

## Sustainable Forest Management in Africa (SFM) Initiative

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### Introduction

The forests in Sub-Sahara African (SSA) are renowned for their habitats for wildlife, beekeeping, unique natural ecosystems and genetic resources. They are catchment to many rivers that are a cornerstone of economic development in the region. Further, they are increasingly receiving global attention because of their share in biological diversity, potential for industrial timber exports, capacity for mitigating adverse effects of global climate, livelihood 'safety nets', and as levers for rural development. The SSA region is continually accommodating, in national plans, new and emerging issues, on the global scene as well as from individual countries. These issues arise from international agreements, conventions, protocols as well as those from the sub-regional economic groupings.

The forests and trees supply a variety of products and services for rural and urban communities. They form an integral part of the livelihood strategies of local communities who live within and/or around them. As a result of this, human impacts on the forests have increased mainly due to growing demand for agricultural land, as well as increased demand for forest products and services, both of which are partly a consequence of rising human population and economic development. The pressure has progressively escalated due to inappropriate land use practices, such as shifting cultivation that has been practiced on progressively short cycles, slash and burn practice of farm clearing, frequent and uncontrolled bush fires, lack of soil conservation measures, uncontrolled livestock grazing, and farming on marginal lands. Other major factors include conversion of forestlands to non-forest uses such as mining, hydropower generation, urban centres and agricultural plantations.

In an effort to contain these developments, there are considerable efforts to empower rural communities

and to devolve ownership and management of natural resources to them. It is believed that such devolvement will lead to better management and utilization of forests and tree resources. However, this has not been matched with parallel efforts in terms of enhancing human capacities to take on these additional responsibilities by supplying them with additional physical, financial and other resources to manage the forests. This is reflective of the nature of such efforts in Africa, where structural changes have been mainly confined at the macro-organisational level and there is very little change and resources at the meso- and micro-levels.

These shortcomings notwithstanding, and despite the glaring lack of information in support of good forest management, there are efforts to manage African forests sustainably, especially those under formal administration. Sustainable forest management (SFM) is a long-term objective for Africa, and is written into most national and regional development plans and strategies.

Developing SFM plans for productive forestry is relatively new. Past experience dealt with management plans for sustained timber yield. It is commendable that Africa has begun to take realistic steps to improve management of its forest and tree resources. The most important steps are in the realm of policy and institutional changes, both within the forest sector, in other sectors, and the economy as a whole. Of particular importance are the following:

- Decentralisation and devolution of administration and increased emphasis on community participation in forest management.
- Changes in forest administration, especially through the establishment of more autonomous boards, authorities and commissions.
- Increased role for the private sector in forestry production and processing; this has led to privatisation of public-owned commercial enterprises, including forest industries and plantations in many countries.

- Increasing role of civil society – especially national and international non-governmental organisations – in influencing forest resource management, particularly through their advocacy role and also through direct involvement in forestry initiatives that involve local community participation.
- Concerns about global changes, especially stemming from demands that forest, also in Africa, shall provide global public goods and services, and environmental protection in particular, as reflected in various international arrangements including treaties, agreements and conventions.

### Sustainable Forest Management in Africa Initiative (SFM)

As a modest contribution to the promotion of SFM in Africa, the African Forest Research Network (AFORNET) at the African Academy of Sciences (AAS), in collaboration with the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry (KSLA) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, implemented a project on “Lessons Learnt on Sustainable Forest Management in Africa” between 2003 and 2005. The project aimed at discerning positive and negative lessons from forestry activities, programmes and projects that had been implemented in Africa since most countries became independent in the last 40+ years. It also sought to enrich its findings through analysing the relevance to Africa of lessons from Latin America, Asia and Sweden.

More specifically the project has three specific objectives, *viz*:

- Analyse and establish what lessons have been learnt from positive and negative experiences of various initiatives, projects and programmes aiming at sustainable management, use and conservation of forests in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- Analyse and establish what the ecological, economical, social, and other pre-requisites are for extending positive lessons to wider use (to more people, larger areas, other countries, etc).
- Based on the outcome of the above analyses, identify the most urgent issues and concerns for Africa to give priority in international processes such as UNFF and CBD.

In addition, it was intended that the work would also assist in:

- Defining roles for how the various institutions making up the Collaborative Partnership for Forests (CPF), particularly the technically and resource-wise stronger ones (FAO, ITTO, CIFOR, ICRAF and IUCN), can contribute to national efforts to extend positive lessons and assist African countries in international processes related to forests and forestry.

