



**SECTION 3**

Voluntary  
case studies

## The evolution of community-based forest management in Tanzania

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### SUMMARY

Bringing communities into forest and woodland management roles has a short but rapidly evolving history in Tanzania. The first three community-owned and managed forest reserves were established in September 1994. Today more than 400 000 ha are under the direct management (and sometimes ownership) of over 500 communities. A new National Forest Policy (1998) supports and builds upon this development – one of its objectives is that the 19 million ha of unreserved forest land and woodland come under local guardianship, primarily through the establishment of village forest reserves. Inclusion of local people in the management of the 12.5 million ha reserved estate (forest reserves under central or local government) is also provided for, although within a user-stakeholder context. Several reserves are now co-managed, including catchment forests, whose protection is a priority, and even one where a community is co-managing a substantial commercial plantation. Drafting of a new forest law is well advanced. This will provide, inter alia, for a new concept of “reserve”, with individuals, groups and villages able to establish and/or manage reserves, as well as the State.

This paper seeks to do two things. First, it seeks to record how community-based forest management has evolved in Tanzania and to describe the directions that it is taking. Second, it seeks to identify a small number of current issues. In particular, the basis upon which local people are being involved in the management of government forest reserves is reassessed. This leads into a discussion of what must become a prime concern of modern sub-Saharan community forestry: the need to move away from user-centric (and primarily South Asia-derived) paradigms, towards a conceptual framework that involves local people living close to forests from the outset as managers in their own right, and not as product users, paying for access by providing protection services. It is argued that until this paradigm shift is made, it will prove difficult for sub-Saharan countries to bring the forest reserves under effective protection and management.

## Background

### The resource

One-third of Tanzania is forested (33.5 million ha). Ninety-six percent of this (32 million ha) is woodland of the *miombo* type, the most distinctive dry forest formation in east and southern Africa, dominated by species from the subfamily *Caesalpinioideae* of the *Fabaceae* family. While dry and of usually only medium canopy height (20 m), miombo is highly valued for its multiple products and environmental uses, which range from water catchment functions and the support of wildlife populations and pasture for livestock to the provision of hardwood timber, medicinal plants and wild food.<sup>1</sup>

Less than 1 million ha of Tanzania's forest is moist montane. There is a further quarter of a million ha of coastal mangrove forest and commercial exotic plantations.

The most important administrative categories of forest and woodland in Tanzania are "reserved" (forest reserves) and "unreserved". Under half of the national estate (14.5 million ha, or 43 percent), is reserved. Forest reserves (around 580) are under government jurisdiction (the Forestry and Beekeeping Division, Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism). Operational responsibility for one-third of these has been devolved to the local government level (district councils).

Strictly speaking, "reservation" is a land management rather than a tenure category, which does not necessarily endow the State with ownership. This is made explicit in recent land legislation (1999) and will be reflected in upcoming new forestry legislation that recognizes a range of "reserves", the tenure as well as authority (jurisdiction) of which falls to various parties.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, it is common to refer to forest reserves in Tanzania as being "owned" by central or local governments, given the full jurisdiction they hold over these estates. More than half of the national forest estate remains unreserved.

### The socio-institutional framework

Most of this unreserved forest or woodland falls within, or is adjacent to, the land areas of rural village communities. Tanzanian villages (the singular is *vijiji*, the plural *kijiji*) have the unusual capacity of electing their own governments, or village councils. These bodies in turn have the unusual characteristic of being independent legal persons able to sue and be sued, hold property and enter contractual arrangements. In addition, local government law endows village councils with considerable executive and even legislative powers. They act on behalf of their constituent households, who meet quarterly as a village assembly to approve decisions and direct their "government". In a very real sense, the Tanzanian village is possibly the smallest democracy in the world.<sup>3</sup>

Equally important is the socio-spatial cohesion that underwrites village-level governance. At the time of its formation as a formal "village", the community registers not only its core member households (the social group), but its village area, the extent of which has been agreed with neighbouring communities. Registration began in the 1970s with 8 500 villages. Today the rural areas of Tanzania comprise a network of nearly 9 000 registered communities or villages. Villages in upland areas tend to have a low household/village area ratio. However, most village areas are substantial and include vast tracts of unoccupied pasture and woodland. A certain amount of additional woodland lies beyond village areas and is really "no-man's land", falling by default under district councils.

Over the last quarter of a century land policy and law have moved steadily towards the establishment of community ownership over local resources. The 1983 National Agricultural Policy launched a programme of village titling whereby village governments were to lease the village area and to sublease parts thereof to individual households. In practice, the survey procedures

1. See Campbell (1996) for an up-to-date review of miombo in eastern and southern Africa.

2. The Village Land Act (No. 4 of 1999) and The Land Act (No. 5 of 1999). A new Forest Act to replace the 1957 Forest Ordinance is currently in draft (1999).

3. The core legislation is the Local Government (District Authorities) Act No. 7 of 1982, founded upon the Villages and Ujamaa Villages Act of 1975 (since repealed). Critical amendments to Act No. 7 of 1982 in 1992 and 1999 render village government an even stronger and more independent level of governance. See Wily (1997b, 1998f) for an exploration of village governance in natural resource matters.

involved prevented more than a quarter of villages from securing a village title-deed in the following decade. New land policy (1995) and new land law (1999) have now reconstructed the tenure environment of Tanzania, in which the village government is rendered land manager rather than owner, and is able to allocate titles in perpetuity to member households. A prerequisite for this is the definition by the community as a whole of those areas it wishes to retain as common land, which is similarly registered. Meanwhile, the definition of reserved land has been changed in the new law to make it clear that individuals, clans, groups and villages may directly own reserved estates, which are nonetheless subject to environmental legislation, such as laws concerning wildlife or forests.

