



ABOUT THE PORTAL BACK GROUND ERS

The Africa Portal backgrounder series offers brief background information and commentary on current policy issues of concern to Africans—especially in the areas of conflict, energy, food security, health, migration and climate change. Written by seasoned, up-and-coming scholars on Africa, the backgrounders are published exclusively on the Africa Portal and are available for free, full-text download. The Africa Portal is an online knowledge resource for policy-related issues on Africa. www.africaportal.org

THE IMPACT OF DEFORESTATION ON FOREST LIVELIHOODS IN GHANA

JAMES BOAFO

SUMMARY

- Forest resources play a large role in income generation and household food security in Ghana, with forestry products providing sustenance and revenue for about 2.5 million people in the country.
- Between 1990 and 2005, Ghana lost over a quarter of its total national forest cover. At the current rate of deforestation, the country's forests could completely disappear in less than 25 years.
- Current attempts to address deforestation have stalled due to lack of collaboration between stakeholders and policy makers. A more effective approach will require the integration of sustainable livelihood activities into national forestry policies.

FORESTRY AND DEFORESTATION IN GHANA

Deforestation — defined as the conversion of forested land to other uses, or a permanent reduction of canopy cover — has attracted increasing international attention in recent years (FAO, 2004). Annually, the rate of global deforestation is around 13 million hectares, most of which occurs in the developing world. Forest loss in Africa is particularly troubling, however: two-thirds of the continent's population depend on forest resources for income and food supplementation, and 90 percent of Africans use fuel wood and charcoal as sources of energy. Despite, or perhaps because of this reliance on forest resources and non-timber forest products (NTFPs), deforestation in Africa is estimated at around 3.4 million hectares/year (FAO, 2010; CIFOR, 2005).

Disappearing forest cover is a particular problem in Ghana, where NTFPs provide sustenance and income for 2.5 million people living in or near forest communities (Acheampong and Marfo, 2011; Domson, 2007). Many of those living in these remaining forested areas have livelihoods predicated on

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Boafo

James Boafo is a Master's student in geography and rural development at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana. His research interests include forest management, poverty alleviation, climate change and food security.

the availability, access and utilization of forest products (Appiah, 2009; Asamoah et al, 2007). Forest communities use their surroundings for a variety of activities: the collection and production of fuel wood, hunting for game, collection of snails and mushrooms, gathering of medicinal herbs and chewing sticks, and both legal and illicit logging. The products obtained from these activities are recognized as resources that contribute directly to communities' well-being, especially during the agricultural lean seasons (Ahenkan and Boon, 2008).

It is generally recognized that outside of urban areas, forest products are at the centre of socioeconomic development in Ghana. A study conducted by Appiah et al (2009) in three forest districts, for example, suggests that income from forest products contribute about 38 percent more household income than any other income-generating activity.

Regardless of the contributions of forest products to livelihoods in Ghana, however, deforestation remains high. According to the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO, 2005), the annual rate of deforestation in Ghana is around 65,000 hectares and the country's substantial forest cover could completely disappear in 25 years. This stark prediction underlies the fact that deforestation is not only a serious national policy challenge at present, but has been a chronic problem facing a number of past governments that have failed to implement a viable national mitigation plan. Between 1990 and 2005, for example, Ghana lost about 1,931,000 hectares of forest, equivalent to 26 percent of total tree cover (Amisah et al, 2009).

MAJOR CAUSES OF DEFORESTATION IN GHANA

In Ghana, deforestation is the result of a number of economic activities: legal and illicit logging, clearing trees to increase arable land, fuel wood extraction and mining. These causes are differentiated across the various forest zones in the country, however: in the south, timber exploitation, mining and agriculture expansion have been identified as predominant causes (Boafo, 2012), while in the north, unsustainable charcoal and firewood production, forest fires and agriculture expansion (again) are the major causes (Agyeman et al, 2012).

