Some have focused on the forest policy-making processes of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development and subsidiary bodies. Others have prioritized legally binding international treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the various human rights instruments. Still others have targeted the World Bank and other international financial institutions, while for others targeting private sector agencies and pressing for market reforms have been given priority.

Just how networks position themselves within this changing framework determines to a great extent how they then interact with government agencies, the private sector and communities themselves. A fundamental choice for networks at their formation is to decide whether or not they should include government officials within their membership or not. As noted below, many of the international networks do not, in fact, reach through from the international level to grassroots communities either through local and national institutions or directly.

Hybrid Vigour:

Some of the networks studied are composed of a wide mix of interest groups – community-based organizations, indigenous peoples, NGOs, academics, donor agencies, government officials. This is especially valued in networks that seek to build consensus among different players who start from quite different perspectives and experiences. For example the national FKKM network in Indonesia was explicitly founded in order to build a shared vision among academics, NGOs and government officials about ways forward to promote community forestry. At the international level RECOFTC, FTTP and AFN have also adopted the same approach. These ‘hybrid’ networks start with a recognition that not all their members will share a view about the best ways to accommodate the interests of rural communities and indigenous peoples in forestry. However, the expectation is that through dialogue, information exchange, workshops, shared training and carrying out pilot schemes, common ground can be found which will encourage officials to accept the feasibility of community forestry and effect reforms to make this possible on a wide scale. Even if debates do not yield unanimity, mutual respect can develop so long as opponents can see that their different points of view are at least being understood if not accepted. The survey carried out in India elicited several comments from interviewees who were critical of the failure of the international networks to reach (and teach) Forest Department officials, which is a significant omission since a major barrier to reform is the resistance of forest officials to increased community control over forests.

Hybrid hubris:

However, the study also found that hybrid networks find it hard to maintain their broad platforms if they engage in partisan advocacy on behalf of local communities and social movements. For example, when the FTTP regional network in East Africa, FAN, publicized a video with critical voices of Maasai herders who claimed that a so-

called participatory plan for the Ngorongoro Game Reserve was not so participatory after all, this caused serious repercussions in the FAO's headquarters in Rome due to protests from the international organization supporting the plan. In the same way, when the FFTP secretariat supported FECOFUN's campaign to stop Nordic companies gaining forestry concessions in community forestry areas in Nepal similar tensions and divisions surfaced. These tensions were among a large number of factors which contributed to the eventual closing down of the FFTP network by the FAO. Indeed some of the mainstream foresters within the FAO even characterized the FFTP presence in the forestry department as an 'invasion of socialists'. The closure of the FAO's Community Forestry Unit soon followed, despite donor government appeals to keep it going.

A conclusion of this study is that networks with strong advocacy goals are rarely able to function for long as 'multi-stakeholder' networks because it is hard for NGOs and activists to share their tactics and judgments with government and intergovernmental officials. Staff in RECOFTC, which has a broad mix of government and non-government in both its membership and the composition of its board, have had to be very circumspect in their engagement in local struggles. They now seek to act as host institution to a regional association of community forest users, which may be structurally difficult.

Members of community organizations express resentment at community forestry networks which are 'fence sitters' and that do not commit themselves to supporting the communities in whose interests they claim to speak when they come into conflict with government officials. As one workshop participant put it:

Networks have created dreams for communities but they run away when we face a problem. Do they link with us or with the Forestry Department?

According to this view, community forestry networks that lack real links with the communities and do not take their lead from them are unacceptable (see section 9).

Synergies:

An alternative view is that advocacy networks, information sharing networks, and capacity building networks all have their place. Partisan campaigns support needs to be complemented with consensus building platforms. However, one of the surprises of this investigation is that, given the apparent complementarity of the networks in terms of their functions and their apparently overall shared goal, the extent to which the networks act in isolation from each other is surprising. Greater synergy and coordination between networks seems to be called for. The creation of the Global Caucus on Community Based Forest Management, discussed below, may provide an opportunity for this.

4. The Tool Box:

Although networks have very diverse functions and ways of interacting, the actual tools they all use are surprisingly similar. A list of commonly used tools encountered during the investigation includes the following:

Table 3: Networking Tools

‘One way tools’	‘Two way tools’
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newsletters • Publications • Resource Centres • Web sites • DVDs, CD Roms, • Press releases • Public Radio and TV • Other mass media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence • Email newsletters, ‘listservs’ and discussion groups • Assemblies or annual meetings • Regional meetings • Workshops • Exchange visits • Training courses • Field projects • Research

As suggested in Table 3, these tools can be divided into two sets. On the one hand (in the left hand column) are those that are apt for reaching large numbers (hundreds or thousands) of participants. However, these tend to be ‘one-way tools’, suitable for disseminating a large amount of information but not best suited to encouraging feedback, dialogue and shared decision-making. On the other hand (listed in the right-hand column) are those tools that are useful for reaching much smaller numbers of people at any one time and which are ‘two-way tools’ that encourage dialogue, interaction and joint decision-making. With the exception of occasional, (usually very expensive) large assemblies, most of these tools are not well suited to stimulating shared communication and joint decision-making among groups much larger than, say, 50 people at any one time. This suggests that it is hard for interactive, two-way networks to include large numbers of people on a sustained basis in shared decision-making and interactive planning.

Digital divide:

There have been expectations that the new technologies would help overcome such limitations on networking. Certainly, email is highly valued for its convenience and ease of use by many network secretariats. Indeed, for those with the right training and who have the overheads covered, email does offer a relatively cheap and simple means of communication over great distances. It suffers major deficiencies however:

- it excludes all those without telephones
- it excludes all those who are not computer literate
- it often substitutes for more personal and interactive means of communication

- unless specific measures are taken it discourages the use of several languages
- email overload is widely reported

Our investigation suggests that over-reliance on email is one of the major weaknesses of networks. The case studies reveal that, in practice, sustained email networking as a means of shared communication and decision-making rarely reaches below the 'national level' and tends to limit participation to those from middle-class, educated, and/or urban backgrounds.

This is not to argue that email should be rejected. The technology is here to stay and as telecommunications improve is bound to gradually become more widely available in rural areas. Acquisition of cheap computers and the training of local organizations may be a logical next step for networks seeking to reach below the 'national level' in some countries. Nevertheless the findings suggest that networks that aim to reach down to local organizations or to the community level cannot rely on email but must make alternative arrangements for effective communications if local communities are to be actively engaged in strategy and decision-making.

Newsletter overload?

Newsletters provide a valued means of sharing information and sustaining a sense of shared endeavour among network members. For example, readership surveys carried out by the WRM and FTTP (the two networks surveyed with the widest readerships - 9,000 and 12,000 respectively) do show that these newsletters are highly valued. However, in the course of this study concerns were expressed that newsletters do tend to become ends rather than means, are expensive and time-consuming and that there are too many of them. This is especially the case with email newsletters, which many people feel overwhelmed by.

Face to face meetings:

In the end however there are no substitutes for face to face meetings for generating a genuine sense of shared purpose and decision-making. As one workshop participant put it: '*two-way means four eye*'. Face to face meetings are crucial to maintaining network coherence and to building up good personal relations and trust. Annual meetings seem to be a minimum amount of interaction, at least among the most active and core members. Virtual networks rarely survive without these get-togethers.

Workshops examining specific issues are also highly valued but networkers stress the importance of having follow-up mechanisms to ensure that decisions can be turned into joint action. Workshops are useful as information exchange but ideally should not be ends in themselves.

Global networks find that information sharing and the planning of relevant joint actions inter-continently is difficult because local and national contexts are so very different. Regional meetings are often more productive in developing joint strategies because local contexts tend to be more similar.

Exchanges:

Contrary to our expectations, the case studies show that direct exchanges between countries and regions are highly valued. Face to face meetings between farmers who

can examine actual practice are practical and educational. Mixed groups of visitors, including government officials and community members from one country traveling together, can also break down hierarchies and help build shared visions.

Communications strategies:

A number of other common concerns emerged about communications, but the most serious is that in general the networks seem to lack clear communications strategies. Weaknesses include the following:

- Most networks are under-resourced and thus facilitators lack capacity and time to provide agile and detailed responses to local actors.
- Information ‘extraction’ from the local membership is not complemented by adequate feedback mechanisms down to the local level.
- Outputs for international advocacy are not simplified or adjusted enough for use by local actors. Many publications are criticized for being too technical and academic, and not well targeted to promote desired changes.
- Individual members rarely place the publications they receive in libraries and resource centers, further limiting the availability of materials to other actors. Information networks should target libraries, resource centres and academies if they want to reach larger numbers of people.
- Workshop participants also emphasise the need for networks to make more use of popular means of communication and mobilization: rallies, demonstration, sloganeering and posters were all noted for their effectiveness.

New tools:

Some relatively new tools that are increasingly being used by networks also deserve highlighting. These include:

- Participatory mapping of community systems of land use and ‘traditional forest-related knowledge’, which has proved a powerful tool on which to build local management capacity and dialogue with government officials.
- Public radio, videos, films, DVD, and drama as means to reach local communities for whom the written word carries less well than oral culture.
- Two-way radios, which have provided vital links for rural communities in Amazonia, linking their widely dispersed villages into federations and so to international processes. For no obvious reasons, these are not so widely used in other regions.

Languages:

Considering the cultural diversity in most of the networks, the extent to which networks limit their communications to a single language, mostly English, is surprising. Of the networks surveyed, only FTTP, RDFN and WRM were found to routinely publish in several languages, yet many of the other networks admitted that

they **needed** to translate more of their materials. Likewise in meetings and workshops, we found it was routinely the case that adequate provisions were not made for interpretation, a lack which seriously discourages informed participation. Clearly the high costs of translation and interpretation are factors here and those donors that support networks need to accept that translation and interpretation are vital to interactive and democratic intercontinental and regional networking.

However, the studies suggest that financial constraints alone do not explain the reluctance of networks to work in several languages. In effect, if not always in intention, network communications are being targeted at donors and ‘policy-makers’. Many networks seem content to limit effective participation to an elite, educated in the western style, and do not prioritise communication with community based organizations, let alone promote their engagement in decision-making.

Our survey thus chimes with the conclusions of Manual Chiriboga, in his review of international NGO campaigns in Latin America directed at the World Bank, where he found that:

*Transnational NGO networks appear to be strongly biased towards Northern leadership and concerns, information does not flow adequately from North to South, accountability to Southern members is limited, and risks incurred in global campaigns are not distributed equally.*³⁹

5. Internationals and Locals:

Indeed, one of the strongest impressions that comes out of all the case studies carried out for this review is of the great difficulties that international networks have in reaching to the local level. Obstacles created by inadequate analysis of local contexts and limited targeting of partners, inappropriate communications, language barriers, resource constraints, cultural differences and capacity limitations (on all sides) confront all networks.

Some of the global networks, such as the IUCN-CIFM, RDFN and FTTP, were clear from the outset that they did **not expect** to directly reach the local level. The cost however may have been to generate a heightened sense of exclusion among the target ‘beneficiaries’. Many of the other networks do, however, aspire to link to the local level while recognizing that this is a huge challenge.

However, ascertaining the extent to which international networks are having an effect at the local level is by no means easy. Many ideas and experiences seem to ‘trickle down’ to local actors even though their provenance is unknown. On the other hand, many local actors are dismissive of international networks without really knowing what they offer or intend, suggesting there are more profound communications barriers and that international networks need to raise wider awareness of what they can offer and what their ideologies are.

³⁹ Chiriboga 2001: 73.

The strongest and commonest criticism of the networks that we heard at the local level is that the networks tend to plan and make decisions from the top down. This relates both to the way they are funded (see ‘Money Matters’ below) and their governance structures (see ‘Governance’).

International-local linkages

In general few of the international networks and, even, surprisingly few of the regional networks, actually communicate directly with or involve community-based organizations. However, it transpires that this problem is not one limited to international networks. A finding of this survey was that relatively few of the **national** community forestry networks have good links to the community level. Inadequate vertical linking between local communities and community forestry networks are thus a prevalent problem not limited to the ‘international level’.

