



## Implementation Challenges of Ghana's Forest Policy: A Case of Wassa Amenfi West and East Districts

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### Abstract:

There is an increasing global concern in relation to problems attributed to continuous tree felling that ultimately culminates in the degradation of forests. Forest institutions in two districts namely, Wassa Amenfi West and East Districts where deforestation is widespread were selected for this study. Interviews with key stakeholders together with a desk study which focused on the review of policy documents served as the basis for examining the challenges facing the proper implementation of forest and wildlife policy in the districts, the relationship between the Forest Division Service (FSD) and stakeholders as well as hindrances responsible for the non-attainment of targets for forest institutions in Ghana. Corruption which has been studied extensively in relation to forest management as one of the key challenges of forest policy implementation had no impact on the present study but rather commitment in enforcing laws, regulations and legislation in forest institutions in Ghana. Corruption is however one key variable which could have dire consequences on forest management in Ghana if not nipped in the bud by managers of Ghana's forest.

**Keywords:** Deforestation, Forest Governance, Wassa Amenfi East, Wassa Amenfi West, Forest Policy

### 1.0 Introduction:

Globally, there has been a lot of concern about the problems associated with the rampant felling down of trees leading to degradation of forests. FAO (2015) reported that the global natural forest decreased by a net 6.6 million hectares (ha) per year from 2010 to 2015. Deforestation in sub-Saharan Africa is exemplified by increasing domestic consumption of timber as well as increased demand for arable land for agriculture due to significant population growth (Asante, 2005). Ghana, a country in Sub-Saharan Africa has an annual deforestation rate of approximately 65 thousand ha. At this rate of deforestation, Ghana's forest reserve could disappear in the next 25 years (Asante, 2005). Having recognised the impact of deforestation in Ghana, the government of Ghana instituted policies and programmes such as the National Forest Plantation Development Programme (NFPDP) to encourage the development of a sustainable forest resource

management regime and address forest related problems. These initiatives have positively impacted on job creation, increased food production and contributed to a reduction in rural poverty in the Ghana (FC, 2008). Though Ghana's forest is governed by detailed forest policy and laws, it has not translated to the benefit of the society and the government (Marfo *et. al.*, 2002). Despite the agglomeration of the reforestation schemes or policies, the forest and the trees have not been given much attention to serve Ghana's economic and social needs.

Effective functioning of the forest management institutions require some basic corresponding prerequisites and know-how to achieve set goals and targets. The study apart from examining the challenges facing the proper implementation of forest and wildlife policy in the two districts, also sought to identify specific challenges working against

the effective functioning of forest management institutions in the two districts. The study also tried to establish the link between Forest Service Division (FSD) and stakeholders in forestry.

**1.2 Forest Policies and Implementing Institutions:**

Drafting a forest policy is about respecting the different and diverging views on how to use and conserve the forest (FAO, 2010). Forest policies entail goals and strategies for the management of the forest as well as an outline of the methods and processes for the distribution of cost and

benefit (Cubbage *et al.*, 1993). After the Rio conference in 1992, many countries have done structural adjustment in their forest policies to incorporate the livelihood of the local people (Franser, 2002). The current forest policy being implemented in Ghana is the Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy (2012) (GoR, 2012). The Forestry Commission (FC) has oversight responsibility of forest resources in Ghana. FSD is the highest on the forest administration structure at the decentralised level and it is headed by an executive director as shown table 1

