

FORESTRY SUB-SECTOR POLICY

REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

(2010 – 2019)

Forest Policy of The Gambia

Background

The Government recognised the prospects of a balanced ecosystem in advancing the socio-economic development of the country. The policy framework for sustainable natural resource management put an adequate forest cover at the centre front. The preceding forest policy, 1995 to 2005, proclaims that, a forest cover of 30% is sufficient for maintaining an ecological balance necessary for sustainable economic growth. Even though, Department of Forestry is unable to achieve this policy objective the review strongly recommend that the target be pursued in the next 10-year policy framework. The preceding policy suggested that 75% of the forest cover be managed by involving local communities and private sector. This policy provision was implemented, but only 12% of this target has been achieved under this arrangement. The principal objective of the participatory approach was to check the degradation, in order to restore the natural balance and sustain the production and use of forest resources. However, it has been argued that the 10-year time-bound of the policy was inadequate to achieve the objectives. Hence, after careful consultations at all levels, it was recommended that this policy objectives be further pursued in the next policy period.

The implementation of the preceding forest policy faced the following critical constraints: (a) increasing population pressure on land resources, and the inability of the natural resource sector to meet the increasing resource demand; (b) the inability of various users to take full responsibility of balancing supply and demand for forest resources; (c) inaccessibility to land and difficulties in securing extended tenure (to match the long-term benefits of investment in forest resource development) for private foresters; (d) poor marketing system for forest products; (e) inability to stimulate adequate private sector response to investment possibilities in forestry; and (f) inadequate capacity of the institutional framework to sufficiently advance the sector. These constraints constitute major challenges in the implementation of the policy under review. It is therefore, essential that adequate remedial and protective measures are applied in a systematic manner to sustain a sound forest resource base for meeting the specific needs of the local population.

The Government has recognised the alarming rate of degradation of forest resources, and has commissioned an institutional review, and an update of the preceding policy. The review reflected the poor implementation of the policy provisions resulting to under-achievement of the envisaged targets. The review showed that traditional domestic energy has not been adequately addressed as a key policy objective. It was argued that domestic energy is vital; hence the need to develop a comprehensive long term responsive policy in line with development needs of energy resources for economic growth.

The strategy for this policy period, 2010 to 2019, will have to build on the existing strengths and plug the perceived weaknesses. One key area is the need to improve the department's capacity to manage change. The current competence base needs to be hugely augmented to deal with the proposed decentralisation and empowerment agenda (at the micro level) and the emerging institution-building, and policy research and implementation agendas (at micro and macro levels).

Similarly, the whole area of research and development on alternative socio-economic uses of forest resources (e.g. medicinal trees and herbs) needs to be augmented. The need to improve learning mechanisms and the M & E system is obvious, as also is the need to harmonise and build synergies between related sectors. The organisational culture has to move to become much more knowledge-base and supportive of innovation. Strategies to develop a more comprehensive funding mix are also required. With respect to the external positioning, Department of Forestry has to fully exploit its potential to facilitate a coalition for forest resource management by tapping from the prospects of institutional linkages.

In the role of facilitating joint action by related sectors, Department of Forestry will continue to play a collaborative, nurturing and cutting edge role. Building the capacity of local government councils, private sector and other civil society institutions to engage on effective forest resource management will receive even greater focus for the department. Department of Forestry's relationship with the levers of power within government, partners and donors, and the corporate sector will remain cordial, and this is an edge for the department to stimulate civil society and private sector involvement in forest resource management. This will be a radical move, and the risks involved in the process are all too clear; but the available political will can provide the strength to proceed. At the same time, Department of Forestry will strive to work closely with related sectors, relevant authorities in NEA and Environment Ministry to benefit from their experiences and exploit synergies of collective action. Although public-private partnership will increasingly be required in forest resource management, securing the tenure-rights for an extended period to match the long-term benefits of private forestry will be reviewed. Department of Forestry will remove the present huddle, which is the limited period for tenure-rights in private forestry.

