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FORESTS,
TREES
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ARRBES, FORÊTS ET
COMMUNAUTÉS
RURALES



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA
FORESTRY DEPARTMENT

Proceedings of the international workshop on community forestry in Africa

Participatory forest
management:
a strategy for
sustainable forest
management
in Africa

26-30 April 1999
Banjul, the Gambia

Actes de l'atelier international sur la foresterie communautaire en Afrique

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participative:
une stratégie
pour une gestion
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Foreword

In the search for effective natural resource management strategies, it has become apparent that local communities have a critical role to play in sustainable forest management. Community-based forest management has emerged in the past decade as an effective approach for the management of tree and forest resources. Experiences in various countries have shown that when communities are empowered with responsibility and rights for the management of these resources, and receive the benefits from them, the rate of degradation is substantially reduced, and in many cases the forest cover improves visibly.

While there has been extensive documentation of Asian community-based natural resource management experiences, there is less awareness and documentation of African experiences. However, while not as well recognized, there are today growing and evolving efforts taking place in Africa.

The evidence of this workshop suggests that Africa may well take the global lead in the design of supportive policy and laws and the implementation of community-based resource management. At least eleven different States have at least one significant initiative underway: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, the Niger, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Half of these have in draft or complete new forest policies and laws that are responsive to the requirements of community-based forest management (e.g. Cameroon, the Gambia, Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia). It is plausible that with the beginning of the new millennium, there will be upwards of 1 million ha of natural forest in sub-Saharan Africa that is under direct or indirect community management. At the time of the workshop there were probably no less than 100 000 ha

under provisional community management in Cameroon, nearly 19 000 ha of community forests (and the area is quickly expanding) in the Gambia, some 600 000 ha of community-managed 'forest' in Mozambique and upwards of 400 000 ha of forest under community management in Tanzania. Perhaps more significant are the numbers of communities involved – more than 1 000 in the three States of the Gambia, Mozambique and Tanzania alone.¹

Despite the current networking that is occurring in Africa to enable improved exchange and flow of information, more needs to be done in order to learn from each other, to harmonize and systematize approaches, and to provide the necessary framework to move from pilot to national implementation. It is in this context that the Gambian Forestry Department, in conjunction with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), and with the technical support of the Community Forestry Unit of the Forestry Department of FAO and the Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP), organized the International Workshop on Community Forestry in Africa, held in Banjul, the Gambia, 26 – 30 April 1999.

The focus of the workshop was on both the institutional framework (policy and legislation) and the implementation approaches needed to enable the development of participatory forestry for the sustainable use of forest resources in Africa. The workshop was attended by participants from 25 African countries, including policy-makers, practitioners from government and non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations from African countries, as well as donor representatives and international organizations involved in community forestry.

1. Wily, Liz Alden. In Press *Involving communities in forest management: an overview and analysis of developments in Eastern and Southern Africa in 2000*. To be published as a Gatekeeper Series Paper, International Institute for Environmental Development (IIED), London.

There was lively discussion on shared experiences, potential benefits, constraints encountered and future directions. There was consensus that the management of forests was entering a new phase. The paradigm of the past had proven to be ineffective in meeting the challenges of today. What particular path to the future was to be followed would depend to some degree on a country's past, the current status of its forests, and the needs of both local communities and the State. However, while the paths might vary, there was a generally agreed upon direction – in which community-based management was a major factor.

There was also agreement on the need to continue to share experiences – for when striking off in a new direction it is useful to know from those who have gone before what can be achieved and how. In support of this, Professor Said Iddi, Director of Forestry and Beekeeping at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism in Tanzania, proposed that a follow-up workshop be held in Tanzania in 2001.

The organizers of the International Workshop on Community Forestry in Africa would like to thank the fol-

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