



Participatory Territorial Forest and Rural Development Framework

GOOD GOVERNANCE PRACTICES FOR FOREST RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT PLANS





Preface / credits

This document is developed in the frame of the project REFORLEB - Building-Up a Participatory Governance Framework for the Sustainable Development of Forests and Rural Territories in Lebanon (EuropeAid/135-358/M/ACT/LB) 2014-2018.

This document is complemented by the guide “Forest Restoration Management Plans in West Bekaa, Lebanon” (Coello, 2019), produced at the same project and presenting the technical steps to consider in a forest restoration project.

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Introduction and Definitions

Aim of this guide

Forest and landscape restoration is a complex process where several social factors together with technical ones are involved. Moreover, **since restoration activities bring people together to identify, negotiate and implement these practices** (FAO and WRI, 2019). The combination of technical and social aspects will determine not only the restoration goals but also the potential barriers to sustainability, constraints and priorities. Good governance practices aim at encompass all these issues, increasing the feasibility of the land restoration project.

The aim of this guide is to offer a practical view on the conceptual and methodological considerations for the successful implementation of good governance practices in Forest Restoration Management Plans (FRMP, hereinafter).

Who is this guide for? This guide is intended to inform forest and landscape restoration developers and stakeholders such as technicians from the Ministries, NGOs, municipalities, landowners, free-lancers or SMEs.

Defining Good Governance Practices

The **concept of governance** does not have a universal agreed-upon definition, and the utilization of the term ranges from direct reference to governments, to more broad concepts of norms, processes, instruments, people and organizations that shape interactions with a specific issue, as the forest and landscape restoration.

Scholte (2005) defines governance in a general form as “processes whereby people formulate, implement, enforce and review rules to guide their common affairs.”

Participatory governance is an approach to consultation and decision making that involves the stakeholders and people affected by management of the areas in a coherent and accountable way. It offers tools to involve and empower all stakeholders, by establishing rights, but also obligations, and by promoting more efficient management of available public resources. By involving stakeholders and taking into account their various interests and visions, better integrated/cross-sector policies can be created and applied being better adapted to social demands (Soto et al., 2014).

As a precondition, the predisposition of the local, regional or national authorities for sharing partially the responsibilities and decisions on land management is required to undertake a good governance process. Good governance has not to be confused with simple information sessions, briefings or public presentations of pre-planned proposals from a top-down approach.

Elements of “good governance” include transparency, lack of corruption, accountability of officials, stakeholder participation and political stability (Figure 1). All those elements will be influenced by the social factors involved in forest and landscape restoration projects (described in Chapter 1) and they should be balanced according to the corresponding specificities (Chapter 2).



Figure 1. Characteristics of good governance (Source: Adapted from UN-ESCAP, 2007, in Soto et al., 2014).



1. Social factors involved in forest restoration projects governance

In forest and landscape restorations, a wide range of technical (e.g. water availability or soil and climate limitations to plant selection) and social factors (e.g. cultural rights, values and practices) are involved. Consequently, the governance into FRMP should encompass all them to ensure the long-term success of the forest restoration.

Forest restoration can be developed in woodlands affected by disasters like wildfires or pests. However, it is **commonly developed in non-wooded lands where other uses, current or potential, may exist** (grazing, crops or urban settlements for instance).

Often, the **main social factors** that the governance process has to deal with **are related to the consequences of changing the land-use**. Potentially, this change of land-use could be locally seen as an opportunity cost (understood as the benefits an individual, investor or business *misses out on* when choosing one alternative over another), since a forest restoration is normally planned as a permanent use of land, which may conflict with other expected uses or development opportunities.

