



International
Institute for
Environment and
Development

GATEKEEPER SERIES

128

**MAINSTREAMING
PARTICIPATORY
FORESTRY WITHIN
THE LOCAL
GOVERNMENT
REFORM PROCESS
IN TANZANIA**

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2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mainland Tanzania has one of the most advanced community forestry jurisdictions in Africa. Participatory Forest Management (PFM) has become a central strategy of the country's forest policy, laws and programmes. Until recently, PFM had been facilitated by area-based projects working with local partners such as individual local governments and non-government organisations and focusing on particular forest resources. The government has recently decided to mainstream service delivery through national and local government institutions, supported by direct block grants to local governments. In this paper the author describes some of the experiences of the government's Forestry and Beekeeping Division in institutionalising participatory forestry. He also outlines some particular challenges for the process against the backdrop of the government's decentralisation and local government reforms.

A number of lessons have been learned in this process:

- Devolving institutional responsibilities to local governments for implementing participatory forestry must be accompanied by devolved responsibilities for budgets, disbursing and financial accounting within existing structures and systems. Financial management arrangements that make local governments accountable to other line ministries only disempower locally elected councils.
- Funding for forestry activities must be tailored to the needs of individual areas through the use of transparent funding allocation criteria such as forest cover, poverty index and size, as well as more general aspects such as district capacity, good governance and effectiveness.
- Forest revenues are an important source of “untied” income for local governments. This causes a potential conflict of interest as district councils hold the key to transferring forest management (and revenue collection responsibilities).
- Mechanisms are needed for neighbouring administrative units (village, wards or district councils) which share common forest resources to harmonise forest management and use. These should not take decision-making power away from lower level management units, but should be tools for dealing with village to village conflicts, and for agreeing on resource-wide management actions.
- Limited capacity at local government levels means incentives are needed for district councils to outsource forestry services to competent local service providers. The users of these services should also, as much as possible, be involved in choosing the service providers. Without this, the pace of rolling out forestry services will ultimately be hindered by the staffing and capacity of local government structures.
- Raising the awareness of local forest users, managers and locally elected forest management committees about their rights and responsibilities is an effective investment for ensuring downward accountability of community-level forest management institutions.

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MAINSTREAMING PARTICIPATORY FORESTRY WITHIN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM PROCESS IN TANZANIA

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SCALING-UP PARTICIPATORY FOREST MANAGEMENT

Of the estimated 33 million hectares of forest land in Tanzania, 57% (around 19 million hectares) is largely unprotected and lies outside government forest reserves (URT, 2001). In the mid 1990s a number of pilot activities were started in northern and western Tanzania, which for the first time allowed the transfer of forest ownership and management responsibility from central to village government. Following these successful and well-documented pilots (Wily, 1997), other forest areas were brought under community management or community co-management. Notable examples include the East Usambara forests of Tanga region, the highland forests of Iringa, miombo woodlands, and, more recently, coastal forests in Tanga, Mtwara and Lindi regions. These pilots, implemented by a range of actors, including local and international NGOs and local governments and supported by bilateral donors, collectively demonstrated the viability of engaging communities in forest management under a range of social and ecological conditions. These experiments across the country coincided with a review of the forest policy and legislation in the late 1990s, together with sweeping reforms in Tanzania's economic and political spheres, and directly contributed to a favourable legal environment for advancing what is locally called Participatory Forest Management (PFM). Today, mainland Tanzania has one of the most advanced community forestry jurisdictions in Africa as reflected in policy, law and practice (Wily, 2000). The National Forest Policy (URT, 1998) provides incentives for the sustainable management of unreserved and unprotected forests by village governments, which number over 10,500 in Tanzania.

The policy objectives of PFM are listed in Box 1.

