

Participatory Forest Management and Collective Action.
Paper presented on a Workshop organised by forum for Environment

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Introduction

Modern forest management activities started after the Italian occupation (c. 1930's)². In this relatively short time the main government forestry institution has undergone many restructurings. The frequent restructuring has contributed to a lack of long-term visionary leadership, institutional memory, and consolidated conservation efforts. The sector is also led by one of the financially weakest institution, with a lack of clear policy which has made the government forestry efforts inefficient in bringing forth any significant change or impact. A protectionist forest management approach, adopted by Ethiopian Forestry sector has also widened the gap between what is *dejure* and what is *defacto* and has exposed Ethiopia's forest resources to the widely known situation of the "tragedy of the commons", that is, open access resources open to detrimental over exploitation. The protectionist forest management system used also undermined any traditional communal resources management systems, wherever they have existed.

A further significant factor concerning the current situation and status of forest resources in Ethiopia is the current population growth rate (greater than 3%). Such rapid growth outstrips the development pace of the country, and together with the severe levels of poverty, has made the efforts to conserve and protect forests, achieve a low impact. The depletion of the forest resources and their declining capability to contribute to the national economy, and to local livelihood sustainability, calls for urgent action of all development partners.

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Forest management can have a number of objectives, such as, commercial purposes, rural development / poverty alleviation, employment creation, empowerment of marginalized groups, habitat for wildlife, tourism, and conservation of rare and valuable ecosystems. Recognising that different forest objectives demand different forestry activities is the first step improving forest operations. Above all, in developing countries like Ethiopia, the place of forestry in the socio-economic fabric of the rural society is very important. Promotion of the potential economic role of forestry for sustainable rural livelihoods is the new rural development forestry agenda. As stated, the past protectionist forest management approach has not halted deforestation, or contributed towards sustainable growth or livelihoods. Actually, this is a factor of forestry relevant in most developing countries.

Communities around forest resources and elsewhere do need trees and tree products for their livelihood support. According to a study done³ around Chilimo forest, about 98% of the community members use the forest in varying degrees. If communities do not have legal access to forest resources, and has no certainty of having access in the future, they will continue to use the resource, whenever available, in a disordered manner. Access rights and ownership responsibilities are critical factors in promoting sustainable forestry. Therefore, communities need to be brought to the forefront of rural development forestry, as development partners, and as key actors in the management of trees in the landscape, and hence sustainable development.

In many developing countries of Africa and Asia, communities' collective action in resource management has shown promising results on the quantitative and qualitative improvement of the resources, whilst at the same time contributing to the rural household economy.

This paper draws out some of the lessons learned from the FARM Africa / SOS Sahel International(UK) Joint Participatory Forest Management Programme. The two

organisations have been working to respond to the issues of access and ownership in the context of forestry, through the development of community based forest management systems.

The Participatory Forest Management (PFM) Programme

The programme is operating, in three different social, and environmental contexts in Ethiopia, (Bonga, Chilimo, and Borana), and in Nou in Northern Tanzania.

Bonga forest is a moist tropical forest located in Kaffa zone of Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples State. The local population are a more or less a homogeneous community, although there are socially ostracized community groups living in the forests. Chilimo is a highland montane forest in West Shewa Zone of Oromiya Regional State, with heterogeneous community, reflecting its proximity to Addis Ababa, in-migration to the area and a long history of forest management activities dating back to the Italian occupation⁴. Borana lowland Junipers forests, in Borana and Guji Zones, Oromiya Regional State, are surrounded by Pastoralist and Agri-pastoralist communities where traditional resource management systems exist in a relatively better condition than the other parts of the programme area. Nou forest (Tanzania) is another montane forest in the Arusha catchment of Northern 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

³ Garuma Gudeta, Study of Forest-related contributions to household economy, Chilimo Participatory forest Management Project: dendi District, west Shewa Zone, Oromia regional State, Ethiopia, August 2000

⁴ Melaku Bekele, 2003,

4. To catalyze the adoption of PFM within policy and practice

The rationale behind these objectives is that, developing sound PFM approach by itself would not be sustainable unless complemented by increasing livelihood (agricultural and NTFP productivity) 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 and support activities, at higher levels.

