

Community Based Natural Woodlands Management Project, Iringa District, Tanzania

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Abstract

The Project started in April 1999 and Phase 1 will run for three years. The aim of the Project is to develop community based management of natural forests and woodlands in Iringa District, and through this effort conserve valuable biological diversity and improved welfare of rural communities in line with the new Forest Policy (1998); the Wildlife Policy (1998) and the proposed Land Bill 1999 and the Village Land Act (1998). If successful during the first phase, the Project will be extended into a second phase during which the results will be applied to other woodlands in Iringa Region. During phase one, models for management of natural woodlands and local structures will be developed and strengthened in one village owned forest area and one national forest reserve. The management plans will be developed and implemented jointly by the villagers, forestry staff at district and sub-district level with support from Iringa District Council and technical assistance from Danida.

Villagers of both genders and of different ethnic and socio-economic background are expected to be the main beneficiaries from the joint forest products and wildlife through improved (legalised) access to the natural resources in the woodlands. The Iringa District Council – through it is Department of Natural Resources – will play a facilitating and monitoring role and will, in turn, have its revenue base improved through increased District Cess from forest related products in the two pilot areas.

Major activities include training of villagers on natural resources management and relevant new policies; demarcation of forest areas and development of management plans; development of markets for products from the woodlands; gender training and training on management of funds at village level. Training will be directed at different groups of villagers and in particular to natural resource management committees operating under the auspices of the village councils. Training will also be directed at the natural resources management supervisory staff at the District level.

1. General Description of the Project.

1.1 Introduction

The core problem addressed by the Community Based Natural Woodlands Management Project (NWMP) was related to the potential and actual conflicts between the overall concern for the environment on the one hand and efforts to support people's livelihood and alleviate poverty of individual households, rural communities and local authorities on the other.

Tanzania today faces a number of environmental challenges including increased pressure on natural resources, deforestation, land degradation and other related problems. The failure to effectively address these problems can be related to a number of factors, including the overall policies pursued by Tanzania in the past; lack of means (capital, knowledge, technical inputs, etc) and institutional and organisational bottlenecks. A weak management and information system and until recently insufficient political will to acknowledge and support needed fundamental reforms have also played their role. Moreover, individual households and local communities lack economic and other incentives to play an active role in the conservation or sustainable utilisation of the natural resources due to lack of or insecure ownership and user rights to these. As a consequence the efficiency and effectiveness of existing means and organisational structures aimed at management of natural resources are still considered to be low.

With the ongoing decentralisation process, the newly developed and approved Forestry Policy, the new Wildlife Policy and the new Land Act and Village Act, the Government of Tanzania has taken some major political steps towards resolving the conflict between the environmental and poverty alleviation objectives. Districts and local communities, who will become the main custodians of the natural resources on behalf of the society as a whole, however, have difficulties in taking upon their new role, firstly because the recent policy changes are not yet known to most people (including government officials at regional and district level) and secondly due to lack of technical and managerial skills required for the effective and sustainable management of the natural resources.

To enhance the impact of the new policy changes, the Regional and Local Authorities and communities need to be equipped with the necessary information and knowledge.

Furthermore, the capacity of existing organisational structures and systems to manage the natural resources in a sustainable and beneficial way in accordance with the new policies and laws needs to be investigated and possibly strengthened. The NWMP is designed to assist the local communities, district authorities and Tanzania as a whole to achieve the formulated policy goals and to minimise the current conflict between the environmental objectives and the poverty alleviation objective.

The Project operates on two levels:

- On community level aimed at formulation and implementation of sustainable woodland management strategies and related administrative procedures and structures.
- On district level aimed at the design and implementation of a District Forest Framework to create an enabling environment for the local communities in the pilot areas to undertake their natural woodlands management plans.

1.2 Objectives.

Development Objective:

To develop community based management of natural forests and woodlands in Iringa District, and through this effort conserve valuable biological diversity and improved welfare of rural communities.

