



FOREST GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT

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Introduction

There is no simple or broadly accepted definition of governance. It is a theoretical concept and refers to processes of governing rather than government and these processes may be carried out by organizations including a government, private company, university or NGO through policies, law, rules and regulations or power. In forestry, governance takes an equally complex shape with multitude of stakeholders and institutions deriving and managing different resources found in forests for livelihood and conservation.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has defined governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions, through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences”. (UNDP 2006)

In 1993, the World Bank defined governance as the method through which power is exercised in the management of a country’s political, economic and social resources for development. The World Bank realized that most of the crises in developing countries are of a governance nature concerning issues such as transparency, accountability, and judicial reform. In this context, the Bank has introduced a new way of looking at governance-“good governance”.

FOREST GOVERNANCE

Forest governance is an equally difficult concept to define. Assessment of forest governance generally faces the question of what exactly to assess within the forest landscape. In reality, forest governance has its focus on the process of how decisions are made about forests keeping in mind the long-term impacts of the decisions on overall environment and its socio-economic repercussions.

Forest governance is very challenging as it has a unique web of stakeholders, institutions, and a valuable resource that provides a variety of products and services often resulting in a highly complex conflict of interests. The common conflict among stakeholders is for land and products, and among the institutions for authority. This causes overuse of resources,

degradation and deforestation. At the same time forestry worldwide remains a low priority sector with little or no political clout. For example, in India forests have semblance of *de facto* common property resource when it comes to its use for pasture and fuel wood collection.

The institutions involved with forest resource have a very complex relationship-giving rise to a complex governance structure. Various stakeholders that influence decision making in forest sector are depicted in figure 1. Within a given landscape, forest governance is not independent process rather it is part of a system. The System is overall country’s governance web which is highly intricate. Consequently, the assessment of forest governance becomes complicated as well.

GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT

The quality of governance determines whether forest resources are used efficiently, sustainably and equitably, and whether a country can achieve forest related development goals. A qualitative analysis of governance is therefore crucial to ensure the efficacy and equity in the system.

Forest governance assessment is a tool used for diagnosis, monitoring and evaluation of how forest-related decisions are made in a country or province. This includes mapping and analysis of institutions and their interaction within and outside the forest sector that together creates the conditions and possibilities for the governance of a country's forests and forest resources. In India, forest falls in concurrent list of the Constitution of India. Both States and Central Government play key roles by promulgating forest policies and laws though the States implement policies and enforce most laws. Therefore, an assessment of forest governance will be required to be done at both levels.

FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT: ITS DEVELOPMENT & USE

Forest governance is inherently difficult to assess in quantitative fashion yet increasingly important aspect for evaluating the success or failure of forest sector in a country or state. Most of the international forest investments programs have realized the significance of forest governance assessment framework in making investment decisions and developing new programs in a number of countries. This holds true particularly when measuring success of REDD+. The framework can also be of assistance to government and non-government organizations interested in the characteristics and quality of forest governance in a particular state or country and help introduce reforms to enable better achievement of goals.

In 2010, during the EU and FAO meeting on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade

(FLEGT) in Rome, participants felt the need to develop pragmatic and feasible indicators to assess forest governance especially for REDD+ (a requirement of REDD-plus international policy is that governance issues should be addressed while developing national REDD-plus strategy). The World Bank Program on forests (PROFOR) and FAO were called upon to undertake the development of a core set of principles and criteria of generic nature which could be flexible enough to apply in different country settings.

The framework so developed¹ is used for description, diagnosis, monitoring, assessment and reporting on a country's state of forest governance. It can also assist in stakeholders' consultation on forest sector governance as well as improving governance.

FAO-PROFOR FOREST GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The Framework is based on three pillars and six principles as shown in Figure 1 and it builds on the principle that governance is both the context and the product of the interaction of a range of actors and stakeholders with diverse interests. These are also the generally accepted pillars and principles of "good" forest governance.



Figure 1: Pillars and Principles of Governance (Source: FAO 2011)



Pillars of good (forest) governance

According to FAO (2011) there are three pillars of good governance. Each pillar has a number of components and sub-components. The following three pillars of the framework are fundamental to forest governance:

1. Policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks;
2. Planning and decision-making processes; and
3. Implementation, enforcement and compliance

There are 13 components and 80 subcomponents in total. The assessment framework also provides guidance on how indicators can be developed to assess these elements of each of the pillar. The number of indicators varies for different countries and circumstance.

