Reconciling biodiversity conservation and green value chain development

Lessons Learned Factsheet

This *Lessons Learnt factsheet* has been developed in the framework of the first phase of the **EconoBio Programme**, implemented in Ghana, with the collaboration of all implementing Civil Society Organisations during workshops and cross-learning meetings.

This factsheet is designed as a tool to stimulate learning and sharing of best practices among different stakeholders whose work combine biodiversity conservation with community development. These lessons can apply to all community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) organizations but in this document, we focus on the Ghanaian CBRNM example: the **CREMAs**[1].

It is our hope that our team, partners, communities and other organizations involved in CBNRM approaches will find inspirations from these lessons and make use of it to improve the quality of current and future projects.

[1] CREMA : Community Resource Management Area: a mechanism that gives power to local communities to manage their natural resources through the devolution of governance and management responsibility and authority by the Minister of Lands and Natural Resources.

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Green Value Chain Development

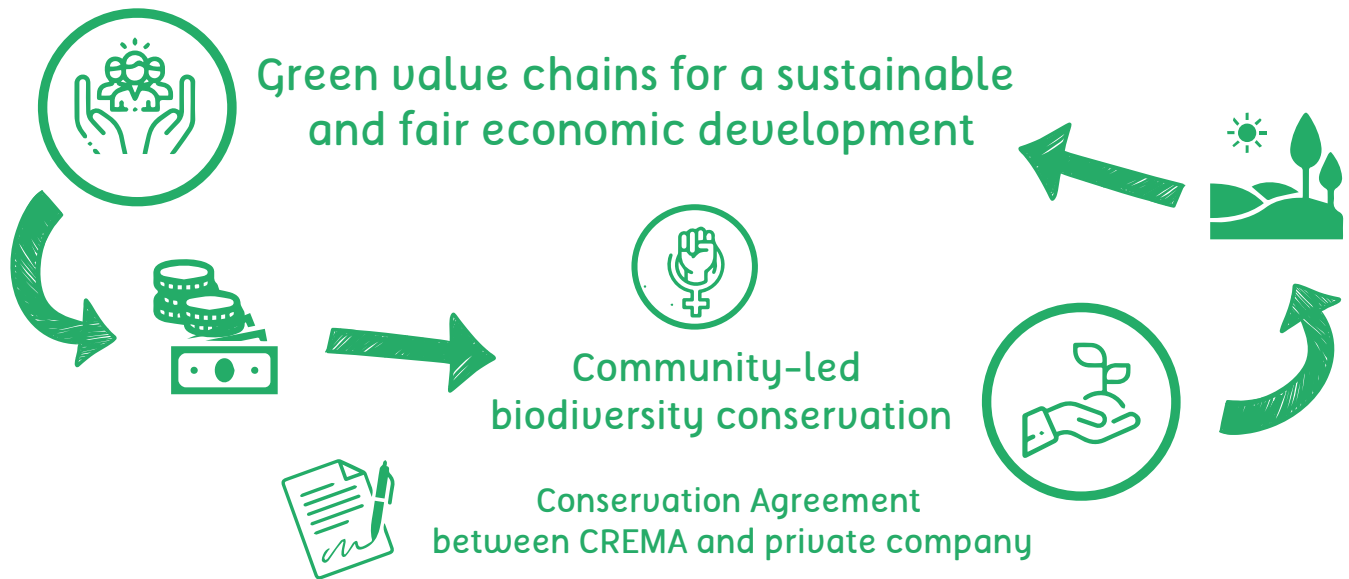## Involving Private Sector in GVC Development

- **"Profitability is sustainability" is key to develop economically sound GVC**. However, know that business is not just the profit but more importantly the relationships – build trust, transparency and accountability with the private sector.

- **Binding private companies and community enterprises (eg. CREMAs) is key to create a positive win-win relationship**, ensuring the viability of the developed GVC (as the NGO should exit at some point). **Conservation Agreement** (initiated by Conservation International) is a great example to formalize the relationship between the private entity and the Community-based organization and helps to guarantee long-term technical support and market access to communities.

