

**Proceedings of  
the international  
workshop  
on community  
forestry in Africa**

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

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26-30 April 1999  
Banjul, the Gambia







## **SECTION 1**

Overview



# Overview of the international workshop on community forestry in Africa

by Foday Bojang

## Introduction

An International Workshop on Community Forestry in Africa, jointly sponsored by the FAO and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), in collaboration with the Government of The Republic of the Gambia, was held in Banjul, the Gambia, 26-30 April 1999. The workshop brought together over 120 participants from 25 African countries, representing government forest services, projects, community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in the area of community-based forest/natural resource management. The objective of the workshop was to exchange experiences, in an African context, and to work towards developing a strategy for community-based natural resource management.

The workshop was conducted in six plenary sessions, with two working group sessions, a full-day field trip to community-managed forest areas and a poster session.

## Opening statements

Under the chairmanship of the Acting Director of Forestry of the Gambia, Mr Abdoulie Danso, the opening session of the workshop presented statements from the FAO Representative and the GTZ Representative in the Gambia and the Senior Community Forestry Officer from FAO in Rome. The opening statement was delivered by the Gambia's Honourable Secretary of State for Trade, Industry and Employment on behalf of the Secretary of State for Presidential Affairs, Fisheries and Natural Resources. Members of the diplomatic corp were present at the opening.

In his introductory statement, the Acting Director of Forestry, after welcoming the participants, underlined that the focus of the workshop would be on exchanging

experiences on the key elements and strategies necessary for successful community forestry implementation for sustainable forest management in Africa. He encouraged the participants to view the workshop as an opportunity for establishing a network for exchanging information and promoting community forestry in Africa. He gave a synopsis of the Gambian experience in community forestry, which was established as a pilot project in 1990 before the relevant policy and legislative changes were introduced, and which has since expanded to cover more than 17 000 ha by 1999.

The FAO Representative, Dr Heimo Mikkola, representing the Director General of FAO, expressed the Organization's delight at the cooperation between FAO, GTZ and the Gambian Government in promoting community forest management in Africa. He cited the Gambia as a leading example in community-based natural resource management, both in the forestry and fisheries sectors, with experiences dating back to the late 1970s and early 1980s. This, he said, makes the Gambia an ideal choice for the workshop as the country has in place an appropriate policy and legal framework for the implementation of community forestry.

Mr Dominique Reeb, GTZ Policy Adviser to the Forestry Department of the Gambia, speaking on behalf of GTZ, gave an overview of the GTZ-Gambian Government partnership in the sphere of forest development. During the almost 20 years of uninterrupted partnership, GTZ has provided technical assistance to the forestry sector for natural forest management, resulting in the development of a natural forest management model. This forest management model formed the basis for the community-based forest management approach currently being implemented in the country. He underlined the important role played by the Gambian Government, through its political commitment and policy and legislative changes, in enabling the full-scale implementation of the concept

in the country today. The apparent success of the community-based programme has encouraged two other donors to extend assistance to the programme through the GTZ. He acknowledged the commitment of the Gambian villagers to managing their forests and encouraged strong support for their course.

The Senior Community Forestry Officer from FAO Headquarters in Rome, Dr Katherine Warner, gave a brief overview of FAO's Community Forestry Unit and its Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP) and presented the background to the workshop. Interest in holding a workshop resulted from previous international forestry and other natural resource management meetings where the Gambia's experiences in community-based forest management were presented. These presentations prompted the Community Forestry Unit to seek a collaboration with the Forestry Department of the Gambia in hosting an International Workshop on Community Forestry in Africa. She emphasized that the purpose of the workshop was not to identify best practices but to provide an opportunity for exchanging experiences, at the continent level, in the field of community-based forest management, to help build strategies for its further development and expansion on the African continent, and to provide an opportunity for the various actors to initiate a wider network of information exchange.

An opening statement was delivered by the Honourable Musa Silla, Secretary of State for Trade, Industry and Employment, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Presidential Affairs, Fisheries and Natural Resources, the Honourable Edward Singhateh. In his statement, the Honourable Secretary of State underscored the State monopoly that hitherto characterized forest management and ownership in Africa in general. He underlined the need to recognize the immense potential for sustainable

forest management through the devolution of authority and ownership over the forest resources to local communities. He stressed that the Gambian Government recognized this need and therefore, in 1995, it changed its Forest Policy, and in 1998 its Forest Legislation, to enable a country-wide implementation of community forestry. These instruments now permit community ownership of the resources, and the benefits accruing from them, through management agreements with the Gambian Government. The Honourable Secretary of State also recognized the role that forests can play in socio-economic development and the fight against desertification. He stated that communities are often aware of the environmental and socio-economic relevance of forests and therefore are ready to accept responsibility for them.

