

Summary

Forests are among the key natural resources supporting rural livelihoods in developing countries. In the NTFP-PFM project sites in south-western part of Ethiopia, the cash income contribution of forests reaches 100% for some households, while many local industries rely on forest products. While the contribution of the forest sector to the national economy is profound it is often unrecognized and undervalued at policy making levels. This has allowed forest resources to degrade and disappear at an alarming rate; in Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) forest loss is estimated to be 2.35% per annum. One neglected reason for forest loss is the weak policy environment, with government policies favoring other sectors and a lack of suitable forest institutional arrangements.

An effective policy framework is essential to enhance the role forests play. Development of such policies requires a major consultative process which ensures that policies and institutional arrangements are responsive to the changing conditions on the ground and sensitive to the needs of grassroots user communities. Full consultation with all stakeholders is essential for this, and development partners can play a key role in supporting this through their work.

This Briefing Note presents the processes and lessons gained from NTFP-PFM R&D Project's support for participatory forest policy making in SNNPRS. It reports a major step forward in terms of policy development process and policy content. In particular:

- a) a new form of forest ownership, designated as 'community forest', has been recognized,
- b) community rights to use forest products have been clarified, and empowerment of communities in forest management is supported;
- c) an iterative process has been developed, so that there is a fully consultative policy development process, with policy based on the field reality;
- d) this policy review process shows that significant progress can be made where government and field projects of development partners liaise closely; and
- e) it has been shown that policy making should not be an office job of experts alone, but rather requires the active engagement of all stakeholders, from grassroots to experts.

While the new policy is a major progression, policy must evolve all the time. Specific testing of the new policy is needed now, especially with respect to piloting timber harvesting to find out how sustainable forest management using all forest products may help forests become a competitive land use.

Background

Forests, through their products and services, are key resources in supporting rural livelihoods. In Ethiopia millions of rural households and urban residents depend on forests for a major part of their income. In forested regions, such as the south-western part of the country, forests contribute nearly half of total household income, and up to 100 % of the cash income for some households (NTFP, 2004). Forests also contribute to the national economy in many ways. For instance, biomass energy obtained from the forests and woodlands of Ethiopia supplies 78% of total national energy demand, equal to 86.5 M tons of oil equivalent (WBISPP, 2004). This is a major saving of potential foreign exchange spending. Nonetheless, heavy pressure is being put on the forests from different sources. In particular, increasing population pressure in rural areas means forestlands are a key option for absorbing the growing unemployed youth through the provision of agricult-

ural land. The quest for national food security also targets forest areas for agri-business investment. As a result forests in Ethiopia are continually reduced in area and degraded in quality and tree density. At the national scale the estimated deforestation rate exceeds 140,000 ha/yr (FAO, 2010).

Forests are often lost not because of lack of skills or knowledge about how to conserve or manage them sustainably, but due to inappropriate incentives and institutional structures that fail to promote the sustainable management of these resources for the benefit of local communities and the rest of society (McDermott et al., 2007). Hence, reforms, in terms of policies, regulations and institutions to implement and enforce these, are part and parcel of the solutions to address the problem of deforestation and encourage proper forest management and development.

Policies should provide guidance for sound decisions on the development, conservation and sustainable use of forests. Policies must be designed to accommodate and respond to new developments and societal needs, as well as emerging local, regional and global agendas. They should be mechanisms or instruments by which the interaction between natural and human systems is regulated in such a way that both may co-exist, co-benefit and co-evolve. Through proper policies the human benefits from the forests will be optimized and the negative impacts of human misuse - deforestation and degradation, reduced, while sustainable management and conservation can be enhanced to benefit forests and their biodiversity.

This Briefing Note presents the processes, achievements and lessons learnt from a policy development process in SNNPRS. This was supported by the Non-Timber Forest Products – Participatory Forest Management (NTFP-PFM) Research and Development Project funded by the EU, the Netherlands and Norway.

Forest Policy in Ethiopia

The first ever formal national forest policy in Ethiopia was issued in 2007 (FDRE Proclamation No. 542/2007). This is still in force. Before, that policies related to forest resource management were vague, and could only be inferred from various related legal instruments, such as institutional mandates or other documents. The objective of the forest proclamation is stated as 'to meet the forest product demands of the society and increase the contribution of forest resources to the national economy through appropriate management'.

