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Ghana

Albert A. Arhin, Mohammed-Anwar Sadat Adam

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PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS: REDD+ AND THE REVERSAL OF DEFORESTATION IN GHANA

Albert A. Arhin and Mohammed-Anwar Sadat Adam

Introduction

The mechanism of Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation plus the role of conservation, sustainable forest management and carbon stock enhancement (REDD+) is emerging as one of the most viable and cost-efficient international policies to halt land-use change and transform the forestry sector of developing countries (Stern, 2007, Eliasch, 2008, Angelsen, 2009). Both internationally and in Ghana, there appears to be high enthusiasm among policy-makers, civil society groups and private investors alike about how REDD+ can stem the tide of deforestation in Ghana (Forestry Commission, 2010; 2012). However, this enthusiasm appears to pay little attention to the many attempts at similar reforms over the past several decades that have yielded poor results. This paper is informed by the understanding that politics and the interests that shape policy are of fundamental importance to policies such as REDD+. The aim of this paper is therefore to explore the political economy of forestry reforms in Ghana with a focus on highlighting their implications and lessons for the REDD+ mechanism. The paper begins with an overview of the ideational anchor of REDD+ at the global level and domestic levels. The second section sketches out some of the legislative and policy reforms undertaken to address deforestation and degradation over

the past few decades. This is followed by a discussion of some of the reasons why deforestation has still continued in spite of those reforms. The paper then draws implications for the ongoing reforms under REDD

Forests, climate change and REDD+

Scientists estimate that forest loss has been responsible for between 12-20% of the global greenhouse gas emissions driving anthropogenic climate change emissions (van der Werf et al., 2009, Solomon et al., 2007). At the recent Global Forest Resources Assessment by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) it was concluded that the world's forests are fast disappearing (FAO, 2010). Between 1990 and 2000 there was a net loss of 8.3 million hectares per year while another net loss of 6.2 million hectares per year was recorded between 2000 and 2010. Although the global rate of loss has slowed, it remains worryingly high, with the vast majority occurring in developing countries. Forests are therefore receiving a high level of international attention—at least since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit—as a critical component in the solution for the climate crisis currently facing the world.

The idea of REDD+ emerged at the international level in 2005 as a potential mechanism to mitigate climate change by providing economic incentives that will make it more profitable to keep trees standing than to chop them down. The principle behind the REDD+ mechanism is simple: reward individuals, communities, projects and countries that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from forests. Through the REDD+ initiative, national and subnational governments, communities and projects in developing countries can be financially rewarded for reducing emissions from deforestation, forest degradation and enhancement of carbon stock (UNFCCC, 2011). This approach was borne out of the recognition that current economic benefits from trees in forests are obtained only when they are chopped down for uses such as timber, charcoal, fuelwood.

REDD+ aims to create economic values for carbon stored in trees and provide financial incentives/compensation for actions that reduce deforestation and degradation. Its goal is to make forests or trees more profitable when standing than when cut or cleared. While the underlying idea of REDD+ is simple, there are complex issues to be solved, such as measurement, scale, funding, permanence, liability, leakage, and reference levels. There are further social and governance issues related to land tenure, participation and benefit sharing which are currently under discussion within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

REDD+ is touted by its proponents as a mitigation option that is cost-effective when well implemented (Parker and Mitchell, 2009). At the same time, REDD+ represents an opportunity for many tropical countries, including Ghana, to participate in emission reductions related to the forestry sector while providing social benefits such as jobs and income opportunities for poverty reduction. While REDD+ activities are generally expected to deliver significant social and environmental co-benefits, it is also recognised that they may bring a number of potentially negative consequences for biodiversity and the environment and to communities whose livelihoods depend on forests. Many have raised doubts, worrying that the poor may not benefit from the new sources of finance promised by REDD+ due to barriers to entry as well as the high costs involved in participating in the scheme. In particular, it is generally recognised that REDD+ can potentially bring about exclusion from forest resource use, limited participation in decision making, displacement of rural communities and increased social inequities as well as elite capture which may impoverish the lives of the poor while also impinging negatively on biodiversity (Hall, 2010, Ribot and Larson, 2012).

