

# QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMMES

## Executive Summary

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**LTS International** is an independent specialist consultancy company based in Scotland. We provide management, facilitation, evaluation and research services to the international forest sector, with expertise in many aspects of sustainable forest management, social forestry, institutional strengthening, policy analysis, and participatory resource management. LTS consultants are working to guide and support the change processes within and around the forest sector that will make improving management possible.

# Executive Summary

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## I. Background

In many countries sustainable forest management (SFM) is associated with improved livelihood opportunities and building good governance, and thereby a precondition for eradicating poverty. Emerging consensus demonstrates that a national forest programme (NFPs), expressed in a sector-wide framework of agreed principles, standards and actions, is one vehicle for improving forest management and co-ordinating support. The reforming of sector policies and institutions within the 'NFP framework' appears to represent a new chapter of forest sector development that has wider implications for national development strategies and poverty reduction agenda's.

The NFP as a 'process' embraces a cycle of policy-making, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review. The NFP process is further characterised by open, transparent and inclusive planning, consultation, negotiation, communication and educational processes. The harmonisation of these inter-related technical and political processes, compulsory to support, drive and sustain sectoral reform under a shared vision of widespread aims and interests demonstrates the added value of the 'NFP approach'.

This report responds to a request from African Academy of Sciences (AAS) for a qualitative study by external evaluators<sup>1</sup> to inform a wider comparative understanding of national progress in the adoption of the 'NFP approach'. The report offers opportunities to establish an information flow focused on national processes and crosscutting issues beyond conventional data collection. The exercise conducted within an African context demonstrates an early attempt to devise and test new methodological tools which illustrate progress in complying with international standards and best practice of institutionalising a 'credible' NFP.

## II. Approach to the Qualitative Assessment

The short-time frame of the study and insufficient practice to date of evaluating an NFP process obliged evaluators to take a snapshot, impressionistic view of NFP progress. A logical hierarchy (goal and purpose) was constructed to assist with managing the difficulties of country specificities.

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<sup>1</sup> The International Expert Meeting (GoJ, 2001) on Monitoring, Assessment and Reporting had suggested that an "independent auditing of country implementation of Inter-governmental Panel on Forests may be a useful tool to demonstrate credibility."

- NFP Goal: To create a conducive policy, legislative and institutional environment that enables forest utilisation, management, protection and conservation practices that address local needs, national priorities and international principles.
- NFP Purpose: To negotiate, re-examine and design new roles, rights and responsibilities through multi-sectoral planning and consultation processes that foster conducive relationships amongst stakeholder groups.

The assessment is guided by an 'Evaluation Framework' that packages emerging lessons and experiences of NFP processes into an elaborated set of criteria and indicators. This has enabled rational comparison of progress in the four participating countries - Ghana, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia - while ensuring an innovative, flexible, and adaptive approach. The Evaluation Framework focuses on the processes and mechanisms during the formulation and to lesser extent implementation phases of the NFP under three levels of assessment: (i) design and implementation arrangements, (ii) procedural requirements, and (iii) outputs.<sup>2</sup>

The synthesis of qualitative information in the report is a consolidation of document reviews and discussions with numerous stakeholder and interest groups in each country's natural resource sector. The 'quick and dirty' reconnaissance approach to country activity rather than a 'in-depth' consultation exercise has required only general remarks to be expressed at this stage of appraisal. This summary represents the overall findings, analysis and conclusions, as presented under the structure of the Evaluation Framework.

### **III. Design and implementation arrangements**

Structural arrangements in place to get the NFP up and running may be defined as a well-positioned cohesive system of operating structures that make the best use of their resources to attain widespread political commitment. It appears that this is achieved by linking horizontal and vertical planning, consultative, and learning processes with various policy communities and interest groups in national and local level forums. Country experience suggests that:

- A broadly represented 'NFP Steering Group' and strong 'NFP Co-ordination Unit', both positioned within a well designed and technically capable ministry are appropriate locations for institutionalising the NFP process (as

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to recognise that this three-tiered framework is a first attempt, drawing from little experience evaluation on NFP processes and is therefore a working document periodically redrafted in accordance with greater appreciation of the requirements that will make the process an effective agent of change.

seen in Tanzania). This is promulgated by the division in regulatory and management functions emerging with the replacement of civil service departments by semi-autonomous organisations in each of the countries.