In this way modern land law not only allows villagers to earmark parts of their local environment for common use or natural resource management; rather, it encourages them to do so and provides two mechanisms through which local-level jurisdiction may be reinforced: first, through declaring a woodland inside the village area as common land, and second, through providing for the ownership of all rights pertaining to this land to be titled to the appropriate group of the community, or even the community as a whole. Moreover, the way has been opened, at least in theory, for communities adjacent to forest reserves to become owners of such estates.

The question arises as to whether or not the Tanzanian Government wants to award local people management or tenure rights over forest reserves.

The answer is mixed. The new National Forest Policy (1998) is quite clear as to the need to bring unreserved forests, such as those that form part of village lands, under the jurisdiction of local communities, and indeed sets up a construct of village forest reserves as a primary vehicle for this. In respect of other categories of forest reserve (central and local government forest reserves), the policy opens the way for adjacent communities to become co-managers, through joint management agreements. The draft new forest law develops this further but at no time suggests that ordinary citizens may become owners of parts or all of such government reserves. Specifically, no provision is made for village forest reserves to be declared out of existing central or local government forest reserves. However, the conclusions of

a recent workshop on the draft law strongly advocated that such a provision be made. It is argued that over time a good number of government forest reserves could logically become village forest reserves, after some 10 to 20 years of village management.

### Remaking the construct of reservation

Until recently, Tanzania pursued the common strategy of post-colonial states of seeking to inhibit the constant attrition of forest to expanding settlement, cultivation and urbanization through withdrawing as much forest as possible from the vulnerable public domain and placing such estates under the protective hand of the State as forest reserves. Reservation at once did two things: it removed *de facto* and *de jure* community authority over the forest and earmarked it for conservation purposes.

From the preceding discussion it is clear that these two processes, until very recently seen as inseparable, have since been delinked. Both in approved new forest policy and, it is anticipated, in upcoming new forest law in Tanzania, the making of a forest reserve no longer necessarily means the removal of that property from local level jurisdiction, or even local ownership. Moreover, this delinking is endorsed in modern land law, which makes it clear that the status of a property as reserved (game park or forest reserve) says nothing about its owner.

The development of such distinctions is worth pondering. The origins of these important socio-legal opportunities for community-based forest management are also interesting, in that they derive less from new forestry policy or new law than from changes on the ground. It is to these, the real experiences of community-based forest management over the last half-decade, that this paper now turns.



## Evolution of community-based forest management

### Duru-Haitemba

Modern community-based forest management in Tanzania has its beginnings in late 1994, when eight villages established themselves as not only the managers of a natural forest, but also its owners. This was Duru-Haitemba. The forest was small by Tanzanian standards (9 000 ha), a dry miombo woodland, and degraded through encroachment and overuse during the previous decade; and yet it was here that a genuine breakthrough in strategies of forest management in East Africa was made, a breakthrough that was still, four years on, slowly but surely sending out a ripple of change in Tanzania and beyond.

Much has been written about the Duru-Haitemba development that need not be repeated here.<sup>4</sup> In brief, Duru-Haitemba was one of a series of new forests scheduled for gazetting as a forest reserve in the mid-1980s. To this end, district by-laws identified the area as protected, forest guards (mainly local people) were posted to protect the forest and eventually the proposed reserve was surveyed, its boundary cleared and beacons installed (1991-1992).

This last act provoked the most resistance, adding to the determination of local people and outsiders to extract as much as they could from the forest before it was lost to them forever. The dispute focused upon the location of the boundary – local people were determined to retain as much of the forest as they could outside the forest reserve. Eventually an external adviser (this author) was brought in to help arbitrate, by identifying which uses would have to be permitted by the forestry division in return for local acceptance of the reserve. Considering the enormous conceptual progress made since, it is worth observing that the trading of use rights for support for the government taking public land for forest reserves was understood at the time as “the new way forward”.

In the event, the negotiations that followed led to a quite different arrangement: the cessation of the reservation



*One of the last polewood houses constructed in Duru village*

process and the return of the proposed reserve to the eight communities within whose jurisdiction, both traditional and modern, it fell. Significantly, this was arrived at not through lengthy debate but through the establishment of village-based management as a *fait accompli*, a management regime that all recognized as infinitely superior to the management that had been exercised by the government over the previous decade.

How did this come about? Challenged by the facilitator and the District Forestry Officer to find a better way forward than the proposed allocation of use rights, the communities involved took steps that have signalled everywhere since the fundamentals of working community-based forest management. These were: the removal of open access by bringing the forest under the direct jurisdiction of the communities; and the establishment of protection and use-regulation regimes for which they were solely responsible. Crucially, these were founded not upon the access rights individual households desired but upon what the community determined as “right for the forest if we are to save it for ourselves and our children.” Encroachers were evicted, directly damaging uses banned, other uses put under quota systems, and the forest zoned in accordance with its rehabilitation requirements. All access to more than two-thirds of Duru-

4. See Sjöholm and Wily (1995) and Wily and Haule (1995) for short published accounts.

Haitemba was denied as a result. Community meetings elected forest management committees, patrolmen volunteered, use zones and rules were agreed and punishments were meted out to those who failed to observe them.

There is no doubt at all that the villagers were spurred on by the knowledge that they were venturing into uncharted waters and by fear that, should they fail, the government would again try to remove the forest from their jurisdiction. Once they took over the functions of management their excited sense of empowerment was balanced by a sense of responsibility. They recognized (as one village leader put it) that henceforth they could not blame the government for the loss of the forest or its condition, and that its continued existence now depended on them.

