



2.1 A common framework to assess and monitor forest governance

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Why forest governance monitoring and assessment?

The quality of forest governance largely determines the success and sustainability of forest management within countries. Good forest governance enables progress to be made toward the sustainable and equitable development and use of forests' services and goods. It also affects the achievement of sectoral development goals and enhancement of the social, economical and environmental values of forests.

Improving forest governance requires a systematic approach to identifying areas to be addressed, devising and implementing suitable responses, monitoring results, and continual adaptation and learning. The need for a comprehensive analytical framework to diagnose, assess and monitor forest governance in countries is widely recognized among those dealing with forest governance, particularly at the international level and by non-governmental organizations. This has motivated a number of initiatives to develop such frameworks. This is positive, but also creates risks of duplication of efforts, contradictory outcomes and confusing messages for the countries and organizations that apply these frameworks.

Developing a commonly accepted framework can do much to minimize these risks. This paper describes such an initiative, the Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance. The framework was recently developed through an international process with contributions from several countries, organizations and initiatives. The aim of the framework is to serve as a starting point or general terms of reference for forest governance assessment and monitoring.

This article is based to a large extent on the publication *Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance* (FAO and PROFOR 2011). The article summarizes the most prominent international initiatives in the field of forest governance assessment and monitoring, and describes the process behind and the structure of the framework. It also provides the next steps for further development of the framework.



USE OF A COMMON GENERAL
FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING
AND MONITORING FOREST
GOVERNANCE HAS THE
POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE FOREST GOVERNANCE.

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The emergence of forest governance assessment and monitoring

Since the early 1990s, the notion of “good governance” has gained widespread currency as a context for emerging institutional arrangements. During that decade, different bodies — including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) — developed general principles of good governance that were linked to the wider international discussion on aid effectiveness. These principles are now used beyond the donor-related applications from which they emerged.

In the forest sector, the quality of forest governance started to gain greater attention, including its recognition as one central aspect of sustainable forest management (SFM). In the mid-1990s several of the regional processes on criteria and indicators for SFM included a component related to policies, legal and institutional frameworks and forest governance in their monitoring and reporting frameworks.

This component was later recognized as a thematic element of SFM in the Non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2007 (UN 2008) and was taken up in the Global Forest Resources Assessment, 2010 of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (FAO 2010).



One of the earlier initiatives to apply the concepts of good governance in the forest context was undertaken by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) in the late 1990s. IIED developed a fairly comprehensive diagnostic and planning tool to assess the key enabling elements for good forest governance and to close the gap that existed between field-level assessments and

international reporting requirements on SFM (Mayers, Bass and Macqueen 2002). Two subsequent major initiatives were established to develop comprehensive approaches for assessing forest governance:

- the Analytical Framework for Forest Governance Reforms (FFGR) of the World Bank; and
- the Governance of Forests Initiative (GFI) of the World Resources Institute (WRI) and its partners (Capistrano 2010).

The World Bank initiative and the analytical framework it applies explicitly link the good governance dimensions developed earlier by the bank, and the main thematic elements (criteria) of SFM (World Bank 2009). This approach should enable governance reforms with a high chance of strengthening SFM to be identified and prioritized. The World Bank initiative is primarily targeted at policy decision makers and reformers (see article 2.2).

The WRI initiative is designed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of forest governance as a basis for advocacy led by civil society. While the GFI is comprehensive in its coverage of the dimensions of governance, its indicators focus on four issues: forest tenure, land

use planning, forest management, and revenue distribution and economic incentives (WRI, ICV and Imazon 2009). The initiative includes a significant component of capacity and coalition building.

These initiatives, as well as similar frameworks or programmes developed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) — such as Transparency International and Global Witness — are designed to diagnose, assess and/or monitor¹ forest governance or some elements of it. A range of other international forestry initiatives require assessment or monitoring of forest governance to make progress toward their objectives, such as the EU's FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) and Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (REDD+).² Examples of initiatives and their main characteristics are presented in Appendix 1.

Although the initiatives that support the assessment and monitoring of forest governance have been developed for a range of purposes and end users, there is considerable concordance in what they focus on. This being the case, a more common understanding of the meaning and the main components of forest governance — and of the elements of good forest governance, was desirable and potentially feasible.

