



National Report to the Fifth Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

The Kingdom of Lesotho

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INTRODUCTION

Of Lesotho's total land area, less than 1% is under forest cover. Despite its scantiness, the patches of remaining indigenous trees and shrubs fulfil important socio-economic and ecological functions. Many rural people rely on indigenous trees and shrubs for fuel and other products. While large numbers of livestock obtain fodder, shade and shelter from indigenous woody vegetation. By providing vegetative cover, indigenous trees and shrubs play a critical role in protecting land from soil erosion by regulating the water cycle. Particularly as such forests often occur in catchments and river valleys. Areas of native trees and shrubs also provide an important habitat for wildlife and plants and are of significant cultural value to Basotho. Many references are made in Sesotho literature to indigenous trees, some of which are now only rarely spotted.

There are potentially useful indigenous tree or shrub species populations being lost in Lesotho. These species are generally at the highest extremes of their natural distribution in Lesotho and so are potentially of high genetic value.

It is of utmost important to point out from the outset that these guidelines and suggested format for this exercise has been very helpful to see clearly what has to be reported to inform the UNFF process. However, in the of Lesotho an attempt has been made to cover only those relevant IPF/IFF proposals for action such as rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover; rehabilitation and restoration of degraded lands and promotion of natural and planted forests; maintaining forest cover to meet the present and future needs and criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management. Other proposals for action are still under a thorough study through NFP process to enable all stakeholders to have a feel of what needs to be done and who is responsible at the end of the day.

The main emphasis therefore has been put on those areas that are believed to be important for understanding the present state of forestry and the future trends in forestry programmes in Lesotho. These areas include, e.g history of forestry in Lesotho, existing forests, trees and shrub resources, environmental impact of trees and current forestry activities and programmes.

2.0 Overview of Forests Resources and Conservation

2.1 History of Forestry in Lesotho

Lesotho is predominantly grassland, and fossil pollen analyses indicate that the predominance of grassland and heathland has existed in the country for at least in the 23 000 years (Scott,1984). According to missionaries records of 1833 closed low forests have been restricted to patches under escarpments and in some mountain valleys and they had difficulties in getting suitable trees for roofing as the trees were too short to make required trusses.

In the light of depleting vegetative cover, the colonial administration embarked upon a number of attempts to promote tree planting, particularly during 1930s. These campaigns had limited results when one considers the number of trees planted. Nonetheless many of the groves of poplars, willows and wattle dotting Lesotho's countryside originate from this period.

Forestry initiatives in Lesotho date back to 1855 (May, 1992). Overall their success record has been poor. Although millions of trees were planted, very few have survived to harvestable age. Both bio-physical constraints, mainly harsh climatic conditions, and socio-economic factors were responsible for this limited impact. Most of the earlier efforts were directed at encouraging individuals to plant trees, either for provision of wood or for soil conservation. Plantings for soil conservation purposes intensified from 1942 to 1947, and focussing on communal planting in dongas or other unproductive areas. This scheme was largely unsuccessful, as tree survival rates were constrained by sub-standard planting practices and the absence of supervision and protection of planted areas from human and natural damage.

Following the limited success of community plantings, the Lesotho Woodlot Project (LWP), which commenced in 1973, had as its intermediate objective the establishment tree plantations that were owned and managed by the Government. LWP established woodlots, or forest reserves (FRs), with a total planted area of over 7000ha. It also produced tree seedlings for planting in catchment areas. In addition, LWP set up the infrastructure that formed the basis of the Forestry Division, provided extensive staff training and undertook basic forest research.

In spite of the expenditure and effort put into LWP, which included contributions by the UK Overseas Development Administration (ODA), the World Food Programme and the South African mining companies Anglo-American and De Beers Consolidated, serious doubts were raised about the sustainability of the programme by donors.

1980s witnessed the introduction of a number of area-based projects that included a significant forestry component (e.g Plenty, Matelile Project etc). These projects have tried to involve people in tree planting activities both on a communal and individual basis. Following such experiences and in line with worldwide trends, considerable interest in community or social forestry has been generated in Lesotho. This essentially entails assisting local people to plant their own trees.

2.1 Existing Forests, Trees and Shrub Resources

Lesotho is one of the least forested countries in Africa. No recent comprehensive data on the extent of forest cover exist. Variations of estimates depend on the definition of forest employed. By the most favourable counts and taking into account all types of forestry resources, coverage is unlikely to exceed a few percentage points of total surface area.