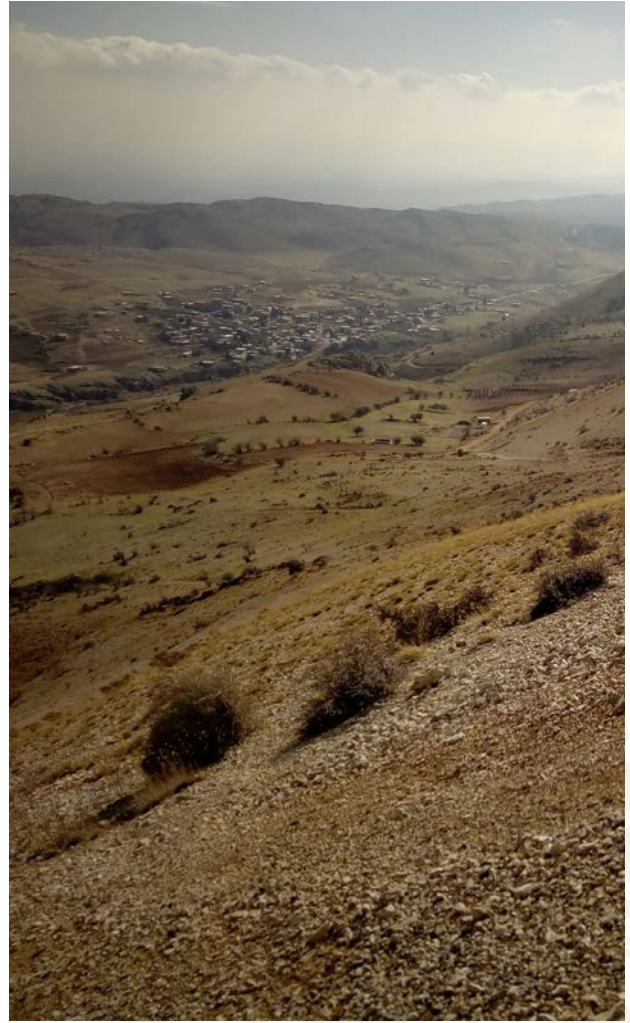
Consequently, neighbors, shepherds, farmers or developers, among others, may have (or perceive) a risk to their current uses or status, both in the short and in the long term.

On the other hand, the short and midterm **social economic or environmental benefits of forest restoration are not always visible**, especially for restoration projects that don't have (or it is not perceived) a visible impact on the local economy (e.g. forest market products, tourism, etc.). On the contrary, restoration can hamper the grazing opportunities in the area, or future urban development in the municipality.

The lack of forest culture in most of the sites where forest restoration projects are necessary, may reinforce this low affinity with the recovery of a forest cover. Due to the time needed for the seedlings to grow, several years will pass before the forest cover is visible. And some more time will be necessary to perceive the environmental and other indirect benefits related, for instance, with the landscape beauty and the increase of tourist potential in the area.

All those issues can act as constraints and barriers for the successful development of the forest restoration. Consequently, **the social factors that can be present in a territory where a FRMP is implemented should be addressed in parallel with the technical ones during the design, planning and execution of the forest restoration project**.

A selection of main common **factors** is featured below. The corresponding **constraints** for the successful completion of the forest restoration objectives are described, together with the **risks' mitigation measures**. According to the characteristics of each site, different factors can be present and the corresponding prevention actions should be properly taken into account into the FRMP.



SOCIAL FACTOR

CONFLICT WITH LAND OWNERSHIP

#1

Definition and constraints: Especially in those lands surrounding the settlements, conflicts with the bordering limits of the properties can appear.

Mitigation measures: Ensure and clarify the ownership and the limits of all the properties involved in the restoration project, for both the selected plots and the land surrounding them. This should be done before starting the project and the process needs to be participatory as much as possible.

LIMITATION TO PREVIOUS FARMING USES

#2

Definition and constraints: The limitations to current and/or potential uses can generate a conflict with the restoration. This commonly happens, for instance, with shepherds doing extensive grazing, that can destroy the seedlings and the young plants when these are not protected or the area is not controlled. Therefore, the land uses regulation should be based on the existing laws. Nevertheless, some uses can be perceived as cultural and traditional, or their illegal status can be unknown, and some kind of compensation to mitigate the risk of conflict could be necessary.

Mitigation measures: Limitations that may arise due to current land uses (legal or illegal) should be properly identified, together with the actors that are carrying them out, including the temporary users (e.g. shepherds coming from other areas).

Tree protection is an expensive protection measure and can be achieved with the use of tree shelters (which allow herd passage between the trees) or perimeter fencing (more effective, but with high visual and social impact). Nevertheless, potential conflicts should be discussed and potential compensations measures need to be proposed to the affected stakeholders (offering them alternative lands or auxiliary infrastructure) as to help users carry out the previous activity as much as possible in a feasible way.

