Organising pitsawyers to engage

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Summary

Small forest producers are often ignored or marginalised by policies and institutions. Decision-makers often assume that an army of small producers, if left unchecked, will only ever destroy the forest. This may or may not be the case. Either way, a good level of organisation of small producers is needed, so that they can fight their corner; or so improvements in their practices can be made. This tool provides an approach and a framework for development practitioners to help small producers, such as pitsawyers. It shows how partnerships with other players can also create incentives for small producers to base long term livelihoods on sustaining - not destroying - local forest resources.
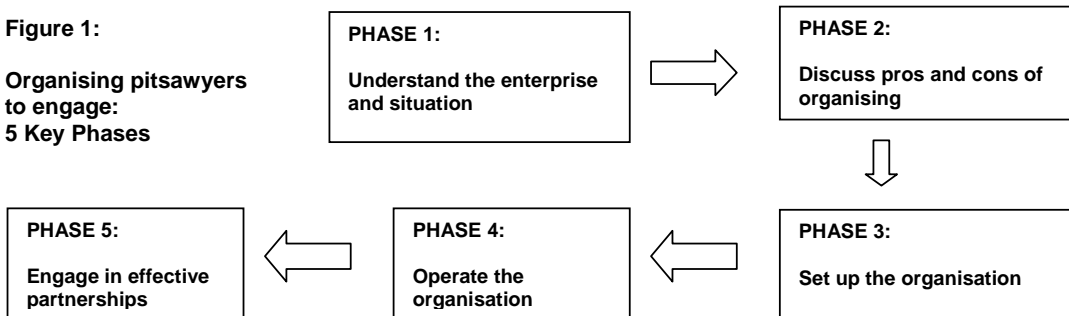
What is this tool for?

This tool will help marginalised forest producers to organise themselves in order to gain greater recognition. As a recognised organisation legitimately engaged in forest governance and management, marginalised forest producers may be able to access resources, partnerships and markets which they would otherwise not be able to.

Based upon experiences and lessons from the formation and operation of the Budongo Sub-county Pitsawyers Association in Uganda, this Power Tool suggests a process for understanding the situation facing this type of marginalised forest producer (see Figure 1). It can be used by pitsawyers and those who seek to help them. It provides ideas on how pitsawyers can plan, form and operate an organisation. It suggests measures that a local pitsawyers' organisation may take to gain the formal recognition they need to, for example, obtain licenses and operate legally.

Pitsawing, which is the production of timber using hand saws, is a widespread activity in Africa and in some other parts of the world. This tool may be useful in these contexts. We believe it may strike a chord with others more generally who recognise the need for improved levels of small producer organisation.

Figure 1:

Organising pitsawyers to engage:
5 Key Phases

PHASE 1:

Understand the enterprise and situation

PHASE 2:

Discuss pros and cons of organising

PHASE 3:

Set up the organisation

PHASE 4:

Operate the organisation

PHASE 5:

Engage in effective partnerships

Why do pitsawyers need recognition?

Poor communities who live close to forests often remain largely dependent on forest resources for their livelihood. Members of these communities exploit forest resources for subsistence, with many engaging in small-scale production of timber and non-timber forest products for commercial sale.

Pitsawyers from forest-dependent communities, in particular, face a number of constraints which are due, in large part, to a lack of recognition of their legitimacy. Larger operators from outside the region enjoy greater recognition, which enables them to obtain licenses to *legally* harvest. The only option left to local pitsawyers who cannot obtain licenses is to harvest *illegally*. As a result, policy makers and institutions involved in forest governance, management and law enforcement do not recognise small-scale pitsawyers as legitimate operators, and continue to exclude them from policy and forest management processes.

The challenge is how to empower these local pitsawyers to regain recognition as legitimate small forest producers. A starting point is to support local pitsawyers to organise themselves into local pitsawing associations. As a registered association, willing to prove its commitment to a local forest resource for the long term, local pitsawyers will gain greater recognition of legitimacy by forest governance and management institutions. As legitimate small forest producers, they may be able to:

1. Formally access pitsawing licenses in forest reserves,
2. Engage in new markets previously inaccessible to them,
3. Secure a seat at the negotiating table for important forestry decision-making,
4. Negotiate higher prices for their timber products,
5. Co-operate rather than compete for harvest of scarce forest resources,
6. Assess the sustainability of their activities and jointly develop sustainable harvesting techniques and systems for long term management of local forest resources,
7. Get training in harvesting, processing & storage, marketing and entrepreneurship,
8. Develop and market new forest products from timber "waste",
9. Co-operate to store and supply timber products directly to the buyer in bulk, and
10. Deliver better returns to local livelihoods from pitsawing.