Forest resources can be categorised into five main groups. These are essentially categorised according to patterns of ownership and consist of: i. indigenous trees and shrubs ii. Government owned plantations iii. private treelots iv. trees in individual homesteads v. trees in the urban environment

Indigenous trees and shrubs

The extent, density and composition of indigenous forest and shrubland was determined in the course of the 1981-82 National Rangeland Inventory. Due to poor archiving procedures, however, detailed records by locality were subsequently lost. An extended programme has been underway since 1990 under which the trees and shrubs present in each forest patch are identified and its location plotted on a 1:20 000 maps (May, 1997).

Lesotho's forest patches and woodlands have been, and continue to be subject to so many impacts. This makes it difficult to identify and evaluate their current status. Essentially, the forest patches and woodlands are of two basic types, but with a number of sub-types.

One main type comprises the mixed evergreen and deciduous forest patches of the Lowlands and Foothills. It is found below escarpments, in valleys and gullies and other similar localities. Thereby providing partial protection from the fierce post-winter bushfires that used to ravage the country before overgrazing became rampant. It is reported that some of the species that occur in Lesotho are found in mountain forests as far north Tanzania and beyond (May 1997). The emergent trees of this first type generally grow to maximum heights of 12-20 metres. They commonly include *Celtis africana* (Molutu), *Olea europaea var. Africana* (Mohloare), *Kiggellaria africana* (Lekhasi), *Pittosporum viridiflorum*(Phuku e nyenyane), with less commonly *Ilex mitis*(Phukhu) and *Scolopia mundii*(qoqolosi) which are shade demanding in youth. The canopy trees, of which only a few species may reach 11 metres or so in Lesotho, commonly include *Maytenus hetrophylla* (Sefea-maeba), *M. undata*, *M. Acuminata*, *Halleria lucida*(Lebetsa), *Euclea crispa var. Crispa* (Mohlakola), *Diospyros lyciodes*, *Buddleja salvifolia* (Lelothoane) and *Grewia occidentalis* (Lesika). Due to cutting and browsing, these species are more often of shrub form. Old trees of the pioneer tree, *Leucosidea sericea* (Cheche) may occur but are succeeded by those of the other species in closed canopy conditions.

The other main type is dominated by *Leucosidea sericea* which forms more or less homogeneous stands of trees and comparatively-extensive scrubby areas in the lower Mountains Zone up to 2500 metres or so, where it appears to be a dominant tree species. Depending on the degree of openness of the *Leucosidea*, its principal shrub associates may be *Rhamnus prinoides*(Mofifi) , *Diospyros austro-africana* (Senokonoko), *Rhus divaricata* (Kolits=ana), *R. dentata* (Lebelebele), *Euclea coriacea* (Ralikokotoana), *Buddleja salvifolia* (below 2200 metres or so), *Buddleja loricata* (Lelora) (above 2200 metres or so), *Artemesia afra* (Lengana) and *Myrsine africana* (Moroka- pheleu) (May, 1994).

National Rangeland Inventory data, Mahlelebe (nd) calculated the total area dominated by the native trees as 34 685ha only. The inventory=s two vegetation categories, *Leucosidea*-dominated and *Rhus* - dominated were classified as shrubland types and in the final computation, the areas pervaded by the

indigenous trees were incorporated into them.

It is noteworthy that the national average crown cover (i.e the part of the plant directly above and below the ground) of *Lucosidea sericea* and of the various *Rhus* species amounted to 10.88% and 11.32% respectively of the total land area. While, total crown cover of all woody plants in these categories was 21.24% and 12.90% respectively; revealing the overall openness of woody growth in much of Lesotho.

Although the naturally occurring extent of natural forest and woodland is low, it remains a valuable resource to many rural people, providing: fuel, wood for tools and house construction, medicines for both humans and livestock, sites for traditional ceremonies, browse and shelter for livestock. Almost all these areas are extensively used for grazing and firewood collection. Despite the existence of management schemes backed by regulatory measures, natural vegetation loss continues unabated. The rate of depletion, however, has not been quantified.

Government Owned Plantations

Much of the country's existing woody biomass stock originates from planted trees by the Lesotho Woodlot Project between 1973 and 1987. Geographically woodlots have a skewed distribution with the majority located in the Lowlands and Foothills. By district, over half of the area established and survived is in Leribe (30%) and Maseru (26%). In terms of species: eucalypts generally predominate in the north, pines in the drier south and cypress at higher elevations due to silvicultural reasons. The current distribution of woodlot by district is given in Table 1. Although the gazetted woodlot area is 12,988 ha, the actual stocked area is less than half this figure (6,130.9 ha).

