

SUB-THEME 6



Processing, Marketing and Utilization of Forest Resources:  
Implication for Sustainable Forest Management  
and Trade in Nigeria

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# PARTICIPATORY FORESTRY PRACTICES AND RENEWABLE NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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## Abstract

Despite their importance, the forest resource base in most African countries has continued to dwindle. This continuous decline in Africa forest cover and the inability to stem the tide of deforestation indicate among other things the failure of the classically structured resource management institutions established during colonial administration. Consequently, there has been a paradigm shift in forestry practices throughout the world from the classical management approach to managing the forest in a manner that ensures greater and effective participation of all stakeholders, especially the forest communities. This paper further examines the concept of participatory forestry practices as a model of renewable natural resources management approach. It also discusses the nexus between participatory forestry and sustainable natural resources management, the key steps in establishing participatory forest management, emerging conflicts in participatory forestry practices and avenues for conflict resolution. We contend that for a sustainable participatory forest management, there is need for strong commitment on the part of local people towards maintaining the forest resources through secured forest tenure; upholding a sustainable harvest levels for all the products from the forest; assessing the economic aspects of production and guaranteeing a fair share of the benefits accruing to the local population.

**Keywords:** Participatory forestry; sustainable forest management; conflicts and conflict resolution.

## Introduction

There is an abundance of literature on the importance and role of forest resources in the livelihoods of people living in both rural and urban areas (Babulo *et al.* 2008; Amusa, 2014). Forests are natural assets which contribute to food security, household cash income, reduced vulnerability and improved well-being. They provide home to nearly 300 million people and about 1.6 billion of the world inhabitants earn their livelihoods from the forests (Popoola, 2014). Furthermore, forests provide a wide range of ecosystem services, thereby playing an important and multifaceted role in supporting the agricultural systems on which millions of subsistence farmers depend. There is increasing evidence of complex dependency of a growing number of world's poorest communities on forests (Azeez *et. al.*, 2000; Chidumayo and Gumbo, 2010).

Despite their importance, the forest resource base (including the humid and dry forests within the sudano-sahelian landscape) in most African countries, has continued to

dwindle. The continuous decline in quality and extent of the forest cover and the inability to stem the tide of deforestation are evidences that the classically structured resource management institutions established during colonial administration (and the authority it commanded), has progressively weakened under changing state and administrative frameworks in post-colonial times (Odera, 2004). Consequently, forestry practices throughout the world are changing from the classical management approach to managing the forest in a manner that ensures greater benefit flow to all stakeholders, especially the forest communities. This paradigm shift which places more emphasis on the people is informed and intricately linked with the importance of social factors to forestry development. Invariably, the attainment of sustainable management of natural resources requires a more comprehensive approach, which includes strengthening the organizational and technical capacities of local communities as well as engendering their active support for sustainable resource use.

Participatory forestry practices represent one of a whole set of initiatives aimed at achieving the sustainable management of forest resources. This idea that community participation is central to effective natural resources management has been recognized in a number of international treaties. It was given a prominent place in Agenda 21, the policy document of the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as well as the 1994 UN Convention to Combat Desertification. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Forests Proposals for Action also called for the establishment of participatory mechanisms to involve all interested parties, including local communities and indigenous people in forest resources development, implementation and management (Amanor, 2003).

The following sections of this paper discuss the context of participatory forestry practices; the nexus between participatory forestry and sustainable natural resources management; key steps in establishing participatory forest management and; emerging conflicts in participatory forestry practices and avenues for conflict resolution.

### **Context of Participatory Forestry**

The FARM-Africa/SOS Sahel Ethiopia (2007) defines participatory forestry as a system in which communities (forest users and managers) and government services (forest department) work together to define rights of forest resource use, identify and develop forest management responsibilities, and agree on how forest benefits will be shared. According to Worah (2008), participatory forestry is an arrangement where key stakeholders enter into mutually enforceable agreements that define their respective roles, responsibilities, benefits, and authority in the management of defined forest resources. The FAO (2014) refers to it as processes and mechanisms that enable those people who have a direct stake in forest resources to be part of decision-making in all aspects of

forest management, from managing resources to formulating and implementing institutional frameworks.

