Promising inclusion, delivering marginalisation? A reflection on the policy and practice of the Hotspot Intervention Area Governance Mechanism in Ghana

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NbS Conference, University of Oxford | 6th July 2022
Forest loss in Ghana

- High Forest Zone (6 million ha) depleting at 138,600 ha/year

Logging  Illegal mining  Agricultural expansion

115,000 ha per annum (83%)
Cocoa-driven deforestation: 31000 ha per annum
Ghana Cocoa Forest REDD+ Programme

- Hotspot Intervention Area Governance Mechanism

(Source: FCPF 2017; NCRC, 2020)
Hotspot Intervention Area Governance Mechanism

Tier 1

Tier 2

Tier 3

Source: NCRC, 2020
HIA and Nature-based Solutions (NbS)

Cocoa agroforestry 1.8 million ha

Forest conservation and rehabilitation (1.3 ha)
Research question

How is the HIA governance mechanism evolving, what powers had it devolved to local communities and how does it influence their decision-making at the grassroots?
Analytical considerations

• Decentralised governance: actors, power and accountability

Based on Agrawal and Ribot (1999)
Juabeso/Bia Hotspot Intervention Area

- CREMAs (11), non-CREMA (5), Sub-HIAs (6), HIA Management Board
Summary of findings

• HIA processes started with alacrity but efforts have tumbled

• CREMAs for forest policing instead of consensus-building and collective action on farmer rights, tenure reforms

• Responsibilities imposed on local communities without little attention to their needs and incentives for operations
Key findings – Making decisions

• CREMA/Sub-HIA: power to consent to timber harvest within their area (byelaw); local constitutions limit decisions largely to electing leadership and administrative issues

• HMB: decide on investments projects in their landscape (landscape management plan not in place); enter into agreements with consortium partners; develop guidelines for using emission reduction payments*
Key findings – enforcing compliance

- **CREMA/Sub-HIA**: make rules for collection of non-timber forest products; arrest illegal operators; monitor terms of permits; sanction members who breach forest laws

- **CREMAs/Sub-HIA/HMB**: conduct patrols, monitor; apprehend illegal operators (loggers/miners, etc.)
  - No support with personal protective equipment and logistics
  - Exposes members to multiple risks from illegal operators
Key findings – adjudicating conflicts

• CREMAs/Sub-HIA/HMB: internal conflicts resolved at CRMC, CEC, Sub-HIA and HMB levels

• Traditional authorities recognised as main arbiters of in CREMAs; but chiefs as parties to conflict e.g., working with illegal miners
Key findings

• CREMAs, Forestry Services Division competing for control over resource spaces

• CREMAs are mostly weak – a handful of people; not focused on farmers felt needs

“CREMAs initially came to improve our livelihoods, but everything has now become ecosystem services”
Take home points

- HIA governance mechanism and tokenistic involvement of local communities in emission reduction programme

- Imperils the success of the GCFRP and NbS in the study landscape

- Listen to local communities, start small, build resilient community structures that address felt needs before scaling out
Thank you