

COLLABORATIVE FOREST MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR  
THE GHANA FORESTRY COMMISSION

Proposals submitted by the Technical Committee on Collaborative Forest and Wildlife  
Management Practices in Ghana

March 2001

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## Acronyms

|      |   |
|------|---|
| CFM  | Collaborative Forest Management             |
| CRMC | Collaborative Resource Management Committee |
| FC   | The Forestry Commission                     |
| FSD  | Forest Services Division                    |
| SFM  | Sustainable Forest Management               |
| WD   | Wildlife Division                           |

## **1. Introduction**

**Ownership and Forest Reserve Constitution:** - Forest ownership is closely linked to the indigenous land tenure regime in Ghana. Principally land is communally owned and held in trust on behalf of the people through stools and skins. On that basis, landowners exert substantial influence in reservation procedures. Although the laws of the country grant authority to the government to constitute any land it deems fit as a reserve, landowners must be consulted through an arbitration process under the jurisdiction of a reserve settlement commissioner who must take into consideration the concerns of landowners. There have been instances whereby the constitution of proposed reserves have had to be abandoned due to strong opposition from landowners. Once an area is constituted as a reserve, management rights become the prerogative of the government but revenue accruing from the reserve is passed on to the landowner subject to the deduction of expenditure on management.

In certain instances, as is the norm in game reserves, the government purchased the lands outright from landowners. Under those circumstances, the government becomes the bona-fide property owner and enjoys commensurate rights just like any other landowner. In effect landowners - whether stools, skins, the government or individuals - wield immense power on the setting aside of an area as permanent forest estate and in all cases have their rights to revenues from the exploitation of the resource. The official forest management agencies therefore need to collaborate with land owning communities in the management of forest resources.

## **2. Policy Framework for Collaborative Forest Management**

The New Forest and Wildlife Policy of Ghana promulgated in 1994 creates an enabling environment for the practice of collaborative forest management. Under the guiding

principles of the 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy the salient elements on collaborative resource management are the following:

- People should have the right of access to natural resources for maintaining a basic standard of living and to shoulder the responsibility of ensuring the sustainability of the resources.
- Traditional methods of resource management are to be incorporated in national strategies.
- A share of financial benefits from the utilisation of the resource should be made available for the maintenance of resource production and as benefit to local communities.
- Decentralised participatory democracy of issues concerning the welfare of the people should be developed and;
- Unemployment and support for women in development should be encouraged.

More specifically the policy emphasises on the need to:

*‘Promote public awareness and involvement of rural people in forestry and wildlife conservation to maintain life-sustaining systems, preserve scenic areas and enhance the potential of recreation, tourism, and income generation opportunities’*

Owing to this recognition the FC has now adopted CFM principles at all levels of forest and wildlife management, namely: policy and legislation formulation, forest management planning and execution of forest operations. The adoption of this document signifies the high degree of importance the FC attaches to the practice of CFM.

### **3. Definition of Collaborative Forest Management.**

The general definition that Forestry Commission has adopted for collaborative forest and wildlife management is given as:

Working partnership between different stakeholders which enhances the management and development of forest and wildlife resources and leads to equitable distribution of benefits

#### **4. Legislation**

**Discussions:** - In order to give effect to CFM there is the need to back up policies, plans and strategies with relevant legislation. This is justified on the grounds of the apparent conflicts of interest and authority between institutional practitioners and target communities that emerges under CFM practice. In simplistic terms there is the need to draw up the limits of what is permitted and or prohibited. On the other hand the use of legislation to guide CFM also sometimes conflicts with the spirit of CFM practice which advocates for goodwill amongst collaborating partners. Due to the uncertain impacts of new CFM ideas, the strategy has been to pilot CFM initiatives on a small scale before rolling them out once proven to be feasible.

One challenge that faces CFM practitioners is the uncertainty they go through while testing initiatives. Whereas adequate information must be obtained before systems could be packaged for widespread adoption non practitioners fail to appreciate the necessity of going through lengthy periods of piloting coming out with answers. A balance must therefore be sought in utilising resources – time, personnel, funds, etc. - to test initiatives while field practitioners are anxious for solutions to immediate problems. Another serious challenge is in the transfer of initiatives onto the field. Without appreciation of field officers of the delicate nature of dealing with the sensibilities of communities, systems are not followed properly thus resulting in failures in application upon which the blame is put on the non-viability of the systems. A recommended solution for field officers and CFM practitioners to act in unison and have common goals on ensuring the success of initiatives for without that the future survival of forest and wildlife resources cannot be guaranteed.