According to Lemenih and Bekele (2008), participatory forestry originated in the early 1980s in a wide range of activities variously called community forestry (CF), collaborative forest management (CFM), adaptive co-management (ACM), community-based natural resource management (CBNRM), community involvement in forest management (CIFM), joint forest management (JFM) and integrated conservation and development project (ICDP). The whole idea of these participatory forestry practices is conceptualized within a framework of ecological emergency, i.e. resource depletion, growing poverty and food insecurity. It was initiated to organize and empower communities in order to rehabilitate degraded natural resources and to use them in sustainable way. It was a response to the failure of traditional top-down, paternalistic and state-initiated development practices, which ended in only alienating communities and put them in conflict with state forest management. The whole claim is that villagers have a more concrete know-how about and a vested interest in the resources than state bureaucrats. They also have a greater concern in managing forests sustainably, because their livelihoods depend on it. The objectives of participatory forestry rests on the driving principles of accommodating conflicting interests over the forest resources, and the empowerment of communities by introducing congruency between the forest capacity and community's needs of forest products. The approach was to improve community livelihood and rehabilitate the forest resource by bringing villagers more closely to the resource with the sense of confidence and certainty, an effective policy tool to manage conflicts.

As a corollary to the foregoing, participatory forestry emerged as a concept of developing partnerships between forest user groups and the forestry department (FD) on the basis of mutual trust and jointly defined roles and responsibilities with regard to forest protection and development. Participatory forestry is increasingly seen as both a desirable and a feasible option in many parts of the world, but particularly in the tropics (Carter and Gronow, 2005). It is a two-way exchange of experience and knowledge, in a partnership between local people and forestry or related professionals. Such participation may range from the recognition and strengthening of forestry activities already being implemented by local people, to new initiatives requiring considerable outside technical as well as institutional support.

### **Defining Participation**

The term *participation* is so widely used in development literature, and so variously interpreted. What is meant by participation often range from almost complete outside control, with the token involvement of local people, to a form of collective action in which local people set and implement their own agenda in the absence of outside

initiators and facilitators (Carter and Gronow, 2005). Between these two extremes are various intermediate forms of participation, on a sliding scale of outsider involvement. In the conservation arena, Hartanto *et al.* (2003) have proposed that participatory management is a generic term to describe resource management approaches that combine three elements including:

- recognition of the legitimacy of the values of development and conservation
- acceptance that development and conservation goals are not necessarily antagonistic
- commitment to engage local people in environmental management.

However, there is a continuum of approaches for local people's participation in natural resource management. Cornwall (1995 cf. Carter and Gronow, 2005) identifies six modes of such approaches (Table 1).

**Table 1: Local People's Participation in Natural Resource Management: A Continuum of Approaches**

Mode of local people's participation	Type of participation	Outsider control	Potential for sustaining local action and ownership	Role of local people in research and action
Co-option	Tokenism- representatives are chosen but have no real input or power	*****		Subjects
Co-operation	Tasks are assigned with incentives; outsiders decide agenda and direct the process	*****		Employees/subordinates
Consultation	Opinions asked; outsiders analyse information and decide on a course of action	*****		Clients

Collaboration	Local people work together with outsiders to determine priorities; outsiders have responsibility for directing the process	*****	***	Collaborators
Co-learning	Local people and outsiders share their knowledge to create new understanding and work together to form action plans; outsiders facilitate	***	*****	Partners
Collective action	Local people set and implement their own agenda; outsiders absent		*****	Directors

Still, different types of participatory forestry practices have emerged and new ones continue to crop up in different countries. Scholars of participatory forestry practices seem to agree that the pivotal issues of sustainable forest management are primarily matters of governance, tenure and technology whose inter-relationships must be streamlined before technical development can be advanced. According to Odera (2004), the following recognitions on the state of participatory forestry practices are noteworthy:

1. Participatory forestry practices is shifting from a state-people collaboration in which the people support the efforts of the state to an arrangement in which the state supports the efforts of the people;
2. The general varying nature of human relationship with resources is a fundamental requirement of participatory forestry practices. This creates variations in social structures and complexities in partner categories and state receptivity;
3. There is a genuine need to spell out a standard model of participatory forestry practices (defined by clear principles, concepts and characteristics) to mobilise the constituencies to nurture its consistent growth into a socially and technically sustainable system;
4. Participatory forestry practices can only become a major component of a forest management system when it is backed up by legislative and institutional mechanisms and structures through which it can engage with other sectors and governance processes;

5. Participatory forestry practices has a broad geographical spread and landscape extending from rich and denuded forest areas, to niches in agricultural lands, on field bunds, on common property resources, even urban localities. It operates in natural forests, plantations and involves indigenous and exotic multi-purpose species that are raised for different management objectives;
6. Its management systems, tenure and benefit sharing arrangements may be different from that of conventional forestry; and
7. Participatory forestry practices often incorporates sideline occupations and supplementary income-generating activities such as beekeeping, mushroom cultivation, hunting, ecotourism, bush meat trade, marketing available non-timber forest products, etc.

In line with the above, a number of participatory forestry constructs have also emerged. The following are common constructs of the various systems and types of management agreements operated between local communities and other partners:

**Leases:** Under lease arrangement, the investor signs an agreement with a community on the use of communal land, develops the facility and pays a lease fee to the community. Depending on the agreement, the community may or may not have some involvement in the running of the enterprise.

**Consultation:** Participatory forestry established through discussions and consent by the state and the community, e.g. as expressed in the Forest-Farmer Commissions in Côte d'Ivoire or the Forest Committees in Ghana.

**Co-management:** This refers to Collaborative Natural Resources Management (CNRM)- a generic term that embraces approaches to resource management that recognise the legitimacy of development and conservation values and the need to integrate the two in active commitment of participation and collaboration in resource management by local people (widespread, particularly under wildlife services and operates under arrangements similar to JFM constructs).

**Contract:** Here a private company provides individual growers with incentives such as loan advances for establishment, technical expertise and subsidised inputs. The community or individual provides land and labour and is conditioned to sell the matured product to the private company. Unlike joint ventures, contracts often lack joint decision-making of both parties whose interests could be diverse.

**Consigned management:** An arrangement in which the community has all operational powers except ultimate authority for enforcement, licensing and decision-making (e.g. as Gambia and Tanzania in respect of national forest reserves).

**Loose confederation:** A structure of members operating on their own land and running forest/woodland based micro-enterprises, such as CBOs and/or Community-Trusts (widespread throughout Africa).

**Joint ventures:** Under this arrangement, a private investor and the community enter into an agreement, with the community holding equity stake and the proceeds are shared according to the value of each party's input. Where the land belongs to the community, it is valued and this forms part of their stake (common in southern African countries).

**Community-based forest management:** Here, jurisdiction is a fully devolved managerial and decision making authority, sometimes including ownership of the estate (e.g. as in Gambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Uganda).

### **Participatory Forestry and Sustainable Forest Management**

Like participation, *sustainable* is a word which is also very popular in development literature, but which is often used fortuitously. However, the term has deep historical roots in forestry. Literally, it implies the ability of a system to continue itself perpetually or for a long time (Encarta Dictionary, 2009). The Wikipedia encyclopaedia (2006) views it as a systematic concept, relating to the continuity of economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society, as well as the non-human environment. Dunster and Dunster (1996) defined it as the ability of an ecosystem to maintain ecological processes and function, biological diversity, and productivity over time. According to Zwahler (1995), it is the equitable intergeneration sharing of resources to provide for the needs of today without disadvantaging future generation.