Presently, the details of the mechanism remain undecided and regulations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) are largely still in the planning phase.

Nevertheless, a number of donors and organisations currently support the efforts of countries to prepare for the REDD+ scheme. These include the World Bank Forestry Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF), the UN-REDD and other bilateral and regional initiatives. There are over 170 REDD+ pilots and demonstration activities currently taking place around the world (Cerbu et al., 2011). Globally there is much optimism about the prospects of REDD+ to contribute significantly to reducing deforestation and deforestation. It is estimated that nearly \$7 billion was committed for early readiness activities of REDD+ between 2008 and 2010 (Simula, 2010).

Forest and REDD+ in Ghana: A brief overview

Forest and wildlife resources in Ghana have long contributed to the country's socio-economic development, formal and informal employment, livelihoods and export earnings. The forest and savannah ecosystems provide rich biodiversity of national and global significance and form the backbone of the economic and productive sectors of the Ghanaian economy. It is estimated that forest accounts for 9-12% of export earnings and provides livelihood to nearly 15% of the population (Forestry Commission, 2012). Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) including snails, chewing sticks, mushrooms, foliage, medicinal plants, fuelwood, and forage are also extremely important to livelihoods support of many forest fringe communities although much of their value is not formally recorded and remains inadequately represented in policy analysis. Yet the country faces a higher rate of deforestation.

Ghana has, therefore, taken advantage of the REDD+ mechanism as an important pathway through which it can halt and reverse its fast deforestation rate. The country was among the early tropical countries which submitted its REDD+ Idea Note (known as PIN) and later a proposal which was approved under the World Bank's FCPF. Its proposal to the Forest Investment Programme

(FIP)—which also aims to build capacity for countries to implement REDD+—was also approved in April 2011. Overall, about \$7 million is expected to be received (of which \$3.4 million has already been provided through the FCPF) to prepare and make policies that will pave the way for the Ghanaian government to implement REDD+.

Within the international REDD+ discourse and also in Ghana, implementation of REDD+ is proposed to go through three different phases which are not necessarily sequential. These are: (i) National REDD strategy development, including national dialogue, institutional strengthening, and demonstration activities; (ii) Implementation of policies and measures proposed in those national REDD strategies; (iii) Payment for performance on the basis of quantified forest emissions and CO₂ removals against agreed reference levels. Ghana just transitioned to the second phase with approval of seven REDD+ demonstration activities (Forestry Commission, 2012). The Government of Ghana is currently undertaking a number of reforms and strategies to identify the underlying drivers, the institutional strengths and gaps and other conditions that will ensure that REDD+ succeeds in halting deforestation and degradation. Under Ghana's REDD+ Proposal, two thematic areas have been agreed upon as candidate strategies to deal with the perennial problem of deforestation and degradation. The first theme relates to forest sector policy, legislation and governance while the second theme discusses agro-forestry carbon-conserving activities. Consequently, the proposal identifies a number of drivers of deforestation and forest degradation which will be the target for policy implementation. These drivers identified include timber industry overcapacity, policy /market failures, increasing population pressure, increasing local demand for agricultural and wood products, and high demand for wood and forest products at the international market. In the succeeding sections, we argue that the political economy that encourages these

drivers of deforestation is equally as important as the factors mentioned. We believe the issues which we discuss in this paper will further inform the analysis and the ongoing reform efforts through the REDD+ initiative.

Political Economy as a Framework of Analysis

Over the past decades “political economy” has had a number of different meanings across the economic, political and social sciences. Even though there is little consensus on its definition, political economy broadly relates to the study of how political factors influence economic and social policy outcomes. We have approached this paper from a political economy perspective—a tradition that aims to situate development interventions within an understanding of the prevailing political and economic processes in society (Beuran et al., 2011). Political economy analysis highlights the institutions through which policies are developed and the links between politics and the economy, while also focusing on the incentives, relationships and distribution and contestation of power between different groups and individuals, all of which greatly impact the outcomes of policies or programmes (Collinson, 2003). The popularity of political economy as an analytical tool for policy analysis has risen sharply across diverse disciplines and sub-fields.

