

## Kenya Forestry Master Plan – recognition of local forest users

Anna Ruotsalainen

### Abstract

The human population of Kenya is rising very fast. This puts a great strain on natural resources. Forests and trees outside the forest are involved in this development, as they produce fuelwood, raw materials, and many other products for local and national needs. They also have important environmental functions, for example in biodiversity conservation, protection of soil and water supplies, and carbon sequestration.

The past management of harvesting forest resources has been erratic and poorly controlled in Kenya. No allowable cuts have been established and rotational and sustainable yield have not been in place. This has resulted in exploitation, harvesting and opening of large areas that are now devoid of commercially important trees. Social and economic considerations, for example the realisation of the fact that the traditional centralised state-led forest management organisations, as principal management models have not been successful anywhere in the world, have a powerful impact on forest management. Kenya is now focusing on replacing those organisations with economically more efficient, decentralised institutions (Kenya Forestry Master Plan 1994b).

The Kenya Forestry Master Plan (KFMP) notes that farm forestry has been very successful already in increasing the growing stock of trees and in the production of wood, and it proposes to close the country's supply-and-demand gap by encouraging the farmers to grow still more trees. This will directly benefit the economy of rural households.

This paper highlights the parts of the Forestry Master Plan that have a direct impact on, or are indirectly dealing with, local people and communities in the rural parts of Kenya. Looking at the KFMP it is obvious that Kenya has realised the potential of its rural areas to participate in sustainable management of natural resources. The emphasis is on local people and their capacity to provide knowledge, labour, skills etc. as a part of managing the forests in a better way.

### The Kenya Forestry Master Plan

The first official forest *policy/plan/program* in Kenya was published in 1957 and was updated in 1968. After that there was a long phase when no modifications or adjustments were needed in the forest policy inherited from the colonial time. A new program became necessary along new, important subjects. These include different international agreements, for example Convention on Biodiversity, multipurpose use of forests, social and farm forestry, commercial, social and environmental viewpoint in forest management, the importance of trees as a fuelwood, rationalisation of forest industry, and the importance of woody vegetation in the arid and semiarid areas.

The Kenya Forestry Master Plan project was organised in 1991. Its goal was to produce a Master Plan, strengthen the Forest Department's planning capacity and concern itself with both national and district planning. The KFMP provides the basic information necessary for the

management of the forestry sector in Kenya. It has outlined the various scenarios and projections as well, thus predicting the future of the sector. However, according to the Forestry Country Study made by FAO (2003a), since KFMP completion major changes in forest structure would require its revision and updating. The KFMP is presented as an updated forest policy, which is the end result of a review process led by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Kenya... 1994a).

The protection of the forests is justified based on their significant potential in economic development. The forest policy, as mentioned in the KFMP, aims at giving special attention to the farm forestry, including diversification of agriculture by planting trees. It aims at improving water management, higher soil production and increased income in the rural area, and easing the pressure on indigenous forests.

The people living near or inside the forest who endanger the future existence of the forests constitute a complex socio-economic question in the KFMP. What is important from the viewpoint of local forest users is the aim of enhancing the role of the forest sector in socio-economic development, especially in the rural areas, and increasing the role of forestry in economic development. Other objectives of KFMP include more equal distribution of employment and an increase in the earnings of the rural poor (Kenya... 1994b).

Partnerships play an important role in forestry development, especially from the viewpoint of rural development and participation of local people. Nowadays partnerships can be seen as the overall focus in forestry everywhere. For example, FAO Forestry Department supports and promotes the introduction and consolidation of participatory forestry processes at all institutional levels. Greater stakeholder ownership in national forest programme processes, thus taking into account the needs of civil society, is expected to facilitate the successful implementation of forest policies (FAO 2003b).

In forest management the KFMP tries to allocate proper tasks for each partner, putting a high premium on people who are directly dealing with trees and forests. The KFMP notes that the Forest Department acts as a central authority but the government should distribute the responsibility in forest management (production and protection) also to private and public enterprises, tree farmers and communities.

