

# Promoting good forest governance for sustainable livelihood improvement: a Tanzanian example

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*A project in four forest-adjacent villages helped community members identify obstacles to sustainable forest management, propose solutions and begin to implement them.*

In the United Republic of Tanzania, sustainable management, use and conservation of forests and woodlands (covering over 35 million hectares or almost 40 percent of the country's land area) are essential for lasting poverty reduction and sustainable development. Thus good forest governance – referring for the purposes of this article to the formulation, administration and implementation of policies, legislation, regulations, guidelines and norms relating to ownership, access, rights, responsibilities and practices for sustainable management of forests at the local or national levels – is of vital importance. Key principles guiding good governance of forests include equity and justice, empowerment, accountability, transparency, subsidiarity and sustainability (Kenya Forest Service and Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 2007).

In 2007, the Tanzania-based non-

governmental organization Envirocare (see Box) implemented a six-month project to promote good governance in forest management for sustainable livelihood improvement in Kilindi District. The project was supported by the National Forest Programme Facility.

The project worked with four village communities adjacent to Songe-Bokwa forest. It was grounded in the principle that local people's ownership rights and empowerment to govern the resources on which they depend must be recognized. The objectives were:

- to build capacity in forest governance;
- to identify and promote policy, legal, institutional and economic arrangements that contribute to improved forest governance;
- to promote and consolidate equal gender participation in forest decision-making;

## About Envirocare

The Environmental, Human Rights Care and Gender Organization (Envirocare) is a Tanzanian non-profit, non-partisan, non-governmental registered organization founded in 1993 and funded by Hivos (the Netherlands), FAO, ReCoMaP (the Regional Coastal Management Programme of the Indian Ocean Countries) and Care Tanzania. Its vision is to see a society with a clean and safe environment that can benefit all citizens equally and in a sustainable way.

Envirocare implements development projects aimed at improving environmental conservation, people's livelihoods and equitable sharing of natural resources, with a human rights and gender based perspective. It has worked in promoting organic farming and improved farming methods; tree planting and participatory forest management at household and community levels; civic education and HIV/AIDS awareness of youth; economic empowerment of vulnerable groups; and women's rights and agricultural policies favourable to the environment.

For more information, see: [www.envirocaretz.com](http://www.envirocaretz.com)

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*Songe-Bokwa forest was continuously subjected to heavy pressures from livelihood activities, including agricultural encroachment*

- to promote and strengthen transparency in allocation and use of forest resources.

Although the scale and budget of the project were relatively small, this experience demonstrates the complex series of actions required to begin to influence forest outcomes in a local district.

#### SONGE-BOKWA FOREST

The Songe-Bokwa forest in Kilindi District covers about 3 000 ha and shares borders with four villages together having about 10 000 inhabitants: Songe, Bokwa, Vilindwa and Kwamba. The forest is village land; all community members have control over it.

The forest is rich in biodiversity. Economic activities carried out by the forest-adjacent communities include beekeeping, hunting, collection of wild fruits, vegetables, weaving materials and medicinal plants, and extraction of timber and precious stones. Forest resources are thus vital to livelihoods, poverty alleviation and environmental sustainability in the district.

As it was non-reserved, Songe-Bokwa forest did not have a management plan to ensure that local forest-dependent people took responsibility for managing the forest. Sustainability was not given priority; good practices and good forest governance were not in place. The forest was continuously subjected to

heavy pressures from livelihood activities such as random felling, setting of forest fires to enable hunting of wild animals and growth of good forage for livestock, agriculture (permanent and shifting cultivation), unmanaged fuelwood gathering, charcoal making, collection of other forest products and herding of cattle, sheep and goats. After seeing that the resulting depletion of forest resources was contributing to drying of water sources, disappearance of traditional medicines and the need for women to walk long distances for fuelwood, village leaders became interested in promoting more sustainable use of the resources.

#### PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Envirocare organized a series of workshops to identify the problems facing the forest and propose solutions in a participatory manner. Forest-adjacent communities in each of the four villages helped identify the policy, legal, institutional and economic obstacles to sustainable management of the Songe-Bokwa forest and the equitable access and benefits that sustainable forest management entails. Next, communities proposed solutions, and on this basis devised conservation action plans. Other key project activities included training and awareness raising on good forest governance.

