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Community Forest Management

Climate and Forests 2030

AUTHOR
Ben Hodgdon

EXPERT REVIEWERS
Richard Donovan, Duncan Macqueen, Iliana Monterroso, Pablo Pacheco, Nonette Royo, and Paul Sein Twa

Background

The Climate and Land Use Alliance (CLUA), with the support of Meridian Institute, is exploring the integration of climate and land use with justice, equity, health, and economic recovery through Climate and Forests 2030: Resources for Funders. This focus is intended to inspire innovation and investment in integrated work on forests, rights, and sustainable land use and will inform a new strategic plan for CLUA for the period 2021 to 2030.

To inform the thinking, CLUA commissioned a series of "thought pieces" to provide diverse inputs into developing a more integrated approach for forests and land use. These are meant to stimulate discussion and debate and are not intended to reflect the views of CLUA, its member foundations, or Meridian Institute.

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Key Messages

- Community forest management (CFM) is the future of forestry if the world is to address the interconnected "wicked problems" of climate change, deforestation, rights violations, inequality, and the loss of biological diversity and cultural heritage.
- Successful CFM delivers on multiple fronts: it is not only a "natural climate solution," it is also a social justice and equity solution that enhances livelihood security and powers low-emissions economic development, cultural revitalization, and community health and resilience. No other approach to managing, conserving and restoring forests can deliver such a suite of benefits.
- CFM takes many forms and has been promoted for decades; rights-based approaches that emphasize local control, multi-use forest management, and social inclusion have resulted in the most durable success.
- Building CFM at scale takes a long time and requires major public sector investment, both through "bottom-up" measures with grassroots civil society, as well as "top-down" actions that recognize community rights, empower local forestry organizations, and enable sustainable and equitable enterprise.
- Current investments in other climate solutions (e.g., clean energy) dwarf those that go to CFM. To enable CFM at scale, a massive increase in public and private finance for CFM that is accessible to communities needs to be mobilized.
- The time is now for a major, global push to expand rights-based CFM and collective enterprise in priority regions. The philanthropic community can support this effort by establishing a Global Initiative for Community Forests dedicated to mobilizing big investments and coordinating partnerships.

Context

Of the world's nearly 7.8 billion people, approximately 3.4 billion live in rural areas. Roughly 2.5 billion are indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs), of which an estimated 1.3 billion are "forest dependent" (FAO and UNEP 2020). Together, IPLCs customarily manage more than 50% of global lands, but governments only recognize IPLC legal rights to around 10% of this area (RRI 2020a). Forests customarily managed by IPLCs globally cover some 2 billion ha (Tauli-Corpuz *et al.* 2020) — or around 50% of the world's total forest — but presently local groups have legal rights to less than 15% of that area, with recognition heavily skewed geographically towards Latin America and parts of Asia (RRI 2020b).

The case for recognition of local rights over forests has been strengthened in recent years. Mounting evidence demonstrates that **IPLC-controlled forests outperform state-administered forests** on a number of fronts. In the Amazon, forests titled to indigenous communities show lower deforestation rates than neighboring forests over many years (Walker *et al.* 2020, Blackman *et al.* 2017). In Mexico and Guatemala, locally-controlled forest enterprises produce a range of economic benefits for communities that improve livelihoods (Torres Rojo *et al.* 2019, Stoain *et al.* 2018). Recent evidence from Nepal, moreover, shows how community organizations managing forests have evolved the social capital and resources to attend to a host of local needs where government fails to deliver, including disaster relief and Covid-19 response (Gentle *et al.* 2020).

A host of studies have focused specifically on the potential for IPLC-controlled forests to mitigate carbon emissions. One analysis found that over 290,000 million metric tons of carbon are stored in the collective forestlands of IPLCs, equivalent to 33 times global energy emissions in 2017 (RRI 2018). This estimate significantly underestimates the true potential, since countries like Indonesia and the Democratic Republic of Congo are left out.

The upshot is that **IPLCs must play a central role in addressing the global climate crisis**. But they can only do so if they have rights and the means to defend their forests.