In concluding his statement the Honourable Secretary of State thanked the Gambia's development partners, most especially Germany for its long-standing financial and technical assistance to the forestry sector in the Gambia. He also acknowledged and thanked FAO for co-financing the International Workshop on Community Forestry in Africa and for supporting the Forestry Department to host it in the Gambia.

### **Keynote addresses**

Prior to the case study presentations two keynote addresses were presented: one by Mr Patrice Bigombe Logo, of Planet Survey (Environnement et Développement Durable, Réseau Agricultures Paysannes & Modernisation [APM-Afrique]) and the National FFTP Facilitator for Cameroon; and another by Ms Friederike von Stieglitz from GTZ (Section for Forest Management and Nature Conservation).

Mr Bigombe's presentation was on *Dialectics for the promotion of community forestry in Africa from the top and from the grassroots: actual situation and prospects*.

Sub-Saharan Africa is heterogeneous, and despite apparent similarities, realities differ from country to country. The implementation of community forestry requires time, resources, courage and patience. Questions that should be raised at this workshop include: What has concretely been done in the area of community forestry in Africa and what remains to be done?; What are the achievements, limits and opportunities?; What are the



constraints and how can these be addressed?; What institutional, policy and operational strategies need to be put in place in sub-Saharan Africa for the advancement of community forestry?

Community forestry can provide an opportunity for effective and efficient conflict management in the sphere of natural resource management. It can be an appropriate means for the rational and sustainable management of forests. It can also be useful for decentralized natural resource management and for local development.

Sub-Saharan Africa has developed experience in the areas of traditional and conventional forestry. There are many programmes in community-based forest management within the context of various international programmes, such as the Biodiversity Programme, and institutional networks have been established. However, there are institutional limits, as well as conflicts in resource management and ownership, as well as other structural problems. Laws are made that are difficult to implement, and these new laws have not helped to change habits either. There is a need to capitalize on the gains made in Africa south of the Sahara and to find the means for reaching all those who have the desire to engage in community forestry, and to make deliberate efforts to understand the hitherto ill-understood customary laws. There is not only a need to transfer ownership to the local communities, but also to transfer competence, resources, etc., through a decentralization process.

Ms von Stiegliz's presentation was on the *Impacts of social forestry and community-based forest management*.

State ownership of forests, a legacy of the colonial past, is a characteristic feature of African forestry programmes. Through this system of ownership people are kept out of the forests even though the governments have very little, if any, corresponding capacities to manage these forests. While the pressure on the forests is coming from all sectors, the approach of governments to forest management has been, and remains, narrowly sectoral. It does not involve many of the stakeholders. Forests have been undervalued, leading to considerably reduced output in financial terms, and consequently compromising their contribution to national economic development.

Over the years, however, there has been an evolutionary process in the approach to community-based forest management from community forestry to social forestry and finally farm forestry, focusing on the interests of the individual enterprise. Institutional changes in policy and the legislative framework regarding the forest itself, land, finance and administrative law are needed to mobilize the full potential of 'social' forestry. The institutional changes will help to attract new actors, but the need for appropriate capacity building should not be lost sight of if effective involvement is to be achieved.

The multiplicity of interests involved in social forestry poses a risk for the sustainable management of the forest. In order to avert non-sustainability, the commitment of the various interest groups has to be ensured through a management agreement that provides guidelines for the sustainable management and utilization of the forest. Institutional arrangements have also to take into consideration the socio-cultural setting in which social forestry is being implemented.

Social/participatory forestry is not without problems, however. These problems, among others, are:

- unfavourable political and legal framework conditions due to either their absence or late introduction;
- ill-defined conditions for participation with respect to roles and functions for all players, as well as benefit-sharing conditions; and
- challenges for economic viability and integration of resource management and development objectives, especially considering the long-term nature of the forest enterprise, vis-à-vis degraded resources, and people's short-term perspective for a return on investment.



