



PUBLIC FOREST ADMINISTRATIONS IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA



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CONTEXT

One of the case studies commissioned by the *Sustainable Forest Management in Africa (SFM)* project was on public forest administrations and related institutions (PFAs). The authors were Fredrick Owino and Assitou Ndinga and the full report is available on the AFORNET web site www.afornet.org.

Among other issues, the study highlights that PFAs in most Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries were patterned on the institutional arrangements in the former colonising countries. They have remained focused primarily on implementing policies around delineation, gazettement and management of state forest and wildlife reserves, with emphases on regulation of forest extraction and on conservation.

Despite protracted global concerns with deforestation and poor forest management in developing countries, PFAs in most SSA countries have not sufficiently addressed the ambitious plans and many proposals for action towards SFM that have come out of the Tropical Forest Action Plans of the 1980s or the UNCED/IFP/IFF processes of the 1990s. The calls for more comprehensive and holistic national forest plans, new forest policies, and associated institutional reforms, which called for significant changes in structure and functions for PFAs, have only resulted in modest progress in a few countries.

The situation has further deteriorated as these failed attempts coincided with economic problems in the sector caused by a combination of structural reform programmes (SAPs) and reduced donor support to forestry. These have resulted in drastic staff reductions, which have dealt debilitating blows to PFA capacities in most countries. Moreover, new SFM paradigms and approaches - community forestry and agroforestry, for example - have ushered

in new functions for PFAs, the capacity for which does not exist. The growing official corruption, the rampant illegal forest activities and the HIV/AIDS scourge have combined to render PFAs ineffective in many countries.

Clearly, there is an urgent need for SSA countries to reform and to strengthen their PFAs as an important pre-requisite to the move towards SFM. Already, some countries have made progress on these lines and there are important lessons to learn for other countries that have plans to make a start. It is in this context that one of the main thrusts of the next phase of the SFM in Africa project will be policy advocacy for institutional reforms and capacity building for PFAs.

SOME KEY ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

The study and several discussion forums convened by the project identified the following key issues to be addressed in strengthening PFAs:

1. Inadequate investments in PFAs by governments, leading to a steady decline in the state of human resources and physical facilities, lack of mechanisms to retain forest revenue for the direct benefit of SFM efforts, and no considerations on how to derive full benefits from forest services (water, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, etc.);
2. Need for institutional reforms with particular emphasis on re-defining the roles of PFAs vis à vis other players, strengthening cross-sectoral linkages for greater impact and investment, and more effective harmonisation with national policies and legislation;
3. Weak and inconsistent high-level political commitment, reflected in interference in PFA operations (forest resources often given away as state largesse), government officials involved in illegal forest practi-



Public forest administrations must become better to respond to farmers' need for advice in tree planting, management and sale.

ces, and politically instigated conflicts between PFAs and local populations over settlements, extraction rights, etc;

4. Raising the profile of PFAs at local and national levels commensurate with the important heritage and value under their control; and,

5. Addressing emerging professional challenges for PFAs, consistent with new forest paradigms, such as giving greater attention to the social dimensions of forestry and developing skills in providing technical guidance on issues like biodiversity, water relations, CO2 capture, etc.

LESSONS LEARNT

Increasing investments in PFAs

☼ High level political statements on the importance of forests and commitment to their improved management are rarely matched by increased government budget allocations and support to PFAs.

☼ Some countries, e.g. Ghana and Kenya, have taken promising steps to realise additional revenue from forest services (particularly on water flow). However, appropriate mechanisms, including the roles of PFAs, for steady benefits from such revenue sources have yet to be sorted out.

☼ A few countries, e.g. Tanzania, have introduced forest revenue retention schemes, which are already boosting investments in PFAs.

☼ In many countries, illegal forest activities continue to rob PFAs of valuable income.

Progress on institutional reforms

☼ TFAP and UNCED/IPF/IFF/UNFF inspired reforms are being implemented very slowly. Some countries, e.g. Uganda, Ghana and Cameroon, have moved significantly faster than others.

☼ In many countries, attempts at promoting necessary reforms continue to be resisted, both by politicians and civil leaders, and from within PFAs.

☼ In some countries, e.g. Malawi, Zambia and Uganda, reforms have been supported largely by donors with some risk that they could slow down or collapse upon this support being withdrawn.