Forestry Policy and Reform in Ghana

Literature is generally not short on discussions of Ghana’s forests and the various initiatives undertaken in the past century or so (see for example, Kotey et al, 1998; Asante, 2005). Generally, the country seemed to have—although with several constraints—progressive policies, comprehensive laws, relatively well-developed institutions and a handful of well trained professional foresters and policy analysts (Opoku, 2006). For instance, since 1997, legislation obliges logging companies to obtain farmers’ permission and negotiate adequate compensation, but farmers still do not receive

any payment for the value of the trees. Again, legislation requires timber companies to commit not less than five percent of their turnover into Social Responsibility Agreements (SRA) focusing on infrastructure provision for communities. Nevertheless, ever since the colonial period exploitative relations between the corporate timber industry and the state on the one hand and forest-dependent communities and the public on the other, have persisted.

Over the past century, the British Gold Coast colony and then independent Ghana incrementally shifted its forest policy, legislation and management approaches. The Forestry Department (which has now become the Forestry Commission) was established in 1909 to manage timber resources and help conserve a sufficient area of forest suitably distributed throughout the country (Oduro et al., 2011, Kotey et al., 1998). Although a voluntary process to create forest reserves started in the 1920s, local chiefs resisted this initiative. It was not until 1927 that the British colonial government passed the Forest Ordinance to compulsorily constitute forest reserves that were deemed necessary (Kotey et al., 1998). In 1948, the colonial administration enacted the first formal policy on forestry, which remained in effect for forty-six years. In late 2012, Ghana's governing cabinet approved a new Forestry and Wildlife Policy. Several other legislative and policy initiatives have also addressed issues of deforestation and degradation since 1948. An overview of these initiatives is provided in the table below:

**Key legislative and policy reform initiatives
of the forestry sector (1948-2012)**

<i>Forest laws, policies and programmes</i>	<i>Core objective (s)</i>
1948 Forest Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Creation of permanent forest estates ▪ Protection of forests ▪ Protection of water catchment areas ▪ Environment protection for ecological balance
Forest Ordinance, 1951	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protection of forests ▪ Protection of forest reserves

Forest Improvement Act of 1960	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forest plantation development ▪ Timber plantation establishment and managemt.
Wild Animals Preservation Act, 1961 (Act 43)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conservation of wildlife
Wildlife Reserves and Conservation Policy of 1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Protection of wildlife resources ▪ Species conservation ▪ Wildlife conservation areas ▪ Protected areas development
Forest Protection Decree, 1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defined forest offences ▪ Forest protection
Trees and Timber Decree 1974	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Logging guidelines for timber industry ▪ Sanctions for non-compliance with guidelines ▪ Promotion of export of processed timber
Trees and Timber Regulation of 1983	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regulation of felling of trees (chain saw) ▪ Forest plantations operation ▪ Regulation of logging activities
Forest Protection (Amendment) Law, 1986	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defines forest offenses and penalties ▪ Forest Protection ▪ Protection of water bodies ▪ Species conservation
1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Species conservation ▪ Regulation of timber harvesting ▪ Development of cottage and agro-based industry ▪ Community forestry and forest conservation ▪ Deregulation and streamlining of bureaucratic controls on wood export marketing ▪ Involvement community in conservation of forest and wildlife resources ▪ Rehabilitation and development of degraded forests ▪ Protection of forests
Timber Resource Management Act, 1997 - Act 547	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Timber utilization contract ▪ Offences for illegal logging ▪ Protection of logging on farms and plantations
The Forest Protection Amendment Act of 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community forestry and forest conservation ▪ Protect forest and wildlife ▪ Reforestation and afforestation programmes ▪ Forest offences penalties ▪ Protection of water catchment area
Forest Resource Management Project (FRMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institutional strengthening of forest sector agencies ▪ Development of policy planning, monitoring and evaluation capability

