

EFFECTS OF DECENTRALIZATION POLICIES ON FOREST MANAGEMENT:
EXPERIENCE FROM SEVEN FORESTS IN KENYA

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Abstract

The process of decentralisation in the Kenyan forestry sector has been going on since 1930s. The process has focused mainly on administrative decentralisation whose objective was to ensure effective management of forests by the forest department. In 1983 the government introduced the District Focus for Rural Development Programme involving all government departments. The aim was to deconcentrate administrative power from the headquarters to the districts. The districts were to be the centres for planning and implementation of all government programmes. The district development committee formed other sub-committees focussing on all the departments of government management. Apart from the district development committees, sub committees were started at divisional and locational levels in order to reach as many people as possible. For example, the Forest Department created the Sub location forest management offices in an effort to bring forest services closer to the people.

Despite all the efforts and the good intentions of this administrative type of decentralization in the forest department, conditions of many forests continued to be poor thus prompting stakeholders including the Forest Adjacent Communities (FACs) to agitate for better forest management and delivery of forest goods. The agitations forced the government to initiate a forestry master planning process that culminated in the production of a New Forest Policy and Legislation that seek to involve forest stakeholders. Even though the legislation process is not yet complete, many forest adjacent communities have formed themselves in to environmental self-help groups and forestry associations that have initiated natural resource management initiatives in many forests.

This paper presents interim results from data collected from 6 sites in 6 forests where such associations have been formed. The results give analysis of the rationale for the formation of forest associations' their objectives, activities and achievements as well as obstacles in their management. The formation of associations by the forest adjacent communities is their response to the effects of decentralisation in the Kenyan forestry sector. The range of activities in which the communities are involved through their associations show that decentralisation efforts have the potential to improve the condition of Kenya's forests and woodlands. This will be assured when the forest adjacent

communities are involved in the management of the forests and woodlands in order to supplement the efforts of the Forest Department. The parameters assessed are the estimated amounts of extractions levels in the seven forests between 2000 and 2002. These are Loitokitok, Kedowa, Upper Imenti, Thimlich, Aberdares, Got Ramogi and Tugen Hills. Results from the study show a general decrease in the availability of major forest products. This was the main reason why those communities who live adjacent to the six forests formed associations through which they could bargain for better management of the forests.

Even though the forests are located in different agro-ecological zones, the forest adjacent communities experienced similar problems, responded in similar ways and with similar objectives to address the identified problems.

1.0. Introduction

Decentralisation and devolution have become dominant themes in the management of natural resources in the less developed countries (Belshaw, 2000 Barkan and Chege, 1989). There are differing definitions of decentralisation and devolution, and the two terms are often treated as equivalent (Ribot, 2001). Decentralisation can be defined as the relocation of administrative power away from a central location (Ribot, 1999). Devolution is the transfer of decision making power and authority from a central government to the lower centres which may or may not include the government departments (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001). In its most ideal situation, the process of devolution in the natural resources sector often involve the transfer of power and authority for decision making to the local communities. In this sense, power can be equated with the capacity or authority to contribute to the decision making process. While decentralisation and devolution may occur at the same time (Crook, 2002), it is possible to decentralise administrative structures without devolving power to make managerial decisions to the lower levels of management, as is the case in Kenya (Poole and Leakey, 1996). Such kind of decentralisation does not create accountable local institutions that would constitute democratic decentralisation (Robot, 1999) as would result from the process of devolution.

In the late 1970s, the government of Kenya recognised that the successful long term rural development required greater participation by local communities. In 1983 the District focus for rural development was started (GOK, 1987). This delegated to the districts responsibility for many rural development projects such as village water systems, rural access roads and rural health centres to the district level. The authority to set general policy and to plan multidistrict and national plans remained with the central government ministries. The intent of this decentralisation strategy was to widen the base of rural development and encourage broader participation by local communities in their development.

This paper presents experience with the administrative decentralisation of Kenya's forestry sector which took place mainly in the 1970s and 1980s; its effect on the country's forest resources and how the forest adjacent communities reacted to address the destruction of the forests which continued despite the implementation of the

decentralisation policy. The authors explain these using seven forests located in three agro ecological zones of the country.