Table 1. Distribution of woodlot according to districts in Lesotho

DISTRIC T	Plantable Area (hectares)	Planted Areas up to 1993/94	Survived or Actually Stocked Area	Area Stocked with ECCS	Area Stocked with Pine	Area Stocked with Other	Number of woodlot -10 -20	Number of woodlot 21 - 50	Number of woodlot >50	Total Number. of woodlot

MASERU	3953.20	2478.40	1590.65	534.20	927.15	129.30	68	89	22	3	<u>114</u>
BERET	1188.30	1111.70	807.75	508.75	288.70	10.30	50	63	3	2	<u>68</u>
LERIBE	3186.25	3064.80	1798.75	1241.05	495.20	65.50	38	56	14	7	<u>77</u>
BUTHA BUTHE	1087.10	946.15	507.15	351.30	128.00	27.85	28	15	4	1	<u>20</u>
MOKHO TLONG	143.00	44.00	20.50	0	4.50	16.0	13	13	0	0	<u>13</u>
THABA TSEKA	254.00	176.00	49.50	7.25	9.00	33.25	14	15	0	0	<u>15</u>
QACHAS NEK	461.40	211.00	34.30	1.50	29.10	3.70	23	23	0	0	<u>23</u>
QUTHIN G	955.70	925.40	426.55	48.05	350.30	28.20	57	66	1	0	<u>67</u>
MOHAL ES HOEK	688.75	484.10	441.25	160.40	263.05	17.80	24	40	10	1	<u>51</u>
MAFETE NG	1078.00	921.00	454.50	126.65	288.90	38.95	18	31	6	0	<u>37</u>
TOTAL	<u>12995.70</u>	<u>10362.55</u>	<u>6130.9</u>	<u>2979.15</u>	<u>2783.9</u>	<u>370.85</u>	<u>333</u>	<u>411</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>485</u>

Source: Forestry Division Woodlot Inventory 95/96

Out of 10,362 ha of woodlot established until 1992 only 60% or 6131 ha are stocked at present (60%). Replanting of 4231 ha is required to re-establish the originally planted area. The currently stocked area of 6131 consists of: 2979 ha of eucalypts, 2786 ha of *Pinus* species and 371 ha of other tree species (see Table 1). The quality of existing pine stands is superior to eucalytus stands as well as other tree species. The stands require regular pruning and thinning. *Pinus radiata* and *Pinus pinaster* show the best growth rates compared to *Pinus halpensis*. Although the latter has a good survival rate it grows slowly. In most cases *Pinus* species are suitable for erosion control but not particularly appropriate for wood production. The most performing eucalyptus species has remained throughout to be *Eucalyptus rubida*

The inventory also identifies the following management problems:

- # inadequate management and control of the woodlot by the foresters due to lack of funds and other resources to carry out certain tending operations;
- # poor access to most of the woodlot situated on plateaux due to deteriorated roads condition;

- # meagre harvesting and illegal felling resulting in declining quality and stocking of the woodlot;
- # large losses of stocking and tree quality due to drought, fire and grazing by animals in small stands;
- # and decline in reforestation activities since late 1980s due to inadequate resources available for afforestation programme (Runze, 1997).

Other problems that limit the range of species which can be grown and contribute to low survival and growth rates, even amongst well-adapted species are harsh climatic conditions and infertile soils..

Private woodlot - individual and community

No comprehensive survey of private tree planting or ownership has ever been conducted. In the main, they consist of small groves or patches of grey poplar (*Populus canescens*) or silver wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) often planted in dongas. These include areas compulsorily established under the Tree Planting Scheme of 19942-47, and from government-paid planting for soil stabilisation undertaken as part of wider conservation programmes, dating from around the same period. Although many of the community woodlots are not systematically managed they have been able to regenerate themselves into well utilised resource base. This is significant in view of the heavy grazing impacts by livestock.

Individually owned trees in Homesteads

Individually owned trees in homesteads also constitute valuable forest resource. The undisputed tenure of the homestead has provided individuals with security to plant trees for amenity, shade and fruit. Peach trees in particular are a ubiquitous feature of villages. Most homesteads have at least some trees: For example, a 1989 surveys found that 86% of all rural households had one tree, 66% of which were fruit trees. Most of these (87%) were planted around the home, (Hall and Green).