3 Pillars of Forest Governance

Pillar 1: Policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks

- 1.1 Forest-related policies and laws
- 1.2 Legal framework to support and protect land tenure, ownership and use rights
- 1.3 Concordance of broader development policies with forest policies
- 1.4 Institutional frameworks
- 1.5 Financial incentives, economic instruments and benefit sharing

Pillar 2: Planning and decision-making processes

- 2.1 Stakeholder participation
- 2.2 Transparency and accountability
- 2.3 Stakeholder capacity and action

Pillar 3: Implementation, enforcement and compliance

- 3.1 Administration of forest resources
- 3.2 Forest law enforcement
- 3.3 Administration of land tenure and property rights
- 3.4 Cooperation and coordination

3.5 Measures to address corruption

WRI GOVERNANCE OF FOREST INITIATIVE FRAMEWORK

World Resources Institute (WRI) has developed a Governance of Forest Initiative (GFI) Indicators Framework for assessment of forest governance. The GFI framework provides a comprehensive menu of indicators that can be used to diagnose and assess strengths and weaknesses in forest governance. These indicators have been tested by civil societies in Brazil, Cameroon, and Indonesia during 2010-2012 (WRI 2013). The Framework is flexible and can be adapted for use in different countries and provincial situations.

GFI framework address two main concerns regarding the forest governance assessment: a) what to assess; and b) subjectivity in qualitative assessment. It offers an easily understandable model for identifying what to assess. The approach based on qualitative assessment is also considered systematic and replicable (WRI 2013).

The GFI Framework recognizes three components of forest governance for given indicators: **Actors** include a variety of institutions and people who are responsible for decision making about management and use of forests. These actors include legislature, government, communities, private companies and civil society. **Rules** refer to policies and legislation governing forest sector. Indicators are also used to examine the process of policy and legislation preparation, promulgation and amendments as well as their contents of current policies, laws and regulations. **Practices** indicators assess implementation of policies and enforcement of rules and regulations by responsible authorities. These three components are measured against the five principles of good governance embedded in the thematic and sub-thematic indicators. (*see* Table. 2)

Specific Themes and sub-themes under GFI	
1. Forest tenure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest ownership and use rights • Tenure dispute resolution • State forest ownership Concession allocation
2. Land use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use planning • Land use plan implementation • Sectoral land use • Forest classification
3. Forest management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest legal and policy framework • Forest strategies and plans • Forest monitoring • Forest management practices • Forest law enforcement
4. Forest revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest charge administration • Forest revenue distribution • Benefit sharing • Budgeting
5. Crosscutting Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legislature • Judiciary • Executive agencies • Private sector • Civil society
6. Cross-cutting Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public participation in decision-making • Public access to information • Financial transparency and accountability • Anticorruption measures

WHO & WHY SHOULD ASSESS FOREST GOVERNANCE

Not everyone working in forestry sector has to learn skills to evaluate existing governance quality. It is also not meant to replace the understanding of officials from public forestry institutions on governance strengths and

weaknesses. Rather it is a systematic approach to include perceptions of the officials and other stakeholders in a given landscape for a realistic assessment. Thus interactive workshops where indicators are developed in a participatory manner and are used in scoring in a participatory way are the best way.

CONCLUSION

An assessment of forest governance in all states in India is a highly desirable and necessary step as it will be useful to prepare a document on assessment that can be used for undertaking important reforms in the forestry institutions and sector.

POLICY POINTERS

Forest governance assessment is a tool used for diagnosis, monitoring and evaluation of how forest-related decisions are made in a country or province. It is not meant to replace the analysis of public officials based on experiences and perceptions.

Five principles of good governance around upon which assessment indicators are built include transparency, accountability, participation, coordination, and capacity.

Forest falls in concurrent list of the Constitution of India which calls for a two-level forest governance assessment mechanism.

GFI Framework recognizes three components of forest governance for given indicators: Actors, rules, and practices which are measured against indicators built on five good governance principles and six forest-sector themes.

An indicator is a quantitative, qualitative or descriptive attribute that, if measured or monitored periodically, could indicate the direction of change in a governance subcomponent. PROFOR-FAO framework does not have specific indicators while GFI framework gives 122 indicators for forest governance assessment.



ⁱ Organizations involved are WRI's Governance of Forests Initiative, World Bank's framework for Forest Governance Reform, Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management of the Montreal Process and of the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO); UNREDD & Chatham House framework for monitoring REDD+ Governance