2.0 Kenya's Forestry Sector

Forests in Kenya have been managed centrally since the creation of a department to manage forests in 1902 (GOK, 1994). From 1902 to 1982, the Kenya government was preoccupied with the alienation of communally owned forests to central government ownership. The alienation process happened in 1908 and 1932. Between 1933 and 1982 the development of forest policies and legislation aimed at ensuring that the department functioned well and was able to bring the alienated forests under the control of the central government. The first Forest act was enacted in 1942 and revised in 1947 and 1982; while a policy to direct forestry development in the country was first written in 1957; revised in 1967. From 1967, the revision of the forest policy was attempted in 1994 following the completion of a forest management planning process, which had been initiated in 1990. The proposed new policy though revised in 2000 has not become an official government document that can be used as law (GOK, 2002).

The office of the chief conservator of forests, which is also its headquarters, was established in 1910 in Nairobi. The chief conservator of forests covered the whole country up to 1930s, when three forest conservancies were created. These were the eastern, central and western conservancies. After independence in 1963, the department started to expand forest management operations to cover all parts of the country where forest resources were found. The expansion was supported for a period of about twenty years (1970-1988) with development funds from the World Bank. By 1975, the country had established more than 20 forest divisions throughout the country. The divisional forest offices covered large areas and in some cases were responsible for areas currently covered by more than five districts (GOK, 1994). The World Bank project aimed mainly at establishing forest plantations while another arm of the department known as the Rural Afforestation and Extension Services (RAES) was established to encourage tree planting on peoples' farms. RAES activities covered all of the existing government administrative districts.

The RAES programme covered the whole country and was initially supported by the government of Switzerland for a period of ten years after which the government of

Sweden took over its support for another ten years. After the end of the Swedish support to RAES, several donors concentrated in supporting forestry extension activities in different regions and districts in the country. The government of Denmark supported forestry activities in South Nyanza, the Japanese government supported forestry activities in Kitui and the Finnish government supported Nakuru, Nyandarua and Laikipia districts while the Swedish government also supported parts of Nyanza and Machakos. The governments of United Kingdom and Australia supported activities in the dry Eastern and parts of the rift valley provinces (GOK, 1998).

While this was the period in Kenya when afforestation activities on farms were accelerated in the country partly to address the fuel wood shortage caused by an increase in petroleum prices in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the forestry sector also experienced major political interference in its management. There were two presidential bans on the exploitation of indigenous tree species and the burning of charcoal in all public and communal forests in the country. Apart from these, the government also banned the *Taungya* system of plantation establishment in 1987 and followed it by removing those who had lived in government forests for years thereby causing a major shortage of labour for forestry operations (Wanyiri, 1999).

Since its establishment and expansion of its structure, the forest department used the command and control approach at all levels by using armed Forest Guards to police the forest boundaries and enforce management rules and procedures (Matiru, 2003). It has been observed that this type of decentralisation, also known as deconcentration worked when population was low and the demand on the forest was mainly to supply industrial wood to the forest industries. Forest officers had minimum interaction with the other stakeholders in the sector. In this type of system, all decisions pertaining to forest management were made at the headquarters and passed down for implementation by the forest officials on the ground without input by the other stakeholders and beneficiaries in the forestry sector (Oyugi, 2000).

The population of Kenya has more than doubled since 1969 from about eleven million to thirty three million in 1999 (GOK, 2000). This ever-increasing population with its increasing social and economic demands has increased its demands on the forests thus creating shortages of many resources. Other external influences such as the petroleum

crises and the increasing prices of petroleum products have forced many households in the lower economic brackets to rely more on renewable biomass fuels (MOE, 1995). Since more households find themselves unable to afford petroleum products, they turn more to wood fuel energy. This created serious shortages in wood fuel supply since 80% of households in Kenya rely on wood fuel for heating and cooking (GOK 1994). Towards the end of 1980s, many forest adjacent communities started to encroach into the forests in search of firewood and charcoal (Sayer et al, 1992). Due to the dwindling amounts of forest resources, many local communities have come to recognise the importance of forests in their lives. They started to organise themselves in groups to find ways of mitigating the energy crisis (MOE, 1992).