LACK OF CONTROLLING OF THE FOREST RESTORATION

#3

Definition and constraints: As a consequence of the previous conflicts, controlling measures may be necessary in some cases, which normally implies the mobilization of extra resources (e.g. personnel, equipment, etc.). The lack of plant control can jeopardize all the efforts done, as only one incorrect action can destroy all the work done with the restoration project.

Mitigation measures: Controlling measures should be properly identified and planned, and the necessary resources properly foreseen in the FRMP, being a structural cost of the restoration. Solving all the security issues, controlling actions could be managed through voluntary or formal agreements (with or without monetary compensations) with private actors, such as neighbors or NGOs. Giving a role to the locals may reinforce their commitment with the restoration project.

LACK OF PUBLIC RESOURCES FOR MONITORING AND MAINTAINING THE FOREST RESTORATION

#4

Definition and constraints: Although most of the expenses of forest restoration take place in the implementation phase, the management plan may include monitoring and maintenance actions, such as the replacement of dead seedlings, fixing the tree protection system, weeding, irrigation or thinning, especially in the first years. Cost of irrigation can be significant in areas where water resources are limited or expensive to mobilize.

Mitigation measures: The monitoring and maintenance actions have to be properly identified and foreseen in the FRMP, including the protocol for execution, schedule, who is in charge of each action and the corresponding budget as a structural investment of the restoration. In all cases, the size of the restoration should be proportional with the resources available in order to maintain it.

SOCIAL FACTOR

LACK OF AFFINITY TOWARDS THE FOREST COVER

Definition and constraints: There are several reasons that explain the low affinity of people to forests (e.g. economic, cultural, psychological, etc.), and in most of the cases they are related with the aforementioned factors. Consequently, a social opposition to the forest restoration project can appear. Opposition that can even turn into sabotage or even deliberate damage by individual people (that could be committing an offence).

Mitigation measures: The risk and possible reasons of the lack of affinity should be properly identified. Once the reasons are well understood, the corresponding measures should be planned. Solutions can be found within a wide range of options, from economic compensation to public communication and awareness, or collaborative processes to build confidence and trust between the promoter and the locals. Note that, in some cases, especially those factors related to attitudes and perceptions, as well as cultural changes do take time. In those cases, the participatory process can serve in offering the tools and the means to initiate the process of change in attitude.

#5

LACK OF CONSENSUS WITH THE SPECIES SELECTION OR OTHER TECHNICAL DECISIONS

Definition and constraints: Conflicts can appear to specific questions such as the choice of the tree species. Sometimes, social preferences are not compatible with the technical or economic feasibility assigned to the site characteristics. Normally those species with economic profit are preferred by citizens and neighbors. An added difficulty is the integration of the climate change scenarios that could recommend the use of unusual species in the area when these are better adapted to the "future" conditions not perceived at present. Sometimes, disagreements in other apparently minor issues might appear such as the soil preparation (points or contours) or the distribution patterns (regular, geometrical, in groups...).

Mitigation measures: The discussion on the choice of species or other technical issues should be properly developed and justified, including both pros and cons and balancing them in the case where there are several proposed alternatives (for instance, if we choose a species more expensive or that needs more irrigation, less restored surface would be completed). Visiting demonstration sites in other areas with similar conditions can help to improve the social acceptance.

#6

OTHER UNEXPECTED ISSUES

Definition and constraints: Unexpected conflicts and issues can appear throughout the process as not all factors can always be foreseen and prevented.

Mitigation measures: The FRMP should have enough flexibility to confront unexpected conflicts, even those appearing once the forest restoration has been implemented. The participatory process as well as the use of open communication channels with the local community are important to rapidly identify potential new or latent conflicts.

#7

2. Components of the good governance applied to forest restoration projects

Based on the main social factors described in the previous chapter, specific considerations about the good governance principles (Figure 1) are described to address a participatory process according the common requirements of the FRMP:

ACCOUNTABILITY: This is a core element of any participatory and governance process since the **proactive involvement of stakeholders** is crucial for the success of any forest restoration plan. This implies a strong sense of responsibility of the promoter in all the actions undertaken along the governance and restoration processes, **reporting the results of the participatory sessions and ensuring the fulfillment of the commitments.**

TRANSPARENCY: At the time of starting the participatory process, **rules should be clearly defined** and explained to the participants, including all the expected phases, functioning of the meetings, schedule and any relevant information related to the process. It is strongly recommended to include in the explanations **all the process timeline.** Transparency has to include how the reporting of the participatory process will be done. The **mechanisms to solve potential conflicts** between opposite visions, such as parallel sessions or negotiations, the participation of a mediator, etc., should be planned and explained.

