

About the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative



Rural road damaged by loggers and other forest users
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The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI) is an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program that aims to understand the factors that *enable responsive and accountable decentralization and strengthen representation* of forest-dependent populations within local government decision making. The research group also aims to understand the conditions that enable local government to play an integrative role in rural development and natural resource management. Through this understanding, RFGI will develop guidelines for responsive and accountable local governance that reduces vulnerability, enhances local wellbeing, and improves forest management. RFGI will provide insights that help make forestry policies and projects, in particular the United Nation's program for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and adaptation funding, responsive to, and respectful of, local needs and aspirations.

Comprehensive research will take place in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda.

There will be comparative studies in four additional countries selected from Liberia, Mali, South Sudan, Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa. RFGI will invite independently funded researchers from other regions of the world to participate in the program. The results from Africa will be compared with results from studies carried out by collaborators in Asia and South America in order to enhance RFGI comparative scope, and to broaden its geographic policy relevance.

Objectives and scope

The objective of RFGI is to make natural resource governance responsive to the needs of local communities, and to establish representation as a guiding principle for forestry policies and projects. Specifically, RFGI wants to improve representative local forest governance and forest management in at least 10 African countries. The first phase of will be carried out between December 2010 and December 2013. The expected phase 1 results will be:

- i) An increased knowledge about critical elements for a well-functioning local forest governance
- ii) An increased environmental governance analytical capacity within Africa,
- iii) The development and testing of a preliminary Responsive Forest Governance Handbook (RFG handbook)
- iv) A revised RFG Handbook



The research will be conducted in two parts; the first is the “politics of choice” which examines how governments, development agencies, and NGOs interact with forest communities. This aim is to understand the logic of policy and project intervention in order to improve the involvement of these authorities. The second is “the politics of recognition” which examines the actual effects of forestry policies and projects on local representation, and studies the effects of forestry policies and projects on representation, citizenship, building local democracy, sound forest management, and poverty alleviation.

RFGI will convene three meetings in 2012 that will bring together its research teams from around the world; a methods workshop in January, a mid-research meeting in May, and a research finding meeting in September. The project will systematically train young policy researchers to help build an Africa and worldwide network of new environmental governance policy analysts. Researchers wishing to participate (with their own funds) will be invited to the meetings. RFGI does not have support for participants from outside of the African continent.



Farm in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest Cameroon

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Core research team

Ebrima Sall

Ebrima is the executive secretary of the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA). He holds a PhD from the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. He was a fellow of the Yale University Program in Agrarian Studies and senior researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute (NAI) in Sweden. One of his recent book publications includes “Human Rights and the Dilemmas of Democracy in Africa” (co-edited with Lennart Wohlgemuth). Ebrima can be contacted at ebrima.sall@codesria.sn

Edmund Barrow

Ed is head of IUCN's Ecosystem Based Adaptation Programme based in Nairobi, Kenya. He has worked with IUCN for 15 years, and before his current position, served as IUCN's Regional Forest Advisor for Africa. Ed has significant forest conservation experience, is affiliated with the Rights and Resources Initiative, and has over three decades of working experience in Africa. Ed can be contacted at edmund.barrow@iucn.org

Jesse Ribot

Jesse is a professor of geography at UIUC in the School of Earth, Society, and Environment, and serves as the director of the Social Dimensions of Environmental Policy initiative of the Beckman Institute. He was a senior associate in the Institutions and Governance program at the World Resources Institute, and a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Jesse can be contacted at ribot@illinois.edu

James Murombedzi

James is the RFGI program manager based at CODESRIA. James was a research fellow and lecturer at the Center for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe. He has also worked for the Ford Foundation and for IUCN in the Southern Africa regional office. He was recently the chief technical adviser for energy and environment with the United Nations Environment Program and the United Nations Development Program in Liberia. James can be contacted at james.murombedzi@codesria.sn



RFGI fellow Emmanuel Nuesiri in the Bimbia-Bonadikombo community forest Cameroon

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Emmanuel Nuesiri

Emmanuel is the RFGI postdoctoral research associate based at the Geography Department of the UIUC. He holds a doctorate degree in geography and environmental science from St. Antony's College, University of Oxford. He has worked as a consultant for Fauna and Flora International and for the DFID funded Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation. Emmanuel can be contacted at enuesiri@illinois.edu

Researcher corner

Spotlight on Dr. Emmanuel Marfo, RFGI Ghana team leader

In this edition our spotlight is on Dr. Emmanuel Marfo, the RFGI Ghana field research team. Emmanuel holds a PhD. in environmental policy from Wageningen University, Netherlands. He is a lead scientist in forest policy and governance research at the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG), which is one of the institutes of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in Ghana. He also serves as the scientific coordinator for the Forest Policy and Governance Group of the Forestry Research Network of Sub-Saharan Africa (FORNESSA).



