

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.