Immediate Objectives:

First, to develop, test and implement widely replicable Joint Forest Management models for environmentally sustainable production, use, management and protection of natural forests and woodlands in the pilot areas.

Second, to support capacity development in natural forest, woodlands and biodiversity resource management in Iringa District.

The underlying strength of the Immediate Objectives is that they define the two crucial levels of MEMA activity: first, to assist villages and communities and, second, to support District-level capacity to sustain this activity.

1.2 Implementation Strategy

The project took as its point of departure the following guiding principles:

- Improved management of natural woodlands, comprising average annual exploitation that is identical to or less than average annual increment, will secure sustained benefits accruing to villagers in perpetuity;
- Improved access to and control over economic assets in woodlands (i.e. rights to use the woodlands and benefits sharing occurring from these) will provide villagers with a strong incentive to manage the woodlands on a sustainable basis;
- Sustainable utilisation will imply that part of the income derived from natural woodlands must be re-invested in natural woodlands;
- Improved systems for payment of Royalties and for a more balanced sharing of income derived from natural resource management between different stakeholders (village, district, national level) are important for sustainable use of the woodlands; and
- Women and poorer sections of the rural communities are particularly dependent on forest products and other natural resources for their livelihood and sustainable management of the natural woodlands must include safeguarding of the interests of these groups.

In general terms, the project facilitates and assist the Iringa District Council and the local communities in two pilot areas: the Nyang'oro Forest Range classified as general land and the Kitapilimwa Central Forest Reserve (gazetted by the Central

Government) to achieve a more sustainable management of forest-related products and other natural resources in the natural woodlands.

Specific elements of the implementation strategy include:

- Preparation of necessary baseline studies of gender-specific socio-economic issues and natural resources in the two pilot areas as a basis for formulating locally adapted strategies on how to ensure full consideration of gender issues and of poverty orientation in Project supported activities;
- Preparation of profitable, workable and affordable agreements (Joint Forest Management Plans) between the local communities in the two pilot areas and the District Authorities through participatory planning methods;
- Training and facilitating the work of Natural Resources Management Committees at various levels (village, ward, division and district level) to undertake their roles in the implementation of the agreed Joint Forest Management Plans;
- Making available once only the initial investments necessary to clear the 20 years backlog in investments in natural woodlands in the pilot areas providing funds and technical expertise;
- Facilitating the development and implementation of a district forestry framework intervention plan, which will enable the profitable and sustainable exploitation of the natural woodlands by local communities in the pilot areas; and
- Facilitating and assessing the effective execution of formulated policies and related legislation by the District Authorities and Village Governments in the pilot areas through the development of a community based monitoring and evaluation system.

1.3 Outputs

Outputs to satisfy the first Immediate Objective

- Contribution to the development of simple, low cost, replicable Joint Forest Management (JFM) systems, which would be applicable over a large area under a second phase project;
- Socio-economic, marketing, vegetation and biodiversity surveys undertaken in the pilot areas to underpin management plans and establish indicators for impact monitoring;
- Joint Forest Management Plans for each pilot area submitted for approval, and village institutions capable of implementing the plans. This would include fulfilling legal requirements and managing benefits in a socially sustainable way;
- Village and forest boundaries of the pilot areas surveyed (where necessary), mapped and demarcated in collaboration with local communities and relevant authorities (e.g. District Lands Development Office and Forestry & Beekeeping Division);
- Support activities aimed at better forest management inside the targeted forest areas and improved forest resources outside the targeted forest areas;
- Support to marketing of forest products; and
- Establish a Monitoring & Evaluation system.

Outputs to satisfy the second Immediate Objective

- Contribution to selected district-level activities aimed at capacity development for improved natural resource utilisation and management;
- Identify and develop local systems of revenue generation, collection and retention, which provide durable incentives for improved forest resource management;
- District-level training and capacity building for technical and administrative staff of IDC and FBD;
- Research projects and bibliographies supported; and
- Establish management structures, staff, equipment, vehicles and buildings necessary for project implementation.

