



# Innovative approaches to support sustainable forest management and poverty alleviation

Depending on how it is applied, any tenure system – State, community or private – can contribute to sustainable forest management and poverty alleviation. Some innovative forest tenure and management approaches in Africa are demonstrating the potential to provide such benefits.

## **Titling of common property**

Common property systems operate very effectively in many African countries. Under these regimes, individuals cannot usually own or inherit land or resources, but they can use them as sources of food, fuelwood, medicines and other materials. Common property systems can ensure that even the poorest and most vulnerable people benefit from forests. They also give local forest users a vested interest in protecting forest resources from overexploitation or damage, and people often respect “their own” rules and systems more than those of external government bodies. However, local power holders sometimes put their own interests before those of the community in forest management decision-making and implementation. In many countries, traditional forest

management systems have been weakened by inadequate legislation, insecure access rights, and socio-economic change. Many customary forests are left unmanaged and effectively open to anyone who wants to use them, with negative effects on forest conditions and the livelihoods of local people, particularly the poorest. To establish and support communities’ legal ownership and management of forest resources, some governments are introducing land titling, along with capacity building in forest management decision-making and enforcement for the community institutions responsible for managing common property. Land titling policy needs to be phased in gradually, so that community stakeholders can absorb new approaches and practices and learn from experience. In the GAMBIA, forestry field staff help local forest management committees to develop three-year preliminary management plans. When a plan has been successfully implemented, the community signs a Community Forestry Management Agreement, leading to permanent ownership of the forest. The Forestry Department provides training in record-keeping, bookkeeping and numeracy, as well as forest

management skills. Stakeholders also need to have clear benefits. In the United Republic of TANZANIA, a village council can draw up a forest management plan for a village land forest reserve (VLFR), for which it bears most of the costs and receives most of the benefits. Central government provides incentives such as waivers on royalties and taxes for VLFR products, and the proceeds from confiscations and sales of illegally harvested forest products and equipment.

**Titling of common property needs ...** phased implementation, with formal ownership and responsibilities being handed over step by step; capacity building for stakeholders; and guaranteed benefits from managing land and resources carefully.

## **Private sector investment**

Private sector investment can fill the financial gaps that hinder the functioning of many government forestry administrations. More and more African governments are involving the private sector in managing former public forests. After a decade of decentralization and tenure reform in UGANDA, large forest areas are now managed by private freeholders and leaseholders.

Secure and long-term tenure and ownership rights encourage investment in sustainable forest management. As well as providing employment to local communities, some free- and leaseholders contribute to poverty alleviation by allowing local people to cultivate crops in areas opened for tree planting.

Since 2001, the Government of SOUTH AFRICA has transferred 60 percent (nearly 250 000 ha) of its high-potential State plantations to the private sector under lease agreements. The government retains land rights, giving it some control over how forests are used. New owners are obliged to respect local communities' existing rights and claims over the plantation areas, and community trust shareholdings in privatized plantations have proved successful. As well as saving the government about US\$50 million a year in management costs, the privatization of State plantations has also improved forest conditions. Certification with an internationally accredited organization is now a condition for the continuation of leasehold agreements with plantation owners.

#### **Private sector investment in forest management needs ...**

secure and long-term tenure rights; mechanisms for ensuring sustainable forest management (including effective forest law enforcement and access to markets); and recognition of local communities' existing rights and claims over land.

#### **Joint forest management**

In some African countries, such as SENEGAL, GHANA and the United Republic of TANZANIA, joint forest management (JFM) is resulting in improved forest conditions, biodiversity conservation, reduced illegal activities and local people's increased involvement in sustainable forest management.

In JFM arrangements, the State retains ownership of the forest, but shares the responsibility for managing it with the community. Local people are willing to assume the added responsibility when they have a say in how their forests are managed, but many JFM initiatives are undermined by powerful groups that are reluctant to share their authority.

Under JFM, communities receive shares of the benefits from forest resources. So far, however, most JFM arrangements are based on conserving and protecting forests, rather than commercial exploitation, so they have not had much impact on poverty alleviation, so far.

Financial incentives are very important, as demonstrated by comparing the cases in SENEGAL, where communities receive part of the fines collected for non-compliance and can commercialize some forest resources, and the United Republic of TANZANIA, where forest dwellers are losing interest in JFM because its financial benefits are less than those they derived from forest resources before JFM was implemented.

#### **Joint forest management needs ...**

local communities' involvement in decision-making; protection of less powerful and least-advantaged socio-economic groups; and benefits for local communities.

#### **Empowerment of less advantaged groups**

Many forest communities lack forest management capacities and sense of ownership over resources. The private forestry sector can help rectify this situation by not only providing employment opportunities for forest people, but also supporting communities through the complicated process of registering forest rights and obtaining benefits from them. Governments can encourage such initiatives through incentives and by making them a condition for the granting of licences and concessions

to exploit forest resources. SOUTH AFRICA's scheme to privatize State plantations favours companies that commit to improving the living conditions of the black population, through ownership of plantations, employment opportunities and access to forest resources.

Most natural forest and wildlife exploitation in MOZAMBIQUE is carried out by private companies. Innovative legislation aims to ensure that communities are consulted about how their land and resources are used. Communities that have registered their land-use rights must be consulted before concessions are granted, and receive royalties from concessionaires on the resources extracted from community land. Concessionaires must also involve local communities in forest management plans and decisions. Although lack of clarity about consultation procedures is threatening this scheme, successful relationships with logging contractors have brought communities jobs; logging residuals for woodcarving, building material, charcoal and fuelwood; and facilities, training and market access for income-generating activities.

#### **Empowerment of less advantaged groups needs ...**

clear rules and procedures for ensuring community benefits; a sense of ownership; incentives for private enterprises investing in local development; capacity building of local people in registering their rights and using their resources sustainably; and access to markets for communities' products.

#### **Fair benefit sharing systems**

If the presence of commercial logging companies restricts forest communities' use of forest resources without bringing any benefits the result is hostility or conflict. The few African countries to establish benefit sharing systems have had positive results.

