TANZANIA NATURAL
RESOURCE FORUM

Going to Scale with Participatory Forest Management: Early lessons from Tanzania

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October 2004

TNRF Occasional Paper No. 4

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1. Introduction

The paper provides an overview of experiences in Tanzania to date in "scaling up" Participatory Forest Management (PFM) from what has until recently been a "project-driven" approach to one that is mainstreamed within national and local government institutions. It will highlight the valuable role that projects have played in influencing policy, developing new models and tools, but also some of the pitfalls of the project approach, particularly with regard to local expectations, the lack of sustainability and failure to integrate within local institutions. The paper will outline some of the enabling factors as well as constraints to further dissemination and scaling-up of PFM in Tanzania – looking at political, institutional, social and economic dimensions.

2. Background

In many respects, Tanzania remains in the forefront of participatory forest management in Africa. In the early 1990s a number of pilot PFM activities were started in Babati and Singida Districts (Manyara Region), which for the first time, provided a mechanism for the transfer of ownership and management responsibility from central to village government. Following these successful and well documented pilots, other forest areas were bought under community management or community co-management. Notable examples include the East Usambara forests of Tanga region, highland forests of Iringa as well as lower 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, local governments and supported by bilateral donors, collectively demonstrated the viability of PFM under a range of social and ecological conditions. Currently around 2 million hectares of forest land are now under various PFM arrangements across the country, out of an estimated total of 33.5 million hectares of forested land (URT, 2001). 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 PFM in mainland Tanzania. Although not explicitly described by the law, two main strategies for PFM are being developed: *Joint Forest Management* and *Community Based Forest Management*.

Joint Forest Management is a collaborative management approach, which divides forest management responsibility and returns between either central or local government and forest adjacent communities. It takes place, largely on "reserved land" such as National Forest Reserves (NFRs) (for catchment, mangrove or production purposes) and Local Government Forest Reserves (LGFRs). It is formalised and legalised through the signing of a Joint Management Agreement (JMA) between village representatives and either the District Council or Director, Forestry and Beekeeping.

Community Based Forest Management takes place on "village land" (land which has been surveyed and registered under the provisions of the Village Land Act (1999). Under CBFM, villagers take full ownership and management responsibility for an area of forest within their jurisdiction and declared by village and district government as a Village Forest Reserves. Following this legal transfer of rights and responsibilities from central to village government, villagers gain the right to harvest timber and forest products, collect and retain forest royalties, undertake patrols (including arresting and fining offenders) and are exempted from local government taxes (cess) on forest products, regulations regarding "reserved tree" species, and are not obliged to remit any part of their royalties to either central or local government.

With funding from Government of Tanzania, Danida, Finnida, Norad and World Bank, 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 has targeted 37 districts across Tanzania. This paper describes some of the opportunities and challenges being faced by different players involved in the PFM process from national to local level.

3. Opportunities and enabling factors for PFM in Tanzania

Policy and Legal Framework

First and foremost, the scaling up of PFM in Tanzania is greatly facilitated by a positive and forward looking legal and policy environment that allows for the devolution of ownership and management responsibilities over forest resources to local communities (URT 1998; Wily and Dewees 2001). The National Forest Policy (1998) provides a clear direction and mandate for PFM as illustrated below in Box 1:
The Forest Act (2002) gives further legislative support to these broad policy directions as illustrated below in Box 2.

The Forest Act supports PFM by enabling local communities to declare – and ultimately gazette – Village, Group or Private Forest Reserves. It provides for three categories of Community-based Forest Management (CBFM):

a) Village Land Forest Reserves (VLFR) managed by the entire community,
b) Community Forest Reserves (CFR) managed by a particular designated group in the community, and
c) Private Forests (PF) managed by individual designated households.

Box 1: Excerpts from the National Forest Policy (1998) in Support of PFM

Policy Statement 3 (p.17): To enable participation of all stakeholders in forest management and conservation, joint management agreements, with appropriate user rights and benefits, will be established. The agreement will be between the central government, specialised executive agencies, private sector or local governments as appropriate in each case and organised local communities or other organisations of people living adjacent to the forest.

