

# Communities and their partners

## Governance and community-based forest management

### Nicholas K. Menzies

Since very early times, forests have been the site of conflicts between States and people whose livelihoods depend on forest resources. States have intervened to control forest resources in the name of ‘public interest,’ thereby restricting access to these resources by people who have traditionally or historically depended on them.

It has been about 20 years since governments, international donors, and others initiated community-based forest management (CBFM) programs involving forest communities in the management of forests, which had formerly been the exclusive preserve of state agencies. The Ford Foundation is one of a number of international organisations that have recently commissioned reviews to assess the impacts of CBFM on communities, the forests they depend on, and on government forest management agencies. This review consisted of case studies from China, India, Mexico, the Philippines, and the United States. The Ford Foundation review also assessed the impacts of national, regional, and global networks promoting CBFM. It found that despite the differences between the countries and the activities involved, governance is emerging as a central concern of all the partners involved with the evolution of CBFM.

Community-based forest management initiatives have attempted to create a favorable policy environment for devolving management of forested lands to communities or entities other than government agencies. In reality, though, the various actors in CBFM have different perspectives on the origins and objectives of CBFM. In some places, forestry departments saw CBFM as a route to more effective forest management, to higher success rates in reforestation programs, or as a strategy to reduce erosion and land degradation in upland areas. While a plurality of motives for participating in CBFM programs is not in itself a problem, experience has shown the importance of managing the different expectations of diverse partners through principles of good governance such as open fora for discussion of issues, and mutually accepted procedures for making and implementing decisions.

Many communities complain that CBFM has devolved the most burdensome responsibilities for protection, monitoring, and planting to them without a symmetrical devolution of decision-making authorities, which tend to remain firmly in the hands of government agencies. CBFM institutions are also easily dominated by their

more powerful and more articulate members, entrenching inequitable relations within communities. Good governance must therefore give equitable access to decision-making about forest resources, and CBFM institutions must consciously craft rules and procedures to ensure that the voices of the weak and disenfranchised are heard.

Community-based forest management will not in itself resolve long-standing conflicts over resources, but it has the potential to play an important role in strategies for sustainable management if there is a realignment of relations among households, community, and government. To realize this potential, it will be important to place more emphasis on crafting inclusive, equitable and accountable mechanisms to mediate relations between partners from the national, and even international level to the local.

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# Institutionalising Biodiversity Conservation

## The case of Ethiopian coffee forests

### Franz W. Gatzweiler

In Ethiopia, as in many other countries, the conservation of biological diversity poses a challenge requiring social re-organisation at different levels. Encouraging experiences with co-management approaches in participatory forest management show that local resource users can sustainably use biodiversity when rights and responsibilities are fairly shared. A diversity of institutions and governance structures, at multiple levels, is required, however, to achieve the conservation of biodiversity. This is due to both the manifold features and functions of biodiversity at different scales and to the varying attributes of the actors directly or indirectly involved

Current approaches to biodiversity conservation very often entail inventorying plant and animal species, modelling ecosystem dynamics, or harnessing traditional plant medicines. Approaches that recognise the importance of institutions in biodiversity conservation often propagate the market, the State, or the community as the most suitable form of governance. I argue that none of these forms of governance is a panacea for biodiversity conservation, and that the various components of biodiversity require to be managed by a diversity of institutions.

Institutional diversity, per se, however, cannot ensure successful biodiversity conservation. Nor is it useful for identifying practical starting points for action. The Ethiopian case demonstrates what happens when the government ‘steps aside’ to allow the market to ‘work its wonders.’ For governments

and markets to function properly, trust is an inevitable ingredient of institutional design for sustainability. Therefore, the entire range of institutions, from the level of informal local institutions to the level of bureaucracies, markets, and prices (see Figure) needs to be considered in that design. In the words of Prof. H. Vogtmann, president of the German Federal Agency for Nature Conservation, on a recent trip to Ethiopia, “All keys of the piano need to be played.”

Although federal officials willingly pass on responsibilities and duties to the regions, the institutional grounds for biodiversity conservation have not been fully laid in Ethiopia. What is required is a better recognition of local rights. So also, a better

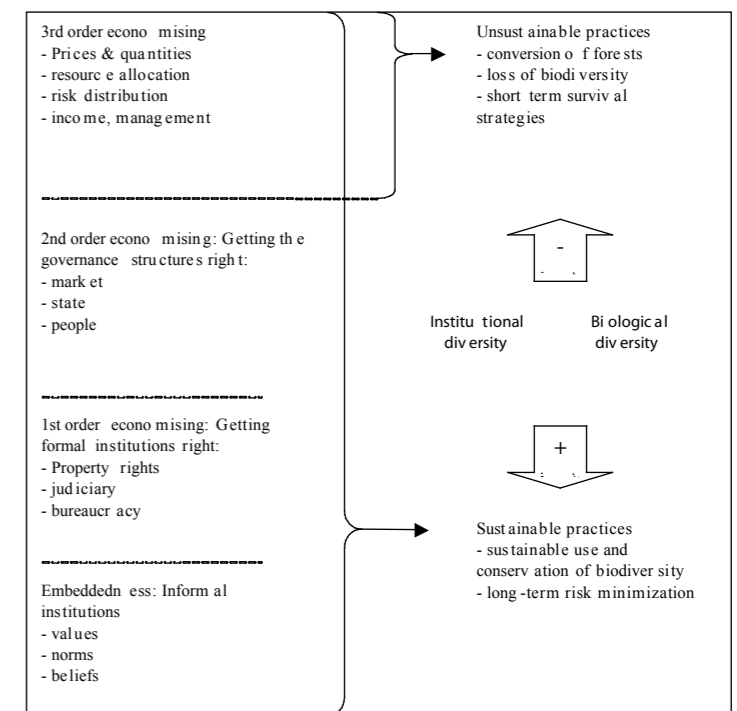


Figure: The entire range of institutions, from the level of informal institutions to the level of bureaucracies, markets, and prices needs to be engaged in well coordinated, collective action for achieving the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity

endowing of the regions with the financial and human resources they need to fulfil additional duties such as safeguarding the provision of public goods and services from forests, instead of additional tax disincentives on the benefits derived from successful community management of forest resources. After recognising the importance of institutional diversity, the challenge is to shape the context-specific patterns of that diversity and to identify starting points for action.