The main mechanism that many international networks rely on to link to the national level and so through to the local levels are ‘national focal points’. Many networks expect these to act as intermediaries linking the international networks to local communities [as well as to other national actors]. However, a finding of this survey is that these focal points are rarely adequately resourced and/or trained to carry out the two-way sharing role that is ascribed to them and they thus often act as barriers (bottle-necks) rather than as facilitators of communication. Common complaints are that:

- Regional members, who attend international meetings, engage in exchanges and/or receive publications and other outputs, are relatively poor at sharing materials with their peers in-country and even less gets shared with the grassroots groups.
- In-country bottle-necking at the level of the leadership of national networks is a major reason limiting the usefulness of international networks as it impedes lessons being learned in both directions.
- Some national focal points have made huge efforts to channel information and decision-making upwards and downwards. It may be thankless work: in networks where institutions are chosen as focal points people suggest that it would be better to have individuals. In networks which rely on individuals, people suggest that it would be better to have organizations.

Three main conclusions emerge from this:

- International networks should not rely solely on focal points to reach national and local members.
- Focal points should be adequately resourced to carry out their functions and selected based on a record of inclusive communications.
- Appropriate means should be developed to make focal points accountable to national members and constituents.

NGOs and communities:

NGOs seem curiously unaware of the extent to which they are resented by local level actors for the way they substitute their voice for those of local people or take over the political space of indigenous peoples and local communities. Hybrid networks of farmers, indigenous peoples' organisations and NGOs need to clarify roles and responsibilities to avoid clashes. Northern networks are likewise often criticized for being blind to local realities in the South. Indeed many local actors we interviewed were sceptical that the international networks could ever really engage with local networks on a basis of equality. To many local activists the international networkers seem very remote. As one interviewee in India tactfully put it: *You are talking about big ships, we are a small boat*. These perceptions, valid or not, pose formidable barriers to effective two-way networking.

6. International policies and national change:

The highly politicized nature of global forestry negotiations, in which forests have become a political football in a wider inter-governmental tussle for additional aid, better terms of trade for the South and technology transfer, has meant that forest policy is not subject to a legally binding instrument. Advocacy at the international level has thus shifted between a wide array of more or less influential international fora that have appeared to offer means for leveraging change in target countries – the World Bank especially in the early 1980s, Tropical Forestry Action Plan (FAO, World Bank and UNDP) in the later 1980s, the International Tropical Timber Organisation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Commission for Sustainable Development and its subsidiary bodies (IPF & IFF) in the 1990s, now the United Nations Forum on Forests and, lately, the World Bank again. The Convention of Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change also offer scope for forest-related advocacy.

Several of the networks examined in this review, including WRM, IUCN-CIFM, AFN, FAN, IAITPTF and ACICAFOC have invested a significant amount of time and effort in these policy discussions and a question for this review to answer has been: has there been 'value added' as a result?

Although ascribing any one agency credit for any particular change or activity is highly problematic, it is possible to point to concrete changes in projects, processes and approaches which have resulted from the overall advocacy intent. The 'revamping' of the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, certain reforms in World Bank policies and procedures, ITTO guidelines, some of the 'Proposals for Action' of the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests, all are examples of changes that can be ascribed, at least in part, to advocacy inputs. These are quite impressive achievements, considering the slender resources on which the networks have based these inputs.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ See Keck and Sikkink 1998 and Fox and Brown 1998 for in depth reviews of some of these advocacy campaigns.

However, the extent to which any of these achievements has led to change at the national level let alone on the ground is harder to discern. IUCN-CIFM and AFN express disappointment at the limited extent to which IPF/IFF 'Proposals for Action' have been implemented, and both wound down their international advocacy following that experience. The country reviews show that national governments have been slow to amend their forest policies and where they have done so multiple factors have led to change, making it difficult to single out the influence of any specific international agency, much less trace this influence back to the advocacy efforts of international networks. Yet it may be premature to judge that these efforts have been wasted. At the international level, the networks sustained pressure during the later phases of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) on the need for governments to implement agreed actions and to carry out participatory national reporting of progress made. As a result the mandate of the UNFF, set up to carry on the IFF's work, does now focus on implementation and on receiving and assessing reports. For all its deficiencies, a mechanism is gradually being established which may allow civil society to discuss national forestry reform processes in the international arena and use this political space to press for change.

On the other hand, international agreements and discourses do also provide new advocacy opportunities for national networks to deploy in their own efforts to secure reforms in country. For example, the important gains made by indigenous peoples in securing recognition of their rights in international instruments and agreements has tangibly led to a shift in attitudes, advocacy efforts and even national laws and policies in Latin America and, to a lesser extent, Asia.⁴¹ The country case studies note other examples where standards, concepts and procedures agreed at the international level have opened up new political space and possibilities for dialogue at the national level. It remains to be seen if similar gains can be achieved at the national level. It may be possible to influence 'national forest programmes' so they give more attention to community forestry, participation, land tenure, traditional forest-related knowledge, by deploying language adopted in these agreements.

The main challenge for the international networks now is to help their national level members to develop their advocacy and reform so as to make the most of international level gains.

7. Money Matters:

Community forestry may have endured in various forms for thousands of years. In today's global markets, with skewed tenure regimes, inequitable subsidy systems, and destructive resource extraction being the norm, sustainable community forestry is, often, uncompetitive and economically unviable in market terms (though it remains crucial to local livelihoods and markets).⁴² Especially in Latin America and Africa, where agrarian systems are relatively less 'involved' than Asia⁴³ and where connections to global markets more direct, the promotion and/or revival of

⁴¹ Colchester 2001.

⁴² Unsustainable community forestry, of course, may be quite profitable, for a time!

⁴³ Geertz 1963. The term 'agricultural involution' describes the internal, very complicated material and moral economies that have developed in highly populated and intensively cultivated areas.

community forestry may, at least, require substantial start-up funds. If structural and market reforms do not soon follow, recurrent costs may also require continuing financial support or subsidies. The community forestry movement is in search of money.

Carbon fixation: global markets

The need for new mechanisms to finance community forestry has thus led to a search for new ‘market mechanisms’ to reward communities for maintaining forests. One option has been to pay communities that maintain forests for supplying ‘environmental services’. Institutions like ICRAF and CIFOR have even started promoting community forestry as a means of capturing carbon in the expectation that communities can benefit from the so-called Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol, which allows Northern polluters to offset continuing emissions of global warming gases in exchange for paying for carbon sequestration projects in developing countries.⁴⁴

Community Forestry as Development:

Convinced that community forestry is potentially a just and environmentally prudent means of promoting development and alleviating poverty, the major donor agencies have put a lot of money into community forestry in various countries, with very variable results. In some countries, community forestry has thus been tolerated or promoted by national governments as a means of capturing aid monies, but at the same time has been institutionally and politically insulated from wider reforms in the forest sector or social policy. Community forestry thus risks becoming an enclave industry and not a sustainable reform.

Network survival:

As previous studies have shown, networks cannot survive without continued donor support either.⁴⁵ The majority of the networks examined feel obliged to offer their publications and services free to their members to ensure that the networks reach the right people. Of the networks examined, only UNOFOC in Mexico and ACICAFOC actually demand a financial contribution from their members. The suggestion from these experiences is that even though these contributions may be token in comparison to the overall running costs, they do promote a sense of ownership of the network among members and also make network secretariats feel more accountable to them, suggesting truth in the reversal of the slogan ‘no representation without taxation’.⁴⁶

The financial realities of community forestry in particular and networking in general have had profound effects on the nature of the community forestry networks. Since communities are seeking additional financing and the networks supporting them are in search of funds to ensure their own survival, the risks of these processes being driven by donors are exaggerated.

Networks as devices to capture money:

⁴⁴ Eg Smith and Scherr 2002.

⁴⁵ FAO 1992.

⁴⁶ RECOFTC is currently reconsidering how it can market its training services.

In Acre in Brazil, for example, community forestry networks have emerged substantially as a mechanism to develop markets, and lobby for subsidies, for community forestry products. Other networks, in Brazil (eg GTA) and Meso-America for example, have been promoted by community-based organizations and NGOs as mechanisms to capture funds for 'projects'. Inevitably this means that networks have become organizations that manage funds. The networks may be set up with the aim of avoiding patronage and control by intermediaries but end up replicating the very patron-client relations they were designed to avert. As an activist noted in Uganda, the dependency on donors that results, erodes the networks' autonomy.

Dancing with the donors:

The studies revealed many concerns about the ways donors deal with networks. Observations and concerns about donors, *inter alia*, are that they:

- Are reluctant to fund the real costs of networking. In particular networks find it hard to secure funds for core costs, and for outreach costs (translation and interpretation, communications, focal point services and the high costs of members' participation in networks).
- Prefer to fund specific 'projects' and product-oriented activities with predetermined outcomes and measurable results, as opposed to process-oriented activities.
- Are trend driven. Donors' preferences are constantly shifting, meaning that networks are always reinventing themselves in response to donor preferences. (Clear evidence of how donor-driven networks can be.) Networks have grown quite skilful at this and also shuffle from one donor to another. Observes one interviewee: '*Networks recycle donors whilst donors recycle networks*'.⁴⁷

These pressures combined have contributed to a number of problems.

- Networks have tended to be top-down, secretariat-driven and output-focused.
- Where network secretariats are based in the north, this has exacerbated the North-South tensions in the networks.
- Networks have become 'projectised' and 'short-termist' and not strategic and process focused.
- Long-term reforms based on supporting grassroots movements have been eschewed as donor dependence has curtailed support for controversial mobilization and advocacy.
- Instead networks have favoured ambitious top-down policy reforms which have lacked community engagement.
- The concerns of local communities and national members take second place to the concerns of donors.
- Accountability mechanisms are the reverse of what is desirable, with networks and their secretariats feeling more accountable to donors than to members.

Indeed the researchers were left asking themselves, do networks survive so long as they serve the needs of their members or only as long as they serve the needs of their patrons?

⁴⁷ See Uganda report.

Donor points of view:

Of course not all donors are equally guilty of these impositions. Indeed some of those interviewed in this survey or who participated in the workshops did not recognize themselves in these characterizations, though conceding they might apply to others. That these perceptions exist should not be doubted. The existence of these perceptions, valid or not, challenges donors to reform the way that they interact with and support networks.

A particular challenge for donors is to find means of supporting networks over the longer term, without requiring excessive formalization and bureaucratisation, without obliging networks to be 'logo carriers' and self-promoters, claiming success for every successful campaign outcome, when in fact successful partnerships among and between networks will grow better if they can assume more modest profiles. It is obvious that donors have to demand financial accountability of networks and cannot write blank cheques for networks to do whatever they please. Donors are right to point out that largesse without targets or proof of performance has encouraged the emergence of inefficient and even corrupt leadership systems, that become unaccountable either to donors or members.⁴⁸ However, novel methods for donors to support and evaluate network processes rather than projectised activities do seem to be required. Some donors may be prepared to accept greater risk in financing networks as long as there is up front risk analysis which shows that the networks are not complacent, or heedless about the challenges they face.

Evaluation:

The survey also reveals that one of the major contributions that donors do make to networks is to demand performance evaluations using innovative and participatory methods. The case studies show that, where done right and with adequate engagement of network members, these evaluations provide important opportunities for secretariats to become accountable to their members and reappraise their structures, strategies and priorities. We found broad agreement that participatory Monitoring & Evaluation processes should also be built into network programmes to encourage feedback and experience sharing.

Evaluations are not always easy however. Training and information activities are much easier to (self-) evaluate in terms of their effectiveness. Indicators are self-evident in terms of numbers of trainees, workshops, publications, communications etc. Target groups can provide feedback on the usefulness of these services and get a clear sense of how responsive other members of the network are to their own inputs. Advocacy work (and other activities with less tangible results, such as awareness raising) is, however, much harder to assess and this difficulty is exacerbated by the fact that many of the networks do not even try to carry out detailed self-evaluation. Those that do, despite the difficulties, are often more self-critical and aware of their shortcomings and thus able to improve their functioning, responsiveness and effectiveness.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Chase Smith 1995.

⁴⁹ For discussions see Davies 2001; Roche 2001; Earl Carden and Smutylo 2001.

Yet, even evaluation mechanisms can get distorted. If networks fear that donors will cut funding if any problems are identified, evaluations will inevitably be fixed to cover up problems so support is maintained. How can donors encourage honest evaluation processes so that lessons are learned, feedback mechanisms optimized and accountability to members encouraged? Long term partnerships and the build up of mutual trust may be the only answer.

Network Collapse:

Yet the prospects of these long term partnerships developing are not entirely rosy. Many of the networks we reviewed are either currently in financial crisis due to the lack of donor support or, at best, face financial difficulties. A widespread pattern of withdrawal of donor support was identified, which suggests some underlying fatigue or fashion change among donors, which has made them less enthusiastic about funding networks than in the past.

