

HIDDEN HARVEST: UNLOCKING THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF COMMUNITY BASED FOREST MANAGEMENT IN TANZANIA

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Abstract

Over the past fifteen years, the Tanzanian government has promoted Participatory Forest Management (PFM) as a major strategy for devolving the management of natural forests for sustainable use and conservation. PFM has been supported by legal and policy reforms as well as significant investments from both the Tanzanian government and its development partners. Various forms of PFM are currently either operational or in the process of being established in over 3.6 million hectares of forestland and in over 1,800 villages nationwide.

One of the major policy objectives of PFM is to bring the large areas of unreserved (and poorly protected) forestland under a defined management regime, implemented by local authorities at community level. This form of PFM, known in Tanzania as Community Based Forest Management (CBFM), has been promoted widely and is spreading rapidly. As many of the largest areas of unreserved woodlands are in some of the poorest and most remote parts of the country, CBFM represents an important strategy in supporting livelihoods in areas where other economic opportunities are severely limited. Prevailing forest legislation provides important incentives to rural communities to manage forests on a sustainable basis by ensuring that almost all forest management benefits are captured at the community or group level. Despite this, there is little evidence that the legal transfer of areas of forest has been accompanied by tangible local economic returns from sustainable forest harvesting and utilisation. We investigate this apparent paradox, with regard to wider issues of forest governance, illegal logging, vested interests and how this generates incentives within government for economic and ecological inefficiency, manifested in terms of forest degradation and increased poverty. We conclude with policy recommendations on how these governance failures might be addressed in the future.

Introduction

Worldwide, approaches to involving people in forest management have multiplied over the past two decades. Adopting a range of names and strategies, and variously called participatory forestry, community forestry, joint forest management, collaborative forest management, all have tended to emphasise the decentralisation or devolution of forest management rights in return for mutually enforceable responsibilities, with the aim of producing positive ecological, social and economic outcomes. (Cater and Grownow 2006, Ingles et al 1999). Decentralisation of natural resource management rights and responsibilities revolves around three key themes: accountability, discretionary power and security (Ribot 2002, 2004). While much of the momentum and impetus for this movement started in Asia, most notably India and Nepal, since the mid 1990s similar changes have been witnessed on the African continent (Wily 2002). In Africa, the moves towards more devolved

forms of forest management have been strongly supported by parallel reforms in both local government legislation and land reforms that have strengthened customary rights, devolved decision making on land tenure and adjudication and in many cases formalised traditional, collective land tenure arrangements (Wily 2000). Nowhere in Africa has this been stronger than in Tanzania, where a unique blend of political history and bold legislative reforms has created one of the most advanced community forestry jurisdictions in Africa (*ibid*). In this paper we shall review the progress of decentralising the management of unreserved forests to mandated village institutions under the overall authority of village government in line with these progressive legal changes. We shall assess the degree to which the transfer of these forest areas to remote and poor communities has resulted in sustainable and tangible changes in income at the local level and the degree to which income potential has been constrained by failures in governance at village, local government and national levels. We conclude the paper with recommendations to policy makers, government agencies and development partners on how some of the wider issues of forest governance may be addressed. The paper draws on our collective and practical experience of working on participatory forestry processes in Tanzania from inside and outside government as well as a review of literature, both published and grey, that we have been able to compile to date.

Context

Participatory Forest Management and Decentralization

Tanzania has one of the strongest and most devolved framework of local governance among the countries in East and Southern Africa (Wily and Dewees 2001). Communities in rural areas are divided into villages, which are managed by Village Councils. Village Councils are corporate bodies, and are in turn answerable and accountable to Village assemblies, which consist of all the adults living within the village area. This system of local governance dates back to the mid-1970s, when the socialist *ujamaa* program of Tanzania's founding President Julius Nyerere established villages on a legal basis in order to provide a structured means of organizing rural communities for collective agricultural production (*ibid*). While Nyerere conceived *ujamaa* villages as largely a means to mould scattered, decentralized, and impoverished rural communities into the country's socialist development agenda, the seeds were also being sown for rural empowerment through the structure of village governments. (Nelson and Makko 2005). The Local Government Act of 1982 formalised the powers of village governments by, among other things, enabling villages to make their own by-laws. While these by-laws must not violate any other laws of the country, they are legally binding and fully enforceable in courts of law. The village by-laws enabled by Tanzania's local government legislation provide communities with a powerful tool for creating statutory land and natural resource management rules and procedures at the local level. By-laws passed by communities commonly address such issues as the use of natural resources (trees, hunting, grazing) reinforced by sanctions and fines for those who fail to comply with local rules.

