

Analysis of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Forest Management Institutions: A Case of Wassa East and West Districts in Ghana

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Abstract

SWOT analysis was performed on four forest management institutions viz Forestry Commission, District Assemblies, Forest Services Division, Non-governmental Organisation based on primary and secondary data which was obtained through purposive sampling and governmental documents/archival records respectively. Funding and political interference were identified as major weaknesses affecting forest management institutions in the Wassa Amenfi West and East Districts. Ghana's forestry regulatory framework can be said to be robust and extremely strong. This is exemplified by the existence of a National Forest Policy, a Social Responsibility Agreement, National Forest Plantation Development Programme as well as Ghana being a party to the Voluntary Partnership Agreement. There are windows of opportunities in reference to policy enforcement which could be turned into strengths.

Keywords: Deforestation, Forest Institutions, Forest management, Wassa Amenfi West, Wassa Amenfi East.

Introduction

Rampant felling of trees has attracted global attention in recent times. The global forest cover has seen a reduction at an estimate of 5.2 million hectares (ha) per year in 2000 to 2010¹. The pressures responsible for deforestation in sub-Saharan Africa are increasing domestic consumption of timber, increased demand for arable land, indiscriminate tree felling and population growth².

Ghana, a country in Sub-Saharan Africa also affected by the same pressures has an annual deforestation rate of approximately 65,000 ha³. Erickson-Davis⁴ reported that, more than 500,000 ha of forest cover in Ghana were cleared from 2001 to 2013. At this alarming rate of deforestation, not only will Ghana lose her forest but also trees of medicinal values as well as biodiversity. SWOT analysis is a planning tool that has been adopted by several scholars in the field of forestry^{5,6}. Suh and Emtage⁷ in their study identified empowerment to manage trees and the availability of resources as a strength of forest management institutions. Lack of finance, uncertain government regulation, lack of information and education were identified as major weaknesses of forest management institutions. Le and Pretzsch⁸ and Suh and Emtage⁷ identified availability of donor funding as an opportunity and the discontinuity of donor funding remains a threat affecting forest management institutions.

Hoare⁹ established the presence of civil societies, diversity of forest resources and availability of traditional institutions as strength in reference to forest management. Corruption, lack of

finance, political instability and limited capacity within civil societies were weaknesses identified by Le and Pretzsch⁸ and Hoare⁹. Lack of political intervention was considered as a threat while an increase in scope of resource conservation and livelihood improvement were the opportunities¹⁰. Bofo³ identified timber regulation, forest protection and community participation as strengths of forest management institutions. Bofo³ stated further inadequate community involvement and continuous timber harvest as weaknesses while strict management policy and enough revenue from timber were identified as opportunities in the management of forest resources. The present study seeks to ascertain the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Forest Management Institutions and their capacity to perform the forest management functions in the Wassa Amenfi East and West Districts in the Western Region of Ghana.

Methodology

Description of the 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 Côte 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° east¹¹.

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. The district has a total forest cover of about 64,242.81 ha, total land area of about 2354 km² ha and Bura, Angoben and Totua as their forest reserves¹².

The district covers a total land area of 2354 sq. km. 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. The district has a total of forest cover of about 212.62 km², total land area of about 2354 km² and Opon-Manse, Bowie, Tonton and Angoben as

their forest reserves¹³. The locations of the WAWD and WEAD Forest is presented in Figure-1.

Study Design: Primary and secondary data were collected from the Forestry Commission (FC) Forest Services Division (FSD), District Assemblies (DAs) and Non-Governmental Institutions (NGOs). Primary data were obtained through purposive sampling from respondents not limited to, forest managers, district executives, project managers, forest officials and NGOs working in the field of forest management. Secondary data were assessed via government documents and archival records after which the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of forest management institutions were used and the application of a modified version of the United Nation Environmental Programme's (UNEP's) methodology as stated in the Intergrated Environment Association (IEA) manual as indicated in Figure-2.