What steps are involved?

This tool provides an approach and a framework to guide development practitioners in helping local forest producers, such as pitsawyers, to organise themselves and legitimately engage in effective partnerships. This process consists of five phases:

Phase 1: Understand the situation facing pitsawyers and their enterprise
Phase 2: Discuss pros and cons of setting up an organisation
Phase 3: Set up an organisation
Phase 4: Operate the organisation
Phase 5: Engage in effective partnerships

Each phase comprises a number of processes. The following section provides checklists of issues to think about and questions to try and answer when undertaking these processes. It is written as a step-by-step approach, based on experience in Uganda. Any user of this tool will need to consider adapting the order of the steps, and even the processes themselves, to make it relevant and achievable in their particular institutional and legal context.

PHASE 1: Understand the situation facing pitsawyers and their enterprise

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To understand the problems pitsawyers face and what support they need, the specific nature and characteristics of pitsawing within each context need to be considered. There are a number of ways to take this forward, depending on how much is already known about the pitsawing enterprise and its importance for forest-based livelihoods. When directly supporting pitsawyers, practitioners may need to focus more on understanding governance constraints and opportunities (Steps 5-7) and focus less on analysing livelihoods issues (Steps 1-4). Pitsawyers undertaking this phase may fully understand their situation, but may need to get help from local district officials or NGOs to structure their thinking and to identify new opportunities.

Step 1: Characterise pitsawing in the area concerned

➢ *Define pitsawing*
   What does "pitsawying" mean in the regional context? In East Africa, for example, pitsawing is the harvesting and producing of timber by hand using two-man rip saws. Pitsawyers are those who are involved in the pitsawing enterprise, and range from business investors to those who

saw the timber. Within the region under consideration there may be similarly marginalised groups who harvest and produce timber by hand, but who are known by another name.

➢ *Describe the region, resources, economy, population and livelihoods*
This is may be important to help justify the need for a focus on pitsawyers as a forest-dependent group. Key things to think about are:
1. How dependent are local livelihoods upon forest resources?
2. How much do local small forest enterprises contribute to the regional economy?
3. What proportion of the regional population is dependent upon forest resources in the region? What proportion is involved in pitsawing?

➢ *Identify historical trends and importance of pitsawing to your area.*
This is important to track changes in pitsawing over time and to learn from the past. Key things to find out are:
1. How did pitsawing start and why?
2. Who has benefited and how? Who has lost out and how?
3. How have pitsawing enterprises changed over time? If things had evolved differently, would it still have been the same groups to lose out and to benefit?

Step 2: Unpack the pitsawing enterprise

This is one of the most important steps. In order to see clearly what the problems are and who needs further support, the pitsawing enterprise needs to be fully "unpacked". It is very likely that a pitsawing enterprise is dependent upon a number of people who are responsible for very different aspects of the business. It is fundamental to see who fulfils the different roles and how the people in these roles relate to each other.

➢ *Identify who is involved*
Key things to think about here are:
1. *What* different roles are needed for the pitsawing enterprise? What is the importance of markets, investors, transporters, middlemen, sawing experts, carriers and other labourers, policy makers, forest management authorities and staff, local politicians and administrative officers to the enterprise?
2. *Who* carries out these roles? Where do these people come from? Where do they live? What levels of education do they have? What is their social status? What tribe or clan are they from? To what extent are these different people dependent on pitsawing for their livelihood?
3. Who operates legally and who operates illegally? Why? Are those who operate illegally the same ones who live closest to the local forest resource?
4. Who is marginalised by current decision-making about pitsawing? (this is investigated further in later steps)

➢ *What are the relationships?*
Relationships between groups are determined by relative power and legitimacy. Given the roles and the people identified above, think about:
1. What are the principal relationships? What are the aims of these relationships? Who is involved? Who is included and who is excluded?
2. What other relationships are there? Think of relationships amongst field employees, amongst investors, between employees of different investors, between illegal and legal pitsawyers, for example.
3. Who is dependent upon whom? Do these dependencies support traditional allegiances?

