Cocoa and Carbon: Remedying Forest Governance through Community Participation in a Redd+Pilot in Ghana

Manali Baruah
University of South Carolina

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COCOA AND CARBON: REMEDYING FOREST GOVERNANCE THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN A REDD+ PILOT IN GHANA

by

Manali Baruah

Bachelor of Science
Gauhati University, 2002

Master of Arts
University of Delhi, 2005

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College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Carolina
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Accepted by:
Edward R. Carr, Major Professor
Amy Mills, Committee Member
Jesse C. Ribot, Committee Member
John A. Kupfer, Committee Member
Cheryl L. Addy, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School.
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ABSTRACT

Global loss and degradation of forests are well documented, and the potential role of forests in climate change mitigation is widely recognized. While forests are key to human well-being, forest resource management in the developing world is fraught with governance challenges. Despite policy discourses that emphasize the importance of local participation in the management of forest resources, it is rarely practiced. Many national governments and non-governmental organizations have set up efforts around the collaborative management of forest resources with local communities to tackle forest loss. However, the operationalization of participatory principles and the effectiveness of these collaborative initiatives are not well understood. In this dissertation, I analyze the mobilization of participatory discourses within the context of a poorly studied community-based resource conservation initiative: a Community-Based Resource Management Area (CREMA) in Ghana. It is also a site for a Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) pilot project. Using governmentality as a theoretical lens, I explore the governmental rationalities of these projects to understand how discourses on deforestation, forest degradation, and community participation were used by various actors to shape the conduct of project stakeholders and achieve the project’s instrumental objectives. This project was justified through expert discourses and knowledge that institutionalized tree planting in the thinking and practices of cocoa farmers as a means of remedying deforestation issues. As I demonstrate, farmers engaged
with agroforestry because they anticipated benefits, including private property rights over “planted trees” and tradable claims over “carbon” sequestered by the planted trees. However, these global and national policies mobilized discourses of participation and safeguards to attract stakeholders at various scales, to improve forest governance or to build robust democratic institutions. The contradictions between discourse and practice in the case of this CREMA reflect larger challenges in forest governance globally, call into question the logic of conservation and sustainable use of forest resources and hamper local democratic participation and social justice outcomes that these interventions claim as expected outcomes.
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<td>ARD</td>
<td>Agroforestry and Rural Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CREMA</td>
<td>Community Resource Management Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DA</td>
<td>District Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FD</td>
<td>Forest Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FORIG</td>
<td>Forestry Research Institute of Ghana</td>
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<tr>
<td>GEF</td>
<td>Global Environment Facility</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<tr>
<td>LLS</td>
<td>Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>REDD</td>
<td>Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGP</td>
<td>Small Grants Programme</td>
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<td>WD</td>
<td>Wildlife Division</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

I am a cocoa farmer, and that is what I do. Why should I plant trees?

Why do we have to listen to the government, which cuts down all the trees for timber, now telling us to plant trees, for CREMA, for carbon and so on?¹

A farmer thus expressed his predicament about planting trees during a meeting that marked the beginning of my fieldwork in Ghana’s Western Region, well known for its cocoa production. His protest emerged in that setting because he knew the subject of my research. It was at my request that the village chief² and elders³ had organized the meeting so that I could seek permission from them to allow me to stay and carry out my research. During the earlier part of the meeting, when we made our introductions, I had to state my “mission”⁴—to examine people’s participation in agroforestry promoted by two

---

¹ Cocoa farmer, 46 years; Male, Western Region, Ghana, 2012, interpreted from Twi on site.

² Customary leaders based on a kinship-based system.

³ Consisting of men and women who are married, with children, influential, and related to the founding family/ies of the village. For men, financial independence, property ownership, and so on play important role in terms of who is considered an elder. For women, it is also related to having independent sources of income, property, if she is the head of a household, presence of other younger adult women (daughter in law, daughters) who take care of the household chores. Elders advise the chief on matters regarding village administration; there are no strict number requirement for people on the Council, and it depends on the village population.

⁴ It is customary among Akan hosts in Ghana to enquire about a visitor’s mission or purpose of visit. Conversation and activities follow once the hosts welcome the visitor by shaking hands. Gifts are usually exchanged.
ongoing projects in the area—the Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs) and Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) pilot. Participation with regard to my research means the transfer of secure discretionary powers and rights to locally-accountable bodies who represent people’s needs and aspirations, and who are accountable to their constituents for their decisions and actions (Ribot 2002). In the context of decentralized interventions, it is important to frame participation in terms of responsiveness and accountability, if local people are to be enfranchised as citizens and participatory approaches to natural resource management including forestry are to achieve what they aspire - to devolve decision making and benefits from forests to local populations, along with responsibilities for forest management. Often the latter is achieved through community based and decentralized initiatives where local populations just remain dependent subjects with added responsibilities but without secure rights and benefits.

This incident placed me and my research into a particular history and set of practices because interplanting cocoa with both indigenous and exotic tree species such as cidrella, odum, and teak has long been promoted by various institutions in Ghana, primarily for creating agroforestry concessions, diversifying incomes, and providing ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration and restoring degraded forests. It was believed that on-farm availability of timber would lessen the pressure on forest reserves, of which most were severely degraded (Hawthorne and Abu-Juam 1995). Farmers have also selectively retained certain plant species, such as kola nuts and fruit trees, in farms

---

5 The term community/ies used in this dissertation refers to the targeted beneficiaries of the past and ongoing interventions through participation, engagement, or other development actions.
for additional income, for domestic use, or to boost cocoa production. Therefore, this farmer’s question was a means of challenging the ways state bureaucracies have dictated the terms of engagement in the forestry sector. However, the village linguist, a retired schoolteacher and a stakeholder in the ongoing projects, decided to respond. He listed all the benefits associated with trees—ecosystem services, wood, and non-timber forests products, and the possibility of additional income from selling carbon credits. After he had finished, he asked me to respond. I began by acknowledging not having the answers that could explain the government’s contradictory positions on trees. Hence, the objective of my research, I stated, was to examine some of those contradictions in the context of the ongoing projects in the area and potentially address some of the issues in forest resource management created by these inconsistencies. This particular incident also lays bare some power relations in my research context—the linguist, because of his age and status, felt free to answer for me, and to lecture other farmers, thus potentially allowing his interests and role in the projects to drown out other voices.

In retrospect, it is easy to see that in my response I was establishing the significance of my research to the community, and rationalizing my presence in the area. I first acknowledged the farmer’s assessment of the deficiency in existing agroforestry practices, a problem that needs to be fixed, and then utilized the strategy of promising anticipated benefits of my work to my hosts, many of whom were going to be my

---

6 While the position of “linguist” is a common one among the Akan, in this case, the role was more than ceremonial as the village chief did not speak English and the teacher was fluent in Twi and English.

7 While facing the gathering, he began by interpreting the question for me and proceeded to answer it. My research assistant sitting next to me also interpreted the question and quickly wrote it down for me in her field note book.
interview participants. My goals were as aspirational as that of the projects I was set to examine. My strategy was also not entirely different from how these projects mobilized various elements such as discourses, institutions, regulatory decisions, and scientific statements to engage local populations and direct their conduct to achieve desirable environmental and social objectives—or benefits in the context of REDD+. This story thus illustrates my research question: how are these resources “governed”—that is, how are different actors’ interests aligned toward achieving forest conservation as well as improving livelihoods? Who can speak? Who speaks for whom? It also brings out my positionality as a socially situated subject in reproducing the existing discourses.

1.2 The Research Context

In this section, I explain some of the key ideas to contextualize this dissertation research. It is important for the reader to understand the concepts of CREMAs, the REDD+ mechanism, and the linkages between the two to situate the arguments and claims made in this dissertation. A CREMA, as developed by the Ghanaian government, is both a geographically defined area as well as an approach to integrate conservation and rural development goals as part of a natural resource decentralization process (Asare, Kyei, and Mason 2013). REDD+ is a global framework designed to financially incentivize developing countries for any reductions in emissions realized through a decrease in the conversion of forests to non-forests, and other land uses. In doing so, countries have to demonstrate lower emission rates from a reference emission level (i.e., without REDD+). In Ghana, government thinking positions CREMAs as the appropriate institutional mechanism for implementing REDD+ projects on the ground.
1.2.1 CREMAs in Ghana

CREMAs are a vehicle for governing forest resources that come out of a long history of efforts to govern forests. Given that establishing protected areas in state-owned forests has not succeeded in widely producing desired forest conservation outcomes in Ghana, the Ghanaian state utilized collaborative resource management as an alternative strategy to manage resources by partnering with local communities living around these resources such as forests and wildlife. The Wildlife Division (WD) of the Ghanaian Forestry Commission (FC) developed the CREMAs\textsuperscript{8} in Ghana. It aimed to address wildlife management outside protected areas and forest reserves. Over time, the CREMA approach became a model for decentralized resource management in Ghana, where it was used to promote natural resource conservation and livelihood diversification outside of protected areas. In post-Independence Ghana, the 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy marked the broader decentralization reforms in the natural resource sector. This policy and subsequent reforms influenced the design of the CREMA approach. However, despite the rhetoric, decentralization in the forestry sector in the country remains limited (Teye 2011). The central state administrative institutions, particularly the FC, continue to be reluctant to devolve decision making in forestry due to their substantial revenue generating potential (Sasu 2004).

While initially, CREMAs established by the WD targeted the co-management of the wildlife in protected areas, CREMAs now have extended their focus on any natural resource they deem fit for conservation (Forestry Commission Ghana, 2004), including

\textsuperscript{8} During the 1990s, the Ghanaian state initiated a series of policies and programs claiming to involve the local population in forest management and to give them a greater share of benefits accruing in the forestry sector. These measures were collectively named as Collaborative Resource Management Programs (CRMP).
trees. The Ghanaian government identifies CREMAs as an important “participatory model” and claims that the CREMAs will create the “right conditions” for democratic participation, and opportunities and financial incentives for local communities to engage in the conservation and management of forest resources. At present, there are over thirty CREMAs in Ghana at various phases of the establishment process.

Despite the adoption of this approach and its spread through Ghana, community forest management, and the decentralized natural resources governance offer no guarantees of improved outcomes with regard to previous, state-led efforts. Such efforts have resulted in mixed outcomes (Mayers and Vermeulen 2009; Tokede et al. 2005), suggesting that success of community-based management is contingent on local circumstances. For example, in some cases, they have led to enhancement of local livelihood and improved income, forest conservation, and the transfer of discretionary powers to local communities (Cronkleton, Pulhin, and Saigal 2012; Larson and Ribot 2007; Ribot, Lund, and Treue 2010). However in other cases, community forest management interventions produced inequities in benefit sharing among local stakeholders, the elite capture of benefits, and resulted in conflicts over local rights to natural resources often marginalizing the less powerful more than before the interventions (Charnley and Poe 2007; Ribot, Agrawal, and Larson 2006; Ribot, Lund, and Treue 2010; Schreckenberg and Luttrell 2009; Tacconi 2007).

1.2.2 Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation

REDD+ is a climate change mitigation strategy framed around an incentive-based compensation mechanism to conserve forest (and other carbon-rich habitats such as mangroves and swamps) in a manner that prevents and reduces greenhouse gas
emissions. REDD has evolved since it was first pitched as an idea by the governments of Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica, during the 11th session of the Conference of the Parties in Montreal. REDD initially focused on “reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.” It expanded to include three more objectives (a) Conservation of forest carbon stocks, (b) Sustainable management of forests, and (c) Enhancement of forest carbon stocks. This is how, at the 2010 COP-16 in Cancun, REDD became REDD-plus (REDD+), to reflect these new components (“REDD+” 2017). With the inclusion of a number of decisions related to REDD+ and forests in the Paris Agreement (COP21, 2015), forests once again found prominence as a key strategy for emission reduction and mitigating climate change.

The primary goal of the REDD+ mechanism is to reduce global carbon emissions by paying forest owners in developing countries for decreased CO₂ emissions associated with avoided deforestation and forest degradation and maintained carbon stocks (“REDD - Warsaw Framework for REDD-Plus” 2013; “UN-REDD Programme” 2017). Benefit schemes are therefore based on the difference between the actualized emissions and projections from a historical baseline (UN-REDD 2009). These benefit schemes may include both direct (e.g., cash payments) and indirect (e.g., improved governance, availability of forest products, and ecosystem services) gains resulting from the implementation of REDD+. Incentive-based conservation predates REDD+ and includes

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9 The agenda item on “Reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries and approaches to stimulate action” was first introduced during COP 11 in Montreal in 2005. The governments of Papua New Guinea and Costa Rica, supported by eight other parties, through their submission FCCC/CP/2005/MISC.1, requested for this issue to be taken up on the agenda (UNFCCC 2014).
Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES), a movement started in the early 1980s when environmental economists (Pearce and Moran 1994) argued for putting a monetary value on nature and its services to conserve it. Achieving forest conservation through this approach seems straightforward in principle—forest owners (government, communities, and individuals, depending on how ownership is defined) are compensated for maintaining standing forests, offsetting their opportunity costs, and therefore leaving the world with a greater stock of forest with which to take up emissions. However, in practice, the approach has faced problems. These challenges include transaction costs associated with identifying forest owners in systems of complex tenure (discussed later), overlapping property rights and weak governance, more opportunity costs than benefits, costly monitoring, reporting, and verification, and leakage. Another problem is establishing additionality—that is, showing that reductions in deforestation and forest degradation due to REDD+ activities are greater than they would have been without REDD+ activities. Despite that, REDD+ has gained increasing traction among policy makers as a potential solution to achieve conservation, development, and climate change mitigation goals (Angelsen 2010).

REDD+ is implemented in three phases—readiness, piloting, or demonstration—and includes policy reforms and full implementation including results-based action.12

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10 Millennium Ecosystems Assessment in 2005 made the idea about ecosystem services popular. MEA also triggered, a range of payment schemes for ecosystem services (e.g. biodiversity conservation, ecotourism, carbon storage)

11 ‘Leakage refers to the fact that while deforestation might be avoided in one place, the forest destroyers might move to another area of forest or to a different country’ (REDD Monitor 2017).

12 REDD+ readiness phase includes activities implemented at the national level, such as developing a REDD+ national strategy, setting a national reference level, establishing a forest monitoring system, and institutional and technical capacity building activities, among other;
This step-wise approach is to ensure that REDD+ projects progressed seamlessly and logically. Ghana’s involvement with the REDD process began in 2007, via the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). Ghana has received REDD readiness funds from both from the FCPF mechanism of the World Bank as well as non-FCPF mechanisms (FCPF, Aug 2015). The first phase of Ghana’s REDD+ Readiness was completed in November 2014. The main activities and outputs of phase I included establishing mechanisms for benefit sharing, dispute resolution, social safeguards, and the monitoring and evaluation framework, setting baseline emission levels, and a measurement, reporting, and verification (MRV) systems. This phase also included setting operational guidance and standards for national and sub-national REDD+ programs. At present (2016 onward), Ghana is in early implementation phase (2016–2030) that includes monitoring, performance-based payments, and scaling up activities. Ghana has opted for a nested national approach toward REDD implementation. This mean Ghana will consider both national baselines, and if a project manages to adhere to REDD-related activities, there may be a direct payment to beneficiaries (nested approach).

1.2.3 CREMA as REDD+ Pilots

From a practical mitigation standpoint, it has been argued (Asare, Kyei, and Mason 2013) that the CREMA has the potential to address many of the key challenges for REDD. These challenges include boundary demarcation, free prior and informed consent, ensuring democratic decision making, ensuring sustainability of institutions and

Piloting phase may involve testing the strategies, policies, and plans proposed in the readiness phase. Implementation phase involves measurement, reporting, and verification of the results under UNFCCC after which countries can access results-based payments.
mechanisms, clarifying tenure and carbon rights, along with creating the right conditions for equitable sharing of benefits. Since 2007, when Ghana began its involvement with the REDD readiness phase through World Bank’s FCPF, there have been speculations about the ability of CREMAs to generate carbon revenues in the near future. The FC of Ghana supports the use of CREMAs for piloting forest carbon projects in the country. The Ghana Wildlife Policy 2012 and Ghana’s REDD Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) support the CREMA approach as a means for implementing REDD demonstration projects and pilots (Ghana REDD RPP 2010; Ghana Wildlife Policy 2012). Due to the difference in stages of development and involvement in the carbon market and certification schemes, no CREMA in Ghana has yet generated any revenues from reducing emission.

The establishment of a CREMA area involves a series of administrative procedures. It is a six-step process that involves: (a) defining governance structures, (b) developing and approving the Constitution, (c) boundary demarcation, (d) by-law preparation and approval by the DA, (e) recognition by the WD, and (f) authorization by Minister of Lands and Forestry by Devolution of Management responsibilities to the CREMA. The guidelines for CREMAs lay out a governance structure that would manage the CREMA area. This structure involves institutions that operate at different scales. First, at the village level, a Community Resource Management Committee (CMRC) is elected by the villagers. The CMRCs handle the management of the CREMA at their community. Then, CREMA members at the village level elect a representative from each CMRC to the Executive Committee (CEC). CEC is the highest decision-making body
within the CREMA, and it includes the Divisional Chief of the Wassa Traditional area (FC 2004b, 7).

**1.2.4 The Value of Standing Trees**

Using the earth’s resources responsibly and addressing poverty are two of our greatest challenges, and climate change both problematizes and overtly connects them. Curbing deforestation and forest degradation in tropical countries is argued to be a potentially cost-effective way to reduce carbon emissions and address climate change through land-use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) activities (Canadell and Raupach 2008; DeFries et al. 2007; Malhi et al. 2008). Among LULUCF activities, afforestation, agroforestry, and reforestation respond to the need of enhancing ecosystems, sequestering carbon, and shifting to a low carbon economy. This attention to forests is not new. Forest conservation has been on the core agenda of international conventions and agreements (e.g., the Millennium Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs], and Aichi targets)\(^\text{13}\) designed to achieve conservation and development targets. It is only recently, however, that climate change has entered into this conversation.

Agroforestry\(^\text{14}\) is being considered for use by many developing countries for Land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) activities. This emphasis on agroforestry is because of its potential for climate change mitigation and with components from both

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\(^{13}\) Target 5—“By 2020, the rate of loss of all natural habitats, including forests, is at least halved and where feasible brought close to zero, and degradation and fragmentation is significantly reduced” of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, Strategic Goal B—“Reduce the direct pressures on biodiversity and promote sustainable use.”

\(^{14}\) In general terms, agroforestry is the association of trees with farming practices and can be classified into several categories based on the agroforestry system’s structure, its function, its socio-economic scale and level of management, and its ecological spread (Nair 1985, 97–128)
agriculture and forestry, agroforestry activities are critical for livelihoods of the global poor dependent on agriculture and forests (Anderson and Zerriffi 2012). An estimated 1.2 billion people in the developing world currently practice and benefit from agroforestry. Scholars and practitioners have argued that agroforestry has the potential to simultaneously tackle both climate change and help achieve development goals by generating used on “co-benefits” (Garrity 2004; P.K. Ramachandran Nair et al. 2009; Pandey 2007), such as the sequestration of carbon and the delivery of income, via payments for carbon credits to poor populations living in and around forests. The post-Kyoto Protocol period has witnessed a surge in the establishment of financial mechanisms to balance opportunity costs associated with pro-environment initiatives to sequester carbon and reduce deforestation. The Bonn Challenge is another global effort to restore 150 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands by 2020 and 350 million by 2030 (Ghazoul and Sheil 2010; IUCN Policy Brief 2017). Although these financial mechanisms are primarily conceptualized and undertaken as interventions to enhance the value of uncut forests and/or endorse reforestation activities, many have argued that they can also help reduce poverty (Landell-Mills and Porras. 2002; Bishop and Pagiola 2012).

The forestry sector still comprises a valuable asset for Ghana’s economic development, accounting for 3.5% of Ghana’s GDP and contributed USD1.3 billion (FAO 2011) to the economy in 2011. However, the country incurs economic loss through biodiversity loss due to deforestation and land degradation (Tutu, Ntiamo-Baidu, and Asuming-Brempong 1993). The main drivers of forest cover loss in Ghana are agricultural expansion and wood exports in the wake of structural adjustment programs (Benhin and Barbier 2004; Codjoe and Dzanku 2009; Owusu 1998). Other drivers of
deforestation include wildfires, mining, and urbanization (roads, settlements, and other infrastructural development). Ghana, in response to declining food production until the 1980s and dwindling forest cover, gradually shifted its agricultural policies and initiatives to include modern agroforestry and agricultural intensification practices as stated in the National Agroforestry Policy, 1986. The main objective of this policy was to use agroforestry to promote sustainable land use (Terakawa 2002). Its early focus in the 1980s was to establish nurseries for tree seedlings to provide readily available seedlings to farmers willing to adopt agroforestry technologies. Today, Ghana has trees in public, private, and government plantations as well as within protected areas, forest reserves, community forests, and in people’s farms.

Ghana is the second largest exporter of cocoa in the world, and therefore cocoa plays a significant role in the Ghana’s economy (15% of Ghana’s GDP) (ICCO 2004). However, the expansion of cocoa farms has also been alleged to be the primary driver of deforestation in the country’s high forest zone (HFZ) (Hawthorne and Abu-Juam 1995), largely confined to the south-western part of Ghana. However, these existing narratives of over-exploitation of “natural” forests for cocoa cultivation usually overlook/downplay the specific historical conditions and social institutions that accompany them at a national, regional, or local scale (Fairhead and Leach 1998). In the early 1990s, this forest zone also saw agroforestry projects implemented by both foreign and Ghanaian timber companies encouraging farmers to actively incorporate trees on

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15 Traditionally maintaining or increasing cocoa production was associated with farm expansion and not with intensification or improved farming practices; in response to widespread deforestation and shrinkage of traditional cocoa growing areas, this is gradually changing—the practices now lean toward restoration of old cocoa farms and reusing old farm land.
farm in an area gradually losing its forest cover (Appiah and Pedersen 1998; Prah 1994; Richards and Asare 1999). Although the inclusion of suitable and valuable tree species\textsuperscript{16} at various phases of cocoa farm establishment is widely practiced by smallholders, tree planting, particularly commercially valuable timber species, has faced resistance due to complex land and tree tenure issues (discussed in later sections). Research by various government and non-government institutions\textsuperscript{17} continues to look for the optimal shade conditions for growing cocoa, and to identify suitable indigenous and exotic tree species for cocoa agroforestry to harmonize tropical agricultural production with the surrounding environment.

1.3 The Problem Statement

Since its inception in 2005, questions were raised about the long-term viability of REDD+, particularly concerning financing. With the global economic crisis (2008–2009), the landscape for REDD+ implementation looked discouraging (Peters-Stanley and Daphne 2013). Although REDD+ projects are emerging as complex development initiatives and are being implemented in many tropical forest regions of the world, till now, they have been financed mainly through public sector finances with bilateral organizations playing a major role (Norman and Nakhooda 2015). With the specific inclusion of REDD+ in the Paris Agreement\textsuperscript{18} text during COP 21, the role of forests in managing climate change impacts became solidified in the international climate agenda.

\textsuperscript{16} There are not too many studies on farmer preference but they prefer mixed tree species that would fulfill household food and fiber needs and not only timber.

\textsuperscript{17} CRIG, Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, Conservation International, CARE, Kuapa Kooko, and STCP-Ghana.

\textsuperscript{18} Historic agreement between 195 countries to keep global temperature rises below 2°C while at the same time making significant efforts to limit the rise to no more than 1.5°C.
Also, there were also a number of pledges made during the Paris Agreement to increase forest financing including significant pledges from Germany, Norway, and the United Kingdom in support of REDD+. The Paris Agreement also ‘affirms’ the importance of “public awareness, public participation, public access to information and cooperation at all levels on the matters” addressed in the Agreement (Paris Agreement 2015). Looking forward, with these strong endorsements, the developments around REDD+ and forest governance are going to receive renewed attention. Also, under the SDG, environmental protection, climate change mitigation, and poverty alleviation are now all connected—and forest governance will be a key site where this plays out. Goal 15, of the SDGs, specifically states, “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss”—once again emphasizing the role of the environment and forests for sustainable development and human well-being.