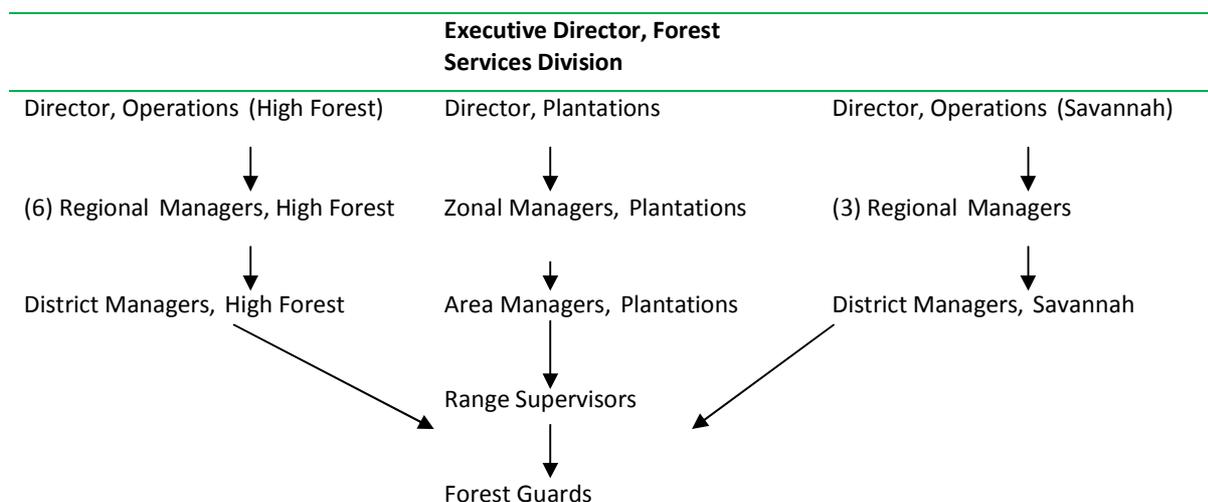


Figure 1: Forest Administration Structure – Decentralized Level (Modified from Asare, 2008)

**1.3 Ghana Forest and Wildlife Resource Policy:**

Ghana has adopted three official forest policy statements. The first policy was introduced in 1908 with the aim of protecting the forest cover and also water bodies for regular supply of cash crop production (Derkyi, 2012). A second policy introduced aimed at utilising and conserving timber outside the forest areas in the Gold Coast prior to being used for agricultural purposes. The second policy took into account forest sustainability and safety. A third policy whose scope was on both the forest and wildlife was formulated in the year 1994 with the aim of conserving and developing the country’s forest and wildlife resources having in mind the concept of sustainability (Ahenkan and Boon, 2010). The policy was to promote public participation with reference to benefit and management of the forest resources and also encourage effective coordination of study on forest related issues. The objectives of the 1994 policy

and its reforms could however not solve the problem of forest degradation in Ghana (RoG, 2012). A revised policy of 1994 was therefore formulated in order to improve forest management in Ghana. Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy was revised in 2011 and adopted in 2012 with the aim of integrating the principle of international agreements and conventions of conserving and sustaining forest and wildlife resources.

**1.4 Deforestation Situation in Ghana:**

Activities such as timber trade and the felling of trees for firewood are some of the causes of deforestation in Ghana. Ghana's forest which has an annual deforestation rate of 2.0% (Boon *et al.*, 2009) is continuously declining at an alarming rate (Hawthorne *et al.*, 2001; FAO, 2010). According to Ghana Natural Resources and Environmental Governance (NREG) report Ghana's forest cover stood at 8.2 million ha last century but an estimated

1.6 million ha now remains. Ghana's annual deforestation rate is approximately 135,000 ha (RoG, 2012). Deforestation in Ghana has significantly affected the ecosystem services/functions as well as foreign exchange in Ghana (FCG, 2015). In response to this alarming rate of deforestation the government of Ghana has implemented policies and programmes such as the Natural Resources and Environmental Governance Programme (NREG) and the National Plantation Development Programme to reduce deforestation.

### **1.5 Forest Governance Structure in Ghana:**

The Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources (MLNR) is the highest authority tasked with the responsibility of managing Ghana's land and forest resources. Under the ministry, there are three commissions, namely, Lands, Minerals and Forestry Commission. There are various semi-autonomous departments and agencies. The agencies are responsible for implementing programmes and projects in their respective sub-sectors. The FC was established in 1993 by an Act of Parliament (Act 453) and it is responsible for the daily management of forest and wildlife resources. The highest authority is the Executive Director who is appointed by the government of the day. Two directors are the immediate subordinates to the Executive Director. Various units namely operations, personnel, finance and forest conservatory are headed by directors. Field staff comprising range supervisors, technical officers, forest guards, and field assistants are supervised by forest managers at the headquarters, regional and district levels who are in turn supervised by the directors. Functions of the FSD include: revenue collection and mobilisation, controlling and monitoring of logging activities in on-and off-reserve forests.