Private sector participation in harvesting and marketing of forest products is currently limited to only processing and selling of wood for construction and furniture production. However, what remains to be accomplished is adding value to non-wood products for both local consumption and export. Both production and processing companies can be active in their niche areas; for instance, the production of medicinal plants and genetic materials for the pharmaceutical industry. Department of Forestry will develop strategies for exploring emerging markets for forest beverages (local tea) and 'green' products harvested or crafted by the poor.

The policy provisions/strategies will include civil society and private sector participation in forest resource development and management, and ecotourism. These strategies will be advanced in tandem with cross - sectoral strategies while recognising cross-cutting issues of concern: to develop the economic use of forest products by local industry; to protect the natural fauna and flora of the forest environment; to promote integrated approach to natural resource management; and to optimize government revenue and/or community benefits from the forestry sector. The new forest policy is formulated within a national policy framework that provides an enabling environment for private sector investment, civil society participation and socio-economic development. The policy recognises government's strategic shift towards poverty reduction and economic growth, which underpins vision 2020, the Gambia Environment Action Plan, Local Government Reforms and Decentralisation, Strategy for Poverty Alleviation II (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper), National Action on Desertification etc. The provisions will accommodate government's decentralization process; and demand driven "bottom-up approach" strategy of the Local Government Act, 2002. This Act places management responsibilities on the Local Government Area Councils for a range of natural resources under their jurisdiction.

The Global Policy Approach

Our search for a new policy orientation led to a system that will provide a viable and sustainable natural resource base, which in turn will create true development and growth in the rural economy and thereby improve, in every sense, the quality of rural life. This is the challenge for Department of Forestry to grapple with. The success or failure of any policy largely depend on the approach, the governance in place and its policy orientation, procedures, management and the organisational strategies as well as methodologies that are adopted in discharging the onerous responsibilities.

In order to advance a viable forest resource management strategy, three levels of policies have to be considered:

- The policy in approach;
- Macro policies which in general terms, guide the conduct in creating the right environment that attract private sector, civil society organisations and communities to engage in viable resource management programmes;
- Micro policies which are specific to various actors in natural resource management, and are designed as a code of guidelines that ensures efficiency and diligence in the attainment of policy objectives.

There is one common feature applicable to all the three policy levels. Policy should not be sacrosanct but flexible and transformable to answer prevailing circumstances and resource demands. For our purpose, we are mainly concerned with institutional/organisational and programme policies that should guide our overall operations in natural resource management.

The Policy

The new policy would be impact, rather than revenue generation and input delivery oriented. The policy orientation will embrace strategies advanced by the medium term plan, strategy for poverty alleviation and growth, and other sub-sector policy frameworks. The policy will be user-friendly and pro-poor; and will advance four areas: research and development, programme development, institutional/organisational development, decentralization and synergy. The main thrust of the policy will be engaging in partnerships and networking in order to strengthen national resource base. The department will engage international and national partners and networks to mobilize resources for natural resource management programming. Department of Forestry will strengthen the existing partnerships and networks, and would build new partnerships and networks to increase its capacity to respond to the increasing environmental degradation.

Chapter Two

2. Goals, Objectives and Principles of Forestry Policy

2.1 The Need for a Policy Framework

The need and purpose of the policy framework is to provide Department of Forestry core policies and a set of minimum standards for organizational effectiveness and programme management. This policy framework establishes a clear departmental position in some areas that have previously depended only on precedent, interpretation of rules and regulations, procedures and concepts. It sets out and defines certain principles to inform decisions. It provides a basis for accountability and gives consistent bench marks against which to monitor and assess practice.

2.2 The Status

This document will become a corporate policy which is binding on all parts of the department. The process through which the documentation goes before reaching approval stage is important. Once it has been approved by government, all operatives will then be held to account against the policy framework. It will be both a mandate for action and a tool to the staff accountable for management practice.

