



# Facilitating Engagement and Building Local Capacity in the West Africa Forest Farm Interface Project

WAFFI Project – Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)

## Understanding local management of the forest–farm interface

The forest–farm interface is a mosaic landscape of integrated management and production practices that combine agricultural, forest and livestock land uses. The interface is not a discrete line separating farms and forests, but is a complex geographic and temporal mosaic of agricultural and forest land uses shifting across landscapes typically used by smallholders.

Smallholder households in southern Burkina Faso and northern Ghana occupy mosaic landscapes shaped by extensive parklands interspersed with pastures, and farmland with significant tree densities and woodlands. Their livelihoods integrate agriculture, forestry, livestock and natural resource management, making it difficult to separate agricultural land use from forest and tree use. Unfortunately, these smallholder systems are often poorly accommodated by policies and programs that treat forests and agriculture separately.

The WAFFI project is analyzing local management of the forest-farm interface and examining how policy frameworks address the smallholder agriculture and forestry context as a point of departure for developing strategies and programs to improve opportunities for the rural poor. A collaborative effort by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), the World Agroforestry Centre (ICRAF) and Tree Aid, WAFFI is being implemented in two landscape sites in Ghana and Burkina Faso (see Figure 1).



## Engagement with village level stakeholders

To establish a foundation for improved social learning, the WAFFI team introduced a method called Auto-Appraisal (AA) that involves local people in the evaluation of local conditions and needs assessment. Auto-Appraisal is a participatory method similar to other Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) techniques; however, the emphasis is placed on villagers, who carry out the appraisals themselves rather than outsiders. The method assesses the local livelihood context to develop a village consensus on perceived strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

The project team also is using Participatory Action Research (PAR) to assist village stakeholders to evaluate local natural resource management systems iteratively throughout the project life. The goal of the PAR work is to better align research and dialogue around locally relevant management challenges, as well as to provide local women and men with the skills and confidence to engage with policy makers and researchers for the design and planning of development initiatives.

## Multiple research methods gather evidence on management systems

**Polyscape**<sup>1</sup> is a participatory GIS approach that examines spatially explicit trade-offs between ecosystem services across landscapes to provide decision support to land managers and policy makers. ICRAF and local partners have facilitated participatory mapping of village livelihood boundaries that align with forest and market access gradients in both countries. Gender disaggregated groups have identified local land use classifications and degradation areas, which were then used to identify ecosystem services, particularly those associated with tree species. Combining this spatially explicit information with resource planning maps used by policy makers will promote a better understanding of livelihood interactions, as well as synergies and trade-offs related to forest landscape governance (Figure 2).

## Gender-Responsive Value Chain Analysis

CIFOR is using an analytic gender framework called Gender-Responsive Value Chain Analysis (GRVCA), to illustrate differentiated roles, resource access patterns (such as tree tenure) and patterns of benefits distribution associated with marketing networks for stakeholders involved in the harvest, and post-harvest transformation of key forest and agricultural products. Analysis evaluates the institutional, technological and cultural factors that frame opportunities and constraints in the market, particularly those relevant to marginalized groups (for example women, young people and pastoralists).

## Knowledge sharing and dialogue

To enhance adaptive social learning the WAFFI team has organized **Village Exchange Meetings** to evaluate results and identify common themes emerging from the research. The Village Exchange Workshops provide opportunities for participants i) to share and learn from research taking place in the communities; and ii) to identify key issues for presentation to other stakeholders and decision makers.

The project team also is facilitating **Multi-stakeholder dialogue platforms** to engage policy makers, practitioners and village representatives in knowledge sharing and co-learning. This process uses evidence generated by the project to define strategies, approaches and actions that will effectively support the livelihoods of smallholders managing the forest-farm interface for improved income, food security and equitable benefits.

## Gender-responsive capacity building

The WAFFI project adopted a strong gender-responsive approach in all activities carried out in Burkina Faso and Ghana. In total women make up about 41% of participants in project activities so far with an increasing trend for the GRVCA (ongoing).