## **2.0 Material and Methods:**

### **2.1 Study Area:**

Wassa Amenfi West and East Districts which are in the forest zone of Ghana can be found in Ghana which shares boundaries to the east with Togo, to the west with Cote D'ivoire, to the south with the Gulf of Guinea and to the north with Burkina Faso is located between latitudes 4-115° north and longitude 3.11° west and 1.11° east (Yvette, 2004). The forest management institutions in the two districts were chosen for this study because of the magnitude of deforestation problems and its

associated impacts in the country (Bandoh, 2010; IUCN, 2010). Wassa Amenfi West District (WAWD) one of the two study sites is located in the western region of Ghana. It lies between latitude 400°N and 500 40°N and longitudes 10 45°W and 20 10°W. The district is bounded to the north by Wassa Amenfi District, to the south by the Ahanta West District, to the west by the Nzema East District and to the east by Mpohor Wassa East District. From the 2010 population census conducted the total population of WAWD was 92,155 with 47,361 males and 44,791 females (GSS, 2014). The district total forest area is about 64,242.81 ha, total land area of about 2354 km<sup>2</sup> ha and it comprises of Bura, Angoben and Totua Forest reserves (GSS, 2014).

Wassa Amenfi East District (WAED) the other study site is also located in the western region of Ghana. It lies between latitudes 5, 30°N, 6, 15°N, longitude 1, 45°W, and 2, 11°. The district is bounded to the north by Upper and Lower Denkyira, the south by the Wassa West District, to the west by the Wassa Amenfi District and to the east by Mpohor Wassa East District. Besides, the 2010 population census conducted showed a total population of about 83,478 with 42,896 males and 40,582 females (GSS, 2014). The district total forest area is about 212.62 km<sup>2</sup>, total land area of about 2354 km<sup>2</sup> and it comprises of the Opon-Manse, Bowie, Tonton and Angoben forest reserves and (GSS, 2014). The locations of the WAWD and WEAD forest is presented in Figure 3.

### **2.2 Sampling Design:**

The institutions from which both primary and secondary data were collected include FDS, District Assembly and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Primary data were obtained through purposive sampling with the respondents being forest managers, district executives and project managers in charge of forest management. Secondary data were assessed via government documents and archival records. Purposive sampling method was applied in this study as shown in Figure 2 to identify informants with a specific type of knowledge and skills for the study (Li et al. 2006; Prance 2004). Purposive sampling method has been acknowledged and applied in many fields and this is because it allows the researcher to identify specific individuals who have information related to the study questions (Campbell, 1995; Godambe, 1982). The snowball sampling method applied in this study

assisted us to identify a small group of initial experts to choose other experts who can provide us with information. Figure 2 shows the identification of informants with a specific type of knowledge on the subject matter and the identification process of snowball sampling.

**2.2 Stakeholder Analyses:**

The study applied stakeholder analyses in combination with qualitative interview, direct observation and policy document review to understand the concerns, interest and perceptions of key actors (Yin, 1994). For example, we asked the forest staff “what are the challenges you face in

performing your duties and how have you tried to address these challenges?” Additionally, the method made it possible for us to identify forest-related policy and forest governance problems in the districts. Initially, the key stakeholders were identified based on the degree of influence on the forest and related issues. After identification, we had an in-depth discussion to understand their concerns on various topics. After the data was collected, we grouped all the answers into sections and identified the emerging issues. For this purpose, anomalies in the forest management and specific issues were exposed.