1.4 Activity Outline

The preparatory activities comprised of:

- Soliciting, through an open tender, contractors to undertake the infrastructural improvements of the DNROs office in Iringa (jointly with UMFM);
- Purchase, installation and training in the use of all equipment required;
- Initiating natural resources surveys and socio-economic baseline surveys;
- Preparation of marketing survey and strategy;
- Introductory training courses and on-the job training in joint forest management and participatory land use planning for forestry and other extension staff to be involved in the Project; and
- Preparatory Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) and workshops with natural resource management committees and villages.

1.5 Input and Institutional Setting

The budget frame for the three-year project period amounts to DKK 16,140,000. One expatriate adviser (administration and financial issues) is attached to the Project. Overall technical and financial responsibility for the Project rested with the Technical

Adviser cum Team Leader who is responsible also for the Udzungwa Mountains Forest Management and Bio-diversity Conservation Project (UMFM).

Activities of the project are co-ordinated through a Joint Project Steering Committee (JPSC) and a Joint Project Management Unit (JPMU). The two projects are known locally as the MEMA projects. MEMA is a Kiswahili acronym for Matumizi Endelevu ya Misitu ya Asili, which in English means Sustainable Utilisation and Management of Natural Forests. Close co-ordination has also been made with the HIMA Programme and the DFID supported MBOMIPA Project, both of which are active in the field of natural resources management in Iringa Rural District.

2. Community Involvement in Forest and Natural Resource Management.

2.1 Processes and Methodology in Project Implementation

Joint Forest Management (JFM) and the Community based Forest Management (CBFM) require the involvement of local community at different levels.

In JFM the community is the user alone whereas the owner remains the government. While in CBFM the villagers are both the owner and the user of the resource. However, technical support is to be provided by expertise from Natural Resources personnel in both collaborative cases.

Successful implementation of the project activities required dedicated commitments by all stakeholders, close collaboration with other institutions and harmonised co-ordination of the project components, through multidisciplinary involvement with all key implementers.

The villagers living adjacent to the forests are essentially fully involved in planning and implementation process thus the programme is a participatory one in nature.

Sensitisation of villagers on the value of forest and the important position they hold to that effect is encouraged. Inside the reserves villagers are involved mainly on monitoring and to what extent they can benefit from the reserve in a harmonized manner. In general land and woodlands systems, which support the empowerment of community are built up. Systems are formal or informal using methods and network ranging from regular meetings to formulation of terms of references (guidelines). Sharing of benefits is fairly transparent.

2.2 Achievement

The successes of the project include the following:

Capacity building of villagers and technical staff, improvement of the management of the forests through facilitating mobility of staff and caused awareness of villagers on forest conservation especially joint forest management/community based strategies.

Also activities like aerial survey and mapping, collection of forest data through zoological, botanical and inventory surveys were achieved. Coordination with other institution, like Tree Seed Programme (NTSP), Hifadhi ya Mazingira (HIMA), Udzungwa Mountain National Park (UMNP), Tanzania Forestry Research Institute (TAROFI), University of Dar Es Salaam (UDSM) and non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) was maintained.

Remarkable success was noted with the activity of forest boundary marking where initially villagers were very rigid in compromising with the boundary fixing. Later, awareness was raised on the intended approach and use of the resources (joint forest management) hence influenced the villagers to change their attitude. Villagers advocated for more land to be included on the conservation side. Similarly after establishment of the village natural resource committees and participatory identification of their roles, illegal harvesting of natural resource was more exposed and the committees shown keen interest in being involved in conservation activities. Further, success includes high demands of villagers for planting indigenous tree species like *Azelia* and *Pterocarpus Angolensis* this being attributed by themselves feeling the importance of promoting these species, which are diminishing at an alarming rate.