2.3 The Scope

This policy framework will be binding on all parts of Department of Forestry where staff are designated as employees of the department, or are working for or representing Department of Forestry in a voluntary or legal capacity.

2.3.1 The goals of the Forestry policy shall include the following:

- (i) Improvement in the living standards of the citizenry through poverty reduction and forest resource enhancement initiatives;
- (ii) Institutional empowerment for effective decentralized forest resource management
- (iii) Encouragement of coordinated efforts and inflow of assistance into the forestry sub-sector as defined in the National Development Framework.
- (iv) Improvement in Department of Forestry's absorptive capacity and effective management of forest resources;

2.3.2 Specific Objectives

The Department of Forestry's policy intends to achieve the following specific objectives:

- (i) strengthening the institutional capacity of the Department of Forestry and Non-State Actors involved in the management and implementation of natural resource programmes;
- (ii) further integration of Department of Forestry into the medium and long-term national development framework;
- (iii) ensuring that Department of Forestry create multiplier effects on forest resource management and the domestic economy in general;
- (iv) technology transfer to decentralized structures and development of indigenous technology in forest resource management; and
- (v) promoting efficient and unified systems for forest resource management.

2.4 Principles of the Forestry Policy

The relationship of Department of Forestry with others shall be governed by the following principles:

- The principle of **quality**: Department of Forestry will seek best practice, defined as work of the highest quality, but also cost-effective.
- The principle of **innovativeness**, which requires the courage to be creative and not fear of failure.
- The principle of **partnership and synergy**, which allots different responsibilities and respects the mandate, rights and obligations of all parties.
- The principle of **devolution**, which conforms to local government reforms and decentralisation.

Department of Forestry seeks mutual trust and confidence in its relationship with local area councils and other civil society organisations regardless of size, financial resources or influence. The principle of relationship should be listening to and understanding each other's constraints, opportunities and disciplines and not imposition of particular ideologies and specific practice. For Department of Forestry, mutuality is a critical guiding principle. Any form of collaboration should be based on the relationship being of mutual benefit. Principles should be developed mutually, apply to all parties, and be monitored jointly. All parties should respect the autonomy of others and their need to remain accountable to their respective constituencies.

2.5 Policy Implementation Approach

Department of Forestry's approach towards policy implementation will be based on its long experience of working with and learning from its engagement with communities in resource management programming. It will build on the existing strengths of its experience in order to mobilise the capacity and the will to change. Furthermore, it should work creatively and constantly innovate and introduce new technologies and methods in all aspects of its work and organisation. It will undertake policy work with a holistic approach, meaning the department will seek to understand and act on the overall context and causes of land degradation, without being driven by technical specification. This will be its core approach to policy implementation.

Chapter Three

Policy Provisions

1. Institutional Development Policy

1.1 **Policy Statement:** Department of Forestry will engage on instructional development and capacity building in all parts of the organisation.

1.1.1 Enhancing the professional and institutional ability of Department of Forestry for effective and efficient resource management programming through:

- continuous development and improvement of quality of programmes and ensuring that they have sustainable impact in natural resource management;
- improve capacity to learn from experience of both success and failures, and hence improve quality of programming;
- effective balanced programmes at all levels, and the consequent programme growth;
- integrated planning;
- strengthened institutional framework at Regional and local community level;
- providing technical guidance and support to Regional forestry offices for the design and programming of forest conservation initiatives; and
- engaging on a nation-wide comprehensive natural resource management awareness and education campaigns.

1.1.2 To maintain a forestry service with an adequate number of quality staff at professional and technical level for programming in the country in accordance with the stated forest policy goal, to ensure:

- adequate licensing administration and supervision by local area councils;
- extension activities that will promote a positive public attitude towards the forestry profession; and
- extension activities to ensure the willingness of the local population to be involved in the protection and sustainable management of the forest resource.