This initiated the process towards a common framework for forest governance assessment and monitoring. The use of a common framework, which can adjust to various contexts and purposes, has the potential to reduce overlapping assessment, monitoring and reporting requirements and eliminate contradicting outcomes from different initiatives. It would facilitate and streamline efforts to improve assessment and monitoring of forest governance within and among countries, and enhance the compatibility of different approaches.

A harmonized framework for assessing and monitoring forest governance

Recognizing the potential benefits of a harmonized approach, several organizations and initiatives working with countries to develop and field-test forest governance indicators initiated a series of discussions on forest governance monitoring and indicator development in 2009.

In May 2010, the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (UN-REDD) and Chatham House organized an expert workshop on monitoring governance safeguards in REDD+. This workshop presented three core governance parameters, which were subsequently taken up as the pillars of the framework.

In September 2010, the World Bank, FAO and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) organized an international symposium in Stockholm to decide on a common framework or core set of principles and criteria to help countries assess and monitor forest governance. As a result of the symposium, FAO and the World Bank's Program on Forests (PROFOR) convened a core group of experts and practitioners to develop the framework. The participants of the core group presented different user

countries, organizations and initiatives with experience in the application of forest governance assessment and monitoring and/or development of forest governance indicators.

The framework presented in this article is based on the draft framework introduced in Stockholm and the subsequent work of the core group of experts. It was developed in close coordination with the initiative of the UN-REDD and Chatham House that is developing guidance on how REDD+ governance safeguards can be effectively monitored (Chatham House and the UN-REDD Programme 2011). Both these initiatives, which use the same structure and description for good governance, were presented in an expert meeting in May 2011. Participants discussed the use and possible subsequent refinement of these two guidance documents.

Proposed common framework for assessing and monitoring forest governance

Purpose

The Framework for Assessing and Monitoring Forest Governance facilitates the description, diagnosis, monitoring, assessment and reporting of the governance of a country's forests and trees. It features a globally relevant set of the major elements that describe forest governance. It provides both a starting point and a frame of reference for organizing governance-relevant information, and can be used within and among countries to assess and monitor forest governance.

The framework can assist countries in increasing their understanding of forest governance, and in identifying and responding to critical issues in ways that can be measured, tracked and improved over time. By enabling and stimulating informed discussions among stakeholders on governance in the forest sector, the framework also seeks to foster opportunities for wider national discussions on overall governance beyond the forest sector.

The framework is not in itself an assessment or monitoring tool. It supports the development of understanding on forest governance and provides a context for all issues of forest governance. The framework is meant to be flexible; it should be adjusted to fit the context, purpose and available resources. The framework can assist in the development of new tools for forest governance, such as the questionnaire-based multi-stakeholder approach being applied in Uganda and Burkina Faso by the World Bank (see also article 2.2).

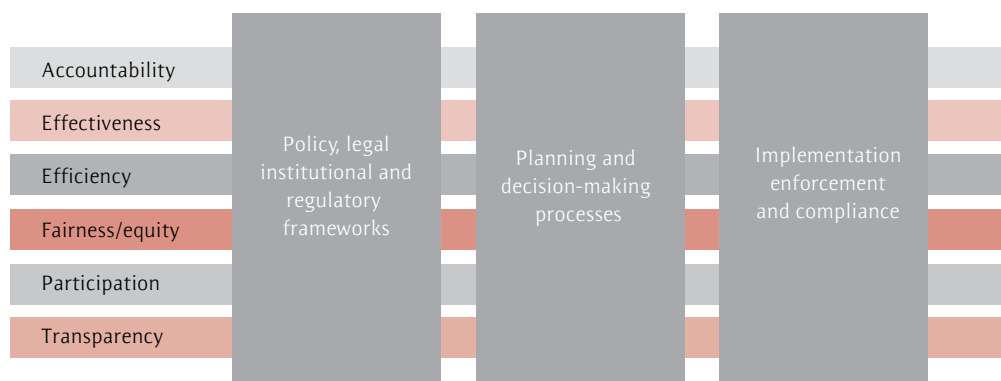
Structure

The framework builds on the understanding that governance is both the context and the product of the interaction of a range of stakeholders with diverse interests. The framework is based on broadly accepted pillars and principles of forest governance (Figure 1).