This proclamation is meant to serve as an umbrella form of guidance, on the basis of which regional states will draw up their respective forest proclamations considering local socio-economic and resource realities. This is the result of the decentralized political administration system adopted in Ethiopia since the early 1990s that has given regional states the power of administering their natural resources, including forests, by developing their own policies and institutional arrangements.

SNNPRS: An Overview

SNNPRS is one of the nine regional states of Ethiopia, with a total land area of about 112,000 km². The Region accounts for 10% of the total area of the country. SNNPRS is characterized by its relatively high rainfall and has the second largest area of rain forest in the country. It hosts more than 770,000 ha of high forest, which represents 19% of the total high forests found in the country (WBISPP, 2004).

The forests of the south-western part of the SNNPRS are known to be the area where *Coffea arabica* originated and are the key genetic storehouse for the country and the world. This alone makes the forests of the region of high national and international importance for conservation. The Region is also famous for the large areas of agroforestry which are practiced in farm land.

However, the region is also characterizing by the highest rate of forest clearing with an annual rate of 2.35% (WBISPP, 2004). Rural livelihoods in the region, particularly in the forested south-western zones depend heavily on forest resources. Forests are the foundation of the socio-

cultural fabrics of the people. Hence, developing policies which support sustainable forest management and are community sensitive is essential for sustaining the forest resources, and their cultural, social and economic significance.

The Need for Revising the SNNPRS Forest Policy

SNNPRS is one of the pioneers in developing regional forest policy. The first such policy was enacted in 2004 (Proclamation No.77/2004), well before the 2007 federal policy (Proclamation No. 524/2007). However, a number of criticisms had been raised about the 2004 proclamation which led the regional government to consider revising it. Key concerns were the failure to recognize communities' rights over forest and the lack of acknowledgement of community forests, as well as the absence of regulations and guidelines to guide the application of the proclamation. In addition this proclamation had to be revised in the light of the federal forest proclamation enacted in 2007, while regional staff felt it needed to embrace new regional, national and global developments in forest management and governance, especially participatory forest management (PFM). Having recognized this, and discussed the situation with the NTFP-PFM Project, who agreed to support a policy review process, a taskforce team was set up by the regional authorities.

Process Followed

The SNNPRS forest proclamation revision process followed the general steps indicated in Figure 1 below. These steps involved:

- A. *Preparation* – establishing a multi-disciplinary government team and assessing the task and requirements.
- B. *Developing Methods* - training the team on technical aspects required to develop a policy, particularly with respect to stakeholders' engagement and consultation. This included organizing the first proclamation development planning workshop for the multi-disciplinary team with financial support and some technical backstopping from the NTFP-PFM project staff. The workshop identified a series of steps to be followed and formulated an action plan. A follow up planning workshop was also held where further training on policy consultation skills was given and a more detailed action plan and toolbox of methods for the formulation of the policy was refined and elaborated.
- C. *Field Consultation* - The team then conducted extensive stakeholder consultation work involving 87 government representatives and 170 local community representatives in eight zones, 10 woredas and 34 kebeles of the region. This involved the collection of information from a range of stakeholders involved with forest management, such as farmers, forest users, Development Agents (D.A.), government officials, and private sector actors. After gathering the information and identifying policy gaps and assessing recommendations from the stakeholders the team produced a draft policy.

- D. *Multi-Stakeholder Workshop* – A multi-stakeholder workshop was then held to present a review of the existing policy and propose recommendations for the revision of the policy. In addition, a first draft version of the proclamation was presented to that workshop for comment and enrichment. The workshop was held in Hawassa, and attended by a total 84 individuals, including a full range of stakeholders.
- E. *Policy Drafting* – The policy was reviewed after the workshop and a revised version produced for final consideration in government and with stakeholders.
- F. *Legal Compatibility* –The final policy had to be reviewed for legal correctness and compatibility with other regional legislation before it could be sent for formal approval.
- G. *Final Stakeholder Review Forum* – A final multi-stakeholder forum was held to present the final version of the Proclamation to the stakeholders for their final comment.
- H. *Regional Cabinet and Council* – Review and approval by the Regional Cabinet and then by the Regional Council formally and legally approved the new Proclamation
- I. *Publication* - The Proclamation was formally published by the government. The NTFP-PFM project and the follow-on projects are producing additional copies for local circulation along with the Regulations and Guidelines. These are being used to raise awareness amongst the forest fringe communities of the new legislation.