1.2 **Policy Statement:** Department of Forestry will advance strategy development for effective programme and policy work, and influence the political will for institutional support.

1.2.1 To provide a strategic framework for programming and policy work based on the larger country context by:

- providing an understanding of micro/macro linkages;
- developing links with key policy makers and change agents;
- providing a focus for programme and policy work;
- providing a framework for accountability in relation to strategy and overall departmental mandate;
- providing a forecast of human and financial resource needs;
- identifying major operational implications including required changes in organisational structure and staff training requirements;
- enhancing planning, monitoring and evaluation of skills of staff;
- fostering a sense of staff identity and ownership of local level programmes;
- developing staff understanding of macro-micro linkages, poverty, the policy functions and policy issues and strategic options;
- Leading to more effective action by Department of Forestry at all levels; and
- engaging government to provide the required institutional support for at all levels.

1.3 **Policy Statement:** Department of Forestry will engage all stakeholders (particularly, the local government councils) to mainstream Natural Resource Management into their programmes.

1.3.1 To advance a holistic approach that presents an executive's role in dealing with forest resource management; and the role of professionals and practitioners, and the media in awareness raising by:

- designing programmes based on proven scientific principles;
- engaging on institutional capacity building at all levels, particularly at Regional and local government area council levels; and
- building on existing strengths and capacity, and integrate national development goals as far as possible.

1.3.2 To promote, harmonise and mainstream forest policy, development objectives and strategies with related sectors and other actors by:

- engaging related sectors for synergy and programme learning;
- ensuring a multi-disciplinary approach calling for knowledge of various professionals in order to achieve a given set of objectives; and
- advancing a multi-sectoral approach, and recognise the niche competence of all actors and related sectors.

1.4 **Policy Statement:** Department of Forestry to be committed to partnership, alliance building & networking, and engage on a cooperative working culture and learning from others.

1.4.1 To engage national and international partners and networks in shaping national delivery mechanisms in natural forest management in The Gambia by:

- soliciting regional cooperation with allied organisations;
- building solidarity in national and international fora;
- advancing inter-governmental and professional interaction in the approach;
- sharing skills and experiences;
- combining resources to develop a common approach to forest resource management;
- mobilizing resources for natural forest resource management;
- strengthening existing partnerships and networks;
- expanding roles to include capacity development of personnel and institutions; and
- building new partnerships and networks.

Funding Policy

1.5 Policy Statement: Department of Forestry will solicit more long term and strategic engagement with a wider range of donors than in the past. This should involve developing funding proposals to seek for donor funds.

1.5.1 To secure adequate funding (from government, development partners, NGOs and private sector) to improve the capacity of Department of Forestry (human, facilities and infrastructure) by:

- strengthening the forestry fund administered by the Department of Forestry; and
- ensuring an increase in recurrent budget allocation by Central Government.

1.5.2 To develop a funding mix for expanded Regional level programmes by:

- building the profile of Department of Forestry and increase understanding of level of natural degradation in the country among regional and international partners and donor audience;
- building the income base from existing and new partners and donors through new approaches and long term relationships;
- maximising income from trust and private sector at acceptable cost ratios; and
- building income from official donors (both multi- and bi-lateral organisations) through project proposals, and existing and new contacts.

1.5.3 To improve and stabilise revenue generation from state plantations, woodlots and natural forests by:

- introducing ecological levy on ecotourism and private saw mills;
- devolving permits and related levies to local government area and municipal councils, saving cost on policing and controlling; and
- recoup 15% of royalties, licences, permits and penalties paid from local government area and municipal councils, and community forests;

2. Programme Development Policy

2.1 Policy Statement: Department of Forestry will engage on integrated resource management programming

2.1.1 To reserve, maintain and develop forest land resources including mangroves ecosystem covering at least 30% of total land area which is capable of environmental protection through:

- minimizing soil desiccation and soil erosion;
- improving, conserving and preserving biodiversity;
- maintaining river bank stability (mangroves); and
- protecting the swamp lands.

