



RFGI research team at the mid-term research meeting in Saly, Mbour, Senegal

The RFGI Journey So Far

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) mid-term research meeting was held from the 30 July to 04 August at the Hotel Savana Saly, Mbour, Senegal. It was attended by Jesse Ribot and James Murombedzi (co-directors of RFGI), Prof. Bernard Lututala from CODESRIA, Gretchen Walters from IUCN, Prof. Prakash Kashwan from the University of Connecticut and Susanne von Walter from SIDA.

In attendance also were the 30 RFGI researchers working across 12 African countries. The meeting was an opportunity to evaluate what the researchers have achieved in the first half of the year and what remains to be done in the second half of 2012. The meeting was also an opportunity for the researchers to improve their research instruments. The mid-term meeting was highly productive and energizing.

More about the mid-term meeting is on page 2

The RFGI/IUCN Partnership

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is implemented by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA); the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (UIUC) and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). CODESRIA is our administrative center, UIUC sets the research agenda, and IUCN ensures that our work is policy relevant.

In this edition of the newsletter, we explore in detail the role of IUCN in RFGI. In this respect, we have in this newsletter contribution from Barbara Nakangu and Gretchen Walters, colleagues from IUCN working closely with the RFGI. Barbara is the Uganda Programme Officer for IUCN, while Gretchen is the Central and West Africa Forest Programme Manager for IUCN based in Yaounde, Cameroon.

More on the RFGI/IUCN partnership is on pages 2 & 3



Focus on the RFGI/IUCN Partnership

The RFGI Journey So Far *(contd. from page1)*

As stated previously, the RFGI mid-term research meeting was used to evaluate what the researchers have achieved so far and what remains to be done. It also enabled the researchers to work closely with Prakash Kashwan, the research methods resource person, to improve their research instruments.



Left to right: Floribert Ntungila (Congo team), Jesse Ribot and Prakash Kashwan during tea-break at Saly

Commenting on this, Prakash states that the ‘cross-fertilization greatly improved the research instruments and lent depth to the overall approach that RFGI has developed’; for Alois Mandondo, a senior researcher with RFGI, ‘the highest point of the mid-term methods meeting at Saly was the operationalization of different elements of representation’ and ‘how to go about measuring the respective aspect of responsiveness’. A summary of the RFGI research program and method can be found at www.codesria.org/spip.php?article1247.

The RFGI/IUCN Partnership

Gretchen Walters

(IUCN Forest Program Manager for Central and West Africa)

In 2008, Jesse Ribot met with Edmund Barrow (presently head of IUCN Ecosystem Management Programme) and they discussed setting up a research program looking at how forest governance can better represent the needs of local people. This meeting was the first of many with colleagues and partners such as Ebrima Sall of CODESRIA that eventually led to design and implementation of the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI).

IUCN is the world’s largest conservation democracy. It is comprised of members (including states, ministries, and NGOs), commissions (more than 12,000 volunteer specialists serving in six commissions), and the secretariat, who work on IUCN program priorities around the world.

Every four years, IUCN members vote on conservation priorities. One of IUCN’s new program priorities is the “Effective and equitable governance of nature’s use”. The RFGI fits squarely into this priority and its results will inform IUCN’s efforts to improving natural resource governance, and in the development of the IUCN new Natural Resource Governance Framework (NRGF). The NRGF will measure governance and equity across sites and countries.



Gretchen Walters (left and IUCN) and Mawa Karambiri (right and Burkina Faso team) during tea-break at Saly

IUCN’s work within RFGI is meant to carry the RFGI research into policy and action. In Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mozambique, and Uganda, IUCN will conduct “Action Learning”, which involves giving back RFGI research results to communities where research was conducted and planning with them how to use the results to influence governance at the local level.

The RFGI research results will be used by IUCN and members to influence national policy. RFGI research results will also be used to develop guidelines for future work by practitioners and local stakeholders to ensure that democratic principles are part of project development and implementation.

IUCN is starting to internalize RFGI lessons on institutional choice and representation in its work. In September, IUCN secretariats in Uganda, Ghana, Cameroon and members of the two regional offices in Africa met to discuss how RFGI was impacting them. It was clear that in some cases, the RFGI framework was helping the secretariat to use democratic principles when planning and executing projects.

RFGI is a key project for IUCN which allows us to test and use results on local governance in sub-Saharan Africa. We look forward to 2013 when we will develop joint policy papers to help improve local governance. We hope to use these to develop the NRGF which will be used globally to guide decision making, while ensuring equity and democracy. These are exciting times for the RFGI and IUCN.

Focus on the RFGI/IUCN Partnership

IUCN Uganda and the RFGI

Barbara Nakangu
(IUCN Uganda Country Program Manager)

The RFGI Uganda research team is hosted by the IUCN Uganda country office. The team is composed of Dr. Robert Mbeche (co-team leader), Doreen Ruta (co-team leader), Dr. Jackson Tumwine, Agrippinah Namara, and me. My research topic is *'Examining the Effect of REDD+ on Representation in Local Communities: A Case of Mt Elgon Regional Conservation Project (MERECP)'*.



Jackson Tumwine in conversation with Barbara Nakangu

My participation in RFGI has given me a better understanding of the role of local governments in sustainable natural resources management and the constraints they face. I have learnt that intervening agents sometimes frustrate local democratic governance through the uncritical choice of partners at the local level to implement our programs.

Projects sometimes fall short of their objectives when they do not pay attention to critical governance variables such as representation and accountability in their programs. I now include indicators to manage these variables in projects I manage. The RFGI team has supported my efforts in this regard. I shared this experience at the recently concluded 2012 IUCN World Conservation Congress in South Korea.

