

# The Forest Policy Process, Regulatory, and Institutional Frameworks in Ethiopia

Turkato Turto Duga<sup>1\*</sup> Birhane Sime Geressu<sup>2</sup> Mohammednur Ahmed<sup>3</sup>

1. PhD Candidate, Ethiopian Civil Service University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

2. Associate Professor, School of Policy Studies, Ethiopian Civil Service University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

3. Assistant Professor, School of Policy Studies, Ethiopian Civil Service University, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

E-mail: turkatot56@gmail.com, PO Box 5648

## Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine the trends of the forest policy process, its responses, legal frameworks, institutional developments, stakeholder relations, and stakeholder roles, as well as the major driving causes of the forest policy, regulatory, and institutional practices in Ethiopia. A qualitative content analysis method was employed for the study. The review of the literature is fundamentally based on data sources from archival and review of relevant empirical studies, as well as policy, legal, and strategy documents, supplemented with data sources from six key informants from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Ministry of Agriculture, FDRE Forest Development, and FDRE Environment Protection Authority who have relevant leadership and professional responsibilities in relation to forest policy, legal, and interdisciplinary issues. The result of the findings indicated that the trends were top-down and coercive. Moreover, the historical legacies of forest policy, legal, and institutional frameworks of past regimes have immensely affected the performance of the current forest policy and regulatory frameworks and their institutional strengths. Such an operation hindered public participation and resulted in poor forest policy outcomes. Therefore, the study recommends the urgency of creating strong inter-sectoral coordination in forest-related matters, ensuring participation, freeing institutional mandate allocation from the influence of the agriculture sector by balancing forest conservation and agriculture intensification, ensuring independent forest regulatory bodies across the tiers, providing the necessary implementation directives and guidelines, and giving adequate support to discharge their roles at the grassroots community level, as suggested.

**Key terms:** Forest policy, regulatory, institutional framework, Ethiopia

**DOI:** 10.7176/PPAR/13-3-02

**Publication date:** April 30<sup>th</sup> 2023

## Introduction

Forests are important sources of livelihood for millions of people and contribute to the national economic development of many countries. Despite their crucial importance in livelihood and climate regulation, forest resources all over the globe are exposed to enormous pressure, resulting in deforestation and degradation (FAO, 2011). The depletion of forests has many ecological, social, and economic consequences, including the extinction of biotic communities, leading to a reduction in biodiversity, soil erosion, global warming, and a loss of income to forest dwellers (Chakravarty, S. et al., 2012). Deforestation and forest degradation are the leading causes of global warming and climate change-related hazards, together accounting for about 20% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and over one-third of emissions from developing countries (WB, 2009).

The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 brought world leaders together to set targets and priorities on the global sustainability agenda, laying a solid foundation for international policy cooperation and addressing the fundamental drivers of deforestation, as well as the need for strong attention to forest policy and governance to ensure the sustainability of approaches to reducing deforestation and degradation. Moreover, countries from global to local scales formulate several forest policies and regulatory devices and establish institutions to address the insistent challenges of viable forest management and to achieve the economic and societal benefits expected from the sector through their established institutional frameworks (Ayana, 2020; Muthee et al., 2022).

The Great Green Wall Initiative of the Sahara and the Sahel was conceived as a sound forest-related policy initiative towards ensuring sustainable environmental management in African countries. It is anticipated that it could help in strengthening efforts made to arrest the loss of biodiversity control, desert encroachment, and improve the resilience of the local community to climate change impacts. The GGWSSI is an initiative with a broader target of increasing food security and reducing poverty by diversifying livelihood opportunities through climate-resilient development approaches. This initiative was developed to protect the expansion of the Sahara Desert via the planting of a wall of trees that stretches from Dakar to Djibouti with a width of 15 kilometers and a length of up to 7000 kilometers. The wall envisioned by 11 African countries (Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, and Chad) on the southern border of the Sahara and their international partners is aimed at preventing the expansion of the Sahara Desert into the Sahel (MEFCC, 2017). However, the continent's forest area declined by 2.8 million ha per year between 2010 and 2015 (FAO,

2016a), a much higher rate than anywhere else in the world. Africa's forestry sector challenges include: poor forest and land-use policies and ineffective implementation of good policies; unsustainable forest management; competition for land from the agriculture, mining, livestock, and energy sectors and from settlements; disputes over land; and general political conflict and instability. Moreover, the forest sector is given low priority in national plans and resource allocations and is negatively affected by many governance issues. At the continental level, member states have differing policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks, though institutional responsibility is given for the AU sustainable forest management framework (SFM Framework for Africa 2020–2030, 2020).

Similarly, over the course of history, a number of forestry-related policies in the form of guidelines, laws, and regulations have been formulated and implemented in Ethiopia to address forestry issues and problems (Ayana, 2014; NFSDP, 2018). Official forest policy, regulatory, and institutional development and establishment date back to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. It was a top-down model of policy development, motivated in most instances by expatriate advisors, in which the government was the sole source for developing policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks. The policy discourse, the approaches, the actors and their roles, and the driving causes for forest policy, regulatory, and institutional arrangements have shown a slight difference from regime to regime in the last fifty years in Ethiopia. While over the last two decades, the forest sector of Ethiopia has received considerable national policy and strategy emphasis, in addition to specifically formulated national policy and strategy documents for this sector, there are also policies and strategy measures relevant to the forestry sector that were integrated into the broader rural development policy frameworks. Other sectors' policies and strategies have significant links to the forest sector. Based on the foregoing background information, a review of the literature, and interviews with key informants, the study addressed the trends of the forest policy process and regulatory and institutional frameworks in Ethiopia in the last three regimes, as mentioned hereunder.

### **The Method**

The purpose of this study is to examine how the policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks look in Ethiopia. The study employed a qualitative content analysis method, reviewing the historical trends of forest policy and governance across three regimes: the monarchy (before 1974), the military government (1974–1991), and the FDRE government until the present. To this end, reviews of documents and relevant literature have been conducted to see whether international and Ethiopian forest policies and regulations, as well as the institutional frameworks, were meant to properly address the issue of forestry. The study analyzed the articles and contents related to forestry policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks using a qualitative content analysis. The information was analyzed qualitatively using narration and description.

### **Forest Policy, Regulatory and Institutional Frameworks in Ethiopia**

The lives of citizens everywhere are shaped by public policies, whether we are aware of them or not. The term "policy" is not tightly defined but is used in different ways on different occasions. Frequently, it can mean "a course of action adopted and pursued" (Egnowmn, 2009). A policy can be explicitly stated or not. It can also be planned or emerge through evident behavior. It is therefore often viewed either as a rational system based on deliberate aims and plans or as the consequence of political activity arising from a series of decisions (Kevin B. Smith and Christopher W. Larimer, 2009). In any case, a policy needs to provide guidance and a sense of direction over a certain period of time in order to be useful. It is proposed to guide and regulate present and future results and actions and usually comprises two elements: a set of aspirations, goals, or objectives and an outline of a sequence of action to achieve them (FAO, 2010).

A forest policy, sometimes referred to as a "forest strategy," is a long-term vision for the forest sector comprising a set of aspirations, goals, and objectives and an outline of a course of action for pursuing those strategies. FAO defines a "forest policy" as: "a negotiated agreement between government and stakeholders (i.e., all those who depend on or benefit from forests or who decide on, control, or regulate access to these resources) on the orientations and principles of actions they adopt, in harmony with national socioeconomic and environmental policies, to guide and determine decisions on the sustainable use and conservation of forest and tree resources for the benefit of society" (FAO, 2010).

Ethiopia has a long tradition of forest protection practices. Formalized forest management was introduced in Ethiopia in the early 20th century during the Italian occupation (Bekele, 2003). Since the commencement of official forest management in the early 20th century, forest protection ideas and practices in Ethiopia have been continuously evolving and changing. The context of the changes in the political economy in various periods determined the content of forest policy and the way it was negotiated. Since the 1990s, changes in political ideologies and economic priorities have continuously shaped forest protection policies and practices, including the Italian administration, imperial, socialist, and current FDRE governments. Forest protection has been embedded in broader political contexts throughout these periods, according to the political economy priorities of the various administrations (Rahmato, 2001; Bekele, 2003). Such politically motivated forest protection has had

varying effects on forest resources, depending on what was the priority for forest protection at the time (Woldegiorgis, B., 2020).