Poole and Leakey (1996) reported similar problems in the Wild life sector where the decentralisation policy resulted in the wildlife management responsibility being sifted between different government departments in order to conform to the District Focus for Rural Development policy. Problems in wild life management ended with the formation of a government parastatal known as the Kenya Wild life Service. Similar arrangements have been mooted for Forest Department (GOK, 2002).

The effects of the donor driven structural adjustment programmes did not spare the forest department either. Because of the haphazard manner in which the government implemented the programmes (Seymour and Mugabe, 2001), many forest workers were retrenched without replacements adequate arrangements having been made to ensure the management of the forests. The retrenchment programme drastically reduced the forest department's capacity to monitor forest operations and enforce rules.

Conflicts arising from the district focus programmes where the District Commissioner (DC), being the administrative arm of government collected and controlled the collection and use of revenue. The DC also controlled the major activities and expenditures in other government departments. For example, authority to harvest products from the forests was in some cases given by the DC's office. The District Forest Officers (DFOs) realising that they did not have power to decide on the collection and use of revenue became lax in carrying out their duties. This further aggravated the mismanagement of the forests (-----).

In order to explore further the effects administrative decentralisation of government policy had on the forest sector, a study of seven forests where the IFRI Collaborating Centre has been working with forest adjacent communities was undertaken from 1997 to 2001. This research is on going and only some aspects of it relevant to decentralisation have been reported in this paper.

3.0 Study Methods

The research was done using the IFRI research protocols involving a combination of Participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) and field measurements. It covered seven forests where the IFRI Collaborating Research Centre in Kenya; CRC-K has set up research sites. The study used PRA methods to collect sociological data on communities and actors in the forestry sector adjacent to the seven forests. The research team reviewed secondary information on the management of forests in Kenya. Group meetings were held in all the six sites during the first site visit and also during the site revisits.

3.1 The location of study sites (forests).

The forests where the study was conducted are located in three agro-climatic zones of Kenya. Loitokitok forest is located in the South eastern parts of Kenya. Loitokitok is a dry deciduous forest. The forest is located on the border between Kenya and Tanzania. North Imenti and Aberdares forests are located in the central parts of the country. Both forests are wet montane forests. Kedowa forest is also a wet montane forest found in the eastern slopes of the Great Rift Valley. Both Got Ramogi and Tugen hills are dry deciduous forests found in the western parts of the country. While Got Ramogi is located in the Lake Victoria basin, the Tuge hills forests are located in the north western parts of the Great Rift Valley (Wass, 1995).

3.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to review issues that relate to decentralisation in Kenya, particularly in the forestry sector; and also, answer the following two questions:

- What is the effect of administrative decentralisation of the forest department on the condition of Kenyan forests?
- How have the people responded to the poor forest conditions?

- How do institutions enhance or impede decentralisation of forest management at the local levels?

3.3 Research parameters

This paper examines the drivers towards self-organization of the forest associations around selected forests where such organizations have been done. This paper, examines the availability of the two major products that the FACS considered critical to their livelihoods. These included firewood, charcoal, grass and medicinal plants. Charcoal and grass are not covered in this paper because charcoal is mainly produced for use outside the settlement and it was not possible for the members of the community to provide information on its production. Grass has been left out because of uncertainty involved in estimating the quantities eaten by livestock which are grazed in the forests. In addition to the availability of the products, the study also sought to establish the extent to which the local communities have organized themselves to counter the effects of decentralization process on the management of the forests.

Before undertaking the case study of the seven forests, an assessment of the effects of the administrative decentralization on the Forest department and the forests in Kenya was undertaken. The assessment was based mainly on secondary information obtained from government reports and other sources of literature. The following section is based on the findings of the assessment effort.