As a result the IUCN will be providing training on developing environmental governance indicators using the RFGI framework to other IUCN Africa teams not directly involved with the RFGI. We are surely making progress. I am excited that I am part of this group of researchers that will have the opportunity to transmit what I have learned and discovered in my field projects to a much wider audience.

The 10 second interview



Name: Saadia Bobtoya
Nationality: Ghana
Expertise: Environment and Natural Resources
Position: IUCN Ghana REDD Project Officer

Job description: Management and implementation of the DANIDA *'Towards Pro-Poor REDD Project'* and support to the implementation of other IUCN initiatives in Ghana

Challenges: Significant trade-offs between value addition to the country's REDD process through alignment of project activities with on-going national processes; and the timely delivery of project outputs/outcomes

Why do you do it? Personal interest in impacting positively on environment and natural resources governance, and improving my skills and experience

What are the biggest issues in resource governance in Africa today? Weak institutions, poor regulatory control, unclear tenure rights, inequitable distribution of resources and benefits, non-inclusive decision making

How are you involved with the RFGI? Provide technical support and information to the RFGI Ghana team, and coordinate IUCN/RFGI *'Action Learning'* in Ghana in 2013

Final word: Strengthening and enhancing resource governance structures and processes is the foundation for sustainability in the natural resources sector

The 10 second interview



Name: Wale Adeleke
Nationality: Nigeria
Expertise: Forest Management and Policy
Position: REDD Forest Governance Thematic Coordinator, IUCN West and Central Africa Programme

Job description: Developing new initiatives in REDD+ for IUCN West and Central Africa Programme; providing technical backstopping for the implementation of IUCN REDD+ projects and activities in Cameroon and Ghana

Challenges: Getting forest communities to understand what REDD plus means, and the big task of getting the private sector in REDD plus

Why do you do it? Personal interest in resources management being from a forest community myself

What are the biggest issues in resource governance in Africa today? Unclear land and tree tenure as well as inadequate benefit sharing regimes

How are you involved with the RFGI? IUCN provides technical support to the RFGI Ghana team; more specifically I am part of the RFGI Ghana National Advisory Group

Final word: Great to be part of this initiative and winning Ghana team

RFGI news and announcements

New Hires

Bakary Doucouré was employed by the RFGI in August 2012, as a post-doctoral fellow based at CODESRIA Dakar, Senegal. Bakary holds a PhD in Social Sciences from Université René Descartes-Paris V (Sorbonne). Before joining the RFGI, he taught Social Science Research Methods, Rural Sociology and Development Socio-anthropology at Ziguinchor University, Senegal.

Jacques Pollini was employed by the RFGI in August 2012, as a visiting scholar at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. He holds a PhD in Natural Resources from Cornell University, USA. He studies agrarian changes on forest frontiers, with emphasis on decentralized resources management, political ecology of sustainable land uses, and the resilience of peasant societies.

“Geography, Ecology and Politics: A Climate of Change”, 6-8 September 2012, Orléans, France

Antang Yamo and Floribert Ntungila represented RFGI at an international colloquium in Orléans, France. Their respective presentations, made an epistemological and methodological effort towards reframing the “gestion des terroirs” (French approach) in order to incorporate it in the global paradigm of political ecology and to outline a body of thought on the politics of territoriality in Francophone Africa. The presentations focused on i) New tools for owning forest land and managing biodiversity in the Congo Basin: from customary to private territories; ii) The territorialization of access to forest resources, governance and the production of an ecological citizenship in the Democratic Republic of Congo; iii) The zoning approach in Francophone Africa: outlining a geography of exclusion and a political ecology of the fragmentation of the public space.

The IUCN World Conservation Congress, 6-15 September 2012, Jeju, South Korea

The RFGI was represented at the IUCN World Conservation Congress by Edmund Barrow, Gretchen Walters, Barbara Nakangu, Wale Adeleke and Saadia Bobtoya. At the congress, RFGI partnered IUCN, USAID CARPE program, and James Cook University Australia, to organize a session titled ‘Is REDD+ an opportunity for or a constraint for economic development in Central Africa?’

The session discussed the following pertinent questions: (i) is REDD+ perceived as a development hindrance or opportunity in the Congo Basin? (ii) how can REDD+ be constructed as a development opportunity in Central Africa? (iii) what is the role of the private sector, civil society, local administration, and citizens in REDD processes? (iv) how will local communities benefit from national and regional REDD projects when land tenure is still an issue and governance is still poor in many places?

Mission to Ouaga, 16-21 September 2012

James Murombedzi and Bakary Doucouré visited Burkina Faso in September, 2012. The objective of this mission was to provide support to the Burkina team and to meet with RFGI partners in Ouagadougou. These included the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), the regional office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN Burkina Faso), the RFGI Burkina Faso National Advisory Group, and the focal point of the Forest Investment Program (FIP) in Burkina Faso, Mr. Samuel Yeye. The ‘mission to Ouaga’ helped to strengthen RFGI’s relationship with our partners in Burkina Faso.

CODESRIA/IUCN/UIUC RFGI Working Papers

The following RFGI working papers are now available upon request:

Kashwan P., 2012. *Studying Representation: A Synthetic Review*

Mutasa M., 2012. *Review of REDD+ and Carbon-Forestry Projects in RFGI Countries*

Nuesiri E., 2012. *The Re-Emergence of Customary Authority and its Relation with Local Democratic Government*

Rutt R. L., 2012. *Social Protection in REDD+ Initiatives: A Review*

Zerriffi H. and E. Anderson, 2012. *The Effects of REDD+ on Forest People in Africa: Access, Distribution, and Participation in Governance*

RFGI on the web

More information about the RFGI is available at:

- <http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article1247&lang=en>
- <http://sdep.beckman.illinois.edu/programs/democracyenvironment.aspx>