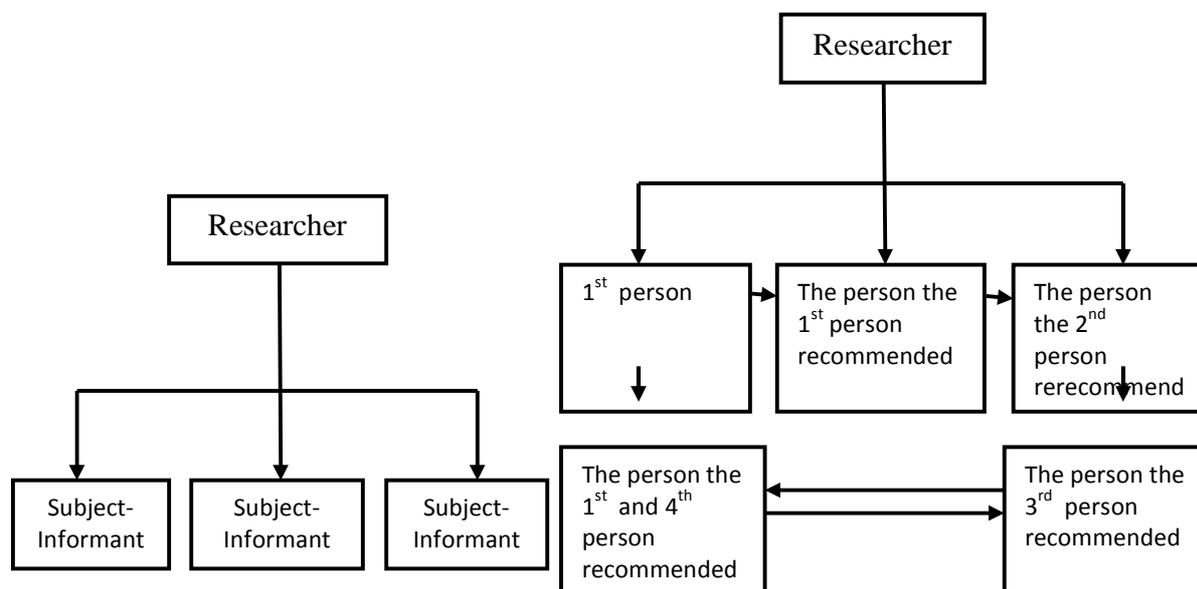


Figure 2: Purposive & Snowball Sampling (Modified from Blankenship, 2010)