#### Obstacles identified by the communities

**Policy and legal obstacles.** The national forest policy's failure to regulate trade in wood- and non-wood forest products was a factor facilitating their unmanaged exploitation, permitting forest destruction and degradation. A further obstacle to sustainable forest management was the lack of harmonization in the policies and laws of the various sectors related to land use – agriculture, wildlife, environment, land development, water, energy and minerals – and the lack of an effective mechanism for intersectoral collaboration.

**Institutional obstacles.** In the usual procedure, the yearly plans for conserving and managing the resources of the Songe-Bokwa forest were generally first discussed by village council members, then taken to the village assembly for public discussion and agreement, and then taken to the ward development council – comprising the village chairpersons and village executive officers of the four villages, the ward executive officer and technical personnel in that particular ward – for further comments. Finally, the plans would be approved by the general meeting of the district (the full council) for implementation.

Unfortunately, village assemblies were not well attended. Local officials with

*Forest-adjacent communities met in workshops to identify obstacles to sustainable forest management, propose solutions and devise a conservation action plan*



personal interests in the forest resources could easily take advantage of the ignorance of the community to protect their own interests.

Local government had limited capacity for law enforcement. Forest guards, forest officers and other stakeholders needed training on the provisions of the Forest Act and associated legislation and guidelines.

**Economic obstacles.** Poverty had increasingly become a major cause of forest decline, since poor forest-adjacent people saw no option but to overexploit the natural resources in order to survive. The communities noted that illegal or unmanaged logging and hunting, collection of medicinal plants, charcoal making and extraction of precious stones were contributing to the degradation of the forest and reducing the quantities of resources available. Investors from outside Kilindi District were also contributing to depletion of the forest resources.

#### Proposed solutions

Solutions proposed by the community workshops included the following:

- making of by-laws;
- tree nursery establishment;
- alternative income-generating activities;
- establishing boundaries for Songe-Bokwa forest;
- conserving water catchments;
- learning forest policies and laws taking good governance into consideration;
- land-use planning;
- establishing forest patrol groups;
- involving the community in forest conservation and planning for sustainable use of forest resources.

#### Conservation action plan

Following the discussion on the causes of environmental degradation and proposed solutions for sustainable management of Songe-Bokwa forest, the beneficiaries

**TABLE 1. Short-term conservation action plan for Mount Bokwa forest**

Activity	Time frame	Responsible
Make by-laws	8/07–10/07	Village chairpersons, village executive secretary, Envirocare
Form forest patrol groups	10/07–12/07	Chairpersons, village executive officers
Start and strengthen beekeeping groups	10/07–11/07	Beekeeping groups, Envirocare, district beekeeping officer
Plant trees	9/07–3/08	Tree nursery establishing groups, Envirocare, district forestry officer
Provide training on hunting wild rabbits using nets instead of fire	10/07–11/07	Elders and Envirocare
Start small income-generation projects (e.g. raising chickens, vegetable gardens, tree nurseries)	10/07–11/07	Group chairpersons, district council, Envirocare
Create awareness on land-use planning	10/07–12/07	Village governments, Envirocare, district land-use officer
Make long-term management plan	8/08–11/08	District council, Envirocare, village governments

devised a short-term conservation action plan listing all activities that were to be implemented for the period of August 2007 to November 2008 (Table 1).

#### Training and awareness raising

In addition to holding local discussions with the communities about good forest governance, the project organized five workshops to train community leaders to promote good practices and raise village awareness. Training was provided for 20 village government leaders and 20 representatives of forest user groups in each village. The training emphasized good governance concepts, local people's empowerment, policy options for promoting good governance

in Songe-Bokwa forest, participatory forest resources assessment and transparent procedures for granting concessions for harvesting forest products. Trainees were equipped with the necessary materials, knowledge and skills to train others in their respective communities.

Information materials produced by Envirocare in the local language, Kiswahili, were given to workshop participants for distribution in the villages. These materials included posters on environmental degradation in Mount Bokwa forest and on good governance in forest conservation, as well as the booklet *Understanding forest policy, laws and land rights in Tanzania*.

*Workshop participants were trained in good governance concepts including local people's empowerment and participatory forest resources assessment*



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*Workshop participants received information materials to raise awareness in their villages*

The project also addressed the different roles of women and men in livelihood activities with respect to management of the available resources and development of alternative income-generating opportunities. This gender perspective helped promote equitable benefit-sharing and more effective local government.

In addition, village groups were trained on fire prevention methods by the district natural resource officer.