## Summary of case study presentations, and panel and working group discussions

Six case studies were presented, from Tanzania, Burkina Faso, the Niger, Cameroon, Madagascar and Uganda, in addition to a presentation on the Gambian experience. The case studies demonstrated many different approaches to community forest management. They also showed the variety of objectives behind the different programmes. While some case studies indicated both an environmental and an economic focus in country activities, others, depending on the way the projects had been initiated, had more of an economic than an environmental focus. The case studies also demonstrated the variety of institutional arrangements employed to implement community forestry, especially the inter-phasing of local traditional and modern (national) institutional arrangements.

Although not necessarily representative of the entirety of the situation in Africa with regard to community forestry, the case studies nonetheless provided a good indication of the various approaches employed and focuses of attention. They also showed the stages of preparedness, diverse institutional arrangements, policy and legal bases, incentives and tenure arrangements, as well as the degree of empowerment/transfer of authority to local communities in Africa. Much, however, still needs to be done in Africa in the area of policy, legislation and tenure arrangements with regard to community forestry. Africa has a wide range of examples of attempts to involve local communities in forest and other natural resource management.

The following section gives a summary of the major aspects and issues of community forestry in Africa as represented by the case studies, and panel and working group discussions.

### Historical context

Public agitation for community-based forest/natural resource management has its roots, in most African countries, in the repressive natural resource laws from their colonial past. The forest laws that came to be applied in the post-colonial era alienated local communities' rights to claim ownership of forests. Licences and

other forms of taxation, previously unknown to the communities, were introduced to control the exploitation of produce that used to be freely accessible to them for domestic and commercial use. As populations and the demand for agricultural land increased, and the financial needs of the newly independent countries increased as a result of heightened demand for social, infrastructural and general economic development, the laws governing the management and exploitation of natural resources were made more stringent to permit the governments to maximize revenue from these resources. Developments in the private sector provided governments with an opportunity to increase revenue from natural resources through commercialization of products. The royalties and licence fees that were introduced were beyond the means of the local communities. As a result, mainly 'outsiders' involved in natural resource business, who had the financial means to pay the taxes, accessed the resources at the economic, social, cultural and spiritual expense of the communities settled close to them.

The business community, which was profit-oriented, did not concern itself with sustainable exploitation, and the governments did not see the need, or have the capacity and experience, to enforce sustainable practices of exploitation. Communities therefore often adopted a nonchalant attitude to both the governments' approach to forest management and to the forest itself, resulting in the latter's deterioration. As communities began to witness the disappearance of their hitherto valued forests, and the associated traditional, social, spiritual and local economic values that they attached to them, some communities took it upon themselves to protect them against fires and illegal cutting. These attempts did not have much impact on reversing the degradation of the forests, not so much due to lack of financial resources as to an absence of legal empowerment. The communities therefore began to call for a return of their forest lands and their empowerment to manage them. At about the same time, the governments themselves began to face difficult situations in which the relative revenue-generating capacity of the forest resources diminished as a result of inefficient revenue collection methods, declining forest resources, and increased population pressure on forest areas for farming and corruption. Soil productivity declined, threatening food self-sufficiency and food security, and drought and desertification threats escalated.



The emergence of the international debate on tropical forests brought a new orientation to forest management in the tropics. The contribution of forest resources to the wider context of sustainable economic and environmental development began to gain international recognition. Similarly, international attention came to focus on sustainable management and utilization in relation to the contribution of forests to the socio-economic development of the communities settled around them. A variety of conceptual approaches therefore emerged, such as integrated forest management, joint forest management, collaborative forest management and forestry for rural development. In the integrated forest management approach, emphasis was placed on the integration of other economic and social functions of the forest in management activities, local value-added orientation, and the association and active involvement of other stakeholders as partners both in the management and conservation of forests and in benefit sharing. The joint and collaborative management approaches recognized the need for stakeholder involvement in order to achieve sustainable development. In these cases the implementation approaches used were, for example, contract management and nature conservation by agreement between government/rural authorities and rural communities/user groups, or between government/forest authorities, rural communities/user groups and the private sector.

Global initiatives were taken in the 1980s and 1990s, in the form of international environmental and natural resource conventions. These have now been signed and ratified by the majority of African countries and have brought pressure to bear on the national governments to properly manage their natural resources and to involve the local communities in the process. There was also serious agitation for attitudinal change, among governments and the people, from international and local environmental groups. Faced with inadequate financial and human resources to respond to the various situations, the governments began to call upon the local communities to assist them in protecting the 'state-owned' forests in the hope that the communities would respond since they had been seeking a return of their ownership and management rights. However, the expected response was slow in coming since policies and laws remained unchanged. For political reasons and for fear of losing power and a revenue base, the governments and their

resource management agencies were reluctant to bring about the much called-for policy and legislative changes that would permit the transfer of ownership, and authority for the management of the forest resources, to the local communities. This reluctance on the side of governments and their agencies is largely responsible for the current proliferation of project-based pilot initiatives in community-based forest/natural resource management that have no, or very limited, legal bases. Nonetheless, the governments' acceptance of these pilot schemes constituted a positive precursor to a legally facilitated process of community forestry on the African continent.

