

INTEGRATING COMMUNITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY INPUTS INTO FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN GHANA

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INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT

- Ghana's forest resources are vital for the country's sustainable development.
- Various forestry reform initiatives have been implemented to improve governance in the forestry sector.
- Participatory approach such as collaborative forest management in Ghana aims at achieving representation of a broad segment of primary stakeholders.
- Civil Society Organizations and local communities in Ghana have a reputation for their interest in forest resources management.
- In recognizing this in addition to the rights of communities, the Forestry Commission has modified the focus of its management system to ensure greater consultation with stakeholders, especially local communities that are dependent on the forests.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING

- Sustainable Forest Management thrives on forest management planning forest. Management planning is significant for the following reasons:
 - A. It provides an opportunity for setting out approved management objectives and specified actions and therefore facilitates the subsequent communication to the owners of the resource.
 - B. Forest management planning helps to translate national forest policies into a well thought-out strategic framework that will lead to the preparation of annual operational program for effective and efficient management of Forest Reserves.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING CONT'D

- c. It also helps to regulate forestry activities for a set period through the application of prescriptions that specify targets, actions and control arrangements.
- d. It is the mechanism for deciding professionally on the forest management system that translates practically into forest resource assessment, protection, yield determination, harvesting, silviculture, conservation, monitoring and control and other operations.
- e. It provides a basis for continuity in managerial operations over time to formalize institutional arrangements for monitoring forestry field operations.

POLICY PERSPECTIVES OF PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING

- The Forestry Commission Act, Act 571 of 1999 provides for the inclusion of a representative of non-governmental organizations involved in Forest and Wildlife management in the Forestry Commission's Board of Commissioners.
- An integral part of the new 2012 Forest and Wildlife policy is a new governance system based on transparency, equity and the involvement of local people, especially forest fringe communities”
- The strategic directions within the first policy objective 4 provide that forest reserves' planning, policy formulation and decision making will be done through intersectoral and multi stakeholder collaboration.
- In addition, the policy objective 4 of the 2012 Forest and Wildlife policy highlights on promoting and developing mechanisms for transparent governance, equity sharing and peoples' participation in forest and wildlife resource management

PROFILE OF ENVIRONMENTAL NGOs, CBOs AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN GHANA

- According to Tropenbos International Ghana (2008), there are 79 Environmental NGOs currently and their distribution by Regions is detailed in the table below:

REGION	No. of NGOs
Ashanti	13
Brong Ahafo	1
Central	0
Eastern	3
Greater Accra	37
Northern	2
Upper East	2
Upper West	0
Western	8
Volta	13

ENVIRONMENTAL NGOs, CBOs AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS WHICH ARE IN DIRECT WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH FORESTRY COMMISSION

- Forestry Commission records indicate that, the under listed ENGOs/CSOs are in partnership with the Forestry Commission of Ghana.
 1. Africa Environment Regeneration Movement
 2. Agency For Sustainable Development
 3. A Rocha Ghana
 4. Civic Response
 5. Forest Watch Ghana
 6. Friends Of The Earth
 7. Green Earth Organization
 8. Humanitarian Care And Relief Organization
 9. International Network For Bamboo And Rattan
 10. Savannah Eco-Tourism Foundation
 11. Save Mankind Foundation
 12. SNV Development Organization
 13. Trees for The Future, Ghana
 14. Nature Development Foundation
- ❖ The list is not exhaustive because there are several others which came into existence after 2008.

THE DYNAMICS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN GHANA

Forest Management planning in Ghana is premised on the following guidelines which provide the framework for the preparation of forest management plans.

1. Gathering, collating and analyzing all relevant information concerning the forest reserves (flora and fauna), and environmental services of the forest reserves by adopting the standard methodologies;
2. Reformatting all available data on the forest reserve to make them useful inputs for the management plan.

THE DYNAMICS OF SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN GHANA

3. Organizing stakeholder meetings and workshops to provide initial input for the confirmation of socio-economic data and establishing management objectives for the forest reserves.
4. Drafting of the management plan for the forest reserve by adopting a standard outline and achieving this through research and consultation with stakeholders.
5. Organizing workshops for stakeholder comments on the draft plan and; producing a plan that is acceptable to the Forestry Commission, Land owners, Local Government Agencies and forest fringe communities, CSOs and other stakeholders.

