Guidelines for Institutionalizing and Implementing Community-Based Forest Management in Sub-Saharan Africa

Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations Regional
Office for Africa, Accra 2012

Cover photo
Participation of local people in forest management, Mali (Photo: FAO)

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CONTENTS

v ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
vii FOREWORD
ix ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS
1 INTRODUCTION
3 SECTION I: BACKGROUND
3 1.1 Forest Types and Community-Based Forest Management
6 1.2 Evolution of Community-Based Forest Management
11 1.3 Community-Based Forest Management Approaches
12 1.4 Lessons learnt from Africa's Experience with Community-Based Forest Management

17 SECTION II: KEY ELEMENTS FOR ENHANCING INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

17 2.1 Enabling conditions: Prerequisites for Institutionalizing Community-Based Forest Management

25 SECTION III: OPERATIONAL GUIDES FOR ENHANCING THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY-BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

25 3.1 Building a Shared Vision of Community-Based Forest Management
27 3.2 Developing Enabling Policies, Legislations and Institutional Arrangements
32 3.3 Facilitating the Development and Implementation of Community-Driven Management Plans
37 3.4 Practical Steps in Developing and Implementing a Community-Based Forest Management Plan
42 3.5 Highlighting and Addressing Environmental and Socioeconomic Aspects of Community-Based Forest Management
43 3.6 Enhancing Support Services to Stakeholders
45 3.7 Anticipating and Capturing Emerging Issues

50 REFERENCES

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Participants at the opening of the validation workshop on CBFM at the FAO Regional Office for Africa, Accra - Ghana. (Photo: FAORAF)

FOREWORD

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) culminated in the adoption of Agenda 21, a comprehensive global plan of action for sustainable development, and its complementary 'Non-legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of all Types of Forests' (Forest Principles), which seeks to secure sustainability of the world's forests ecosystems for the benefit of present and future generations. One feature of the Forest Principles relating to community engagement in forest management is that: "national forest policies should recognize and duly support the identity, culture and the rights of indigenous people, their communities and other communities and forest dwellers. Appropriate conditions should be promoted for these groups to enable them to have an economic stake in forest use, perform economic activities, and achieve and maintain cultural identity and social organization, as well as adequate levels of livelihood and well-being, through, inter alia, those land tenure arrangements which serve as incentives for the sustainable management of forests". The objectives of Agenda 21 and the Forest Principles were reiterated and taken a step further by the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002.

Since 1992, many African countries and their Regional Economic Commissions (RECs) have embarked on forest policy and legislative revisions not only to implement Agenda 21, the Forest principles and, since 2002, JPOI, but also to address the increasing trends of deforestation and, forest degradation, which pose serious threat to social, economic and environmental development and stability in the continent. In this context, many experimented with various forms of community forest management, thereby resulting in the creation of a wealth of experiences. In 1999, FAO, in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of The Gambia, held its first international workshop on community forestry in Africa, in Banjul, The Gambia, to share these experiences and to popularize the concept of community forestry. FAO has been involved in the promotion of various aspects of community engagement and value chain development of products from community forests. In 2011, FAO published a manual on "Community-based tree and forest products enterprise: Market Analysis and Development" to contribute and support the development of business capacity amongst the practitioners of community forestry.

At its 16th and 17th Sessions in 2008 and 2010 respectively, the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission deliberated on the issue of viable community involvement in forest and wildlife management and called upon its members and the international community to implement policies and actions to achieve this. This publication is yet again one of FAO's attempts at providing such support to the continent. It proposes key institutional, policy and legislative measures that need to be put in place for the sustainable engagement of local communities in forest management and development. Furthermore, the document emphasizes the need for collective vision, equitable benefit sharing and value development of and market access for products in order to make community forestry attractive to both governments and target communities. The document is intended for use by policy makers and forestry practitioners in sub-Saharan Africa.

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ACRONYMS

AFORNET	African Forest Research Network
AFWC	Africa Forestry and Wildlife Commission
ANAFE	The African Network for Agriculture, Agroforestry and Natural Resources Education
CBFM	Community-Based Forest Management
CBNRM	Community-Based Natural Resources Management
CF	Community Forestry
CFM	Collaborative Forest Management
CILSS	Comité Inter-Etat de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel
COMIFAC	Central African Forests Commission
COVIMOF	Communautés Villageoise de Melombo, Okekat et Faékélé
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FAORAF	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, Regional Office for Africa
FMI	Forest Management Institution
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GFMC	Gambia Forest Management Concept
GGWSSI	Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative
IPF	Intergovernmental Panel on Forests
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JFM	Joint Forest Management
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NFP	National Forest Programme
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
NWFP	Non-Wood Forest Products
PFM	Participatory Forest Management
REDD	Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
RRI	Rights and Resources Initiative
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
SMP	Simple Management Plan
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
WRM	World Rainforest Movement

WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
UN	United Nations
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFF	United Nations Forum on Forests
VLFR	Village Land Forest Reserves
VNRC	Village Natural Resource Committee

INTRODUCTION

Africa holds just over 674 million hectares, about 17% of the world's forests (FAO, 2010). The forests and trees are at the centre of socio-economic development and environmental protection of the continent. They provide a wide range of products and services upon which rural communities and the urban population depend for their livelihoods and subsistence. The forest products include wild foods (such as honey, mushrooms, bush meat and fruits), medicines, wood fuel, construction poles, and browse and fodder for livestock. Over 90% of the people in Africa rely on forests and trees for their energy needs, mostly as firewood and charcoal. In addition, forests and woodlands also provide important global environmental services that include watershed protection, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, carbon sequestration and maintenance of ecosystem functions. The forests and woodlands also provide resources for forest-based enterprises. In recent years there has been significant growth in the production and trade in non-wood forest products (FAO, 2009). This has been driven by the growing popularity of ethnic foods, traditional medicines, natural and organic foods.

Although the role forests play in local and national economies in Africa is known, forests continue to decline at high rates due to deforestation and forest degradation: 0.49% or 3.4 million ha per year (FAO 2010). Land clearing, conversion to agriculture, logging, fires, overgrazing and other factors have resulted in huge annual losses of forests and woodlands in Africa.

Both colonial and post independence governments in Africa usurped ownership of the natural forests from local populations. As a result, indigenous management regimes faded, usually with no effective replacement. This failure of centralized forest management to foster sustainable management of forests and to achieve an equitable distribution of benefits from forest resources management, both for national development and improvement of community livelihoods, triggered the search for alternative approaches to forest management.

Many African countries have, over the past two decades, been undertaking policy and legislative reforms to ensure the devolution of authority to local levels not only for administrative purposes but also to ensure appropriate structures for better natural resources management. Community-based natural resources management (CBNRM) schemes have consequently been implemented in many countries with different degrees of policy or legal backing. While some were implemented at pilot

level in the 1980s others were implemented, from the 1990s, under full policy and legislative provisions (Wily, L. 2001). Although the number of countries that have adopted policy and legislative provisions for community-based forestry are few (e.g. Tanzania, Nigeria, The Gambia, Cameroon, RDC, Liberia...), there is increasing desire at the continental level to see more community empowerment in natural resources management, especially in forest management (FAO-AFWC, 2008 and 2010). Experience in most of the countries has shown that policy and legislative reforms need to be backed up by supportive extension services, changes in attitude among all stakeholders and improved capacity of local community institutions to effectively implement community-based forest management practices.

The purpose of this document is to provide suggestions for enhancing the institutionalization and effective implementation of community-based forest management in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to popularize and extend the adoption of the practices in the continent. It is envisaged that the guidelines will benefit those involved in planning, designing and implementing community-based forest management programmes and projects at national and community levels. These include development partners, policy makers, planners, forestry and rural development extension workers, local administrators and community leaders.

SECTION I BACKGROUND

1.1 Forest Types and Community-Based Forest Management

Natural forests in Africa range in type from sparse vegetation of desert steppes in the Sahara desert to moist humid tropical rain forests in the heart of the Congo basin. The forests can be classified into several categories including tropical rain forests, tropical moist forests, tropical dry forests, tropical shrubs, tropical mountain forest, sub-tropical humid forests, sub-tropical dry forests, sub-tropical mountain forests and plantations. All of these forest types are vital to the socio-economic, cultural, and spiritual needs of rural African communities whose survival depends on long term existence of these forests. Some classifications insist that a 'forest' requires trees occupying a minimum percentage of total area, to be classified as forest. Although trees may be the largest and most impressive permanent elements of a forest, other products and uses (livestock grazing, wildlife, tourism) may be, in some cases, more important and valuable, or at least must be integral parts of forest management plans. In this regard many forest lands in which Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM) is being applied do not necessarily fit into the strict biophysical definition of a forest. In the lexicon of CBFM, any patch of natural vegetation or tree plantation that is of interest to sedentary or seasonal forest users is considered a 'forest'.

Apart from their classification according to vegetation type, forests in Africa are also categorized by their legal status. The highest level of protection is accorded to protected forest areas, where little or no use is allowed to local people. National Forests (forêts classées or gazetted forests) are demarcated forests under government control. The degree to which local communities are allowed to use these forest areas varies according to country and the desired management objectives. The remainder of forest areas, which account for the bulk of the continent's forests are generally referred to as state forests, but in reality are loosely controlled by customary arrangements that have no legal status.

