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Case Study Information Sheet

Region: Sub-Saharan Africa

Country: The Gambia

Title: Community Forest Ownership: Key to Sustainable Forest Resource Management. The Gambian Experience

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Other Information: (i) Original language: English; (ii) Partners: Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit(GTZ), Gambian German Forestry Project (GGFP)

Abstract: This is a case of the changes brought about in traditional forest management practices of the Forest Department in The Gambia, following large-scale deforestation and destruction of invaluable forest resources and realization of the need for community involvement in their protection and maintenance. With the support of the Gambian German Forestry Project (GGFP), the Forest Department introduced community forestry in 1990. The institutional changes included creation of Forest Committees at the village level that are responsible, along with the Forest Department, for developing and following the Community Forest Management Agreements, and for taking revenue management and conflict management decisions. In the latter activity help from traditional chiefs are taken. While technical assistance is provided by the Forest Department, the communities use traditional culture as a basis for organizing themselves into various task forces. One of the key lessons from this experience is that communities should be granted permanent ownership rights over the clearly demarcated forest resources being protected by them, on the condition that they would sustainably manage the resources. In addition the absence of financial incentives for undertaking these tasks instilled a sense of ownership and responsibility within the communities. Approval by the concerned Government of the new Gambian Forest Policy in 1995, and its consequent legislative approval, provided a much needed legal standing to this innovative approach which is now being implemented countrywide. This case study details the participatory process involved in bringing about the existing changes in The Gambian Forest sector, and other related natural resource management practices.

Themes (prioritized): 1, 2, 3

Subsistence Practices (prioritized): Pastoralism, Gathering, Agriculture

Resource Type & Ecosystem: Forest

Key Terms: Community consultation, Conflict management, Conservation, Replication

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