Box 1: PFM policy objectives

- Improved forest quality through sustainable management practices
- Improved livelihoods through increased forest revenues and secure supply of subsistence forest products
- Improved forest governance at village and district levels through effective and accountable natural resource management institutions

Source: URT, 2003

Two main approaches for implementing PFM are being promoted in Tanzania: Joint Forest Management and Community Based Forest Management:

- **Joint Forest Management (JFM)** is a collaborative management approach which divides forest management responsibility and returns between the forest owner (usually central or local government but occasionally the private sector) and forest adjacent communities. It takes place on land reserved for forest management such as National Forest Reserves (NFRs) (for catchment, mangrove or production purposes) and Local Government Forest Reserves (LGFRs) or Private Forest Reserves (PFRs). It is formalised through the signing of a Joint Management Agreement (JMA) between village representatives and government (either the District Council or Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism).
- **Community Based Forest Management (CBFM)** takes place in forests on “village land” (land which has been surveyed and registered under the provisions of the *Village Land Act* (1999) and managed by the village council). Under CBFM, villagers take full ownership and management responsibility for an area of forest within their jurisdiction and it is “declared” by village and district government as a Village Land Forest Reserve. Following this legal transfer of rights and responsibilities to village government, villagers can harvest timber and forest products, collect and retain forest royalties and undertake patrols (including arresting and fining offenders). They are also exempt from regulations for harvesting “reserved tree” species, and are not obliged to share their royalties with either central or local government. The underlying policy goal for CBFM is to progressively bring large areas of unprotected woodlands and forests under village management and protection.

With funding from the Government of Tanzania and bilateral donors, the Forestry and Beekeeping Division (FBD) of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism is developing a national programme for the implementation of participatory forest management. Working primarily through district and village governments, but

increasingly supported by NGOs and the private sector, the programme is currently supporting 53 districts across mainland Tanzania (out of a total of 97).

A recent assessment by the FBD found that PFM was operating or being established in over 1,800 villages and on over 3.6 million hectares of forest land (Table 1), equivalent to approximately 11% of the total forest cover and 18% of all villages on mainland Tanzania.

Community Based Forest Management (CBFM)		Joint Forest Management (JFM)	
Forest area under CBFM (hectares)	Number of villages with CBFM	Forest area under CBFM (hectares)	No. of villages with JFM
2,060,608	1,102	1,612,246	719

Source: URT, 2006

At the same time, the government of Tanzania, as in many other countries in Africa, is promoting a national programme of decentralisation, with financial, administrative and political decision-making authority and responsibilities being transferred from central to local government. The role of central government is being transformed into one of policy guidance, monitoring and capacity-building. The different levels of local government in Tanzania are illustrated in Table 2.

Administrative/ Political Level	Functions	No. on mainland Tanzania
Village Government	Overseeing development activities at the local level; ensuring local law and order; enforcement of local bylaws; co-ordination of local planning, overseeing land use planning and allocation	10,571 (registered)
Ward	Co-ordinating and supporting village planning, supervising service delivery and ensuring integration of priorities into district plans and budgets	1,756
District Council	Maintaining law and order and good governance; ensuring equitable and effective delivery of services to people in their areas; raising, receiving and disbursing funds in line with local development priorities	97
Regional Administrative Secretariat	Linking local governments to central ministries; advising local governments on planning, financial management and service delivery; monitoring and reporting local government activities to central government	21

(Source: Prime Ministers Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG) statistics)

This paper describes some of the particular challenges and lessons learned in mainstreaming participatory forest management within this framework of local government and decentralisation reforms.

KEY CHALLENGES

Matching institutional mandates with appropriate roles

As in many countries, the institutional architecture of forest management in Tanzania is changing rapidly. Previously, the Forestry Division had primary responsibility for all forests in Tanzania and worked through its staff posted within different levels of local government, whilst retaining vertical reporting lines to the parent ministry. Since the adoption of the *Local Government Act (1982)*, however, forest officers have been decentralised and are now entirely answerable to locally elected councils through the District Executive Directors. This is complicated, however, by the presence in many districts of forest reserves administered by central government due to their regional, national or even global biodiversity or water catchment values. Such areas fall outside the domain of local government and their management is vested in District Catchment Forest Officers who work alongside District Forest Officers but are answerable to central government (Table 3).