Examples of success and the big potential gains from rights recognition have elevated the importance of locally-controlled forests in international arenas. The importance of protecting and expanding IPLC forest rights was a key element in the negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Paris Agreement and a subsequent Intergovernmental Panel and Climate Change (IPCC) report also highlight the critical role of IPLC rights in responding to climate change, building on rights enshrined in the 2007 UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

All this has resulted in real progress. A recent Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) stocktaking found that, since 2002, at least 14 countries have passed legislation that requires the recognition of rights. The same analysis found that if only seven of these countries implemented these new laws, policies, and court decisions, over 176 million hectares would be transferred from government to local ownership, benefitting more than 200 million people (RRI 2020b).

But emerging trends are not encouraging. Beyond the well-documented environmental rollbacks and violence that have accompanied the Covid-19 pandemic,[1] a slowdown in rights recognition is also occurring. Even if this trend can be reversed and rights can be significantly expanded, it is clear that **tenure rights alone will not be enough**. Cases from the Muskitia region in Honduras and Nicaragua, to the Peruvian Amazon, to Cameroon and Cambodia, demonstrate that deforestation, conflict, social inequality, and livelihood insecurity can increase after rights recognition.

A key question has thus emerged in local and global discourses around forest rights: **What comes after formal rights recognition?** In other words, how can communities be supported to exercise their rights, keep forests standing, and strengthen equity and resilience amid multiple threats?

One strategy that can enable this is **community forest management** (CFM). By investing in capacity building to manage locally-controlled forests, communities can evolve the technical and social capital necessary to defend territories and lands after they win rights. Developing enterprises based on

[1] *See, for example, new reports on the topic produced by the Forest Peoples Programme and partners.*

sustainable forest management, moreover, can produce multiple livelihood benefits, increasing the value of the forest and making it less likely to be converted for other uses.

Successful CFM can also help mitigate conflict around access to land and resources, increase social inclusion and gender equity, expand access to basic services, improve educational opportunity, safeguard community health, and support cultural well-being. There is also evidence — most compellingly from Guatemala's Petén region — demonstrating how communities with strong CFM operations are more resilient in the face of organized crime, resulting in reduced violence, illegality, and outmigration. In sum, where it functions well, CFM generates the kind of **prosperity** the world urgently needs more of in order to secure a sustainable future (Macqueen *et al.* 2020).

But what does it take to build successful, equitable CFM and local forest enterprise, and crucially, how can such models be taken to scale? These are the questions this paper seeks to answer, and in so doing articulate a call to action to place community forests at the heart of the global forests and land use agenda.

Definitions and Models

Communities have of course been managing forests forever, with or without state recognition. As a formal approach, the term "community forest management" encompasses a range of territorial and forest management, restoration, rural development, and conservation approaches, applied in different ecosystems, aimed at different objectives, and including local communities to a greater or lesser degree. Its application in diverse contexts has given rise to a mini-lexicon of alternative terms over the years including, among others: "social forestry," "joint forest management," "participatory forest management," "community-based forestry," and "locally-controlled forestry." A common denominator for such initiatives is that local groups take (or are assigned) some sort of role in forest management and are therefore entitled to benefits.

Major institutionalized, international efforts to develop formal CFM date to the 1970s. With a few notable exceptions (e.g., Mexico's community forests, Brazilian extractive reserves), a majority of efforts for decades tended to focus on conservation, reforestation, or restoration, with governments and projects dictating the terms of local participation, usually on state-administered land — which may or may not have overlapped with customary lands (Gilmour 2016). Whether framed as "watershed management," "integrated conservation and development," or "participatory conservation," for decades the guiding goal for many initiatives was to **keep people out of the forest**, reflecting a widely-held belief that local communities drive deforestation.

More recently, in line with the global trend towards greater recognition of local control over forests — as well as the mounting evidence that community-managed forests can better control deforestation — there has been a notable shift towards a more "**rights-based**" CFM. This approach is based on tenure policies that recognize collective community ownership or fixed-term usufruct rights over natural forest, and supports technical assistance and other investments promoting sustainable forest management controlled by communities, usually in coordination with state agencies (Kaimowitz and Tomaselli 2020).

While rights-based CFM has a unifying logic, its development still happens in very different realities, taking different forms and involving variable tenure regimes as well as diverse institutional and social-organizational relationships. A sample of this diversity is captured in Table 1, adapted from a typology presented in a 2020 report called "Unseen Foresters."