This requires awareness building, communication, trust-building, guidance, and mediation. In Ethiopia today those measures are still heavily supported by NGOs and the international aid community. Governmental support in the form of tax and other incentives and extension services do not exist, or fail to reach local resource users. The attempt to conserve Ethiopia's wild coffee forests illustrates that all stakeholders have their individual interests but also share a common vision. Well co-ordinated collective action is a necessary consequence of institutional diversity.

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## Ankila Hiremath

**N**on timber forest products – the fruits, roots, bark, flowers, resins, and fibres that people collect from forests – make an important contribution to both subsistence and market economies, worldwide. In India alone, more than 50 million people are estimated to depend on forests for non-timber products (hereafter, NTFP). Locally, NTFP can account for 30-40 % of cash incomes for forest-dependent communities, and at a global scale the value of trade in NTFP runs into billions of dollars.

Our relationship with NTFP has a long history – humans were hunter-gatherers much before they learnt settled agriculture. But managing forests for NTFP has only captured the imagination of conservation scientists in the last couple of decades. This change can be traced back to an influential article by Charles Peters and others, written in 1989, suggesting that the long term economic benefits from managing tropical forests for NTFP far exceeded the benefits from converting them to agriculture or other land uses. This provided a justification for tropical forest conservation that was socioeconomic as well, and not just biological: Forests and their

# Non Timber Forest Products

component biodiversity could be conserved, while at the same time enhancing livelihoods of forest-dependent communities through their sustainable extraction of NTFP. Enthusiasm for the dual promise of this “good extractivism” has since had to be tempered – it turns out that managing forests for NTFP often has higher ecological costs and lower economic benefits than originally expected. Yet, understanding the constraints to good extractivism may enable us to seek solutions for sustainably managing forests for NTFP. The set of pan-tropical articles in this special collection attempts to do just that.

Shahabuddin and Prasad, review research on the ecology of NTFP harvesting in India, and provide an overview of the kinds of ecological costs potentially associated with NTFP harvesting. There can be direct deleterious impacts on the target NTFP species, either due to over-harvesting, or due to destructive harvesting practices. In India one of the few places where there has been extensive research on various aspects of NTFP harvesting is the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary, Karnataka. Uma Shaanker and colleagues

summarise a series of studies that demonstrate how the NTFP harvesting can have consequences that range from genes to ecosystems: Trees of three important NTFP species – *Phyllanthus emblica*, *Terminalia chebula*, and *Terminalia bellerica* – showed reduced genetic variability closer to human settlements, as compared to further away, a difference that the authors associate with a gradient in harvesting intensity. This same effect of harvest intensity was reflected in the number of seedlings and saplings of these NTFP species, a sign of whether or not there is a next generation of individuals necessary to maintain the population. These studies also show that there may be effects of harvesting and other associated human use that extend to other non-target species. For example, they describe altered species composition in forests closer to human settlements relative to forests further from settlements, and lower total biomass in forests closer to human settlements relative to forests further from settlements.

In another study, also in the Biligiri Rangaswamy Temple Wildlife Sanctuary, Ganesan and Setty describe the case of two species of amla, *Phyllanthus emblica* and *P. indofischeri*, which both occur in this area. *P. emblica* occurs in moist deciduous forests, whereas *P. indofischeri* occurs in drier scrub forest. Both species of amla are subject to similar harvest pressure, but *P. emblica* shows very little regeneration of young individuals,

unlike *P. indofischeri*. The authors suggest that anthropogenic disturbances not directly related to harvesting (e.g., fire and grazing) can also have an impact on NTFP species.

Ecological effects of NTFP harvesting can vary according to the plant part harvested. This is



Photo: Nitin D. Rai

illustrated by Runk and others, from a study in the Darién Province of Panama, where the Wounan and Emberá communities rely on several important NTFP such as fruits of the tagua palm (*Phytelephas seemannii*) for its vegetable ivory, and fronds of the chungu palm (*Astrocaryum standleyanum*) for fibre that is woven into fine baskets. Tagua harvest does not

jeopardize regeneration of the palm, but the chungu palm is killed to obtain its fronds. The authors also draw attention to the year-to-year variation in availability of certain products, as well as to the variation in harvest amounts, relative to proximity to tourist markets. They use these findings to make the important point that most studies on harvesting of NTFP are based on short-term observations, made on small populations, which thereby limit the recommendations that can be made on their basis.

But ecological consequences of NTFP harvesting are not just a consequence of the biology or natural history of the plant or animal concerned. Socio-economic factors such as equity in access to resources, and tenure regime, can also have important impacts on harvest practices, thus on ecological sustainability. Rai and Uhl, in their study of uppage (*Garcinia gummi-gutta*) rind harvesting in Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka, show that Brahmins, who have tenurial rights in Soppinabettas, can afford to wait until the fruit is ripe and the rind falls to the ground. This way, there is no damage to the trees, nor competition for fruits with fruit-eating animals, and seeds are left in the forest to germinate. On the other hand, people – largely lower caste non-Brahmins, as it happens – who rely on open-access reserve forests for their harvest of uppage, are compelled to harvest the fruit before it is ripe, often cutting