Also there should always be a balance between promulgating legislation and promoting policies. This presupposes that practitioners will not rely solely on legislation to advance the course of CFM but will rely on it as an addendum to goodwill policies, plans and strategies.

**Policy Statement:** - The Forestry Commission shall ensure that collaborative forest management programmes, practices and systems are backed by the necessary legislative provisions by initiating the necessary formulation procedures as well as ensuring enforcement through co-operation with relevant bodies.

**Strategies:** - The following are the strategies to be adopted by the FC on legal matters pertaining to CFM.

- The FC shall adopt varied strategies in its quest to give legal backing to CFM.
- The FC will champion the promulgation of Laws, Legislative & Executive Instruments, that advance the cause of CFM at the national level.
- The FC shall ensure that the necessary backing is given to CFM field practices through the issuing and enforcement of requisite Orders, Directives and Instructions to Field Officers and partners.
- Encouragement will be given to allied partners such as District Assemblies to promulgate and lead in the enforcement of bye-laws that promote CFM.

## **5. Collaborating Institutions**

**Discussions:** - Institutionally it is recognised that CFM practice is wide ranging and cuts across agencies both governmental and non-governmental, society segments, business interests, community based organisations and gender. The challenge is to ensure that each body contributes its quota towards the development of CFM systems that promote optimal benefits in an equitable manner for all segments of society. At all points in time the Forestry Commission shall be the rallying point to bring all other bodies together in order to promote harmony and synergy for achieving SFM.

**Policy Statement:** - With due recognisance to the crucial role that CFM plays in ensuring SFM, the Forestry Commission shall ensure that appropriate structures are established to explore, develop and integrate cost effective CFM systems within the operational set up of the Commission as well as facilitate the creation of requisite structures amongst external partners. A Service Charter shall be in place to set out the modalities for the co-ordination of relationships amongst collaborating institutions and structures.

**Strategy:** - Strategies to be adopted by the FC to promote vigorous development of institutional structures for the practice of CFM are as follows:

- Whereas specialised units as appropriate will be created to principally develop CFM systems it shall be the avowed strategy of the Commission to champion the integration of tested systems into the main working framework of operational wings of the commission.
- Manuals and Guidelines on CFM will be issued to operational staff for adoption in field programmes and practices.
- Where necessary structures will be created to service and lend support to community and other stakeholder interests in line with the pursuit of quality CFM practice.
- The FC shall make appropriate financial provision to cover the creation and maintenance of the customer service structures from its normal budgetary allocations.
- Support shall also be provided towards the operation of a vibrant civil society forum by way of contribution to policy development on forest management in Ghana.

## **6. Concepts and Approaches**

**Discussions:** - Numerous concepts and approaches have been propounded to describe CFM practice. In most cases concepts are devised based on the prevailing circumstances and context for the CFM practice. Irrespective of that common principles and concepts prevail across the global divide. In Ghana the main quest of CFM is to promote equitable share of responsibilities and benefits associated with forest and wildlife management.

**Policy Statement:** The FC shall ensure that agencies operating under its umbrella adopt common concepts and approaches and that concepts are reviewed in line with changing trends and circumstances.

**Strategy:** - These are the strategies to be pursued by the FC for constant review of the concepts and approaches of CFM.

- The FC shall on a regular basis constitute a forum to review CFM concepts and practices
- Based on the outcome of forums, the FC shall set forth official policies, definitions and terminology on CFM and communicate same to agencies and practitioners.

## **7. Collaborative Resource Management Committees (CRMC)**

**Discussions:** - It has been recognised by CFM practitioners that to give credence to the concept there is the need to empower communities to reach partnership status with agencies without which equity may not be achieved. To this end agencies desirous of ensuring genuine CFM practice should facilitate the formation of community institutional structures that are capable of representing the communities and acting as the link between them and the agencies. Such structures should be as broad based as possible taking into consideration the heterogeneity of communities. Such structures should also possess the basic tenets of democratic principles without discrimination.