Trees in the urban environment

Almost all towns in Lesotho have quite a number of trees in their surroundings. These trees play such an important role in improving the urban environment and the well-being of urban dwellers. Among other things they ensure a clean water supply for the city; protect the towns against strong winds; provide shade and a cooling effect in hot climate and provide a habitat for urban wildlife. Unfortunately, there are no figures to indicate the extent of trees found in the urban areas. Although recently cabinet has just passed a directive instructing the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation through Department of Forestry to plant trees throughout the country. To this effect the Lesotho Brewing Company granted the sum of M40, 000 for the purchase of amenity trees which have been planted mainly in the capital city Maseru, and other companies have already showed interest to support other ten district towns.

2.0 Forests and Related Aspects of Economic Development

2.1 The Role of Forestry in The National Economy

In common with most developing countries Lesotho's rural population is dependent upon biomass resources including shrubs, cowdung and crop residues to meet their own energy needs. Lesotho ' s harsh winters has meant that people require substantial energy for warmth in addition to food preparation. The overwhelming reliance of rural households on biomass fuels has placed tremendous pressure on this resource. While the use of dung and crop residues as alternatives to fuel wood has had adverse implications on soil fertility. In real terms, firewood provides 64% of the household energy in rural areas, with cow dung and crop residues accounting for over 27% of the balance (May, 1997).

2.2 Utilization of Wood and Non Wood Forest Products

2.2.1 Wood Products

Basotho utilise trees for a wide range of uses in addition to fuel. The survey work of Hall and Green indicates that trees are used for: fruit (especially peaches), windbreaks and shelter for houses, people and livestock, tools and furniture, fencing; browse for animals and medicines

2.2.2 Non Wood Products

It is important to understand the multipurpose value of trees and forests for conservation of forests and development of other community forestry activities. Beekeeping is a clear way of exploiting forests and trees without destruction. The financial outcome from beekeeping gives beekeepers a financial reason to protect forests and trees.

One source of forest fires causing tremendous tree destruction are honey hunters, but involvement of beekeepers in forest related activity will subdue this destruction through bee protection and assisting honey hunters in honey collection.

Also when given a choice for planting in forestry programme, farmers usually request fruit trees or trees from which they can obtain harvest within a very short time and many of these fruit trees depend on bees for pollination to produce high quality fruits and for fruit and seed set.

2.2 Domestic and International Trade

Lesotho imports most timber products from South Africa and the available figures on imports are 1999 figures indicating that almost over M200 million worth of timber products are imported every year. Hence, a demand, supply and consumption study forest products in Lesotho is essential. It is worth noting again that

the Ministry has just ordered a mobile portable sawmill to demonstrate to Basotho that structural timber comes from trees in order to instil interest in planting more for the future generations. It must also be noted that the statistics given has been collected by value and not by volume. There are no exports of forest production in Lesotho. All trade in forest produce and service relate to imports except for firewood.

3.0 Role of Major Groups and Social Aspects of Forestry Development

The Ministry has over the last two years involved all people with a stake in forestry matters. There is a general agreement that major groups have a role in forestry development in Lesotho. The Ministry appreciates that women play a key role in household maintenance throughout the developing world- they collect fuel wood, water, along with children are involved in forestry and agricultural production. In Lesotho, the role and the associated burden imposed on women are particularly serious given the large number of female-headed households (approx. 30%) and the difficulties posed by a seriously degraded environment. Women undertake a substantial proportion of agricultural and forestry activities and are extensively involved in the informal sector. This importance is not matched by control over most disadvantaged in terms of access to land having user rights only through their husbands although many women have found strategies to cope with this such as share cropping and illegal leasing. It is a major problem. Therefore, recommendations made in the previous UNFF sessions under economic aspects of forestry need not be overemphasized as it has captured all our aspirations for the future.

In a virtually treeless country like Lesotho involvement of major groups is a big issue or very important. Almost every week the Hon. Minister of Forestry and Land Reclamation go out to talk to these major groups with the recognition that these are the right people to advance the national forestry programme in the most sustainable manner and cost effective too. He has actually identified all stakeholders but more importantly the youth as the fate of forests lie in their hands.

Since the inception of Social Forestry Project 1993, Lesotho government has tried to empower local people to undertake tree planting and management of forests by assisting them to secure undisputed access to land and ownership of trees and in transferring and developing necessary skills.

