

# The effectiveness of Ethiopian forest policy making: The implementation bottlenecks in Oromia regional state

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**Abstract:** The study intends to identify the existing implementation bottlenecks that hamper the effectiveness of the Ethiopian forest policy and laws in regional states by focusing on the Oromia Regional State. It attempts to address the question, “What are the challenges for the effective implementation of the federal forest policy and law in Ethiopia in general and Oromia Regional State in particular?”. The study followed a qualitative research approach, and the relevant data was collected through in-depth interviews from 11 leaders and experts of the policy, who were purposively selected. Furthermore, relevant documents such as the constitutions, forest policies and laws, and government documents were carefully reviewed. Based on this, the study found that there is the dichotomy between the provision of the constitution regarding the forest policy and lawmaking and the constitutional amendment on one hand and the push for genuine decentralization in the Ethiopian federal state on the other. To elaborate, the constitution is rigid for amendment, and it has given the power of forest policy and lawmaking to the federal government. On the other hand, the quest for genuine decentralization requires these powers to be devolved to the regional states. As the constitution is rigid, this may continue to be the major future challenge of the forest policy and lawmaking of the state. This demonstrates a conflict of interests between the two layers of governments, i.e., the federal and regional (Oromia Regional State) governments. Respecting and practicing the constitution may be the immediate solution to this pressing problem.

**Keywords:** forest policy; forest policy-making; forest policy implementation bottlenecks; Ethiopia; Oromia regional state

## 1. Introduction

Deforestation and forest degradation is the pressing problem that is currently challenging the world. For instance, forest degradation, which is caused by both natural and human-made sources, is currently a continually progressing issue, resulting in the reduction of forest productivity in ecosystems [1]. Thus, to address this trans-boundary issue, different policies and laws have been formulated and executed at global, national and local level by inter-governmental organization and national and local governments.

Similarly, to address the ongoing deforestation and forest degradation in Ethiopia, the successive Ethiopian governments have followed different policies at different times. For instance, the imperial government (1931–1974) and the Derg regime (1974–1991) established a centralized forest administration and forests were protected by guards. During the time of these governments, the policy making (including forest policy making) was top-down and centralized. However, in the aftermath of the Derg

regime, Ethiopia became a federal state under the rule of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) government. The FDRE constitution created two levels of government, i.e., the federal and the regional governments. It authorized the federal government to formulate and implement national policies, plans, and strategies concerning the overall economic and social development of the country [2], (p. 10). Under the federal structure, it also allowed the regional states to design their own policies [3] and to formulate and execute economic, social, and development policies [4].

As far as forests are concerned, however, the power to formulate policy and laws is vested in the federal government. Under the FDRE constitution, the power to formulate natural resource policies and laws, including forest law and policy, is exclusively given to the federal government. The regional states are given the power to administer land and other natural resources in accordance with federal laws rather than formulating their own policies and laws. Based on this, the FDRE government developed a forest policy known as the Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Policy and Strategy in 2007. Following this policy, the laws concerning forests have been formulated in 2007 and 2018. The forest policy and strategy primarily emphasized the utilization of forests to meet the economic demands of the country while also having forest sustainability issues.

However, the Oromia regional state formulated the forest law of Oromia in 2003 and committed to its implementation. Actually, before this, there was a federal forest law that was formulated in 1994 during the period of the same regime. But the current federal law and the Oromia regional forest law have content differences, particularly with regards to punishment allotted by the court. For instance, according to the 2018 federal forest law, an individual found illegally destroying the forests would be penalized with imprisonment of one to five years, while the 2003 Oromia forest law penalty was even more stringent—between five to fifteen years of imprisonment. Furthermore, the 2003 Oromia forest law prohibits the cutting and utilization of protected tree species such as *Hagenia Abyssinica*, *Cordia Africana*, *Podocarpus Falcatus*, *Prunus Africana* and *Juniperus Procera*. But, the 2007 federal forest policy and strategy and the forest laws does not limit the cutting and utilization of these endangered species. Even in the 2018 forest law, the owner can utilize the endangered tree species upon confirmation from the concerned authority.