### **Securing a legal framework for village-based management**

A problem that was to prove pivotal to the evolution of community-based forest management in Tanzania arose with a legal ruling. A local magistrate refused to rule in favour of a village forest committee that had sought court action against an offender who had refused to pay his fine for illegally felling in the village forest. The magistrate found that the village had no explicit authority to levy fines in this area. This caused the village concerned to seek help to explore how it could indisputably legalize its authority beyond customary mechanisms. The result was to activate the capacity of registered villages to make by-laws and enable such by-laws to enter law and be binding on everyone.

This capacity, mentioned above, is today widely used. However, in 1995, village by-laws were not only few but in practice drafted by the district council and made applicable to all registered villages throughout its district. Here, however, in the case of Duru-Haitemba, each of the eight villages concerned drafted its own forest management by-law before proceeding to secure the approval of the district council, as required by law. The district council agreed, pointing out to central government foresters the improved condition of Duru-Haitemba and supporting the claim of the villagers that the forest fell in any event within their respective village areas – the titles of which were, at the time, being given to the com-



*“You are now entering the forest of Duru village (Duru-Haitemba Forest). We are protecting our forest.”*

munities. It was thus with considerable confidence that the eight villages declared their respective areas of Duru-Haitemba “village forest reserves”, to be managed through the relevant village by-laws. This framework has since been incorporated in the new National Forest Policy (1998) and forms a key element of the new Forest Act still in draft.

The subsequent history (1995-1999) of the eight Duru-Haitemba village forest reserves has not been trouble-free, the process being marked by a more or less constant adapting of use regimes and management structures in response to one problem or another. At no time, however, has any one of the eight villages wavered in its determination to conserve the village forest and prevent its degradation or reduction in size, despite considerable land demand. Instead, all eight villages limit new settlement in their communities and encourage intensified land use on farm. Agroforestry, soil conservation measures and even stock reduction have all been effects of the process of creating a village forest reserve.

Although the product uses of the forest are subsistence rather than commercial (no village currently allows harvesting of standing trees for sale), villagers place a very high value on the forest “services”. All the communities claim that the improved condition of their respective forest areas has already resulted in reduced soil erosion and steadier stream flow. They marvel at the return of

wildlife, the higher occupancy rates of their forest beehives, the increased shade and lower temperature of the forest as the canopy closes, the abundance of grasses in the grazing zones. Visitors – and there are many, both from within and from beyond Tanzania – are shown around with great pride. In short, villagers place great value on the forest, and this is powerfully underwritten by a sense of possession and authority. It is only now, as village-based management of Duru-Haitemba enters its fifth year, that some villagers are beginning to take their ownership and authority for granted, and to look towards the forest for higher productivity. In one village, the extraction and sale of mature trees has become a subject of discussion and planning.

### **Mgori**

Developments did not stop with Duru-Haitemba. By mid-1995 the experience was being applied to a larger and less fragmented miombo woodland, some 160 km to the south of Babati. This was the 45 000 ha Mgori Forest, which, like Duru-Haitemba, had been earmarked for gazetting and where a survey, an inventory and boundary demarcation (which, in this case, had been even more expensive and time-consuming) had been undertaken with foreign donor support. The project predicted that at least 50 government forest guards would be needed to protect the vast and vulnerable area.

With the Duru-Haitemba experience to draw upon, a more workable way forward towards the conservation of Mgori was arrived at.<sup>5</sup> The initial arrangement differed from that concerning Duru-Haitemba in respect of the form that village authority was to take. While the eight communities of Duru-Haitemba rapidly seized not just management authority but tenure, the five Mgori villages confronted both a central and local government that were more reluctant to relinquish control. Moreover, only part of Mgori Forest could be claimed to be within the village areas of the five adjacent villages. The compromise was that the five villages would act as managers working

with the district council in a collaborative arrangement. A local forester was appointed as liaison officer and worked hand in hand with each community to establish effective management regimes. From time to time he exerted his authority over village decisions.

Nonetheless, and this development was critical, community authority over the area was consolidated during 1995-1998 as the villages succeeded in establishing rigorous and effective protection regimes and use regulation. This was achieved in difficult circumstances – Mgori was greatly threatened by ivory poachers and shifting cultivators looking for remote tracts of virgin forest to clear for commercial millet cultivation. In addition, there was a constant threat of fire from pastoralists seasonally crossing the area and burning the high grass to reduce the risk of their stock being bitten by snakes.

During this period, each village had its perimeter village area boundary surveyed and, arguing customary usage, ensured that its respective village forest management areas were included. In this way, these areas have become village forest reserves in the eyes of the communities. This is now accepted by the district council, at least in principle. However, as the condition of Mgori has dramatically improved in the few short years since village-based management began, and as possible timber harvesting is discussed, the question of ownership of Mgori threatens to raise its head again. This is exacerbated by a new threat: a neighbouring district, Kondoa, has watched the recovery of both vegetation and game in Mgori, and now claims the timber-rich eastern half of the forest as its own, a matter still unresolved in 1999.

### **Moving forward**

By the end of 1995, government foresters involved in Duru-Haitemba and Mgori felt able, with the assistance of technical advisers, to offer their experiences to a national forum of interested foresters where forest projects were discussed. Several of these took the information to heart and began their own initiatives.<sup>6</sup>

5. See Wily (1996, in press). Refer also to the case study on Tanzania by Edward L. Massawe in this publication, p. 175-181.