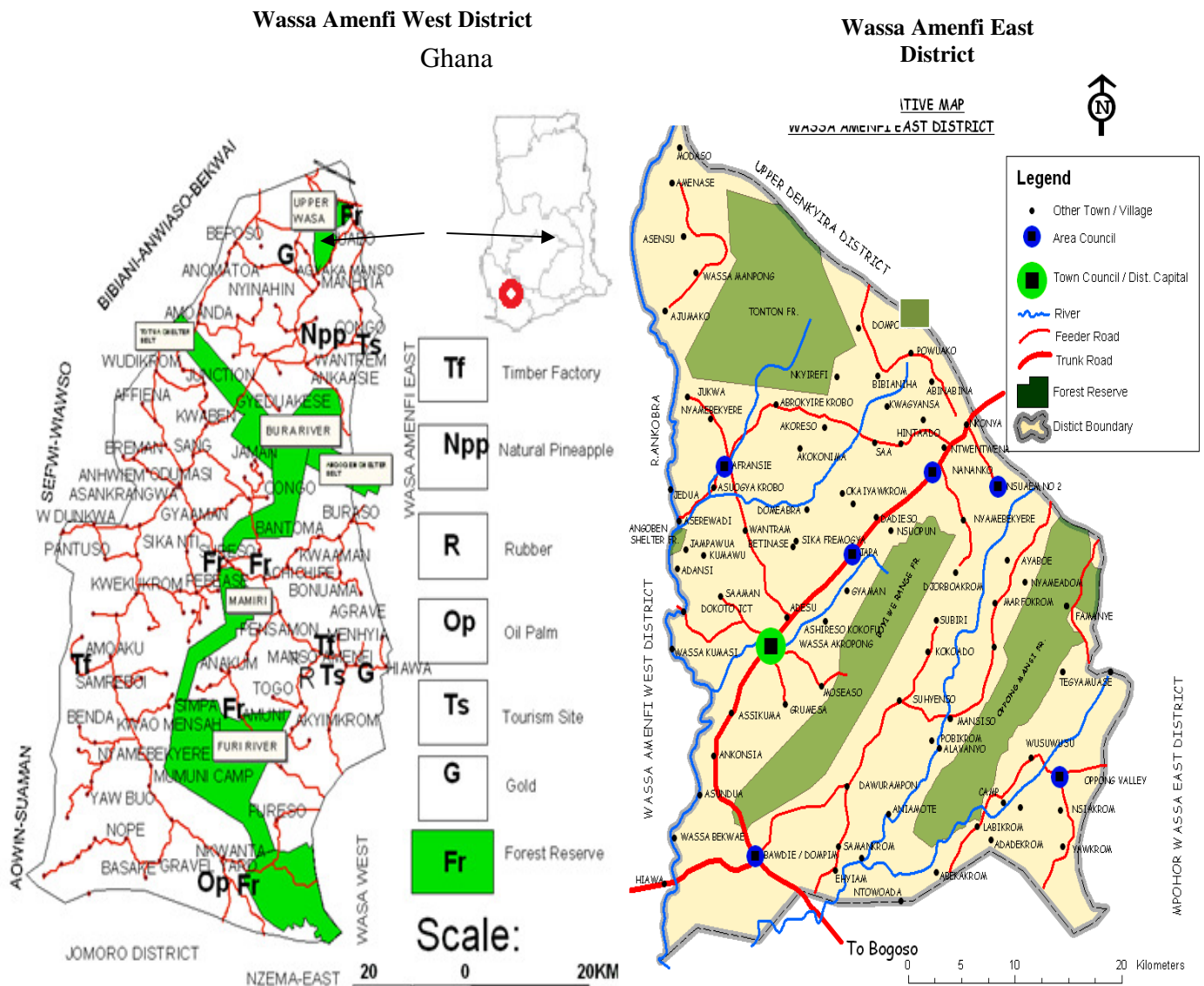


Figure-1
 The locations of the WAWD and WEAD Forest (Adapted from Ghanadistricts.com¹⁴)

Results and Discussion

Table-1 shows the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of key forest management institutions in two districts in Ghana. The SWOT matrix as shown in the Table was generated

using indicators namely performance criteria, policy instruments, funding availability and political interference. The existence of forest management regulations was a key strength among all the four forest management institutions.