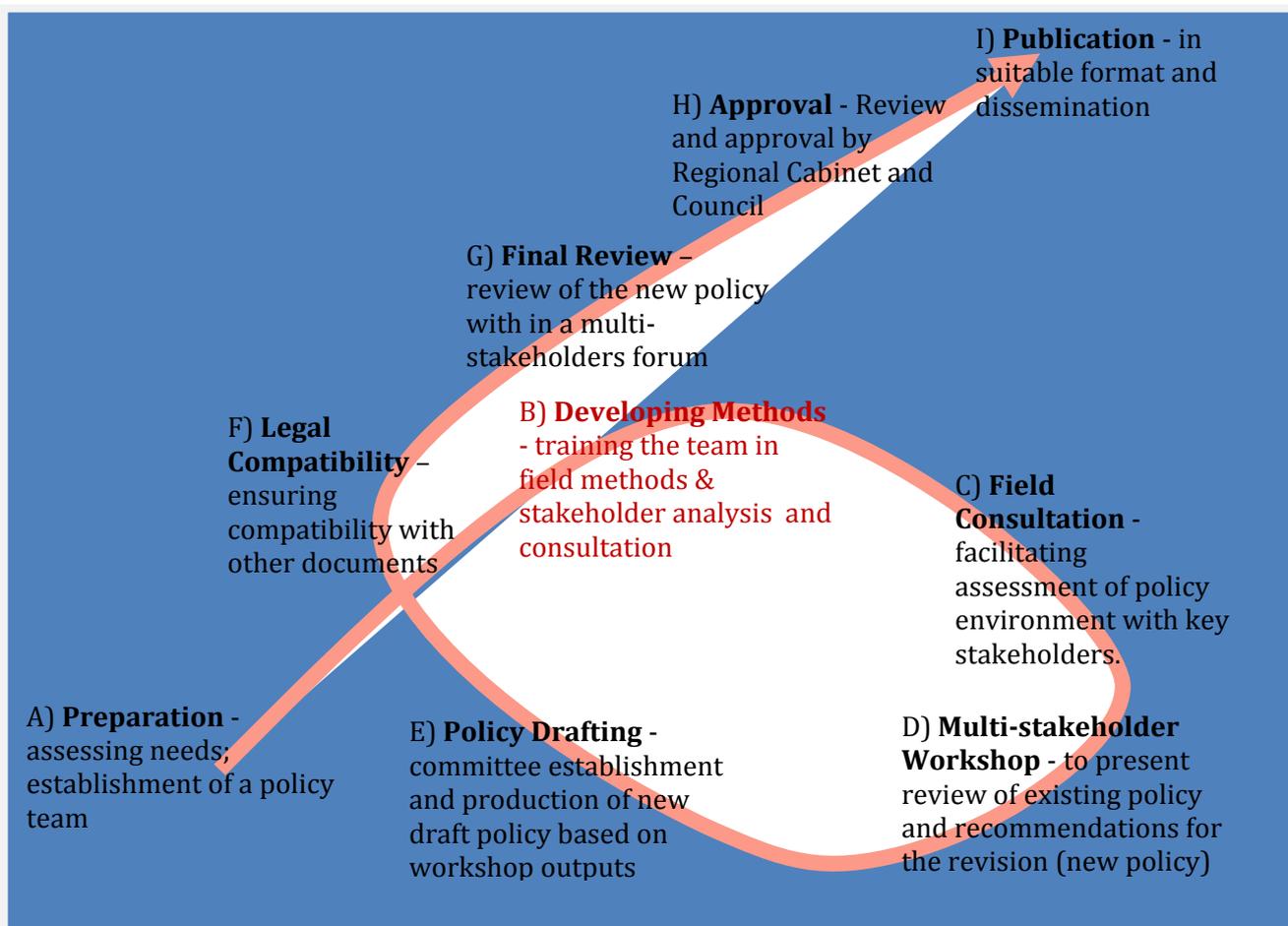


Figure 1. Key policy revision steps and procedures followed

Achievements

The revised regional forest proclamation (Proclamation 147/2012) has shown a number of advances compared to the old version (Proclamation 77/2004). This is seen particularly in terms of recognition of community rights to forest, as well as community empowerment. Critically, one new form of forest ownership, designated as 'community forest' has been recognized as part of this. Table 1 summarizes an analysis of the two proclamations and identifies the major differences between them.