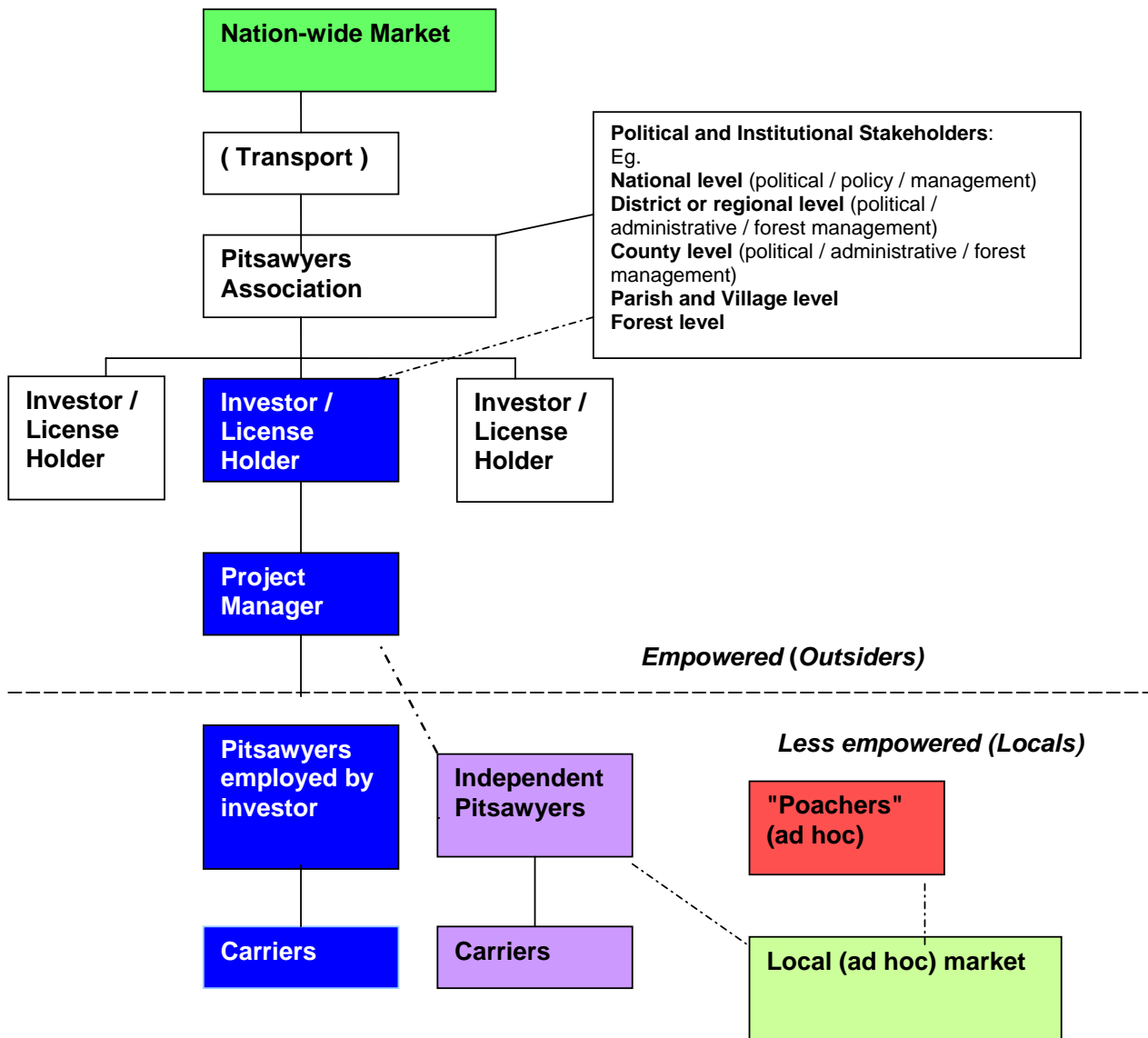➢ *Draw a diagram of the pitsawing enterprise and its relationships*
Depict the people and groups involved and their relationships in a diagram that can be used to provoke further discussion. Try a Venn Diagram (in which groups are depicted in a series of different size circles depending on importance, and which overlap depending on the extent of the relationship), or try something like the diagram in Figure 2.

Figure 2 characterises the pitsawing enterprise and its power relationships. Being empowered makes it easier to develop relationships with those in positions of influence which enables easier access to pitsawing licenses. Those who are less empowered often cannot access pitsawing licenses because they have less time or legitimacy to develop these relationships. Setting out the stakeholder relationships in this way helps to identify where the balance of power should lie, who should be further empowered, and how, in order to improve contributions from pitsawing to local livelihoods. Develop a diagram, using Figure 2 as an example:
1. Set out the stakeholders in terms of their formal (full line) and informal (dashed line) relationships. (Figure 2 sets out one formal vertical relationship and other informal relationships)
2. Determine who is empowered and who is less empowered. (In Figure 2 it turns out that those who are empowered tend to be from outside the local forest area, while those who are less empowered are locals.

Figure 2 helps us to see that, in this case, the present power balance lies with empowered outsiders who control relationships and linkages with political and institutional stakeholders and national markets. It also helps us to see that locals, who are directly involved in pitsawing (whether directly employed in legal pitsawing enterprises or as independents), should be empowered to develop their own relationships with political and institutional stakeholders and the national markets.

