

PFM in Sheko

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Background

Various biodiversity conservation efforts have been attempted in the Afromontane forests of Ethiopia. These include the EU supported Coffee Improvement Program (CIP) and the IBC Coffee genetic resources conservation initiative. However, these efforts have had little lasting impact. This has been attributed to the exclusion of communities from playing an active role in the forest and coffee conservation effort. In such exclusionary approaches communities find no incentives to encourage their support; rather they are ignorant of, or become hostile to the initiative, and potential conflicts can be created.

A further challenge is that despite *de jure* claims for strict protection and law enforcement, governments and conservation bodies failed to put in place effective institutions and allocate sufficient funds to ensure protection. Despite good intentions, these approaches left the forest in a *de facto* open access situation which often lead to widespread forest degradation or deforestation.

The WCC-PFM Project adopted Participatory Forest Management (PFM) as an approach to forest management and biodiversity conservation in Sheko. PFM was chosen because it recognizes the traditional forest use rights of communities as well as their responsibilities and skills in sustainable forest management. PFM focuses on the role of local people who traditionally eke a living from these forests. PFM works to reconcile conservation and livelihood needs. Recognising use rights develops a sense of ownership and boosts household incomes from forest products. In return for the benefits derived from forest products, communities take responsibility for forests, improving their management and maintenance.

Project Strategy for a Sustainable Solution

There is growing evidence that PFM has the ability to ensure better biodiversity conservation than other approaches. These include:

- PFM actively engages and empowers communities providing powers of self-determination over their forest, granting use rights and a clearer sense of ownership, and developing capacity to manage and use the forests;
- Communities benefitting from PFM appreciate the value of biodiversity and forests not only for the products but also for the multiple ecosystem services, and as a result will manage the forest if properly engaged and empowered, rather than being excluded;

- Forest ecosystems and their biodiversity are the result of mild wild animal/human/forest interaction and there is a general understanding that this interaction should continue in order to maintain the ecological situation, especially for wild coffee regeneration which requires gaps in the forest canopy;
- PFM projects in Ethiopia and elsewhere in Africa and Asia have had a positive impact on the rehabilitation of lost ecosystems and have helped maintain ecosystem diversity as well as improving management of forests.

The project strategy to achieve improved conservation of coffee genetic diversity conservation is summarized in Figure 1.