- **Understand that private sector is both a problem and a solution** – support them to see the value of long-term investment by educating them on the social and environmental impacts and help them to pay premium on the real cost of what they buy.

- **Build and share a strong story around the value chains** to boost the linkage with buyers and access to markets.

Involving Communities in GVC Development

- **"Indigenise" and localise the enterprise and ensure that you are supporting existing value chains**, building upon traditional knowledge and context, and addressing real needs locally (one size doesn't fit all). This requires involving communities in the design of the process; the danger of not doing this is that the social background, traditional knowledge, real needs, and aspirations of the local people might be ignored, and this often results in the projects failing.

- **There is the need for demonstration** considering that farmers/producers might be risk-averse – they know what they have today and might prefer not to take the risk of changing their practices even if it could increase their income. Demonstration plots, pilot projects, exchange visits, awareness raising or deep explanation and access to data and information are possible ways to effect changes in practices and behaviour.

- **Facilitate the organization of producers in formal associations** with legal status to give them a collective voice and to benefit from public and private sector support.

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Green value chains for a sustainable and fair economic development

Community-led biodiversity conservation

Conservation Agreement between CREMA and private company

Environmental Sustainability

- **Anchoring GVC to CREMA policy** is an asset to support environmental sustainability.

- To prevent adverse impact on biodiversity and overexploitation of natural resources, **GVC development projects must strengthen good practices** and should contribute to the CREMA financial sustainability, by ensuring that:

  1. Part of the benefits contributes to the CREMA **Conservation Fund**[2], from the producers and/or from the private partner (e.g. Conservation Premium);

  2. Organic certification standards include sustainable exploitation criteria which can be implemented even if the GVC is not certified (e.g. leave a percentage of nuts under and on the shea or kombo nuts trees). Agro-forestry practices should be promoted to support the resilience of GVC

Economic Sustainability

- **Mechanisms ensuring contributions from communities/beneficiaries** should be set up to avoid providing equipment for free. It creates sense of ownership and counters the development of a "dependency culture". Different approaches can be implemented (e.g. counterpart funding, full or partial phased reimbursement, contribution for maintenance and for future investment, etc.) and the payment scheme (e.g. pay to use the equipment, membership dues, benefit-sharing on the product sales price, etc.) depending on the type of equipment provided (small equipment, or "unaffordable" equipment such as tractors or processing centres).

  1. The contribution scheme should fit the local context and should be clear from the beginning.

  2. Always prepare the exit and maintenance plan - how will the equipment be financed over time to cover operation costs (fuel, maintenance costs, etc).

- But know that **the non-cash contribution of beneficiaries (such as time, land, and labour) towards the development of the value chains matters as much as their financial contributions** to sustain the value chains. Let them feel that you value their time and labour as much as they value your financial and technical support.

- **Encourage diversification** to increase income streams as well as reduce risks (climate change, economic crisis) and pressure in specific resource (e.g. develop other Non-Timber Forest Products, such as Kombo nuts in cocoa agroforestry). Depending on the natural resources base in a specific CREMA, ecotourism can be developed and marketed.

- **Support food crops production** in parallel to build the capacities of local communities to overcome climate change impacts.

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[2] Conservation Fund: Fund belonging to the CBNRM and fed by the Conservation Agreement's premium allowing the CBNRM to fund their conservation activities.

Community-Based Natural Resources Management

Community Involvement and Participation in CREMA

- **Do a proper community entry from the start** by involving all relevant stakeholders especially traditional and opinion leaders to ensure a good Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process – seek permission and acceptance of the community authorities by explaining the **CREMA concept** and helping to clarify misunderstanding especially about issues of land. The process is key – follow all traditional norms in the community and avoid a "hit and run engagement" ensuring that the initial consultation is thorough and done more than once. Election of CRMCs must be consistent with the CREMA's constitution.