These aforementioned disparities created conflicting interests over the implementation of the federal forest laws. The interview made with the experts of the regional office, i.e., the Oromia Environment, Forest, and Climate Change authority showed that the official removal of the Oromia forest proclamation of 2003 by Chaffe (regional council) is a prerequisite to accept the new federal forest law of 2018 and to develop a further regulation to execute it.

Currently, in Ethiopia, diverse actors, especially from the government, community organization and NGOs, do participate in the forest governance [5]. Even the current forest law recognized the community's participation in the forest governance and hence acknowledged participatory forest management. While the inclusion of diverse actors in the governance boosts democratization and good governance, the multiplicity of interests and coordination may continue to challenge the forest governance.

This study is, therefore, necessitated by the existing implementation bottlenecks that hamper the effectiveness of the Ethiopian forest policy and laws in the regional states by focusing on the Oromia Regional State. Furthermore, it is initiated by the existing scientific knowledge gap, especially in the study area. Regarding literature, our extensive review has shown that there is barely any literature dedicated to the systematic analysis of forest policy in Ethiopia, and when literature does exist, it focuses on other aspects of forest policy or relies on different approaches to analysis. For instance, in his study titled “How environmental NGOs have influenced decision-making in a ‘semi-authoritarian’ state: The case of forest policy in Ethiopia”, Ayana et al. [6] emphasized how environmental NGOs influenced the 2018 forest laws of Ethiopia. Also, Ayana et al. [7] in another study, “Historical development of forest policy in Ethiopia: Trends of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization”, emphasized mainly the history of forest policies in the country. Yonas [8] in the study titled “Status and Prospects of Forest Policy in Ethiopia” showed that Ethiopia had no comprehensive forest policy in 2001. After that, however, there have been different developments concerning forest policy, including the formulation of the 2007 forest policy. Furthermore, the new approach is used in this study, i.e., the PCI (principles, criteria, and indicators) approach, which emphasizes the policy’s ease of implementation, its coherence with national development goals, legitimacy, and financial transparency. Thus, it has made a great contribution to bridging the literatures and empirically testing the PCI approach. Hence, the objective of this study is to identify the existing implementation bottlenecks that hamper the effectiveness of the Ethiopian forest policy and laws in regional states by focusing on the Oromia Regional State.

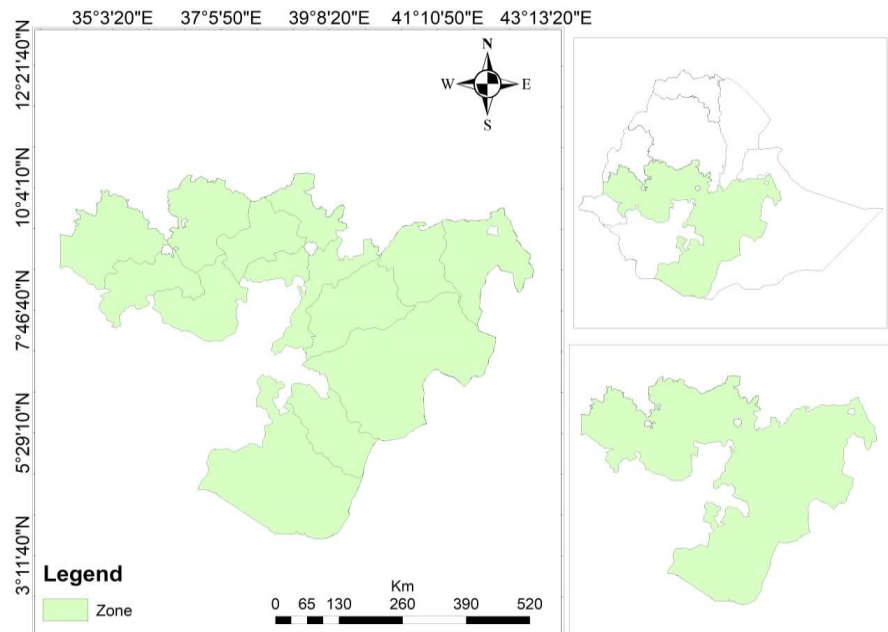
## **2. Materials and methods**

### **2.1. Description of the study area**

Oromia Regional State is one of the largest and most populous regional states among the 12 regional states and two city administrations of the federal state of Ethiopia. The Oromo are the largest ethnic group speaking Afan Oromo (Oromic) language and inhabiting largely the Oromia Regional State of Ethiopia. In addition to the Oromo people, many other minority ethnic groups live in Oromia Regional State. According to the Ethiopian Census of 2007, the Oromo make up 36.7% of the total Ethiopian population. The lives of the Oromo people have been administered under the Gada system for centuries [9]. According to Dereje [10], the Oromo had been using the Gada system to administer themselves, to defend their territory, and to maintain and develop their economy. It is a traditional system of governance that provides individual members of the society, mainly men with different responsibilities in the successive stages found in the system [11]. The annals of the Oromo reveal that the Oromo religion was neither Christianity nor Islam but was an indigenous religion known as Waaqeffanna [12]. At present, most have embraced Christianity and Islam.

Oromia has a land area of 359,620 square kilometers, straddling the middle of the country, and has a very varied topography (high mountains, valleys, rolling plains and lowlands, including part of the Rift Valley [13]). It shares borders with every regional state of the country except Tigray and Harari. Agriculture, both crop cultivation and

animal husbandry, is the mainstay of the economy, which employs nearly 89 percent of the labor force.



**Figure 1.** Map of Oromia regional state.

The Oromia Regional State (**Figure 1**) is geographically divided into 21 zonal administrations. Within the geographical area of each zone administration, there are several woreda governments and urban administrations. Under Ethiopia's decentralized system of government, these administrations have their own governing councils. The zonal administrations in effect act as an intermediary (for example, for the channeling of budget performance reports) between the woreda governments and the Oromia Regional Government bureaus.

## 2.2. The study design

Descriptive research design was employed in this study to assess Ethiopia's forest policy. The reason for choosing a qualitative rather than a quantitative research approach is due to the nature of the study—it requires a detailed description of the ease of implementation, the legitimacy, transparency, and coherence of the policy with the national development goals. Thus, the relevant data was collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis.

## 2.3. Sources of data and sampling techniques

The empirical data was collected through key-informant interviews with experienced and knowledgeable experts. More specifically, six experts from the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission and Oromia Environment, Forest and Climate Change Authority, three experts from Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprises, and two experts from NGOs (FARM Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia). They were leaders and experts of the policy who have in-depth knowledge and understanding, and hence, they were purposively selected.

The interview was a structured interview. The questions were first developed in English and then translated into two local languages—Amharic and Afan Oromo—to guarantee communication. Based on the adequacy and saturation of the desired data, further interviews were not made.

In addition to the primary data, relevant documents, both federal and regional, were consulted. Thus, the 2003 Oromia forest proclamation, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitution, the 1994, 2007, and 2018 national forest proclamations, and the 2007 national forest policy were all reviewed to support the arguments.

#### **2.4. Framework of analysis**

The policy-related effectiveness PCI (principle, criteria and indicators) approach (shown in **Table 1** below) is followed to identify the existing implementation bottlenecks that hamper the effectiveness of the Ethiopian forest policy and laws in regional states by focusing on the Oromia Regional State. The PCI approach is based on four principles, namely ease of implementation, legitimacy, coherence, and transparency. These four principles can be developed further by identifying criteria that are consistent with each principle and indicators of compliance for each that reflect current practices. Bird et al. [14] PCI approach (shown in **Table 1** below) is relevant for this study because its principles relate to the core of the debate in the policy circles. Hence, this piece of contribution addresses the following four questions:

- Whether the forest policy and proclamations are designed for ease of implementation.
- Whether the legitimacy of forest policy and proclamations is recognized by stakeholders.
- Whether the federal forest policy and proclamations are coherent with national development policies.
- Whether these policies and proclamations promote transparency in finance delivery.

The PCI approach has been used in different studies with some variations among the approach's theoretical framework and its purposes. For instance, Carol et al. [15] explored the people-forest interface. Based on a literature review and field tests of five sets of criteria and indicators (C&I) in Indonesia and Côte d'Ivoire, the authors identified two principles and six criteria, defined as fundamental to the benign human involvement in sustainable forest management. The two principles are: (1) Forest management should maintain or enhance the flow of benefits from forest resources, with access generally perceived as just by all stakeholders; and (2) the voice of all stakeholders must inform forest management. Based on these principles, six criteria were developed. Generally, this approach emphasizes the implementation side of policy making, while the PCI approach, with its principles, criteria, and indicators, is more relevant to the policy development aspect of policy making.

**Table 1.** Policy-related effectiveness principles, criteria and indicators (PCI) adopted from.

Principle	Criteria	Indicators
Whether the forest policy and proclamations are designed for ease of implementation?	<p>Policy objectives are clearly Expressed</p> <p>Subsidiary instruments for implementation accompany the policy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Targeted objectives are listed in the policy documentation.</li> <li>The time when to achieve the set policy objectives is articulated in the relevant policy documents.</li> <li>The methods of how to mobilize the financial resources to implement the policy are contained within the policy statement.</li> <li>Subsidiary instruments to achieve specific policy objectives are identifiable within the policy documents.</li> <li>The time when to establish appropriate subsidiary instruments is identified.</li> <li>Appropriate subsidiary instruments are published in the authority's legal newspaper.</li> </ul>
Whether the legitimacy of forest policy and proclamations is recognized by stakeholders?	<p>Key actors' interests are represented in policy-making processes.</p> <p>Policy-making is evidence-based.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Policy-making forum exists, where key policy decisions are made (e.g., policy working groups, expert working groups, sector working groups).</li> <li>Existing policy forum provides for representation of key actors from both government and civil society.</li> <li>The existing policy forum provides opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to the policy-making process.</li> <li>The policy formulation process is preceded by, and benefits from, background analytical work.</li> <li>Policy think tanks and research institutions provide evidence-based analysis to support the policy process.</li> <li>Relevant policy documents contain explicit references to background analytical work and contributions from policy think tanks.</li> </ul>
Whether the federal forest policy and proclamations are coherent with national development policies?	<p>The forest policy and proclamations statements acknowledge national development goals.</p> <p>Actions are consistent with strategies and planning processes for national development.</p>	<p>Reference is made to national development goals.</p> <p>Strategy documents and national development goals refer to each other.</p>
Whether these policies and proclamations promote transparency in finance delivery?	The forest policy and proclamation provide for the establishment and operationalization of mechanisms and modalities to promote transparency.	Mechanisms and modalities exist to promote transparency of finance.

The the policy-related effectiveness principles, criteria, and indicators (PCI) approach was developed initially to examine climate change policies that have different principles, criteria and indicators. It is different from the C&I one because it has four different principles—ease of implementation, legitimacy, coherence, and transparency—developed based on literature that underpins the development and implementation of policy. Furthermore, the framework was developed for examining policies specifically applicable to climate change policy development of a given country but has not been applied to a specific study. Based on the review, however, it has been realized that this framework can be applied to any policy and hence applied to forest policy and this study.

## 2.5. Method of data analysis

Structured interview questions were first prepared in English and then translated and administered in two local languages—Amharic and Afan Oromo (Oromic). Based on the consent of the respondents, it was recorded. Then, the audio was transcribed and translated back into English. Subsequently, it was repeatedly read and categorized

under the four principles of policy-related effectiveness (PCI). Finally, it was analyzed using descriptive data analysis. Furthermore, it was supported by content analysis of the federal constitution, the 1994 forest proclamation, the 2007 federal forest policy and proclamation, and the 2018 federal forest proclamation.

### **3. Results and discussion**

#### **3.1. Evolution and development of forest policy and law in Ethiopia**

Forest policy was developed for the first time in 2007 in Ethiopia, which makes it a relatively recent phenomenon in the country's history. Prior to 2007, there were enactments and legislations concerning forestland ownership, utilization, and conservation over a period of time. For instance, in 1965, during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I, three consecutive proclamations No. 225, No. 226, and No. 227 were enacted, which respectively recognized three forms of forests; namely, state forests, private forests, and protected forests [16].

In 1980, the socialist government of Ethiopia known as the Provisional Military Administrative Council or the Derg repealed all the 1965 forest proclamations and proclaimed a new law that acknowledged the three new types of forest ownership, namely, state ownership, ownership by peasant associations, and ownership by urban dwellers associations. During the transitional period (1991–1995), immediately after the fall of the Derg regime, the FDRE government adopted a new proclamation known as the Forest Conservation, Development, and Utilization Proclamation No. 94/1994, annulled the former proclamations, and recognized three forms of forest ownership, namely state, regional, and private. Within a well-established set of rules for forest management and conservation, the 1994 proclamation gave a more significant role to private sector participation in wood harvesting and processing [17].

This forest policy and strategy had practically increased the economic contribution of the sector. However, the lack of concrete implementation directives served as a bottleneck hindering the effective implementation of the federal forest policy and strategy as well as law. Furthermore, the private sector contribution to the the sector GDP is low, mainly because lack of an enabling environment.

Immediately after the policy and strategy was developed, the 2007 Forest law was enacted to give legal ground for the policy, which recognized two types of forest ownership—state and private forest ownership [18]. However, payment of land taxes and credit for private investment were overlooked by the law.

In 2018, another law known as the Forest Development, Conservation, and Utilization Proclamation 1065/2018 was enacted. It is the latest forest law governing the forests of the country. The 2018 proclamation repealed the previous law. It classified forests into four types: Private, community, association, and state. It acknowledged participatory forest management.

#### **3.2. Easeness for implementation**

This section assesses whether the policy objectives are clearly set out and whether subsidiary instruments are identified for the ease of implementation. The forest policy

has both general and specific objectives. The general objectives of the 2007 forest policy were to meet public demand for forest products and foster the contribution of forests in enhancing the economy of the country through appropriately conserving and developing forest resources. The policy emphasized economic development, focusing on how to meet forest product demands of the society and increase the contribution of forest resources to the national economy.

The specific objectives of the policy include: 1) To encourage sustainable forest development by rendering professional and technical assistance to farmers, pastoralists, investors and institutions engaged in forest resource development; 2) To adequately meet the forest and forest product demands of the public through sustainably enhancing the production of forest resources in areas that are suitable for forest and forest resource development; 3) To foster the contribution of forest resources to food security and industrial development through the identification, rejuvenation, multiplication and distribution of tree species that are suitable for our country and capable of giving diverse benefits; 4) To lay the foundation wherein forest resources deliver all-embracing services to the country in a sustainable manner through the prevention of threats as well as the conservation and development of forest resources; 5) To ensure maintenance of the natural ecological balance through adequately conserving and developing the forest resources of the country.

These specific objectives are actually attainable, but it is difficult to measure how well they have been accomplished. Furthermore, the time for achieving them had not been clearly stated in the document. In addition, the method for mobilizing financial resources to implement the policy had not been included in the policy statement. According to key informants, the financial resources needed to implement the policy were budgeted by the government upon the request of the concerned government bodies. Similarly, based on the 2004–2005 review, Europe recognized that one of the main concerns for the European forest policy was that the goals of the European Union forest strategy were vaguely specified, and therefore, tools and instruments to implement the strategy were not well targeted [19]. Due to this, it was challenging to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the forest strategy.

Regarding subsidiary instruments, the Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation No. 542/2007 was enacted immediately after the development of the policy. This proclamation attempts to provide legal grounds for the Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Policy and Strategy of 2007. Hence, the absence of further implementation directives hampered the effectiveness of this law.

The Oromia Regional State has not developed the regulations and directives for the further implementation of this policy. Instead, the regional state is committed to implementing the Oromia Forest proclamation of 2003. The FDRE government, on the other hand, has developed the Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation 1065/2018 and underlined the need for other regional states to develop a regulation and directives to further implement it. But the Oromia Regional State has not yet done so. The main reason for this, according to the experts from the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Authority, is that there is no consensus or common understanding between the federal and the regional offices. The regional offices believe that they have the power to enact the regional forest proclamation. But



the federal offices argue that the power to enact the forest proclamation belongs to the federal government; the regional government can develop and enforce regulations and directives only. Because of this, the recent proclamation has not been developed as a further instrument in the Oromia regional state.

### **3.3. The legitimacy of the forest policy and law**

According to the federal policy experts, the policy-making process was consultative and participatory. Researchers, experts from concerned NGOs, and experts from the regional states have participated. The policy experts further stated that the major problem was not in the process of forest policy formulation; rather, it is in its implementation. Researchers mainly policy researchers, NGOs such as FARM AFRICA and SOS Sahel, and every regional state and city administration (at that time nine regional states and two city administrations) were involved in 2018, when the 2018 forest law was formulated. But there are implementation weaknesses at both levels of the government.

Implementation is not the only problematic issue; some have argued that there was passive participation during the forest policy development and law formulation. For instance, according to the expert of the Oromia Environment, Forest and Climate Change Authority, the regional offices have not fully participated since the 2018 forest law was enacted. They were invited to familiarize themselves with the policy rather than to provide inputs. Hence, considering this and the constitution, it can be argued that the forest policy-making is top-down and centralized. Consistent with this, the policy making in Nepal is also centralized. In this respect, Ojha et al. [20] argued that despite the rhetoric of participatory development, decentralization and democracy, actual policy decisions on forestry in Nepal continued to be captured by forest officials, who have both scientific and bureaucratic authority. The participation of civil society in forest policy making is also limited in Nepal.

Generally, there is disagreement between the two layers of government over the formulation and implementation of forest policy and law. The regional state committed to implementing the 2003 Oromia Forest law. But the federal office has argued that it is the power of the federal government under the FDRE constitution, which states that the federal government shall enact laws for the utilization and conservation of land and other natural resources. The constitution gives the regional state the power to administer land and other natural resources in accordance with federal laws. However, starting in 2003, the Oromia forest law has been active in Oromia regardless of the existence of the 2007 and 2018 federal forest laws. A similar case also happened in Nepal.

### **3.4. Coherence of forest policy and law with national development policies**

While the 2007 Forest Policy and Strategy document did not make explicit reference to the national development policies, it has greater coherence with the Growth and Transformation Plan I (GTP I) and the Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II). But it has no coherence with the Climate-Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) development strategy, which was ratified in 2011. A similar problem of lack

of coherence with regard to EU forest-related policies is observed in the European Union. For instance, the 20-20-20 targets of the Climate and Energy Package are in potential conflict with the targets of the new EU Biodiversity Strategy [21]. A further explanation of the lack of coherence between the forest policy and national development goals of Ethiopia is presented below.

GTP I was a national plan carried out in the period from 2010/11–2014/15 for five years and intended to make Ethiopia the middle income economy in 2025. During this time, the forest coverage of the country had increased, i.e., from 13.0 million hectares in 2010/11 to 15.93 million hectares by the end of 2014/15 and 13.4 million hectares of degraded land were demarcated and rehabilitated. Thus, it led to the carbon emission reduction [22].

GTP II (2015/16–2019/20) was another national plan, which was also aligned with the 2007 forest policy as it had planned to increase the nation's forest cover and the contribution of the sector to GDP. In 2015, the sector's contribution to the national GDP was 3.3% [23]. According to the forest policy experts, the sector's contribution to the GDP had shown increasing trends, and it reached 6% in 2018. Both GTPs are coherent with the forest policy and strategy, but they have given priority to the sector's contribution to economic development over sustainable forest management.

However, according to forest policy experts, the 2007 forest policy and strategy and proclamation are not coherent with the Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy. This was one of the factors that initiated the enactment of Forest Development, Conservation and Utilization Proclamation 1065/2018. Ethiopia has initiated the CRGE strategy to safeguard the country from the adverse effects of climate change and to build a green economy [24]. It was to achieve at least lower middle income by 2025. Re-establishing forests is one of the pillars of CRGE.

The CRGE baseline scenario showed that contribution of the forest sector for carbon emission accounts for approximately 37%. Thus, it gave much emphasis for planting forests. This led to an increase in the forest cover of the country. Furthermore, as part of the green economy strategy, the four initiatives were identified for fast-track implementation in the CRGE Strategy document: exploiting the vast hydropower potential, large-scale promotion of advanced rural cooking technologies, efficiency improvements to the livestock value chain, and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+).

### **3.5. Transparency in finance delivery**

The sources of finance for the implementation of the 2007 forest policy and strategy and proclamation and the 2018 forest proclamation were specified in neither the policy document nor the proclamations. The experts asserted that it should have come from the government. The responsible government office has to plan and request the government to allocate the necessary financial resources. In spite of this, however, the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission is not the sole body that governs the forests. The Forest and Wildlife Enterprises and the community (through participatory forest management) are also authorized to govern the forests while having different sources of finance under their jurisdiction. To give a concrete example, the Oromia government had given the power to protect, conserve, use, and manage the

plantation forests in Oromia through a concession to Oromia Forest and Wildlife Enterprises. This office does not receive its budget from the government but derives its revenue from the sale of plantation forests. Financially, it is independent from the government offices. The communities are also organized into forest-dweller associations and community-based organizations and have an agreement with the government to co-govern the forests under their jurisdiction. They have their own offices and budgets to govern the forests that they were given by the government via this agreement—they are given the power to protect, conserve, use, and manage the forests under their control. In short, the sources of finance for the implementation of the forest policy and strategy and the proclamation come from different sources—both from the government and other bodies like Forest and Wildlife Enterprises and communities. But, according to the experts, the government has allocated an insignificant amount of funds to its offices. Thus, the major problem is not one of transparency of finances but a lack of government funds, allocated to the effective execution of the required activities.

#### 4. Discussion

**Table 2.** Summary of the Ethiopian forest policy and law based on the PCI approach.

Principle	Criteria	Indicators
The 2007 forest policy and strategy and the forest laws are not designed for ease of implementation.	<p>Policy objectives—both the general and the specific objectives—are expressed clearly, but the general objectives prioritize economic development while the specific ones prioritize forest sustainability.</p> <p>The 2007 and 2018 forest laws were formulated by the federal government, but further regulations were not developed in regional states, specifically in the Oromia regional state.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The intended results are listed in the 2007 forest policy and strategy.</li> <li>• The time to achieve the 2007 forest policy and strategy objectives is not scheduled.</li> <li>• The method of how to mobilize financial resources to implement this policy and strategy is not contained within the policy document.</li> <li>• Subsidiary instruments such as proclamations had followed the 2007 forest policy and strategy documents.</li> <li>• When to establish appropriate subsidiary instruments is not predetermined.</li> <li>• Appropriate, but not enough subsidiary instruments are published in the authority's legal newspaper.</li> </ul>
The legitimacy of the forest policy and strategy and the forest laws is more or less recognized by stakeholders.	<p>Key stakeholders' interests are not represented in the forest policy-making processes, particularly the interests of the Oromia regional state.</p> <p>Policy-making is evidence-based.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were policy-making forums, where key policy decisions are made.</li> <li>• Existing policy forums provide for the representation of key stakeholders from both government and civil society.</li> <li>• Existing policy forums had not provided enough opportunities to let all stakeholders contribute their best in 2007 and 2018.</li> <li>• The 2007 forest policy and strategy formulation process is preceded by, and benefits from, background analytical work.</li> <li>• An independent research institutions, such as a policy think tanks, did not provide evidence-based analysis to support the policy process.</li> <li>• The 2007 federal forest policy and strategy documents have not benefitted from the contributions of policy think tanks.</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** (Continued).