Policy Statement 5 (p.19): To enable sustainable management of forests on public lands, clear ownership for all forests and trees on those lands will be defined. The allocation of forests and their management responsibility to villages, private individuals or to the government will be promoted. Central, local and village governments may demarcate and establish new forest reserves.

Policy Statement 6 (p.21): Village forest reserves will be managed by the village governments or other entities designated by village governments for this purpose. They will be managed for production and/or protection based on sustainable management objectives defined for each forest reserve. The management will be based on forest management plans.

Policy Statement 7 (p.21): Private and community forestry activities will be supported through harmonised extension service and financial incentives. The extension package and incentives will be designed in a gender sensitive manner. Extension services and financial incentives will be provided in support of "forestry activities" *per se*.

The Forest Act also provides for registration and other procedures through which villages, groups or individuals may secure local jurisdiction over forests or take on management functions in Central and Local Government Forest Reserves through the establishment of Joint Forest Management (JFM) Agreements with the appropriate government authority.

Box 2: Selected Objectives of the Forest Act

encourage and facilitate the active citizen involvement in the sustainable planning, management, use and conservation of forest resources through the development of individual and community rights (Sect II, 3(b));

delegate responsibility for the management of forest resources to the lowest possible level of local management consistent with national policies (Sect II, 3(d));

ensure the sustainable supply of forest products and services by maintaining sufficient forest area under efficient, effective and economical management (Sect II 3(e));

enhance the quality and improve the marketability of forest products and regulate their export (Sect II 3(f));

promote coordination and cooperation between the forest sector and other agencies and bodies in the public and private sectors; (Sect II 3(g))

facilitate greater public awareness of the cultural, economic and social benefits of conserving and increasing sustainable forest cover by developing programs in training, research and public education (Sect II 3 (h))

enable Tanzania to play a full part in contributing towards and benefiting from international efforts

The Forest Act is complimented by two other key legal documents. Firstly, Village Land Act (1999) which recognises customary tenure rights for village and communal land, and allows for its registration as "village land", while, secondly, the Local Government Act (1982) provides the basis for village councils as executive and corporate agencies as well as providing the legal basis for village bylaws, which can be used to regulate forest use and access. Elected village councils are empowered as managers of village communal land and charged with the supervision of adjudication and registration of Village Land within their respective village spheres, including forests and woodlands.

The National Forest Programme: 2001 – 2010, provides a strategic framework and plan for the implementation of the Forest Act and Policy. Participatory Forest Management is identified as a priority area for implementation under Sub Programme One (Forest Resoures Conservation and Management Programme) (URT, 2001)

General agreement about PFM objectives and "outcomes". Coupled with the favourable policy and legal environment for PFM, there appears to be a general consensus on the objectives and "outcomes" of PFM among policy makers as well as senior forestry staff at national and district levels. Three broad (but largely implicit) policy objectives drive the dissemination and scaling up of PFM:

- *Rehabilitation and maintenance of forest quality:* The primary goal of PFM is to restore or maintain forest quality and the environmental and ecological services they deliver to local and national stakeholders. Behind this lies the assumption embedded in the Forest Act that delegating management responsibility to the *lowest possible level* will lead to improvements in the quality of the forest resource in question

- *Improvements in livelihoods of forest dependent communities*: By capturing the benefits of forests and woodlands at the village, community and household level, it is assumed that rural livelihoods will become more secure and sustainable. These benefits take the form of :

  Financial returns (from the sale or lease of forest resources and collection of fines),
  improved governance through more effective local institutions
  empowerment through securing of rights over local resources

- improved local governance through more effective and accountable institutions
- reduced vulnerability through a sustainable supply of forest based goods and services for domestic consumption(water, firewood, building materials)
- improved partnerships with external institutions (such as local governments and other service providers)

The degree to which policy provisions and practical implementation in the field are achieving these two goals is discussed in more detail in the next section

Growing numbers of experienced facilitators with grounded local experience. PFM has been operating in Tanzania for over 10 years and has been implemented in a range of locations across the country. Consequently, there is now a growing number of experienced practitioners who have been practically involved in facilitating PFM processes at village level. Although local level capacity remains one of the most critical constraints to scaling up of PFM, formal and informal networking of practitioners is having a positive impact on dissemination of village and forest level experiences and learning.

