Forests for People

Community Rights and Forest Tenure Reform

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6

Community Networks, Collective Action and Forest Management Benefits

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This chapter focuses on understanding the forms, scope and nature of secondary-level community institutions and their role in securing tenure and enhancing forest-based benefits. The previous chapter has made clear the problems that remain in efforts to construct fair mechanisms for representation and devolution of appropriate authority. Here, we take a pragmatic view, looking at collective action at a secondary level, such as networks, and explain the role they play in mediating the reform processes and ultimately shaping their outcomes.

Community networks build on community-level collective action, scaling up these actions at higher levels. *Community network* (hereafter 'network') refers to the diverse forms of secondary-level organizations of forest-dependent communities, such as federations, alliances and associations that defend and promote community interests. Despite the large literature on collective action at the local level (Ostrom, 1990,1999; Agrawal, 2001; Bromley, 2004), scholarly work on secondary-level organisations, particularly networks, is relatively scarce. This chapter explores the evolution and dynamics of networks – as sites for collective action – of forest-dependent communities and explores their roles in enhancing forest tenure security and livelihood benefits.

Networks have often become part of the forest tenure reform process. In most of the cases studied, networks emerged from a major reform process and later became the promoter of further devolution. More than isolated and localized traditional institutions, networks can be seen as modern institutions for collective action that facilitate learning, sharing, mutual exchange and collaboration. The frequent interaction and communication among local groups, in turn, help networks advance their agendas.

Since networks have increasingly become part of tenure reform processes, more knowledge and reflection about the evolution and dynamics of networks could facilitate the tenure reform process itself. What are the political and policy contexts in which such networks emerged? What are their organizational structures, scope, priorities, strategies and activities? What roles have networks played in shaping forest policy and practice? What are the major achievements in terms of securing tenure and enhancing the benefits of forest management? What are the major challenges? What theoretical and practical lessons can be drawn from these stories? The answers to these questions may expand our knowledge of community networks in the context of forest tenure reform.

The chapter explores how local communities and concerned groups of citizens can effectively participate in constituting networks and influence management practice at different scales of forest governance. We identify the conditions under which these specific networks evolve, grow and serve the above-mentioned functions. We primarily draw on three cases: the Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal (FECOFUN), the Association of Forest Communities of Petén, Guatemala (ACOFOP) and the Integrated Agroextractivists of Pando Farmers' Cooperative, Ltd., Bolivia (COINACAPA), here referred to as the Brazil Nut Producers' Cooperative. The first two networks consist of community-level organizations involved in forest management. They are primarily involved in policy advocacy in securing community rights and enhancing community interests. The third is a cooperative of individual producers that works to secure its members' interests in the market. In addition, we also refer to similar initiatives in other countries to substantiate the discussion.

The second part of the chapter discusses theories of collective action and community networks. The three cases are presented in the third part. The fourth part, drawing from the cases, identifies some common patterns and extracts lessons regarding the evolution and dynamics of networks and their roles in securing forest rights and enhancing livelihood benefits.

Collective action and community networks

A few scholars, responding to the increased interest in secondary-level organizations, have begun focusing on the emergence and dynamics of community networks (Cronkleton et al, 2008; Ojha et al, 2008). Theorists have focused on collective action for the management of the commons at the grassroots level (Baland and Platteau, 1996; Ostrom, 1999) but have not fully explained the dynamics of networks at a higher level. We explain networks' collective action through a social movement perspective. Although the notion of social movements often indicates resistance, reflecting grievances around perceived injustices, we take a broader definition where such movements constitute the pursuit of alternative agendas, such as establishing cooperatives and taking other affirmative actions aimed at improving livelihoods. Similarly, although *network* connotes the notion of horizontal relations, here we are talking about secondary-level organizations of community institutions that

exist within a hierarchy, albeit one that is less rigid than state bureaucracies or corporate bodies.

Because we take a social movement perspective to understand and explain collective action at the level of networks, we differentiate them from traditional movements. Scholars often distinguish between traditional collective action and contemporary social movements, even though these share some common features. First, social movements do not constitute fundamental (economic) classes; instead, they are aggregates of various social groups (Offe, 1985, p831). In case of the common pool resources, people from different classes may share common concerns and form alliances to promote their collective interests. Second, whereas trade unions and other political organizations often aim to capture state power, forest dwellers, landless people and ethnic minorities simply demand more secure rights over the resources on which they rely (Hickey and Bracking, 2005). Third, a corollary to the second, new social movements have shifted away from the realm of state and political parties and operate within civil society by creating 'new spaces and solidarities' (Cohen, 1983, p106). The network-led movements are neither guided by grand ideological positions nor intended to rule the nation, though they may seek more autonomy at sub-national or local levels. As Harvey (2003, p182) states, the traditional trade union movements are understood to be resistant against 'accumulation through exploitation', whereas network-led movements are targeted against 'accumulation through dispossession'. Fourth, unlike many traditional movements, which are primarily concerned with material production and distribution, indigenous people or other forest dwellers are also concerned with symbolic capital, such as identity (Habermas, 1981, p33).

Community networks have coevolved with extension of the collective action spreading across a large territory. Collective action aimed at social change can be considered a social movement (Touraine, 1985; Neidhardt and Rucht, 1991; Jelin, 1986). In fact, as popular collective action gradually transforms the participants into social actors, those actions take the form of social movements. Since these actions largely operate in the triangular space between family, state and the market, they can be identified as civil society networks (Habib and Kotze, 2002, p3).