Role	Responsible Ministry	Officer, location and reporting line
Supporting Community Based Forest Management on village land	Prime Ministers Office – Regional Administration and Local Government	District Forest Officer , based within district offices and reporting to District Executive Director
Supporting Joint Forest Management in Local Authority Forest Reserves	Prime Ministers Office – Regional Administration and Local Government	District Forest Officer , based within district offices and reporting to District Executive Director
Supporting Joint Forest Management in National Forest Reserves (such as Catchment Forests)	Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism – Forestry and Beekeeping Division	District Catchment Forest Officer , based outside district and reports to central government

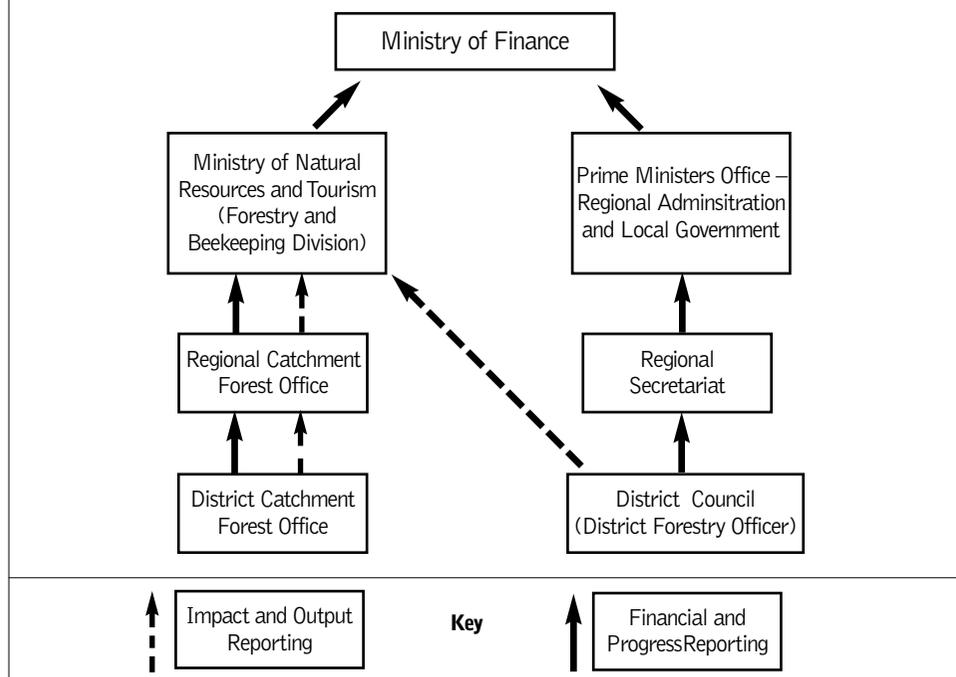
FBD staff at national level no longer implement PFM directly in the field. Their role is now to provide policy guidance, ensure policy compliance and quality control, offer training and capacity building, raise awareness, monitor and channel funds.

Making this transition has proved difficult and continues to present challenges. One example is the question of financial disbursements and reporting lines. Until very recently, funding from development partners was provided from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism directly to local government accounts. District Forest Officers then reported their activities and expenditures back to the same ministry, based on approved plans and budgets. This arrangement, however, clearly contradicts the government's stated policy of "decentralisation through devolution" and results in the somewhat confusing situation of one line ministry being financially accountable to another. This is now being rectified and funding lines are being matched with institutional responsibilities. With effect from the 2006/07 financial year, for activities under the supervision of the district councils (see Table 3) finances are channelled directly from the Ministry of Finance to the appropriate district and do not feature in the annual budget of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. Routine financial and administrative reporting is to the respective district council, based on approved plans and budgets. The parent ministry—the Prime Ministers Office Regional Administration and Local Government (PMO-RALG)—is then responsible for compiling financial and activity reports across districts and regions and presenting consolidated results to the Forestry Division at national level. Forestry and Beekeeping Division is still responsible for monitoring overall progress of forest policy and law implementation; therefore impact and output monitoring takes place from local governments to FBD directly.