The classic model — the one that probably comes to mind when most people think "community forest management" — involves large blocks of typically common property natural forest ("**forest core**"). Within such settings, different tenure arrangements may prevail (title, concession, co-management), as well as very different social governance models for management and enterprise (collective, cooperative, individual). In most cases where CFM has been developed at a considerable scale in such forest core sites, the state plays a major role in regulating management. Given the central importance of conserving the world's remaining forest cores (both within and outside protected areas) to the global climate change agenda, it is clear that such modes of CFM are critical to support.

Second is a "**forest edge or mosaic**" reality where smaller, often fragmented and degraded forest

TABLE 1: Typology of community forest management operations*

TYPE OF FOREST AREA	TENURE ARRANGEMENTS	MANAGEMENT APPROACHES	EXAMPLES
Forest core	• Collective ownership (title) • Fixed-term concessions • State-administered	• Collective decision-making • Cooperative management • Work group models • Individual management • Co-management	• Collectively-managed indigenous forest in Mesoamerica and the Amazon • Brazil nut concessionaires in Peru • Community forest concessions in Cameroon
Forest edge or mosaic	• Privately-owned parcels • Fixed-term leases • State-administered	• Multi-stakeholder boards • Cooperative management • Smallholder associations	• Smallholder forestry cooperatives in Guatemala • Farm forestry in Kenya • Smallholder forestry plantations in China, Indonesia, and Vietnam

**Adapted from Macqueen and Mayers (2020); note that lines are not always distinct within or between these types of CFM.*

patches (or lands being reforested) are typically managed by smallholders. While in most cases such forest is privately owned, or managed under long-term usufruct, such arrangements are considered as CFM where smallholders come together within a landscape (sometimes encompassing multiple communities) to engage in collective action. Such collective action can involve technical forestry planning, harvesting operations, value-added processing, finance, or marketing. Where smallholders work together across large landscapes, there is big potential for the global restoration agenda. For example, smallholder farm forestry efforts in China and Vietnam have reforested millions of hectares over the last 25 years.

2030 Global Vision for Community Forest Management

In its many different forms, CFM has been promoted for decades, and over the last 40 years or so, there has been significant expansion in the area under formally recognized CFM. Where it succeeds, CFM can rapidly restore forests and improve natural forest management, mitigating climate change while improving governance and equitably enhancing local livelihoods. This is the promise and the potential, but in most countries, even where communities control large territories (e.g., Brazil), CFM is still seen as a kind of "boutique" development project. The number of places where CFM is performing at scale remains small, especially in forest core landscapes.

Therefore, the vision for CFM by 2030 is one where **community forests are consistently at the heart of forestry sector decision-making in the world's major forested regions**, and where **rights-based CFM is performing at scale** in natural forests in at least three new places, delivering equitable benefits to marginalized communities and significantly reducing climate risk.

Achieving this vision will require major coordinated investment and long-term alliances. The creation of a **Global Initiative for Community Forests** is thus proposed here as an important first step in realizing the 2030 vision. This new Global Initiative would bring together existing IPLC and CFM organizations and their networks (e.g., Global Alliance of Territorial Communities) with donors, government, civil society, and private sector partners to support CFM expansion and implementation in key sites over the long term. An indicative list of possible focal countries for the initiative is presented in Annex A.

Investment Priorities: CFM Enabling Conditions

Investments in CFM need to be channeled to support proven strategies, learning from both the successes and many failures with CFM development over time. Some notable scholarship has sought to distill such learning globally. Baynes *et al.* (2015) studied the literature on CFM systems in Mexico, Nepal, and the Philippines — as well as a host of other sites around the world — and identified five main factors that are critical to success. These are: (i) secure rights, (ii) good producer group governance, (iii) government support, (iv) socio-economic cohesion, and (v) material benefits for members. Above all, the authors highlight the importance of **social capital**, both for internal collective action and for engaging with external actors.

More recently, Hajjar *et al.* (2020) undertook the most comprehensive review and analysis of the literature on CFM globally, using data from 643 cases in 51 countries. Their findings suggest that most CFM initiatives result in positive environmental and income-related change, but that many (somewhat paradoxically) negatively affect rights and access through the formalization of forest management, highlighting the **trade-offs** inherent in formal CFM development. Significantly, only a small minority of CFM initiatives studied (18%) reported "triple-positive" outcomes related to forests, livelihoods, and rights. The authors note several variables associated with "double- and triple-positive outcomes," namely: (i) biophysical conditions, (ii) strength of institutions, (iii) the CFM intervention model, and (iv) user-group characteristics. Among other insights, the study underscores the importance of **rights-based CFM** and strong **community-based institutions**.

