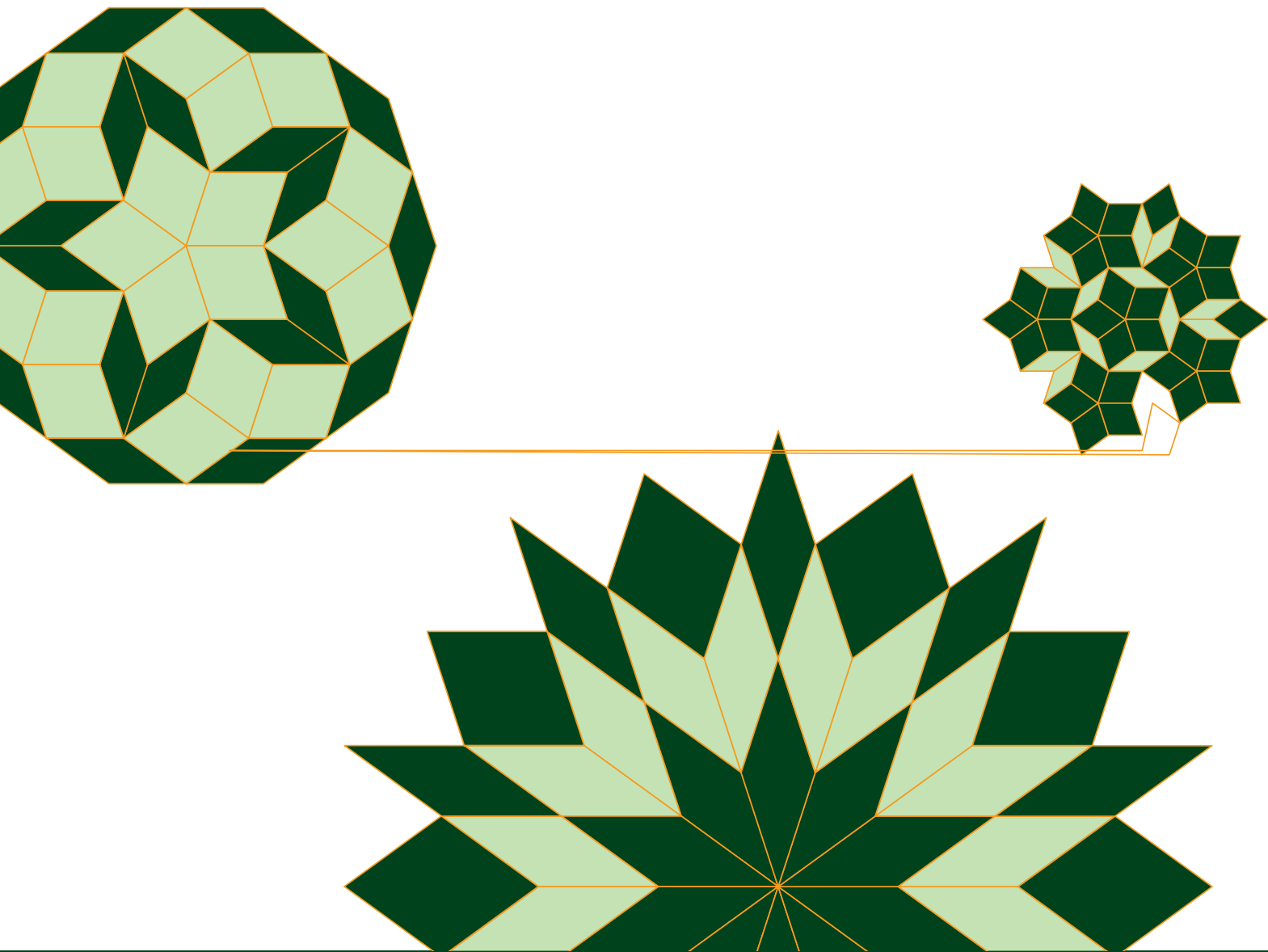




Multi-stakeholder dialogues

What role do they play in forest governance reform?