- An NFP Co-ordination Unit's effectiveness relies on its accessibility to key policy-makers, secure financial resources, positive inter-departmental relations and an appropriate mix of leaders, technical advisors and political advocates. As the nucleus driving and sustaining change it is essential to continuously support these operating structures to mobilise interest from outside traditional forestry circles (as being seen in Tanzania and Uganda) and lesser extent elsewhere.
- A 'National Stakeholder Forum' is an appropriate consultative body to guide sectoral priorities and NFP progress. The role of the forum, particularly in absence of a supportive donor contingency, as a platform for consensus and policy building between national interests and local needs, is essential to keep the process country driven in nature. Although discussions are surfacing (as seen in Ghana and Zambia) there is limited progress to date with the establishment of these forums (with the exception of Uganda's very successful National Consultative Forum).
- 'NFP Working Groups' (also called Task Forces) in several cases are more detrimental than productive to the planning process. Although a limited analysis of group discussion was undertaken, attendance records and attitudes amongst participants illustrate the concept of 'working' in a 'group' setting may be misconstrued. In those cases where groups performed as expected, limited vested personal interest, strong leadership and sound technical capacity were identified as success factors to delivering transparent results.
- Development partners are learning how to best support sector-wide reform processes that rely on strict set of NFP principles (Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda). Instituting a strong 'NFP Donor Support Contingency' based on conducive relationships between host governments, sub-contracted consultancy firms and bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies are presently inadequate (in all countries). Though improvements at the project activity level and in some cases within larger reform programmes are visible, co-ordination of financial and technical support is insufficient. It appears that the design of interventions based on process-oriented approaches that avoid over-prescription and that allow for flexibility in manoeuvring through complex policy processes of dialogue, negotiation and stakeholder buy-in are critical for successful change.

- 'Honest brokers' or 'NFP Consultancy Sub-Contractors', administering the procurement of goods and services for bi-lateral donors, play a dual role in managing the political agendas of their clients (i.e., bi-lateral agency) and beneficiaries (host government). They assume a critical role in sustaining necessary momentum for the reform process (in all countries) to meet wider objectives and interests of both parties. It is therefore essential for them to remain as unbiased as possible, distanced from internal donor politics, institutionalised within reform processes, and able to confidentially assure host governments that they are acting in their best interest.
- An 'African Regional Forest Policy Forum' to support national learning can add value to sharing the realities experienced during NFP processes. This will enable countries to strengthen their co-ordination amongst key areas of expertise, build networks and relationships amongst institutions, and enhance communication needed to foster coherent policy positions within international fora on several technical matters (i.e., financing forestry, restructuring institutions, cross-sectoral approaches, etc.).

#### **IV. Procedural Requirements**

The NFP approach can informally be characterised by two sets of inter-related Procedural Requirements. These include (i) *Working Process Principles* (i.e., political commitment, national ownership, participatory and inter-sectoral approaches, etc.). These agreed principles, resulting from international deliberations under the Inter-governmental Panel on Forests are cross-cutting in their aim to guide and inform a set of (ii) *Planning, Consultative and Reform initiatives* (i.e., forest sector assessment; policy, legal and institutional processes, financing/investment strategies, etc.). These requirements are explored in more detail, and mark the foundation for the breadth of discussion in the main report.

##### **➤ Working Process Principles**

For the purposes of this study five key areas are under this first category of 'Working Process Principles' within NFP procedural requirements. 'Working', as labelled for the purposes of this exercise, stems from the notion that the present level of understanding and agreement on these 'principles' is largely appreciated at conceptual rather than operational levels. These five principles are an interpretation of international dialogue and may need to undergo further refinement. The 'Principles' are labelled as 'Process' due to their role in overcoming key bottlenecks of previous sector wide policy processes and planning frameworks.