- **Development of constitution, bye-laws and management planning processes should always start with the whole community** – organize community durbars to do participatory resource mapping and planning (what are the resources, where are the resources and what are the uses and rules around their use (access and control). Support them to create a vision for their CREMA.

- **Environmental awareness raising, education and capacity development of community members** are essential to cause a shift in paradigm. Experiences show that illegal activities can be conducted due to ignorance of the law or ignorance of the impact of such activities.

- **Rewards or certification schemes** should be integrated in community resource management to incentivise the local farmers or producer groups to conserve trees on their farms and preserve forests.

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Supporting Enforcement of the Rights of CREMAs

- **Building a strong governance system and leadership** is key to dealing with the external influences hindering CREMAs effectiveness. The CREMA executives must be strengthened to be firm and should not be compromised; this is the only way they can stand against illegalities especially in areas where the chiefs and local government authorities are compromised (e.g. seized chainsaw handed over to the chiefs or management authorities can go back to the perpetrators again - seized equipment should then rather be kept in the custody of the CREMA executives).

- **Apply for devolution certificate** as soon as some key governance structures (constitution, committees) are in place and running to guarantee the rights of the CREMA and support the CREMA to understand its provisions so that they can demand for their rights.

- The devolution of management authority on "natural resources" to CREMAs is not always acknowledged by stakeholders or can be misinterpreted. It is critical to **push for the passage of the Wildlife Resources Management Bill and ensure the enforcement of the Tree Tenure Reform** to facilitate effectiveness of CREMAs.

- **Involve stakeholders** such as District Assembly (planner and budget officer), Wildlife Division, technical partners, etc. Include patrons to serve as "third eye" to guide and monitor the CREMA (chiefs and other members) but they must not have decision making power.

- **Adequate support is needed** to ensure the effectiveness of monitoring teams as well as the safety of the patrollers. A reward and insurance scheme should be instituted for the patrollers to serve as incentives for participating in biomonitoring.

- **Develop and support the patrol** to use community friendly biodiversity monitoring protocols including data collection and analysis tools. Provide regular training and capacity building to the team.

- **The monitoring teams** are adequately trained and do biomonitoring and law enforcement, which should include the monitoring of sustainable practices related to GVC.

Ensuring CREMA Sustainability

- **A successful CREMA depends on its economic viability and technical support**. Adequate financing schemes must be designed and implemented, e.g. the developed value chains should contribute to the financing of the CREMA activities, by setting up a Conservation Fund with a well detailed financial management plan to guide how funds are used and ensure accountability. This must be accompanied by in-depth capacity building of CREMA executives in financial and project management.

- **Avoid monetarizing the CREMA from start** – do not get communities used to receiving money at every meeting, if not, they won't do anything without taking money. But also recognize that as much as it is important to avoid the culture of handout, it is important to consider the opportunity cost for them to participate in CREMA activities.

- CREMA management **plan and regulations** should be developed and effectively implemented.

Managing Conflicting Interests

- **Inadequate understanding of power relations** at the community level could create elite capture. This often leads to domination and compromises the governance system. Dealing with this will require a well thought out approach that takes into account all interests.

  1. Do a proper stakeholder and power relations analysis together with the community to better understand the different interests and the historical power (cultural, social, economic, political power) a certain group of actors hold with regards to decisions around their resources

  2. Support the group to adopt a flexible system that allows selective inclusion (co-opt persons with power whose involvement will support the process) and selective exclusion (exempt persons with power whose involvement compromises the process). In this way, ensure that there's clear understanding of why they are included or excluded. For instance, include chiefs or government officials in the CEC to provide advice and technical support.

- **Access and control of land** often create major challenge in CREMA establishment – (core zone, restoration, land use planning). The tenure system differs from one location to the other; in some places, land is owned by the stool (chief of the community) whilst in other places, it is owned by individuals, families or clans. Always engage the right owners of land especially where land is individual or family owned to avoid future possible conflicts. Do well to document every stage of the process.