Distilling such findings and combining them with lessons from decades of CFM and enterprise support projects, four key enabling conditions are advanced here, building from ProLand (2020):

1. **Social governance and technical capacity** for effective leadership and technical knowledge in forest management and administration, while ensuring stakeholder accountability and transparency.
2. **Secured rights and a supportive legal framework** to manage forests, exclude others, and sell forest products or services.
3. A **viable and equitable social enterprise** model that produces financial benefits sufficient to reinvest in forest management and business development, and that delivers economic and livelihood benefits to a broad stakeholder base.
4. **Multi-scale alliances** to access external funding and technical support, aggregate supply, market forest products, and invest in infrastructure; such alliances include those with national and local government, donors, civil society organizations, producer associations, and private sector entities.

While these are key themes everywhere, different approaches and activities need to be tailored depending on the needs and aspirations of local stakeholders, as well as national political and economic realities. Critically, a combination of both "**bottom-up**" and "**top-down**" measures are necessary for the above conditions to be met and sustained, and for CFM to go to scale.

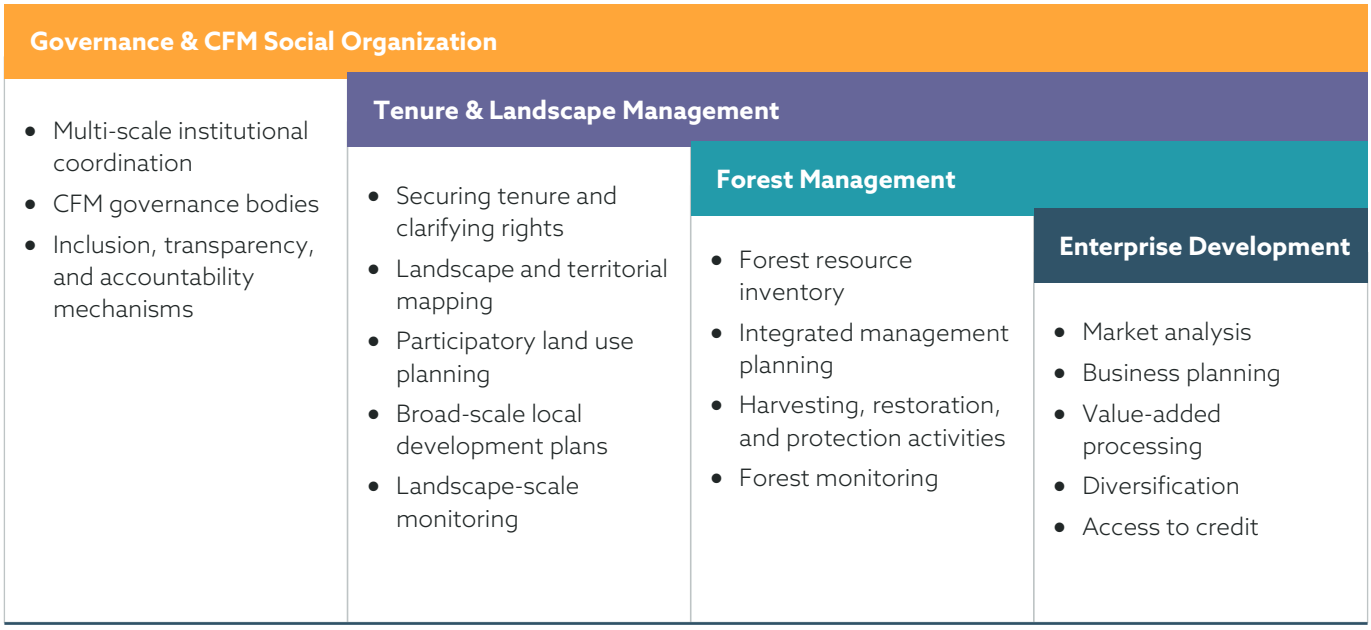
Field Investment: A Model for CFM Development from the Bottom-Up

Building from the above factors, Figure 1 presents the key stages for CFM support in the field. These stages indicate generally how investments may be channeled for CFM development, with the emphasis placed on different stages in the model depending on the local context.

