

Review of Policies Impacting on Sustainability of Natural Woodlands in Southern Africa

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Introduction

Willis *et al.* (2000) state that the variety of tenure arrangements as well as management objectives which exist make the savannah woodlands of southern Africa a complex yet essential resource to manage, monitor and sustain on national and regional levels. Furthermore, Shackelton *et al.* (1999) and Watson *et al.* (2001) have identified a lack in policy frameworks which will help in promoting sustainable woodland use. The issues pertaining to natural resource management (including savannah woodlands) in southern Africa are embedded in a myriad of complex concerns that need to be equitably addressed. These include questions of accessibility, natural resource management aspects, ownership patterns as well as policy and legal concerns. For the vast majority of people who live in poverty, especially in rural areas, livelihoods and household survival are directly linked to natural resources.

Woodlands are one of the world's major renewable and sustainable natural resources which are managed for many different reasons and for a wide range of management objectives (Grayson 1993). Woodlands generally form part of the larger savannah biome and, according to the National Forests Act (1998) of South Africa, a woodland is taken to mean a group of indigenous trees which are not a natural forest, but whose crowns cover more than 5% of the area bounded by the trees forming the perimeter of the group (Shackelton 2000). Increasingly, woodlands are now being managed to provide a variety of complementary benefits which include timber

production, economic regeneration, access and recreation and the enhancement of biodiversity. Within the southern African context, woodlands are indispensable to the country's heritage, beauty, wildlife and environment. Shackelton *et al.* (1999) indicate that woodland resources are regarded as extremely important, not only for the maintenance of rural livelihoods but also as a potential contributor to the national economy. It is for this reason that the article focuses on woodlands and policy issues. Furthermore, the research conducted was part of a broader collaborative research programme which focussed on understanding the role of non-timber forest products and rural livelihoods in southern Africa.

This article aims to encapsulate the key policy issues and concerns related to the sustainability of savannah woodlands in southern Africa. By adopting a policy review methodological approach, the current policies and strategic frameworks that are promoting the sustainability of woodlands in southern Africa is undertaken with the intention of promoting efficient and effective woodland management in the future. The uses, values and benefits of woodlands have often been consistently understated, and conservation and management given low priority in government development plans (Munro 2003). It is through informed policy intervention that significant improvements can be achieved in rural livelihoods while concurrently addressing sustainable management of these natural resources.

Policy Context

In any review on policy issues it is always useful to consider the nature and importance of public policy.

In a democracy it (policy) serves the functions of providing transparency and accountability. Policy in essence becomes a tacit social contract between government and the governed about what is being done, by whom, for what purpose, and within the parameters of public resources and in the public interest (Wildshcut and Hulbert 1998:31).

Furthermore, public policy:

communicates what a society values, provides guidelines for the many decisions and actions that organisations and institutions take daily, embraces a very broad sphere of governance, confers predictability on the process of government and it provides a basis on which to foresee outcomes and yardsticks, for evaluating the performance of public institutions (Leonard and Thomas 1995:2).

Bob and Banoo (2002) state that there are numerous shortcomings of and conflicts over environmental legislation both internationally and in southern Africa. These include fragmented and minimally enforced environmental legislation and policy, lack of co-ordination, capacity, resources and skills and also inadequate administrative systems to effectively manage, monitor and sustain natural resources globally.

With regard to woodlands in southern Africa, there has been a lack of sufficient information pertaining to the value and status of natural woodlands. This has resulted in the woodlands being controlled by various policies and legislations which have governed this savannah biome in the past. For example, in South Africa's more recent forest developments, the government has taken on the responsibility of ensuring the sustainability of woodland resources by identifying 'woodlands' as a type of natural forest (Department of Water Affairs and Forestry—DWAF 1996). This has drastically changed the government's perspective on the importance of woodlands in South Africa which are home to approximately 9.2 million rural inhabitants and 5.6 million urban inhabitants (Solbrig *et al.* 1991). Thus, being home to a substantial percentage of the population, it is critical that policy-makers and natural resource managers identify the elements which will ensure future sustainability of woodlands as well as provide efficient and effective management through policy in southern Africa.

