

UN-REDD
PROGRAMME



SGP
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Programme

30
YEARS



RAISING FOREST VOICES:
SGP COMMUNITY-BASED
REDD+ INITIATIVE

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Acronyms

AFD	Action for Development
CBR+	Community-Based REDD+
CFM	Community forest management
CSO	Civil society organizations
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GEF	Global Environmental Facility
HOMEF	Health of Mother Earth Foundation
LCIP	local communities and Indigenous Peoples
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NSC	National Steering Committee
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SPFA	Solidarity for the Promotion of Indigenous Women (<i>Solidarité pour la promotion de femmes autochtones</i>)
SGP	Small Grants Programme
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework for the Convention on Climate Change





Publication Overview

Climate change remains a defining issue of our time, which has been exacerbated by massive deforestation efforts around the world. To mitigate this issue REDD+ was developed to set up an international financial mechanism for developed nations to provide payments to developing countries for conserving their forest carbon stocks and offset emissions. Despite the initial success of REDD+, this programme often excluded the input of communities that directly depend on these forests. Indigenous Peoples and FDCs continue to be the most at risk and disproportionately affected by climate change, while their knowledge about the ecosystems that they inhabit is an invaluable tool for improving this devastating trend. CBR+ was developed to foster synergies between local and national stakeholders to ensure that the people most impacted by climate change are included in policy dialogues regarding their lands and livelihoods.

The primary goal of this initiative was to empower forest-dependent communities and Indigenous Peoples to fully engage in the design, implementation and monitoring of REDD+ readiness activities to develop experiences, lessons, and recommendations at the local level that can be fed into national REDD+ processes. To achieve this, CBR+ was designed to allow participating countries to experiment with their own collaborative approaches to develop mutually beneficial solutions in forestry governance and climate change mitigation strategies. This approach by CBR+ is also aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN's Agenda 2030, and with its commitment to safeguarding human rights and ensuring the inclusion of the world's most vulnerable populations.

This publication presents all six pilot countries' approaches for REDD+ implementation at the grassroots level, and showcases select projects from each country, representing a diverse collection of themes for consideration in working with forest communities. In Africa, CBR+ projects in the DRC helped improve socio-economic conditions with the development of non-timber forest products and enhanced conservation efforts through forest vigilance and protection; Nigeria was effective in establishing decentralized local governing institutions that included women in decision-making authority in forest governance in the Cross River State for the first time; In Asia, Cambodia's strategy emphasized holistic projects centred around community forestry initiatives to acquire Indigenous People's rights to land and has since granted conservation status to more than 120,000 hectares of forests; Sri Lanka has taken a holistic approach to its CBR+ programming that has provided a variety of support services to projects nationwide, giving participants tools and resources to combat numerous challenges and empowering communities to protect their forests; in the Americas, Panama created an entirely Indigenous-focused programme that united communities, improved governmental relations and developed valuable REDD+ policies that incorporate a respect for cultural knowledge and practices; Paraguay enabled Indigenous communities to directly access and manage funding for the first time, increasing visibility of local actions to reduce deforestation and promote good agroforestry practices.

These initiatives have provided the impetus and models for REDD+ at the local level to inform national strategies, enabling SGP to realize a more inclusive framework for sustainable forest management. I hope that this publication will encourage further investments in related community-based work and provide opportunities to amplify these innovative and inclusive small-scale projects to create larger and more sustainable impacts.

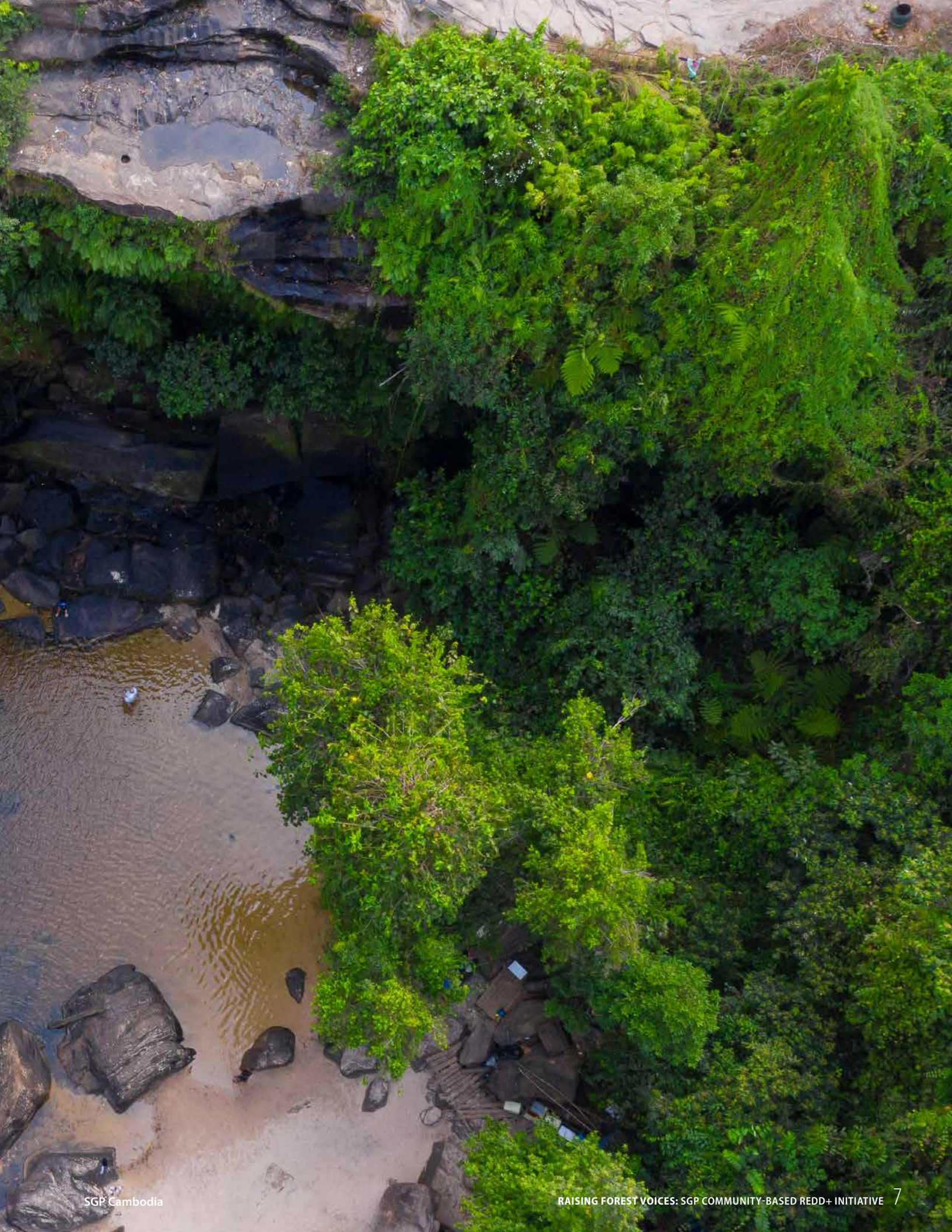
This publication summarizes the experiences and lessons learned from the participating CBR+ countries during the pilot phase. A case study from each country represents a notable strategy for implementing REDD+ at the local level. These case studies, featuring action from the ground up, have demonstrated the importance of investing in Indigenous Peoples, young people, women, and other marginalized groups affected by climate change. These initiatives highlight the need to ensure that forest governance is participatory and inclusive, based on genuine partnerships and synergies with a wide range of stakeholders, and respect for local culture and traditions.

