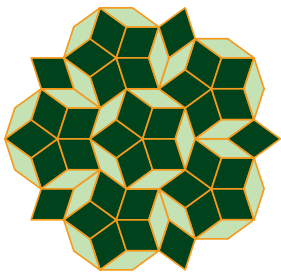
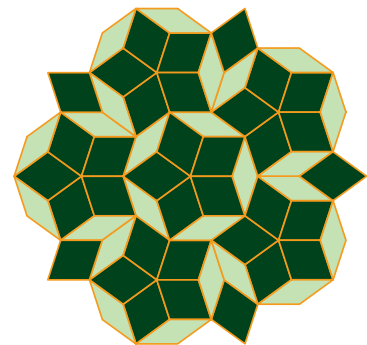
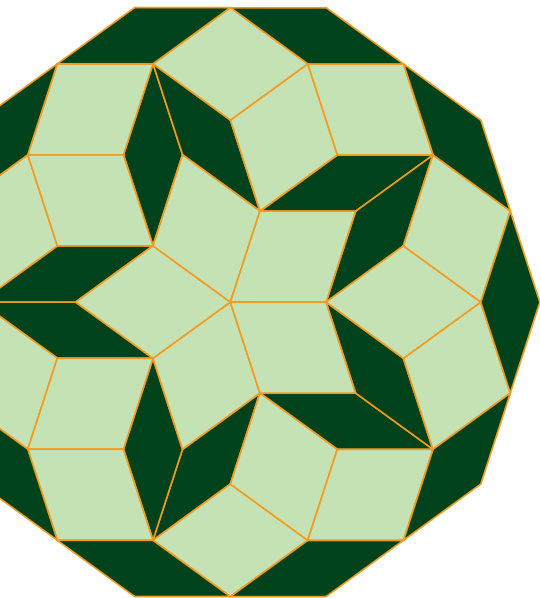




# Multi-stakeholder dialogues

What role do they play in forest governance reform?

July 2009



**EFFECTIVE FOREST GOVERNANCE IS ESSENTIAL** for equitable and sustainable forest management. Which is why, over the past 4½ years, IUCN and its partners implemented “Strengthening Voices for Better Choices” (SVBC), a project funded largely by the European Union as part of its ongoing efforts to combat illegal logging.\*

The project focused on bringing governments, civil societies and businesses together to discuss needs, build capacity, share information and implement jointly agreed upon solutions to improving forest governance. In providing space for such multi-stakeholder dialogues (MSDs), the hope was that every stakeholder could help to identify practical forest governance reforms leading to fairer and more sustainable forest use.

But can MSDs contribute to this goal? That question was the topic of an interactive discussion organized by IUCN at Chatham House in London, England. Speakers at the event shared their experiences and the lessons learned from specific SVBC pilot sites, and from MSDs in general, while an audience of policy makers and practitioners cast their votes on selected questions about the relevance and future of MSDs.

*“Forest governance fails when laws are abused or not enforced, when corruption protects the perpetrators from prosecution, and when those who depend on forest resources for their livelihoods have no rights and are forced into illegal activity in the forests merely to survive.”*  
**— Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples Programme**

### Strengthening Voices for Better Choices

The SVBC project ran from 2005 to July 2009 in six countries across three continents: Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Tanzania, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. Its role, amongst others, was to support, facilitate and, in some countries, convene MSDs.

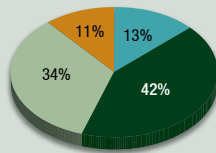
### Chatham House Update Meeting

The SVBC discussion took place at the Chatham House Illegal logging Update Meeting on 24 June 2009.† The two-hour session included presentations of three case studies from Brazil, Sri Lanka and DRC, and input from panel members representing business, civil society, local government and the European Commission. The “Cast Your Vote Live” interactive session was moderated by the British broadcaster and journalist, Liz Barclay.

## MSDs are expensive, time-consuming and labour-intensive. So are they worth the effort?

How important are multi-stakeholder processes in forest governance reform?

- An indispensable element of any reform process
- One of the many components of a successful reform process
- Unnecessary for successful governance reform
- A constraint on reform because they consume resources and may divert attention from the “real issues”



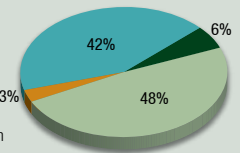
► The majority of audience members at the event believed that MSDs are essential to forest governance reform.

► The audience also made it clear that the dialogue should give advice on, and be guided by, options tailored to specific local contexts.

► Facilitating decision making was also an important function of MSDs for the audience members.

Should the role of multi-stakeholder processes be to decide, to advise, or to discuss?