Natural forest in Guinea (Photo: FAO)

Legal statutory ownership of forests

According to the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FAO 2010 a), the main forest categories by ownership at global level are;

- Public
- Private
- Community
- Other

Community managed public forests (under management agreements or under joint or collaborative forest management) cover approximately 5% of the public forests whilst forest concessions allowing private companies to exploit forest resources take up 17% of the total.

Public/State forests

According to classification of forests by ownership, nearly 95% of forests in Africa are public-owned forests (83% by governments) whilst nearly 4% are privately owned (FAO, 2010). This is partly because, since colonial times, forests have been viewed as being of national economic and/or environmental importance. Forest ownership at sub-regional level is as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Forest ownership by sub-region

Sub-region	Public	Community	Private
Eastern and Southern Africa	90%	4%	6%
West and Central Africa	98%	1%	1%
North Africa	90%	0%	10%

Source: FAO, 2010

Central governments retain exclusive control over 16% of public forests (FAO, 2010), 61 % are used by various actors predominantly communities who are granted user rights that limit them to low value products and to meeting subsistence needs e.g. firewood collection and non-wood forest products (NWFP) collection.

Private forests

Privately owned forests only account for about 4% of Africa's forests. These are owned by individuals, corporate and communities. At sub-regional level, privately owned forests constitute about 10% of forests in North Africa, 6% in Eastern and Southern Africa and 1% in West and Central Africa (FAO, 2010).

Community-owned forests

Community-owned forests often include those forests that exist on land that are legally owned by the community or forest that have been legally assigned to the community by the Government. Although communities own some areas of forests in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), these forests make up only 1% of the total forest area. This explains why the majority of community-based forest management initiatives have been in state forests. This situation has influenced the types of forest management regimes and CBFM models that have emerged in the region.

Forests classification by value

The forests can also be classified by value into:

i. ***High value*** especially in terms of timber and less so in terms of other products e.g. (biodiversity)
ii. ***Low value*** especially degraded forests or forests with products that do not have high market values

The value of forests has a big influence on the type of management regimes adopted especially for public forests. In general, governments in SSA have retained the management of high value forests or granted concessions to private companies for

their management. High value forests have rarely been given to local communities even under forest management concessions. Most of the CBFM initiatives have tended to be in low value degraded forests that need restoration or rehabilitation. The management costs of such forests tend to be higher than the benefits, which usually take long to be realised.

1.2 Evolution of Community-Based Forest Management

During the last two decades many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa began to change their natural resources management approaches from centralised management under the state, to community-based natural resources management. This change has been driven by a number of factors including "democratization" of natural resources management that was ushered in by the adoption of democratic governance principles in general, and the realization, by states, of the futility of the conventional system of managing natural resources without local people's engagement. The decentralization of authority and responsibility for natural resources management has become a global trend in the pursuit of sustainable natural resources management and biodiversity conservation. In many parts of Africa this is reflected by the adoption of (CBNRM) approaches during the 1980s. CBNRM is an approach to conservation and development that focuses on people's needs and recognizes the rights of local people to manage and benefit from the management and use of their natural resources (Murphree, 2003). CBNRM also involves devolving control and management responsibility to local people through appropriate natural resource management policies and legislation. At the community level, it necessitates building the technical, organizational and institutional capacity of local communities and their institutions to enable them to assume these responsibilities.

Box 1: Decentralisation

Decentralization is defined as any act in which a central government formally cedes powers to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy (Agrawal and Ribot1999; Ribot *et al.*, 2006). The term **decentralised forest management** is used to refer to forest management regimes where forest management responsibility has been devolved from central government to local government or community institutions. The change to a decentralized forest management regime involves change in institutions such as legislation, and also change of organizations or actors (Alden Wily and Mbaya, 2001; Gautam *et al.*, 2004; Kumar, 2002; Ribot, *et al.*, 2006; Thanh and Sikor, 2006).

In the forest sector decentralized forest management has led to the emergence of community-based forest management as an alternative to the "fortress conservation" approach that was associated with management of forest reserves by central governments. In sub-Saharan Africa where the rural population are highly dependent on forests and their resources for their social and economic needs, it is essential to integrate existing livelihood systems into any new model for forest management and to ensure the full participation of local people in decision-making about forests. One approach that allows for this is community-based forest management.

Community-based forest management has the dual objective of achieving the conservation of forests on one hand and contributing to the general economic development and livelihoods improvement of local communities on the other. In most countries that adopted CBFM approaches, many communities have embarked on a wide range of small-scale forest-based enterprises that have contributed to improving their social and economic conditions. Studies of small-scale and medium-sized forest based enterprises from around the world, of which an increasing number are community-based, show that they help to accrue wealth locally, encourage local entrepreneurship, engender greater local environmental accountability and can maintain cultural practices (FAO, Macqueen, 2008). This has led, in some countries, to the integration of CBFM into national economic development plans including poverty reduction and national conservation strategies (Camara, 2009; Gondo, 2004). Examples of this are small-scale forest enterprises based on timber harvesting and harvesting of non-timber forest products that have obtained Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification.

The development of CBFM has also been influenced by broader forest policy developments within the international arena (for example the forest principles under Agenda 21, Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) proposals for action), filtering down to the regional and national levels, with the main thrust being decentralization and democratization of forest resources management. The development has been characterized by states giving back authority to manage natural resources to communities, having been convinced that their close involvement and participation in the management of the resources is an absolute necessity if sustainability would be achieved.

The evolution of CBFM has followed different pathways in various parts of Africa based on different socio-political and biophysical contexts. In eastern and southern Africa, the relative abundance of wildlife and high returns from ecotourism and trophy hunting has seen the development of CBNRM approaches that are heavily influenced by the development of community based wildlife management programmes. Over time, and taking advantage of favourable policy and legislative

provisions providing a conducive environment for CBNRM, the programmes have diversified the range of resources and products targeted. In less densely populated and more heavily forested central Africa, interest in natural forests is largely limited to conservation groups' concerns for biodiversity and protected areas management on one hand, and logging and wood processing enterprises on the other. West Africa is experiencing an increasing interest in CBFM, driven by scarcities in fuelwood and other forestry products. In recent years some of these efforts have been integrated into community-based land use planning and other participatory programmes.

Why community-based forest management

The need to address climate change and the emergence of markets for ecosystem services including watershed protection, biodiversity and carbon have provided new opportunities for community-based forest management. In particular, the opportunity to conserve forests and at the same time generate additional incomes through trading in and/or compensation for environmental services increases the value of forests to the local communities and provides additional incentives for them to protect the forests and to utilize the forests sustainably. Although the implementation of payment for ecosystem services (PES) is still in its infancy in Africa, with payments for recreational services and biodiversity conservation being the most developed, there are already enough examples that have demonstrated that PES has the potential to increase forest values and returns to communities under CBFM.

Arguments justifying the institutionalization and implementation of CBFM in Africa include:

- **Recognition of the inherent rights of forest-dependent communities**: Social justice demands that local communities and forest-dependent people, who have suffered the injustices related to displacement, inequitable access to forest resources and benefits, as a result of centralised forest governance be granted back their rights and access to benefits and forest management responsibilities .
- **Giving value and ensuring forests benefit their owners (the local communities) and managers:** If forest resources that people live with do not benefit or have a value to them, they are likely to be replaced by other economically valuable land uses such as agriculture. CBFM enables local communities that live in or around forests to meet their social, economic, environmental, cultural and spiritual needs. In other words, forest dependent communities have a larger stake in sustainable forest management.
- **Local communities have the knowledge and potential capacity to manage**: Forest dependent communities have developed, over several

generations, the indigenous knowledge systems and local institutions that enable them to regulate forest use and manage the forests to ensure their continued existence. CBFM provides the space for communities to exercise their rights and build on their traditional knowledge and institutions in forest management by guaranteeing the retention of benefits from their efforts.

- **Local forest governance**: Forest management is more responsive to community needs when communities who live with and in the forest are empowered to participate in making decisions and developing forest management plans.
- **Better integration with other sectors:** Forests have multiple functions and therefore multiple stakeholders. Even at community level there are multiple interests that are not only dynamic but sometimes conflicting. The participatory and collective decision making nature of CBFM provides a platform for linking with and taking into account interests from other sectors. Some of the key sectors include agriculture (including livestock), water, energy, tourism, health and local government.
- **Democracy and devolved governance**: By its very nature CBFM provides citizens with practical experience in local control of a vital local resource and collective decision making and action, which gives the local communities capacity to participate in general democratic and devolved governance systems. The experience gained in holding their own local institutions accountable and the skills and capacity they develop in self management can be applied in other spheres of governance at local and national government levels.
- **Income generation**: African farmers depend on the forests and woodlands to supplement their incomes. Thus CBFM provides a strong and sustainable basis for community-based forest enterprises that include timber logging, charcoal production, beekeeping, fishing, hunting, and sale of firewood. The forest based enterprises do not only help in supplementing household incomes but also contribute to the growth of local economies. In addition to opportunities created by forest-based micro-enterprises, some members of the community benefit directly from carrying out forest management activities either as contractors or workers. These include road construction and maintenance, forest inventories, guarding, seedling production, silvicultural activities, sawmilling and plantation maintenance. All these help to increase forest value and the economic incentives to the local communities to invest in the management and protection of their forest resources.
- **Gender mainstreaming**: Women, children and the youth are important forest users who are often ignored in development of forest management plans. CBFM provides platforms for the participation of all forest user and

interest groups in all aspects of forest management right from the planning and design of forest management plans through to implementation and monitoring and evaluation. In particular women get the opportunity to articulate their own needs, priorities and possibilities for action.