Models of forestry development, which focus on individual ownership, have been emphasized rather than larger communal activities where uncertainty regarding allocation of future benefits has been consistently shown to act against people's willingness to protect and manage the resource.

Efforts have been made to integrate trees fully into farming and livelihood systems- forestry development must be wider than the simple promotion of blocks of trees without recognition of limited land resources and alternative land uses

4.0 Policy and Legal Framework

Policy Framework

Until very recently, Lesotho had never had a formally approved policy for its forestry sector. Notwithstanding this policy gap, the Government had always assumed the lead role in the development and maintenance of forest resources since 1876. This continues to be the case, with very little planting being done outside of government and international NGO supported initiatives. The adoption of a National Forestry Policy in 1997 marks a radical shift in direction by emphasising the role of communities in forestry management. In this policy, the government has firmly committed itself to local ownership of forest resources. To this effect, the Forestry Policy states:

It is the policy of the Lesotho Government to maximize, through actions consistent with other stated policies and development goals, the contribution that forests can make to the alleviation of poverty, livelihood security and environmental protection in Lesotho, and to enhance the participation and contribution of women in this endeavour.

Legal Framework

Land in Lesotho traditionally belongs to the people as a whole. The King as Head of State is vested with the responsibility of allocating land on behalf of the nation. The Land Act of 1979 grants Village Development Councils (VDCs) the authority to administer allocation of arable lands to individuals by issuing a permit known as 'Form C'. In so doing, it guarantees exclusive rights for a specified time period. Nonetheless, this license falls short of an officially registered title. The Land (Agricultural Lease) Regulations of 1992 enables a 90 year lease to be taken out on land, but this option is rarely applied to agricultural holdings.

Forestry activities and the status of tree ownership are governed by the Laws of Lerotoli and Forest Act of 1978 . The latter, however, was enacted mainly to support the development of woodlots or Forest Reserves and does not cater for ownership of trees by communities or individuals. A new Forestry Act was drafted in 1996, in response to the policy changes proposed in the National Forestry Action Programme of 1996. The Forestry Act 1998 was discussed and agreed upon at a forestry workshop in Mophale's Hoek in July- August 1996, and it has been formally approved by the parliament in December 1998. It places tree ownership in the hands of the individual or group who planted the tree. It also empowers the Ministry responsible for forestry through the Chief Forestry Officer (CFO), to transfer ownership of trees, forest plantations or indigenous forest/ woodland to groups or individuals, for a specified number of years and subject to certain terms and conditions. The underlying principle is that of sustainable management of resources. The CFO is to scrutinize applications and ascertain that candidates have necessary resources and management skills. Successful applicants would be required to follow a management plan approved by the CFO. Transfer of title shall be effected by means of a written agreement between the holder and Government. If the holder breaches the terms of the agreement, for example, by failing to manage the woodlot in a sustainable way as prescribed by the management plan, the government has the right to repossess the resource.

5.0 Institutional context

Primary responsibility for national forestry development within the government lies with the Forestry Department which is institutionally situated under the Ministry of Forestry and Land Reclamation the latter was established on the 21 March, 2003 with the four pronged mandate i.e afforestation, soil and water conservation and range resources management. The ministry since its inception has managed to achieve the following:

1. Hold awareness campaigns with different stakeholders to establish good working relations. For example, it has already held meetings with the following:-

(a) Primary, Secondary and High School Principals throughout the country

A total of 1030 principals have been met and they have planted quite a number of trees both within their schools and outside with communities surrounding their areas

(b) Principal, Ward and Local Chiefs

The meetings with the chiefs are mainly geared towards creating awareness regarding protection of the land based resources such as forest and rangelands. They are also meant to appeal to their co-operation between the ministry and different stakeholders with reference to the release of land for the developmental programmes.

2. **At present the ministry is engaged in the rehabilitation of 26 catchments which cover an area of 26000 hectares.**

to rehabilitate degraded lands, ensure adequate fuel wood supply and poles production among others.

These activities have long-term possibilities of creating employment; providing the much needed food source especially for the child headed and elderly managed households. They also compliment other government interventions.

- Water harvesting activity facilitates job creation through irrigation and aquaculture (back yard farming).
- Trees provide opportunities for small scale industries; such as dried fruits; poles treatment; timber etc;
- Grasses provide the much needed resource for improved livestock production and different cottage industries; but most importantly, it promotes water infiltration and better storage.