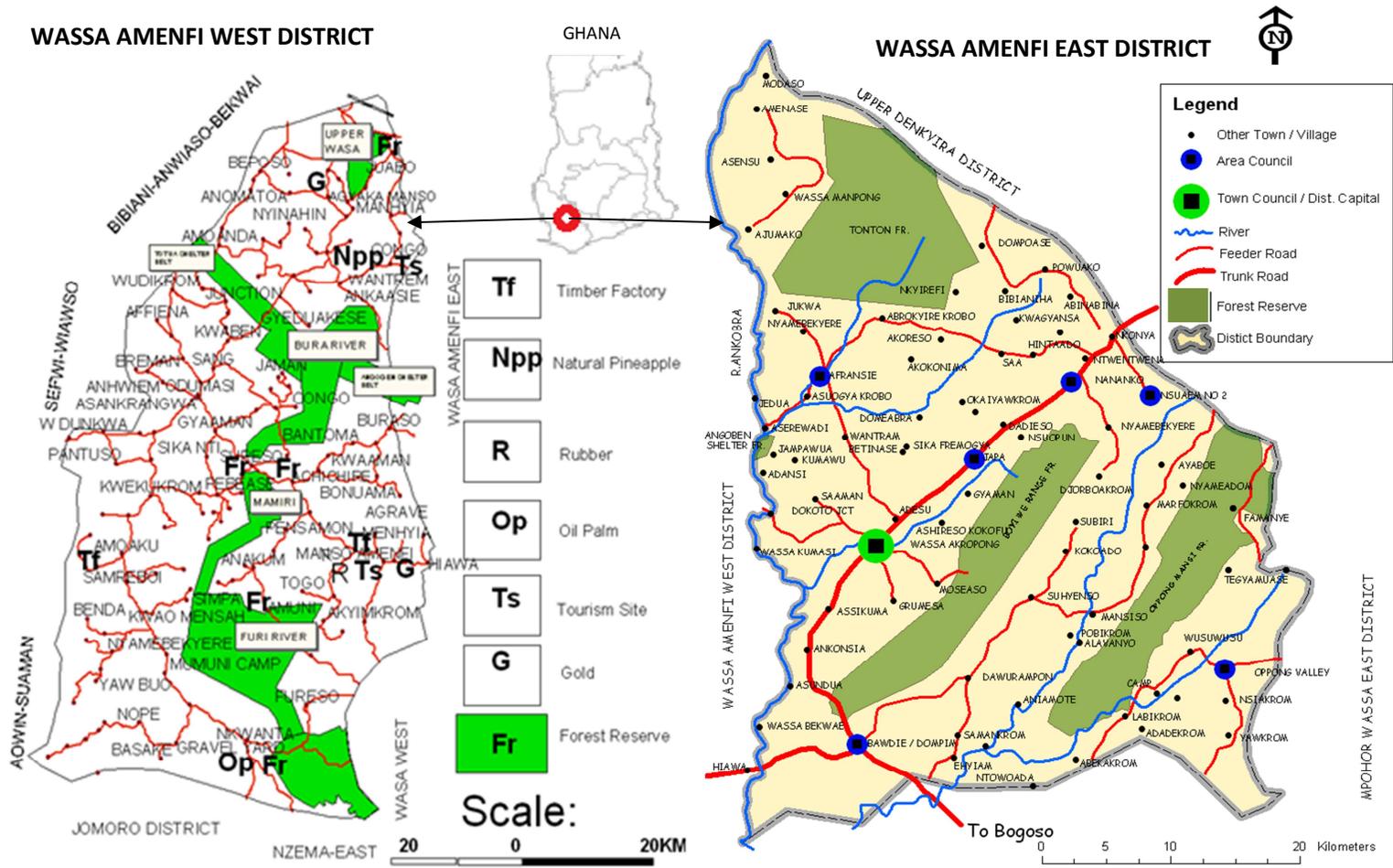


Figure 3: The location of WAWD and WAED Forest Area (Modified from Ghanadistricts.com, 2006)

**2.3 Analytical Tool:**

The analytical framework as presented by FAO and PROFOR (2011) in Figure 4 for assessing and monitoring forest governance to facilitate description, diagnosis, monitoring, assessment and reporting of governance of a country's forests and trees was used for the analysis.

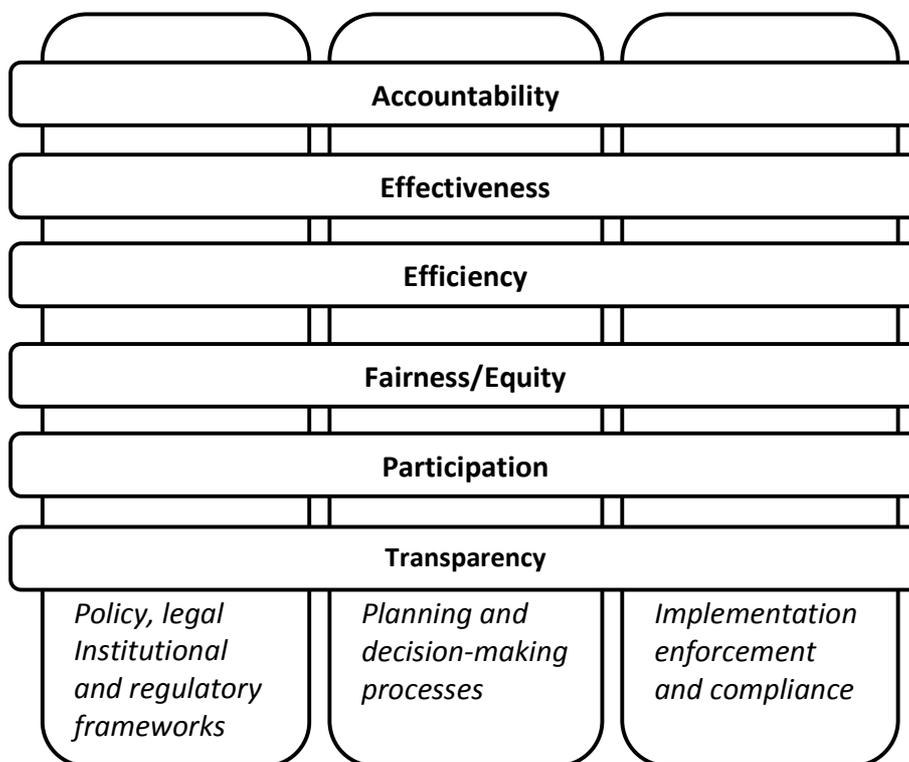


Figure 4: Pillars and Principles of Forest Governance (Adapted from FAO and PROFOR, 2011)