We hope this publication will inspire further innovation, knowledge sharing, mainstreaming, replication and scaling up of community-based approaches and techniques around the world. The CBR+ initiative has shown that actions to empower local communities to act and contribute to sustainable development yield many benefits for people and the planet, with significant room for expansion as countries work together to build a safer and healthier future. CBR+ is an essential part of UNDP's support to locally led climate action and sustainable and equitable development. UNDP aims to strengthen and empower more local communities worldwide to scale up CBR+ successes and lessons learned.



SECTION 1

What is Community-Based REDD+?



INTRODUCTION

CBR+ is a complementary initiative to REDD+, a mechanism under the Paris Agreement on climate change to reduce emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. Indigenous Peoples and forest communities – as custodians of large forest areas – are crucial stakeholders. In particular, their rights, livelihoods and customary lands may be impacted by REDD+ activities. It is therefore critical to ensure full engagement with and inclusion of their perspectives regarding the lands that they call home. In recognition of this, the SGP, a corporate programme of the GEF that is implemented by the UNDP, set up the CBR+ initiative to provide small grants of up to USD 50,000 to Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities. The primary goal was to empower these marginalized peoples to fully engage in the design, implementation and monitoring of REDD+ readiness activities to develop experiences, lessons, and recommendations at the local level that can feed into national REDD+ processes. To achieve this, CBR+ was designed to allow participating countries to experiment with their own hands-on, bottom-up and collaborative approaches to develop more inclusive and mutually beneficial solutions in forestry governance and climate change mitigation strategies.

In total, 123 community projects were funded through 101 grants in six GEF-SGP partner countries with national REDD+ processes under way: Cambodia (24 projects), DRC (26), Nigeria (24), Panama (15), Paraguay (24) and Sri Lanka (10). Each country developed its own national strategy to ensure that CBR+ projects complement existing REDD+ readiness processes and approaches, supporting policy dialogue, capacity building and knowledge management towards inclusive and rights-responsive REDD+ action. Overall, 42,160 forest-dependent community members participated in CBR+ projects, gaining valuable skills and training for localized REDD+ activities. Of the participants approximately 49 percent were women. Nearly 120,000 hectares of forest were allocated under community tenure, or protected as preserves, reforested or rehabilitated.

Over a two-year period, these local projects were implemented with the goals of developing capacity in climate change mitigation while improving communities' well-being, and fostering synergies between local and national stakeholders. Primary themes of projects included, but were not limited to, agroforestry and other sustainable agricultural practices, development of economic alternatives to forest resources, CFM planning and mapping, educational campaigns, forest crime

CBR+ CORE OBJECTIVES

- Support the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples, communities and civil society in national-level processes related to REDD+, including supporting communities to determine whether and how they see themselves engaging in REDD+.
- Build the capacity and awareness of communities to engage in REDD+ activities and processes.
- Facilitate the integration of community-based activities, knowledge and ideas into national REDD+ processes.
- Develop and share knowledge and lessons learned from community-based experiences to inform national and international REDD+ policies and practice.

prevention, and REDD+ monitoring. CBR+ provided a grassroots strategy that offered opportunities to incorporate and learn from Indigenous experience, enhancing overall effectiveness of strategies for climate change mitigation.

CBR+ delivered on its commitments, results and funding within the planned three years, with no delays or extensions required. The efficient and effective delivery was the result of a combination of factors: focused design; realistic planning; national governance arrangements based on multi-stakeholder platforms; the use of an existing grant mechanism (the SGP); and a clear purpose. Following the successful pilot phase, in 2019 the UN-REDD programme conducted a thorough consultation in consideration of a second phase of CBR+, building upon recommendations and lessons learned from the first.

Forest-dependent communities and Indigenous Peoples have a wealth of collective experiential knowledge to contribute to the sustainable management of forests. If national governments aspire to reverse the effects of climate change, they must respect, recognize, and include these peoples as major stakeholders. As countries strive to achieve their international obligations to reduce emissions from deforestation, the experiences derived from CBR+ will be invaluable towards a more inclusive dialogue with unique perspectives to support policies that combat climate change.

FINANCING

The CBR+ pilot initiative was co-financed with matching support from the Government of Norway and the UN-REDD Programme totalling USD 8 million. The UNDP oversaw the distribution of funds and implementation combining technical expertise of its Climate & Forests Team with the existing community grant-making mechanism of the GEF SGP. In total, CBR+ financed and helped implement over 123 community projects through 101 approved grants. The funding served to: coordinate the initiative globally; provide



technical assistance to the pilot countries; conduct capacity-building for Indigenous and community stakeholders locally; facilitate the uptake of community experiences and perspectives into national policy processes; and support knowledge management.

PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

CBR+ operates in countries that already have an ongoing SGP national programme. At the country level, operations follow the well-tuned SGP systems and procedures, with some adjustments to respond appropriately to the features of REDD+. In this sense, existing SGP national steering committees (NSCs), which are multi-stakeholder in composition, were expanded for CBR+ with REDD+ experts and stakeholders, responsible for strategic decision-making and oversight on CBR+ grants.

Each CBR+ NSC provided overall guidance to the CBR+ initiative in the country, including review of proposals and selecting beneficiary projects. A National Plan for CBR+ was designed through consultation with stakeholders and adopted

by the CBR+ NSC. The National Plan provided guidance for the submission and selection of CBR+ project proposals, ensuring synergies between local initiatives and national processes for REDD+ results. A call for proposals was issued in line with the National Plan for CBR+ and following SGP procedures. Capacity building was given to potential grant applicants to help them develop and submit proposals. Typically, CBR+ delivered small grants (up to USD 50,000) directly to civil society organizations (CSOs) affiliated with Indigenous Peoples and forest communities for REDD+ action. Such actions ranged from organizational capacity to actual actions to conserve forests and address deforestation drivers. SGP and UN-REDD specialists guided and monitored the implementation of CBR+ projects. On completion of the CBR+ grant and knowledge management cycle, lessons were shared with REDD+ decision-makers in order to influence REDD+ policy and action on the ground.

CBR+ APPROACHES

REDD+ safeguards - community stakeholder consultations & free and prior, informed consent

International conservation strategies often involve economic incentives to restrict local access to natural resources. Despite their environmental benefits, such strategies have occasionally reinforced social disparities that have led to human rights violations. CBR+ strived to redress this issue by deliberately working with marginalized communities who have historically been excluded from negotiations regarding land use within their own territories. To ensure greater participation and engagement amongst Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities, CBR+ was designed to adhere with REDD+ safeguards mandated by the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These safeguards specify Indigenous Peoples' rights to self-determination, ownership of cultural lands,

and national requirements to obtain the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous communities before making decisions affecting their lands. As a preliminary step to developing a nation's CBR+ plan, an NSC was formed to include representation of its marginalized communities. This NSC then helped with informed decision-making on programme logistics and project selection. CBR+ projects were designed to uphold free, prior and informed consent and other REDD+ safeguards through participatory approaches such as consultations and prior assessment of community needs that promoted multi-stakeholder engagement and programme transparency. By respecting the rights and inclusion of these communities, participants felt empowered, took ownership of projects driving their success, strengthened their relations with governing authorities, and promoted more equitable forestry governance at multiple levels.

Incorporation of local cultural knowledge into national REDD+ processes

In order to improve national REDD+ processes it is imperative to integrate local knowledge regarding forest ecosystems and the communities who inhabit and depend on them. Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities often have a spiritual connection with forests as well as values aligned with protection and conservation of the land and its resources. By incorporating traditional knowledge that has been passed down through generations, national policies can promote more regionally specific and sustainable land use practices, informed and enforced by a country's local peoples.