Governance and CFM Social Organization

Global evidence indicates that the single most important factor determining the success or failure of CFM is strong **social governance**. When support programs ignore the social foundations, investments in technical or market or finance "solutions" are all too often a house of cards. Social governance structures take multiple forms. In some contexts, a collective approach may make the most sense; in others, a cooperative model may be called for. In smallholder or forest edge settings, enterprise organization may be required, negotiating "collectivity" among private landowners. In still other settings, individuals or small groups of individuals may manage relatively large tracts separately, but then band together for enterprise activities.

FIGURE 1: Stages of field-based CFM and enterprise support[2]



Whatever the model, experience shows that **continuity in social governance is fundamental**. Years of investment in forest management, enterprise development, market access, and finance can be wasted if there are no mechanisms in place for weathering leadership transitions. Community forests that manage to avoid such problems generally have established a **separate forest administration** with permanent personnel, while maintaining a commitment to transparency and inclusion.

Tenure and Landscape Management

Secure tenure that allows community access, use, management, and exclusion rights is equally fundamental. Tenure arrangements may be secure under different modalities (collective title, fixed-term concession, private ownership, leasing, etc.) but without secure tenure, long-term management cannot develop. While tenure is the most fundamental, for CFM to develop successfully, a host of **other supportive policies** must be in place, including regulations that facilitate sustainable forest management, harvesting, and commercialization; enterprise legality; tax regimes that facilitate local business development and value-added; and (ideally) preferential purchasing policies by government.

Another key need is for **landscape-scale planning** to ensure that forest management areas are clearly agreed upon and demarcated, and to control land use change so that investments in forestry have the greatest chance to succeed. This is particularly important in forest mosaic sites where pressure for conversion to agriculture or other land uses may be high, and also in more forest core settings where the broader territorial vision for land and forest use must be agreed upon before formal forest management can move forward.

Forest Management

Forest management objectives will vary widely. In some places, forest protection may be the main aim; in others, it may be production of timber or non-timber forest products (NTFPs) or restoration. In any case it should not be forgotten that forests are critical for a wide array of non-commercial community needs, from food security to spiritual health. Evidence from past CFM projects points to a few important lessons with respect to commercial forestry. Perhaps most notable is that formalizing forest management can result in **reduced access** within communities. Steps must therefore be taken to ensure equity.

[2] Investment stages need not be rigidly sequential: field support should focus on multiple stages iteratively and continually. At the same time, however, experience indicates that for forest management and enterprise to achieve durable success, secure tenure and solid social-organizational capacity need to be in place.

A related lesson is that, in many contexts, **an early, heavy focus on timber production is risky**, particularly when production is focused on lofty expectations of entering preferred markets. Managing for timber requires big investment, is often stifled by bureaucratic regulation, requires unique skills for both marketing and product delivery to picky buyers, and tends to benefit a smaller share of community members. A better strategy for forest production in many contexts with limited resources may be to first focus on NTFPs, which require less investment for management and tend to benefit communities more equitably. Alternatively, timber management might focus first on products needed for local use, building capacity to reach broader markets over time. Support for the technical aspects of forest management must include long-term forestry **capacity building** for CFM development.

Enterprise Development

Where it is socially desirable and economically feasible, developing enterprise can allow CFM operations to turn a profit and reinvest, as well as to enhance benefits to the community. Agreeing a vision for forest enterprise development is an important first step that needs to be based on realistic market assessments and honest assessments of existing local capacity. The scope for **developing up the value chain** will vary depending on the extent and value of the resource, local capacity (particularly for forest management, but also processing and delivery of product to buyers), market demand, and financing options.

While it is clear that increased **vertical integration and value-added** can increase incomes and benefits, this is not always a viable strategy at the scale of single communities. Aggregation and value-added at the **"second-tier" scale** — through associations — is often more viable. Although "cutting out the middleman" is a guiding goal for many projects, global experience indicates that intermediaries **play a critical role**, especially for young CFM enterprises. **Diversification** is critical to resilience — especially in the face of climate change and resulting increase in pests and disease — and can be a benefit multiplier. CFM operations that manage for a range of products and services (while ensuring that forest management does not undermine access and food security) tend to be more resilient and provide more equitable benefits, especially for women and marginalized households.