REDD+ schemes have been piloted in many regions, but our knowledge about REDD+ initiatives within a local context is limited (Bond 2010; Cohn et al. 2011). Some tropical countries, civil society and indigenous people’s organizations are watchful of REDD+-related development in their countries because of existing governance challenges, lack of legal land rights and tenure issues, and therefore are critical and often resist any possible government or private sector initiatives in this context (Angelsen 2008; Okereke and Dooley 2010). REDD+ projects are multidimensional in design, scale, the place, and the social contexts in which they are going to be operationalized. Hence, there are all sorts of conflicts that can arise between different types of knowledge and the various stakeholders’ interests.
The exploitation of natural resources in weak institutional and governance settings can lead to internal conflicts of rights, access, and usage among local communities (Collier and Hoeffler 2005). As discussed, the implementation of REDD+ is directly linked to institutional structures, good governance, and the process of unifying the rights of various forest-dwelling and indigenous groups. Successful outcomes from REDD+ will hinge upon resolution of conflicts (related to rights, access, and usage) and the adequate representation of diverse goals and interests in a manner that aligns individual and community interests with policy goals of REDD+. Overall, understanding the local governance shaped by REDD+ is, therefore, crucial to reduce vulnerability, boost economic and social wellbeing, and promote forest conservation and better management.

As discussed before, CREMAs modeled on participatory approaches to natural resource management are being promoted as the ideal institutional set-up in Ghana for piloting of REDD+ readiness projects. The particular CREMA in Wassa Amenfi West District in the cocoa landscape of Western Ghana with a pro-poor REDD+ Readiness project provided the ideal setting to examine forest governance issues in the context of REDD+. The CREMA case, therefore, presents an opportunity to examine how discourses on participation are materialized in practice, and in this dissertation I look at “participation’ as “conduct of conduct” (Dean 1999).

1.4 Research Questions and Dissertation Overview

The empirical analysis in this dissertation uses data from the HFZ of the Western Region of Ghana, where the activities of the Bontori CREMA and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN’s pilot pro-poor REDD project) overlapped—I use the term focal interventions or CREMA/REDD+ to refer to these projects throughout the
dissertation. Using empirical data collected through semi-structured interviews with both cocoa farmers and government and non-governmental organization (NGO) officials associated with the projects, this dissertation describes the governance contexts that influence people to participate in the agroforestry activities.

With both global and national focus on the legitimacy of REDD+ projects (Corbera and Schroeder 2011; Luttrell et al. 2013), equity issues in the distribution of benefits (Okereke and Dooley 2010; McDermott, Mahanty, and Schreckenberg 2013), and its importance for tropical forest conservation and mitigating climate change, it is important to understand the contextual elements and practices that influence how project stakeholders are participating in the process. However, these REDD+ projects espousing participatory processes require accountability and representation to achieve equity, justice, and efficiency in outcomes (Ribot 2002). Building on a comprehensive review of the literature surrounding conservation and development, decentralization, and political ecology, the empirical research for this dissertation began with two broad questions: (1) *Who participates in CREMA/REDD+ activities and why?* Through this question, I want to understand the responses of various actors toward the CREMA/REDD+, how do they align and negotiate their expectations within the broader rationalities of the intervention, and besides the regulatory practices, what are the political and economic motivations of the various parties involved in the intervention. (2) *How is participation achieved?* Through this question, I attempt to understand the various practices, rationalities, and forms of incentives and punishments that are brought together to engage various stakeholders so that the intended objectives (reducing emissions, deforestation, and maintaining carbon stocks) of the REDD+ mechanism are achieved. I also attempt to
understand if participation hinges on regulatory frameworks and the technologies of remuneration and punishment or whether the making of responsible environmental subjects is contingent on local context, uneven power relations, and diverse subject positions of the farmers.

1.5 Chapter Outlines

This dissertation consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research topic and provided the background on collaborative resource management areas (CREMAs) and REDD+ in Ghana and their contextual relevance for agroforestry activities associated with conservation, rural development, and climate change mitigation goals. The chapter then introduces the natural resource landscape of the Western Region of Ghana, land tenure and tree tenure arrangements—elements that are framed both as problems and technical fix, likely to optimize the achieving of objectives through REDD+.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation reviews theoretical approaches to conservation, development, participation, community-based conservation to show that (1) community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) approaches came out of a long history of efforts to decentralize resource governance; (2) how REDD+ is reworking existing elements of CBNRM for new purposes and defining “social protection” or “safeguards” to address equity issues and account for past injustices in natural resource management; (3) how “safeguards” such as community “participation” and “tenure” are not straightforward; and (4) how these may impact benefit sharing and equity issues through REDD+.

Chapter 3 focuses on the research methods. My main data source is semi-structured interviews, and this chapter details the advantages of this method of data
collection for this type of study and discusses some of the issues and limitations of this approach. It also discusses the characteristics of the study population and the methods used to recruit the study participants. I also draw data from government, NGO documents, local newspaper articles, rural radio programs, and personal observations. This chapter also provides an overview of data collection experiences and the methods I use to analyze the data.

Drawing from the semi-structured interviews and review of policy documents, Chapter 4 elaborates on how climate change and deforestation is problematized and promised benefits through the ongoing projects is linked to governing the conducts of cocoa farmers regarding farming practices. These alliances between parties who want to govern with objectives such as (conservation, tenure rights, payments, livelihood improvement, and sustainability) encourage people at the project sites to engage in agroforestry activities despite their reservations against tree planting and skepticism about equity issues in benefit sharing.

Chapter 5 shows the complicated ways and practices that the diverse interests of the stakeholders are brought together, and connections are forged between them toward a specific end of mitigating climate change, conservation, and improving rural livelihoods, and how theses manifest themselves in the farmers’ narratives of their livelihoods and well-being in the cocoa landscape of Western Ghana.

Chapter 6 starts with a description of the current status of the CREMA/REDD+ at the study site. It then summarizes the main insights drawn from this empirical case, drawing lessons from an analysis of the existing institutional setup and early REDD+
implementation and how these findings contribute to the scholarship on forest governance, climate change, and critical development studies.
CHAPTER 2
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The central objective of this dissertation is to critically analyze the politics of natural resource governance, local development, and climate change in the context of CREMA/REDD+. In doing so, this study focuses on farmers’ participation in agroforestry, the different subjectivities of the relevant actors, and the local contextual elements that are likely to influence the realization of CREMA/REDD+ goals.

At their core, both CREMA and the REDD+ pilot initiatives seek to alter the beliefs and practices and induce behavior change of cocoa-farmers by institutionalizing their support for forest conservation, climate change mitigation, and improved livelihoods through agroforestry (e.g., selling timber, payments for carbon credits). Both initiatives are neoliberal in spirit, as they support decentralized community-based institutions, encourage the privatization of state functions while advocating for private property rights over “planted trees” and tradable claims over “carbon” sequestered by the planted trees. While the CREMA, as a decentralized resource management strategy, seeks to reduce pressure on protected forest reserves by garnering local support for off-reserve forest management, the pro-poor REDD+ pilot seeks to institutionalize tree planting for forest conservation and climate change mitigation into the thoughts and actions of cocoa farmers, so that they not only become eager participants in REDD+ when it is fully operationalized but will also conduct themselves consistent with REDD+ objectives in the future (Birkenholtz 2009). Therefore, for analyzing, the practical elements from
CREMA/REDD+ implementation, Foucault’s concepts of governmentality and the technologies of governance (techniques of rewards and punishment) that emerge from and (re)create governmentality, as seen through the lens of Agarwal’s “environmentality,” offer a useful analytical framework.

Political ecology, a field that offers “empirical, research-based explorations to explain linkages in the condition and change of social/environmental systems, with explicit considerations of relations of power” (Robbins 2011), is another useful framework for studying the social, economic, ecological, and political dimensions of the CREMA/REDD+ intervention. Political ecologists have a long-standing engagement with the plurality of perceptions and framings of environmental and resource problems (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987; Bryant 1998; Escobar 1996; Robbins 2000). With multiple sponsors, including a range of actors from transnational and national to local, REDD+ projects bring in a range of interests, knowledge types, and agendas. Further, studies using this framework illustrated the role of expert knowledge and discourses in defining problems and devising solutions to climate change (Peet and Watts 2011; Bumpus and Liverman 2011). I have relied on this theoretical literature to frame my exploration of differences, heterogeneity, and multiplicity of meanings in the construction of environmental risks, benefits, and participation under CREMA/REDD+, and to explore the making and un-making of governable environmental subjects and how these subjects negotiate the efforts of subject making.

Farmers’ engagement with agroforestry practices in the CREMA/REDD+ site is related to overarching ideas about participatory approaches to conservation and development, market-oriented approaches to conservation, distributive justice (benefit-
sharing of carbon payments), and specific contextual factors such as tenure and institutions. In the following paragraphs, I develop the general conceptual and analytical framework relevant to this dissertation research on the case of CREMA/REDD+ implementation in the Western Region of Ghana. I first provide a brief background on the emergence of CBNRM strategies, which came out of a long history of efforts to better govern natural resources by integrating conservation and development agendas around notions of decentralization. I then argue that REDD+ strategies rework existing elements of CBNRM for new purposes—mitigating climate change, conserving forests (including biodiversity), and enhancing livelihoods—and thereby aim to produce forest conservation stewards. Third, I outline how REDD+ adopts the rhetoric of “social protection” or “safeguards”—in other words, tools of governance—to address equity issues and account for past injustices in natural resource governance. Finally, I describe how the success of these tools of remuneration and punishment are contingent on the local context, uneven power relations, and multiple subject positions of the farmers, as well as other relevant actors, all of which may impact the achievement of desired outcomes through REDD+.

2.2 Community-Based Natural Resource Management

Decentralization has become a dominant paradigm for resource governance both in rhetoric and in practice. Influenced by participatory and bottom-up perspectives in development and conservation (Chambers 1995; 1997a; 2005) CBNRM is widely advocated based on the assumption that such decentralized efforts will result in material well-being, social justice, promote sustainable management and conservation of natural resources, and produce overall better resource governance (Child and Dalal-Clayton
Community-based approaches to natural resource management are based on the assumption that local communities have a greater stake and understanding of local issues than distant actors, and these collaborative approaches came out of a long history of efforts to integrate the environment and development agenda (Brosius, Tsing, and Zerner 2005; Shackleton et al. 2002).

The early development agenda, led by the World Bank and other major donors, treated the environment as a resource base for economic gain. Strategies focused on targeted nature preservation (e.g., influenced by the first National parks and forests in the U.S.) while development strategies focused on economic growth and efficiency through the transfer of technology to boost agricultural productivity and improve infrastructure development (Richards 1985; Scott and Wilkinson 2011). These centralized, top-down approaches to rural development have been heavily criticized because they were not inclusive and left local populations outside of the decision-making processes and contributed little to poverty alleviation and rural empowerment (Chambers 1997a; Holling and Meffe 1996; Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007). In response to these growing criticisms, participatory approaches to development appeared in the 1970s, evolved during the 1980s, and went to cover Central America, Africa, and Asia (Participatory Action Research 1991; Chambers 1994, 1997b).

Criticism of top-down development strategies also came in the form of resistance and protests from communities where many of these projects were implemented. Communities challenged these command-and-control strategies when their resources rights were taken away, and they were forced to move to urban areas in search of livelihood opportunities (Agrawal and Redford 2006; Brockington, Igoe, and Schmidt-
Loss of livelihood and access to the rich-resource base as well as forced migration fueled conflicts among local communities, state agencies, and other stakeholders (Schwartzman, Moreira, and Nepstad 2000; McElwee 2010). These tensions also contributed to the weakening of social structures and loss of natural resources with minimal improvement in rural livelihoods or strengthening of local institutions (Chambers 1997a; Schmidt-Soltau and Brockington 2007).

It was also around the same time that the linkages between development and conservation were strengthened. As a result, the World Conservation Strategy was formulated and launched in 1980 led by the World Conservation Union (IUCN) with inputs from other organizations (McCormick 1986). To address the failures of command and control-styled conservation strategies and to promote sustainable and equitable natural resource management, conservation practitioners adopted the participatory approaches for natural resources management including, forest, marine, and other common resources in Latin America and Africa (Agrawal and Gibson 1999).

Despite the widespread appeal and adoption of community-based and participatory approaches to natural resource management, they often failed to deliver on its mandates. The most important of these criticisms are: considering and treating “project beneficiaries” as passive recipients of project undertakings (Pimbert and Pretty 1995); the short-term nature of projects and over reliance on outside knowledge and expertise. Community-based projects also lacked concrete standards to evaluate their effectiveness in conservation or enhancing human well-being (Kellert et al. 2000). Others argue how certain social groups are recognized at the expense of sidelining others (Hobley 1992; Sarin 1995). Elite control of decision-making and elite capture of benefits
also has been a common outcome of development and decentralization projects (Dasgupta and Beard 2007; Fritzen 2007). Empirical evidence suggests that decision making, even in projects implemented in the name of decentralization, is controlled and dominated by the elites. Elite control can be particularly problematic in societies like Ghana, where since the colonial period traditional leaders claiming to represent local interests have had substantial decision-making powers over land management (Acemoglu, Reed, and Robinson 2013).

As discussed, CBNRM approaches carry both opportunities and uncertainties, but given their ability to coalesce both environmental and development priorities, these strategies will remain pivotal parts of the natural resource governance conversation. In the next section, I demonstrate how REDD+ is a newer form of CBNRM as it has retained the same elements (objects to be managed, situated subjects such as communities, goals, objectives, and rationalities) and characteristic of CBNRM approaches.

### 2.3 REDD+ as a Reassembled Form of CBNRM

In an extended case of community forest management, Li (2007) demonstrated how specific practices (described below) might be forged together toward the desired outcome. In the case of community forest management, the outcomes are related to material well-being: livelihoods, control, efficiency, sustainability, and conservation among others. Li identified six practices that apply to any assemblage, described as an ongoing process of coalescing disparate elements and forging linkages between them. The practices identified by Li are as follows:
(1) Forging alignments: the work of linking together the objectives of the various parties to an assemblage, both those who aspire to govern conduct and those whose conduct is to be conducted. (2) Rendering technical: extracting from the messiness of the social world, with all the processes that run through it, a set of relations that can be formulated as a diagram in which problem (a) plus intervention (b) will produce (c), a beneficial result. (3) Authorizing knowledge: specifying the requisite body of knowledge; confirming enabling assumptions; containing critiques. (4) Managing failures and contradictions: presenting failure as the outcome of rectifiable deficiencies; smoothing out contradictions so that they seem superficial rather than fundamental; devising compromises. (5) Antipolitics: reposing political questions as matters of technique; closing down debate about how and what to govern and the distributive effects of particular arrangements by reference to expertise; encouraging citizens to engage in debate while limiting the agenda. (6) Reassembling: grafting on new elements and reworking old ones; deploying existing discourses to new ends; transposing the meanings of key terms (Li 2007, 265).

Li’s analysis of assemblage is drawn from the notions of governmentality, a concept developed by Foucault (1991). Governmentality refers to “governmental rationality” or the “conduct of conduct,” an idea of government that is not only limited to the control by states but can be employed by anybody who is interested in governing. Using governmentality includes various regulatory techniques, some degree of deliberation to shape our behavior “according to a particular set of norms and for a variety of ends” (Dean 1999, 10). For Foucault, government, in general terms, means “the
conduct of conduct” (Foucault 1982) or “…a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons (Gordon 1991).”

Dean (1999, 10) elaborates this point:

Government is any more or less calculated rational activity, undertaken by a multiplicity of authorities and agencies, applying a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge that seeks to shape conduct by working through our desires, aspirations, interests and beliefs, for definite but shifting ends and with a diverse set of relatively unpredictable effects, consequences and outcomes.

At the core of this framework lies the notion of problematization, which involves first examining the thought process in the definition and framing of a problem and second “how and why certain things (behavior, phenomena, processes) become a problem” (Foucault 1985a, 115). Two essential features can be identified in the production of governmental subjects: first, knowledge production to inform the formulation of problems that need solving, identify priorities and goals, and rationalize forms of interventions (Dean 1999). Second, the production of subjects involves the creation of technologies of government, such as institutions and policies, documents, and so on, to alter people’s conduct (Rose 1999; Li 2007). Both elements are interrelated.

Another important aspect of governmentality is to make the desired conduct acceptable among the governed such that those considered to be the object of government consent to be willing subjects. Thus, problem identification must be accompanied by remedial strategies that direct subjects toward particular conduct, diminishing the barriers between “problems” and “solutions” (Miller and Rose 2008).
Extending Foucauldian notions of governmentality to the governance of the environment, Agrawal’s environmentality examines the results and functions of the decentralization of environmental governance by analysing “knowledges, politics, institutions, and subjectivities that come to be linked together with the emergence of the environment as a domain that requires regulation and protection” (Agrawal 2005). Using governmentality as a theoretical framework, scholars have examined the mechanics of environmental policies and identify the rationalities and strategies that are used to produce and govern neoliberal subjects (Agrawal 2005; Birkenholtz 2009; Bumpus and Liverman 2011; Li 2007).

REDD+ fits into this literature as a form of environmentality. As Thompson et al. (2011, 100) noted, “REDD+ is itself an emerging project of environmental governance—a set of social norms and political assumptions that will steer societies and organizations in a manner that shapes collective decisions about the use and management of forest resources.” REDD+ is a process of environmental subject making—of various actors from professionals working in the projects to local populations to the government, NGOs, and private actors, all of whom will continually engage in constructing, challenging, and practicing discourses of conservation and development as shaped by the context of REDD+ (Agarwal 2004). In that sense, REDD+ is a site where both state and non-state institutions, actors, policies, and practices meet and are aligned toward a set of goals—“a transnational apparatus of governmentality” (Ferguson and Gupta 2002).

As REDD+ is piloted around the world, it is reworking existing elements of CBNRM for new purposes—to bring ecological benefits through reduction of carbon emissions and biodiversity conservation as well as providing social benefits to local
communities (Angelsen 2008, 2010). Scholars and experts engaged with the technical and institutional issues of REDD+ implementation have suggested how REDD+ initiatives can draw lessons from community or collaborative management and forest conservation (Agrawal and Angelsen 2009; Hayes and Persha 2010; Cronkleton, Pulhin, and Saigal 2012) and many REDD+ projects have relied on existing community-based institutions to realizing REDD+ activities on ground. This broad umbrella can be seen as shaping the goals of CREMAs. CREMAs operate on principles of community forest management and imply that decentralized resource management efforts through inclusive local participation can achieve the collaborative management natural resources for conservation and rural development outcomes.

The piloting of an REDD+ project in the CREMA site also exemplifies how assemblages such as CBNRM incorporate “new elements onto the assemblage, reworking existing elements for new purposes and transposing the meanings of key terms” (Li 2007, 284). Therefore, this case of CREMAs and REDD+ at this particular site offers an opportunity to deploy governmentality to explain forest governance in emerging contexts of market-based solutions. As demonstrated in Chapters 4 and 5, these practices are assembled and employed as a means to address issues of deforestation, conservation, livelihood security, and rural inclusion. At the same time, various interested parties use these sets of practices to deliver notions of benefits and of improvement in forest management that help create and enroll responsible and governable environmental subjects, at least in those sections of the population who are participating in these initiatives.
2.4 REDD+ Safeguards As Tools of Government

Governmentality describes a variety of technologies of government, including policies, practices, and institutional arrangements, for making governable subjects (Dean 1999; Miller and Rose 1990). In the previous section, I discussed how in the context of CREMA /REDD+, climate change and deforestation is problematized, and ongoing projects are aimed at governing the conduct of cocoa farmers regarding farming practices is presented as a solution.

Despite being positioned as an important and potentially cost-effective climate change mitigation strategy, and having been piloted across the world, REDD+ faces significant implementation challenges (Eliasch 2008; Palmer and Engel 2009). These include clarifying land tenure rights, challenges in the quantification of carbon sequestration, continued demand for food, timber, and biofuels worldwide, permanent threats of illegal logging and emissions leakage, and potential degradation risks in savannas, wetlands, and tropical forests across borders in countries that are not REDD participants (Fry 2008; Irland 2008; Olander et al. 2008; Miles and Kapos 2008; Sandbrook et al. 2010; Karsenty and Ongolo 2012). There are also challenges in ensuring sustainable market and stable monetary value for carbon credits to ensure the long-term success of REDD+. For example, high prices for cash crops (including biofuels) can subvert REDD efforts as in southeast Asia (Butler, Koh, and Ghazoul 2009), as those prices can result in larger incomes than possible through participation in REDD+ programs. Scholars have also raised concerns about land rights and access claims (Larson et al. 2013; Resosudarmo et al. 2014; Sunderlin, Larson, and Cronkleton 2009) under

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19 Refers to a situation that may occur if, due to REDD+ activities, drivers of deforestation shift from one area to another (locally, nationally, or internationally).
REDD+. For example, REDD+ projects may fail to recognize customary tenure, use and property rights to forest resources, undermining the rights of many indigenous local, and other marginalized groups. Similarly, REDD+ projects can result in the exclusion of people from resources that they previously had access to or exclusion from project benefits that may threaten their livelihoods (Luttrell et al. 2013). There may also be ecological and social consequences of REDD+, such as conversion of natural forests to plantations or other land uses, threats to biodiversity, displacement of deforestation to other areas, or recentralize forest governance (Phelps, Webb, and Agrawal 2010; Sunderlin, Ekaputri, et al. 2014).

REDD+ is entrenched in broader governance structures, as both deforestation and forest degradation are linked to other global change processes (Biermann et al. 2009; Rockström et al. 2009). As many have argued, the success of the REDD+ depends on the alignment of interests of various stakeholders, for under the REDD+ framework, many forest people will be subject to efforts to make the goals of the political, economic, and social authorities parts of their livelihood and economic choices (Hiraldo and Tanner 2011; Thompson, Baruah, and Carr 2011). This new configuration of interests will bring new obligations and duties to the affected communities and their national governments. However, the failure to align traditional practices and local interests with the REDD+ goals (or vice versa) might lead to outcomes that diverge from project objectives.

The assumption that carbon credits will economically benefit the local communities and how the ideas about these incentives gain “consent” on the ground warrants a closer examination. Development is not monolithic, homogenizing, and depoliticized; it is instead a diverse process and highly contested when particularities of
specific practices and discourses are examined in the context of various local organizations (Perreault 2003). It can create alternative paths and spaces for resisting, negotiating and contesting prevailing knowledge and practices (Bebbington 1996).

Fundamentally, REDD+ efforts require answers to some key questions, including: Given immediate livelihood and survival concerns directly related to forests, why should communities care about carbon and conservation? Will the payments for carbon compensate the opportunity costs associated with surrendering access to forest resources? What are the assurances, the information, and the coercions involved in legitimizing REDD+-related development for the communities involved?

As discussed earlier, critiques abound of collaborative resource management approaches—and because of the past negative outcomes through these approaches—there is a growing consensus on the importance of “safeguards” or “social protection” to address inequalities in the governance of forest resources through forest carbon and REDD+ projects. These social safeguards include but are not limited to the respect for indigenous and local communities, transparent and effective governance, equity, tenure security, social benefits, public participation, and the protection of biodiversity (McDermott, Mahanty, and Schreckenberg 2013; Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2012).