Availability of internal and external financing for PFM: In line with the increasing emphasis that both government and development partners are placing on poverty reduction, PFM has been identified as an important area for funding within the forest sector. Currently, national level funding (through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism) for PFM is being obtained from Danida, World Bank (IDA), Finnida, Norad, and GTZ. This is complimented by a substantial contribution from internal revenue generated by Forest and Beekeeping Division.

4. Lessons learned to date

Lessons learned from PFM over the last ten years are many and varied. This section, attempts to identify the most critical ones in three main categories.

Outcome and impact issues:

Experiences over the last decade appear to confirm the general assumption that PFM, when well facilitated can lead to recovery and/or maintenance of forest quality. Although empirical evidence and is scanty and long term ecological monitoring has been very limited, many villages responsible for forest management under PFM arrangements are reporting important indicators such as:

- Improvements in water discharge and quality from PFM areas
- Increasing signs of natural regeneration in degraded areas
- Reduced incidences of fire
- Reduced village revenue from fines, due to reduction in illegal activities
- Reduction in encroachment of agricultural land into forest areas
- Increases in game and wildlife numbers/diversity

Evidence appears to mounting, therefore, that PFM does indeed contribute to sustainable forest management whether under CBFM arrangements on village land, or under JFM arrangements in reserved land.

Looking towards the second goal of improved livelihoods, the evidence here is perhaps less clear, particularly with regard to the more tangible, economic returns from forest management. A recent assessment of PFM in Iringa district (Topp-Jørgensen et al, 2004) revealed average annual village incomes of USD 653 per year from CBFM forests and USD

189 from JFM areas inside national forest reserves). This appears to be for a range of reasons, some of which are identified below:

- much of the early PFM was carried out on degraded forest land that had little merchantable timber left. This meant that utilisation opportunities for forest managers were limited and long lead-times were required before the forests became commercially viable. For example, Duru-Haitemba forest (Babati District), after 11 years of community management is only now being considered for low level commercial harvesting
- given national and international interests with regard to securing critical forest ecosystems, much of the early donor funding to PFM was directed towards high biodiversity forests (such as "catchment forests"). Given their national and global values, local use options (and corresponding management responsibilities) tend to be minimal.
- Fines collected from illegal activities occurring within the forest represent an important income source for village forest managers (particularly where the forest status precludes many economically productive activities such as timber harvesting). As forest areas are bought under effective village control, and incentives for open access harvesting reduce, so fines tend to reduce. In many cases, this has resulted in revenues to village forest management committees being reduced to a dangerously low level – to the point where they now jeopardise the viability of maintaining even skeleton village forest management costs.
- As forests are managed in more sustainable ways, wildlife populations tend to increase and re-colonised from surrounding areas. The ability of villages to cash-in on this new found resource remains limited due to the restrictive and bureaucratic rules and regulations regarding community wildlife management. Consequently, increase in wildlife numbers in PFM areas often represents an unwanted and growing cost due to crop raiding and damage to property. This is particularly an issue with regard to larger mammals such as elephants and buffaloes, which threaten life and property. Mgori forest, in Singida region is one such example. Covering an area of 44,000 hectares and divided between five villages, the area has now been heavily re-colonised with game. In July 2004, an elephant from Mgori forest killed two people in Ngimu village and destroyed large amounts of crops – the first incidence of its type in that village for many years. Increases in vervet monkeys and baboons also pose an ongoing problem.

