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The role of multi-stakeholder forums in subnational jurisdictions

The Jamma-Urji farmer managed natural regeneration MSF

Oromia, Ethiopia

Key messages

- The multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) employed a collective action approach to mobilize local communities in rehabilitating degraded land, and to build the capacities of local level actors to design and implement sustainable land-use practices.
- Interventions on capacity building and stakeholder empowerment increased the MSF's perceived effectiveness in enhancing sustainable land use.
- The MSF's perceived effectiveness was constrained by the limited representation and participation of women, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector.
- Gender inequity and a lack of alternative livelihood means for women and youth limited the implementation of the MSF's outcomes.

MSF at a glance

Participants	 
Organizers	 
Year started	2014
Funding	
Forum type	Knowledge sharing and decision-making
Outcome	Recommendations and coordination

Summary

Land degradation threatens the food security and livelihoods of rural communities in Ethiopia. Past interventions to address this problem have not prioritized engaging stakeholders or addressing the political and sociocultural constraints that lead to land degradation. There is, however, current interest in participatory processes to address land degradation, reflected in the introduction of multi-stakeholder forums (MSFs) as a potential solution to facilitate dialogue and negotiation among stakeholders, and to mediate their competing interests.

To explore this potential, we examined the MSF established under the Jamma-Urji Farmer Managed Forestry Project in 2014 in Shalla and Shashemene *weredas* (districts) of Oromia regional state (Figure 1). **The MSF aimed to increase biological diversity and forest carbon stocks, and to improve the balance of the ecosystem through the natural regeneration of the forest. It also aimed to transform the livelihoods of local communities by channeling revenues from carbon finance and the sale of timber and**

non-timber forest products, and to improve their access to environmental co-benefits. Additionally, the MSF worked on mobilizing stakeholders and improving forest conditions through exclosures and tree-planting.

For this research, in-depth interviews were carried out with 15 MSF participants and 10 non-participants, 2 MSF organizers, and 4 key context informants from different sectors with knowledge and firsthand experience of land use and land-use changes in Jamma-Urji. The study aims:

1. to identify the processes and outcomes that influence the MSF's effectiveness in achieving sustainable land use;
2. to examine how the MSF addresses power and inequity issues in decision-making processes and benefit sharing among stakeholders.

Research reveals that the MSF was set up with the assumption that the interest among local communities to address land degradation, and their motivation to collaborate and find solutions with other stakeholders, could lead to the effective implementation of more sustainable land-use practices.