8. Governance Dilemmas:

It is estimated that since the 1970s, some 20,000 transnational civil society networks have come into being and although studies show that accountability is the key to the long term health of networks, relatively few of these have democratic systems of governance and accountability. Are networks trying to have it both ways, demanding standards of accountability from governments and the private sector, which they are not prepared to adhere to themselves?⁵⁰

Suggested ‘indicators’ that international networks should use to assess their accountability to the grassroots include the following:

- demonstrable benefits to constituents
- sharing information, including **local** knowledge
- representation in advocacy and network decision-making
- partnerships with poor and marginal groups
- accurate and objective research
- M&E by southern groups.⁵¹

This review of the international forestry networks has highlighted the major dilemmas that confront networks in choosing governance structures that suit their main goals and functions, target groups, funders and political context. Like other studies it finds that ‘bottom up’ networking is possible but it requires more time, resources and investment than are often available.⁵²

Membership

A general finding of the review is that the global international, as opposed to the regional international, networks tend to be northern dominated (the exception is the WRM). Few of the networks studied are led by, or give prominence to, community-

⁵⁰ Edwards 2001:4-5

⁵¹ Clark 2001.

⁵² Cf Brown and Fox 2001: 53-55.

based organizations or indigenous peoples. Most are dominated by concerned academics, NGO activists and ‘practitioners’. Lacking grassroots ‘members’ or participants inevitably makes it harder for networks to be responsive to community visions and priorities.

Many of the networks, especially the hybrid ones, are open to all ‘members’, since their main goals are to share information and build consensus based on a common understanding. However, with the single exception of the FSC, none of the networks appears to have included the private sector in their operations, although IUCN-CIFM had intended to link with the private sector when originally conceived.

Of the networks reviewed, the WRM is exceptional in avoiding having general ‘members’. The WRM, acting more as a social movement than a formal network, recruits support through a wide-reaching mailing list without pretending that the readers somehow have a lien on the secretariat, which is instead governed by a small steering committee.

However, although the other networks do have ‘members’ few actually give their general ‘members’ a say in decision-making. Those that do give their members a ‘vote’, like ACICAFOC, IAITPTF, FAN and FSC⁵³, have evolved membership criteria, which are designed to ensure that all members have a joint commitment to a shared vision. Most networks however, seem to recruit ‘members’ organically through personal webs of contact and trust.

Community organizations challenge international community forestry networks to be more open: if the members of the networks are not the local communities, then the question must be posed, ‘do the networks work for the benefit of their members or for the communities?’ Networks must take account of the fact that the political circumstances in 2003 are quite different from 1985: new mechanisms that ensure the participation of community based organizations must be considered if networks are not to forfeit their credibility.

Governance structures: to formalize or not

FSC, ACICAFOC, IAITPTF and FAN do give their members a vote and have elected boards, yet it is not clear that these ostensible mechanisms of democracy really create accountability in the network as a whole and of its secretariat to the members, in particular. Indeed, few of the networks have clear mechanisms to ensure that members have control, or a strong say, in network decision-making on a regular basis. For this to be achieved networks must formalize and develop complex decision-making trails that members can participate in.

Some of the networks have gone down that route, but such institutional formalisation of networks comes at a high price, and not just financially. Formal mechanisms - to ensure transparency, accountability to members and members’ control (or influence) of budgets - make networks less agile, top-heavy with bureaucratic trammels and expensive. Members warn of the problem of formalised network secretariats ‘becoming NGOs’ which paradoxically are then perceived as being delinked from

⁵³ The original aim had been to examine the FSC-Community Forestry Working Group and not the FSC as a whole.

their membership. The risks are that in instituting formal structures of accountability, means become ends and networks become organisations.⁵⁴

Networks which handle large budgets from a central secretariat seem especially prone to the accusation of being top-down and authoritarian. In these cases transparent accounting, letting the members see the books, is necessary to maintain trust. However, it may be preferable to encourage decentralized funding of network components to ensure autonomy and to avoid the build up of large centralized bureaucracies, with concomitant power tussles for control of lucrative posts. For example, the study of FAN suggests that it found the FTTP's formalized institutional structures to be quite dominating and led to it developing a very projectised way of working.

Unusual among the networks surveyed, WRM and AFN have consciously chosen to have loose processual and not project based networking with a minimum of formal structures and procedures. These networks are highly informal and personalized. The downside is that these more informal networks may more easily be charged with being unaccountable 'clubs' which other civil society groups feel excluded from.

We conclude that there is no 'correct' solution for networks. The choice of how, and how far, to formalize is a tricky one for all networks to make. We suggest that the important lesson which does emerge is that these choices should be made in as inclusive and open a way as possible: if participants choose informality and an absence of rules to ease communications and promote dynamic action-oriented partnerships, they need to be aware of the possible pitfalls. Conversely, they also need to be aware of the possible pitfalls of formalization.

Does size matter?

Clearly the size of networks has a bearing on these choices, with larger networks being obliged to formalize more than the smaller networks which can afford to be more personal and informal. But the size in question may not be so much the number of 'readers' or 'members' that a network accumulates so much as the size of a network's budget, project portfolio and secretariat. For example, the FTTP and WRM have both built up very large readerships (12,000 in the case of the FTTP newsletter, 9,000 in the case of WRM).⁵⁵ By contrast the FTTP and WRM are at opposite extremes in terms of their budgets and numbers of staff, with the FTTP being the largest and WRM the smallest of the networks surveyed. Some of the experiences of FTTP call to mind the conclusion that the FAO itself drew about networks in 1992: *'Long term external support is essential for network development, but excessive inputs of money or personnel by sponsors will work against the development of self-reliance and a genuine network spirit'*.⁵⁶

Secretariat location:

Autonomy is crucial for networks. The survey shows that those networks which were able to establish themselves independently of other institutional hosts or free themselves of such links over time, tended to be those able to develop healthy,

⁵⁴ Indeed a number of the 'networks' studied are in fact organisations in formal, legal terms.

⁵⁵ Fernandez 2002.

⁵⁶ FAO 1992:8.

interactive internal processes. On the other hand, those located within formal bureaucracies and large organizations, even though they sometimes benefited from having access to existing infrastructure, resources, information and contacts, were also those that were most constrained and secretariat driven. Suspicions, well-founded or not, of the connections between the secretariat and the host organization, clouded relations with the membership and undermined trust. In the case of the FTTP, the host organization intervened decisively in the workings of the network, which was one of the reasons that eventually led to its closure.

Staff stability:

Potentially international networks can act as important reservoirs of experience and can become the institutional memories of social movements and civil society in general. Some of the case studies show that this is a key function of the networks that is much valued by 'members'. Some of this experience can be recorded and made available through the normal 'tools' and transferred directly through workshops, exchanges and training (see tool box). But networks can suffer disruption when key members leave and this reservoir of experience is lost. The more informal networks are particularly vulnerable, as networks structures are built up around personal relations and not institutional structures.

Leaders or Bullies:

Indeed, the key role that individuals play in creating and sustaining networks is also widely remarked on. Many of the most successful networks were founded around one or a small number of charismatic activists who sustain the networks through their energy and vision. Yet these networks are just those that are most vulnerable when key individuals leave and are also those most open to the charge of being top-down and doctrinaire.

Choices not Rules:

Apart from the most obvious considerations, most of the 'lessons learned' from this survey highlight that international networks have to make informed choices about strategies and structures. There are no universal 'rules' that can be invoked, as all decisions will be highly contingent on aims, targets, membership and backgrounds. The most important general lesson seems to be that networks should consciously think through their structures and functions to ensure that they have:

- Clear aims and agreed methods
- Clear and strategic targeting of focal points, active members, audiences and 'policy makers'
- Informed constituencies
- Well judged decisions about when to include mixed constituencies and when to give each sector its separate space.
- Reasoned governance structure
- A coherent communications strategy, with multi-directional flow of communication, and with adequate budgets for translation, simple tools, and face to face encounters among key actors
- Participatory mechanisms to ensure feedback, in which M & E may be key

- Donor commitment to core funding, offering programmatic support for flexible but evaluated outputs, and with adequate resources for national and local two-way sharing
- Mechanisms to follow up international advances with national and local level actions and advocacy
- Strategies for collaboration and interaction with other international and national/local networks.
- Clear sharing of responsibilities among members, including financial responsibilities.

Trust:

In the end you can have as many rules and procedures as you want, but once trust breaks down its hard for a network to recover.

9. Linking with Social Movements:

The small size and limited financial resources of most NGOs make them unlikely challengers of economic and political systems sustained by the prevailing interests of big governments and big business. Yet the environment, peace, human rights, consumer rights and women's movements provide examples of the power of voluntary action to change society. This seeming paradox can be explained by the fact that the power of voluntary action arises not from the size and resources of individual organizations, but rather from the ability of the voluntary sector to coalesce the actions of hundreds, or even millions, of citizens through vast and constantly evolving networks These networks are able to encircle, infiltrate, and even co-opt the resources of opposing bureaucracies.... In growing numbers they are joining forces with and learning from the experience of established social movements. As we learn more about the nature of true movements, we realize that they are not defined by organizational structures...

David Korten 1992

Like activists in many other sectors,⁵⁷ advocates of community forestry have recognized that the main challenges to the adoption and spread of community forestry come from vested interests, those who benefit from the present system which gives them preferential access to forest resources and forest lands. The promotion of community forests implies a transfer of both resources and power in favour of local communities. In most national contexts, the empowerment of communities implies the disempowerment of others, who contest their rights of access to, and control of, forests. Although it is conceivable that these shifts of control over resources can be effected through the provisions of generous aid financing, in practice enduring shifts in power are rarely sustained without strong mobilization of the social groups that benefit from the change.⁵⁸ In other words, community forestry is a highly political, even radical, project and the politics of representation, by which communities assert their rights and assume control of forest resources, is a central consideration.

⁵⁷ Eg Keck and Sikkink 1998.

⁵⁸ Britt 2002.

Since the late 1970s, when the global ‘community forestry movement’ can be discerned to have had its origins, the nature of civil society relations to development agencies and States has undergone a major transformation. ‘Civil society’ has emerged as a significant even necessary player in development dynamics. As Michael Edwards reminds us, civil society, however, ‘is an arena and not a thing and although it is often seen as the key to future progressive politics, this arena contains different and conflicting interests and agendas’.⁵⁹ In committing ourselves to support any one network or social process among so many it is important to take stock of their diverse agendas and interests: which among the plethora of emerging civil society voices clamouring to be heard should we rightfully attend to most. Are some authentic and representative and others not?

Howell and Pearce suggest that many development agencies are turning to civil society organizations as substitutes for state agencies. To make up the ‘democratic deficit’, to avoid costly and time consuming negotiations with weakened, downsized, and structurally-adjusted government offices and in order to dodge corrupt counterparts, development agencies are choosing to work with civil society groups that conform to their normative expectations of what civil society groups should be like. The language of ‘participation’ and ‘partnerships’ has become the norm.

Howell and Pearce detect two broad groupings of civil society organisations. On the one hand, they discern, a ‘mainstream’ civil society has established itself, which works essentially within the current framework to promote ‘socially responsible capitalism’. This mainstream conforms to an increasingly stereotyped notion of civil society, accepting NGOs as legitimate spokespersons for society as a whole. Such groups are favoured as partners by the development agencies as they can readily be coopted, contracted to act as economical channels for the delivery of aid while at the same time lending legitimacy through their participation to policies and programmes that the development agencies impose. Howell and Pearce perceive real risks that new forms of social exclusion will result.

They also discern, however, more radical social movements. These are more overtly opposed to the ‘Washington consensus’ (which favours neo-liberal economics), are often also skeptical of State actors and seek to build what they characterize as ‘alternatives to capitalism’. Many of these civil society groups trace their origins back to the radical social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, but have since transformed into increasingly formalized social organizations, and, having adopted sectoral, single issue agendas, now find themselves less well inserted than they used to be in the mass movements though still more closely aligned to them than the first group.⁶⁰

These insights prompt real questions for those observing the community forestry movement. Which, among the many networks and NGOs that champion community forestry, are the ‘mainstream’ civil society institutions that are letting themselves be coopted by the development agencies and substituting their voice for the voice of the wider society? Which are the more radical social movements, more closely aligned with the mass organizations, who assert alternatives to capitalist development? And, more importantly, do the communities themselves feel comfortable being supported

⁵⁹ Edwards 2001:1.