Policy Review as a Methodology

There has been long term uncertainty over social, economic and political imperatives which have hampered a straight forward policy planning perspective. Furthermore, there has been a lack of social consensus and this has forced planners to develop new policy review tools to incorporate

various types of conflicts among different stakeholders, localities and policy objectives.

In modern policy processes and planning there is a tendency to focus primarily on a cost-benefit analysis. However, despite its many merits it is also recognised in modern analysis that this tool has some limitations, because not all relevant modern policy initiatives can be expressed in the measurement of monetary value (Nijkamp and Pepping 1998). Dovie *et al.* (2006) states that in public policy evaluation, especially in studies of environmental impacts and sustainability issues the implications of using a cost-benefit approach becomes troublesome. This equates to a scenario where all advantages and disadvantages of policy options have to be translated into a common monetary unit. Therefore, qualitative data of an unpriced and intangible nature cannot be included in the decision-making procedure based on the principles of a standard cost-benefit analysis.

To cope with the weaknesses of monetary evaluation, various modern assessment methods have been developed over the last ten years to complement cost-benefit analysis and to offer new perspectives in which qualitative aspects can also be incorporated. Many of these methods simultaneously investigate the impacts of policy strategies on a multitude of criteria which are referred to as multi-criteria methods or multi-assessment methods (Nijkamp and Pepping 1998).

The lack of policy processes recognising the need to incorporate often intangible and unseen values of natural resources, based on basic cost-benefit analysis, has been the catalyst in promoting informed environmental policy reviews around the world and even in southern Africa (Nijkamp 1994). Policy review as a methodology has steadily been gaining prominence as an accepted form of research methodology within modern social research. Reviewing of existing policy documents enables future policy development to improve on current gaps, overlaps and conflicts which are often synonymous within the environmental policy arena.

This article reviews selected international and national policies that directly relate to woodland resources. It is important to note that the review relies heavily on the South African context where more detailed research was undertaken. Moreover, the focus is primarily at the national level. The next section briefly summarises some of the key international policies and related issues.

International Environmental Policy Initiatives: Implications for Southern Africa

Deforestation as an environmental issue has gained global prominence in the past decade. In response to the global threats of deforestation and degradation and the complexity in dealing with the issue, many governments around the world have embarked on international initiatives to promote global co-operation and compliance to ensure the security and sustainability of the world's forests. International environmental agreements and treaties are important as they are the key mechanisms whereby nation-states manage natural resources and co-operate to find equitable and efficient solutions to problems which arise from the inter-relationships between natural and human systems (Geach 1999). The main international initiatives relevant to this study are discussed below.

The Tropical Forestry Action Programme (TFAP)

The TFAP was aimed to promote international donor co-ordination in the development of National Forestry Action Plans (NFAPs). The TFAP has also promoted collaboration between the NFAPs of several countries at the regional level. The success of the TFAP has been relative. Sizer (2000) asserts that many critics of the programme have claimed that it has stimulated minimal institutional and policy reform at the national level and generated insufficient information on the status of forests. TFAP's problems can be traced partly to the programmes inception and launch which was implemented as a sectoral policy exercise and did not take into account the root causes of deforestation. Also, there was a lack of donor investment in most of the proposed national exercises.

The International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA)

The ITTA is a binding commodity agreement between the consumers and producers of tropical timber as is governed by the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO). The question of whether sustainable management of tropical forests designated for industrial use is widely viable, has still remained a debated issue by scientists and policy-makers (Agarwal

and Narain 1989). This concern remains true today. Many Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) who initially had supported the institution have voiced concerns about ITTO, stating that it is strongly influenced by timber trade interests and politically biased. Poffenberger (1990) states that there had been growing concerns over the ITTO's resistance to embrace new initiatives, such as timber certification, which had been globally called for by various governments.

United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)

At the UNCED, much of the environmental thought was focused through the identification of fundamental principles such as those of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration which had governed environmental development globally. Southern African countries have subsequently signed and ratified many of the international environment related conventions and agreements. The following is a brief look at some of the main international environmental conventions and agreements and the possible implications they may have on the sustainability of natural woodlands.

- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES):** This convention highlights the importance of conserving wild fauna and flora which are of extreme importance to natural ecosystems of the earth. Under the convention South Africa, for example, has adopted measures to combat smuggling of species to ensure its biodiversity, also promoting sustainable utilisation of species by trading and hunting. Although CITES in theory encourages the conservation of such species and indirectly promotes the sustainability of woodlands, illegal trade is still common in southern Africa.
- **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD):** The aim of the CBD is to effect international co-operation in the conservation of biological diversity and to promote the sustainable use of living natural resources worldwide (Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism—DEAT 1999). It also aims to bring about the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilisation of

natural resources. In theory the above convention bodes well for the woodlands. However, the issues of budgetary and financial constraints need to be considered. Also, implementation of conservation strategies for biological diversity at local and household levels, especially in rural areas, has not as yet been devised.

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC): The convention addresses the threat of global climate change by urging governments to reduce the sources of greenhouse gases. Woodlands are significant with regard to this, as they are involved in the process of carbon sequestration. Davidson *et al.* (2003) state that climate policies in the context of developing countries remain marginal and sectoral. What is needed are climate strategies that are congruent with integrated development approaches.
- Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention): The convention aims to promote co-operation among nations to protect natural heritage which is of such outstanding universal value that its conservation is of concern to all people (DEAT 1999). The relevance of heritage sites in the context of woodlands is aptly illustrated in relation to the St. Lucia Wetland Park which enjoys world heritage status. The significance of enjoying such world heritage status and the associated conservation of this area, coupled with promoting increased tourism and creation of employment in communities near this site will ensure some form of protection for the woodlands and promote their sustainability. However, there is already evidence that increased tourism is having the opposite effect, that is, increases in fuelwood harvested to supply lodges and camps as well as craft wood to make curios and other wood related products may have a detrimental impact.
- Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD): The convention is aimed at encouraging integrated development which prevents or reduces land degradation, rehabilitates partly degraded land and reclaims desertified land (Geach 1999). Southern Africa needs to pay particular attention to the CCD as a significant proportion of the land is arid to semi-arid and this makes it susceptible to

desertification and degradation. Furthermore, most of the woodlands on commercial farms and on communal lands are used to graze cattle and overstocking is a major problem in both categories of land use. This has also led to bush encroachment and extensive soil erosion over vast tracts.

Specific Southern African Policies: Implications

This section critically examines relevant policies in southern Africa impacting on woodlands. The focus is on policy statements and strategies that have been extracted with specific relevance to South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Botswana. However, it is important to state that there are various unique factors which prevail in each of these countries pertaining to natural resource management but many environmental issues extend beyond the boundaries of one country, or are beyond the resources of a single country to address.

South Africa

Social, economic and environmental policies in South Africa fostered forced removals by conscious land dispossession and the withdrawal of rights to make use of natural resources (Peart and Wilson 1998). Willis *et al.* (2000) indicate that instead of aiding the conservation of natural resources, these policies led to massive poaching of wildlife and uncontrollable destruction of resources vital to local people's subsistence. In addition, Peart and Wilson (1998) assert that historically there has been little ownership of environmental problems or common agreement on causes, as a basis on which to take action. Key South African policies that impact on natural resource management and woodlands specifically are briefly discussed.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa provides the state with a development mandate to implement sustainable development and demands that the state addresses, within its means, the realisation of social, economic and environmental rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights (Section 24 to 27). The Constitution does make provisions for an act of parliament to establish structures and institutions to promote and facilitate intergovernmental environmental relations. The National Council of

Provinces is one of these, but no coherent policy framework is yet in place (Lebert and Westaway 1999). Furthermore, the priority which environmental issues are given at an economic policy level provides some indication of the likely commitment of government to implementing environmental policy and the financial support it will provide.

The Department of Agriculture and Land Affairs (2001) states that several policies provide a framework within which conservation, development and sustainable natural woodlands management should take place in South Africa. Additionally, the framework provides guidance for the establishment of sustainable institutional and organisational frameworks for natural resource management and development. However, most of the government structures are still weak and inexperienced in development planning for the sustainable use of natural resources and this includes the use and management of natural woodlands in South Africa.