- **Maintenance of environmental services**: The use of the ecosystem approach is an integral part of CBFM in order to generate the multiple forest products and services that are necessary to meet the people's needs. With careful planning and linkages with markets CBFM has been demonstrated to have the potential to contribute to the enhancement of various ecosystem services such as biodiversity conservation, watershed protection and carbon sequestration.

Community forest tree nursery in Guinea (Photo: FAO)

1.3 Community Forest Management Approaches

The concept of community forestry (CF) emerged out of the need for forms of forestry that are responsive to local needs, while ensuring sustainability, as opposed to state forestry which regarded state agencies as having unique capacity to manage the resources. Community forestry is a generic term referring to all forms of forest management in which local communities are involved. FAO (1978) as cited by Fisher (1995) define community forestry broadly as any situation which intimately involves local people in forestry activity. Community forestry is also referred to as a regime of common property management that strives to achieve sustainability by linking local people's social and economic interest with forest conservation (Taylor, 2000). Over the years, different approaches have been used to involve communities in forest management. They include:

a) Community-based forest management

Community-based forest management was defined by FAO (1990) as "any forest management which is carried out by individuals in a community in order to increase benefits they value". Wily (2002) defined community-based forest management as "a forest management construct in which jurisdiction is fully devolved and sometimes includes ownership of the forest estate". Another widely used CBFM definition is "a participatory, people-driven forest management system, decentralized to local community institutions with links between the state, and other partners, and operating under a legitimate framework for sharing roles, responsibilities, authority, control, costs and benefits" (Farm Africa, undated). The term is increasingly being used when a community is both the owner and manager of a forest, for example in Tanzania, Malawi and Gambia where there are clearly defined village or community forests. For the purpose of this guidelines, community based forest management is used as a generic term referring to "*any form of collective management of forest resources by a defined community that has collective ownership and/or user rights for their own benefit*". The term CBFM may also be used to refer to traditional systems of community forest management. Recognising traditional forest management systems is an acknowledgement of the importance of traditional knowledge and practices and of well established roles and rights of different members of the community.

b) Social forestry: This emerged as a form of community forestry in which there is a greater attempt by governments to increase the range of possible ways for involving local communities in afforestation, conservation and tree planting on farms to improve benefits to the communities.

c) Participatory forest management (PFM) refers to forest management systems in which communities (forest users and managers) and government services (forest department) work together to define rights of forest resource use, identify and

develop forest management responsibilities, and agree on how forest benefits will be shared. According to FAO, participatory forestry refers to processes and mechanisms which enable people with a direct stake in forest resources to be part of decision-making in all aspects of forest management, including policy formulation processes. This term is commonly used in east Africa especially Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

d) Joint forest management (JFM) is when a community manages a portion of government-owned forests jointly with a government agency (Havnevik, 2003; Alden Wily and Dewees, 2001) through a form of management agreement between a community group and a government agency.

e) Collaborative forest management (CFM) refers to a community-state partnership in which communities manage the forest in exchange for access to prescribed products (similar to joint forest management (JFM) (practiced in the Gambia, and Tanzania in state forests) It does not normally imply any change of ownership of the forest which legally continues under state ownership. At community level, households or individuals are normally brought together into a representative local group which enters into a formal management agreement with the state (normally the Department of Forestry). Roles, responsibilities and the costs and benefits of sustainable forest management are normally shared between the state forest management organisation and the local group according to the provisions of the forest policy and legal framework and according to a mutually agreed forest management plan (E.g. Malawi, Uganda).

1.4 Lessons learnt from Africa's Experience with Community-Based Forest Management

Despite the acknowledged potential of CBFM to enhance adoption of sustainable forest management in SSA, meaningful implementation and scaling-up remain limited. Detailed analyses of CBFM experiences in African countries have been published in numerous professional journals, corporate documents and in proceedings of international workshops on participatory forestry in Africa held successively in Banjul in the Gambia in 1999, Arusha in the United Republic of Tanzania in 2002, Rio Branco, Acre in Brazil in 2007, Yaoundé in Cameroon in 2009 and more recently at Montpellier in France in 2010. However, there are few cases where CBFM has been practiced and monitored for a sufficiently long time to derive conclusive lessons from when it works and when it does not. Also, the scales of the studies range widely from site-specific project results, through to country case studies, and sub regional and continental reviews and analyses. Furthermore, by their very nature, CBFM lessons are location specific and vary widely along numerous socio-economic, ecological and institutional gradients.

There are a growing number of cases where CBFM initiatives are reported to have:

- Reversed degradation of forest ecosystems;
- Increased afforested areas;
- Led to the emergence of strong local institutions and promotion of democratic processes and practices at community level;
- Empowered vulnerable groups in communities through inclusive participation;
- Improved livelihoods of local people and stimulated local economies.

On the other hand, the following negative experiences have also been encountered:

- Fragmentation and uncoordinated management of contiguous forest areas under the management of different communities and other forest users.
- Increased deforestation and encroachment due to weak local community institutions and failure to enforce by-laws and forest management agreements.
- Heightened conflicts between communities during the definition of boundaries as some people or sections of the community are excluded.
- Cases of conflict with government and other partners and within communities due to poorly defined or inequities in cost and benefit sharing.
- Failure to take full advantage of community-based enterprises due to constraining cross-sectoral policies and legislation and absence of business development service providers.

Some key lessons that can be drawn from CBFM to-date include:

- CBFM practices are most effective when they benefit from enabling policy, legislation and institutional arrangements (including relevant customary rights) that ensure land and forest tenure security, promote decentralization of forest resources management to devolve meaningful power to local community institutions under clear, negotiated, consensus-based agreements. This requires that:
    - truly participatory processes are used from inception to completion of the CBFM process;
    - there is transfer of authority to communities under clear, negotiated and consensus-based agreements;
    - a legal framework has been created;
    - a stakeholder capacity development strategy that includes training and access to new skills and technologies are facilitated so that the community has capacity to organise itself and also has knowledge and skills to implement planned forest management activities.

- Where CBFM is based on resource poor forest areas, (e.g. with a low potential of marketable wood and non-wood products), and/or where the potential for value adding is limited (e.g. where communities only have access to small local markets), the absence of concrete economic benefits often leads to communities losing interest in the activities.
- When there is too much focus on community level benefits at the expense of the potential for individual household incomes, the community members tend to lose interest in CBFM quickly.
- CBFM initiatives tend to be most effective when:
    - They are based on a shared vision of CBFM and are supported by simple but comprehensive implementation guides;
    - They provide incentives that are attractive to all categories of stakeholders;
    - They provide equitable and transparent systems for power and benefit sharing that adequately cater for women and other vulnerable groups, and are clearly articulated in national policy and relevant legislation;
    - They have clear forest management strategies that balance objectives of resource sustainability and socio economic objectives of livelihood improvement and economic growth;
    - They have clear strategies for sustainable funding both at community and national levels;
    - They are based on development and implementation of management plans which have been driven by the community itself, with facilitators and technocrats only providing guidance and assistance;
    - Procedures for registration and titling are not overly bureaucratic and/or expensive;
    - Communication, dialogue platforms involving all key stakeholders and conflict management mechanisms are established and functional right from the onset to deal with emerging issues.

One of the key lessons that has been learnt from research into CBFM is that there is no one approach that can be uniformly applied, Rather, it needs to be developed and implemented on the basis of the specific national and local circumstances, in particular, the nature of communities and social organization, the ecological situation and market opportunities.

General challenges and constraints also commonly encountered during the implementation of CBFM include (FAO, 2002 and 2008; Odera, 2004; Bojang, 1999):

- Community-based forest management tends to be viewed as an innovative but risky practice, and thus to be limited to costly pilot projects. Pilot projects have been implemented largely under donor or NGO funding, sometimes outside formal forest management structures, with minimal participation of professional foresters working in governmental agencies. These elements tend to limit the replicability of successes countrywide, as national forest policy, legislation, and institutional reform often occur without guidance from local experiences.
- At the national level, there is considerable variation in government agencies' attitude towards community-based natural resources management in general, and the extent of political will, commitment and public support for it.
- Policy and legislative development processes have tended to be non-participatory, omitting opportunities for debate and negotiation between stakeholders on roles, rights, and cost–benefit-sharing mechanisms.
- Institutional rigidities, failure to harmonize inter-sectoral policies (e.g. regarding land tenure, agricultural development, resettlement, public service restructuring, energy, forests and water, tax credits), and inadequate funding are prominent barriers.
- Success takes time and requires long term investment by both government and communities, which deters stakeholders from engagement unless they can access additional funds.

Kusaabel Community Forest Village Funds contributed towards the purchase of a farm tractor: Jakoi Sibrik and Nyangit villages, The Gambia.

SECTION 2

KEY ELEMENTS FOR ENHANCING INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

2.1. Enabling conditions: Prerequisites for Institutionalizing Community-Based Forest Management

Based on the above lessons learnt, a range of enabling conditions for the promotion of community-based forest management (CBFM) has been identified and summarized below:

A discrete and defined community

A discrete community with identifiable membership is important for community organization, decision-making and benefits sharing, control and regulation of behaviour, sharing of management responsibilities and accountability. Community forestry implementation should therefore be undertaken at a well defined target community with clear leadership and institutional structure that is accepted by the members. For communities to be able to engage in forest management they must be recognized by the government as legal participants in the management of the forests (Heermans, J. and Otto, J., 1999; AFORNET, 2005). To be the legal participants they need to be defined, with clearly defined boundaries which delineate limits of their jurisdiction (FAO, 2002).