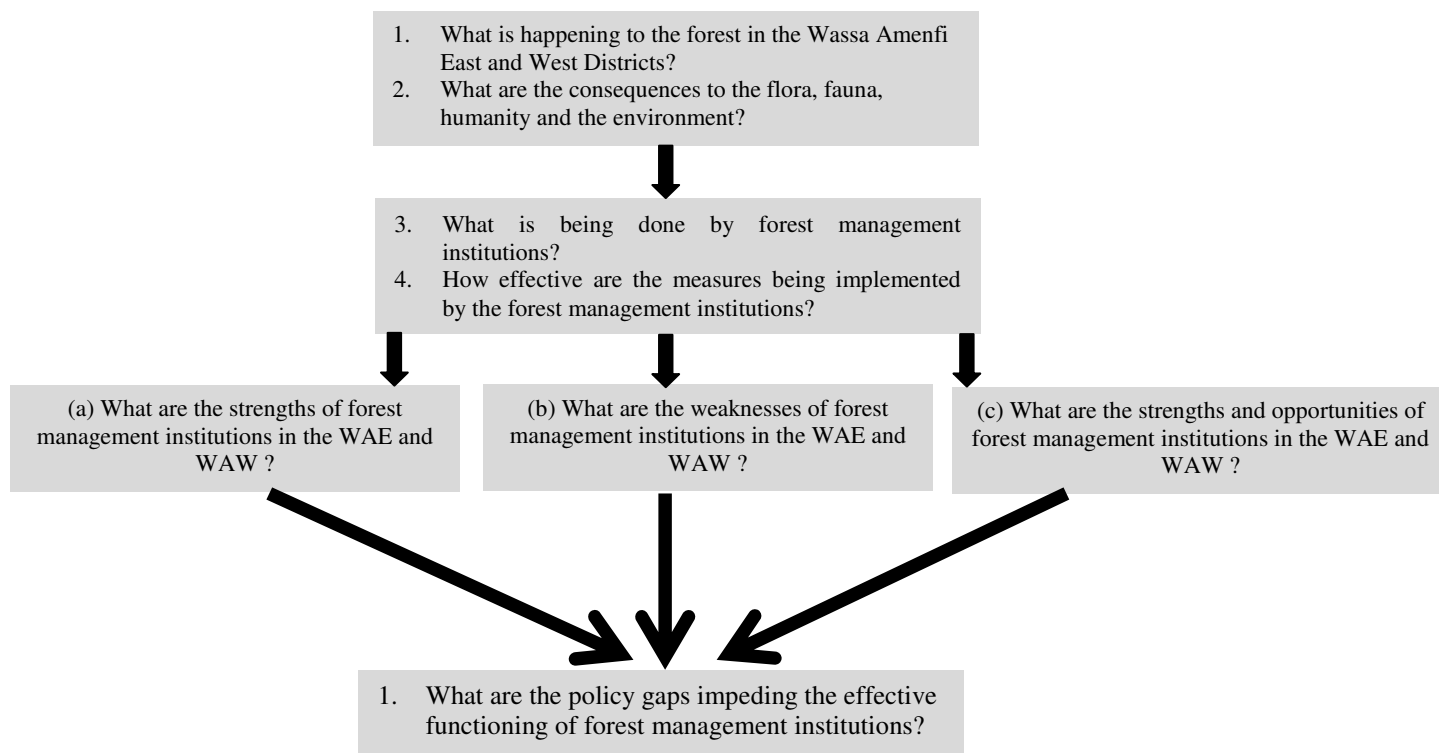


Figure-2
 Methodological Flow Diagram (Adapted from the UNEP, IEA Training Manual¹⁵)