Forestry Development Master Plan (developed in 1996)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide guidance towards reforms and initiatives to control deforestation in line with the Vision 2020
Forest Sector Development Project (FSDP-1) (launched in 1995 and expired in 1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To assist with the establishment of a forest service capable of effective and efficient implementation of forest policy ▪ To transfer the then Ghana Forestry Department (FD) into an autonomous self-financing Forest Service (FS)
National Environmental Policy (developed in 1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improving the general performance of the environment ▪ Control deforestation
Forest Sector Development Project (FSDP-2) (launched in April 2000 and expired in 2006)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist GoG and other stakeholders in the creation of an institutional framework that increases the sector's contribution to poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth
Natural Resources Management Programme (NRMP) (launched in September, 1999) NRMP (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assist GoG in implementing its policy of protecting, rehabilitating and sustainably managing national land, forest and wildlife resources by: (i) institutionalizing viable sustainable land, forest and wildlife management systems nationwide and (ii) establishing effective national policy.
High Forest Resource Management (HRM) Component	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish the policy, legal, administrative, financial and technical bases for sustainable forest management including biodiversity conservation, collaboration and efficient utilization of forest product
Natural Resources and Environmental Governance (NREG)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure predictable and sustainable financing for the forest and wildlife sectors and effective law enforcement ▪ Improve mining sector revenue collection, management, and transparency ▪ Address social issues in forest and mining communities ▪ Mainstream environment into economic growth through Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and development of a climate change strategy

Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a legal framework aimed at ensuring that all imports into the EU Community from Ghana of timber products covered by this Agreement have been legally produced and in doing so to promote trade in timber products
Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strengthen political commitment and action at all levels to implement effectively sustainable management of all types of forests and to achieve the shared global objectives on forests ▪ Enhance the contribution of forests to the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including MDGs, in particular with respect to poverty eradication and environmental sustainability ▪ Provide a framework for national action and international cooperation ▪ to implement the Instrument
Protected Area Development Program Phase II with emphasis on Community Resource Management Areas (CREMAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reduce poverty through enhanced conservation of the biodiversity heritage of Ghana
Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To Enable Ghana meet its non-binding commitments under the UNFCCC/Kyoto Protocol frameworks ▪ To reduce emissions from deforestation and degradation
Forestry Investment Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Securing the Integrity of Natural Forests and Woodland Resources ▪ Enhancement of Carbon Stocks ▪ Climate Smart Agriculture and Watershed Protection
2011 Forest and Wildlife Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Manage and enhance the ecological integrity of forests ▪ Promote the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded landscapes ▪ Promote the development of viable forest and wildlife based industries and livelihoods ▪ Promote training, research and technology development that supports sustainable forest management

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Promote information uptake both by forestry institutions and the general public ▪ Promote and develop mechanisms for transparent governance, equity sharing and citizens' participation in forest and wildlife resource management
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Adapted from: (Gyimah and Dadebo, 2010, Ahenkan and Boon, 2010, Forestry Commission, 2012)

The Forestry Commission's initial focus was protecting watersheds and maintaining climatic and soil quality conducive to cocoa production (Kotey et al., 1998). However, in the mid-twentieth century the focus shifted towards timber exploitation for macroeconomic development. In the post-independence period timber became the focus for development. Government took formal control of all land and trees in trust for the chiefs and people in 1962 and heavily exploited the timber resources to achieve macroeconomic targets especially during the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) era of the 1980s. By the early 1990s, most of the reforms aimed to control deforestation in Ghana had failed. In many cases, these efforts in fact contributed to further deforestation. Kotey (1998) sums up the situation of at the beginning of the 1990s:

Many [forest] reserves had become badly degraded; the annual allowable cut bore little relation to estimates of sustainable yield; and some important timber species were threatened with commercial extinction in twenty years if current policies continued. The landholding authorities and local communities had become marginalised and alienated owners of the resource with few rights and even fewer responsibilities. There was overcapacity and waste in the timber industry. In certain quarters, patronage and corruption was rife. (Kotey et al, 2008: vii)

The 1994 Forest and Wildlife Policy aimed to correct the situation, but its success was less than spectacular. In 2011, the government drafted a new Forest and Wildlife Policy to provide guidance for overcoming many barriers to the country's forest

conservation efforts. There are now several ongoing programmes, all of which seek to address the factors behind deforestation and degradation in Ghana. These include but are not limited to the Natural Resources and Environmental Governance (NREG), Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA), Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI), the Forest Investment Programme and the REDD+ initiative under the Forestry Carbon Partnership Facility of the World Bank.

