

MINISTRY OF LANDS AND NATURAL RESOURCES



CREMA

(Community Resource Management Area)

ENHANCING LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Ghana, acknowledging the threats of climate change and the growing cost of natural resource degradation, has adopted an integrated approach to achieving sustainable natural resource management. The integrated approach which revolves around the Forest and Wildlife Policy of the country and the Ghana Forest Investment Programme (GFIP) is aimed at addressing the underlying factors of the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation. Among these underlying factors are the lack of sense of ownership and inclusiveness in the management of the nation's forest resources. Often, decision regarding natural resource management and use are taken from top to down which brews a sense of imposition on the forest users.

To address this problem, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources is operationalizing the strategic actions of the Forest and Wildlife Policy which advocates for collaborative resource management. This is being achieved through one of the projects of the Ghana Forest Investment Programme "Enhancing Natural Forests and Agroforestry Landscapes" (ENFALP).

Under this project, the Government of Ghana is piloting the Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) concept as a strategy to devolve management powers of natural resources to groups of communities who come together with a common goal and objective.



GFIP | GHANA FOREST INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

The Community Resource Management Area (CREMA) concept was developed by the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission of Ghana to promote collaborative and participatory wildlife management in the country. The concept principally involves a group of communities agreeing on the management regime of a common area. This works as a community based organization with an executive structure, a constitution and relevant bye-laws that guide and regulate natural resource governance and management activities in the respective constituent communities. Usually the CREMAs link a number of Protected Areas and Forest Reserves and create an ecological corridor for both flora and fauna. Also the CREMA mechanism creates incentives for farmers by allowing them to benefit from the use of natural resources which in turn encourages them to manage these resources sustainably. Communities and land owners obtain much more rights to access and control the sustainable use of their natural resources which otherwise is the prerogative of government. Other benefits of CREMAs include improved livelihoods and human wellbeing. It also ensures that habitats are secured, and endangered species are protected. It further strengthens accountability and democratization at the community level, and promotes diversification of income generation which strengthens local economies.

PROCESS LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GFIP CREMA

To test the CREMA concept under the Ghana Forest Investment Programme, an ecological corridor within the High Forest Zone where cocoa production, deforestation and carbon potentials are high was selected.

The corridor had an estimated area 180,000 ha of which Five (5) CREMAs each with a total area of 10,000 ha was to be established.

To ensure inclusion and the respect of rights, one of the key approaches to the establishment of the CREMAs was wider consultation and consensus building. Also paramount in the establishment process was the engagement of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to facilitate the process. These CBOs had extensive knowledge about the landscape and were very vest in community entry and rural appraisal.

With the overall CREMA establishment expertise from the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission and the capacity of the CBOs, the processes leading to the establishment of the GFIP CREMAs were lively and engendered a lot of support from the targeted groups. This was evident in the oversubscription of the initiative.



Consultations and Consensus Building

The core of the establishment process was the consultations and consensus building aspect. This aspect was critical in the sense that the buy-in and the sense of ownership begins at this stage. This stage always borders around rights and inclusiveness. It was important that communities and members of particular communities who may not be interested are not forced to join the common agenda. The Investment Programme excelled in this area. The CBOs played an integral role with the support of the Forestry Commission and Ghana Cocoa Board to make the process inclusive as possible and conflict free. It is important to note that a grievance system was in place during all these processes.



Delineation of the CREMA Boundaries

After the consultations and consensus building to arrive at the conceptualized CREMAs, a consultant was recruited to delineate and demarcate the CREMA boundaries. The task was done in a participatory manner to ensure that areas are not wrongfully demarcated leading to restriction of access or land loss. Five CREMAs were delineated within the ecological corridor with their name unanimously agreed upon by all stakeholders. They are:

1. Aowin CREMA
2. Boin CREMA
3. Akontombraman CREMA
4. AsuoBiaNkyirima CREMA
5. Juaboso District CREMA

Selection of Executives

The CREMA management system emanates from the community level. In this regard, Community Resource Management Committees (CRMCs) were formed at all the communities participating in a CREMA. Through a consultation process, executives were selected at the CRMCs level. These executives represent the community at the CREMA executive level.

