



## **Participatory Forest Management Programme (PFMP) of FARM-Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia**

To address the high rate of forest destruction and the need to establish sustainable livelihoods for communities living in and around forest areas, FARM-Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia began work on Participatory Forest Management in Ethiopia in 1996 and in Tanzania in 2001. The two organizations formed a joint programme in 2002.

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# Gaining a Common Understanding: the core concepts of Participatory Forest Management

## What does the term Participatory Forest Management (PFM) mean?

Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is used as a broad term to describe systems in which communities (forest users) and government services (Forest services), work together to:

- define rights of forest use;
- develop ways of sharing management responsibilities; and
- agree how to divide forest benefits.

The term PFM includes Joint Forest Management, Collaborative Forest Management, and other similar terms, that are all used to describe modes of community based forest management systems.

## Why is PFM being promoted / used as a forest management system?

The roles of governments are under re-consideration and evolving to fit the modern day context of decentralised governance. In many countries decentralisation is seen as a means to encourage greater participation in local resource management and economic development. There is more emphasis on governments' role in providing a stable and enabling framework for economic and social development.

In the forestry sector it is widely recognised that governments, in asserting state ownership and control of natural forests have; undermined traditional common property regimes, disabled local resource management systems, and disempowered local communities in terms of both resource ownership and responsible use.

Communities that have been excluded from forest resources, have been perceived as, and often were, destructive towards forest resources. As forest resources were utilised exclusively by government (and illegally by powerful investors and/or merchants), the value of forests was lost to the community. It became more advantageous for them to convert forestland to farmland, whereby they regain use rights over the land.



The state found itself unable to enforce control over forest resources. Market demand for forest products, weak forest management institutions, and alienation of local communities resulted in forests becoming open-access resources, liable to over-exploitation. This is the present situation in many countries today (including Ethiopia), and is the reason that rapid deforestation continues despite growing awareness amongst all stakeholder of the need and advantage of sustainable forest management.

As these problems have become recognised, and the promotion of state regulation has decreased, at the same time, the understanding and respect for the strengths of indigenous / traditional natural resource management systems has increased. Forms of PFM have

been pioneered in India, Nepal, South-east Asia and Latin America, and there is a growing body of experience in Africa. In the African experience examples of developing PFM are increasingly common; Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria, Gambia, Ghana, Mali, South Africa, readily come to mind.

The development of PFM systems for improved forest management can be argued to be the most significant new development and technology shift in the forestry sector for many years. In many countries, including Ethiopia, government investment in developing PFM systems is currently the only significant investment in the forestry sector.

### **So what is PFM?**

PFM systems are either built out of traditional systems of community-based controlled resource use (management) that existed in the past. Or, in the absence of past systems, new controlled resource use systems, developed by the community, and agreed with government. A key challenge of the process of developing PFM is to put in place systems of resource management that are effective in today's context of increasing resource demand, and landuse competition. It is important to recognise that, in practice, this dictates the need



*The Traditional Gada Institution, Gumi Gayyo, Borana*

to modernise traditional resource management

systems. Traditional resource management systems can be seen as the foundations on which to build new systems of forest management.

### **How is PFM established as a management system - How do we do it?**

To put systems of PFM in place is a complex and long term task. The process should not be regarded as an instant fix to the problem of over exploitation of forest resources. Success will take time and require investment by both Government and Communities to: learn, plan, develop, adapt, negotiate and share, the responsibility for forest management. The promotion of any new system is a process of joint learning and adjustment that requires an experimental, learning by doing approach. It will take time to re-establish community based management systems and to redevelop community roles and capacity.

To establish PFM systems we start with a basic concept of shared management of common property resources. During the process of establishment, we develop the ideas within this concept as we learn about the actual management opportunities and constraints, and the site-specific requirements, of each forest site.

### **The challenges of a new approach**

PFM is a new approach, particularly in the Ethiopian experience. As with any new approach, many Forestry Professionals view PFM with some suspicion and concern, due mainly to a lack of clear understanding of the processes being promoted. In addition, there is an uncertainty about the new roles that professionals and community members, will taken up. It is useful from the beginning to dispel the myth that the PFM process simply entails the handing over of forest resource control to local communities, and leaves them to manage the resources in any manner they see fit. As stated above, PFM is a management partnership between local communities and government services. How this partnership works is explained below.



*Foresters and community discussing forest boundary, Nou, Tanzania*

**Examining the new roles**

PFM is an on going partnership between the Government Forest Services and the Local Communities. It is a working partnership where each party is interdependent on the other. The new approach requires new activities and roles

from both Forestry Professionals and Forest Users. The box below identifies what these new roles and activities are. The list of actions is not exhaustive and should be developed as both the Forestry Professionals and Forest Management Groups develop and understand their roles, through learning and experience.



