

Participatory Forest Management: the case of Chilimo Forest

By FARM-Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia Participatory Forest Management Unit

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, to develop ways of sharing management responsibilities, and to agree how to divide forest benefits.

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, conservation values. 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).



Foresters inspect the forest under community management

The Participatory Forest Management Programme (PFMP) 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 (SNNPR), Chilimo, and Borana (Oromia) forests.

This article aims to show the major achievements of participatory forest management in the Chilimo forest.

PFM and the Chilimo Forest

Chilimo forest is one of the oldest remnant forests found in the central highlands of Ethiopia. It is found 80 kms from Addis Ababa. The forest is at the altitudinal range of 2350 – 2850 masl. In 1975 G.C, although the government tried to manage the forest, the type of management system and lack of capacity resulted in the forest being open to exploitation.

The forest is rich in various tree species including *Podocarpus falcata* (Zigba), *Olea capensis* (Weyra), *Hagenia abyssinica* (Koso), *Juniperus procera* (Tsid), *Prunus africana* (Tikur Enchet) and *Ficus sp.* (Shola). This makes it an important source of forest seeds for the central highlands. Over 180 bird species and 21 mammals are found in the forest. A number of rivers, including the Awash, start from within the Chilimo forest.

The first phase of Chilimo joint forest management project was operational from 1996-2000 with the objective to conserve the Chilimo forest through community participation. The second phase of the project became part of the FARM-Africa / SOS Sahel Participatory Forest Management Programme in 2002. The project is carried out in partnership with Government and participation of local communities. The PFMP team operates jointly with the Woreda Office of Agriculture and Rural Development line departments from the same office.

Major activities of the project are: forest conservation through the establishment of sustainable forest management systems; complementary natural resource management and Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) technologies adopted by local communities; capacity building of partner organizations, government and community; and development of new forest policy, networking and dissemination of experience.

The main achievements of the project under each activity are:

Forest conservation through the establishment of sustainable forest management systems

Currently there are 11 Forest User Groups (FUGs) in the project. The groups have a membership range of 58 – 213 households. Out of these, two FUGs (Chilimo and Galleesa) have transformed to Forest cooperatives. The Chilimo FUG took the responsibility for a 596.21ha forest area from the government on July 2004. Shortly after, in October 2004, the group transformed to a Forest cooperative. This has enabled the FUG to obtain legal status. Becoming a legal entity has given the group strength in controlling forest resource users. Especially, after discussions and workshops held with the judiciary, significant changes have been seen in the support and assistance of the police and the court with FUGs against illegal users.



Chilimo FUG signing forest management agreement with the Government

Complementary natural resource management and NTFP technologies adopted by local communities

Various trainings and farmer-led research is being carried out in all the project sites in order to reduce the pressure on the forests and improve the communities' livelihood. Trainings for alternative livelihoods have included beehive management, poultry, animal feed, irrigation and other vegetables technologies.



Chilimo FUG member showing his experiment between traditional and improved beehives

The income from various activities of the Forest cooperative including sale of plantation timber partly goes to the cooperative's Community Development Fund (CDF). The money in the CDF is used according to the group's three-year plan which includes maintenance of road, bridge, cooperative office, school construction, livelihood credit for members (10 women headed houses recently obtained improved stove on credit), and other development activities. The cooperative has established its own grain bank worth Birr 7,500 with the support of another NGO. These activities have contributed to improved food security in the area and have encouraged the groups to work more on sustainable forest management.

Capacity of partner organizations, government and community developed

The emphasis of the capacity building activities is on learning by doing. The practical operations of the project activities carried out by communities and Government and facilitated by the NGO, are the most powerful learning tools. Exchange visits and study tours are organized for community members, project and government staffs. Training on PRA, forest management, institutional development, gender, conflict resolutions mechanism, and agroforestry, are given for all concerned community and active line departments. Based on these, the natural resource office, project team and community have been using various tools to investigate the forest, organize the FUGs and plan the conservation, development and monitoring of the forest.

New forest policy developed and Networking and dissemination of experience

The participatory forest management unit based in Addis supports the project to publish materials and disseminate them to relevant organizations via various media. Its quarterly newsletter (available from office) and website (www.pfmp-farmsos.org) are used to disseminate current project activities. In addition, PFMP along with other concerned non-governmental organizations is a member of Regional PFM working groups and is engaged in continuous policy dialogues. The

Chilimo project site is used as PFM training ground for students to ensure PFM is linked with higher education.

Contact Address:

Tel: 251-011-1550154/1550511

Fax: 251-011-1552143

Email: cwcp@ethionet.et

Website: www.pfmp-farmsos.org