In the light of this, the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO, 1992) defined sustainable forest management as the process of managing forest to achieve one or more clearly specified objectives of management with regard to the production of a continuous flow of desired forest products and services without undue reductions of its inherent values and future productivity and without undue undesirable effects on the physical and social environment. The FAO (2003) gave a definition of sustainable forest management as one which ensures that the values derived from the forest meet present day needs while at the same time ensuring their continued availability and contribution to long-term development needs. Papka (2005) interprets sustainable forest management as a system that guarantees continuous exploitation of forest resources that are governed by operational rules and regulations and which in turn guarantees the inexhaustible or everlasting existence of the biologically diverse forest for purpose of future benefits and advantages. Accordingly, the concept of sustainable forest management would include adequate attention being paid to areas where forests are disappearing as a result of encroachments and clearing for agriculture, where excessive grazing is preventing regeneration of trees and where wood harvesting for charcoal and firewood is causing

forest degradation. In view of these, sustainable forest management can be said to imply various degrees of human intervention aimed at safeguarding the forest ecosystem, its functions and its resources for the sustained production of goods and the provision of environmental services.

In spite of these arrays of definitions and interpretations, sustainability is something that is very difficult to prove without the benefit of hindsight as well as foresight. At the biological level, adequate technical information may not be available to be confident of continued levels of production, especially concerning non-timber forest products. In some circumstances, management systems may be more a 'best guess' prescription than a plan based on proven experience. Economic predictions can only be as accurate as current market trends and predictions allow. Sudden unexpected market changes can alter results drastically. The long-term viability of local people's organisations or sustained political support can be fostered, but only time will demonstrate success or failure. In the light of this, forestry operations that are both participatory and sustainable imply that:

- Local people are committed to maintaining the forest resource, have an active role in forest management decisions, and have (or are developing) the necessary skills for this.
- Tenure of the forest is secure, ideally (but not always) being vested in the local people themselves.
- Forest product harvesting is at levels that do not damage the productive potential of the resource, and can be maintained indefinitely.
- The economic aspects of production have been carefully assessed and appear viable for the foreseeable future, with a fair share of the benefits accruing to the local population.
- Institutional structures support a participatory approach to forest management. This is necessary both at the local level (for example, forest management committees that are properly representative of the local population) and nationally (committed forest department staff, appropriate government policies and legislation, etc.).

### **Key Steps in Establishing Participatory Forest Management**

Like any new approach or undertaking, establishing participatory forest management in an area involves a considerable amount of work. In sum, the process is usually broken into three distinct stages viz: *investigation; negotiation and implementation* (FARM-Africa/SOS Sahel Ethiopia, 2007).

### **Investigation in Participatory Forest Management– Forest stakeholders, forest users and forest uses**

It is essential to understand the different interest groups and resource user groups who should be involved in participatory forest management. These groups are referred to as

stakeholders. The principle of inclusive management depends on an understanding of the different stakeholders and the institutions that they represent. There is a need to clearly understand who could gain or lose by changes in resource management systems. Identifying how people perceive their own rights and responsibilities, as well as those of others, is a crucial starting point in initiating discussions over who should have which rights and responsibilities in the management system.

Therefore, a crucial part of the first stage in establishing participatory forest management is to undertake a review of stakeholders and carry out a stakeholder analysis. The immediate objective of a stakeholder analysis is to identify and analyse the different stakeholders in terms of direct and indirect resource uses. This information is then used to begin to assess appropriate rights and responsibilities for the various interests among the different groups.

Stakeholders can be divided into primary and secondary stakeholders, if there is a need to differentiate between levels of rights to the forest resources. For example primary and secondary stakeholders may be differentiated by proximity of their settlement to the forest. The stakeholder analysis can also reveal the different relationships among resource users. In this way potential and actual risks and conflicts between groups can be identified. Specific questions that the stakeholder analysis ought to answer focus on four elements of forest use and management including:

1. Who has what rights to use the forest? (Rights)
2. Who takes what actions in terms of forest management? (Responsibilities)
3. How do the different stakeholders relate to each other? (Relationships)
4. Who benefits from the forest? (Revenues)

#### **Investigation in Participatory Forest Management: Setting up forest management institutions**

The existence and establishment of functional community-based forest management institutions is at the centre of successful participatory forest management. If the community does not have the capacity to organise itself as members within a management group, participatory forest management will not work. The strength of the community-level forest management institution is critical. Adequate time and investment must be given to build management skills and capacity since the forest management institution is the body or group that takes on the roles and responsibilities of community-based forest management.