This concept was integral throughout the duration of CBR+ through representation of these vulnerable communities in its NSCs, project design and knowledge sharing of lessons learned that have since been integrated into national REDD+ policies. Cultural knowledge about local forests and their flora and fauna were key factors to the success of CBR+ projects, creating continuity and



SGP Paraguay

instilling a sense of ownership and pride amongst participants. Cultural knowledge of crafts and traditional plants for medicine were crucial project activities for development of marketable goods to generate income for families and funding of local forest crime prevention groups. Respect for local cultural knowledge on a national level is a vital step toward forest conservation and climate change mitigation, by improving historically contentious relationships between local communities and governmental authorities. CBR+ has been shown to be a catalyst for improving these relations by empowering local communities to sustainably manage their territories through their own traditional means.

Fostering REDD+ awareness and training

Although there has been a significant increase in general awareness of climate change over the last years, many local communities and stakeholders are still largely unfamiliar with REDD+ and its initiatives. Due to their remoteness and often limited access to education, many forest-dependent communities lack the literacy skills necessary to digest highly technical language or concepts for their acceptance and engagement in REDD+ projects. To accommodate this reality, it

is important to explain climate change and REDD+ using locally relevant terms and examples when implementing community-based initiatives. CBR+ projects were adapted for local literacy levels. This included the development of REDD+ materials for low-level readers and audio-visual components to aid with illiteracy, as well as engaging women and youth participants. Experiential learning activities were also utilized to engage participants through demonstration of development plots, the creation of community and school plant nurseries, field trips, and technical trainings on agroforestry and legal awareness on reporting forest crimes. Additionally, training and technical support on REDD+ activities were provided to local governing authorities and agencies to ensure mutual understanding and cohesion between multiple parties involved with community projects.

Sustainable community forest management: development of agroforestry and economic alternatives

CBR+ was originally developed to create a decentralized model of forest governance that would re-allocate authority back to the communities who depend on forests for their livelihoods. The provision of legal rights for secure



land tenure to Indigenous and forest-dependent communities has proven to be as effective at conserving forests as formalized protected areas due to an instilled sense of ownership and cultural value. By returning authority back to the local community, people are more incentivized to protect what they own while improving historically contentious relationships with governmental entities.

Although secure land tenure was not a prerequisite for CBR+, projects collaborated with local and national governments to develop forest management strategies that worked to return control of forests back to local communities. Many CBR+ projects emphasized strengthening of local capacities in sustainable CFM by developing agroforestry and economic alternatives, providing new income streams without deforestation and thus alleviating the economic pressures to clear the land. This work included developing forest management plans for sustainable harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products and marking forest boundaries with signs and fire barriers to publicize projects and the protected status of designated areas.

Reforestation and watershed rehabilitation projects depended heavily on local knowledge of native species and their propagation. Communities were trained in new agricultural techniques, and provided new equipment for processing materials. Road access was improved to sell and distribute products more cost effectively. Fuel-efficient stoves were installed, and investments made in solar energy to reduce demand for firewood. Several projects developed women's savings groups that offered microloans for local economic initiatives and utilized the revenue to fund forest crime prevention and sustain financial support for project longevity.

Inclusive adaptation

Climate change highlights and intensifies existing inequalities in our societies. The complex interactions between exposure to climate impacts and certain biophysical, social, economic, and environmental factors contribute to social vulnerability. These factors apply to all social groups including women, men, the elderly, children and youth, Indigenous Peoples and ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities.



There are numerous factors that contribute to vulnerability including:

- limited roles in decision making;
- limited access to resources including cash, credit, land, livestock, and tools;
- lack of education and access to information;
- discriminatory cultural or social norms;
- limited mobility;
- dependence on natural resources for livelihoods; and
- division of labour based on age, gender and other social definitions.

Understanding the dynamics of these factors makes it possible to mainstream vulnerable groups within REDD+ activities, ensuring that they can effectively: participate in adaptation or development initiatives; develop the skills to gain access to, and control over, resources; and take responsibility in their decisions and actions to enable them to cope with climate change impacts. The people most affected by climate change must be part of the climate solution. Social inclusion has been a cross-cutting theme in the CBR+ programme and women and youth of Indigenous and forest-dependent communities have been actively engaged across a range of CBR+ projects.

Vertical and horizontal knowledge exchanges

Effective national REDD+ programming requires the mainstreaming of knowledge sharing both vertically across multiple levels of forest governance as well as horizontally amongst project leaders and participants engaged in its local activities. To compliment the original top-down REDD+ framework, the CBR+ initiative encouraged participating countries to design and implement their own unique grassroots methodology for engaging with local communities that would inform national-level REDD+ policies. Sharing good practices and lessons learned are key to supporting locally managed projects. Other key elements are raising awareness and strengthening synergies between multi-stakeholders and governmental authorities. To accomplish this several national CBR+ programme strategies created means of exchanging knowledge across projects.

For example, Cambodia's programme promoted these exchanges through a national forum of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for project leads to share their projects' progress and learn from each other. Sri Lanka provided a variety of support services to projects nationwide, including developing events and publications to promote cultural knowledge exchange. These services gave Indigenous Peoples and their

partnering organizations tools and resources to combat a number of challenges, build trust, and empower communities to protect their forests without fear of repercussions from local governing authorities. This strategy also helped change the perception of governing agencies, from agents of deforestation into key problem solvers. Alternatively, Panama's fully Indigenous-led *Bosques de Vida* ("Forests of Life") CBR+ programme based its design on horizontal exchanges of knowledge and resources across its array of projects where ceremonial events provided a unique platform for sharing experiences, promoting pride, strengthening alliances and inspiring other communities to implement new ideas back home. The successes with these differing approaches are indicative of both horizontal and vertical strategies for knowledge exchange – and potential hybrids – that should be considered and further developed to improve future decentralized REDD+ initiatives.

Monitoring and evaluation

To test the effectiveness of CBR+ pilot projects, rigorous data collection methods were designed and implemented for reporting project progress and key performance indicators. Guided by national SGP protocols and international REDD+ safeguards, each country adapted its monitoring and evaluation procedures to create an approach that would not be too invasive or impose authority over its participants, which might have potentially discouraged engagement. In most cases, responsibility for monitoring and evaluation of project activities and its participants was delegated to the CSO facilitating the project. This responsibility included prior community-needs assessments, as well as establishing baseline statistics and demographics. Reporting frequency of project activities varied between countries, however, annual reports sent to the country's CBR+ national coordinator were the primary method for demonstrating a project's status and level of completion.

Key indicators assessed levels of community participation, knowledge and understanding of climate change and REDD+ concepts, gender and youth inclusivity, and details of specific activities accomplished, as well as the status of pending activities, and challenges encountered. Upon completion of the pilot phase of CBR+ in 2017, country programmes were responsible for project evaluation and the development of knowledge products to offer viable policy recommendations to their existing national REDD+ strategies based upon lessons learned at the local level. The next section provides a summary of the outcomes and results of the first pilot phase of CBR+ based on the findings from these evaluations. This is followed by articles describing each pilot country's experience and spotlighting specific projects that offer unique insights and applications of REDD+ at the local level for consideration in future community-based strategies in climate change mitigation and adaptation.



SGP Sri Lanka

An aerial photograph of a lush green forest. A river flows through the center, curving from the top right towards the bottom left. A large, irregularly shaped area of the forest has been cleared, revealing a sandy and light-colored ground. In the center of this cleared area, there is a large, dense cluster of trees. A line of smaller trees or posts runs across the cleared area, possibly marking a boundary or a specific site. The surrounding forest is dense and vibrant green.

SECTION 2

Case Studies and Project Spotlights

Africa

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Ethnically divided communities unite over common goals to protect their forests, resources and traditional livelihoods.