Well established Institutions

Communities are by nature heterogeneous and therefore have members with multiple and often competing interests. The existence of legitimate local community institutions that are respected by the community members and provide platforms for interfacing and engaging with other stakeholders such as private sector, local government authorities and central government is an important prerequisite for a successful CBFM. The key role of such institutions is to organise and facilitate community platforms for dialogue, debate and setting of community forest resources management objectives that take into account the multiple uses and demands placed on the forest and tree resources by their community. Other roles include overseeing implementation of management plans, enforcement of rules and regulations, monitoring of management outcomes and impacts and facilitating equitable distribution and sharing of benefits.

Clearly defined resource property rights

The forest area over which the defined community has jurisdiction should be clearly defined with identifiable boundaries. In addition, secure boundaries give

communities the right to exclude outsiders and power to prosecute offenders. This effectively ensures that the forest is not under open access but closed access. With clear ownership or power over a forest, each community jealously guards its own forest or sphere of forest (in the case of JFM) against encroachment or illegal use by outsiders. Above all, security of tenure encourages investment without fear of expropriation (FAO, 2002).

Land use planning

It is important to ensure that the forest to be managed is part of a land use plan that sets aside the forest area in relation to other land uses such as agriculture and settlements. This provides a framework for long term investment in forest management without the danger of conversion to other land uses. Planning should be based on a good understanding of the different needs of different user or interest groups in the community as well as an understanding of the land use capabilities. In this regard it should be undertaken by the community itself with assistance from technocrats.

Improved policy and legal frameworks

Conducive legal and regulatory environments are needed to enable CBFM. In most countries, there has been notable progress in developing CBFM friendly policies, legislation, and institutional reforms and tenurial re-arrangements (Odera, 2009, Heermans, J. and Otto, J., 1999). Clear tenurial rights are crucial to enable the community to negotiate with government for exclusive use of forest resources and for investment as well as revenue sharing. Awarding of forest ownership or use rights has been proven to be necessary but not sufficient to guarantee forest conservation and management by communities. This has to be achieved through decentralization of power and devolution of authority directly to the community level (Odera, 2009, Heermans, J. and Otto, J., 1999). However, to safeguard the community from shift in ideologies that come with changes in administration, a legally binding framework is advocated for (Wily, 1997). In this regard, the willingness of the government to shed power and the readiness and capacity of the community to *''receive and make use of new-found powers''* remain critical (Wily, 2001).

Political support

The advent of political democracy and multi-party systems has increased demands for accountability and transparency. Coupled with the pressure from global processes and civil society, political support gives CBFM strong foundation for growth (AFORNET, 2005: Odera, J., 2009). Political support can also be demonstrated by promulgation and implementation of supportive CBFM policies and legislation and allocation of resources for implementation.

Cost and benefit sharing

Local communities must become recipients of genuine benefits from all forest-based economic activities including the most lucrative - timber and tourism. NTFPs are certainly valued for personal consumption and local sale, but are not usually as financially interesting as timber or income derived from exploitation of forested lands. If communities do not get, or are denied access, to all benefits, there will be no real lasting incentive for them to invest in CBFM. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the benefits from CBFM generate enough resources to: cover the costs of management activities incurred by the communities; allow re-investment into management of the forest resources; and to contribute to community and household socio-economic needs. The basis and mechanisms for cost and benefit sharing between the different stakeholders and within communities must be clearly articulated right at the onset. In general these should take into account how much each of the stakeholders has invested based on their roles and responsibilities to ensure equity.

Improved marketing

The ultimate success of CBFM will be measured by its contribution to the transformation of the forest dependent communities (AFORNET, 2005: Odera, J 2009). This includes the capacity of forest-based enterprises to function efficiently and generate profits in a sustainable manner (Heermans and Otto, 1999). For this to be achieved the current challenges of lack of, or limited access to markets and credit need to be addressed; low levels of literacy, and poor technologies resulting in inferior products have to be overcome. CBFM is more likely to succeed where forest products have good access to reliable markets. However, most natural forests do not have close proximity of markets, thus there is need to develop more sophisticated marketing strategies (Heermans and Otto, 1999). In some instances there might be need to modify laws and offer services to facilitate forest-based enterprises. Value-adding processing also increases the attractiveness of CBFM.

Access to finance

The availability of financial resources is critical for investment in forest management activities, capacity building and establishment and operation of small forest-based enterprises. Sometimes only small amounts are needed, (usually less than $US100) to buy tools or improved beehives. Larger enterprises such as mobile sawmills naturally require more capital investment. The financial resources may be in the form of grants or loans. Investment credit on affordable terms is crucial for the establishment of forest-related businesses that are at the economic core of CBFM. In this regard linkages and partnerships with financial institutions and other private sector partners are essential to ensure communities and other stakeholders involved in CBFM have access to all necessary financial services.

Capacity development for local communities and service providers

The local community members, through their different user groups, and the local community institutions need to have adequate capacity to execute their mandates and responsibilities. This will require training, external support and above all an opportunity for the community to "learn-by-doing". Capacity development is essential to help communities adopt new forest management systems and techniques, and to improve their skills.

As roles change from policing to facilitation, public forest institutions will need to develop new capacities and equip their staff with new skills and knowledge to enable them to better engage and support communities in CBFM. The same applies to other service providers in the private sector, civil society, academia and research. Some of the skills and capabilities to be developed include conflict management, participatory techniques, operational planning, facilitation of meetings, market analysis and access, participatory monitoring and evaluation methods, and time management, among other competencies. Another way of strengthening the capacity of public forest institutions is by establishing and /or assigning specific units and staff with the roles and responsibilities of developing and supporting CBFM at national level.

Improved knowledge base

The knowledge base and technical capacity to develop the full potential of CBFM in different settings are often very weak, both at community levels and among institutions and organisations. In this regard it is essential to support activities for generating improved knowledge of the forests and management techniques and their impacts. Action research should be an integral part of CBFM activities including collaborative monitoring. In this regard research institutions need to establish mechanisms for identifying and capturing research priorities from communities engaged in CBFM as well as effective ways of availing the research results to the communities.

Participants at a Community Forest Committee training in Jenoi, Lower River Region of The Gambia

Long-term commitment

Given the limited experiences in CBFM interventions in many countries and localities, it is clear it is a fairly new concept and practice which is still in its infancy. Development and implementation of CBFM requires long term investment and nurturing before its full benefits can be realised. A long term view to provision of assistance from donors, NGOs, forest departments and private sector should be considered for any such intervention (AFORNET, 2005). This will also ensure that the different CBFM models are sufficiently tested and refined including the re-engineering of the forest extension systems to support planning, and implementation of CBFM (AFORNET, 2005.). In the same vein, local communities intending to or engaged in CBFM should take a long term view and be prepared to commit themselves over a long period of time.

Information management and communication strategy

An effective communication strategy based on well-defined communication channels is very critical for facilitating exchange of information and experience sharing between all stakeholders. Care must be taken to ensure that the information is relevant and is communicated in forms that are accessible and easy to understand by all partners. This also includes deliberate documentation of experiences and lessons learnt and discussion platforms. An important component of the communication strategy is general awareness raising among communities and other stakeholders to ensure the concepts, benefits and challenges of CBFM are understood right from the onset and throughout implementation.

Participation

Participation is based on the democratic doctrine that stresses the importance of the participation of local people in the governance of their own affairs (Ostrom *et al.*, 1993). In this regard all members of the community, including different user groups (hunters, fuelwood collectors, NWFP harvesters etc.) and other stakeholders (e.g. private sector, local government state agencies) need to be involved in all aspects from planning to monitoring to ensure their needs and interests are taken into account. This requires the establishment of planning and review fora and dialogue platforms that will provide the space for participation and reconciliation of the multiple interests.

Collective decision making

Genuine agreement among different user or interest groups on the principles and objectives of forest resource management is a prerequisite for effective community based forest management. Collective decision making is critical for providing the mechanism for reconciliation of diverse interests and preferences within and across various levels of social and political organisations. Ultimately, each decision-making framework has spheres of its own efficacy, with the dilemma being to strike some measure of best fit.

Adaptive management:

This is a participatory process of goal setting, planning, management, experimentation and evaluation (Schelhas *et al.*, 2001). The approach provides an effective way of dealing with the complex and uncertain situations associated with forest management given the wide range of species, product types, varied ecological zones and diverse socio-economic contexts. It is a value-adding approach whereby individuals or groups who use or manage a forest agree through a process of participatory action research to act together and draw up plans for their forests. Also known as learning-by-doing, this approach is characterised by deliberate efforts among collaborating groups to communicate, negotiate and seek out opportunities to learn together about the impact of their actions and to adopt corrective action based on the available indigenous and scientific knowledge.

Collaborative learning and monitoring

The management objectives, status of the natural resources and the impacts of utilization are relatively dynamic and unpredictable. Collection of monitoring data and creation of platforms to review the outcomes and impacts of forest management on a regular basis enables communities to learn more about their forests and to adapt their actions to meet new needs and respond to changing circumstances.