However, these distinctions are made largely based on experiences of social movements in developed countries, particularly in the west. This Eurocentric interpretation of social movements may not adequately explain the social movements in developing countries. Forsyth (2007), for example, based on his study of environmental movements in Thailand, suggests that social movements in developing countries carry a relatively stronger class flavour. Unlike in post-industrial societies, poor and marginalized communities in developing countries have always been struggling to secure access to a livelihoods resource base. Protecting access to forests, land and water has remained the major driver behind the Chipko and Narmada environmental movements (India) and the rubber tappers' movement (Brazil). Therefore, it can be argued that in tropical forested countries, community networks – the leaders of forest-based social movements seeking resource rights – may also share some elements with conventional movements.

What kinds of socio-political environments are conducive to collective action at higher scales? First, the emergence of social movements largely depends on the political opportunities that may facilitate or inhibit collective action. Social movements emerge out of political opportunities, which are then expanded by movements themselves, creating further opportunities for new movements (Ballard et al, 2003, p3). The political regime and cultural traditions in any society may facilitate or inhibit the legitimate forms for voicing grievances. Generally, such movements flourish in a relatively liberal political regime where basic citizen rights are respected and free media function. Similarly, the greater the spatial and functional decentralization of a given political system, the more effective will be the social movement (Ash-Garner and Zald, 1987, p310). This allows more space for the lower units of government and community initiatives and gives rise to local groups of diverse nature, form and scope. Consequently, secondary-level organizations like networks, cooperatives and alliances emerge and prosper. This equally applies in forest-based rights movements. For example, Cronkleton et al (2008) observed that areas with minimal state presence provided conditions conducive to forest-based social movements because public institutions that could defend local rights or interests were absent. They found that local communities' common understanding of the threat to their collective livelihood interests served as the primary driver of these movements.

Second, how communities mobilize their resources is an important aspect of understanding these networks. *Resources* here comprise grassroots political constituents, enthusiastic local cadres and sympathetic supporters as well as material resources. Community networks place their resources under collective control for pursuing their collective interests. The networks mobilize resources and influence other groups to contend for power (Tilly, 1978, p78). McCarthy and Zald (1977, p1215), for example, suggest that the leaders act as 'issue entrepreneurs' by constructing issues and grievances. Charismatic leaders identify and define grievances, develop a group identity, devise strategies and mobilize the members, often taking advantage of political opportunities. Similarly, external support, particularly during the initial stages, is important for the emergence of such movements. Cronkleton et al (2008) found that external support in the form of official technical assistance and community funding for institutional growth remains instrumental in expanding and sustaining a movement.

Based on those general theoretical understandings of collective action and social movements, we seek to explain the networks of community groups in managing forests. We analyse cases from Nepal, Guatemala and Bolivia to explain the emergence, functioning and outcomes of community networks.

Nepal: Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal

The Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal (FECOFUN), the largest civil society organization in Nepal, represents forest-dependent communities. It emerged along with the growth of community forestry, particularly since the 1990s. Today it represents more than 14,000 community forest user groups

(CFUGs) spread across the country, which manage about 25 per cent of the country's forests (Dahal and Chapagain, 2008; Ojha et al, 2008).

Nepal introduced community-based forest management in the late 1970s to halt ongoing deforestation and degradation, particularly in the midhills. The programme gained momentum after the Panchayat system (a non-party political system under Nepal's monarchy) was overthrown in the 1990s and a multiparty parliamentary system was established. The new Parliament endorsed the Forest Act of 1993, allowing district forest officers to hand over part of the national forests to identified user groups (HMG/MoLJ, 1993). The act recognized CFUGs as self-governing, independent, autonomous and corporate institutions that could acquire, possess, transfer or otherwise manage their own property, such as forest resources or any related funds (HMG/MoLJ, 1993, Art. 43). A CFUG is a collective entity representing every household in the neighbourhood of any specified forest patch, usually through household heads as general members. The members, through their annual general assembly, elect an executive committee to carry out everyday forest management and associated activities. These communities range from ten households (managing 0.5ha of forest) to 10,000 households (managing 8000 ha). Following the new act, thousands of CFUGs formed and began to manage community forests (see Chapters 7 and 8).

FECOFUN, as a secondary-level network, emerged as community forestry developed. Four factors in particular contributed to its establishment (see Box 6.1). First, during the early years of community forestry, CFUGs faced institutional and technical challenges, such as forming effective executive committees, preparing group constitutions and forest operational plans and carrying out recommended forest management activities. They sought to benefit from exchange and sharing with other CFUGs who were facing similar challenges. Second, although the parliament endorsed the Forest Act of 1993, the government, particularly the forest bureaucracy, undermined its spirit by developing restrictive regulations and using discretionary power (see Chapters 7 and 8). The CFUGs consolidated their resistance by strengthening FECOFUN. Third, the new multiparty political system promoted democratic values, norms and principles and provided space for diverse forms of citizen groups to flourish. Fourth, external aid supported CFUG networking to promote and institutionalize community forestry. The Ford Foundation and bilateral forestry projects of the Swiss, British and Danish governments funded more than 95 per cent of FECOFUN's costs during its early phases (FECOFUN, 1999). Today it has 73 district chapters, 560 range post chapters and 11,700 CFUGs as formally registered members.