The other major advance to be noted is in the process of

policy formulation which was applied. As the diagram above shows, this policy development process has been iterative, going back to the stakeholders on several occasions for their views and opinion. Further, from the outset it has been a consultative process with the policy development team basing their work on the field consultations, as well as analysis of the views of the full range of stakeholders. This is certainly a major innovation as it has ensured that the new proclamation is much more sensitive to the interests of the stakeholders who have to use it and more pro-community compared to the previous proclamation.

Table 1. Some reflections on the differences between the new proclamation and the old proclamation

Contents	New	Old
Part One: General Definitions	Under this section a number of new elements are included such as definitions of state, private and community forests. Three forest ownership arrangements are recognized and presented.	Only two types of forest ownership: state and private were recognised in the proclamation.
Part Two: Article 6 Designation, demarcation and registration of State Forest	Sub-article 6 (1) indicates the 'participation of local community' in designating forests in the region as productive or protective forest. Sub-article 6 (2) also states that the regional state shall designate forests already held by communities or those to be identified as community forests and register thereon.	In this case, the regional state was authorized as designator of the forests into different categories. No mention was made of community participation. This is not found at all in the old proclamation;
Part Two: Article 7 Development, Conservation and Administration of State Forest	Sub-article 7 (2) states the need for engagement of the local community in the preparation of management plans for state forests; Sub-Article 7 (4 & 5) indicates that development, conservation and utilization of 'state forest' can be done mutually by the state and community; Sub-article 7(6) community shall be organized to enter into a contract with the state for the management of the state forest; Sub-article 7(7) states the possibility of facilitation for transfer of ownership of state forest to community forests or to be mutually administered by the state and community as found necessary.	Part 4 provides provisions regarding local people's participation presented as follows: Sub-article 11 (1) states that local people should directly participate in identifying problems besieging the forest sector of the region, including afforestation, forest conservation & development, and in the preparation of management plans; Sub-article 11(2) promises awareness raising work with local communities on forest and environmental conservation, and to relish benefits. However, what this benefit would mean is not stated. No such article or sub-article. No such article or sub-article. No such article or sub-article.
Part 2 – Article 8: Utilization of State Forest	Sub-article 8 (3) indicates the possible granting to local communities of rights to harvest and use grass, fruits, spices, tree species, forest coffee and honey from the forest, and to engage in other types of traditional usage in the forest. Sub-article 8(4) also allows local communities to benefit from revenue generated from the sale of state forest products	Part 3, Article 2B indicates similar rights but with the condition of reasonable payment by the local community. Part 6, Sub-article 13/2 includes local people in fixing price of forest products, and the public (not local community) will be made beneficiaries from the income.
Part Three – Community Forests Article 10 to 12	This part is new and was included only in the revised proclamation. This part of the new proclamation allows the local community living in and around forests to be organized and take over responsibility for managing natural forest (and to develop and utilize it); It also promises special support to the community group to be legalized and formally own the forest; The contract signed between the community and the state shall also stipulate the rights and obligations of the two parties; Article 12 states the utilization of community forests and indicates that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community, according to management plan developed, can utilize their forests for home as well as sale. It states that the community has the right to produce, utilize, move and sell the products of their forest (Sub-article 12/2), and for this the community can obtain permits to move or store their forest products (Sub-article 12/3). 	This was not in the old proclamation at all
Miscellaneous Issues	Article 26 sub-article (1-3) states the rights of the local community, these include – a share of the benefits from forest and forest product income; to produce and transport forest products in accordance with a contract entered into with the government, and to be active participants in forest development, conservation and administration.	No such provision at all

Lessons Learnt

The experience from this policy review process shows that significant progress can be made where government and field projects liaise closely. Further, when they follow a participatory and consultative process, so that the views of the stakeholders and the lessons from the changing reality on the ground can be thoroughly considered, appropriate policies which are sensitive to community needs can be developed.

The innovations in the new proclamation can be attributed in part to this wider stakeholder consultation by the team, which is the proper procedure for developing policy. This achievement also confirms that policy making should not be an office job of experts alone, but rather requires the active engagement of all stakeholders, from the grassroots communities to the experts, so as to include all the people who are affected by, and involved in, the management and utilization of forests. Transparent dialogue in multi-stakeholder workshops at various stages of the policy making process has also been shown to be an essential ingredient of the process.

