DOES THE STUDY ON TFK FOR LOCAL VILLAGERS BENEFIT LOCAL VILLAGERS? RESEARCH ETHICS, COMMUNICATION AND IMPACT: SHARING RESEARCH RESULTS WITH COMMUNITIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

This conference aims at illuminating the need to further advance ethical considerations and social responsibility in forestry research, particularly when it is done with participation of forest-dependent communities. It presents work in progress contributing to this end, looking at how the benefits emerging from research results are shared (or not) with the communities involved, and suggests the need to bridge the epistemic gap between scientific research outputs and community-accessible materials. It is anticipated that these materials would contribute to enhancing local livelihoods and the sustainable management of forest landscapes. Thus, scientific research would leverage investment by fostering, *inter alia*, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Strategic Goal D seeks to "enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services", while Strategic Goal E is to "enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building". The accessibility of scientific research results for forest-dependent communities may support these goals.

The last decades have witnessed a growing accountability of the business community regarding business values, ethics and social responsibility. The United Nations and organizations such as the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Global Reporting Initiative and the International Organization for Standardization produced guidelines, standards and recommendations such as the Global Compact, GRI 4, ISO 26000, the Equator Principles, and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. However, there has been no meaningful initiative on this matter dealing with scientific research.

The European Union, within Framework Programme for Research and Innovation Horizon 2020, established the "responsible research and innovation" approach that "anticipates and assesses potential implications and societal expectations with regard to research and innovation, with the aim to foster the design of inclusive and sustainable research and innovation" (EU, 2017). This framework fosters citizen engagement and open access to research results, although there is no specific provision for the translation of research into accessible materials. The Royal Society, together with the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Academy of Engineering and Wellcome, established a series of commitments for the "translation" of research into practical business-related actions (The Royal Society, 2017). "Translation" is understood here as a wide range of outputs and activities involving

the exchange of knowledge and ideas, creation and exploitation of intellectual property, academic-industrial collaborations, establishment of spin-out companies and development of products, processes and enabling technologies (*ibid.*).

Besides these initiatives, the research community is frequently confronted with ethical concerns, particularly regarding biological and genetics issues. The Nagoya Protocol, among other objectives, seeks to ensure equal access to benefits derived from the sustainable use of biodiversity, particularly of indigenous and traditional communities. Furthermore, there has been significant progress in promoting evidence-based policies and fostering the science – policy dialogue.

In spite of this progress, there is a gap that requires developing new solutions and involves "giving back to communities" in an effective fashion. Participatory Action Research and related methodologies did take into account the need to produce "Impact" and the possibility of transferring knowledge to participating communities. They also pioneered in stepping down from the pedestal of Western science and valued local and traditional forest knowledge. However, these efforts did not achieve the intended results in terms of improved livelihoods and post-project sustainability. Hence, the question remains on how to bridge the gap.

2. METHODOLOGY

Realizing the need to reach out to forest-dependent communities, within the context of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), particularly the Research Group 9.03 Forest History and Traditional Knowledge, a Task Force is being developed in order to produce a voluntary protocol for communicating science more effectively to local communities directly or indirectly participating in research projects. The strategic intent of this initiative is to produce guidelines that enable scientists to produce accessible and useful materials based on the results of their research that contribute to fostering enhanced livelihoods for the participating communities, including small-scale producers, indigenous communities and peasants. This would also imply a two-way dialogue between "Western" science and traditional forest knowledge.

This protocol would provide a useful tool to materialize social responsibility in science in a meaningful way. It is anticipated that the protocol will support further synergies between research results and the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals by directly supporting forest communities through accessible knowledge sharing. This approach to the dissemination of research results in participating communities could also provide valuable insights that promote the development of local and regional economies. Furthermore, the protocol could also provide useful guidelines to connect research with cooperation for development in a new way, which optimizes investments through an enhanced science outreach supporting ODS-related projects in the field of forestry and related disciplines.

Once developed, the protocol will be validated through its implementation in two or more sites. The validation process involves the construction of a validation tool (C&I), selection of case studies and pilot implementation of the protocol. The pilot implementation of the protocol includes capacity building of researchers and practitioners, elaboration of accessible materials based on research results, and dissemination workshops with local communities.

4. EXPECTED RESULTS

The broad project development goal is to improve the role and contribution of scientific research in advancing the SDGs in forest-dependent communities. The main expected outcomes are: (1) a validated protocol for research accessibility and dissemination, (2) a report on the implementation of the protocol in at least two case studies, and (3) a forest research community more aware and accountable for the ethical aspects and social responsibility for its activities with smallholders and forest-dependent communities. Intermediate outcomes include a draft protocol with voluntary guidelines for research accessibility, capacity building activities to enhance the ability of scientists and practitioners to share and communicate knowledge to non-expert stakeholders (i.e. smallholders and forest dependent communities), and enhanced awareness of the ethical aspects of and social responsibility in forest research. Figure 1 shows the development goal, intermediate and end-of-activity outcomes.

Figure 1. Key project elements
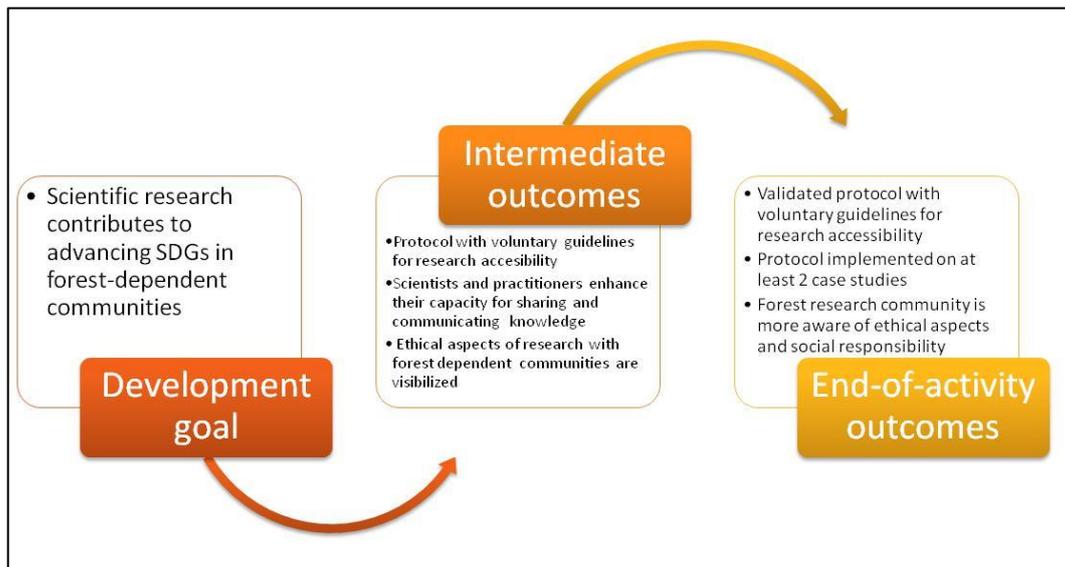
The Task Force's outputs will contribute to the global dialogue on the SDGs implementation, Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEGT) processes, and climate change (notably, REDD+). The Task Force will also make its outputs widely available to IUFRO units and produce an IUFRO publication freely-accessible on the Internet. Other expected impacts of this initiative include an enhanced awareness and accountability of the forest research on the ethical aspects and social responsibility for its activities with smallholders and forest-dependent communities. Moreover, the ability of scientists and practitioners to share and communicate knowledge to non-expert stakeholders (i.e. smallholders and forest dependent communities) is expected to be improved through the implementation of the protocol.

5. REFERENCES

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