More and more African countries have begun to look at their policies and legislation in the area of natural resources with a view to changing them to permit local community involvement in their management.

### **Objectives of community forestry in Africa**

The principal objectives of community forestry, whether advocated for by governments, projects, NGOs or the local communities themselves, have been to arrest forest resource degradation and to enable communities to have a secure/guaranteed access to, and ownership of, the resources and their benefits, through empowerment and building capacity for forest management at national levels. Other broad objectives include environmental protection through forest conservation, enhanced wildlife management, and establishment of woodlots and management of grazing lands. Some project-initiated activities have had the objective of using community forestry as a livelihood strategy through which income is generated for the participating communities. Due to the State's inability to control forest exploitation, community forestry is being used in some cases as a cheaper (and more effective) source of labour and to create adequate capacity at the national level for forest management.



## **Motivation and incentives for community forestry in Africa**

The case studies illustrated that, as far as the majority of governments are concerned, the motivating force has been the prospect of protecting and managing large areas of forest lands with the pool of 'cheap' labour available at the local community levels. However, in some cases community forestry has been the governments' response to the demand to transfer ownership and management of forests to the communities. In most of these cases in which community forestry has been implemented, externally funded projects initiated the process (e.g. the Gambia). For the local communities, it is the prospect of having relatively unhindered access to the forest and its benefits, the belated realization of the environmental benefits of forests and the mere satisfaction derived from the feeling of 'ownership' that have been, in many cases, the driving forces behind their involvement. In the Gambia, the communities have been motivated by the prospect of owning the forest and its benefits as well as by the desire to keep 'foreigners' out of 'their' forest. In the Niger, Uganda and Cameroon, the prospect of financial gain has been an obvious principal motivating factor, while in many of the other cases presented it has been the combination of the desire to arrest forest degradation, resulting from outsiders' exploitation, and the prospect for localizing the monetary and other benefits that has driven the communities to engage in forest/natural resource management.

The projects involved in community forestry in virtually all of the cases were motivated by their desire to demonstrate that community involvement is crucial for sustainable natural resource management in Africa.

### **Starting point for community forestry**

Local communities were dissatisfied with the way the governments, through their forest services, handled forestry issues and consequently alienated them. Hence, in many African countries, they agitated for a return of the forest to them. In the case of the Gambia there was a strong demand for the return of the forest to the people in order to permit the local communities to directly control the forest and to have access to the benefits accruing from it. Consequently, at the time community forestry was introduced, there were pockets of communities willing to

engage in the process. This provided the Forestry Department with an opportunity to successfully introduce a pilot programme.

Although the presentations brought to light many cases of community-initiated forest/natural resource management well before the advent of the 'modern concept' of community forestry, it was apparent that much of what is happening in Africa now has been initiated by externally funded projects that either sympathize with the communities or desire to demonstrate that community-based management can be a viable means for sustainable management. Governments were aware of the degradation of natural resources, the inadequacy of their policies and legislation to arrest the downward trends, and the need to involve communities in natural resource management. However, lack of financial and human resources, experience and political will prevented them from introducing community-based management. It therefore took project interventions to introduce community-based management in most African countries.

Given the situation above, the focus of community forest management differs in the different African countries. In the Gambia and Tanzania the focus is principally on transferring to the communities the ownership of non-reserved forest areas and their benefits. In most other cases the starting point has been community management of, and access to, forest products, as in the Niger, Uganda and Cameroon. In all cases, however, the political, policy, tenure and legislative environments dictate the forms of community involvement.

### **Policy and legislative environments**

The workshop revealed that most African countries have still to put in place an enabling policy and legislative framework for community forestry to take root. The majority of African countries (with the exception of the Gambia and Tanzania) currently lack appropriate policy and legislation that would permit communities to own and manage forest areas and resources. Consequently, community forestry activities in Africa are conspicuously pilot activities that are being implemented by projects in the hope of influencing policy and legislation in the future. In some cases, however (e.g. Madagascar, 1997), legislation was introduced allowing forest resource use

by the local communities without providing for the communities to own the resources. The law also makes it possible for communities to be involved in the management of the forests.