#### **Monitoring progress**

To track the efficiency and effectiveness of the planned activities over the course of the project, 20 community members (five from each village) and the Envirocare project management team came together to develop a monitoring system. Measurable indicators were developed in a participatory manner with the beneficiaries (Table 2).

#### **RESULTS**

The project results were monitored for two years. The following is a summary of the progress made during that time.

#### **Increased community awareness of policy intentions to promote people's participation**

The community was made aware of policy aims to encourage people's participation in forest activities. For example, the National Forest Policy includes the statement that: "Local communities will be encouraged to participate in forestry activities. Clearly defined forest land and tree tenure rights will be instituted for local communities, including both men and women."

#### **Greater community response in village assemblies**

Before implementation of the project, the attendance at village assemblies was poor. Of 2 000 people in Songe village, for example, only 100 attended the meetings. But following awareness-

**TABLE 2. Development of indicators for monitoring progress**

Problem	Source of the problem	Impacts	Solution	Indicators
Forest wildfire	Illegal hunting	Forest degradation	Start income-generation activities	Increase in the number of households with small ruminants and chickens
	Honey harvesting		Make by-laws	Increase in water availability
	Pasture regrowth		Establish boundaries for fire control	Increase in number of beehives Decrease in cases of forest fire Increase in number of planted trees
Deforestation	Fuelwood collection	Unreliable rainfall patterns	Make by-laws	Presence of by-laws
	Charcoal burning	Destruction of water catchment	Establish forest patrols	Increase in number of trees planted
	Illegal timber logging		Plant trees	Increase in conserved water catchment area
Encroachment of Mount Bokwa	Shifting cultivation	Soil erosion	Use best agricultural practices	Increase in forest area/cover
	Land scarcity	Destruction of catchment areas	Create awareness on land-use plan	Increase in water flow
	Livestock grazing			
Illegal hunting	Need for income	Extinction of endangered animal species	Make by-laws	Presence of by-laws
	Need for food		Forest patrols	Increase in number of wild animals
			Start alternative income-generation activities	Increase in number of small-scale livestock keepers
Charcoal burning	Lack of income	Environmental degradation	Look for alternative sources of energy and income	Increase in number of households using energy-saving stoves
	Lack of alternative source of energy		Promote tree planting	Increase in number of trees planted in farms and other areas



*Village groups began beekeeping to raise additional income and discourage villagers from setting forest fires*

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raising activities on the importance of participation in forest resource decision-making, attendance increased to 400. More members of the community became concerned about the fast rate of disappearance of their forest resources and recognized the need to participate in decision-making on how the resources should be managed and used.

#### **Enhanced income opportunities**

The project resulted in the formation of several community groups focused on alternative income-generating activities, which are helping to reduce pressure on the forest.

In Songe, the Tumaini women's group started keeping local chickens (200) and cultivated a 2 ha farm which produced 20 bags of beans. The group also made 1 000 energy-saving stoves which were sold at an affordable price in their communities, reducing the time needed for fuelwood collection and giving women more time for other household tasks and for rest. In Kwamba, the Mshikamano group established a 0.4 ha vegetable garden which produced 10 bags of tomatoes and 15 bags of sweet peppers. The income-raising activities have empowered women economically.

The Kiegeya group and the Tumaini men's group of Songe and the Ujamaa group of Bokwa started apiaries in their respective villages. The hives

were placed in the forest to discourage villagers from setting forest fires, since many villagers were investors in the hives. All together, the groups established 100 hives. On average each hive produces 10 litres of honey per harvest, which is then sold for 5 000 shillings (TSh) (about US\$4) per litre.

#### **Increased community response to forest fire, and decreased incidence of fires**

Communities in all four villages became active in the prevention of forest fire. They established fire boundaries and engaged forest patrols and income-generating groups in reporting and fighting forest fire. On one occasion a pastoralist set fire to the forest at Kwamba village. The event was quickly communicated to the community and the fire was put out before major damage could occur. The culprit was caught and fined TSh30 000 (about US\$25).

In Bokwa village no forest fire incident was reported. In Songe village, which used to experience at least five forest fires per year, there was only one reported fire incident, which was quickly put out by village volunteers. Vilindwa village also reported a significant decrease in forest fire incidence. In Kwamba village, annual incidents decreased to three from a previous minimum of seven. It is likely that greater

awareness of the importance of conserving forest resources, increased fire management training and the villagers' desire to protect their beekeeping activities in Songe-Bokwa forest all contributed to the decrease in forest fires.

