

## Community engagement support

**Through timber construction, there is a future in which forests can support cities and, in return, cities can support forests.** As the global population increases, particularly in cities, the construction sector is expected to exponentially grow in order to accommodate the demand for housing and other infrastructure. Current construction techniques are a significant contributor to the global climate crisis and urgently need to be transformed. By substituting the carbon-intensive materials commonly used in construction with forest economy biomaterials, such as wood and bamboo which sequester carbon, we can create buildings with reduced carbon emissions. However, this timber construction industry is still in its nascency and there is a need to address its market gaps and leverage opportunities to accelerate its development and increase its uptake.

**These interventions for the mass timber construction industry can be segmented into seven main categories of solutions that affect the value chain and enablers of the ecosystem.** Through various internal and external discussions, Climate Smart Forest Economy Program (CSFEP) has categorized potential solutions as relating to i) Finance and insurance; ii) Product and process certifications; iii) Communication and awareness building; iv) Timber knowledge ecosystem; v) Forest management and timber policies; vi) Value chain linkages; and vii) Timber-based real estate. The proposed solutions can be executed as for-profit, philanthropic, or blended ventures, with the services developed as individual offerings or paired with complementary services in a single offering. Additionally, while some solutions may be set up as a free-standing entity, other solutions may be similar to services provided by existing actors in or adjacent to the CSFE sector. In the case of the latter, it may make sense to approach these existing providers as potential partners to find a suitable and effective home for needed services.

### COMMUNICATIONS AND AWARENESS BUILDING

**Even when successfully established, it is difficult to maintain local forest economies without community engagement and support.** Community members are often key factors in the success of these initiatives, but it is often challenging to secure their buy-in. The project proponents, investors, and champions struggle to build and sustain their social-based forestry initiatives without this local ownership of forestry, reforestation, and forest management solutions. These initiatives and projects may become stagnant, or even regress from the progress made, if community engagement is not prioritized. Social forestry initiatives need to provide communities with support to ensure the sustainability and success of their initiatives.

**A program dedicated to supporting social forestry initiatives gain the participation of local communities will improve the sustainability and success of these types of projects.** Fostering meaningful relationships will enable these initiatives to have easier collaboration with communities, especially in areas where the initiatives have no prior involvement. In order to increase community engagement, the key objectives of the program would be:

- Supporting initiatives build long-lasting and mutually beneficial relationships with local communities
- Ensuring the needs and priorities of all parties are accounted for by identifying key areas of interest and measures of success

**Increasing this participation has been shown to improve the both socioeconomic and environmental outcomes of social-forestry systems, and local communities are willing to receive the support provided in order to access these benefits.** The importance of this is highlighted by Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture & Bioresources (ANSAB), an organization engaged in community-based ecosystem management and value-chain development in the forest economy. For one of their social-forestry initiatives, ANSAB engaged communities by raising awareness of ANSAB's activities and providing training to empower

communities and build capacity. They found that involving communities was one of the “*best way[s] of transforming technical knowledge to communities*” and contributed to promoting ownership of the system.<sup>1</sup> Engaging with communities has also allowed them to leverage their knowledge to successfully incentivize participation and improve economic outcomes for community members. Local communities also welcome this knowledge-sharing and technical assistance. During DIY bamboo housing construction with CASSA in Guatemala, the local community selected ambassadors who underwent training on sustainably planting and using bamboo for housing. These ambassadors not only provided input into the house design to make it more relevant to local communities but later on built additional housing to support those affected by Tropical Storm Agatha. m Agatha.

**Community engagement services provided by the program can consist of activities that foster collaboration and co-creation and provide technical support and education on how to conduct forest activities.** The community engagement program could conduct the following key activities for social forestry initiatives:

- Provide support for community engagements, outreach, workshops, and dialogues
- Provide in-depth local contextualization to understand community needs using human-centered design
- Support initiatives think about how they can create or co-create benefits for local communities (e.g., training programs, job creation, etc.)
- Educate communities on the benefits and value of forest restoration, management, and production
- Support initiatives set-up decision-making channels which include local communities and leaders

If you would like to know more about social-based forestry, you can reach out to [Fairventures Social Forestry](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Asia Network for Sustainable Agriculture & Bioresources (ANSAB), ANSAB’s Experiences on REDD+ and related activities, 2013