In the case of Tanzania, while communities can own land it still remains under the executive control of the President, who can change its ownership status as he deems necessary. Chances therefore exist for communities to lose rights over forest lands under this kind of arrangement. For the Gambia, communities have to enter into forest management agreements with the Gambian Government through which ownership is guaranteed as long as the laws and the agreements are observed. Here again ownership cannot be exercised until these agreements are signed.

Although considerable interest has been generated in Africa for community-based natural resource management, the continent is still a long way from realizing the large-scale implementation of the concept. This can be attributed to the apparent absence of permissive policy and legislative environments. While the prospect exists for combined natural resource management, the current lack of political will and the resistance to change (by those standing to lose) pose serious constraints.

### **Process and approach for community forestry**

The need to involve communities for sustainable forest and other natural resource management has been recognized. This calls for participatory needs identification, participatory planning, awareness raising, stakeholder visits, agreements and memoranda of understanding (MOUs) in order to generate the greatest possible local involvement in the process.

Apart from involving local community members in forest management activities, most countries/case studies also see the need for, and involve, other actors such as NGOs, private business, etc., in the process.

The approaches adopted differ from case to case depending on the policy and legislative environment as well as on the state of the forest being managed. While some pilot activities have an integrated approach (e.g. Malawi), most are limited to the management of the forest resource. There is, however, a need to integrate other development

aspects, based on the communities' expressed needs, in the implementation of community-based forest/natural resource management. Participants nonetheless appreciated the limitations for a fully integrated approach due to human and financial resource constraints.

For the Gambia, apart from introducing community forestry at a pilot level using a forest management model to test both the willingness and capacity of the local community to implement it, as well as the applicability of the model at the community level, the Forestry Department has used a phased approach to the introduction of the programme. These phases, the start-up phase, the preliminary phase and the consolidation phase, enabled understanding and confidence building between the department and the target community. It determined the continuity, or not, of the programme and permitted the association of other collaborators, particularly the NGOs.

The start-up phase allows consultation between the community and the Forestry Department. During this phase the community forms a management committee, makes the necessary negotiations among its members and between itself and neighbouring villages, and also receives training from the department on forest management principles. The start-up phase lasts up to six months, and the community uses it to identify and preliminarily demarcate its forest, and limit its utilization to extraction of non-timber products and wood for domestic consumption. The phase is also used to prepare the community to apply for its Preliminary Community Forest Management Agreement (PCFMA) from the Forestry Department.

The preliminary phase implements the PCFMA signed between the community and the Forestry Department. It lasts for three years initially, and can be extended for up to another two years, depending on the results of an evaluation conducted at the end of the phase. The phase is used to resolve conflicts, consolidate institutional arrangements at the local level, prepare management plans and conclude all necessary administrative and legal issues. Commercialization of wood from fireline construction activities is permitted at this stage, and all revenue accruing from this activity is kept by the local community. The PCFMA phase is a 'test' phase both for the community and the department. It allows the community to demonstrate its capacity to manage its forest,

and the department to determine the willingness of the community and its own ability to cooperate with the community. It also gives the community an opportunity to determine whether the department will live up to expectation and therefore provides the possibility to opt out of the programme if it deems that necessary. Communities that do not satisfy the department in terms of their commitment have a chance to do so during a two-year extension phase. The agreement is annulled when a community grossly fails to satisfy basic evaluation criteria.

The consolidation phase is the period when a final Community Forest Management Agreement (CFMA) is signed between the Forestry Department and the community, permanently transferring authority and ownership of the forest to the participating community. The conclusion of a CFMA is dependent on the community 'passing' the evaluation. The preparation and implementation of a simple management plan is strictly observed during this long-term phase. Communities are allowed to harvest according to management prescriptions and are required to pay 15 percent of their revenue into the National Forestry Fund, which is used by the department for forestry development including extension of community forestry activities. Communities are also required to place 40 percent of the remaining revenue into a local fund, which they control and administer, for reinvestment into their forest. They use the balance of 60 percent for other community development activities.