Without realistic mitigation policies and coordination on a national level, these activities and their deforestation consequences are likely to continue

— and even increase — as Ghana's growing population demands more forest products and land area for settlements, construction, energy and food (Amisah et al, 2009).

IMPLICATIONS FOR FOREST LIVELIHOODS

The impacts of deforestation in exacerbating rural poverty are complex and widespread. Not only does forest loss reduce forest communities' contributions to national economic growth, but more critically, it threatens the livelihoods and traditions of rural and forest dwelling people across the country (Acheampong and Marfo, 2011). With the availability of NTFPs reducing alongside the trees that support them, forest communities often have to travel further distances into the forest to access products that sustain their food security and socioeconomic well-being (Bosu et al, 2010).

Across Ghana, logging operations have also had negative impacts on the collection of NTFPs at the local community level. Forest dwelling or depending communities rarely benefit from timber harvesting as concessions are reserved exclusively for corporate use (despite pervasive illegal tree cutting), while social responsibility agreements do not make adequate compensation provisions when forest dwellers' farming activities are harmed in the process of doing so (TBI, 2010).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the negative socioeconomic impact of deforestation across Ghana, several government programs have attempted to address the problem. In 2009, for instance, Ghana updated its National Forest Plantation Development Programme for this first time in eight years, with the latest version's main policy goals aiming to improve livelihoods through 'agro-forestry' — combining trees/shrubs and crops together in one area — and accelerated tree plantation. The sustainability of this program has been questioned, however, as it seeks to transform the typical livelihood activities of forest communities rather than integrate them into a larger mitigation framework.

To better mitigate the rate and impacts of deforestation on forest communities in Ghana, therefore, sustainable livelihood activities should be taken into consideration in national policies. Through working with the

traditions and activities of forest communities, a sharper interest towards forest resource management could be developed. Thus, it is important to emphasize that tackling deforestation requires a pragmatic integration of the activities of forest-dependent communities into national policy. In this regard, the communities will more readily appreciate the need to protect forest resources, as mitigating deforestation also implies safeguarding their own livelihood.

WORKS CITED

- Acheampong, E. and E. Marfo (2011). "The impact of tree tenure and access on chainsaw milling in Ghana." *Ghana Journal of Forestry*, Vol. 27: 68-86.
- Agyeman, K. O., Amponsah, O., Braimah, I., and Lurumuah, S. (2012). "Commercial Charcoal Production and Sustainable Community Development of the Upper West Region, Ghana." *Journal of Sustainable Development*, Vol. 5 (4).
- Ahenkan, A. and Boon, E. (2008). *Enhancing food security, poverty reduction and sustainable forest management in Ghana through Non-timber Forest Products Farming: Case Study of Sefwi Wiawso District*. Published online by GRIN publishing at: www.grin.com/de/preview/.html
- Amisah, S. Gyampoh, A. B., Sarfo-Mensah, P., Quagrainie, K. K. (2009). "Livelihood trends in Response to Climate Change in Forest Fringe Communities of the Offin Basin in Ghana." *Applied Science and Environmental Management*, Vol. 13: 5-15.
- Appiah, M., Blay, D., Damnyag, L., Dwomoh, F. K., Pappinen, A. and Luukkanen, O. (2009). "Dependence on forest resources and tropical deforestation in Ghana." *Environment, Development and Sustainability*, Vol. 11: 471-487.
- Appiah, O.D. (2009). "Personifying sustainable rural livelihoods in forest fringe communities in Ghana: A historic rhetoric?" *Journal of Food, Agriculture & Environment*, Vol. 7.

Asamoah, A.K., Pinard A.M., Cobbinah, R.J., Damnyag,L., Nutakor, E., Nketiah, S.K., Kyere, B., Nyarko, C. (2007). *Chainsaw milling and trade in West Africa. Socio-economic impact of chainsaw milling and the lumber trade in Ghana*. DFID, Renewable Natural Resource Research Strategy (RNRRS) (FRP) PMP 05-08. Natural Resource International, UK.