RESPONSIVE: A restoration plan may imply a major change in the previous land uses, and normally the benefits are not perceived in the short term. Beyond technical issues, feelings, customs and cultural aspects could be confronted, adding difficulties and challenges to the process. **Specific professional skills** about how to prevent and manage the potential conflicts are recommended. An external professional or a mutually agreed **mediator** could also help to offer a neutral position in between the promoter/s and the land users.





EQUITABLE AND INCLUSIVE: The participatory process has to **offer the same opportunities** to all the interested stakeholders that are participating. This means that those stakeholders that because of economic, gender, cultural or language reasons could have more difficulties should be accompanied and especially supported to offer equitable conditions to all. It can happen, for instance, that joining them, all together, could cause some groups to feel uncomfortable or inhibited in exposing their own opinions. In this case, parallel sessions might be considered. Logistics need also to be considered in order to facilitate the access to the meetings, especially for those stakeholders with longest distance or economic limitations.

EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY: the participatory process has to be planned in a proper way. Normally it will include several meetings and travels which are time-consuming. The participation of public officers and project promoters is normally included in their daily working tasks. However, most of stakeholders are freely and voluntarily coming. Having a **clear roadmap of the process** with the corresponding schedule allows participants to organize their involvement according to their own priorities, capabilities and availabilities. The fulfilment of the method and commitment will help the engagement of the participants. This is especially relevant when several sessions are expected.

FOLLOW THE RULE OF LAW: The discussion of alternatives and agreements during the participatory process has to be **framed under the current legislation and within real possibilities** to carry out the actions as not to generate frustration about the expected results. **Rights and obligations of all parts** (from the public to private sectors and at individual level) have to be fully defined, explained and mutually recognized. This is especially relevant as restoration plans have often to confront illegal occupation of lands or non-regulated land uses.

PARTICIPATORY: The participatory process has to be inclusive **representative**, and involve as many relevant stakeholders as possible around the discussed topic. Everyone's role and contribution have to be coherent with the scope of the restoration plan, while at the same time, wide enough to ensure that all the important roles are considered (Figure 2). Although the participation is voluntary, the process has to be designed, explained and planned in a way to **ensure the participation of, at least, all main relevant stakeholders**. This stage should serve also to get rid of misunderstandings or confusions, sometimes due to myths than can lead to unnecessary rejections of species, techniques or even other stakeholders. The participatory process goes beyond information sessions, and aims to build a consensus oriented restoration plan.

CONSENSUS ORIENTED: Reaching a consensus should be the main objective of a participatory process, although it is not always possible to completely achieve it. In all cases, giving the opportunity to the stakeholders to meet and share their visions, priorities and worries, helps to **reinforce the sense of community**, and **builds a shared vision**, even when the agreement is not fully reached. In that sense, potential conflicts can be solved by the participatory process. In other cases, the process itself will serve to inform and alert on **latent conflicts**, and can support in creating the enabling environment for dialogue and common understanding of each one's position and requirements. The best scenario is when both situations are occurring together in the same process. However, the worse scenario is when there are conflicting interests from different stakeholders. Solutions can be found in the Management Plan with a proper distribution of the uses (e.g. hunting and recreational use can be carried out if both activities do not overlap in the same place and time).

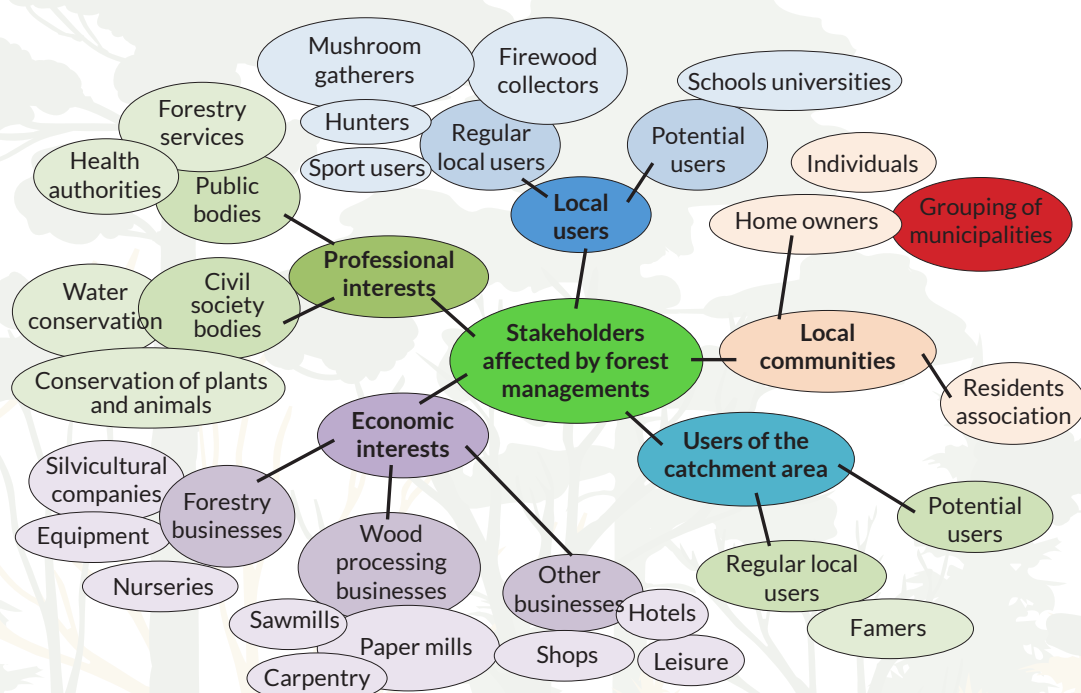


Figure 1. Example of stakeholders' map organizing them in different groups, using colors for representing levels of involvement or interest for instance (Source: Plan Blue 2015)

3. Integrating good governance practices into Forest Restoration Management Plans

Since a forest and landscape restoration plan deals with land users' rights and obligations, the **good governance practices have to be understood and assumed as an inherent and crucial issue of any FRMP**. Therefore, a good governance process is implemented from the beginning of the restoration plan up to the last phases, and aims at increasing the social feasibility of the project.

Through the good governance practices, involvement of local community is promoted, the transparency of the decision making process is reinforced and potential conflicts may be identified and solved. In addition, the correct functioning during the design and implementation phases will allow **a more efficient use of the resources allocated to the restoration project**.

Governance practices within the design and implementation of the FRMP in four steps

The FRMP design and implementation includes several stages where the good governance practices could be embedded and would contribute to improving the technical and social feasibility of the restoration.

Figure 3 shows a four steps synergy between common phases for a FRMP complemented with the good governance' ones, that can serve to modulate a **common forest restoration and governance management plan**.