### **Institutional arrangements for community forestry**

Community forestry in Africa, as noted above, is still largely project-based. Most of the experiences have been derived from pilot schemes implemented by externally funded projects. A variety of institutional arrangements have been employed that involve community, local authority and state levels. In most cases, however, the ultimate arrangement is that decisions are taken by the community organization, such as a committee, with the state forest service and the project providing advice and guidance with regard to technical and legal matters. Fully decentralized decision making has yet to be achieved in any country. Tanzania, with its long-standing experience in the decentralization of local administration, is perhaps the only country where close to a fully decentralized

decision-making process occurs. Yet here also the village council feels more responsible to the higher local authority than to the villagers themselves. This situation may undermine the empowerment level that sustainable community forestry asks for.

Wherever possible, existing traditional institutions are used in planning, organization, implementation and benefit sharing at the community level (e.g. the Gambia). In most cases village management committees or organizations have been formed (Uganda, Madagascar, Malawi, Burkina Faso and the Niger) to lead the implementation process. Management agreements with governments (the Gambia, the Niger), contracts (Madagascar) and MOUs (Uganda) have been used to implement community forestry.

In the Gambia, the apparent success of community forestry is attributable, to some extent, to the collaborative involvement of relevant NGOs and the use of private extension agencies. Whereas the private extension agencies are contracted for their services, the NGOs are associated through an MOU, and they bring in their own resources as a supplement to the limited project resources. The NGOs are used to perform work that they are most qualified for, such as institution building and strengthening. The MOU is signed for three years to ensure that uninterrupted services are provided. The Forestry Department and the project act as facilitators to establish contact between the villagers and other government departments, NGOs and donors for the implementation of non-forestry development activities that the villagers might request.

Until full decentralization is achieved, with legally guaranteed decision-making authority devolved to the local communities through the local administrative structures, community forestry will continue to be implemented through various institutional levels depending on the political and legislative environments.



### **Development of a management concept or approach**

It is only in the Gambia that a forest management concept and model preceded the introduction of community-based forest management. There was no experience in natural forest management in the Gambia prior to 1985. The Gambian-German Forestry Project subsequently developed a natural forest management concept and model, during the period 1985-1990, which was adapted to the local conditions. The forest management model lays emphasis on fire protection of forest stands and enrichment planting. This model was used to introduce community forestry and to establish the best practice for a country programme. The existence and use of a model helped to avoid risky experimentation with the local communities. It also significantly enhanced the success of the Gambian case.

The question of whether a pilot programme to build experience, and thus a model, should precede policy and legislative changes, or vice versa, was discussed at length. The workshop recognized that experience gained through the implementation of a pilot project proves useful in determining policy orientation and instruments. However, the implementation of a pilot project hinges on the existence of political will, enlightened forest service personnel and, in some cases, an 'opening' in the existing legislation that could permit the implementation of a pilot project.

Here again the Gambian experience offers a valuable lesson for other African countries. In the Gambia, both the forest service personnel and the policy organs of the country saw the need for community involvement in forest management both for the benefit of the communities and the nation at large. The Gambia's 1977 Forest Act had a provision that allowed the Minister responsible for forests to exempt a particular community from the restrictive provisions of the 1978 Regulations for the purpose of forest management or exploitation. The Forestry Department used this legal provision to implement community forestry by seeking such exemptions from the Minister. This allowed a smooth implementation of the pilot projects of the first half of the 1990s, leading to the development of an acceptable approach. The experience gained by the Gambia during the period 1990-1995 formed the basis for the new policy of 1995 and the revised legislation of 1998.

### **Tenure arrangements for community forestry**

The absence of a secure tenure for the communities involved in forest management is a characteristic feature of most community-based forest management activities in Africa. In the Gambia and in Tanzania, significant legal strides have been made to transfer ownership rights over forests to the local communities that have customary claim over them. In most other African countries, the State still exercises overriding authority over land in general and its resources. The communities' right to forest resources is frequently limited to use of (mainly) non-timber products. Legislative development processes have largely been non-participatory, with the consequence that consideration of community and individual views and rights has often not been incorporated into the final text of land legislation.

The issue of tenure was underlined by the workshop as one needing serious attention if sustainable community forest management is to be achieved. In all the case studies presented, with the exception of the Gambia and Tanzania, security of tenure for the communities is not guaranteed. For example, in Uganda, where collaborative resource management is being implemented on a pilot basis, resource ownership has not been clarified. In most cases, tenure is limited to access to forest products and does not imply ownership of the trees or land. This kind of tenure arrangement only helps to promote exploitation as opposed to sustainable management. As observed earlier, however, tenure security in the Gambia and Tanzania are also contingent on a CFMA and developmental and political considerations respectively. Overall, the workshop concluded that a legally guaranteed secure tenure is necessary if community forestry is to advance from its current pilot/project-based nature to a people-owned process.