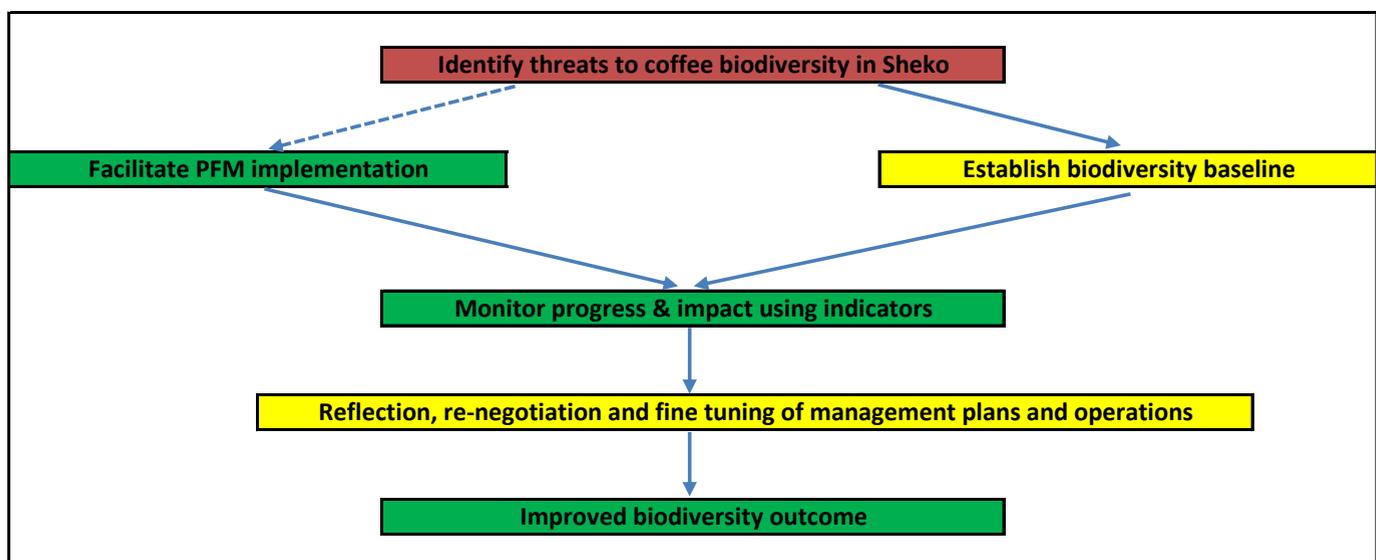


Figure 1. Project strategy to achieve wild coffee conservation

How PFM Works

Participatory Forest Management has emerged as one form of responsible and sustainable forest management and has been widely adopted in several countries,

including Ethiopia. PFM is a negotiated and legally devolved form of management with defined rights, revenues and responsibilities amongst the participating

parties. PFM covers a multitude of arrangements from community forestry, in which communities assume complete control and use rights over forests previously government owned, through to joint forest management where community and government each assume rights and responsibilities.

With these rights and incentives in place, responsibilities for forest management emerge automatically, or can be negotiated and included as part of the process and agreement. These rights-triggered management responsibilities have been shown to be the best way to slow deforestation and forest degradation and ensure better conservation of forest ecosystems (Figure 2).

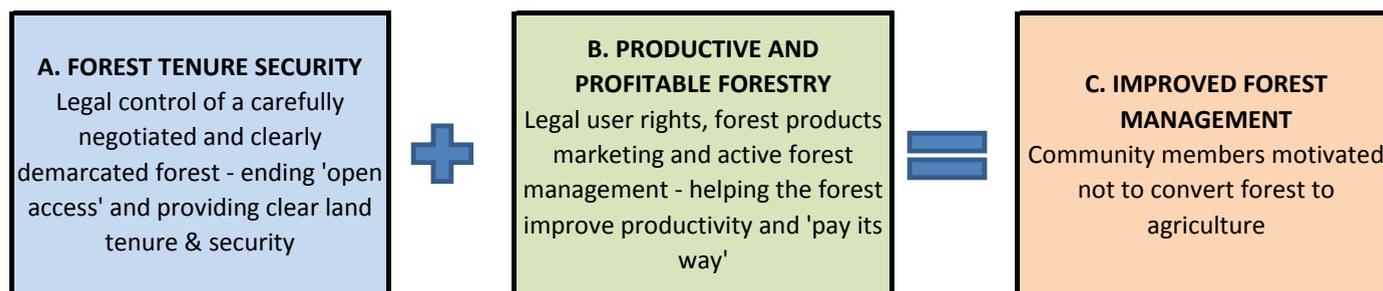


Figure 2. The principles under which PFM operates to ensure improved forest management outcomes

PFM is a rigorous and stepwise process. It starts with awareness raising and building trust and moves on to forest boundary demarcation, forest condition assessment, formation of community forest organisations, byelaw development, development of forest management plans, forest based enterprise development, signing of forest management agreements between communities and government, before ending with the development of monitoring and evaluation protocols implemented by communities and government.

Experience has shown that community motivation to participate in PFM is not solely driven by short term forest use and income goals, but by the desire for a long term balance between goods and services provided by forest ecosystems.