6. These included one that led to the emergence of the first gazetted village forest reserve in the country, under the Finnish-funded East Usambara Catchment Forestry Project, and others, still in their early stages, in Iringa and Morogoro regions. In Lushoto District in Tanga Region, a German-funded soil conservation programme assisted six villages to rehabilitate and manage the small Chambogo Forest.



Perhaps the most significant was the development undertaken by a World Bank-funded programme operating in Mwanza Region.<sup>7</sup> Following a visit to Duru-Haitemba, the programme assisted district foresters to help villagers bring residual forest patches under protection and management. The approach linked the Duru-Haitemba process, already described (Wily, 1994), and the experiences of neighbouring Shinyanga Region, where grazing lands, not forests, were being protected through a revitalized traditional mechanism for setting aside *ngitiri* (grassland).

What are locally referred to as forest *ngitiri* resulted. Today, more than 1 300 *ngitiri* exist in the seven districts of Mwanza Region with another 120 in Tabora Region (Wily and Monela, 1999). Several hundred are in effect village forest reserves, similar to those of Duru-Haitemba and Mgori. Most *ngitiri* are much smaller and under the jurisdiction of parts of the village community – subvillages, women's groups or traditional societies. At least 500 *ngitiri* are individually owned. Few are larger than 10 ha and some are less than 1 ha.

The *ngitiri* initiative represents a very important branch of community-based forest management in Tanzania because it extends the approach and the opportunity to conserve resources into areas, not hitherto seriously considered, where the resource is much diminished. Moreover, the principles are brought into play at the household level of decision making, encouraging individual farmers to reassess their farm resources with a view to protecting rather than clearing their residual woodland patches. This has proved particularly advantageous, in that it is in such small areas that silvicultural management techniques may be profitably applied. A growing number of farmers with very small *ngitiri*, acknowledged and protected by the wider community, now routinely thin and prune to produce only those trees for which they have most use.

Meanwhile, developments in both Arusha and Singida regions, where the catalytic Duru-Haitemba and Mgori initiatives occurred respectively, have continued apace. In Singida Region, 15 new villages are launching village-based woodland management, accompanied and stimu-



*Finalizing village by-laws for forest management, Singida Region*

lated by the formal demarcation of the boundaries of village areas. It is anticipated that some 40 000 to 50 000 ha of quality miombo woodland will in this way be secured where in other circumstances it would almost certainly have been lost to the ever-continuing process of shifting cultivation and settlement and because of vagueness concerning ownership of the resource. This is in addition to the 40 000 ha Mgori Forest. The five Mgori Forest villages have themselves extended the boundaries of Mgori to include fringe woodland areas they were previously holding on to when the government was attempting to bring the forest under its own control, so that now Mgori includes 43 000 ha of protected forest.

A further 2 000 ha have been earmarked by the Mgori villages as "spare" forest (*Msitu ya Akiba*). This differs from a village forest reserve in that it may, one day, be subject to planned settlement, in the event of severe land shortage. For now, these areas are subject to the same kind of use regulation and protection as the reserved areas, which has done a great deal to encourage local communities to extend planning and management to all their resources. Like the Duru-Haitemba villagers, the Mgori villagers are now more cautious in accepting new settlers into their village areas, and more directive as to livestock numbers.

7. Forest Resources Management Programme, 1993-1999. See Wily and Monela (1999) for a detailed review of the *Ngitiri* Programme mentioned here.



In Arusha Region, the expansion of community-based forest management has been equally impressive. Today, the region boasts a quarter of a million ha of forests and woodland under the direct management of 45 villages. By far the greatest portion is found in the pastoral Masai district of Kiteto, where nine villages manage different parts of the 200 000 ha Suledo-Sunya miombo woodland. As in the case of Mgori Forest, the current focus of discussion (and potential dispute) is the question of to what extent village communities should be able to harvest the valuable timber species of Suledo-Sunya for their own benefit, rather than that of the district (or even the nation). Working out a taxation regime or royalty system that will satisfy all parties is the main issue on the 1999 agenda.

All the above developments have taken place in unreserved lands (or what are traditionally termed “public lands”). It is accepted that most of these fall within the modern “village lands” category, using the concept of village forest reserve, first adopted by the eight Duru-Haitemba villages, or the comparable construct of ngitiri. This kind of reservation differs strikingly from reserves created by the State in that the “reserving”, or the dedication of property for the purposes of forest conservation and development, is being undertaken by local people themselves and concerns lands over which their jurisdiction is recognized. It will have been noted that the act of reserving forest or woodland in this way also serves to extend and confirm village jurisdiction where it is vague or disputed. In due course, there will doubtless be a



number of communities establishing forest conservation regimes over the remoter woodland tracts in their localities precisely for this purpose – that is, less to protect woodland than to secure land.

To date, the village forest reserves established have not, with one exception, been nationally published (i.e. gazetted).<sup>8</sup> The majority of the 1 500 or so forest reserves in public lands, large or small, exist informally. In Mwanza and Tabora regions, a loose form of ngitiri registration exists, wherein the concerned group formally informs the local district council of its intentions and actions. The making of community rules has also been used to formalize the decision, at least at the local community level. While effective in terms of binding the community to agreed actions, such rules do not have the advantage of full, modern village by-laws, which are binding upon all persons, irrespective of whether they belong to the community where the village forest reserve is located or not. Failure to turn community rules into formal by-laws is more a result of poor guidance regarding the process than intent. Many villagers are simply not aware that it is first necessary to ensure the content of the law is consistent with the provisions of administrative and forestry acts, and second, that the proposed by-law must be presented formally to the local district government (district council) for its endorsement. Without this form of approval, the “rules” cannot enter statutory law and be upheld in the courts.