Actions and strategies

During the early 1990s, CFUGs urgently needed help with institutional and technical aspects, but the service provided by the government and some bilateral forestry projects was far from adequate. FECOFUN emerged to support preparation of operational plans, proper recordkeeping, improved

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BOX 6.1. INSTITUTIONAL EVOLUTION OF FECOFUN

July 1992: First sharing workshop among CFUG representatives of Dhankuta district
February 1993: National workshop with 40 CFUGs from 28 districts
May 1995: Formation of *ad hoc* committee of FECOFUN following national CFUG workshop
September 1995: Formal registration of FECOFUN in Kathmandu

Source: FECOFUN (2002)

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forest management practices and compliance with local and global standards for sustainable management (such as those of Forest Stewardship Council).

As community forestry expanded from a few intensively supported and carefully designed groups to a large number of groups across the country, some cases of unsustainable harvesting (Luintel, 2002), misuse of funds (Gentle et al, 2007) and exclusion of marginalized people (Agarwal, 2001; Nightingale, 2002) became apparent, especially in the *terai,* the southern lowland with dense and valuable forests of sal (*Shorea robusta*). The forest authorities overreacted and introduced restrictive policies for forest management, harvesting, sale of forest products and financial management. A series of government policy decisions, guidelines and circulars increased forest officers' discretionary power to sanction, monitor and approve CFUG activities. FECOFUN saw this as undermining local autonomy and resisted these 'regressive' moves. Table 6.1 lists the major government decisions and FECOFUN's responses, which are mostly targeted towards protecting community rights over forests.

FECOFUN uses diverse strategies and tactics including sit-in protests, street rallies, blockades of government forest offices, memoranda, press conferences, mass meetings and media campaigns. Apart from launching advocacy campaigns, it has fought several legal cases on behalf of member CFUGs, defending their autonomy. For example, in the fiscal year 1999–2000, it filed 15 cases in various courts. It also engages in constructive policy dialogue by participating in various policy forums, such as task forces and working groups like the national-level Forest Sector Coordination Committee and the District Forest Coordination Committee.

Achievements

The FECOFUN-led movement has had some successes (see Table 6.1). Although unable to reverse all undesirable decisions, the movement has helped stakeholders pursue collective action in forest management. For example, FECOFUN has promoted 50 per cent women's representation and greater allocation to livelihood activities that benefit the poor – ideas institutionalized by the government's 2009 community forestry guidelines. FECOFUN is now

Table 6.1. *Government action and FECOFUN response*

Date	Issue	FECOFUN activities	Outcome
1998	Timber Corporation of Nepal granted monopoly over timber trade	Organized street protest, held press conference, informally lobbied stakeholders	Government changed its decision; by implication, parastatal monopoly would not control trade in timber from forests managed by communities and local governments
1999	First amendment of Forest Act of 1993 gave more power to forest officers and restricted CFUG rights, required 50% of CFUG funds be invested in forest management	Organized disobedience, raised awareness in CFUGs about impacts of amendment	Partially successful; both forest officers and CFUG members can take action against CFUG committees for mismanagement, 50% requirement reduced to 25%
2000	Circular restricting community forestry in *terai*	Held mass meeting and press conference, submitted memorandum, lobbied policy-makers	Ban on community forestry handover in *terai* was lifted
2002	Forest Regulation of 1995 amended to remove provision giving 'special priority' to community forestry over other management options	Lobbied against decision, conducted nationwide campaign, held mass meetings at local level, submitted memorandum	Unsuccessful; amendment allows government to hand over part of national forest to private companies without prioritizing community forests
2003	Financial ordinance imposing 40% tax on CFUG forest product sales	Conducted nationwide campaigns, street protest and mass meeting, lobbied decision-makers	Tax reduced to 15% and limited to sale of two products (sal and sisso timber)
2005–2006	Illegal interference and seizure of CFUG bank accounts by zonal administrators	Held rallies in several districts	Seizure of bank accounts halted
2006–2007	Some community forests used by government for army barracks and Maoist rebels' cantonments	Submitted memorandum listing alternative options	Most community forests returned to local control

Source: adapted from FECOFUN (2002)

recognized as a major actor in the forest policy process. Its nationwide network and the sheer mass of people it represents have helped it to challenge power imbalances between the forest bureaucracy and local communities and increase user groups' sense of security over their forest rights.

Challenges

FECOFUN has faced both institutional and programmatic challenges. Grooming of new leaders, especially women and marginalized people, appears inadequate. Upper-caste males still dominate the leadership. FECOFUN is often criticized for its blind support of a populist agenda without proper reflection. According to some critics, it often reacts defensively to proposals rather than developing thoughtful positions (Ojha et al, 2008). A major threat is that because the leaders and cadres are affiliated with political parties, the movement could be coopted by a party agenda at any point. Also, FECOFUN is under pressure to meet growing demands by CFUGs for diverse types of services for their effective operation.

Financial sustainability is another major challenge. General institutional funding is shrinking and project-based funding is restricted to specified activities. This limits FECOFUN's ability to defend the user groups' rights. Moreover, not all the projects are compatible with its priorities (Ojha et al, 2007; Timsina, 2003). For example, when FECOFUN implemented a project on reproductive health with support from the United Nations Population Fund, many members questioned the link with forest rights.

Guatemala: Association of Forest Communities of Petén

As part of an effort to recognize the importance of forest biodiversity, the Guatemalan government, supported by international conservation organizations, established the Maya Biosphere Reserve in 1990 (National Decree 5-90), the largest protected area in Mesoamerica, encompassing more than 2 million ha (see Chapter 3). By the mid-1990s, with the civil war[1] winding down, the Guatemalan government faced a new and unpredictable conflict in the Petén. In a region characteristically lacking formal channels of communication and minimal mechanisms for governance, conservation agencies made little effort to reach out to distant and atomized forest community settlements (Sundberg, 1998). The regional economy had been based on the extraction of timber and diverse non-timber forest products. In 1994, the government, with the strong backing of USAID, legalized a formal community concession system in the multiple-use zone of the Maya Biosphere Reserve. This would be the largest community forestry endeavour implemented by the Guatemalan government.