Many organizations have been supporting work in the field on the above themes for decades. International institutions such as the FAO (currently through the Forest & Farm Facility), CIFOR, and ICRAF; research and advocacy groups like the Forest Peoples Programme, Rights & Resources Initiative, and the World Resources Institute; conservation organizations such as Rainforest Alliance, Rainforest Foundation, and the World Wildlife Fund; regional bodies like CATIE and RECOFTC; and many national and local NGOs working in the field, too numerous to mention here.[3]

In spite of the large number of organizations working on CFM, most field efforts have been too small in scope and timeframe to achieve lasting impact. Moreover, a lack of coordination between groups supporting CFM — or, worse, competition between them — dilutes investment and impact. Global lessons show that for CFM to develop there must be **long-term alliances** supporting work across the themes outlined above. The Global Initiative for Community Forests proposed here would help address this fundamental problem.

Taking CFM to Scale: Top-down Measures

Field-level interventions described above are the key "bottom-up" measures for supporting CFM and enterprise on the ground. But the real challenge is mobilizing the "top-down" policies, programs, and financing that are crucial for CFM to take root and go to scale. In his recent book on the history of Mexican community forestry, Bray (2020) underscores this point. As much as grassroots mobilization was fundamental to the community forestry movement in the country, only through **top-down policy reform and state investment** did CFM become possible to operationalize on a grand scale, such that now thousands of local forest enterprises operate throughout Mexico.

Indeed, anywhere that CFM has achieved a measure of scale — in Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, Nepal — the central role of government is clear. In contrast, where state support is halfhearted or where policies are not implemented — e.g., Cameroon, Honduras, Laos,

[3] List of acronyms: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR); World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF); The Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center (CATIE); The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC).

Indonesia — CFM outcomes have been inconsistent and suboptimal, fueling bureaucratic arguments that community forests cannot perform. Generating political will for an approach that in many places runs counter to the political culture is not easy. But there are strong arguments that can appeal to state interests, most importantly the scope for CFM to help **resolve social conflict and power rural development** in remote areas, as well as helping governments comply with international commitments. Above all, choosing the right moment and which actors to influence is critical.

Taking the mobilization of state support for CFM recently achieved in **Colombia** as a blueprint for action, a few key areas for such top-down action are advanced here, including:

- **Advocacy** — analyses, targeted communications, events, and study tours involving high-level government officials to "prove the case" for CFM; building networks of local civil society CFM advocates tied to social movements.
- **Policy development** — national- and local-scale support to expand the area under community management and promote enterprise through favorable policies and regulations.
- **Extension** — design and financing of national-scale capacity building for all stages of CFM and enterprise development, i.e., moving from policy to implementation.
- **Technology** — funding and deployment of cheap, user-friendly technological tools that reduce costs and allow communities to manage and monitor forests effectively.
- **Markets** — promoting preferential sourcing of CFM products by government agencies; facilitating private sector investment in CFM; and supporting cost-effective, appropriate certification and access to preferred markets for local forest enterprises.

As critical as government is, **civil society networks and associations** have proven central to success. Where CFM is working at scale, the "top-down" is effectively informed and shaped by grassroots actors, underscoring the importance of empowering community organizations in the design and deployment of top-down measures. Everywhere that CFM has achieved durability, it builds from strong inter-community associations, producer organizations, or other alliances, underscoring the importance of "multi-scale governance."

Such organizations — e.g., ACOFOP in Guatemala, FECOFUN in Nepal, or UZACHI in Mexico — take many forms. Some are more political in nature, while others focus on forestry technical services provision. Other groups focus on product aggregation, value-added processing, and accessing finance and new markets. Associations are particularly important for smallholders, as well as smaller, more remote forest communities that often lack the capacity to develop forest management and enterprise on their own. Supporting the growth and strengthening of such associations at multiple scales — much as CLUA has done with AMPB, COICA, AMAN, and the Global Alliance of Territorial Communities — is central to long-term success.

