

Summary Report on the Third Annual FLARE Meeting

The 3rd Annual FLARE meeting (September 29 – October 2, 2017) was organized in partnership with Stockholm University, Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), the Swedish International Agricultural Network Initiative (SIANI), Forest, Climate and Livelihoods Research Network (FOCALI), and the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI). The meeting brought together a diverse group of ~180 scholars, practitioners, policy-makers, and donors to showcase and discuss a wide diversity of topics related to the domain of forests and livelihoods. Participants, representing 29 countries, presented 133 presentations and eight posters, and participated in two special discussion sessions and three topic-specific workshops over four days Stockholm University. The meeting kicked off with a welcome reception at Stockholm City Hall, home of the Nobel Prize ceremonial banquet, and many continued networking the next evening as they cruised the archipelago on the S/S Waxholm.



Building on the previous two annual FLARE meetings, this year's meeting sought to continue to advance discussion and collaboration around the relationships surrounding forests and livelihoods, with special attention to nine broad themes, as well as strengthen the network of forest and livelihood researchers and practitioners.

Important lessons that emerged from the presentations and discussions include:

Forests, and forest products, contribute to livelihoods

There is continued recognition of the value of forests (and trees, more generally) to livelihoods and wellbeing. Several sessions identified direct (e.g. nutritional intake from hunting fishing activities) and indirect (e.g. income from sale of products, ecosystem services such as flood control) benefits, but also argued for better tools and approaches for measuring the ways and extent to which they contribute to livelihoods.

A significant number of people, particularly in the Global South, rely on wood for their energy needs. Two panel sessions discussed methodologies that can capture both population-representative data as well as detailed, household-level data. Empirical analyses, modeling efforts, and policy instruments are contributing to these efforts. One session illustrated the conditions under which small and medium forest enterprises can positively impact community development, including strong institutions, the presence of natural resource rights for local users, technical support, and local and organizational capacity.



But it is not just forest products that contribute to wellbeing and livelihoods.

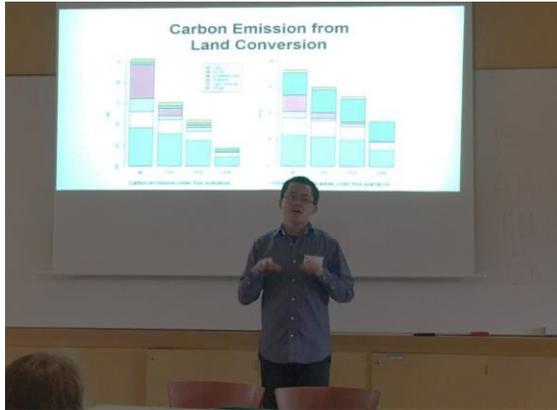
Several presenters explored payment-based interventions. Presenters argued that the design of such programs (e.g. REDD+) should focus on including existing stewardship practices and motivating good behavior, rather than punishing bad behavior. Similarly, it was argued that such programs should include resilience-based approaches over more value-laden language and top-down approaches. The presenters debated the extent to which local comparative research can offer insights into improving REDD+ policies and how REDD+ policies can contribute more effectively to wellbeing.

Presence of power dynamics and the need for cross-scalar coordination in forest management

In sessions that explored the role of communities in forest management and restoration efforts, power was a ubiquitous theme. Ensuring social equity and representation of diverse local voices (across gender, cultural, and economic spectrums) in forest management policy and programs is critical, as are robust analytical tools for measuring impacts of these policies and programs. Several sessions illustrated the surprisingly complex relationship between land rights and forest management outcomes, evident for instance in land titling programs that do not always lead to forest conservation. One session stressed the need for research to untangle local and social interpretations of ecological values (e.g. primary forests versus planted trees) and the ways in which tenure arrangements may vary with such interpretations. With specific attention to the Amazon, one panel illustrated the importance of coordination at the local level (e.g. among farmers engaged in fire management) as well as across scales (e.g. higher-level policies and interventions taking on a unique twist when they meet local conditions). Such coordination has the potential to lead to win-win outcomes for both forests and people.

Large-scale land use impacts at multiple scales

Several sessions illustrated the challenges of evaluating the impacts of large-scale land use (e.g. land transactions and protected area). Outcomes of such use are context dependent and data continues to be patchy; the presentations considered the need for new or revised methodologies that better capture pre-conditions, correlating factors,



and interacting processes. One session described several new tools and datasets that will enable transparency of forest product commodity supply chains, although it was suggested that the concept of transparency needed to be better unpacked as a means to an end, rather than as an end in and of itself.