- Defining roles for how Swedish “forestry actors” (authorities, institutions, industry, forest owners, NGOs, etc), and those in other developed “forest countries”, might contribute to the same goal in partnership with national or international (e.g. CPF) institutions.

In implementing the project, twenty case study reports were made as follows, with the authors and their institutions (as they were in 2004) in brackets:

1. African forests and forestry: an overview (background report on “issues” by FAO).  
*Authors: Mr Julius Tieguhong (Cameroon) and Dr. C.T.S. Nair (FAO).*
2. Observations on participation of Africa in international forestry processes.  
*Authors: Mr. Jones Ruhombe Kamugisha (Uganda), Prof. Reidar Persson (Sweden) and Mr. Bai-Mass Taal (UNEP).*
3. Etat de la recherche forestiere en Afrique Sub-saharienne.  
*Author: Dr. Pape N. Sall (Senegal).*
4. State of forest education in Sub-Saharan Africa.  
*Author: Dr. James Legilisho-Kiyiapi (Kenya).*
5. Study on forest administration and related institutional arrangements.  
*Authors: Prof. Fredrick Owino (Kenya) and Dr. Assitou Ndinga (Senegal).*
6. Forest plantations in Sub-Saharan Africa.  
*Authors: Prof. Shabani Chamshama (Tanzania) and Dr. Frank Nwonwu (Nigeria/South Africa).*
7. Communal forest management.  
*Author: Dr. Jeff Odera (Kenya).*
8. Rain forest management for wood production in West and Central Africa.  
*Authors: Prof. David Okali (Nigeria) and Dr. Oscar Eyog-Matig (IPGRI-now Bioversity).*
9. Forest management for non-wood forest products and services.  
*Authors: Dr. Ben Chikamai (Kenya) and Dr. Mathurin Tchataat (Cameroon).*
10. Forest-livestock interactions in West Africa.  
*Authors: Dr. Aimé Nianogo (IUCN) and Mr. Iba Thomas (Senegal).*
11. What shapes forestry practice in Africa?  
*Authors: Dr. Jemimah Njuki (CIAT), Prof. Godwin Kowero (CIFOR) and Dr. CTS Nair (FAO)*
12. Development of wood-based industries in Sub-Saharan Africa  
*Author: Dr. Kwame Asumadu (Australia/Ghana).*
13. Development of trade and marketing of non-wood forest products for poverty alleviation in Africa.  
*Authors: Mr. Julius C. Tieguhong (CIFOR) and Dr. Osseyinou Ndoye (CIFOR).*
14. Lessons learnt from the evolution of forest policy in Sweden in the last 150 years.  
*Author: Mr. Henning Hamilton (Sweden).*

15. Producer cooperatives – a tool for developing small-scale forestry. Lessons learnt from Sweden.  
*Author: Mr. Sven Sjunnesson (Sweden).*
16. Lessons learnt from SFM initiatives in Asia and their relevance to Africa.  
*Author: Dr. Manish Tiwari (India).*
17. Lessons of SFM from Latin America and their relevance to Africa.  
*Author: Dr. Ivan Tomaselli (Brazil).*
18. Forest certification – a potential tool to promote SFM in Africa.  
*Authors: Mr. Ake Barklund (Sweden) and Dr. Demel Teketay (FSC-Africa).*
19. The Vi Agroforestry program in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.  
*Author: Mr. Ake Barklund (Sweden).*
20. Land/tree tenure systems in Ethiopia and sustainability of afforestation sites.  
*Authors: Dr. Nurhussen Taha (Ethiopia) and Mr. Ake Barklund (Sweden).*

Briefly the achievements of the SFM project include:

- Positive and negative lessons from various projects, initiatives and programmes aiming at sustainable management, use and conservation of forests in Sub-Saharan Africa were identified. Twenty case study reports and 12 policy briefs were written and posted on AFF, KSLA and AFORNET websites.
- Conditions necessary for extending positive lessons to wider use identified.
- The most urgent issues and concerns for Africa and proposed possible actions to resolve them were identified.
- A more effective and strengthened African participation in the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) was initiated.

This special issue of *Discovery and Innovation* presents the outputs from the project through selected papers based on some of the 20 reports. The papers have more up to date information on their areas of focus.

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