Although discussions continue on the definitions of governance, the existing literature outlines some common key attributes and processes that characterize good governance. These attributes and processes are reflected in the principles of the framework (Table 1). By drawing on the approaches currently in use or under development in major forest

governance-related processes and initiatives — including the World Bank FFGR, the WRI GFI, and the regional processes on Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management — the framework aims to enhance discussion and further development across the field. Additionally, it aims to build on existing national forest governance-related monitoring systems, such as those to monitor administrative, budgetary and judicial procedures.

Figure 1. Pillars and principles of forest governance



Source: FAO and PROFOR 2011

Table 1. Principles of the framework

Principles	Description
Accountability	responsibility of political actors to all members of society for their actions and decisions
Effectiveness	production of results meeting needs; production of desired results
Efficiency	maximal use of human, financial and other resources without unnecessary waste or delay
Fairness/ Equity	equal opportunities for all members of society to improve or maintain their well-being, including impartial application of rules
Participation	involvement of citizens and stakeholders in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediaries representing their interests
Transparency	clarity and free flow of information, enabling all members of society to have access to, understand and monitor processes, institutions and information

Source: FAO and PROFOR 2011

The operational description of governance employed in the framework is based on three pillars (policy, legal, institutional and regulatory frameworks; planning and decision-making processes; implementation, enforcement and compliance). These are fundamental facets of forest governance and occur simultaneously. Each pillar is divided into components (see Box 1) and subcomponents (elements of a component that can be identified and assessed).

Box 1. Description of the components under the three pillars

Components under Pillar 1 probe the existence and quality of forest policies, laws and regulations, including protection of forest-related tenure and rights and the functioning of key institutional frameworks. They examine the extra-sectoral links that affect forest sector governance. The components also consider the concordance between forest policies and broader development policies, such as financial incentives and economic policies, and address equity in the distribution of forest resources and benefits.

Components under Pillar 2 examine the extent, characteristics and quality of participation of a range of stakeholders in forest governance and the capacity of stakeholder groups to engage in governance processes. Components under this pillar also consider the transparency of forest-related decision-making and resource allocation, and the degree of accountability of governance mechanisms and processes.

Components under Pillar 3 examine critical aspects of forest administration and law enforcement, measures that deal with corruption, and the administration of tenure and property rights. A major component under this pillar considers the cooperation and coordination across implementing and enforcement agencies, which is vital for effective management and enforcement and for promoting overall good governance.

The framework offers a range of subcomponents under each component, encompassing important aspects of the forest governance assessment and monitoring process. An example of a suggested subcomponent is provided in Figure 2. The subcomponents of the framework provide a starting point; depending on their specific needs and areas of interest, users may focus on only some of the subcomponents, amend existing subcomponents or add additional ones.

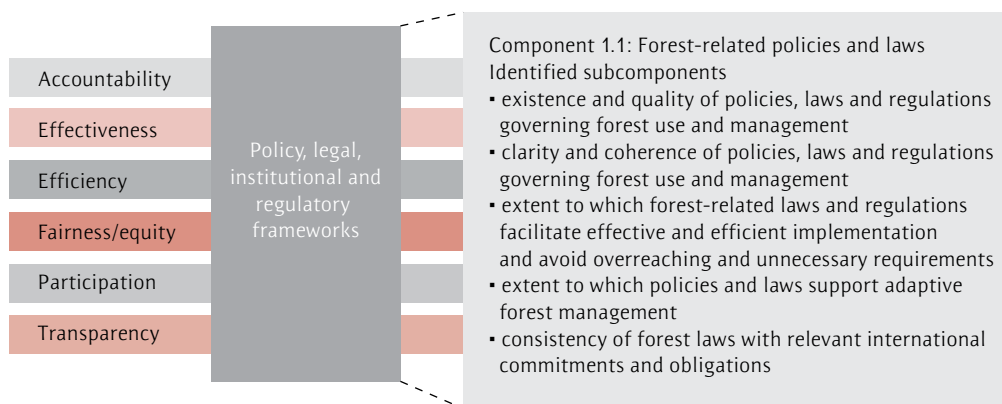
Once indicators for the governance subcomponents have been identified, they allow for periodic measuring, indicating any change in direction. The framework does not specify indicators, since they are necessarily specific to purpose and context. Rather, it provides a structure for the many governance indicators already in existence or under development. Users are encouraged to choose from the framework's subcomponents and develop new indicators according to their needs, objectives and the constraints they face concerning data and resource availability.