For activities supervised at the local level by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism (see Table 3) funding remains within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and both financial reporting and impact monitoring takes place vertically (Figure 1).

Thus, similar activities fall under the remit of two different ministries with different lines of accountability for planning and reporting. This presents challenges for local co-ordination and harmonisation of forestry plans. Currently the degree of co-ordination at local level between representatives of Forestry and Beekeeping Division and local government staff rests largely upon the relationship between the two officers; there is no institutionalised mechanism to ensure co-ordination on planning, allocation of resources, sharing of workload or reporting. In addition, compiling national or regional data on the progress of Participatory Forest Management is hampered by the fact that impact and output monitoring reports flow to different staff members within the ministry.

Figure 1: Institutional roles in reporting of PFM Activities at local government levels



The gradual shift of responsibility from FBD/MNRT to PMO-RALG has left some staff in the Forestry Division feeling disempowered and unable to exercise what they consider their legitimate right to more directly guide and steer district based activities. Conversely, District Forestry Officers, often former employees of the Forestry Division, also feel that informal reporting lines to central government based on shared history should be allowed to continue. One important and legitimate role for central government in supporting PFM, however, is providing technical and policy guidance to improve standardisation, harmonisation and quality control in the wide array of approaches being implemented across the country. Local practitioners and facilitators often request policy guidance, implementation manuals and practical guidelines on “how to do” PFM. This legitimate demand from the field must be carefully balanced with the need for embracing innovation and local adaptation. Providing too many guidelines and too rigid an implementation framework can easily lead to suffocation and institutional paralysis. Providing too little guidance, on the other hand, can lead to PFM activities becoming blurred and largely unrecognisable on the ground.

Mismatches between administrative and ecological boundaries

The Forest Act delegates responsibility for the management of forest resources to “the lowest possible level of local management consistent with national policies” (URT, 2001). Numbering over 10,500, village governments constitute the lowest level of government in Tanzania, with significant powers to receive, raise and disburse funds based on local plans, enact bylaws, elect councillors and defend local interests (Table 2). Following these provisions, PFM is largely a process that is driven and implemented by committees established under the Village Council and therefore firmly embedded within village government structures. Where forest resources are entirely contained within the village land and are not contiguous with other forest areas outside the village, all forest planning and management decision-making can be driven by local considerations and interests. However, when a continuous piece of forest cuts across a number of village jurisdictions, there is clearly a need to go to a higher level to ensure that management activities and plans are harmonised across the forest and that mechanisms for inter-village conflict are addressed. Where all villages are within a single ward (the next highest administrative structure), the ward is a suitable institutional home for such discussions. However, more often than not villages from different wards share a common forest. In such cases, it is becoming increasingly common for villages to associate across the forest through an informal management system. Decisions relating to harvesting, licensing, fees and royalties and the sharing of benefits are often referred to such higher associations to ensure harmonisation and avoid conflict. The legal nature of such an institution, however, becomes questionable and often remains simply a co-ordinating body with no executive powers or financial resources. If, however, it chooses to distribute revenues (for example from harvesting) it needs to register as a legal entity. In some cases this has been as a “union” of local governments (see Box 2), which is recognised under the local government act for issues of mutual concern or interest. In other cases, these associations have been registered as non-governmental organisations and have sought funds outside government.

Box 2: Angai Forest, Liwale District

13 villages in Liwale district collectively manage a single forest area of around 141,000 hectares called the Angai Forest. Management actions at the forest level are co-ordinated by the *Mungano wa Hifadi ya Misitu wa Angai* – a “union” composed of representatives drawn from each village. A union of local governments is a recognised legal entity under the Local Government Act of 1982 and avoids the need for registration as an NGO.