Table-1
 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of Forest Management Institutions in the districts

| Strengths | Forestry Commission | District Assemblies | NGO's | FSD |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------|-----|
| (a) Performance Criteria | | | | |
| 1. Targets | + | + | ++ | + |
| 2. Benchmarks | +++ | | +++ | ++ |
| 3. Principles | +++ | +++ | +++ | +++ |
| 4. Standards | ++ | | +++ | +++ |
| (b) Policy/Policy Instruments | | | | |
| 1. Regulatory | +++ | +++ | ++ | +++ |
| 2. Institutional | +++ | | +++ | +++ |
| 3. Expenditure | | | +++ | |
| (c) Funding | | | + | + |

Weaknesses

| | Forestry Commission | District Assemblies | NGO's | FSD |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------|-----|
| (b) Policy/Policy Instruments | | | | |
| 1. Policy enforcement | -- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2. Institutional | | -- | | |
| 3. Expenditure | | -- | | |

Opportunities

| | Forestry Commission | District Assemblies | NGO's | FSD |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------|-----|
| (b) Policy/Policy Instruments | | | | |
| 1. Policy enforcement | | | | |

Threats

| | Forestry Commission | District Assemblies | NGO's | FSD |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------|-----|
| (c) Funding | | *** | *** | *** |
| (d) Political Interference | | *** | *** | *** |

The Table is presented in NGOs=Non-Governmental Organisations, FSD=Forest Services Division, strength, weakness, opportunity, threats, opportunities, - = Weak, -- = Very weak, --- = Extremely weak, + = Strong, ++ = Very strong, +++ = Extremely strong, *** = Highly significant.

Discussion: All the four institutions in the study could be categorised very strong to extremely strong in reference to the existence of a regulatory framework as shown in Table-1. The strength lies in the fact that Ghana has a National Forest Policy (2012), a Social Responsibility Agreement (SRA), a Plantation Development Programme, a National Forest Plantation Development Programme as well as Ghana being a party to the Voluntary Partnership Agreement⁷. An example of this regulatory strength is a fine of GH¢200 or 18 months in jail term due to failure to produce a Timber Utilisation Contract or forest permit by an individual¹⁶.

Among the key strengths of the district assemblies are the principles they apply to the management of forest resources. Among these principles are: collaborative forest management which involves local communities in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of forest reserves to ensure effective and efficient forest management¹⁷⁻¹⁹. Another strength of the district assemblies is maintaining the ecological integrity of the forest and savannah ecosystems, employing multi-sectoral approaches to planning and management of forest and wildlife resources; and mainstreaming relevant international agreement and conventions into planning and management in the forestry sector²⁰. While the District Assemblies, the Forestry Commission and the Forest Service Division could be considered strong in reference to meeting targets, the NGOs

were very strong in reference meeting targets. In reference to meeting benchmarks, upholding standards and institutional organisation the FC and NGO's could be considered extremely strong (Table-1).

With the exception of the NGOs, funding remains a major weakness for The FC, FSD and DAs. This can be attributed to the fact that the budgetary allocation from the state to the FC, FSD and the DAs for the management of Ghana's forest is woefully inadequate²¹. Additionally, funds obtained from forest royalties are not equitably distributed among the governmental agencies responsible for the management of Ghana's forest²².

Political interference is a threat to the effective functioning of forest management institutions^{7,9,23}. There has been several reported cases of persons wielding political authority setting free offenders who blatantly disregard regulations and by-laws meant to facilitate the work of forest management institutions²⁴. Funding is yet another threat which critically undermines the effective functioning of the FC, NGOs, FSD and DAs with reference to forest management in Ghana. Policy enforcement was yet another weakness which could be turned into an opportunity and subsequently strength. There is an agglomeration of reforestation schemes and policies in Ghana. The operational forest policy in Ghana is the Ghana Forest and Wildlife Policy (2012)²⁰. The hindrance to this policy which has all the

ingredients for effective forest management is enforcement. The various forest management institutions viz FC, FSD, DAs NGOs in Ghana can explore the opportunities in Ghana's forest policy and by-laws for effective management of forest resources.

Conclusion

Policy enforcement and political interference were the major weakness and the eminent threat to the effective functioning of forest management institutions in both the Wassa Amenfi East and West Districts of Ghana. The existence of a regulatory framework which serves as the backbone for the effective functioning of forest management institutions was identified as a major strength across all the institutions.

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