Ways of using the framework

The framework provides a basic structure that can be modified according to the purpose, available resources and the intended audience. Users may decide to use only parts of the framework; for example, to complement their perspectives in areas where they have less practical experience. They may also insert additional principles, pillars, components or subcomponents. For example, the framework applies differently to diagnosis than to

monitoring. Diagnosis refers to an analysis that aims to broaden understanding of a governance system. It applies a wider use of the framework to identify a system's characteristics, general patterns, and issues in need of attention, monitoring or intervention. Monitoring focuses on specific aspects of governance that require measurement and analysis over a period of time; these are likely to involve a higher level of detail and a smaller set of subcomponents.

Figure 2. Example of a component and subcomponents under Pillar 1



Source: Modified from FAO and PROFOR 2011

Although the framework was developed primarily to support forest governance assessment and monitoring on a country level, it can also be used in many other settings and by different users. In fact, the framework can be used by anyone involved in forest governance, at levels ranging from sub-national to international. The framework has a wide range of possible applications. Countries can use it to diagnose, monitor and assess the state of forest governance at different levels. Lobby groups, investors, donors, researchers and generators of forest governance data can use the framework to organize, analyze and communicate forest governance information. The framework can also be used for advocacy work aimed at emphasizing specific issues in a country, or in reform processes.

Initiatives such as REDD+, the Forest Investment Program (FIP), and the FLEGT VPA processes may use the framework as a starting point or reference for deciding what to monitor for their specific purposes, and to determine suitable governance measurement parameters. In the case of REDD+, for example, these are likely to include aspects related to other land uses and specific parameters concerning the REDD+ process itself, such as carbon rights and distribution of benefits.

The framework may also serve as a general reference to compare forest governance arrangements between countries. Whether and to what extent the framework can be appropriately employed for country-to-country comparisons will depend on the choice of indicators and the protocols adopted for their measurement and standardization.

Conclusions and next steps

The use of a common framework could streamline forest governance assessment and monitoring efforts, reducing overlaps in assessment, monitoring and reporting. For instance, forest governance monitoring and reporting requirements that follow from commitments to international agreements could be based on a common language and a common understanding of the concept and elements of forest governance that facilitate national-level actions.

The national and sub-national contexts in which forest governance assessment and monitoring is applied are case-specific, and so are the purpose and the desired outcomes. The framework is intended to serve as a basis for the development of context- and purpose-specific assessment and monitoring systems.

Based on initial experiences, the advantages of the framework are evident when it is used for initiating or strengthening a multi-stakeholder dialogue. The use of the framework — in whole or in part — supports the pooling of stakeholder groups' views and opinions, which is fundamental to the development of a workable strategy on improving forest governance as a whole.

The framework is a result of an ongoing process. As the practical experiences from its application and from other approaches in different countries and contexts and by different users accumulate, the lessons learned can revise and further improve the framework to increase its usefulness and practical applicability.³ For instance, experiences regarding technical capacity and the financial means required to strengthen or develop forest governance assessment and monitoring systems are necessary to improve the framework.

Recognizing the importance of sharing experiences on the many issues involved in undertaking forest governance assessments and monitoring, FAO and PROFOR are planning to organize a meeting during 2012 to bring together experiences from the framework's country-level application. The aim is to share views and develop further guidance on application of the framework.

It is hoped that the use of a widely accepted and applied framework, and its further improvement, will enhance common understanding of and communication about forest governance and lead to improvements that strengthen the practice of forest governance. Ultimately, the aim of strengthening forest governance is to make progress towards sustainable forest management.

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Endnotes

1. Diagnosis refers to examination that identifies or determines the nature and characteristics of a system or certain aspects of a system. Assessment refers to an appraisal that is based on analytical evaluation, often involving certain criteria and indicators. Monitoring is a continuous tracking or scrutiny for the purpose of collecting specified data or information.
2. The “+” in REDD+ refers to the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.
3. Some of these emerging experiences are described in articles of this publication (such as 2.3).

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