**3.0 Results and Discussion:**

**3.1 Perspective of the Forestry Division Service (FDS):**

The study revealed royalties as a key source of revenue for the FSD. Of the revenue mobilized, 10%, was credited to the stool administration. The Forestry Commission, lands belonging to the chiefs (Stool Lands), District Assemblies (DAs) and the Traditional Authorities received 25%, 55%, 20% respectively of the 90% Left. The successful implementation of the forestry policy 1994, was obstructed by problems of technicalities, coordination, implementation and finances. Compounding the already mentioned problems are other problems attributed to the Social Responsibility Agreement (SRA), sharing of benefits, as well as staffing. There are often delays in taking decisive decisions and in some cases, DA's are non-responsive in certain aspects of the implementation. Monitoring was also a major challenge in relation to the implementation of the Forest Policy of 1994.

The Forest Policy of 2012 makes provision for a Timber Utilisation Contract (TUC) in forest management. In ensuring that timber industries are committed to better management of the natural forest and also undertake tree planting activities makes the Timber Utilisation Contract (TUC) one of the best forest management systems in Ghana. Landowners and farmers are trained to negotiate for compensations and SRAs under the TUC. Under the system, community members have the right to challenge timber harvesting on off-reserve lands by illegal timber contractors. The Forest Policy of 2012 with specific reference to the TUC can be said to be transparent and very robust in that: negotiation for projects under SRA is covered, monitoring of the activities of TUC holders is ensured, compensation payments are made to affected communities, reforestation is undertaken, non-timber products are considered for long term sustainability of forest, support is offered community members accessing timber resources.

**Table 1: Current Status of Forest Initiatives in the Districts**

Institutions	Initiatives	Status
FSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community forestry</li> <li>• By-laws</li> <li>• Tree planting project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Capacity building &amp; sensitisation programmes</li> <li>• Development of by-laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> <li>• Yes</li> </ul>
DA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of by-laws and biodiversity policies</li> <li>• The District forest forum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yes</li> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>

**3.2 Perspective of the NGOs:**

NGO's have invested in activities to support and fill the knowledge and capacity gap among stakeholders working in the forest sector. A district community forum contributed to capacity building and knowledge management for Community Base Organisations (CBOs), NGOs and other stakeholders. The capacity building emphasised on the use of forest products for domestic purposes with permission from the FSD, royalties for community development, SRA negotiation, permits for timber harvesting, Timber Utility Permit (TUP).

**3.3 Perspective of the District Assembly:**

The DA has the responsibility to ensure overall development of the district, including natural resource management. Theoretically, The FC is required to report to the assembly but this arrangement is not practically implemented due to inadequate personnel, logistics challenges and funding gaps. The District assembly is obliged to enforce forest laws that allow timber contractors to pay compensation to farmers whose farms are destroyed by logging. Additionally, environmental committees and NGOs formulate by-laws aimed at protecting the forest from the activities such as chainsaw<sup>1</sup> and illegal mining (Galamsey<sup>2</sup>) operators as well as charcoal manufacturers. To ensure effective forest governance in Ghana, by-laws, capacity building and sensitization programs have been undertaken by institutions to create awareness on the impacts of deforestation on flora, fauna, the environment and humanity.

<sup>1</sup> Ghana prohibit small scale operators using chainsaws from cutting or logging its forest (timber).

<sup>2</sup> Galamsey mining is a local artisanal gold mining which is illegal in Ghana and often describe as "Galamsey".