Figure 2: Example of a diagram showing pitsawing stakeholders and relationships

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┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Nation-wide Market    │
└─────────────────────────┘
            │
┌─────────────────────────┐       ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│   ( Transport )         │       │ Political and Institutional Stakeholders: │
└─────────────────────────┘       │ Eg.                                    │
            │                     │ National level (political / policy /   │
┌─────────────────────────┐       │ management)                            │
│   Pitsawyers            │───────│ District or regional level (political /│
│   Association           │       │ administrative / forest management)    │
└─────────────────────────┘       │ County level (political / administrative / forest │
                                  │ management)                            │
                                  │ Parish and Village level               │
                                  │ Forest level                           │
                                  └──────────────────────────────────────┘
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| Investor / License Holder | Investor / License Holder | Investor / License Holder |

Project Manager

Empowered (Outsiders)

- -

Less empowered (Locals)

| Pitsawyers employed by investor | Independent Pitsawyers | "Poachers" (ad hoc) |

| Carriers | Carriers | Local (ad hoc) market |

Step 3: Establish the importance of pitsawing to local livelihoods

Pitsawing contributes to local peoples' livelihoods in many different ways. Pitsawing may contribute directly through employment in a pitsawing enterprise or from sale or subsistence use of pitsawn timber. For some people it may contribute indirectly to livelihoods, for example those involved in transporting timber to market. Using the diagram of the pitsawing enterprise and its relationships, establish for each of the stakeholders the relative importance of pitsawing to their livelihoods. Aspects to consider may be:
1. Whose livelihoods are dependent upon pitsawing and in what way are they dependent?
2. How many people are directly and indirectly dependent upon pitsawing for their livelihoods? Where do they live? What do they do?
3. What proportions of peoples' livelihoods are derived from pitsawing?
4. What have been the trends over time? Have people become more or less dependent upon pitsawing for livelihoods? What are the reasons for any changes?
5. How important is illegality or legality of pitsawing to livelihoods? Who gains and who loses from illegal pitsawing? Who gains and who loses from legal pitsawing?
6. What are the threats to livelihoods dependent upon pitsawing? Are there any opportunities for better returns from pitsawing?

7. Whose livelihoods are mostly dependent on the long-term sustainability of the local forest resources?

Step 4: Assess the impact of pitsawing on forests, woodlands or trees on farms

Assessing the impact of pitsawing on forests can be done at many different levels, with varying degrees of accuracy. Local communities are not likely to have the capacity or the knowledge to assess the impact of pitsawing from the scientific perspective that a Forest Department would. For this purpose, the "required" scientific approach may not be necessary. Local people who may or may not be involved in pitsawing will be able to qualitatively assess the impact on local forest resources, based upon direct contact with local forest and woodland resources over generations. Consider the following approach:

1. Try to develop a picture of how the forest looked and what timber and non-timber resources were available then and now from current pitsawyers, former pitsawyers, elders, and women who commonly harvest resources for domestic use.
2. Develop a historical timeline of important national and local events, policies, and laws which may have played a part in how pitsawing has impacted the forest.
3. Ask past and present pitsawyers what the changes have been. What has been the most common timber for pitsawing, then and now? What is left which is suitable for pitsawing? How much is available? How many years do they envisage being able to make a living from future suitable timber sources?
4. Ask past and present pitsawyers about techniques and tools used in pitsawing operations. How have these changed? Are they less or more destructive on remaining forest resources?
5. Which types of pitsawing enterprises (licensed, unlicensed, ad hoc, etc) seem to have most impact on local forest resources? Why is this so?
6. Ask the Forest Department or the forest managing authority for their view on impact of pitsawing on local forest resources. What are they trying to do about it? Do they see a future in working with pitsawyers towards restocking and improving conditions for sustainable forest management?

Step 5: Analyse pitsawyers' decision-making

➢ *Describe how pitsawyers have been organised (if at all)*
   Here the objective is to assess levels of co-operation and competition amongst those involved in pitsawing, and what impact this has on their ability to make their own decisions in their best interest. Use the diagram to help. Key things to think about are:
   1. If organised, who, of those involved in pitsawing, is included in the group? Who is excluded? What impact does this have for decision-making?
   2. If not organised, what are the positives and the negatives? For whom?
   3. For those organised; is it formal or informal? What does its institutional structure look like? Is it representative of all the pitsawing stakeholders' interests? Whose does it exclude? Why?

