

# The RFGI Bulletin

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The Newsletter of the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative

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## Launching the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative

The Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI), an Africa-wide environmental-governance research and training program, was formally launched on January 09, 2012. This Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funded program is a 3-year collaborative initiative of the Council for the Development of Social Research in Africa (CODESRIA); the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN); and the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign (UIUC).

The launching took place at the historic island of Gorée, Senegal, and was presided over by Sara Gräslund, the First Secretary of the Embassy of Sweden in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. She was part of a 3-person SIDA team, which included Göran Björkdahl, Senior Programme Officer with SIDA and Susanne von Walter from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences. Sara Gräslund's keynote address emphasized the importance of social science research in informing environmental policy.

In attendance were also the directors of the RFGI, Ebrima Sall and James Murombedzi from CODESRIA; Edmund Barrow from IUCN and Jesse Ribot from UIUC. The launching also doubled as a research methods meeting bringing together the RFGI team of researchers working in 12 African countries. The team is composed of senior researchers including Alois Mandondo, Alphonse Maindo, Frank Matose, Pascaline Coulibaly-Lingani and Rene Oyono; and a strong group of young doctoral scholars.

The RFGI thanks all the resource persons at the methods meeting including Prof. Bernard Lututala, Zeynabou Kane and Abdarahmane Wone, CODESRIA; Cheikh Mbow, University Cheikh Anta Diop; Prakash Kashwan, Indiana University; Rebecca Rutt, University of Copenhagen; Gretchen Walters, Marta Monjane and Barbara Nakangu, IUCN; Irmeli Mustalahti, University of Helsinki; Amath Sow and Mamoudou Kane, interpreters at CODESRIA; Madame Sophie Mbodj and Marguette Sall of Gorée Institute.



### Spotlight on the RFGI research teams in Burkina Faso, Ghana, and Uganda

The RFGI has research teams in 6 African countries (Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda), and individual researchers in 6 additional African countries (Nigeria, South Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique and South Africa). The following is a brief on the composition and research focus of the RFGI teams in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Uganda.

#### **Burkina Faso**

The Burkina Faso team consists of Dr. Pascaline Coulibaly-Lingani, Sayouba Ouedraogo, Muriel Cote and Mawa Karambiri. Pascaline, the team leader is based at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique et Technologique (CNRST). She has 17 years professional experience as a sociologist with CNRST and her RFGI research study is on *'Democratic decentralization and forest management: A case study of representation in Toébila-Vara, Sissili Province'*.



Pascaline Coulibaly (left) and Mawa Karambiri (right)

Sayouba Ouedraogo is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Ouagadougou. He was technical advisor from 2007 to 2011, in the Ministry of Agriculture, during the conception of the national land reform program. His RFGI research study is on *'Decentralization in the forestry sector in Burkina Faso – what contribution to local democracy: The case of the Cassou production forest management area'*.

Muriel Cote, a French citizen, is a doctoral candidate at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Her field research in Seguenega, northern Burkina Faso, examines changes in power relations for land governance at the intersection of decentralization and livelihood change. Her RFGI study is on *'Authorizing institutions: A case study of the impacts of institutional choice on citizen engagement in forest resource governance in North Burkina Faso'*.

Mawa Karambiri is an RFGI young scholar. She has a master's degree in Sociology from the University of Ouagadougou and was recently a research assistant at CIFOR West Africa regional office in Ouagadougou. Mawa's RFGI research study is on *'The effects of forest management in the Sablogo protected forest area on the dynamics of local democracy'*.

The Burkina Faso team has an advisory board consisting of Samuel Yeye (Forest Investment Program Burkina Faso), Doulikom Adama (Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development), Ganaba Souleymane (INERA Burkina Faso), Michael Balinga (CIFOR West Africa), Alkassoum Maïga (University of Ouagadougou), and Clarisse Honadia (IUCN). We are thankful to the advisory board for their support.