**4. 0 Current Initiatives:**

Within the period of assessment, institutions had initiated community forestry approach and education as shown in table 1. Some NGOs had not been able to extend their interventions to other communities due to failure to raise fund. For example, a staff from New Generation Consult(NGC) narrated that among the 41 communities in the WAED only 12 communities had received forest conservation programme . Other related NGOs operate in a small number of communities in the WAED. In WAWD, there are limited projects initiated by the NGOs. All the interviewees recognised that lack of resources to undertake and implement projects is a major setbacks, hence, no matter how beautiful a project proposal may be it requires resources to implement it.

**4.1 Setbacks of Forest Initiatives:**

Sharing of revenue generated from the forest was a major problem. It is one of the major failures of most forest management projects (Richards *et al.*, 2003). The forestry commission benefits from forest revenue at the expense of the local people. The right to share benefits is related to the ownership of the resource that generates these resources. The local people are, if not exploiting their own resources are also entitled to part of the benefit from the resources (ClientEarth, 2013). The landowners are not satisfied with the sharing process. The local people have no choice but to resort to illegal activities to satisfy their needs. Also, they were not entitled to the full amount of the benefits. The Bopoben community does not benefit from stool land royalties thus forcing Bopoben to engage in illegal activities in the forest. In Twifo Morkwaa, farmers had no incentive to protect the trees on their land due to the fact that the timber tenure right was vested in the government of Ghana. Nketia *et al.*, (2005), also reported a

similar situation on farmers not being adequately compensated for the damages to their farms.

NGOs have reported of limited accessibility to timber by local farmers and chainsaw operators. The problem of chainsaw operation still persists in the districts even though there is a ban on chainsaw operations as also stated in Odoom (2005). The forest administration was not able to control chainsaw operations. There are also no measures to regulate illegal logging. Illegal chainsaw logging depletes or reduces the availability of timber resources in the two districts. The extensive and continuous illegal chainsaw operation is due to lack of clarity over forest resources policy and forest tenure system. Political interference and or influence of "powerful members" of communities undermined the effective implementation of the forest policy. This is exemplified by government officials shielding forest offenders. The restriction of local people in relation to access to forest resources is a contributing factor of weak policy implementation. Farm land is in high demand in the two districts as a result of which farmers take the law into their own hands and farm in forest reserves claiming their traditional rights to the forest are being denied. Over the years the national forest policy is designed to be more restrictive which prevents the local people from depending on the forest resources. The restrictions on forest reserve were aimed towards sustainable forest resources (Boateng, 1994).

### 5.0 The Way Forward and Conclusion:

From the findings, key possible initiative can be developed and implemented in the districts. The initiative can be achieved if there are strong involvement of government, stakeholders, decision makers and NGOs to implement it. First initiative is the continuation of capacity building programmes with the goal of addressing the root causes of deforestation in the districts. This initiative, if implemented, will educate community members and staff on modern methods and approaches, especially forest guards, range supervisors and forest watch dogs working in the forest. In the process, FSD should collaborate with other agencies such as information service department and national Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) to inform the farmers or the community members about sustainable method of harvesting trees. This will provide the local people with the information they

need to make better decisions in using the forest. FSD should also collaborate with the community effectively to make the community watch dogs work successfully. This can be done by supporting them with modern equipments such as mobile phone, motorbikes and even guns if possible to monitor illegal activities. Another important initiative is training of community members in small-scale enterprises. Small-scale enterprise such small farming, bee keeping and establishment of an advisory board to guide the community members with the skills and techniques they need to expand their business. Finally, the use of independent monitors to assist government with an independent assessment performance of forest sectors is supported. This initiative is highly practice in Cameroon, Cambodia, Ecuador, and Canada (ITTO 2005). For example, in 1999, Cameroon and Cambodia contracted an international NGO (Global Witness) to monitor the activities in the forest. Ghana can learn lessons from this initiative to sustain the forest. (ITTO, 2005). The ineffective implementation of the forest policies in Ghana could be attributed to enforcement lapses resulting in forest malpractices such as clearing of huge tracts of forest cover for illegal mining (Galamsey), chainsaw operations, farming in the forest reserves and bush burning. There is also a collaboration between NGOs and government agencies in the area of capacity building viz-a-viz forest management.

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