➢ *Work out which policies, institutions, market signals and other external factors affect enterprises' decision-making*
   Usually, sectoral policies, laws and governing and managing institutions have some degree of influence on decision-making by enterprises. Clarify the sectors that the enterprise works within and in partnership with, and get to know the policies, legislation and institutions which administer these sectors. Decision-making within a pitsawing enterprise should, for example, take into account sectoral policies and legislation for the forestry, environment, and land sectors, in addition to any decentralisation policies and legislation determining where policy making, enforcement and administration is based. The location and size of markets also play a large role in enterprise' decision-making, particularly regarding cost of transport and type of

demand of timber. Find out about which are the relevant markets, what restricts or enables access to these markets, and about any competition within these markets.

Also consider whether external factors affect all pitsawyers differently:

1. How does it differ? For whom? Why?

➢ *Determine relative importance and influence of stakeholders*
   Have another look at the list of stakeholders, and how these relate as depicted in the Venn diagram or in the diagram like Figure 2. Borrowing a technique from the *Stakeholder Power Analysis* Power Tool, this analysis can be taken a bit further to help you determine which of the stakeholders is most in need of support. Draw two axes, dividing the page into four boxes. Label the vertical axis "influence" and the horizontal axis "importance". Plot each of the stakeholders involved in pitsawing according to how influential (or powerful) they are, and how important pitsawing is to their livelihoods. Usually, those stakeholders with least influence and most importance (ie. in the bottom right box) will be the target stakeholders most in need of empowerment through this tool.

➢ *Identify constraints and opportunities to decision-making for marginalised stakeholder groups*
   Develop this as a table for purpose of clarity. Compare constraints and opportunities depicted in table and consider:

   1. What are the main reasons for the constraints?
   2. Where do the opportunities lie?
   3. How would marginalised pitsawyers be best placed to take advantage of these, given the constraints?

PHASE 2: Discuss pros and cons of setting up an organisation

Having identified the constraints facing the more marginalised pitsawyers, during Phase 2 we consider whether, as an organised group, they would be better placed to take advantage of the opportunities.

Step 1: Identify a general goal

Develop a picture of what you want to achieve. During this step, marginalised pitsawyers aim to identify a general goal of what they want to achieve as a group and how, incorporating the problems and threats they face. It is important that this is undertaken in a participatory way, making sure that all interests are formulated into developing the general goal. Key things to consider are:

1. Do all share a common vision of what they want to achieve? If not, why not?
2. Formulate the picture of what you want to achieve into a general goal.
3. How would "organisation" help pitsawyers achieve their general goal?

Step 2: Explore whether it makes sense to get organised

Establish as a group what would be achieved by organising. Consider the following;

➢ *What type of organisation would be appropriate for pitsawyers?*
   Think through together what an organisation might achieve, what type of organisation is needed and whether formal or informal association is needed. As part of this process, consider also:

   1. At what level could / should the organisation operate to achieve the general goal?
   2. Whether an association, a company or a co-operative or informal association would be best suited to participants and achieving the general goal.

➢ *Would it be possible?*
It may not even be possible to organise. There may be irreconcilable differences in approach, lack of sufficient mutual trust within the group, or powerful influences from outside the group which resist change. Key things to think about are:
1. What is the level of mutual trust amongst pitsawyers considering organisation?
2. Who could / would support the organisation? Are there local civil society groups such as NGOs and CBOs, who have experience in group formation and who could facilitate this process?
3. Who could / would undermine the organisation? What resistance are they likely to face and by whom? Why? What are the implications for the new organisation and for themselves?

➢ *Who would be included and who would be excluded?*
This is potentially the most difficult issue to resolve. It is important to carefully consider the following:
1. Who will be affected positively and negatively?
2. Are any marginalised pitsawyers losing out? If so, why are they not included in the organisation?

Step 3: Make a decision - to organise, or not

During this step, all potential members of the organisation should participate in deciding important matters relating to whether to organise, the type of organisation and in finding out how to go about it. Ensure that a date is set for a meeting which all can attend and that information about the meeting is widely posted. When making decisions, ensure that one person has one vote.

➢ *Get support from local NGOs or CBOs, local government, forest management bodies*
The more people who know of your intentions, the more information you can gather to help you make a decision. Some may even be able to help you because it is there mandate to do so. Find out from different sources about what is involved in setting up each type of organisation, in particular:
1. What is the process for applying?
2. Whose support do you need? Who is responsible for facilitating the application?
3. How can you get it?
4. What is the timescale for setting up?
5. What funds are needed?

➢ *Decide type of organisation*
1. Is informal association or setting up a company, registered association or co-operative the best option? Do all agree? If not, why not?

PHASE 3: Set up the Organisation

Having decided to organise, the objective of Phase 3 is to set up the organisation. Phase 3 outlines the most important issues for the formation of an organisation, to be decided by the prospective members. It is vital that all prospective members participate in this process, so that there is agreement on the fundamental principles and institutional structures. Steps 1-3 will have to be undertaken during the course of several meetings.