- They should have the power to say “yes” or “no”
- They should have the power to deliberate and advise on the options for action
- They are primarily for exchanging information and views
- It depends on the mandate of the process

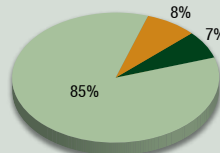


*“The democratic act of bringing together as many of these stakeholders as possible to share information and capacity has been lacking, and it is this void that MSDs try to fill. Local customs often mean that women and marginal voices are excluded, and only those who actually show up are involved. The challenge of these dialogues is to get a fair balance, to ensure that information is shared, that all groups with an interest are represented, to deal with criticism and then to ensure all this is fed back into the discussions.”*

**— Marcus Colchester, Forest Peoples Programme**

Multi-stakeholder processes are primarily used to:

- Avoid or postpone difficult decisions
- Facilitate the making of difficult decisions
- They are irrelevant to decision-making processes



*“Matching the content of proposed governance initiatives with their context is vital. If resources are limited, for instance, it makes no sense to replace existing institutions with new, expensive ones. Instead, governance initiatives should as far as possible build on existing institutions.”*

**— Mari-Lise du Preez, South African Institute of International Affairs**

*“Developing forest policies based on fair representation and diverging opinions is a time-consuming process, but one which helps to avoid conflicts later on.”*

**— Flip van Helden, European Commission**



*“MSDs require time, which is a scarce resource. But time is essential if we are to understand different stakeholders’ thoughts and reach a common vision and shared strategy. In Acre, MSDs gave us the opportunity to sit together in a ‘governance space’ and hold a clear and direct discussion which contributed to solving our problems and challenges, and to strengthening the sector. These collective spaces and discussions also increased the self-esteem and capacities of stakeholders to achieve common goals.”*

**— Adelaide de Fátima G. de Oliveira, Associação das Indústrias de Manejadores do Estado do Acre (ASSIMANEJO)**



\* For details of IUCN’s forest governance work and SVBC, visit: [www.tinyurl.com/IUCN-FLEG](http://www.tinyurl.com/IUCN-FLEG). For details of the EU FLEG Action Plan, visit: [www.tinyurl.com/EU-FLEGT](http://www.tinyurl.com/EU-FLEGT).

† IUCN would like to thank Chatham House (the Royal Institute of International Affairs) for making space for the SVBC event in the programme of the Illegal Logging Update Meeting.



### Case Study

#### MSD achievements in Bikoro territory, Equator province, DRC

Children in Bikoro could not afford enough notebooks for school. The books had to be brought from the capital, Kinshasa, making them more costly than the locally produced charcoal, fruit and vegetables which fetch a good price in the city. Charcoal is one of the main threats to Bikoro's forests, however, so supporting the trade in farm produce should both boost local incomes and protect a valuable resource.

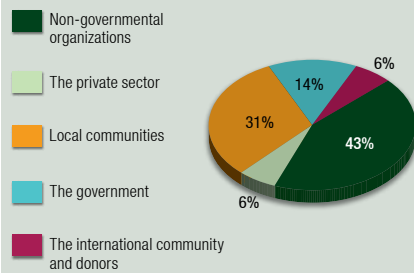
As a result of dialogue, a local logging company agreed to ferry school supplies, paid for by SVBC, on its boat from Kinshasa. Project money was spent on building a small shop, allowing Bikoro children to buy cheap notebooks for school. These are sold at near cost price, and the proceeds used to buy more supplies from Kinshasa.

To earn some money (to buy books, for example), older children were taught how to grow plantains. The logging company also agreed to transport these to Kinshasa to be sold. This trade replaced some of the local charcoal which the company used to transport for sale but has now agreed to stop.

For the community, poverty has been reduced, children have become involved in the governance process, and reducing the dependency on charcoal as a source of income has addressed one of the main challenges to sustainable forest management in the area.

## After all the effort, who in the end benefits from MSDs?

In practice, who benefits the most from multi-stakeholder processes?



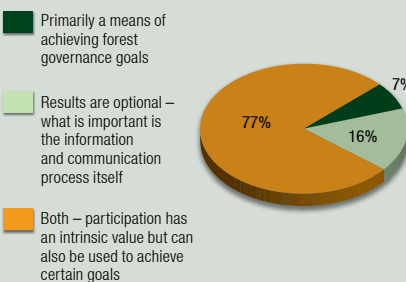
▶ Although local communities and NGOs came out as clear winners from multi-stakeholder dialogue, the audience thought that all stakeholders benefit to some extent.