#### **Ghana**

The Ghana team consists of Dr. Emmanuel Marfo (team leader), Dr. Prince Wusu-Agyei, Manali Baruah, and Frank Agyei. Emmanuel is studying up focusing on *'the politics of institutional choice and democratic representation of local communities under forest decentralization policy in Ghana'*.



Frank Agyei (left) and Emmanuel Marfo (right)

Emmanuel's hypotheses are (i) commitment of authorities to local democracy is symbolic rather than substantive; (ii) in implementing institutional choice, authorities are driven by substantive than procedural concerns; (iii) traditional against elected leaders are privileged by authorities because they are viewed as able to harness and/or threaten their interests. Prince studies *'Decentralization and institutional choice: A study of implications on community representation, citizenship and accountability under Modified Taungya Forest Management System'*.



## RFGI researcher focus

Manali studies 'The effect of institutional recognition under Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) on local democracy dynamics: Lessons from Wassa Amenfi REDD+ implementation'. Her case study is in the Western Region of Ghana. Manali is a doctoral student at the University of South Carolina, USA. Frank examines the effect of institutional choice of local representatives in Social Responsibility Agreement (SRA) negotiations on responsiveness, accountability and empowered citizenship. Frank is studying a case involving an SRA signed between Samartex Timber & Plywood Ltd. and the local communities in the Akyekyere customary stool land within Wassa Amenfi West District.

The Ghana team has an advisory board made up of Dr. Joseph Cobbinah and Dr. Victor Agyeman (Forestry Research Institute of Ghana), Alex Asare and Robert Bamfo (Forestry Commission of Ghana), and a representative of the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (yet to be appointed). IUCN-Ghana is a collaborator. A word of thanks is extended to the board for their support.

### Uganda

The Ugandan RFGI research team is composed of Dr. Robert Mbeche (co-team leader), Doreen Ruta (co-team leader), Dr. Jackson Tumwine, Barbara Nakangu (head of IUCN Uganda country office), and Agrippinah Namara. The five researchers are hosted by the IUCN Uganda country office. The studies by the Uganda team seek to understand choices made by higher level forest management intervening agents and their effects on democratic representation of forest dependent communities.



Left to right: Robert, Jackson, Agrippinah, and Doreen

Robert is studying up focusing on 'The dynamics of choices made by intervening agents in the design and implementation of forestry projects'. Doreen examines gender and representation in the Nile Basin Reforestation Project; Jackson studies representation within district forest services, central Uganda; Barbara assesses the representativeness of forest communities in the negotiation of community resource management agreements in the Mt. Elgon National Park area; and Agrippinah examines 'Effect of the emergence of private forest governance institutions under PES on local representation in forestry: The case of the Upper Albertine Rift area'.

The formation of the advisory board for Uganda is in advanced stages. An inaugural meeting is envisaged for the third quarter of the year. We wish to thank the various persons who have kindly responded to our invitation to serve on the board.

### The 10 second interview



**Name:** Dr. Charlotte Benneker  
**Nationality:** Dutch  
**Expertise:** Forest Governance and Policy  
**Position:** Programme Director, DR Congo Programme, Tropenbos International (TBI)  
**Job Description:** Development and management of the DR Congo program of research and training

in service of multi stakeholder discussions on forest governance and management.

**Challenges:** The quality of education and existing discourses that have blown over from the west but are not always applicable in the local context.

**Why do you do it?** Working here is a real challenge, figuring out how (forest) governance issues play out in practice is endlessly interesting, I am here to learn and enrich my knowledge and experience.

**What is the biggest issue in resource governance in the DRC today?** Insecure tenure rights, competing claims and political and military interference over land and forest resources that engender conflicts and exploitative ways of resource use where people have access to transport and markets.

**How are you involved with the RFGI?** TBI funds the participation of two of its researchers (Patrick Matata and Billy Mbilizi) in the RFGI research program. .

**Final word:** Best wishes to RFGI!

### ***COP-17 Durban, South Africa***

Edmund Barrow and Marta Monjane from IUCN represented RFGI at COP-17. IUCN helped distribute the RFGI program brochure at this meeting.