Step-wise approach

A phased approach gives all concerned time to learn and adapt to changes as well as to build confidence between the communities and the state and other partners. A gradual process also allows all stakeholders (administrators, implementers and communities) to acquire all the necessary skills for the new approaches and techniques, so that they can carry out their new tasks effectively and successfully.

SECTION 3

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR ENHANCING THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT

Although many constraints still limit wide scale adoption of CBFM, it is increasingly recognized that CBFM has reached a position where it can make a shift from experimental projects to becoming institutionalized as an accepted model of forest management.

This section discusses practical guidance on policy orientations and field implementation processes for Sub-Saharan African countries that wish to introduce, replicate or upscale community-based forest management practices. The objective is to:

- provide guidance on steps that need to be taken by governments to create the enabling conditions discussed above for institutionalizing CBFM; and
- advise on concrete actions that need to be taken by communities and other stakeholders to actually develop and implement community-driven management plans.

The guidelines are organized around the points identified in the review of lessons learnt and enabling conditions:

3.1. Building a Shared Vision of Community-Based Forest management

A key step of the CBFM process involves reaching informed agreement among all categories of stakeholders, especially government agencies and community-based organizations, on what CBFM means and what are its requirements and implications, including roles, responsibilities and expected benefits for the various categories of actors involved.

The need for shared understanding and vision of CBFM

Ensuring a sense of ownership of the main features of the CBFM concept by all parties to be involved in its promotion and implementation is not only desirable, it is essential. The transition from yesterday's forests to wide scale adoption of CBFM across Africa will be possible and most effective if members of the coalition of stakeholders have developed a shared understanding and vision of CBFM. A shared vision will enhance stakeholders' ownership of CBFM and also align it with the country's national development plan, thus providing a niche for it in national policies and development strategies. For a shared vision to be achieved, there is need to:

- Initiate a process of information sharing on CBFM,
- Clearly identify actual stakeholders and their stakes,

- Carry out a critical examination of the potential benefits and costs of CBFM to stakeholders,
- Clearly identify and agree on rules and mechanisms for sharing anticipated costs and benefits,
- Clearly identify what institutions, capacity building and funding strategies need to be put in place to sustain CBFM,
- Finalize shared vision and implementation strategy,
- Develop communication strategies to enhance popularization of CBFM.

Broad categories of stakeholders and their roles in CBFM are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: CBFM stakeholders and their roles

Stakeholder	Role
Community (local traditional or modern organization, elected communal council)	*de facto* land and forest managers and beneficiaries of forest resources
Private sector	• Resource mobilization • Provision of goods & services
Civil Society Organizations (NGOs, Farmer organizations, Associations)	• Public awareness • Advocacy • Dissemination of innovations • Capacity building
Public sector (Central government and decentralized administrative authorities)	• Creation of enabling national environment policies, laws and regulations • Planning and implementation of strategies (development, research, education/training, extension, etc.)
Academics (Research Institutes and Training/Education institutions)	• Creation of new knowledge • Management of knowledge and capacity development
Sub-regional and regional policy makers (RECs, AU, NEPAD, UN Agencies)	• Creation of enabling environment at sub-regional and regional levels • Promotion of cross-boundary cooperation (policy, trade, etc.)

Enhancing ownership of CBFM by stakeholders

Community based forest management's dual objective of achieving the conservation of forests while at the same time contributing to livelihoods improvement and general economic development is attractive, but it is not a panacea. Prior understanding by each stakeholder of CBFM strengths and weaknesses is crucial for securing their responsible and sustainable engagement.

Community forestry meeting in Namibia (Photo: FAO)

Steps to facilitate stakeholders' ownership of CBFM include:

- Clear identification of stakeholders' expectations;
- Critical examination of the benefits and costs of CBFM to all participating stakeholders. This should include addressing the question of whether CBFM is the most effective strategy to achieve sustainable and equitable improvement of rural livelihoods in their respective contexts.

3.2. Developing Enabling Policies, Legislations and Institutional Arrangements

CBFM is more than solving legal and technical problems. CBFM requires innovative policy and legislative reforms that effectively increase the direct involvement of local communities and other non-State actors in forest management. It is now widely accepted that this requires key changes that will:

- Clarify and promote land and forest tenure security;
- Promote decentralization of forest management;
- Ensure that forest sector policy and legislation are coherent with policies of other sectors, with international agreements, and with local bylaws;
- Facilitate inclusive participation and partnership building.

Clarify and promote land and forest tenure security

Tenure determines who can use what resources, for how long and under what conditions. Tenure can be formal (recognized by statutory law) or informal (locally recognized rights without formal state recognition). Prevailing forest tenure regimes in the region are combinations of both statutory laws and customary practices.

Developing policies that ensure land and forest tenure security for communities is a major step for enhancing the institutionalization and implementation of CBFM. To achieve this, incorporation of the basic rights into the regulatory framework should be as "hard" rights into the higher levels of the regulatory framework such as the Constitution or law, where any changes require high political decision and a complicated process, rather than "soft" rights in the lower levels such as implementation guidelines that can be modified relatively easily by bureaucratic discretion (FAO, 2010).

It is important to realize that in most African countries, the land tenure issue and the overlap between customary and official rules and regulations have an important impact on forest tenure. Fundamental policy and regulatory changes will not take place unless there is potential within government institutions to move towards change. This requires strong political will and leadership. In order to develop policies to clarify and promote land and forest tenure security there will be need to:

- Review existing policies to assess their relevance and/or appropriateness for CBFM and revise where necessary to allow genuine involvement of communities and other stakeholders in forest management.
- Take stock of traditional laws and customary practices and assess their relevance and /or compatibility with national policies and CBFM requirements, bearing in mind that concerns have been raised in relation to many customary systems, particularly with respect to gender and more marginalized groups. While the position of women under customary tenure varies considerably, many such systems contain norms and practices that are gender-discriminatory. Key characteristics of tenure security are shown in Box 3 .

Box 3: Characteristics of tenure security

1. Security requires that there be clarity as to what the rights are.
2. Security requires certainty that rights cannot be taken away or changed unilaterally and unfairly.
3. Security is enhanced if the duration of rights is either in perpetuity or for a period that is clearly spelled out and is long enough for the benefits of participants to be fully realized.
4. Security means that rights need to be enforceable.
5. Security requires that the rights be exclusive.
6. There must be certainty both about the boundaries of the resources to which the rights apply and about who is entitled to claim membership in the group.
7. The government entity entering into the agreement (in the case when co-management arrangements are involved) must have clear authority to do so.
8. Security requires that the law recognizes the holder of the rights.
9. Security requires accessible, affordable and fair avenues for seeking protection of the rights for solving disputes and for appealing decisions of government officers.

Source: FAO, 2011: Reforming forest tenure**.**

Lessons learned from successful tenure reforms clearly indicate that the process of reform is as important as the actual tenure arrangements themselves. Developing tenure arrangements that work and match stakeholders' needs and capacities should therefore consider:

- allocating sufficient time for consensus building;
- identifying the stakeholders involved and developing their capacity as well as empowering them with relevant negotiation and lobbying skills

A contrario, a regulatory framework for forest management that focuses solely on technical issues such as inventory techniques, cutting rates, etc., and neglects important social aspects such as forest tenure rights, livelihoods, income generation potential, and public participation will not be considered a good approach.

Ensure cross-sectoral coherence of policies and legislations

Inter-sectoral issues and the need for cross-sectoral cooperation and coordination are important factors in the success of CBFM. Forests occur within a landscape of other land use categories, such as water resources, grazing and agricultural land,

etc. Antagonistic interests in land use by herders, gatherers, farmers, etc. sometimes degenerate into violent conflicts and can defeat the purpose of the intended CBFM if appropriate mechanisms for conflict prevention/resolution are not in place. Despite these threats, integrated management and landscape approaches to develop synergies and reduce conflicts are often underutilized. It is therefore important to keep in mind the fact that forest management does not occur in a vacuum. It is influenced by what happens in other land use systems such as agriculture, rangelands, water, etc.

Many factors that contribute to forest degradation and deforestation originate outside the forest sector, such as conversion of forests into farmland or settlements, overgrazing or unchecked wildfires, mining, and infrastructure development. Indeed, it is the norm that forest-related concerns are defeated by those of agricultural expansion and of industrialization. On the other hand, a number of other sectors depend on many of the goods and services provided by forests.

A review by FAO on forest tenure reform in Africa shows that although regulatory frameworks for non-forest sectors are not necessarily explicitly related to forest management or policy, they may nonetheless have direct impacts. For example, people may have formal rights under the forest law to collect NTFPs but may be prevented from getting the products to market and selling them due to transport or market regulations which may limit the ability of smallholders or local communities to transport or market forest products, even if the reformed forest sector empowers them to do this (FAO, 2010). Therefore, communities' ability to operate within one law is constrained by another law.

Developing guidelines for successful tenure reform to support CBFM therefore needs to look outside the forest sector to analyze regulatory frameworks applied to other sectors so as to ensure cross-sectoral coherence in policies and legislation. It is important to identify what changes are needed within other sectors to support forest tenure reform and seek to: i) influence those sectors to make the necessary changes as well as ii) properly assess negative impact of forest reform on other sectors and seek to minimize such impacts.