Under the Village Land Act, enacted in 1999, village governments were given the legal mandate to exercise decisions relating to land within the "village area" – an area that encompasses all the land claimed and used by the village population, which in some cases covers tens of thousands of hectares. Forest within the village area automatically falls under the jurisdiction of the village government.

The Forest Act (2002) drew heavily on these key legal provisions and for the first time, gave the basis in law for communities to own, manage or co-manage forests under a wide range of conditions. The law recognises two different types of PFM:

- Community Based Forest Management (CBFM). This type of PFM enables local communities to declare – and ultimately gazette – Village, Group or Private Forest Reserves on village land. Under this arrangement, communities are both owners and managers of the forest resource.
- Joint Forest Management (JFM). This type of PFM allows communities to enter into agreements with government and other forest owners for sharing the costs and benefits of forest management, by signing Joint Management Agreements. Under this arrangement, communities are co-managers of forest otherwise owned by the district or central government.

This distinction is extremely important and not widely understood. The first form takes place on village land – or private land, and the trees are owned and managed by either a village council (through a village natural resource committee), a group or an individual. All the costs and benefits relating to management and utilization are carried by the owner. The role of central government is minimal – and districts have a role only in monitoring that villagers fulfil the conditions set out in the management plan. The second form of PFM, Joint Forest Management, takes place on “reserved land” – land that is owned and managed by either central or local government (typically Forestry and Beekeeping Division or district councils). Villagers typically enter into management agreements with government agencies (the ‘owner’) specifying the sharing of benefits and responsibilities for forest management. Some of the key differences in these two forms of PFM are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: A summary of differences in Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Community Based Forest Management (CBFM) (adapted from Wily 2002)

Parameter	Community Based Forest Management	Joint Forest Management
Who is the forest “owner”?	Village Government or a Community Group	Central or local government
Who has the primary responsibility for forest protection and management?	Village Government or a Community Group	Village Government
How is transfer of rights recognised in law and how is it endorsed?	Through a village assembly declaring an area of forest a reserve and the District Council registering it	Through the signing of a Joint Management Agreement between a Village Council and a higher level of government
Who has rights to forest products and how are they shared?	Village Government or a Community Group	Legal grey area (law recognises sharing of forest goods and services but no legal mechanism exists for determining in what relative share).
How does the law view the community and the benefits obtained?	- Actor, partner - Manager - Decision-maker - Rule Maker - Citizen (<i>Emphasis: sharing of power</i>)	- Beneficiary - Forest User - Consultee - Rule follower - Subject (<i>Emphasis: sharing of benefits – NTFPs and at times revenue</i>)
What is the overall intention of the management approach?	To decentralise rights and responsibilities of forest management	To reduce forest management costs of government through benefit sharing

Table 1 illustrates the difference in terms of devolution of both rights and responsibilities under the two PFM approaches adopted in Tanzania. Under CBFM, communities under the law have the full responsibility for forest management and corresponding rights to all the benefits obtained through forest management. JFM, however, transfers the management right to community institutions (typically the patrol of the forest management area) but the mechanism and ratio for sharing the benefits of forest management is a legal grey area. Consequently, a number of authors have criticised JFM for being inherently inequitable and an easy way for the state to shed its responsibilities without transferring any clear rights or benefits. (Blomley and Ramadhani 2006; Lund and Nielsen 2006; Meshack and Raben 2007; Meshack et al 2006). This wide ranging debate will not be the focus of this paper as it has been covered extensively elsewhere. Rather, we shall turn our attention more specifically to the form of PFM that (on paper at least) provides for the greatest transfer of powers, rights and responsibilities – that is, Community Based Forest Management.

As described in Table 1, under Community Based Forest Management, villagers, being both owners and managers of the forest, are required to assume full management responsibility for the forest, but in return, have the rights to retain all income accrued from its management. The law essentially treats forests on village lands as private forests, and no benefit sharing is required. Village councils can enter into contracts with forest enterprises, or can opt to harvest and sell forest products directly. Technical support and advisory services are the responsibility of local governments, but often supported by Forestry and Beekeeping Division, or specific donor funded projects.

CBFM, under the Forest Act (URT 2002), allows village governments to “declare” their own village land forest reserves or community forest reserves if they satisfy a certain preconditions, such as the election of a village natural resource management committee, the production of a simple management plan and passing of village forest management bylaws. Once the forest is registered by the district council, they can begin active management. The legislation provides specific local incentives for CBFM, which are intended to encourage its rapid adoption and diffusion at local level. These include:

- Waiving state royalties on forest produce. This means in principle that villages do not have to follow government timber royalty rates but can sell their produce at prices chosen by them (Forest Act: Section 78 (3)).
- Exemption from benefit sharing arrangements. As registered forest managers, village councils may retain all of the income from the sale of forest produce.
- Levying and retaining fines and proceeds from confiscated timber and equipment. Fines imposed on village land in respect of Village Land or Community Forest Reserves are retained by the Village. Similarly any forest produce or equipment used to illegally harvest in a village land forest reserve may be confiscated and sold by the “forest reserve manager” (Forest Act, Section 97 (1)(b)) – which in this case is the village council and proceeds be used to the benefit of the village.
- Exemption from the “reserved tree species list”. The Forest Act protects commercially important or endangered tree species (reserved tree species) on general land, and places their management with the district forest officer (DFO). Once under village management, decisions about harvesting of these species are transferred to the village administration. (Forest Act, Section 65 (3))

Implementation Progress to Date

A national survey undertaken in 2006 established that over 3.6 million hectares were under some form of PFM and that over 1800 villages were participating (URT 2006). Of this area, more than half is covered by Community Based Forest Management (Table 2) – the primary focus of this paper.

Table 2: Current coverage of CBFM across mainland Tanzania (*Source: URT 2006, Blomley and Ramadhani 2007*)

Area of forest under CBFM	2.06 million ha	10.2% of public land forests
Forest types covered by CBFM	Miombo woodlands	68% of total area covered
	Coastal forests	15% of total area covered
	Acacia woodlands	16% of total area covered
	Mangrove	0% of total area covered
	Montane forests	1% of total area covered
Number of declared or gazetted village land forest reserves	382	
Number of villages engaged in CBFM	1,102	10.4% of villages in the country
Number of districts engaged in CBFM	51	38% of the districts in the country

CBFM has spread quite rapidly over the past ten years. It was first started in the early 1990s when different models of CBFM were piloted in northern Tanzania. Table 3 gives an indication of the spread of CBFM since 1999.

Table 3: Estimates of adoption and spread of CBFM in Tanzania from 1999 to present.

Date	Forest area under CBFM (hectares)	Number of villages with CBFM	Source
1999	323,220	544	Wily and Dewees 2001
2002	1,085,300	845	URT 2001b, FBD monitoring records and reports.
2006	2,060,600	1,102	URT 2006

The relatively rapid rolling out and scaling up of participatory forestry in Tanzania has been assisted by a number of enabling factors (Blomley and Ramadhani 2006). Firstly, a strong forest law and policy that draws heavily on parallel legislation in the local government and land sectors has meant that legal impediments have been very limited. Secondly, a general agreement among policy makers and government field staff on the desired outcomes of PFM – namely an improvement in forest condition, improvements in local livelihoods and increased accountability within village institutions. Thirdly, growing numbers of field-based practitioners with technical skills in both forestry and social processes working both within and outside government mean that service delivery can be affected across a wide area. Lastly, considerable support from development partners (namely the governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway and the World Bank) working increasingly to align and harmonise with and through government structures means that the development of a single, national programme is possible (Blomley, 2006)

CBFM is a management approach that can be applied to all forest types – whether it is montane forest with high biodiversity values, or lowland miombo woodlands with high levels of use and disturbance. Despite its wide applicability, CBFM tends to be concentrated in the *miombo* woodlands, much of which occurs outside government forest reserves and on village land. Montane evergreen and mangrove forests show a disproportionately small coverage under CBFM as the total area under these forest types is smaller and the majority are classified as central government forest reserves due to their higher economic or biodiversity values).

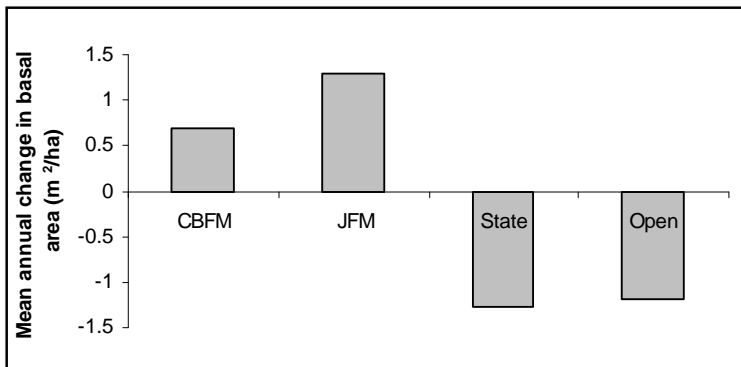


Figure 1: Mean annual changes in growth characteristics in 13 forests under different management and ownership regimes (Source: Blomley et al in press)

per hectare) than areas under exclusive state control (Figure 1). This study, supported by other recent assessments (*cf.* Pfliegner and Moshi 2007) would suggest that reduced disturbance and uncontrolled activity, supported by community-managed law enforcement efforts, appear to be turning the tide on forest loss and degradation in these areas.