Located in the heart of the Congo Basin in central Africa, the DRC is home to the second-largest tropical forest in the world and ranks fifth worldwide in terms of animal and plant biodiversity. Covering over 60 percent of the nation's land area, the DRC's forests are estimated to contain more than 17 billion tonnes of stored carbon. These forests support the livelihoods of an estimated 50 million Congolese citizens, across more than 250 Indigenous ethnic groups. Ethnic conflicts have historically plagued the region, including neighbouring countries, leaving forests primarily untouched out of fear. However, in recent decades this trend has changed during times of peace, as agricultural expansion and higher demand for timber products and fuels has resulted in the rate of deforestation increasing to almost half a million hectares annually.

To address these issues and uplift local communities, the DRC's strategy for CBR+ implementation focused primarily on raising REDD+ awareness and developing economic alternatives to reduce the demand for forest products and clearing. The country's NSC disbursed USD 543,996 through small grants to 26 CBR+ projects. Pilot sites were selected to include a diverse cohort of Indigenous and ethnic peoples as well as provide training and support to their respective local systems of governance. Local development committees were set up for Indigenous groups to elect representatives. In total, 14,116 forest-dependent community members participated in CBR+ projects, including 7,434 women (53%), and supported the protection of 23,270 hectares of forests through community tenure initiatives, preserves, and reforestation and restoration projects. CBR+ was found to support these communities by improving socio-economic conditions with the development of non-timber forest products and enhancing conservation efforts through forest vigilance and protection.

The majority of these CBR+ projects emphasized training and strengthening of local capacities in sustainable CFM by developing agroforestry and industries such as beekeeping and fish farming to reduce dependence on forest resources. Educational materials were translated into numerous local dialects, forest boundaries marked with signs to promote project visibility, experiential learning activities conducted in demonstration plots and nurseries, fuel-efficient stoves installed, and investments made in solar energy to reduce demand for firewood. An NGO, Save the Climate, was contracted to provide training and technical support for project and community leaders, and develop a web platform for knowledge sharing, as well as oversee the monitoring and evaluation of the CBR+ programme to generate reports. Despite the DRC's long-standing history of ethnic conflict, the NC reported that CBR+ had a powerful impact on divided communities, uniting them around



SGP Democratic Republic of the Congo

common negative experiences of deforestation, and creating opportunities for them to work together to remediate their lands for the entire community.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Solidarity for the Promotion of Indigenous Women – Support for community forest regeneration initiatives of agricultural spaces in the lake sector of Momboyo.

Traditionally, the Pygmy peoples of the Congo Basin are a nomadic tribe who live by hunting, fishing and gathering due to the rich biodiverse forests and streams throughout their territory. Now, due to population growth, expansion of development, discrimination and exclusion, their territories have been significantly reduced and confined to small tracts of forest. With increased pressures from the outside world accentuated by the effects of climate change, the Pygmy people's traditional ways of life are significantly under threat.

In response, the CSO Solidarity for the Promotion of Indigenous Women (*Solidarité pour la promotion de femmes autochtones*, or SPFA), with funding support from CBR+, developed new community initiatives to help the Pygmies regenerate their forests and raise awareness of the dangers of modernized methods in farming, hunting and fishing. The SPFA began by bringing together more than 2,000 Indigenous Peoples of the Momboyo River Basin to protect the 2,000 hectares of forest that supply most of their resources. With their help, the forest was divided into two parts; the largest was set aside for two years of protection with no hunting, fishing, woodcutting or cultivated fields. To demarcate this from the part to be cultivated, the Pygmies divided the forest with a 5-metre-wide trench planted with medicinal plants and trees that attract pollinator species.



Cultural norms of the Pygmies typically prohibit women's participation outside of traditional domestic duties. As a result, women rarely attend village meetings, remaining uninformed about important decisions that impact the community, including information on climate change and its effects. To address this, gender-segregated focus groups were interviewed to identify roles that would enable the involvement of these communities' women without conflicting with customary practices. SPFA discovered that women were primarily responsible for the households' food gathering and fishing and held essential knowledge about the forest and its resources. This allowed for women's active role in guiding and implementing many of the project's activities to restore two fishing ponds, plant more than 3,000 native trees and medicinal plants, and also act as guardians of the forest by reporting illegal logging and discouraging practices harmful to the environment. This project exemplifies women's vital role in combating climate change at the local level and their inherent role within their communities as forest stewards.

NIGERIA

The most far-reaching community focused initiative seen in Cross River State in decades, giving communities independence to be innovative and vocal.

As Africa's most populous country, with more than 210 million people, Nigeria has experienced severe socio-economic effects due to land degradation. Between 2010 and 2015 the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported a 5-percent decrease in the country's forested area resulting in a total of less than 10 percent of its original forest. Of Nigeria's remaining primary forests, 50 percent is located in the Cross River State, one of the last remaining habitats in the world for the critically endangered Mountain Gorilla. As a recipient country of significant international conservation funding, Nigeria has prioritized protection, overriding the access rights of the country's forest communities and Indigenous Peoples. Government restrictions on forest use have forced locals to resort to illegal

deforestation and poaching for additional income. Nigeria was selected as a CBR+ pilot country to address these issues by further integrating lessons learned from local forest peoples to align with its national REDD+ strategy.

Nigeria's CBR+ programme disbursed a total of USD 561,723 through small grants to 24 CBR+ projects. Nigeria's CBR+ strategy used its REDD+ network of sites in Cross River State through previously established forest management committees. Representatives from these sites were trained to host consultations in 52 communities to generate a stakeholder map which became the basis for the nation's CBR+ country plan. In total, 10,018 forest-dependent community members participated in CBR+ projects, including 5,232 women (52%). Those projects supported the conservation of 66,075 hectares of forests through community tenure initiatives, protected areas, and reforestation and restoration projects.

The primary focus of these projects was to engage forest communities in REDD+ awareness and training, and to strengthen local capacities in sustainable CFM by developing agroforestry and economic alternatives to forest exploitation. CBR+ projects were effective in establishing decentralized local governing institutions with decision-making authority regarding forest resources in Cross River State for the first time. Culturally divided communities came together to learn about shared problems caused by climate change, and unified around reforestation projects and CFM strategies. Fuel-efficient stoves were constructed to reduce demand for firewood. Communities were trained in new agricultural techniques and equipment to produce cassava, cocoa and bush mangos, and road access was improved to sell and distribute these products more cost-effectively. Revenue from these initiatives provided additional funding for training of forest management committees and forest guards for effective coordination and monitoring and enforcement of bylaws.



SGP Nigeria

Additionally, extra effort was taken to promote women's participation in forest governance through inclusive forest management planning and implementation, as well as innovative gendered livelihoods through investments in food crops, livestock and non-timber forest products. Lessons learned from the pilot phase of CBR+ in Cross River State have since been incorporated into national REDD+ processes that will be implemented around the country.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Health of Mother Earth Foundation – Capacity building for community forests stakeholders in Cross River State.

The government of Cross River State decided to build a six-lane superhighway through 115 kilometres of forests that are home to the Ekuri ethnic community. This plan threatened to open up the primary rainforest to logging, land grabbing, and destruction of the forests and associated livelihoods and traditions. The project started bulldozing parts of the community forests without complying with the Environmental Impact Assessment Act or recognition of the peoples' right to free and prior informed consent. Initial construction of the highway was temporarily halted when CBR+ funded the Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF) to help local Indigenous Ekuri peoples organize, learn of their right to free and prior informed consent, and petition for consultations.