### **During the Brief Period of the Italian Occupation**

The Italian administration established the first forest administration authority, called Milizia Forestale or Forest Militia, which was the first of its kind of institutional arrangement with branches in many parts of the country (Gebremarkos, 1998; Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Melaku, 2003). The task of the Milizia Forestale was to supervise forest exploitation, do inventories, and carry out silvicultural and reforestation works (Bekele, 2003). This colonial epoch was characterized by structural change in the forestry sector, which is considered the beginning of formal forest management in Ethiopia (Bekele, 2003; Woldegiorgis B., 2020). This period is popularly known for its introduction of forest management based on colonial principles of economic use (Bekele, 2003; Alemayehu, 2019). In this period, the newly established forest administration institutions in different parts of the country issued various forest laws and regulations. The main goal, as implied by the formulations of the Milizia Forestale, was to exploit forest resources primarily for economic gain, with forest management guided by colonial interests and its primary goal being to benefit the newly established administration through the expansion of the forest industry (Woldegiorgis B., 2020).

The colonial forest management institution emphasized the need to promulgate strict disciplinary regulations that would enable a rational utilization of the forest (Bekele, 2003; Ayana, 2014). Milizia Forestale introduced laws and regulations to enforce the disciplinary and prohibitory rules of forest utilization. Between 1937 and 1938, the Italian administration issued forestry decrees and legal procedures for all the administrative tiers. The laws and proclamations sought to establish utilization standards and protect the forest by prohibiting local use of forest resources (Bekele, 2003).

However, forest policies in this period came from the expatriate foresters, and their management was harmful to the forest resources of the country, not up to standard, and caused significant deforestation. Similar to other African countries, colonial forest management practices in Ethiopia were mainly about managing forests as economic goods to maximize the benefit of the colonizer's economic interests, guided by ecological ideas that separated forest management from the local society, disregarding local knowledge and the established practices of forest use and management (Ayana, 2014; Woldegiorgis B., 2020).

When trying to understand how a colonial forest management practice was shaped in this period, consider the form of institutions and laws and legislation that were organized, established, and issued to guide colonial forest management ideology. Analyzing the colonial form of forest governance reveals how it was structured primarily for the purpose of exploiting forest resources for economic gain. The exploitive and dualistic nature of the colonial form of forest governance scaled up forest degradation and deforestation even within a short-term period and had negative effects on forest cover to a degree that is difficult to estimate today. The invaders had enacted over twenty laws in the five years of their occupation, which were purely aimed at securing the forests for rapid exploitation with no regard to their ecological values (Bekele, 2008).

Though the effects of colonial forest institutions on forest loss need further research, the Italian administration contributed to Ethiopian forest management practice in the sense that they initiated a major structural change to develop the forestry potential of the country (Bekele, 2003; Rahamto, 2008; Ayana, 2014; Alemayehu, 2019; Woldegiorgis B., 2020).

### **The Monarchical Era (Before 1974)**

The forest policy, regulatory, and institutional processes during the monarchy can be best seen since the post-Italian occupation. There was insufficient evidence that indicated advances in environmental affairs except for measures that were undertaken on a fragmentary and rudimentary basis (Alemayehu, 2019). During the five years of the Italian invasion, there were attempts at forest conservation by the Italian forces. They exercised strict regulations to safeguard forests in the southwest and central parts of the country with the purpose of protecting the trees from the reach of the local societies and using them for extensively practiced timber production (Bekele, 2008; Ayana *et al.*, 2013; Ayana, 2014).

The invaders' forceful protection of forests was not aimed at conserving resources for ecological purposes; rather, it was motivated by their desire to exploit resources for timber and related construction works. In this regard, Bekele (2008) has noted that "*the resource regulations during the Italian occupation focused on the economic potential of Ethiopia's natural resources rather than their ecological value.*" *During this period, the Italians issued over twenty forest decrees and implemented destructive forestry programs to fuel infrastructural development (P. 338). With all of its flaws, the monarchical era's forest protection measures became visible after the period of restoration, which was laden with fears of similar foreign invasion or intrusion and an obsession with agricultural production to feed the growing population (Zemenfes, 1995; Bekele, 2008).*

As a result, forest conservation practice during the monarchical era was overshadowed by the monarchical government's political structure, as manifested by its relationship with the people and cross-border relationships

with external forces. Since resource conservation requires public mobilization and coordination that bring the people and the political institutions into close contact, the political mistrust between the people and the ruling class has been detrimental to undertaking conservation activities. In this regard, empirical evidence and opinions from the key informants have also indicated that the emperor's era had the worst record of conservation of forest resources (Challa, 2015). During this era, land covered by forest was seen as wasteland. In order to allocate land tax, individual land holders were classified on the basis of their land resources (KII-001, 2022).

The disregard for forest conservation during the monarchical era was seen in its reluctance both before and after the Italian invasion. As noted by Bekele (2008), the monarchical regime had enacted virtually no rules with regard to forest protection before the Italian invasion, while the invaders had enacted over twenty laws in the five years of their occupation, which were purely aimed at securing the forests for rapid exploitation with no intention to protect their ecological values.

After the restoration, the government heavily focused on agricultural development, which utterly encouraged the destruction of forested lands for agricultural expansion, and national forest lands were also officially distributed to individuals for agricultural cultivation (Bekele, 2008; Alemayehu, 2019; Woldegiorgis B., 2020). Even though the 1955 constitution had provisions that encouraged conservation of resources, there were no clear policy steps taken by the government to materialize what was stated in the constitution. Hence, Bekele (2008) further explains the devastating effect of the period of 1955–1968 as the worst period ever seen in Ethiopia's forest governance, and thus an estimated half of the country's forest resource was destroyed, going from six million hectares in 1937 to three million hectares in the 1960s (p. 339).

The regulatory and institutional setup for forestry governance, which was under the ministry of agriculture (Negarit Gazeta, 1996, p. 140), had also been geared towards maximization of economic benefits from the forest sector. Based on the imperial government's land tenure system, there were state, private, and community forestry systems, each of which was recognized by law. However, irrespective of its ownership, the entire goal of forestry development had no significant value for its ecological implications. Thus, the imperial government had issued successive laws on forestry governance since 1965, emphasizing the economic generation from the forest resources, and 1968 can be thought of as a year of successive forestry regulations, with about nine forest-related laws enacted by the ministry of agriculture (Negarit Gezeta, 1968:2).

**Table 1.** The details of the successive forest regulations in the year 1968 are as follows:

Forestry regulation	Cited as	Purpose of the regulation
Legal Notice No.343 of 1968	Protection of Private forest regulation	To provide for protection of private forests from irresponsible use that could cause harm to the nearby state forest
Legal Notice No.344 of 1968	Protection of State Forest Regulation	To provide for protection of state owned forest from unauthorized use
Legal Notice No.345 of 1968	Exploitation of State Forest Regulation	To provide for exploitation of forest by the state (timber) and for sale to the local people through auction.
Legal Notice No.346 of 1968	Exploitation of Private Forest Regulation	To provide for authorized cutting of trees from private forests. It also obliges an owner to reforest the area
Legal Notice No.347 of 1968	Management of Protective Forest Regulation	Requires an approval of management plan for any forest regardless of its ownership, including private forest
Legal Notice No.348 of 1968	Establishment of Community Forest Regulation	Provides for organization of community forest commission at kebele level
Legal Notice No.349 of 1968	Powers of Rangers Regulation	To provide for establishment of forest ranger service for the protection of forests and implementation of Proc.no. 225, 1965
Legal Notice No.350 of 1968	Powers of Forests Guards Regulation	To provide for establishment of uniformed forest guards which protect state forests from illegal use
Legal Notice No.351 of 1968	Trade of Saw Logs and Veneer Logs Regulation	Provides for control and authorization of private timber sawmills, veneer mills and plywood factories

**Source: Compiled from Negarit Gazeta no.1, 1968 (pp., 1-21)**

The above table indicates that there were about nine regulations related to forestry development and governance enacted in a single year in 1968, with too much emphasis placed on the economic use of forest resources. Although the regulations provided for the development of private and community forests, their sole purpose was for timber production and domestic use, with no sign of care for the maintenance of species and genetic diversity.

With regards to the institutional framework, forestry was seen as a sub-sector with low priority. The forest agency was established within the agricultural ministry and was mainly responsible for reallocating forest land to

expand commercial agriculture and the issuance of permits for the exploitation of forest products (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Tadesse, 2001). This policy and lack of concern for forest protection pushed the farmland frontiers to encroach on forestlands (Bekele, 2003; Rahamto, 2008). Economic benefits gained from the forestry sector, such as timber production, were considered a subsidy to the agricultural economy only.

Apart from the economic policy of the imperial government, land policy gave forestland ownership rights mainly to the state and landlords. Forest possessed by the state was labeled as "state" or "imperial" forest property, while those possessed by the landlords were considered "private forest property." The tenure structure also played a role in intensive forest exploitation since forest exploitation was guaranteed in private and state forest possessions (Gebremarkos and Deribe, 2001; Bekele, 2003; Rahmato, 2008). The absolute right of ownership on private land was harmful to the forest in terms of deforestation. The situation prevailed until a law regulating the management of forests in private ownership was issued in 1965 (Bekele, 2003). The forest under state ownership was also poorly managed and nearly considered "open access" to any individual, and reforestation practices were limited (ibid.).

The historical analysis illustrates the existing competitive ideas between imperial policymakers and forest experts. As we have seen above, the imperial government did not pay attention to the forest, and it took a very long time for the imperial government to understand the need for forest management. The forest experts introduced the importance of bringing attention to forest conditions, providing recommendations, and also driving the debate by stressing the lack of government practices and the dominant agricultural modernization that caused an increased level of forest degradation (Alemayehu, 2019).

The advocacy work of the foresters was thus significant in terms of building up knowledge and awareness of the state of the forests. However, a firmly established political ideology of the political elites affected the policymaking process in the presence of experts with knowledge who advocate for policies that are important for environmental protection and forest administration (Woldegiorgis B., 2020).

The factors that made the imperial government reluctant to respond to the recommendations of the foresters were financial and institutional ineffectiveness. The policymakers, mostly royal landlord elites, lacked a broader interest in forest management, and they also mistrusted the expatriate foresters, whom the politicians considered agents of colonial ideology (Bekele, 2003; Rahamto, 2008; Ayana, 2012; Ayana, 2014; Alemayehu, 2019). The imperial government had chosen to follow a closed-door policy-making process with no influence rather than trusting and following the reports from the expatriate foresters and allowing them influence the policy-making process (Ayana, 2012, 26).

The forest protection advocacy of the foresters could not fit in with the economic development plan of the political elite. The political elites were rather focused on maximizing their economic profits from their private holdings of farmlands and forestlands (ibid.). On the other side, the expatriate foresters advocated for the prioritization of forest resources and called for forest governance that opts for proper management and environmental protection.

The lack of government policy and the sluggishness of forestry policy as an essential part of the government over twenty-four years shows how the foresters faced hard resistance from the imperial government as the state used its power in deciding policies and practices pertinent to its own political and economic priorities since 1941, which were agricultural modernization and maximization of economic profit for the ruling royal elite (Bahru, 1991; Bekele, 2003; Ayana, 2012; Woldegiorgis B., 2020).

In conclusion, the monarchical government's policy response to forest conservation was massive during the late 1960s, following long-term neglect that resulted in the country's forest resources deteriorating to an unprecedented level. This policy rush, according to some writers, was due to the rising voices and pressure from experts, both domestic and expatriate, as well as long-term concerns raised by donor agencies (Dessalegn, 2001).

### **During the Socialist Derg Era (After 1974-1991)**

The socialist Derg era was characterized by significant changes in the political economy and forest governance discourse and practices. The main difference was that the socialist government organized a full revision of forest management and a strong level of involvement. This change signifies a shift in the government's role in forest governance compared to the previous period. The key reason for this transformation in the government's role in handling environmental resources, and mainly forests, was the first ecological crisis of 1966–1967 during the imperial period (Ayana, 2014).

With the evolution of the new political system, land and natural resources were nationalized, and farmlands were allocated to the peasants (Yeraswork, 2000; Tadesse, 2001; Bekele, 2003). The socialist period marked the beginning of a new form of forest governance, and forest management came back into the spotlight and gained much more political attention (Ayana, 2014; Alemayehu, 2019). The socialist government also made itself the main actor in environmental and natural resource management by introducing direct control over land, forestlands, and forest resources. Centralization was thought to be an appropriate approach to solving the environmental and deforestation problems in the country. Forest management was formed with a robust

bureaucratic authority situated close to the government (Yeraswork, 2000; Tadesse, 2001; Bekele, 2003; Ayana, 2012).

During this period, the government issued a new constitution, other proclamations, and legislation focused on the nationalization of land and natural resources (Bekele, 2003; Ayana, 2012; 2014; Alemayehu, 2019) to enforce its forest management practices. The laws and regulations gave authority to the government to limit the rural people's access to and use of forests and forestlands (ibid.). The legislation, proclamations, and laws issued in this period are presented in the table below:

**Table 2. The Socialist Government Regulations related to Forest Protection**

Proclamations	Years	Main objectives and purposes
PDRE Proclamation for land reform and to provide ownership for government	1975	Nationalized all the rural lands, including forest under state and the people control for collective use. It aimed to stop the extensive forest degradation in the country
PDRE Proclamation for forest conservation and development	1980	To enforce forest protection and plantation activities To take immediate and decisive action against forest degradation and deforestation To plant, conserve, develop and administer the country's forest and wildlife resources.
PDRE Constitution	1987	To ratify state ownership over natural resources: land, minerals, water, and forest

**Source:** Forest Property Rights, the Role of the State, and Institutional Exigency by Bekele 2003).

As part of this reform, the government established an autonomous forest management institution called the Forest and Wildlife Conservation and Development Authority (FAWCDA) to strengthen forest management practices, the Forestry and Wood Utilization Research Centre, and the Wondo Genet College of Forestry (Ayana, 2012, 2013; 2014). The Forest and Wildlife Conservation and Development Authority (FAWCDA) was established in 1980 by repealing monarchical legislations that established separate institutions of state forest development agency (order No. 74 of 1970) and wildlife conservation organization (order No. 65 of 1970) and bringing both forestry and wildlife mandates under the control of a single central body (Negarit Gazeta, No. 17 of 1980). This proclamation, which repealed the previous regime's orders that provided for the formation of a wildlife protection institute in 1970, including the state forest development agency formation order, was critical of the failure of the past regime and outlined the purposes of the conservation measures to be followed. The preamble of the proclamation states:

*Whereas Ethiopia's forest, which formerly covered most of the country, has been depleted by the defunct feudo-bourgeoisie order for the selfish interests of the aristocracy and the nobility, the wildlife of the nation is exposed to the danger of extinction due to a failure to take the necessary care, and immediate and decisive actions must be taken in order to avert this disastrous situation by agitating and coordinating the broad masses to plant, conserve, develop, and administer the country's forest and wildlife resources (Proc. No. 192, 1980:1).*

As indicated in the proclamation, resource degradation was rampant, and the reckless use of resources during the monarchical era was clearly indicated. From the preamble, it can be understood that the forest degradation was massive and resulted in soil degradation that was threatening the lives of agricultural communities. Even though it was a positive policy move, as stated by a key informant from the federal environment authority, Derg was not quick enough to respond to the ongoing degradation until the 1980s, which was an indication of similar reluctance towards forest conservation (Negarit Gazeta, No. 17, 1980; KII-002, 2022).

As is evident from the proclamation, the forest conservation was to be conducted by "agitating" the peasants to "plant, conserve, develop, and administer" without any sign of involving the people in decision-making. Across the entire proclamation, there was no provision that permitted how the peasants should benefit from the forests they were supposed to develop. Even though the proclamation emphasized the responsibility of local people in forest development under the grass-roots organization of the farmers' association, the greatest of the mandates over forestry were granted to the FAWCDA. It rather granted the FAWCDA unlimited power to issue permits for the use of forest products and undertake punitive measures against those who fail to obey the proclamation and similar regulations in the sector (Bane et al., 2008). Though it is criticized for its unlimited totalitarianism, some writers contend that the FAWCDA was the strongest institution ever to appear in the institutional setting of the forest sector, which was able to undertake massive plantations of forests during the socialist derg era.

The socialist government also established plantation activities of exotic fast-growing tree species such as the eucalyptus tree in degraded areas and launched practices such as the strategy to reduce deforestation (Bekele, 2003; Mulugeta and Tadesse, 2010; Ayana, 2012; 2013; 2014), demarcated large tracts of national forest reserves, and established a state-owned forest plantation area covering approximately 4.8 million hectares of land (Bane et al.,

While the government's actions during this period, such as enacting laws and policies, engaging in plantation activities, and establishing forest management institutions, had a significant impact on forest development, however, the main critique against forest policy in this period was related mainly to the dictatorial approach to forest management (Woldegiorgis B., 2020). Moreover, in contrast to the regime's commitment to foster conservation and improvement of the country's forest resources, Derg introduced some erroneous policies such as resettlement and urbanization that were damaging to forest conservation. It introduced forceful movement of the settlers from their place of origin, and it was done in forested areas; hence, the destruction done to the resources was believed to be immense and resulted in massive devastation of the resources by the public after its demise (De Waal, 1991: 232; Dessalegn, 2001; KII-005, 2022).

To this end, the contentious policy actions related to resettlement and village formation were meant to achieve development through bringing the rural people into manageable quarters to foster economic and social development from the socialist perspective (Alemayehu, 2019). Researchers who studied the socialist government's approach of centralizing power to the state, such as Yeraswork (2000), Tadesse (2001), Rahmato (2001), Bekele (2003), and Ayana (2012), have criticized the socialist government's approach of centralizing power to the state. Furthermore, Derg's environmentalism was based on the mistaken belief that the top-down way of imposing policies was believed to be the right approach to solving development problems, and hence the people were entirely disregarded in matters that pertain to their own lives and their local resources, as key informants from the ministry of agriculture and FDRE forest development also agree (Keely & Scoones, 2003; KII-003, 2022; KII-006, 2022).

Authority and responsibilities were concentrated only in the government functionaries and in the state-run forestry institutions, limiting the participation of local people in the decision-making process and particularly in managing the protection of forests and forest lands (Yeraswork, 2000; Tadesse, 2001; Rahmato, 2001; Bekele, 2003; and Ayana, 2012). In addition, the top-down approach to forest administration neglected not only rural people's potential role as forest managers but also their core economic issue, i.e., maintaining forest property as stated by a key informant from the FDRE ministry of agriculture (KII-005, 2022).

Though the authoritative approach introduced centralized policies and institutions, which played a major role in the improvement of forestry and forest conservation, this centralized and authoritarian approach created conflicts of interest at the local level between the government officials and the local people. Having full authority over land allocation and the categorization of land as forest land or farm land, which was exclusively done by the government without any consultation with local people, created a conflict between the rural people and the government's institutions (Bekele, 2003, 118). The primary significance of this period's forest governance was increasing forest cover in urban and rural areas (Bekele, 2003). However, the political change in the period afterwards resulted in a disturbance of this process and a regression of forest cover (Bekele, 2003; Ayana, 2012; Alemayehu, 2019).

In general, the military government, guided by socialist principles, followed an unresponsive approach to the views of the people and persisted in undertaking policy measures that, from the regime's perspective, were believed to yield the expected socio-economic changes. (Alemayehu, 2019).

With regards to the institutional setup, environmental mandates during the derg have shown little change from those of the monarchy. The Ministry of Agriculture, as the main institutional structure, remained the focal point for environmental mandates, expanding its responsibilities with the newly established Department of Soil and Forestry Conservation (Ayana, 2014; Alemayehu, 2019). Proclamation No. 192 of 1980 re-established the Authority for Forest and Wildlife Conservation and Development (FAWCDA), granting it the governance of forests and wildlife or national parks. Initially, FAWCDA was instituted independently and hence took some significant steps in forestry development. However, later in 1984, it was merged into the Ministry of Agriculture.

In terms of actors, the major player in the governance of environmental and forest resources was the government itself. Since the major policy paradigm of the Derg was state-centric, elitist, and top-down, the role of other actors was very weak. Even though the reforestation and soil conservation works were massively carried out by the rural people, the entire policy decisions were undertaken by the government institutions in a highly centralized manner, and thus the wider public had no room to influence the policies as well as the implementation strategies. By the time there were over forty donor agencies and environmental NGOs engaged in support of rehabilitation works, their expert advice was influential in shaping the policy contents as well as implementation strategies (Challa, 2015). Thus, more than the people, who were merely obligated to accept and implement the top-down decisions, the foreign donors have had a strong role in policy making and the design of national conservation plans. As a result, it can be argued that the forest policy process and governance was state-centric and top-down elitist, with little room for public participation.

### **Forest policy, Regulatory and Institutional Framework during the Transition Era**

The forest policy and governance system in the previous monarchical and derg regimes was highly limited to laying out scant legal and institutional frameworks to govern land-based resources (soil, water, vegetation, and

wildlife), which were synonymous with "environment," and the major intention of the conservation measures was basically economic and leisure with little focus on the objective of achieving the ecological balance of nature (Amonge, 2013).

Following the demise of military rule by the EPRDF-led coalition forces in 1991, the country faced disorder, instability, and anarchy for a brief time of transition (EPA, 2012; Amonge, 2013). After long years of suppression and tyranny, the people have begun to vent their hatred toward the conquered regime by destroying its institutions. Cutting trees and clearing lands, which were protected for area closure and forestry, took place in an attempt to control additional farmlands (Dessalegn, 1994). The demolition of conservational works such as stone bunds and terraces was also one of the ways that disorder and lawlessness were manifested. Even though there is no concrete evidence with regard to the magnitude of the damage done to resources, the size of the smashed public forests was huge (TGE, 1994, p. 7).

As archival evidence indicates, there were no laws, regulations, or policy responses over the period of transition with respect to resource conservation. After three years of full engagement on peace, stability, and the introduction of major economic reforms (Sisay, 2008), the first attempt towards responding to the ongoing degradation of resources was seen in 1994, with the enactment of the proclamation of the forest conservation law (Negarit Gazeta No.94, 1994) and the formulation of the ADLI policy, in which effective utilization and conservation of land resources were emphasized as a prerequisite for agricultural growth that would lead to industrialization (TGE, 1994; MoFED, 2002). With the re-establishment of regulation and command, resource conservation gradually began to take shape as local governments were established and the justice system began to function (TGE, 1994).

The aforementioned forest protection law, proclaimed by the transitional parliament, was the first step to respond to the massive devastation of plantations and ongoing soil degradation. Its preamble underlines the threat posed to forest assets and the level of land degradation and reiterates the necessity of providing for the protection of these resources. It also emphasized the need to develop and conserve forests while considering the livelihood demands of the resource communities, whereby their participation in the governance of and benefit sharing from public forests would be given legal recognition (Negarit Gazeta No.94, 1994).

Despite those attempts mentioned above, the major focus of the new regime was to put in place an orderly path to a secure and stable national political system guided by the transition charter (Negarit Gazeta No. 1, 1991), and hence over the following years, degradation of resources took place persistently (Dessalegn, 2001). As noted by Amonge (2013), an estimated 60 percent of the conservation works, including state forests, were destroyed in a brief period of the transition.

### **During FDRE Government Era (After 1991 until Today)**

The post-transitional period witnessed key milestones in forest policy, regulatory framework, institutional framework, and governance, which were demonstrated by the formulation of the FDRE constitution. The 1995 constitution can be regarded as the turning point in Ethiopia's environmentalism, with strong implications for policy, legal, and institutional frameworks. Being the highest law of the country, the constitution devoted two articles to the environment, which lifted the degree and status of environmental concerns to the highest level from being a lateral issue to the status of a major human rights topic (FDRE, 1995).

The FDRE constitution, Article 44, puts environmental security as part of basic popular rights, dictating that "all individuals have the right to an unpolluted and healthy environment" (Negarit Gazeta, 1995, p. 16), and this article is consistent with and adopted in reference to Principles 1 and 2 of the Rio Declaration on Human Environment (Vasseur, 1973). Similarly, Article 92 specifies environmental objectives and recognizes the government's obligations to ensure that citizens are entitled to live in a "clean and healthy environment" (p. 33). This substantial development in policy, supported by robust constitutional provisions, resulted in the proliferation of legal instruments, directives, and execution plans that were directed towards improving the country's environment and forest resources that have experienced long-term degradation (Alemayehu, 2019).

The 1994 law was the first significant step towards saving Ethiopia's forest resources from ongoing destruction after four years of tragic destruction due to the early reluctance of the transitional government (Alemayehu, 2019; Woldegiorgis B., 2020). The proclamation recognizes three categories of forests, namely state forest, regional forest, and private forest (Negarit Gazeta, 1994). With the enactment of the forest law, practical measures such as the preparation of Ethiopia's Forestry Action Program (EFAP) were undertaken, which was an early attempt towards implementing the law.

Even though the practicality of this law and the EFAP require deep scrutiny, evidence indicates that there were more or less improved tendencies and practical responses to forest protection throughout the regional governments (Ayana, 2014). Until the repeal of this law in 2007 by a proclamation entitled "Forest Development, Conservation, and Utilization Proclamation No. 542/2007," there were both economic and environment-oriented approaches to forestry development. This was evident in the EFPA, which was seen as a practical commitment of the government with the major aims of enhancing forest products for economic demands, curbing soil



degradation, enhancing agricultural production through forest development, and protecting the forest ecosystem, including agroforestry practices supposed to be done by individual farmers. Hence, the program was aimed at achieving both economic and environmental goals (Amonge, 2013).

Furthermore, the national forest priority areas (NFPA) were a comprehensive forest policy document produced by the then ministry of natural resources and environmental protection that was based on the Ethiopian wildlife development and conservation authority's (EWCA's) ten-year strategic plan (1983-1993) that set a target of increasing the country's forest cover to 24% by the end of 1993, though implementation fell far short of its ambitions (Bane et al., 2007; Alemayehu, 2019). Nevertheless, this policy contributed to the opening up of the forestry governance landscape for multi-level and multi-actor-based governance, which was never the case in the past regimes (Alemayehu, 2019).

The government further introduced a new development strategy called Agricultural Development Led Industrialization (ADLI) in 1994, a policy intended to develop the smallholder farming system and promote large-scale commercial agriculture (Rahmato, 2011; Ayana, 2012; Bekele et al., 2015). Developing the agricultural sector was taken as the main catalyst for developing other sectors, including forestry (ibid.). Subsequent development programs were issued by the government, such as the Poverty Eradication Tactics Package, the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty, the Growth and Transformation Plans, and the Climate-Resilient Green Economy, based on following ADLI's main principle of prioritizing the agrarian segment (Ayana, 2012; Bekele et al., 2015). As a result, much emphasis was given to the farming subdivision in the growth policies and approaches of the government.

With the attention on agriculture, the forestry sector was given little consideration. Despite new legislation, the remaining forestlands were in danger of dwindling because of the need for commercial farming land expansion (Bekele et al., 2015). For example, subsequent government reports have shown an increase in farmland in a short period of time. In 2010, it was reported that the farmland increased from 9.8 million ha in 2004–5 to 11.25 million ha in 2007–8 (FDRE, 2010). This expansion was directly linked to the decline of forest lands (Bekele et al., 2015). The 2011 government document stated that "1.5 million ha of forest and shrub cover are at risk due to agriculture expansion and biomass energy needs" (FDRE, 2011; Bekele et al., 2015). The growth and transformation plan documents show that a large portion of land, including forest land, was allocated to be transferred to commercial farming (FDRE, 2014). Meanwhile, the forestry sector was envisioned in the government's plan to fulfill the demands of the market economy. This sentiment was made clear in the Rural Development Policy and Strategy (RDPS) document, where it was stated as follows: "Forestry activities shall not be performed for the sake of forest development per se." The trees to be planted shall provide tangible economic benefits to the people, and the practice must be an agroforestry undertaking (FDRE, 2001; Ayana, 2014).

From the expression in this document, we can understand that the government's aim in developing the forestry sector was for its subsidiary contribution to the economic growth plans of the government. Therefore, it can be argued that forest management in the first part of this period was a low priority at the federal level, and this idea is consistent with the opinion of the KII-003 from the FDRE bureau of forest development. Gradually, the forestry sector became a priority in the policy-making process, with increased attention given to it partly to increase its contribution to the economic growth plan and partly for the global climate change mitigation initiatives that connect forest management with additional economic benefits through carbon finance (FDRE, 2011; Ayana, 2012; Bekele et al., 2015; MEFCC, 2017; NFSDP, 2018).

However, there has been a long-standing debate on the outcomes of the country's forest development policy implemented so far. The discussion is based on whether the economic policy that gives priority to agricultural growth at all costs has been undermining forest resources in particular and environmental security in general. Needless to say, to bring forth the two sides of the debate, which is outside the scope of this paper, there are reports that the policies have positively contributed to forest development and conservation (Alemayehu, 2019).

Similarly, the government has claimed that integrating forest policy with agricultural development has resulted in a significant increase in Ethiopia's forest cover (MoA, 2010), but there are ample critics who argue that the agricultural extension approach overemphasizing crop productivity increases has weakened forestry to a significant extent, and thus, there have been few achievements compared to the extent of policy narratives that has been underway until recently (Amonge, 2013; Ayana, 2014; Alemayehu, 2019).

When we come to the 2007 forest policy, it defines forest management objectives and purposes to meet the environmental and economic needs of the country. The policy explains the development, conservation, and utilization of forests for preventing environmental problems such as soil erosion, expansion of desertification, disturbance of ecological balance, and depletion of biodiversity; further, it states the contribution of forests to the improvement of the national economy (FDRE, 2007). The policy also promotes participatory forest management and encourages forest ownership by individuals, forest use group associations, and private investors to create a sense of ownership and the right to benefit from forest resources.

One of the main contributions of the 2007 forest policy is giving legal recognition for participatory forest management practice in all over the country which is the result of the successive urging of NGO stakeholders as

a key informant from the FDRE forest development indicated. Participatory forest management has become a primary mechanism to involve communities in sustainable forest management and to reduce existing and historically induced tensions between the government and the rural people on the issue of property rights (Bekele et al., 2015). According to the KII response from the federal forest development office (KII-OO4, 2022), participatory forest management (PFM) is widely recognized as a suitable way for forest management to rehabilitate degraded forest landscapes and reduce deforestation though community members are still dissatisfied with regard to benefit sharing and forest use rights (Limenih and Bekele, 2008; Bekele et al., 2015).

In addition to the forest policy, the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy is another important move that was taken by the Ethiopian government to enhance forest management. It is also an international initiative that was launched by the United Nations Environment Program in 2008, which urges governments to design an economic strategy that reduces environmental risks and ecological scarcities while at the same time playing the role of poverty eradication and achieving sustainable development (Tombe, 2016).

With regards to the institutionalization of the forest sector, it is characterized by regular instability. It stayed in the ministry of agriculture (MOA) as a department until its merger with Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment protection (MONREP), where it was dwarfed by agricultural amplification. As indicated by Ayana (2014), this overshadowing was evident both in human and financial resource allocation, which negatively treated the forest sector and gave vast attention to agricultural development. The major reason for the lack of attention for the forestry resource is related to the basic policy paradigm of looking at forestry through the window of agricultural production and the dire need for easy expansion of fertile arable land, as stated by senior researchers in the environment protection authority and forest development sectors of Ethiopia (KII-001, 2022; KII-003, 2022).

Besides policy and institutional gaps in the forest sector, the government's policy of inter-regional and intra-regional resettlements has also been criticized for their negative effect on the forest resources of the country, as most of the resettlement programs were carried out in densely forested woodlands and shrub lands, which were cleared off in order to construct thatched houses and for farming. For these reasons, forest destruction was visible in the southern nations, nationalities and peoples region (SNNPR) and Oromia regional states (Jaleta et al., 2011). Similarly, studies conducted in different places across the country have consistently reported that the status of natural vegetation along with land use and land cover in the resettled areas have significantly changed due to poorly undertaken resettlement programs (Teshome et al., 2011; Amonge, 2013; Mulugeta et al., 2014; Kefelegn et al., 2017).

Ethiopia's growing connection to global economic and political forces has had an influence in terms of embracing the environment and development discourse of sustainable development through the formulation of relevant policies and the putting in place of institutional arrangements that are thought to be in line with the multilateral agreements; the country has ratified so far as well as its growing voice and role in regional and global forums related to climate negotiations (MoFED, 2014).

However, the new institutional reform towards setting up a full-fledged ministry of forest and environment, which could be seen as a significant stride, stayed for a very few years and was exposed to downsizing with the disputed allocation and fragmentation of forestry mandates among some institutions, including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MoCT), to which the EWCA was annexed, and the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), which is still assuming forest development mandates (Alemayehu, 2019).

Four years ago, the 2007 forest development, conservation, and utilization proclamation was revised by Proclamation No. 1065/2018. It recognizes four types of forest tenure categories, namely, private, community forest, association forest, and state forest (Article 4 of Proc. No. 1065/2018). Recognition of four types of tenure categories is a significant positive step compared to the recently repealed forest proclamation (Proc. No. 542/2007), which categorized forest ownership into state and private. Besides expanding forest tenure categories, the new forest proclamation further elaborated a legally recognized package of rights for each tenure type (FDRE, 2018; Ayana, 2020).

The 2018 Forest Law laid the foundation for significant forest tenure reform in Ethiopia by authorizing the creation of community and associational forest ownership types in addition to the state and private forest categories recognized in previous forest laws, though the similarities and differences between associations and cooperatives are yet to be clarified. State forests are further subdivided into three management categories: productive, protection, and reserve forests. The law defines the privileges and compulsions of three categories of non-governmental forest developers: private, community, and association. The law provides a definition for participatory forest management (PFM) and reflects Ethiopia's interest in using Payment for Ecosystem Services schemes to encourage forest expansion and retention (FDRE, 2018; Rebecca et al., 2019).

The privileges, encouragements, and duties shared by all forest grower categories were also stated in the proclamation. All three categories of non-government forest makers can obtain use privileges on state land selected for use as a forest and can obtain a license of ownership for the forests they grow. Communities can also acquire certificates of title for the forests they develop on communal lands. Communal lands refer to land that

communities use communally for grazing or other purposes (FDRE, 2018; Rebecca et al., 2019). However, the state retains ownership of such lands. If communal land is certified under the names of more than one household, it will still be considered communal but certified land. Uncertified lands remain accessible for use by the surrounding communities, and such lands are generally candidates for rehabilitation and for afforestation.

Based on who developed them, these may become either association or community forests. However, all types of prospective developers must develop and adhere to a forest management plan. All forest developers have the right to use, sell, or add value to the products, including carbon and ecosystem services, from the forests they develop. Additionally, all forest growers are authorized to obtain payment if the land is taken for public use and to acquire professional forestry-related support from the federal and regional governments (FDRE, 2018). To encourage forest development, the 2018 Forest Decree calls for the state to provide forest developers with incentives, such as access to loans and tax holidays. The obligations are nearly identical for all forest developer categories. They are mainly linked to forest safeguarding and guaranteeing that the forest administration strategy, environmental acts, and communal ethics and standards are valued.

On the other hand, community forest creators ensure extra rights that private and association forest developers do not enjoy and are subject to further duties. Societies demanding to develop forests need to do so using a participatory approach. They also need to establish communal bylaws to govern how they retain their forest and distribute benefits as stated in their regulations. Similarly, communities have special status regarding access to and sharing of benefits from state production and protected forests. For example, when developing control plans, government forest managers must include indigenous societies; societies take precedence in sharing benefits from state forest concessions; and local communities may derive social, economic, and environmental benefits from production and secure forests if they work in accordance with the administration proposal. The law is silent on the specific benefits that communities receive in exchange for forest concessions on state forests, as well as their rights and responsibilities in reserve forests.

The details of the legally recognized bundle of rights for private forest (forest other than community or state forest and developed on private or institutions' holding), community forest (forest developed, conserved, utilized, and administered by the community on its private or communal possession based on laws and plans developed by the community), and association forest, i.e., forest developed, conserved, utilized, and administered by the associations established to develop forest according to the new declaration No. 1065/2018, are indicated on Articles 5, 7, and 9 of the new decree.

Communal land holding, including forest land, is also recognized by the 1995 Constitution and the rural land use and administration proclamation No. 456/2005. It is defined in Proclamation No. 456/2005, Article 2/12, that communal holdings are rural lands that are given by the government to local residents for common grazing, forestry, and other social services. The constitutional articles that support communal forest land holding include: 1) freedom of association, which could allow people to organize into forest use groups; 2) direct participation of the local people in all matters (which include forest administration and viable utilization issues); and (3) joint ownership of land and additional nature-gifted assets (which shall apply to forest resources).

With regards to the institutional framework, forest sector mandates are fragmented in different sectors after the collapse of the Ministry of Environment, Forestry, and Climate Change. In the first instance, at the federal level, it was established as the Ethiopian Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Commission as a responsible institution for forest sector mandates. Currently, the forest sector activities are distributed among the FDRE forest development, FDRE Environment Authority, FDRE Minister of Agriculture, Ethiopian Biodiversity Conservation Institute, FDRE Culture and Tourism, and others according to the views of key informants from the three federal institutions (KII-001, 2022; KII-003, 2022; KII-005, 2022; KII-006, 2022).

Prior to this breakup, the Ethiopian Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Commission was the responsible institutional entity, working closely with the regional states to enforce the 2018 forest law. Its roles encompassed leading and overseeing the implementation of the law, setting up systems for forest protection, forest marketing, and benefit sharing, and providing training, education, and research opportunities for forest developers and regional forest authorities (FDRE, 2018). It did, however, further fragment the FDRE forest development and environmental protection authorities.

The regions are responsible for grassroots operations. The regions are entitled to state forest administration; classification, demarcation, and certification of non-state forests; and delivery of practical and managerial backing to forest growers. Additionally, provincial forest officials are responsible for standardizing levels of forest product fees and confirming agreement with forest strategies and forest regulations. The demarcation and certification of all rural lands, including forests, is done by the respective Regional Land Administration Authorities (FDRE, 2018).

According to a key informant from the federal environment authority and forest development, a critical review of federal land law in order to align it with the 2018 Forest Law, as well as the corresponding regional land laws, was strongly suggested to facilitate implementation of the national forest law that recognizes community rights to forests. However, actualizing rights on the ground requires strong political commitment and

administrative support, as well as the existence of fair, secure, stable, and accountable tenure systems (KII-002; KII-03, 2022). For this to happen, the state will need to fulfill its responsibilities of monitoring and regulating forest resource access and use, a task that will require strengthening communication and coordination across governance scales and sectors. In this regard, a senior researcher from the federal ministry of agriculture indicated that the effectiveness of forest policy implementation should be seen from the perspective of a multi-layered governance approach in which all tiers of governance, from national to local, should be fully involved for its success (KII-006, 2022).

Institutional arrangements of organizations in charge of forestry between regional states and the federal government need to be aligned to improve vertical communications. Cross-sectoral coordination is required to facilitate the planning and implementation of restoration options at the landscape level. In relation to this, there are no implementing regulations and guidelines at the federal and regional levels for the 2018 Forest Law, which currently hinders the ability of regional and lower-level institutions to implement the law. The absence of legal instruments and procedures for managing overlapping formal and traditional tenure systems makes implementation challenging, and there are also few mechanisms that exist for aligning legal and institutional frameworks between federal and regional governments and for coordinating plans and actions across sectors (e.g., agriculture, land administration, investment, and forestry). As stated by KIIs from all three sectors, forestry tasks are left to agriculture offices at the local level because of the poor dedication and commitment of most regional states and forestry institutions (Rebecca et al., 2019; KII-001; KII-002; KII-003; KII-004; KII-005; KII-006; 2022).

In general, the policy, regulatory, and institutional trajectory of the forest sector currently in Ethiopia can be said to have shown significant advances in policy narrative and resulting governance and policy performances. Forest governance, unlike the previous regimes, was elevated to the next level through policies and legal frameworks that provided for decentralized power and the participation of different stakeholders, which resulted in improved forest protection among the regions. However, the obsession with increasing agricultural production has resulted in forest stock degradation when forests were cleared for additional land use. Besides agricultural expansion that affected forest protection, the resettlement program has also undermined forest resources, though the government's current effort to expand tourist destinations assumes that it is one of the core macro-economic development sectors, and the statement of the "green legacy" by the Ethiopian prime minister to mobilize the people is a good step if it is supported with strict follow-up and care for the massively planted seedlings and rehabilitated forests.

Institutional development in the current era has seen many changes, as different types of forest institutions have been established in the center and regions with different nomenclature. The institutionalization followed the broad policy narrative and experienced chaotic changes that, in some aspects, have been detrimental to the effectiveness of policy implementation. The institutional setup has many gaps and overlaps, mainly characterized by its failure to enforce the major laws, and needs urgent correction so as to bring about the promised change in the sector.

### **Summary, Conclusions and Recommendation**

Based on the detailed discussion and analysis of forest policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks in the preceding sections, the following summary, conclusion, and recommendation are provided, comparing the policy context, guiding forest policy discourse, approaches to governance, institutional set-up, roles of actors, major drivers, and policy outcomes of the previous two regimes after the Italian invasion of the current FDRE regime.

#### **Summary**

Ethiopia's forest policy response has evolved from narrow, land-based, and agriculture-driven forest conceptualization during the past two regimes to a holistic, all-encompassing view of forest understanding and simultaneous broad-based policy responses in the current era. During the monarchical and Derg eras, there were patches of forest legislation, while in the current FDRE government, there are broad-based strategies, coherent forest policies backed by constitutional provisions, broad mid-term plans with explicit targets, numerous regulatory tools, and the climate-resilient green development strategy (CRGE), including the recent green legacy of the prime minister. In terms of policy discourse, it was a frontier economic approach in both the monarchical and Derg regimes, as well as eco-development in the socialist era to a lesser extent. The policy discourse during the FDRE period is about frontier economies, eco-development, and sustainable development.

Concerning the major drivers, the monarchical period was characterized by expatriate knowledge, drought and famine, and the emulation of modernity. In the socialist regime, the major policy driving forces were the socialist way of development, such as collectivization and village formation, expat advice of neo-Malthusian views, draught and famine, and donor influences. During the FDRE period, the major policy drivers were: drought and famine; poverty alleviation; and the coincidence of external and internal development paradigms. With regards to the institutional framework, the wildlife organization, state forest agency, and MoA were the

major forest institutions during the monarchical period. During the socialist derg era, FAWCDA was the primary institution for forest and wildlife management. In the FDRE regime, though its absolute dominance is decreasing, MoA's influence is still significant; there are varieties of forest institutions at federal, regional, and local levels outside the auspices of the traditional MoA.

In connection to the role of actors, the government was a sole implementer with the involvement of some international agencies and donors during the monarchical and military dictatorship eras. In the current FDRE era, the government and the local communities play the major and primary roles, respectively, and the NGOs and international donors play the secondary role of acting on forest policy. During the monarchical and derg eras, the forest governance approach was top-down, exclusionary, and coercive resource conservation, whereas the current FDRE regime's forest governance approach is decentralized and participatory in natural resource conservation but centralized and exclusionary in protected area governance. In relation to policy outcome, the monarchical period was characterized by massive degradation of natural forest cover, the legacy of exclusionary protected area governance, and the MoA as a storehouse of forest governance. The forest policy outcome during the derg period reserved some state forests through harsh protective measures, resulting in the destruction of conservation measures forced upon communities and forest areas that incorporated farm lands. The misguided policies caused massive destruction of forest and wildlife resources and a foreign aid-dependent soil and water conservation approach.

The current FDRE regime is distinguished by massive soil and water conservation through a participatory approach, as well as a shift away from aid-dependent practices; agricultural development based on natural resource conservation has emerged as a new path of green and sustainable development. Poor policy implementation and law enforcement characterize it; policy disharmony (e.g., resettlement policy and large-scale land grab) resulted in massive forest degradation and development projects that ignored environmental security and citizens' social rights.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The analysis of the policy, strategy, archival documents, and empirical studies together with the information obtained from the key informants selected from the three pertinent sectors indicated that the policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks have been immensely affected by the legacies of historical trends in forest policy responses and the drivers behind forest decisions. Though the country has achieved some major developments in broadening its forest policy narrative by incorporating issues other than land-based resources, including climate change mitigation and adaptation responses, the actual practice has been seriously influenced by the historical legacies of how forests were viewed and treated.

Even though the country has crossed some significant stages of institutional reform, the regulatory strength of forest institutions in achieving compliance has been subdued by multiple problems that emanate from lack of clarity of mandates, weak political support, meager execution capacity, and the low status granted to these institutions by law. Actor engagement has been improving with a significant increase in the level of community participation in forest governance. However, there is no defined modality of actor engagement in general, which leaves no room for participation by the CSOs and the private sector. Thus, weak institutional capacity coupled with poor actor engagement has enormously contributed to the ineffectiveness of forest policy, regulatory, and institutional frameworks in the country.

Despite all the efforts in the formulation of relevant policies, strategies, and legal frameworks, as well as institutional reforms, Ethiopia's forest performance has a huge mismatch between what is on paper and the actual practice on the ground. The policy remedies and revision of legal provisions, though promising, are rarely enforced by regulatory bodies, which suffer from weak internal capacities, a lack of directives and implementation guidelines, and a lack of institutional independence. Hence, the government should work towards creating strong inter-sectoral coordination in forest-related matters, ensuring participation, freeing institutional mandate allocation from the influence of the agriculture sector by balancing forest conservation and agriculture intensification, ensuring independent forest regulatory bodies across the tiers, providing the necessary implementation directives and guidelines, and giving adequate support to discharge their roles at the grassroots community level, are suggested.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author (s) is thankful to Christina H. and Daniel K. for the financial support.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### **References**

Alemayehu Assefa, (2019). Trends and Regulatory Challenges of Environmental Institutions: Evidences from