### **The local forest users**

There are about three million people living within 5 km of a forest (see Table 1). Nearly half of them are in the more fertile parts of central Kenya, where population density is high (Kenya... 1994a).

People living inside the forest are squatters who reside in the forest reserves without the permission of the Forest Department. Nevertheless, there is a clear distinction between people who have traditionally lived in the forests and people who have recently moved there in search for land for cultivation. Traditional hunter-gatherer

groups are in many cases overlooked because it is thought that their lifestyle is incompatible with 'proper' forest management.

Forest-adjacent people spent a lot of time collecting fuelwood (dead and live, often exceed licences) and timber, carving wood, and in charcoal production, sometimes for cash sale. Non-wood forest products are mostly for subsistence, e.g. medicines, honey, wild fruits, vegetables, nuts and tubers, forest animals, and they are collected from areas of natural forest (Kenya... 1994a).

Forestland supports both habitation and agricultural production. Cultivation takes place on a small scale as creeping encroachment, and on large-scale as clearance both at the forest edges and inside the forests (Figure 1). It is estimated that encroachment for cultivation occurs on nearly a third of the gazetted forests.

A small number of forests contain a permanent population, while others are temporarily or seasonally inhabited by the surrounding people. Forests hold cultural and religious values to these people and the utilisation trends vary from low-level subsistence use to mixed subsistence and high-level commercial use.

### **Decision-making in forest management**

The main decision-making body in the management of forests in Kenya is the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (FAO 2003a). The Forest Department under the supervision of the Ministry encloses a Forest Extension-unit, which guides the local extension officers working in the divisions. Other important bodies are the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), Kenya Wildlife Services, private landowners, the wood processing industry and the Office of President.

The Forest Department has made efforts to build its capacity to manage the forest resources. It has, among others, provided working tools for plantation establishment and even involved the local communities in the maintenance of young plantations (FAO 2003a). The department also cooperates with other government departments through various Memorandums of Understand-

Table 1. Estimated rural population within 5 km of forest boundaries

Forest zones	Number of people	Number of households
Dry forest	400 000	70 000
Coastal forests, exc. Mangroves	60 000	10 000
Montane forests	1 340 000	250 000
Western rainforests	1 100 000	200 000
Total	2 900 000	530 000

Source: Kenya Forestry Master Plan 1994a. Based on 1989 district population estimates, 5 km forest boundary buffer.

ing (MoU), mainly Agriculture Department, Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Kenya Forestry Research Institute (KEFRI), National Environment Secretariat (NES) and Country Councils. The Forest Department also has a Farm Forestry Division whose main thrust is to generate training and awareness materials (FAO 2003).

The authorities of the Forest Department are, according to the KFMP, expanded so that they do not just cover farmers who grow trees but also the communities that are interested in management of indigenous forests. They should also cover individuals and enterprises in the private sector involved in middle or large-scale wood industry. The KFMP also puts emphasis on improved forest education in schools, and on awareness raising on forest protection and management among the citizens.

The Forest Department's frailty lies mainly in the lack of capacity to protect and manage the natural and plantation forests in the districts (FAO 2003). The Forest Department has a Forest Extension unit, which guides the local forest extensionists covering all the divisions in the country. Extension has an important role, especially from the viewpoint of local communities involved in the management of forests. It promotes active involvement and the proper practice of forestry by different development partners, and assists them in tree and forest management, utilisation and conservation (Kenya... 1994a).

### **Policy on land management for production and conservation**

The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is the main co-ordinating body for rural development policies and strategies. Other stakeholders include NGOs, development partners, the private sector and local farmers (Jo-

hannesburg 2002a). The policy states that it is possible for the people who live inside or adjacent to forest areas to practice their traditional livelihoods and forest-related cultural values and religious ceremonies, and they are respected as long as they are not in conflict with national development principles (sustainable use of natural resources).

Special attention is given in the KFMP to promoting women's participation in forest management, education of skilled labour, forest protection and farm forestry financing, for example with the help of links between women groups and extension work. Women should be supported in different forest industry fields and in the informal economy, and as key operators in innovative forest management development of rural areas. Women are supported in education, employment and given support by the government together with NGOs (Kenya... 1994b).