▶ The audience believed that the main role of MSDs was in promoting participation and in their contribution to achieving forest governance goals.

*“Before SVBC, indigenous people were not included in the dialogues and received nothing. During the project, the national forest code was translated into Lingala to explain people’s rights to them in their own language. The result was that timber companies had to make agreements with local chiefs and pygmies about how resources would be shared.”*

— **Françoise van de Ven,**  
Timber Industries Federation, DRC

Are multi-stakeholder processes a means to an end or an end in themselves?



*“To reduce deforestation, social conflict must stop. This can be achieved by including forest-dependent people and by providing them with economic options. The value of the forest has to be realized to overcome the expansion of agriculture and ranching, to strengthen forest governance and social organisations, and to promote social inclusion and forest management by communities.”*

— **Carlos Oviedo,**  
Secretary of Forestry,  
State of Acre, Brazil



### Case Study

#### MSD achievements in Acre, Brazil

SVBC and its partner, WWF Brazil, supported a system which promoted local government, business and community participation in improving forest management practices and in becoming FSC-certified.

For its part, SVBC provided training in certification, reduced-impact logging and administrative cooperatives, and supported audits of action plans. The project also contributed to a Modular Certification Standard for Community Forest Management to encourage small and medium enterprises to participate. To date, six logging companies, four of which are in Acre, have joined the programme. A number of community enterprises are also preparing to join.





# Does strengthening voices through MSDs lead to better choices?

*"In the long term, MSDs lead to better choices. We have to work together to achieve fair access benefit sharing, sustainability and equal participation."*  
 — Emelia Arthur, Integrated Action for Development Initiatives



## Key lessons about MSDs learned during SVBC

- ▶ Though MSDs cannot prevent conflict, they do provide a framework for constructive discussions at all levels and lower the chances of a breakdown in communication.
- ▶ Good and respected facilitators are essential for MSDs. Facilitators have to work hard to win the trust of all sides. They mediate discussions, encourage those with a vested interest to participate at the discussion table, and help communicate forest policies and regulations from the national level down to the local level. Facilitators should remain in place even if a donor-funded project ends.
- ▶ Leadership, adaptive management skills, a long-term vision, a steady flow of information, confidence building and transparency are essential for effective MSDs.

## Case Study

### MSD achievements in the Knuckles forest, Sri Lanka

When Sri Lanka's government gazetted the Knuckles Conservation Forest (a protected area) in 2000, communities lost access to forest land for shifting cultivation and private landowners were obliged to sell their land within the forest to government at preset prices.

- ▶ SVBC used IUCN Sri Lanka's broader network to mobilize support from business for livelihood activities supporting local entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Villagers organized themselves into vegetable marketing cooperatives, and private landowners formed an NGO called Eco-Friends, giving them a collective voice to engage in local forest issues.
- ▶ Information flows from Knuckles concerning the real value of livelihood losses suffered by local communities have helped decision makers respond more positively.
- ▶ Local and national multi-stakeholder forums have been created to address broader issues of forest conservation, feeding lessons into national policy. Communities in Knuckles have started reaping the benefits of proactive participation in local governance processes.

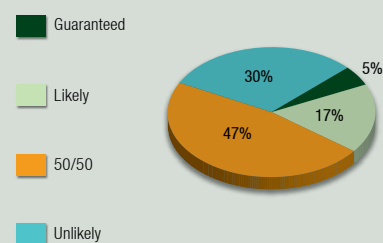
*"We made business a matter of human service. In Knuckles, we worked with IUCN to empower villagers once forced by circumstances into unsustainable practices. By establishing a cooperative society and providing training, funding and marketing expertise, we helped to eliminate the middleman and increase villagers' returns. That helped bring them into harmony with their environment while also addressing social and economic needs in the community."*  
 — Dilhan Fernando, Dilmah Tea Company

## Will better choices promote good forest management?

- ▶ Despite their positive feedback on MSDs, the audience seemed unsure as to whether enough time and space would be set aside for MSDs in the future to help make sustainable forest management more widespread.

*"The voting results indicate considerable uncertainty and concern about future forest governance arrangements. This is not surprising given the increasing competition that forests face from other land uses such as agro-business and biofuels, and the current pressure to identify quick solutions, such as REDD, for forests to contribute to mitigating climate change. REDD may help conserve the forests, but there are some important equity challenges to overcome. Moving forward, we need to work harder to consolidate, expand and replicate the gains made from MSDs in various places to address these big challenges."*  
 — Guido Broekhoven, Senior Forest Governance Officer, IUCN

What is the likelihood that forest governance arrangements will be more conducive to sustainable and equitable forest management by 2015?



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