4 Decentralization of Forest Management in Kenya (1930 –2002)

The Forest Department had used decentralization approaches in form of the *shamba* system or *Taungya* and Joint Forest Management (JFM). The *Taungya* system of forest plantations establishment was a joint partnership between Forest department (FD) and the people where both parties had their rights and responsibilities (Chavangi, 1980). *Taungya* system involved the allocation of forestland to cultivators who were allowed to grow annual subsistence for a period of two to three years before the forest canopy started to shade out the crops. After the closure of the canopy, the farmers were allocated to other plots. In the process, the Forest Department gained from the labour provided by the farmers to tend the young trees. The farmers also benefited from the crops grown on forestland. Though the system worked well for both parties, it had been exposed to abuse

by both the farmers and the Forest Department due to lack of proper monitoring (Gathaara, 2000). Since 1983, the government has banned the practice three times and has since remained banned since 2002.

In Joint Forest management, Forest Department shares management responsibilities with forest adjacent communities. The responsibilities usually refer to protection and regeneration of the forest plantations. Through JFM arrangements, the forest adjacent communities are entitled to Non Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), fuel wood and fodder (Jordan, 1992). While the forest adjacent communities benefit through the collection of the forest products, they protect the forest from encroachment by those who do not participate in the system.

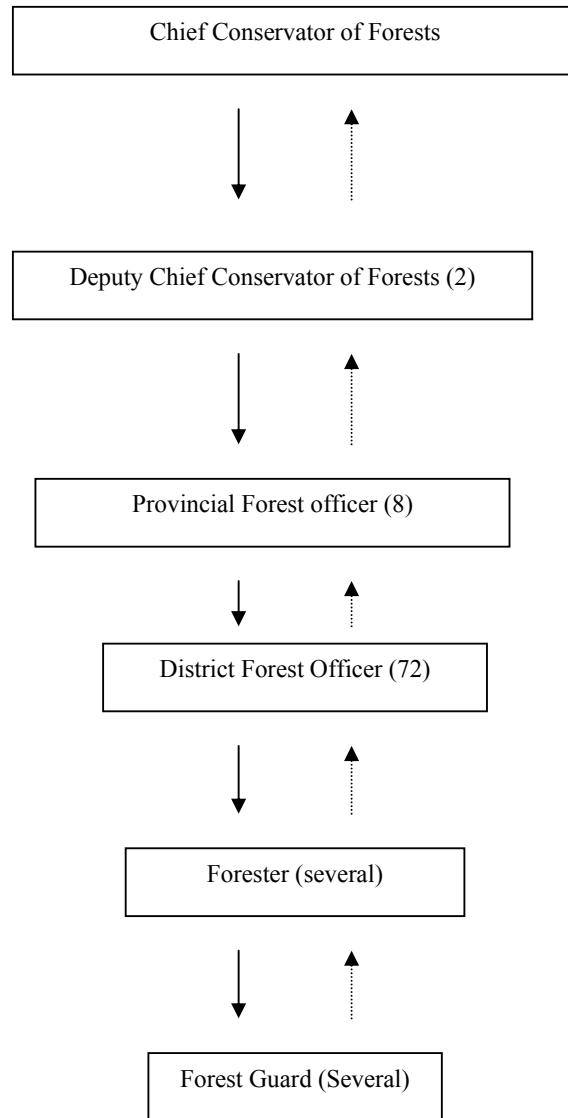
Taungya and Joint Forest management have been practiced by the Forest department without having developed a policy on them, and within the administratively decentralised management approach. With the advent of the moves to democratise forest management in the country through the devolution of decision making powers to the local levels, the Forest Department has started to pilot Participatory Management (PFM). Participatory forest management is a form of collective management where local institutions in forestry management function to secure sustainability in natural resource use, help organise people to use their indigenous knowledge, and mediate access to the resource by members of the community (Uphoff, 1992 and Pretty, 1995a). Participatory forest management is being piloted at the Kenyan Coast at Arabuko Sokoke forest (Mbuvi, 2002). The communities who live in Dida village which is adjacent to the Arabuko Sokoke forest have formed themselves into a forest management unit, the Dida Forest Adjacent Community Association (DEFAFA). Through the association, the Dida community has successfully negotiated with the Forest Department to manage parts of the forest. In the forest block which they have been allocated to manage, they have initiated honey production, butterfly farming and ecotourism. Through the production and sale of the products, the members of the association have earned good income and this has encouraged them to monitor the forest closely against any destructive agents. The results are so far encouraging and the system is being recommended for trial in other areas.

In spite of all the endeavours to decentralise to local levels, decentralisation process in Kenya has remained incomplete (Smoke, 2004; Poole and Leakey, 1996).

4.1 The District Focus for Rural Development Strategy (DFRD)

According to Ribot 2001, administrative decentralisation in Kenya started in 1963 when Kenya attained Self Rule from the British colonial government. At the time of independence, customary authorities were the main tools of administrative management (Mamdani, 1996) and were mainly decentralised in their administrative functions. In 1983, the government attempted to decentralize the activities of other governments through the creation of the District Focus for Rural Development movement (Ngethe, 1998). The decentralisation of administrative functions of government from headquarters to the districts also necessitated the forest department to decentralise its functions from the headquarters, provinces and divisions to the districts. During this process, the forest department created forty-one district forest offices including one for Nairobi area. The continued expansion of the country's administrative structure has now resulted into the country being divided into seventy-two administrative districts with one hundred and eighty administrative divisions. The forest department has district forest officers in all the seventy two districts and in some cases, has posted forest officers to the Divisional level. The diagram below shows a schematic illustration of the administrative structure of the department.

Figure 1: Administrative structure of the Forest Department



Solid arrows indicate the strength of command of control (From top to bottom)

Broken arrows indicate the weakness in the feedback. The lower levels cannot give instructions upwards.

The system incorporates representatives of lower tier elected local government committees but it is essentially a deconcentration of central ministries tightly controlled by government officials (Smoke, 1992; 2004). This system defeats the purpose of decentralising government functions which should include giving the local level committees and groups the power to make decisions on matters that relate to development. The local members of parliament (MP) in collaboration with the District Commissioners (who are the designated chair of the District Development Committees) make decisions on local development and resource allocation routinely on the basis of political patronage and access to centrally controlled networks. Representation of the local communities is weak and heads of government departments cannot decide on the projects to be implemented. In order to conform to the new government's administrative dispensation, all the sectors of the government including the Forest Department, established offices at the district and other lower levels. It is important to note that where such offices were established, they remained administrative offices with very little powers to make decisions. Community involvement in the management forests remained non-existent (Woodhouse, 1997).

4.2 Weaknesses of the Administrative type of decentralization

From the structure, it is clear that power in decision -making in the forest department is heavy from top to the lower levels. There are very weak feedback mechanisms from the bottom up except in writing monthly, quarterly or annual reports. Fiscal decentralization is also unidirectional and the revenue collected by the forest department and handed to the central government is not ploughed back to improve the forests.

The process of decentralisation in the Forest Department failed to lay ground for the establishment of competent local level institutions and as a result, created a vacuum which was used by the provincial administration to defeat the proposed good management of the forest sector. The establishment of the lower level offices also did not include the transfer of financial resources from the Forest Department headquarter to the district levels. Because of this, there was lack of accountability in the lower level offices. Due to insufficient provision of the necessary tools, the forest officers lack the basic capacities to enforce rules in forests within their jurisdiction. They are also demoralised and over-looked by the district administration. The district focus strategy

also removed most of other powers from the forest officers. For example, the district commissioner's office collects revenue accruing from the sale of forest products. They have usurped the powers of controlling funds allocated to the district forest office.

Even though the forest Department had very good intentions of bringing forest goods and services closer to the communities, this move however opened up the department to many manipulations by the provincial administration, influential individuals and the politically corrects who allocated both forestland and forest resources to themselves without the consent or involvement of the forest department. The forest department found itself in more problems than it had expected. *Ad hoc* forest excisions became common and by 2002 about 167,000 hectares of forestland had been ear marked for excision (Gachanja, 2002). This demoralised lower level officers who in turn worked with the harvesters to further destroy the forests. The period between 1983 and 2002 saw the greatest destruction of Kenyan forests with the government officials being blamed for condoning the process (Njuguna et al, 1999). According to the Kenya government, about 80% of the people living in the rural areas were experiencing shortage of firewood (GOK 1995)

The provincial administration also politicised posting of officials where selected officers were posted to strategic districts with largest amounts of forest resources (Gathaara, 2002). Thus, the district forest officers had either inadequate resources or no control over the allocated funds (Ndungu, 2000). Accounting systems for forest products were also disrupted by the incorporation of the District Commissioner's office in revenue collection. What ensued was lack of accountability from the from the district offices upwards (Seymour and Dubash, 2000). The attempt to carry out an administrative decentralisation of all the sectors including the forestry sector thus crumbled (Smoke 2004).

The effect of the administrative of the Forest Department has continued to affect the management of the forests in Kenya as was noted from case studies of the seven forests where IFRI Kenya has established sites. In the following section, we explain the effects of the policy using the levels of harvesting of forest products between 1993 and 2001. In the section, we also show the response which the forest adjacent communities have had on the continued problems of managing the country's remaining forest resources.

5. Case Study of Seven Forests

In order to understand the effects of the administrative decentralisation policy, we studied seven forests where IFRI has established sites to study the role of local communities in the management of woodlands and forest resources in the country. While this is a long term project which aims at answering other research questions, this study considered changes in the harvesting of firewood and medicinal plants. According to the communities who live adjacent to the seven forests, these products were the most important for them and their sustained availability was considered critical in their livelihoods.

5.1 Reduction in firewood availability

The communities in all the seven forests reported that the availability of forest products had continued to decrease over time (Tables 2 and 3). The communities from all the forests recall the experience of the 1980s when there was a national energy crisis which had affected 80% of the households that depended on wood fuel energy for cooking and heating. During the time, the prices of firewood and charcoal rose and the rate of harvesting of trees like *Olea* and *Accacia* which are important for fuel wood species escalated in all the forests. The forest adjacent communities reported that commodities like firewood and medicinal plants, which were abundant 20 years ago, had become difficult to get from the forests. The firewood user groups reported that five years ago, they could collect enough firewood for household use along forest boundaries. But now they have to walk deep inside the forests and spend an average of four hours per day to collect one head-load of wood. This leaves them with little time for other household chores.

Table 2: Trend in Firewood harvesting (000s of Head loads)

Name of Forest	Forest Size (ha)	Year		
		2000	2001	2002
Loitokitok	41	30.6	28.8	27.7
Kedowa	2500	38.4	38.0	37.5
Upper Imenti	5958	48.0	43.6	38.9
GotRamogi	283	7.7	6.9	5.7
ThimLich	20	5.6	4.9	4.6
Tugen hills	1956	26.9	25.0	24.7
Aberdare hills	500	72.4	72.0	71.8

5.2 Medicinal plants disappearing

Some species especially of medicinal value have disappeared from the forests due to over-exploitation and the destructive methods of harvesting. The trade in herbal medicines has been highly commercialised in Kenya (). Therefore more herbalists are joining the practice. In most areas the herbalists have established nurseries and planted medicinal plants and herbs on their farms

Table 3: Medicinal Plants harvested (00s of bundles)

Name of Forest	Forest size (ha)	Year		
		2000	2001	2002
Loitok	41	526	467	510
Kedowa	2500	1500	1350	1457
Upper Imenti	5958	100	75	50
Got Ramogi	283	672	643	597
ThimLich	20	120	100	160
Tugen hills	1956	580	640	670
Aberdares	500	500	750	730

In the 1980s, herbal medicines were used primarily for family use but now they have become highly commercialized. Raw plants are measured in bundles before they are processed either as solutions, dust, cut leaves etc. It has not been possible to get accurate

estimates on the amounts of medicinal plants harvested by any group even though the number of people selling herbal medicines known local as mobile herbalists mobile herbalists”)¹ has increased from 5 to about 15 around Lotokitok alone within a three year period. For our purposes, the bundle measuring about 200g was taken as standard weight.

5.3 Communities respond to poor forest management by FD

In order to stop and reverse such destruction and losses, there have been some attempts to form forest associations to protect the forests. Communities and the civil society realised that if they do not take action to safeguard the forests, there will be forest products and that the environments will turn in to deserts. In response to the reducing availability of wood, many women organised themselves into women and self-help groups as early as 1980s to raise tree seedlings for planting on farms.

Consequently many woodlots were established and environmental projects started to reverse the trend of massive loss of trees in government forests. The years that followed saw an increase in adoption of improved wood using stoves, which, reduced firewood consumption and improved energy use efficiency. This was in response to what the communities saw were negative results of deforestation caused by bad forest management. These included reduction of crop yields due to persistent and prolonged droughts, soil erosion, and wind throw among other problems in the forest sector.

From the case study, forest associations which had been formed by the communities adjacent to the forests were identified and their activities documented (table 3).

¹ These people move from one town to another selling herbal medicines on market days.

Table 4: Forest Associations formed by Forest adjacent communities

Name of forest	Name of association	Year formed	Reasons for formation	Achievements
Tugen Hills	Sochei Self Help Group	2002	-To regulate use and harvest of herbal medicine. -To help members plant pyrethrum	-Created links with the pyrethrum board which provides seeds to members willing to plant pyrethrum.
Aberdare hills	Michaka-Kiringo Forest Conservation	2002	-To reduce intensive degradation on the forest. -To establish tree nurseries to provide seedlings which can be planted in the forest	-Planted seedlings in the nearest ridge. -Helped reduce forest degradation by introducing harvesting rules
Upper Imenti	Nkunga forest conservation	2000	-To save the forest that was fast disappearing due to saw milling and charcoal burning	-Have helped reduce illegal harvesting by reporting offenders to authorities. -Have educated some locals on the importance of flora and fauna to reduce degradation.
Got Ramogi	Got Ramogi Alternative Health conservation	1999	To sustainably use the forest as their only source of herbal medicine	-Have sensitized the local community through the chief's barazas* and schools. -Restricted the sale of wood from the forest through their rules.
Kedowa	Country Vision	1999	To promote forest conservation through tree planting on farms	-New organization
Thimlich Ohinga	Got Olasi Youth Tree Nursery	1994	To reduce scarcity of fuelwood that was a major problem to the locals.	-Tree nursery establishment. -Planted trees for sale as fuelwood

*A baraza is a Kiswahili word for an open air community meeting often organised by a local chief.

5.4 Highlights on the Community initiated forest associations

In Loitokitok, the communities entered into contractual agreement with the Forest Department to replant the forest with trees of indigenous and exotic species. The users

provide labour for the establishment of tree nurseries, raise and plant seedlings in the forest; and, monitor the forest in turns. The Forest Department allows them to cultivate in the forest for a period of time. Through this arrangement the communities have started on-farm tree nurseries to supply seedlings to other environmental self-help groups to plant on their own farms. The communities are concerned about the on going soil erosion caused by heavy run-off from Mt. Kilimanjaro. They hope that through the planting of trees in the forest surface run-off will be minimised.

In Kedowa, the Country Vision forest association was formed by the youth to monitor illegal harvesting of products from forest. This was as a result of the realisation that if the Forest Department continued to allow illegal harvesting of fencing posts and harvesting of *chat* from the forest then these products will be depleted to their detriment. .

This is Forest Association is composed of young school leavers who came together to raise awareness on forest conservation and keep themselves busy. The members work in the World Vision offices at Kedowa as volunteers. This association is newly formed and their major activity is the management of a tree nursery which they had established. They also plan to participate actively surveillance and policing of the adjacent forest.

In Upper Imenti forest, the community formed the Nkunga forest committee to protect their crops from damage by elephants. The association became a powerful organization which successfully negotiated with the Kenya Wildlife Service to erect an electric fence along the boundary between the forest and their farms. Due to the danger posed by wild animals to women and children when going to fetch water from the forest, the forest association successfully negotiated with the Ministry of water conservation and development which has since piped water from the forest to the community.

Michaka- Kiringo Forest Conservation Association is a no profit making community-based organization (CBO) that was formed by the settlement residents to help monitor illegal activities in the Aberdare forest.

The association is mainly concerned with protecting the forest, monitoring and enforcing the rules which relate to harvesting and sale of forest products. This association is new

and has not gone through all the formalities of registration. It is not yet allowed to make any decision regarding forest conservation or use.

The association has 74 members who work on voluntary basis since they have not collected enough funds to pay for any services provided to them by the Forest Department. Most members work for the association on a voluntary basis. Those members of the association who monitor the forest are appointed by the other members based on their experience and willingness to work.

In Ramogi forest, the local herbalists formed Got Ramogi Alternative Health Forest Association whose aim was to protect forest in order to conserve plants of medicinal value. The association also arranges for monitoring the quantities of medicinal plants harvested by each herbalist as well organizing for educational seminars and tours for people from outside the community.

They are not involved in the general management of the forest, except for harvesting of products for use in their herbal medicine practise. The association has written statement of the association's mission and objectives.

In Thimlich Forest, the Got Olasi Youth Tree farmers association protects the forest, monitor and enforce the rules relating to harvesting of forest products. Got Olasi Youth Tree Farming Association is a non-profit making community based organization (CBO) that was formed by young residents from the forest adjacent community to monitor activities in the forest and improve tree cover outside the forest. All the 14 members of the association work on voluntary basis.

In Tugen hills, the local community formed Sochkei self help group Forest association to protect the forest which is an important cultural asset to the community. They are also involved in agro forestry activities where they promote fast growing trees for sale to the community.

5.5 Governance of the forests

Even though these associations reflect the extent to which local forest adjacent communities have attempted to evolve informal institutions for the devolved forest management, none of them have legal rights to make any decisions on forest management. Such rights still await the enactment of the New Forest Bill into law. It is anticipated that once the bill is enacted, the rights and responsibilities of the forest associations will be clearly spelt out.

6.0 Conclusion

In nearly all the forests, there had been significant levels of degradation to the extent that the communities themselves felt that it was necessary for them to take immediate action in order to save those forests which were still remaining from being decimated.

Administrative decentralisation of Kenya's forestry department in the 1980s provided a clear structure of command based management. It provided mechanism for forest management of the forests at all levels except for lack of effective feedback from the lower levels to those managers based at headquarter level. The management of the forest resources was also taken closer to the people, especially for the provision of forest goods and services. The decentralisation process however lacked devolution of power to the lower levels and failed to involve communities in the management of forest resources within their areas. Such shortcoming resulted into the forests under the jurisdiction of the decentralised management being destroyed to the extent that the livelihoods of the forest adjacent communities were threatened with loss. Local communities therefore initiated activities aimed at reversing the destructive management approaches which had been adopted by the lower level managers of the Forest Department.

Activities initiated by the local communities included the promotion of farm forestry as well as planting of medicinal plants and other trees in the government managed forests and in their own private farms. This helped to reduce dependence on the forests for forest products which are important in the livelihoods of the forest adjacent communities. The communities formed themselves into forest associations in readiness to participate in the management of forests which are located adjacent to them as soon as the law approving this is passed.

Despite the uncertainty in decentralisation in Kenya's forestry sector, the participatory research process which is being implemented by the CRC has contributed to the building of the social capacity and the social capital of the forest adjacent communities in the forests where the team has carried out more than one site visits. The formation of forest associations by the forest adjacent communities has been one of the results of the CRC activities with the forest adjacent communities.

It is clear that forest adjacent communities are ready to work with the government to better manage the country's remaining forests. The New Forest policy advocates the involvement of communities in the management of the forests which are adjacent to them. The proposed forest policy will act to strengthen what is already on the ground.

It is anticipated that with the current move by the central government to devolve not only managerial but also political and financial powers to the local levels, decentralisation in the sector will soon be a reality.

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