The seven safeguards, agreed to in Cancun in 2010\(^{20}\) also known as the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards, address the environmental and human rights aspects of REDD+ interventions. They cover policy alignment; transparent and effective forest governance;

\(^{20}\) The safeguards are presented in Appendix I, Outcome of the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention. In 2010, countries took an important step when they recognized the role of environmental and social safeguards in implementing REDD+ projects at the 16th United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) during COP16 in Cancun, Mexico.
knowledge and rights of local communities and indigenous people; substantive participation of relevant local stakeholders (e.g. indigenous people and local communities); natural forest, biodiversity, environment, and social-co-benefits; address the risk of reversal of emissions reductions, and reduce displacement of emissions. Safeguards were designed to alleviate the likely negative impacts of REDD+ projects on the environment and people. These adverse effects may include displacement of local populations, loss of resource-based livelihoods, and increased tensions caused by inequitable distribution of benefits from REDD+ projects. Critically, the purpose of these social and environmental safeguards is to “do no harm” and attempt to put human wellbeing at the core of the REDD+ debate. At the same time, these safeguards can become tools of government for mobilizing and shaping subjects under REDD+

However, the language of safeguards is ambiguous at its best, poorly defined, and open to interpretation (Arhin 2014; Chhatre et al. 2012). Safeguard activities vary in terms of how they are defined, funded, or verified. Many multilateral and non-governmental initiatives supporting REDD+ and sustainable forest management initiatives, such as the FCPF, draw on the Common Approach and the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessments (SESA) tool (Common Approach, 2011; SESA, 2009) to ensure that appropriate safeguard measures are taken in REDD+ projects. The UN-REDD safeguards—the Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria—is for the readiness activities in countries that have received REDD+ finance (UNREDD/PB8/2012/V/1). The REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards (SES), another set of standards is to assist and guide national governments build their structures and instruments for applying the UNFCCC REDD+ safeguards (REDD+ SES, version 2,
2012). For instance, for tenure, Principle 1 of these SES safeguards states that “The REDD+ program recognizes and respects rights to lands, territories, and resources” (pg. 8), while the Cancun safeguards do not mention anything explicitly about tenure issues. On the other hand, effective participation is emphasized across the existing frameworks on safeguards.

**TABLE 2.1 Key themes and social goals emphasized as safeguards for REDD+**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Protecting rights of vulnerable and marginalized groups such as indigenous people</th>
<th>Cancun Safeguards</th>
<th>Forest Carbon Partnership Facility</th>
<th>UN–REDD (Mar 2012)</th>
<th>REDD+ SES (Vers.2)</th>
<th>Community, Climate, and Biodiversity Standards (Vers.2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporting tenure and resource rights of communities</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acquiring free prior and informed consent from local and indigenous communities</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing livelihoods Through income Generation and capacity</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full and effective Participation of relevant stakeholders</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing of Benefits</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided resettlement</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparent governance and decision–making</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies, laws and regulations should be consistent with international and national</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grievance mechanism to address conflicts and concerns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policies</th>
<th></th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
<th>X</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Source: Adapted and modified from Arhin 2014

Note: Cross mark, where expressed (and implied) references have been made to the key issues highlighted in the left column.

Also, recent empirical evidence (Poudyal et al. 2016) suggests that operationalizing safeguard assessments could be challenging and that safeguards often exacerbate and reproduce existing inequalities (e.g., compensation for REDD+ costs favored local elites). The study found despite social safeguard assessments; there were some barriers to equitable benefit distribution, including access to information due to location barriers; hesitance of communities dependent on shifting agriculture to express this because of existing government regulations; and dependence on non-representative local institutions by safeguard evaluators and experts.

Of these key themes and social goals of REDD+ safeguards (Table 2.1), benefit sharing, tenure security, and effective participation of local communities in management has been argued to be among the most relevant, as these will enable better forest outcomes and improved capacity for forest governance (Chhatre et al. 2012). In the next section, I discuss three of these safeguard themes, “participation,” “tenure security,” and “sharing of benefits,” and how they can be seen as tools of government. I also discuss benefit-sharing issues later in Chapter 4.

2.4.1 Participation

Participatory processes can be deployed to improve collaboration and knowledge exchange between the intervening agencies of REDD+ and project constituents. Many
indicators and standards for forest governance under REDD+ call for participation of local people (IUCN 2009; Kishor and Rosenbaum 2003). Through facilitated participatory processes where there are provisions for information exchange, people can learn about government services and schemes and know what to expect. In this way, participation and outreach activities can help gain “consent” of willing subjects of the REDD+ regime. But deploying the discourses of participation to mobilize people does not necessarily result in effective participation. Further, choosing interest groups, NGOs, or customary authorities to implement CBNRM interventions through participatory processes can weaken governance, as institutional pluralism without accountable representation can result in the elite capture of participatory practices and the larger projects to which they belong (Ribot 2002).

Phelps et al. (2010) found that a majority the proposals submitted for “REDD+ readiness” funding from the World Bank did not address governance issues, such as benefit sharing, insecure tenure and local participation in an effective manner. However, some proposals adopted the vocabulary of local participation and benefit sharing after feedback from donors. Such rhetoric on participation cannot depend on just consultations and mobilization of local people but have to recognize the importance of effective participation, giving rights and access to forest resources and markets, and building strong democratic institutions. Effective participation requires the transfer of power to locally-accountable bodies who represent people’s needs and aspirations, and who will answer for failures of representation (Ribot 2002). REDD+ must outdo the last three decades of effort to enhance local well-being and empower those whose livelihoods
directly depend on forest resources—in attempting to do that REDD has to manage “failures and contradictions” (Li 2007) to make willing subjects.

For the REDD+ mechanism, however, the real problem is not only about participation per se, but also about who participates and how (Thompson et al. 2011). Under current practice, participation and belonging or democracy/representation are determined by the policy and programmatic decisions made by intervening authorities like development organizations, government, or NGOs. Effective participation in REDD+ is posited to facilitate several proximate and long-term social co-benefits (Chhatre 2012). Participation as a social safeguard also stipulates that there has to be a meaningful representation of local interests and viewpoints in REDD+ decision-making so that local populations have the voice and opportunities to challenge injustices and inequalities, and therefore protect their rights. Effective local participation is not only crucial to seek free and informed consent from the communities for REDD+ projects, but also for asserting community rights and responsibilities in the initiatives. Participatory processes, therefore, are a technique of government to enroll the support of specific subjects who seek to improve their lives through these REDD+ governmental interventions.

### 2.4.2 Tenure Rights

Harmonizing customary and statutory tenure arrangements has been argued by many as the first step toward equitable benefit sharing under REDD+. Many have argued that the unclear and complex land and forest tenure system and the poor governance in many parts of Africa and Latin America has been identified as hindrances that could threaten the scope of REDD+ interventions (Cotula and Mayers 2009; Jagger et al. 2009).
In Ghana, land tenure is a complex issue where it is customary. Customary tenure implies ownership of land by traditional authorities rather than individual citizens or communities. Many of these customary tenure arrangements are the remnants of the formal arrangements established by colonial governments (Amanor and Ubink 2008). In Ghana, customary tenure is constitutionally recognized and has been institutionally retained and practiced. This results in traditional authorities being the main institutions for land and resource management, and hence their wide recognition by intervening agents, government, and communities. The Constitution of Ghana, however, does not spell out the specifics of land management by customary authorities, who has the authority to allocate land rights, and who is entitled the proceeds from such allocations (Amanor and Ubink 2008).

Both land tenure and tree tenure in Ghana is complex and uncertain. Tree tenure in Ghana is complicated due to the existence of both official regulations as well as aspects of customary or traditional tenure systems (Marfo, Acheampong, and Opuni-Frimpong 2012). Also, differences in tenure occur between trees that are planted by farmers and those regenerating naturally, and between trees on family land and those on communal land. While the statutory framework of Ghana (Act 547) provides secure tenure for trees planted on farms and forests (plantations), tenure rights over natural forests and naturally occurring trees (but raised by farmers) remain problematic both in policy and in practice. Farmers are custodians of naturally regenerated trees growing on their farms but have no rights to these trees. The management and utilization rights belong to the state, which assumes this role in trust for the Chiefs or customary authority. To be able to cut down or utilize the planted trees on their farms, the farmers have to
obtain permits from District Forestry Services Division (FSD), who have the sole
discretionary power to determine whether permission should be granted. Due to a number
of disincentives associated with tree planting and ability to access benefits (Besley 1995;
Zhang and Aboagye Owiredu 2007), the inability to distinguish between planted trees
and naturally occurring ones (Acheampong 2003), and unclear tenure rights and damage
to crops from logging operations on farms (Marfo 2006, Hansen, Lund, and Treue 2009),
most farmers in Ghana do not want to plant trees on their farms (Acheampong 2003).
Empirical studies have also shown that farmers often deliberately destroyed trees and
saplings on their farms (Acheampong 2003; Amanor 2000). There is also a lack of
appropriate incentives and tenure based safeguards for tree planting, especially for
migrant farmers who “rent” lands for agriculture (Amanor 1999).

As previously discussed, the REDD+ framework is a form of governmentality
which implicitly relies upon the creation of new environmental subjects to address
anthropogenic climate change. Previous conservation and development projects predating
REDD+ have used tenure rights and property rights as an incentive for particular actions
on the part of participants that might serve to attain a range of environmental
conservation and resource management goals (Hanna and Munasinghe 1995). These
broader goals include reducing poverty, promote economic growth, and encourage
landowners to invest in land and natural resources (Deininger 2003). REDD+ mobilizes
various forms of incentives and punishments, including similar framings of tenure and
property rights, to engage people in agroforestry-related activities. In the next section, we
briefly discuss benefits and sharing of benefits.
2.4.3 Sharing Of Benefits

REDD+, like other PES programs and projects, results in both risks and benefits for project stakeholders. In an ideal situation, these costs and benefits of REDD+ are expected to be distributed and shared across society through benefit distribution systems, consisting of benefits (described below), actors (including beneficiaries), and rules which consist of cross-cutting formal and informal rules that govern how benefits are shared (Peskett, Vickers, and Graham 2011).

Within the prevailing global discourse on REDD+, benefits refer to the incentives necessary for people’s engagement in the REDD+ projects. Benefits may be proximate and long term. Benefits may also be material (timber, building material, and cash) and non-material (e.g., ecosystem services, better governance). Benefit sharing refers to sharing of benefits among various stakeholders—among countries, within national programs, and among stakeholders within REDD projects (Figure 2.1). Figure 2.1 shows the various horizontal and vertical flows of benefits within REDD+ context, also depicting the intra-household scale to raise the issue of the sharing of benefits among the individuals within the same households (e.g., among men and women in the same household). The risks associated with REDD+ refer to environmental, social, and economic challenges and impacts.
The promise of sharing of benefits through a well-formulated benefit distribution system is, therefore, another tool of government aimed at attracting farmer participation in REDD+ project activities and improving their lives. For example, Criterion 12 of the UN-REDD safeguards aims to “Ensure equitable, non-discriminatory and transparent benefit sharing among relevant stakeholders with special attention to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups” to deliver on Principle 3, “to promote sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction” (UN-REDD Programme Social and Environmental Principles and Criteria 2012). Similarly, Principle 2 of the REDD+ SES states that “the benefits of the REDD+ program are shared equitably among all relevant rights holders and stakeholders” while addressing Criteria 1.1 and 1.2, which emphasize the establishment
of effective,\textsuperscript{21} equitable,\textsuperscript{22} and efficient\textsuperscript{23} benefit-sharing mechanisms (REDD+ SES [version 2] 2012). These 3-E principles of benefit-sharing mechanisms are expected to create enabling institutional conditions, distribution of benefits, and ultimately induce a change in land use practices to achieve the carbon and non-carbon goals of REDD+ projects (Luttrell et al. 2013; McDermott, Mahanty, and Schreckenberg 2013).

It is also important to note that these themes and principles of participation, tenure, and benefit sharing emphasized by REDD+ as safeguards are not mutually exclusive, but rather are mutually reinforcing. For example, to ensure an equitable distribution of REDD+ costs and benefits, clarifying tenure and ensuring inclusion and participation of relevant stakeholders are seen as important.

\textbf{2.5 Conclusions}

In summary, this chapter shows that (1) CBNRM approaches came out of a long history of efforts to decentralize resource governance; (2) how REDD+ is reworking existing elements of CBNRM for new purposes and using “safeguards” as tools of government to address and account for injustices in natural resource management; (3) how “safeguards” such as community “participation,” “tenure,” and “benefit sharing” are challenging to operationalize, and (4) how all of these may impact realization of expected outcomes through REDD+. In the next chapter, I discuss the methods used in this

\textsuperscript{21} Effectiveness—the extent to which the emissions reductions and other goals of the program are achieved.

\textsuperscript{22} Equitable—Just, impartial, and fair to all parties including marginalized and vulnerable people.

\textsuperscript{23} Efficiency—achieving the target with minimum cost, effort, and time. All three definitions proposed by Stern (2008) and broadly adopted under REDD+. 
dissertation to explore the politics of natural resource governance, local development, and climate change embedded in REDD+ as it takes shape in Ghana.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this research project, interviews with implementers, policy makers, and community participants of a CREMA (pre-REDD) and REDD+ pilot project in the Western Region of Ghana provided empirical evidence for exploring wider theoretical questions relating to participation, benefit sharing, and forest governance issues surrounding REDD+ implementation in Ghana and elsewhere in tropical countries. The methods and fieldwork for this project were, to a degree, shaped by my engagement with a larger research and training program called the Responsive Forest Governance Initiative (RFGI), a five-year initiative focused on environmental governance. This Africa-wide program conducted a comparative assessment of Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) and climate-adaptation interventions in 12 countries in Africa. The objective of the program was to: ‘enhance and institutionalize widespread responsive and accountable local governance processes that reduce vulnerability, enhance local wellbeing, and improve forest management with a special focus on developing safeguards and guidelines to ensure fair and equitable implementation of REDD+’ (RFGI 2011). Based on a research proposal I submitted, I received funding from the RFGI to conduct my fieldwork in Ghana.

While there were a set of issues that were of primary interest to the RFGI program, I had the complete independence to design and implement my research. As a researcher in the program, I had few time-sensitive deliverables (e.g., mapping the
forestry related institutions, working papers, and reports) and responsibilities (e.g., attending regular country team meetings, regional training, and research workshops). This also required me to interact with the staff of the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana (FORIG), which looked after the administrative aspects of the Ghana RFGI research program.

3.2 Research Setting and Focal Interventions

The Wassa Amenfi district is in the Western Region of Ghana and has forest reserves covering a total of 413.94 sq. km. These forest reserves constitute 12 percent of the total landscape and are primarily managed by private logging companies (Sandker et al. 2010). The land tenure system is based on customary arrangements, but tree tenure is under state ownership. Among the population of the district, there is a high dependency on forests for cash and non-cash produce. While cash from forests comes from selling products such as firewood and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), people also depend on a variety of forest products for everyday consumption and use (Figure 3.1). The forests in the landscape have different protection statuses, ranging from protected areas to production reserves to individual tree plantations. The landscape also includes part of the only surviving high forests of Ghana. Furi River, Mamiri, and Furi Head are forest reserves that are part of Globally Significant Biodiversity Areas.²⁴

²⁴ These are among thirty (30) forest reserves in the country which are designated as Globally Significant Biodiversity Areas (GSBAs) in recognition of their extraordinary biological importance.
3.2.1 Specific Research Site

The specific site for the research described in this dissertation was the Bontori Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) in South-Western Ghana. The CREMA (pre-REDD) and pro-poor REDD+ pilot project are the two focal interventions
central to this dissertation because these interventions were about forest governance and REDD+ (Figure 3.2). The Bontori CREMA, an area of 90 sq. Km, was established by Agroforestry and Rural Development (ARD), an Accra-based NGO, in 2004. This effort was supported by a three-year grant from the Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Facility. Securing rights for planted trees was one of the main objectives of the project. Though IUCN did not directly fund the CREMA establishment, it played a substantial role in its development and formalization and provided technical and financial support to the CREMA. IUCN’s support for this CREMA aimed first at integrating some of its Livelihood and Landscape Strategy (LLS) project activities, which was launched in early 2007, coinciding with the period when GEF funding for the CREMA ended. IUCN later adopted CREMAs as a critical component of its REDD+ pilot project development (Nyame et al. 2012), which kicked-off in 2011 (Figure 3.2).

![Timeline showing the projects at the study site. Source: Illustrated by author](image)

I identified the research site through review of the literature and in particular through the IUCN website. The IUCN, as part of their ongoing projects, had assessed the study site in Wassa Amenfi West to understand the forest dependency of the local population and published some of the initial findings through their website (PROFOR-
IUCN Poverty-Forest Tool Kit 2010). The study used locally identified poverty indicators and participatory exercises to collect data on the dimension of forest dependency and poverty, drivers of deforestation and possible solutions. The pro-poor REDD+ project in the area organized a number of consultations seeking opportunities to include customary law and administration into legal options for benefit-sharing arrangements under REDD+. Initial project activities included awareness generation, transfer of knowledge and information about REDD+ to grassroots organizations, and the establishment of a community level pro-poor REDD-plus multi-stakeholder platform. Multi-stakeholder platforms were designed to engage civil society both at the local and national levels. All of these factors made this study site relevant to my interests (participation in development interventions) and those of the RFGI. I describe the research questions that guided this study in the next section.

3.3 Research Methods

3.3.1 Research Questions

This research examined how discourses of conservation and development were mobilized and employed as a means to address issues of deforestation, conservation, and rural development in the case of this CREMA. Specifically, it looked at the contradictions and gaps between these discourses and the practices they enabled. This dissertation’s data collection and analysis were shaped around two major research questions:

(1) Who participates in CREMA/REDD+ activities and why?
Empirical inquiry for this research question concentrated on the following issues:
(a) community members’ narrative of their engagement with the projects and (b) the
environmental, social, and economic arguments they use to rationalize their participation.

(2) How is that participation achieved?

Empirical inquiry for this research question focused on: (a) how discourses of
conservation and development were employed and promoted as a means to address issues
of deforestation, conservation, livelihood security and rural inclusion, (b) how these
impact how community members evaluated, understood, and anticipated the project
benefits and impacts.

The interview guide and the operational questions related to these central
questions are listed in the Appendices.

3.3.2 IRB and Permissions

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board
of the University of South Carolina-Columbia (April 25, 2012) and the study received an
IRB exempt status. This meant my research was not going to be monitored by the IRB
assuming the project did not change. However, I was still required to fulfill my ethical
obligations regarding transparency and accountability to my study participants, and
therefore made provision for obtaining informed consent. A letter in English and Twi was
handed out and read aloud to inform participants about the purpose of the interviews (see
Appendices). I did not obtain formal written consent from interviewees because the
respondents expressed their consent verbally to participate in the interviews, and because
written consent among a population with such low literacy is not more meaningful than
solid verbal consent efforts.
Once I received the IRB permission, the team leader of the Ghana RFGI program wrote a letter of introduction for me and my research, which I then used as an entrée into the study area. This letter also served as an official permission to research in Ghana.

### 3.3.3 Living Arrangements and Self-Presentation

I arrived in Ghana on March 25, 2012, and lived in the FORIG guest house in Kumasi for the first couple of weeks. As a member of the RFGI team, I also had some research responsibilities and therefore had to be in Kumasi for the first couple of weeks. During this period, I was primarily reviewing secondary gray literature and publications that were not available online. I also prepared for fieldwork, interviewing candidates to serve as my research assistant/interpreter. The Ghana Team leader helped me get in touch with potential candidates, but it is hard to find someone who was willing to stay and travel with me for extended periods of time. On the other hand, it was not feasible to find interpreters closer to the field site because we did not have prior contacts at the study site. After interviewing two female and one male candidate, I choose a female college graduate with a bachelor’s degree in natural resource management and because of her prior experience in conducting forestry-related field work.

The first few weeks in Kumasi were also helpful in identifying the key institution and actors relevant to my research—the Resource Management Support Centre (RMSC) in Kumasi, the technical wing of Ghana’s FC. Through the point of contacts in RMSC

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25 In patriarchal societies, women are often perceived as less threatening and more responsible than men; colleagues in Ghana advised me against hiring a male RA because they were seen as troublemakers—getting drunk or involved with local women at the study site, issues with which they had several prior instances.
and FORIG, I also received the contact information and names of the high-level actors\textsuperscript{26} involved in the implementation of the two focal interventions at the study site. I did not start my formal interviews until I received clearance from the IRB. The Ghana RFGI team leader gave me the contact information of the IUCN project officer who was based in Accra. I emailed her, and she told me to come and visit the site in the first week of April, when the IUCN, in collaboration with the District Administration, was planning a workshop for the Multi-Stakeholder Platform of REDD+ at the pilot site in Wassa. We arrived in Asankragwa, the district headquarters of the Wassa Amenfi district on April 3, 2012,\textsuperscript{27} and spend the next two days observing the proceedings of the workshop. There were participants from five villages who attended the workshop, which was meant to share the findings of an earlier Forests-Poverty Toolkit\textsuperscript{28} assessment conducted by an NGO, Participatory Development Associates, on behalf of IUCN. This assessment was also seen by IUCN as a means to improve the design and execution of REDD+ activities and plans.

Attending the workshop therefore also served another purpose, that is, presenting myself to the residents of the district and justifying my presence in the area. I introduced myself as a graduate student from the United States interested in studying forest-related

\textsuperscript{26} These included IUCN officials, as well as officials with the Forestry Commission, Wildlife Division, and Arocha-Ghana.

\textsuperscript{27} I arrived in Kumasi, Ghana on March 23, 2012. The district headquarters of Wassa Amenfi West is about seven hours’ drive from Accra and six hours from Kumasi. The requirements of my field research grant required that I collaborate with my colleagues at the Forestry Research Institute of Ghana, Kumasi and complete the official paperwork.

\textsuperscript{28} The toolkit is used to collect qualitative and quantitative data on forest dependency and governance issues. It can estimate wealth ranking based on locally identified indicators (IUCN 2011).
issues in Ghana. After the workshop had ended, I sat down with the Chairman and the Secretary of the CREMA. We three were gathered under the shade of a tree, surrounded by a group of workshop participants from a distance that allowed them to hear fragments of our conversations without being considered intrusive and disrespectful. The two senior men were both excited and perplexed with my curiosity in the CREMA and what was happening in the area. They were also genuinely interested in me and my background, relentlessly questioning me about my family, my country, and my marital status while few senior women hollered and teased them. They thought I was “a brave Indian woman” to have traveled so far to learn about their country and probably had few magic tricks\textsuperscript{29} up my sleeves, but offered me a place to stay in their respective villages, in case I decided to pursue my research there.

After spending a week in Asankragwa, we returned to Kumasi on April 11 to prepare for the extended field work. We returned to the field in the first week of May. I was based in Asankragwa from May till November, except for the trips to attend RFGI-related meetings (in Kumasi, Senegal, and Accra), and conduct interviews with policy makers in other parts of Ghana (Figure 3.3).

3.4 The Data Collection Process

3.4.1 Policy Document Analysis: While a variety of definitions of the term institution has been suggested, this dissertation will use the term “institution” to indicate

\textsuperscript{29} A frequent remark that I encountered about my Indian identity and knowing magic.
the rules, norms, and strategies adopted by individuals operating within or across organizations. The purpose of the policy document analysis was to understand the historical, political, and economic basis of the power and functions of the major institutions that were important for forest governance in Ghana, and for the particular case in Wassa Amenfi West. In other words, mapping out the key actors, institutions, and powers helped me understand the context of forest governance in Ghana. I wanted to situate these institutions in their colonial and postcolonial processes and events that shaped them, examine the discourses and laws that recognize them and their practices in forest resource management. I reviewed existing published literature, news articles, and documents to sketch out the existing institutions in the local arena—elected local governments, line ministry offices, district officers, customary authorities, project implementation units, user groups, NGOs, companies and corporations, and political parties. I searched the Internet for project documents that would outline the roles of the existing institutions, as well as the specific institutions with which the particular project was partnering and other key actors related to this project. Information on NGOs and their projects were readily available, but getting access to government documents was challenging because digital versions of many of these documents did not exist. At a later stage, I contacted individuals in the Ghanaian government and the NGOs through email,

30 ‘Shared prescriptions (must, must not, or may) that are mutually understood and predictably enforced in particular situations by agents responsible for monitoring conduct and for imposing sanctions’ (Ostrom 2016)

31 ‘Shared prescriptions that tend to be enforced by the participants themselves through internally and externally imposed costs and inducements’. (Ostrom 2010)

32 “Regularized plans that individuals make within the structure of incentives produced by rules, norms, and expectations of the likely behavior of others in a situation affected by relevant physical and material conditions”. (Ostrom 2010)
phone calls, and personal visits to gain access to relevant project documents. I later completed the initial sketch of the existing institutional linkages with information obtained through direct observation and interviews with actors from the most important institutions. This exercise helped me understand the institutional terrain relating to forests resource management in Ghana particularly,

- identifying and mapping the context (action, situation, and actors);
- identifying the key institutions and their role in the decision-making process;
- the power and accountability relationships of these institutions, which was not otherwise explicit; for example, situating the role of traditional authorities in forest governance, land, and tenure issues;
- who spoke for whom in matters of forest resource management; for example, I found out that the elected local governments played a marginal role in comparison to forestry line-offices; the presence of powerful private actors;
- NGOs and their accountability relationship with the State and the project constituents.

