

COMMONS FORUM *RESPONSE*

Response to: Institutions for the Management of Common Pool Resources in African Floodplains: The AFWeP Research Project, by Tobias Haller

Ujamaa Policy and Open Access in Pangani River Basin and Rufiji Floodplain, Tanzania

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The Rufiji Floodplain and the Pangani River Basin of Same district in Tanzania are two river floodplains with ecologically varied settings and economies. They share, however, the common political experience of Ujamaa after independence, which opened up Common Pool Resources (CPR) for all Tanzanians.

The Rufiji Floodplain is home to the largest river in Tanzania and has been a remote area, where CPRs such as fish, wildlife and other resources have been used by different ethno-professional groups collectively called Rufiji. Membership to fishing, hunting, agricultural and gathering groups defined resource areas and access to CPRs according to flooding seasons. Within these groups, local leaders (Mpindo) set up rules and had religious specialists to co-ordinate collective use of CPR, monitoring and sanctioning. Wild animal attack (crocodiles, lions) was viewed as a clear sign of having violated rules. The Pangani River Basin of Same District is not only a floodplain setting.

The Pare ethnic group in the mountains adjacent to the plains was using CPRs such as water and forests. The floodplains on the other hand were used by nomadic pastoralists (Maasai) for dry season grazing. In the Pangani area, village settings and boundaries included whole mountain slopes with water catchment areas covered by forests, where the Supreme Being was seen to be located and rituals were performed. These territories were extending according to slopes and small waters. Therefore the management of irrigation water to the floodplain and protection of catchment areas was done within one ecological setting. Access to these resources was governed by local leaders called Mfumwa and elders.

During German, and especially during British, rule Native Authorities were set up and taxes were introduced in order to push people to produce cash crops. This affected the two environments differently: While Rufiji area benefited from its remoteness, the Pangani basin area was exposed to a stronger colonial control and was more involved in cash crop production (coffee, especially in the mountains). After independence, Tanzania adopted a socialistic policy (Socialism and self-reliance) namely Ujamaa (family hood) in 1967. This was accompanied by transformation of the colonial and traditional institutions with the main objective to give all Tanzanian in a one-party state a chance to take active role in development. The main aspect of Ujamaa concentrated on the dismantling of ethnic boundaries and alteration of traditional or colonial political structures to create room for state villages. In the case of Rufiji floodplain, new villages were created on higher grounds for protection against floods. The mountain villages in Pangani remained, but the political structure was altered. The major impact of Ujamaa policy was that traditional institutions had been altered by forced relocation and the restructuring of existing villages. This can be seen on an organisational and a spatial level. Local traditional and colonially transformed traditional leadership offices (the Mpindo for the Rufiji and the Mfumwa in the Pangani Basin), along with the council of elders, were abolished because these leaders were seen as a threat for national unity and the villagisation projects. These were replaced by the village chairmen who

took over all the administration functions at the village level backed by district government. Secondly, the ethnic boundaries stopped to exist and this created an open access constellation in Rufiji. In Pangani Basin the boundaries were disrupted because new village territories were no longer outlined according to environmental slope boundaries. In Rufiji area this restructuring disrupted the traditional management institutions and granted free access for newcomers through the possession of state permits, which the district government issued. This made it difficult for the locals to access the CPRs leading to illegal resource poaching at the local level for fish and wildlife.

One of the main problems now is that formal state rules cannot be implemented due lack of financial means after Structural Adjustment Programmes. At the same time, more people are interested in the CPR in Rufiji area since it has been opened up through infrastructure and because commercial centres are management of floodplain-related small lakes was made difficult by the influx of seasonal fishermen in a village close to the market centre Ikwiriri. People in another village were able to re-introduce certain traditional and new regulations because their village is located further away from the market centre. But it is not only a problem between outsiders and locals: within villages close to markets, young people have also started to use CPRs for commercial purposes in an uncontrolled way. Interestingly, there is an emerging opposition: parts of the old management system are gaining value after accidents with crocodiles and lions are occurring, especially among elders. Such events are said to be signs of punishment from spirits who are angry because of the misuse of CPRs.

In the Pangani Basin area most severely affected, state development, cash crop production (coffee) and the change in agrarian Ujamaa policy towards more liberalisation and privatisation, has lead to a change from coffee production to more extensive resource use. These changes are due to low coffee prices paid to peasants and weakened cooperative within reach. However, there are differences according to resources and how close villages are from urban centres. Regarding fish in Rufiji, the resources was governed by local leaders called Mfumwa and elders unions. Forests in the hands of the State in catchment areas are now an alternative (though illegal) and are being used for commercial lumbering by local Pare because the state does not protect the forests adequately. Other Pare people move into the floodplains in order to practice irrigation agriculture (rice). Irrigation has been practiced mainly at the foot of the mountains along the floodplain for some time, but modern irrigation schemes were introduced 1990s. These were not adapted to local conditions and plots are taken over more and more by rich urban people and administrators. In one of the two floodplains, irrigation agriculture is rather new and conflicts with pastoralists already pushed aside by a protected area.

While the overuse of CPRs are increasing with these changes, there are some positive signs of collective action: Now there is a new Government Act (following the Village Land Act of 1999) granting villages the right to manage the resources within the villages collectively. Though this gives power back to the local level, it will not be enough to challenge the problems of inter village dynamics or between villagers and outsiders. Also, the weakness of the State must considered. In the Rufiji area, there are signs of collective action for fishing in remote areas where locals share common interests and old rules have remained longer as a focal point. Moreover, there is an initiative financed by the NCCR North South in collaboration with IUCN Tanzania (partly based on the former Rufiji Environment Management Project (REMP)) in order to strengthen the building of new local level institutions in the forms of locally defined by-laws.

In Pangani basin, the Pare peasants at the foot of the mountain have realised that logging in catchment areas is problematic for them because of the lack of water. One local initiative is attempting to reintroduce the old management system in a dialog with the upstream villages in order to protect the forest areas.