Given the societal transformation and redress imperatives in South Africa, national and provincial governments tend to focus more on social spending. This has significant implications for the achievement of sustainable development which requires the integration of environmental and development considerations. If less money is made available for environmental considerations there will be a negative impact on woodlands because government officials charged with regulating the management of woodlands will be unable to do so effectively. Therefore, although South Africa has promulgated excellent environmental policy and legislation in recent years, the apparent lack of priority given to environmental issues indicates that these are unlikely to be effectively implemented.

The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy in South Africa is another framework policy (DEAT 1997a). Specific subsidiary and sectoral policies to carry forward the detailed tasks of everyday governance fall within this framework. They subscribe to the vision, principles, goals and regulatory approach set out in the framework policy. The policy applies to all government institutions and to all activities that impact on the environment. Through this policy government undertakes to give effect to the many rights in the Constitution that relate to the environment. They include rights relating specifically to the environment, as well as those relating to governance such as the legal standing of parties, administrative justice, accountability and public participation. The policy furthermore

defines the essential nature of sustainable development as the combination of social, economic and environmental factors. It takes ownership of sustainable development as the accepted approach to resource management and utilisation in South Africa, thus entrenching environmental sustainability in policy and practice.

The government's subsequent development of the National Environmental Management Act (NEMA), together with the White Paper on Environmental Management provide a framework within which all environmental management plans have to be formulated. NEMA was assented to in November 1998. NEMA is regarded as a 'landmark statute' in environmental affairs in South Africa because it is the first 'umbrella' national legislation which endeavours to establish an integrated framework through which most of the currently diverse and fragmented sectors of the environment will be transformed and coordinated (Willis *et al.* 2000).

NEMA does not address woodlands specifically, however, it will have positive implications for the sustainability of woodlands. It clearly addresses, through its various principles and elements, the importance of such aspects like the conservation of biological diversity, civil society participation in environmental governance and co-operative governance procedures, which collectively may well be the mechanisms of overcoming the constraints of the fragmented management of the woodlands in the past.

Several sectoral policies are also likely to impact on woodlands. For example, the White Paper on South African Land Policy (Department of Land Affairs 1997) addresses the issues of land through three main programmes: land redistribution, restitution and tenure reform. Of particular significance with regards to the sustainability for the woodland resource are the programmes of land redistribution and tenure reform. Tenure reform is perhaps the most significant component in terms of the impacts it may have for the sustainable management of woodlands. As with many developing countries in the world, insecure tenure arrangements have led to constraining factors on land-based livelihoods (Shackelton *et al.* 1999). The major assumption is that land reform, especially the redistribution and restitution processes, will move people onto new land. Thus, there will be a decrease in the numbers of people and livestock in the over-populated former homelands. This reduction in the total number of people and livestock will give the former homeland range-lands a chance to recover and will promote

the sustainability of the woodlands.

The White Paper on the Conservation of Biological Diversity (DEAT 1997b) recognises the role of and need for incentives which support the maintenance of biological diversity at user level. It highlights South Africa's unique biological diversity with its variety of genes, species, ecosystems and ecological processes occurring in the country generally and in savannahs specifically. A loss of woodland would result in a loss of some of our world renowned faunal diversity and much of its tourist appeal for South Africa.

Agriculture is one of the principle means whereby natural habitats are converted to other land-uses. South Africa is characterised by a scarcity of high potential agricultural land and a key challenge in South Africa is meeting the food needs of the rural poor. In attempting to provide this basic need for all South Africans, agricultural policy may have significant impacts on the natural woodlands. It has been increasingly recognised in recent years that land-use policies have in the past failed to take into account the inter-linkages between woodlands and agricultural production, and the indirect contribution of forest and woodland resources to the national economy (McNamara 1993). Agriculture poses the largest threat to the woodlands due to land clearance to plant crops and overstocking of cattle that has led to bush encroachment and soil erosion.