### **(i) Political willingness and individual commitment**

Commitment and willingness to support NFP processes from formulation through to implementation is explicitly measured through the widespread adoption of policy statements in each of the four countries. A broad contingency of willing and committed individuals at all levels of the civil service sector to sustain positive change is less visible according to the studies benchmarks. Evidence demonstrates that:

- The current stalled enactment and implementation of legislative prescriptions (i.e., Ghana and Zambia) and overwhelming resistance to institutional reforms (in all countries) reflect the diverging levels of willingness amongst 'technocrats' in line Ministries, central forest departments, and political elite's and forest officers in local government.
- The current levels of explicit financial support allocated by ministries of finance and key national frameworks (i.e., Poverty Reduction Strategies) demonstrate the nearly absent commitment prioritised to the forest sector and NFP (with the exception of limited progress in Uganda).
- Management practises advocated at decentralised levels, an overemphasis on revenue collection compared to district management planning, are indicative measures of the limited commitment to the NFP process at the implementation level (in all countries).

### **(ii) Ownership and country driven**

The success of the NFP will depend on a high degree of ministerial leadership, co-ordination, ownership and responsibility, underlined by political commitment through all stages of the country-driven process. In practice, the achievement of country driven NFP processes is severely limited for each of the countries for several reasons. It is evident that:

- Forestry as a poorly-valued sector gaining little priority from financial ministries, usually housed in the smallest and least resourced government institutions and displaying minimal internal technical planning capacity make external dependency on secure flows of finance an overriding hurdle to country driven approaches (in all countries). To make any progress in overcoming this dependency will be based upon the sector ability to attract and sustain multiple channels of finance.
- An overwhelming presence of donors in policy-making and decision-making circles has negatively impacted the potentials of achieving national consensus and sufficient confidence to take forward policy positions and drive the reform process (in all countries). The establishment of National Advisory Council's, restricted to national partners to better enable lead

institutions to strengthen country negotiating position should be further explored (in Ghana, Tanzania and Zambia).

- The positioning of operating structures in appropriate locations to drive the process is critical for instilling country ownership. The limited technical capacity and poor institutional design within civil service structures (Ghana, Uganda and Zambia), may require temporary locations for co-ordination units outside the conventional ministry setting (as done in Uganda).
- At the same time, NFPs can be accredited as nationally driven processes in that their formulation complements and implementation hinges upon larger country-led government policies, plans and processes - public sector reforms, local government reform, and poverty reduction strategies (in all countries).

### **(iii) Participatory, inclusive and transparent processes**

Participatory, inclusive and transparent efforts at all stages of the policy cycle preside through traditional formal and informal working forums (at both national and district levels). These structures and processes vary in their ability to encourage and maintain stakeholder involvement. Experience suggests that:

- National and district processes are often perceived by staff in central and decentralised levels of government as 'paying lip service' and 'window dressing' to attract funds from external sources (in all countries). Consequently, dialogue and participation amongst civil servants has been hindered by competition for finances amongst closely related sectors, lack of technical command of subject areas, and financially related motivations of participants (in all countries).
- The short-time frame and inadequate resources given to inducing participation at local levels during formulation is a constraining factor for sustaining broader interest, yet sufficient in gaining perspective and insight into local needs (Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia). For instance, one or two workshops at the district level over the course of formulating an NFP [roughly two to four years in each country] are insufficient means to raise proper awareness, sensitise technicians on new approaches, or gain widespread commitment from key local political actors (viewed in Tanzania).
- Village level participatory initiatives are less common. Comprehensive studies that capture 'voices from the field' are however significant measures for synthesising important views regarding livelihood needs, documenting ongoing initiatives and identifying potential partners for

future programmes and plans (as done in Uganda and to a lesser extent Ghana and Tanzania).

- Private sector and civil society participation in dialogue is increasingly open and transparent, fostering an attitudinal shift amongst decision-makers in the civil service (in all countries). The level and scope of involvement amongst these private and civil interest groups appears to be dependent upon the mix of individuals and personalities involved, perceived political significance by government, role of advocacy groups in society and availability of secure funding to maintain processes and structures.
- The encouragement and maintenance of public participation during policy development is still very low; and may benefit from establishing a Public Participation and Information Section within forest departments to facilitate public involvement in legislative and policy processes.
- The potentials of establishing new horizontal and vertical mechanisms should be further explored to enhance co-ordination and strengthen local level ownership. This may include Regional Working Groups under a National Stakeholder Forum that are linked to Local Level Working Groups and networks in specialised areas (i.e., PFM, forest management planning, etc.)