PFM in Sheko

In Sheko, community PRA exercises reveal the motivation for forest management is both revenue and environmental services. Communities articulate well, and often in a balanced way, the product and service values of their forests. In Sheko they stated that 'without the forests protecting the mountains around their farm and villages, the productivity and sustainability of their agricultural systems will soon be at stake.' This is reflected in forest management plans the communities have developed as well as in the PFM agreements signed with government. In their plans, communities included management activities that would improve the condition of the forests, and their ecological and social services. In reviewing a sample of community plans and PFM agreements, several forest and biodiversity friendly components were found:

1. Two types of forest are identified and mapped: coffee forest and natural forest. These are agreed to be managed differently and this is reflected in the forest management plans. Moreover, in the agreement

Deforestation and conversion are stimulated by two major factors:

- insecurity of forest and forest land tenure, and
- expectations that non-forest activities have greater livelihood benefits.

PFM addresses these issues by providing improved user rights and secure tenure through legally signed agreements with government. It also increases the value of the forest through active forest management to improve productivity and forest based enterprise development.

documents communities have committed to not convert the natural forest into other land use, i.e. to preserve the natural forest / coffee forest boundary. If the forest boundary is not changed then the natural forest area in total will remain the same.

2. Many of the community plans include enrichment planting of indigenous tree seedlings in the coffee forest as this part of the forest has over-mature and dying trees because no seedlings have been allowed to grow due to the complete weeding which has been undertaken in connection with coffee harvesting in recent years. The planting of enrichment seedlings helps ensure the preservation of indigenous canopy and other plant species used for coffee shade.
3. Similarly several positive biodiversity operations are being undertaken in the natural forests:
 - Tending of seedlings in natural forest with active silviculture to control invasive tree ferns and undergrowth;
 - Low impact uses focusing on Non Timber Forest Products (e.g. collecting honey, medicinal plants and lianas), while working towards reversing illegal and destructive uses;
 - Protection of the natural forests against land-use change, illegal use, forest fires and coffee farm expansion, and other negative activities.

Conclusions

The WCC-PFM project has approached conservation in a totally new way by engaging local communities and giving them the responsibilities to manage the forests while also making economic use of these areas on a sustainable basis. Through this new PFM approach to biodiversity conservation there are good prospects for successful *in situ* conservation of the genetic pool of *Coffea arabica* in Sheko at species and ecosystem levels.

South West Forests and Landscapes Grouping

SWFLG is an informal grouping of organisations which are interested in the development of an ecologically sound and socio-economically sensitive approach to the management of the south west landscapes of Ethiopia. The members of the grouping to date are: University of Huddersfield (UK), Ethio-Wetlands & Natural Resources Association and Sustainable Livelihood Action/Wetland Action EEIG (the Netherlands). They have been partners in projects funded by the EU and several other international donors since 1996 and have built up specific expertise in the areas outlined above.

The grouping currently has two projects in this area besides the recently completed 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, the Horn of Africa Regional Environment Centre and Network and the UK Government Darwin Initiative.

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.

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WCC-PFM Project Summary

The “Wild Coffee Conservation by Participatory Forest Management” (WCC-PFM) Project seeks to test and fine-tune PFM so that it can contribute to *in situ* conservation of wild coffee in the forests in southwest Ethiopia. At present the project is working in parts of Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s Regional State (SNNPRS).

The focus of this approach to *in situ* conservation is the engagement of the communities so that they own and lead the process of PFM and forest management plan development and implementation. The plans include different forest management practices - development, protection and utilisation, including activities to ensure *in situ* conservation. The PFM process is driven by the way in which rights can be devolved to communities and forest-based enterprises developed which help forests become an attractive land use for communities, competing against other land uses and so “pay their way”.

Further details can be found at:

<http://wetlandsandforests.hud.ac.uk/forests.html>

All SWFLG Briefing Notes can be found at:

http://wetlandsandforests.hud.ac.uk/wcc_publications.html

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Project Funding Agencies



European Union,
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Sustainable Livelihood Action



Ethiopian Institute of
Biodiversity



Southern Nations, Nationalities
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