The White Paper on Sustainable Forest Development in South Africa (DWAF 1996) is committed to the overall goal of promoting a thriving forest sector, utilised to the lasting and sustained benefit of the total community and developed and managed to protect and to improve the environment. The government has achieved this through the preparation of a strategic plan, the National Forestry Action Plan. Furthermore, the promulgation of the National Forests Act (NFA)—Act 84 of 1998 provides the necessary legislative support for the implementation of the forest policy. The government of South Africa has for the first time taken on the responsibility of managing woodlands by identifying them as a type of natural forest.

The White Paper on Sustainable Forest Development addresses forests of all types, but it also highlights more specific issues concerning woodlands. DWAF recognises the importance between woodland resources and rural livelihoods, and addresses this issue in the section called

'community forestry'. Community forestry has been designed and applied to meet social, household, and environmental needs and to promote local economic development (DWAF 1997). Furthermore, the economic value of woodlands to rural households provides a significant proportion of the incomes generated in these areas and makes the sustainable management of woodlands vital in ensuring the maintenance of rural livelihoods. The main resource base is the natural forests and woodlands, followed by industrial plantations, then home gardens and woodlots. The White Paper also discusses government's involvement in international initiatives like Sustainable Forest Management and development tools like criteria and indicators.

The forestry sector of South Africa has undoubtedly made considerable progress in the past few years with the development of the forest policy and a plan of action. These combined with the necessary legislative support from the Forest Act have changed the way forests and woodlands are now managed and utilised. The need for integration and multi-sectoral approaches is centralised.

Some of the key indicators surrounding natural woodlands which have been neglected in the sectoral policies are a lack of clearly identified management structures, efficient conflict management within woodland areas and a lack of identifying responsibilities for implementation of resource conserving strategies at local levels. Also of significance is the lack of private sector input into natural resource management. Additionally, monitoring and evaluation of woodlands is only on the research agenda of forestry and none of the others policies address these imperatives.

It is important to note that most of the government's policies fail to address the issue of local capacity building. This is crucial given that all natural resources including the woodlands are consumed and utilised at the local and household levels. With a lack in recognising the need to improve local capacities and also trying to change existing practices in woodlands within rural communities the detrimental impacts on the sustainability of the resource will continue unabated.

Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe as a whole is relatively well endowed with woodlands. There are also a range of policies that affect them. The woodlands cover approximately

53% of Zimbabwe's total land area (Forestry Commission 1997). However, the land hosting most of the resources is very unevenly distributed amongst the population.

Zimbabwe's distribution of land, people and woodland can be broken down into four major land tenure categories. These are communal, resettlement, commercial and state-owned land areas. Almost 74% of Zimbabwe's rural population, or a little over half of the total national population, lives in the communal areas which cover 42% of the land area and contain about 43% of the country's woodland and scattered trees (Nhira *et al.* 1998). A further 6% of the rural population live in the resettlement areas which occupy about 8% of the land area. The commercial farms occupy about 31% of the land area, supports 19% of the rural population, and hosts 30% of the woodlands. Clearly, the picture painted is one of inequitable access to land and woodlands which inevitably have many implications for the sustainable management of woodlands and the policies that affect them.

Nhira *et al.* (1998) indicate that the legislation on use and management of woodlands inherited at independence in 1980 reflected the dualistic nature of the colonial period, that is, voluntary self-policing and investment in commercial lands and state enforcement and regulation in communal lands. In an attempt to redress these inequalities, the Zimbabwe government initiated CAMPFIRE—The Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources in the mid-1980s. The aim of the programme was to place proprietorship of natural resources in communal lands with local communities, based on the supposition that through direct benefits derived from their management of these resources, communities would perceive a vested interest in their conservation. The programme has enjoyed some level of success with 32 districts (more than a quarter of a million people) engaged in the programme by the late 1990s (Watson & Dlamini 2000). It has served to increase an appreciation for the need to manage woodlands more sustainably due to its focus on local resource use.