☼ There is an urgent need for policy advocacy and capacity building for country-driven national forest programmes (nfp) as an overall framework within which institutional reforms are implemented.

☼ Reforms invariably take much longer time to be realised than planned. Countries should neither expect nor plan around quick reform fixes, but rather be committed to sustained efforts with country-driven reforms.

Attracting high level political commitment

☼ Political leaders in many countries (e.g. Rwanda, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi and the Central African Republic) have declared that high priority will be given

to afforestation and forest conservation. Regrettably, even where these declarations are genuine, PFAs have failed to capture the full opportunity presented to enhance their national status.

☼ There are promising sub-regional forest initiatives which have great potential to enhance the profile and high level political support of PFAs and to standardise their operations on regional bases. These include the Conference on Central African Moist Forest Ecosystems (CEFDHAC), the Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), the Conference of Ministers in charge of Central African Forests (COMIFAC), the Conservation and Rational Land Use of Forest Ecosystems in Central Africa project (ECOFAC), the Congo Basin Forest Initiative, and the SADC Forestry Protocol.

☼ On the downside, there are several countries where PFAs have moved towards collapse. In Kenya, for example, public esteem and political support for the PFA is very low on account of corruption among its staff.

☼ In the several countries with internal wars, the functions of PFAs are severely curtailed or rendered impossible.

Raising the profile of PFAs

☼ PFAs have tended to be conservative, keep low profiles and resist attempts at cross-sectoral planning and implementation of national development activities. This has pushed PFAs further to the periphery at national levels, where various sectors compete for diminishing public funds. PFAs need to embrace crosssectoral approaches to development.

☼ PFAs need to enhance and continuously review professional ethics among their staff in order to raise and sustain a high professional esteem in the public eye. In this context, strengthened foresters' associations and the introduction of professional regulation mechanisms (e.g. certified forester schemes), could serve as "ethics watch-dogs".

Addressing emerging professional challenges

☼ PFAs need to extend their technical skills and guidance into new areas such as sustainable use and



In many countries, PFAs have been unsuccessful in curbing illegal logging, often even contributing to the problem.

value addition for non-wood products, quantifying and regulating various forest services, etc. There is a need for PFAs to work jointly with other specialised agencies on such tasks.

☼ Universities and forest research institutes should take the lead in addressing these emerging challenges to the profession.

THE WAY FORWARD

Increasing investment in PFAs

☼ Countries should develop and streamline forest revenue schemes.

☼ PFAs should directly benefit from revenue generation mechanisms related to forest services.

☼ Taken effective steps to stem illegal forest practices, including strengthening operations of the regional forest law enforcement and governance initiative (FLEG) and promotion of forest certification and chain-of-custody schemes.

Institutional reforms

☼ Countries should strengthen their own nfp and move forward with their own institutional reforms in PFAs.

☼ Networking for sharing of experiences and capacities across countries in driving nfps forward; such networking can be sustained through a regional pro-

fessional forum such the one soon to be established by the AFORNET/SFM project.

Attracting high level political commitment

☼ Initiate and sustain advocacy efforts for high level political support for SFM and for strengthened PFAs in all countries; such advocacy will be one of the core activities of the AFORNET/SFM project.

Raising the profile of PFAs

☼ Take a broader approach to ensuring high professional ethics through targeted promotion and support for forestry associations, vetting schemes (e.g. certified foresters), and legislation, in all countries.

☼ Universities, academies of sciences, and other players should guide such initiatives; the AFORNET/SFM project will specifically focus on promotion and support for forestry associations in selected SSA countries.

Addressing emerging professional challenges

☼ Support targeted interdisciplinary research on emerging dimensions on SFM; these should be priority areas for AFORNET research grants for senior scientists.

☼ Commission feasibility studies in such new areas as the potential value of carbon trading (under CDM) and other environmental services to SFM in Africa; the AFORNET/SFM project will take a lead role on this.

The project, "SFM in Africa" for short, has been jointly managed by the African Forest Research Network (AFORNET) at the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) and the Forest Department of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO).

The policy briefs are based on commissioned reports which are available in full at the web site www.afornet.org. The reports contain all relevant references to information sources used.

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