6.0 Progress in Planning and Monitoring of Forestry Development

There are quite a few planning frameworks that recognize the importance of forestry development such as National Goals and Objectives, Poverty Reduction Strategies and Vision 2020. One important target set by government within these frameworks is to plant 1.5 million trees per year involving all stakeholders as mentioned earlier. In order to meet this target Forestry department has categorized its activities into three main areas i.e social forestry that involves communities, individuals and groups; conservation or protection forestry that involves mainly protection of water catchment. This is a very important activity heavily financed by government due to a serious land degradation facing the country; agroforestry, here the main focus is on fruit trees and vines within the homesteads and crop fields, this year alone over 600,000 vines are going to be distributed throughout the country to interested farmers.

7.0 Criteria and Indicators

In 1998 UNEP and FAO supported a meeting on national-level C & Is in the SADC region. This meeting concluded that:

- C & Is can play a useful role in improving capacities for achieving SFM through the development of appropriate monitoring arrangements and catalyzing the development of adaptive co-management systems. Some participants argued that the frame of reference of “dry-zone was not really applicable to countries in the SADC region and proposed that the name be revised. The set of C & Is for dry-zone Africa (UNEP/FAO 1995) was therefore analysed criterion by criterion, indicator by indicator, but the end result produced a similar set with only one addition under Criterion V: indicator 28: Changes in water yield and quality. In essence the set would have 48 indicators, whereas the Dry-Zone Africa Process has 47 while the number of criteria remained the same, seven. The participants renamed the
- “new set” SADC initiative on criteria and Indicators for sustainable forest management in the framework of the Dry-Zone Africa Process. With this revision, the meeting endorsed the recommendations of the Nairobi workshop of 1997, and further recommended that the national-level C & Is be implemented with donor support, and be incorporated in ongoing programmes under SADC’s forestry portfolio

After the above meeting the UNEP/FAO supported the national workshops in respective countries and Lesotho was not an exception it took this important advantage and held a two day workshop with all stakeholders to adopt this new set for SADC countries and verify their relevance to our situation Unfortunately, the implementation on the ground has been hindered by the capacity due to inadequate financial and other resources. Apart from this a study by Chakela and Seithleko (1995) has identified several environmental indicators relevant to forestry. These are as follows: tree planting, survival rates of trees planted, agroforestry, effective institutions, awareness raising, conservation works, rate of fuel wood

consumption and rate of wood consumption for indigenous tree species. In fact, these suggested indicators can serve as a guide when formulating national forestry programmes and policies as well as broadening the information base in forestry development in the country.

7.0 International Dimensions: International and Regional Cooperation and Support

Forestry Development in Lesotho is supported by both Lesotho Government and the German Government through GTZ Social Forestry Project which started in 1993 till 2002. The main thrust is in establishing small woodlots for firewood production and poles within the communities. There is still a strong support in the technical assistance in terms of private nursery production which has addressed two main problems in the rural areas i.e employment and poverty. These family operated nurseries produce trees which in turn government buy at the set price through a clear contract. Currently there are over 32 fully fledged private nurseries with the capacity of almost 1 million trees a year and this has gone a long way trying to create much needed employment in the rural areas.

A close cooperation exists between SADC Forestry Sector Unit and the SADC Tree Seed Centre Network. For a long time we have been collaborating with KEFRI Kenya for capacity building programme on social forestry.

Currently, Lesotho is in the process of updating and reviewing her National Forest Programme through the assistance of the well known National Forest Programme Facility. The agreement was signed in September 2003 and since then Lesotho has become an active partner. The National Steering Committee has put together terms of references for various studies to be carried out by local NGOs that amongst them they will be looking at the role of private sector and NGOs in forestry development in Lesotho and identify the relevant IPF/IFF proposals for Lesotho and make recommendations that eventually be incorporated into the Updated National Forest Programme. The whole exercise is as open as possible and participation of all stakeholders is the key principle adopted.

Conclusions

The forest issues of Lesotho are many and varied. Some are unique to this country while others are clearly cross national boundaries. The daunting challenge facing both the remaining indigenous forest patches and the 485 Forest Reserves, is to implement a sustainable ecosystem management plan based on a sound understanding and integration of biological and socio-economic issues. Furthermore, there is an overriding need to assess and quantify the multiple benefits that Basotho society derives from forest resources. This data foundation is essential to establishing communal responsibility towards sustainable forest management within the context of participatory decision making.

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