Mobilizing Finance

Global experience demonstrates that taking CFM to scale — even within defined jurisdictions — will require **large investments**, and will need to be sustained **over decades**. In Mexico, for example, the state has invested heavily in the development of CFM since the 1970s. Since the creation of the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) in 2000, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in the country's community forests. For over a decade, moreover, Mexico also was the site of the World Bank's largest investments in community forestry globally. In Guatemala, meanwhile, USAID support alone to the Maya Biosphere Reserve probably exceeded $100 million between 1995 and 2020. And in Nepal, tens of millions of dollars of support from a wide range of bi- and multilateral donors has backed CFM development since the 1970s.

While **public financing** from national governments and bi- and multilateral donors will remain the main source of funding for CFM development, there are several new avenues through which increased finance could be mobilized. First is through **blended finance mechanisms**. Using a mix of public funds and private capital, such mechanisms — where they are tailored to the needs of social enterprise — can unlock large amounts of credit for forestry producers. While still in their nascent stages, sector-wide efforts to tap into state-backed rural credit schemes in Brazil, for example, show real promise. The large amount of

untapped credit in countries like Mexico and Indonesia offer a huge opportunity. Lessons from the World Bank's Forest Investment Program demonstrate that significant "top-down" work is still necessary to structure financial mechanisms for forestry producers, while continuing "bottom-up" capacity building is fundamental for CFM operations to access, execute, and repay loans.

Another opportunity is through **payment for environmental services (PES)** markets. Billions have been invested in REDD+ over the last 15 years, and there is increased recognition of "natural climate solutions" as the most cost-effective approach to reducing emissions and increasing carbon storage worldwide in the near term. Yet consistently low carbon prices and high transaction costs for communities mean that carbon payments are unlikely to power CFM development at scale anytime soon. If the price of carbon were more in the range of $25/ton, which could happen, this might change.[4] Even so, ownership of carbon and benefit sharing with the state will need clarification in most places. Other types of payment schemes — for watershed services, biodiversity, or wildlife protection — seem less likely to change the game.

Broadly, PES is still best conceived as an added income stream for already well-advanced community forests. At national scales, carbon finance could ultimately play a bigger role in financing CFM, but only if binding agreements can be operationalized, and only to the extent that national governments prioritize CFM as part of low-emissions development commitments (e.g., **Nationally Determined Contributions** under the Paris Agreement) and resulting rural development programs.

Of particular note: 2021 is the first year of the **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration**. Many countries, companies, and large NGOs have made commitments to restoration objectives. Given the major potential already demonstrated for CFM to restore forests, public and private sector finance in this space could provide significant resources. But as with carbon finance, it will be fundamental to ensure that such funding is accessible to communities (rather than simply feeding large, northern NGOs) and that it powers rights-based CFM. Furthermore, care must be taken to ensure that restoration initiatives (as well as "landscape approaches") do not take an overly protectionist approach to natural forest blocks. Productive management must remain central.

More concretely, partnerships with private **sector buyers** of CFM products should also be further leveraged, especially in support of local forest enterprise development. Beyond philanthropic donations made to showcase corporate social responsibility, experience shows that concrete commercial partnerships can be forged, especially with niche buyers that are willing to invest in training and long-term purchasing agreements. Commitments from companies — both in the north and in emerging economies with growing numbers of conscientious consumers — may be leveraged for many "boutique" product lines, especially non-timber products. It should be remembered, however, that niche markets are unlikely to amount to more than a fraction of a CFM operation's production. As with credit mechanisms, lessons indicate that technical assistance must be sustained on the producer side over long periods in order for such partnerships to work. Focusing on local markets is usually a better bet for enterprise sustainability.

Finally, there is considerable scope for CFM to be a central pillar in **green recovery** plans aiming to "build back better" post-Covid-19. Up to now, however, only a fraction of the estimated $13 trillion being deployed globally for pandemic recovery invests in sustainable, community-led development. To drive more resources to CFM is a major priority, but this requires targeted communications campaigns demonstrating the economic viability of community forest enterprises operating in different regions and focused on different products (timber, NTFPs, restoration, ecotourism, PES), while showcasing CFM's ability to safeguard local livelihoods, protect community health, and strengthen social inclusion and gender equity. Such campaigns should quantify the level of investment needed to bring CFM to scale, profiling the kind of partnerships that have already occurred and what is necessary to achieve and sustain success.