Step 1: Define Objectives and Activities of organisation

➢ All organisations and companies set a goal, set objectives to achieve the goal, and develop activities to achieve the objectives. This is called a strategy. Without a strategy, a company is directionless. Take another look at the general goal identified as part of Phase 2. This will remind prospective members why they thought they needed to organise in the first place.
➢ *Develop a series of co-ordinated objectives which work towards the goal.*

➢ *Plan a series of activities and partnerships which work towards the objectives.*

Step 2: Define membership

➢ *Agree who is included and who is excluded*
In Phase 2 (Step 2), prospective members considered who was to be included and excluded in the organisation. Refer back to the conclusions jointly made on membership. Building on this, consider this when deciding membership;
1. Are all marginalised pitsawyers in the given area included? If not, again, why not? There may be reasons why a particular person is not included, for example because he is known to steal. If, however, there is a systemic lack of inclusion of people whose livelihoods depend on pitsawing, these people may make it difficult to achieve the organisation's objectives and goals. It is better to include them.

➢ *Define categories of membership (if any)*
Consider whether there is a need to make different categories of membership. It may be useful to define categories of membership for local investors, pitsawyers and carriers / labourers. That way, the organisation develops trust amongst all involved in the pitsawing enterprise. This provides mutual benefit; carriers / labourers become affiliated members of the association which increases long term employment prospects so there is less incentive to pitsaw illegally, while pitsawyers have the use of a guaranteed trusted labour force. Consider also the possibility for group members, where the poorest can become members as a group, to pool costs.

➢ *Define criteria for membership*
Defining criteria for membership depends a great deal on the reasons for organising. In the Budongo case study, local pitsawyers were being denied access rights by larger pitsawyers from outside the area. Local Budongo pitsawyers organised to develop strength in numbers to gain recognition to help them obtain their own permits. Membership criteria in this case was based on whether pitsawyers were local and trusted and whether they could afford to operate as a licensed pitsawyer. Key general criteria to think about are;
1. Level of membership fee - Can he or she afford it? This may exclude the poorest (if there is no group category of membership) but it ensures a) that operational costs of licensed pitsawing are met, and b) higher level of member commitment.
2. Degree of trust to co-operate and to abide by organisation's rules
3. Is he or she considered local to the forest resource or from "outside"? Is that important?

Step 3: Agree roles and principles for running the organisation

For an organisation to gain recognition of legitimacy and to achieve its goals through good governance, its members need to agree roles – each consisting of rights, responsibilities, returns and relationships. Defining these "Four Rs" up front as an organisation helps to clarify an institutional structure: who does what, why they should do it, why it benefits themselves and the organisation, and what happens if they don't do it. Refer to the *The Four Rs* Power Tool to find out more about each "R" in more depth. Although different types of organisations in different country contexts may have specific legal requirements, the formation of any organisation or company is fundamentally based upon the following three components:

➢ *Agree institutional structure*
An institutional structure should be developed to provide two key functions: an executive (elected committee mandated to carry out decisions made by the members), and a representative (mechanism for equal representation of all members, so that they can be heard, are informed and can engage in matters for the executive and relating to enforcement). It may also be necessary to establish a disciplinary committee (elected committee independent from executive mandated to decide on resolution of conflicts within the organisation). Key things to think about when developing institutional structure are;

1. How to structure executive committees. What other committees might be needed? What interactions will they have?
2. Are all types of stakeholders represented in committees? Can they participate?
3. What election procedures will be established? One person-one vote is the ideal.

➢ *Define actual roles encompassing rights, responsibilities returns and relationships*
Reaching agreement on the equitable allocation of roles, which encompass rights, responsibilities, returns and relationships, provide for good governance and happy members. Responsibilities help to allocate tasks amongst members and hold members accountable for funds and for their performance. Rights establish who is entitled to carry out an action or to receive benefits. Returns determine what a member is owed from the organisation or as income from his investment (labour or financial). Relationships clarify responsibilities to networks developed for the mutual benefit of all partners. Keep in mind:
1. All members should agree the Four Rs for their organisation to ensure that they reflect their investment (labour, financial or otherwise)

➢ *Develop and sign a written agreement, such as a constitution*
A written agreement such as a constitution for the organisation or company helps people to collaborate in pursuit of a common goal. It is a good idea to write down the roles and principles of the Four Rs, and to agree and write down procedures for electing the committees, for accounting, for transfer of ownership, and other matters important to the organisation, including disciplinary procedures. All members should participate in developing this agreement and should ultimately sign it. The agreement can be very simple or more complicated, depending on the nature of the organisation and what its objectives are and the mutual trust amongst members. It is a good idea to ask around for help to check it over before all sign it, to ensure that some parties are not disadvantaged.