More recent experiences, however, point to some very real economic opportunities for village-level forest managers. Two examples are provided below:

Suledo village forest reserve, Kiteto District. Shared between nine villages and covering an area of 60,000 hectares (plus an additional 94,000 hectares of grazing land with significant tree cover) this area of dry miombo woodland was transferred formally to community based forest management in 2001. (Sjoholm and Luono 2002) A participatory forest resource assessment has revealed high levels of commercially viable species such as Mpingo (*Dalbergia Melaloxylon*), Mninga (*Pterocarpus angolensis*) and Mkalakala (*Brachystegia spp*). A simple analysis of annual harvestable timber volumes (using the low level government royalty rates) shows a potential revenue of TAS 140 million (equivalent to USD 140,000), or around USD 15,000 per year per village.

Angai village forest reserve, Liwale district. Covering a total forest area of 154,000 hectares, thirteen villages share this high-value, and largely unexploited coastal forest. Although the villages are still in the process of establishing and declaring village management and control, conservative estimates reveal that a sustainable harvesting management regime could generate between USD 730,000 to USD 820,000 per year (or around USD 70,000 USD per village per year).

Under such conditions, fragile and emerging village level institutions may not have enough capacity to manage and oversee the collection and disbursement of such level of funding. Clearly, alternative management options will have to be investigated, such as developing lease or tender arrangements of forest operations to private sector operators.

Viability/sustainability issues

Identifying conditions for successful PFM implementation.

It is becoming increasingly clear that PFM is not a panacea, and works better under certain conditions than others. Three key factors appear to influence the likelihood of PFM producing both economic and environmental returns. These are briefly presented below:

> Environmental: As mentioned above, many of the earlier examples of PFM took place on high degraded land and incentives, returns and incomes in the early stages were minimal. For many communities, faced with high levels of poverty, long term environmental rehabilitation is simply a cost they cannot afford.
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> Economic: Market forces for forest products vary enormously across Tanzania and can both drive or destroy PFM processes. Where market forces are extremely high (such as near urban centres) it may prove impossible for villages to prevent the relentless and illegal stripping of assets by outsiders (typically charcoal and timber), thereby undermining the whole PFM process. Where markets are weak (for example due to poor roads or large distances from centres of demand) villagers may be unable to sell their produce and become disillusioned, although forests remain largely in tact. Where PFM areas are located adjacent to open access forest resources, illegal extraction of forest produce in non-PFM areas (and the subsequent low cost to producers) may undermine attempts by villagers to market their produce at a reasonable price.
>
> Legal: As mentioned earlier, catchment forests while providing valuable services at the national and even international level (through provision of biodiversity, water catchment and carbon functions) generate few concrete returns to villagers. Under current arrangements, the long term viability of many JFM agreements in catchment forests seems questionable and alternative sources of income and benefits may have to be considered.

As government (and donors) increasingly invest in PFM as a tool for both sustainable forest management and poverty reduction, it is important to target scarce resources to those areas where chances of achieving outcomes will be maximised. This will necessitate a more thorough analysis of PFM success criteria across a range of social, environmental and institutional conditions.

The emerging contrast between CBFM and JFM arrangements

The Forest Act (2001) makes a clear distinction between the stakeholder participation in the management of forests on village land (what we refer to as CBFM) and those on government lands (JFM). On village land, the Forest Act provides a range of incentives to encourage the progressive "reservation" of forest resources on general land by villages. These include the following three provisions:

- *waving state royalties on forest produce.* This means in principle that villages are not bound by inflexible royalty rates and can sell their produce at prevailing market rates
- *exemption from local government taxes* (cess) on forest produce from village forest management

- *exemption from the "reserved tree species list"*. This is a mechanism under the Forest Act which protects commercially important or endangered tree species on general land, and entrusts their management (and commercial use) in the district forest officer. Once under village management, decisions about harvesting are transferred to the village administration

Under Joint Forest Management arrangements – the capture or even sharing of benefits appear to be limited – particularly where forests are classified as catchment forest reserves – and provide national or international benefits such as water catchment functions, carbon sinks and biodiversity reserves. Currently, many JFM arrangements derive economic incentives through the retention by villagers of fines levied on illegal forest use. However, recent legal analyses have revealed that even this appears to be illegal as fines must (in principle at least) be remitted to the Treasury.

