

Forest Policy review workshop by Cassian Sianga

Revision of the Forest Policy of 1998 was deemed necessary at this point in time taking into consideration significant changes, which have occurred since its inception. These changes include the promulgation of the Tanzania Development Vision 2025; the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); adoption of the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (NSGRP) or MKUKUTA; Public Sector Reform Programme (PRSP) and the Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP)

The Forestry and Beekeeping Department of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism conducted a stakeholders' forum to discuss a "zero draft" of the National Forest Policy (which I circulated to the TFWG members). Members of the forum were from NGOs, Private sector, Research Institutions, Training Institutions, some CBOs, Development Partners Group, Government related representatives (such as Agriculture, Rural and Urban Development to mention a few) and Regional Administration and Local Government. It drew about 90 members in total across the whole country. The forum was held on the 27th and 28th November 2008 at the Court Yard Hotel in Dar Es Salaam.

Members were informed that the policy review process so far has achieved a number of outputs which led to the production of a "zero draft" of the revised Forest Policy. We were further informed that the review process was consultative and participatory, and that stakeholders' forum was crucial in order to discuss and provide inputs to the "zero draft" of the revised policy.

To make the process more effectively a synthesis of reports covering formulation process for the current policy, implementation of programmes/projects, legislation issues, forest outlook for 10 years and environmental analysis were used as reference materials to develop the "zero draft" of the revised Forest Policy and a matrix showing identified issues as was presented to the forum by the facilitators of the policy review.

The forum critically went through the "zero draft" policy and the matrix and made necessary improvements accordingly. The results of the recommendations will be documented by the Forestry and Beekeeping Department and thereafter be circulated to members.

According to the Director of Forestry and Beekeeping Dr. Felician Kilahama's statement in his closing remarks, he said that the document is for all Tanzanians. He said that the documents will be translated into Kiswahili as most of those who will be affected by the policy are the community members living in the rural areas depending heavily on forest products. He further said that these communities are the managers of the forests in their areas.

Dr Kilahama promised that once the translation is made it will be taken back to the communities for further consultations. He promised these consultation meetings to be organised at zone level so that most community members get involved. The dates for the consultation meetings in the zones were not immediately known but we have to be ready by such forums. This means we have to keep our members who we are working with in our areas

aware of these consultative meetings and making sure that we access the draft report. As soon as we access these reports we will make them available to you.