PHASE 4: Operate the Organisation

Step 1: Develop practical operating systems

The goals and objectives agreed in Phase 3 (Step 1) will be more easily achieved if the organisation sets up systems to support daily operations and strategic planning. Systems provide a framework for managing the organisation, and for monitoring and evaluation of progress and problems. Consider developing systems for:

➢ *Strategic planning and management*
Remaining focussed on a daily basis to achieving longer term objectives can be difficult. Here are some measures to help with this;
1. Develop an Annual Operating Plan to guide members in working towards achieving objectives and to help monitor and evaluate progress for the year. Working to a strategically developed plan helps to ensure that activities are well thought through and not just ad hoc. Leave room to adapt the plan. It helps to write the plan in table format.
2. Develop a five-yearly Strategic Plan to formulate longer term objectives.
3. Delegate tasks and responsibilities to others within the organisation. This helps to motivate others and to make sure that the workload is shared. Make sure that those responsible know that they are accountable to all members.

➢ *Financial management*
The organisation will not benefit its members if the management of its finances is poor. This is because members expect a reasonable return on their investment in membership fees and in setting up the organisation. Systems and trust are the two most important components. Tips include:
1. Ask for advice on how to develop skills in book-keeping managing cash flow.

2. Set up a company bank account in a local bank specifically for the organisation. This helps to ensure separation of personal and professional bank accounts from the outset. It also makes book-keeping easier and more easily accountable.

➢ *Licensing systems*
If one of the objectives includes operating under license, it may be necessary to develop systems for their allocation and management amongst members. Budongo pitsawyers developed systems for:
1. Co-operation between members to share a license (if the license fee is too high or allows for higher harvest allocations than one pitsawyer alone can manage).
2. Temporary transfer of licenses amongst members of the organisation if circumstances require license holders to move away on a temporary basis.

➢ *Skills development and training*
A main function of forming an organisation is that it makes it possible to co-operate to get training to develop new skills. It the organisation is to flourish and progress, training is essential. What skills are needed and when? Try thinking along these lines:
1. Incorporate a skills review into the Annual Operational Plan and the 5 yearly Strategic Plan. This helps to identify what skills are needed by whom for the different activities.
2. Ask advice from the regional or district forestry and agriculture departments or a local NGO on who can provide training in, for example, book-keeping, conflict management, harvesting techniques, wood treatment and storage, wood processing, marketing, to name a few. Think through the requirements for the organisation. There may be other skills that your particular organisation needs.

➢ *Monitoring and Evaluation*
Progress can only be measured accurately if it is evaluated on a regular basis. Monitoring regularly helps to evaluate progress over the longer term or after an objective has been achieved. Tips for setting up a monitoring and evaluation system include:
1. Agree monitoring targets for each activity to be reached at agreed intervals (for example every quarter)
2. Agree indicators of progress based on the targets to help regular monitoring.
3. Build monitoring into the Annual Operation Plan to be carried out at agreed intervals
4. Evaluate progress made over the year against achievement of Annual Operational Plan targets and develop next year's Plan accordingly.

PHASE 5: Engage in effective partnerships

One of the key objectives for organising as a group is to gain recognition of legitimacy. Once recognised, there is the potential to engage with others on issues of concern as effective partners.

Step 1: Developing partnerships

➢ *Determine what partnerships are needed*
As a recognised organisation, pitsawyers may be able to choose from a range of different partnerships with others. A pitsawyers' organisation may consider engaging with government agencies, civil society organisations, businesses, development agencies and research institutes. But be aware that not all relationships with other organisations will be beneficial. Some may do more harm than good. Here are some things to think about when choosing to develop relations with a potential partner;
1. Partnerships that may be useful:
These are partnerships in which both partners mutually benefit from the relationship. Partners do not necessarily have to be equally powerful, but they should be able to contribute to the relationship such that both partners value their investment in the relationship. Useful partnerships for pitsawyers include;
❖ National government body responsible for forestry (for pitsawing license)

- ❖ Local government offices responsible for forestry, agriculture or environment to seek opportunities for training in forestry-specific skills
- ❖ Other pitsawing organisations nation-wide and internationally for sharing experiences and ideas.
- ❖ Private sector companies working in local forests (especially related to forestry and forest land use) for local operational benefits and links to markets and for new products from
- ❖ Private sector companies and agencies from overseas involved in the carbon credit market. This may involve going through the national carbon credit management institution if there is one. Find out about national schemes through the national forest management body.
- ❖ Private sector companies in larger cities for sponsorship and training, tapping into their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes. At first try to make contact with large companies who work in your area, and who are involved in agriculture, forestry or mining businesses, which may be competing for forest resources and forest land.
- ❖ Local NGOs and CBOs to get help for training and technical assistance.
- ❖ National legal (specialising in environment or land issues) advocacy groups to promote approach to empowerment while seeking legal support.
- ❖ Development agencies and international NGOs for source of external funding in form of small grants to be used for skills development.