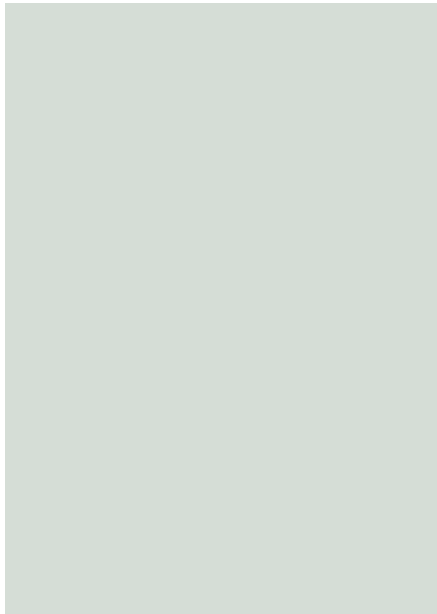
July 2009



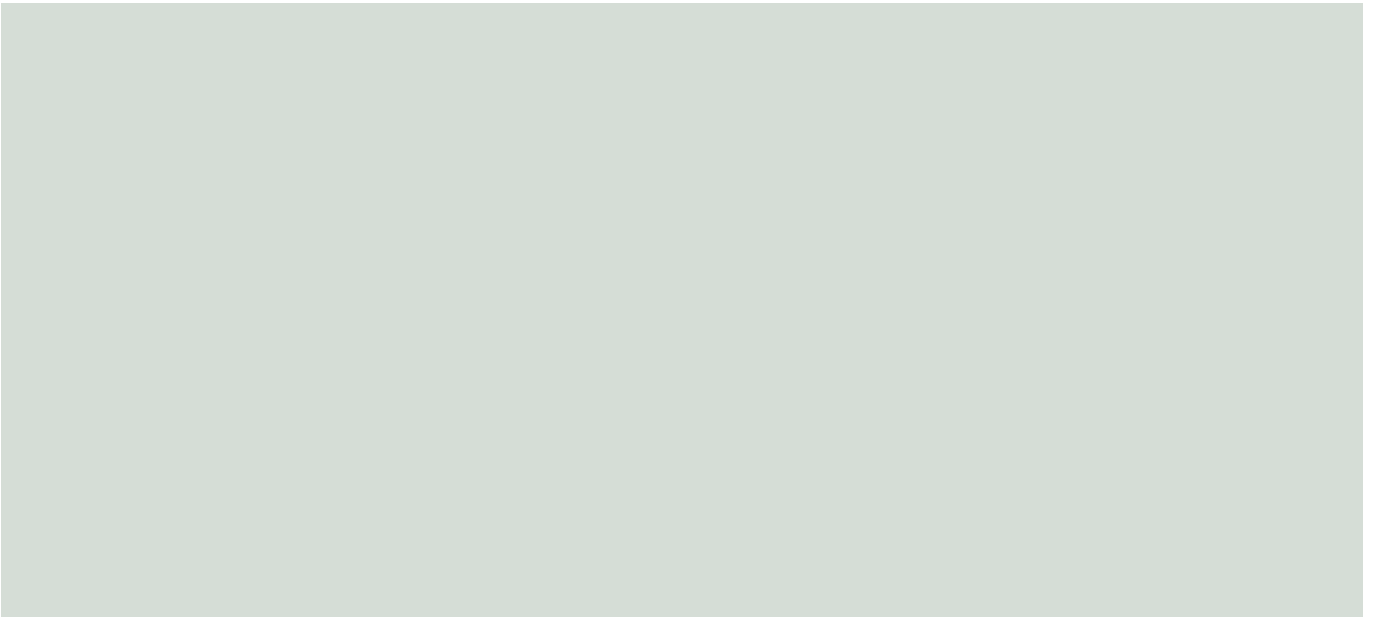
EFFECTIVE FOREST GOVERNANCE IS ESSENTIAL for equitable and sustainable forest management. Which is why, over the past 4½ years, IUCN and its partners implemented “Strengthening Voices for Better Choices” (SVBC), a project funded largely by the European Union as part of its ongoing efforts to combat illegal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



E The majority of audience members at the



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

Photos © (top to bottom) Shantha K. Hemnayake; Kathryn Sturman



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.

Key lessons about MSDs learned during SVBC

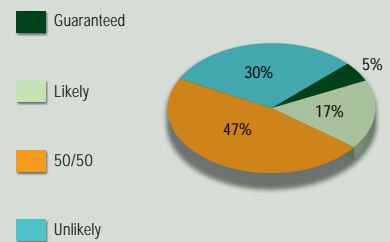
- ▶ Though MSDs cannot prevent conflict, they do provide a framework for constructive discussions at all levels and lower the chances of a breakdown in communication.
- ▶ Good and respected facilitators are essential for MSDs. Facilitators have to work hard to win the trust of all sides. They mediate 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.

“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.

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



“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



INTERNATIONAL UNION
FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE

FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAMME
 Rue Mauverney 28
 CH-1196 Gland
 Switzerland
 forest.governance@iucn.org
 Tel +41 (22) 999-0261/3
 Fax +41 (22) 364-9720
 www.iucn.org/forest



This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of IUCN and the authors. The views and opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union.