Finally, the innovations in this new proclamation when compared to the old one clearly indicate that formulation of effective policy is not a matter of a single event, but is an evolving process which follows a learning cycle (developing – acting/implementing – monitoring – drawing lessons - and revising). This recognition makes it clear that the current proclamation is not the ultimate and final policy. Rather, it will need to be further refined and revised, so that policies which are more pro-forest and pro-forest-dependent communities, can be drawn up. These will come into existence in the future, as experience grows, more lessons are generated and as capacities are built. Development partners, such as non-state actors, need to continue to experiment and demonstrate the conditions that will ensure better success in sustainable forest management, and then engage with the government to enhance the understanding and capacity of policy makers. This will further prove the value of consultative policy development.

Gaps Observed:

Despite the considerable progress made with the new policy, a number of issues have already been identified which will need further attention. Five key ones are identified below:

- **Strategies to ensure the security of rights bestowed on local community.** In this regard, the proclamation could have indicated a cross-sectorial linkage and engagement with other government offices, like the land administration bureau. This would have helped the development of strategies to ensure better security of tenure for the local communities through measures such as collective forestland certification. With the present weak statements about formal recognition and security of the tenure, the content of the proclamation could fail to achieve the overall goal of improving the state of the forest and the community.

- **Rights of the local communities to manipulate their forest to ensure sustainable forest management for their benefit from timber based opportunities.** Despite the general recognition of the rights of local communities to utilize the forests they manage, the new proclamation appears to implicitly forbid timber based income generation. This was reflected during the discussions between the regional experts and stakeholders on the forest regulation to follow this proclamation. This view is not the general intention of the proclamation and needs to be clarified.
- **Pros and cons of NTFPs.** The proclamation is rather bold on the rights of communities to exploit NTFPs. However, it is now recognised that NTFP utilization is not necessarily forest friendly and sustainable. Based on market demand some NTFPs can be over exploited and sometimes intensive management to boost their production can result in significant modification of forest structure. A major example of such a practice is forest coffee. Therefore the regional policy makers may need to monitor and critically evaluate the possible implications of the provisions in the new proclamation.
- **Forests are maintained by productive use, not by conservation.** One critical observation is the frequent conservation oriented perspective amongst the forestry professionals in government. In fact, given that sustainable forest management (SFM) has not been practiced or piloted in Ethiopia, it is difficult to prove or disprove the assumption that local communities' may destroy forests if allowed to produce timber from productive forests managed under PFM. Global experience suggests this will not occur. Hence, it is high time that piloting of SFM is undertaken to demonstrate to policy makers whether or not communities can achieve SFM in Ethiopia.
- **Enforcement is an issue.** Last but not least is the fact that most natural resources affiliated policies suffer from weak implementation and enforcement in Ethiopia. For a policy is to serve its purpose, it has to be binding, i.e. enforced. Otherwise, it merely forms a statement of good intent: the intention may be excellent but the result may be otherwise.

Conclusions

The development of this revised regional proclamation is a great achievement, particularly given its participatory process and pro-community nature. It should be seen as a start, and an important step, on a long journey in the policy development and refinement process for the benefits of the forests and forest-using people of SNNPRS and Ethiopia in general. It is self-evident that policies are not static but need to be constantly reviewed and revised to accommodate new experiences and developments in the political, social and economic environments.

To make the policy binding, so that the actors follow it through, the implementation capacity of the policy-enforcing organizations should be strengthened. Therefore, the policy document should be duplicated in large quantities, distributed to all concerned bodies, and awareness on the contents, along with the new rights and obligations of all concerned disseminated and advertised.

Support from all concerned is also needed in implementation. Furthermore, the new proclamation needs to be accompanied by all necessary requirements, such as clear guidelines and regulations.

The work must not stop at the present point. Some further immediate areas of action are suggested here by way of conclusion.