2.1.2 To ensure that 75% of forest lands are managed and protected according to forest management principles and plans in order to increase forest resource base by:

- engaging local communities in forest resource management;
- strengthening local structures such as community forest management committees, Area Councils;
- devolving more authority and management responsibilities to local communities and area councils; and
- introducing effective participatory techniques for local empowerment.

2.1.3 To ensure that sufficient supply of forest produce needed by both urban and rural population is available through:

- rehabilitation of forest lands; and
- establishment of fast growing plantations and woodlots (e.g *Jatroffa carcus* spp for bio-energy).

2.1.4 Develop the institutional capacity of local government councils, the private sector and community-based organizations (CBOs), to deal with land degradation at their level by:

- building skills base of partner institutions;
- providing technical assistance to partner institutions; and
- providing financial assistance, which can be reduced over time.

2.1.5 To promote national tree planting by encouraging:

- tree farming on agricultural lands, grazing lands, and along roadsides to improve their productivity and contribute to soil and water conservation; and
- the participation of forest produce-exploitation local government area councils in tree farming.

2.1.6 To engage local communities and their forest committees on bush fire prevention and mitigation programmes through:

- extension activities that will promote a positive public attitude towards forest protection; and

- extension activities to ensure the willingness of the local population to be involved in forest protection.
- 2.1.7 To promote national awareness on conservation and rational utilisation of forest resources especially in urban areas through:
- community level traditional communicators;
 - radio and television slots;
 - community level meetings; and
 - community-based education and campaign programmes
- 2.1.8 Encourage urban forestry through:
- establishment of green belts and woodlots in urban and semi-urban areas for landscaping and recreational purposes.
- 2.1.9 Encourage the multiple use of forest and forest lands which are not in conflict with forest management especially in the areas of:
- controlled grazing;
 - collection of minor forest produce;
 - eco-tourism; and
 - wildlife conservation.
- 2.1.10 To stem the on-going forest resource degradation and its over-arching environmental implications through:
- greater involvement of the communities;
- 2.1.11 To introduce pro-poor alternative source of energy to slow down the rate of forest destruction and the extinction of certain tree species through:
- approved technologies on rational utilisation of wood energy; and
 - engaging Energy Department on charcoal briquette study.
- 2.1.12 To promote the production and adoption of efficient fuelwood and biomass charcoal briquette end-use appliances which improve the efficiency and reduce the quantities of these household energy source by:
- encouraging local industry for the production of charcoal briquette.

3. Policy on Decentralization and Synergy.

3.1 Policy Statement: Government is committed to advance its local government reforms and decentralisation program. Hence, Department of Forestry must conform to this commitment.

- 3.1.1 Department of Forestry to devolve the management responsibility of all forest resources (woodlots, open forests, etc.) in all municipalities and Regions to local area and municipal councils by:
- re-aligning the organisational structure to conform to the local government decentralisation program;
 - strengthening Regional forestry services;
 - devolving all management responsibilities;

- devolving all licence and permit administrations to local government councils;
- building skills - base of local council forestry services; and
- providing technical assistance to local council forestry services.

3.2 Policy Statement: Department of Forestry to engage related sectors and non-state actors in forest resource management.

3.2.1 To utilize the combine efforts of all related sectors, local government administrative machinery, technical specialists, NGOs and local community structures in conservation programming by:

- facilitating joint action by related sectors;
- playing a collaborative, nurturing and cutting edge role;
- harmonising intra-sectoral related policies for cost effective collaboration; and
- maximising the limited physical incentives.

3.2.2 Engage partners to develop new strategies for the prevention and control of bush fires as the most important agent of forest and range land destruction.