### **Capacity building**

There is need for capacity building at all levels, but most especially at the community, NGO and private sector levels, for sustainable forest and other natural resource management. Most of the current community-based natural resource management programmes incorporate a training component for the participating stakeholders. In the case of the Gambia, for example, community forestry



emphasizes capacity building both for the Forestry Department and the participating community. In this respect the department trains the communities in basic management planning, bookkeeping and marketing strategies, and uses trained community members to train other community forest committees. The department staff is provided with in-service training on community forestry to facilitate the extension of the programme and for sustainability. The NGO and private consultant partners are also involved in training activities, either as beneficiaries or as trainers themselves.

### **Constraints to community forestry and natural resource management in Africa**

Constraints to the expanded implementation of community forestry in Africa are many. Foremost among the constraints, as revealed by the workshop, is the lack of appropriate policy and legislative frameworks in the countries. The existence of such frameworks is hindered by the lack of political will at the level of the governments, and resistance to change both at administrative and local levels. Lack of experience in successful sustainable practices at the country levels has also hindered the development of appropriate policies and legislation for the implementation of community management practices. As a result, many pilot schemes are currently being implemented in a legal vacuum. The conservative attitudes of most forest service personnel in Africa were also cited as an important constraint to the advancement of community forestry on the continent.

The absence of a secure tenure for forests and other natural resources creates a 'discouraging' environment for community involvement in their management. This situation is being significantly, albeit gradually, overcome in those countries (the Gambia and Tanzania) where the political will for it exists.

It was also noted that the local communities and the forest service personnel often lack the technical skills and capacities to implement community-based forest management. For the communities, it is more an issue of an absence of expertise in matters of technical forestry, while for the forest service personnel the concept is new and calls for attitudinal change and open-mindedness, which are two attributes that are difficult to achieve in a short period. Governments often do not have the finan-

cial and human resources, even where the will, policy and legislation are available, to implement country-wide activities. Another important constraint is the frequently recounted donor fatigue, especially since the implementation of community forestry has relied heavily on donor support. As a result, despite the significant strides that have been made in Africa to introduce and implement community forestry on a wide scale, the constraints identified above will hinder development in the sector for a long time into the future.

The current ingrained mistrust that communities have concerning the governments' intentions will slow the rate of adoption of community-based forest management. The workshop saw the need for intensified campaigns and awareness raising among the communities and the NGOs represented in the countries.

## **Strategies and recommendations for community forestry in Africa**

In considering strategies and recommendations for community forestry in Africa, the workshop took into account key elements that had been identified in the working group sessions. The strategies and recommendations that emerged were based on the outcomes of discussions in specific areas such as policy, legislation, economic issues and implementation. These strategies and recommendations are presented below.

### **Strategies**

#### ***Policy strategies***

A conducive national policy is necessary if community forestry is to be implemented country-wide. In this respect awareness raising is necessary, at all levels in the country, on the need for genuine devolution of authority to the local communities for the ownership and management of forest resources. Related to this is the need for administrative decentralization and the involvement of the communities throughout the planning and implementation stages. Forest and other related policies need to be harmonized, and the involvement of communities and other stakeholders in policy definition should

be ensured. Policy instruments should also ensure government commitment to community-based management as well as capacity building for all stakeholders.

### **Legislative strategies**

A link has to be established between policy and legislation. Therefore legislative provisions have to be made for community ownership and management of forests, while recognizing the important role of local institutions and norms in this respect. Experience gained from implemented pilot projects would be a useful input during the process of drawing up the laws. The legislative process should involve all administrative levels and stakeholders. For this purpose, the new laws should be adapted to the existing or planned decentralized structure wherever possible. As a confidence-building strategy, given the current atmosphere of mistrust of government intentions among the local communities, new community forest legislation should be popularized and thoroughly explained to the communities to avoid, or minimize, problems in the future.

### **Institutional strategies**

Insofar as the principal beneficiary in community forestry is the community, implementation of community forest management activities should employ local institutions, norms and practices as much as is practicable. This will help in building confidence within the communities while at the same time promoting a sense of ownership of the programme among them. Most communities have age-old conflict resolution mechanisms that must be recognized and used throughout the planning and implementation of community forestry.