⁶⁰ Howell and Pearce 2001.

by either of these political currents ? Lest we be accused of partiality, we shall let the readers judge for themselves.

One of the most coherent social movements to have emerged globally over the past 20 years, one which has made the most evident gains in terms of reforms of international law and national policy and which in a number of countries has already secured real transfers of land, wealth and power, is the movement of indigenous peoples. Despite coming from a multitude of different cultural and historical circumstances, and notwithstanding very real tensions, divisions and differences among the various groups, the indigenous peoples movement has successfully retained a shared agenda throughout the past 20 years. Central to its success has been its undeviating insistence on the right to self-determination, as a result of which it has been vigilant in ensuring that supportive NGOs and other civil society groupings remain just that, supportive, but are never allowed to substitute their voices for the peoples' themselves. The ability of this social movement to secure adequate funds for major intercontinental meetings several times a year has contributed importantly to the build up of mutual trust and a shared vision and strategy.

This experience may teach some important lessons for the community forestry movement. As noted, the 1990s has witnessed the emergence of coalitions of community-based organizations for whom 'community forestry' is a major concern. Indeed, a number of the regional and national networks examined in this review were born out of this mobilization, including ACICAFOC in Central America and UNOFOC in Mexico. In Brazil, the national networks promoting community forestry grew out of the social movements of Indians, rubber tappers and civil society, which mobilized in the 1980s to oppose the central government's and international financial institutions' plans to open up the Amazon to road-building, colonization, loggers, mines, dams and ranches.⁶¹

Other NGO networks, such as the WRM and FAN, purposefully set out from their inception to forge links with these social movements, the WRM being linked to a number of social movements, for example those opposing industrial plantation, shrimp aquaculture, dams and mines. Most of the other networks, because of their institutional bases and 'hybrid' composition, were less suited to directly partnering the social movements (see *'hybrid hubris'* above).

The review finds that most networks now agree that strengthening their ties with the social movements that support community forestry may be an important next step if their work is to be effective. The IUCN-CIFM's unfunded second stage proposal envisaged building this kind of a 'Coalition for Change'. RECOFTC is likewise examining the possibility of acting as a locus for a proposed regional 'Association for the Promotion of Good Forest Governance in Asia', which it is intended will link the NGO networks with the social movements of forest user groups. In July 2002, at the Bali PrepCom meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, groups like RECOFTC, FAN, WRM and CICAFOC joined the 'Global Caucus for Community-Based Forest Management'.

⁶¹ Mendes 1989; Shoumatoff 1991; Keck and Sikkink 1998:140-142; Cardoso 2002.

How well are the international community forestry networks suited to this work? Given the difficulties they have linking to local communities (see ‘Internationals and Locals’ above) and given the limitations imposed on their ways of working by donor constraints, it seems obvious that the networks face real challenges in effectively partnering and ‘catalysing’ the actions of social movements. There may be a need for hard talking between the various civil society actors to explore these tensions.

Of the networks studied, only ACICAFOC and IAITPTF see themselves as mechanisms for ‘representation’ of community groups. Although both are legally constituted as ‘organizations’, both function as political alliances that respect the autonomy of their members. ACICAFOC grew out of a trades union and peasant movement which had become closely linked to party political structures and patronage systems. ACICAFOC’s signal achievement has been to break free from these historical shackles.

Ten years ago, David Korten offered the following advice to networks seeking to ‘catalyse’ the actions of social movements.

Operating Principles for Strategic Network Catalysts:⁶²

1. Maintain a low public profile. Emphasize the commitment and contribution of other organizations to the network’s goals. Measure own success by effectiveness in making others stronger and more successful contributors to these goals.
2. Recognize the differing motivation and resources of the groups engaged in the network.
3. Look at those who have the most direct and compelling interest in the outcome to provide sustained leadership.
4. Continuously scan the environment for opportunities to engage new participants who bring new perspectives and may appeal to additional segments of the public.
5. Do not take on any function that another group can perform. Facilitate linkages and fill temporary gaps not serviced by other organizations.
6. Work through existing communications networks and media to reach large audiences efficiently.
7. Help other groups find their own sources of funds, but don’t become a funder.
8. Keep staff and budget small to assure flexibility, avoid competing institutional interests, and maintain dependence on effective action from others.
9. Use protest actions to position the movement to advance a proactive agenda.

During the ‘Lessons Workshop’, which concluded this study and which reflected on the case studies and an early draft of this synthesis paper, concerns were voiced that the international networks could compete with the emerging social movements for political space. In India civil society voices, it was noted, were already actively substituting themselves for, and even delegitimising, local voices such as the Mass Tribal Organisations of Central India. Other participants, on the other hand, warned against exaggerating the capacity of the social movements: in many countries, it was noted, they remain weak or may lack political space altogether. Many will need a lot of support if they are to find political space and grow. *‘But once they do grow, then networks must learn to stand aside’*. Moreover, warned another: *‘If networks can’t*

⁶² Korten 1992:43. He drew these lessons from examining the effective tactics of the Thai NGO ‘Project for Ecological Recovery’.

support social movements, they should at least leave them alone and not interfere or prejudice their growth’.

But does the discourse of ‘community forestry’ really constitute the basis for a joint platform for future reforms? For some, the term ‘community forestry’ will always imply that communities should continue to be subject to the rules and ministrations of western forestry laws and outmoded forestry departments.⁶³ If what communities are seeking is food security, land security and the right to choose the most environmentally appropriate vegetation cover and natural resource management regime to suit their needs, then framing their demands in terms of ‘community forestry’ may only limit their options and separate them from other social movements making the same fundamental demands for land, livelihood and a rights-based approach to community development.

10. Towards Conclusions:

The ‘community forestry’ of today is radically different from the ‘community forestry’ that was being promoted by foresters twenty-five years ago. Not only has the model of community forestry changed – towards one that gives far more emphasis to rights, local control, customary institutions and traditional knowledge – but the framework for discussions about community forestry has also transformed. Today community forestry is analysed and discussed as but one element in local livelihoods and as but one component in the national and international frameworks which condition its possibilities. Advocacy in favour of community forestry now focuses as much on legal, political and market transformations as on technical innovations and local management considerations. There is indeed a risk that, in focusing on the ‘upstream’ governance, policy and market conditions that frame livelihood strategies, too little attention will now be paid to local needs, local particularities and community realities. Thinking globally is no substitute for acting locally. The need is for both and for the global and national reform agendas to be driven by local visions and local voices.

The international community forestry networks that this study has focused on have emerged at very different moments in this trajectory, and have started with very different goals, visions, priorities and participants. Surely one of the most encouraging aspects of this evolution has been the emergence of networks better linked to, and even run by, community-based organizations themselves. The trend towards locally run networks requires additional support and the other networks must do much more to link to these new initiatives, standing aside to let them grow when required. However, it would be naïve to conclude that, therefore, the earlier networks have all run their course or exhausted their possibilities. The need for training, information exchange, awareness-raising, international advocacy and consensus-building still exists, especially for countries where social movements remain weak or suppressed. The challenge for the older networks is therefore to adapt to these changing circumstances, so that they act as supporters and services to community organizations,

⁶³ These views are particularly strongly felt in Asia, where the notion of ‘forest’ is considered a legal fiction and ‘forestry’ has become a term synonymous with expropriation and imposed management.

relinquishing any pretensions they may have had to act as ‘practitioners’, ‘conflict managers’, representatives or forest managers.

The ways that international networks have contributed to community forestry are very diverse. Few networks can claim to have had direct impacts at the local level, except through a handful of pilot projects, but then few of the networks sought to achieve change this way. Rather most of the networks have focused on providing information and services to national level actors to raise awareness, build consensus and to arm them with the information, arguments, knowledge, techniques, resources and skills needed to promote national and local change. These contributions have been so various and diffuse, and often, indirect, that drawing up a balance sheet of the costs and benefits of networking is impossible. There seems to be no denying that the collective result of all this networking has been helpful in many countries and crucial in some others, especially those where donors also exert considerable influence. The gains attributable to the networks in international forest policy making are both more evident and less certain, as for the most part these gains have not yet discernibly influenced national policy reforms let alone had local effects. Not enough seems to have been done to insert these international policy gains into national reform platforms. A cumulative result of all this networking and advocacy has been a growing, global acceptance of the validity of community forestry. New ideas of how to promote it have opened up space to local communities to reassert their rights, revalidate their institutions and customs and adapt to changing conditions.

For the networks themselves some key lessons do emerge from this sifting of experiences. Consensus building networks that seek to include actors from communities, NGOs and government do have an important role to play. However, they need to recognize their limitations and distinguish themselves from locally driven networks which are run by the community representatives. Supportive NGO networks that seek to act in solidarity with local communities and social movements must also take care not to substitute themselves for local actors.

Networks also need to recognize the inherent limitations of the networking endeavour and not exaggerate the extent to which they are genuinely democratic and inclusive. De facto networks cannot effectively include more than around 50 individuals or organizations in routine collective decision-making, even though they can reach thousands through modern communication tools. Larger assemblies and congresses can set networks’ strategic directions and broad goals, but, if networks are to remain agile, trust in a smaller group of leaders is essential. Every network needs to accept that there is an inherent tension between maintaining informality and flexibility and adopting structures and decision-making processes that ensure transparency and accountability. In choosing their governance structure, networks need to weigh up the pros and cons of different ways of working and have clear reasons for whatever structures they choose.

Maintaining trust and links with and between communities requires substantial investments of time and resources. Over-reliance on computers - email and the web – for communications will exclude the effective participation of community organizations in many countries for the foreseeable future. Networks need to think through carefully their communications strategies to ensure they do reach those they

claim to include. Face-to-face meetings and exchanges, due investment in translation and interpretation, and the modest use of newsletters as ends not means, have proved their worth and need adequate financing, while some of the new technologies and techniques seem worth experimenting with further.

This study has also highlighted the challenge that global networks face in connecting to national and local levels. Networks have relied too much on a single national or regional focal point for communications: they need **both** to resource these partners more adequately so they can fulfill their onerous role **and** find other complementary means of linking to national and local actors.

The lessons for donors are also challenging. Community forestry and community forestry networking do require sustained support if they are not to wither away. More support is needed to build up social movements and community-based networks, even those that are critical of government and aid agency policies. The challenge is to support the networks in ways that promote accountability without imposing artificial goals, targets and structures. Support needs to be: long term and demand less pre-programmed 'outputs'; for good processes rather than results focused projects; for inclusive sharing and decision-making as much as for specific publications and pre-determined advocacy goals. Participatory monitoring and evaluation to help networks reflect on the extent to which they are being effective and are genuinely reaching those they seek to include has proved its worth.

Now that participation has become a norm in development discourse and even practice, the time has come for a much more critical evaluation of the form of this participation. 'Multi-stakeholder' decision-making, new 'partnerships', routine engagements with 'civil society' all promise new opportunities for local actors to get their voices heard. But there are also risks that these same processes are creating new divisions and possibilities of social exclusion. The community forestry networks and the social movements that they claim to support both need to be vigilant to ensure that they engage in these processes astutely, using political space that is offered in ways that do not legitimize unacceptable practices and exclude the rural poor in whose name community forestry is advocated.

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Learning Lessons from China⁶⁴

Context:

China's south-western province of Yunnan is a mountainous area of high biological and cultural diversity that was annexed into China relatively late in Chinese history. The province has lost over two thirds of its original forest cover and lost half of what remained in the last fifty years. Ethnic minorities make up about a third of the population of the province but predominate in forested areas. Chinese policy towards 'minority nationalities' at first recognized their right to self-determination but since liberation has oscillated between assimilationist and integrationist approaches. Despite strong central government control, the law grants ethnic minorities an important measure of cultural and institutional autonomy at the local level.

Nationally, forest policy has been highly centralized and geared towards timber production. Quota-driven overharvesting has depleted forests and has led to serious soil erosion and local impoverishment. It has also been blamed by the government for causing flooding and massive loss of life in the lowlands. Mass afforestation efforts have disappointed. Since 1998, the government has banned logging in Yunnan, allowing only a very restricted cut for domestic use.