3.2.3 Encourage the active participation of the private sector in the production of and marketing of forest produce in accordance with the Gambia Government policies of privatization and land reform following the guidelines set by the Department of Forestry by:

- engaging private sector (individuals and firms) in forest resource management;
- increasing tenure rights to an extended period;
- improving forest product markets;
- facilitating linkages between private plantations with ecotourism and financial institutions;

3.2.4 To promote private sector involvement in non-wood forest products, processing and marketing to boost the economic value of Gambian forests to ensure a significant contribution of the sector towards economic growth by:

- encouraging local/cottage industries in herb (e.g combretum spp) processing into tea; and
- encouraging processing of forest fruits into beverages.

3.3 Policy Statement: Establish Farmers Platform to advance strategies in land and agricultural resource management at local level.

3.3.1 To mobilize the rural communities to assume increasing responsibilities for sustainable preservation, conservation, exploitation and utilization of natural resources by:

- developing and strengthening the concept of farmers platform;
- encouraging and facilitating the creation of Regional farmers platforms;
- farmer training and community-based resource management education campaigns;

- facilitating the creation of national farmers platform;
- dissemination of resource management technologies; and
- translating forest policy into local languages.

4. Policy on Research and Development

4.1 Policy Statement: Department of Forestry to engage on resource management technology generation and transfer at local level.

4.1.1 To engage and collaborate with NARI and other relevant sub-regional research institutions on technology generation and transfer in order to restore extinct and endangered tree species through:

- silvicultural research (growth & yield);
- agro-silvo-pastoral studies and research; and
- forest economics studies (e.g showing contribution of forestry on GDP, etc.).

4.1.2 To support research in acquiring base line data through applied forestry research and studies, such as:

- forest produce consumption trends studies;
- local knowledge about trees and forest;
- wood utilization research; and
- studies on cross-boarder trade.

4.1.3 To Engage production and processing companies to add value to non-wood products for both local consumption and export through:

- collaboration with MRC to explore economic use of medicinal plants and genetic materials;
- exploring emerging markets for forest beverages (local tea) and ‘green’ products; and
- engaging local companies in the production of medicinal plants and genetic materials for the pharmaceutical industry.

4.2 Policy Statement: Department of Forestry to prioritise programme learning and development

4.2.1 To improve the capacity of M&E unit to develop an effective programme learning system by:

- establishing an appraisal and strategic planning system;
- engaging on effective monitoring and evaluation;
- developing the second and third level indicators;
- developing an effective reporting system to share and spread information on good lessons and practices;
- documenting and learning from best practices; and
- sharing experiences internally and externally.

4.2.2 To update forest resource inventory and assess the country’s sites of high ecological and aesthetic vales (fauna and flora) bi-annually.

- develop early warning systems for timely decision making;
- develop the baseline data and programme learning; and
- monitor environmental change and impact.

Chapter Five

Policy Conclusion

This policy builds momentum into a process of continuous change, which will continue into the next ten years. It seeks to increase organisational understanding, alignment and commitment towards the new direction and enable Department of Forestry to move at an appropriate pace of change. At the same time it provides sufficient flexibility so that the department can continue to challenge and extend the boundaries for innovation and improvement.

This policy places emphasis on civil society and private sector involvement in forest resource management. It underpins partnership and adequate collaboration with related sectors for synergy. The policy is formulated within a national policy framework underscoring macro economic programmes. The challenge is the local government's decentralization process; demand driven "bottom-up approach" and organisational change.

The policy is emphatic about Department of Forestry's position and direction. However, it recognises that the degree and rate of change will depend upon the operating environment and the capabilities that exist in different parts of the organisation. For an effective change, it must from the traditional approach, to enable it to deal with the operating environment in order to achieve its organisational objectives.

The policy is all embracing for efficiency and effectiveness, requiring a multi-disciplinary approach, calling for a multi-sectoral cooperation. The policy advocates for technologies that are based on proven scientific principles, and is impact oriented. It is user-friendly and pro-poor while putting people before trees.