Paradoxically, deforestation and degradation increased remarkably in the period during which the government undertook these reforms. Information about deforestation trends differ and always need to be treated with caution. Still, they all point to a common conclusion: Ghana suffers from rapid deforestation and degradation. In 1900, the area of high forest was estimated to be between 8 and 9 million ha (Forestry Commission, 2012). Some estimates suggest that between 1900 and 1990 Ghana lost 80% of its forest cover (8m ha – 1.6m ha) (Opoku, 2006). Satellites images of reserves taken in 1990 and 2000 further revealed rapid degradation and deforestation within the reserves as well, some losing as much as 90% of their cover in this short period (Opoku, 2006). Other sources also show that while there were about 6,093,906 hectares of forest in 2000, this had declined to 5,516,932 hectares by 2005 (Forestry Commission, 2010). With the rate of deforestation estimated at 1.8% per annum, some have raised the alarm that Ghana might be without any meaningful forest cover within the next twenty-three years unless there is a transformation in our forest management discourse and approaches (Dumenu, 2012). Can REDD+ and the associated ongoing reforms offer this hope?

Summing up what we know about the sector, two key conclusions can be drawn: (i) legislation, regulations and institutional reforms related to forest, deforestation and environment increased significantly and (ii) that deforestation goes on at an alarming level despite the reforms, legislation and initiatives

pursued by the Forestry Commission. So, why is this paradox so? In the next section, we sketch out the key drivers for deforestation and the reasons why these forest policies largely failed. We do not claim to discuss these issues exhaustively. However, we aim to tease out some important implications that will be relevant in the ongoing REDD+ initiative.

The Underlying Causes of Deforestation: A Political Economy Perspective

The conventional causes of deforestation and degradation of Ghana appear to be well known, and do not need over emphasis. Within the circles of government, forest loss is blamed largely on agricultural expansion, unsustainable agricultural practices and illegal logging (Ewers, 2006). In its analysis of the drivers of deforestation, the Ghana's REDD+ Readiness Proposal (R-PP), the Forestry Commission (2010) mentions that agricultural expansion contributes to approximately 50% of deforestation. Other factors that the Commission regularly mentions include (illegal) chainsaw operations, bush fires, agricultural expansion by farmers, mining operations and wood extraction for fuel wood. In the succeeding section, we argue that these practices are rather a manifestation of complex underlying drivers, some of which are within the forestry sector, while others lie outside it.

We share the concern for the expansion of agriculture into forests. While proposing solutions to address the underlying causes of this phenomenon, the Forestry Commission (in the Forest Investment Programme) outlines the following interventions: promote intensification and increased productivity linked to community land-use planning to curb further expansion into forests; increase farmer access to financial and risk-reduction mechanisms; facilitate community-based land use planning to avoid deforestation and degradation; increase access to technical and non-technical

information and removal of financial incentives that encourage forest land conversion (Forestry Commission, 2012).

We contend that such technical explanations are often insufficient to address the problem of deforestation in Ghana. The problem is not only technical but also political. What is often not mentioned in this discussion is that much of the clearance happens in the cocoa-sub sector—one of Ghana's primary export commodities. Discussions on the large clearance of forestry for agriculture, therefore, should contextualize Ghana's broader development goals and efforts to achieve high economic growth and, for that matter, middle income status. Excessive deforestation and degradation continue in spite of reforms. This is due, in part, to government economic policies favourable to clearing large forested areas for agriculture. In fact, considerable land-clearing has taken place with government subsidies to cocoa farmers. Significantly, in addition to illegal land clearance, timber firms contribute to deforestation. Timber companies and their proponents have maintained that they can log in the forests sustainably (Opoku, 2006). In the end, however, they take all the trees and even log outside their concessions, all with support from the forestry administration (Opoku, 2006, Forest Watch Ghana, 2004). In 2004, Forest Watch Ghana reported that almost the entire timber industry operates in defiance of the permits regime established by the Timber Resources Management Act in September 1998 and continues to operate under concession agreements that the Act explicitly terminated (Forest Watch Ghana, 2004). As far as the socio-economic development agenda of the nation is concerned the political and economic interests in the cocoa sub-sector are of equal importance as the technical factors that contribute to clearing of forestry for agricultural purposes.

The issue of illegal chainsaw operations driving deforestation also features prominently in the discourse on deforestation. Although the high rate of deforestation and degradation are often

attributed to individual chainsaw operators, this could be a distortion of the facts. The government banned chainsaws over a decade ago, but has not enforced this ban. Apparently, strong political and economic incentives motivate government officials to turn a blind eye to the practice. Opoku (2005) notes that chainsaw operators are increasingly funded by and answerable to persons with ties to the forestry administration and to well-established timber (export) companies. These same companies provide the prime market for lumber from the operations. Empirical evidence suggests that the ineffectiveness of the chainsaw ban has been driven by interference from politicians and influential business entities, in addition to corruption and connivance between the chainsaw operators, forestry officials, the police, and the Task Force (Adam et al., 2007, Marfo, 2010, Nutakor et al., 2011).

A recent study found that of the annual supply of approximately one million m³ of lumber to nineteen wood markets in Ghana, 80% was cut by chainsaw and, therefore, is illegal (Hansen et al., 2012). In light of this dynamic, the policy reforms under REDD+ are bound to fail if the focus is put only on the “perpetrators” (i.e. the chainsaw operators) without due consideration of the conditions that allow them to operate and thrive. Indeed, there are other factors behind illegal logging, including underemployment and income inequality. Past efforts to reform the forestry sector and halt deforestation failed because of lax enforcement of rules, regulations and laws. Apart from the illegal chainsawing discussed above, there are numerous regulations and laws against harvesting and in support of farmers’ rights. Yet the government has failed to enforce them. Killick and Hansen suggest that patron-client relations between the political and administrative elite and actors in the formal timber sector contribute to the low enforcement of laws (Killick, 2008, Hansen et. al., 2009). They document political and bureaucratic elites aiding those who breach laws in exchange for payments (bribes) and/or other forms of support. Members of the lower level bureaucracy

(e.g. forest officers, police officers, staff of the judiciary and the military) also extract informal payments from formal and informal agents in the timber sector while allowing breach of regulations (Adam et al., 2007, Marfo, 2010).

The seeming conflict between macroeconomic objectives and forest conservation is another obstacle to effective reform. While Government bemoans the continuous loss of forests, at the same time it prides itself on being a leading timber exporter. Birikorang notes that the focus on macroeconomic growth during the SAP era expanded the timber industry's extraction and processing capacity to above five million m³ annually—which is way above the annual allowable cut (2001). The government has also exempted many timber firms from paying corporate tax for ten years, while many others located in rural areas enjoy corporate tax rebates (Government of Ghana, 1994, Government of Ghana, 1995). As observed in the preceding section, various macro-economic policies in Ghana have favoured capacity expansion and improved the profitability of the export-oriented timber and mining industry (Asante, 2005). The end result has been the exploitation of timber in an unsustainable manner in spite of various policy efforts over the past century or so.

Debates on the failure of forestry reforms in Ghana would benefit from greater consideration of the unclear tenure security and the biased benefit-sharing arrangements in the sector, issues which have received considerable attention in the REDD+ debate. Fundamentally, farmers have no legal rights, either to harvest timber trees they maintain on their farms, or to any of the revenue accruing from timber extraction (Marfo et al., 2012, Amanor, 1999). Although the Timber Resource Management Act (1997), Act 547 provides tenure security for trees planted by individuals and other forests (plantations), tenure rights over natural forest resources still remain problematic both in law and in practice (Marfo et al., 2012). The 1992 Constitution of Ghana categorically states that all

(naturally-generating) tree rights, irrespective of where they stand and whether they are on private or communal land are held by the state (on behalf of the 'chiefs and communities). Revenues from forest resources are then distributed to sub-national actors according to a constitutional revenue distribution formula. These stakeholders are the Administrator of stool lands, which receives 10% before the residue is shared among District Assemblies (55%), stools (25%) and traditional authorities (20%). Quite unsurprisingly, individual landowners or the land-users neither own nor have any economic rights for royalties and timber revenue as the royalties are paid to the chiefs, the stools and to the district authorities. By implication, the Constitution selects the District Assemblies, stools and traditional authorities as the institutions to receive communities' portion of royalties. Whether by omission or commission, there are no mechanisms for any of these institutions to be accountable to the communities for royalties they receive on their behalf. In many cases, the District Assembly that receives large share of this cake has no direct responsibility with the management of the forest. The chiefs and traditional authority also tend to use their share 'to maintain the stool' rather than investing in their communities (Marfo et al., 2012, Opoku, 2006). Ultimately, individuals and the larger community are left out from the benefits that accrue from timber extraction.

In an attempt to benefit from the legal framework on benefit sharing, Hansen et al (2009) observe a manoeuvre by the Forestry Commission (FC) to channel large share of financial revenues to the central forestry administration (i.e. the Forestry Commission) at the expense of the constitutionally sanctioned beneficiaries. The first, which is an administrative decision, is that the Forestry Commission has instituted a 'management fees' which are deducted prior to the sharing of benefits in accordance with the constitutional formula described above. This is 60% of revenues obtained from on-reserves and 40% for those accruing from off-reserves (consideration for 50:

50 management fee is under discussion). Second, the timber taxation regime depends on downstream fees (i.e. export levies), which are not considered by the FC as Stool land revenue. These levies are therefore not shared with the constitutional beneficiaries, but appropriated in full by the FC (HANSEN and TREUE, 2009, Birikorang et al., 2007). Hansen (2009) contends that the somewhat manipulation of the law and the resulting low revenues transferred to the constitutional beneficiaries suggests a deliberate political decision to keep forest fees low so as to appropriate them to satisfy economic and political interests. In the end, communities do not have much incentive then to preserve the forest—because after all they are never going to get any financial benefits from them.

The Forestry Concession Act of 1962 makes it an offence for an individual or community to cut or sell timber or merchantable tree species without permission from the appropriate government entity. Marfo et al (2012) observes that off-reserve trees that farmers have managed through to maturity are often treated as a naturally occurring resource by the forestry administration. Since by law such rights to their harvesting are vested in the state, the forestry administration then allocate their felling rights to timber contractors with the accruing benefits shared among the constitutionally nominated stakeholders-but not the farmer. There is therefore a strong disincentive for farmers to manage trees sustainably. Farmers' frustrations is summed up by this quote reported by Acheampong (2003: 252) in a study conducted in the Western Region: "If I will not get anything from timber trees I protect on my land and if timber contractors will harvest them and destroy my crops, then I will destroy them while they are young in order to avoid future damage to my crops" (Acheampong, 2003). Going forward, in the era of REDD+, an alternative pathway that duly recognises and channels enough financial resources to individual farmers is necessary if the scheme is to be successful in halting deforestation.

There are additional factors behind the failure of anti-deforestation measures. The government has been unable to allocate all the resources necessary—personnel, equipment, finance, etc.—for the ‘policing’ work required in managing the forestry resources. Distributing resources to other sectors, such as energy, infrastructure, health and education, is essential to promote socio-economic development. Additionally, the excessive centralisation of the forestry administration has also strengthened the hand of central government and vested all rights with respect to timber of trees on any laws outside the forest resources into the hands of the president. This has rendered the traditional rulers who, prior to British colonial rule, were the custodians and administrative of laws mere nominal owners with very limited role in the fight against deforestation (Asante, 2005).

Bushfires also contribute to deforestation. They destroy forests, especially in the transition zone. Yet to single them out as a dominant cause of deforestation fails to account for the socio-political economy that actually drive their occurrence. This deserves attention in the ongoing reform efforts under the REDD+.

