

**Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
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**Strengths and Weaknesses of Local Institutions for
Natural Resources Management: The case study of Goba**

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Introduction

Mozambique similarly to several countries in the Southern African region is currently engaged in the transformation of its natural resources management practices or conservation. The objective is to find ways of achieving environmentally sustainable, economically viable and socially acceptable systems of natural resources management by involving the participation of all stakeholders.

This paper provides a brief insight into how Community of Goba is organized to manage the natural resources in its surroundings. Goba is one of selected pilot areas of a Government Community Project started in 1998 about 75 Km away from Maputo the capital of the country. The Project is aiming to support the local community in its organization to take control of the natural resources in the area characterized in old times by free access and degradation and its permanent conflict between the locals and outsiders in the exploration of timber and charcoal.

The area of Goba Community is about 10,000 hectares. The population is approximately 1400 people distributed into 320 households. Their main (if not only) source of income is charcoal, fully absorbed by the nearby market of Maputo. This constitutes a critical issue and a challenge to the CBNRM (community-based natural resources management) initiative.

The new Forestry and Wildlife legislation (July 99) introduces the concept of participatory management, delegation of responsibilities and empowering local communities for management and control of their natural resources and creating legal mechanisms of sharing of benefits. Although, the legislation is supposed to have direct links with the communities at the grassroots level, we may find that in many cases the community-based organizations are very poor consequently institutional linkages are weaken.

To effect sustainable use of its natural resources, the Community of Goba has created a gender-balanced council for natural resources management. The organization has created rules and regulations that govern the conduct of their members for the management and utilization of natural resources. It is also helpful in resolving conflicts with private sector, GO authorities, neighboring and other stakeholders.

Background

The village of Goba is administratively part of Administrative Post of Changalane at District of Namaacha. Goba is accessible by railway and through a conventional road up to Maputo City. The majority of inhabitants of Goba live in “Goba-Estação” – the main village, divided in three suburbs. Few households (about 10) live in “Goba-Fronteira” and Mandhimbe areas.

Goba is particularly relevant for nature conservation due to its location in the Libombo Mountains, in the area where the Umbeluzi River enters Mozambique, hosting endemic species of the Umbeluzi valley, such as *Encephalartos umbeluzensis*. The vegetation is mainly savanna type of *Combretum* spp and *Acacia* spp, with the presence of important commercial timber species such as *Androstachys johnsonii* (ironwood), *Azelia quanzensis* (Chanfuta), and *Spyrostachys africana* (African sandal). There are identified 55 medicine species and some of them are often used for charcoal production.

There do exist very few public services and infrastructures such as a health centre, a primary school, a railway station and a well concentrated in the core of the village.

According to a social-economic survey made in October 1998, it was observed that the origin of population is very diverse with representation of people coming from the ten provinces of the country. However, the high percentage is of people from Inhambane province who have populated the area late 1980's being most of them ex-soldiers demobilized after the civil war ended in 1992. The majority of Goba inhabitants speak “changana” the main local language, one of the 13 Bantu languages spoken in Mozambique.

In general, almost all inhabitants are involved in farming (agriculture) as a subsistence activity, being most (80% of households) of them engaged in charcoal production for (in many cases the only source) income and/or livelihood. As result, the forests have been over-exploited and they are disappearing. This situation creates some uncertainties because the forests are relied as free accessible data bank where men and women turn to for the supply of their subsistence needs.

The forest resource of Goba area is scarce. According to forest inventory of the area made in 1998, about 93% of Goba area are classified as zone for agriculture and grazing. The area is predominantly savanna type with low density of trees. To give an example, the annual allowable cut for charcoal making is about 2 to 4 cubic meters per hectare.

The average annual growing stock including all tree species is about 14.78 cubic meters per hectare and 7.6 cubic meters per hectare of species for charcoal production.

The social-economic survey made in the area indicates that the production of charcoal varies being the minimum 1 – 10 bags, the average 10 – 20 and maximum between 20 to 30 bags (each bag weights approximately 30 Kg) of charcoal per household per month.

The wildlife survey showed the existence of medium and small mammals (herbivorous), rodents, bats and small carnivorous. Birds constitute the largest and most attractive fauna in the area. There are identified about 115 species of 580 bird species existing in the country. There is an abundance of reptile species.

The wildlife survey reported facts of illegal hunting for subsistence and commercial in last 20 years. Much of poaching had impact on mammal species rather than birds and many species are rare in risk of disappearing.

In regard to tourism, Goba area has great potential for ecotourism activities such as bird watching, adventure walking on the mountains due to its beautiful landscape and the existence of large number and variety of bird species.

Community Management Initiative

Since the colonial period up to the post-independence period, the central government managed the natural resources through the use of law-enforcement as the major tool for conservation. However, since the beginning the system shown to be ineffective and the resources were always degraded.

Over the last decade throughout Southern Africa including Mozambique a different approach has been developed aimed at improving the management and sustainable use of natural resources. The implementation of a variety of pilot projects has helped to promote an alternative approach to conservation commonly known as community-based natural resources management (CBNRM).

The community management of natural resources initiative in Goba is a pilot project emerged as result of observation of a tragedy situation: a rapid devastation of forests aggravated in the last decade. This situation was motivated mainly due to following factors:

- Rapid growth of population in the area that made Goba the area of uncontrolled extraction of wood and charcoal,
- The proximity to Maputo city the principal and potential market,
- Abandon of livestock (livestock was major capital for income earn till mid 1980s) activity by communities due to 1983/84 drought and last civil war and,
- Lack of job opportunities.

There was a need of an intervention to correct the situation and to promote sustainable use of the natural resources for social and economic benefits for present and future generations.

The community-based natural resources management project implemented by the Provincial Forests and Wildlife Service (GO), started its activities in Goba in January 1998 with the technical assistance of FAO, supporting the local community in its organization to take control of the natural resources in the area.

Following the rural participatory appraisal undertaken in 1998, Goba Community defined four main objectives for management of natural resources:

- Inventory and management plan of natural resources
- Create legal mechanism for charcoal making
- Delimitation of the area
- Ecotourism development and alternative activities for income based on natural resources

One of important results was the elaboration of a participatory **Management Plan** for the community area of Goba. As mentioned before, several activities were carried out in Goba that brought important elements for the management plan such as rural rapid appraisal, social-economic survey, forestry inventories, wildlife survey, and identification of local problems and alternative income sources.

In its context, the management plan is simple in a way that each member of community has the opportunity to understand basic aspects and be able to participate in discussions. The management plan focus on following basic aspects:

- The objective of managing the forest
- Who cuts/hunts/collects
- What to cut/hunt/collect
- Where to cut/hunt/collect
- How to cut/hunt/collect
- How much to cut/hunt/collect
- When to cut/hunt/collect

The management plan establishes principal rules that community of Goba uses as a tool in management of natural resources.

There were identified several local abilities for developing productive activities. About 20 peer groups were identified and at the moment four groups have been organized and started their activities. The four groups are bee-keeping group, community activists for conservation (7 women and 7 men), charcoal production group and sewing group. The participation takes in account the gender balance.

Each peer group was trained in planning system of activities using logical framework methodology supported by a monitoring and evaluation system called SIPSA (integrated system for planning, monitoring and evaluation). The members of each group have attended a short course in related subject. The project supports the groups taking the responsibility of organization of the training process.

The project also supports the groups by acquiring material and machinery to start the business. Each member of the group is responsible to return the money expended at initial investment to the group that should be considered its capital.

Local Community Organization

Three types of authority structures were involved in the community/village organization before the beginning of the project. The State structure – headed by Locality Administrator commonly called Executive Council President and below him each suburb has a secretary, the political party structure (only Frelimo the ruling party is represented in this case) and the traditional structure headed by “régulo”.

The Project encouraged and supported the community to be organized into natural resources management institutions. The community agreed to create “**Ntava Yedzu**” (meaning “**our forest**”) group. This group constitutes the Management Committee of 30 elected members representing the three suburbs. 10 members elected from group of 30 form the Executive Council with equity representation of the three suburbs. The participation in-group 30 as well as in-group 10 is 50% women and 50% men. This group maintains liaison between the project and the rest of members of the community.

The Executive Council has responsibility to plan meetings and propose matters for discussion. Each member of this group is ascertain a task and should report to the leader. The Executive Council meets once a week (on Fridays) where they discuss problems related to natural resources. The Head of Executive Council channeled meeting results to President of Management Committee and then they discuss major aspects of agenda to convene a meeting where participate all members of Group 30. The Group of 30 meets twice a month. The traditional leader “Régulo Mazia” is regularly informed of what is going on and called to mediate and take decisions in cases where the group of 30 does not find a consensus.

The provincial coordinator of the project and a rural extensionist living in Goba, provide regular technical assistance to the community. The community gets also technical assistance and collaboration from project experts.

Natural resource management by Community of Goba

As referred above the Community of Goba has created an organization mechanism for natural resources management. They have created rules and regulations that govern the behavior of their members for the management of natural resources. They have defined means of resolving conflicts among them and with outsiders.

The group of community activists for conservation has been trained in principles of nature conservation and law enforcement both in Mozambique and neighboring Swaziland. This group plays an important role of awareness within the community for sustainable management and utilization of natural resources. They facilitate discussions about the importance of forest and wildlife species, control of fires, erosion control and land use planning. Through cultural activities (theatre, traditional dances), schools and churches, traditional/cultural knowledge and values of natural resources are passed to young generation and members of community in general.

Charcoal production is the main source of income and one of the major causes of deforestation in the area. To regulate this activity to sustainable basis, the community has defined 5 zones of production and organized group of producers. These groups have attended a short course on charcoal making, comparison was made between their traditional kilns and improved kilns (“Casamansa”). Mechanisms have been created for charcoal makers to exercise the activity in agreement with country legislation. Since 1999, they agreed to reduce the production of charcoal to 3000 bags (90 tonnes) a year as one recommendation of forest inventories. Goba community has now gained exclusive rights to explore forest resources and may negotiate in near future the leases with outsiders when legal issues are resolved.

Although there is a commitment of Goba Community to engage in common management of their resources, often the common interests do not coincide with individual needs. We find cases of conflicts, just to mention one incident where the President of the Management Committee was threatened to death.

Achievements

From the community side:

- A community committee for natural resources management (Goba Ntava Yedzu) has been established and is representing community interests related to sustainable use of the natural resources in the area. The organization is particularly helpful in conflict management with private sector, government authorities, neighboring communities and other stakeholders.
- A participatory zoning and management plan has been carried out and will constitute the basic tools to regulate access and control of utilization of natural resources in the area.

- New Forest user groups are being established, either to maintain charcoal production on sustainable limits, or to replace charcoal making by more sustainable income activities.
- All charcoal makers are now residents (grouped in 5 zones of production) licensed and have production quotas based on annual allowable cut in agreement with government authorities.
- The community is gaining its traditional tenure rights on the natural resources in the area.

From the Government side:

- From sporadic repressive presence of forest rangers in the area, the provincial Government authority evolved to a system of participatory natural resources management and control.
- Non-residents who have previously using the forest resources for fast cash income by illegal charcoal making have abandoned the area.
- The level of poaching has lowed as community control grows.
- The community is controlling forest fires.
- There is a resident extensionist in Goba, supporting the development of sustainable community forest user groups.

Conclusion

The adoption of community-based management of natural resources by Community of Goba has an ultimate objective to reduce substantially the levels of devastation that threaten the life of forest and their lives since they have totally dependence on forest products for domestic energy needs, building materials and so on. This approach is also aimed to reduce the pressure over the forest and wildlife resources (the only source of income) and to promote alternative activities for income earn such as eco-tourism and explore opportunities for partnership with private sector, Government and other stakeholders for development of the area.

The community of Goba is committed to this end through its local organization. However, the local representation “Ntava Yedzu” needs to be institutionalized and have legal identity to have power for decision making in issues related to natural resources. They also need to have title over land and resources they manage, protect and control to have power to negotiate with other investors. Since the beginning, the community has undergone through a long and complex process of acquiring legal framework for their community organization, yet little progress has been achieved. The politicians express their commitment to CBNRM (Community-based natural resources management) approach but the practice has shown that still mechanisms should be defined for government institutions to recognize and transfer power and responsibilities of natural resources management to local community organizations.

One important progress on political side achieved up to now is that, the provincial and local government authorities have surrendered the area of 10,000 ha for Goba community management.

In December 1999, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries approved an official document called “Technical Annex” to the Land Law. This document contains special and practical instructions for delimitation and demarcation of local community lands that should be used as references to issue a *certificate* (equivalent to Title) for the right of use over land and resources on it.

With this important element of Land Law, local communities organized for natural resources management will have opportunities to pursue easily the process and not necessarily have to present a classic investment project over a piece of land. Again, this is a new element of Land legislation yet not an experience exists of its practical application.

The incentives for participation may not be sufficient to compensate the costs of engagement in community organization including the imposition for charcoal making restriction even understanding the advantage of sustainability of forests for present and future generations. Currently, there is a lot of enthusiasm among communities while the project exists to support the initiatives, but the alternative activities have not yet produced incomes to sustain people expectations and confidence to drop dependence on charcoal making.

We should acknowledge the strength of organization of Goba Community and the capacity to make it work, but on the other hand, the level of illiteracy is very high and may create some limitation on communication with other stakeholders and investors.

The participatory methodology has been adopted to build local capacity. Members of community have participated in inventories and surveys of resources made in Goba area and a system of participatory planning is being introduced to motivate the organization of interest groups and committees. Members of community attended exchange visits to community projects in Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Zambia and in the country including workshops and seminars.

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