Imprudent natural resource use is linked to the doctrine of State ownership of all lands and forests and the imposed structure of village collectives. Since the late 1970s, the government has progressively devolved management and use rights to land and then forests to local farmers. Massive increases in agricultural production have resulted, but the lesser degree of autonomy granted farmers with respect to forest land, combined with the top-down quota system, inadequate supervision capacity, poor delineation of forests and the slower rate of return on investment have frustrated social forestry initiatives. Farmers' skepticism that devolved tenure would give them real rights over timber has been confirmed by the logging ban. At the same time, in Yunnan, many upland farmers are being obliged to plant trees on their higher fields, with the aim of limiting run-off. The simultaneous loss of grain for subsistence and income from timber has hit farmers hard. The losses have not been made up with subsidies and grain handouts.

Local activists distinguish between the government's 'social forestry' and the 'community forestry' that has been promoted, since the late 1980s, by the Ford Foundation, international development assistance projects and the international networks, notably RECOFTC. Despite major advances in awareness raising, training, the development of forestry school courses and curricula, and despite numerous educational pilot projects, community forestry has not yet 'taken off' in the province. This can only come when the central government's policy changes.

The main challenges now facing community forestry in Yunnan are achieving national policy reform, and building local capacity and awareness in both communities and forestry bureaux. Recent government moves to allow village level democracy and slim down the administration offer opportunities to give farmers greater initiative. Perhaps minority areas, where indigenous forest related knowledge is retained, and where more autonomy is, notionally, allowed, offer hopeful beginnings.

The networking experience:

Laws restricting civil society organizations are quite strict in China. Informal social mobilization and networking is not allowed. 'NGOs' either incorporate as associations under government bodies or as private corporations, with obligations to pay at least some tax. Despite these limitations an incipient provincial level network has evolved promoting participatory approaches to development and forest management. Efforts to promote a national level community forestry network have been less successful. Although Yunnan has had a

⁶⁴ Colchester 2002d

relatively limited experience with international community forestry networks, local actors provided insightful lessons and suggestions about how such networking should be improved.

The main lessons that emerge from the Yunnan study are the following:

- ❑ Government notions of what constitutes community forestry are quite different from the NGO perception,
- ❑ Linguistic, political and technical difficulties create formidable obstacles to participation in international networks. Hence the main engagement in these networks is through select academics and individuals,
- ❑ Involvement in networks has introduced valued new participatory methods into natural resource development thinking,
- ❑ Monitoring and evaluation of network functioning is a vital tool in ensuring their local relevance
- ❑ Networks now need to link more to local communities and have more active feedback mechanisms,
- ❑ Networks should not become mechanisms for attracting consultancies and funding but should take account of the real costs to members of participation,
- ❑ Publications should be targeted at libraries and resource centres not just individuals.

Learning Lessons from Indonesia⁶⁵

Context:

Indonesia is two things: a unified country and a plurality of distinct peoples governed by their own customs. The tension between these two underlies many of the problems and challenges that Indonesia's forests and peoples face today. Having once been fully forested, and home to nearly one fifth of the world's biodiversity, Indonesia is now badly deforested and rates of forest loss continue to increase, exacerbated by recent steps to decentralize control of forests to district authorities.

Indonesia exemplifies to an unusual degree the intrinsic political, social and institutional weaknesses of 'scientific forestry'. A centralized approach to forest management has denied community rights, favoured the emergence of a corrupt elite, established a technocratic forestry bureaucracy and overseen a sustained over-harvesting of timber and misallocation of forest lands for over fifty years. The political economy of logging which has resulted, has created huge barriers to those promoting community forestry. Additional obstacles are erected by the government's ethnocentric and assimilationist social policies towards forest dwellers, a land tenure system that provides very weak recognition of customary rights, and forest tenures which deny collective rights to forest lands.

The government's community forestry programme only really got going in the 1990s. Despite set backs, this programme has established a co-management approach allowing communities which incorporate as cooperatives to gain 25 year leaseholds on unencumbered State forest lands. The programme has mainly been applied in degraded forest areas and among migrant farmer communities. Indonesia's experiment with decentralization now poses the main uncertainty to the future of community forestry in the country. Since the fall of Suharto in 1998, successive administrations have vacillated between devolving control of land use decisions to the districts and then trying to recover it.

Community forestry has been promoted in Indonesia by a number of agencies, notably the Ford Foundation but also IGOs, aid agencies and NGOs. Networking has been an important part of this process. However, during the dictatorship the scope for NGOs to promote radical changes in forest policy was limited and most aid agencies were very cautious about what they supported. The Ford Foundation itself sought to promote change within the parameters set by government policy while at the same time encouraging the introduction of new concepts about community forestry from overseas.

Networking Experience:

The main national networking efforts got going in the late 1990s. One approach favours inclusive dialogue with government. The other advocates a more radical reform that would secure community rights and recognize the value of customary knowledge systems. None of these efforts have been well linked to grassroots organizations. The recent emergence of a social movement of 'indigenous peoples' could change this. Community mapping has proved a useful tool.

International networks have been important in training, introducing new concepts and helping local actors invoke international standards. However, national players are critical of the extent to which these networks impose their own agendas and priorities. The international networks also fail to connect with local communities. There is a considerable amount of suspicion of the real motives and values of Northern-based networks.

Some of the lessons that from the Indonesian experience are the following:

- ❑ To be more effective the international networks need to attend more to local realities, adopt agile working methods that give control to local partners, and styles of communications tailored to suit local needs,
- ❑ Advocacy support for local communities should also be accompanied by capacity building support,
- ❑ Networks should avoid dependency on national focal points in linking to community organizations

⁶⁵ Colchester 2002c.

- However, until it is clearer who is going to win the tug-of-war for control of forests being waged between the district and national administrations, it is hard to guess what kind of networking approaches will be most effective.

Learning Lessons from India⁶⁶

Context: About 23% of India's land area is classified as forest, most of which is administered by the Forest Department. About 100 million people live in India's forests with a further 275 million living nearby, and who are also dependent on forest resources in one way or another. The take-over of forests by the state for commercial use and a model of natural resource management that excluded local inhabitants, became widespread in the 19th century under the colonial rulers. A similar mindset continued after Indian independence. This severely restricted the access of locals to resources on which their livelihoods were based, and effectively removed all responsibility of communities to look after their natural surrounds. Thus, local people have often become hostile to official management of forests because the law has excluded them from their own surroundings. While communities have never stopped using forests unofficially, since their livelihoods depend on this, they have suffered much hardship and harassment. In many cases, forests were seen as the property of an insensitive government, something to be used and exploited, often with great hostility towards Forest Department (FD) officials. A lack of dialogue and trust between the two sides has exacerbated the situation. Poor management and over-harvesting has led to rapid forest deterioration. On the other hand, more and more examples have been emerging about communities who have independently taken the initiative to protect vast tracts of forests to meet their livelihood needs, with remarkable results.

The 1970s was the decade of 'social forestry', meant to promote the use of public and common lands to meet the fodder and fuel subsistence needs of village communities, and thereby lighten the load on government forests being used for industry. Increasingly the government has become aware that it is not possible to protect forests without local co-operation. By 1988 there was a greater devolution of powers to local communities to manage forests, reflected in the Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme. JFM is the management and conservation of a forest by local communities and FD officials, through joint committees, with communities entitled to a share in usufructs. There are diverse opinions regarding JFM, with serious concerns raised about the lack of true sharing of decision-making powers with local communities. Legal reforms in recent years (e.g. - Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996) have gone further in entrusting forest resources to community control, but these measures remain largely unimplemented. The most important international agreement regarding natural resource management ratified by India, is the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD). A fall-out of this is a proposed Biological Diversity Bill, emphasizing community participation in decisions on biodiversity use and conservation. A National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, required by the CBD and recently formulated, has been a unique and ambitious attempt at participatory planning. Thus, the overall policy environment in India has been moving towards becoming more conducive to community forestry, though the success of its implementation is highly debatable, with varying outcomes. Much depends on political will.

National Networking: India has had long experience with NGO activism and networking. Two notable attempts at creating a national level CF network have mainly focused on promoting and steering the development of JFM. The National JFM Network, hosted by an NGO, evolved in the 1990s and generated various sub-networks concerned with different aspects of JFM. It aimed to include NGOs and forest officials. The network lapsed by the end of the 1990s. A second National JFM Network was launched in 2000, by the Ministry of Environment and Forests with the aim of bringing together NGOs and FD officials for dialogue. The first network was widely acknowledged to have made a significant contribution to popularising JFM across the country and facilitating exchange of research/experiences of JFM. Opinion is more divided about the second network, which has been criticized by some people for being too bureaucratic. Two of the states studied also had a history of state-level networking.

International Networking: International networks in India have focused mainly on sharing ideas and information (e.g. FTTP), promoting policy analysis and documentation (e.g. AFN) and capacity building (e.g. RECOFTC/FTTP). Apart from a few examples of local level activity

⁶⁶ Apte and Pathak 2002

(e.g. in Orissa), international networks have neither sought nor achieved direct local level impacts. Overall, national actors consider the impact of international networks to have been small. Nevertheless, they have been appreciated by the academics, NGO representatives and FD officials who have been involved in their meetings, mailing lists and training courses. Most interviewees felt that international networks had a valuable role to play in information dissemination, capacity building, providing inspiration and exposure, and building contacts. However, most people felt that national/local networks are far more relevant for leading to changes on the ground. Some other key findings on international networks are as follows:

- ❑ More effort needs to be made to communicate in local languages if a wider impact is to be achieved.
- ❑ The most glaring gap in international network activity was that there did not seem to be any attempt to create formal links with national or local networks, even where local networks were strong and vibrant. Linking with local networks would add value to an ongoing process and reach a pre-existing local base of CF actors.
- ❑ International networks may have had an indirect role in promoting CF at grassroots and policy level, by influencing some people who work at these levels. They have impacted mainly on larger NGOs/institutions and researchers/academics. Efforts have not been made to target the FD at an institutional level. This misses out a key, powerful player in the CF scenario.
- ❑ There may be an assumption by networks, that targeting a few key individuals and institutions will ensure a wider network influence through a horizontal and vertical domino effect. However, given the vagueness regarding international network impacts at grassroots and policy level, and the fact that networking was largely confined to a narrow clique of people, this does not seem to be a safe assumption.
- ❑ International networks may be seen as less relevant than national ones because they are viewed as top-down processes, as opposed to need-based, context-driven networks. 'Foreign' origins can also give rise to suspicions regarding the political agenda of networks.
- ❑ There was not much evidence of international networks taking a context-driven approach. Activities did not seem to be sufficiently shaped by an awareness of policy contexts, political contexts, local networking, attitudes to 'foreign' activity, and the dynamics between key actors in CF.

Learning Lessons from Uganda⁶⁷

Context:

Over 70% of Uganda's forests and woodlands occur in the private domain, but current community forestry approaches appear to over-emphasize on protected forests, being mainly institutionalised through collaborative forest management, which gives a spatial bias.

Most of the collaborative forest management initiatives operate through project-based approaches. Restricted project timeframes constrain tracking of processes across temporal scales, whilst conditionalities associated with donor support inevitably erode autonomy. Most of the projects are implemented at localized sites, which constraints the relevance of lessons learnt mostly across the spatial dimension.

Waves of political and fiscal decentralization have swept across Uganda resulting in the creation of a nation-wide superstructure of bodies for decentralized government – but much still needs to be done to give these decentralizations a democratic orientation.

Limited environmental decentralization has occurred, mainly through the superposition of environmental committees on administrative and local government structures – but it still lacks complementary elements necessary to democratise it. For instance the emphasis needs to shift from mere privileging through benefit sharing towards greater local decision-making and control. There needs to be downward accountability, and even in the current set-up the community dividends need to be more meaningful in terms of per capita value to constitute a credible incentive, whilst the remittances need to be more regular and predictable, this applying especially so for schemes at the forest margin zone.

Environmental decentralization to local authorities is still highly circumscribed, and the authorities appear to be under tight administrative and fiscal control of the Forest Department – they are only allowed to control forests that are less than 100 hectares, and even in these forests permit issuing and revenue collection are done by FD officials, with revenue sharing arrangement skewed against the local authorities. A policy has been put in place that broadens the scope of community forest management, emphasizing on community forestry management on private lands as well as the concept of multiple uses and multiple users as well as the roles of the various stakeholders including facilitators under whom networks fall. The policy is only recent but the challenge needs to be taken up.

The underlying causes of the policy and legal shifts and other changes cannot be attributed to one factor in isolation, these being the cumulative effect of many interacting factors.

