

REDUCING VIOLENT CONFLICTS OVER FORESTS

By Mary Melnyk, Jay Singh, Scott Bode, Kim Sais and Julie Kunen

Conflict financed or sustained through the harvest and sale of timber, or conflict emerging as a result of competition over timber or other forest resources is a major challenge to development, further impoverishing and contributing to instability in many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has taken a strong stance on the issue and is actively funding activities to reduce conflict while creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods. Our comprehensive approach to directly reduce conflict includes rigorous analysis, strategy development, engaging staff and implementing activities in countries across the globe.

Analysis and strategies

Since 2001, USAID has been working with the Foundation for Environmental Security and Sustainability (FESS) to develop an environmental security framework to address a broad range of environmental issues, including deforestation, as they apply to regional security, stability and conflict. FESS' Environmental Security Assessment Framework (ESAF) is an analytical tool that assists in evaluating, assessing, prioritising and monitoring regional environmental threats. A field assessment in Nepal constituted a pilot test of ESAF. Further information can be found at www.fess-global.org.

As a first step for well-targeted and effective

programming related specifically to forests and conflict, in 2002 USAID commissioned the analysis *Conflict Timber: Dimensions of the Problem in Asia and Africa* (http://www.ardinc.com/html/projects/p_timber.htm). Its primary objective was a comprehensive examination of the economic, ecological, political, social and security dimensions of conflict timber in Asia and Africa. It profiles 14 countries with in-depth case studies of Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Further in-depth analyses have been done for the Philippines and Cambodia. This analysis identified a strong link between conflict timber and poor, inequitable systems of governance. Ambiguous property rights to forests further promoted struggles over timber. Also, loose financial oversight generates opportunities for powerful individual actors (military, police, politicians) to engage in conflict timber activities.

To raise awareness and engage staff on the issue of forests and conflicts and other natural resources, a series of reports have been developed. These reports, entitled toolkits, should help staff develop strategies to reduce or prevent conflict. They are discussed in the paper by Feil and Voils (this issue, page 19).

Activities to reduce conflict over forest resources

USAID offices around the world are working on programs to reduce conflict over forest resources. Vital to many activities is the empowerment of local communities to manage their forest resources and the incorporation of natural resources management into programs to strengthen democracy and the rule of law. With USAID assistance in the Philippines, local governments and communities jointly

assessed forest status and decided on forest allocation while adopting and budgeting for forest use plans. The forest land use plans govern who has rights to the forests, law enforcement, forest protection, and production-related activities. In 2003, for example, 31 local governments committed \$270 000 to reduce illegal logging, place open-access areas under management, and mitigate forest-related conflicts on at least 670 000 hectares of forestlands.

Grants to local NGOs in Cambodia are working to resolve forest and land conflicts by disseminating information to communities on their legal rights in accordance with Cambodia's new Forestry and Land Laws. The NGOs will work with ethnic minorities to demarcate their ancestral lands, register these claims with provincial authorities and prevent the further encroachment of forests by immigrants. In response to communities' requests, the NGOs will also strengthen their capacity to organise and manage forests, while providing them with cell phones to report illegal logging to authorities. Likewise, in Ecuador, USAID support to the World Wildlife Fund assisted the Awa indigenous group to develop a new forest strategy that formally recognized their ancestral rights to the forest, thus helping to resolve an ongoing land tenure conflict.

There are many conflicts over forest and land use in the watershed areas of Lampung, Indonesia. Yet, now there are opportunities to address these conflicts because many government functions have been decentralized. Methods to negotiate land and forest disputes are being developed by the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) and partners, supported by USAID. Policy

dialogue on tenure and negotiations on land use have begun to yield significant results. Several agreements have been reached between farmer groups and local government. A consultative group composed of government officials, community members and non-governmental and research organisations has also been organised with ICRAF's assistance at the West Lampung district level and a framework policy for Integrated Natural Resource Management is currently being drafted.

In Senegal, conflict over use of forest resources arose between indigenous people and migrant farmers. A conflict assessment involving about 5 000 residents, development partners and businesses in the area identified pragmatic options for addressing the conflict, and an ensuing meeting opened dialogue for drafting an action plan. Subsequently, the community developed another action plan to promote sustainable management of the 73 000-ha Pata forest, creating forest-monitoring committees. This also strengthened democratic processes while reducing conflicts over these resources.

The Liberia Forest Initiative explicitly addresses conflict timber and the need for reform of the forestry sector. It is a United States government effort to help accomplish Liberia's transition from war to peace. To avoid the use of timber to finance conflict and to promote the gainful employment of ex-combatants, the program will establish a new system for competitive and transparent allocation of forest concessions, and it will employ ex-combatants for forest conservation. Furthermore, the program will work to gain rights for communities to manage forests. Other elements of the program will develop

regional collaboration for a cross-border peace park and a transparent process for the administration of budgets by Liberia's Forest Development Authority.

The future

USAID's approach is part of a growing concerted effort to address natural resources, specifically forests, taking into account the environment, corruption, government accountability, and economic growth so as to reduce conflicts, empower local populations and improve their health, and create conditions for sustainable growth. Working across regions and technical areas, USAID hopes to achieve multiple benefits for development by reducing conflicts over forests.

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MAINSTREAMING FOREST AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: A FOREST AND CONFLICT TOOLKIT

By Moira Feil and Olivia Voils

USAID emphasizes the need to closely link development cooperation to conflict management. In an effort to strengthen conflict management as a crosscutting theme, the Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) was established in 2002. Recognising the complexities of violent conflicts and their multifaceted drivers, CMM commissioned a series of briefing papers on how conflict relates to various themes, including youth, health and natural resources. In the framework of this effort, the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR; Bogor, Indonesia), the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (Washington DC), and Adelphi Research (Berlin, Germany) were asked to submit three papers on the linkages between conflict and water, minerals and forest.

The aim of these briefing papers is to raise awareness among mission employees on the links between different natural resources and conflict, and to assist USAID in their program development by integrating conflict prevention and natural resource management. Throughout the project it was clear that USAID required accessible and practical toolkits that would give employees on the ground a quick understanding of the major issues related to these natural resources and conflict as well as practical guidance on how to recognize and address such conflicts in their own work.