PFM Rationale

Participatory forest management can simply be defined as a “ situation in which two or more social actors negotiate, define and guarantee amongst themselves a fair sharing of the management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory, area or set of natural resources”⁵. It is a process-oriented development and in this process the main actors are the government and community where their roles and responsibilities can vary depending on the resource base. There is no generalised model for a successful PFM approach, but in principle it should to be based on the existing traditional use, management rules and traditional institution.

The economic rationale behind PFM is that communities will conserve (sustainably utilize) forest resources if benefits of the management actions outweigh the costs of forest conservation. Therefore the issue is what benefit is the community gaining out of involving themselves in the process of forest management or tree planting. In some cases, these benefits should not necessarily be only financial and economic terms, but benefits in terms of more qualitative cultural values, recognition, and respect are also significant.

The issue of tenure is also very significant. Rights of access to, and/or ownership of forest resources completely changes the perceived and actual value of the resources to the community. In Ethiopia the right to current and future sustainable use of forest provides

⁵ Borrini-Feyerabend, G., Farvar, M. T., Nguingui, J. C & Ndangang, V. A : "*Co-management of Natural resources, Organising, Negotiating and Learning-by-Doing*", GTZ and IUCN, Kasperek Verlag, Heidelberg (Germany), 2000

incentives for the community to take the responsibility of forest management by ensuring that their members adhere to their agreed rules and plans and by protecting the forest from outsiders abuse.

The PFM Process

The PFM process has three main stages, notably;

- 1) Investigation stage,
- 2) Negotiation stage
- 3) Implementation stage

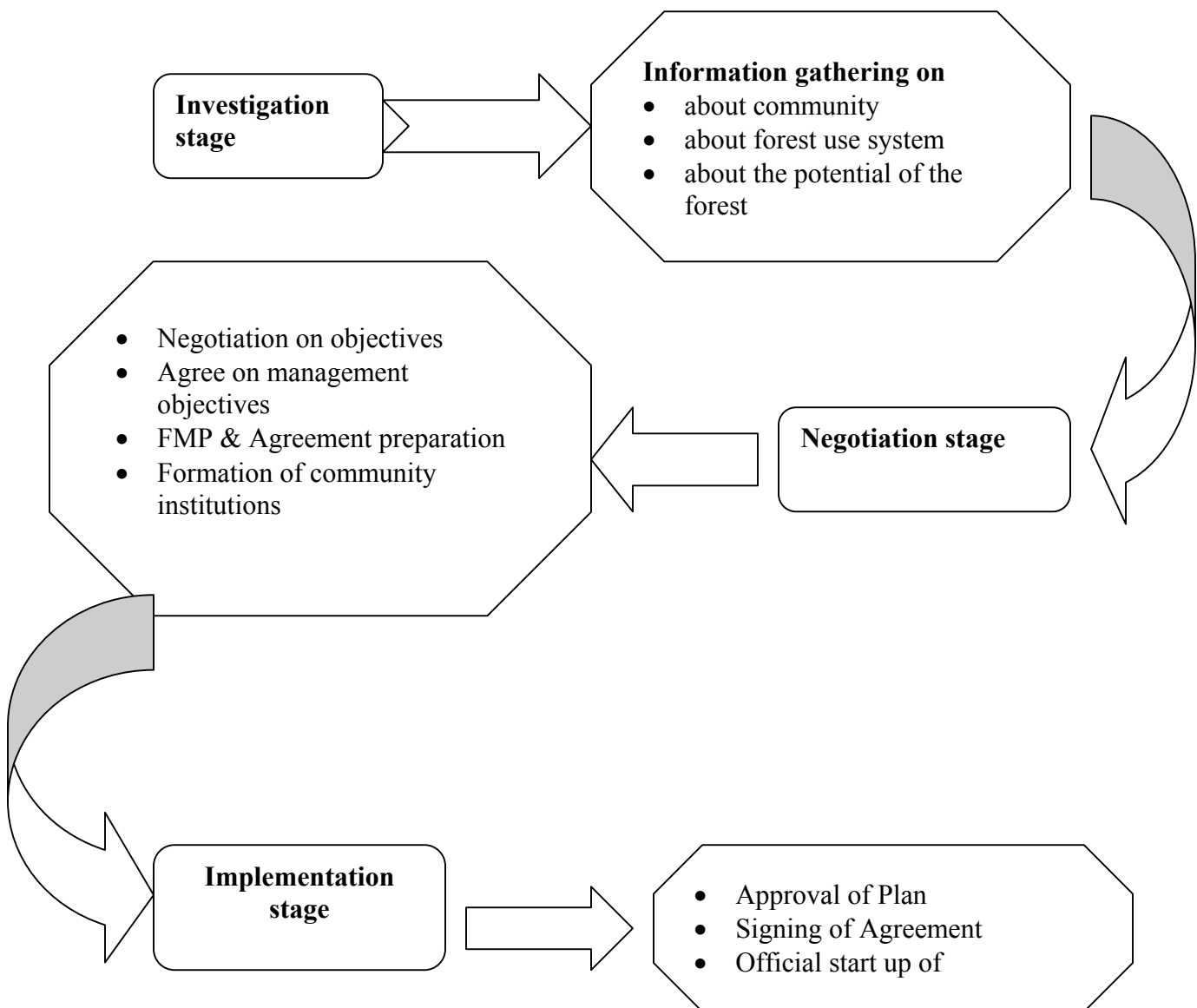
The fundamental point in the PFM process is that the community has to have a sense of responsibility and ownership over the process. Therefore for the community to have the ownership feeling on the process building a high degree of trust and confidence between the community and the forestry extension worker is a prerequisite for the process to start and succeed. The forestry extension workers should start PFM from the outset of accepting that the community is an expert in its own field of knowledge and experience.