The networking experience:

A variety of networks exist in Uganda at a variety of scales, which offers scope for cross-scale insights, but the constraints is that collaboration among them is considered weak.

- ❑ Formalization was viewed as a liability to networking because a formal network “ends up in tension with its members”, and “impairs their visibility” as well as “eroding their identity and autonomy.
- ❑ No networking tool is necessarily better or worse than the other, and networking tools seldom work best in isolation but in combination with other tools.
- ❑ In terms of vertical and horizontal links, no structure appears better than the other as they complement each other, with the question being, perhaps, that of balance.
- ❑ Strategic points of intervention including, awareness raising, capacity building and advocacy are synergistic components of the whole process of seeking to influence change.

⁶⁷ Mandondo 2002a

Learning Lessons from Cameroon⁶⁸

Context

Cameroon is a large, culturally diverse country which includes a very varied vegetation mosaic consisting of humid forests, savanna grasslands with montane forest patches, and well as a semi-arid Sahelian zone. The moist tropical forests are by far the most important of these vegetation categories in terms of economic importance, being a source of commercially valuable timber species.

For the entire colonial period and subsequently up to the mid-1990s, the forests of Cameroon were managed through a centrally-directed structure and process, which expropriated resources and control over them from local communities, and excluded such communities from accessing forest resources as well as economic benefits accruing from them.

A variety of interacting factors including donor pressures, international economic interests, local political considerations, sheer weight of local tenurial and use pressures, as well as pressure from civil society movements, including international and local community forestry networks – ushered in a pro-people trend in policy, which culminated in the enactment of the 1994 forest law and its complementary decree of application.

Forest-sector reforms immediately preceding the 1994 law included a zoning plan that divided forests into a permanent zone, exclusively owned and managed by the state – and a non-permanent zone, owned by the state but used and managed by a variety of other actors including municipalities, private individuals, and local communities.

The 1994 law entitles communities to benefits of the forests through 'community forests', which are excisions of the non-permanent forest estate not exceeding 5000 hectares, which are then managed in partnership with the state through management plans and agreements. Communities derive economic benefit from the commercial exploitation of the forests, from which they also draw resources for their subsistence needs.

But decentralized forest management in Cameroon is rather restricted because of size restrictions to community forests, which are further confined to the non-permanent zone. Communities often inherit secondary forests of diminished economic value, since such forests have often been subject to salvage logging by companies, which often end up in conflict with the communities. Harvesting restrictions, specified in the management plans as a premium for sustainable offtake, impose further limits on the magnitude of the benefit.

Decentralization through the conferment of 'community forests' upon communities has only resulted in conditional empowerment without addressing the fundamental issues of ownership and control of forests and the land on which they grow. Moreover, the process of establishing community forests is long and costly, riddled with implementational contradictions between the supportive law and its decree, and vests too much discretionary power in state-level actors at the expense of the communities. Overall, the implementation of community forests in Cameroon appears to take the focus and resources away from other community forestry activities, particularly those practised by communities outside the humid forest zone.

The Networking Experience:

A state-aligned local network formally institutionalizes community forests in Cameroon. Though its "civil society plus state" outlook is seen as enhancing delivery in terms of policy and grassroots impact, the partnership is seen as considerably eroding the network's autonomy. Not surprisingly the network has still not crafted a broader vision of community forestry that transcends the insular concept of community forests, which the network helps implement in partnership with state institutions.

There is a sizeable complement of other local, regional and international networks operating in Cameroon, which offers considerable scope for cross-scale insights and synergies, but unfortunately coordination among all these networks is considered weak. The various networks have different combinations of intervention domains (e.g. awareness raising, capacity building etc), with those that have wider intervention areas being seen as building on "internal synergies". Although those focusing on a few areas may result in "high

⁶⁸ Mandondo 2002c

specialization”, some form of coordination was argued for, to enable filtering of specialized insights to other networks and contexts.

The various networks use different combinations of networking tools, depending on their priorities and resource endowments. No particular combination of tool was necessarily considered better or worse than the other, but developing tools that enable more effective contact with grassroots communities was emphasized.

Some form of “formal linkage” or “coordination unit” was suggested as a way of ensuring that the activities of local networks feed into the scope of the work of international networks, as well as minimizing duplication among the networks. A suggestion risked by one informant related to the establishment of “an official clearing house” for tracking and monitoring, the ethics and mechanics of which are open to debate.

No fundamental contradictions were noted between government policy and the agendas of international community forestry networks, at least in terms of the envisioned objective functions like decentralization, sustainable management, poverty alleviation and community empowerment and participation. Some of the contradictions were seen to arise from differences in emphasis, with networks accused of often sensationalizing issues instead of engaging government in positive dialogue.

Learning Lessons from the Forest Action Network⁶⁹

The Forest Action Network (FAN), based in Nairobi (Kenya), is a networking organization created in 1995, initially to coordinate activities of the global multi-donor Forest Trees and People Programme at both national regional levels (East and Southern Africa). The programme's broad objective was to address the problem of "*insufficient local control over the management of natural resources, and over policy, administration and legislation pertaining to natural resource management*". To meet this and other related objectives, the following themes were identified and implemented in the East and Southern Africa Region: conflict management; forestry and food security; participatory processes; farmers' initiated research and extension; and networking and institutionalisation.

FAN has used a variety of strategies and activities to meet the objectives and themes. It has not only advocated for policy change but has also actively entered the policy making process, organizing stakeholders' workshops that incorporated community perspectives into the draft Kenya Forest Bill, and making active input into the drafting of the Bill. In order to enhance its own capacity and that of its collaborating partners and communities, FAN has been involved in exchange visits, field demonstrations, training and resource mobilization. As part of its information and networking strategy FAN is involved in the following activities: organizing relation building workshops at a range of levels; producing and distributing three newsletters; distributing natural resource management videos, books and other publications; organizing radio programmes on a range of natural resource management themes; and later, establishing a formal resource centre (library). The information service complements some of FAN's other strategies including awareness raising.

FAN implements several regional and national programmes in collaboration with other networks and organizations. It participates in several international policy forums including the Inter-Governmental Panel on Forests and has an observer status at some United Nations meetings. Its membership draws from a broad canvas of organizations at the local, national and regional levels.

Advocacy for policy change and the networking and the information service were more readily seen as FAN's prominent strengths but other strengths were noted to include: varied scales of intervention allowing for cross-scale insights; extending the scope of community forestry by emphasizing on commercial values of NTFPs instead of just subsistence values; its thrust on institutionalising gender awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness in natural resource management; a capacity for self evaluation and strategic planning; and its links to a variety of networks, fora, organizations and individuals.

The following were among the reported challenges and constraints: reporting format that does not adequately reflect its regional character; over-reliance on donor funding; dominance of vertical linkages and upward accountability at the expense of grassroots-level horizontal linkages and downward accountability; challenges of phasing and sequencing of strategies for influencing and transacting change; skewed membership structure; and a not so well targeted dissemination strategy. These are highlighted as opportunities representing prospects for the way ahead.

⁶⁹ Mandondo 2002b

Learning Lessons from the Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP)⁷⁰

The FTPP was launched in 1987. The global headquarters were lodged in the FAO in Rome, with support from a multi-donor trust fund. FTPP worked through regional and national institutions in Asia, Latin America, Africa and Europe. Its operations ended in December 2002. The FTPP had three main objectives: (1) to develop tools, methods and approaches for participatory forestry; (2) to strengthen the ability of local and national institutions to work in participatory forestry and related fields; (3) to share information and experiences on innovative methods and approaches. It was never an objective for FTPP to directly target grassroots communities. It was felt that a wider impact could be achieved by working with institutions and organisations, who would then work with local communities either directly or through local partners. The main tools of networking were: (1) annual and regional meetings; (2) regional visits by headquarter staff; (3) publications, newsletters, websites and training materials produced regionally and by the global headquarters. FTPP aimed to be a decentralised network with decisions taken jointly by regional focal points and the global headquarters. The vision was that Southern actors should be partners, not beneficiaries. This was a valuable approach to networking, respectful of diverse voices and experiences.

There were conflicting opinions on most issues, but the FTPP was perceived by several interviewees to have been a vibrant process, particularly in its earlier years. The main findings that emerged from the study are as follows:

- ❑ *Communication Strategy*: A formal communication strategy seems vital in a large, diverse network like FTPP, to provide clear guidelines on knowledge management and to create multi-directional flows of communication. Since key questions of communication were not formally strategized, this led to problems in collaboration between components. However, the strategy followed by the publication unit was largely a success, though there seemed to be a lack of a strategy for translations.
- ❑ *Monitoring and Evaluation*: Not having a formal M&E strategy led to a lack of clarity regarding the impacts of FTPP, particularly at grassroots level. There is a need to develop tools of M&E that take into account processes as well as products, since many network activities are process-oriented.
- ❑ *Leadership*: Mechanisms of functioning should not be reliant on the presence of one particular individual and his/her style of working, but on institutionalised strategies and mechanisms. This is more conducive to long-term sustainability, building of institutional memory and continuity.
- ❑ *Institutional Arrangements*: The flexibility and decentralisation that FTPP needed may have been limited by being housed in a large, bureaucratic organisation. Infrequent face-to-face contact between members may have been a problem in terms of building up personal relationships. The size of FTPP and the high cost of bringing all members together was a significant factor in this.
- ❑ *Donors*: Donors need to be more willing to learn lessons from network experiences, and to include their own actions in the analysis. They also need to demand more substantial reporting in order to gauge network impacts.

⁷⁰ Apte 2002a.

Learning Lessons from the Asia Forest Network (AFN)⁷¹

The origins of the AFN go back to the early 1980s when exchanges between small multi-disciplinary groups were facilitated by Ford Foundation to discuss Community Forestry (CF) issues. The AFN was formally created in 1992. Its objective is to provide a forum for exchanging knowledge on CF, gaining a broader vision of shifts in forest management policies and practices, developing appropriate tools for CF implementation and guiding policy reform. Findings are communicated at a global, regional and national level. Till 2000 the AFN operated from California, USA, but since then most activities have shifted to headquarters in the Philippines. Network members are planners, researchers and scientists from a range of Asian NGOs, universities and government agencies. Membership has included local communities over the years, but in general local communities are 'reached' through partner members.

The informal and highly personalised nature of AFN is one of the chief characteristics of the network, and is a guiding principle in its administrative structure, recruitment of members, implementation of activities, monitoring and evaluation, etc. Activities include annual regional meetings, field workshops, country working groups, development of field methods, cross-visits, information dissemination and documentation of case studies. AFN also has a significant publications list. Currently its activities are focused on 5 Southeast Asian countries.

Some of the main findings that emerged from the AFN experience are as follows:

- ❑ Providing free publications is an important networking strategy, and is a valuable service provided to members.
- ❑ Face-to-face exchanges are more effective than publications in terms of learning lessons and building relationships between members. Hence the emphasis on regional meetings and workshops with limited numbers of participants.
- ❑ AFN operations are lean and modest. Operating with relatively small amounts of money helps openness and honesty in the relationship with partner members since money is not the main focus of the relationship. The secretariat is clear that it does not want 'big' funding, as this would entail more structured work plans, and would not be flexible in terms of strategies.
- ❑ A network needs a strong leader as a driving force, but as a network matures, and as the aims get more rooted, a strong leader can give more room for a wider base of leadership to ensure sustainability and fresh perspectives.
- ❑ The AFN has been built up as a gradual process based on commitment and personal equations, rather than as a 'projectised' network created on the basis of the availability of funds and infrastructure. This indicates that the AFN may be a network that is sustainable in the long run.
- ❑ Networks, particularly small ones like AFN, need to be strengthened to sustain involvement in resource intensive processes like international agreements.
- ❑ A more inclusive kind of networking could take place if translation was built into all budgets as a priority activity.

⁷¹ Apte 2002b

Learning lessons from the Rural Development Forestry Network⁷²

Having been formed in 1985, the Rural Development Forestry Network is one of four specialist networks, run by the Overseas Development Institute, and covering areas such as agricultural research and extension, rural development forestry and humanitarian practice issues. The network's objective is to provide a tool to enable exchange of ideas between researchers, practitioners in the field and donors in the north on topics relating to the role of forests in people's livelihoods. The Rural Development Forestry Network brings together 2900 members from over 120 countries, with the composition of such membership being regulated by an affirmative recruitment policy that favours members from developing countries as compared to those from developed countries. The requirement that members contribute their own materials to the network, and the active soliciting of papers from them, provides a limited degree of two-way information flow. However, the network's policy information focus has meant that interaction with grassroots members has not been a key objective.

