



Government of Malawi
Department of Forestry

TECHNICAL ORDER ON REGULATING WOOD UTILIZATION ON CUSTOMARY LAND

1. INTRODUCTION

Firewood and charcoal trade along major roads and urban centres of Malawi is growing by the day. Over 40,000 producers and traders are engaged in this trade serving a market of almost 2 million urban dwellers.

The trade ensures a steady flow of income (up to K1000/month/person) to the producers and traders and steady supply of energy to the urban households. This energy is used for cooking household food and heating up water for bathing, supporting cottage industries like baking mandazi, frying chips and other restaurant products. These food products contribute to the well being and health of the urban workers and dwellers.

This wood is coming from sources on customary land where the standing stock of a natural woodland is 80m³/ha; with a mean annual increment (MAI) of up to 2m³/ha/yr, the annual allowable cutting. Often times actual cutting is 40-80m³/ha/yr which causes wiping out of the growing stock in 1 to 2 years.

Wiping out the wood resource is a threat to the wood trade, steady supply of energy and all livelihoods it is supporting. Above all, it is a threat to sustainable income and employment it provides. It is against this background and aspirations that some guidelines for regulating

wood utilisation on customary land are deemed necessary.

2. DEMARCATION OF VILLAGE FOREST AREAS

Every village in Malawi has a Village Forest Area (VFA) where goats and other animals graze, families fetch firewood, twigs and thatch grass. Boundaries of these Forest Areas are known by the village, but not clearly marked on the ground. Most of these forest areas, especially in the southern and some parts of the central region, are degraded and have thus lost the appearance of a forest. So the first step that should be taken by the District Forestry Officer (DFO) is to determine how much village forest (degraded or not) is in the District, Traditional Authority, Group or Village.

Followed by registration of all wood harvesters and traders should be registered with the District, Municipality or City. The registration should specify name and location of registree, available capital, sex and age. The harvesters and traders can then be allocated specific Village Natural Resources Management Committees to work with.

Each VNRMC should thus acquire a stamp, cash receipt books, delivery notebooks, and other necessary stationery to enable them conduct proper sale transactions which can be identified at a

Check Point or roadblock.

3. PARTICIPATORY SELECTION OF EXPLOITABLE TREES AND AREAS

A Village Natural Resources Committee (VNRMC) or a farmer can seek advice of a forestry assistant [S34 (2)] in an Extension Planning Area (EPA) or Area Control Unit (ACU). The forestry assistant should together with the VNRMC inspect desired trees or forest area to determine exploitable trees and areas; sparing young trees and fragile areas.

The forestry should determine the harvesting level in line with a management plan. VNRMC, being the producer, should be the one deciding on whether to exploit the entire annual allowable cut or part of it. The forestry assistant's role is to advise the VNRMC as stipulated in Section 34 (2) of Forest Act, 1997.

4. SUSTAINABLE HARVESTING

Once the allowable cut has been determined and agreed upon, the forestry assistant should advise the VNRMC on most suitable silvicultural system for the area. There are three (3) silvicultural systems from which a choice can be made for harvesting wood in natural woodlands. These are:

- (i) *Simple coppice*: This involves clear felling compartments on a relatively short rotation to provide firewood or small poles. To ensure a continual supply of small wood the number of compartments should equal the number of years in the rotation, usually should equal the number of years. This system is unsuitable on steep slopes and river banks where vegetation cover should

be maintained all the time.

- (ii) *Selection thinning*: Is the regular harvesting of exploitable trees, either individually or in groups. Clear felling of small coupes, known as group selection, is suitable for stands of *Julbernardia paniculata* and other light demanders (refer to Vol IV of the Extension Kit). This system is useful where demand for small-wood and timber exist.
- (iii) *Coppice with standards* : Is a two layer system in which an overstorey comprises scattered standards grown on a longer rotation, usually 3 to 4 times an understorey. The understorey or underwood is coppice grown on a relatively short rotation, usually for firewood and polewood. For every 1 standard there should be 4 understorey. Thus cut 4 in every 5 trees.

The forestry assistant should attach this information to an application for a licence and send it, through normal channel, to the Director of Forestry for approval before felling commences [S46(a)]. The licence specifies name of licensee, location of wood, allowable annual cutting, area to be cut, method of cutting, silvicultural system and wood processing methods.

5. LICENCING WOOD AND NON-WOOD PROCESSORS

Any wood processor, whether for timber, curios, firewood or commercial non-wood, should apply for a licence to process forest produce (Sections 81 and 82). This application should specify name of licensee, location of wood, allowable annual cutting, method of cut, silvicultural

tural system and wood processing methods.

The application should be sent through the DFO to the Regional Forestry Officer (RFO) for consideration and approval.

6. POSSESSION AND TRAFFICKING OF WOOD

A wood trafficker should acquire a Conveyance Certificate from a Regional or District Forestry Officer. Trafficking wood without the Certificate is an offence [S68(c)]. Those buying wood, charcoal or curios from a trader should acquire receipts bearing the traders registration number and date stamp.

7. LAW ENFORCEMENT

In order to ensure that wood possession and trafficking is coming from sustainably managed natural stands and legally acquired, a mechanism for inspection has been instituted. A major component in the inspection mechanism is the creation of a Law Enforcement Unit (LEU) that has forest inspectors. These inspectors are represented at Forestry Headquarters, Regional and District Offices.

The inspectors can set up barriers across roads as may be agreed with road authorities for the purpose of inspecting wood and other forest produce [S7]. They can inspect for legality, any forest produce being sold along major routes and in urban centres, felling and processing of wood, especially of indigenous trees. They can inspect customary, private and public forests for sustainable Forest Management (SFM) practices and advise on whether criteria indicators are being met. These criteria indicators are: growing stock; annual balance between growth and removals of wood products;

managed and sustainable extraction of non-wood forest products of fodder, honey, gum, miscellaneous fruits, roots and edible leaves; and, quality of silvicultural operations. Also, areas managed mainly for production of water, protection of watersheds, riverine zones and for flood control; areas of forests and other wooded lands managed for scenic and amenity purposes.

The inspectors are able to put together clear evidence for prosecution purposes.

8. PUBLICITY

The public should regularly be informed about attempts to regulate wood utilisation on customary land. In this regard publicity is disseminated through various radio stations informing the general public about these measures. This information is being passed through the following programmes.

1. Za Alimi - MBC Radio 1
2. You and the Environment - MBC Radio 1
3. Inu ndi Chirengendwe - MBC Radio 1
4. Saturday Break-fast show - MBC Radio 2
5. Green Diary - MBC Radio 2
6. Other radio stations available

Press Releases are made in Malawi News, Saturday Nation, weeklies, and Dailies.

9. INSTITUTIONAL NEEDS

In order to achieve the above, you should create VNRMCs in areas where natural woodlands are being cut for wood trade. The VNRMCs should be trained in wood harvesting, processing, silvicultural systems, patrol, policy, law and accounting. The VNRMCs should also be assisted in developing rules and

regulations which must be approved by the Minister of Forestry [S33].

Forestry assistants and guards must also be trained in the determination of allowable annual cutting for natural woodlands and forest policy and law.

10. LOGISTICAL SUPPORT

Due to need for long distance coverage, measurements and paperwork, provision should be made for motorcycle for every forestry assistant, bicycle for the forest guard, uniforms and field equipment for measuring volume and area. There is need to define a minimum package of field equipment for an EPA/ACU as follows:

- 3 diameter tapes
- 3 volume tables
- 3 30 m tapes
- 6 ranging rods
- 3 field notebooks
- 1 permit book/month
- 1 Conveyance Certificate
book/month
- 3 Compasses

The District Forestry Office should keep 1 Conveyance Certificate book/month. All licences will be issued from Forestry Headquarters, in the case of collection of plants and animals for scientific studies, the Chief Forestry Research Officer has delegated powers to issue licences for both customary forests and forest reserves.