The investigation stage:

During this stage of the process, after building trust with the community, the process starts with participatory gathering information on three main categories. These concern information about;

- a) the community,
- b) past and present forest use systems,
- c) forest potential and capacity.

Participatory Forest Management Planning Process Map



The objective of the investigation stage is to develop a clear understanding of the forest resources among the partners and assess the existing potential of the community to manage. The information about community and the past and present forest use systems are gathered using a number of participatory tools, such as historical timelines, participatory mapping, matrices, wealth status, semi-structured interviews and focused group discussions. The community related information, answers key questions such as, who the community is, its organization, social groups, (ethnic, religion, wealth, gender),

and institutions, (their roles, decision making power, influence in terms of resource management), communication networks, attitudes, and livelihood issues. Regarding past and present forest use systems, information like user groups, use areas, who takes what from where, when and how much, are investigated. Rights, rules and tenure, (legal, customary, traditional) issues are also studied.

An example of the participatory investigations is using historical time line diagrams.

With the appropriate facilitation the community will analyse the past and present forest conditions, management, protection, harvesting issues, and discuss what would happen in the future if the situation is not altered, and what should be done.

The investigation stage is used in order to discover what are the existing bylaws in relation of communal resources, what are the existing traditional institutions and what is their role with regards to resource management? What local capacity and opportunities for community management exist? These and other related issues will be discussed with the community at this stage.

It is also at this stage that a participatory forest resource assessment is carried out. The resultant forest assessment report, is used as a management tool to draw management prescriptions. The report information is also used as a monitoring tool at periodical time intervals after the start of PFM plans implementation.

The main feature of the participatory forest resource assessment as a participatory tool has to consider; the time it takes to conduct the assessment, cost implications, and understandability. Participatory forest resources assessment looks into parameters like basal area, natural regeneration, crown cover, dominant species, important species, quality of forest in community perspective, fire evidence, soil exposure, grazing intensity, main uses of the forest, and problems of the forest. The information is assessed by the community supported by foresters.

The Negotiation stage

At the negotiation stage communities discuss on the objectives of forest management, focusing particularly on the government and community priorities and needs. Dominantly

the government objective is more of environmental concerns, that the resource should be playing its environmental role, and be passed on for the coming generation. The community objective is more aim at achieving a sustainable livelihood. The negotiation is therefore focused on harmonising these seemingly contradictory objectives, protection and harvesting, of the government and the community.

The other issue of negotiation is between different interest groups within community like cattle keepers, fuel wood sellers, farm implements sellers etc. After making clear the two major objectives, using the information gathered at the investigation stage, the forestry staff and communities work together to develop Forest Management Plans (FMP) and Forest Management Agreements (FMA).

The FMP plans set out what management activities are to be carried out, where, when, and by who. The plan is developed under four main themes describing forest development, forest protection, forest harvesting, and forest monitoring. The FMA serves to clearly define the rights, responsibilities and duties of each agreeing party and set out conditions for agreement cancellation and compensation issues.

