TOOL 12
COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

FROM THE TREE OF PRACTICES TO THE FOREST OF KNOWLEDGE

A guide to identifying, capturing, sharing and communicating REDD+ Inspiring Practices

PURPOSE
This activity is an effective way to share REDD+ experiences, challenges and solutions related to a particular area of work in an informal way. Communities of practice are usually formed online, which enables participants from around the world to engage, and at times that are convenient.

DESCRIPTION
A community of practice is a group of practitioners who share a common interest in a specific area of competence and are interested in collaborating to share information.

The term community suggests that these groups are not constrained by typical geographic, unit, department or functional boundaries, but rather by common tasks, contexts and interests. The term practice implies knowledge in action, that is, how individuals actually perform their jobs on a day-to-day basis as opposed to more formal policies and procedures that reflect how work should be performed.

While a community of practice can be informal, it is vital to plan in advance and to secure resources to support it. The following questions can help determine the resources required to launch a successful community of practice:

- **Substantiate the existence**: Why is it necessary? Are there any gaps in the topic that needs to be filled? Where do people go now to find information on this topic?
- **Identify an initial leader**: Who will be the leader? Are there existing resources to fund this person’s time?
- **Define the structure and rules**: What will the governance structure be? Who will be able to participate?
- **Define the supporting roles**: Who will be the leaders of sub-topics? Who will be the content manager, etc.?
- **Design the core activities**: What types of activities will the community of practice promote? Will there be regular conference calls, presentations by experts in the field, etc.?
- **Invite key members**: A successful community of practice should have at least 10 or 15 members. Who is interested in the topic and will have the time and energy to invest in participation?
- **Develop an information structure and resources online**: Will the platform include event calendars, relevant reports and articles, user profiles, etc.

WHEN TO USE IT

- To encourage sharing knowledge and learning in an informal setting without the need to interact at the same time

REQUIRED MATERIALS

- Online platform
- Facilitator or community manager to post topics and manage discussions