According to Monterroso and Barry (2008), concessions became the compromise solution to establish a system of control in which all parties collaborated. The Association of Forest Communities of Petén (ACOFOP), as the representative of the community concessions, played a major role in promoting their economic, environmental and political interests. Additionally, stakeholders believed that concessions based on timber management would ensure better short-term economic benefits for residents than extraction of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) or tourism. Both the forest authorities and the community concessions saw the timber schemes as providing sufficient incentives for local participation and eventually long-term sustainability. The model sought to promote sharing of decision-making and benefits between

local communities and the government, with decentralized responsibilities and rights.

A community concession consists of a 25-year contract between an organized and legally recognized group and the Guatemalan government; the contract grants usufruct rights to the former to manage renewable natural resources in protected areas.[2] Two types of community concessions can be identified: one type of organization is embedded within a community and is located inside the reserve's multiple-use zone; the other is an organization whose members belong to one or more communities living outside the multiple-use zone.

The initial concessions offered to communities were too small to be economically viable. The communities 'pushed back' to increase the size, levels of access and extent of control but needed to integrate their demands into a common discourse, since they were dispersed throughout the forest. While some communities staked claims to *maintain* rights held informally over NTFPs and to defend their customary rights of residence in the forest, other groups living outside the multiple-use zone made similar claims to *increase* access to forest resources. With the establishment of the concession system, the community groups began to form a secondary-level organization that consolidated community bargaining power.

Origins and evolution

Efforts to create a network started in 1995, when the Consultative Council of Forest Communities of Petén was established by community leaders with the support of the Rubber Tappers Union. The intent was to establish an organization that could integrate the different community claims into a single, unified voice. This organization would work towards expanding community concessions across the multiple-use zone within the Maya Biosphere Reserve. The organizers proposed to enlarge the initially small areas. Additionally, they negotiated a change in the framework to include the allocation of rights to communities outside the multiple-use zone. Above all, this network was the key to ensuring that community groups were participating actively in decision-making processes. By 1997 the network had become ACOFOP, with 22 community groups as members.

The first concession, granted in 1994, was allocated to a community group for 7000ha; the last community concession was allocated in 2002. The largest concession is 93,000ha. All told, the 12 community concessions in the multiple-use zone encompass more than 400,000ha, 96 per cent of which has been certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (see Chapter 3). Direct beneficiaries include more than 2000 families in 16 communities and three municipalities.

Activities and strategies

Today, ACOFOP defines itself as the representative of community organizations and acts as a vigilant advocate for community claims (see Table 6.2). Initially, the network focused on defending community groups' access to concessions;

Table 6.2 *ACOFOP activities*

Event	Actions
Contract negotiation (1994–2002)	Channelled technical, organizational and legal assistance to help communities understand implications of contracts, facilitated negotiation processes
New legal norms for integrated management and NGO accompaniment	Challenged allocation of integrated management rights over both timber and NTFPs Challenged role of NGOs as legally designated technical assistance providers and required cosigners for valid contracts Strengthened bargaining power of community organizations to select external organizations to assist them
Strengthening of community member organizations (1994–present)	Promoted legalization of community organizations and compliance with contracts Maintained communication and dialogue with grassroots member organizations through workshops, discussions, training processes
Expansion of petroleum concessions for exploration (1998); expansion of Mirador basin project (2002–2005)	Mediated and supported community concession organizations in negotiations with project promoters Engaged with communities in discussing alternative mechanisms and legal and project proposals that could benefit management of multiple-use zone Maintained communication between local and national levels on experience of community organizations in Petén through press releases, TV, radio Defended exclusion rights of community concession organizations when challenged (petroleum, Mirador tourism project) Established strategic alliances with government officials, NGO representatives
Regional development plan for Petén	Participated in multisectoral discussions for development of Mirador Park (known as 4-Balam initiative) Developed proposals to engage in project

Source: ACOFOP-CIFOR (2007)

now it concentrates on political advocacy to ensure that community concession rights are respected and that external interests do not encroach on their rights.[3] ACOFOP also provides technical assistance and *acompañamiento* (such as political and administrative advice) to member communities, strengthening members' organizational, technical and productive skills to facilitate self-management. It has facilitated access to credit and forest markets, improving members' livelihoods. Major decisions are taken in general assemblies that meet once a year. Participants appoint the board of directors together with the technical office (composed of several community technicians) to implement projects financed with members' support or by donors. The board of directors consists of seven members, selected from the legal representatives among member organizations, plus one representative of individual members, elected for a two-year period.

Achievements

The resulting arrangement among conservation authorities, community concessionaires, the timber industry and local government is a unique experiment for Latin America (Monterroso and Barry, 2008). The Petén has become a centre for learning for other community leaders. Outside Mexico, nowhere in Latin America has such a large bundle of rights to land and forest resources been transferred in such a short period of time and at the same time received government and donor investment and support. Following Monterroso and Barry (2008, 2009) and Barry and Monterroso (2008), major outcomes emerging from the work of ACOFOP include the following.

The concession model allowed communities to secure their residence in the area and hold usufruct rights for at least 25 years, with the possibility of renewal. Their members could now begin to exploit forest resources under sustainable use criteria, with standards and indicators elaborated for different resources. Community organizations and ACOFOP had to increase their capacity and project their agendas nationally and regionally to meet the challenges.