In practice, it has so far only been in Arusha Region that villages have taken this step. Lack of national gazetting has shown no signs of inhibiting reserve making at the local level and certainly does not suggest illegality. However, many situations do exist where it will be in the interest of the concerned communities to use their legislative powers to secure their own authority over the woodland through a village by-law. This same act will bind community members more firmly to their decision.

8. The exception is Mpanga Village Forest Reserve, a very small village forest reserve of 59 ha, in Tanga Region. The average size of village forest reserves in Singida Region is currently around 3 000 ha. Masai village forest reserves are the largest, averaging 20 000 ha. Other village forest reserves in Arusha Region average 1 200 ha. Village forest reserves/ngitiri in Tabora Region average 75 ha and the smallest village forest reserves/ngitiri are found in resource-poor Mwanza Region, where they average 27 ha.

### **Moving into the government forest reserve sector**

The introduction of community-based management into already gazetted national or local authority forest reserves has been generally slower, more cautious and arguably less successful and less cost-effective. Initiatives to involve communities have begun in at least 11 different government forest reserves<sup>9</sup> and commitments for expansion made. However, there has been less tangible action on the ground. Currently, only two national forest reserves and no local authority forest reserves are under any form of State-people co-management, let alone direct community-based management. Moreover, in neither case is the entire reserve under co-management, nor has an agreement on the roles, rights and responsibilities of the community partners been formally endorsed. These two cases are nonetheless interesting in their own right and have proved highly instructive as to modes of State-people cooperation.

The first is Urumwa National Forest Reserve (37 000 ha), one of the high-canopy, timber-rich miombo woodlands of Tabora Region. Under the auspices of a World Bank-funded programme, foresters invited local user groups to enter contracts with them for the use of Urumwa. In return they were to pay an annual fee and provide protection services (patrols). The use permitted focused upon the harvesting of certain trees, marked in coupes laid out by the foresters, with one coupe allocated to each group. Not all the groups were local and one was even a government department (prisons).

Inevitably the arrangement ran into problems. Although the patrols provided were effective, the foresters found they were spending more time in management, not less. More important, local people were both confused and dissatisfied. This was not just because some people were included in the contracted user groups and some were not; there was a pervasive sense of having been “cheated” – that, while claiming to involve local people, the government had in fact taken the forest away from

them. Not only had the government redefined their access to the forest but, much more seriously in the eyes of local people, it had redefined their relationship with the reserve so that they had become “mere users”. What they had assumed to be legitimate local guardianship, if only on the basis of the reserve being within their local environment, had been rejected.

Today, several years after the initiative began, foresters are reconstructing the joint management along more effective lines for co-management. Significantly, these follow strategies that had evolved naturally in the development of village forest reserves: first, that the logical partners in management are those (and only those) who share direct boundaries with the reserve; second, that as far as is reasonably possible, the existing socio-legal and institutional framework within which the local community operates should be utilized – i.e. in the Tanzanian context, the modern village; and third, that the subdivision of the reserve between the different local partners must be determined and agreed among the parties themselves. In this way, the definition of particular “village forest management areas” will have a community-driven logic and legitimacy that make it workable and more likely to endure. A fourth principle, applicable to both the reserved and unreserved lands, is that local people are most positively involved not in their capacity as users but in their capacity as managers, building upon their sense of custodianship, not just their economic need. This requires a sharing of authority over land, not access to it.

The second case of co-management in 1999 concerns the important catchment forest reserve of Shume-Magamba, in Lushoto District, Tanga Region. Most of this 12 800 ha reserve is rich montane forest, providing critical water catchment functions for several million households in lower areas. However, the special significance of Shume-Magamba lies in the fact that some 3 000 ha of the reserve are commercial exotic plantations, some planted 60 years ago. Government failure to protect or manage either natural or plantation estates led directly to a pilot development promoting

9. Nou, Ufiome, Haraa and Hanang reserves in Arusha Region; Geita and Sayaka reserves in Mwanza Region; Shume-Magamba, Baga, Shagayu and North Nguu reserves in Tanga Region; and Urumwa National Forest Reserve in Tabora Region.



*Deciding how to manage springs in the forest, Lushoto District*



*Patrolling by village elders, Lushoto District*

community involvement.<sup>10</sup> The most important adjacent village is Gologolo, important in that it is located more or less within the reserve and, because of its position, it was identified as the logical “manager” of around 5 000 ha of the reserve. The fact that this portion of the reserve included one-third of the commercial plantation area proved to be a complicating factor. While the State showed willingness to allow local people to manage natural forest, it was, understandably, unwilling to surrender all plantation management functions to the community, especially those relating to the issue of harvesting contracts to sawmillers, or decisions regarding replanting.

The result has been extremely interesting. The Gologolo Forest Management Area, as the 5 000 ha sector of Shume-Magamba is now known, is managed today through a genuine State-people partnership, manifest in a joint management committee. Most of the protection

functions are carried out by villagers and most of the industrial plantation functions are discharged by the government, but decisions within both areas are discussed and confirmed within the monthly meetings of the joint management committee.

Nonetheless, like all co-management arrangements in government-owned estates, community roles are fairly closely linked to “rights”, and these rights are in effect manifest in access rights. This renders the operation vulnerable to a more or less constant pressure for more and more access. The early Gologolo experience already confirms the main finding of the Urumwa initiative described above – the desirability of involving local people as authorities in their own right wherever possible, not just as users, thus taking management and the definition of what use should and should not be made of a forest beyond simply trading use rights for responsibilities. In the case of Gologolo, such an approach is more difficult to pursue, given the existence of the commercial plantation. Still, as the Government Plantation Officer himself has observed, in future years there is no reason why a competent village community could not take on the full onus and rights of management, either on a revenue-sharing basis, or through a contract or even “hire-purchase” type arrangement.