Other complex issues of land tenure and rights have all contributed towards the increasing rate of deforestation and the reasons why policy efforts have failed. In his work explaining the chronic failure of deforestation policies in Ghana, Asante (2005) contends that the forceful procedure in which forest reserves have historically been established, the procedure by which rights to exploit and use timber has been assigned and the methods of enforcing laws on forestry have all suggested some explanations to the underlying drivers of deforestation. He therefore concludes that deforestation still persists because government’s actions in the past reforms have not really been promoting the quality of the environment or the interest of the citizens who depend on the forests—but rather to become the principal beneficiary of the revenue generated while ensuring that adequate supplies of timber

existed for future exploitation. While we do not necessarily agree with this conclusion, it is our belief that a meticulous look at the land rights, tree rights and reconciliation of economic policy goals to conservation goals are necessary in the ongoing reforms under the REDD+.

Moving ahead with REDD+: Implications and Policy Recommendations

Ghana has for the long term demonstrated its willingness to pursue the ideals of sustainable development, which aims to preserve the environment for both the present and future generations. This has informed the planning and implementation of a number of reforms to slowdown, halt and reverse the rather undesirable deforestation trends. REDD+ appears to be the most recent of these initiatives. The foregoing discussion reveals at least three key messages that are of fundamental importance to the ongoing efforts aimed to stem the tide of deforestation and degradation under the REDD+ scheme. First, we note that the current governance and development paradigm gives priority to economic development over forest conservation. Thus, there is excessive economic and political interest to generate maximum revenue from timber export than actually controlling deforestation. Unless we move away from the extractive-driven notion of forest policy towards an era where there is genuine preservation of the resources for the future generation, REDD+ may end up being just one of those past numerous programmes.

We therefore recommend a policy orientation that views the potential of the forest on the basis of the environmental services and non-timber forests products they provide rather than their potential for timber extraction. This is possible in the wake of the production of oil in commercial quantities—which offer new pathways to raise revenues to support socio-economic development. This will

however, require a strong political will that places strong emphasis on the non-timber values of the forests.

Second, the complex factors that promote deforestation and forest degradation also tend to favour the political and administrative elite to financially benefit from resource depletion. For REDD+ to be effective in stemming the tide of deforestation, the proposed reforms will have to challenge elite interests. As Hansen et al (2009) have noted, this will not be an easy task but until the political economy of deforestation and degradation is given a serious attention, policy reforms under REDD+ will only target the symptoms but not the underlying drivers of deforestation and degradation. To this end, we recommend that the ongoing analysis to understand the underlying drivers of deforestation should adopt a holistic approach that will take into consideration the historical, cultural, social, economic, political and institutional domains that constrain the genuine intention of reversing the trends of deforestation.

Third, it is also worth mentioning that many of the drivers of deforestation are beyond the forestry sector. To this end, we recommend that inter-sectoral coordination is required on plans, proposals, strategies and projects for REDD+ to be effective. Investment into strengthening and building a culture of forest sustainability among the existing institutions will also be required to effect the changes expected through the implementation of REDD+. We recognise that these issues are not completely new but they have not been given the attention they deserve. We therefore consider them highly relevant for the various (planned) reform efforts under REDD+ aimed to reduce deforestation and degradation facing the country.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to draw attention to the political and economic interests in the forestry sector that have severally and

collectively contributed to persistent deforestation despite numerous policy interventions. We have highlighted the almost entrenched political and economic interests that place premium on timber revenue generation which compete for the goals of controlling deforestation. The objective of this paper is very far from denigrating politicians or the forestry administration, who are leading efforts to save the approximately 1.6 million hectares of forests currently remaining in Ghana. Rather, our intention has been to highlight the politics and the interests that have shaped the undesirable outcomes of past efforts at reforming the sector under different initiatives. In doing so, we aim to draw lessons for the REDD+ scheme. Our conclusion is that unless the political and economic interests entrenched in the sector is dislodged, REDD+ will become just like the past efforts that yielded poor result—one ‘swallowing’ huge investment of resources but failing to halt the deforestation and degradation. Our position does not in any way give indication for inaction nor oppose the REDD+ scheme and other ongoing efforts in the forestry sector. Consequently, we assert that until the political economy of deforestation and degradation is given a serious attention, policy reforms under REDD+ will only target the symptoms but not the underlying drivers of deforestation and degradation in Ghana. We therefore join the clarion call for a paradigm shift away from the extractive-driven policy orientation towards an era where there is strong emphasis on the non-timber environmental services provided by the forests for both the present and the future generation.

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