Illegal logging and the sacking of archaeological sites diminished significantly. Forest cover has been maintained, particularly compared with neighbouring protected areas where deforestation has been increasing (Bray et al, 2008; Monterroso and Barry, 2009). Community members established local governance systems based on an expanded set of rights of access, use and decision-making over their natural resources. This included organizing constant vigilance and patrol of the boundaries of the concessions.

Community concessionaires have increased incomes notably as they reap the benefits of harvesting high-value timber; such management activities provide employment in the region, directly involving 2000 families and benefiting more than 3000 families indirectly (Monterroso, 2007). More than 50 per cent of the 17 timber species managed are exported; 70 per cent of the production was value-added sawn wood. Eight community concession groups have bought their own sawmills. Through the work of ACOFOP, the annual timber management plans were accepted by local banks, ensuring access to credit.

Through the charismatic leadership of ACOFOP, it was possible to integrate dispersed local organizations into a single representative body, allowing for external advocacy and providing a vehicle to take concessions to scale. ACOFOP has made it possible for local organizations to defend exclusion rights.

Challenges

ACOFOP needs to be able to respond to the changing dynamics in the Petén and satisfy the diverse demands of member organizations. From a technical perspective, it must help its members meet the standards and comply with the regulations for sustainable forest management to renew their concession rights. Some community concession groups have limited capacity to meet these criteria and face huge transaction costs. They need support in obtaining the annual evaluations for forest management certification and for development of management and annual operation plans.

Political advocacy remains relevant: the community concession groups are constantly struggling to defend their exclusion rights to their concession areas. The demand for land is high and constant monitoring and lobbying are required. The community concessions are largely dependent on the government's political will and face constant threats that may weaken existing rights. The task of community networks goes far beyond the physical role of defending borders. It implies sophisticated and healthy levels of representation with capacity for interpretation and communication to its members about threats to tenure and resource rights. The advocacy campaign involves engagement in constructive dialogue with outside stakeholders. Proactive engagement requires money, mobilization and time. In addition, ACOFOP needs to enhance its legitimacy and credibility through democratic representation and increased accountability – major institutional challenges (Monterroso and Barry, 2008).

Bolivia: Brazil Nut Producers' Cooperative

In Bolivia's northern Amazon, grassroots organizations of rural forest peoples have been instrumental in gaining greater control over forestland and capturing a greater share of benefits from the sale of non-timber forest products. In particular, the Brazil Nut Producers' Cooperative (COINACAPA) has helped members negotiate a better position in the international market for Brazil nuts. COINACAPA has increased the bargaining power and incomes of these forest producers through fair trade and organic markets. This case describes the emergence of COINACAPA and its strategies, activities and livelihood outcomes. Whereas the cases from Nepal and Guatemala have strong elements of a resistance movement for protecting rights over resources, this is a case of collective action to increase benefits from forest management following on a grassroots campaign to gain control over forest resources. It shows how the political strengths of community networks are being used to enhance forest-based livelihoods.

Pando's Brazil nut industry

The Pando department's 63,827km^2 territory is one of Bolivia's most remote frontiers. Pando's population is small: only 52,525 people in the last census, with a density of 0.82 inhabitants per km^2 (INE, 2002). Sixty per cent of Pando's population is rural, and seasonal migration related to forest extraction produces dramatic shifts in the rural population.

Forest is the dominant land cover in the department and non-timber forest products rather than timber have provided the basis for rural livelihood strategies for generations. Brazil nuts (*Bertholletia excelsa*) have been the principal NTFPs since the mid-20th century, when they began to replace rubber. In fact, the Brazil nut has become the economic foundation of the region (Stoian and Henkemans, 2000).

During the first five years of this century, Bolivia accounted for more than 50 per cent of the world's Brazil nut exports and 70 per cent of the world's processed shelled nuts (FAOSTAT, 2007). Rural labourers, however, have

enjoyed little benefit from this booming business. Historically, the estate owners, known as *barraqueros,* had control over forest resources, marketing networks and credit. In recent decades they have been joined by Brazil nut-processing plants, large, capital-intensive enterprises that have allowed the region's Brazil nut sector to thrive. The processing industry makes a significant contribution to Bolivia's forest export earnings (Cronkleton and Pacheco, 2008a), but collection is still labour intensive, and nut gatherers remain some of the region's poorest residents.

The land reform process has been contentious for most of the past decade (Ruiz, 2005; de Jong et al, 2006). However, since 2000 rural communities have gained recognition of their forest rights and some community producers have been able to organize innovative cooperative models. Consequently, the *barraqueros* have lost considerable influence. Their property rights over traditional forest estates have not been recognized and in many places they have lost monopoly control over markets, credit and rural labour.

Pando's agro-extractive communities have traditional property rights that evolved as ethnically mixed groups of peasant workers took control of forests and began working independently to extract and commercialize NTFPs. The basic production unit is the household, so initially rural families were dispersed throughout the forest to facilitate the daily extraction of wild rubber. Later, after the collapse of rubber prices, households began moving to more nucleated settlements, occupying forest holdings only during the Brazil nut harvest, January to March.