Where forests have been transferred to community management, signs from available data are that forest condition is improving. In a study that compared growth characteristics of 13 forest areas under varying management regimes, forest condition appears to be better in those areas managed either wholly or jointly by communities, (as evidenced by higher basal areas, mean annual increments and stems

The Contribution of CBFM to Village Level Income

There is little empirical data regarding the degree to which CBFM is generating local economic returns at the communal or household level. Iringa District, being one of the areas where CBFM models were piloted in the late 1990s, before the passing of the Forest Act, provides an interesting area to assess its effectiveness and impact. Fourteen villages were assisted to reserve small to medium sized areas of miombo woodlands averaging 2,600 hectares in size, on their village land. An assessment of village forest incomes showed annual revenues of around 540 USD in 2002 per year, but rising to around 720 USD per year by 2005 (Lund 2007b).

As illustrated by the above example, forest areas managed by communities to date, by individual communities tend to be rather small (up to a few thousand hectares) and the revenue generation potential from sustainable harvesting remains rather low. There are, however, still vast areas of unreserved woodlands, with significant timber values that could be transferred to village management with the potential to generate important local revenue streams. Although of varying condition, estimates would suggest that up to 20 million hectares of unreserved forests exist that could be bought into CBFM arrangements (Akida and Blomley 2006). Interestingly much of the unreserved forest with remaining timber stocks is found in some of the most remote (and consequently under-developed) parts of the country, where other economic opportunities are severely limited. Figures 2 illustrates this by

comparing regional poverty rankings (a) and the area of unreserved forest per square kilometre of land area (b).

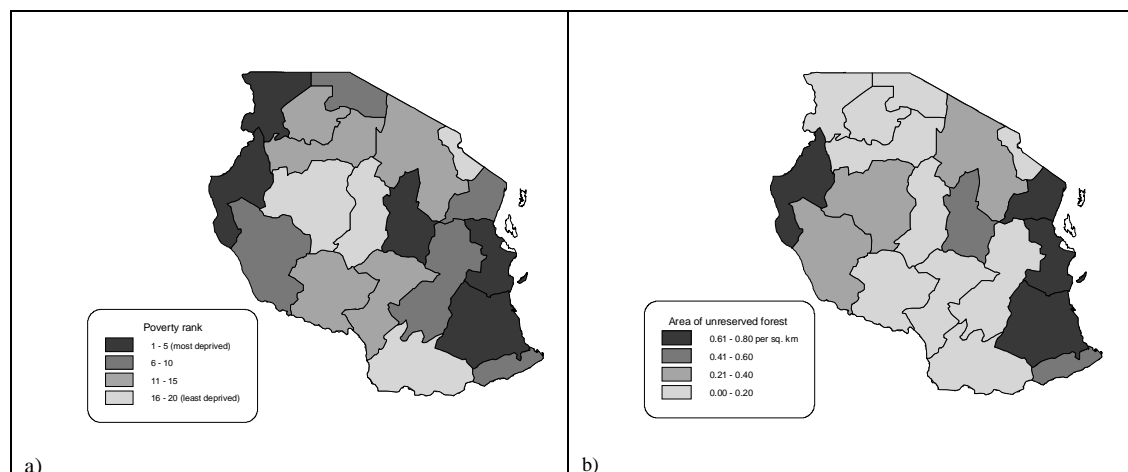


Figure 2 (a) Regional poverty rankings and (b) Area of unreserved forest per square kilometre by region. Sources: URT (2005a) and URT (2003).

Clearly, forest resources on village land, available to local communities through CBFM, represent an exciting investment opportunity, with a potential to generate sustainable flows of revenue in areas where other forms of economically productive activities may be severely limited. Table 4 provides an illustration of a sample of four forest areas currently either under, or in the process of being transferred, to community stewardship with significant potential for local revenue generation from sustainable forest management.

Table 4: Selected areas of forest under village management and their revenue generation potential (Source: Mustahalti 2007; Nelson and Blomley 2007; Mellenthien 2005; Sengeda personal communication)

Forest Name and location	Size (ha)	Status	Estimated annual revenue from sustainable harvesting	Number of villages managing forest	Potential revenue per village/annum
Angai Forest, Liwale District	141,000	Management plan being developed	USD 784,000	13	USD 60,300
Suledo Forest, Kiteto District	164,000	Village land forest reserve	USD 213,000	9	USD 23,700
Mtanza Msona Forest, Rufiji District	10,713	Village land forest reserve	USD 57,900	2	USD 28,950
Ipole Wildlife Management Area, Sikonge District	247,500	Wildlife Management Area	USD 730,000	4	USD 182,500

The trade in forest products in Tanzania is thriving, driven by an ever-increasing demand for timber from south Asia. China has rapidly emerged as the fastest growing importer of hardwoods from Tanzania and represents a major shift in trade dynamics when compared to the 1980s, when 82% of sawn hardwood exports were destined for Western Europe (Moyo 1985). By 2005, 66% of all containers carrying timber products exported from Dar es Salaam were destined for China (Milledge et al 2007). This increase in demand has coincided with improved road networks – such as the opening of the Mkapa Bridge over the Rufiji River that greatly increased access to the regions of Mtwara and Lindi – both suffering from high levels

of poverty and with some of the largest areas of unutilised coastal forests and miombo woodlands in southern Tanzania.

Clearly there is much to celebrate in Tanzanian CBFM. Increasing areas of forest are coming under direct community management and when they do, they appear to be recovering and regenerating. A strong and enabling policy and legal environment provides strong incentives for local participation, which coupled with a thriving timber market has the potential to generate significant economic benefits at the very lowest levels of government. Why is it, then, that despite this good news, these apparent opportunities have yet to be translated into substantial, secure and widespread economic benefits for forest dependent communities? We go on to discuss this apparent contradiction in the following section.

Challenges to Enhancing Local Benefits from CBFM in Tanzania

Institutional Failures, Governance Shortfalls and Illegal Logging in the Forest Sector

At the national level, a range of factors combine to create a favourable climate for poor governance in the forest sector. Firstly, there is very limited evidence regarding the extent, and condition of forest resources in the country. Since the mid 1990s, there has been no national assessment despite major changes in forest cover, particularly outside forest reserves. Of over 700 forest reserves in the country, the number with operational management plans is less than 10% (Akida and Blomley 2006). Under such circumstances, making accurate assessments of sustainable harvest is clearly impossible. Despite this, there is widespread harvesting of timber outside any agreed framework on what may constitute a sustainable harvest (Milledge et al 2007).

Secondly, as in many developing countries, the real contribution of the forest sector to the national economy is significantly undervalued (World Bank 2007). This means that the general public, decision makers and politicians are largely unaware of the considerable wealth that exists, and the potential value that this represents in terms of tax revenues and economic opportunities at both the national and local levels. Thirdly, the roles of central and local governments with regard to the collection and disbursement of forest revenues is unclear, contested and leads to great inefficiencies (*ibid*). Finally, given the massive growth in demand for timber from south-east Asia in the past five years, remaining forest resources are under significant pressure from harvesting, much of it illegal. This operates with the full support of highly placed staff within local and national government institutions who sustain a patron-client relationship between village leaders, logging operators and politically powerful individuals (*ibid*; Mustahalti 2007). Due to the relative vacuum of effective controls, timber trade became very profitable and many people entered the business with a view to exporting round-wood to lucrative overseas markets (Milledge et al 2007). The rapid growth in exports together with poor capacity of government to regulate the trade resulted in an outcry from many quarters such as the press and NGOs (see Mfugale 2005) regarding the high levels of uncontrolled harvesting, lost revenues, forest degradation, government shortfalls and disenfranchised local communities (*ibid*).

Collectively, these factors result in massive under-collection of forest revenues. Current estimates suggest that between 5-15% of actual forest revenues are collected by government, amounting to an annual loss to the treasury of around USD 58 Million (Milledge et al 2007). In addition to losses to the national revenue base, it is clear that in an environment where illegal logging thrives, the proportion of the final value of harvested timber realised at the

community level is negligible and may be less than 1% of the total value of the exported timber.

Limited Capacity and Incentives at Local Government Levels

Despite significant decentralisation and local government reforms over the past two decades, many districts are still very constrained by human and operational resources, which restrict them from effectively implementing forest laws and policies at the local level. This capacity constraint at the local government level is also exacerbated by retrenchment exercises under the public service and structural adjustment reform programs that resulted in significant reductions in government staffing numbers. (World Bank 2007) At the level of the district natural resources office, this often has resulted in a handful of ill-equipped government officers being charged with implementing and managing activities ranging from wildlife, fisheries and forestry in large, remote and inaccessible areas (Mniwasa & Shauri 2001).

An additional factor that appears to constrain the implementation of CBFM at village level is the limited knowledge among district staff regarding the legal provisions within key local government, lands and forestry legislation that provide for the transfer of management responsibilities downwards to lower level institutions. This knowledge gap manifests itself in a variety of ways such as poor advice to community groups and the establishment of CBFM arrangements that may be based on questionable legal foundations. Unfortunately, some of the more remote districts, which ironically have higher levels of forest cover and therefore highly suited to CBFM, are often even more poorly staffed and attract only poorly qualified employees, or those who have been sent there on “punishment postings” (Mustahalti 2007).

Box 1: Kilwa District, Eastern Tanzania

Kilwa is a large district with relatively low population density. It is covered with coastal forests and miombo woodlands covering 1,291,500 ha of which about 80 per cent are unreserved.