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- **In most communities, there are already existing mechanisms** for resolving conflict and punishing offenders (eg. through the traditional leaders). It is crucial to understand how these established systems work and ensure they align with statutory regulations. In cases where such mechanism does not exist, support the community to establish a grievance and redress mechanism to manage and resolve conflict where such may arise. For example, specifying offenses and penalties in the constitution and clearly explaining how such cases should be managed.

Supporting CREMA's accountability

- **Organizing AGM must be a core requirement of the CREMA** with guidelines on how and when meetings should be organized clearly outlined in the CREMA's constitution. The AGM should be a space and forum for exchanges and information sharing. For example, to render account or present financial reports and budgets for approval, to elect new committee members, give feedback on patrol outcomes and amend constitution.

- **Allow leaders to make mistakes**: The best lessons and learning can come from making mistakes. Over-managing governance at the local level robs people and organizations of taking responsibility, learning lessons, and then finding solutions.

Project Management

Improving Project Effectiveness and Sustainability

- **Be proactive** and know that donors will not always give you funds to do baseline analysis – it is key to develop a database of biodiversity issues (species, threats, status, etc) and the relevant information (volume of production, number of producers, price, existing & potential markets, social indicators, etc.) about the value chains in the landscape that your organization wants to support.

- **It is good to bring new knowledge and innovation** – which can be inspired by local knowledge and practices – but this should be accompanied with education and training. Innovation is key to increase production, ensure a better quality and diversify end-products (noting that traditional practices may not always be good neither does new technologies and innovations fits every context) as well as supporting biodiversity conservation within a landscape.

- **When introducing new solutions or innovations, think of who will use it** and how it will benefit them and adequately involve them in the design.

- **Support communities to own and drive the project**. Develop a clear exit strategy in collaboration with the local communities.

Multi-Stakeholder Involvement and collaboration

- **A wide range of stakeholders** (research, government, private sector, NGO, traditional authorities, communities) should be involved in the design of the project as it ensures ownership and buy-in and prevents the development of an "NGO-focus" project. Community-based conservation projects have higher chances of success when the relevant stakeholders are involved.

- **Exchange of knowledge, skills and experience** (failures and successes) must be fostered with enhanced communication and information sharing (e.g. through more exchange visits and cross learning workshops)

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Improving Women and Youth Participation

⚫ **Be inclusive** – youth and women participation should not be cosmetic but should be a force for driving change. GVC development offers significant job opportunities in which the youth as well as women should be involved (even if they are not owning land or farms). Some ways to enforce this include:

1. Create a system that allows to negotiate a space for power. For instance, ensure a quota system (eg. 30%/70% or 50%/50% for elected CREMA executives) in governance and management structures of the CREMA to ensure that women are participating as fully, equally, and fairly as men.

2. When working with organized groups that involve both males and females, create opportunity for separate meetings once a while for the different groups to interact separately – this ensures a neutral atmosphere for each to express their views.

3. Make special arrangements for women and disadvantaged groups in your project. For example, childcare can be provided for nursing mothers during meetings and/or trainings to allow them time to participate.

⚫ **Gender biases will always exist** due to the cultural and social dimensions, yet there must be a conscious effort to find a balance and enforce systems and beliefs that support the fundamental rights of women and marginalized groups.

1. Women participation is key but care must be taking to avoid increasing their work load by engaging them in too many project activities which do not bring tangible benefits. Women are already burdened with domestic chores and so their time should be well valued and compensated for.

2. Encourage peer-to-peer learning as it increases participation, builds trust and facilitates diffusion of skills among the groups. Facilitate exchange visits to other communities where more gender-equitable development is taking place with success stories to share and learn from.

Monitoring and Reporting Impact

⚫ **Projects fail to deliver results due to lack of monitoring and supervision** – before the start of any project, make sure to develop monitoring tools and systems to track progress.

⚫ **To show trend and communicate change**, it is important to conduct real-time monitoring, understand how actions accumulate over time, track impacts and upscale.

⚫ **Story telling is a powerful tool** to drive change and communicate results. Small stories of individuals with big impacts can be used to inspire donors and attract investment.

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