HOMEF worked with representatives in more than 100 Ekuri villages, educating and providing legal services to equip the local forest-dependent communities with the necessary knowledge and tools to stand up against the destruction of their lands and displacement of their villages. Through awareness campaigns and capacity training, HOMEF helped to create an Indigenous forest stewardship and activism group called the Ekuri Initiative. This group later received a CBR+ grant for capacity building in the management



SGP Nigeria

of 33,000 square kilometres of community forest, the largest in the state. This group collected more than 253,000 signatures from people opposing the project on the grounds that it threatened local rights to the land. With the support of several NGO partners, it also elicited an additional 450,000 international signatures. The initiative's leaders delivered the petition to the Nigerian federal government in 2016, which halted road construction early the following year to allow for consultations and consideration of alternative routes. Though still faced with the challenges of illegal logging, Ekuri forests, under more recent management of another CSO, the Wise Administration of Terrestrial Environment and Resources (WATER), has continued to be protected and conserved through mobilization and support from additional sources. This accomplishment demonstrates the effectiveness of CBR+ in empowering marginalized forest communities to organize at the grass roots level and take action against large-scale deforestation and outsider threats to their lands and livelihoods.

Asia

CAMBODIA

Historically war-torn communities were granted authority to sustainably manage their forests and resources guided by their spiritual connection.

Cambodia was a suitable candidate for CBR+, as approximately 80 percent of its population depend on forests for their livelihoods, including an estimated 200,000 Indigenous Peoples. National conservation efforts have struggled to find a footing within this diverse cultural landscape interlaced with tragedy and distrust resulting from decades of civil war. Since democratization, land-use practices have vastly changed as global food, energy and carbon forestry initiatives strive to help the nation build its economy at the expense of traditional methods of subsistence agriculture. Economic land concessions, primarily controlled by the nation's elite class, have driven major land grabs, accelerating deforestation rates and the displacement and limitation of access for many of Cambodia's forest-dependent communities. From 1965 to 2016 forest cover decreased from 73 percent of the territory to 48 percent due to land grabbing, illegal logging and other forest crimes.

In 2015, Cambodia disbursed USD 518,386 through grants to 14 CBR+ projects in five priority provinces: Ratanakiri, Kratié, Preah Vihear, Oddar Meanchey and Kampong Thom. The country's strategy for CBR+ implementation emphasized holistic projects centred around community forestry initiatives. These initiatives included local projects to acquire Indigenous people's rights to land for sustainable CFM, awareness raising and training on REDD+, and economic alternatives through small business loans and renewable energy. In total, 3,445 forest-dependent community members participated in CBR+ projects, including 1,309 women (38%). Those projects supported the conservation

of 24,486 hectares of forests through community tenure initiatives, protected areas, and reforestation and restoration projects. Many projects targeted impoverished rural communities that had been neglected by national authorities due to prior allegiances with the former Khmer Rouge regime, which fell in 1979. The projects documented the participation of Indigenous Peoples in tribunals prosecuting former Khmer Rouge leaders for war crimes, helping their communities heal wounds from past social justice issues so they could move forward on environmental goals.

Community forestry initiatives have had high levels of success due to the region's predominantly Buddhist population, which attributes significant spiritual value to forests and their uses. Five projects were granted formal legal authorization to sustainably manage and protect a total of 14,273 hectares of community forests. This work included developing forest management plans for sustainable harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products, and marking forest boundaries with fire barriers and signs to publicize projects and the protected status of designated areas.

Economic initiatives involving women were key activities for these projects' goals. Women's savings groups were started to provide microloans to



SGP Cambodia

small businesses and for collaborations on larger investments such as agricultural improvements and purchase of solar panels, biogas systems and water filters. The revenue generated from these initiatives also produced funding for other community needs, such as patrolling against illegal forest activities, which ensures sustainability beyond the end of the project's SGP-supported timeframe.

Cooperative efforts between government officials and community stakeholders were key to the success of incorporating feedback from local projects on REDD+ activities. This feedback was important to inform the country's national strategy. Since completing the CBR+ pilot phase, Cambodia has developed its national REDD+ strategy with a continued commitment to working at the community level. With the support of additional REDD+ funding, many of its initial CBR+ project sites have continued and the programme expanded into a second phase with 10 additional projects in 2019. In total, Cambodia has conserved over 120,000 hectares of forests under community tenure and creation of protected areas with the initial support of CBR+.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Action for Development – Optimization in community management of forests and livelihoods to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by land degradation and loss of community forests

Cambodia's implementation of CBR+ primarily focused on decentralizing forest governance by providing support to establish new community forests, fisheries and protected areas, with legal authority and oversight granted to the local peoples who inhabit them. The design of the projects was often holistic in scope and included a comprehensive array of interconnected activities that proved vital for projects' sustainability and longevity.



One project that exemplified this strategy was carried out by the CSO Action for Development (AFD). In collaboration with governmental and private entities, AFD promoted conservation awareness and practices to improve socio-economic conditions and gender equality in five communities surrounding a shared forest in Kampong Thom province. Informational training on REDD+ and climate change were provided to 250 community stakeholders who helped design and draft their shared CFM plan, of whom 40 percent were women. Local committees were formed to oversee and carry out a variety of activities such as planting of 8,000 fruit trees and medicinal plants, the restoration of two agricultural retention ponds, and the development of a management network between all five communities. Women's savings groups coordinated financial management of the activities, allocating funds through microloans for local fishermen, and diversifying and developing markets for non-timber forest products such as mushrooms and honey. Interest collected from these investments was utilized for training local law enforcement monitoring and protection of their lands from illegal timber harvesting and land grabs. Multiple case studies were developed from this experience and earned the elected chief of the community forest, Mean Moum, the nation's first Effective Community Forest Management Award in 2017.

SRI LANKA

Strategic, holistic and integrative national programming provided projects with extensive training, services and resources, proving a strong conceptual model for implementing future community-based initiatives globally.

Sri Lanka has a long history of community-based forestry ingrained in its cultural heritage. In the recent decades of peace, globalization has placed the island's forests under significant pressure because of its strategic location along major international shipping routes. According to the FAO, between 1990 and 2010 development, including expansion of agriculture, cost Sri Lanka 490,000 hectares of forest, amounting to 21 percent of the country's total forest cover. Increased aquaculture development also removed significant areas of coastal mangrove forests. To combat these trends the government created protected areas and allocated forest governance responsibilities to local communities. Currently, 93 percent of Sri Lanka's forests are state-managed and permit community use for non-timber forest products, fuel-wood, and limited timber extraction.

In 2015 the government officially adopted its national REDD+ strategy and was selected as a pilot country for CBR+. Small grants distributed a total of USD 538,175 to 10 projects for forest communities resulting in high levels of community participation and efficient delivery of documentation and results. In total, 5,180 forest-dependent community members participated in CBR+ projects. Additionally, those projects supported the conservation of 2,238 hectares of forests through community tenure initiatives, protected areas, and reforestation and restoration projects. Primary themes of projects focused on REDD+ awareness, training, and strengthening local capacities for sustainable CFM through development of agroforestry, economic alternatives and ecotourism. Indigenous and forest dependent communities were trained in: organic farming techniques; soil and

water conservation; construction of wells, nurseries; reforestation; and planting of more than 200 home gardens. They also installed fuel-efficient stoves and water filters, and established fire belts and marked boundaries to protect community forests. Cultural knowledge of crafts and traditional plants for medicine was incorporated into project activities for development of marketable goods to generate income for families and funding of local forest policing groups.

Sri Lanka's success with CBR+ implementation has been attributed to its holistic view of the programme, which led to the provision of a variety of support services to projects nationwide, including developing events and publications that promote knowledge exchanges. These services gave community stakeholders and their partnering organizations tools and resources to combat a number of challenges, build trust, and empower communities to protect their forests without fear of repercussions from local governing authorities. This strategy also helped change the perceptions of governing agencies, from being considered as agents of deforestation, to key problem solvers.

