Unraveling the governance challenges in the provision of extension services for agricultural carbon projects: Evidence from Western Kenya

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1. Introduction

- Globally, almost ten million hectares of soil are lost each year, which contributes to the rising of atmospheric concentration of greenhouse gases.
- Agricultural soils have the potential to sequester carbon, contributing to climate change mitigations and economic development through carbon credit trading.
- Development projects aimed at increasing Soil Organic Carbon (SOC) stocks in agricultural soils are one of the great opportunities opened up by the Kyoto protocol.
- However, carbon projects involve complex organizational arrangements comprising numerous interdependent actors and economic transactions.
- The institutional arrangements of agricultural carbon projects and the provision of extension services have currently not been sufficiently explored.

2. Research Objectives

- To understand the structure of an Agricultural Carbon Project that aims to connect captured emissions with carbon markets.
- To identify the governance challenges in the provision of extension services concerning carbon sequestration.

3. Methodology

- Field research was conducted from November to December 2022 in Siaya, Bungoma and Kakamega counties (Western Kenya).
- The snowball sampling technique was used to identify and interview stakeholders based on their level of experience in the project and the region.
- The data collection strategy included the "Net-map" participatory mapping technique and expert/key informant interviews with stakeholders.
- Participatory observations was also used to analyze farmer training activities and planning sessions in order to triangulate the data collected.

4. Results

- The presence of external players can inhibit the project impact since they have interests opposed to the project and are powerful enough to impede project outcomes.
- Extension agents must relocate every 18 months, leaving farmers unattended and with a hostile institutional environment, which can lead to the reversibility of SOC storage.
- Public sector and third-party staff work on a wide variety of projects within the same constituency, resulting in a multiplication of roles and confusion among farmers.
- Carbon projects demand specific knowledge, which can be a challenge for the public extension staff as they are often out of date on new data capture technologies.