A complete list of primary policy documents ($N = 20$) used in this study is attached in the appendices (Appendix D).

### 3.4.2 Research Assistants

Language considerations shaped my methods. All villagers except three gave the interviews in Twi. Some respondents used a number of English phrases and words during their interviews in Twi. Therefore, I required interpretation to gather information in the
villages. My interpreters were both females, college graduates with natural and social sciences backgrounds, and limited exposure to qualitative research. The field site was new to both of them, and they did not know anyone involved with the project implementation. One of the challenges I experienced working with these interpreters was their reluctance to stay in villages for an extended period, which forced me to adjust the research schedule to address their moods and preferences.

Before data collection, I asked each interpreter to read background materials, a glossary of terms, and the interview guides. I asked them to clarify the concepts and also make me aware of any cultural taboos or questions that seemed inappropriate or intrusive. We continued to reflect on these issues throughout the fieldwork. We did a couple of pilot interviews to set the time and pace before conducting the actual interviews (Squires 2009). On occasions where I was not allowed to record the actual interviews on my digital recorder, I recorded the interpreter's translations of these interviews in my field notes. I also took field notes, daily reflective notes on the physical setting, interaction patterns, and responses to elicitation materials. While my elementary understanding of Twi advanced enough to allow me to understand certain phrases and words related to my central research questions during the later periods of fieldwork, I continued to rely on my interpreters for detailed translations.

To cross-check the accuracy of the interpretation I was receiving, I played random excerpts of recorded interviews to two other Twi-speaking team members working at different research sites. After the first phase of fieldwork, a different research assistant joined me after the first interpreter had decided to leave to pursue graduate studies in the UK. I also asked her to translate segments of the interviews conducted during the first
phase (without listening to the English interpretation) and then we both listened to the interpretation together to check for inconsistencies as well as similarities. Except for minor nuances in understanding certain Twi words, the interpretations of the interviews by the two different research assistants were very consistent.

3.4.3 Interviews

I primarily employed semi-structured interviews to look at the heterogeneity of meanings in the construction of issues around decentralized forest resource governance and REDD+. Below, I discuss the rationale for this approach to data collection.

The cohort was divided into two groups according to their role in the interventions:

(a) Community members at the specific research site

(b) High-level actors consisting of government officials and staff of NGOs

I met all the respondents at least once and more than half of them several times during my research. Before each set of interviews, I designed an interview guide with topics and questions that I intended to cover, and for the most part, I was successful in covering these. However, depending on the responses made by the interviewee, the order in which the topics were covered and the time spent discussing each topic, differed significantly. Interviews on an average lasted for about forty-five minutes, the minimum time was thirty minutes and the maximum was two hours (see Appendices for details).

- Community Members

The interviews were conducted between May to December 2012. Originally, I intended to employ a stratified sampling method that would have included many combinations of the following identities—native-born versus migrant farmers, gender,
and relationship to the CREMA and REDD+\textsuperscript{33} (Bryman 2001). Further, I hoped to represent all the twenty communities within the CREMA. Logistically, the cost and challenges associated with traveling from one village to another in a rural area and the volume of interviews the combinations of the identities would generate made this plan infeasible. Further, preliminary interviews conducted in a few CREMA communities revealed that the concept is not as well-known as CREMA executives had initially suggested. So I instead started to focus on people who claimed an association with the CREMA through membership or knew about the CREMA and planted trees. These respondents, therefore, were purposively sampled ($N = 37$) from two settlement clusters with the CREMA area—one cluster consisting of native-born Wassan communities and the other cluster consisting of migrants, especially focusing on people who were knowledgeable about the project and were willing to participate (Figure 3.3). I stayed in one of the migrant villages for two months and resided near the native-born Wassan cluster for another three months. Respondents included seven traditional chiefs, one of which is the divisional chief of Achichire stool.\textsuperscript{34} Following a loose grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 2009), I stopped further interviews when I reached a point at which no new themes or information emerged in the data.

\textsuperscript{33} All residents of the CREMA did not associate themselves with the CREMA or the pilot REDD+ activities. Some residents were well aware of these interventions while others were not interested or were unaware.

\textsuperscript{34} In the customary land administration the Divisional Chief is the second in rank after the Paramount Chief. While the Divisional Chief is a Customary Freeholder the Paramount Chief is the Allodial Owner. Among the Akan, stools are equivalent to thrones, part of the traditional regalia. In northern parts of Ghana, chiefs use ‘skins’ as their seat. So ’stools and skins’ are often used to refer to the chief or the area he rules.
I followed a semi-structured approach and conversational style for the interviews (in Twi [Akan]/English) to give the participants an opportunity to speak without restrictions and to allow for new issues to emerge during discussions (Huberman and Miles 2002a,b). This conversational style of interviewing with the help of an interpreter helped respondents make sense of the question in light of the respondent’s particular situation. I usually read a question as worded in my interview guide, then the respondent, my interpreter, and I would go back and forth to assure that the respondent understood the question the way it was intended. We did not do this throughout the research process, as this effort during the initial phase allowed us to standardize and ground the meaning of our questions.

To put the respondents at ease and give them the freedom to reply in as much detail as they liked, I started the interviews with an open-ended question on the respondents’ introduction, occupation, and personal histories. I then moved on to their awareness, participation in the CREMA, REDD+, ownership, their access and use of forest resources, the reasons behind their engagement and interest in the conservation and development activities of this project, and their expectations from this project. In asking these questions, I used hypothetical questions to gather data on complex or controversial topics and let the respondents express their thoughts without inhibitions. For example, participants were usually reluctant to state their mistrust of authorities openly, so I asked them to imagine a scenario in the future when they may receive some tangible (cash and others) from the ongoing projects and whom would they trust to oversee the benefit-sharing mechanism. I also wanted that the respondents express their real thoughts instead of what they thought I wanted to hear.
Silences and nonverbal behavior also add meaning to interviews (Merriam and Tisdell 2015). Although the spoken word is often the focus of qualitative research, it was equally important for me to pay attention to what the respondents explicitly did not say or left unsaid. During each interview, I also observed the non-verbal cues and silences both in the context of the interview and the topic that we were discussing. Using silences as data not only added value to the interpretation but also help me think about issues that were not covered by my questions (Charmaz 2001).

If a respondent permitted, I digitally recorded the interviews while taking detailed notes. Sometimes, even after agreeing to a tape-recorded interview, I sensed discomfort and unease in how the participants interacted with me. In those instances, I simply took notes. There were logistical constraints in recording a few interviews even when participants agreed to be recorded, such as obtaining adequate batteries for the recorder.

As I learned later through informal interviews and discussions with principal respondents, I obtained some of the most honest responses to the pressing issues related to my research when I did not have a recorder or a notebook in hand. People connected and expressed themselves more openly during everyday conversations. On numerous occasions, respondents volunteered information off the record. These candid conversations during day-to-day interactions also helped me assess the validity of interview responses acquired in a formal setting. After these informal interactions, I would take detailed field notes and reflections to capture such information where I conversed directly with the respondents without the help of my interpreter. I also asked my interpreter to maintain a field diary. While she did not maintain it regularly, we would always have a conversation at the end of the day about the interviews we carried out that day. According to Suchman
and Jordan (1990), meaning rests on collaboration. These daily conversations with my research assistants made me think about what was being said during the interviews to make sure that my interpreter and me both understand each other and that we were on the same page. It also helped us refine our questions to simpler and more straightforward versions.

I believe the election atmosphere influenced some of the responses related to questions about the representation, performance, and accountability of representatives and actors of various local institutions. Ghana's general election, to elect the President and members of parliament, was scheduled on December 7, 2012. The parliamentary and presidential elections are held every four years. People made statements about the political parties they supported, and they opposed. Some of the responses indicated that they were sympathetic in judging the performance of their leaders if they shared the same political ideals. There were limits to what I could understand through interviews. For instance, when asked about what happens when things do not fall into place as the project promised, quite a few referred to their religious beliefs and that the God would take care of things. “If God permits,” was a common phrase I encountered. Because I do not fully understand these beliefs, I cannot claim to completely understand the rationales for people’s observed behaviors and stated beliefs.

- High-Level Actors

Following the interviews with the community members, I interviewed eighteen respondents from different government and non-governmental agencies in November and December 2012. All interviewees in this cohort spoke fluent English and chose to be interviewed in English. This included four senior government officials of the FC, five
NGO officials from three different NGOs, three District Forest officials at the study site, two District Assembly officials, and four unit committee members. These respondents were involved with the inception of the CREMA concept, its implementation, and the oversight of CREMA performance. Some of them, especially the respondents from NGOs, were involved in the implementation of the pilot REDD+ project in Wassa Amenfi. Setting up these interviews took some time and effort. Most officials did not check their emails regularly. I had to call them up repeatedly to schedule interviews and follow-up. They all had very busy schedules but ultimately agreed to be interviewed. I did not conduct all the interviews in Wassa Amenfi West. I traveled to Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi, Damongo, and Mole National Park to interview these policy makers and government officials (Figure 3.3). All the interviews with the high-level actors were conducted in their respective offices, except for one respondent who insisted on meeting at the University of Ghana-Legon campus in Accra.

Interviewing the high-level actors was a challenging but an educating experience. These sets of interviews required thorough preparation, one of the reasons I decided to conduct them in the later part of my field work. It was a small sample, but the individual respondents were irreplaceable because each had the first-hand experience about the ongoing interventions. I did not ask questions seeking factual information but instead focused on their perceptions about the focal interventions. All interviewees agreed to be recorded and spoke for a long time with minimal prompting. I found that high-level actors either censored their responses or otherwise avoided clear answers when asked about the controversial topic at the intervention site (e.g., project fund mismanagement). I also become aware of the unequal power dynamics. For example, during one interview
with a senior official in the FC, the respondent quizzed me about my knowledge of the interventions for the first fifteen minutes and in the latter part used phrases such “very good” or “excellent” to acknowledge my understanding of the nuances of the intervention. I think his acknowledgment that I had spent time in the field and had a good grasp of on-the-ground realities helped me get better information about the project activities from him.

Figure 3.3 Site and samples of interviews. *Source:* Illustrated by author

### 3.4.4 Observations

During my research, I had conversations with many people in a variety of settings. These conversations were not deliberate attempts to gather information about my research, but efforts to learn about the people I met and their everyday lives. These observations also helped triangulate the validity of the information I gathered through interviews with various stakeholders. I have tried to distinguish between the sources of
information used in this dissertation—those that came out of unstructured interactions such as above and those that I actively sought through semi-structured interviews.

Although there is no one singular way of conducting participant observation, it is often seen as an appropriate method to observe, cultivate relationships, and gain entry to and insights about a study population to gather information relevant to one’s research questions. Therefore, as Johnson (1975) argues, the practice of participant observation essentially depends on the researcher’s ability to adjust and deftly adapt to the material conditions of day to day life. I originally planned to conduct participant observation for the understanding the breadth and gain deeper insights into the research context. However, I had to juggle between three different regions interviewing high-level actors, fulfill my obligations to the RFGI research program, which involved meeting the Ghana research team in Kumasi every month and three weeks for a mid-term methods workshop in Senegal. Therefore, participant observation proved to be a challenging endeavor.

Secondly, since participant observation as a method is inherently subjective, I did not want to lose objectivity as a researcher or become complicit by partaking in forest-related activities (e.g., collecting NTFPs such as mushroom or snails, herbs, pounding, or chewing sticks in the forest; collecting firewood; hunting), many of which are declared illegal by the Forest Department. Lastly, I did not want to present myself as the tourist/adventurer looking for “exotic local” experiences accompanied by photo opportunities at the expense of my participant’s time.

Despite not employing participant observation as a formal research method, I benefitted greatly from my observations and by staying with the community. As I sought to understand the intervention and peoples’ alliance with the project, I also came to learn
about the many informal processes, the subtle power dynamics and struggles within the 
front that were often presented as a “community” to outsiders. This was possible through 
observing everyday practices and non-interview-related interacts and living among the 
people during my fieldwork. I first visited the village Kamoso, on April 30, 2012, and I 
finally moved to a room in the village on May 29, 2012.35 During the initial phases of my 
research, various actors involved with the project often discussed its success and the far-
reaching impacts of the intervention. By living in the area covered by this CREMA, I 
later came to understand that these claims were overstated. The numerous informal 
interactions and observations on the village durbar grounds, while pounding *fufu*, partaking in making palm oil, and accompanying farmers to their cocoa farms gave me 
not only a clearer picture of the general awareness and opinion about the concept of 
CREMA and REDD within these communities but also gave me insights about the 
trenched gender-based roles. For example, while making palm oil (Figure 3.4d), or 
coconut oil, or *kenke*37 were identified as income generating activities for women where 
CREMA could offer support, these very activities, as many women expressed, among 
other factors (multiple roles, primary care givers, lack of time) were a barrier to 
participation in larger forest governance issues, because they as women of lower socio-

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35 I spent the period from April 19 to April 29, 2012, exclusively in Asankragwa, the district Head 
Quarters of Wassa Amenfi West interacting with key actors, understanding the important 
institutions and their roles and visiting the CREMA villages. The lag in grant disbursement 
delayed the field work; however, after sensing that bureaucratic delays were going to be 
inevitable part of the project, I preemptively planned and went ahead with my field work.

36 Staple food in Ghana made by pounding boiled cassava and plantain, and served with meat or 
groundnut soups.

37 Fermented cornmeal wrapped in banana leaves served with a stew made of tomatoes and red 
pepper.
economic status, had to prioritize these activities instead of participating in forestry meetings and forums.

A few actors, who were affiliated with the CREMA, volunteered to accompany me and insisted on being present during the initial interviews. Even though I knew that their presence could influence the response of my interviewees, I agreed to their presence in my first two interviews as means of showing my appreciation for their help in the research. However, I also noted the dynamics of these interactions, including interruption and non-verbal cues such as facial expressions, body movements, and change in body orientation during the interviews. For instance, the participants referred me to the CREMA affiliate when I they were asked about the impact of the CREMA or the office holders. I also met the same respondents during a later part of my research to clarify some of their earlier answers. Eventually, as I became more of a regular presence in these communities, project gatekeepers showed less interest in my work, and I was able to conduct interviews without their supervision.

Asking about forest dependency was also a challenge. For the most part, people expressed a nonchalant attitude toward forest and forest resources. However, when I was living in the village, a person once brought some “game meat” for us. When I asked him about where he caught the animal, he clarified that it was not from the “forest” but the bush on his farm. At least, in the minds of the community members, “forest” clearly referred to the reserved forests where hunting or collection of NTFPs is restricted.

38 People who are participating in the CREMA were also the stakeholders in the pilot REDD+ project.

39 It was a common practice to share excess produce; sometimes women, with whom I interacted on an everyday basis, will ask me to bring “bread” or “soap” whenever I went to the nearby town.
Therefore, people did not feel comfortable talking about their activities in these areas. However, few key informants over the course of my stay became more forthcoming about the issues regarding access to protected forests and forest products. However, residents of the CREMA had also found other, subtle forms of resistance as a way around the oppressive and alienating management of forest resources. I could never ask any of the residents about “illegal logging,” but now and then I would hear the noise of a chainsaw motor joining the orchestrated cacophony of critters in the silence of the village night. On another occasion, when two drunken men from the village visited us on the pretext of greeting but stayed on to ramble on for hours about whether we are going to report their illegal logging activities, the issues about forest resources and how they are intertwined with everyday lives became much more real.\textsuperscript{40}

Some relevant observations and incidents related to the use of natural resources and forest products, excluding the above examples include:

- Observing and talking with my next door neighbors while they prepared “game” meat and expressed concern about the declining availability of animals and forest produce.
- A child is showing me his pet bird and telling me that he and his father found it in the forest during a hunting trip.
- Breaking cocoa pods while talking to cocoa farmers in their farms and accompanying them to the forest reserve boundary to see the paths they take to collect NTFPs.

\textsuperscript{40} I still struggle to comprehend this particular interaction, whether it was a veiled threat, a resistance to my presence as an outsider or a genuine concern on part of those two men about their sources of income; I never got a chance to interact with those two again, they were always traveling.
• Observing firewood and charcoal being sold in local markets and buying and using charcoal to cook our food in the village.

• Observing village women carrying dead and fresh cut firewood in their baskets while they come back from their farms.

• Observing and talking to a herbalist, while he made medicines from dried wild herbs collected from the forest reserve.

• Talking with intoxicated key participants multiple times while they voluntarily admitted that bush meat was way “sweeter” and I should try some of it.

• Observing tree stumps covered with plant matter in a farm close to the village; it is illegal to cut naturally occurring timber trees even outside protected reserve areas.

Figure 3.4 Non-timber forest products. (a) Small game animals, (b) crabs, (c) mushrooms, and (d) making household items such as wooden pounding sticks and mortar; some of these are also available in people’s farms. *Source: Author*
These observations, interview data, day-to-day interactions, and published reports gave me an in-depth understanding of natural resource use and management in the villages in the cocoa landscape of Western Ghana.

3.5 Approaches to Data Analysis

3.5.1 Data Organization and Preparation

The audio files and interview notes were first categorized into high-level actors (government officials, NGO officials) and community respondents. These were further classified into subcategories and assigned abbreviated names using the scheme described in Appendix 1. The description of the classification scheme, demographic information, and duration of each interview was maintained in a separate file MS Excel file. So a transcribed interview file name was named as NGO1Male. I transcribed 60 percent of the interviews using Dragon Dictate, and the rest were transcribed using Done It Now transcription service. The service provider signed a Non-Disclosure Agreement with me and was provided with a list of key words. I checked for consistency and accuracy by going through the transcriptions several times, transcribing inaudible portions myself, and randomly cross checked the audio files using the time-stamps as reference points.

3.5.2 Framework for Analysis

An explanatory framework was used to structure, label, and define the data. The analysis of the primary and secondary data was organized around the topics that relate directly to the primary research questions discussed at the beginning of this chapter:

1. Participation: Semi-structured interviews were evaluated according to (a) the respondents’ self-declaration of membership and their description of activities (e.g., farming, member of CREMA, planted trees in their farms, had attended ended meeting on
CREMA and REDD+); (b) their explanations of the rationales for participation in the activities; and (c) their knowledge about the focal interventions.

2. Dominant discourses: For this element of the research, both secondary kinds of literature (policy documents) and interviews were assessed according to (a) policy narratives of environmental risks related to deforestation and forest degradation; (b) descriptions and evaluations of policy and project guidelines to address those risks; (c) respondent’s views on environmental crisis; and (d) evaluations of the meanings and rationales project participants attached to themselves as individuals and a community to mitigate those risks.

3. Benefit sharing and equity issues: For this component of the research, both secondary kinds of literature (policy documents) and interviews groups were examined according to (a) respondents’ perception of current benefits from trees and forests for their livelihoods; (b) policy discourses on forest resource benefits sharing; (b) respondent’s views and perceptions on project benefits; and (d) how respondents perceived and evaluated various actors and institutions in forest resource governance and their role in benefit sharing.

3.5.3 Coding

This “first cycle coding” has also been called “open coding” or “initial coding” by other theorists (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss 2009; Saldana 2015). Structural coding is question driven and involved assigning a code to a set of questions and probes that comprised evaluative criteria as described previously. I used a qualitative data analysis software, MAXQDA, for coding the data. The transcribed interviews were saved inside these projects as “files.” For instance, if the transcription was an interview with an NGO official, the file is named as NGO1Male. Each file was then accompanied by a
memo that had additional details on the interview, including location, duration, and institutional affiliation. For the initial round of *in vivo* coding, I used the “Lexical Search” function in MAXQDA and auto coded the search results. I then read the “retrieved segments,” examining if the keywords appeared in context and used structural codes\(^{41}\) to filter and extract relevant portions of the data to answer specific topics. After rereading and re-coding the data several times, I proceeded to develop categories. I combined codes according to their similarity, linkages, and the regularity in which they seem to appear in response to the topic and context.

During the coding process, I also assigned a memo to codes and categories detailing the assigned words and phrases that captured the essence in the context of the issues. I also used the memo function to mark the “contextual meanings” of advanced codes to revisit in the subsequent cycle of coding and analysis. These memos in the software helped to develop a “code book.”

Here is an example showing my initial coding scheme in MAXQDA (Figure 3.5):

![Figure 3.5 Screen shot of the MAXQDA interface showing the initial codes. Source: Author](image)

\(^{41}\) I had a draft structure of the code system that I imported to MAXQDA; however, this was modified as the project proceeded and new codes emerged.
3.5.4 Thematic Analysis

Bernard (2006) succinctly states that analysis “is the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place.” As discussed in the previous section, through several cycles of coding and recoding, I identified words/phrases that the participants used frequently, as well as ideas that emerged from how the interviewees narrated their involvement in the projects and the stories that they told me. After organizing these codes into categories, I started to look for patterns, associations, concepts, and explanations to make sense of the categories and arrive at important themes.

Here is an example showing how I used coding to derive meaning out of my interview data:

**Main Research Question: Why do people participate in the interventions?**

Selected Operational Questions:

- Have you heard about the CREMA? What is it?

- Are you a member?

- Tell how you got involved with CREMA?

- What activities do you do as part of the CREMA? Why?

The responses (raw data), the codes, and the categories in response to the operational questions listed above can be seen in Table 3.1.
Table 3.1 Linkage between raw data, codes, categories, and themes related to the topic of participation in CREMA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent Identifier</th>
<th>Raw Data</th>
<th>Sub-Code <em>(in vivo codes)</em></th>
<th>Parent Code</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interview No. 21, Male, Kamaso, date</td>
<td>“My main motivation for joining CREMA is to plant trees to replace the cut down trees so that the excessive heat and irregular rainfall can be reduced and it will benefit not just Ghana but the whole world”</td>
<td>“Tree planting”</td>
<td>“Discourses about the environment”</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Participation hinged on anticipated benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Excessive heat</td>
<td>“Afforestation”</td>
<td>Risks</td>
<td>Environmenta l issues that needs to be solved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Irregular rainfall</td>
<td>Ecosystem services as benefits</td>
<td>Responsibilit y (toward self and others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benefit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview No. 41, Male, Kamaso, Date</td>
<td>“To have future benefits from trees as I cannot go into the forest; Non-timber forest products”</td>
<td>Trees, NTFPs future benefits,</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>Participation hinged on anticipated benefits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>“Afforestation”</td>
<td>“Non-cash benefits”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Environmenta l issues that needs to be solved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Access issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>For securing the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the important categories that emerge from the above data is about participation in the CREMA through tree planting. Another role of tree planting is to address environmental problems and for benefits.

The above data appear to suggest that people engage in tree planting and agroforestry promoted by the CREMA/REDD+ because tree planting was perceived by the project constituents as a solution

- to address environmental issues;
- experts told them about the importance of tree planting;
- to secure the future of both individual and the society.

I summarized my findings and themes and revisited literature to compare my findings and find possible explanations for them. I explore the major themes in the results chapters.

3.6 Assumptions and Limitations

Inter-cultural perceptions, the intermingling of identities, and my position influenced the fieldwork process and the information that I received. As an “outsider,” I could always manipulate my position as someone who is in the field to learn (Bernard 2000) by inquiring, questioning, and not taking the obvious at face value, often because I did not understand specific things in the way that an “insider” does. However, the dichotomy that is assumed to exist between insider knowledge and status versus outsider knowledge and status is not as established (Herod 1999). Therefore we cannot presuppose that an insider will necessarily produce more relevant knowledge compared to an outsider simply because of their insider status. For instance, participants in the study were willing to give me more time during the interviews, citing I was a “foreigner.”
“had more access to the outside world,” and can “communicate their issues” better. While conducting fieldwork in a foreign country, I embodied multiple identities. The meanings of my characteristics, particularly my gender and race, to my informants were beyond my control or direction, and the connotations that those attributes send out varied with each respondent that I interviewed; at the same time, the identities of my informants were also as fluid and diverse as that of my own.