10. The initiative was launched by a German aid-funded natural resources programme (NRBZ) under the Forestry Division, Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism. Refer to the case study on Tanzania by Said Iddi in this publication, p. 153-162, and also see Wily (in press).

**TABLE 1 • Community-based forest management in Tanzania, 1999**

<b>REGION with districts</b>	<b>PUBLIC/VILLAGE AREAS Village forest reserves, community forest reserves, individual reserves</b>	<b>GOVERNMENT FOREST RESERVES National forest reserves, local authority forest reserves</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
ARUSHA Babati Kiteto Simanjiro Ngorongoro	45 villages directly manage up to 275 000 ha All village forest reserves	8 villages will co-manage 6 535 ha by end 1999, Ufiome National Forest Reserve	53 communities  281 000 ha
SINGIDA Singida Rural	5 villages directly manage 5 village forest reserves, total 43 000 ha 15 villages in process of establishing 15 village forest reserves, total estimated at 50 000 ha	-	20 communities  Estimated at 93 000 ha
MWANZA Sengerema Magu Mwanza Rural Geita Kwimba Ukerewe Missungwi	381 villages manage 381 village forest reserves  280 subvillages, clans and other groups manage 280 community forest reserves  647 individuals manage private reserves  Total: 35 000+ ha	-	661 communities  647 individuals  35 000+ ha
TABORA Urambo Nzega Igunga Tabora	76 villages manage 7 660 ha of village forest reserves  31 individuals manage 394 ha of private reserves	7 local groups co-manage 13 700 ha of Urumwa National Forest Reserve	83 communities  31 individuals  21 754 ha
TANGA Lushoto Tanga	6 villages manage 675 ha  1 village manages first gazetted village forest reserve (60 ha)	1 village co-manages 5 000 ha of Shume-Magamba National Forest Reserve	8 communities  5 735 ha
<b>Total</b>	<b>529 villages 280 groups 678 individuals</b>	<b>9 villages 7 groups</b>	<b>538 villages 287 groups 678 individuals</b>
<b>Total reserves</b>	<b>1 487</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1 490</b>
<b>Estimated ha</b>	<b>411 789</b>	<b>25 235</b>	<b>437 024</b>

## Lessons and issues

### Community forest management as development process

The lessons in the Tanzanian case are myriad and not listed here.<sup>11</sup> Here only a handful of general points are made. The first is the obvious but essential fact that the establishment of community-based regimes is a development process and is workable only when treated as such. Inflexibility and directive approaches inhibit rather than prompt progress. Already the way in which community-based management is developing after four short years in Tanzania shows change. The concept is being applied not only to public lands but also to government forest reserves and, within the public land sector, it is now accepted that, at a local level, not only villages can own forests but also their constituent communities and individuals. The definition of forest to which community-based forest management may apply has also developed, from natural forest to commercial plantation, from grassland estates where tree regeneration is hoped for, to moist montane forest. Despite being drafted only a few years ago, elements of the new forest policy are already out of date and need amendment. Co-management has, for example, already moved beyond the confines of user rights suggested in the policy, and the ownership of village forest reserves by constituent communities of villages rather than their village councils is another current area of discussion.

Within community management initiatives themselves, various stages are discernible. A pattern of sorts is emerging, with a first phase dominated by concerns of empowerment, simply securing the forest in local hands. This tends to be followed by a phase in which the internal politics of community-based forest management are



worked out, leading to greater transparency and accountability to the members of the community. In time, the community turns its attention to production issues – how to make the forest more valuable to household economies.

### The process as social transformation

The processes concerned are related and of necessity “bottom-up”, driven by the actors themselves. For community involvement in forest management does not constitute a redistribution of access rights, but represents a more fundamental socio-political shift in State-people relations. Internal relations within the local community may also be transformed. Accordingly, institutional relationships and frameworks at all levels will themselves be seen to adjust.

The common feature, and driver, in these shifting relations to date is a process of devolution in resource management – a movement of authority and power from centre to periphery. The key factors will be obvious: the willingness of the State (and local governments) to “let go” is critical, as is the capacity of the periphery to receive and make use of new-found powers.

In this respect, Tanzania provides two positive lessons. First, it has had an extensively devolved system of administration at the grassroots (in the distinctive character of its villages). However, what has been most significant in the Tanzanian experience is less that it has had this advantage, than the fact that the local-level institutions have been enlivened where village-level forest management has been established. That is, the act of empowerment embodied in genuine community-based forest management directly encourages and supports devolutionary and associated democratizing processes. The establishment of village legislative capacities is one such example.

Second, the capacity of administrations in the sector to absorb “learning by doing” and to “learn from the field” has been considerable, if inevitably imperfect in circumstances where the bottom line is power sharing, and where process tends to move erratically rather than smoothly forward. This is illustrated by the fact that

11. Lessons have been listed in Wily (1996, 1997a, 1998c, 1999, in press) and Wily and Monela (1999).

community-based forest management in Tanzania has not been born out of new policy but that new policy (1998) has been directly influenced, at least in this area, by new approaches on the ground.

This capacity is similarly illustrated in the way in which the understanding of “reserve” has seen subtle reconstruction in both a legal and administrative sense. Today it is an altogether more diverse concept than it was a mere five years ago. Although often ambivalent, the readiness of the government to respond positively to change and to refashion conventions and instruments has allowed the function of reservation to come an extraordinary full circle over the last four or five years. In 1994, villagers often fought against the making of reserves. Today, villagers frequently fight for them, but for reserves of their own making and under their own aegis. Thus what has changed is not the longstanding need to deny open access to dwindling resources, which still firmly applies, but the tutelage, actors and instruments through which this may be most efficiently and most powerfully achieved.

### **Going beyond participation**

A third core lesson, pursuant to the above, is that the success and sustainability in community involvement has so far directly correlated with the extent to which the communities concerned secure authority over management. Co-management, such as that practised in some government forest reserves, is proving more difficult to establish, more time-consuming and expensive to maintain, and more fragile. As shown in the case of Urumwa National Forest Reserve, cited above, this is even more true where the government partner involves local people not as managers in their own right but as forest users – or to put it another way, where the State involves local people not as actors, but as beneficiaries with protection duties.

However, the evolution of village forest reserves provides an interesting comparison. Perhaps the most important contribution made by Tanzania to sub-Saharan community forest management so far has been to develop working community-based management in the true sense of the phrase, rather than a range of participatory regimes, each in the end proscribing local ownership of management. An important issue facing Tanzanian forestry today

is how to apply its own generally successful experience in villager-controlled management more widely in the government reserve sector.

### **Learning from each other**

Bridges need to be built between the so-called “unreserved” and “reserved” sectors (village lands and government forest reserves respectively) and processes and objectives shared. Problems in the reserved sector derive largely from the directives of new policy. This welcomes participation but structures it in a limited way, and in ways that community-based forest management outside the reserves has not faced. First, the policy leaves foresters and villagers in no doubt that the government is to retain authority and remain manager of these estates. No direct provision is made for local people to share management or be designated as managers, let alone for government forest reserves to become village forest reserves. This would not be inappropriate in the case of many of the remoter woodland reserves, where State guardianship and management are virtually non-existent or ineffective.

Second, the policy restricts the nature of local involvement – it can be effected only through joint management agreements with central or local government, which will set out their “user rights and benefits”. This accurately reflects the policy’s perception of local people living close to reserves as (only) users, or stakeholders whose “stake” in the forest is simply access to its products.

While these strictures are being loosened in practice, and while the current drafting of new forest law is seeking to provide directly for community-based management of forest reserves, a conviction that local people may be involved in such management, but not actually manage with authority, continues to pervade the thinking of many foresters. Understanding why this hinders rather than helps improved forest management may need setting out.





### **Moving from a user-driven to a management-driven regime**

The root of the problem is simple. User-centred cooperation tends to be a weak foundation for community involvement in responsible management in that it downgrades local interests as solely those of user interests. In the process the more important custodial interests, which derive more from history, locality and socio-environmental interests than product use, are undermined.

This deprives the State of what it really needs: an increase in responsible guardianship. Arrangements defined in terms of user access tend to decrease the stakeholding of local people. They may even stimulate a “tug of war” over resources; perceived only as users, it is logical for local people to attempt to secure the maximum access and, over time, to demand more and more, irrespective of whether or not this is good for the forest. After all, the State has made it clear that any sense of guardianship they may have felt towards the forest is unfounded and will not be recognized.

Product-centred local management, in which the community is regarded as user rather than actor, makes co-management especially difficult in forests where utilization should be minimal or reduced. The government partner simply has nothing to trade in order to secure the cooperation and protection services of the local population. In South Asian countries, where the user-centred paradigm dominates so-called joint management, it is precisely this factor, along with the underlying reluctance of the forestry services to devolve authority, that has so evidently prevented community involvement in the management of protected areas in India and Nepal (Wily, 1994).



However, even in respect of Tanzania’s several hundred “production” (as compared with “protection”) forest reserves, product-centred agreements are not ideal. These reserves are often in such poor condition and so threatened by illegal harvesting that the prime management task is to protect them and closely regulate (and often reduce) their use. In these circumstances, as elsewhere, careful assessment of what constitutes sustainable regimes in the longer term (i.e. what is good for the forest) must precede and guide use regimes, not be driven by them. However, where the currency of management is access rights, this is difficult to achieve.<sup>12</sup>

In any event, product- or beneficiary-centred “community involvement” is entirely unnecessary, at least in the Tanzanian context. Forest-adjacent communities have enough custodial interest in seeing a forest or woodland remain in existence for this to be usefully built upon, not diminished. This kind of stakeholding bespeaks a value with which no amount of direct product use can compete.

Contrary to the fears of some foresters, recognition of this kind of stake need not entail a transfer of ownership of the estate to the community. While tenurial rights undoubtedly provide an excellent basis for community-based woodland management, a similar, if lesser impact may be achieved by at least sharing the “ownership” of management – in short, by sharing the authority and decision-making powers that underwrite management. Integral to this is a longer-term frame of reference; charged with the survival and management of the forest in the longer term, many communities have accordingly adopted longer-term strategies, closing off damaged areas and forbidding damaging uses. It appears that it is not until a community is placed in the position of saying to itself, “now we will only have ourselves to blame if this forest disappears”, that community-based forest management can fulfil its promise. Weak versions, in which people merely participate as users or provide protection services, hardly encourage this attitude.

12. In one extraordinary case (Geita Forest Reserve), foresters found themselves having to offer even charcoal-harvesting rights to local villagers in order to secure their cooperation. These same villagers were protecting their own in-village forested areas effectively. However, having been introduced into Geita’s management only as users, to “pay” for their use rights by providing some protection services, they quickly raised the stakes, insisting on greater and greater access. For the record, this plan has since been abandoned.