*Forest Management Groups working in community nursery, Bonga*

New Roles for Forestry Professionals	New Roles for Forest Management Groups / Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-investigators of local forest uses</li> <li>-identifiers of local management systems</li> <li>-facilitators of situation analysis</li> <li>-moderators of different local interests and of conflict and competition</li> <li>-negotiators of forest management rules and regulations</li> <li>-monitors of PFM processes and of forest management agreements</li> <li>-advisors to forest management groups</li> <li>- silviculture experimenters</li> <li>-facilitators of group to group extension and exchange</li> <li>- trainers in community management</li> <li>-analysts of forest management problems</li> <li>-generators of new technologies</li> <li>-providers of information to complement Forest User Group knowledge</li> <li>-documentors/analysts of methods of PFM</li> <li>- disseminators of PFM results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-forest resource managers</li> <li>- legitimate resource users</li> <li>-forestry operations actors</li> <li>-resolvers of conflict and competition</li> <li>-implementors of forest management plans</li> <li>-protectors and controllers of forest resources</li> <li>-evaluators of new ideas and technologies</li> <li>-silvicultural experimenters.</li> <li>-communicators of own knowledge and findings to others</li> <li>-analysers of own situation</li> <li>-selectors of tree species for nursery production and planting</li> <li>-assessors of forest resources</li> <li>- marketers of forest products</li> </ul>

**The core concept of PFM**

PFM refers to the legal empowerment of local communities to manage forest resources for, in the first instance, their sustained livelihoods, and in the second instance, economic return.

The process of PFM involves the legal transfer of resources (use rights to, and/or, ownership rights of) from the government to communities. This transfer is enabled by, and dependent

upon, a negotiated and documented Forest Management Agreement (FMA). The FMA is a legally binding contract between a defined community based institution (Forest Management Group) and the Government (represented by the Forest Services).

The FMA clearly details;

- the negotiated and agreed roles and responsibilities of both parties

- the negotiated and agreed rules and regulations for the sustainable management of the forest resource.

The FMA is periodically reviewed in order to monitor the effectiveness of the management rules and regulations, in terms of achieving sustainable forest management, and to provide opportunities to adjust the management document in the event of new learning and developing forest management skills.

Benefit sharing arrangements are also clearly stated in the FMA. In economic terms, Forest Management Groups can only be expected to take on the role of forest managers if it is an economically viable opportunity. That is that the forest resources will give adequate economic return for the investment of labour and materials made.

### **The PFM process**

The process of establishing PFM systems can be divided into three distinct stages;

- the Investigation stage
- the Negotiation stage
- the Implementation stage

### **The Investigation stage**

During this stage of the process, investigations are carried out into the past and present forest uses, forest condition and forest management practices. Information is gathered using a number of participatory investigation (research) tools, such as participatory forest mapping, historical timelines, species use matrices, resource use impact assessment charts, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. The objective of the investigation stage is to develop a clear understanding of the forest resources, who uses them, what they are used for, what are the existing management rules, and what is the local capacity and opportunities for community management.



*Participatory mapping, Borana- part of the investigation stage*

### **The Negotiation stage**

Using the information gathered in the first stage, forestry staff and communities work together to develop Forest Management Plans and sign Forest Management Agreements. As stated above, these Plans and Agreements aim to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each party (government and community), to set out the rules and regulations governing forest use (user rights / harvest levels), and to develop activity plans for forestry operations.



*Community signing agreement with government, Chilimo, Oromia*

Forest Management Group relations and benefit sharing arrangements are negotiated at this stage. To facilitate this stage, Participatory Planning activities are used in a joint planning process. Conflict and competition over forest

resource uses need to be understood, addressed and resolved at this stage of the process.

### **The Implementation Stage**

Once the Forest Management Agreement is signed, the forest management plan is then implemented. Through out this stage, close collaborative work between the government and the community groups is essential. The role of the forestry services is in supporting the community in the achievement of the Forest Management Plan objectives. There is a need to support the communities in the protection of the forest through the joint enforcement of the agreed rules and regulations. Continual

monitoring of the performance to the community management groups and the effectiveness of the Forest Management Plan is undertaken through out the implementation stage. Periodic reviews of the forest management activities are also conducted. The Forest Management Plans are reviewed and adjusted in accordance with the increasing knowledge and understanding gained during the implementation stage.

### **The Participatory Forest Management Programme**

The Participatory Forest Management Programme is a joint programme of FARM-Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia, which officially started working in 2002. The programme is operating, in three different social, and environmental contexts in Ethiopia, (Bonga, Chilimo, and Borana forests), and in Nou forest of Tanzania.

The programme has four main objectives that interlinked and form the strategy for the development of community based sustainable forest management. The objectives are:

1. To contribute to the long term conservation of forest ecosystems, through the development and establishment of new systems of forest management;
2. To sustain and/or increase income opportunities from improved natural resource management and diversified livelihoods;
3. To build the capacity of government staffs and rural community to manage natural resources in a sustainable and equitable way; and
4. To catalyze the adoption of PFM within policy and practice.

The rationale behind these objectives is a balance between new forest management and improved livelihood opportunities, so as to reduce dependency on the forest resources and strength rural livelihoods. This is supported by building the capacity of the implementers (Government and Community) to manage and sustain PFM, and complimented by policy development, information dissemination and networking.

This programme is funded by:

