

Granting exclusive user rights to the forest dwellers in the state-owned forest: the WAJIB approach in Ethiopia

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SUMMARY

In Ethiopia, the rapid deforestation of natural forest and environmental degradation have forced forest conservation authorities to seek an alternative to the conventional way of forest conservation (law enforcement, awareness creation, mobilization, etc.). For this reason, six participatory forest management (PFM) projects have been initiated over the past seven years to improve forest conservation through community participation. The Integrated Forest Management Project (IFMP) at Adaba-Dodola is the case under consideration.

IFMP, a technical cooperation project of the governments of Ethiopia and Germany, is operating in Adaba-Dodola Forest Priority Area (FPA), which covers 53 000 ha in Oromiya, the largest national regional state in Ethiopia. The core problem of the FPA was identified as being open and uncontrolled access to the forest. IFMP's mission is to develop a feasible forest conservation approach that is within the implementation capacity of the community and the government.

The developed approach is recognized as WAJIB (the abbreviation for Forest Dwellers' Association, in the Oromo language). The guiding principle of the WAJIB approach is granting exclusive user rights to the WAJIB members. Each WAJIB association has a maximum of 30 members and their families and manages an average area of 360 ha, based on the carrying capacity of 12 ha per household.

To date, 17 WAJIB groups have concluded contracts with the forest administration and proved that the local community can make differences in forest conservation. Since June 2000, some 6 810 ha have been put under sustainable utilization through WAJIB, improving the livelihoods of about 2 500 people.



Identification of the case

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia covers a total area of 1.1 million km² and comprises nine national regional states, of which Oromiya is the largest, at 367 000 km². The region is further subdivided into administrative zones, districts and peasants' associations (PAs).

Agriculture employs more than 85 percent of the population, which depends heavily on the scarce forest resources. Population grows at a rate of 2.9 percent per annum.

Ethiopia encompasses a wide range of topographies that has contributed to the presence of enormous biological and cultural diversity. The forest area in Ethiopia, which at one time might have occupied as much as 35 percent of the country, has now been reduced to about 2.3 percent (EFAP, 1994). Although 58 forest priority areas (FPAs), covering 2.3 million ha, have been designated to conserve the country's forests, interwoven factors are contributing to the deforestation of some 163 000 ha annually (Reusing, 1998). By definition, all FPAs are state-owned; settlement inside the FPA is prohibited, and only the government may harvest the forest products.

The case under consideration is located in Adaba-Dodola FPA, one of the 38 FPAs in Oromiya. As elsewhere, traditional ways of forest conservation through awareness creation and law enforcement have failed. Therefore, appropriate ways of community participation are being tested and implemented both to protect the remaining natural forest and to contribute to improving the living conditions of the forest dwellers.

IFMP has been supporting Adaba-Dodola FPA since 1995. IFMP is directly answerable to the Oromiya Natural Resources Development and Environmental Protection Authority (ONRDEPA). As well as IFMP, another five projects are developing PFM approaches in Ethiopia. The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), FARM-Africa, SOS-Sahel and the German Government are supporting these projects. A number of policies advocate community participation in development, which indicates that such initiatives are highly supported by the government. The forest policy is currently under review to reflect PFM.

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Status of the forest resources

Adaba-Dodola FPA is situated in highlands rising up to 3 700 m above sea level. It is bordered by treeless and vast agricultural plain at an altitude of 2 400 m above sea level. In the past, the forest was privately owned by a number of landlords. In 1974, the forest was nationalized. In 1986, it was designated a state-owned FPA, covering 140 000 ha, but an official map indicating the boundary of the forest was never produced. Currently, the Adaba-Dodola FPA covers only 53 000 ha and is highly degraded.

The FPA largely consists of natural but degraded forest with about 5 percent plantation area of mainly *Cupressus lusitanica* (Mexican cypress) and *Eucalyptus globulus* (Tasmanian blue gum). The vegetation of the natural forest is dominated by *Hagenia abyssinica*, *Podocarpus afrocarpus falcatus* (Podo), *Juniperus procera* (African pencil cedar) and *Erica* heather (Trainer, 1996). Utilization of the former three species has been prohibited by law since 1994.

Despite the fact that settlement in state-owned forest is illegal, more than 20 000 people inhabit the FPA. The boundaries between the PAs in the forest area are not established officially and are not clearly defined. In addition, the number of livestock that seasonally graze inside the FPA can be estimated at 480 000. These patterns, coupled with the high demand for forest products, have resulted in annual reduction of the forest cover by 3 percent, or 1 600 ha.

Numerous efforts made by the government, such as forest border demarcation, resettlement of people in confined areas within and outside the forest, establishment of forest protection committees and check points, confiscation of forest products, reforestation, prevention of the use of selected indigenous tree species and of the settlements in the FPA, and the ban on logging by the Forest Service, could not reverse this trend.

The underlying factors for this are the transfer of ownership from the private sector to the state; rapid population growth; agricultural expansion; absence of community involvement and unstable institutional arrangements. These factors, in combination with weak government institutions, have resulted in unregulated access, which is the core problem of managing the forest.

Ecologically and economically, the Adaba-Dodola FPA is important as a source of rivers that are also utilized for hydroelectric power. In the past, the forest administration has generated income from the forest through (destructive) commercial logging and

charcoal burning. Now the forest is particularly important for the local communities, mainly as pasture and as a source of wood for various purposes (Baptist, Aklilu Amaha and Abdurahiman Kubsa, 2001). Small-scale commercialization of forest produce by the local people in local markets is a routine activity. Some 200 000 people depend on the Adaba-Dodola Forest for their livelihood.

As a result of this use pattern, Adaba-Dodola FPA is a multiple-use forest. The actual tree cover is about 5 percent, while the remaining area is covered by settlements, pastureland and some agricultural fields. For this reason, the annual increment of wood is only 1 m³ per hectare. The stands are overage and are not particularly attractive for commercial logging.

In recent years the forest has gained value for the local population as a destination for ecotourism. Marketing is done through national tour operators and a Web site (www.baletrek.com).

The participatory forestry process

History

Rapid deforestation and environmental degradation have forced forest conservation authorities to seek an alternative to the conventional way of forest conservation and has made them realize that, unless the local community is involved in the conservation efforts, the forest will certainly disappear. Therefore, the commencement of IFMP in Adaba-Dodola FPA in 1995, and several other similar projects elsewhere, marked the beginning of participatory forestry in Ethiopia.

IFMP is currently in the second year of its third phase, which will end in December 2003. A government official coordinates the project and seven government-employed foresters are working with the project. One German and five Ethiopian experts provide technical advice.

During the pilot phase (1995–1997) IFMP committed enormous resources for supporting village development activities, facilitating the preparation of forest conservation rules with the community, promoting awareness creation, encouraging forest protection committees to confiscate cross-cut saws and conduct patrols, and subsidizing enrichment plantings and area closure. Such activities easily attracted the interest and raised the expectations of the target community in the three pilot PAs. Nevertheless, at the end of the phase it became

apparent that the contribution of such activities to forest conservation was insignificant.

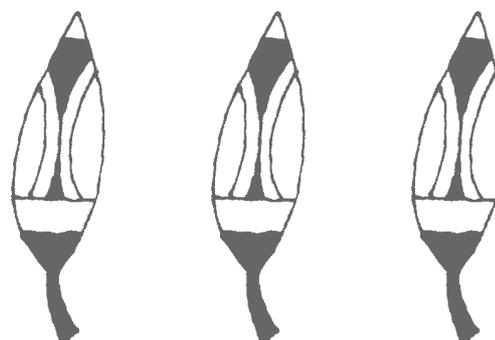
The project had recognized that the absence of a clear mission that is agreed by all the stakeholders is a major constraint to achieving participatory forestry. Hence, in April 1998, IFMP defined its mission as being “to develop a feasible forest conservation approach”. Subsequently, the WAJIB approach was designed to fulfil this mission.

Main features of the WAJIB approach

The main principle of the WAJIB approach is granting exclusive user rights to the recognized members of WAJIB in the state-owned forest. For this purpose the FPA in a given PA is subdivided into so-called forest blocks with an average size of 360 ha. Each block is managed by a WAJIB group of not more than 30 members, based on the calculation of a carrying capacity of 12 ha per homestead (Uncovsky, 1998). The maximum number of 30 members has proved to be the most appropriate in terms of manageability and positive impact with respect to forest conservation. The idea of dividing the forest into blocks is based on positive experiences with the administrative subdivision of PAs into smaller units.

In order to provide a binding agreement, a Forest Block Allocation Contract (FBAC) has been elaborated by the project; it sets out the rights and duties of the forest administration and the forest dwellers. The FBAC is the result of intensive consultations among the stakeholders. It has been reviewed by legal experts and was officially approved by the Oromiya Regional Council in February 2000. A translation in the Oromo language has been provided.

According to the FBAC, the rights of the WAJIB include settlement in the forest block and utilization of forest products for both home consumption and sale. The duties of the WAJIB include restricting settlements to the agreed number of homesteads, maintaining the tree cover, paying forest rent and regulating forest use. The annual forest rent is about



US\$1 per hectare and is payable only for the area not covered by forest, in order to encourage the WAJIB to increase the forest cover. The respective PA retains 40 percent of the rent payment in order to support the non-WAJIB members of the community; this can be considered a benefit-sharing mechanism that benefits the government and community members living adjacent to and inside the FPA.

On the other hand, the forest administration has the right of access to the forest blocks at any time, and the right to call and attend WAJIB meetings. The duties of the forest administration include providing technical and organizational assistance, conducting annual tree cover assessment and settlement censuses, defending the interests of WAJIB against others and providing assistance in cases of litigation. The FBAC also contains sanctions in case of failure on the part of the WAJIB to comply with the agreement. The sanctions are imposed in case of significant reduction of tree cover, non-payment of rent, the presence of excess settlement, and admittance of non-WAJIB members to utilization of the forest. The degree of the sanctions varies from financial penalty to expulsion from the forest block.

It is left entirely to the WAJIB to determine the management of the respective forest block. For this purpose, the WAJIB normally passes internal regulations to direct its members. But there is no obligation to prepare a management plan. It is anticipated that the indigenous knowledge and responsibility of the WAJIB group, supplemented by non-binding advice provided by the forest professional assigned to the respective forest block (the Block Warden) will result in the quality of management required for sustainable forest utilization and protection.

To begin with, the reaction of the community was relatively mixed, i.e. the approach was viewed with suspicion. This suspicion originated from experiences with different regimes. After a series of meetings, consultations and prolonged negotiations, the communities in the PAs have accepted the approach, despite the fact that the strong community coherence does not easily support the distinction between forest dwellers and non-forest dwellers. However, both the forest dwellers and the non-forest dwellers have started to realize the relevance of the approach in improving forest conservation and benefiting the community. The prime incentive to the forest dwellers is the recognition of settlement in the FPA by the Forest Service. Equally important is the right to utilize the forest and forest land in order to obtain a decent standard of living.

With regard to the implementation of the WAJIB approach, the support of the Forest Service is encouraging. The Oromiya Agricultural Development Bureau (predecessor of ONRDEPA) presented the model to the Council of Oromiya National Regional State for approval. After approval of the approach in February 2000, the Forest Service delegated its representative in the project to conclude the FBAC with the WAJIB groups. Since then the forest administration has been highly committed to continue supporting the approach and working further towards replicating the approach in other FPAs. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the initial reaction of a good number of personnel in the Forest Service towards the WAJIB approach was sceptical, and passive resistance could be encountered. Basically, this negative attitude can be explained by lack of confidence in the capacity of the forest dwellers to manage the forest.

The first WAJIB group was established in June 2000. To date, 17 WAJIB groups, comprising 461 members in two PAs, have concluded a contract with the forest administration for a total of 6 810 ha (see Annex 1). Preparations are under way to establish many more WAJIB groups in other PAs.

A number of additional measures have been pursued to complement the forest utilization and protection by the WAJIB groups. In order to provide supplementary income opportunities, community-based ecotourism is operating in the area. Furthermore, possibilities for trout fishing and trophy hunting (especially of the Mountain Nyala, *Tragelaphus buxtoni*) are currently being explored. Lastly, hundreds of individual nurseries have been established in the surrounding plains to provide wood products other than those from the natural forest, and to encourage cultivation of marketable fruit trees.

Steps in the implementation of the WAJIB approach

The implementation of the WAJIB approach involves a number of steps that require the involvement of various stakeholders. The major steps include reaching consensus on the establishment of WAJIB in a PA, participatory forest demarcation, tree cover assessment and settlement census, which eventually lead to signing the contract (see Annex 2). Such steps are executed either one after the other or simultaneously. The entire process of establishing WAJIB in a PA can be estimated to take from about 12 to 18 months, depending on such factors as the initial willingness of the community, the support from government institutions and the size of the PA and its proximity to the project office.

In the process of accomplishing the various activities, the role of IFMP is to provide technical and organizational assistance. Hence, its primary role is facilitating negotiations and mediating conflicts. It is very normal to encounter conflicts at different levels and between different actors, and it is a learning process for foresters to understand and to accept that such conflicts are not problems but steps in reaching consensus and building a strong understanding of the approach as well as commitment of the various stakeholders involved.

Institutional changes

Participatory forestry requires the presence of favourable institutional arrangements that support the approach at different levels. Apart from the favourable policy framework conditions already referred to, the remarkable institutional change related to the WAJIB approach is the creation of WAJIB as an entity that is independent of the PA. Although the WAJIB members remain members of a PA, they have the privilege of making decisions with regard to forest management independently from the PA.

Every WAJIB has leaders and other necessary committee members, who are responsible for accomplishing the task of managing the forest in accordance with their internal agreements and the provisions of the FBAC. The PA has a role of supporting WAJIB on request. Currently, the PA administration recognizes the independence of the WAJIB groups with regard to forest conservation.

It is also foreseen that ONRDEPA will establish its own organizational structure to deal with participatory forestry. Currently, ONRDEPA is exploring the options of establishing a PFM unit and equipping this unit with sufficient resources in terms of labour force and finances.

In addition, a steering committee and a coordination committee at the regional and the district level, respectively, were established at an early stage of the project for dealing with policy and local-level issues.

Recently, a PFM network was formed at the national level. In this network, all PFM-related projects in the country, as well as government institutions, work on various issues in order to promote PFM further.

Obstacles, therefore, do not originate from a lack of political will. Obstacles are related to frequent changes of office holders in the government institutions, frequent changes of the institutional structures that deal with forest conservation, and a lack of experts sufficiently experienced in participatory forestry.

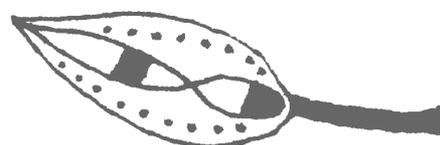
The impact of participatory forestry on rural livelihoods

The first WAJIB groups have started to see the fruits of participatory forestry. They sell forest products, such as grass, timber and wood for different purposes. Observations and figures indicate that the WAJIB approach is gradually improving the livelihoods of the rural population through direct and indirect benefits. The WAJIB members possess more healthy livestock and have closer and recognized access to wood products, which they sell at local markets. As a result of the WAJIB approach, the price of wood products is expected to increase gradually. A follow-up market study is expected to prove this fact. This will hold true particularly after the whole FPA is included in the approach.

Sustainable forest utilization and taxation

The WAJIB groups have the privilege of deciding on what and how much to use from the forest. Consumption is expected not to exceed the annual increment of 1 m³/ha/year. Accordingly, the established WAJIB groups have decided in a responsible way to utilize the forest sustainably so that the off-take will not exceed the annual increment. The measures include a ban on wasteful uses of the forest, a restriction on felling trees without the permission of the assembly of WAJIB members, a restriction on the numbers and times of livestock grazing, and the establishment of area closure for natural regeneration. The details of forest use have been elaborated for each forest block in the internal regulations formulated by the WAJIB members. The Forest Service is also responsible for the annual monitoring of changes through tree cover assessment.

There is no taxation, as such, of marketing of forest products. Nevertheless, the forest dwellers have consented to pay forest rent annually, of which 40 percent is channelled back to the respective PA, thus benefiting the entire community. The tree cover assessment result is the means of determining the rent that has to be paid for treeless areas only. This encourages the WAJIB groups to boost tree cover in their respective forest blocks



The impact of participatory forestry on the conservation and management of forests

In the 17 forest blocks where WAJIB is operational, the forest dwellers have demonstrated their capacity to manage and utilize the forest sustainably. As a result, the potential of participatory forestry as an alternative to conventional forest conservation practices has been demonstrated, although not yet over a long time period. The impacts of participatory forestry are physically visible. The following indicators are used to measure the tangibility of the impact:

- more natural regeneration of indigenous plants;
- healthy seedlings that are neither trampled nor browsed;
- a smaller number of livestock in the forest;
- significant reduction in the number of intruders and reduced use of exploitation trails;
- reduced felling of trees (very few recent stumps);
- better use of dead wood than in previous years;
- better grass growth and effective utilization;
- closing up of bushes;
- significant reduction in the number of charcoal burning sites;
- reduced pit-sawing activities;
- reappearance of wildlife species in areas managed by forest dwellers;
- the beginning of use by non-forest dwellers of *Eucalyptus* and *Cupressus*, tree species that are normally less preferred;
- the transfer of forest guards from WAJIB-managed forest blocks to other areas.

Many of these changes are expected to be reflected in the increase of the tree cover index, which is measured annually. The tree cover assessment provides an overall index for the crown cover of different categories of vegetation in a given forest block. This ground cover is derived from the basal area converted according to predetermined factor percentages for each category. The assessment is done with a sample rate of one spot per hectare (Asfaw Mariame, Baptist and Tsegaye Tadesse, 2001).

This tree cover assessment methodology is currently under review, since the index does not increase in all cases, despite obvious improvements in the condition of the forest. Furthermore, a revised tree cover assessment is expected to be more cost-efficient and to reflect even better the visible improvements in the forest.

Attitudes, from the perspectives of the foresters and the forest dwellers, have shown tremendous

improvement (Abdurahiman, 2001). The foresters no longer consider themselves as the only caretakers for the survival of the forest. The technical and organizational assistance to the WAJIB groups is highly appreciated by the forest dwellers. Moreover, the duties of the local foresters have shifted from plantation forestry to natural forest conservation, which is sounder for ecological reasons. The government authorities have also recognized local people's indigenous knowledge and capacities in conserving and managing the forest resources. Given the current situation, the trust between the forest dwellers and the government is highly promising. The government has become convinced of the commitment of the forest dwellers to manage the forest.

Legal and administrative arrangements

The FBAC that each WAJIB group concludes with the Forest Service is the legally binding arrangement in place so far. Moreover, the government institution that is mandated to certify such associations is being consulted to register WAJIB groups. Preparations are under way to accomplish this. Such certification promotes the legal arrangement of the user groups, i.e. they can sue and be sued. It is also expected that WAJIB members will soon be provided with pass permits in order to distinguish them from traders of forest produce who have not obtained the produce legally.

The WAJIB group has the duty to regulate all the related activities of members and non-members. The Forest Service monitors the compliance of the WAJIB group with the terms of the agreement through annual tree cover assessment and settlement censuses. Moreover, sanctions are applied if the user groups do not comply with the terms of agreement.

Restriction to such basic monitoring parameters makes sense, as it is basically impossible for the Forest Service to regulate each and every activity.

Institutionalization

IFMP is encouraging the establishment of a new structure within ONRDEPA to deal with participatory forestry. Officials in the authorities are willing and very interested in establishing a separate organizational unit for PFM, since the presence of such a unit in ONRDEPA is crucial for the success and sustainability of PFM, in particular for its replication to other FPAs.

Prospects for participatory forestry are enormous in Adaba-Dodola FPA and other FPAs in the country because of the impacts seen so far. The commitment of the forest dwellers and the government to continue

with the approach is promising. Both parties have realized that participatory forestry is the last resort for conserving forest with such a large human and livestock population. The proposed new structure is expected to play a significant role in replicating WAJIB and in providing support to local professionals.

The sustainability of the WAJIB approach depends on various factors, such as institutionalizing PFM, providing legal support to the WAJIB groups and undertaking the commitment to provide technical and organizational assistance to them. The commitment of the WAJIB groups is already optimal.

In the Ethiopian context, the six PFM projects are working closely together towards bringing the necessary changes with respect to including PFM in forest policy and legislation and including PFM in training curriculum and capacity building. In this regard, the support needed from external agencies includes predictable, long-term commitments and tolerance of the lengthy process. Participatory forestry requires long-term commitment in order to achieve the expected results. Some projects are already facing constraints of resources before completing what they have started. Hence, the new approach must have support from various sources in order to realize the high potential of participatory forestry.

It is worth mentioning that participatory forestry implies numerous, rather challenging characteristics, including a lengthy and slow process, a lack of trained and experienced labour force, a need for high initial investment in terms of obtaining the confidence of the stakeholders and developing the approach, and the inadequate resource allocation required for wider area coverage.

Participatory forestry beyond local initiatives

The desire to replicate the WAJIB approach is quite strong. This was noted when the project organized a workshop on the replication of the WAJIB approach for partners and strategic allies in April 2001. The participants witnessed the capacity and knowledge of the forest dwellers after visiting different forest blocks. It was seen that the forest dwellers are making significant differences in forest conservation. Nevertheless, there is a delay in replicating the WAJIB approach to other FPAs in Oromiya. Factors contributing to the delay include the recent establishment of ONRDEPA and resource limitations. It is nevertheless hoped that ONRDEPA will allocate substantial resources for the replication of PFM to other areas.

Recommendations for the promotion of participatory forestry

In the process of realizing the WAJIB approach, numerous lessons were learned. The principal lessons learned can be summarized as follows:

- The community has the capacity to conserve the forest; indigenous knowledge and responsibility are high among forest dwellers.
- The government is willing to accept the bottom-up approach.
- Roles of foresters are changing from policing to advisory, and participatory forestry means more work for foresters.
- Conflict mediation is a crucial qualification for PFM experts.
- PFM is suitable for creating responsibility for quasi “common goods”.
- Legal backing is crucial in giving security to the forest dwellers.
- Boundary issues between PAs require the involvement and commitment of various government institutions.

It is particularly necessary to recognize that participatory forestry is full of challenges that require creativity and the ability to develop a clear vision of how to tackle them, as well as courage and adaptive management.

These lessons must be taken up by the policy and legislation of the federal and regional governments. They need to recognize the potential of participatory forestry. Fora such as this workshop must be in place to disseminate lessons learned to other countries. Exchanges of visits and experts could also contribute significantly to making use of the lessons learned.

The conditions necessary for creating an enabling environment for participatory forestry include allocation of adequate resources, especially on the part of the government; allowance of sufficient time for the PFM process; the willingness of governments to appreciate ideas that originate at the grassroots level and to trust that communities have the capability to take over responsibilities in forest management; and the commitment of all parties concerned.

The time required for each step is only an average, whereas some steps require different activities. In fact there are times when some of the steps have to be repeated in the same locality. Encountering difficulties that delay progress is inevitable.

Annex 1

WAJIB groups in Barisa and Danaba Peasant Associations, Ethiopia

Peasant Associations PA	FOREST BLOCK	MEMBERS		NO. OF DEPENDANTS	BLOCK SIZE (ha)	TREE COVER INDEX	RENT (US\$)	CONTRACT CONCLUDED
		M	F					
BARISA								
	1. Sonora	22	8	137	640	48,00	297,52	June 2000
	2. Bulchana	16	0	85	413	52,13	186,07	Nov. 2000
	3. Sulula	20	7	106	397	76,42	88,10	Aug. 2000
	4. Ali	25	5	165	382	55,16	161,21	Aug. 2000
	5. Mudhi	25	2	129	366	66,62	114,98	Aug. 2000
	6. Gede	23	5	150	489	63,20	169,36	Nov. 2000
Subtotal		131	27	772	2687		1017,24	
DANABA								
	1. Anonu-Lobe	19	5	157	294	46,00	149,42	Oct. 2001
	2. Artu-Fixe	22	8	97	361	49,76	170,69	Nov. 2001
	3. Birbirsa-Guxa	28	2	164	370	40,73	206,40	May 2001
	4. Bulchana-Hubo	20	10	142	380	38,37	220,41	July 2001
	5. Cangity	15	3	67	554	58,38	217,01	July 2001
	6. Edo-Sibilo	24	6	190	372	51,05	171,38	May 2001
	7. Edo-Wite	20	10	102	414	69,43	119,11	July 2001
	8. Faraqasaa	24	6	188	377	51,20	173,15	July 2001
	9. Lobe-Gute	26	4	181	363	46,36	183,26	Oct. 2001
	10. Shushi-Shifa	21	5	122	313	52,46	140,04	Nov. 2001
	11. Tarura	19	6	91	325	49,11	155,66	July 2001
Subtotal		238	65	1501	4123		1906,53	
Total		369	92	2273	6810	*	2923,77	

Annex 2

Steps in implementation of WAJIB, Ethiopia

DESCRIPTION	METHODOLOGY/TOOL	TIME REQUIRED
1. Agreement on establishing a WAJIB (Forest Dwellers' Association) approach with a PA community	Workshop and meetings	More than one workshop session
2. Participatory forest demarcation	Jointly walking along the border with a topographic map and Global Positioning System (GPS). Entered into global information system (GIS)	Three days
3. Participatory PA border demarcation	Jointly walking along common PA borders with GPS, entered into GIS	Depend on a number of neighbouring PAs
4. Settlement census	House-to-house survey, GPS-GIS	One to two days per forest block
5. Proposal for delineation of forest block boundaries by forestry experts	Consideration of carrying capacity and population density	One week
6. Negotiation on the proposed forest blocks among the Forestry Department (FD) representatives	Meetings and field visits	Up to one week
7. Election of founding members	FD meeting	One day per block
8. Forest block borders adjustment	Jointly walking along the border, GPS-GIS	Up to three days per forest block
9. Eligibility criteria formulation	Founding members' meeting	One day per block
10. Selection of eligible members	Founding members' meeting	One day per block
11. Informing recognized members	Forest dwellers' meeting	One day per block
12. Demolishing excess homesteads	Voluntarily or by persuasion by PA administration	Up to two months
13. Tree cover assessment	Transect walk	One week for three assessors
14. Election of WAJIB leaders	FD meeting	One day
15. Concluding contract	Signatories' meeting	Half a day
Total time required		12 to 18 months per PA

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