### **Reconstructing the meaning of collaborative management**

The above leads to a related need to rethink the meaning and nature of joint forest management as emerging in Tanzania. Many foresters assume that joint forest management must be taken at its most literal – that it means either the government managing and involving villagers in peripheral ways, or government foresters fully co-managing with villagers. While the latter is the superior version, it is still not the optimal *modus operandi*. For the reality in Tanzania is that there are in fact very few cases that warrant such genuine co-management.

One such case has been described earlier: the case of Shume-Magamba, where the existence of a commercial (industrial) plantation requires the presence of a full-time Government Plantation Manager, who is responsible for issuing harvesting licences and determining the replanting regimes.

Very few forest reserves in Tanzania include such commercial enterprises. The majorities are natural forests where the prime requirement of management is to protect the forest from illegal use by putting a stop to open access. This is the condition most forest reserves owned and managed by the State appear to be in, whether or not they are protected by government guards. In such circumstances, it is desirable that a joint management agreement for a government forest reserve begins by designating the community concerned as manager. As noted above, proposed new law in Tanzania makes this legally possible, despite the absence of a tangible policy directive. The joint management agreement would specify the management regime to be pursued, the plan having been worked out by the future manager (i.e. the community) in collaboration with the advising forester. The forester's role would accordingly be that of technical adviser, available on request, and "watchdog", intervening when the management regime agreed is not adhered to.

It is just such arrangements that have made the creation of village forest reserves out of village land so successful. It is the lack of such arrangements in most of the early co-management initiatives in Tanzania that has militated against their success. This is especially so where the "co-management" instituted has not been real co-management, but a new form of licensing, access being paid for through provision of patrolling and reporting services.

### **Keeping policy dynamic**

A shift in strategies is not difficult to achieve and, as suggested above, is to some extent informally occurring. Further developments may be expected to occur, responding in more and more precise ways to different situations, but putting into practice the fundamental policy principle that villagers may and should act as the key players. However, the impediment the current national policy concerning government forest reserves has placed upon community involvement means that formal revision of the new policy is desirable, and sooner rather than later. The main needed change is simply to introduce into the policy the opportunity for the State to delegate or mandate communities living close to reserves as managers and, even better, to open the door towards the possible devolution of all jurisdiction over such estates to successful forest-managing villages. A second needed change is to make it possible for village forest reserves to be owned not only by "village governments" (village councils) as the new policy currently states, but by the constituent communities of those villages. To limit ownership of village forest reserves to village governments is, in any event, illegal and inappropriate in light of the new land law, which directly designates village councils as land managers, not landowners.

After all, a main trend over the last 20 years has been the devolution of State control to local governments (district councils). Local authority forest reserves represent some 30 percent of all government forest reserves. Many of these bodies are looking directly to villages to manage these estates and there is a strong likelihood that, in time, such reserves will become village forest reserves.

### **Learning to learn from the field**

It was observed above that the shortcomings in formal policy regarding government forest reserves derived mainly from the fact that there was no local experience upon which to build. This was not the case in respect of unreserved land where the early developments of Duru-Haitemba and Mgori provided an important guide as to how village forest reserves could play a key role in securing unreserved forest. Without such experience to build upon, the drafters of the new policy (beginning in 1996) appear to have been strongly influenced by the strategies of community forestry elsewhere, at least in respect of government forest reserves.

Unfortunately, some of the core concepts borrowed – especially the user-based construct – derive from the very earliest (and South Asian) experiences with joint forest management. However, since the widespread dissemination of these experiences in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the thinking has, at least in some areas, moved forward. At least some Indian states, for example, are beginning to look to local people as managers first, and users who help with protection second.

In any event, paradigms evolve out of different circumstances. At the risk of over generalizing, a main difference between the South Asian and African situation is the absence in the former of an integrated socio-spatial entity – the village – in the sense of being both a social group and a physical land area. Instead, the much more important societal divisions through much of South Asia would appear to be vertical distinctions within a village and area, founded upon caste. Given that those most dependent upon forest products are the very poor and poor, joint forest management in South Asia has arguably built upon, rather than overcome, these distinctions and, in so doing, has deprived itself of being able to designate whole forest-adjacent communities as managers. Instead, the cooperation is with the user group, who may be drawn from many different areas, some quite far from the forest. Meanwhile, many of those (especially the relatively wealthy) living next to the forest have little interest in its products (Wily, 1995; Poffenberger *et al.*, 1996; Ford Foundation, 1998).

In contrast, in sub-Saharan Africa adjacency is a primary factor in social and ritual use of the forests, together with use of their products, and there is a clear and generally consistent decline in vested interest as distance from the forest edge increases. Moreover, in sub-Saharan Africa the adjacent community's local custodial interests over the forest are historically more important. In sum, whereas in South Asia a user-centred framework for community involvement in management has been, correctly or otherwise, the starting point for community involvement, in Africa the logical starting point is not users or user groups, but the forest-adjacent community, whether its members make active use of the forest or not.

It is for such reasons that unthinking adoption of the user-centric South Asian paradigm is both needless and inhibiting in Africa. It is especially frustrating given that a

great deal more opportunity exists in Africa for community-based management and over a much greater range of estates, not only those forests that are available for use. National policy making and strategic thinking must of necessity take national givens and circumstances into account. Where it has done so (such as in the idea of village forest reserves), ease of concept and construct is striking.

Building independently upon its own realities is perhaps most obviously important in Tanzania in view of the advantages the country possesses over most others in this area. The point has been made: while many forest administrations must search, sometimes in vain, for an appropriate socio-institutional foundation upon which to construct community-based management regimes, Tanzania has the ideal instrument to hand, in the village. To pursue models other countries were forced to adopt partly because they lacked such a foundation is indeed a great waste of time.

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