The Implementation Stage

Once the FMA is finalised and signed, the FMP are implemented. The PFM approach developed is not to replace the forestry department that has the regulatory and service delivery roles. Therefore the community needs these roles played by the forestry service in order to support and achieve the FMP objectives.

Regular performance monitoring is built in the approach and the performance of the community management groups and the effectiveness of the plans is undertaken throughout implementation. Of the three stages, this stage is when the community really needs critical support on provision of technical and administrative backup.

Implementation framework addressing sustainability criteria:

Whatever suitable methodology one has he has to make sure it fits the sustainability criteria. The approach should fulfil environmental, economic, social and institutional sustainability

Using Holistic approach

Forest Management is based on developing management prescriptions that are designed to meet specific defined objectives, documented in a management plan. These management prescriptions could effectively implemented if the benefits out weigh the communities' forest management investment in terms of labour, management and limiting their forest use. As most of communities in the project area are very poor and there are many landless youngsters who are desperate to feed their family, especially for the poor overlooking household food insecurity and discussing on forest management would show insensitiveness to their problem. Therefore, addressing forest management problems in an holistic approach, incorporating livelihood off-farm activities and measures that increase agricultural and NTFP would develop community confidence and ensure environmental sustainability

Rural Development Forestry is also not only about forests, and if we want forestry to contribute for the overall development issues of the community, we need to integrate it with other development activities of the community so that we increase the livelihood income diversity at household level and reduce the current forest dependency. Hence by doing this we improve the forest capacity to recover and improve its productivity.

Therefore, the complementary livelihood activities in the programme are those activities serving to increase livelihood productivity, and that address community needs. Currently, these activities include; the introduction of innovative and appropriate agricultural technologies, beekeeping, improved poultry, agroforestry, grain banking, NTFP production and processing and community based tourism funded through community development fund.

Funding source

The livelihood support activities and the implementation of the forest management plans will be funded by the community development funds. These will be self-sufficient in funding through revenue gained from forest products and livelihood support activities. Therefore, the financial sustainability is secured through the establishment of community development fund and the government is expected to undertake its regulatory responsibility through allocating monitoring budget and revenue collected from community through royalty payments.

The community will manage the community development fund and the grant provided by the project would be the initial capital and it is expected to increase as the community generates money from sales of forest products and repayments of loans given for technology purchase. The community development fund also helps to address equity issues as sales of forest products directly go to community development fund not to individual members. Currently the community development fund is being used for the purchase of technologies like improved poultry package, beekeeping, improved agricultural technologies and highland fruits and irrigation.

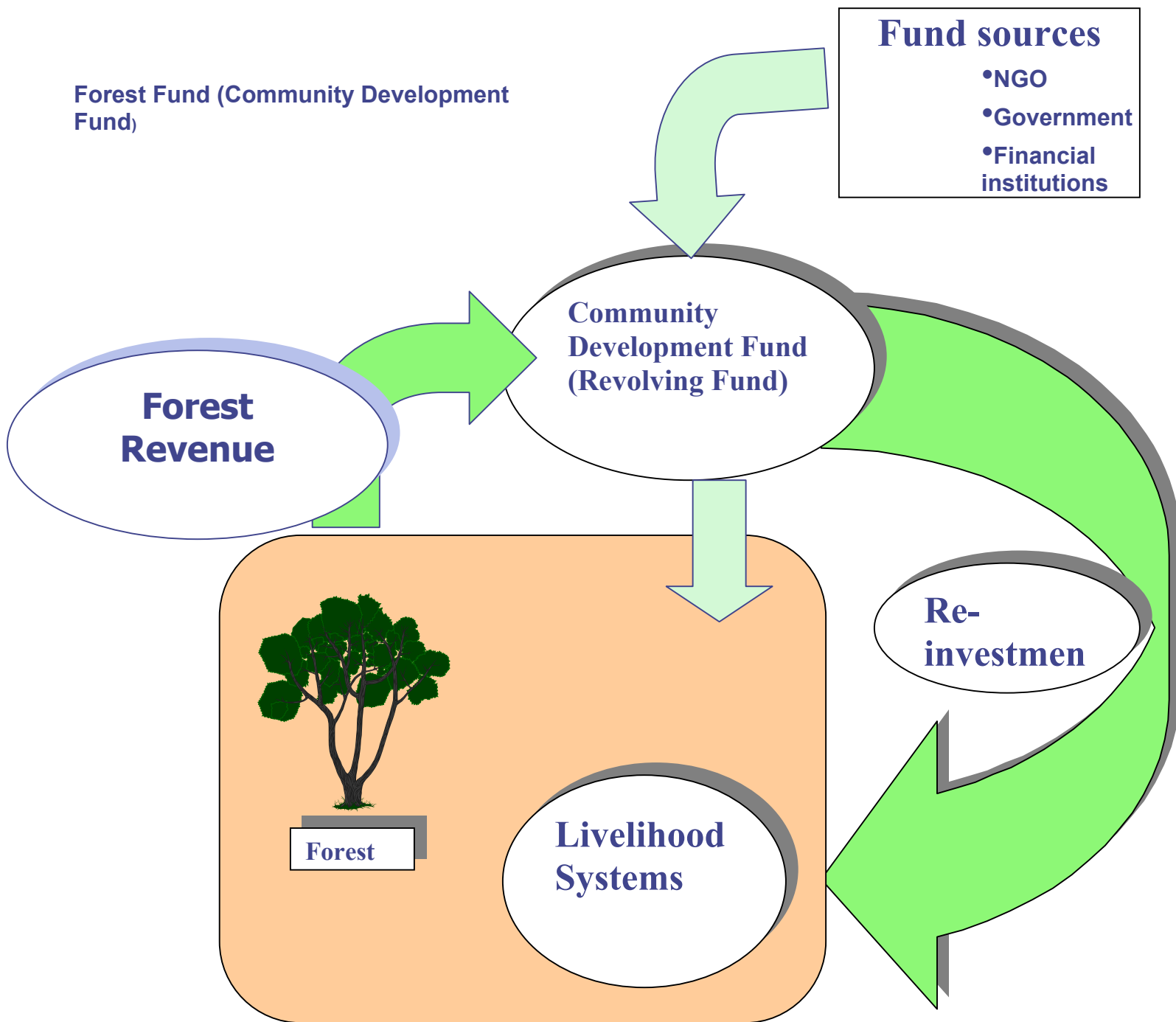


Fig 2: Pictorial presentation of the revolving fund.

Institutional arrangement

The strategy to ensure institutional sustainability is that the project is developing the approach through working with partners and builds skills in the government and

communities. Through learning by doing process the capacity building will eventually enable the processes to continue in the future without external support. The project is designed in such a way that government staff at woreda and in some cases at zonal level are continuously working with the project on full time secondment bases and after donor funding has finished, the project activities will be the responsibility of the government and community. The Woreda office will continue monitoring the project through its regular budget..

During the investigation stage, the existing traditional institutions like Idir, Traditional Religious Institutions, Senbete, and others are formed for specific roles within in the community and are found not able to shoulder forest management responsibilities.

Therefore forming new community forest institutions is found imperative and the project is now forming forest cooperatives that has started acquiring legal certificate from Cooperative promotions offices of the regional government. Therefore these forest institutions are representing the community and are taking the management responsibility. As they have legal entity they have the right to accuse and be accused representing community. The membership of the institution is that husband and wife from a household are equal joint members of the cooperatives and has two voices in all development activities. This is designed to specifically address gender issues within the community.

The forest cooperatives have the overall responsibility of implementing the participatory forest management plan and if deemed necessary revise the plan with the Wereda Natural resources office and managing community development fund. The capacity building component of the project is not only looking into the forest management capacity but also works to develop institutional leadership, financial management, cooperative management that are essentials to ensure sustainability.

Challenges in PFM implementation

Changing roles

One of the challenges for PFM to be widely implemented is the role of the forestry professionals. The role of foresters has to change from the conventional protectionist sentiment and the notion of considering themselves as the only custodians of the forest

resource, to rural development foresters, taking communities and others as partners to manage and develop the forest resources. This particularly needs to change from authoritative forestry supervisors, to supportive forestry extension workers.

Similarly the role of the community also significantly changes. They change from opportune and often illegal exploiters of the forest, to recognized and organized managers of the resource.

Change is not a simple or short term process. The forestry sector is conservative and PFM has been considerably resisted by the forestry establishment. PFM is still regarded as the poor relation amongst forestry disciplines.

New roles and responsibilities for communities, who have been used to following instructions and directives rather than formulating them, also requires radical shifts in community level actions and institutions.