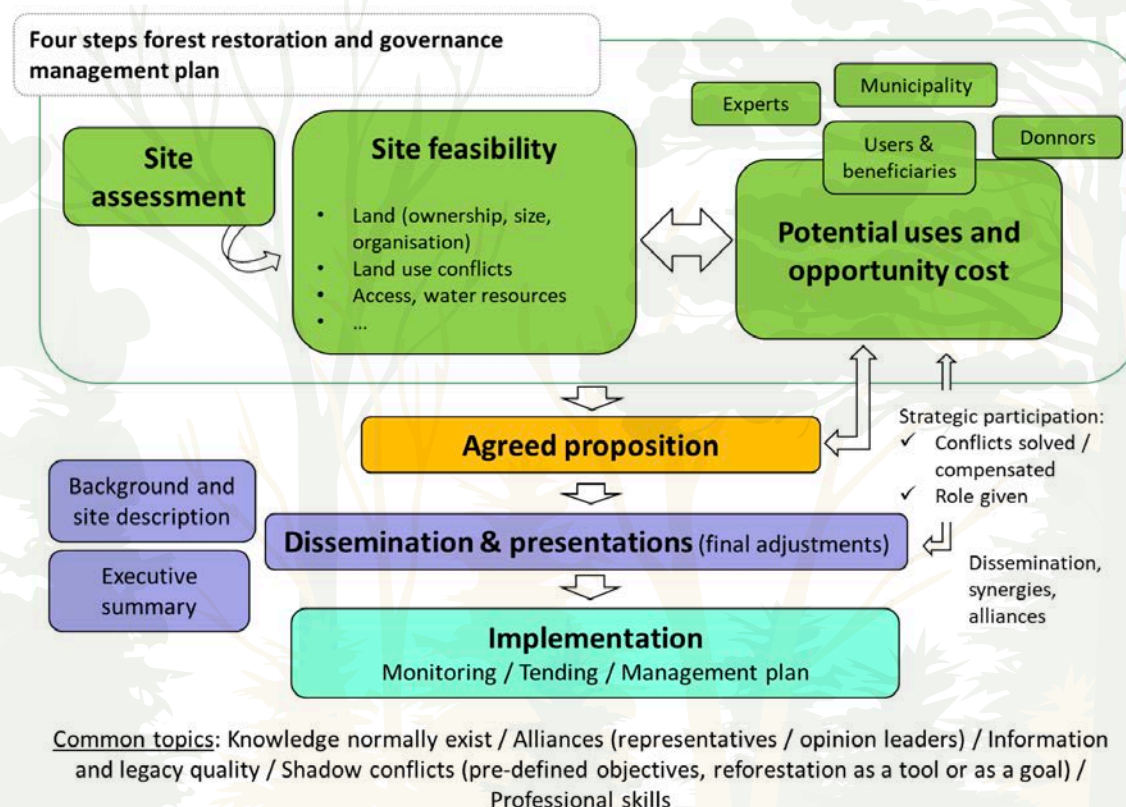


Figure 3. Phases of a synergic process between good governance and restoration plan

In a **FIRST STEP**, **site assessment** will help to define the site selection, its characterization and zoning. Nevertheless, **site feasibility** should be defined according to the physical characterization together with the social and economic constraints and opportunities. Therefore, a proper territorial diagnosis should combine the physical conditions with the social and economic factors affecting the site feasibility (Figure 4) and would respond, among others, to the questions such as **why restoration? What are the land uses? What are the barriers to sustainability?** Through the territorial diagnosis, at least the following fields of information should be complied:

- Stakeholders involved and area of activity (group/individuals and contacts).
- How the reforestation will affect their activities.
- Which level of involvement during the reforestation process is expected/desirable.
- Which preferences, demands, desired uses they have (ranking the preferences).
- Which mitigation measures could be implemented to solve potential conflicts.

Information regards previous reforestation experiences in the site, since successful or unsuccessful precedents can influence the predisposition of the local population to new projects, can be also very useful. In Soto et al. (2015) specific templates about the above mentioned aspects are included, as well as templates for previous experiences in addition to the description of physical data of the site (at municipality and patch level). A specific template for the characterization of livestock activity is also included, since this is normally one of the most common source of conflicts with locals when planning or implementing a restoration project.