Forests and woodlands have not held a prominent position in national development strategies since Zimbabwe's independence. Although forest management was part of the central growth with equity framework it was given minimal priority. Agriculture on the other hand had clear national priority over forestry and other associated land uses. Therefore, the lack of a

national vision of the role for the forestry sector in development is the underlying cause of conflicting approaches to woodland management in Zimbabwe.

The progressive decline in woodland cover has been attributed to both practice related and policy related activities. The most significant direct cause has been agricultural expansion, with 70 000 ha cleared for cultivation annually (Watson & Dlamini 2000). Some of the other direct causes are:

- infrastructural development (dams, roads, power lines);
- industrial uses (brick making, tobacco curing);
- poor land use practices (overstocking, burning too often); and
- firewood and construction material collection.

Chipika and Kowero (2000) state that one of the fundamental issues in the policy context has been the recurring question of land in Zimbabwe. Concerns about land tenure insecurity prompted government to set up the Land Tenure Commission in 1993. In 1994 the commission concluded that radical changes in tenure and rural governance systems in both communal and commercial areas are needed. However, with comprehensive land redistribution, if settlement is not accompanied by support services and effective incentives for conservation, widespread stripping of woodlands is likely to occur due to high levels of productive and reproductive demands on the natural resource base (Nhira *et al.* 1998). Furthermore, Munro (2003) asserts that questions of political will, definitions of property rights, and incipient community conflicts are central to the development of resource management policy in Zimbabwe.

Botswana

Watson and Dlamini (2003) examine the key issues relating to woodlands in Botswana and these are summarized here. Woodland products have been utilised by people of Botswana for a variety of purposes. The significant contribution that woodland products make toward food security and income generation particularly for poor rural households has only been researched over the past two decades and only recognised at national policy level in the past few years.

The major uses of the woodlands in Botswana is that of pastoral use, fuelwood, construction and fencing wood, and other ancillary uses like basket making, worm harvesting and medicines. The woodland products are under greatest pressure from land clearing, harvesting of wood for fuel, construction and fencing. Fuelwood scarcity in particular increases the distances travelled to collect more wood and threatening the sustainability of the woodlands in greater areas.

Botswana's development of policy regarding forests and woodlands had been limited in the past. However, by being a signatory to international conventions like the CBD, CCD and the FCCC, as well promoting the principles outlined by Agenda 21, the Botswana government has committed itself to protecting its natural resources nationally. Several research programmes have been initiated by government or relevant NGOs with a view to identifying ways to reduce the demand for woodland products, especially fuelwood, and promote their long term sustainability for future generations.

The government's capacity to conduct forest research is limited, but modest forestry research initiatives have been made by NGOs and the University of Botswana. However, the most significant realisation to emerge from governments efforts thus far and is an important lesson for southern Africa is that the most effective means of securing savannah products and services is not through an extensive planting scheme, but through multi-sectoral savannah management. There is still a need for improved co-ordination and strengthening of existing institutions in order to improve local capacity to undertake forestry research in Botswana.

Botswana's realisation of its obligation to regulate the transformation of its woodlands is reflected in the culmination of the New Forest Policy that takes general responsibility for the country's forests and woodlands. The New Forest Policy has benefited from the many international experiences on forest policy such as those of the UN forestry principles and lists several objectives.

Mozambique

Cuco (1996) states that almost 71% of Mozambique's land area is described as forest and woodlands. The post-independence development policy of

Mozambique was aimed at stimulating all productive sectors so as to achieve economic self-reliance. The government of Mozambique considered that agricultural development constitutes a fundamental base for the country's economy (Bowen *et al.* 2003). Development policy also included the creation of an independent and advanced economy, with a harmonious development using the natural resources optimally. Within these key strategies, woodlands played a crucial role in the process of economic development for their capability of providing continuous supply of natural resource products, potential for export orientated production; and an important role in contributing to rural development.

Since independence the government proclaimed that all forests (including woodlands) are state property with the natural resources belonging to the people and the government acting as trustee. However, due to the war in Mozambique, the development of policies at local levels was not possible with a large number of people seeking refuge in neighbouring countries.