Forest areas may not only cut across different villages or wards, but also two or more different districts (particularly large montane forests with water catchment functions). This presents additional challenges for planning and implementation. Capacities and interests vary significantly between districts and have significant implications for the adoption and diffusion of PFM (Blomley and Ramadhani, 2006). Mechanisms for inter-district co-ordination and alignment of management activities can nominally be created at the regional level, but where forests cut across different regions, inter-district co-ordination is often limited.

Long term financing of forest-wide, inter-village co-ordination also presents particular challenges. Village representatives are required to travel and may incur costs. Where forest management is generating income (for example from harvesting), a flat-rate percentage can be taken off gross revenues to cover the costs of forest-wide management. Where there are limited opportunities for local revenue generation (for example where forests have minimal local use options due to water catchment of biodiversity functions), forest-wide management is often only maintained under project conditions and has limited duration.

Developing rational allocation criteria for district forest grants

Given that most forested land falls under the authority of district councils (on village land, on “general lands” or in local authority forest reserves), with only around 8% in forest reserves administered by central government, the bulk of financing for PFM goes to local governments. Until recently funding for district councils has operated on the basis of “ceilings” within which district councils are required to plan and budget. These ceilings have been standardised across all participating districts. While simplifying overall administration, the use of flat rate ceilings masks the huge differences that exist among districts. Some districts are large, highly rural and heavily forested while others are smaller, more densely populated and with limited forest resources. In addition to these natural considerations, different districts vary in their capacity, engagement and ability to report accurately and on time. Clearly there is a need for mechanisms for allocating funding to areas where needs are highest and where the chances of success are greatest.

Other line ministries operating district-based granting mechanisms have developed simple formulae for allocating resources. For example, the Tanzanian Ministry of Health uses a formula that reflects local health statistics (such as the under-five mortality rates, and mileage covered for service supervision and distribution of

Box 3: Proposed allocation criteria for district PFM block grants (FY 2007/08)

- Population size (30% weighting)
- Rural poverty index (20% weighting)
- Area of forest reserved by local or central government (20% weighting)
- Area of forest outside forest reserves (30% weighting)

supplies) as well as broader socio-economic conditions such as population size and district poverty levels.

Developing forestry-related allocation criteria for PFM, however, throws up a range of challenges – not least the availability of reliable data on forest cover, type, tenure and dependency. For such a system to work, independent data, disaggregated by district, must be available for the whole country. A formula has been developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism for allocating forestry funding based on the indicators in Box 3. It is proposed that these allocation criteria will be used to allocate PFM grants for the financial year beginning July 2007. Although the reliability of data on forest area is slightly questionable (coming from a survey conducted in 1996), this approach is more sensitive than the use of flat rates.

This discussion triggers a wider debate, however, on the circumstances under which participatory forest management can be considered to perform “best” (or to achieve its goals of sustainable forest management and sustainable rural livelihoods):

- Should funds be allocated to areas with large areas of unreserved intact forest (where opportunities are greatest), or areas where deforestation levels are highest (where threats are strongest)?
- Should funds be allocated to districts close to urban centres where markets for forest products are strongest, or areas far from urban centres where markets are still emerging?
- Should funds be allocated to areas containing globally or nationally important forests (with potentially limited local use options), or to those areas with non-valuable woodlands (such as miombo) with significantly higher potential for local revenue generation?

These deeper questions can only be answered through more focussed research into the social, ecological, institutional and tenurial conditions which allow PFM to meet the policy objectives listed in Box 1.

An additional challenge is linking financial disbursements to performance in previous years. Ideally, those districts that perform best should be given the chance to receive additional funding, while those that perform badly or mismanage their funds should be sanctioned. PMO-RALG has developed an annual performance assessment process that evaluates district performance in key functional areas such as financial management, development planning, transparency, accountability and procurement. A district score is given at the end of each financial year which in turn determines allocation of the subsequent year's capital development grant, providing an indicative planning figure for forward budgeting. A high score brings a performance bonus, an acceptable score within the "minimum conditions" maintains the grant at previous levels, while a low score results in a 20% reduction of the following financial year's disbursement (URT, 2004). Funding to districts in support of PFM will follow the same system from the start of the financial year 2007/08.

Redirecting forest revenue from central and district government to village levels

Revenues from natural resources are an important source of income for local governments. Forest revenues come from two main sources:

1. Income from harvesting forest products (typically charcoal, timber and firewood) from Local Authority Forest Reserves is retained by the local government authority in accordance with nationally prescribed rates.
2. Local authorities can charge a "cess" or local tax on the transport of all forest products licensed at the local government level. These levies, while officially set at 5% of the royalty rates, vary considerably from district to district. Some local governments place a surcharge (which has been known to equal up to 50% of the royalty payment) on forest products harvested from general lands. Although not permitted directly under the provisions of the Forest Act, these surcharges are legalised through the passing of bylaws, allowable under the Local Government Act of 1982.

Despite the clear legal confusion and discrepancies that exist from district to district, forest revenues are important in many forested districts as a local source of flexi-

ble funding for activities that are otherwise not covered from central government grants (that tend to be tied or ring-fenced to specific sectors). One study conducted in Kilwa district in 2004, showed that forest revenue accounted for approximately 20% of all local revenue collected, and was second only to agricultural cess in terms of ranked income sources (Danida, 2004)

With the establishment and formalisation of community-based forest management, decisions about harvesting, licensing, and the collection of forest revenues are transferred from district councils to village governments. Provisional findings suggest that village governments are far more effective at collecting natural resource revenue than district councils. One study conducted in Iringa, where CBFM has been operating for a number of years, compared revenue collected from forest taxes, fees and levies by 12 villages and Iringa District Council. The study concluded that over a five year period, from 1997-2002, the average forestry revenues collected by the district council (which comprises 172 villages) was 7.2 million TSh (USD 5,300) compared with 10.6 million Tsh (USD 7,850) collected by only 12 villages (Lund and Helles, 2006). One possible explanation for this is that village governments have the authority to both collect and retain forest revenues, while a significant proportion of forest revenues collected by district governments are remitted back to Treasury within central government.

District councils play a key role in the approval and legalisation of village land forest reserves, through their role in approving bylaws and management plans. This creates a potential conflict of interest as it results in valuable sources of local revenue being transferred downwards and away from district councils. Whether this conflict of interest has indeed delayed the transfer of management control and the legalisation of community based forest management is difficult to prove conclusively. Similarly, it has yet to be demonstrated that devolution of revenue collection to village governments negatively affects total revenues collected by district councils. However, it does demonstrate the need to maintain the momentum of legalising participatory forest management at the local level and the need for further studies of different models of local revenue collection.

Joint Forest Management poses additional challenges in that it requires the equitable sharing of both costs and benefits if it is to work effectively. Most JFM agreements negotiated to date have taken place in so called “protected forests” (typically high biodiversity, montane catchment forests) that have few legal benefits as the forests are strictly conserved. Consequently the issue of revenue sharing does not

arise (and, many have argued, is resulting in questionable agreements). However, in “production forests” where harvesting takes place (both natural forests and plantations), significant revenues are created from the use of timber, charcoal and firewood by commercial timber operators. This is the major source of revenue for FBD and much of it is retained for operational costs at the ministerial level and field levels. Plans are afoot to transform FBD into a self-financing semi-autonomous executive agency, to be called Tanzania Forest Service, financed largely from timber royalties and other fees charged on forest operations. Under such circumstances, resistance from some quarters within central government to share revenues in Joint Forest Management agreements is evident and consequently no standardised JFM cost-benefit sharing ratios have been agreed and promulgated nationally.

New options for local service provision

While discussions have been taking place about the shift in central government’s role from service provision to policy guidance, monitoring and oversight, district councils still retain an effective monopoly over service provision, such as agricultural and forestry extension, health services, education and water supplies in rural areas. Natural resources remain a low priority sector within local governments and as a result the capacity and staff required to deliver effective forestry extension and training are severely lacking, constraining the delivery of forestry services. This contrasts with neighbouring countries such as Uganda, where discussions on service provision have advanced significantly in both the agricultural and forestry sectors (Harrison et al., 2004) and a variety of models are being developed to complement weak district capacity.

Outsourcing service delivery to agents from either the private or non-governmental sector is constrained by the limited availability of local service providers; the reluctance, in some cases, of districts to forgo some of the benefits of district-managed service provision (such as payment of field allowances); and a continuing suspicion between local governments and NGOs. However, it is also important to consider that questions about outsourcing district services are not confined to the forest sector and that similar debates exist in other sectors such as agriculture and livestock. One possibility is for funds for service delivery to be transferred directly to villages. Guidelines could be issued to allow villages to choose from “approved lists” of service providers issued by district councils. Alternatively, district councils might retain the funds and responsibilities for administration, but these funds could only be issued to service providers selected and authorised by village councils.

Building downward accountability in village forest management

Traditionally, accountability in local government structures has been upward. Budgets, reports and requests are submitted upwards to trigger fund flows downwards. However, as pointed out by Ribot (2002), for devolved natural resource management to be successful, accountability mechanisms should work in a downward direction with elected leaders being accountable to those they represent. The Forest Act places significant rights and responsibilities on locally-elected, village-level institutions that constitute sub-committees of the village government (variously called village natural resource committees, village environment committees or village forest management committees). The deliberate decision to embed the management body within local government structures was taken to ensure harmonisation with local government processes, to ensure oversight from higher up and to maximise legitimacy. Over the last three years I have done an informal review of the consequences of this arrangement, revealing three potential outcomes:

1. **From open access to elite capture:** the village committee consolidates power, captures and retains all forest management benefits and excludes any participation by non-members in meetings or discussions. Various means have been developed with which to obtain and hold power. One includes ensuring a locally powerful individual is present on the committee (such as a district or ward councillor), or alternatively by communicating false information to village members (in one JFM village in Morogoro district, villagers reported that they understood that the Forestry Division had given a charcoal harvesting contract to the village committee and were quite unaware of JFM).
2. **Elite capture followed by institutional realignments:** Many villages have seen cases of fraud—where the treasurer has simply stolen the money—or where the entire committee has conspired to use forest revenues for individual gain. However, signs are emerging from some villages that corrupt committee members are being held to account and either punished or, more commonly, thrown out during re-election processes. This trend appears strongest where community members are aware of the roles and responsibilities of the committee in the wider PFM processes.
3. **Accountable committees.** A third scenario occurs where the committee fulfils its responsibilities by collecting and using funds in a responsible and transparent way from the outset. This tends, unsurprisingly, to take place either where total revenues are low, or more usually where the wider community takes a close inter-

est in the workings of the committee and there are regular opportunities for the committee to be held accountable for their actions.

While a more detailed analysis is required of the different trajectories of village forest management committees over time, it is clear that the single greatest factor contributing to good or improving local governance is local residents' awareness of their roles, rights, responsibilities and returns under PFM, coupled with regular opportunities for reporting and public accountability.

There are some positive signs emerging for relationships between the village and the district and the reversal of accountability lines. With district staff as the primary service providers and facilitators of the PFM process, villages become dependent upon districts. However, as discussed above, once forest management responsibilities are devolved from districts, villagers have the right to determine the level of revenue sharing (if any) with district authorities. In most cases, villagers appear willing to forgo a portion of their revenue to district authorities (between 5 and 20% of total village forestry revenue). However, this process triggers an important discussion about the type and level of service provision that villagers may expect in return. If payments are made but services are not forthcoming, village committees may decide to withhold future support to the district council. Again, public awareness about the rights of villagers to forest revenues is essential to ensure that they maximise the opportunities presented under the law.