Capturing and retaining forest based revenues at appropriate levels.

In many cases, PFM has the potential to generate significant revenue at village level. If a critical mass of villagers successfully establish PFM within any given district, even the remittance of a minimal percentage (for example 5%) could cumulatively provide a revenue for district level PFM operations. Finally, if enough economically viable PFM operation are developed nationally, funds could be remitted back to and retained by FBD to cover investment costs of PFM in new areas. For this to be successful, there needs to be a political will at all levels to retain and reinvest forest revenues back into forest management. Given the shortage of locally generated funds at village and district level, political pressures for utilising these funds for more general development activities (building schools and clinics) often out-competes demands for reinvestment back into forest management. Currently, the bulk of funding for PFM establishment comes from international donors. However, increasingly, these funds should be viewed as "investment capital" - required funding with which to establish a self funding PFM system, rather than maintain it indefinitely. Cost recovery, and reinvestment of PFM revenues must therefore remain a priority as PFM moves towards a national programme.

Awareness of the law and its implications at all levels.

Despite the promising legal environment that exists for PFM in Tanzania (as indicated earlier), an understanding of the law by forest users and managers (particularly rural communities) as well as facilitators and practitioners (district and NGO staff) remains very limited. This widespread problem is often compounded by additional factors such as:

- laws are developed for ministries and sectors such as land, local government, wildlife and forestry. Although not directly conflicting, the integration of these legal instruments at local level remains confused and complex
- those responsible for disseminating and implementing the laws – such as district technical staff – may be unwilling to divest power from themselves to villagers (for example transferring the licensing of forest products on general lands to villagers on village land following village land registration)

Clearly, therefore raising local level legal awareness remains a priority and must be done through a range of channels, such as civil society, radio, mass media, in ways which to demand driven services – from the community to the districts.

Process and management issues:

Seen from the national level, a number of key lessons learned and challenges are being identified during the process of scaling up PFM that are described briefly below:

Balancing flexibility and innovation with policy compliance and standardization. There is a clear need to work towards greater standardisation, harmonisation and quality control in the wide array of approaches being implemented across Tanzania. 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 a 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.

Developing "low cost models" of PFM. Until recently PFM has been driven largely by externally funded and facilitated projects. Along with funding, comes the risks of an artificially inflated environment – made up of external advisers, parallel structures, high levels of expectations and complex field processes that are beyond the reach of local institutions. While many projects have developed innovative new approaches to PFM facilitation, the challenge ahead now requires these costly processes to be "stripped-down" to low cost models that can be replicated from one end of the country to the other and under the wide range of conditions that are found nationally. Over-simplification, however, leads to a poorly facilitated process and a very real risk of low-quality outputs.

Developing a national monitoring framework that PFM captures outcomes. Project based monitoring tends to be externally managed and funded with limited time-horizons and sustainability. By making PFM a national programme, integrated within existing governmental structures and systems, monitoring needs to be similarly integrated within broader forest and livelihood monitoring initiatives. Consequently, PFM monitoring must be integrated within the operations of the primary implementing structures such as FBD, local governments and village institutions. Given the limitations in local level monitoring capacity and equipment, the possibilities for detailed monitoring of impact and outcomes are severely restricted.

Integrating PFM within other sectors and structures at district level and below. Despite the fact that district PFM plans and budgets are being developed by district council staff, it appears that integration of PFM with other forestry related activities within district plans, as well as other natural resource sectors remains very limited. District staff are still essentially viewing PFM as a "project", and not as part and parcel of routine district level activities. Despite repeated calls upon districts to engage with other projects or NGOs working on PFM in their area, again, co-ordination by district staff with these external initiatives remains poor. This leads, inevitably hampers transparency and efficiency.

Acknowledgements: The authors wish to thank Dawn Hartley and Fred Nelson for their invaluable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

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