



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





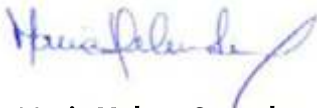
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## FOREWORD

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 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> 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
ANAFAE	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

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# 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.