The programme began by mapping forested regions near populations with high levels of poverty. Communities from these areas were consulted in the development of the country plan. Several NGOs were contracted to develop a comprehensive network of nationwide support services for the CBR+ projects and to enhance the country's National REDD+ Investment Framework and Action Plan. The Tropical Ecosystem Research Network provided training and technical support to all CBR+ project leaders. They also conducted project monitoring and evaluations that led to the creation of knowledge documents, a website, and communications platforms. The Centre for Environmental Justice formed an island-wide network of forest policing groups facilitated through a web-based forest crime monitoring and reporting hotline, and provided mediation services when legal action was needed. The Public Interest Law

Foundation gave awareness training on forest and wildlife laws to Indigenous Peoples and local lawyers establishing a legal aid service available to them 24/7 for reporting illegal forest activities. Lessons learned from the CBR+ pilot projects have since been incorporated into Sri Lanka's national strategy as additional REDD+ funding sources are becoming available.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Ekabadda Praja Kantha Maha Sanwardana Sangamaya – Participatory community protection actions to conserve the west border of Udawalawe National Park and Bambaragala Mukalana Forest, Rathnapura District

In Sri Lanka, the Udawalawe National Park has the highest density of wild Asian Elephants in the world. However, due to intense competition with large numbers of cattle illegally released into the park for grazing, the lush grass is unable to replenish sufficiently to support the elephants, threatening their survival. In addition to cattle grazing within the national park, other forest crime such as poaching and overexploitation of non-timber forest products has led to habitat loss and land degradation.

In an attempt to solve these problems, Ekabadda Praja Kantha Maha Sanwardana Sangamaya (meaning “United Women’s Community Development Association”), with funding from CBR+, worked with eight villages in the development of sustainable dairy farming and the conservation of a 20-kilometre border along the western edge of the park. Twenty households were given support to establish dairy farming units. The project purchased 20 heads of cattle of a high milk-yielding variety and built cattle sheds. Twenty home pasture lands were established by planting a grass variety containing high levels of nutrients that increases milk yields. With these measures, the people nearly doubled their monthly household incomes. Veterinary training to 35 of the beneficiaries taught them to identify common diseases and provide basic health care to cattle. This



new knowledge further promoted their interest in cattle farming. As a result, there has been a 6-percent reduction in cattle grazing within the park, where 180 cattle that were earlier released into the park are now kept within home premises. Additionally, monthly household income through milk production increased on average by LKR 10,350 (USD 28). Agreements have since been made for beneficiaries to share calves with other farmers in the community to ensure fairness and encourage others to transition away from traditional and unsustainable methods of beef production.

In addition to raising awareness and enhancing knowledge of the drivers of forest destruction, the project facilitated the establishment of five CBOs and an environmental task force consisting of 20 community leaders representing the eight villages. Members of the task force were trained in legal aspects of forest conservation and conflict resolution, and have since instated their own law-enforcement patrols and demarcated forest boundaries with fences and signs to deter illegal logging. In compliance with the REDD+ concept of reducing carbon emissions, the project also provided fuel-efficient stoves to 75 households, reducing the average fuel-wood consumption of households by 80 percent, and established 2.3 hectares of a model agroforest plantation with fruit trees and a large well.

Americas

PANAMA

An entirely Indigenous-focused programme united communities, improved governmental relations and developed valuable REDD+ policies that incorporate a respect for cultural knowledge and practices.

The Republic of Panama's unique geographic location contains some of the most biodiverse regions on the planet. With an area of just 7,443,000 hectares, Panama is host to approximately 4 percent of the world's total plant and animal species, which raises significant concerns about biodiversity loss due to human activity. According to the FAO, between 1990 and 2010 Panama lost 14 percent of its forest cover due to illegal deforestation and agricultural expansion, reducing the total down to 3,251,000 hectares, or 44 percent of the national territory. Like many Latin American countries, Panama's government legally recognises Indigenous Peoples' rights to secure land tenure, harvest resources and exclude outsider use. There are currently five formalized Indigenous territories, known as *Comarcas*, that contain more than half of the nation's mature forest cover. National parks and protected areas account for 36 percent of all Panamanian forests, and have some overlap with Indigenous territories, creating a mosaic of different tenures and conflicts over land-use. Nevertheless, these Indigenous territories

have proven to be as effective as formal protected areas at reducing deforestation and are integral to Panama's REDD+ national strategy.

Panama formalized its national REDD+ strategy in 2010 and was selected as a pilot country for CBR+ in 2014. Initially, Indigenous authorities rejected the plan due to the national government's lack of incorporation of Indigenous rights and exclusion of Indigenous Peoples from national dialogues on forestry and climate change that affected their territories. To remedy relations between the Indigenous Peoples and governing authorities, CBR+ was renamed the *Bosques de Vida* programme and the entirety of its funding was committed to projects specifically targeting Indigenous communities as beneficiaries.

Fifteen pilot projects, across all five *Comarcas*, received small grants totalling USD 570,823. A technical committee composed of representatives of Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendants, *campesinos* (subsistence farmers), and UN-REDD national advisors was instated to review projects before consideration for funding by the NSC. Projects were developed through joint participatory planning and executed successfully with various exchanges throughout. In total, 881 members of Indigenous groups participated in *Bosques de Vida* projects, including 475 women (54%). Those projects supported the conservation of 2,887 hectares of forests through community tenure initiatives, protected areas, and reforestation and restoration projects.

CBR+ projects included education and training in sustainable CFM ensuring protection of water and other ecosystem services, and development of agroforestry systems and non-timber forest products. Community development of new agroforestry crops such as cocoa and coffee provided additional economic resources, alleviating the pressure to clear the land for cattle rearing. Educational campaigns in schools and youth leadership programmes created a lasting structure for passing on traditional knowledge



of plants and propagation techniques to the next generation as well as conveying a spiritual connection with the forest. Youth trained in monitoring techniques were praised within their communities and gained employable skills for future forestry programmes.

Panama's *Bosques de Vida* programme was a particularly effective example of CBR+ implementation. It decentralized forestry governance, respecting and empowering its Indigenous communities to cooperate and share knowledge and resources in a shared vision of protecting their ancestral homes. Several publications were produced that summarized results of the programme and project experiences including a guide to traditional medicinal plants developed from Indigenous knowledge. Exchanges between projects have been perceived as pivotal in strengthening relationships and collaborative efforts at the grassroots level and have been significant in informing Panama's national REDD+ strategy.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Friends of the Sagla Dummad Olotebiliguinya – Agents of change: The Forest Protectors of Usdub, Guna Yala.

The forests within the protected Indigenous territories of the Guna Yala have a rich flora and fauna system. Traditional conservation knowledge and practices have maintained the basic ecological structure of the area. However, farming practices such as slash and burn are gradually accelerating deforestation and soil degradation. To address growing concerns over the sustained vitality of their lands, the locally organized CSO, Friends of the Sagla Dumma Olotebiliguinya, partnered with the Cacique Olotebiliguinya Institute to form a network of trained student leaders as designated Forest Protectors of the small island community, Usdub. They serve as local ambassadors to disseminate information to their communities on environmental issues and sustainable farming practices. Educational programmes on forest



conservation were incorporated into local school curriculums, and 30 student leaders were selected and trained to provide the community with interventions utilizing a cultural approach relevant to their Guna heritage.

The Forest Protectors led multiple trainings among their peer groups and held alliance meetings with various community stakeholders and Indigenous authorities. As a result, a nursery was constructed for the production of traditional medicinal plants and endangered tree species. Saplings were planted in identified plots for reforestation of degraded water basins and also shared with local farmers. These activities served as experiential learning tools for the community, instilling a sense of stewardship, pride, and desire to preserve its cultural traditions and the forests they call home. The youth leaders also engaged with local radio stations by disseminating information on environmental issues, and encouraged community participation in upcoming project activities.