Dr. Emmanuel Marfo

Emmanuel's research proposal to the RFGI states that decentralized forestry can serve as a vehicle to institutionalize democratic local governance, equity, and efficient resource management. The local context-conditions for achieving this in Ghana, however, are not yet fully understood by researchers, policy makers, and change agents on the ground. His study will be guided by the following questions:

- i) How is decentralization affected when central authorities bypass elected local government?
- ii) When does decentralization lead to empowered and more democratic local institutions?
- iii) Where has it produced sustainable environmental management and outcomes?

Emmanuel's research sites are the Yaya and Afram Headwaters Forest Reserves. These are part of the Ghana collaborative forest management scheme known as the Modified Taungya System (MTS), which involves the participation of communities in plantations and the restoration of degraded forests. In the MTS, communities are given portions of forestlands to cultivate crops and plant trees. When trees are old enough to be exploited, the financial benefits are shared between the Forestry Commission (40%), farmer or investor (40%), traditional authority (as custodian of the land 15%), and the community (5%).

Emmanuel has chosen the MTS scheme as a case study because of its wide application in Ghana. It is also the main decentralized mechanism for plantation development and restoration of natural forests in Ghana. It provides an excellent context to study state-society-individual relationships. RFGI selected Emmanuel's research proposal because it will enable us to study the effect of institutional choice by central authorities, and the impact of recognition of specific forms of local authorities, on sustainable forest management and local level democracy in Ghana. We wish Emmanuel '*bonne chance*' (good luck) in the execution of his research!



Key upcoming events for RFGI

COP-17 Durban, South Africa

The 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP-17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 9 December 2011. Edmund Barrow will represent RFGI at COP-17.

CODESRIA General Assembly Rabat, Morocco

The 13th CODESRIA General Assembly will be held in Rabat, Morocco from 5 to 9 December 2011, with the theme *Africa and the challenges of the twenty-first century*. RFGI will host a discussion panel at the General Assembly, led by Jesse Ribot and James Murombedzi, with the theme *Representation under a changing sky: climate change policy and politics in Africa*.

ICARUS

The Initiative on Climate Adaptation Research and Understanding through the Social Sciences (ICARUS), founded in 2009, is a forum where social and humanistic understanding of the climate change phenomenon is discussed. The first conference, ICARUS I, was held in 2009, and ICARUS II in 2011. The RFGI program is in part informed by insights from ICARUS, and the research results will in turn feed into the discussions at ICARUS III.

UNCSD Rio+20

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 4 to 6 June 2012. The conference marks the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). The RFGI will organize a table and a series of talks on RFGI and REDD+ at the UNCSD.

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Announcements

New hires

Emmanuel Nuesiri, from Cameroon, was hired in the summer of 2011 as the RFGI postdoctoral fellow for the UIUC team. Emmanuel will work under the supervision of Jesse Ribot to manage the UIUC RFGI activities.

James Murombedzi, from Zimbabwe, was hired as the Program Manager at CODESRIA. He will be responsible for the scientific, administrative, and financial management of the RFGI research teams in Africa.

News from the Dakar research methods meeting

The RFGI core team met in Dakar, Senegal, from 15 to 25 October 2011, to assess the submissions received by CODESRIA. These submissions were in response to RFGI's call for research proposals, which were disseminated over the summer in the core and comparative research countries in Africa. The meeting was also attended by Bernard Mumpasi Lututala, Carlos Cardoso, and Tesfaye Tefesse, all from CODESRIA, and Gretchen Walters from IUCN CARPO, and Barbara Nakangu (IUCN Uganda).

The Dakar meeting was also used to plan for the major research methods meeting that will take place in Goree Island, Senegal, from 9 to 16 January 2012. The meeting will bring together the RFGI team, the selected country research teams, the independent comparative research teams, and other invited social science researchers. The teams will finalize the field research protocol and timelines, and will agree on a dissemination strategy for research results publications.

Independent comparative research partners

While RFGI is still soliciting and accepting applications from independent researchers interested in a comparative research partnership, they are already in talks with:

- ▲ Environmental Change Institute, University of Oxford
- ▲ Ecosystem Services and Poverty Alleviation Programme, Scotland
- ▲ Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)
- ▲ Participatory Forest Management in REDD Research Project, Helsinki University
- ▲ International Institute for Environment and Development, London

In addition to these institutions, RFGI has received interest from the following individual researchers:

- ▲ Professor Fabiano Toni, University of Brasilia, Brazil
- ▲ Dr. Anne Larson, CIFOR Nicaragua
- ▲ Rebecca Rutt, doctoral student, University of Copenhagen, studying REDD in Nepal
- ▲ Indu Shintu, India Institute of Management
- ▲ Dr. Prakash Kashwan, University of Indiana studying REDDc in India

RFGI website

Information about RFGI is available at <http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article1247&lang=en>. The RFGI website is being developed, and will contain RFGI working documents, future plans, and publications.