Principle	Criteria	Indicators
The 2007 forest policy is coherent with GTP I and II, but not with CRGE (Climate Resilient Green Economy).	The 2007 forest policy and strategy did not explicitly make reference to the national development goals.	Reference is not made to national development plans, but emphasis is given to the economic contribution of it.
	Actions were consistent with strategies and planning processes for national development.	The 2007 forest policy and national development goals mostly refer to each other.
The 2007 forest policy did not promote transparency in finance delivery.	Of course, it is not transparency that is the major problem here, but lack of adequate funds for the work of the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Commission.	Mechanisms and modalities do exist to promote transparency of finance.

The policy-related principle, criteria and indicator (PCI) approach is effective in enabling us to explore the challenges of forest policy and strategy and law in Ethiopia in general and the Oromia regional state in particular. It should be noted that the 2018 federal forest law has officially replaced the 2007 forest law. As summarized (**Table 2**), we found that the 2007 forest policy and strategy and the 2018 forest law have implementation challenges; the legitimacy was more or less recognized by stakeholders and has more or less coherence with national development goals. Furthermore, it is found that they have not promoted transparency in finance delivery.

In addition to these current challenges, the major future challenges of forest policy making revolve around the dichotomy between the provision of the constitution regarding the forest policy and lawmaking and the constitutional amendment on one hand and the push for genuine decentralization in the Ethiopian federal state on the other. To elaborate, the constitution is rigid for amendment, and it has given the power of forest policy and lawmaking to the federal government. On the other hand, the quest for genuine decentralization requires these powers to be devolved to the regional states. As the constitution is rigid, this may continue to be the major future challenge of forest policy and lawmaking of the state.

## 5. Conclusion

After 1991, Ethiopia became a federal state, and hence, the authority and responsibilities were transferred to the regional states. Regarding policy making, the adoption of federalism allowed regional states to formulate and execute their own economic, social and development policies. However, the forest policy-making is still top-down and centralized in federal Ethiopia. The government is authorized to constitutionally formulate forest policy and law, which is then implemented by the regional state. Despite this, the Oromia Regional State raised the question of the autonomy of the region in forest policy making and hence is not willing to further develop regulations and directives based on the existing federal forest policy and laws. The authorities have not been able to develop a sense of ownership for the existing federal forest policy and laws at the regional level. The question here is how the policy and law can be translated into effective implementation if not owned by a regional state. Can regional autonomy in forest policy making be granted under the existing condition without amending the constitution? If granted, does it give regional states the freedom of not aligning their forest policy and laws with the federal ones?

Generally, the federal forest policy and laws are not easy to implement because further regulations and directives are not developed. In addition, a lack of adequate budget allocation, particularly for monitoring and evaluation, has been a big challenge for the effective implementation of the policy and laws.

Regarding the 2007 forest policy and strategy, policy objectives were not measurable, and the specific timeline for their achievement was not outlined in the document. In the process of development, it has been consultative and participatory at least to some actors that closely work with the government. However, the interests of all stakeholders have not been addressed, as has been shown to be the case in the Oromia Regional State. In 2018, the new forest law was formulated and immediately replaced the 2007 forest law. This current forest law supported community participation and a participatory forest management approach.

Generally, the forest policy and strategy and forest laws prioritized the economic contribution of the forests. Hence, there is a discrepancy in the prioritization of the forest policy goal, as the main goal of a forest policy and strategy and forest laws should prioritize the sustainable management and use of forests rather than their exploitation. This is lacking with the reviewed policy documents in this research. Thus, balancing the economic contribution of forests with their sustainable governance should be a way out for the sustainability of forest resources and hence, the environment. This means the main goal of the forest policy and strategy as well as the forest law should be how to sustainably govern the forest resources. Furthermore, every one of the critical actors should be involved and allowed to give their inputs in the forest policy development to get their ownership. Improving the allocation as well as the transparency of finance can lead to its effectiveness.

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