

Guinea is a prime example of a country that could benefit from community forest management, as it has long experienced widespread environmental degradation and loss of forests, largely due to illegal logging, land clearing and poaching by people who rely on the forests to eke out a living.

“We brokered a co-management agreement between the local community and the government and introduced a programme to improve incomes of people living in villages around the forests” **says Dennis Garrity, Director General of the World Agroforestry Centre.** “Incomes dramatically improved, the pressure on forests reduced, water sources flowed again and tree cover is steadily increasing.”

The CPF has seen again and again that by increasing local people’s ownership in the management of forest resources, communities are frequently in a better position to start forest product-based business, from which they can derive better incomes. Such businesses include an array of activities, encompassing everything from processing and marketing of shea nuts and butter in West Africa, to community forestry enterprises managing forest concessions in Petén, Guatemala. The ability to build increased household wealth is critical as it often results in improved food security, investments in children’s education as well as increased engagement in community and social improvement activities.

“When local people become equal partners in the benefits and responsibilities of sustainable forest management, many opportunities open up for them,” **says Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Director General of Forestry at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.** “Reliable access to forest resources means they can increase their cash income and engage in developing sustainable enterprises. What’s more, there is a clear incentive to better manage their lands to ensure the sustainability of the forest resources.”

The current international efforts to develop mechanisms for reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation and enhancing forest carbon stocks in developing countries (REDD+) represent new possibilities for local communities to benefit from sustainable management and conservation of forests.

However, according to a book published by the International Union of Forest Research Organizations “... unless considerable progress is made in securing the rights of local people to access, manage, and benefit from forests ... it is unlikely that deforestation and illegal logging will be curbed.”

International Tropical Timber Organization is another CPF member that promotes a holistic approach to involving communities in its various forestry projects throughout the tropics, and sees such involvement as a crucial link to improvements in both livelihoods and sustainable forest management.

At the recent United Nations Forum on Forests meeting in February, ministers stressed the crucial role of local people, including women, and local and indigenous communities in achieving sustainable forest management.

“When you have ministers from around the world recognize that communities are vital for sustainably managing forests, it becomes clear that the time to act is now, “ **says Jan McAlpine, Director of the United Nations Forum on Forest Secretariat.** “If we don’t see wide-scale investment in locally-controlled

forestry we will ultimately fail in some of our most important, and venerable goals, including reducing poverty and ensuring sustainable development for all.”

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The Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) is a voluntary arrangement among 14 international organizations and secretariats with substantial programs on forests. The CPF's mission is to promote the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forest and strengthen long term political commitment to this end.

CPF members:

- Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
- Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD Secretariat)
- Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
- Global Environment Facility (GEF Secretariat)
- International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO)
- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD Secretariat)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- United Nations Forum on Forest (UNFF Secretariat)
- United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC Secretariat)
- World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF)
- World Bank (World Bank)