**Policy Statement:** - The FC shall at all times regard the creation and maintenance of community institutional structures as the cornerstone of its CFM practice through provision of resources and legislation as is necessary to empower such bodies.

**Strategy:** - In terms of community structures the FC shall pursue these strategies:

- The FC shall issue forth circulars enjoining its agencies to undertake the formation and operationalisation of Collaborative Resource Management Committees.

- Each of the various FC agencies shall evolve its own strategies and labels on CRMCs.
- The FC shall provide the requisite resources to enable CRMCs to function properly.
- At every point in time the FC shall ensure that the necessary legislative backing has been provided to enable CRMCs execute their functions without hindrance.
- On annual basis an amount based on a percentage of the revenue derived by the FC shall be provided to finance the activities of CRMCs as well as any incentive schemes that may be adopted following consultations with communities.
- In seeking to select members of CRMCs, due recognition will be given to existing local institutions as well as any new ones that might have been formed towards the management of forest and wildlife resources.

## **8. Research**

**Discussions:** - There is the need to undertake constant research in order to upgrade the knowledge available on CFM with a view to enhancing its practice for the welfare of stakeholders. It must be recognised that unlike other disciplines of forestry issues pertaining to CFM are peculiar in that formal adoption of the concept is novel and mainly social based thus requiring that extra attention be paid to possible impacts from measures adopted. In view of the peculiarities piloting or small-scale testing of ideas are encouraged whenever any new systems are to be introduced. Collaborative Forest Management has three identifiable stages termed as ‘The Learning Process’ that serve as a guide for the exploration and adoption of new initiatives. Another relevant observation over the years has been the need to involve communities at the design stage of research to promote co-operation, prior awareness and sense of ownership on emerging issues in CFM.

**Policy Statement:** - The FC shall ensure that support is provided towards the conduct of continuous research to improve upon CFM systems.

**Strategies:** - The FC shall ensure continuous conduct of research in CFM practices through the following strategies.

- The FC shall through its respective units identify priority CFM research areas and provide resources and support for investigations.
- Once a tried and tested system has been developed the FC shall adopt the system and ensure that it is integrated into mainstream operational activities.
- The necessary policies and framework would be provided by the FC to enable CFM pilot activities to be executed without hindrance.
- Where necessary the FC shall collaborate with or contract out research to the relevant bodies to ensure effective development of new initiatives.
- The FC shall ensure that communities and other relevant stakeholders are consulted in research design and execution wherever possible.

## 9. Training

**Discussions:** - In terms of training, it is recognized that attention must be paid to both staff of the FC and other stakeholders. By way of strategy both formal and informal methods should be adopted. Training is an ongoing phenomenon that must form part of the annual scheme of activities while the necessary resources should be provided to give effect to training policy. It is quite relevant to train specialised staff capable of leading the CFM process while ensuring that operational staff possess the basic tenets of systems to enable them carry out implementation at the field level.

**Policy statement:** - The FC having recognised the pivotal role played by well educated staff and stakeholders on CFM will ensure continuous quality education at all times.

**Strategies:** These are the strategies to be pursued to ensure availability of trained personnel to lead the promotion and adoption of CFM practices.

- The FC shall task the relevant units to identify requisite training for both specialised and field staff in CFM concepts and practices.

- The FC shall, on a regular basis, facilitate the training of communities and other stakeholder partners in relevant CFM areas to enable them to discharge their obligations effectively.
- Where necessary staff would be sent abroad for training that is not locally available.
- Due recognition would be paid towards the use of demonstration areas as training centres.
- Well performing communities and or their leaders shall be recruited to assist in the training programmes and events.
- Study tours and working visits would be adopted as part of the FC's training strategy.

## **10. Conclusion**

The Forestry Commission attaches importance to the practice of CFM principally because indigenous community groups own a substantial portion of the forest reserves of Ghana thus the need to pass on equitable benefits to the owners as a matter of their right. Beside the legal recognition of ownership rights the nation is bent on pursuing CFM as a social agenda for development and for ensuring effective management of its forest resources. The Forest and Wildlife Policy makes adequate provision for the pursuit of CFM. The promulgation of these policies and strategies, specifically, for CFM practice that cuts across the various institutions and agencies operating under the Forestry Commission, the main statutory forest management body will further enhance the practice of CFM in Ghana.