

FRR

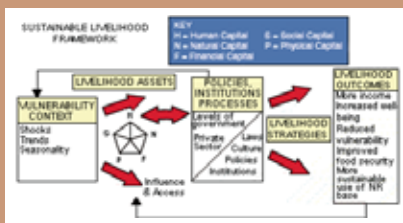


FRR – Implementing Pro-poor Policy Reforms

FORESTS, THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND GLOBALISATION

1.5 billion people in the world directly depend on forest resources to meet their basic needs. And it is to these people that the effort of the Millennium Development Goals will contribute: halving poverty, empowering people and promoting equality of access to resources.

Rural poverty is often less “visible” than urban poverty. People are more isolated; they have less access to services; less voice than those in the cities. Yet they are extremely vulnerable to social changes (such as urban migration) and environmental risks (floods, landscape degradation, and an unpredictable climate). Equally important are the shifts in the international marketplace which affect industries and people’s livelihoods everywhere. The challenge here is to make globalisation work for poor people.



Source: DFID (1999)

SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

In addition to providing jobs in the timber industry, building materials, fuel and household articles made from wood itself, forest resources can often provide at least as much value in non-timber products. These include honey, oils, medicines and bush-meat. In Ghana for example an estimated 300,000 people are employed in the bush-meat trade alone.

Sustainable livelihoods for rural people involves the full range of available resources; skills, equipment, land, a sense of community and any capital they have to generate sufficient income to permanently raise themselves out of poverty. Not just short term fixes, but sustainable changes bringing fundamental, positive shifts in living standards and quality of life.



Empowering people: local decision-making

SO HOW CAN THIS BE ACHIEVED?

In the forest sector training local communities in the basics of forest resource management, tree planting on farms, or equipping communities with portable timber mills are important opportunities for alleviating poverty. On their own however, these steps will not be sufficient to eliminate poverty. Benefits are unsustainable if they happen only at this level of day-to-day resource management.

FRR believes that “the rules of the game” need to be fundamentally changed. Empowering communities and individuals to engage with the policies, processes and institutions which influence their lives is key to improving people’s prospects of a decent livelihood. Civil society actors must be able to effectively respond to development initiatives and influence top level decisions and policy. Equally, Governments need to be able to respond to demands for better policies and services.

CHANGING THE RULES OF THE GAME

Recognising and harnessing the processes by which people move out of poverty is central to FRR’s approach.

Incentives for reform must take account of the prevailing political economy; for example, what will motivate political elites to support pro-poor reform? How best can civil society be strengthened in order to effectively voice demands for reform?



Firewood: a vital need for household use and income generation

Some of the solutions are clear: better laws, better regulation, transparent sharing of benefits through taxation or greater accountability of public servants to meet the needs of the citizenry. Deciding priorities and putting policy changes into practice demands careful analysis and implementation: the process is often challenging, non-linear and “messy”. The political, pragmatic and social drivers which will add momentum to any change need to be identified, and a careful balancing act is required to foster initiatives for positive reform.

LOCKING IN CHANGE

Historically, changes in policy and laws have been ignored or reversed because they lack associated incentives or failed to empower societies to demand their implementation. In addition, mechanisms are needed to lock in change and thus achieve targets for poverty reduction, and economic and social development. The identification of “ratchets”; irreversible changes such as civil society activism or market-based incentives, are often key to achieving real, and lasting, change.

WHY FRR?

Our track record in sector reform programmes demonstrates our proven ability to analyse, design and support the political, economic and social reform processes that lead to genuinely pro-poor change.

- FRR works to strengthen civil society in order to give people the skills to organise, network and voice their needs, concerns and strengths more effectively, and to participate in decision-making processes.
- Through public sector reform projects, FRR equips politicians and civil servants alike to engage better with their constituencies. This includes public finance reforms which provide for greater transparency, and customer service charters which encourage dialogue to negotiate rights and responsibilities. We enable government agencies to assume the mantle of service-orientated organisations.
- FRR seeks entry points where change has the best chance of being sustained. This includes work in support of effective private sector development strategies, improved investment climates for businesses and micro-enterprises, and enhanced economic linkages between rural and urban regions.



Livelihoods are strengthened through small scale forest operations in Malawi



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