Revenue from forestry cess is an important source of revenue for the district, and is charged at a rate of 5% of the total royalty payment. In 2003 revenue collected by the district council was Tsh 180 million (around USD 150,000), equivalent to around seven per cent of the total recurrent and development budget of 2.6 billion Tsh in 2003. Of the 180 million Tsh collected by the district council in local revenue and taxes, 33 million Tsh were from forestry cess, which made this item the second most important source of internal revenue for the District after agricultural levies.

Source: Danida 2004

Misinformation regarding CBFM procedures, legal requirements, steps and delegation of powers, compounded by more conservative views of community involvement in forest management, leads to delays and in some cases obstruction. A recent study analyzed a national sample of local authority by-laws related to natural resource management (URT 2007). In many cases district authorities claimed they were unaware of forest related legislation and did not have copies of the Forest Act and subsidiary regulations. It also revealed that some village by-laws lack approval from relevant authorities and therefore do not have the force of law, while others contain gross violations of principal laws, regarding fines and other penalties, and means that they can easily be contested in courts (*ibid*).

For district councils administering large land areas with significant areas of unreserved forest, forest revenues, levies and taxes constitute an important source of local income which can be used without the sectoral conditionalities attached to much of central government funding (see Box 1). The transfer of large areas of unreserved forest to village management may

undermine higher level goals to boost district level revenue generation and may be a factor in the reported slow rate of CBFM adoption at the local level.

The conversion and transfer of poorly managed forests on village lands to forests managed by mandated local institutions with clear roles and responsibilities may undermine some of the corrupt networks that perpetuate illegal logging, leading to declining benefit flows to those higher up the chain. CBFM provides a legal framework for village governments to assume control and management of forest areas, and has been shown to significantly reduce the effectiveness of uncontrolled logging and forest disturbance (Blomley et al in press). In such cases, district staff and councillors find that they face a clear conflict of interest – over the continued benefits they enjoy from illegal harvesting in unreserved forests, but also their responsibilities to assist communities in securing tenure and forest management rights under CBFM (Persha in preparation). This conflict of interest often manifests itself through the slowing down (and often halting) of key stages in the legal process of CBFM establishment, such as district council approval of bylaws and management plans (Mustahalti 2007).

Lack of Knowledge among Forest-Dependent Communities on CBFM Opportunities

Over a century of state management of forest resources dating back to the German colonial rule have left an enduring legacy among communities living close to forests across the country (Wily and Dewees 2001). Despite the radical changes in policy and law that have been promulgated over the past decade, little impact has trickled down to remote rural communities. Districts with the lowest levels of adult literacy and education often tend to be the same districts that have greatest forest cover, particularly outside reserved forests, due to low population pressure and poor communications (Maps 1 and 2). Low levels of education and lack of knowledge of potential community benefits from sustainable forest management under CBFM make for a fertile environment for illegal forest harvesting. Harvesting of timber represents an important economic activity for men aged between 19 to 45 years old, with 16% of households living near to forest areas obtaining some economic benefit from the timber trade (Milledge et al 2007).

Ultimately the challenge facing advocates of CBFM in such an environment is that of incentives, tradeoffs and opportunity cost at the local level. While CBFM has the promise to deliver a significantly higher share of the forest value to a significantly higher number of people, poverty drives “short-termism” and the tendency to cash-in on forest extraction benefits today, however small, even though these benefits may constitute a fraction of their potential future value.

Where communities are aware of their rights and returns available under CBFM, evidence suggests that they are ready and able to defend them, through active patrolling of forest areas, arresting and fining of illegal forest users and the confiscation and sale of forest produce and equipment. Similarly, attempts by government staff at higher levels to capture and monopolise forest benefits are more strongly resisted in areas with higher levels of legal literacy as villagers are more able to appreciate and defend their rights. (Blomley 2006).

A Focus on Conservation and Restoration rather than Sustainable Utilisation

Many of the early pilot sites at which CBFM was established were areas that were under threat from uncontrolled and unregulated harvesting. Efforts by local or central government foresters to manage the forest sustainably were often unsuccessful due to limited resources

and in some cases, the direct involvement of foresters in the harvesting itself. This meant, in effect, that in many of the early CBFM sites, communities were handed-over areas where natural resource direct use values were in effect negative (Blomley and Ramadani 2006). Consequently, considerable time and effort was required to patrol, protect and conserve the forest before any substantive natural capital (in the form of commercially useful timber) could be accumulated and harvested. Interestingly, many of the “early” CBFM sites initiated in the mid 1990s and following over a decade of improved management have shown very clear evidence of forest recovery from improved management (Blomley et al, in press), to the point at which harvesting is now a viable consideration.

