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Lessons from community-based payment for ecosystem service schemes: from forests to rangelands

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Abstract

Climate finance investments and international policy are driving new community-based projects incorporating payments for ecosystem services (PES) to simultaneously store carbon and generate livelihood benefits. Most community-based PES (CB-PES) research focuses on forest areas. Rangelands, which store globally significant quantities of carbon and support many of the world's poor, have seen little CB-PES research attention, despite benefitting from several decades of community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) projects. Lessons from CBNRM suggest institutional considerations are vital in underpinning the design and implementation of successful community projects. This study uses documentary analysis to explore the institutional characteristics of three African community-based forest projects that seek to deliver carbon-storage and poverty-reduction benefits. Strong existing local institutions, clear land tenure, community control over land management decision-making and up-front, flexible payment schemes are found to be vital. Additionally, we undertake a global review of rangeland CBNRM literature and identify that alongside the lessons learned from forest projects, rangeland CB-PES project design requires specific consideration of project boundaries, benefit distribution, capacity building for community monitoring of carbon storage together with awareness-raising using decision-support tools to display the benefits of carbon-friendly land management. We highlight that institutional analyses must be undertaken alongside improved scientific studies of the carbon cycle to enable links to payment schemes, and for them to contribute to poverty alleviation in rangelands.

[climate finance](#) [CBNRM](#) [dryland Africa](#) [voluntary carbon market](#)
[institutions](#) [Plan Vivo](#)

Footnotes

One contribution of 10 to a Theme Issue 'Impacts of global environmental change on drylands: from ecosystem structure and functioning to poverty alleviation'.

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