2. Partnerships to avoid:
   These are partnerships in which both partners are not mutually benefiting from the relationship. This usually means that the weaker partner loses out to the more powerful partner. Pitsawyers' organisations should avoid partnerships with;
   - ❖ Private companies who are interested only in getting hold of forest resources and labour from pitsawyers' organisations, such as some larger-scale sawmillers or timber producers
   - ❖ Larger pitsawyers' organisations from outside the area. Given past relationships with more powerful outsiders, this is likely to be an unequal relationship which may undermine the newly developed strength.
   - ❖ Any partnership which is based upon illegal activities, including bribes and other forms of corruption

- ➢ *Negotiating with potential partners*
  Developing a relationship with potential partners can be tricky at first. It will be daunting to make the first contact with larger players, especially if the members of the newly-formed organisation were once at odds with the potential partner. This is likely to have been the case if pitsawyers had once operated illegally, and the potential partner is the forest department! Nevertheless, it is fundamentally important for the organisation to make the first move in negotiations, because it is unlikely to be immediately approached otherwise. Here are some tips and tactics for getting started:
  1. Formulate clear objectives with each potential partnership.
  2. Find out about each potential partner. What is their business or function? How can they help you? *How can you help them?* Understand that a partnership is an exchange. Both parties must get something out of the relationship.
  3. Approach potential partners formally. Write a letter, explaining about the organisation and why it was formed. Explain that its membership is committed to operating above board and to achieve certain objectives. Explain what you aim to achieve and why you need their help. Explain what you propose and why it would benefit them to be in partnership with you. Be bold, but do not make promises that your organisation cannot keep. Suggest a formal meeting.
  4. Prepare for the meeting. Send a couple of members, but not too many. Each participant in the meeting should have a function in the meeting and should prepare for carrying out that function.
  5. Get to the meeting on time and be professional at all times. Do not ask for expenses to be reimbursed. The organisation's main aim of the meeting is to create a good impression -

that it can be trusted, that it has the capacity to deliver what is expected of it on any agreement signed, that it is professional and competent, that it has an institutional structure which is accountable and is progressive, and that it has a "can-do attitude.

6. At the meeting, explain again who you are and what you do, and why you have called the meeting. Lay out clearly what you want from a partnership. Then let the partner explain who they are, what they do, and what they feel about your proposal. Expect that at first, they may not sound interested. Remember that you approached them. Reply by explaining again the overall objectives of a partnership and then how they could benefit from it. Leave the meeting expecting the potential partners to need time to discuss it further amongst themselves. Agree a plan of action, date for a second meeting, and who will do what in the meantime. There may be some things that need to be investigated further to see if a partnership could work.

7. After the first meeting, write up a record (the "minutes") of any meetings held. This is very important to make sure that everyone is agreeing to the same set of plans, objectives and responsibilities.

8. Eventually, you might be developing and signing a partnership agreement. Remember that the organisation has as much responsibility to all of its members as it does to the potential partner. Make sure that all members agree to go into partnership and that all pledge to uphold the terms of the agreement.

9. Remember to build into the agreement fair terms for dissolution of the agreement. Both of the partners should be able to dissolve the partnership, if it is proved to disproportionately burden one or the other partner.

Step 2: Moving forward as partners

➢ Evaluating progress from partnerships
   Progressing in partnership is not always easy. Partnerships can be mutually supporting, but, at times, they can also make it difficult to achieve planned objectives. This may only be temporary, and can be worked into operational plans. At other times, partners drift apart as their objectives shift. Partnerships are in a constant state of flux. Try not to see this as purely negative, because it can be positive, too. The challenge is to spot these trends, and to evaluate, as an organisation, progress as a result of the partnership. Key things to think about as an organisation are;
   1. Are you achieving your objectives? Is your partner achieving theirs?
   2. Is there a good working relationship between you and your partner?
   3. Are you communicating well? Do you hold regular meetings? Do you have to?
   4. Does the organisation feel that they are being controlled by the partner? Is it becoming dependent upon the partner?

When the organisation feels undermined by the partner, it is time to review the relationship.

Further information

For further advice, take a look at the case study available on the IIED website of pitsawyers of Budongo in Uganda who formed the Budongo Sub-county Pitsawyers Association. www.iied.org

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