Secondly, experience from other districts where PFM has been introduced more recently is that an important trigger for CBFM, or forest protection in general, occurs when a sufficient number of local residents become sufficiently alarmed by local forest destruction and loss that it prompts some kind of management response (URT 2003b). In such cases, CBFM is a response triggered by increasing and uncontrollable loss of forest cover and a wish to address this through conservation, rather than a tool to capture economic returns from sustainable forest harvesting. Consequently, much of the management actions of community members (as detailed in management plans and bylaws) are focused on protection, conservation and restricted use in order to extend and consolidate control over the resource in question.

This trend is supported by a general and prevailing narrative regarding the need for conservation and protection of natural forests that permeates many levels of government in Tanzania. This is reinforced by frequent reports in the national press regarding uncontrolled and illegal logging in environmentally sensitive forest areas, declining flows in rivers leading to power outages resulting from the reduced capacity of hydroelectric dams, climate change, and continued encroachment of forest reserves by farmers searching for more land. However, much of this is driven by traditional and entrenched views among some foresters regarding forest conservation; that the state is the only effective manager of forests for sustainable use and that “technical forestry” is beyond the reach of poor rural communities (*ibid*). This is reinforced by a continued belief among middle level forestry staff that the underlying objective of PFM is to reduce forest dependency rather than seeing forests as a valuable asset in sustainable livelihoods (Springate-Baginski 2007). This trend is mirrored by the community forestry experiences in Nepal which appears to have taken a highly subsistence-based view of forest utilisation. When commercial exploitation of forest produce has been promoted it has tended to be concentrated on non-timber forest products, rather than higher value timber (Pokharel et al 2006). The natural reaction to such fears is to continually emphasise protection over sustainable management, despite the clear provisions provided by law under the Forest Act. Interestingly, this protectionist perspective is often reinforced by well-meaning outsiders. The former Tanzanian Ambassador to Sweden, who came to visit a large village forest that had been supported through a Swedish development programme, told the villagers “Some selfish people will approach you with money and convince you to allow them harvest your beautiful forest, please avoid them and don’t allow your unique forest to be harvested” (LAMP 2003).

From Policy to Practice: Putting the Benefits of Sustainable Forest Management in the Hands of Villagers

In this section, we propose recommendations to policy makers, government agencies and donor-supported projects which if implemented together, may begin to address some of the constraints identified above

Addressing Forest Governance at National Level

An entrenched and corrupt system of patronage and clientism exists between village leaders, district council staff, illegal timber operators and highly placed government officials (Milledge et al 2006). Under such conditions, breaking the web of patronage and reversing the lines of accountability so that elected leaders become downwardly accountable to those they represent are long and complex processes. This challenge is clearly not unique to forestry and needs to be tackled at multiple levels. Given that much of the source of this poor governance originates at the national level, it would seem appropriate that any attempt to tackle the problem should start here.

Current discussions, on-going in Tanzania, on ratification of the Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) initiative and the establishment of Independent Forest Monitoring (IFM), backed up with advocacy and communication campaigns within civil society and within the local press are promising signs that the climate of impunity under which illegal logging has operated to date is beginning to change. The recent report on illegal logging in southern Tanzania (Milledge et al 2007) has highlighted the extent of lost revenue from illegal logging, revenue that could be used at the national level to support broader development goals and improved forest governance and at the village level to provide invaluable local sources of income for poor and isolated communities. This report has been widely circulated and read, by government, development partners and civil society alike and may provide sufficient momentum to unlock, or at least, weaken many of the patronage networks that support illegal logging.

Helping Communities to Claim Their Rights

In addition, to exploring ways in which government can become more open, transparent and accountable, there is a need to reinforce efforts at the local level directed towards awareness raising and legal literacy. Forest dependent communities must be made aware of the potential value of timber on their village land, the opportunities under the law which enable them to capture and how these rights can be claimed from local government institutions. Similarly, it is essential that communities in forest-rich areas are fully aware of the responsibilities placed on elected representatives charged with forest management duties (such as village natural resource management committees) and on district staff and councillors with regard to the devolution of forest management rights. NGOs have an important role to play in helping politically weak community forest management institutions to open and exploit political spaces, so that their claims can be articulated at the local and national levels. This will require new skills for many of the organisations supporting local forest management initiatives, as most are primarily conservation organisations with limited capacity in advocacy and political empowerment. However, there are rich experiences in the wider development arena that can be drawn on, particularly with regard to communicating with poor, remote and often illiterate target groups in an accessible format and using a medium that takes account of local realities. Dramas, soap operas and documentaries through local radio with messages on forest governance and rights, aired in the evening when both women and men have been shown to have more time has been shown to be an effective way to reach large numbers of rural people (Mediae Trust 2004). Village notice boards, using eye-catching graphics and plain language has been shown to be a useful way in which financial information can be transmitted from financial management institutions (both village and district) to the wider public and now has been formally endorsed by the government as a communication tool designed to improve local governance. (URT 2005b). Finally, in cases of extreme abuse of power, supporting

disenfranchised community groups with legal support may be a controversial, but effective way of restoring justice. National NGOs such as the Legal Environmental Action Team (LEAT) have a strong record in this arena and continue to maintain a high profile.