- **Piloting SFM and Timber Harvesting:** Just as experimentation with PFM has resulted in policy recognition of it, this is the right time to start piloting SFM, including timber harvesting, across several socio-economic and ecological settings. Without experimenting it is not possible to prove whether or not timber harvesting will lead to better forest development or degrade forests.
- **Drawing Lessons from International Experience:** It is not essential to sit and wait until results from pilots emerge, as that will require a delay of 10-15 years before policy revision. It is possible to learn from global developments in the forest sector as there is a lot of experimentation in institutional reform going on in many countries with similar socio-political conditions. Lessons can be drawn from best examples where reforms have resulted in sustainable forest management and positive development outcomes. These include China, Vietnam, Brazil, etc. as well as Tanzania, South Africa and Namibia.
- **Competitive Forests:** It should be stressed that unless forestry is made to pay its way, by better balancing and integrating utilization with conservation, it is unlikely to ensure long term forest conservation and development goals, particularly given the fast growing population in rural areas. Forestry should be considered as an economic sector able to compete with, and even out-compete other rural land uses if properly managed. Realizing this fact is the best option for regenerating forests and increasing forest coverage in the rural landscape of SNNPRS in particular, as well as in Ethiopia and beyond.

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Briefing Notes (produced or in preparation)

1. Challenges and Opportunities for Sustainable Forest Management in South-West Ethiopia
2. Collective Forest Land Certification: a milestone for tenure security and sustainable PFM in Ethiopia
3. PFM Institutional Development: experiences from the NTFP-PFM Project
4. Bamboo Forest Restoration through PFM: experiences from Masha
5. Economic Assessment of the Costs of Deforestation in South-West Ethiopia
6. Forest Policy Development : engaging PFM with the policy process in SNNPRS
7. Evolving Interpretation of Participatory Forest Management in South-West Ethiopia
8. Forest-Based Enterprise Development: comparative experience of cooperatives and PLCs
9. Land use change in the highlands of south-west Ethiopia, 1973-2012
10. The *Korerima* Value Chain: enhancing the value of forest products
11. Competitive and Sustainable Forests: making forests pay their way in south-west Ethiopia

South-West Forests and Landscapes Grouping

This grouping brings together three partners who have been working in this part of Ethiopia for more than 12 years: University of Huddersfield, Ethio-Wetlands and Natural Resources Association and Sustainable Livelihood Action. They have recognized the need for serious attention to be given to the forests and forested landscapes of the south-west highlands of Ethiopia. At present the grouping has two other projects in this area besides the NTFP-PFM Project. These are:

Wild Coffee Conservation by Participatory Forest Management Project (WCC-PFM) led by the University of Huddersfield with contributions from EWNRA and SLA and funding from the European Union and the Horn of African Regional Environment Centre and Network.

REDD+ Participatory Forest Management in South-West Ethiopia (REPAFMA-SW Ethiopia) led by Ethio-Wetlands and Natural Resources Association in association with the Development Fund of Norway with contributions from SLA and UoH, and funding from NORAD.

NTFP-PFM Project Summary

The “Non-Timber Forest Products – Participatory Forest Management (NTFP-PFM) Research and Development Project in South-west Ethiopia” started in July 2003. Its first phase ran until July 2007 and a second phase, for six years, will continue until late 2013.

The project has a “research and development” orientation, in which it combines an integrated technical approach to the sustainable use and management of forest resources with a participatory and gender/equity sensitive strategy for improved rural livelihoods.

The project tries to explore and disseminate successful ways of applying Participatory Forest Management in Ethiopia so that forests can pay their way and become viable and competitive land uses which are sustainably managed by rural communities. This involves policy support, PFM institutional development, forest enterprise

development and the economically viable marketing of forest products.

Through the direct involvement of government institutions and communities in project implementation and the dissemination of project findings, the project aims to ensure the sustainability of its initiatives and their scaling up.

Project Funding Agencies



European Union, Environment Budget



**Royal
Netherlands
Embassy**

Royal Netherlands Embassy, Ethiopia



ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY

Royal Norwegian Embassy, Ethiopia

Project Partners



The University of Huddersfield: With 18 years experience of field research, project management and consultancy / advisory work on natural resources in Ethiopia.



Ethio-Wetlands and Natural Resources

Association: The first Ethiopian NGO to focus on forest and wetland issues. It has worked with most of the donors in the country and has run projects in three of the country's eight rural regions.



Sustainable Livelihood Action: A European Economic Interest Grouping which focuses on capacity building to support local NGOs and organisations in developing countries. Its staff have over 25 years of experience in Africa, Asia and Latin America.



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For further details see:

www.hud.ac.uk/wetlandsandforests/