Mailings on topical community forestry-related issues constitute RDFN's major networking tool. Usually such mailings include a synopsis on the issue under consideration together with a related complement of 4-5 working papers, of mostly a case study nature. Despite its richness and depth, the case study material is of limited relevance to some members, particularly those from South America, a region that does not share the same colonial experience with India and Africa, regions in which the network has had a more long-standing engagement. Issue-based mailings on cross-sectoral issues of common interest or a quota system of coverage were identified as possible ways of enhancing broader relevance of mailings. The network discontinued the production of a newsletter, which it considered to be covering mostly ephemeral issues that received coverage in other media.

RDFN relies on donor funding – which, because of reduced allocations to forest sector portfolios, shifting priorities of donors, and increased competition for soft money among many forestry organizations – has been shrinking over the years. The regional preference of one donor saw the network engaging with the “completely new universe” of South America, well beyond the zones of the network's traditional strengths. The wider geographical focus, nevertheless, gave the network a better comparative scope in addition providing an arena in which the network could engage with a new target audience instead of concentrating on “converting the converted”. Fund raising strategies that the network suggested included a multi-donor approach that provided adequate fallbacks, better packaging of proposals and ensuring cost effectiveness through the generation of multiple products from single sets of information. The significance of cost-recovery was less emphasized.

RDFN's highly centralized structure was seen to worsen deficit of contact with the grassroots. Although such a structure was mainly seen a reflection of the network's limited financial capacity need was recognized for some form of more active partnerships with the regions. It was envisaged that such partnerships could be crafted in such a way as to fulfil multiple roles including enhancing contact with the grassroots, providing quality feedback, providing some form of external advisory service, and involving more members in the network's decision making processes.

⁷² Mandondo 2002d.

Learning Lessons from ACICAFOC⁷³

The Central American Indigenous and Peasant Coordinator of Communal Agroforestry (ACICAFOC) was born out of a 1991 regional meeting to promote community forestry organised by the National Peasant Forestry Board of Costa Rica, an organization designed to help smallholders access government reforestation subsidies. With decisive support from the FAO's *Forests, Trees and People Programme*, community organisations continued their regional interchanges, eventually coalescing as the networking body now known as ACICAFOC. ACICAFOC also salvaged elements from a previous but collapsing regional network of small farmer organizations ASOSODE and linked to new partners in the region with the help of the regional IUCN bureau. ACICAFOC thus emerged as one of the few community-based federations of the region and is increasingly seen by regional governments and international agencies as an authentic interlocutor that can bring community concerns to international fora and help ensure that dialogue, technical assistance and financial resources reach down to communities through a minimum of intermediaries, while assisted by a substantial informal network of supportive NGOs, technical advisers and other fellow travellers.

ACICAFOC is formally incorporated as a regional organisation, governed by a General Assembly of self-selected delegates from 65 member organisations, which range in size from being single community cooperatives to regional peasant federations and which pay a membership fee of US\$100/year, although ten organisations dominate its activities. Since March 2002, aspiring members are screened to ensure that they are genuinely rooted in the communities. The General Assembly sets overall priorities for the organization and elects a Board and a General Facilitator, who acts as the Executive Director of a small secretariat. Through this network ACICAFOC: carries out training through local level workshops; promotes exchanges between member organisations; participates in regional and international policy fora; and carries out community-level projects in territorial mapping, forest management planning, protected area co-management. It also promotes action-orientated research and has initiated attempts to ensure that rural women are involved in decision-making and forest management. ACICAFOC also links its members to other international networks. It is a member of the Forest Stewardship Council, was a regional partner in the IUCN-CIFM project and is a regional member of the newly emerged *Caucus for Community-based Forest Management*. ACICAFOC is also jointly implementing regional projects with international financial institutions such as the World Bank and Global Environment Facility.

Key lessons from the ACICAFOC experience include the following:

- ❑ It's success has been dependent on unusually committed Executive Director
- ❑ Its increasing involvement in advocacy at international forest policy debates, without clear objectives, has detracted from giving attention to the smaller and weaker members of the network.
- ❑ Participation in regional fora has created political space for country members to raise, and engage in dialogue with governments about, issues that are hard to address at national level such as land tenure and indigenous territorial claims
- ❑ the creation of national offices distanced members from network communications rather than promoting their participation.
- ❑ Electronic and telephoned-based communications are inadequate means for good two-way information sharing with grassroots groups;
- ❑ Capacity-building of membership organisations is the main need.

⁷³ Laforge 2002c.

Learning Lessons from the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific⁷⁴

The Regional Community Forestry Training Centre for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC) was established as a university institute in the mid 1980s and redefined as an international organization in 2000. It has played a prominent part in the promotion of community forestry in Asia through training, capacity building and experience-sharing, and as a centre of technical expertise. During the 1990s the Centre became over-extended but it has now been streamlined with a greater emphasis on the need for strategic synergy between its various programmes. Between 1992 and 2002, RECOFTC also acted as the Regional focal point for the FAO's 'Peoples, Forests and Trees Programme' (FTPP). It relies on northern donors for the major part of its recurrent, core costs.

Twenty years of active engagement promoting community forestry have taught the centre many important lessons, which have led to a change in its approach and even of its conception of community forestry. From being essentially a training centre with technical lessons to teach about tree husbandry, RECOFTC has transformed into a 'Learning Organization' that promotes a wide range of systems of forest management by communities. The centre now emphasizes the importance of national policy, institutional and governance reform to allow community forestry to flourish.

RECOFTC is run by a government-dominated board and its main partners are, about equally, governmental and non-governmental organizations. It retains close links with the Thai Royal Forestry Department. Its formal and informal networks also embrace a very wide range of players, including ex-alumni from its training courses, networks of field project partners, community-based organizations and NGOs serviced through the FТПP network. It publishes prolifically and distributes key materials in some of the national languages of client countries. Its web site is widely used.

Networking has been an important, but never central, part of RECOFTC's work. It looks back on its years of engagement with the FТПP as useful but it does not lament the FТПP's demise, considering that the FAO-led network had outlived its usefulness. Some staff are also critical of the FAO's lack of commitment to community forestry. Networking has been particularly important to RECOFTC's vital work within Thailand, where it has engaged very closely with the alliance of community organizations pressing for policy reform. This has been an important learning experience for RECOFTC.

As well as admitting its own shortcomings as a networking agency, RECOFTC is also constructively critical of the networking efforts of other international networks. As information providers, the other networks are seen as useful, but they have been less effective in supporting community-based organizations pressing for reform in the region.

Some of the key lessons that emerge from the RECOFTC experience are the following:

- ❑ Training has been and continues to be a vital activity in promoting community forestry and both helps and is helped by networking,
- ❑ Networks can promote 'multistakeholder' dialogues and platforms, which are needed as part of conflict resolution processes,
- ❑ At the same time, more emphasis is needed regionally on political and legal reform to modify the framework in which community forestry is being established,
- ❑ Land tenure reform requires more attention from the networks, meaning there is a need for more emphasis on analysis and country engagement,
- ❑ Developing these kinds of advocacy strategies and local engagements is hard for a 'hybrid' network which includes both governmental and civil society actors,
- ❑ Closer links with emerging social movements are required to help promote change,
- ❑ These links should be as direct as possible and include mechanisms for feedback,
- ❑ Although informal networking is preferable, formalization may be required to legitimize actors involvement and strengthen the sense of shared endeavour.

⁷⁴ Colchester 2002e.

Learning Lessons from the International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests

Following the release of the Brundtland Report in 1986 and then in the run up to UNCED, indigenous peoples' organizations carried out extensive networking to prepare a joint platform that would give their concerns a high profile at the Rio Summit. At a planning meeting organized by the World Rainforest Movement in Penang in 1992, indigenous peoples from the Pacific, Asia, Africa and Central and South America decided to establish the *International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests*, a coalition of autonomous peoples' organizations based on a shared Charter of demands.

The Alliance has its roots in the global movement for indigenous peoples, which has been pressing for recognition of indigenous rights to land and to self-determination. The movement first sought access to United Nations as colonized peoples and has since sought redress of violations of indigenous peoples' human rights at the United Nations Human Rights Commission and its subsidiary bodies. Since 1983, a Working Group on Indigenous Populations, open to any indigenous representatives has met annually in Geneva and its deliberations have led to drafting of a Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (1993) and the establishment of a UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues under ECOSOC (2002).

The Alliance, which has its own secretariat (currently in Chiang Mai), has the dual mandate of promoting the rights of forest dwelling indigenous peoples in international fora and strengthening regional networks of indigenous peoples. Governed by a Conference of regionally elected representatives, which has met approximately every three years, the Conference sets strategic objectives, reviews reports from the regions and Committees and delegates its authority to an elected International Coordinating Committee which makes decisions on behalf of the members between Conferences.

The Alliance has established close ties with supportive networks, such as the WRM and Global Forests Coalition, made substantial inputs into the InterGovernmental Panel on Forests, including running an intersessional meeting in Leticia, Colombia. Participated in the similar NGO-run process that focused attention on the underlying causes of deforestation at the IFF and now acts as a focal point for indigenous peoples in relation to the UNFF. The Alliance is also involved in the 'Global Caucus on Community Based Forest Management' and promotes indigenous participation in the Convention on Biological Diversity and World Parks Congress.

Key lessons which emerge from the Alliances experience include:

- ❑ Concerted advocacy can result in significant policy gains but these are slow to feed back to the national level,
- ❑ Environmental policy processes are weakly linked to parallel standard setting processes related to human rights,
- ❑ International policy work must be linked to parallel efforts to promote regional, national and local capacity building, to avoid grassroots groups being 'left behind'
- ❑ Email communications and newsletters are ineffective communications tools in reaching community-based organizations
- ❑ NGOs must respect the political nature of indigenous organizations and demands.
- ❑ Substantial and sustained financial support is required to ensure transparent, participatory decision-making at an inter-continental level.

**Learning Lessons from the IUCN's
'Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management'⁷⁵**

Building on a Ford Foundation initiative to promote international forest policy reforms that favour community forestry, an international network calling itself the 'Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management' was created in 1996, with the IUCN acting as network secretariat.

The goals of the network were to accelerate a process of two-way learning between nations and across regions, channel the lessons learned from successful local experiences into global policy making, promote decentralization of forest management and influence donors to give greater support to community forestry. The Intergovernmental Panel on Forests was chosen as the main target for advocacy. The Working Group emphasized the need to amplify civil society demands for a greater role in forest management, analyse regional and national trends in policy evolution, identify the main obstacles to reform, assess the role of the private sector, and document means of transition towards greater community control of forests. Six regions were focused on for action.

The Working Group met at least twice a year between 1996 and 2000, when funding for the network more or less dried up. Most network meetings were in the margins of IPF and IFF meetings, when efforts were focused on advocating the adoption of official language supportive of community involvement in forest management. This advocacy was quite successful, although the IPF and IFF 'Proposals for Action' have not (yet) been widely implemented at the national level.

The Working Group also sponsored regional studies on the status of community forest management, which resulted in five detailed regional 'profiles' in book format – on North America, Meso-America, Western Europe, South Asia and South East Asia. Four other reports (one still in press) on Eastern and Southern Africa were also produced. These regional profiles contain a wealth of valuable information about community forestry but were too detailed and discursive to serve immediately as tools for advocacy. However, with the exception of Meso-America and Eastern and Southern Africa, most of the reports were produced with little lasting engagement with regional networks or community social movements. The Meso-American and African processes were developed with extra funding, which allowed for much more interactive processes, more inputs into regional advocacy and more local capacity-building.

The main members of the network were described as 'highly experienced individuals who have often acted as change agents and leaders' – they were two thirds from the north, and predominantly from NGOs, government and intergovernmental organizations. There were few direct links with community-based and indigenous peoples' organizations. The governance structure was light and secretariat-driven. Efforts to devolve authority to a steering committee were not taken up by members.

Self-evaluation was built into the network's functioning and resulted in useful lessons being drawn for an improved second phase, which was however not funded. More focus on regional advocacy, capacity building, with much stronger grassroots membership and engagement in decision-making, were all proposed.