#### **(iv) Communication and awareness raising**

While the process for change may be given support at the political level, there are still inadequacies in communications and educational activities to create the necessary level of awareness to influence attitudes, perceptions and behaviours. It is clear that:

- Many leading stakeholders still only have a tenuous grasp of the various elements of NFP reforms, and targeted messages reaching the field (to both district governments and local communities), through ad hoc newsletters are insufficient means to raise general awareness of NFP formulation (in all countries).
- 'Societal dialogue' encouraged through workshops and forums needs further backstopping from widespread marketing initiatives that place a new image of forestry in the limelight. Using media programmes with changing themes is a useful tactic to keep people interested in sectoral developments that impact their lives (as done in Uganda). The marketing strategies adopted will stand to benefit from professional communications support.
- An awareness survey, to gauge baseline measures of concern and knowledge about the sector and identify media choices for future use, is a

stepwise initiative (as done in Uganda). Radio is consistently identified as the most appropriate medium for distributing information on political matters and regular monthly internal and external newsletters (Tanzania and Uganda) can play important roles in facilitating information flows and the establishing new information systems (for all countries).

**(v) Cross-sectoral, holistic and iterative approaches**

A thorough analysis of cross-sectoral linkages and a resulting integrated strategy that indicates what must be done (both in the forest sector but also in the other sectors and in national policy) to make forest policy effective is insufficient. It is evident that:

- Sectoral contributions to poverty alleviation generated through NFP activities are critical foundations for a cross-sectoral and holistic approach. Poor linkages within key umbrella frameworks (i.e., Poverty Reduction Strategies and public sector and local government reform programmes) inhibit the sector's case for allocations and prioritisation for implementation in the field (in all countries).
  - The timing of sectoral reforms seems to largely influence the process of mainstreaming NFP activities into other sectors. At this stage, the necessary measures by other sectors and at the macro level to create enabling conditions for improved forestry are not developed or articulated. The potential for strengthening this co-ordination is evident through the emergence of cross-sectoral planning (as done in Uganda).
  - Financing of cross-sectoral approaches appears to rely on sound decentralisation by governments utilising various financing mechanisms (i.e., discretionary grants) that support new service delivery approaches as well as better donor co-ordination of project portfolios. In practice, these requirements are still rarely advocated by local governments or international partners (in all countries)
  - Local level collaborative ventures of many productive sectors (i.e., wildlife, fisheries, agriculture, livestock, etc.) within emerging 'Natural Resource' and 'Development' Committees appear to be pragmatic platforms for stimulating cross-sectoral approaches at the forest estate level (in all countries).
- > An impressive level of adaptive learning, sharing experience, discussing and reflecting on documents, their priorities and programmes (in all countries) has taken place. It is practised and envisioned that iterative assessments and planning will take place under the guise of formulating Medium Term Expenditure Frameworks.

## ➤ Planning, Consultation and Reform Initiatives

The social, environmental and economic values given to forest goods and services influence the visions, policies and strategies formulated. The NFP is an instrument to implement official policy pronouncements. Within the policy cycle, the NFP approach emphasises various interrelated processes necessary to achieve the NFP goal. For the purposes of this exercise, these processes have been categorised as *Planning, Consultative and Reform initiatives*.

### (i) **Forest sector assessment**

Systematic assessments seem to provide a great deal of technical information regarding the rationale for certain policies and the outcomes of policy implementation but results are still inadequately managed or disseminated. It is clear that:

- Information gaps are still present and more importantly, in-depth analysis is still required of previously explored subjects (i.e., cost-benefit-sharing regimes) and those not yet fully appraised (i.e., proper valuation of forest products and services).
- Qualitative assessments, through review of initiatives and 'ground-truthing' at district and village levels, are increasingly being formalised and instituted within forest departments to better understand livelihood needs.
- The design of central databases to manage sector progress reports and findings are critical, but currently lacking in most of the core operating structures.

### (ii) **National policy statements**

Development objectives within policy frameworks addressing inter-sectoral and cross-sectoral issues, have been clearly articulated under new policy statements in each of the countries<sup>3</sup>. As importantly:

- 'Pluralistic' management and delivery systems targeted towards various beneficiaries have replaced single-use practices under the sole responsibility of poorly equipped civil service organisations.