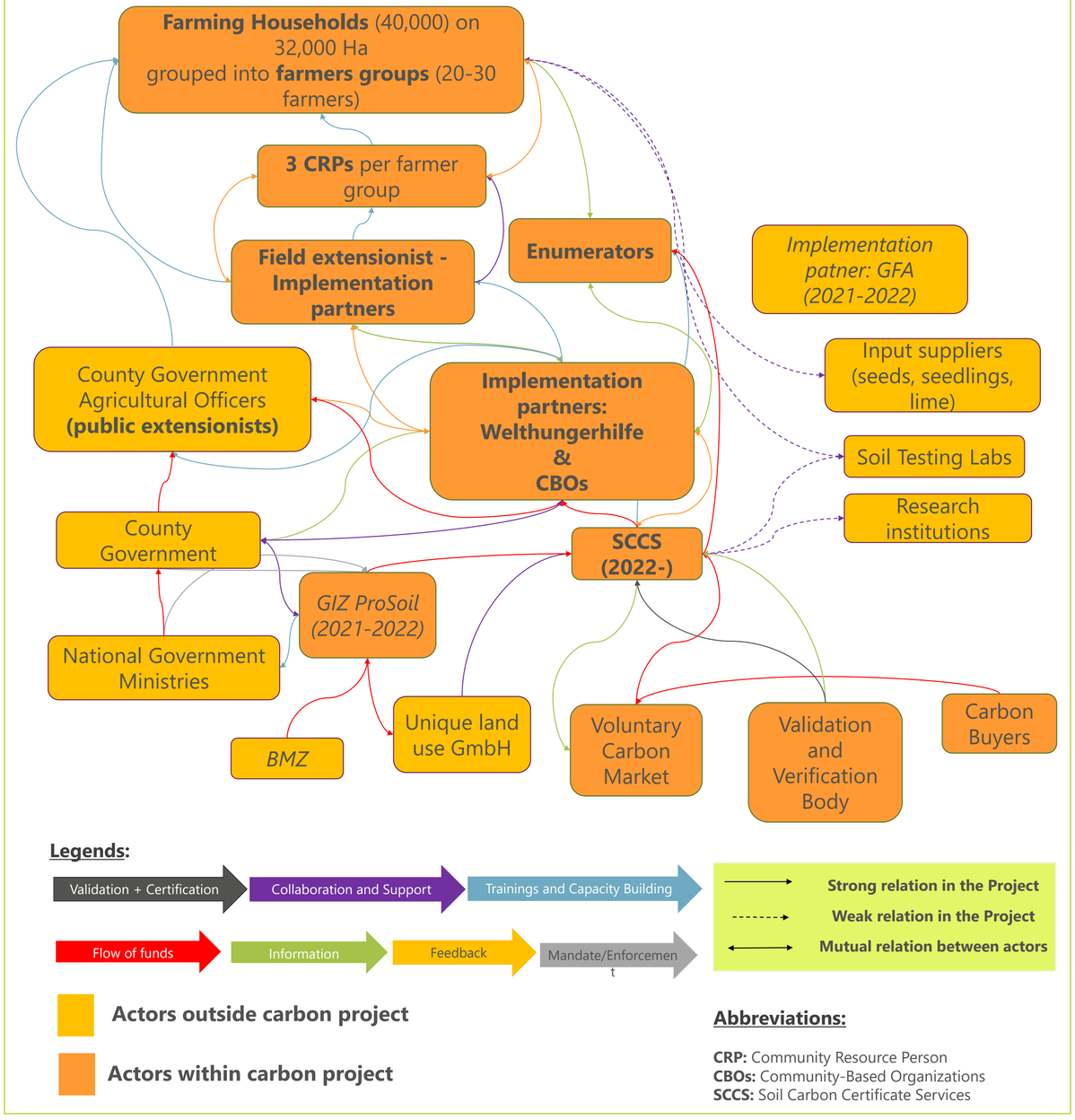

Figure 1. Net-map of the Western Kenya Soil Carbon Project

5. Conclusions and recommendations

- A common understanding of medium- and long-term regional development must be created to guide donors on where to plan investments.
- It is essential to establish coordination platforms where actors are informed about the territories influenced by other initiatives.
- Training sessions should adopt a holistic approach and promote changes in the mindsets and attitudes of farmers towards Sustainable Land Management Practices.
- The study stresses the importance of homogenizing data collection methods for all institutions involved in the project, as information on sequestered carbon may be lost in the collection process.
- It is crucial to empower and recognize the work done by CRPs in order to ensure carbon sequestration after extensionists have left the area.

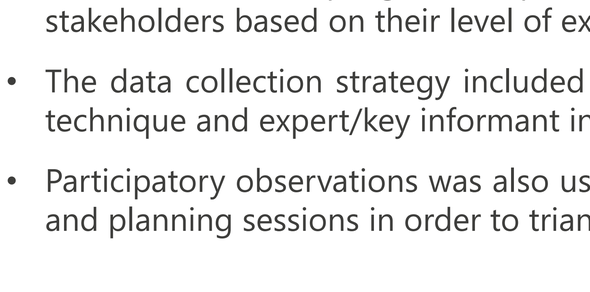

Photo 1. Farmers in a training session in Kakamega county.
Source: own pictures.

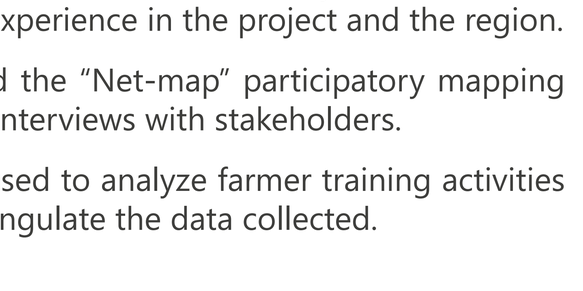

Photo 2. Farmer attending a training session.
Source: own pictures.

6. Further readings

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