CBR+ has since been recognized as a catalyst for intergenerational dialogue, with village elders sharing their ancestral knowledge with the next generation of environmentalists. Several media productions were created to share the experience of the Forest Protectors of Usdub, to serve as inspiration and guidance for replication in other villages around the world.

PARAGUAY

CBR+ enabled Indigenous communities to directly access and manage funding for the first time, increasing visibility of local actions to reduce deforestation and promote good agroforestry practices.

A small land-locked country in South America, Paraguay is geographically divided into two distinct climatic zones by the Paraguay river. In the eastern region, the Upper Paraná Atlantic Forest is particularly biodiverse; and in the west, the Gran Chaco is the second-largest continuous forest in South America after the Amazon. Between 1990 and 2010, Paraguay lost 16.9 percent of its total forest cover, or around 3,575,000 hectares. Approximately 96 percent of Paraguay's citizens reside within the eastern region, which has seen the Upper Paraná Forest fall to just 10 percent of its original size as of 2017. Increased infrastructural development and population growth has placed the Gran Chaco under similar threat from agricultural expansion, with estimated deforestation rates of around 2,000 hectares per day. Government intervention from existing legislation has had little effect due to implementation gaps and lack of environmental law enforcement.

Approximately 117,000 people from 19 recognized Indigenous groups account for 1.7 percent of Paraguay's population. Many of these communities have become isolated within forest islands surrounded by cleared agricultural lands. A changing climate increases risks for these communities, who depend on forests and subsistence farming for food security, income, and their ancestral cultural identity.

The Government of Paraguay initiated early REDD+ readiness preparations in 2008 and completed its national REDD+ strategy in 2016. A national forest monitoring system was set up and workshops held to educate and collaborate with local stakeholders and Indigenous groups for input on residents' needs. In 2014, Paraguay was selected as a CBR+ pilot

country and USD 543,136 was disbursed through 23 small grants. In total, 8,520 forest-dependent community members participated in CBR+ projects, including 3,832 women (45%). Those projects supported the conservation of 1,001 hectares of forests through community tenure initiatives, protected areas, and reforestation and restoration projects. The primary focus of these projects was to build capacity of local *campesino* and Indigenous groups for cooperative forestry governance, and provide technical skills training in REDD+ monitoring, reforestation of unfit agricultural lands with native plant species, and development of non-timber forest products.

CBR+ grants enabled these communities of rural *campesino* women and Indigenous groups to directly access and manage public funding for the first time. Careful consideration was taken when forming management teams to involve key stakeholders, including women and youth. Technical training and consultations on free, prior, and informed consent generated dialogues that served as a useful platform, uniting people around social and environmental issues and garnering support for conservation and sustainable management of forest resources. Awareness campaigns used numerous audio-visual and lower-level reading materials to disseminate information. Experiential



SGP Paraguay

learning activities engaged participants in creation of agricultural demonstration plots, community and school plant nurseries, field trips, and technical training on agroforestry techniques and cash crops such as yerba mate. Successful communication strategies included radio broadcasts about projects, raising awareness on deforestation, and development of audio-visual education materials.

Women were key to the success of many of Paraguay's CBR+ projects. They managed nurseries, promoted agroforestry and forest conservation, and shared traditional knowledge of medicinal plants and propagation techniques. To promote these lessons beyond the national scope, one project sent its women leaders as representatives to a cross-border conference of Indigenous women from each country of the Great American Chaco, a sparsely populated, hot and semiarid lowland region shared between Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay.

Using lessons learned from CBR+, the engagement of local Indigenous communities with future REDD+ initiatives will allow continued implementation of key strategies to protect Paraguay's threatened forests. Since completion of the CBR+ pilot projects, the Paraguayan government has received additional funding through results-based payments for reducing its nation's emissions from reducing deforestation, forest degradation, enhancement of forest stocks and conservation (REDD+) by a total volume of 23 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent during 2015-2017.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Mothers' Association of Naranjito – Forest sustainability through agroforestry initiatives, combined with agricultural production by rural women of Colonia Naranjito

Deforestation due to agricultural expansion and land degradation from the overuse of chemical pesticides in the forests surrounding the community of Naranjito spurred a local mother's



group to act and reverse the damage done. With the financial support of a CBR+ grant, 120 women across nine villages organized and received training on REDD+. They learned sustainable practices for food production combined with techniques of recovery, restoration, reforestation, and soil management. Each participating woman developed a management plan and committed a portion of her household's farmland to be restored, putting agroforestry into practice. Through the construction of a community nursery, more than 100 different species of native trees and other plants were propagated and distributed for planting on household farms and several public spaces, including the restoration of a well. In total, 247 hectares of land were replanted across all 120 beneficiary family farms.

Regular local radio broadcasts promoted the activities of the women, strengthening visibility and support for the project and its connection with REDD+. Additionally, partnerships with the local college and schools offered numerous opportunities for learning exchanges and volunteer support. CBR+'s success in the community of Colonia Naranjito can be directly attributed to the dedication and hard work of its women leaders. The achievements of this project demonstrate the importance of gender inclusion in localized forest governance and offers an excellent model for replication.



SECTION 3

Lessons Learned and Conclusions

CONCLUSIONS FROM COMMUNITY-BASED REDD+ PILOT PHASE 1

CBR+ has demonstrated that it is an innovative mechanism able to directly finance grassroots climate change mitigation strategies in support of forest-dependent communities and Indigenous Peoples in developing countries. During Phase 1, pilot projects carried out in six nations with a diverse array of themes have had numerous positive outcomes. Increased reforestation projects have resulted in reductions in emissions in several countries. Critically threatened forests with significant biological diversity have seen the threat from illegal logging reduced due to CBR+ projects' local protection and monitoring. Forest communities and Indigenous groups are being recognized for their commitment to sustainable forest management, while poverty is being reduced through economic development projects such as agroforestry and non-timber forest products. Many marginalized groups, especially women, have become empowered by participation in local forest governance, initiating change to existing social norms. Overall, the knowledge produced from these projects has helped inform national REDD+ strategies, including reform of forest governance, secure land tenure, and legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples' groups.

Policy influence

The 123 funded projects have covered a wide range of activities that serve REDD+ goals. The project selection criteria in each country, established and overseen by a multi-stakeholder committee, required projects to contribute to, and align with the national processes for REDD+. The resulting projects have included building technical and organizational capacities for sustainable forest management, restoration activities, territorial mapping, forest-sensitive livelihood alternatives, enhancement of agroforestry practices, and testing of REDD+ actions, among many others. The various capacities, experiences and lessons have



ultimately informed and underpinned the design and implementation of national policies for REDD+ such as safeguard measures, incentive systems and governance arrangements for forest conservation. In some cases, CBR+ has served as a field precursor for the implementation of the national strategy or investment plan for REDD+.

Inclusive approach for local benefits

While informing national policy, CBR+ has also advanced local capacities and innovations for sustainable forest conservation and management under a socially inclusive and egalitarian approach. For example, in Cambodia, CBR+ has strengthened local communities' efforts to protect their forests. In the DRC, CBR+ has empowered Indigenous women in forest affairs, rendering them in effect as custodians of the forest, and thus contributing to securing their rights and livelihoods in their communities. In Paraguay, CBR+ supported and strengthened Indigenous Peoples, enabling them for the first time to directly access and manage public funding. It also helped women to engage in restoring and protecting their local forests, empowering them on gender issues and enhancing their livelihoods via new forest-sensitive commercial activities. In Sri Lanka, CBR+ has supported the formation of a forest monitoring system led by a CSO with the favourable recognition of the government. CBR+ is showing



SGP Democratic Republic of the Congo

that, when properly empowered and enabled, Indigenous Peoples and local communities can lead the kind of scaling of innovation that creates landscape-level change and transforms economies.