Recognition of agro-extractive communities

Bolivia's 1996 land law, known as the INRA Law, did not bring immediate change to the region; instead, a tense standoff between *barraqueros* and community producers and their representative organizations ensued (Larson et al, 2008). Initially, *barraqueros* used back channels in the Bolivian capital to promote decrees that would have created 3 million to 3.5 million ha of NTFP concessions benefiting about 200 *barraqueros* (Aramayo Caballero, 2004; Ruiz, 2005). News of these decrees catalysed opposition and a coalition of regional peasant and indigenous organizations took shape; it included the Peasant Federations of Pando, Madre de Dios and Vaca Diez and the Union of Indigenous People of the Bolivian Amazon (CIRABO), together with regional NGOs. This coalition formulated a grassroots response to put pressure on the national government, which was increasingly interested in populist measures to appease rural tensions. The government eventually decided that the minimum area provided to farming and indigenous communities in Brazil nut territories would be 500 ha per family (Ruiz, 2005). The measure corresponds roughly to the area traditionally used by extractivist families to harvest NTFPs and effectively recognized their *de facto* hold over extensive forest properties. However, rather than attempting to title individual plots, the policy was interpreted such that communities would receive communal properties more or less equivalent to 500 ha per family. This has resulted in the titling of

1.8 million ha of forest in Pando to only 163 communities (Cronkleton and Pacheco, 2008a).

The focus on communities for titling purposes made use of traditional institutional frameworks. These loosely organized groups of families share common claim to forest, but individual households form the basic production unit. Access is organized at the household level to manage forest holdings and to link with markets and informal credit sources. There is episodic collaboration among residents, usually along kinship lines. Communal authority, usually derived from informal collective consensus, allocates individual rights, based on customary practices that determine who has legitimate rights to use resources and where. Working alone, households had little leverage to negotiate with buyers, having to accept terms of trade that provided low prices, which often left the families in debt.

Formation of COINACAPA
COINACAPA is a small producer group that has gained access to the fair trade market. Formed in 1998 as a cooperative, it first exported a half-container of nuts (8 tons) in 2000. Its strategy is to subcontract one of the region's processing plants to shell members' Brazil nuts, which the group then exports directly to fair trade brokers in Europe. The intent is to support small producers rather than the processing plants that usually act as intermediaries exporting the nuts. By selling directly to overseas buyers, COINACAPA members receive almost twice the local market price for Brazil nuts they deliver to the cooperative. Since achieving fair trade status in 2001 it has used its premium to provide health care and other services for its members. As a result, its membership has grown from 41 families in 2001 to 465 families in 40 agro-extractive communities in 2007. By 2007, it exported seven containers totalling 112 tons of shelled nuts per year.

COINACAPA leaders say that using the market mechanisms of organic certification and fair trade arrangements has had more influence on management and production practices than any norms or forest policies issued by the government. For example, to qualify for these programmes, COINACAPA members must maintain quality-control standards for sanitation, humidity and safe post-harvest storage and transport to ensure that the nuts are free of chemicals, fuels and other contaminants. The members are organized into groups of four or five producers at the community level to ensure compliance. If nuts spot-checked at delivery fail inspection, the lot of the entire group is rejected, which creates a strong incentive for self-regulation. To demonstrate that they are small producers, members must map and document the location and size of their Brazil nut groves (measured in number of trees), which also allows better planning. By increasing benefits from forest products, COINACAPA is creating incentives for members to maintain natural forests.

Community networks as emerging actors in forest management

Some common patterns have become clear from the cases discussed above. Diverse forms of community networks have been emerging in several countries. We identify three dimensions of the community networks: conditions for emergence and evolution, strategies of resource mobilization and outcomes in securing resource tenure and livelihood benefits.

Emergence of community networks

Collective action at higher levels tends to emerge because of a perceived crisis in access to valuable resources. Both the forest communities in the Petén and the agro-extractive communities in Bolivia organized to defend their rights when they saw their interests at risk. Communities in the Petén had harvested NTFPs before the establishment of the Maya Biosphere Reserve and some people were employed by the logging companies. The establishment of the reserve restricted logging activity, directly affecting these communities. In Bolivia, indigenous communities and other small producers found themselves at risk when the *barraqueros* sought large NTFP concessions. In Nepal, community forest users wanted to share and learn about group organizing and active forest management; when their rights and autonomy were undermined, they consolidated their resistance against government decisions through the federation movement. All these networks grew out of the people's struggles for the right to maintain their livelihoods. Their current activities, however, cover other aspects, including trade, enterprise management, equity and health.

Besides the three major cases presented here, two examples from Cameroon (see Box 6.2) and the Philippines (see Box 6.3) also show that forming community networks has become a way to protect community interests in forest management.

BOX 6.2 CAMEROON: FOREST MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATIONS

To pull together local community forests management efforts, intervillage associations have been set up. In the Oku area, the Association of Forest Management Institutions was established in early 2000. In the Kirby area, a union of community forests was formed in 2007, with logistical support from a coalition of organizations, including Planet-Survey, World Wildlife Fund, the Center for International Forestry Research and financial support from Forest Governance Facility (FGF). The aim of these groups is to secure community rights in forests and promote community interests by influencing regional and national policy.

Another reason for the emergency of community networks is governance and political opportunity. In Guatemala, with the resolution of the long civil conflict, displaced citizens were returning to the Petén region and the government was under pressure to repatriate and resettle a large population. In Nepal, a multiparty parliamentary regime was established in 1990 after three decades of political struggle against the autocratic Panchayat regime; the new democratic polity provided space for civil society organizations to flourish. In Bolivia, conflict over control of forest resources, coupled with the growth of the Brazil nut sector, increased local demands for a greater share of benefits. In response, the government issued decrees to recognize local rights and ease tension between the *barraqueros* and rural communities and a community network evolved.

Charismatic leadership of the networks was crucial in all cases. In Nepal, in the absence of elected local governments, local cadres attracted to social issues became involved in movements for forest rights. In the Petén, the leaders played crucial roles in bringing diverse community groups under a single umbrella and consolidating their movement for community concessions. In Bolivia, some small producers active in the peasant federations' struggle for land emerged as leaders in the formation of COINACAPA.