To address the biases associated with qualitative data and improve the validity of my findings I used triangulation (Creswell and Miller 2000; Denzin 1973; Rossman and Wilson 1985), a common method among qualitative researchers. I reviewed archival and contemporary secondary literature, experiences from observation, and information from my interviews and informal conversations with community members. One of the more surprising findings was how much of the traditional cultural norms actually dictated resource governance in rural Wassa Amenfi, and the popular view about the Chiefs’ powers centered on claims of “autochthony” and “traditional” in contrast to majority of texts that attributed the power of traditional rulers to colonial policies, and patronage relationships chiefs had with the postcolonial Ghanaian State. This finding allowed for a more nuanced examination and analysis of participation, representation, and accountability issues in the focal interventions. To establish the credibility and reliability of my research, I also conducted member checking of my research to see if they understood the preliminary interpretations of their interviews and the meanings contained in them. I also conducted source triangulation, by looking at the themes in the responses to check if my informants shared a common understanding surrounding forest governance issues. Investigator triangulation was also carried out after the preliminary
coding of interview data, particularly in the first few levels of coding hierarchy. Review by colleagues at various stages of the research process, sharing findings with the country team as well as during one mid-term research methods meeting and a terminal results of research meeting also helped establish the credibility of the findings to a certain extent (RFGI Bulletin 2012, 2014).

3.7 Conclusions

This research project utilized qualitative research methods using a case study design principle to elicit data through semi-structured interviews. I also used complimentary qualitative methods, including informal conversations, observations, field notes, secondary data collection from the Internet, government, and NGO sources. The highly contextual and subjective explanations of cocoa farmers’ participation in agroforestry activities in Ghana’s Western Region as part of the focal interventions required the use of qualitative techniques, to produce substantive and deliberated arguments. All of these issues are discussed in the subsequent Chapters 4, 5, and 6, which use the interview transcripts and analysis of policy documents to understand (1) Who participates in CREMA/REDD+ activities and why? (2) How was that participation achieved?

In the following chapter (Chapter 4), I show how participation in agroforestry-related activities hinged on the anticipated benefits, both short-term and long-term from the interventions. I lay out how people saw the need to protect the environment and embedded their own experiences within the environmental crisis and climate change narratives while justifying their engagement with agroforestry projects.

42 This research being part of ten nation Africa wide project involving thirty researchers.
CHAPTER 4
WHOSE LAND AND WHOSE TREES? FARMERS’ PERSPECTIVES ON PARTICIPATION IN CARBON AGROFORESTRY AMIDST TENURE INSECURITY

4.1 Introduction

At the time when fieldwork for this dissertation research was carried out in 2012, IUCN was implementing Phase I of the pro-poor REDD+ project in Wassa Amenfi West. The project was funded by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The primary project activities were awareness generation about REDD+, capacity building (e.g., improving governance, institutional capacity, management of forest resources, developing a monitoring, reporting, and verifying framework), and stakeholder consultations about benefit sharing and communication activities (REDD Full Proposal 2008). As part of the REDD+ readiness phase, these activities were consistent with Ghana’s efforts at the national level, which included preparing the Readiness Grant, designing REDD+ Readiness management strategies, and launching seven REDD+ pilot projects for implementation (Ghana FCPF REDD Readiness Progress Sheet 2012).

Ghana’s Readiness activities at the National level were primarily a response to World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, launched around 2008. The

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43 IUCN’s pro-poor REDD project covered national REDD readiness processes in five forest countries (Cameroon, Ghana, Guatemala, Uganda, and Papua Province of Indonesia). Phase 1 of the project ran from 2009 to 2013. Phase 2 of the project started in 2014 and will end in 2018. Both the phases were funded by DANIDA.
simultaneous national and sub-national (piloting) implementation of REDD+, supported by different donor funding, exemplifies Ghana’s adoption of a nested approach to REDD+ (also explained in Chapters 1 and 2).

In 2012, early REDD+ piloting and demonstration activities were implemented by various non-state actors such as NGOs, communities, and private forestry enterprises supervised by the Ghana FC. The seven pilot sites for these activities were located in the HFZs and transitional ecological zones, which are the southern and central part of the country. The individual project-based piloting strategy changed in 2015 when Ghana opted for a landscape approach to piloting REDD+ and included representative landscapes from all three ecological zones of Ghana—HFZ, transitional ecological zones, and Northern Savannah zone (Isyaku, Arhin, and Asiyani 2017).

This chapter addresses the first research question: *Who participates in CREMA/REDD+ activities and why?* While addressing the first research question by focusing on the participation of farmers in the CREMA/REDD+ intervention, this chapter briefly describes land and tree tenure arrangements in Ghana to present these CREMA/REDD+ projects in broader context. The chapter then shows how farmers’ involvement with past conservation and development initiatives in the area helps them act as particular kinds of environmental subjects legible to and manageable by REDD+ interventions. The next section elaborates cocoa farmers’ perspectives on participation in agroforestry and explores the following interrelated themes: perceptions about the CREMA and REDD+ projects, rationales and motivations for participation in the project activities, participant views of overlapping existing and future practices related to farming, conservation, agroforestry, and conservation. In this chapter, I also show how
the diverse responses of the project participants toward CREMA/REDD+ cannot be separated from their extensive prior engagement with earlier development interventions.

4.1.1 Land and Tree Tenure in Ghana

The underlying argument of this dissertation is that participation under CREMA/REDD+ produces environmental subjects (Agrawal 2005). Through empirical data from the field, I extend the discussion of how project rationalities are internationalized by those who “participate” in their beliefs and practices. Both the CREMA and the REDD+ pilot initiatives seek to improve forest outcomes by instituting behavior change in cocoa-farmers through efforts to coalesce their support for climate change mitigation, forest conservation, and material benefits. This involves bringing together the goals of various parties interested in various activities and outcomes of REDD+, but doing so in an insecure land and tree tenure context. While clarifying tenure issues has been identified as the key challenge in setting up REDD+ on the ground (Sunderlin et al. 2014), empirical evidence has shown that disjointed land tenure interventions at the local level are insufficient to address tenure issues and therefore REDD+ needs broader tenure reforms to address equity issues and improve outcomes (Larson et al. 2013).

Early approaches to land tenure administrative reform under structural adjustment promoted by the World Bank and other donors focused on promoting land titling and registration (Bruce, Shem, and Atherton 1994; K. Deininger and Feder 2001; Feder and Noronha 1987; Lipton 1993). Although research sponsored by the World Bank found no direct correlation between titles to land and long-term investment in land (Bruce, Shem, and Atherton 1994), REDD+ and forest restoration initiatives have seen a resurgence of
these tenure reform efforts (Cotula and Mayers 2009). The World Bank study instead recommended “community-based” solutions that would decentralize land administration to communities (Amanor 2008), an approach embodied in CREMAs.

Land and tree tenure in Ghana is complex and uncertain due to the co-existence of official legislation/regulation and traditional or customary tenure systems (Marfo et al. 2012). Traditional or customary tenure systems in particular lead to various assertions of proprietorship and rights over land resources based on lineage, levels of authority, use and occupancy (Kasanga, Kotey, and others 2001; Unruh 2008). Over 90% of land in Ghana is controlled by traditional customary tenure systems, where land is owned by stools/traditional owners/families, but NTFPs such as trees and animals are vested in the state. Due to this complex land tenure systems, sharecropping arrangements between land owners and tenant farmers are common in the cocoa landscape. These sharecropping systems first emerged around the creation of cocoa plantations and their subsequent management (Hill 1956) and can be categorized into two main groups: Abunu and Abusa.

In the Abunu share cropping system, cocoa production is shared on a 50/50 basis between the landowner and the tenant farmer. Under an Abunu contract, the tenant farmer is responsible for establishing the cocoa farm by clearing the land, performing all farm tasks, and making decisions regarding the processing and selling of the cocoa beans. During the first two or three years before the cocoa trees reach maturity and produce a crop, the tenant farmer has no rights to any revenue other than the right to the food crops that he grows on the land. When the cocoa trees reach maturity and produce a crop, the income from cocoa sales is divided between landowners and the tenant. In a variant of the Abunu system, the usufruct right to half of the cultivated farm land is given to the tenant
after the cocoa crop matures, and the tenant becomes the *de facto* owner of one-half of the plantation.

Under the *Abusa* system, the migrant (or caretaker) farmer farms on established older cocoa farm/land and performs farm-related tasks such as spraying, weeding, and harvesting (Hill 1956). In general, the landowner lives close by and oversees the migrant’s work. At times the landowner might provide housing to the migrant farmer. However, decisions regarding harvesting, selling, and other financial matters are solely taken by the landowner. The caretaker farmer usually receives one-third of the total earned money from selling the cocoa that was produced (Knudsen and Fold 2011).

Also, differences in tenure occur between trees that are planted by farmers and those regenerating naturally, and between trees on family land and those on communal land. While the legislative framework of Ghana (Act 547) offers tenure security for trees planted on farms lands and forests (plantations), tenure rights over forests and naturally regenerating trees remain challenging both in law and in practice. Ghana has four main tree-tenure contexts (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Tree tenure contexts in Ghana

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of land</th>
<th>Tree tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production forest reserves</td>
<td>State has control and manages, as a trustee, the forest reserve lands and the trees occurring thereon on behalf of the stools and landowners; FC manages, approves timber contracts to harvest and market timber, sets standard and guidelines; regulates the timber supply chain in the reserves; Benefit-sharing schemes exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection forest reserves</td>
<td>State has control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off-reserve areas—mainly</td>
<td>Natural trees are owned by those who own the land on which the trees occur, but most lands in Ghana are stool land; FC still</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45 The tenant farmer usually do not have land titles and the agreement between the land.
One who plants owns the planted trees but needs registration certification to prove ownership. Different schemes have various combinations of ownership, control, management, and usage rights.

The coexistence of these different tenure systems greatly complicates REDD+ efforts. Individual ownership of planted trees and usage rights may lead to better income for farmers, but existing land and tree tenure systems as described above may compromise the expected benefits from tree tenure privatization. Even though the legal framework of Ghana offers tenure security for planted trees, the individual farmer has to negotiate the benefit-sharing arrangements with the land-owner based on their existing share cropping arrangements. The presence of legal provisions for planted trees does not resolve uncertainty in tree tenure because land tenure as discussed above is complex and insecure. Despite these opaque tenure arrangements, farmers in the study area engage with the CREMA/REDD+ and therefore makes an interesting case to examine.

4.2 Prior Engagement with Conservation and Development Interventions Shapes Participation

Farmers in the Bontori CREMA have been exposed to conservation and agroforestry activities through previous projects implemented both by government line offices (e.g., FSD, WD, and Agricultural Department), and environmental NGOs such as the IUCN, Care International, and Agriculture and Rural Development. Villagers in the

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46 The name of the local NGO has been changed to avoid its identification.
area had participated in training programs organized by these agencies for capacity
development and awareness generation related to conservation issues.

In 1994, as part of a government program on plantation establishment and
development, a progressive farmer\textsuperscript{47} in the area established a teak plantation. Samartex, a
leading timber company, helped the farmer by supplying seedlings, and later by
providing learning opportunities through workshops, training, and technical advice. The
farmer recalled how he became involved in agroforestry.

We were taught to expand the afforestation to include other species like
mahogany, and teak. Then in 2000, we received a national award during the
Forestry Week. That was last the Forestry Week celebration we had in Ghana.
There we were advised to try agroforestry. So we started the agroforestry in 2000,
whereby we inter-planted timber species with fruits, cocoa, cola, and coconut;
advise came from Forestry, Samartex, and other stakeholders like the Agric
Centre. Moreover, the Agric Centre had the program in Wassu Amenfi. They
doubted the yield of cocoa and cola, and so they wanted to know how other
species worked with cocoa, if we supplied the cola from cocoa, whether we can
mix coconut with cocoa. So you see, we had to know it, so we started from that
experiment. We started with coconut and cocoa, with cola. That was the
preliminary stage. In 2005, we were connected to FORIG by Samartex
Company.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{47} This term was used by the respondents. This term, influenced by paradigms of modernization
theory, refers to agricultural or commercial entrepreneurs capable of earning money and adopting
new technology, and therefore belonging to a higher class elite whose adoption of new
technologies would eventually trickle down to the peasantry (Amanor and Ubink 2008).

\textsuperscript{48} Interview No. 37; Male, Pebase December 15, 2012.
For several years since then, some cocoa farmers in the area planted trees on their farms, sometimes with assistance from Samartex, who harvested and brought their farm-grown timber. In 2004, this small group of farmers joined to form the Bontori CREMA, primarily focused on tree planting. The formalization of the CREMA happened later, and more people became part of the CREMA by either pledging to plant trees on their farms or by planting trees. Another NGO, Care International, supplied tree seedlings to about fifty members of the CREMA.

In 2004, a grant from the Small Grants Programme of the Global Environment Facility was given to a local NGO, ARD, to further the CREMA activities. The main activities supported by the grant involved the capacity building of farmers for biodiversity conservation and enhancing livelihood security. In 2007, at the end of the three-year project, fifty farmers in five CREMA communities had received training on tree nursery establishment and seedling/sapling production, administrative and financial management, and organic farming. The project also supported the establishment of five community tree nurseries managed by select community members. The project also reported production of 22,000 seedlings in the nurseries and the rehabilitation of 200 hectares of degraded land within the CREMA through the planting of indigenous tree species. In addition to these measurable outputs, another significant achievement of CREMA stakeholders (NGOs, CREMA members, and donors) was to work toward clarifying the tenure of planted trees (SGP-UNDP 2012).

Farmers in Ghana were not always amenable to the idea of having trees on farms. Until recently, formal policies, regulations, and laws did not give farmers any rights over
trees with economic value that naturally grew on their farms. To distinguish between planted and naturally occurring trees, the Ghanaian state mandates the registration of planted trees on farms. However, more than seventy percent of the respondents in my study were either not aware of this option or found it troublesome to get their trees registered. Farmers deliberately destroyed natural trees (not planted), fearing outsiders harvesting trees would destroy crops on farms without compensating for loss, or sharing benefits from the harvested timber (Acheampong 2003). Other reasons for not wanting trees on farms were the perception that trees competed with cocoa, brought crop diseases, or were troublesome to manage (e.g., cleaning weeds in the initial years, watering). In this context, the idea of CREMA (decentralized resource management, benefits, and property rights over planted trees, advisory and extension services) brought together the political, economic, and environmental interests of a select group of farmers, the group who agreed with the ideas behind CREMAs and adopted agroforestry practices.

Another intervention was IUCN’s Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy, launched in the area in 2007. The LLS was implemented by IUCN in twenty-seven landscapes across Africa, Asia, and Latin America and was funded by DGIS (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands). The initiative ran from 2007 to 2011. The objectives of LLS were fourfold. The first theme was poverty reduction; second was to support natural resource-based markets and incentives; third was to work toward improved forest governance that includes forest resource rights and secure tenure; and fourth was to enable landscape transformation by effective policy guidance and restoration forest

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49 Ghana is considering legislative reforms for clarifying tree tenure and implementing benefit sharing schemes.
landscapes (IUCN 2012—Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy: Results and Reflections. Gland, Switzerland: IUCN)

Ghana was one of the twenty-three countries where the LLS was implemented. The LLS activities in the country were carried out in the Ashanti and Western Regions and focused on clarifying ownership rights about trees. By supporting a registration and certification process for planting trees, LLS incentivized the farmers to plant trees on their farms. IUCN worked with the members of the Bontori CREMA through a variety of strategies including intercropping cocoa with Allanblackia trees. IUCN is also establishing a dialogue to discuss benefit-sharing mechanisms for REDD+ through multi-stakeholder platforms and contributing to national forest and landscape restoration strategies (Crockett 2015; IUCN 2016). After the IUCN LLS project ended in 2011, the pro-poor REDD+ pilot was launched. As with the LLS, IUCN again adopted the existing CREMA as a critical component of its REDD+ pilot project development (Nyame et al. 2012). The main objective of this pro-poor REDD+ project was to generate awareness, build stakeholder capacity, and conduct stakeholder consultations with the goal of clarifying tree tenure rights and design benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Therefore, continuous engagement with the agroforestry-related issues through the CREMA shaped local perceptions about the pro-poor REDD+ project. Explaining how engagement with CREMA has enhanced participation in REDD+, one community leader said, “For example, when the REDD concept came in, and we educated our members on the REDD program, many farmers have joined hands in planting the

\[50\] An indigenous species of tropical Africa whose seeds are used to produce vegetable oil and margarine that remains stable in room temperatures and has health benefits.
agroforest. So, by so doing the CREMA has been a role model for the community and trees are being planted abundantly.”

The context-specific interventions described above are examples of a wide range of initiatives seen across Ghana working toward these same goals. These interventions include efforts to address forest loss and degradation in Ghana through global and national programs such as the Ghana—EU Voluntary Partnership Agreement under the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade Initiative; the FSC Forest Certification Programme; the Natural Resources and Environmental Governance Programme; and various plantation development programs.

Involving local people in the development and enforcement of local regulations is central to the creation of environmental subjects (Agrawal 2005; Agrawal et al. 2005). Agrawal’s research in India finds that villagers who engage in forest council activities, forest monitoring, and environmental conservation are those who understand the need to protect forests in the manner framed by those who bring conservation to the community as an issue and are most likely to protect the forests. Similarly, in the CREMA villagers displayed their concern for forest conservation and the environment, which is likely attributable to their long-standing engagement with forestry management. For example, as the wife of a traditional leader in the area said,

“The soil is not good anymore. When we planted vegetable before we did not need fertilizers, but now we use it for our vegetables. At first, rainfall used to be so heavy that we did not even go to our farms, but now the rainfall is OK. Since the past five years, everybody has started using fertilizers and pesticides in cocoa

51 Interview No. 18; Male, Essandokrom, July 5, 2012.
farms; we were initially scared about using those thinking it would kill the plants, but now everybody uses it since it increases productivity.”

Respondents demonstrated how they had internalized the conservation discourse and used its language to represent themselves as responsible subjects who understand the importance of tree planting, the environmental services that trees provide, and that they were able to incorporate this mentality to regulate their farming practices through agroforestry. For example, one CREMA member who worked as a voluntary forest guard narrated how his youngest son lost an arm while playing with the gun he had kept for scaring poachers and illegal loggers. On another occasion, I witnessed two villagers stop a truck and check it for smuggled wood. Along with serving as voluntary forest guards, many CREMA members regularly monitored the area and reported illegal logging incidents to the district forest officials, thus assisting in the enforcement of local regulations on forests.

The CREMA stakeholders frequently positioned themselves as pro-environment by claiming that the Bontori CREMA, unlike the other CREMAs in different parts of Ghana, was initiated by the community. The following quote illustrates this claim, “… all such CREMAs were founded by the WD, but this CREMA is self-initiated CREMA, community initiated CREMA.” This “community-initiated” claim about the Bontori CREMA was made by not only by most of its members but also by policy makers.

Those who claim to be CREMA members also frequently state their roles and responsibilities in forest management: they regularly patrol the nearby protected forest

52 Interview No. 10; Female, Kamaso, June 15, 2012.

53 Interview No. 22; Male, Kamaso, May 31, 2012.
reserves, monitor villagers’ activities, and enforce village regulations. They also describe the challenges related to enforcing these forest regulations, such as managing the “bad nuts” within their community and the lack of remuneration for doing their jobs. They understand that “educating” communities on environmental issues is essential to enable them to conduct themselves in compliance with conservation values. They employ the same rhetoric as the conservation staff on the importance of giving rewards or alternative livelihoods to induce people to support conservation efforts. For instance, a CREMA member listed a number of positive impacts that the CREMA brings to the farmers:

First and foremost the CREMA is to bring the farmers of the community together for their strength and unity. Secondly, to manage and tap the resources within the community for the betterment of the farmers. Third, we are to plant trees and guard the forests to promote the ecosystem and four we are to come together for all the NTFPs of the forest sustainably, rear small ruminant animals and the bees in a sustainable livelihood of the people between the community and the CREMA as a whole. … Formerly when the CREMA hasn’t come to exist the forest was being poached by hunters every now and then you will be hearing “gim-gim”—it’s the noise of the guns killing animals, you but when the CREMA came and the laws abiding the CREMA and forbidding then hunters to poach, anyway there is a bad nut (those who break the law) in every society but the hunters do not poach too much these days … those economic trees, they usually prune by themselves … so the pressure from getting wood logs from the forests also has decreased
tremendously because the women can now get it from anywhere in their farms and they cease to go into the forest.\textsuperscript{54}

Given the pro-environment role played by the CREMA members to support forest management and conservation efforts, and CREMA’s framing as a decentralized institution,\textsuperscript{55} it is not surprising that Bontori CREMA was chosen by IUCN to pilot a REDD+ project and also recognized by the Ghana FC as one of the early seven REDD+ pilot projects in Ghana (Baruah et al. 2016). Choosing this particular CREMA also helped IUCN leverage its experience in the area and build on its previous work to launch project activities.

Ghana’s early piloting activities were influenced by inclusive and devolved approaches to governance, and the nested approach to REDD+ which allowed participation of a wide range of stakeholders such as NGOs, communities and private forestry businesses. The Ghana FC looked for proposals (through newspaper advertisements) that could pilot and independently demonstrate REDD+ activities on the ground.\textsuperscript{56} From among the proposals that were received, seven pilot sites were selected—two in the Western Region, two in the Central Region, and one pilot site each in the Eastern, Ashanti, and Brong Ahafo Regions. These long-term associations with CREMA and previous conservation projects also increased the exposure of CREMA stakeholders to the REDD+ issues and activities, helping them express their opinions, concerns, and expectations related to the project. Access to information on both the CREMA and

\textsuperscript{54} Interview No. 18; Male, Essandokrom, 5 July 2012.

\textsuperscript{55} I argue elsewhere that CREMA is not devolved and is non-representative with limited decision making powers and functions to address the needs of its constituency

\textsuperscript{56} Personal communication with a government official of the Forestry Commission, June 2012
REDD+ is differentiated by the social position of the specific actors, as discussed in the later sections of this chapter. While some interview participants have heard about REDD+ as a result of attending meetings and training, not everybody in the village was aware of the initiative. Also, those who were engaged with the CREMA were also involved more with REDD+-related activities.

Recent research has shown how experiences of integrated conservation and development projects have shaped initial pilots of landscape-level REDD+ action (Minang and van Noordwijk 2013). On the other hand, scholars and experts engaged with the technical and institutional issues of REDD+ implementation have suggested ways in which REDD+ initiatives can draw lessons from the community or collaborative management, and forest conservation (Agrawal and Angelsen 2009; Cronkleton et al. 2011; Hayes and Persha 2010). Thus, the piloting of the pro-poor REDD+ in the CREMA site exemplifies how assemblages such as CBNRM incorporate “new elements onto the assemblage, reworking existing elements for new purposes and transposing the meanings of key terms” (Li 2007, 284). At the same time, it shows how the REDD+ assemblage is a combination of various policies (techniques of government), expert analysis, and recommendations of not only project practitioners and policy makers but also academics, scholars, and all others who have a stake in engaging with REDD+ work from the global to the local scale.