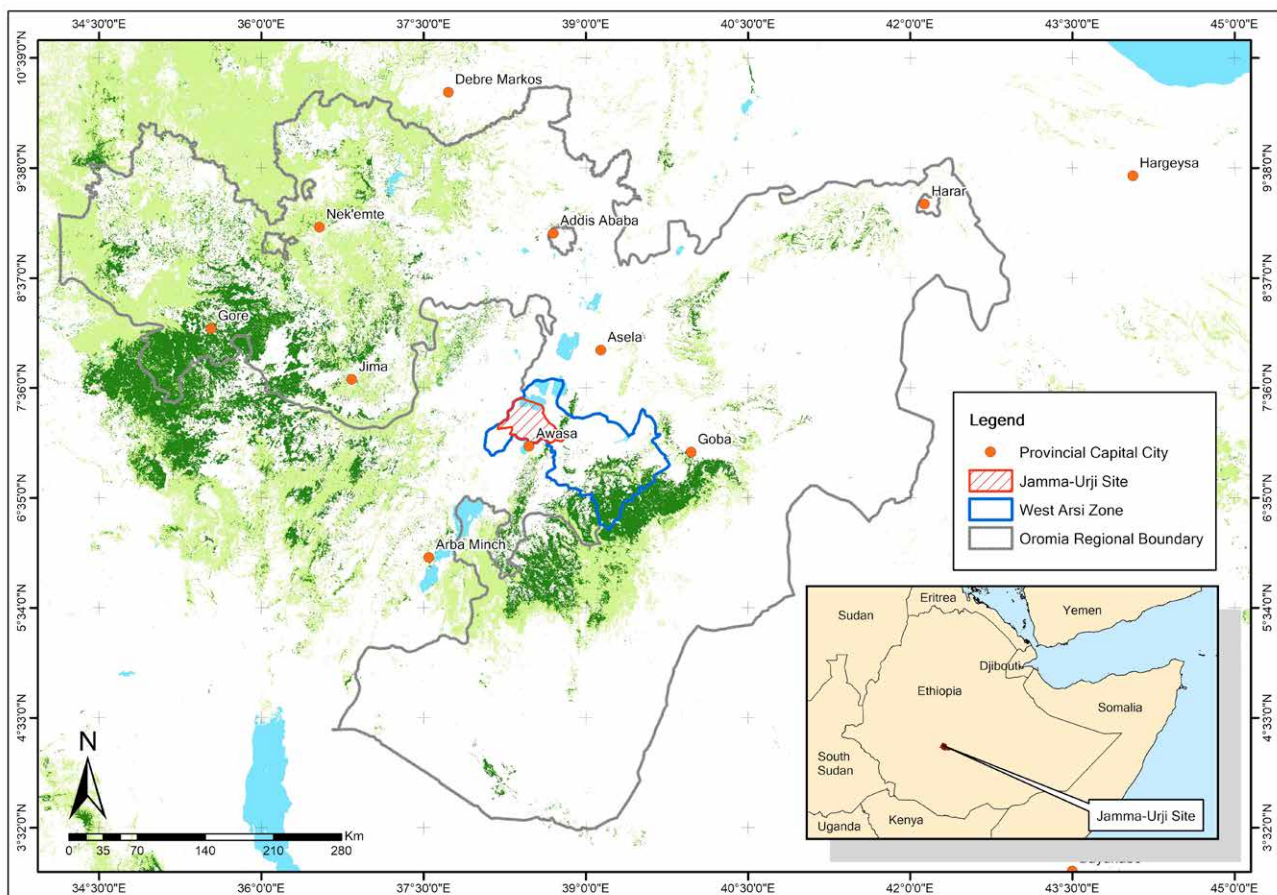


Figure 1. Location of study area: Jamma-Urji site



Figure 2. Gender inequity aggravates deforestation in Jamma-Urji. Photo by Mastewal Yami/CIFOR.

How effective was this MSF?

The MSF led to the establishment of exclosures to avoid human and livestock interference for forest regeneration. The MSF also enabled the establishment of Participatory Forest Management cooperatives, facilitated the certification of land-use rights by these cooperatives, and mobilized local communities towards soil and water conservation in the exclosures. The MSF enabled surveys and assessments to support the registration of the area as a carbon project site, and attempted to integrate some Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) activities with development goals. The MSF's collective action approach and the integration of capacity building and stakeholders' empowerment contributed to its effectiveness in addressing deforestation and forest degradation.

However, findings indicate challenges to the project's effectiveness, in that the MSF paid little attention to the dependence of women and youth on forests due to the lack of alternative livelihoods and the extensive practice of free grazing in the forest area. Findings also show a low level of enforcement of the MSF's outcomes as, for example, Participatory Forest Management cooperatives did not enforce their own by-laws to protect the forest from exploitation and enable equitable benefit sharing among stakeholders. Furthermore, the study also indicated that the MSF attracted limited stakeholder commitment to strengthen the institutional setup and mobilize funding to ensure the long-term continuation of its processes and outcomes. Political instability in the region, coupled with the lack of sustainable funding mechanisms, also threatened the continuation of MSF activities.

Was this MSF able to address inequity?

The MSF made efforts to enhance participatory decision-making approaches through dialogue and the negotiation of interests. The MSF also allocated a quota for women in the committees of Participatory Forest Management cooperatives. Yet, this measure was minimal compared to the high level of gender inequity in local communities. Research found that women and youth were rated as the least powerful but most influential stakeholders in regards to the enforcement of the MSF's outcomes. Gender norms forced women to transgress the MSF's aims, and limited their contributions for collective action, as they depend on the forest to meet their families' daily food and energy demands (Figure 2). In addition, the youth's restricted or lack of access to land and employment opportunities constrained the enforcement of MSF outcomes and contributed to the current 'open access' to the exclosures.

The MSF's achievements were constrained by gender inequity and the little attention given to exploring alternative means of livelihoods for women and marginalized groups, including landless youth. Furthermore, some political leaders at *kebele* levels (the lowest level of administrative unit in Ethiopia) selectively shared information with their closer partners in the invitations to the MSF, which excluded others from effectively participating and affected the MSF's outcomes.



Equity

The MSF was perceived to be equitable or very equitable by 93.4% of its participants.

93.4%



Effectiveness

The MSF was perceived to be effective or very effective by 100% of its participants..

100%

Recommendations

- Extending stakeholder representation:* Improving the representation of women, the private sector, and non-governmental organizations is crucial for increased inclusiveness in the MSF and increased ownership of its processes and outcomes. It is important to acknowledge the existence of, and to reach out to, other interested parties, and to promote conflict transformation in the MSF for a more equitable and effective initiative in the future.
- Gender equity:* Devising mechanisms to enable the economic empowerment of women and youth would reduce their dependence on the forest and thus increase the effectiveness of the MSF's outcomes. In order to increase women's participation, and strengthen the MSF's processes and outcomes, gender equity should be included in the MSF's discussions regarding its objectives and the role of women in achieving them.
- Budget:* The continuation of the MSF processes was threatened by funding constraints following political instability in the area. Embedding plans and activities within the government's structure, and/or devising mechanisms to mobilize funds for the MSF from the government and the private sector could help address funding constraints.
- Monitoring:* Monitoring the MSF's process and progress could support reflection and adaptive learning, enhancing actions to improve ecosystem management and local livelihoods.

This publication is part of the **Integrating REDD+ with development goals at the landscape level: The role of multi-stakeholder forums in subnational jurisdictions** project.

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