Financial and technical support from national and international institutions has become instrumental in these cases. International cooperation organizations (particularly the Ford Foundation) in the Petén and in Nepal appear to have made significant contributions in nurturing ACOFOP and FECOFUN respectively during their early phases. In Bolivia, the Italian NGO Associazione di Cooperazione Rurale in Africa e America Latina (ACRA) provided both technical and financial support to COINACAPA. Such support helped these networks enhance their capacity, increase interaction among stakeholders and consolidate their actions. External support has also helped these networks connect with wider regional and global alliances, such as the Coordinating Association of Indigenous and Community Agroforestry in Central America (ACICAFOC), Global Alliance of Community Forestry (GACF) and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI).

BOX 6.3 PHILIPPINES: COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT FEDERATION

The National Community Based Forest Management People's Organization Federation of the Philippines (National CBFM-PO Federation), formed in 2004, is the largest organized group in the Philippines, comprising 14 regional federations, 71 provincial federations and 1691 peoples' organizations that claim to represent more than 20 million forest residents. It is the umbrella organization defending the rights of forest-dependent communities, but it also seeks to help members to become ecologically accountable, economically viable, politically strong and socially responsive.

Whereas FECOFUN and ACOFOP evolved primarily to defend access to forest resources, COINACAPA was established to engage in the market. However, with the consolidation of power the former two networks have begun enhancing livelihood benefits. FECOFUN's attempts to introduce Forest Stewardship Council certification and to support user groups in enterprise development by helping them connect with private entrepreneurs can be seen in this light. The cases show that collective action at the level of community networks goes beyond securing forest tenure to enhancing livelihood benefits by promoting quality, achieving economies of scale and increasing bargaining power.

Strategies and actions

Networks seem to have incorporated similar strategies to advance their agendas. We observe similar patterns in their mobilization of institutional resources, external support and policy and legal tools. Non-material resources such as legitimacy, cohesiveness and symbolic capital are also being effectively mobilized. We identify the following strategies.

Building institutional and technical capacity   Community networks and collective action at the secondary level help strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of member organizations. The FECOFUN and COINACAPA networks emerged where grassroots collective action appeared inadequate. The networks in turn supported capacity building among their member groups, supported by outsiders in areas of organizational management, recordkeeping, legal awareness, preparation of management plans, enterprise development, monitoring and evaluation and other professional and technical skills. The groups began improving their performance and more clearly defining their roles and have gained confidence in their actions.

Besides serving as political watchdogs and pressure groups, the networks have enhanced the productivity of their resources by adding value. For example, by assisting cooperatives, seeking markets, providing help in gaining market access and delivering information, ACOFOP has enhanced livelihood benefits from forest management. Enhancing institutional capacity by training members to maintain quality and comply with organic standards, as well as forming village-level groups to police local practice, became a central focus for COINACAPA. It helps small producers maintain standards set by fair trade rules so that the whole group can retain access to benefits. FECOFUN also has begun to support its members in achieving certification, to enhance their position in the market.

Capacity building of community groups and their networks is also the agenda of donors and external agencies. Donors and NGOs often have instrumental interests in the networks, which are considered good vehicles for delivering development. In our cases, the governments, international agencies and domestic NGOs appear keen to work with these networks. Direct dealing with them reduces transaction costs in participatory development. However,

it is not always beneficial for the networks themselves, which do not always desire what the donors and NGOs offer.

Influencing public discourse and increasing legitimacy   Community networks can influence public discourse on environmental resources governance. Before the growth of these networks, state agencies promoted state-centric discourse and action and sought solutions through bureaucratic management. The nationalization of forests in Nepal and establishment of the Maya Biosphere Reserve in Guatemala are actions indicative of this perspective. With the growth of these community networks, a counter discourse developed that effectively challenged the monopoly of state management and offered community management as a viable option. Meanwhile, the networks proactively engaged with stakeholders and lobbied for participatory, community-based management. They capitalized on and contributed to a shifting global focus on participatory resources governance and increased their alliances with civil society organizations. Gradually, community-based management has become not only an accepted but in many cases a preferred option.

Changing balance of power in favour of communities   Networks bring agency to the tenure reform process. State-led tenure reform processes originate at the central level and are implemented through the bureaucracy, often treating local communities as passive recipients of state policies. Community networks and other secondary-level organizations, however, become active agents. Once the local communities become engaged, they can demonstrate their entrepreneurship and influence the reform process by collective expression.

Networks gain power through their mass base. The constituent members of the networks discussed here have strong social bases across large regions and can mobilize thousands of people to a common cause. Historically, local-level collective action was not adequately appreciated or recognized. In most cases, isolated groups acting alone were too weak to defend their rights from either centralized, bureaucratic power or external threats, whether private companies or other communities. Transfer of formal rights is only the first step. Maintaining the integrity of community concessions or community forestry remains a challenge, given the constant attempts by external actors to usurp resources. This is particularly apparent in the Petén and Nepal, where private companies and even government agencies have attempted to take back resources and community rights. Networks have defended common interests against such attempts. Because of the sheer number of members and the networks' ability to get national attention and call on national and even international allies, state authorities and market actors have begun to recognize and respect their petitions.