4.3 Participation and CREMA/REDD+

Scholars and practitioners have argued that the participation of local communities in REDD+ is likely to reduce implementation costs of REDD+, including those related to measurement, monitoring, and enforcement at least in the short term (Chhatre et al. 2012;
Larrazábal et al. 2012). From this standpoint, as discussed in Chapter 1, the institutional set-up of CREMA is seen by many as the appropriate platform to address many of the key issues linked with REDD+—boundary demarcation, free prior and informed consent, ensuring democratic decision making, creating sustainable institutions and mechanisms, clarifying land and tree tenure and carbon rights, as well as establishing equitable benefit-sharing arrangements (Asare, Kyei, and Mason 2013). The FC of Ghana also recognizes the CREMA mechanism for implementing REDD+. The Ghana Wildlife Policy 2012 and Ghana’s REDD R-PP both support the CREMA approach as a means for implementing REDD demonstration projects and pilots (GHANA REDD RPP 2010; GHANA FOREST AND WILDLIFE POLICY 2012). It is therefore not surprising that those (e.g., Forestry department officials, agroforestry experts) who seek to gain the consent of farmers and create agroforestry subjects recognize CREMAs as critical to the achievement of Ghana’s social, economic and environmental goals.

One of the key actors who was involved with REDD+ Readiness activities both at a project site and at the national level remarked how CREMAs offer a great foundation for REDD+ because of its “good local involvement”:

When Ghana started talking about REDD+ and preparing for REDD, we were also looking at how best to get REDD+ on the ground. And one of the main … platforms that was identified in Ghana was several collaborative resource management approaches on the ground. There is this community forest project, there is the CREMAs, a lot of them, some employed by the Forestry Division, some by the Wildlife Division. But a careful look around identified the CREMAs as having more than various structures in terms of local involvement, having local
government authority also there and then legal, some legal framework and policy support. You had all the frameworks that is needed to kick start REDD. So at the discussion-level, and not even going towards a policy-level, where they are considering CREMAs as the basis to roll out REDD because it has very good local involvement there. So they want to use these structures to build on some of the things that REDD wants to see on the ground. So it’s not that CREMAs are ready yet. No. CREMAs have been there as a structure or as an approach. But how best can we move CREMAs, their functions, so that they can really satisfy the criteria for REDD on the ground.  

As illustrated by the preceding section and the representative quote, the policy discourse sees an integrated conservation and development approach such as CREMA as the building block for REDD+ in Ghana. On the other hand, interviews with farmers reveal that views on CREMA/REDD+ are influenced by their multiple subject positions. While most people in the study site had heard about CREMA, only farmers actively involved with CREMA activities had heard about REDD+. They displayed a general understanding of REDD+ and its relation to climate change and had been invited to a REDD+-related event at least once. These leaders and members of the CREMA claimed to have disseminated the information/knowledge among their peers, often creating unrealistic expectations from REDD+. Not every interviewee demonstrated a clear understanding of the project membership and participation. However, while most associated CREMA and REDD+ with trees, interviewees who were relatively well-off more demonstrated a more nuanced understanding of the projects.

57 Interview No. 49/NGO Official; Male, Domongo, October 3, 2012.
I started planting as an individual farmer, other people were skeptical, but sooner or later the timber will be finished, companies are sacking people, and have installed machines for splitting the timber. I know the value of timber and the beauty of trees and the environment value of trees. The IUCN and the Forestry people told me to attend the CREMA meetings and gave training about the environmental benefits …we are making an umbrella under the CREMA briefing the people about the environmental benefits of trees.\textsuperscript{58}

On being probed about whether he had heard about REDD, he said that “before it was REDD and now it is REDD+.” Although he could not distinguish between REDD and REDD+, he talked about the environmental benefits of trees that trees conserve energy, water resources, and stores carbon. He also displayed an understanding of monetary benefits associated with trees as reservoirs of carbon. This case is another example of an environmental subject produced through CREMA activities. Thus, the notion of CREMA was inevitably linked to “planting trees,” even though the CREMA has a much broader mandate. Based on the interviews, seventy percent of respondents were aware of the CREMA, but only twenty percent of them could demonstrate an understanding of the link between CREMA and REDD+/carbon. During the interviews, farmers listed teak (\textit{Tectona grandis}), odum (\textit{Milicia excels}), Ofram (\textit{Terminalia superba}), mahogany (\textit{Khaya ivorensis}), wawa (\textit{Triplochiton scleroxylon}), Cedrela (\textit{Cedrela odorata}), and Emeri (\textit{Terminalia ivorensis}) as the species growing along with their cocoa. They also reported the presence of kola nut trees on their farms. The number of trees planted on the farm varied from 2500 to 20 trees.

\textsuperscript{58} Interview No. 14; Male, Achichire, June 16, 2012.
While not everyone in the area articulated the linkage between CREMA and REDD+, the following quote is one of many instances when farmers mentioned trees and tree planting in response to a question about how they viewed the CREMA project:

CREMA is for strengthening forestry for sensitizing people about the need to plant trees, skills acquisition and make their lives better. I have planted trees and have about 50 trees, which I started inter planting with cocoa since 1994, for the trees to give shade to cocoa. They are timber species such as mahogany, ofrum, odum I planted trees because of the environment benefits because they takes up smoke and cleans the air.\(^5^9\)

### 4.4 Anticipation of Benefits from CREMA/REDD+ Shapes Participation

Various community-based natural resource initiatives in the past have shown that stakeholder perceptions, needs, and expectations attached to the outcomes of a project often do not match what interventions seek to achieve (Kellert et al. 2000). Community perceptions of the project benefits matter because the achievement of environmental interventions is contingent on the ways in which goals and aspirations of various stakeholders are aligned with existing resource use practices, cultural meanings, roles in society, and belief systems (Carr 2013). In this context, irrespective of whether or not CREMA/REDD+ can fulfill their stated objectives, the stakeholder perceptions of the CREMA/REDD+ and the anticipated benefits of interventions do matter because they influence people’s decision to engage with these interventions and will continue to influence the intended objectives of these governmental interventions.

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\(^5^9\) Interview No. 23; Male, Kamaso, June 1, 2012.
I found that benefits from the projects, whether realized or anticipated, were important means by which the farmers justified their engagement with the project activities. As one female CREMA member stated why she chose to plant trees on her farm:

I know very well that the forest and the trees are finishing and that their strength is depleting … there were not much trees, the sun is too much and the water is not there. So I realized when I plant the trees I am going to get these benefits and it would also benefit the future generations … I hope that the CREMA will give me money but then the money will be from the tree planting … the cocoa's money is immediate but in the trees I will benefit later. Even if it doesn’t come to me, I have children who will benefit from the trees that I have planted.\(^{60}\)

Another farmer, Mr. Odoi, like most non-Waasa migrant cocoa farmers in the area, traces his roots to the Eastern region of Ghana. Mr. Odoi has been living in Kamaso for more than twenty years, but it was only four years before my interview with him that he started his cocoa farm when his father informally gave some land to him. Before having his farm, he was helping his father. He practiced agroforestry, growing timber trees with food crops such as cassava and plantains. He expressed that he was made aware of the environmental cleaning property of the trees and the money relationship with carbon by REDD+ project workers. His story is similar to many other farmers in Wassa Amenfi who migrated during the expansion of the cocoa frontier in the Western Region in the 1970s (Amanor 2010).\(^{61}\)

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\(^{60}\) Interview No. 9; Female, Metiya Meba, June 13, 2012.

\(^{61}\) Interview No. 27; Male, Kamaso, June 9, 2012.
On the basis of the responses, farmers’ perspectives on project benefits can classified into two main categories: (a) Cash benefits and (b) non-cash benefits. Cash benefits, as perceived by the interviewees, included income from protecting natural resources, fees, royalties, gate proceeds, income from utilizing natural resources such as NTFPs and timber, access to credits, and potential payments through carbon credits. Of these cash benefits, potential payments through carbon credits were most frequently mentioned by the interviewees, and cash from selling timber and NTFPs were the most prominent avenues of cash income perceived by the farmers. Farmers listed capacity building, infrastructure, ecosystem services, biodiversity, and access to resources for subsistence, cultural values, the supply of agricultural inputs (seeds, fertilizers) and extension services, and access to information as the main non-cash benefits of the project.

Figure 4.1 A cocoa farmer on his agroforestry farm. Source: Author

When discussing CREMA/REDD+ benefits, I heard villagers talk about benefit sharing and equity issues along with the ecosystem services and conservation outcomes.
They saw CREMA/REDD+ as a means to get their rights over planted trees and carbon recognized and obtain remuneration that could improve their income. Their interactions and involvement with forest-related conservation projects changed how they viewed their rights and roles vis-à-vis those who seek to govern their conduct. Over ninety percent of the respondents expressed discontent over how state authorities conduct their duties in managing forests and natural resources while expecting farmers to do much more regarding forest conservation and maintenance at the local level. A farmer and a village leader explained why top-down prescriptive approaches for protecting the environment would not work:

This is our policy. We want the farmers, the holders of the land, to do this and that for the sustainment of the trees or the environment … it shouldn’t be in form of just a policy. Everybody has got his freedom. The policy may be there, but how to implement, it should be negotiated … the government thinks they can say, “Plant trees,” and then everybody is planting. “Preserve the water bodies,” and everybody will preserve. You will mention it and it will not work.

Instead, he said that the decision-making processes had to be inclusive and negotiated at the level of the individual farmer.

Okay, if I protect this tree, there’ll be no contractor coming to fell (cut) it. Yes or no? If I protect it, could I be given some incentive, let’s say a monthly maintenance or a yearly allowance to maintain it for the assembly, so that at the end of the harvest the assembly can go in to harvest it because I have already been compensated. Okay, should I leave this portion of my land for you to rent it to
preserve the environment? Because I cannot leave and I and my family suffer for lack of money.62

He, like a couple of other interviewees who practiced agroforestry, expressed a duality: accepting certain aspects of the environmental subject-making while also expressing certain perceptions that are largely absent from the CREMA/REDD+ narrative. Despite the accounts of tree planting, agroforestry, and conservation, particularly from the members and CREMA leaders, there were numerous occasions when the same actors contradicted their pro-environment positions, some of which I discuss in Chapter 6.

4.4.1 Differently Positioned Social Actors Muddle Participation

Important questions are being raised about the terms of participation and the distribution of benefits in settings marked by significant social divisions. The participation of local communities and civil society organizations in REDD+ activities is not as straightforward as often assumed in current debates around safeguards. As many forested regions in the world, including Ghana, are characterized by the weak rule of law and low levels of public accountability, REDD+ runs the risk of increasing corruption and elite capture in forest governance (Karsenty and Ongolo 2012; Sandbrook et al. 2010).

As one actor from the non-government sector experienced in the implementation of conservation and development projects stated that although community-based institutions are supposed to be inclusive and participatory and have good local involvement, communities are not homogenous and have different interest groups. This

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62 Interview No. 37; Male, Pebase, December 15, 2012.
actor emphasized the role of “facilitation” in aligning these diverse goals and interests for a governmental intervention to work:

So when it comes to the developing the CREMA you really have to go to the level the community and understand the community, know the interest groups in the community, know the power structures in the community, only a few people will hijack it and at the end it will represent, oh well they came in and everyone wants to put in themselves all these views and whatever. So right from the beginning should make a conscious effort to include the facilitation through as much as possible and get the views of the community as much as possible. Moreover, we do that through a process here, meaning developing the constitution here is a process where you manage and just guide them and might even plan to the same thing we did here. You raise the issue; these are the issues. So how do you think we can best address it? Do we come up with this plan if we do it this way? No, no in a committee if we do it this way it will not work. What are the key resources we can maybe consider now?\textsuperscript{63}

In Ghana, chiefs are often recognized as the de facto leaders in representing community rights and interests because they are perceived to be easily accessible, possessing intimate knowledge of local issues, and able to facilitate collective action (Boafo-Arthur 2001; Kwame Boafo-Arthur 2003). In the migrant villages in the cocoa frontier, “caretaker chiefs” are chosen from early settler families because they possess larger land holdings, and play a major role in community decision-making processes. Participation in the CREMA/REDD+ process was dominated chiefs, sub-chiefs or elders,

\textsuperscript{63} Interview No. 49/NGO Official; Male, Damongo, November 20, 2012.
and people whom they knew in their respective communities. For instance, all the members of the CEC were leaders in their communities, despite the CREMA guidelines recommending elections to choose leaders. Further, the CREMA Constitutions state that all individuals residing within the area and having land-based livelihood interests can become members when they pay registration and membership fees. All the interviewees expressed that they had never paid any fees, but their membership was based on their tree planting activities on their cocoa farms, active interest in the environment, and attending “forestry”-related meetings.

The type of sharecropping arrangement also influences the decisions and opportunities to participate in the CREMA/REDD+. While early settler families with larger land holdings are more open to agroforestry: “I came here about 45 years ago from the Volta Region near Dudwa and now have about 94 acres under cocoa cultivation, have planted more than 3000 trees on the farm but there is no land (forests) for farm expansion.”64 New migrant families (<5 years) from the under the abusa system did not have enough resources (e.g., land, labor) to engage in tree-planting. Most tenant farmers with usufruct rights under the Abunu system expressed that they made farming decisions independent of the land title holder and planted trees on farm. Interview participants expressed reservations about benefit sharing, and potential conflicts with landholders once benefits from these project activities start to flow (e.g., cash payments for carbon or timber), or if the “REDD+ money” is not comparable to the income from other cash crops.

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64 Interview No. 16; Male, Ataase, June 14, 2012.
Thus, the motivations and opportunities for the CREMA/REDD+ stakeholders to participate in activities are not uniform. Further, the roles they occupy and the identities they assume within the context of these projects varied (Baruah 2015) and they used different types of benefits, both current and anticipated, to rationalize their involvement in the projects. Therefore, the process of environmental subject production through CREMA/REDD+ is not uniform in any population, or across any set of stakeholders, but instead a complex, heterogeneous process. It is this complex, heterogeneous set of environmental subjects that CREMAs, and REDD+ more broadly, must align toward conservation and climate change mitigation goals.

4.5 Conclusions

While alluding to the broader discourse and debates on surrounding REDD+, this chapter discussed the perceptions and motivations of various stakeholders engaged in the CREMA/REDD+ projects. This chapter showed how benefits within CREMA/REDD+ are interpreted and enacted at the local scale and how the participants anticipated and explored past and contemporary tensions associated with the access to those forest resources and related benefits. This chapter presented empirical evidence to show how participation of the local population in CREMA/REDD+ projects hinges on prior engagement with earlier environmental projects and the CREMA/REDD+ potential remunerations, which played a role in the differential production of environmental subjects in the research area. In the next chapter, I discuss the common discursive threads and projects of rule deployed to engage local populations.
CHAPTER 5
GOOD AIR STEWARDS: ENGAGING FARMERS FOR PRODUCING CARBON THROUGH NARRATIVES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS AND INDIVIDUALIZING RISK

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the perspectives of farmers on participation in agroforestry through the CREMA/REDD+ projects, showing how their involvement with past conservation and development initiatives in the area helped them act as particular kinds of environmental subjects and conferred legitimacy to the projects (Sandker et al. 2010). The chapter also showed how anticipation of benefits from the projects shapes participation. This chapter discusses the complicated ways and practices through which the diverse interests of the various actors engaged in the two focal interventions are brought together, and connections are forged between them to ensure participation, for specific objectives—that of mitigating climate change, conservation and sustainable use of forest resources, and improving rural livelihoods—primarily through agroforestry activities. This chapter addresses the second research question—How is participation achieved in the ongoing interventions?

5.1.1 Expertize In Governmental Interventions

Conceptualization of many development projects often starts with the assumption that project constituents have limited prior knowledge and technical capacity to address the problem. Implementation strategies, therefore, rely on experts’ knowledge and discourses to both frame the problems, identify risks and offer potential solutions (Bumpus and Liverman 2011; Peet and Watts 2011). Miller and Rose (1990) defined
expertise as “the social authority ascribed to particular agents and forms of judgment on the basis of their claims to possess specialized truths and rare powers” and represent “neutrality, authority, and skill” (Miller and Rose 1990). The typology of experts put forward by Wilson (2006, 502) is also useful to understand what constitutes expertise:

- area of theoretical expertise (such as agricultural economics or tropical medicine);
- sector of work (for example, agriculture or health or finance);
- the level at which one works (policy maker, strategic manager, extension worker and so forth);
- employment relation (such as consultant or salaried employee);
- institutional context (for instance, local government, national government, NGO, donor agency);
- the authority of experience (for example, expatriate or local);
- nature of experience (in one location or in many locations) (Wilson 2006)

Experts draw power and legitimacy via recognition from both those who govern and those who are governed. Experts continue to exert influence in development projects because they are recognized to possess relevant techniques and authoritative knowledge which can enhance the self-regulatory capacities of the project constituents (i.e., invoking “community”) and thereby improve their lives.

The fundamental criticism against expert-driven development is that expertise is a means to depoliticize governmental interventions because the decisions and rationale behind these interventions are represented as driven by neutral, free, and apolitical experts. Arguments have also been made that experts’ knowledge and discourses are
often privileged over local forms of knowledge for “political, economic and administrative reasons” (Kasanga, Kotey, and others 2001). Using a case of community forestry in Nepal, Nightangle (2005) showed how different forest users adopt the ideas and practices promoted by forestry experts, and in that process how the literate and elites in the community were considered the legitimate subjects to translate the discourses of scientific forestry while “managing” the behavior of marginalized forest user groups (Nightingale 2005). In another instance, Birkenholtz (2008, 2009) showed how groundwater conservation in Rajasthan, India, was framed as a technical problem ignoring antecedent political, economic and social realities with claims and counter claims about the program benefitting the technocratic and upper castes elites in the area, and side-lining lower caste farmers (Birkenholtz 2008, 2009). These cases show how “expertise” is part of governmental technologies and is not apolitical in purpose.

The rationale for the past and current interventions at the Bontori CREMA site can be explained in terms of two main environmental issues as framed by experts. First, Ghana’s forests are fast depleting and conditions deteriorating,65 and there is an increasing need to conserve and protect what is left. Second, the HFZ in the Western Region of Ghana has the only remaining large tracts of tropical forests both in on—reserve and off-reserve areas, is the final cocoa frontier in Ghana and faces threats due to illegal logging exacerbated by the booming domestic timber market and expansion of cocoa cultivation. These factors have contributed to the engagement of the Ghanaian state, international agencies, and donors with forest conservation issues in the region.

65 Structural adjustment policies of the 1980s led to economic growth at the expense of the rapid deterioration of Ghana’s forests. See Owusu (1998).
What these particular framings do not do is to contextualize the problem within the historical and current political and economic processes. Figure 5.1 below is an example of how experts have framed (also the dominant narrative) the forest degradation problem in the HFZ of Ghana. This was presented to the Forest Investment Plan (FIP) sub-committee in 2012.

![Diagram of forest degradation causes and solutions]

**Figure 5.1** Expert framing of the “Drivers of Forest Degradation—in the HFZ. 

Based on the analysis of policy documents and interviews with high-level actors, the next section presents the results of the rationale and choices used to define the ongoing interventions—the CREMA and the pilot REDD+ project central to this research. In the subsequent sections, the three major themes that emerged from the analysis of data are discussed. I argue that the following three practices were assembled to make participation achievable in the specific context of the CREMA/REDD+

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66 FIP is submitted by interested countries to access FIP grants and loans. FIP is a $775 million funding window of the Climate Investment Fund designed to provide grants and low-interest loans, channeled through partner multilateral development banks such as the World Bank, to help countries address the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation.

interventions: narratives of ecological crisis, delivering assurances to address the crisis through technical fixes and expert knowledge, and individualizing risk and responsibilizing the project constituents to address the crisis.

### 5.2 Rationale of the Focal Interventions

Carbon forestry projects in the developing world have not arrived on a blank canvas. In an edited volume discussing the implementation of emerging REDD+ projects in Africa, the cases demonstrated how most sites have long histories of environment and development interventions, in particular, related to forestry (Leach and Scoones 2015; also discussed in Chapter 4). In seeking to examine and analyze how participation in the CREMA/REDD+ pilot, central to this particular research, was achieved, I found it useful to consider the justifications that informed these interventions at the first place, because these projects should be seen not only in the context of their on-the-ground realities but also in the context of previous interventions. Li (2007) argues that governmental interventions are often reassembled, incorporating “new elements and reworking old ones; deploying existing discourses to new ends; transposing the meanings of key terms” (pg. 205). She argues, with specific reference to community forestry management, that in the age of neoliberalism, governmental apparatuses and practices are not stable but “are concerned with grafting new elements onto the assemblage, reworking existing elements for new purposes and transposing the meanings of key terms” (Li 2007, 284). According to Li (2007, 284–5), these transformations of governmental interventions:

…are well illustrated by shifts in community forest management in the context of neoliberalism. There are two potential relays or points of connection. First and most obviously, the emphasis on community is compatible with a neoliberal
concern to downsize and decentralize bureaucratic functions. It is easily assimilated to agendas stressing the need for “good governance,” democracy and the rule of law. Second and more contentiously, community forestry is being promoted as a way to promote entrepreneurialism and market efficiency. Communities, advocates of this version propose, can supply forest products and services at a competitive price.

I have already shown through the review of the literature (Chapter 2), how REDD+ is a project of environmental governance—a reassembled form of CBNRM. CREMAs in Ghana emerged as the primary institutional mechanism utilized by the government for managing wildlife outside protected areas by incentivizing local communities. In principle, CREMAs are supposed to create reciprocal relationships between people living near protected areas and reserve boundaries, and the state by supporting a lucrative bush-meat market through sustainable meat production as long as communities meet an obligation to manage these resources for the long term. Senior officials of the WD involved in conceptualizing and implementing the CREMA approach mentioned that the stringent forestry and wildlife laws, based on fortress conservation, alienated communities from their resources. Despite the policing techniques used in Ghana until the early 1990s, conservation efforts were not yielding results. This is illustrated in the words of a senior Park manager, who when asked why the CBNRM area (CREMA) initiative, as a Ghana wide approach, was first started, said “wildlife outside the protected areas are not abundant and parks do not have buffers … so the CREMA is a strategy to serve as buffers because if there are CREMAs fringing the parks, the activities
within the zone are regulated ... so they offer protection, security.”

Interviews with government officials, policy makers and officials of local and international institutions, including funding agencies involved in CREMAs, revealed that the main rationale behind the CREMA approach was the idea that secure rights and responsibilities at the local level led to better conservation outcomes. A very senior member of the WD stated that the environment, and specifically deforestation, often is not part of national political issues but that resource allocation is very much a political decision. Further, since timber exports have been consistently one of Ghana's top foreign exchange earners, there is little political motivation to completely transfer forest ownership and management to local communities. Instead, the “collaborative” and “community-based” projects were adopted as a middle ground seeking to maintain some level of central control over this key resource while attempting to improve conservation outcomes.

Thus, these interventions aimed to achieve multiple goals (e.g., benefits, livelihoods, property and tenure rights, governmental control and efficiency, sustainability, conservation) for multiple stakeholders (e.g., donors, NGOs, local communities, politicians, technical experts) and drew from diverse discourses of environmental crisis, integrated conservation and development, and participatory approaches in development. Specific actors (WD, NGOs, Government, donors, farmers, traditional leaders) and diverse group of experts (agroforestry experts, conservationists, social scientists, development workers, lawyers, policy makers), translated these discourses into policy instruments and materialized them into practice. For instance,

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68 Interview No. 50/Government Official; Male, Domongo, November 12.

69 Interview No. 44/Government Official; Male, Takorade, December 13, 2012
agroforestry experts often came to the cocoa farmers and advised them to combine shade-tolerant varieties of cocoa with timber and fruit trees, arguing that both forest conservation targets and the livelihood needs of the cocoa farmers can be met by adopting the practices endorsed by experts.

The following conversation, which took place between a Senior Government official and me, highlights how the CREMA approach was designed by pulling together these diverse elements:

**Respondent:** It was in the early to mid-90 when the Wildlife Division decided to do an evaluation of the mandates … of the various subsectors that are under the ministry. So we implemented what is called the FRMP, Forest Resource Management Projects, and the Wildlife Division was part of it. Also, we did an assessment to understand how we had fared in terms of delivering on that mandate that has been given to us as a division. And, in doing that a number of things came up … wildlife numbers were going down and we sought to understand exactly what was going on and also to fix it because at the time I think globally we were all talking about reforms within the forestry subsector, … in the final analysis we realized that wildlife numbers were going down for three reasons; bush meat as food, wild fires and the nature of the law itself.