The forestry sector's primary contribution to the basic needs of the people of Kenya is to ensure a sustained production of firewood and charcoal. Other priority forest products are construction wood and various paper products, and numerous non-wood forest products. Subsistence needs, household energy consumption, protection and fodder, are in the primary position in the forest policy although they cover for the biggest part the informal sector and the government strives to promote all forms of farm forestry. (Kenya... 1994b)

Management and use of indigenous forests, woodlands and bushlands is carried out by the offices approved by the Government. The policy proposes innovative forest management, including the models that reinforce the protective and sustainable use of reserves by local people. Where possible, the areas are conserved and the participation of local



Figure 1. Clearance of indigenous forests and bushland for terraces and agriculture decreases the forested area in the Taita Hills (P. Pellikka).

communities in achieving of products and services for subsistence needs at local level is allowed (Kenya... 1994b).

### **Future prospects**

The population of Kenya is estimated to be 52 million in the year 2020. This must be considered in the future plans. The need for bioenergy will increase from 20.1 million cubic metres of fuelwood in 1995 to 40.1 million in 2020 (Kenya... 1994a). On current trends, the indigenous forests will decrease from 1.17 million hectares in 1995 to 0.93 million in 2020, and the state's forest plantations from 164 000 hectares to 79 000 (Kenya... 1994a). This is scenario will have notable social, environmental and economic consequences.

The use of fuelwood in cooking and heating in rural and urban areas has an important role in wood consumption. In 1995 71% of consumed energy came from wood. Development and promotion of energy-efficient equipment is therefore very important.

It has been noted that woody biomass outside the gazetted forests is increasing heavily. An important viewpoint is that once farmers get a

secure ownership on their land they start to plant trees as part of agroforestry and woodlot utilisation. Farmers are clearly a powerful partner in the forest management development.

Non-governmental organisations present the rights of the rural people. They are truly an important link between different partners, including other NGOs and the government, dealing with rural development. NGOs mobilise and organise people, they work together with them to develop skills and improve capacity building. NGOs also take part in participation and actions based research and forest extension, and have access to natural resources. They participate directly in forest resources' conservation, management and planning.

### **Conclusion**

According to the Kenya Forestry Master Plan the emphasis is put on increased participation of rural people, especially on women and the private sector. Timber and fuelwood production on plantations and farms have an important role as well. Partnerships are very important in forest management and in the KFMP they are promoted as a fundamental strategy. There is a need to enclose all the willing partners in the

development, and each development partner must be given an appropriate role (Kenya... 1994b).

Government's Forest Department has to develop co-operation between farmers, rural communities and private industrial enterprises that have an interest in developing and managing the forest and other wood products more efficiently. Protection that allows sustainable exploitation requires participation of the local people and the farmers must also be involved in the extension work. There is demand for well-educated people in administration and in management. The citizens must be aware of new trends in forest protection and management, and especially of means used to solve problems in forest management today. Forest extension on tree growing activities should be directed to farmers and communities interested on protection and management in indigenous forests.

Capacity of the forest, sustainable yields, accessibility, existing forest condition, and recovery after over-exploitation should be plotted. Management objectives, e.g. wood production, multipurpose management, ecotourism, strict preservation, and planning the management strategies are all important parts of sustainable for-

estry development. Policy and institutional changes must be considered as well.

Forest industry, especially small-scale, should be developed among the government's general policy concerning industry because it influences the rural economy. The means for this are intensified forest management that fits into the government's general industrialisation and employment policy, and decentralised and small-scale industrial sectors.

According to the KFMP, fundamental issues are to be addressed if Kenya is to continue enjoying benefits that forests provide. An important question is how are forest dwellers, forest-adjacent households, commercial producers, users of forest products, ecotourism and the global community interrelated in forest management? Recognition of beneficiaries and their roles in forest management and conservation, control of excisions, regulation and deregulation, education and training, extension and public awareness, resource inventory and assessment, development of sustainable systems and better technologies, and market development especially for non-wood forest products, are issues to be considered.

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