Meanwhile, interactions among the authorities, market agencies and community actors have changed. Previously, the communities interacted bilaterally with state authorities or market actors. Today, new platforms and mechanisms allow communities to interact along with other stakeholders in diverse contexts. The platforms have expanded from national to international

levels. With these expanding contexts and arenas, the traditionally unequal relations of power between the authorities and communities are beginning to crumble. New configurations of power have emerged. For example, when government officials and FECOFUN leaders sit together in an international workshop and applaud community forestry, their relations take on a different form despite the level of conflict at home. These encounters serve as alternative channels of communication and resolution. Similarly, in many public programmes, district forest officers and FECOFUN leaders are invited and given equal status, a pattern that can gradually equalize their power relations.

Influencing policy and regulatory frameworks   The networks' expanding activities have helped to establish strong links between local communities and political leaders. Conventionally, forest bureaucrats are the *de facto* policy-makers, legitimized by the political system, and often undermine local livelihood interests by imposing strict exclusionary regimes. Community networks have been able to protest against such policies through civil disobedience and by nationally denouncing threats against their rights. FECOFUN, for example, has worked as a watchdog organization since the late 1990s, constantly resisting any regressive policy decisions that undermine community rights.

Networks have changed their strategy, however, from purely resisting government decisions to proactively engaging with formal policy processes. Initially there were two problems:

1   the established party, the state authority, seldom listened to the voices and concerns raised by local communities; and
2   the community leaders neither had trust in the system nor the capacity to constructively engage and contribute to the policy process.

With the evolution of community networks the situation has changed. Apart from many state agencies' recognition of multistakeholder process, the networks themselves have evolved as legitimate actors and begun to expand their role. They have been able to capitalize on strategic relations with political leaders who favour participation of the community networks in policy-making, building support through them. This has proved to be an effective strategy for increasing participation in the formal policy process.

This practice has been gradually institutionalized in recent years. External donors and many multilateral environmental agreements have promoted the idea that local communities should be consulted on environmental policies. For example, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) efforts demand that local communities and civil society organizations be adequately informed and consulted during national policy formation. Networks provide a convenient way to meet this requirement. Because they represent both the local community and civil society, they have become crucial actors in all policy forums concerning forest and natural resources governance. FECOFUN has become a permanent member of the Forest Sector Coordination Committee and the District Forest

Coordination Committee in Nepal, for example, and ACOFOP is a civil society representative on the board of directors of the National Council of Protected Areas in Guatemala.

Outcomes of network building

Community networks have helped strengthen tenure in two ways:

1 enhancing collective action at the group level; and
2 increasing the bargaining power of the groups with government officials or with the market (as in the COINACAPA cooperative).

Through regular interaction and educational activities, the networks have helped develop the capacity of community groups. They have helped expand the interface with government agencies, markets and other civil society actors through formal multistakeholder dialogue and informal processes. At the broader level, they tend to promote democratic, inclusive, equitable and participatory discourses, even if these ideals are not always reflected in practice. For example, FECOFUN's stated agenda is to achieve 50 per cent representation of women in the community forest user groups (but has not yet met this goal).

State-led reform processes have created a favourable environment for enhancing people's access to resources, but many reforms do not automatically translate into increased livelihood benefits (Cronkleton et al, 2008; Paudel et al, 2008b), either because devolution is limited to subsistence use (e.g. in Nepal) or because it is not linked with the complementary services needed by the communities (in Latin America). Moreover, the state tends to invent new interventions hindering the reform or at least limiting the potential benefits that communities can draw from the reform process. In such contexts, initiatives by forest-dependent communities and their networks have helped modify state-led processes.

Several studies have observed that these networks have played important roles in enhancing access to forest resources and markets for forest products and securing rights over these resources (Plant and Hvalkof, 2001; Cronkleton et al, 2008). Similarly, Komarudin et al (2008), based on action research in Indonesia, conclude that collective action enhances tenure security and livelihood benefits of forest-dependent communities. They noted that although local-level collective action has minimized elite capture, higher-level network building and networking are necessary to increase access to land, raise incomes and improve women's status.

Challenges

Huge challenges remain. First, community networks must keep pace with the changing context to meet the expectations of their members and stakeholders. Second, the networks must help their members build the capacity to meet the standards and criteria set by governments and markets. Third, they

must address governance issues, particularly equity and inclusion within the organization. Fourth, they must achieve a balance in their relationships with members, donors, government agencies, civil society organizations and media, particularly with their increasing involvement in international forums. As their membership and political influence grow, the networks come under the sharp scrutiny of donor agencies and NGOs. Finally, the experience of FECOFUN and ACOFOP shows that one-off policy reform is not enough; continuing vigilance against regressive policies or rollback of rights is required.

Important lessons can be drawn from the discussion on collective action, community networks and tenure security. Community networks emerged out of perceived crises in livelihoods and resource governance. These networks helped expand the scale and scope of collective action. Representing forest-dependent communities, networks have emerged as new actors in the management of forest commons. They play significant roles in translating progressive policies into practical realities so that communities can realize the livelihood benefits of tenure reform.

Notes

1. Between 1966 and 1996 Guatemala experienced a civil war. According to the Peace Accords, the socioeconomic and agrarian agreement establishes that at least 100,000 ha should be allocated to organized community groups.
2. Two important differences between community concessions and industrial concessions are determined by contracts. First, contracts give industries usufruct rights to manage timber products only, whereas community concessions are for integrated management, including both timber and non-timber resources. Second, whereas community concessions pay for the use of land (between US$1 and $1.50 per ha), industries pay the intrinsic value of timber depending on the species and the amount logged.
3. According to Ostrom (2000), exclusion rights include the collective right to determine who has rights of access, withdrawal and management and who does not (see Chapter 1).