A strong linkage and partnership should be established between the players (i.e. the community institutions, forest service, NGOs, private voluntary organizations, etc.) to ensure sustainability and effective implementation. The legislation should ensure these institutional linkages and support through management agreements or MOUs signed between stakeholders. Decision-making should principally be vested in the local communities while government services should provide advice and guidance.

### **Implementation strategies**

For the total and effective involvement of communities, their rights should be clearly defined and made known

from the very outset, as well as those of other actors, especially governments. Pilot projects will help identify and clarify these various rights and privileges. All necessary technical support should be given to the communities, including training. Training for community forestry should not be limited to communities alone, but should be extended to other participants/stakeholders. A training of trainers (the forest service personnel), as the concept and practice of community forestry develops, should be ensured. Simple forest management plans drawn up by the communities with technical assistance from the forest service should constitute the basis for management at the community levels. Other related development activities requested by the communities should be taken into consideration in implementing community forestry.

### **Economic strategies**

Economic incentives have to be perceived by the communities if their long-term commitment is to be secured. As a result, it will be necessary to identify, develop and promote the economic values of forests. During the implementation phase, markets have to be sought for the various products and the value of these products should be enhanced through value-added processing. This calls for the use of existing local knowledge in a way that will ensure employment for the community members. Every effort should therefore be made to ensure a positive impact on the livelihoods of the community members.



## Recommendations<sup>1</sup>

The working groups made some recommendations and proposals for follow-up activities in support of an Africa-wide implementation of community forestry. These are summarized below.

- Governments and donors should be sensitized to appreciate community forestry and to demonstrate long-term commitment to it by mobilizing and channelling sufficient resources into the process.
- Regional, subregional and national community forestry networks should be established and strengthened to facilitate information exchange and cross-border exchange visits between communities, services and institutions.
- FAO should immediately undertake to prepare a country status report every five years on community forestry for the whole of Africa, and widely disseminate these reports.
- Regular (biannual) consultative meetings should be held between heads of forest services, practitioners and policy-makers at subregional levels for the purpose of sharing information and to facilitate follow-up with the governments.
- Regular capacity-building/strengthening programmes should be organized for all actors by governments and donors.
- FTTP of FAO should routinely solicit case studies and disseminate these to as many actors as possible in support of the national and Africa-wide networks.
- FAO should sponsor impact analysis and focused cost-benefit analysis of cases where clear competing land uses exist.
- Community forestry legislation should periodically be revised by governments to bring it into harmony with social and economic evolutions.

- The physical and financial benefits of community forestry should be popularized among the local communities and at the national level.
- In all cases, communities should be seen as partners in forest development.
- Whenever possible, FAO should take advantage of other relevant international fora to promote community forestry for Africa.
- The development of national-level strategies for community forestry in Africa should be promoted throughout the continent by FAO.
- FAO should distribute the outcome of this workshop to all participants and participating countries as well as to those countries and relevant donors and NGOs that have not been represented.

## Conclusion

The working groups were unanimous in their conclusion that community forestry is a feasible undertaking for Africa as a whole although some requirements have to be met. These requirements include the existence of a permissive policy and legislative environment, an appropriate development framework, the right ecological setting and appropriate incentive frameworks. It was also observed that governments should demonstrate both political and financial commitment to the process and that tenure arrangements should be ones that permit a guaranteed ownership of the resource base. Opinion was also expressed that, despite its feasibility, community forestry might not be the 'best' option (especially for high-value forest products) where private management might be possible.

1. Many of the recommendations suggested follow-up activities to be carried out by the FAO. While the recommendations are certainly of strong interest, it was noted in the discussion during the session that FAO does not have the level of resources, either human or financial, required to conduct the many activities recommended. It was suggested by Dr Warner that national and regional institutions, rather than the FAO, be called upon to assume many of the tasks recommended. However, some of the activities that were recommended are currently being carried out through FAO's Forests, Trees and People Programme (FTPP). The African components of the programme play an active networking role in the development and dissemination of case studies, field manuals, training materials and other information materials on locally-based natural resource management. They distribute a quarterly FTP Newsletter in Africa. Along with its regional FTTP partners, FAO's Community Forestry Unit (CFU) is indeed working to promote community forestry in Africa in international fora. The CFU and the FTTP will also help to organize a follow-up workshop on community forestry in Africa, planned, at time of press, for 2001 to be held in Tanzania.