The CREMA executives responsible for the overall operation of the group were also elected into office. The executives comes from the various CRMCs making up the CREMA. The selection process was transparent and democratic.



Inauguration of the CREMA's

After the establishment of the executive structure, the development of constitution and code of conduct, the Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources through the Ghana Forest Investment Programme organized the inauguration and swearing in ceremony for the Five (5) CREMAs. The inauguration was done by the Deputy Minister of Lands and Natural Resources. To complete the establishment process, the Ministry handed to each CREMA a certificate of devolution of power which empowers each group to manage their area based on their gazetted by-laws and management plans.



SUSTAINABILITY OF THE CREMAS

Building of the Resource Centers for Each Group

As part of the processes to enhance effective CREMA activities within the five CREMA blocks established, it was agreed that CREMA offices be established in all the five CREMA blocks to serve as a resource centre, office for CREMA executives and community engagement. Following this, a contract was awarded and CREMA offices built, the Ministry officially organised handing over ceremony to enable the communities take over the ownership of the offices. The inaugural and handing over ceremony was performed by the Hon. Deputy Minister for Lands and Natural Resources, Hon. Benito Owusu-Bio. As part of the ceremony, the community members were supplied with the following field equipment's; protective clothing, wellington boots, cutlasses, bicycles, motorbikes and mobile phones to facilitate their work.



· **Provision of Alternative Livelihoods**

Sustainable natural resource management requires extensive support of local fringe communities necessary to reduce pressure on the natural forest and provide them with alternative livelihoods.

Furthermore, lessons learnt over the years of implementation of CREMAs shows that without livelihoods, when the projects ends, the CREMAs become dormant due to lack of resources to organize themselves. It was against this backdrop that the programme have made it a target to provide community preferred livelihoods to the established CREMAs to ensure that part of the revenue gained will contribute to continues operation of the CREMA.

In this regard, the GFIP in collaboration with the local CBO identified preferred livelihood ventures and they are:

1. Bee keeping
2. Soap making (perfumed soaps and local soaps from cocoa pods)
3. Snail rearing
4. Fish farming
5. Tree nurseries

The programme is working with the CBOs to procure the necessary equipment and logistics to operationalize the livelihoods.

· **Capacity Building**

The development and maintenance of local capacity is fundamental to achieving a strategic long term natural resource management outcome. Effective and efficient implementation of CREMA will only be achieved if the participating individuals and local communities possess the requisite capacity to undertake the various activities under the Ghana Forest Investment Project.

Capacity building trainings are being conducted for community members, field facilitators and field safeguard officers. The training focused on CREMA establishment and management processes, community entry techniques and safeguards.

Further to this, Series of community education on biodiversity conservation are undertaken. Community members are educated on the importance of the environment and the need to conserve it. Extensive sensitization of CREMA constituent communities on their roles and expected benefits from conservation of the environment are some of the training given to the community members.

Engagement with community members at the various community centers within the blocks provides opportunity to engage in a face-face interaction with project beneficiaries. Capacity building and training are essential and therefore there is the need to continue the sensitization and capacity building process in all the CREMA communities to ensure sustainability.

· **Harmonization of the CREMA activities**

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resource is working with partner institution to harmonize the implementation of the CREMA. In this regard, new intervention on the landscape will use the existing CREMAs as the entry point to avoid duplication and continue to keep the groups active.

Conclusion

The programme has successfully established and operationalized the pilot of collaborative resource management through the CREMA concept. Preliminary findings on the landscape show positive impacts of this initiative and there is interest for more of such initiatives. The programme is relying on the Forestry Commission to continue with the success of this pilot of a wider scale to ensure that the good impacts on the ecological corridor are witnessed elsewhere.