Identification of a suitable institution should be undertaken at the investigation stage of the participatory forest management process. Different types of institutions will exist at the community level. Generally, if institutions already involved in the management of

natural resources exist, then these are the most appropriate institutions to work with. However, existing institutions should not be assumed to be functionally effective, gender balanced and/or pro-poor. The imbalance has to be addressed. Getting legal recognition is also a critical challenge.

In the absence of existing suitable institutions, the community will need to form a new forest management group. It is necessary to call a series of community meetings to actually set up a new forest management institution (or when working with an existing institution) and to negotiate forest management roles. During these meetings, the options for forest management institutions should be thoroughly discussed. It is very important that the community review their options and then decide themselves what type of institution they want to set up. The role of the forest management group is usually defined in the Forest Management Plan and Agreement. Central to the role of the management group is the ability to both make decisions and take action to implement those decisions. Good decision making will determine the success of the overall forest management systems. Therefore capacity building focused on appropriate decision making for forest management is crucial.

Linked to the legality of the Forest Management Group is the critical issue of law enforcement. The Forest Management Group must be a legal entity in order to bring offenders to the appropriate law bodies. The Forest Management Group needs to build recognition and understanding of itself and its institutional status regarding the other institutions with which it will work.

#### **Investigation in Participatory Forest Management: Participatory Forest Resource Assessment**

The participatory forest resource assessment provides the Community Forest Management Group with forest resource data. This data is then used to develop and support the appropriate management of the resources. Participatory forest resource assessment information about the resources is used to decide appropriate management actions and to develop a relevant Forest Management Plan.

Ownership of the participatory forest resource assessment report should be joint, i.e. both the community and the government Forest Department services should agree on the content of the report and maintain a copy for their records. The report should be available in the appropriate local language. In essence, the participatory forest resource assessment report is part of the key documentation for participatory forest management that enables communities to take up the legal management of the resources. The community should be supported to use the participatory forest resource assessment exercises and participatory forest resource assessment report as key forest management tools.

### **Negotiation in Participatory Forest Management: Forest management planning**

Forest management planning produces a Forest Management Plan (FMP) that is part of the key documentation for participatory forest management. The Forest Management Plan is normally approved when the Forest Management Agreement is signed. The participatory forest resource assessment report helps both the community and the government services develop meaningful, realistic forest management activities based on detailed information about actual forest resource conditions. The participatory forest resource assessment provides the basic information for formulating the main sections of the forest management plan. When collating participatory forest resource assessment, the forest management implications of actual forest resource conditions are noted in the participatory forest resource assessment report. This management information is then collated to develop Forest Management Prescriptions which are presented to the community forest managers for them to use during forest management planning and from which to develop forest management activities.

Forest Management Activities/Actions is a key section of the Forest Management Plan. This should be developed through discussions with the community and then documented in the plan. Negotiation between the Forest Department and the Community Forest Management group may be needed during these meetings. In fact, the most important thing to remember is that the Forest Management Plan must be made by the community and include their decisions on how to manage the resources.

Foresters must resist the urge to impose rules and regulations; this simply takes us back to the traditional top-down approach. However, issues of sustainability must not be compromised in the Forest Management Plan. Measures of sustainable harvesting of timber and non-timber forest products must be contained in the Forest Management Plan. If data is lacking with respect to any of the resource, gathering of required data and experimentation with different harvesting levels should become part of the action plan. The Forest Management Plan is a vital document for PFM and both parties should hold a copy of it. It should also be available in the local language.