**Author:** Wildlife laws?

**Respondent:** Yeah, the legal environment … was partly to be blamed for declining the numbers and prospects of wildlife… also the fact that we are losing our forests, the habitats, habitat loss … Of course at the time also globally there was this agitation for more participation for local communities and all this and that.
So all those issues played up and as something to consider for the kind of reforms that we need to do.

So we said, okay fine that we needed at the time to *come up with something that would involve local communities* more in wildlife conservation. I say this particular because of the nature of the law. The nature of the law was such that it was more or less like wildlife it belonged to government … government was managing wildlife … at the same time the people did not have authority or power to manage anything and even if one was to like say if you kill it … the law more or less criminalized the use … for the local (communities) *it means the will to conserve wildlife properly was not there*, so we had to find a way of roping in you know local communities and who could manage their resource properly …

So from then we started thinking about how to *come up with a good concept of community participation*. We had a series of workshops the major stakeholder workshops to think through what we thought was possible. We had *some international study tours and all that trying to understand the system that was in placed in number place East Tanzania, Kenya, Namibia*, all those other places … some of our strategies to engage with that communities to establish a kind of rapport that would reduce tensions that have built up as a result of our relationship of those communities through law enforcement and all those kinds of things. So what I want to say is that it has come through a long history of development as far as where we are today.\(^{70}\)

\(^{70}\) Interview No. 50/Government Official; Male, Domongo, November 12.
The above quote shows how different discourses of environmental crisis, that is, forest, wildlife, and habitat loss; and of community-based participatory approaches as a solution are assembled under CREMA—in the form of governmentality that mobilizes and aligns the interests of a wide range of actors around the use and management of forests.

On the other hand, pro-poor REDD+ is an example of how discourses on ecological modernization and environmentalism and market-based solutions to climate mitigation are consolidated into practice. The objective of pro-poor REDD+ is “to demonstrate a tangible reduction of deforestation, a direct improvement of forest-dependent livelihoods and, ultimately, long-term security of forest-based carbon stocks in key forest rich regions,” with the purpose of aligning this objective with “national poverty reduction strategies” and ‘forest governance reforms’ (IUCN Pro-Poor REDD Project Document, pg. 3) The rationale behind the Pro-Poor REDD Project was therefore to demonstrate the prospects of jointly addressing concerns about deforestation, climate change, biodiversity loss, and poverty by reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation—win–win situation for everybody who is involved. In doing so, the interests of the cocoa farmers are aligned with the REDD+ mandate at the global, national, and local scales.

The fact that the pro-poor pilot REDD+ project in the Wassa Amenfi West District builds on the CREMA approach is illustrated by the following commentary made by an NGO official involved in REDD+ negotiations in Ghana and also CREMA implementation at specific sites:
Ghana started talking about REDD+ and preparing for REDD, we were also looking at how best to get REDD+ on the ground. And one of the main, I will say, platforms that was identified in Ghana was several collaborative resource management approaches on the ground. There is this community forest project, there is the CREMAs, a lot of them, some employed by the Forestry Division, some by the Wildlife Division. But a careful look around identified the CREMAs as having more than various structures in terms of local involvement, having local government authority also there and then legal, some legal framework and policy support. You had all the frameworks that is needed to kick start REDD. So at the discussion-level, and not even going towards a policy-level, where they are considering CREMAs as the basis to roll out REDD because it has very good local involvement there. So they want to use these structures to build on some of the things that REDD wants to see on the ground. So it’s not that CREMAs are ready yet. No. CREMAs have been there as a structure or as an approach. But how best can we move CREMAs, their functions, so that they can really satisfy the criteria for REDD on the ground. So it’s actually, it’s been discussed at the local-level and now it’s actually at the national, policy-level discussions now, as far as I know.\(^\text{71}\)

Further, the pro-poor REDD+ project also advances the market-based agenda by claiming to promote “good governance” through the participation of vulnerable groups and entrepreneurialism and market efficiency by focusing on clarifying the land and tree-tenure rights (planted) of the project constituents.

\(^{71}\) Interview No. 49/NGO Official; Male, Damongo, November 20, 2012.
As illustrated above, the rationale behind the CREMA and REDD+ shares a common thread—which was the identification of a collective problem that needs to be resolved and the co-construction and negotiation of project participation to resolve that risk. The subsequent sections of this chapter present the practices that were assembled to engage the local project’s constituents, that is, the cocoa farmers in agroforestry activities for better outcomes for the environment and society. It highlights the rationale underlying the promotion of “community-based and collaborative principles” as a way to make the intervention legitimate and inclusive.

5.3 Forging Alignments for CBNRM and REDD+ to Mitigate the Risk

A common CREMA narrative amongst interviewees, both project implementers, and project constituents, centered on environmental degradation and deforestation. While the crisis narrative surrounding the CREMAs tended to be more concerned with the declining wildlife numbers and encroachment issues near parks and forest reserve boundaries, the justification for REDD+ focused on climate change and deforestation.

Mr. Adom, Director of a local NGO which serves as the Secretariat of the Bontori CREMAs, said that once the cocoa farmers at the project site understood and witnessed how “forest cover has changed a lot in the area, rains have become less frequent,” so the risk (of climate variability and forest change) and the monetary benefits were good enough for people to plant trees. The founder of the local NGO of the Bontori CREMA and his family were the pioneers in planting teak trees on a commercial basis. The founder had an eclectic professional life and considered himself an “expert” both in Ghanaian administrative affairs and in agroforestry. Despite claims that environmental
change was enough to make tree planting reasonable, Adom noted the fact that “his farm” was the “the teaching and learning ground” helped people to participate in agroforestry:

Forest cover has changed (lessened) a lot in our area, rains have become less frequent and people were seeing these changes. This was enough motivation for us to plant trees but initially it was very difficult to convince people because it is about investments, money. Farmers easily do not want to put money; they want to see if it is feasible. Our farm became the teaching and learning ground for the community and particularly after our first harvests, when money flew in many of them bought the idea of tree planting.

He further added that:

… the most challenging issue is the complete ownership of the whole process. How do we increase our income and fulfill our aims? Our aim is that natural resources is our concern and our livelihood and therefore at all costs we should do something about it, even to the point of taking the policy and make sure that the policy responds to what we are trying to do. Our Constitution denies the people who owns the resources, the access to those resources.72

This particular view also represents the beliefs shared by many local people who have been hostile and uncooperative to projects that restrict access to forest resources and reduce income and employment opportunities. Sentiments such as the one expressed above also illustrate the instability around the narratives associated with these governmental interventions that seek to regulate behavior and institute change. As Adom notes, the crisis narrative was not enough to spur planting; instead, that narrative had to

72Interview No. 54/NGO Official; Male, Accra, October 2012.
be combined with demonstrations of practices that would work to address that crisis before it gained the force of action.

As discussed earlier, the urgent crisis of declining wildlife numbers and shrinking forest areas needed resolution and improvement. Therefore, also fundamental to this narrative of environmental crisis and for those who were involved in governing the crisis, was the assumption that the problem can be addressed and managed sustainably through collaborative actions with communities living near forested areas. At the specific project site, the parties involved in governing natural resources, especially the project implementers, saw the local communities involved with the CREMA as the suitable group to carry out restoration of degraded forests and take care of the resources to avoid the consequences of a poorly managed environment. The following quote from a senior community member and Chairman of the CREMA illustrates this point:

First and foremost, the CREMA is to bring the farmers of the community together for their strength and unity. Secondly, to manage and tap the resources within the community for the betterment of the farmers. Third, we are to plant trees and guard the forests to promote the ecosystem and four we are to come together for all the NTFPs of the forest sustainably, rear small ruminant animals and the bees in a sustainable livelihood of the people between the community and the CREMA as a whole.\(^\text{73}\)

In addition to what he deliberately wanted to convey, based on the popular environmental discourses and his position in the intervention, it may be safely concluded that these ideas were not his own. This respondent had also expressed his frustrations at

\(^{73}\) Interview No. 18; Male, Essandokrom, July 5, 2012.
the delay in seeing “carbon payments” but at least agreed to continue with his agro-forestry practices in the short-term—“for the next couple of years.” His justifications were also necessary because many other farmers also situated their actions within a general framework of conservation and climate change discourse (also discussed in Chapter 4). Statements such as “When I first came here it was covered with forests, but now rainfall has reduced and less regular and erratic”74 or “it used to rain here a lot, but now it has been changing and becoming more irregular”75 were common.

Whether it was the CREMA or REDD+, trees, and agroforestry not only connected the two interventions but also the project stakeholders. As one woman farmer explained when asked about her motivations for joining the CREMA and planting trees, “people came here told us that they will put a tag on the trees and that the trees have carbon and the trees will give us good air.”76

Speaking about the specific Bontori CREMA, at the study site, a senior official of the forestry department in the Wassa Amenfi District said that the CREMA with REDD+ was a “good idea” because this particular CREMA, with its emphasis on tree-planting and maintenance of trees on farm, could mean that REDD+ will bring incentives both for planted and naturally occurring trees on private farms for which farmers did not have any ownership or user rights.77 A community leader, who was also a farmer, agreed with the CREMA and REDD+ linkages saying, “getting involved in the whole process of the

74 Interview No. 17; Male, Ataase, June 14, 2012.
75 Interview No. 28; Male, Kamaso, June 10, 2012.
76 Interview No. 8; Female, Kamaso, June 1, 2012.
77 Interview No. 38/Government Official; Male, Asankragwa, April 25, 2012.
climate change, planting more trees if we (CREMA) want to enter into the carbon market then we want to get something out of it,” also adding “but, even then not that (entering the carbon market), our interest is just to plant trees for every day.”

For IUCN, the other agency at the project site, implementing the pro-poor REDD+ intervention, CREMAs can provide the necessary local structure for carbon forestry or REDD+ projects in Ghana. The West African Protected Areas Newsletter, IUCN, 2011 states that:

CREMAs and other provisions designed to support dedicated community forests could be key mechanisms for engendering local control and participation in REDD+ initiatives especially in the off-reserve areas since they are an effective means of local self-mobilization and have delivered tangible results from activities that would qualify for REDD-plus, such as tree-planting, forest restoration and on-farm, tree based diversification.

The West African Protected Areas Newsletter, IUCN, 2011.

NGOs have been critically often examined with observations that they privatize government functions and shrink state capacity. Despite these widespread criticisms, both the government officials as well as community members felt that the NGOs were playing a crucial role in facilitating the interventions. Therefore, besides the staff of the Ghana Forestry department, donor agencies and the communities at the project site, the two NGOs were also important parties in forging the alignments for implementing the focal interventions.

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78 Interview No. 37; Male, Peba, December 15, 2012.
The community members also agreed to the role played by NGOs in implementing community projects. As one farmer put it, “NGOs give us lessons to awaken our spirit in farming.” for example, a senior executive of the CREMA described how the role of NGO’s extends beyond monetary help to “backing up communities” and advocacy (NE, Achichire). Similarly, an official from another NGO involved with the implementation of a CREMA project near the Mole National Park mentioned that NGOs, in general, get involved with projects such as the CREMA to act as a facilitator in areas where local communities might not trust government officials, what government officials during the interviews had referred to as “the failure of fines and fences.” Importantly, these interventions align with their programmatic mandates:

… when we came in we were able to get the district’s magistrate, the courts to come and help the communities engage with the Park because the community was worried about losing their land or being forced out of the area because of the CREMA. And if you really understand what the CREMA really stood for…the concept of giving management authority, to them was like Ok, it’s just a ploy. And most of the communities around the Park have an experience where they have been evicted from the park. So that history is very fresh in their minds. We talk about land conservation, management issues, and the constitution and but especially when issues of demarcation comes in, they very much link us to their lands been taken away. So you have to engage in the district courts and they have to go to the community and explain to them, assuring them that there is presently
no law that allows the government to take community land without adequate compensation.\textsuperscript{79}

Another elite member of the community expressed similar sentiments. As he positioned the role of his NGO in representing community rights and offering CREMA-related expertise, he was skeptical of the term “collaborative” used in the context of CREMA; he thought the CREMA approach was rather authoritarian. The following conversation illustrates his point:

\textbf{Author:} You mentioned that the CREMA has to be self-sufficient at some point and nobody needs to represent a CREMA, so until when do you see ARD (local NGO) being associated with the CREMA? Or do you think the ARD support would be required for the CREMA as long as it is there?

\textbf{Respondent:} That is what it is, and that is why we need ARD to serve as a secretariat that will energize the system and engineer the department… so, the ARD is not an external institution, it is an internal institution that will have to last, it is parts and parcel of the CREMA but then the ARD has the ability to go beyond the institution of CREMA by establishing other CREMAs by using the experience and the lessons and sharing it with a larger community and other people who desire to engage in that style of governance. You mentioned the word “collaborative”, in Ghana the way they use it, is a little bit misleading.

\textbf{Author:} Yes, It’s the government’s term, I am using it, I am not saying it (CREMA) is collaborative; this is what they (Government) are saying.

\textsuperscript{79}Interview No. 49/NGO Official; Male, Damongo, November 20, 2012.
Respondent: They [the government] just design it up there and pass it down for you to follow [so it is not collaborative].

The practices of identifying an existing problem, in this case, loss of habitat and deforestation, and delivering solutions for improvement via collaboration with communities illustrates how perceptions were shaped by issues such as landscape degradation, forest conservation, and livelihood change. The overarching message from the respondents was unambiguous: environmental degradation was real, and collaboration with the communities was a necessity for addressing these issues on the ground. Through their construction, the CREMA and REDD+ projects aligned the various interests (e.g. farmers’ interests in improving income; NGO's mandate on agroforestry and restoration activities; the State’s objective to conserve forests) in a manner that moved these projects forward.

5.4 Delivering Assurances to Address the Crisis through Expertise and Capacity Development

Even though collaboration with the local communities were seen as an essential precursor, and the community was considered to be the appropriate body to carry out the agroforestry for obvious benefits, a recurrent theme that emerged from the data was a sense amongst high-level actors that the communities are not “ready” to shoulder such responsibility without adequate “training” and “capacity building”, that they required “guidance” and “facilitation.”

Talking about the issue of community capacity and CREMA establishment, a senior forestry official said:

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80 Interview No. 54/NGO official; Male, Accra, November 2012.

81 Interview No.48/Government Official; Male, Accra, September 4, 2012.
You cannot just form it (CREMA) and then leave it. It needs some guidance—technical guidance. It gets to a point where it works for itself. I can easily foresee when things have gone round in full circles, some of them learn by working for themselves, it will happen. For it (CREMA) to perform, you don’t have to leave them to themselves, but you have to help guide it for some time.\(^2\)

An official from IUCN involved in the implementation of the REDD+ pilot also described the role of implementing agencies such as NGOs, in the following words:

… they (community) need guidance, like when there is a child, the parents have to take care and likewise this CREMA concept is a new concept that has come to Ghana, and any NGO that leads to its formation or its developmental area should still be up in doing and leading those people and seeing the people are doing the right thing and are capable enough. They (NGOs) should not lead, they should be in the background and supporting, pointing them [the community] when they are going wrong, and enhancing their [community] capacity for involvement.\(^3\)

These notions—that the projects have a solution to the overall degradation and deforestation problem, that people’s lives can be improved through management and technological remedies such as agroforestry was perpetuated via experts who work with the stakeholders and adopted by the farmers who participated in the projects. As one of the interviewee, Nana Gonu said:

Mr. N (referring to an NGO official) told us that there have been changes in the climate and there has been changes in rainfall, where we are getting direct sunrays

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\(^2\) Interview No.40/Government Official; Male, Asankragwa, July 5, 2012.

\(^3\) Interview No.43/NGO Official; Male, Asankragwa, June 17, 2012.
due to the trees which have been cut and to prevent it that is why we have to plant more trees, and we should also include trees in our farms such as for cocoa and cropland so that it would prevent the crops and cocoa from drying out.\textsuperscript{84}

As illustrated by this quote, the narrative focused on climate change, where rainfall patterns, temperature, and tree cover has significantly changed. However, the participant also indicated that the source of this knowledge was the project expert who had communicated this information to the cocoa farmers engaged with the project. It further illustrates how the expert used the rhetoric of “risks” to make the participant care about planting trees, to mobilize the farmers’ interests and align them with those of the CREMA and REDD+. Another farmer directly attributed his knowledge to the project experts, stating that IUCN and FC told him to attend the CREMA meetings and trained him on the environmental benefits\textsuperscript{85} of the intervention. All the community participants expressed that there was a lot of awareness generation carried out by the forest department and CREMA members.

These sets of quotes illustrate that the interventions of experts had captured the imagination of the CREMA’s constituents by delivering notions of improvement and development in several spheres of their lives (income, better livelihoods, preventing crop failure, good air). However, the narrative was also accompanied by a particular framing of deforestation and forest degradation and the impending associated risks (crop failure, environmental degradation) and what the particular responsibilities were at the individual

\textsuperscript{84} Translated from Twi; Interview No. 21; Male, Achichire, September 28, 2012.

\textsuperscript{85} Interview No. 18; Male, Essandokrom, July 5, 2012.
level of the cocoa farmers, as well as those of the experts responsibilized to address these risks.

In forging these alignments with the community, the experts were in general reflexive about their biases and how these may impact their role as facilitators because they too felt responsible for the governmental projects and the intended objectives of these projects. The success of the CREMA/REDD+ assemblage was as much reliant on these experts as it was for the cocoa farmers and other project stakeholders. As one Forestry Official said, “… you need someone who is quite knowledgeable and skilled to facilitate the process. Other than that you may come out with something which many people will not buy into because they are representing your views of what their community should do.”

The role of experts was not only limited to training and project facilitation but as one senior government official argued, experts should also be able to “facilitate” and “manipulate.” The following excerpt from the interview with him typifies this attitude:

… if the facilitators are not good then there could be a few challenges. You could have people hijacking the thing. There are some people, if you do not control their way [behavior, attitude], they are likely to hijack. And if that happens you could have a structure there [institutional structure for the project], but the support base would be weak. Because they [project constituents] know the person and nobody likes the person, and that person is the one leading with them then your thing [project] might not stand for a long time.

But if it is well I’m expecting a good facilitator—when he spots somebody like

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86 Interview No.44/Government Official; Male, Takorade, December 13, 2012.
that—to know how to deal with that person in the whole scheme of things. Sometimes we have a kind of word, I mentioned it somewhere and people laughed a lot, but it is a good word. In Ghana for those of us who do these things we have something called “Facipulation” …you facilitate a little, and you manipulate.\textsuperscript{87}

In this sense, experts were expected to build the capacity of the cocoa farmers by way of “reorganization of knowledge and social power” (Birkenholtz 2009, 216) to guide project implementation while ignoring the local socio-political issues and intra-group dynamics.

One migrant cocoa farmer, who was seventy-three years old came to the region in 1963, shared his experience with higher cocoa yield resulting from following the advice of agricultural extension workers as follows:

When I came to Kamaso it was all bushy [presence of thick naturally growing vegetation] here, I used to clear the land and burn the bushes. Cocoa can be planted directly from the pods or seedlings, but I preferred to raise them in nurseries because, in the beginning, there were a lot of rats who would eat the cocoa beans. When I first came here, I used my intuition about planting distance but agricultural specialist are saying that ten ft by ten ft are good for planting cocoa, so I am using it now because the farm is more systematized and organized. But both systems worked. Initially, the production was slow per acre, but now it is

\textsuperscript{87} Interview No.44/Government Official; Male, Takorade, December 13, 2012.
two bags per acre because of extension services like spacing and fertilizers (ring or broadcast) method.\textsuperscript{88}

Another woman also shared similar sentiments, stating how following the advice of agricultural extension services helped her boost cocoa production even with decreasing soil fertility and erratic rainfall.\textsuperscript{89}

As discussed in the previous chapter, the major selling points used by experts to deliver notions of improvement through the projects were: direct monetary benefits, better living conditions through enhanced ecosystem services—clean air, cooler temperature and benefits to the current livelihood that is, cocoa cultivation, shade, soil fertility. Once the interests of the farmers’ were aligned with the project activities, their capacity “built’ through training they had to be made responsible for carrying out their duties toward the environment and society.

Armed with techniques that promise better livelihoods, efficient resource management via empowered communities, and decentralized decision-making processes, those with expert knowledge seek to enhance community self-regulatory capacities in a manner that aligns community preferences and choices with broader policy objectives. Such governing through the community aim to de-socialize and individualize risk, with subjects encouraged to “shape their lives according to a moral code of individual responsibility and community obligation” (Rose 1996, 347).

High-level actors repeatedly evoked the “collaborative principle” and the sense of “community” to mitigate some of the shortcomings inherent in the past forest and

\textsuperscript{88} Interview No.29; Male, Kamaso, June 10, 2012.

\textsuperscript{89} Interview No.4; Female, Achichire, July 4, 2012.
wildlife management policies, but they also asserted that the communities should be held responsible for the resources they use. As one NGO official working with communities on the CREMA implementation said, “People should be held responsible for the resources they use because, without those resources, they would suffer. Their livelihood would be compromised and then what happens?”

Interviews pointed to the emerging debates over the past two decades about the durability and sustainability of many local resource governance institutions. Such institutions are critical for securing rights and responsibilities at the local level in a manner that leads to better conservation and therefore is one of the main rationales for working with communities through the CREMAs.

The discourse about deforestation and environmental degradation and the role of the community and the individual in addressing the collective crisis also seemed to inform the individual behavior of the project constituents. For example, talking about this issue a 65-year-old male Wassa farmer, said, "My main motivation for joining CREMA is to plant trees to replace the cut-down trees so that the excessive threat and irregular rainfall can be reduced and it will benefit not just Ghana but the whole world." Another farmer, also echoed a similar sentiment about the role of the individual in the collective crisis and the value of tree-planting, noting that he had a personal responsibility to plant

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90 Interview No. 49/NGO Official; Male, Damongo, November 20, 2012.

91 Based on interviews and repeated interactions over a period of seven months with seven government officials and policy makers and four officials of local and international institutions, including two funding agencies involved in CREMAs.
trees even in the face of skepticism from his peers because he understood the value of trees and the ecosystem services that forests provided.92

However, the capacity to self-govern in this current environmental crisis was not only limited to the individual farmers at the village level, but also for experts. As one of the Senior Wildlife Division officials elaborated on the pro-activeness of higher-level actors (the experts) in achieving the objectives of resource management through CREMAs:

**Author:** So you are saying, in the department, each of you senior officers has the independence to bring in new ideas to incorporate in this project. The challenges you face is regarding budgetary allocation and political will to support those initiatives?

**Respondent:** Even the political will, I will leave it … at our level, if you yourself (the officer) are convinced about the concept, then you should have a plan to do it, even without any support from the top … nobody tells us to see if we can try and get funds for them just because we are convinced about what can come out of the CREMAs. We are just pro-active. We write to foreign organizations also … you can convince somebody about these communities that are governing their resources and are given an opportunity to do that. I am not waiting for any more political will. If they did, all the better for me … before 1994, the Forest and Wildlife policy probably didn’t have any senior authority ready to work with local people. So already with that policy, the way has been open. So I see the officers, the people who would love to have some more money as an indication of political

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92 Interview No.19; Male, Gonukrom, December 12, 2012.
will from the government. But if it is not coming, my question is what can we do also? … It would have been very good if as a country, we saw the situation and did something to halt the declining situation. It appears that if we do not put in so much effort, then at a certain point in time, we will lose all that is around us. 93

The previous sections show how, through alignment of interests and internalization of experts’ discourses, not only the cocoa farmers but also experts and other stakeholders are responsibilized, and these discourses are consolidated into practice at the project site. The fact is I too as a researcher situated my role and responsibilities in responding to this global environmental crisis (see Chapter 1).

While the environment crisis discourse seems to have materialized through the situated subjects and their attitudinal changes and modifications in farming practices, it also served as a benchmark for perceptions and evaluations—for those who aligned with the project objectives and those who did not.