Forest management strategies under CBFM approaches therefore need to:

- Reach outside the traditional forest sector and engage in partnerships with a range of stakeholders in other related development sectors;
- Institutionalize the use of ecosystem approach to ensure biophysical and socio economic integration between forests and other related land use systems
- Develop and implement strategies for conflicts prevention and resolution.

Consolidate the process of decentralization

Decentralization of forest management involves the transfer of control over forest resources from central government to local authorities, which may be lower levels of government administration or local institutions of user groups. Forest administrations in many countries are now decentralized at local level and work with local institutions, but the process of mental and attitudinal change of stakeholders' behaviour takes time. Yet, as discussed above in the section on enabling conditions decentralization is key to CBFM. There is need therefore to consolidate the process of decentralization of forest governance that is on-going in many countries of the region.

Different levels of empowerment of local institutions are realized through various mechanisms, including **decentralization** and **deconcentration** through which central government remains the main authority, and **devolution** which transfers rights and responsibilities to user groups.

Successful decentralization requires more than handing over of responsibility. Because decentralization involves the transfer of authority over natural resources to local communities, including of potentially valuable resources such as wildlife and timber, it often requires major institutional reforms and fundamental changes in power, and may encounter stiff resistance to change by central authorities, especially in the case of high value forests. Moreover, effectively **devolving** authority over resources to local communities may not go down well with central governments, as this will create precedence in the administration of other natural resources such as crude oil! Those communities that have gold, oil and other highly priced natural resources would want the government to use the same principle as used in CBFM .

Mistrust between central government and local user groups as well as power struggle between individuals or groups within local communities themselves constrain actual decentralization of forest governance.

For local institutions to effectively contribute to the promotion of CBFM they need to overcome internal problems, acquire and/or strengthen their legality, legitimacy and credibility. Also they need to develop good functional relationships with partners at district and national levels.

Successful decentralization therefore requires:

- Strengthening local institutions that are truly representative –and are perceived to be so by stakeholders and partners;
- Ensuring that different stakeholders and groups within a local population have their views represented and seriously considered through

participatory approaches.

- Given the importance of forests and forest products for rural women, a deliberate effort must be made to ensure the involvement of women at every level of management.

Ensure coherence of national forest policies and legislation with international agreements and local by-laws

National policy reforms take place in the context of i) obligations flowing from international and regional instruments to which countries are signatories, and ii) customary systems and local by-laws which govern resource use at local levels. National and local level regulatory framework on tenure must therefore be coherent with both levels of policies.

International instruments to be given consideration are mostly those related to:

- Multilateral environmental agreements, such as the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), etc.; and
- International human rights treaties.

It is government responsibility to ensure that policy, legislative and institutional frameworks adopted at national level are coherent with these international instruments to which the country is signatory.

At local level, it is important to ensure that practices under customary rules and local by-laws are congruent with the provisions of national land and forest tenure regulatory frameworks. Conversely, efforts should also be made to ensure that there is opportunity for local realities to inform the formulation of national policy and legislation. This is particularly important where customary rules are undemocratic and traditional leaders and their families and associates always take the lion share. To ensure coherence with relevant Agreements and by-laws, the CBFM process should:

- Enhance stakeholders' knowledge of international agreements and local by-laws relevant to CBFM
- Analyze national policy and legislation, international agreements, and local by-laws relevant to CBFM, and revise where appropriate.

3.3. Facilitating the Development and Implementation of Community-Driven Management Plans

The ultimate and desirable outcome of planning is the formal adoption of a community- driven management plan and its effective implementation. The sections below highlight the key steps involved in the process.

Introducing CBFM: The process

Community-led processes for developing management plans takes time. Experiences from The Gambia and Tanzania, generally considered as successful, clearly indicate that the process to successful introduction and acceptance of CBFM is long and complicated. Despite this, the process should not be rushed. As one CBFM expert puts it, "PFM/CBFM has more to do with attitudinal changes and building social capital than with legal and technical procedures. These take time to evolve and mature. The process has to give time for concerned stakeholders to build confidence or mutual trust and to develop a sense of ownership amongst communities".

Although details of actual procedures vary depending on local realities, it is now widely agreed that the process of initial set-up of CBFM areas and subsequent management have to follow more or less standardized procedures referred to as phased or step-wise approaches. The phasing provide sufficient time for confidence building between state and local stakeholders, and for building stakeholders' capacity and sense of responsibility. This cannot be achieved solely through the registration of a property title, or the formalization of a management agreement.

Two successful examples are shown in Box 4 (The Village land forest reserves experience in Tanzania) and Box 5 (The phased approach for community forestry in The Gambia). Although their origins and structures are different, the two processes share some common key elements, including the following (FAO, 2008):

- *A phased approach:* the formal recognition of ownership is the result of a relatively long process during which the government uses pilot villages to test the process, assess local capacities and build confidence before releasing land titles.
- *Capacity building* is an integral and significant component of the process.
- *Mechanisms for benefit sharing* provide an incentive for titling and the sustainable use of resources.

The main limitations so far have been the comparatively high costs and resultant dependence on external funding in The Gambia, and the unclear impacts on poverty alleviation in Tanzania, mainly because of the poor condition of forests devolved to local communities.

In the Gambia, a program entitled the Community Forestry Program uses a formal three-phased model consisting of 1) a start-up phase, 2) a preliminary phase and 3) a consolidation/ownership phase. Implementation of the three-phased approach is illustrated in Box 5.

Box 4: Village Land Forest Reserves (VLFRs) in Tanzania

A village council may reserve common land within the village land as a VLFR for the purpose of forest management. The village council owns and manages the trees through a village natural resource committee (VNRC), a group or an individual, and most of the costs and benefits of managing and utilizing forest resources accrue to the owner. Central government has a minimal role in the management of VLFRs, and district councils are responsible for their planning and establishment, as well as for undertaking occasional monitoring. To declare a VLFR, the village prepares a management plan, which must be approved by the village assembly. Villages can make by-laws to support the management plan and provide the legal basis for enforcing forest management rules. The following are some of the incentives that the Forest Act (2002) provides to encourage local communities to reserve forest resources on general land:

- *Waiving State royalties on forest products*: This means that the village is not bound by inflexible (and low) royalty rates, and can sell its products at prevailing market rates.
- *Exemption from local government taxes ("cess") on forest products from village forest management*: This means that products harvested from VLFRs are not liable for local government taxes during transportation.
  Exemption from the reserved tree species list: This mechanism under the Forest Act (2002) protects commercially important or endangered tree species on unreserved land, and entrusts their management (and commercial use) to the district forest officer. When under village management, decisions about harvesting these species are transferred to the village administration.
- *Confiscation and sale of illegally harvested forest products and illegal equipment*: Any illegally harvested forest products or the equipment used for illegal harvesting in a VLFR may be confiscated and sold by the village council, and the proceeds used to benefit the village.

As a result of these incentives, communities' interest in establishing CBFM is increasing. Evidence is mounting that forest condition is significantly improved when forests are managed locally by mandated village institutions under CBFM arrangements.

Source: (Akida and Blomley, 2007) ***In FAO, 2008***

Box 5: Phased approach for Community Forestry (CF) in The Gambia

A village or group of villages can become involved in community forest management by concluding an agreement with the Forestry Department over any piece of forest land that is not a forest park and that lies within the traditional lands of the village or group of villages. The Participatory Forest Management (PFM) Programme is implemented in phases. The timing for transfer to community ownership depends largely on the experience and readiness of the community concerned. Phased implementation is useful because it gives partners the chance to learn about each other. The responsibilities transferred to a local community must be commensurate with its technical and managerial capacity for sustainable management of the forest. The process of ownership transfer must therefore include regular training sessions to build community capacity.

The management of a community forest is based on an approved forest management plan developed by the local management committee with the help of forestry field staff. There are two types of plan: the three-year preliminary management plan, and the five-year community forest management plan. These correspond to the preliminary and consolidation phases of the CF implementation process. The community's management performance is evaluated before the end of the preliminary phase. If the evaluation results are positive, the final agreement - the Community Forestry Management Agreement - is signed, leading to the community's permanent ownership of the forest. During this three-year period, the Forestry Department provides capacity building to the local forest management committee, with training in record-keeping, bookkeeping and numeracy skills to enhance its financial management skills. The programme has had positive effects on forest cover, gender equity, income generation (through commercialization of forest products), governance, capacity building, and promotion of the integrated rural development approach.

Source: (Camara and Dampha, 2007) In FAO, 2008.

Branch firewood from Bulanjor community forest in Gambia (Photo: FAO)

Less successful examples from Cameroon highlight some of the main constraints that can hinder the successful completion of the process of developing community-driven management plans. Cameroon appears to be quite progressive regarding the promotion of community forest management. However, FAO (2008) and WRM (2007) reported constraints of overcomplicated and too expensive procedures that were discouraging for local actors. The result was limited success of the country's programme of communal forest at that time, although the situation may have improved since then (Box 6).