### (iii) **Enabling legal frameworks**

A shift from restrictive command and control legislation towards education, information and financial incentive-based frameworks are complex legalities to grasp amongst most stakeholder and interest groups. It was evident that:

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<sup>3</sup> Newly revised and adopted policy frameworks have been explicitly endorsed in Ghana (1994), Tanzania (1998), Zambia (1998) and Uganda (2001).

- Sector wide legal frameworks are not fully enacted by Parliament in any of the countries, although encouraging signs persist in Tanzania and Uganda, as well as regulatory revisions in Ghana.
- In several cases there is limited understanding, experience and knowledge amongst both legal drafters and forest officials of what regulations by are required to support new forest laws (in all countries). An interdisciplinary team of trained and experienced legal specialists can greatly benefit the process of revising and formulating new statutes.
- The avoidance and removal of contradictions and legislative loopholes to enable seamless implementation of new policy objectives is problematic in encouraging sufficient stakeholder buy-in. This is clearly evident regarding co-management arrangements between governments, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and communities at district and village levels (in all countries).

#### **(iv) Redesigning the institutional framework**

Systematic qualitative and quantitative assessments in each country identified the need for redefining the roles, entering into partnerships and strengthening the capacity of lead institutions in the forest sector, as means to improve co-ordination and performance. It is revealed that:

- Inter-related processes of reforming and enhancing the roles five sets of stakeholder groups: central and local government, private sector, local communities and NGOs, are necessary for a sustained reorientation of institutional actors in the forest sector. At this stage, institutions responsible for leading reforms have poorly articulated how this may take place in a step-wise manner.
- The institutional incentives and mutual gains of expanded partnership are in many cases clear. New approaches to service delivery are encouraging, including the use of community workers, building capacity for contracted specialist support, advising on business development, financing and marketing (as being piloted in Uganda and Tanzania). A 'Forest Partnership Framework'<sup>4</sup>, similar to those found in health sectors, may be a beneficial instrument to guide the formation of new partnerships, enhance existing efforts, and evaluate the progress of developing partnerships.

#### **(v) Managing organisational change**

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<sup>4</sup> This idea of a Partnership Framework is differentiated from Forest Partnership Agreements being piloted between government and donor agencies in other countries.

A number of divestiture options including agentisation, decentralisation and privatisation are now being considered, planned or instituted with limited success<sup>5</sup>. Evidence demonstrated that:

- Clearly communicated option scenarios for the future overall institutional design lack in number, derive from non-transparent processes, and provide insufficient analysis (i.e., particularly in terms of comparative financial assessments) for proper decision-making on ways forward (as seen in Ghana and Uganda). A Restructuring Study appears to be essential from the inception of the institutional reform process, yet lacking in all countries. It is envisioned that this study can explore various issues and options for the redesign of the forest departments into a client based, self sufficient, profit making, corporate organisation that delivers quality services efficiently. The outputs can inform a final Restructuring Plan to guide implementation.
- Support for 'meritocratic' systems based on performance indicators is weak amongst staff at central and decentralised levels of the civil service (in all countries). Likewise, visionary and motivated leaders managing change from within higher tiers of government are poorly represented (as seen in Ghana). Overwhelming resistance and lack of motivation (in all countries) is due to job insecurity, lack of confidence in fulfilling new roles, inadequate incentive and reward systems, and consistent track records of unpredictable redundancy. Besides a voluntary redundancy programme, it is equally evident that the new forest administrative structures gain independence and freedom to manage their own human resource policies.
- Although a long-term process (5-10 years) is necessary to transform civil servants into corporate-minded entrepreneurs, it appears that current efforts are yet to impact working cultures (Ghana is the only country to advance at this level of assessment). Human resource development is a crucial aspect requiring urgent attention in developing an entrepreneurial culture and instilling a conservation ethic (for all countries). Areas of concern entail addressing imbalances of staffing patterns, increasing job specialisation, and improving human resource management.
- Managing knowledge in organisations has led to a variety of new challenges and is facing bureaucratic resistance (in Ghana). New information management systems can act as an indirect entry into changing working cultures and overcoming institutional weaknesses. A

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<sup>5</sup> Each participating country is now in the process of restructuring their respective departments into semi-autonomous 'commissions' or 'authorities'. Ghana has reached implementation (although stalled), Uganda is in advanced phases of planning (final deliberations), Zambia has started but formally stalled, and Tanzania has this as priority NFP strategy.

sector 'Information Management Strategy' aimed at linking sector policy with people, outputs and performance through enabling applications that facilitate communication, feedback and information flows and support the attainment of sector and business objectives should be considered (as seen in Ghana).