Other lessons from the network experience include the following:

- ❑ Technical publications have limited usefulness and should be complemented with simpler stand alone summaries for wider dissemination and advocacy use
- ❑ Publication in the main UN languages is vital for effective inter-continental linkages
- ❑ More engagement with local social movements is necessary if regionally targeted advocacy is to have legitimacy and be effective in promoting change
- ❑ Centralized, secretariat-driven networks end up having passive members. More engaged and accountable governance mechanisms are needed.
- ❑ Self-evaluations provide crucial moments for reflection and to check the networks' value to the membership,
- ❑ Information dissemination should target libraries and resource centres and not just individuals, NGOs and offices.

⁷⁵ Colchester 2002b.

Learning Lessons from the Forest Stewardship Council⁷⁶

In response to international concerns in the 1980s about the impact of logging on forests, particularly tropical forests, and the refusal of intergovernmental agencies to promote the labeling of timbers, NGOs and some of the more progressive elements in the timber industry developed proposals to promote voluntary forest product labeling. This led to the creation of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in 1993. This Mexico-based NGO developed a global scheme for the certification of forests, according to agreed standards, independent of governments.

FSC is a 'chambered' membership organisation designed to be governed equally by members from 'economic', 'social' and 'environmental' groups. FSC stakeholders developed global standards for 'environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable' forest stewardship. These standards are adopted and modified by national initiatives for application in specific countries. Nonetheless, consensus building in national fora has proved lengthy and requires heavy investment of time and resources from participants. Marginal and poor social groups have not been able to afford the time and resources needed to engage in these processes effectively. For this and other reasons, national standard-setting has thus tended to focus on developing standards appropriate for large and not small-scale producers.⁷⁷ Additionally, the requirements of independent certifiers to see documented management plans, the costs of certification inspections, and problems linking small-scale producers to concerned consumers have discouraged some community forestry operations from getting certification.

Whilst the earliest FSC certificates in the tropics were for community forestry, certification grew most rapidly among public and private landowners, as FSC funders, Board members and secretariat gave priority to developing a significant market share for FSC certified timber. By 2000, over 90% of FSC certified forests were managed by public bodies, individuals and corporations, not communities.⁷⁸ Most certified community operations had been supported by substantial grant-funded technical assistance. In general, certification, as a tool for market-based reform, has not worked well for communities in its early phases.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, around 50 FSC certificates have been issued to community forestry operations (principally in Central America and Mexico) providing an important set of experiences from which others can learn.

Notwithstanding FSC has taken a series of measures, through concerted networking, to try to address these market failures and incorporate the needs of a broader range of forest users into its certification policies and procedures. In the mid-1990s, FSC members mandated the creation of a 'Social Working Group' to promote membership of the social chamber, and to formulate a strategic plan for dealing with social issues. Vigorous efforts were made to recruit more members from communities, trades unions, social justice organisations and indigenous peoples. A still-active bilingual (English/Spanish) email list of 170 was set up. In 1998, FSC developed 'group certification', which allows groups of small-scale producers to jointly apply for certification and thus share administration and inspection costs. By 2002, almost 1 million hectares of forests, from over 7,500 individual forest operations in 23 countries had been certified under this scheme.⁸⁰ During this same period, FSC also invested considerable effort in devising a 'Social Strategy' which was based on the recommendations and requests collected at previous face-to-face meetings, such as the 2001 annual conference 'Certification for the People'. The strategy was developed via extensive consultations with FSC members, national initiatives, email circulars and using other networks, such as RECOFTC's newsletter. FSC expects that further networking will be crucial to the successful application of this strategy.

In 2002, FSC also launched a new initiative called '*Increasing Access to Certification for Small and Low Intensity Managed Forests*' (SLIMFs Initiative). This seeks to: provide guidance on interpreting standards and management requirements for small-scale operations;

⁷⁶ Laforge 2002a.

⁷⁷ Robinson and Brown 2002; Counsell and Loraas 2002; Draft Social Strategy.

⁷⁸ Rezende de Azevedo 2001.

⁷⁹ Thornber and Markopoulos 2000:2.

⁸⁰ Robinson and Brown 2002. Few of these are community forestry schemes however.

make information about certification processes and standards more accessible and intelligible; simplify the documentation system of certification inspections and audits. These ideas are now to be tested in field trials. Interested stakeholders are kept informed via regular 'Review Committee' briefings.

FSC's experiences with networking brings out the following lessons:

- ❑ considerable investment in translation and information servicing is required to keep networks active and working in two directions
- ❑ face-to-face meetings are crucial if technical issues are to be addressed and developed in any depth
- ❑ cost-effective means of incorporating the views of resource-poor NGOs and community organisations into policy development remains a major challenge. Email networking and consultation processes may not be the best way to reach them.⁸¹
- ❑ bringing marginalised social groups into networks, national initiatives and certification processes requires grants (self-financing is not an option in most cases). In most national initiatives, community participation is minimal.
- ❑ although the governance structure of FSC allows for voting equality among the six stakeholders groups (social, environmental, and economic, each divided into 'North' and 'South'), in practice decision-making processes favour those with higher education, technical knowledge, access to communication, and financial resources.
- ❑ overcoming this *de facto* inequality either requires capacity-building of southern and resource-poor social groups or novel mechanisms of decision-making, which give proper weight to local and indigenous knowledge, languages and discourses.
- ❑ FSC's formalized governance system and complaints procedures have nevertheless provided important political space for community-based organizations and indigenous peoples, which they have used effectively to address serious problems. Supportive NGOs and grant financing have proved necessary to make use of these apertures.

⁸¹ For example while there are many developing country members of the SLIMF's review committee, over 90% of respondents to a recent SLIMF questionnaire were from developed countries.

Learning Lessons from the World Rainforest Movement⁸²

The World Rainforest Movement was born at two NGO conferences held in Penang, Malaysia, in the mid-1980s, focused on the destruction of the rainforests and the global environmental crisis.⁸³ Much of the impetus for the creation of the group came from the perceived need to develop a common critique of top-down official solutions to the deforestation crisis which exclude civil society, and indigenous peoples and forest-dwellers in particular. WRM thinking crystallised in the form of a 'Penang Declaration' in 1989 accompanied by a popular document which explained the underlying causes of the forest crisis, the flaws in official solutions and the need for an alternative approach based on securing the rights of local communities.⁸⁴ Initial efforts of the group focused on exposing the inadequacies of the Tropical Forest Action Plan and International Tropical Timber Organisation, explaining the need for land security and agrarian reform to address deforestation and highlighting the threat posed to forests by industrial monocrop plantations.⁸⁵ The group also provided campaign support for the Dayak peoples of Malaysian Borneo (Sarawak) who sought to secure their land rights in the face of an aggressive timber exploitation regime which denied their rights.⁸⁶ At the same time the group embarked on a special programme to promote networking among forest peoples, which led to a third major conference in Penang, controlled by indigenous peoples organisations but supported by WRM members. The meeting led to the establishment of an autonomous intercontinental indigenous umbrella organisation the '*International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of the Tropical Forests*'.⁸⁷

WRM has chosen to present itself as a social movement without a formal membership structure and decision-making. It has nevertheless, perforce, been obliged to: secure legal personality as a non-profit organisation: set up a Steering Committee made up of committed NGO members who share the WRM's goals in order to pool ideas and make strategic decisions: establish a small secretariat originally based in Penang and now in Montevideo.

WRM seeks to change policy through mobilising public opinion and information dissemination rather than through direct negotiation in policy fora. It engages in many active campaigns in solidarity with 'local struggles' and produces a widely distributed electronic newsletter in French, Spanish, Portuguese and English which reaches some 9,000 readers. Concerned about the risks of civil society being 'coopted by' and thus 'legitimising' intergovernmental policy making processes, WRM nevertheless hosted the Joint Initiative to Address the Underlying Causes of Deforestation and Forest Degradation at the InterGovernmental Panel and Forum on Forests and now acts as host to another NGO network, the Global Forests Coalition, coordinates NGO advocacy directed at policy reform at the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the UN Forum on Forests and the Framework Convention of Climate Change.

WRM also interacts actively with other networks, such as the Taiga Rescue Network, Industrial Shrimp Action Network, OilWatch, Forests Movement Europe, WRM has also joined the recently formed Caucus for Community-Based Forest Management. WRM is seen as a southern-based movement, which prioritises a southern constituency and is directed by southern NGOs with support from NGOs based in the North. Although WRM acts to support community forestry, it does this mainly by seeking to promote framework change rather than by addressing directly community forest management regimes.

Key lessons from the WRM experience include the following:

- Two way networking can be achieved with a minimally formalised governance structure;

⁸² Laforge 2002d.

⁸³ SAM 1987; APPEN and SAM 1988.

⁸⁴ WRM 1989.

⁸⁵ Shiva 1987; Colchester and Lohmann 1990; Colchester 1993; Colchester and Lohmann 1993; Carrere and Lohmann 1996.

⁸⁶ WRM 1989.

⁸⁷ Colchester 1992.

- ❑ Direct support for local struggles through campaigns is highly valued by local organisations but requires a heavy investment in local level networking, field visits and sustained information flow to be successful;
- ❑ Social movements which engage in advocacy targeting human rights abuses cannot readily accommodate governments in their networking activities
- ❑ Synergies between networks can help strengthen advocacy and improve cross-sectoral policy reform.

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Annex 1: Terms of Reference :

The CIFOR project, titled *'Learning Lessons from International Community Forestry Networks'*, was funded by DfID and the Ford Foundation. Under the project, researchers were contracted to review eight countries' experiences with international community forestry networks and also review the activities of eight international community forestry networks. A 'peer review/advisory team' was also contracted to react to the research findings and contribute to the Lessons Workshop comprised of Mary Hobley, Janis Alcorn, Madhu Sarin and Louise Goodman. The project has been handled as part of CIFOR's 'Adaptive Collaborative Management' programme initially under Carol Colfer and then under Lini Wollenberg. The Director of CIFOR, David Kaimowitz, took a central role in conceiving and then overseeing the project.

As given in the project outline, the aim of the project was to *'review the experience with international networks designed to promote community forestry, to assess how much 'value-added' they have provided or could potentially provide to activities at the local and national level and their ability to advocate for community forestry at international levels. The project's central objective is to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of international efforts to support community forestry with the aim of:*

- *Promoting transparent, accountable, and democratic decision-making processes concerning forests that incorporate the views of the poor, women, indigenous peoples, and ethnic minorities;*
- *Helping poor people retain and obtain access to existing forest resources, generate new resources, and earn greater incomes from the resources they have; and*
- *Protecting and regenerating forest ecosystems and biodiversity, and reducing environmental degradation.*

The project's specific objectives are to:

- *Synthesize the lessons emerging from international community forestry networks through a collective process, emphasizing these networks' ability (or inability) to provide 'value-added' to local and national processes and to advocate for community forestry at international levels;*
- *Share these lessons with the main stakeholder groups mentioned above;*
- *Improve the programs of bilateral and multilateral agencies and foundations that support community forestry, with particular emphasis on grant-making by the Ford Foundation and DFID;*
- *Help CIFOR and other international research organizations that support community forestry design an effective strategy for working with international community forestry networks.*
- *Provide inputs into the design of a 'Global Summit for Pro – People Forest Reform'.⁸⁸*

⁸⁸ CIFOR funding application to Ford Foundation and DfID. Bogor, 2001.

Annex 2: Connecting to the Networks

For further information about networks mentioned in this review try the following web sites or email contacts:

ACICAFOC: www.acicafoc.org

Asia Forest Network : www.asiaforestnetwork.org

CIFOR: www.cifor.cgiar.org

Forest Action Network: <http://www.ftpp.or.ke>

Forest Peoples Programme: www.forestpeoples.org

Forests, Trees and People Programme:
www.fao.org/forestry/FON/FONP/cfu/cfu-e.stm
<http://www.polux.sdn.org.pa/~rfc/>
<http://www.cnr.org.pe/fao/index.htm>
<http://www.cnb.net/~ftpp-fao/welcome.html>
<http://www-trees.slu.se/nepal/watchindex.htm>

Forest Stewardship Council: www.fscoax.org

IUCN Working Group on Community Involvement in Forest Management:
<http://www.iucn.org/themes/fcp/special/cifm/html>

Rural Development Forestry Newsletter: www.odifpeg.org.uk/publications/rdfn

RECOFTC: www.recoftc.org

World Rainforest Movement: www.wrm.org.uy

Global Caucus for Community-Based Forest Management:
globalcbfm@yahoogroups.com

