

The stakes in empowering the community to gain access to natural resources: the example of Goba in Mozambique

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SUMMARY

The great legislative openness witnessed in Mozambique since the 1990s (the Constitutional review and the publication of the new Land Law, its Technical Appendix and, particularly, the law related to forests) is already beginning to bear its first fruits regarding community organization.

In the course of this short span of time, it can be seen that, after a rather uncertain beginning, community-based initiatives in the management of natural resources have tended to increase in the country. However, the majority of these initiatives are “external” and most of them have been spearheaded by the government, Provincial Forests and Wildlife Services (SPFFB) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). This is detrimental to purely local efforts (for example, the sacred forest of Chirindze, some 200 km from Maputo, recently received the largest number of visitors).

However, the real problem, on which this case study is based, is the fact that the number of initiatives does not correspond to community permits for access to natural resources, although these have been strongly recommended in the new Land Law and its Technical Appendix.

In other words, although according to a study (Matakala and Mushove, 2001)² there are 61 officially documented natural resource management initiatives in the country, the number of permits issued to date remains relatively low. Understanding this discrepancy between the law and actual practice is one of the aims of this study.

The known cases of permits issued are referred to in order to understand better the difficulties encountered and the benefits that the community derives wherever permits have been issued, beginning with the example of Goba, which has had its permit since January 2001.



1. The main mission of this office is to develop pilot projects (Goba is one of the four pilot areas of UMC) to encourage community management of natural resources in the country.

2. Matakala, P. and Mushove, P. 2001. Arranjos institucionais para o maneio comunitario dos recursos naturais (MCRN): perfis e analise de 42 iniciativas de MCRN em Mocambique. Maputo, Project FAO GCP/MOZ/056/NET, National Directorate of Forests and Wildlife.