### ***CODESRIA General Assembly Rabat, Morocco***

James Murombedzi, Emmanuel Nuesiri, Emmanuel Marfo and Robert Mbeche represented RFGI at the 13<sup>th</sup> CODESRIA General Assembly which was held in Rabat, Morocco from 5 to 9 December 2011, with the theme *Africa and the challenges of the twenty-first century*. RFGI hosted a discussion panel with the theme *Representation under a changing sky: climate change policy and politics in Africa*.

### ***Initiative on Climate Adaptation Research and Understanding through the Social Sciences (ICARUS), 18-20 May, 2012***

The third 'Initiative on Climate Adaptation Research and Understanding through the Social Sciences' (ICARUS III) conference will take place from 18-20 May, 2012, at Columbia University, USA. RFGI will be represented by Jesse Ribot (co-director of RFGI and co-founder of ICARUS) and eight RFGI funded researchers including Emmanuel Nuesiri, RFGI postdoc researcher; Irmeli Mustalahti, University of Helsinki, Finland and RFGI Tanzania researcher; Rocio Hiraldo, RFGI Senegal team; Rene Oyono, RFGI team leader for Central Africa; David Eteme and Raymond Achu Samndong, RFGI researchers in Cameroon and DR Congo respectively; Emmanuel Marfo, RFGI team leader Ghana; and Robert Mbeche, RFGI co-team leader Uganda.

### ***UNCSD Rio+20***

Jesse Ribot and James Murombedzi, co-directors of RFGI, will be attending the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20-22 June 2012. They are part of a team organizing the side event titled '*Occupy Nature: Representation as the Basis of Emancipatory Environmentalism*'.

### ***RFGI mid-term research methods meeting, Saly, Mbour, Senegal, 30 July-04 August 2012***

The RFGI mid-term research meeting is scheduled from the 30 July to 04 August, at the Hotel Savana Saly, Mbour, Senegal. The meeting will provide an opportunity for the researchers to present and discuss initial research findings from the first field research phase, refine tools and methods, and to plan for the second field research phase.

### ***Geography, Ecology and Politics: A Climate of Change, Orléans, France, 6-8 September, 2012***

Three RFGI researchers will attend an International Colloquium in Orléans (France) in September this year. The encounter will focus on the exploration of changing perspectives in disciplines such as political geography and political ecology. In their respective presentations, Antang Yamo, Floribert Ntungila and Phil René Oyono are making an epistemological and methodological effort for reframing the "gestion des terroirs" (French approach) in order to incorporate it in the global paradigm of political ecology and to outline a body of thought on the politics of territoriality in Francophone Africa. The three communications are: i) New tools for owning forest land and managing biodiversity in the Congo Basin: from customary to private territories; ii) The territorialization of access to forest resources, governance and the production of an ecological citizenship in the Democratic Republic of Congo; iii) The zoning approach in Francophone Africa: outlining a geography of exclusion and a political ecology of the fragmentation of the public space. The three presentations will lead to journal articles.

### ***RFGI at the World Conservation Congress, Jeju, South Korea, 7 September, 2012***

RFGI is partnering IUCN, USAID CARPE program, and James Cook University Australia, to organize a session at the forthcoming World Conservation Congress titled '*Is REDD+ an opportunity for or a constraint for economic development in Central Africa?*' The session will discuss the following pertinent questions: (i) is REDD+ perceived as a development hindrance or opportunity in the Congo Basin? (ii) how can REDD+ be constructed as a development opportunity in Central Africa? (iii) what is the role of the private sector, civil society, local administration, and citizens in REDD processes? (iv) how will local communities benefit from national and regional REDD projects when land tenure is still an issue and governance is still poor in many places?

### ***RFGI website***

Information about RFGI is available at <http://www.codesria.org/spip.php?article1247&lang=en>. The RFGI website is being developed, and will contain working documents, future plans, and publications.