

MALAWI'S NATIONAL FORESTRY PROGRAMME

PRIORITIES FOR IMPROVING FORESTRY AND LIVELIHOODS

2000

Government of Malawi
Department of Forestry
NFP Co-ordination Unit
P.O.Box 30048, Lilongwe 3, Malawi
Tel: +265 771000, Fax: +265 771812
Email: sadcfstcu@malawi.net

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Poverty eradication, a thriving economy and good environmental management are important goals for Malawi. Forests and trees can and should be managed and used to contribute to achieving these goals. Malawi's National Forestry Programme (NFP) aims to make this possible by providing an agreed set of priorities and actions to bring about sustainable management of forest goods and services for improved and equitable livelihoods.

Malawi's NFP has been developing since the early 1990s – with a concerted development phase during 1999 and 2000. Existing information has been unearthed and utilised, new analysis has been carried out by working groups, key international obligations and opportunities have been considered, and consultation processes with stakeholders at national, district and local levels have been carried out and synthesised in this document.

Improved forestry and livelihoods are given a solid policy framework in the Constitution, the National Forest Policy and the Forest Act. The NFP is the means to operationalise the Policy and the Act – to translate good intentions into real results. It does this by focusing on the key issues, drawing on

experiences of good local and national practice in all the key areas needed for better forestry, and making better two-way connections between policy and practice so that both can be improved.

Malawi is a nation of smallholders – most households only have a hectare or so of land from which they must get a variety of livelihood needs. Forest goods and services may be crucial components of these livelihoods – and should be further developed to improve them – by providing fuel, building materials, cash, or soil-fertility. This is why the NFP is needed, and also because currently there are *major problems*:

- ❑ ***Forest degradation and food insecurity go hand in hand*** About half of Malawi's farm households have been classed as food insecure, and farmers often have no way to tackle their food insecurity except to cut woodland on customary land or to encroach upon the forest reserves.
- ❑ ***Fuelwood problems are rising, and affect women and children most***. For the foreseeable future fuelwood will remain vital for most Malawians. But much of the wood is being chopped from woodlands much faster than it can grow back. Women have to spend more time finding wood, whilst children suffer from less frequent cooking.
- ❑ ***National demand for forest products is much greater than supply***. Annual consumption of forest products, estimated at 15 million m³, far exceeds the sustainable supply of 7-8 million m³.
- ❑ ***Potential benefits from plantation forests are being missed***. Effective management of Malawi's industrial plantations has declined, and a significant opportunity for off-farm employment and much needed industrial development, in a sector in which Malawi enjoys a comparative advantage, is thus being missed.
- ❑ ***Broader threats to national sustainable development damage the forest sector particularly badly***. Increasing inequality and insecurity of law and order are national problems which impact on rural smallholders to a great degree. Such trends reduce the possibility of smallholders investing their precious land, time and cash in the forest and tree resources which could help them stabilise and improve their livelihoods.
- ❑ ***Existing institutions are poorly fitted to the changed roles which stakeholder pressures and new policies demand***. The related drives for private sector involvement and decentralisation are creating pressures for change amongst government agencies and new responsibilities for other stakeholders.

To tackle these problems – a focus on *key roles* is needed, and consensus has emerged on what these are: ***Central government*** needs to restructure and strengthen existing core roles such that it can focus on regulating, planning, managing reserves and providing guidance. ***Local government*** needs to respond to the imperatives and opportunities of decentralisation and focus on enabling forest management and providing forestry services. The ***private sector*** needs to increase its commercial capabilities and focus on developing and using markets for delivering the forest goods that people want. Finally, ***civil society*** needs to empower and develop local capacities and alliances for improving forestry and livelihoods.

The NFP has developed *twelve strategies*, each with a set of prioritised actions. In summary these strategies and actions aim to ensure that the role-players are able to:

1. ***Manage the process of institutional change***. Re-shape the Forestry Department organisational structures and procedures for managing human resource development, information, finance and planning.
2. ***Optimise policy influences on forests and livelihoods***. Use the platform provided by the NFP consensus to pull sectors together through mechanisms for policy analysis and cross-sectoral policy co-ordination.
3. ***Build local forest governance through decentralisation***. Rise to the challenge of decentralisation and focus central and district actions to empower local institutions for forestry.
4. ***Support community-based forest management***. Recognise a broad range of village institutions and develop their capabilities, along with those of front line extension staff, for collaborative management.
5. ***Improve individual smallholder livelihoods***. Foster the trust, entrepreneur-smallholder partnerships, information and availability of inputs necessary for growing and nurturing trees.
6. ***Strengthen forest extension***. Improve effectiveness and efficiency in extension for community-based and smallholder forestry.
7. ***Sharpen research and information systems***. Make old and new research and information on forest assets, demands and uses more useful, and fill the gaps in social and economic knowledge for improved forestry and livelihoods.
8. ***Influence wood energy supply and demand***. Focus wood energy policies, and phase out government subsidies for timber, to encourage private production of wood fuel and timber.
9. ***Manage forest reserves*** Establish local boards and prepare practical planning guidance and partnerships between government, NGOs and the private sector for reserve management.
10. ***Foster improved industrial forestry***. Generate a clear political decision on the future ownership and management of plantations, and develop proper standards and leases for plantation management
11. ***Increase wood production in the estate sector***. Encourage better management of existing woodlands on estates and promote development of outgrower schemes and contract tree-growing on estate land by neighbouring farmers.
12. ***Develop forest sector financing***. Develop partnerships and co-financing agreements between government, private sector and civil society for new forestry investments

Together, these roles, strategies and actions can realise the NFP goal of sustainable management of forest goods and services for improved and equitable livelihoods. To achieve this, the NFP needs to keep its energetic process alive. A monitoring and adaptation system is needed so that lessons learned from practice can be fed back into the NFP cycle to improve strategies and make progress.

Next steps are also needed – the actions which enable people to make a start on these strategies. The key next steps for the main groups of role-players are:

- *All role-players* – should spread the level of agreement reached on the NFP so far, make commitments to the NFP, and develop practical means to implement the highest priority activities identified in this document.
- *Central government* – political decision-makers should clearly decide the future of plantations and the responsibilities of different forestry players under decentralisation policy; and the forest department should ensure that the NFP Co-ordination Unit is well-supported, and put in place better departmental systems for human resource development, information, finance, and institutional change management.
- *Local government* – should incorporate NFP actions in district development programmes and generate alliances and proposals for necessary support.
- *Private sector* – should engage with the Forestry Department (FD) and other role-players to identify and overcome blockages to promote new investment in sustainable forestry enterprise and trade.
- *Civil society* – should incorporate NFP strategies in programmes and proposals, and strengthen community-based institutions that have capability and motivation to improve forestry and livelihoods.
- *International community* – should support the other role players in pursuit of NFP actions and work towards sector-wide support for the NFP.

The NFP presents an ambitious agenda. The first steps have been taken and it is hoped that the next steps will be taken through initiatives which provide the inspiration for many to join in and work for improved forestry and livelihoods in Malawi.