CONTENTS OF FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN

- The structure of the management plan consists of 4 main parts (Part I, Part II, Part III, and Part IV).
- Highlights on Part I
 - a) Global trends in sustainable forest management
 - b) The justification for producing the plan
 - c) Planning period
 - d) Location and extent of forest reserve
 - e) Physical environment
 - f) Ownership and rights

HIGHLIGHTS ON PART I CONT'D

- g) Community and cultural setting
- h) Stakeholder analysis
- i) Flora description
- j) Fauna Description
- k) Carbon estimation
- l) Previous Management
- m) Current status of forest resources

HIGHLIGHTS ON PART II

- a) Evaluation of Options
- b) Forest management principles
- c) Current forest management objectives
- d) SWOT Analysis
- e) Specific Objectives of Management Options

HIGHLIGHTS ON PART III

- a) Management Prescriptions
- b) Forest Management Objectives
- c) Forest Management Zones
 - Natural Forest Production
 - Timber production in plantation forest
- d) Environmental and Ecological services (Conservation and Protection)
- e) Non-Consumptive Uses (Socio-economic services)
- f) Infrastructural Development
- g) Buildings
- h) Utilities

HIGHLIGHTS ON PART IV

- a) Implementation Arrangements
- b) Health and safety for field operations
- c) Logistical support
- d) Revenue flow and distribution
- e) Funding
- f) Monitoring and Review of Performance

MECHANISMS FOR GENERATING INPUTS FROM COMMUNITIES AND CSOs FOR INTEGRATION INTO THE FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANS

There are two main mechanisms namely:

- Forestry Commission's formalized procedure for engaging stakeholders in forest management planning as already explained.
- Implementation of projects initiated by CSOs.

IMPLEMENTATION OF PROJECTS INITIATED BY CBOs

- The CSOs develop forestry-related proposals.
- The Chief Executive of Forestry Commission endorses them for funding.
- Forestry Commission Regions and Districts are selected for piloting the implementation of the approved projects.
- Forestry Commission representatives often chair the steering committees to oversee project implementation.
- The findings and lessons learnt from such projects are often incorporated into Forestry Commission's routine operations.

SPECTACULAR ACHIEVEMENTS OF CSOs AND CBOs IN GHANA

- Establishment of Nurseries for the restoration of degraded landscapes.
- Training of Forestry Commission staff on community participation in the management of natural resources.
- Community sensitization on causes of pollution of water bodies and how they can be conserved.
- Sensitization and engagement of first and second cycle schools in the planting of trees for environmental protection.
- Promoting the utilization of bamboo in construction and the craft industry for revenue generation as an alternative to wood.
- Contributing towards the development and implementation of management plans over the years.

Eg; The Nature Development Foundation contributed partially in funding the preparation of 10 forest management plans.

SPECTACULAR ACHIEVEMENTS CSOs AND COMMUNITIES CONT'D

- Collaborating with Forestry Commission to build the capacity of the timber industry in sustainable logging to qualify for forest certification and the issuance of FLEGT license for the production of legal timber.
- Facilitate compensation payments to farmers for crop damage by standardizing the process in respect of timeliness of compensation negotiation, assessment of compensation to be paid and verification of payments made.

CHALLENGES OF PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN GHANA

- Resistance to change and slow adoption of sustainable practices by various stakeholders.
- Weak capacities of communities and CSOs for carrying out technical responsibilities.
- The collaborative natural resource concept which constitutes the pivot around which most of the governance mechanisms revolve has no legal backing from the Central Government.
- Persistent anthropogenic threats to the sustainability of forest resources due to a generally weak sanction system .

WAY FORWARD FOR ADDRESSING CHALLENGES

- The collaborative natural resource management concept in Ghana should be given a legal backing.
- CSOs and ENGOs should be given a legal backing which should clearly spell out the qualifications required for their staff to enable them measure up to the technical expectations.
- The Forestry Commission should put in place a vibrant and technically competent extension unit to intensify sensitization of the citizenry on national forestry issues.
- The sanctions meted out to forest offenders should be more punitive to render forest crimes less attractive.

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