### **Negotiation in Participatory Forest Management: The Forest Management Agreement**

Formulation of the Forest Management Agreement also requires meetings, discussions and negotiations between the Government Forestry Department and Community Management Groups. Once signed, the Forest Management Agreement becomes the legally binding contract document for participatory forest management. The signatories are the Forestry Department, on behalf of the Government, and the Chairperson of the executive committee of the forest management group, on behalf of the community.

The Forest Management Agreement usually contains the objectives of the agreement (same as/similar to the Forest Management Plan), and the condition and location of the forest (same as/similar to the Forest Management Plan), as well as information about the agreeing parties. The Agreement also describes benefit-sharing arrangements. The Agreement should state the revenue benefit share from any sales. This may be tax payments to government on product sales or actual shared revenue. The Forest Management Agreement should also state the clear specification of the rights and responsibilities of the two parties. Rights and responsibilities should be developed through discussion with, and between, the government and the community.

Rights and responsibilities are directly related to the rules and regulations that have been agreed concerning the forest, such as who can do what in the forest. Decisions concerning rights, responsibilities, rules and regulations need to be negotiated. Decisions need to relate to the objectives of sustainable forest management. Agreement formulation meetings need to be held between the community and the Forestry Department services. Once rights and responsibilities, and rules are decided and agreed, they are written into the Forest Management Agreement.

The Forest Management Agreement also stipulates the legal conditions of the agreement. This includes the procedures to be followed in the event of a disagreement between the two parties, a default of contract by one of the parties, or the termination of contract. Other legal terms, conditions and/or requirements are also noted. Like the Forest Management Plan, the Forest Management Agreement is a vital document which should be held by both parties. The Agreement should also be available in the appropriate local language.

#### **Implementation in Participatory Forest Management–The roles of the community as forest managers**

Participatory forest management is a working partnership where each party is dependent on the other. This requires changes in the activities and roles for both community forest managers and forestry professionals. The new activities that the community undertakes are critical in determining the success of the arrangement. In the implementation phase, it is very important to understand the various activities that will now be carried out by the community in their new roles as forest managers. Their relationship with professional foresters and the forest resources will also change significantly.

#### **Implementation in Participatory Forest Management: Changing roles for professional foresters**

When implementing participatory forest management, it is also important to understand the different activities that will now be carried out by professional foresters. Changing the roles of professional foresters is key to determining the success of the new arrangement.

New rural development technical capacity is essential. Particularly, skills in participatory development are useful. These include Participatory Planning, Participatory Technology Development (PTD), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E). Ultimately, what is being asked for is a new commitment from professional foresters to support new systems of community managed forests.

### **Implementation in Participatory Forest Management– Monitoring and evaluation of Forest Management Plans**

Monitoring and evaluation of community forest management plans is a critical part of the overall management of the forest by communities. Monitoring and evaluation needs to be recognised as part of participatory forest management practice. Enabling the community to carry out monitoring and evaluation of their forest management practices is, therefore, a key area of capacity building, in order to improve and develop community management skills and systems.

Critical to monitoring is the systematic collection and collation of data (information). Data should be simple, collectable and relevant. The identification of measurable indicators by the community is central to the activity. The professional forester has an important role here, helping the community devise accurate systems of counting and sharing information of how to estimate resource availability and area production. Collected data sets need also to be analysed and reviewed and results concluded. Data should be stored and, when needed, shared and/or presented to other stakeholders in an evaluation meeting.

This collection and use of data presents a key challenge to community Forest Management Groups, particularly to non-literate groups who are unlikely to have formal systems of data collection, although they will have their own systems and methods for monitoring their other resources. These local systems of monitoring can be developed and adapted to help monitor forest management activities. Thus, monitoring and evaluation encompasses tools for further learning in participatory forest practices.

### **Emerging conflicts in Participatory Forestry Practices and Avenues for Conflict Resolution**

Many conflicts arise from changing social, environmental, economic, legal and political conditions, particularly when these factors create new interests and demands on natural resources. As submitted by Odera (2004), conflicts in participatory forest practices may be triggered by one or a convergence of some of the elements discussed in the following sections.