Bosu, P.P., Foli, E.G., Djagbletey, G., Ametsitsi, G., Addo-Danso, S. D., Cobbinah, J.R., Nkrumah, E.E., Bandoh, P.K. (2010). *Assessment of coping and adaptation strategies to the effects of climate change in the Offinso North and South districts, Ashanti Region*.

Centre for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) (2005). *Contributing to Africa's development through Forests Strategy for Engagement in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Center for International Forestry Research, Bogor, Indonesia.

Domson, O. (2007). "A Strategic Overview of the Forest Sector in Ghana." *Louisiana Forest Products Development Center Working Paper, No. 81*.

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2010). *Global forest resources assessment 2010*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 2010.

International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO) (2005). "Status of Tropical Forest Management 2005." *ITTO Technical Series, No 24*. Available at: http://www.itto.int/direct/topics/topics_pdf_download/topics_id=2645&no=0&disp=inlin

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (2004). *Global forest resources assessment update 2005 Terms and definitions (Final version)*, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/ae156e/AE156E00.htm#TopOfPage>

Ministry of Land and Forestry (1994). *Forest and wildlife policy, Republic of Ghana*. Ministry of Lands and Forestry, Accra.

National Forest Plantation Development Programme (NFPDP) (2008). *2008 annual report*. Available at: http://fcghana.org/assets/file/Publications/Forestry_Issues/National%20Forest%20Plantation%20Development%20Programme/Annual%20Reports/nfpdp_annual%20report2008%281%29.pdf

ABOUT THE AFRICA PORTAL

The Africa Portal is an online knowledge resource for policy-related issues on Africa. An undertaking by the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI) and the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA), the Africa Portal offers open access to a suite of features including an online library collection; a resource for opinion and analysis; and an experts directory — all aimed to equip users with research and information on Africa's current policy issues.

A key feature to the Africa Portal is the online library collection holding over 3,500 books, journals, and digital documents related to African policy issues. The entire online repository is open access and available for free full-text download. A portion of the digital documents housed in the library have been digitized for the first time as an undertaking of the Africa Portal project. Facilitating new digitization projects is a core feature of the Africa Portal, which aims to improve access and visibility for African research.

www.africaportal.org

The Africa Portal is part of the Africa Initiative project.

AFRICA INITIATIVE

The Africa Initiative (AI) is a multi-year, donor-supported program, with three components: a research program, an exchange program, and an online portal. The Africa Initiative aims to contribute to the deepening of Africa's capacity and knowledge in five thematic areas—conflict resolution, energy, food security, health, and migration, with special attention to the cross-cutting issue of climate change. By incorporating field-based research, strategic partnerships, and online collaboration, the Africa Initiative is undertaking a truly interdisciplinary and multi-institutional approach to Africa's governance challenges. Work on the core areas of the initiative focus on supporting innovative research and researchers, and developing policy recommendations as they relate to the program's core thematic areas.

MASTHEAD

Series Manager
Erica Shaw

Series Editor
Brandon Currie

Copy Editor
Vanessa Humphries

Series Coordinator
Hayley MacKinnon

Designer
Steve Cross

Copyright © 2012 by The Centre for International Governance Innovation

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Centre for International Governance Innovation or its Board of Directors and/or Board of Governors.



This work was carried out with the support of The Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Waterloo, Ontario, Canada (www.cigionline.org). This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Non-commercial — No Derivatives Licence. To view this licence, visit (www.creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/). For re-use or distribution, please include this copyright notice.

First published in 2010 by The Centre for International Governance Innovation



The Centre for International Governance Innovation
57 Erb Street West
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 6C2, Canada
www.cigionline.org



57 Erb Street West
Waterloo, Ontario N2L 6C2, Canada
tel +1 519 885 2444 fax +1 519 885 5450
www.cigionline.org