[4] There are signs of improving market conditions, especially now that the Biden Administration has rejoined the Paris Agreement; moreover, the Climate Action Reserve of California has recently approved projects supporting a CFM operation in Mexico.

Call for Philanthropic Action

As a recent analysis (Menon *et al.* 2021) makes starkly clear, far less than 1% of annual philanthropic investments in climate change mitigation go to efforts supporting climate justice, grassroots social capital building, low-emissions development, and equity — all of which are enabled by successful CFM.

This paper outlined the core strategies needed for CFM to succeed, and some of the priorities for investment if the global community is to upscale and mainstream the model in key forested regions. What is needed now is bold investment, stronger alliances, and long-term commitment.

A new **Global Initiative for Community Forests** would provide a platform for alliance-building, advocacy, technical exchange, and coordinated investment. Taking the experience of the **International Land and Forest Tenure Facility** as an example, this Global Initiative would organize a coalition of existing CFM alliances to mobilize both top-down and bottom-up actions. Providing seed financing for this Global Initiative would be a key contribution from philanthropic donors.

Crucially, the initiative should not duplicate or seek to replace the many CFM and IPLC alliances that already exist. Rather it should seek to **leverage partnerships and channel investments** to these groups, focusing its efforts on **advocacy, network-building, technical exchange, and finance mobilization**. At the same time, the initiative needs to be high-profile enough to signal clearly that CFM must be at the heart of the global forests and land use agenda.

Global experience clearly demonstrates what rights-based CFM and enterprise functioning at scale can accomplish. Yet the investments necessary to realize it have only materialized in a few places to date. The time is now for a major push to mobilize support for CFM at the level it deserves.

Annex A

Indicative Priority Countries

This list builds from an analysis of opportunities for expanding land rights for IPLCs in low- and middle-income countries (RRI 2020b), and prioritizes countries where rights -based "forest core" CFM may be promoted and upscaled.

REGION/ COUNTRY	STRATEGIC FOCUS
Africa	
Cameroon	Policy change to align current CFs with customary boundaries and use; development of social governance and enterprise capacities
Democratic Republic of Congo	Supporting CFM policy and management guidelines; piloting CFM development in newly recognized community forests
Ethiopia	Expansion of community rights in natural forest; support to development of CFM enterprise
Kenya	Expanding recognition of indigenous community forests; support to producer groups and local forestry enterprise
Liberia	Developing supportive policies for recognized community forests; building management and enterprise capacities
Namibia	Expansion of community rights in natural forest; support to development of CFM enterprise
Tanzania	Scaling up existing community management of natural forests; strengthening of producer groups and enterprise
Asia	
India	Building from existing Joint Forest Management model to expand rights, manage larger areas of natural forest, and build enterprise
Indonesia	Strengthening CFM capacity in indigenous forests; streamlining policy and expanding access to finance for enterprise
Laos	Policy change for expanded community rights in natural forest; piloting CFM enterprise
Myanmar (ethnic zones)	Supporting CFM in autonomous indigenous territories; piloting formal forest management and enterprise

Continued on following page

REGION/ COUNTRY	STRATEGIC FOCUS
Asia	
Nepal	Further upscaling CFM, especially in natural forests; strengthening enterprise development
Philippines	Upscaling CFM to new regions; strengthening and expanding existing CFM enterprises
Vietnam	Policy change to recognize indigenous customary forest; expansion of CFM enterprise to natural forests
Latin America	
Bolivia	Upscaling CFM to new regions; strengthening and expanding existing CFM enterprises
Brazil	Securing existing rights; upscaling CFM among titled indigenous communities; supporting access to finance and new markets
Colombia	Supporting CFM policy implementation; piloting CFM in indigenous territories
Ecuador	Upscaling CFM to new regions; strengthening and expanding existing CFM enterprises
Guatemala	Upscaling CFM to new regions; strengthening and expanding existing CFM
Mexico	Expanding social inclusion among CFM operations, support to CFM networks, improved enterprise and diversification
Panama	Securing rights in comarcas; upscaling CFM among titled indigenous communities; supporting access to finance and new markets
Peru	Upscaling CFM among titled native communities; supporting access to finance and new markets

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Thought Piece: Community Forest Management

Ben Hodgdon