Women have shown high interest in running their small tree nurseries with bias on species, which are appropriate for fuel wood. A

total number of 100,000 multi-purpose trees seedlings were raised and planted on the project area in a participatory manner.

2.3 Constraints

The Public Sector Reform Policy clearly identifies a reduced role in implementation for the national and local government. Policy legislation enforcement and monitoring are becoming the main government functions with other development activities being delegated to agencies and the private sector. There is increasing technical capacity in the private sector and at the National Universities, which can provide contractual input to rural development and natural resources management programme.

However this resource is not well known and it is not particularly well organised. Projects such as MEMA, however, should be able to make greater use of this under-utilised capacity. A starting point would be the University of Dar es Salaam Consultants Bureau, SUA and the Institute Resource Assessment's Database on National Resources Management Specialists.

2.4 Summary of Lesson Learned

In the implementation process, it has been noted that lack of seriousness in law enforcement at all levels has been a set back to people's participation in management of natural resources and thus illegal access to the forest reserves. On the personal side the project has identified low and inadequate trained manpower both technical and village levels as constraints towards sustainable management of the natural forests.

Experiences showed that perception of the community of the management of natural forests (miombo woodlands), conservation of water sources and poor involvement of women are major causes of not achieving the goal of managing the resources in a sustainable manner.

From social economic survey reports a number of events within the forest reserves, like fires, illegal harvesting grazing etc, would have been minimized by applying indigenous technical knowledge that exists within the community.

Monitoring of project activities has been a slow process, which has lead to non-accomplishment of some issues. Limited alternative sources of fuel wood have been observed to be a big article to reduction of encroachment in forests. It remains the fact that more than 90% of the people in the country are dependent on fuel wood as their only source of domestic energy. This eventually resulted in a high rate of economical utilization of fuel wood in the forests. There is an inadequate market for forest products other than timber. Sales of forest food and medicinal plants could contribute to raise per capita income of the people.

Conflicts in land use systems by different land users like farmers, pastoralists and conservationists has been a problem to most villagers in the project area and outside. This problem is attributed by most villages lacking village boundaries and village land use plans.

2.5 Major Recommendations on Project Implementation

Members of the VNRC require further training and there need to be more discussions with the village populations about the role of the committees;

The project should undertake more public meetings at sub-village level and be careful not to concentrate awareness raising activities on VNRCs and village council only;

To the extent possible village-level activities must reflect village priorities. The project should explain the purpose of activities, which are not in the village plans or which have been given a low priority by the villages;

The project should constantly consider that most primary users of natural resources are poor. Although interested in improving management strategies, they are obliged to give priority to short term economic considerations;

Strategy to support not only capacity building of the VNRCs but also of village council is commendable. There is a need to support the capacity of village councils to undertake participatory decision-making, planning implementation and bookkeeping; and

If the project wants to ensure that those most dependent on natural resources management issues are fully involved in project activities, it has to target the poorest rather than the general population in the village.

Potential areas of donor co-operation include the International Community, Private Sector, Non Government Organisations, Institutions and Parastatals like Nation Tree Seed Programme (NTSP) Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA) etc.

The donor community has great interest in forests for various reasons including the protection of species and contribution towards the reduction of global warming and green house effect. Medical research institutions like Muhimbili and other higher learning research institutions, both from within the country and from abroad benefit in conducting different research such as medicinal plants zoological and botanical surveys.

Other sectors involved and which have a bearing to the forests include the agriculture sector, whose activities may negatively affect the well being of the forest but which on the contrary stand to benefit from the forests through the use of irrigation water flowing.

Projects like Hifadhi ya Mazingira (HIMA), Matumizi Bora ya Malihai Idodi & Pawaga (MBOMIPA); Agricultural Sector Programme Support (ASPS) and other Institution working in the project area contribute in sharing the experiences on the implementation of the activities.