- Federal and selected Regions of Ethiopia Macro think institute of Environmental Management and Sustainable Development ISSN 2164-7682, Vol. 8, No. 2
- Alemayehu N. A. (2020). Impacts of Policy and Legal Framework on Sustainable Forest
- Alemayehu, N. A. (2014). Forest governance dynamics in Ethiopia: histories, arrangements, and practices. Wageningen University.
- Alemayehu, N.A., Arts, B., Wiersum, K.F. (2013). Historical development of forest policy in Ethiopia: trends of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization. *Land Use Policy* 32:186–196.
- Amonge, (2013) Forest resource management systems in Ethiopia: Historical perspective College of Development Studies, Ababa University, Ethiopia.
- Ayana, A (2012) Forest governance dynamics in Ethiopia Histories, arrangements, and practices. Wageningen University, Wageningen
- Bahiru, Z. (1991). A history of modern Ethiopia. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University Press.
- Bane, J., Nune, S., Mekonnen, A., & Bluffstone, R. (2008). Policies to increase forest cover in Ethiopia. In Proceedings of a Policy Workshop organized by Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia (EEPFE) and Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI), Addis Ababa (pp. 18-19).
- Bekele M, Tesfaye Y, Mohammed Z, Zewdie S, Tebikew Y, Brockhaus M and Kassa H. (2015) The context of REDD+ in Ethiopia: Drivers, agents, and institutions. Occasional Paper 127. Bogor, Indonesia: CIFOR.
- Bekele, M. (2003). Forest property rights, the role of the state, and institutional exigency. Diss. (sammanfattning/summary) Uppsala: Sveriges lantbruksuniv., Acta Universitatis agriculturae Sueciae. Agraria
- Bekele, M. (2008). Ethiopia's environmental policies, strategies and programs. *Digest of Ethiopia's national policies, strategies and programs. FSS, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*, 337-69.
- Chala, D. (2015). Environmental management system: during imperial, Derge and EPRDF periods in Ethiopia. *Journal of Environment and Earth Science*, 5(3), 45-57. Challa, 2015
- De Waal, A. (1991). *Evil days: Thirty years of war and famine in Ethiopia* (Vol. 3169, No. 69). Human Rights Watch.
- Dessalegn, R. (2001). Environmental change and state policy in Ethiopia: Lessons from past experience. Forum for Social Studies.
- Dessalegn, R., Yeraswork, A., & Yared, M. (2007). Population, Health and Environment Integration in Ethiopia: Exploring the Opportunities and Challenges. *Population Reference Bureau, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*.
- EFAP (1994). The challenge for development. Addis Ababa: Ethiopian Forestry Action Program
- EFCCC, (2018) Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation No. 1065/2018 Negarit Gazettae 24th Year No 21 Addis Ababa, 23th January 2018
- Egomnwan, J.A. (2009). Public Policy Analysis, Concepts, and Application. Benin City,
- Environmental Protection Authority of Ethiopia, EPA. (2012). National assessment report of Ethiopia, UN conference on sustainable development, Rio+20.
- FAO, (2010) Global forest resources assessment. Country report Ethiopia. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization. Retrieved from: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i1757e/i1757e.pdf>
- FAO, (2011). Economic and social significance of forests for Africa's sustainable development. *Nature et Faunes*, 25(2).
- FAO. 2016a. *Global forest resources assessment 2015. How are the world's forests changing?*
- FDRE (2001). Policies, strategies and approaches to rural development (Amharic version). Addis Ababa: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
- FDRE. (2007). Policy, strategy and proclamation on forest development, conservation and utilization. Addis Ababa: Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1994) Forestry conservation, development and utilization proclamation. No. 94 FDRE, Addis Ababa.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995) The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa: Federal Negarit Gazeta, first-year No. 1.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2005) Rural Land Administration and Land Use Proc-lamation No. 456/2005. Addis Ababa: Federal Negarit Gazeta No. 44,
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2007) Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation No. 542/2007. Addis Ababa: Federal Negarit Gazeta No. 56.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE). (2011). *The climate resilient green economy (CRGE) Strategy*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, FDRE. (2002). Environmental protection organs establishment proclamation no.295/2002
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. (2010). Growth and Transformation Plan 2010/11 – 2014/15. Volume I: Main Text. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: MFED.

- Gebremarkos, W. (1998) The forest resources of Ethiopia past and present. *Journal of the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society* 19:10–28.
- Gebremarkos, W., Deribe, G. (2001) Problem of forestry associated with institutional arrangements. In: *Biological Society of Ethiopia: imperative problems associated with forestry in Ethiopia*. Proceedings of a workshop, 45–80. Addis Ababa: Addis Ababa University.
- Getahun, Kefelegn, Poesen, Jean, and Van Rompaey, Anton (2017) Impacts of Resettlement Programs on Deforestation of Moist Evergreen Afromontane Forests in Southwest Ethiopia. *Mountain Research and Development*, 37(4) : 474-486 International Mountain Society URL: <https://doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-15-00034.1>
- Gilmour, D. (2016). Forty years of community-based forestry: A review of its extent and effectiveness. *FAO forestry paper*, (176).
- Jaleta, M., Yohannes, M., Tolera, A., Haile, M., Yesufe, A., Geberehiwot, K., ... & Teferi, M. (2011). Impact of resettlement on the livelihood, food security and natural resource utilization in Ethiopia.
- Kevin B. Smith and Christopher W. Larimer, (2009) the public policy theory primer Westview press
- Lemenih M and Bekele M. (2008) Participatory Forest Management: Best Practices, Lesson Learnt and Challenges Encountered: The Ethiopian and Tanzanian Experiences. FARM-Africa/SOSSahel.
- Ministry of Agriculture, MoA. (2010). The Ethiopian forest cover triples within a decade. Press report on July 14, 2010 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Retrieved from: <http://www.moa.gov.et/node/4>
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, MoFED. (2002). Ethiopia's rural development policy and strategies. Addis Ababa.
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, MoFED. (2014). Growth and transformation plan annual progress report for 2012/13. Addis Ababa.
- Mulugeta, L., Kassa, H., Kassie, G. T., Abebaw, D., & Teka, W. (2014). Resettlement and woodland management problems and options: a case study from North-western Ethiopia. *Land Degradation & Development*, 25(4), 305-318.
- Mulugeta, L., Tadesse W. (2010). Review of forest, woodland and bush land resources in Ethiopia up to 2008. In: E. Sue, ed. *Ethiopian environment review*, 131–186. Addis Ababa: Forum for Environment.
- Muthee K, Duguma L, Wainaina P, Minang P and Nzyoka J (2022) A Review of Global Policy Mechanisms Designed for Tropical Forests Conservation and Climate Risks Management. *Front. For. Glob. Change* 4:748170. Doi: 10.3389/ffgc.2021.748170
- National Forest Sector Development Program, (2018) Ethiopia Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFCC) Synthesis Report.
- Negarit Gazeta No.1 (1968). *Protection of private forest regulation 1968 and protection of state forest regulation 1968*.
- Negarit Gazeta No.1 (1991). *Transitional period charter of Ethiopia (TGE)*
- Negarit Gazeta No.80. (1994). *Forestry conservation, development and utilization proclamation no.94/1994*
- Negarit Gazeta, No.17. (1980). *Proclamation to provide for the conservation and development of forest and wildlife resources proclamation no.192/1980*.
- Rahmato D. (2001) Environmental change and state policy in Ethiopia: a lesson from past experience. FSS monograph series 2. Forum for Social Studies, Addis Ababa.
- Rahmato D. (2008) Ethiopia: agriculture policy review. In: T. Assefa, ed. *Digest of Ethiopia's national policies, strategies, and programs*, 129–152. Addis Ababa: Forum for Social Studies.
- Rebecca McLain, Habtemariam Kassa, Steven Lawry and Belay Yazew (2019) Fostering tenure security for forest landscape restoration in Ethiopia Creating enabling conditions for the 2018 Forest Proclamation CIFOR DOI: 10.17528/cifor/007410 | Second edition. Rome.
- Sisay, N. (2008). Ethiopian government efforts to increase forest cover: a policy oriented discussion paper. In *Bane J, Sisay N, Alemu M, Randall B (eds.) Policies to Increase Forest Resources of Ethiopia, Proceedings of a Policy Workshop Organized by Environmental Economics Policy Forum for Ethiopia (EPPFE) and Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI): Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*.
- Sumit Chakravarty, S. K. Ghosh, C. P. Suresh, N. Dey And Gopal Shukla Deforestation: Causes, Effects And Control Strategies 3 1Department Of Forestry 2Pomology & Post Harvest Technology, Faculty Of Horticulture Uttar Banga Krishi Viswavidyalaya, Pundibari 3 ICAR Research Complex For Eastern Region, Research Center, Plandu Ranchi India
- Sustainable forest management for Africa (SFM), (2020) Sustainable forest management framework for Africa 2020-2030 AU *Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture*
- Teshome, W., Rangipaht, S., & Chanprasert, W. (2011). Natural resource conservation practices of re-settlers in the new resettlement areas of Amhara region, Ethiopia. *Kasetsart Journal Social Science*, 32, 297-307.
- The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MEFCC), (2017) Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) For the Implementation of REDD+ in

- Ethiopia final report, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Tombe, T. B. (2016). Climate Change Education for Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) of Ethiopia. *International Journal of African and Asian Studies*, 20, 89-105.
- Vasseur, E. (1973). United Nations Conference on the Human Environment: Stockholm, 5–16 June 1972. *Water Research*, 7(8), 1227-1233.
- WB (The World Bank), (2009) Roots for Good Forest Outcomes: An Analytical Framework for forest Governance The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank 1818 H Street, NW Washington, DC 20433 Report No. 49572-GLB
- Woldegiorgis, B. 2020. A history and policy analyses of Forest Governance in Ethiopia and REDD+. Uppsala, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History.
- Yeraswork, A. 2000. *Twenty years to nowhere: property rights, land management and conservation in Ethiopia*. Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press.
- Zemenfes, T. (1995). *The political economy of land degradation in Ethiopia*. *Northeast African Studies*, 2(2), 71-98.