**(vi) Decentralisation and partnership**

Decentralised governance in districts will often require local institutions to evolve into brokers of relationships between producer-groups and privatised service providers. Unfortunately, this has been limited for several reasons. Assessments revealed that:

- Key several challenge areas for NFP implementation at district level (in all countries) include: the scarce integration of national forestry frameworks into district development planning; inter-district conflicts revolving around cross-boundary forest reserves; intra-district conflicts between related natural resource sub-sectors (i.e., wildlife); inadequate structures for districts to participate in the planning process; and, dual accountability of District Forest Officers to line ministry's and district councils.
- Concentrated efforts to strengthen and restructure institutions at ministerial and headquarter levels are overshadowing critically needed capacity building efforts in the field. This has severely undermined NFP objectives in the near and medium-term as well as hampered the possibilities for widespread ownership and commitment at implementation levels (Ghana, Uganda and Zambia, not yet Tanzania). Priority must be given to building capacity in district and local government personnel (i.e., planning and implementation skills amongst sufficient numbers of staff) and to reorient staff to promote the understanding and appreciation of communities as owners and decision-makers.
- New co-management arrangements between government authorities and local communities are encouraging signs of decentralised governance being promoted (in all countries). At this stage, innovative approaches are being piloted on a very small scale nationally within forest and wildlife sectors (more widespread in Tanzania). Approaches are yet to be fully appreciated and integrated within the institutional cultures and management systems of lead organisations. Moreover, management arrangements suffer from a lack of benefit-sharing regimes and enabling incentive frameworks required for proper devolution of rights and responsibilities, and inadequate local learning platforms that can share experience and unite a fragmented and disjointed network of participants and practitioners.

- The allocation of forest management responsibility given between central, local government and communities, especially with regard to forest revenues, lies at the heart of the NFPs impact and its integration of decentralisation policies. Prevailing supportive (and non-supportive) conditions necessary to move from problem-driven to vision-driven solutions need further assessment in terms of cross-sectoral partnerships amongst producers, users, service providers and enabling agencies.

#### **(vii) Financing mechanisms**

Though NFPs provide a vision and framework for co-ordinated support directed by cohesive policy statements, there is no evidence as of yet that they provide an implementation framework that can necessarily attract and utilise funding more efficiently. Observations revealed that:

- All countries have made indicative costs of NFP implementation for the first three to five years. It is evident that a Sector Investment Programme for the NFP, which takes into account of poverty strategies, public sector and local government reforms and costs out the NFP sub-programmes and actions against the resource parameters of Medium Term Expenditure Framework's are needed in place of gap analyses.
- Financing is mainly being sought through domestic public resources, with a large emphasis presently placed on identifying ways to generate public resources through improved revenue collection and pricing systems that capture a fair share of the resource rent.
- Positive efforts are being instituted to create a supportive climate for private sector investment. This is being prioritised through the removal of market distortions, review of the Investment Code and tax regulations, review of contracts for land concessions, marketing of wood product information, establishment of Forestry Funds, and development of more transparent and accountable systems of administration and regulation.
- The Global Environment Facility (GEF) is an important source of funding and mobilisation of political support (as seen in Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania). At a micro-level the general awareness and understanding of GEF opportunities and procedural modalities is insufficient amongst most professionals.
- A Financing Study (as conducted in Tanzania) analysing the frame of conditions for sectoral development. This advocated initiative may include both sectoral and macro-economic policies, which regulate and influence the profitability/ability for self-financing of the sector).

#### **(viii) Sector-wide approaches (SWAps)**

The multitude of administrative rules and requirements, especially the steps in project cycle management, reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and a constant in-flow of various donor review missions place heavy burdens on forestry staff<sup>6</sup>. Experience to date revealed that:

- Governments are sending signals of interest and commitment at executive levels (Tanzania and Uganda), with the presumption and acceptance that an approach characterising SWAPs will not become effectively operational for several years (at least ten). Rhetoric by governments and development partners elsewhere is limited (Ghana and Zambia).
- A common Programme of Work between donors, accompanied by a joint Calendar of Activities which provides a timetable for joint annual reviews and other critical steps, is a challenge for donors. There is a much greater willingness among donors to support joint reporting and review missions than to pool funds and monitoring of activities (Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda).