<sup>1</sup> Jackson B, Pagella T, Sinclair F, Orellana B, Henshaw A, Reynolds B, McIntyre N, Wheeler H and Eycott A. 2013. Polyscape: A GIS mapping framework providing efficient and spatially explicit landscape-scale valuation of multiple ecosystem services. *Landscape and Urban Planning* 112:74-88.

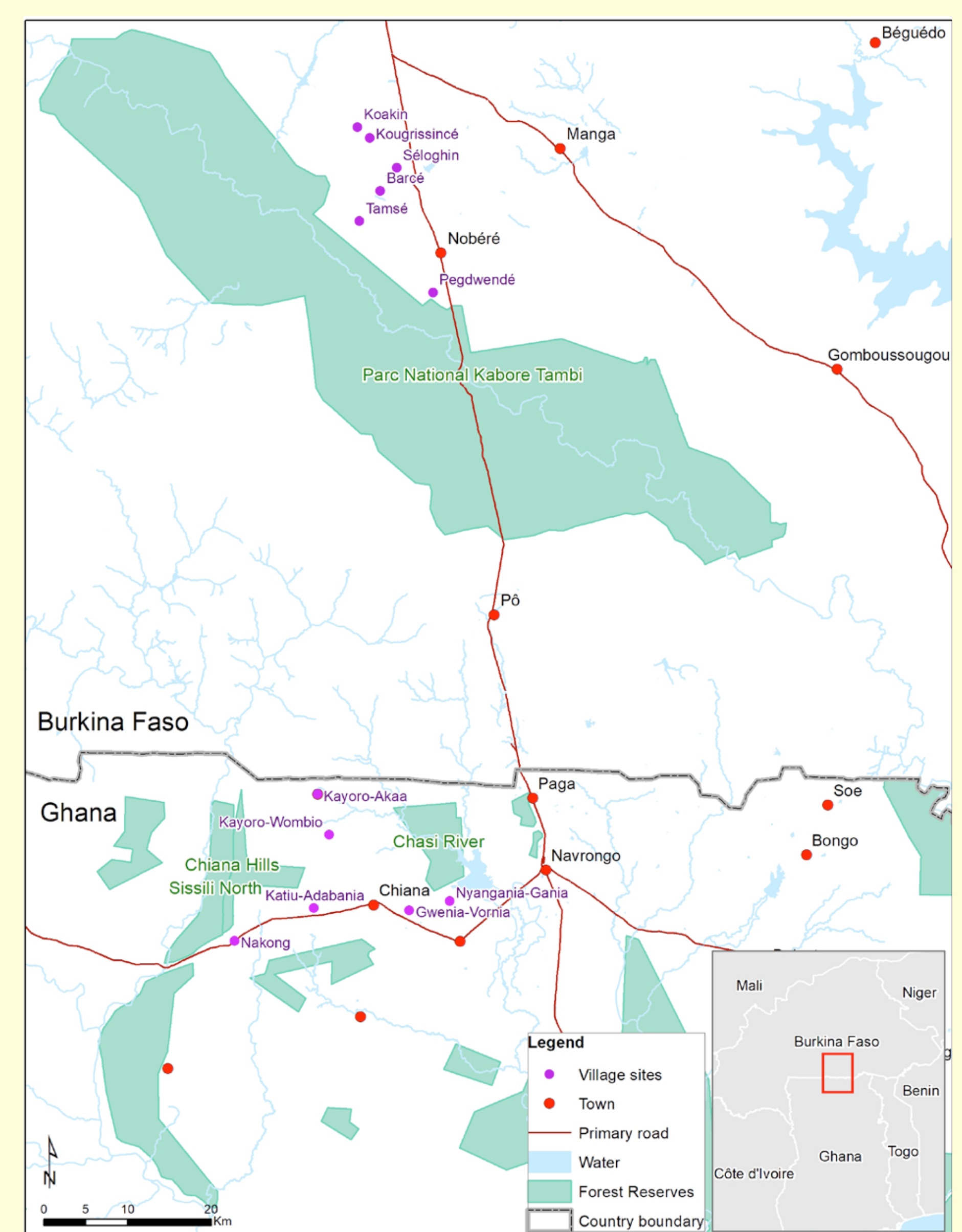


Figure 1. WAFFI project locations

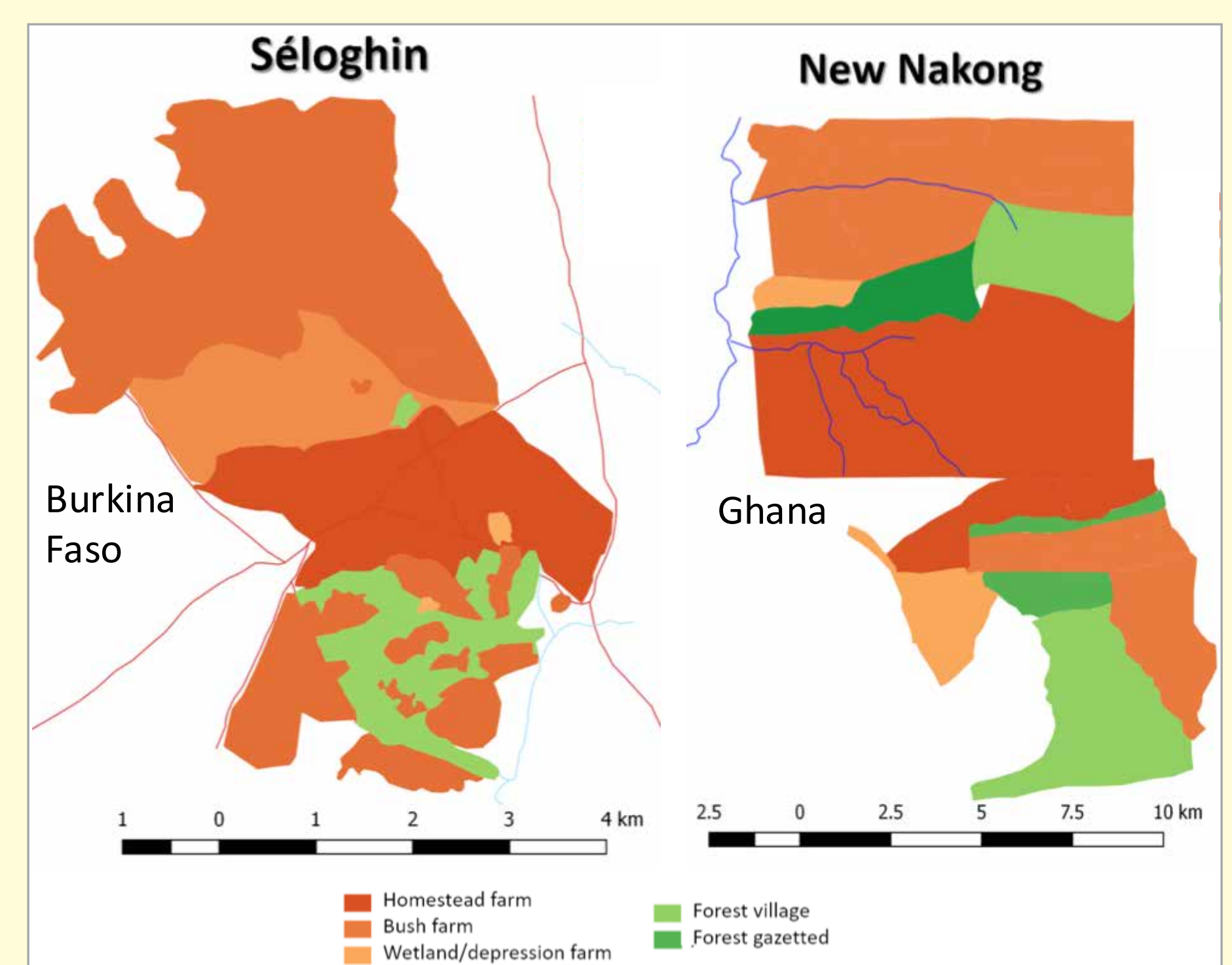


Figure 2. Socio-ecological characterization for Polyscapes

The project team continues to emphasize the inclusion gender in planned activities to reach a high percentage of women participating in work at village level.

WAFFI's capacity building strategy is based on social adaptive learning, with a bottom up approach allowing communities to gain space and skills for negotiations and encouraging marginalized people to voice their interests and needs.

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