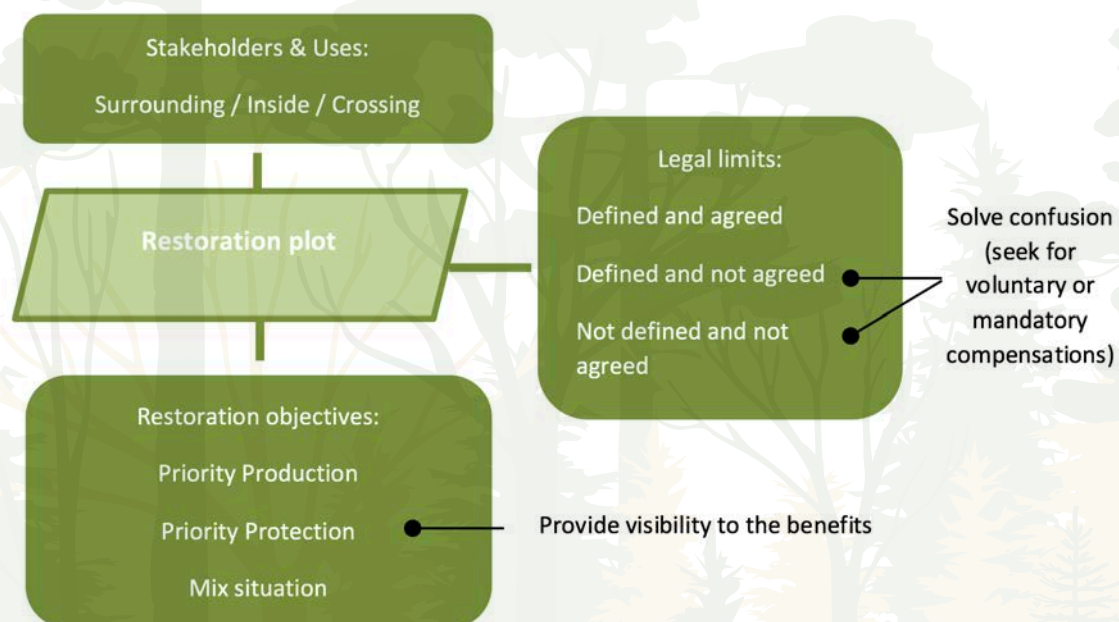


Figure 4. Cross-links among potential uses, restoration objectives and the legal limits that may affect site feasibility

More concretely, in a restoration plan, special attention should be paid to the land ownership and the way it is organized, the existing or potential land use conflicts and the access to water resources, among others.

Face to face meetings and field trips from external experts on forest governance can help to collect the main relevant information.

During this phase, the **stakeholders mapping** should be carried out and be included in the territorial diagnosis. The stakeholders mapping should be linked to the scope of the restoration plan: What objectives are socially more accepted? Is the restoration affecting grazing lands? Are the property rights/land uses clear? Can the tourist sector benefit from the improvement of landscape? Figure 5 shows easy steps to complete a stakeholders mapping. In case the information needed to build the stakeholders' map is poor, initial open meetings and discussions can help in initiating the process and would contribute to increasing the list of stakeholders for the next sessions of the participatory process.

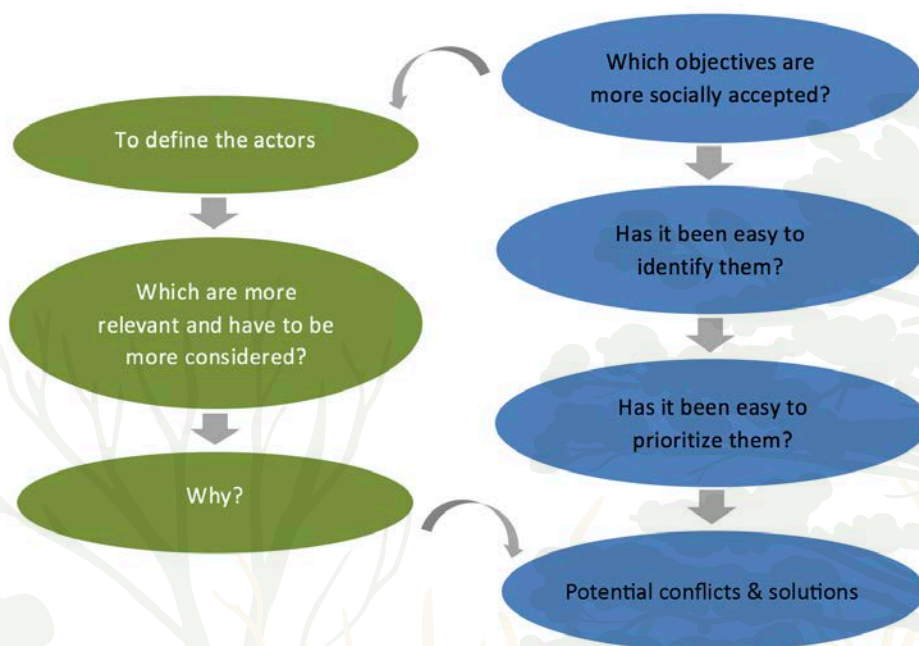


Figure 5. Steps during stakeholders mapping that can help to identify potential conflicts and solutions in parallel

In a **SECOND STEP**, once the basic information on the site feasibility is compiled, a wide participatory process about potential uses should be carried out with the aim of defining a “**maximum possible consensus**” **agreed proposition**. The discussion should be guided with the aim to build a shared vision of potential uses including their corresponding limitations or opportunity costs, such as restrictions to traditional grazing in the area.

The **participatory process** has to consider all related stakeholders from experts, municipalities, donors to users and beneficiaries affected by the restoration project. The principles mentioned in Chapter 2 should be

specially considered all along the process. This phase should also serve to establish the mechanisms for solving the potentially identified conflicts. Giving a role to the stakeholders within the restoration plan, can significantly improve the social acceptance of the action, and be used as a tool to compensate for the conflicts or any opportunity costs.