Box 6: Communal forests in Cameroon: A case of limited success

FAO, 2008 - Cameroon's Forest Law of 1994 foresees the possibility for a village represented by its mayor to request the creation of a communal forest (forêt communale). So far, the success of this initiative has been limited: not only is the law vague about the use and exploitation rights associated with the land titling, but the procedures are so complex and the costs so high that the advantages are not clear in comparison with the income assured to a local community through sharing the income taxes generated from a concession (40 percent to communes). As a result, even though communal forests have the advantage of being owned in perpetuity by the villages, this alternative tenure system has not yet received adequate support.
***Source*:** (Bigombe Logo, 2007) *In* FAO 2008, p14, Box 6

WRM, 2007 - In Cameroon, logging is carried out in an industrial scale by large corporations –national and foreign- linked to foreign capital and export-oriented. Paradoxically, the country appears to be -on paper- quite progressive regarding the promotion of community forest management. In this respect, a community forestry law was passed in 1994 which enables communities to manage their own forests –although with a maximum of 5,000 hectares- under a contract agreed upon with the Ministry of Environment and Forests and valid for 25 years…
On 12 September [2007] we visited the COVIMOF (Communauté Villageoise de Melombo, Okekak, Fakele 1&2, Ayos et Akak.) community forest, where the first thing we learnt was that the process for approval of community forest management is very slow. In this case, the five communities involved started the process in 1996 and only in 2004 they managed to comply with all the requirements for the approval and signing of the necessary legal agreement. They complain that even now, when they present the annual management plan, the Forestry Department takes months to approve it, which means that the community is left with a very short period of time (1-2 months) to implement it.

Source: WRM's bulletin Nº 123, October 2007

3.4 Practical Steps in Developing and Implementing a Community-Based Forest Management Plan

The objective of the forest management plan is determined by the needs of the community. It is these needs that should drive the development of the plan. To some extent, the process of preparing a management plan is as important as - if not more important than - the final written document. A management plan should not be prepared quickly just to fulfil a target. If the process is not carefully followed, the users will not understand the plan and will not be able to implement it. Furthermore, the community should be at the forefront of the preparation of the plan. The process of developing the plan normally involves several stages and steps. As it is likely that the community will not have the technical expertise required to actually develop the plan, the process will need to be undertaken with the assistance of an external facilitator, i.e. from the Forest Administration or a

Training course for community leaders as part of activities in strengthening the capacity of local communities in the sale of NTFP in Southern Cameroon (Photo: FAO)

capable and experienced consultant or NGO. The community would need to establish its own management committee to work with the facilitator in order to create capacity at community level.

A major constraint in developing a community forest management plan is the high cost. Financing options to be explored include the following:

- If the management targets commercial goods and services, the private sector may be approached;
- In the case of multiple use management which provides public goods for livelihoods improvement of forest-dependent people, Government or donor support should be solicited.

Key stages in the development of the plan are summarized below, although the stages themselves as well as their sequencing may vary by country across the region:

Stage I: Determination of land and forest use rights. The aim here is to research and document the status of the forest and the community. The process involves stakeholder analysis, livelihood analysis, institutional assessments, forest gazetting

and resource overview assessments, forest mapping, community mapping. Contrary to the detailed technical inventory normally required by the Forest department, a community management plan uses simpler methods to carry out resource assessment. These should be simple enough for the community to understand and carry out with the assistance of a technocrat, but comprehensive enough to guide sound management.

Stage II: Development and negotiation of a time-bound plan. The Forest Management Plan is usually developed for a pre-determined period. It gives details of the forest management objectives and the activities to be undertaken yearly or over any specified short time period. Once the plan is completed, it should be endorsed or cleared by the community and formally approved by Government.

Box 7: Example of a summary content of a community forest management plan

1. Background Information
2. Introduction
3. Description of the forest
4. Objective of the Forest Management Plan (short term and long term outcomes)
5. Forest management actions (activities regarding protection, development, utilisation and monitoring)
6. Collaborative monitoring and learning (setting targets, indicators, data collection and analysis, adaptive management)
7. Approval of the plan

Source: Sola, 2001

Box 7 shows an overview of what the forest management plan would generally cover.

Stage III: Development of a Forest Management Agreement. In addition to the forest management plan, the state and the community should enter into an agreement detailing exactly what the terms of the partnership are and the cost and benefit sharing mechanisms thereof. The Forest Management Agreement details the legal transfer of forest resources from the state to a community (where this is necessary) as well as the negotiated and agreed rights, responsibilities, rules and regulations for the sustainable management of the forest resources. The Forest Management Agreement is a legally binding contract document for partnership between the community and the state. Examples of points generally covered in a forest management agreement are shown in Box 8.

Box 8: Example of points generally covered in a management agreement

1. Introduction and background
2. Article 1. Definitions
3. Article 2. Objectives of the agreement
4. Article 3. Location, historical background and condition of the forest
5. Article 4. Description of agreeing parties
6. Article 5. Benefits to the agreeing parties
7. Article 6. Rights and responsibilities of the agreeing parties
8. Article 7. Conditions, legality and duration of the agreement

Further stages include the implementation of the CBFM plan, which focuses on the development of a detailed annual work plan with clear targets, and a monitoring system. The monitoring system should be set up with agreed community driven indicators and targets. As part of the process, capacity building activities are important to address some of the problems identified during the monitoring and learning process.

Community forest meeting in Oshampula, Namibia (Photo: FAO)

An important requirement for a CBFM implementation plan to be successful is that it must be user friendly. Box 9 shows key characteristics of a good CBFM plan.

Box 9: Characteristics of a simple forest management plan

A community forest management plan should be:

• **Useful**: a management plan should only contain essential forest management operations that need to be carried out to meet the users' objectives. This means that objectives should be clearly defined in the management plan. No unnecessary activities should be included.

• **Simple:** (easy to understand): a management plan should not contain terms that cannot be understood by the users. It should not contain data (from inventory or forest survey) which is not needed by the user groups to manage their forest.

• **Independent:** (drawn up by users): the primary managers of the forest are the Forest Management Institutions (FMIs) or users. This means that the plan should not be imposed from outside. The users themselves should produce the plan. Technicians should only act as facilitators.

• **Realistic:** (can be carried out by users): the user group should decide whether it can really carry out an operation before it is included in the management plan. For example, if the forest is very large, an operation such as enrichment planting should be written in a small part of the forest (e.g. in one workable block or compartment).each year rather than in the whole forest area. Activities should not be too costly for the community. Prior funding arrangements should be made if activities that are beyond the means of the community to finance must be put in the plan.

• **Flexible**: a management plan is a working document. Users will learn from experience what can or cannot be achieved. The users should be encouraged to adjust the plan according to these experiences (however, major changes should be approved by Ministry).

• **Participatory**: although the FMI executive and key community representatives initially prepare the management plan, other members of the community must have the opportunity to make comments and amendments during small group meetings and at enlarged community assemblies.

Source: FAO, 2002

3.5. Highlighting and Addressing Environmental and Socioeconomic Aspects of Community Based Forest Management

For CBFM to be attractive to stakeholders, it must demonstrate its potential to contribute to livelihood improvement, be it through cash income generation or through use of non-cash benefits from forest goods and services. To enhance the contribution of forests to economic development and livelihoods improvement, many communities have embarked on a wide range of small-scale forest-based enterprises. Whilst the majority of these remain in the informal sector, there is a growing trend of integration of these enterprises into the formal or main stream economy especially where the products and services provided are high value and have broad domestic and international markets. This has also led to the development or emergence of a wide range of community private sector partnerships in different parts of the world in an effort to boost business management and marketing capacity of the enterprises. The development and growth of small-scale forest-based enterprises generate demand for a wide range of business development services such as:

- Enterprise development support services
- Good transport and communication services especially for marketing
- Access to micro-credit and other financial services
- Business management capacity and skills
- Contract and partnership negotiation skills
- Financial management services and skills

Thus the institutionalisation of CBFM has to include the following:

- Policies and regulations that support community-based enterprises
- Guidelines for joint ventures and other partnerships
- Policies that promote the development of micro-finance services to improve the communities' access to relevant and affordable financial services
- Clear guidelines on benefit sharing mechanisms to ensure that benefits do not accrue to one user group only.
- Clear procedures and guidelines for forest use and exploitation of products to prevent over-exploitation
- Development of the capacity of local management institutions to monitor and regulate commercial and other uses of forests and forest products.
- Development of the capacity of local management institutions to facilitate and balance the use of forests and environmental and subsistence needs. This should include platforms for reviewing forest management objectives and practices to take into account changing circumstances and needs of different user groups (platforms for collaborative learning, development of adaptive strategies and consensus building at community level).

Strategies to properly address environmental and socio economic aspects of CBFM should ensure that government and the community jointly:

- Monitor continuously the long term dynamics of the forests under community management and under other management regimes at sentinel sites across ecological and socio economic gradients throughout the region.
- Assess strengths and weaknesses of community forests in the context of broader environmental issues such as climate change, watershed management, biodiversity conservation, land degradation/desertification control, etc.;
- Expand market opportunities for forest communities and small forest operations;
- Develop community-based indicators for monitoring and evaluation of CBFM performance in terms of environmental sustainability, livelihood improvement, and economic growth.

3.6. Enhancing Support Services to Stakeholders

To enable stakeholders contribute effectively and efficiently to the institutionalization and implementation of CBFM in the region, key services required include capacity development and sustainable funding. These are examined below together with potential benefits that can be derived from regional cooperation.