#### **(ix) Capacity building**

Forest sector change that entails decentralisation and partnership, a new role and capacity for forest departments, linkages with the private sector, new technologies and financial sustainability require various measures of improving capacities. The numerous activities involved made this an overwhelming level of evaluation that was not realised during the exercise.

#### **(x) Monitoring and evaluation**

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) occurs at various levels - from within the sector programme co-ordination units, technical project work plans to the impact analysis of operational field level activities. Findings indicate that:

- The institutional environment and arrangements (roles, responsibilities and modalities) for M&E are improving, but are still insufficient to meet the current demands of assessing NFP performance and impact within a cross-sectoral setting. National criteria and indicators for forest resources and links to poverty reduction frameworks (as seen in Uganda) are greatly needed strategic measures.
- Several information management systems and data sets appear to be critical for a cross-sectoral approach at a sector level of M&E. These include Forest Management information systems, Regional and District Environmental Management information systems, Census Management

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<sup>6</sup> The evaluators were constrained to a quick assessment of donors' perceptions rather than a comprehensive in-depth analysis of functions within current funding mechanisms (i.e., administrative, accounting, auditing, budgeting and planning systems).

information systems, Sector-wide information network. Systems for forest inventory, accounting and financial management are being improved as a priority measure to mitigate current weaknesses in collection, storage, processing and dissemination of accurate and timely data.

- Structures that enable easy reporting in a format conforming to standards of international organisations are beginning to emerge within national criteria and indicator frameworks (i.e., Tanzania). However, fragmented systems of monitoring with special features, and efforts to bring them under one standard, have been inconclusive to date.

#### ➤ **Outputs**

There are various products developed at the end of the formulation phase of an NFP process. This will vary from one country to the next depending on the timing and need of producing such outputs. Whilst, the NFP strategic framework document (the NFP product) is needed, it should be clear that this is not the end result of the process. Products stemming from the NFP process have included the following traits:

- Comprehensive sector reviews and articulated development objectives that address sectoral and cross-sectoral issues have been expressed under new policy statements and forthcoming legislation.
- Practical and realistic measures exist within the NFP framework document, as expressed through a focus on key institutions and targeting the poorest geographical areas and groups. While these are sufficient at the conceptual level in all countries, it is presently too early to judge the uptake of these strategies.
- Systems (simple or complex) for prioritising NFP sub-programmes, strategies, actions and investments, are scarce to date. It is evident that a greater sense of country ownership can be fostered through the establishment of a clearly mapped out priority concerns institutionalised within the NFP framework document and other M&E frameworks.
- The promotion and integration of binding and non-binding international commitments to SFM are explicit throughout NFP outputs. The discussion of integrating national development strategies is implicit, yet still suffers from poorly elaborated measures on co-ordinating and strengthening cross-sectoral linkages.

## **V. NFP adoption**

In the four countries there are several means employed with varying degrees of effectiveness to raise awareness, enhance dialogue, and identify needs and develop a sense of ownership at national and local levels. The NFP framework

being applied in these countries however shows some constraints and weaknesses, including:

- Institutionalising ownership remains difficult due to the limited domestic financial allocations prioritised to the sector;
- Negotiation processes pursuing stakeholder agreement on the redesign of institutional landscapes have not been widely established; and
- Cross-sectoral approaches embedded into sub-programmes, strategies, action plans and budgets of other sector frameworks is lacking.

Despite these shortcomings, considerable improvements are being made with the effective integration of all forest-related actions, including those of the UN Forum on Forests, into a comprehensive policy and legal frameworks. Likewise, NFP approaches are achieving a raised profile and image for the sector, as well as harnessing support from a broader contingency of development partners. Evidently, a wider range of approaches, based on expanded partnerships within and beyond the conventional array of actors, is needed to overcome some of these principle hurdles. Fortunately, the timing of the four NFPs seems appropriate for ambitious change as donor enthusiasm is increasing, larger government reforms are coinciding with decentralised forest governance, and the profile of the sector contribution to alleviating rural poverty becomes more apparent.