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## Stakeholder perspectives in forest and landscape restoration and their interaction patterns

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### Abstract

The Global Partnership on Forest Landscapes Restoration (FLR) defines FLR as “a process that aims to regain ecological functionality and enhance human well-being in deforested or degraded landscapes”. While the concept appears straightforward, restoration choices often mirror specific concerns, objectives, and mandates of individual stakeholders. These perspectives remain insufficiently articulated in global restoration literature, even more so in Sub-Saharan Africa. To address this, we focus our case in Kenya and ask two questions: 1) what are the perspectives on degradation, restoration pathways, outcomes and challenges across FLR stakeholders? and 2) what are the interlinkages and interactions of stakeholders within FLR? We conducted content analysis of data from 37 stakeholder interviews and 10 focus group discussions to explore the stakeholders and their perspectives. To assess stakeholders’ interaction and interlinkages in FLR we applied social network analysis (SNA) and generated networks based on different stakeholder roles. We categorise stakeholders by type (communities, government, development, and research) and scale (local, sub-national, national, and international). FLR stakeholder roles are largely distributed across implementation, coordination, and technical support, with communities, government, and research organisations playing central roles respectively. Stakeholders broadly agree on degradation patterns but differ in how they explain its causes. Restoration is viewed as a portfolio of practices; local communities prioritise individual approaches, while development and research stakeholders emphasise integrated landscape approaches. Although all recognise the multifunctionality of restored landscapes, their valuation varies: communities prioritise immediate, tangible benefits; government focuses on ecosystem services and resource management; development partners frame restoration within broader economic systems; and research institutions emphasise long-term, system-level sustainability. Challenges to FLR are interconnected, including financial constraints, governance and policy gaps, capacity limitations, and trade-offs between short-term needs and long-term objectives. Given that FLR operates as a coupled social-ecological system, where outcomes are shaped by ecological processes, governance structures, economic incentives, and social dynamics, the effectiveness of FLR depends on the alignment of stakeholder priorities and the strengthening of feedback across scales. Addressing existing mismatches between local realities and stakeholder expectations will be critical for achieving sustainable and scalable restoration outcomes.

**Keywords:** Forest and landscape restoration, Kenya, social network analysis, stakeholders

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