

IUFRO Task Force on International Forest Governance Meets with Indonesian Practitioners in Singapore

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The [IUFRO Task Force on International Forest Governance](#) convened in February following the release of the 2011 Global Forest Expert Panel's assessment report "Embracing Complexity – Meeting the Challenges of International Forest Governance." One of the key findings of the assessment was the need to foster policy integration and stakeholder learning towards problem solving "on the ground." The Task Force meeting in Singapore was the first of three "founding" meetings that brought together key forest governance experts with global, national and local foci, along with practitioners from Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand. Practitioners illustrated real-world problems while the academic participants worked to suggest potential training and capacity development solutions.

Practitioners highlighted major issues including land tenure, how to support 'best practices', and the trials of changing waves of popular initiatives (e.g. REDD). The guest practitioners cast an image of great opportunity and work to be done improving Indonesian forest governance. For instance, it is now acceptable to talk about major themes such as "tenure reform" and "corruption", but many components of forest governance they desire are still missing. It is easier for community groups to request permits/recognition with the help of NGOs, but there is not enough NGO capacity to meet demand. There is also much debate regarding the appropriate roles of the national government and local governments in issuing harvesting permits.

Several proposals were put forward regarding how to involve local practitioners, communities, and academics in the global research agenda on forest governance and how to incorporate knowledge generated into relevant training and broader capacity-building efforts. The hope is that proposals both include practitioners to improve research and use research to build capacity on the ground. For instance, a suggestion that Indonesian practitioners could learn from other countries sparked a long discussion about academics' role in elucidating best practices.

After hearing from practitioners, the Task Force brainstormed potential next directions including practitioner-relevant "living" policy briefs and regular trainings that both meet the needs of practitioners and allow practitioners to "peer-review" policy briefs and generate questions for further academic research.

Learning

Two major themes emerged with respect to gaps in policy learning: assessment of needs and assessment of effectiveness. It quickly became clear that different



Photo from Task Force meeting by Alexander Buck

stakeholders needed different kinds of information delivered in different formats. It is critical to know the long-term effects and impacts of current efforts, but very difficult to measure the effect of any single initiative or intervention on forest governance since both learning and management changes often occur in complex situations over long time horizons. In the near term, the group asked: what kind of incentive structures can training and capacity development unleash? If they are different for different groups, how can they come to fruition simultaneously? Addressing these gaps will require new approaches to scholarship and monitoring.

Integration/Interaction

Given the fragmentation of authority and proliferation of hundreds of institutions and processes at the international level, institutions for forest governance need to be better connected. Current frameworks and processes need not be replaced. Rather, the Task Force committed to thinking through both how processes relate to others and to the problem they are addressing. Again, it is critical to link processes and orient scientists toward problems on the ground. For example, if scientists can link research to popular initiatives such as REDD+ and legality verification, it could help make these initiatives more durable and effective at solving the problem. Social scientists are well equipped to bring studies of power into integration or interaction, but International Relations scholars usually 'black box' local processes and local scholars sometimes 'black box' international processes. The Task Force on International Forest Governance aims to create space for the cross-cutting scholarly conversations needed to overcome these challenges.