Such changes require new skills and capacity on behalf of the professional as well as the community. New training activities and courses are required. Not only training but also job descriptions of the professionals at the grass root should reflect what is expected of forestry extension worker.

Time factor:

PFM is not a quick fix solution to the problem of forest destruction. Introducing PFM is a long process, as mentioned above, requiring changes in roles, new responsibilities and skill. Where PFM is new, as in Ethiopia, it also requires new policy and legislation. The severe condition and rapid disappearance of the forest resources in Ethiopia, often makes you feel that going through a drawn out process is a luxury, wasting time and resources.

Complexity of a holistic sustainable livelihood approach

PFM approaches has to analyse the opportunities to reconcile the conservation and utilisation needs of the community. Therefore, community-based management must try to balance between the forest conservation and economic need from the resource, which commonly are the different interests of the government and the community. Poverty levels in rural areas, and the number of forest dependent households is a major challenge and needs an integrated approach that must look into increasing livelihood productivity.

For the approach to be successful has to be integrated with other development interventions. Institutional and financial management capacities of the community also need to be strengthened.

Respect for traditional customs / rules

The communities active commitment is also essential for successful development and implementation of PFM plans. In areas where there is no respect to traditional customs and rules on resource utilization, getting high level of participation is a challenge.

Working in heterogeneous communities, strength of community level management is a key concern. To successfully implement community-based management the responsible government institutions must be committed to support community initiatives, enforce and respect community decisions. In other words, community rules and sanctions must be supported with legal enforcement. The commitment from the legal executive bodies must be raised to complement and support community initiative.

Getting the necessary Legal support, new policies and legislation

Community based management (Participatory management) must be accommodated within the legal framework. This is ranging from getting the formal recognition by the Judiciary and recognition as forest managers and with right to be accused and accuse. PFM has been developed in Ethiopia in a policy vacuum. This has served to reduce the pace of PFM development, and confuse those on the ground using outdated and irrelevant old policy, in the absence of anything more appropriate.

Strong Community institution

Community based resource management needs strong community based institutions, which are not easy to create. Community institutions has to be able to enforce rules and sanctions and collect fines that will be reinvested to the development of the resources / community. The institutional capacity of the community has to be empowered so as to administer all the technical, financial and administrative issues of community based management. The sector is very weak in Ethiopia

Recommendations on what needs to be done

In Ethiopian context where the population of the rural farming community is so large and mostly dependent on natural resources, we have to develop a mechanism where the forestry sector contributes for rural development. Sustainable forest management as in the Ethiopian case could only be achieved if we treat the problem in a holistic way addressing forestry and community problems.

Forestry related issues:

Policy issues:

The upcoming forest policy should (at the federal level) explicitly give provision for various mode of community involvement and subsequently should be supported by proclamations and directives. In these respect the federal ministry seems to overlook the forestry problems of the country. Therefore, there must be a clear policy guideline which accommodates community based management approaches and must be followed by regulations and directives

Institutionalizing PFM approach:

In Ethiopia, PFM has started to show results on improving forest conservation and supporting rural household economy. Therefore to get significant results PFM approaches should be institutionalized within the government structures. Currently the projects operating in this area are very few compared to the need to involve the community in the management of the remaining forest resources. Institutionalizing the approach could not come easily and needs strong commitment from partners.

Institutional measures:

Having a good policy by itself would mean nothing if institutional capacity is not developed These needs critical measures ranging from capacity building training to re-designing TOR of the forestry professionals at the grassroots level. It should be complemented by behavioral and role change of the existing forestry professionals to

forestry extension workers taking the community as development partners rather than forest destructors.

Legal support for community initiatives:

PFM is not to replace government management in the absence of legal support which encourages fee riders. There must be legal recognition and support for community initiatives. If the judiciary and police are not supporting community actions the success can mostly depends on the empowerment of the community which is not achieved in a short period of time.

Community related issues:

Adopting holistic approach:

Forestry development activities should be geared towards improving livelihood system. The question is how could we harmonize the conservation and utilization needs of the community.

Community empowerment:

The strength of communities' collective action depends on the level of empowerment and confidence built within the community. Therefore, forestry institutions should be transparent and work towards empowering the community. Granting legal access to the resources and having management responsibility will totally change the perceived and actual value of the resources and encourage the community to manage the resource.

- **References**

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