Presently one of the poorest countries in the world, civil war has led to the huge economic decline and deterioration of the forests. Recognising the need to address these issues, the government implemented the Socio-Economic Rehabilitation Programme in 1990 which recognised that woodlands played an important role in terms of its wood as raw material and as well as providing the diversity of forest products necessary for the different uses within communities.

Since post-independence from 1977-1991, forest policy development had gained steady momentum. Since the signing of the peace accord in 1992 the people of Mozambique returned to their lands, and government's involvement in ensuring sustainable management of its natural resources increased. In order to ensure the implementation of the forestry policy, special attention was given to the creation of capacities for gathering baseline information and strengthening of institutional structures, which collectively aimed to promote:

- formulation and implementation of forestry policy;
- coordination and regulation of production, processing and trade of woodland products;
- undertaking economic and technical studies;

- managing natural woodlands, plantations, wildlife and beekeeping;
- giving technical assistance to the communities; and
- regulation of supply and demand of woodland products.

Unfortunately, none of Mozambique's forestry objectives has had the opportunity of being fully realised. This can be attributed mainly to the short time-scale in which the policy changes have occurred and insufficient monitoring and evaluation of these objectives thus far.

Summary

An assessment of southern African woodland usage in relation to indicators proposed by Nhira *et al.* (1998) which have been formulated from international experiences in the management of natural forests and woodlands is undertaken in Table 1. It is important to note that developing nations around the world have recognised the importance of subscribing to outlined forestry principles as proposed by Agenda 21. However, one of the important points which requires attention and is a lesson for southern Africa is the intimately related issues of land policy and tenure issues. Within southern African, there is lack of clear demarcated boundaries and secure tenure arrangements except for Botswana. This leads to ineffective and inefficient management of the woodlands as these areas have insecure tenure arrangements and the future sustainability of the resource is uncertain. With comprehensive land redistribution, if settlement is not accompanied by support services and effective incentives for conservation, there is likely to be widespread stripping of woodlands as has happened in many current resettlement areas in southern Africa. Another important lesson is the need to implement effective monitoring and evaluation systems. This is urgently required in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Mozambique. Furthermore, in none of the countries examined where management priorities identified and acted upon.

Table 1: Assessment of southern African woodland usage in relation to indicators proposed by Nhira *et al.* (1998)

Indicators from International Experiences	South Africa	Mozambique	Botswana	Zimbabwe
Identifiable agency	X	X	X	X
Ownership patterns of the resource	X	X	X	X
Clear demarcated boundaries	-	-	X	-
Effective monitoring systems in place	-	-	X	-
Extent of resource	X	X	X	X
Recognition of value and use	X	X	X	X
Management priorities	-	-	-	-

Key Concerns/ Gaps and Conflicts in Policies Affecting Woodlands

A review of the current policies and its implications for sustainability of woodlands enables one to draw a number of key concerns about policy and the policy processes in southern Africa. Specifically, the following key constraints emanating from the discussion above need to be addressed.

Conceptual Understanding of the Resource

There is implicit lack in the understanding and importance of woodlands in southern Africa. Many of southern Africa's environmentally related policies do not address woodlands directly (except for forestry) and the economic, environmental and social value is often poorly recognised. This has severe implications for the achievement of sustainable management of the resource which is rapidly declining as result of pressures and changes which are not widely understood. There is an urgent need for improved understanding of

the resource, which if appropriately managed will contribute significantly to sustainable economic development. Also, associated is the lack of access to information with regards to the objectives, mechanisms and intended outcomes of policy decisions to those who are supposed to implement them as well as the wider grouping of those who are affected by them. The format of policy documents which are often poorly communicated can lead to many misunderstandings, confusion and mistrust and negatively impact on the proposed aims and objectives for policy processes.