In the **THIRD STEP**, during the **presentation and dissemination of the proposal** to the general public, access to all the documentation should be fully guaranteed. All the information about the site description, results of the participatory process, minutes of the meetings, etc., should be made available to everyone. The preparation and distribution of an executive summary or leaflet is fully recommended, even before the session. This phase could be used to offer the opportunity for the general public to participate in the proposal, involving them in the final result. The present should not be confused with the participation of relevant stakeholders in the previous phase: all stakeholders with a direct/indirect relation and with high relevance to the topic should have participated previously. In this phase, for instance, the opportunity to choose between three different tree species previously selected among the most feasible ones can be offered to the general public. This also serves to engage them in the dissemination process and the global socialization of the project. The same can be done with students and other targeted groups. **To look for synergies and alliances with strategic stakeholders** (as local NGOs, touristic sector, women groups, etc.) during the project dissemination process can also help in reinforcing the feasibility of the restoration.

In a **FOURTH STEP** about the **restoration plan implementation**, the good governance practices should be considered as well. As it was mentioned before, stakeholders can play a role in the plantation monitoring and maintenance. Including students in a “restoration day”, or accompanying the restoration activity with parallel activities to promote the economy of the local community are ideas that can help in raising the local awareness and the social acceptability to the change in the land use. Hiring local workers serves to offer direct benefits to the territory.

Normally, main efforts during the restoration activity will be done in the initial implementation stage. Nevertheless, all the efforts can be suddenly lost by a single incorrect action, for instance, uncontrolled grazing in the same area or missing irrigation in the first months during a severe drought. Mechanisms to ensure the restoration maintenance should be strong enough to withstand changes in the local governments and the potential lack of commitment of the new mayor or municipality staff.

The creation of a **monitoring committee with stakeholders’ representatives** can help to reinforce the public commitment with the restoration project. The committee can play a role of “government body” of the restored land, acting as mediator for upcoming conflicts for instance, or assuming a fundamental driving role for new restorations in the area.

In addition, the monitoring can be complemented by a set of indicators to measure progress towards the restoration goals (at local, regional or national level) that can be sustained over the long term (FAO and WRI, 2019).

Complementary consideration and last remarks

The above mentioned steps can be complemented with the following common methodological considerations towards good governance practices:

There is a **wide range of knowledge available**. The participatory process can help in making visible the local and empirical knowledge on land management, the feasibility of forest species, the local economic opportunities, the preferences, the difficulties and the challenges for setting up an efficient restoration management plan at social and cultural aspects among others.

The participatory process can be used **to build alliances** that contribute to several advantages both during the restoration implementation and maintenance, whereas it can reinforce the project social acceptance globally. Alliances can serve to involve target groups through representatives and achieve leaders' support for the restoration management plan. Alliances can also contribute to giving stakeholders a role and increase the dissemination of project actions for instance.

The **quality of the information about the legal framework** is fundamental, as expectations and agreements should be based on a clear definition of each ones' **rights and obligations**.

The participatory process can make visible **latent conflicts** that sometimes do not have a direct relation with the restoration itself. Land property or land access, water resources availability, or electoral interests can appear and affect the restoration plan. The more these latent conflicts are identified and addressed within the participatory process, the more feasible will be the restoration plan implementation. Accordingly, the restoration process can be seen as a goal and/or a tool to solve existing conflicts.

Specific professional skills and experience in participatory processes and mediation are fully recommended. The involvement of society in the implementation of the forest policy will normally require the reinforcement of the forest administration staff with the specifications of the good governance practices or the collaboration of external professionals.

Key remarks towards good governance practices into forest and landscape restoration

- Identify synergies, mitigate land use conflicts and build a shared vision among forest officers, local community and municipalities.
- Consider the perceived "opportunity cost" of the change in land use to a permanent forest use and how to mitigate it.
- Develop a proper and balanced design in terms of skills, economic and time resources and schedule.
- Integrate climate change scenarios into the discussion and the potential future social / natural risks. Mid and long-term conditions can constrain the species selection of the land use options.
- Give visibility to future benefits, especially those related to socio-environmental issues.
- Build consistent collaboration networks, citizen participation and alliances with key stakeholders.
- Keep the municipality awareness and mechanisms to ensure future commitment in case of new elected members.
- Create collaborative follow-up committees including private and public actors.

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