Building Incentives for Local Governments

This paper has highlighted the important contribution that natural resource taxes and levies make to revenue generation at district council level and the perception that devolving authority for the forest revenue collection to villages will result in net losses in income to local governments. Despite this, the efficiency of collection by districts remains rather low and in some cases, collection efficiency has been found to be as low as 5% of potential (Milledge et al 2007) and even as low as 1%, as in the case of Iringa District (Lund 2007a).

Research taken from Iringa District has shown a substantial increase in the efficiency of collection when forest revenue collection responsibilities are devolved from district to village level. The total revenue collected by 14 villages implementing CBFM exceeded by several times the amount collected by the district council from forests covering the remaining 153 villages (Lund 2007b). If only a small percentage of this revenue is remitted back to the district council, it may represent a net increase in revenue to the district when compared with revenue figures collected by the district council alone.

In tandem with tackling forest governance at district level through greater transparency and accountability, it will be necessary to build parallel incentives for district councils – who have the primary responsibility for facilitating the handing over of unreserved forests to village governments – to engage in CBFM processes. One option may entail facilitating negotiations between village and district councils on the sharing of forest revenues from village forest reserves. Although not a requirement by law, this could lead to a small percentage of the forest revenues collected at village level (perhaps between 5 – 10%) being remitted back to the district councils. Uses of these revenues could also be negotiated, for example, so that a portion of these funds be allocated to finance forestry extension from the district back to the village. In addition, it will be necessary to demonstrate to district councils that 5 to 10% of forest revenues collected by villages may represent a massive increase in revenue, when compared to current methods where district councils retain this task. If such a model was found to work, it could then be translated into more binding guidelines, or even legal regulations for local governments facilitating the establishment of CBFM. Clearly, for this to function effectively, it will be important to ensure a wider discussion between the elected and appointed members of the respective district councils and those whom they are mandated to represent and serve. Budgetary incentives at local government levels will only work once perverse incentives described earlier in this section have been broken and staff begin to operate according to their institutional mandates rather than for personal gain.

We have highlighted how governance failures have undermined attempts by local communities to claim their rights regarding the ownership and management of forests in accordance with prevailing legislation. However, we have also highlighted how capacity constraints also contribute to weak, ineffective and inefficient service delivery at the local level. While local governments retain the primary responsibility for delivering CBFM at the village level, the presence, capacity and incentives of staff at this level are often severely limited. This is particularly the case in more remote districts where attracting competent and skilled staff is even more challenging, but where potential benefits of CBFM are greatest.

Incentives for local governments (and possibly subsidised through ongoing support to the forest sector) to recruit and retain qualified staff needs urgent attention.

Changing mindsets among staff responsible for the delivery of forest policy at the local level takes time, particularly among those who are the product of traditional forestry education. On-the-job training support to address short term needs must be complimented by longer-term reforms in the curricula of forestry training colleges and universities across the country.

Conclusions

CBFM holds the key to sustainable forest management and significant contributions to rural livelihoods in some of the poorest and most marginalised parts of the country. For a variety of reasons, the promise of benefits from the management of these natural resources has yet to materialise in the vast majority of areas under CBFM, despite the growing market for traded timber and a highly enabling legal and policy environment. In this paper we have attempted to unpack this apparent disconnect between policy and practice. We have found that one of the primary underlying causes of this trend is poor forest governance – namely the creation of institutional incentives in central and local government that prevent local forest resources from being managed sustainably and returns generated being captured at the community level. This is reinforced by a very limited awareness of forest management rights, laws and opportunities among forest dependent communities and weak capacity within local governments.

Given this, recommendations common among existing donor-supported projects, that emphasise technical solutions (such as the production of guidelines and manuals), or capacity building (training courses, seminars and skills development) may be necessary, but insufficient, if this problem is to be addressed at its root. Additional, more radical actions are required if these incentives are to be reversed: actions that engage with the “harsh and brutal realities of the every day politics of the governed” (Brockington 2007). We have provided a series of recommendations which if implemented together, may begin to address some of the underlying problems facing power, access and control over forest resources in Tanzania.

Finally, this paper has highlighted the need for more substantive and independent research in the certain key areas; namely the contribution of CBFM to local livelihoods in monetary and non-monetary terms, the overall contribution of forest goods and services to the economy as a whole and the impact of various forest management regimes on forest condition.

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