As a 70-year-old farmer from Ataase, stated:

Some people mocked me about planting trees; somebody even told me to cut down all the trees and advised me instead to plant rubber commercially profitable]. When you put sheep out and they do not return you do not put the rest out until the first the first batch returns. So other people won't join [in tree planting] until they see the benefits (cash or material).94

Clearly, cash benefits are a key motivator in many farmer’s decisions to engage in tree planting. However, Ghana’s complex tree tenure system also seems to be another

93 Interview No. 44/Government Official; Male, Takorade, December 13, 2012.

94 Interview No. 16; Male, Ataase, June 14, 2012.
major barrier to people adopting tree planting. One female farmer from Metiya Meba village expressed what she thought was a key factor which demotivated many from participating in the ongoing intervention, “Farmers feel entitled to naturally growing trees on their farms, and this seems to be a pertinent problem.”95 What she referred to as a “pertinent problem” was the people’s reluctance in adopting agroforestry because of lack of rights over naturally occurring trees on their farms.

In addition to the above-stated reasons, few other women farmers with whom I spoke to, stated a few additional challenges in participating in the interventions via tree planting. As a forty-five-year-old female Ataase farmer, put it, “as a woman, distance is a problem for me to move the seedlings from Kamaso [the nursery is located in a separate community] and apart from the house hold work, I have to satisfy my husband … I feel that a woman have to share more work burden than man.”96

The following segment of a conversation with the Chief’s wife in Kamaso expresses a similar idea and provides insight into why many women are not participating in tree planting and agro-forestry activities, “I think a man spends more time on the farm, but women overall spend more time working throughout the day. I have to prioritize working in my vegetable garden so that I can have food to cook.” 97 All these women quoted here participated in the ongoing interventions, but spoke about these challenges and that - these challenges might have influenced other women’s decision not to participate. Other reasons cited by the respondents for not diversifying their farms

95 Interview No.9; Female, Meiya Meba, June 13, 2012.

96 Interview No: 6; Female, Ataase, June 14, 2012.

97 Interview No.10; Female, Kamaso, June 15, 2012.
through agroforestry were: not having enough land, timber trees taking years to mature, not seeing direct cash benefits, fear of overshadowing cocoa and diseases, farmers' perception about growing trees as a bad investment, lack of ownership over naturally growing trees on their farms, and preference for cash crops such as cocoa, rubber, and oil palm.

5.5 Conclusions

This chapter, through empirical evidence, demonstrated how the CREMA/REDD + governmental interventions helped align the interests of both the subjects and those who sought to govern through the ecological crisis narrative, by finding expert solutions to manage past failures and addressing deforestation and climate change, and making the environmental subjects do their part in this collective effort to address climate change, conservation, and SDGs. The chapter also discussed the barriers faced by individuals who could not take part in agroforestry. In the next chapter, I discuss the contextual issues that may influence the realization of the objectives of these projects.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Epilogue

On a typical morning in the village a couple of weeks away from Ghana's general elections, I was about to start interviewing a CREMA resident who was also an ex-member of the local District Assembly (Respondent 1, Male). Moments earlier, I had finished interviewing the man's elder sister (Respondent 2, Female) who was a cocoa farmer but was not a participant in the CREMA/REDD+ projects. While my interpreter and I were preparing to interview her brother, she was having a conversation with another member of the CREMA (Respondent 3, Male).

**Respondent 2 to Respondent 3:** They (government) say we should reserve the forest for the future generations, but most of them (children) have come because I have given birth and my kids have also given birth, so whom are we reserving these forests for? Will you ask them (referring to my interpreter and me) to make sure that they tell the authorities that we need more land for farming ... They (referring to the interpreter and me) can tell that (to the government) we need to farm where the forest is now.

**Respondent 3:** "Oh don't worry these answers are for answering sake, a time will come in the future when we all will share the forest land for agriculture, and the would be no reserve forests, and we will weed (clear, slash, and burn for agriculture)."
Respondent 2: Even if every person gets a pole (a local unit of land measurement colloquially equivalent to the distance between two electrical poles), that would be beneficial instead of the forest standing there and the community not getting any benefit from it.

The woman while addressing me said, “Obron, [foreigner, stranger] you go and tell to give some portion of the forest for farming, there is no more land for farming.”  

It is important to note that Respondent 3 was one of the key participants in this study. As a leader of his community, he had attended numerous meetings, training, and workshops on forest conservation organized by the Forestry Department and NGOs. He also volunteered as a community forest guard. Despite the views he expressed in the above conversation, his responses during his semi-structured interviews were pro-conservation and pro-environment. This conversation is an example, embedded in everyday practices that challenged the existing regulatory frameworks on access to forest resources and their use. People perceive that the governmental rationalities related to forest conservation have failed to deliver, and they feel deprived of the very resources they were protecting because sanctions on using those resources were very much a part of their lived reality.

Other stakeholders in the CREMA/REDD+ process offered similar sentiments. Some expressed their views without any inhibition, stating: “I will burn all the trees that I have planted if I am not allowed to use them.” They spoke about alternative strategies and plans if agroforestry and REDD+ payments failed: “I will plant rubber, which is

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98 Interview at Asankragwa between 8 and 11 am, Tuesday, October 30, 2012.

99 Male Farmer, Kamaso, June 2012.
much more profitable than the tree planting.”

People also spoke of the challenges of mainstreaming agroforestry if the discourses of REDD+ do not materialize in practice, and why it might be difficult to enroll other environmental subjects in the absence of tangible REDD benefits.

Similar sentiments were echoed by others who were participating in the CREMA/REDD+ process. Some expressed their views openly stating: “I will burn all the trees that I have planted if I am not allowed to use them” while others spoke about alternative strategies and future plans if agroforestry and REDD+ payments failed “I will plant rubber, which is much more profitable than the tree planting” while others spoke about challenges of mainstreaming agroforestry, if the discourses of REDD+ do not materialize in practice, and why it might be difficult to enroll other environmental subjects in the absence of tangible REDD benefits.

Even though there was no organized and visible resistances to the governmental efforts surrounding forest conservation, I witnessed ‘everyday forms of resistance’ during my field work. The vignette above, and the wider case in this dissertation show how both those who participated in the CREMA/REDD+ initiatives and those who did not share similar views about interventions that sought to regulate their behavior regarding natural resource access and use. The vignette also shows that governmentality (through mobilization of discourses) is useful for framing and examining CREMA/REDD+, but falls short of addressing local subject formation, power, and knowledge and

100 CREMA leader, Essandokrom, May 2012.

101 Male Farmer, Kamaso, June 2012.

102 CREMA leader, Essandokrom, May 2012.
socioeconomic and political contexts predating the interventions (Carr 2013, 2014, Li 2005).

6.2 Summary of Findings and Contributions

This dissertation, while examining “community-based conservation” approaches, explored the challenges that emerge at the intersection of project proponents and communities, and of communities and the global community and international negotiations. These challenges that obstruct the realization of the objectives of CREMA/REDD+. In this sense, this dissertation revealed the contradictions between governmental rationalities, discourses, and operationalization of these discourses in the context of CREMA/REDD+, and speaks to larger concerns for the realization of REDD+ goals through other means which mobilize discourses of conservation and participation.

In Chapter 1, I laid out the research context and provided the background on collaborative resource management areas (CREMAs) and REDD+ in Ghana. I described the relevance of these interventions for agroforestry activities associated with conservation, rural development, and climate change mitigation goals (Asare, Kyei, and Mason 2013; Canadell and Raupach 2008; DeFries et al. 2010; Garrity 2006; Luttrell et al. 2013). I then described the natural resource landscape of the Western Region of Ghana, including land tenure and tree tenure arrangements, elements that were framed both as problems and technical fix by governing agencies (Tutu, Ntiamo-Baidu, and Asuming-Brempong 1993).

In Chapter 2, I presented reviews of theoretical approaches to better understand the CREMA/REDD+ interventions in the cocoa landscape of Ghana. Through a review of literature I argued that (1) CBNRM approaches came out of a long history of efforts to
decentralize resource governance; (2) REDD+ is reworking existing elements of CBNRM for new purposes and defining “social protection” or “safeguards” to address equity issues and account for past injustices in natural resource management; (3) “safeguards” such as community “participation” and “tenure” are not straightforward; and (4) these safeguard principles may impact the realization of meaningful environmental, social, and economic goals through REDD+. Of importance here is the idea of governmentality (Foucault 1985), a means of framing the mechanics and goals of problem identification that lead to the definition and framing of a problem (Dean 1999; Li 2007; Rose 1999). Extending this theoretical framework to CREMA/REDD+, I examined global and sub-national environmental policies to identify the discourses and rationalities that were mobilized to achieve project objectives (Agrawal 2005; Birkenholtz 2009; Li 2007). Responding to the calls of critical development scholars to focus on social justice issues of developmental interventions, I also examined how these efforts mobilized equity discourses (safeguards) (Bebbington 1996; R. Chambers 1997a; Sunderlin, Larson, et al. 2014). This helped to unravel the socio-economic rationale for a focus on community-driven environmental conservation and increasing household incomes through agroforestry intervention to achieve rural development. Finally, governmentality gives frame to the literature on natural resource decentralization and local democracy (Agrawal and Ribot 1999)

Crook and Manor 1998; Ribot 2003; Ribot et al. 2008) by demonstrating how strong institutions, good governance, and congruence between discourse, law, and practice serve as means of mobilizing wider interests and reshaping projects of the rule, to protect the environment and human well-being.
I presented the research methods in Chapter 3 and explained the rationale for, and advantages and limitations of, the chosen data collection methods. Based on the empirical data as well as data collected from government and NGO documents, local newspaper articles, rural radio programs, and personal observations, I discussed the characteristics of the study population and the methods used to recruit the study participants. I also presented the methods for data analysis to demonstrate the rigor and validity of the data and resultant findings. I explained the importance of looking at contradictions and gaps between discourses, practices, and outcomes (Ribot 2002), furthering the goal of generating conclusions that are of practical relevance.

In Chapter 4, building on the data collected through semi-structured interviews and a review of policy documents, I elaborated how climate change and deforestation were problematized in the Wassa Amenfi CREMA/REDD+ and how promised benefits through the ongoing projects were linked to governing the conduct of agriculture by cocoa farmers. I found that these alliances between parties who want to govern with objectives such as conservation, tenure rights, payments, livelihood improvement, and sustainability encouraged people at the project site to engage in agroforestry activities despite the reservations about tree planting and skepticism about equity issues in benefit sharing from these projects voiced by those living in the project site.

In Chapter 5, I demonstrated the complicated ways and practices through which the diverse interests of the stakeholders were brought together, and connections were established between them to meet the specific goals of the ongoing interventions—mitigating climate change, conservation, and improving rural livelihoods. I showed how the discourses and practices of the CREMA/REDD+ interventions helped to align the
interests of the REDD+ stakeholders and those who sought to govern through the crisis narratives of deforestation, environmental degradation, and anthropogenic climate change. These interventions also sought expert knowledge and guidance to remedy these issues while seeking to influence the behavior of project stakeholders so that they perform their part in the collective effort to address climate change and other environmental challenges.

Through Chapters 4 and 5, I showed how decentralized community-based initiatives such as CREMA and REDD+ pilots focus more on expectations and mobilization of participatory discourses than on effective practice and outcomes, thus undermining policy mandates. The identification of this particular mobilization of discourses of participation and governance within the project of rule embodied in CREMA and REDD+ through an in-depth assessment of decentralization efforts revealed the gaps between discourse, governmental rationalities, and practice. This I believe is a major contribution of this dissertation regarding reconceptualizing forest governance under REDD+, along with generating empirical evidence that demonstrates the clear implications of my findings for policy (Ribot 1995; Larson and Ribot 2007).

As the case study of Bontori CREMA, under the Phase II of “Towards Pro-Poor REDD,” undergoes institutional and governance reforms and project participants wait for REDD+ “money to come,” this case study compels us to rethink the “win-win” rhetoric surrounding the establishment of carbon projects and REDD+. These market-based projects require long-term and significant cash investments both from the public and private sector to succeed. Pre-existing local community institutions, and having/creating compliant communities, is not a guarantee for investment outcomes. If investments do
not come, then will REDD+ mostly be about receiving money from the international donors to support business-as-usual conservation and development projects? Moreover, will that be enough?

### 6.3 Participation as Mobilization

Despite the invocation of democratic processes in policy discourses and the recognition of the need for effective local participation, this dissertation showed the contradictions between discourse and practice. In practice, participation was a political tool to mobilize specific discourses for achieving project activities. This is because intervening agencies (local and donor NGOs, government agencies) ignored democratic processes and building robust institutions, and instead focused on measurable outputs (Ribot 1995; Ribot and Larson 2012). Democratic participation and participatory decision-making processes consume time, are costly, and are often not the indicator of choice for implementing agencies to monitor and assess development projects (Collier and Hoeffler 2005).

Examining the accountability issues and participatory processes in CREMA, I showed how its legal and administrative framework tended to empower elites. Further, I showed how the recognition of a local NGO also empowered elites over rest of the population, both contradictions of the CREMA’s mandate (Baruah 2015; Baruah et al. 2016). The legal and administrative framework of the CREMA tended to empower the traditional elites, for example, when the recognition of a local NGO by state authorities to oversee natural resource management encouraged the formation of new elites. I found that despite their stated commitment to democratic processes, the Government of Ghana and international authorities presumed the accountability and ability of NGOs to
represent local interests in forest resource management. I also found that institutional mandates and technical and managerial priorities are used by higher-level authorities to rationalize the omission of accountability and representation in CREMA activities. Disregard for democratic processes thus centralized decision-making and rendered political processes technocratic at the cost of effective local participation and control over forest resources. Also, the higher-level authorities’ promotion of tree tenure privatization reduced public engagement by enclosing and thus discounting the public forest domain. The combination of these factors compromises the accountability and ability of CREMAs to represent local interests.

This dissertation showed how despite the rhetoric and policy framings of the importance of democratic and participatory decision-making processes as essential principles of REDD+ safeguards, implementing agencies take these principles for granted. Collier and Hoeffler (2005) argued that the access to and use of natural resources in weak institutional and governance settings may be problematic and lead to internal conflicts surrounding rights, access, and usage among local communities (Collier and Hoeffler 2005). As discussed in the previous chapters, institutional structures, good governance, and the process of unifying the rights of various stakeholders are crucial for the implementation of REDD+. Successful outcomes from REDD+ depend on the resolution of conflicts (related to rights, access, and usage) and the adequate representation of diverse goals and interests in a manner that aligns individual and community interests with policy goals of REDD+. CREMAs in Ghana are seen as appropriate vehicles for operationalizing REDD+ on the ground because they have some aspects of these ideal institutional and governance pre-conditions. However, without
addressing governance issues, tenure insecurity, and opacity regarding the specific role of non-state private actors and NGOs, CREMAs need to be promoted and implemented with caution (Baruah 2015). Otherwise, these interventions are likely to perpetuate existing inequalities in decision-making processes regarding access to forest and land resources and hinder pro-poor outcomes sought under REDD+.

6.4 Future Research

In many respects, this dissertation establishes how global frameworks such as REDD+ are fraught with competing interests and are interpreted at multiple scales, and how the realization of objectives is contingent on local context, uneven power relations, and diverse subject positions of the stakeholders that must be aligned and mobilized to achieve project goals. It also elucidates the local place-based realities of a community-based conservation initiative that was brought into conversation with market principles and the commodification of nature through a global policy such as REDD+, and how it is shaping local forest governance creating allowing new outcomes such as efforts to clarify tree tenure rights, as in other places (Lawlor et al. 2013). For some cocoa farmers at the specific CREMA site in Ghana, the arrival of decentralized forestry interventions created an enabling environment to advocate for tree tenure reform and local rights over forest resources. At the same time, REDD+ has been utilized by multiple kinds of “local” authorities (chiefs, government agencies, farmers, experts, and new elites, local NGOs) to strengthen claims over their power to manage forest resources. Further studies are needed to understand how the emerging spaces for political possibilities could transform state-society-community relation in forest governance and what those changes could mean for forest conservation and human well-being.
Another potential avenue for research is to examine the role of CREMAs in forest rehabilitation, on biodiversity, how they affect land use and land cover change, and their impacts on habitat quality outside of protected areas and forest reserves. Ghana is losing forests at the rate of 20 kha/year (FAO 2015), and most of the remaining forests are in its 250 forests reserves and seven national parks in a human modified matrix. Eighty-six percent of these forest reserves are located in the HFZ and cover about 20 percent of the zone (Odoom 2005). About fifty-five percent of the total reserve area in Ghana is “degraded” while twenty-nine percent is in “very bad condition” (Hawthorne and Abu-Juam 1995). Biogeographers and ecologists continue to emphasize the impact of forest habitat loss and fragmentation on biodiversity (Brashares, Arcese, and Sam 2001, Kupfer, Malanson, and Franklin 2006). While studies recognize the implications of forest habitat loss on Ghana’s biodiversity (Blay et al. 2008), the ecological impacts of habitat management around dispersed protected areas, through collaborative initiatives such as CREMAs, have not been explored in depth. Forest loss and fragmentation reduce habitat resources and divide species populations, change species interactions and disturbance regimes, modify micro-climate conditions, and increase exposure to invasive species and pests, but the severity of many such impacts vary greatly across the human-modified landscape mosaic (Kupfer, Malanson, and Franklin 2006). The thirty CREMAs in Ghana, all operating with a mandate to manage wildlife and conserve natural resources outside protected areas, require further examination to understand their effect on conserving biodiversity and wildlife habitat. Studies on the impact of forest fragmentation and habitat loss conducted in tropical forests show that the primary forest habitats are irreplaceable for their role in sustaining biodiversity in tropics (Gardner et al.
2009; Gibson et al. 2011), But there is little information on biotic responses to varying levels of human usage across the landscape across or the potential value of human-modified systems for species of concern. Use of some recently available globally consistent satellite derived data (Hansen et al. 2013), and geospatial platforms could be leveraged to answer some of these questions (Global Forest Watch 2014; GEE 2017).

This dissertation did not deeply engage the political economy of forest conservation via CREMAs and REDD+. Political economic studies of the environment emerged from an interest in the interaction of state and non-state actors within environmental and economic policy processes (Clapp and Dauvergne 2005). Studies on the political economy of reforestation and forest restoration programs in Asia–Pacific has identified key governance challenges, including corruption and rent transfer to elites (Barney 2008; Barr and Sayer 2012). A range of actors and institutions (ministries, timber and plantation companies, NGOs, elected government, political and corporate elites, Chiefs, local population) are involved in the CREMA/REDD+ process. Therefore, the political economic analysis will illuminate the political and economic interests at various scales in REDD+ and the implications of those strategic interests for forest governance and achieving the intended outcomes of these interventions (Luttrell et al. 2013). For example, in the context of REDD+ and the economic incentives that it may present, it will be worth examining the evidence on potential re-alignment of power relations among chiefs, the REDD+ constituency, the state, forestry bureaucracies and donors and how these re-alignments influence existing strategic relations. As the CREMA/REDD+ interventions talk about training and “capacity–development” of local farmers, a political economy analysis will also reveal the realities that marginalize them
(Faye and Ribot 2017). The findings from a political, economic analysis could potentially help policy makers structure REDD+ in a way that it delivers benefits across the broad range of stakeholders involved in the REDD process in Ghana.

6.4.1 Revival of the CREMA through Governance Reforms

As of March 2017, the Bontori CREMA is operating under Phase II of the “Towards Pro-Poor REDD” project implemented by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), in collaboration with its local partner Codesult Network, and the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission. The revival involved providing financial and technical support to the CREMA to develop a comprehensive five-year Action Plan. The IUCN facilitated the process to design an operational strategy for the CREMA that will help revamp the governance structures and instruments of the CREMA and guide it on a path to sustainability. Implementation of the Action Plans was initiated with a review of their CREMA Constitution to reflect current challenges and opportunities. They also developed and published the District Assembly bylaws that provide the CREMA with the needed legitimacy in a government bulletin. The initial phase of reviving the CREMA is expected to end by May 2017, and the future replication of the activities currently undertaken in the second phase of the REDD+ project will be subject to the availability of additional funds.

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# APPENDIX A INTERVIEWS WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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### APPENDIX B
### INTERVIEWS WITH HIGH LEVEL ACTORS

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APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDES

A. Villagers (CREMA and Non-CREMA members)

- Tell me about yourself—name place of birth, what you do for a living etc.
- Have you heard about the CREMA? How?
- Are you a member?
- Tell me how you got involved with the CREMA
- What are the activities of the CREMA?
- Who are the CREMA office bearers in this community?
- What about the executive Committee members?
- How do you elect your CREMA leaders?
- Have you taken part in any CREMA elections?
- What has the CREMA done for the community? For you?
- What else can be done?
- Who do you think is your leader?
- Does the leader listen to people’s needs?
- Do you trust your leader? Why?
- Can the community influence their leader?
- Who does the elected official represent?
- Do you think your leader has enough power to respond to people’s needs?
- Have you heard about REDD+/Forest carbon? How?
- What is it?
- Whose forests are these you think? Who should be looking after them?
- Do you go to the forest? Why?

B. IUCN Project personals

- Who are the local actors and institutions working with you here at Wassa Amenfi West?
- What kind of support you give them and what do you expect in return?
- Who decides who you work it on ground?
- What are forestry related interventions are in place?
- What do you look for in a local partner?
- What is the central government mandate on representation in the forestry sector in Wassa Amenfi West?
- How do you understand representation and participation? Is one important than the other?
- Explain stakeholder selection
- Explain selection of representatives from among stakeholder groups.
- What do you do with regards to accountability of representatives?
- How does the IUCN view representation by the local institutions and how do they view their skills and capabilities to achieve project goals?
- What and to whom is the IUCN accountable to?
- What accountabilities do you imagine local institutions to have to the local population?

C. District Forest Department
- Who are the local actors and institutions working with you here at Wassa Amenfi West?

- What kind of support you give them and what do you expect in return?

- Who decides who you work it on ground?

- What forestry related interventions are in place?

- What do you look for in a local partner?

- What is the central government mandate on representation in the forestry sector in Wassa Amenfi West?

- How do you understand representation and participation? Is one important than the other?

- Explain stakeholder selection

- Explain selection of representatives from among stakeholder groups.

- What do you do with regards to accountability of representatives?

- How does the FSD view representation by the local institutions and how do they view their skills and capabilities to achieve project goals?

- What and to whom is the FSD accountable to?

- What accountabilities do you imagine local institutions to have to the local population?

D. Representatives of elected local governments (unit committee members)

Additional question to those listed under villagers

- Tell me what you do for the community as an elected representative?

- How do you discharge your duties and responsibilities?

- Who do you think you are accountable to?
- What about listening to people’s needs? What do you do about it?
- What about people’s trust in you? Why?
- Who do you represent?
- Tell us what do think about the role of traditional leaders in responding to community needs
- Do you think you have enough power to respond to people’s needs?
- Do you have any power related to the forestry sector?
- What changes would you like to see?

E. CREMA executives

Additional question to those listed under villagers

- What powers CREMA has to respond to people’s needs?
- What more power and functions can help CREMA? Please elaborate.
- How do you collaborate with the FSD and IUCN?
- What about the role of CREMA on REDD+ implementation?
- What about the role of CREMA after REDD+ implementation?
- Do you think people trust CREMA as an institution capable of instituting a practice of collaborative resource management?
- Explain selection of representatives for CRMC.

F. Traditional chiefs

- Tell how you became the chief?
- How do you discharge your duties and responsibilities?
- What kind of decisions do you have to make as a chief?
- Do you make any rules in the community?
- What about listening to people’s needs? What do you do about it?
- What about people’s trust in you? Why?
- Who do you represent?
- Tell us what do think about the role of traditional leaders in responding to community needs
- Do you think you have enough power to respond to people’s needs?
- Do you have any power related to the forestry sector?
- What changes would you like to see?

**G. Vignettes on REDD+/Forest carbon sharing**

In order to understand people’s perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward different institutions and actors involved in the forestry sector, the context, idea, and structure of REDD+/forest carbon were explained to them in a simple language. Relating to their experiences in land and tree tenure, they were asked to comment on the REDD+ benefit-sharing scheme, on who should get what and why, who they would trust with the measurement of carbon, tree registration, and disbursement of benefits under REDD+ or CREMA.