#### **The heterogeneity of interests among villagers**

People living in many a community engaged in participatory forestry programmes constitute a socio-spatially defined forest community management unit. Common

property theory contends that successful common property management is more likely where communities are small, have a homogenous social structure and hold shared views, understandings and norms (Ostrom, 1992). However, communities on the ground rarely display these qualities, and do not represent homogenous but rather heterogeneous entities. The members are made up of families from different clans, and people of different social status (rich, poor, the elite; quite often the majority may be illiterate). They are further highly differentiated with multiple interests and each sub-group can influence processes and decision-making in different ways. Makumuri (1995) observed that a single community can be made up of separate individuals with divergent agendas and different user groups with distinct needs from the common natural resource bases. Residents have different immediate development needs and household development priority ratings. Stratification may occur according to wealth, education, ethnicity, political affiliations, livelihood strategies, access to land, use of resources, access to patronage and engagement in the formal economy (Ainslie, 1999; Kepe, 1999). Some are strongly divided by factionalism. Some individuals tend to group into traditional social units; others rally behind modern leadership structures, while traditional leaders and political elites jostle for power over the populace. Moreover, according to Sithole (1995), these social groupings can change rapidly in relation to commercialisation, in-migration, and economic changes. Such socio-economic differentiation can result in weak incentives to contribute to a common understanding of participatory forestry (Shackleton and Campbell, 2001).

#### **Inadequate support and commitment by the Forest Service**

It is widely feared that foresters are not sincere in their commitment to participatory forestry practices. As submitted by Ibo (2005), foresters seem threatened by fears of losing jobs, authority and influence through up-scaling of participatory forestry. Power is an all important resource and tool in life and every bureaucrat is reluctant to give it up. Anderson *et al.* (1991) and other critics of the Asian JFM, have observed that the local organisations under JFM in India are little more than a proxy for the forest service to perpetuate its hold on key aspects such as the distribution of benefits. This is probably true for African countries as well where many people, particularly foresters, still hold little faith in community's competence to manage biodiversity rich forests, licensing and enforcement.

#### **Institutional failure**

At the structural and institutional levels, deficiencies are found in the weak capacities and limited means of action of the institutions operating the participatory forestry programmes. These institutions are seriously lacking in basic human capacities and skills needed to develop and put in place appropriate tools, methods and approaches for the development of participatory forestry programmes. At the level of state institutions, NGOs and local communities, there are insufficient numbers of specialists and

professionals well-versed on participatory forest management or community forestry development work. Cases of failure in providing returns and probity in accounting have been reported from some CBFMs (Shackleton and Campbell, 2001).

Despite well intended attempts to empower local communities to manage and benefit from their natural resources, the impact seldom reaches the intended beneficiaries. The lack of representation of women and their effective involvement in decision-making and agenda setting is one example of such concerns. Men and women are often involved in different economic activities and should be well represented in all organs of the participatory forestry programme structure. This is further constrained by a range of environmental factors, which exacerbate this class divide. The lack of coherent implementation strategies has also led to competition and contradictions between government departments, thereby negatively affecting participatory forestry programmes.

### **Conclusion**

Participatory forestry practices have been identified as one of composite measures towards achieving the sustainable management of forest resources. It was a response to the failure of traditional top-down, paternalistic and state-initiated development practices in the forestry sector. However, there is a continuum of approaches for local people's participation in natural resource management. There are also a number of participatory forestry constructs that have since emerged. In all of these, a sustainable participatory forest management entails the commitment of local people towards maintaining the forest resources; secured forest tenure; upholding a sustainable harvest levels for all the products from the forest; assessing the economic aspects of production and guaranteeing a fair share of the benefits accruing to the local population. There must also be institutional structures that support a participatory approach to forest management. Meanwhile, conflicts arising from changing interests and demands on the natural resources must be identified promptly, tackled and nip in the bud.

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