Looking forward: Complex situations require complex solutions

Taking a broad, forward-looking view at the relationship between forest conservation and human wellbeing and development, several sessions illustrated the complex realities of addressing conservation and development challenges. For example, presenters argued that while forest ecosystems can support agricultural resilience, land competition is fierce. As such, we need to pull our diverse and complementary expertise to understand, respond to, and perhaps re-frame the goals and impacts of conservation and development initiatives. The presentations suggested the need for both public and private sector representation, the meaningful inclusion in policy outcomes of local and cultural knowledge, and an understanding of how expectations influence outcomes. Research endeavors that use rigorous evaluation approaches and tools are needed to assess the design, impact, and implications of conservation and development projects.

Group Discussion: The Future of Forest Work, FLARE Working Group

This discussion introduced the working group's goals and activities around the question, "What are the prospects for meaningful work for today's young people in forest communities?" The working group shared its efforts to engage youth around the world in 'visioning workshops' and promoted discussion around preliminary findings and opportunities for future engagement.

Group Discussion: Rights and Resources Initiative's Tenure Tracking Methodologies

This discussion offered a technical presentation of RRI's methods and datasets pertaining to tenure and explored how they can be used in policy, advocacy, and research settings.

Three workshops introduced and facilitated discussion and debate on specific tools, skills, datasets, and/or methodologies:

Forests, farms, and livelihoods: The scale, scope, and rights matter: This workshop introduced and reviewed FAO's work on estimating aggregate numbers and values of forest and farm producers and associated enterprises and organizations at national and global level. The workshop participants discussed strategies for using existing evidence to influence decision-makers on policies and investments that would enhance conditions for small-scale forest and farm producers. It highlighted the importance of land and forest rights of producers, initiated joint collaborations, and produced a compendium of the discussion points to inform key stakeholders about datasets, methodologies, and approaches for measuring contributions of small-scale forest and farm producers.

Design and methods of research with community participation: Integrating local ecological knowledge, practices, and worldviews in resource use and management planning: This workshop introduced the design and methodological practice of participatory research in order to assess and incorporate local knowledge, practices, and worldviews (k-p-w assemblage) into project/policy implementation. Participants engaged in circles of conversation and activity around hypothetical research designs and simulated participatory methods. This workshop highlighted the critical role and responsibility of researchers to understand and incorporate local community k-p-w assemblages in resource management.

FLARE's LivWell tool (Livelihoods and Well-being app): This workshop provided a "hands-on" introduction to and training for the FLARE Livelihoods and Wellbeing (LivWell) Tool. The FLARE LivWell tool provides a streamlined set of questions, implemented using an app-based survey, to measure household livelihood and wellbeing. Participants downloaded the tool and became familiar with how it works, drafted a Work Plan for implementing the LivWell Tool in their own data collection settings, and provided feedback on how FLARE might improve this instrument for future use.

Fostering engagement

Feedback from meeting participants suggests that this year's FLARE conference provided a unique and intimate experience that continues to fill a gap in the field of forests and livelihoods. As with previous meetings, there is an enduring desire for space and time to exchange and discuss ideas!



Better than ever: Using participant feedback toward FLARE 2018

In this year’s plenary closing session, participants broadly praised the quality of both the presentations and moderator facilitation. They also expressed appreciation for moderator efforts in some sessions to undertake new modes of discussion amongst presenters and audience members, as well as those moderators that attempted to collaboratively compose session key messages. These actions will be encouraged in the next FLARE conference. Many also appreciated the lightening talk sessions – and called for more of these in subsequent FLARE conferences. With an eye toward improving, calls were also made for: i) a more general emphasis on how we can collectively share, and learn from, the failures we all experience, ii) more diverse ways of communicating, including through artistic expressions and new media, iii) space for the inclusion of non-English language presenters and content, iv) efforts toward building bridges with other sectors, and v) regional/local focus involving academics, NGOs, and policymakers, with the ambition of composing concrete, context-specific policy suggestions. Feedback will be given careful consideration by the organizing committee, to make the next FLARE (2018, in Copenhagen) better than ever.

A huge Thank You to all of FLARE’s partners, sponsors, and members for another successful Annual Meeting! See you in Copenhagen!