#### **Decreased encroachment of Mount Bokwa forest**

Implementation of the project resulted in the recovery of over 20 ha of forest that had been encroached by cultivators. The recovery could be partly attributed to the influence of the district commissioner, who gave the order for villagers to stop farming in forest areas. But local people's involvement in creating by-laws to discourage encroachment by outsiders, and in convincing their fellow villagers to stop farming on the forested slopes of Mount Bokwa, also had a role.

#### **Tree nursery establishment and tree planting**

The project supplied the environmental committee of each village with 1 kg of teak (*Tectona grandis*), arborvitae (*Gmelina arborea*) and *Grevillea robusta* seeds and watering cans, racks and shovels, with which they established tree nurseries, raising about 10 000 seedlings in total. The seedlings were distributed to the village communities to start their own forest farms.

#### **Creation of local by-laws**

To persuade forest-adjacent communities to abide by the forest management rules and regulations, the four villages made by-laws in Kiswahili related to the management, access and equitable sharing of natural resources. These were to be taken to the ward development council for discussion and then to the district council for approval.

#### **Formation of forest patrols**

Forest patrols were formed according to the Forest Act No. 14 of 2002. Four patrols of five people each were formed for the four villages. They agreed to

patrol their respective village forest areas (ranging from 71 to 1 666 ha) twice a week on days agreed by them but not disclosed to others. According to the new by-laws, the patrol members are not paid and are therefore exempt from having to work in other village development activities such as construction of classrooms.

#### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although the concept of good governance was relatively new among the beneficiaries, the experience of the project in Bokwa forest was positive. Target groups and stakeholders received the project wholeheartedly; they were eager to learn and cooperated to the fullest during the entire period of project implementation. Forest monitoring continues within other ongoing Envirocare projects in Kilindi District, helping to sustain these outcomes.

The following recommendations may help to continue promoting good governance of forest resource management in the project area and elsewhere.

- **Put good governance in forest management into practice in all village governments.** The village governments must make a commitment to the principles of good governance.
- **Simplify laws.** To be accessible to villagers, laws need to be drafted in language that they can easily understand – in this case non-technical Swahili.
- **Make local government more transparent and accountable.** Accountability in each office is only possible if the people at large, as well as the staff and officers themselves, know what the office is expected to achieve and on which parameters their performance will be judged. All offices involved in natural resource management at the village and district levels should adopt a mission statement and publicize it widely.
- **Protect and reward whistle-blowers.** Villages need to devise by-laws that will protect those who expose illegal loggers or people who set forest fires. The village government might institute annual awards to recognize their contributions in exposing wrongdoings detrimental to forest resources.
- **Maintain discipline in managing natural resources.** Many villagers consider forests on non-reserved land as no man's land. This perception allows illegal loggers to take out timber and other resources as and when they please; it will have to change if good governance in forest management is to be a reality.
- **Continue fighting corruption in harvesting and trade of forest products.** Each village government should identify the areas under its authority that are prone to corruption and take measures to tighten procedures, review the delegation of powers, identify areas of discretion and prepare associated guidelines. Wide publicity should be given to forest-related corruption and the remedial steps taken to deal with it. The public must be convinced that the village government is honest, means business and is bent on eradication of forestry-related corruption.
- **Mainstream good governance in village meetings.** In each meeting, the village government could review the steps taken for good governance.
- **Set up a standing committee on good governance.** The concept of good governance will have to be refined from time to time to adapt to changing societal requirements. A standing committee in each village could continuously interact with stakeholders to make suitable recommendations on the subject.
- **Strengthen and motivate the forest patrols.** The forest patrols need to be equipped with the necessary gear for effective operation (e.g. overalls, boots, torches) and should continue to be exempt from participating

in other village development activities.

- **Strengthen income-generation groups.** Groups generating income through forest conservation related activities, for example tree nursery establishment, tree planting and production of energy-saving stoves, need to be supported in obtaining access to markets for their products.
- **Allocate unprotected forest land for conservation and sustainable use by villagers.** The Kilindi District authority should legally give the communities adjacent to Songe-Bokwa forest the role of conserving it and using its resources sustainably. ♦



#### Bibliography

- Kenya Forest Service & Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources.** 2007. *Forest law enforcement and governance in Kenya*, by W. Mathu. Nairobi, Kenya. ♦