A number of steps were taken to ensure that CBR+ projects benefit men and women equitably. This is reflected in the fact that, of the six CBR+ Country Plans, almost all include gender considerations prominently among the criteria for project selection. Some CBR+ Country Plans included gender considerations within the monitoring framework, with gender-disaggregated targets and indicators related to women and gender equity. Several emphasised projects benefiting young and unmarried women in particular. In all six countries, women were specifically identified and included among the stakeholder groups participating in the consultations.

Participatory and cooperative design

Engaging stakeholders at every step in the establishment of CBR+ has proven to be a worthwhile investment, even if it slowed the process at times. Extensive consultations and civil society focus groups contributed to CBR+ Country Plans, ensuring that these represented the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples and forest communities, helping to contribute to a sense of community ownership and buy-in to the initiative. Also, the process of undertaking these consultations was a valuable opportunity to raise awareness among grassroots stakeholders about REDD+ and the CBR+ initiative. Extensive efforts at capacity building ensured that grassroots stakeholders understand how CBR+ projects link to national REDD+ processes. It has also empowered communities by helping them build the skills they need to design and implement successful community-level projects.

Multi-stakeholder platform to combat climate change

Finally, CBR+ has created an innovative multi-stakeholder dynamic in the national climate arena. For example, CBR+ provided some of the beneficiary countries with a platform for bringing local perspectives into dialogues about the design of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (the policy commitments of countries to address climate change that are regularly submitted to the UNFCCC). This strategy is serving as a model for other partners. Likewise, as negotiations on the Indigenous Peoples Platform of the UNFCCC advance, partners are looking at CBR+ as an example of how Indigenous and traditional knowledge can inform national policy issues, including on climate change.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

1. Even in an initial pilot phase, with limited time and financial resources, it is possible to build the capacity and awareness of communities as a first step for later engagement in REDD+ activities and processes.
2. Strong leadership, engagement of local communities and short-term benefits combine to result in effective implementation.
3. Goals and activities must be tailored to the capacities of grantees and beneficiaries.
4. The timeframe for CBR+ activities must be sufficient for the assessment of meaningful impacts.
5. The sustainability of project interventions will only be achieved through an in-built and self-sustaining exit strategy.
6. Income-generating activities will only be successful if there are pre-arranged market linkages, for which corporate sector engagement would be ideal.

FUTURE APPLICATIONS

Nationally Determined Contributions – Driving Climate Action

The CBR+ initiative has proven an effective instrument for grassroots engagement in REDD+ as well as a means to enhance national policy with the insights and experiences of communities. The lessons learned from this programme should be considered by countries that qualify as forerunners in REDD+ action and that are willing to enhance forest-related ambition in their NDCs by empowering Indigenous Peoples and local communities with their roles in forest and land use. Through the Paris Agreement, NDCs are the keystone policy instrument for advancing climate action. The land use, land-use change and forestry sector represents 25 percent of planned emission reductions by the total NDCs to achieve targets for 2030. Yet to meet these forest-related NDC

goals, there is a need to ensure that Indigenous Peoples and forest communities have the channels and means to contribute with their perspectives, experiences, projects and knowledge toward NDC reviews, implementation and enhancement. The successful implementation of the land and forest components of NDCs lies on robust multi-stakeholder partnerships, on the full and effective engagement of Indigenous Peoples and forest communities, and on the promotion of forest rights.

Nature-Based Solutions to Address the Climate Crisis

Forests offer the biggest and the most immediately implementable nature-based solution to the climate crisis, with a massive mitigation potential of 4.1 - 6.5 gigatonnes of CO₂ equivalent by 2030. REDD+ is an internationally agreed pathway for nature-based solutions, recognized by Article

5 of the Paris Agreement, connecting policy action with financial support. The active involvement of Indigenous Peoples and other forest-dependent communities in forest management produces positive results, such as lower rates of deforestation; in effect, Indigenous Peoples are the historical curators of massive spans of forests around the world. However, Indigenous Peoples and forest-dependent communities are poorly recognized for their roles and potential agency in forest actions and nature-based solutions, lacking recognition of their rights, political significance and public voice. For the movement around nature-based solutions to yield meaningful results, the perspectives and experiences of Indigenous Peoples and forest communities should be further recognized, empowered and incorporated into national and international policy design and actions on forest, climate and land use.

The UNFCCC LCIP Platform

The UNFCCC parties and concerned stakeholders have been negotiating a new global platform on local communities and Indigenous Peoples (LCIP) as an inclusive mechanism to enhance knowledge sharing and policy dialogue within the UNFCCC between governments and Indigenous and community stakeholders. The LCIP Platform was adopted at the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP 24, December 2018) and is in its inception phase. The Platform has a unique potential for fostering and enhancing inclusive climate action in the areas where Indigenous Peoples and local communities have the greatest potential to contribute to mitigation, adaptation and resilience, by way of traditional knowledge and forest management practices. At this crossroads, community-based knowledge exchange, climate actions, and policy dialogue can provide concrete and practical inputs to the Platform, based on Indigenous Peoples' and local communities' experience with REDD+ and CBR+, thus guiding and nurturing its early stages.

FINAL REMARKS

There currently exists a diverse array of community initiatives to conserve forest ecosystems. The unique element of CBR+ is to foster a community-government partnership to enhance policy design and implementation in the climate-forest nexus. In this regard, CBR+ aims at strengthening collaboration between government programmes and community grants, and nurturing a common vision, which is required for effective REDD+ results.

The CBR+ approach, following the inclusive philosophy of UN-REDD, encourages community and government stakeholders to work together and align their efforts on forest conservation across all levels, and contribute towards improving community livelihoods, addressing climate mitigation, and achieving sustainable development goals.

Among the existing community REDD+ programmes, CBR+ is unique in this deliberate pursuit of a partnership between community and Indigenous stakeholders on the one hand and government actors on the other. In addition, CBR+ systematically employs a multi-stakeholder governance mechanism at national level (through the SGP's NSC mechanisms), which has demonstrated that it is conducive to joint dialogue and co-operation between community and government stakeholders on forest and REDD+ actions. In this sense, the CBR+ initiative complements the existing landscape of community REDD+ programmes, fostering joint community-government policy dialogue and concertation, which are key for the success of two critical UNFCCC instruments: the NDCs and the LCIP Platform. As countries continue their efforts to meet their obligations under the Paris agreement, the experiences derived from CBR+ will be invaluable toward a cohesive vision that combats climate change while uplifting marginalized populations and alleviating poverty.





The Small Grants Programme (SGP) is a corporate programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Established in 1992, SGP is currently active in 128 countries and promotes community-based innovation, capacity development, and empowerment through sustainable development projects of local civil society organizations with special consideration for Indigenous Peoples, women, and youth. SGP has supported over 27,000 community-based projects on biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable land management, conservation of international waters, and chemicals and waste management, while generating sustainable livelihoods.



The Global Environment Facility was established on the eve of the Rio Earth Summit to tackle our planet's most pressing environmental problems. Since then, it has provided more than \$21.7 billion in grants and mobilized an additional \$119 billion in co-financing for more than 5,000 projects and programs. The GEF is the largest multilateral trust fund focused on enabling developing countries to invest in nature, and supports the implementation of major international environmental conventions including on biodiversity, climate change, chemicals, and desertification. It brings together 184 member governments in addition to civil society, international organizations, and private sector partners. Through its Small Grants Programme, the GEF has provided support to more than 27,000 civil society and community initiatives in 135 countries.



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