Lack of Institutional Capacity

One of the main obstacles to implementing environmental policy in southern Africa is likely to be the lack of institutional capacities. There are many institutional structures which are involved in natural resource management and these vary from national, provincial and local government to private companies and NGOs. At national level government departments have lacked the necessary skills, expertise and training required to provide strong leadership. For example, in South Africa the NFAP indicates that DWAF has strong technical but weak social capacities in state forests and almost no involvement in land outside state forests in the management of natural woodlands. At provincial level, capacities have varied as different provinces have given management issues different priorities and emphases that are reflected in how the forests have been categorised as a ministerial responsibility. At the local government level, management of forests and woodland has remained limited with a view to increase future involvement on both state and land outside state forests. The role of NGOs has been stronger on private or communally owned forests with little to no involvement on state forests. Implementation of sustainable management of woodlands is likely to be hampered by inadequate capacities at national, provincial and local government levels with little financial commitment to its development. Therefore, there is a need for capacity building to be incorporated into the policy process itself to establish an institutional framework for co-operative governance in the sustainable management of woodlands.

Responsibilities for Management

Woodland management is closely related to both ownership and user-rights of the resource. Management of woodlands and forests is practiced by those to whom they belong or by those who have access to benefits from them. Generally, woodland ownership in southern Africa can be classified as communal property, private property and government property. However, in practice woodlands in a given area generally come under a mosaic of ownership patterns, which inevitably confounds the responsibilities for overall management and results in conflicting ideas on resource usage. Successful and sustainable management of woodlands is of a major concern in southern Africa given the critical importance of the resource in the maintenance of rural livelihoods. Therefore, management should incorporate a multi-stakeholder approach which begins to engage all sectors in the development process.

Coordination Issues

Governments make repeated commitments toward ensuring co-ordinated approaches in environment development processes. However, the policy structure has led towards an arbitrary sectoral division in responsibility across a wide range of government departments and other agencies. This division in responsibility across the different sectors of government has revealed conflicts and overlaps in natural resource administration in southern Africa. There needs to be a holistic review of all policies and a clear picture of what is to be managed, by whom, and at what level in order to promote more efficient co-ordination both within and between government and other stakeholders in the future.

Assessment, Monitoring and Research

Forestry research in South Africa has so far mainly focused on forestry production and utilisation. However, there is a change towards broader perspectives and this will require research efforts that address a wide range of forest functions including ecology, catchment management and socio-economic aspects. It is important that this research can be used for the development of guidelines for future forest management. The assessment

and monitoring of forest activities is also constrained by a lack of relevant indicators, especially within the field of non-timber forest products.

Policy Making Processes

There is a need to share information and promote stakeholder involvement in policy review processes in southern Africa. Although the need to incorporate local knowledge systems in policy development is often recognised, this is rarely practiced through mechanisms which actually allow local representation. National government will need to improve on network building and development of inter-linkages across agencies including international agencies, NGOs, the private sector and community-based institutions. Such networks are intended to improve information flow, avoid duplication, make efficient use of resources, enhance effectiveness and avoid contradictory approaches. Sharing of woodland resources between inhabitants in different land tenure categories, particularly in those areas sharing a border with communal lands will need to be closely looked at in southern Africa. This will provide a viable way to address resource shortages, share management responsibilities and build trust between different landholders.

Conclusion

This article illustrates that there are a range of policies, both nationally and internationally, that impact on the sustainability of natural woodlands in southern Africa. The critique of existing policies indicates serious gaps. Some of these include the lack of definitional clarity about the woodlands, implementation challenges, inability to identify existing as well as potential users of the woodlands, inability to develop policy frameworks that will ensure the monitoring and evaluation of the impacts of the policy more generally, the lack of focus on local capacity building, inability to outline a research agenda that will feed into the monitoring systems, and the inability to integrate conservation imperatives relating to woodland use within the policy frameworks.

Policy and legislation on woodlands is at present both restrictive and contradictory. Apart from the overlaps and interpretative differences, policy

and legislation remain equivocal about the rights of communities to control the utilisation of woodland products and services. The reliance on restrictive legislation has meant that governance arrangements, particularly in communal areas are unable to deal with matters of sustainable resource use (Bob & Banoo 2002). Local authorities, which are charged with many responsibilities are inadequately financed and tend to rely on the services of central governments sectoral agencies which normally have varying agendas and this further exacerbates overlap and contradictions at the local level. The key aspect of concern is that of implementation. Many of the policies articulate laudable intentions. However, generally there is difficulty in translating these policies into practice.

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