Harmonising development partners with local government reforms

The forest sector in Tanzania is supported by both bilateral and multilateral development partners who include Danida, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Finland), NORAD and the World Bank, as well as by funding from the government of Tanzania. Efforts have been underway in recent years to implement a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) in forestry (Simula, 2004) in which a single forest sector investment plan is supported using common approaches to financing, reporting, monitoring and evaluation.

Progress towards greater harmonisation within the sector has been mixed, particularly in the adoption by development partners of government systems and procedures such as budget and workplan formats, procurement rules, and monitoring systems and frameworks. Greatest progress towards alignment has been achieved with the bilateral development partners (including Danida, MFA Finland and also potentially NORAD), but much remains to be done for multilateral funds such as

the World Bank support for a multi-million dollar forest management project. Rather than integrating funding to PFM within the frameworks described above, the World Bank has opted to mainstream local level support within a larger World Bank project called the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF), which provides direct grants to village governments based on priorities identified at that level. Procedures for planning, budgeting and disbursement of TASAF funds to local level activities are quite different from those being implemented by the Prime Ministers Office – Regional Administration and Local Government as part of the ongoing local government reform process. This different approach does potentially provide an opportunity to test different models for supporting PFM at the very lowest levels of government through community-driven planning processes. However, it clearly presents challenges for harmonising approaches within districts that receive funding from different sources. The establishment of a parallel system also causes extended delays.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Devolving responsibility for implementing participatory forest management away from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism to local councils and institutionalising these processes within emerging local structures takes time and considerable resources. It requires building regional and district capacity to ensure that functions and responsibilities are carried out. But it also requires a willingness to “let go” at the national level: to let go of control of the process itself, as well as of revenues generated from forest management. With this comes the need to develop and to change roles such as policy guidance, monitoring, facilitation and securing finances. The same constraints exist at lower levels as district staff begin to question the wisdom of transferring forest management responsibilities (as well as forest revenues) down to elected village councils for the management of village land forest reserves and joint forest management agreements. Making the transition from implementers to “facilitators” and from enforcers to advisers is clearly not easy. Without building civic awareness among forest users and managers at the community level regarding new rights and responsibilities under recent forest legislation, there is little chance that downward accountability can be developed between villagers and their elected forest management committees, village councils and district staff.

Although still at a relatively early stage, our experiences raise some general lessons which may have a wider application:

- Devolving institutional responsibilities to local governments for implementing participatory forestry must be accompanied by devolved responsibilities for budgets, disbursing and financial accounting within existing structures and systems. Financial management arrangements that make local governments accountable to other line ministries only disempower locally elected councils.
- Funding for forestry activities must be tailored to the needs of individual areas through the use of transparent funding allocation criteria such as forest cover, poverty index and size, as well as more general aspects such as district capacity, good governance and effectiveness.
- Forest revenues are an important source of “untied” income for local governments. This causes a potential conflict of interest as district councils hold the key to transferring forest management (and revenue collection responsibilities).
- Mechanisms are needed for neighbouring administrative units (village, wards or district councils) which share common forest resources to harmonise forest management and use. These should not take decision-making power away from lower level management units, but should be tools for dealing with village to village conflicts, and for agreeing on resource-wide management actions.
- Limited capacity at local government levels means incentives are needed for district councils to outsource forestry services to competent local service providers. The users of these services should also, as much as possible, be involved in choosing the service providers. Without this, the pace of rolling out forestry services will ultimately be hindered by the staffing and capacity of local government structures.
- Raising the awareness of local forest users, managers and locally elected forest management committees about their rights and responsibilities is an effective investment for ensuring downward accountability of community-level forest management institutions.

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ISSN 1357-9258



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