GCS-Tenure Project

Tenure security and forest-dependent communities

A global comparative study 2014-2016

Introduction

Forest tenure reform has been at the center of the debate, on national as well as international policy agendas, in recent years. The reform is intended to give customary communities, local communities or local governments ownership or some level of rights over forestland and resources. During the period 2002–2013, the total forest area under community ownership or management increased by over 33 percent in developing countries (from 383 million ha in 2002 to 511 million ha in 2013)[1]. In developing countries, the tenure reform is assumed to improve the forest condition as well as wellbeing of forest communities if the tenure is defined properly and enforced appropriately.

For the past two decades, a number of governments in Africa, Asia and Latin America have revised the regulations and laws related to forest and land allocation to provide greater recognition of customary and local authorities, indigenous territorial rights, and women's rights. However, the impact of the reforms on the ground has fallen short of the expected outcomes. The reforms are either inadequate in conserving forest resources or providing limited livelihood returns for local people. In addition, women and the poor receive neither equitable political space in forest governance nor a fair share of the benefits from forest management.

The existing tenure reform has marked a number of factors that are crucial in determining the impact of reform, including a regulatory framework, administrative management, market forces, resource systems, and community attributes. However, there is limited understanding of the extent to which each of these factors affect the outcomes at the systems level. There is a need for comprehensive knowledge that is built on the insights of the evolution of tenure reform; integrates policy and practices; is based on the realistic assessment of the outcomes of reform; considers the constraints imposed by policies, and challenges faced during policy enforcement; and takes into account capacity, cultural, behavioral and power dimensions.

1 Based on: RRI (2014). What future for reform? Progress and slowdown in forest tenure reform since 2002. Washington DC, Rights and Resources Initiative.

What is forest tenure reform

Forest tenure is related to access to and use of forest resources, and determines who owns, uses, manages and makes decisions about these resources.

Forest tenure reform is understood as change in existing rules that transfers (part of) rights and responsibilities away from the centralized forest authorities to customary authorities, local resource users or local governments. Tenure security involves the extent of the rights granted together with the duration of rights and risk of losing them. Moreover, the security of the rights depends on how people perceive and experience the rights, whether the rights are statutory or customary.

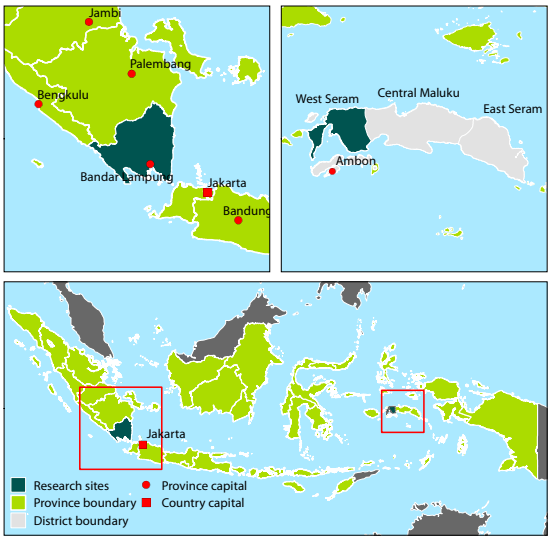
Research questions

The research primarily aims to address the questions such as who gets what from the implementation of tenure reform, and how tenure security of the forest dependent communities, especially women and other marginalized members can be strengthened. This research also integrates questions and variables relevant to evolution, processes, outcomes and challenges of tenure reform implementation in relation to extent of rights given to the forest dependent communities and tenure security.

Research Objectives

This research and action aims to generate knowledge and operational tools to improve the implementation of tenure reform and to strengthen the capacity of actors across different governance levels. We aim to:

- Establish how reforms emerge, and experiences and options for formal approaches secure customary rights.
- Identify the impacts of reform on rights and access of women, poor men and ethnic minorities to forest and tree resources.
- Identify factors that constrain reform implementation.
- Disseminate lessons learned and knowledge generated at the sub-national, national, regional and international levels.
- Develop the capacity of stakeholders for the uptake of results.



Research sites in Indonesia are located in the Maluku (Seram Island) and Lampung Provinces

Research Methods

Multiple methods will be employed to address tenure reform and gender equity. Both are complex and dynamic issues that are embedded within cultures, histories and political economies. Quantitative techniques, as well as qualitative, ethnographic and participatory techniques (including Participatory Prospective Analysis or PPA) will be used to uncover patterns within countries and across types of reforms, and to generate in-depth understanding of implementation processes, interactions and outcomes. Multiple methods also provide the opportunity for cross-verification, and increase the credibility of the research findings.

Research Sites

Target countries for detailed comparative analysis include Indonesia, Peru and Uganda. Three additional countries for comparison as well as for targeted knowledge sharing and uptake of research results include the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador and Nepal.

Research sites in Indonesia are located in the Maluku (Seram Island) and Lampung Provinces. Sites were selected based on several criteria that reflect variation in: a) the extent to which local community rights are perceived to be secure; b) the advancement of reform implementation; and c) cultural and demographic factors. The project will seek an opportunity to work jointly with local communities, NGOs, universities, local and national government actors responsible for forestry and land allocation.

Photos by Nining Liswanti and Tuti Herawati

Expected outputs

- Assessment of structures (institutions), processes and outcomes of tenure reforms both globally from the literature and for the study countries;
- Improved methods and frameworks for assessing tenure reform outcomes;
- Strategies designed to address constraints to and capitalize on opportunities for implementation of tenure reforms;
- Enhanced understanding of tenure issues and opportunities for reform for policymakers and other key stakeholders through their engagement in the process of research and analysis, and through targeted communication and dialogue.

Target Group and Beneficiaries

- Poor forest-dependent communities, both men and women, in target countries;
- Policymakers and practitioners in target countries who design and implement land and forest tenure policies;
- Donors, NGOs and other actors that seek to influence existing policies/ practices.

RESEARCH PROGRAM ON
Forests, Trees and Agroforestry

This research was carried out by CIFOR as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (CRP-FTA). This collaborative program aims to enhance the management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape from forests to farms. CIFOR leads CRP-FTA in partnership with Bioversity International, CATIE, CIRAD, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture and the World Agroforestry Centre.

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