Empowering stakeholders through knowledge by strengthening participatory research and capacity development

The technical back-up to communities involved in CBFM by national institutions, e.g. public forest administrations (PFAs) and research institutions, is often very limited, either because of unclear mandates of these institutions in relation to CBFM or because of lack of resources and personnel with the right knowledge and experience. Due to limited participation of stakeholders in development of curricula and research programmes, research and education programmes in many countries still largely target traditional forestry needs. To strengthen the support of research and capacity development programmes to CBFM, there is need to:

- Promote participatory research to ensure that the needs of communities are mainstreamed into research plans. This can be best achieved by involving community representatives in research planning;
- Develop a capacity development strategy to enhance skills and capacities of both individuals and training institutions;
- Include CBFM concept and strategy in forestry curricula and enhance the capacity of trainers to develop relevant training materials in CBFM;
- Assess capacity needs at all levels (local, national and regional), focusing on

community empowerment as well as re-orientation training for professionals and technical staff, to update their technical skills and skills to deal with communities;

- Document and build on traditional knowledge, technologies and institutional arrangements;
- Learn from (and build on) success stories such as Central Africa's experience with the *"Guide pour la formation en gestion participative des resources naturelles"*, the Sahelian experience with the UNDP/FAO supported training Centre on community capacity development for participatory management of natural forests at Nabilpaga-Yargo in Burkina Faso, and similar experiences in other sub-regions.

Developing and implementing a strategy for sustainable funding

Sustainable community forestry faces serious constraints in today's global markets. Even with progress in the development of small and medium scale forest enterprises, CBFM may not be sufficiently competitive and economically viable. Innovative and sustainable funding mechanisms are needed if CBFM is to successfully compete and prosper to benefit stakeholders.

Sustainable funding to support the promotion of CBFM will require more than simply mobilizing the state's and traditional donors 'financial" resources. In addition to traditional income generation through trade of timber and non-timber forest products, there is need to tap new and emerging financing mechanisms such as compensation for conservation efforts i.e. non-market based financing mechanisms (e.g. GEF, Conservation trust funds, etc.), and market-based mechanisms of payment for ecosystem services (e.g. markets for carbon sequestration including REDD opportunities, watershed services, recreation, biodiversity conservation, etc.). These options are discussed in more details later in the section on emerging issues.

Whatever the actual source of external funding, CBFM implementation should emphasize the need to also establish a Local Forestry Fund for the sustainability of the approach. A good example is the National Forest Fund (NFF) in The Gambia. In this case, any revenue realised from CFM is subject to a 15 percent tax, National Forest Fund. Of the net (post-tax) benefits received by the participating community, 40 percent must be reinvested into CF development activities, and the remaining 60 percent would go to community or village development activities (Camara, 2009).

Capitalizing on growing regional and international cooperation in Sub-Saharan Africa

Several strategies, programmes and projects on CBFM and other forestry-related initiatives exist in sub-Saharan Africa. However, on-going activities take place mostly at local and national levels. Operational mechanisms for information sharing, mutual learning and coordination at sub-regional and continental levels are lacking. The overall coordination role played by FAO in the late 1990s and early 2000s to organize the international workshops on community forestry in The Gambia and Tanzania has been instrumental in raising awareness and support for CBFM in Africa. There is need to establish a regional platform and mechanisms for cooperation on CBFM in Africa. Such a mechanism would help achieve the following objectives:

- Capitalize on the existing rich and diverse country experiences on CBFM to update lessons learnt, enhance visibility and promote cooperation to expand CBFM in future;
- Ensure regional coherence in the understanding and vision of CBFM;
- Examine existing and emerging constraints and opportunities for promoting the use and implementation of this guidelines;
- Raise awareness of the guidelines and promote their dissemination through regional and international fora and mechanisms;
- Develop programmes for disseminating the present guidelines and implementing them at the national and regional levels, where additional support is needed;
- In addition to the NEPAD Action Plan for the Environment, mainstream CBFM into sub-regional forest policies, programmes and projects such as the convergence plan of COMIFAC in Central Africa, the West Africa Dialogue on Forests, the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative;
- Mainstream CBFM (and other forestry-related priority issues) into CAADP and in sub-regional agricultural policies and investment programmes.

3.7. Anticipating and Capturing Emerging Issues

New and emerging issues may provide opportunity for CBFM to expand meaningfully in future. An important issue that emerged in the last decade is market for ecosystem services including watershed protection, biodiversity and carbon. There is need to review and align national policies and legal frameworks, and institutions in the forestry sector, with other sectors in order to provide an enabling framework through which CBFM can take advantage of these opportunities. Opportunities for partnership with the private sector are also emerging in connection with trends of increasing interest for certification of forest products.

Governments therefore need to provide a conducive policy framework for private companies to do business with local communities in a socially responsible manner. Although it is clearly too early to offer any detailed guidance on how to incorporate the emerging issues into CBFM, it is important that they be recognized and captured as key issues with the potential to influence future development of CBFM.

In recent years the development of payments for environmental services (PES) as a potential source of revenue from, and funding for, SFM has gained momentum. Payment for the services of forest ecosystems entails providing compensation to the owners of a forest (or other ecosystems) in return for the provision or maintenance of certain environmental services (Wunder, 2005). While such payments have long existed for recreational services, they are being adopted for other services such as watershed protection, carbon sequestration, biodiversity conservation and landscape beauty. Various regulatory, market-based, and other voluntary payment mechanisms for these forest environmental services have been introduced over the last decade. Many such schemes have been developed around the world, and in the best cases, these have resulted in improved resource management and economic development (Wunder *et al*., 2008).

Unfortunately, in Africa the use of PES is still in its infancy and limited to payments for recreational services and biodiversity conservation being the most developed. Ecotourism can be seen as a kind of voluntary environmental service payment inasmuch as the resource managers receive benefits (in the form of additional income, training, improvement in health and education services, and steady well-paid jobs), in return for protecting the scenic beauty and biodiversity of the forests where they live. In this case, the purchasers of the service are environmental tourists and organizations that provide funds to be invested in infrastructure in these areas or support the creation of community tourist enterprises.

In the last 35 years a number of CBFM projects based on ecotourism and biodiversity conservation have been developed. Examples include the Bwindi Forest project in Uganda where communities are managing a forest area for the conservation of gorillas and benefiting from the ecotourism enterprises they have developed. Payments for other environmental services, especially watershed services and carbon sequestration are a more recent phenomenon and the experience with these in Africa is limited. However, there are already enough examples that have shown that PES has the potential to increase forest values and returns to communities under CBFM. Examples of payments for watershed services are: (i) the Working-for-Water Programme in South Africa that involves the control of invasive alien species in catchments for the protection of water resources and ensuring water supplies and: (ii) the Kimani watershed protection project in

Tanzania (van Wilgen *et al*. 2001). However the development of watershed services payment schemes has been very slow in Africa due to low income levels, small markets and weak institutional capacity. Whilst communities can manage forests for watershed protection services, there is need to develop domestic markets for such services and to integrate this with other forest uses such as harvesting of NTFPs in order to increase returns to the management investments.

The situation is similar with carbon sequestration. The high level of global concern about climate change has resulted in forests attracting great attention because of their role as carbon sinks (or as sources of carbon when they are cut down). Payment for carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change is one of the fastest growing environmental services markets in the world. In Africa there are now a number of carbon trading projects involving local communities. Community-based carbon sequestration projects can provide significant economic benefits to local communities in the form of cash incomes as well as through access to NTFPs generated through forestry activities. For instance, in the Nhambita Community Carbon Project in Mozambique (Box 10), local households receive a cash payment of US$242.60 per ha over seven years for carbon sequestered on their farms.

Box 10: Miombo Community Land Use and Carbon Management – Nhambita Pilot Project (Mozambique)

Nhambita is a small community located near Gorongosa National Park in the Sofala province of Mozambique. The Miombo Community Land-Use and Carbon Management pilot project aims to develop forestry and land-use practices that promote sustainable rural livelihoods in partnership with rural communities in a way that raises living standards and to assess the potential of these activities to generate verifiable carbon emission reductions. The project was launched in 2003 as collaboration between the environmental company Enviro-trade Ltd. and the University of Edinburgh. The project is supported by the European Commission. The project is a collaborative effort between several different organisations which include, the University of Edinburgh, the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Management, Enviro-trade (UK), International Centre for Research in Agroforestry, and the Park Administration of the Gorongosa National Park (Mozambique).

Local farmers and forest communities manage the planting and tending of trees in return for proceeds from the sale of carbon offsets to customers in the developed world using the Plan Vivo methodology developed by the Edinburgh Centre for Carbon Management. The Plan Vivo is a carbon management system that was developed for small farmers under the Scolel Te Project in Mexico in 1996. The Plan Vivo is a Trust Fund, which provides technical and financial assistance to local farmers to take up forestry/agroforestry activities and then on their behalf, sell carbon offsets that are generated.

The growing focus on compensation for reduced emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has increased the opportunities for countries and local communities to benefit from payments for carbon. However there are still a number of issues that need to be clarified and addressed before communities can benefit from these opportunities under CBFM. These include:

- Uncertainties about how payments for REDD credits can be distributed to local communities and
- What other benefits communities can obtain from REDD schemes
- How to ensure that the majority of payments is not being captured by elites or the state.

- What other forest-based livelihood activities are compatible with REDD and how will REDD affect the overall contribution of forests to community livelihoods.

A number of countries, such as Tanzania, Zambia and Democratic Republic of Congo have participated in pilot REDD projects with support from the United Nations and the World Bank. Thus it will be important for countries to share lessons and experiences on how to incorporate REDD in CBFM. This is yet another reason for establishing a regional platform for cooperation on CBFM in Africa.

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