



Tanzania Forest
Conservation Group
Shirika la Kuhifadhi
Misitu ya Asili Tanzania



Community advocacy in the forestry sector: A study of advocacy options for communities to address forest management issues.

By Elida Fundi, MJUMITA Advocacy Officer

December 2012



1.0 Introduction

This study investigates political space options for communities to voice their concerns regarding forest management at the district or national level. It aims at increasing public participation in development initiatives and making important decisions on issues related to forest management. It has been argued that when local communities are involved in forest governance and management and when they benefit from doing so they are far more likely to support sustainable forest management (Envirocare 2007). The majority of rural communities depend heavily on forest products including firewood and charcoal (bio-energy) for their livelihoods. These communities and a large proportion of urban dwellers depend heavily on bio energy. Bio-energy is the main source of fuel for the rural population and accounts for about 90% of the total energy consumption in the country (Blomley and Iddi, 2009). However, for a long time these forests like others in Tanzania have been governed without full participation of the local communities that live in the vicinity of the resources which has resulted in the unsustainable utilization of the resources. It is in this regard that this study tries to identify spaces where community members can have the opportunity to be involved in planning and implementation of forest management initiatives and space to voice their concerns to the higher level about forest governance and related problems.

2.1 Advocacy opportunities in PFM

Participatory Forest Management (PFM) has been adopted in Tanzania as an official strategy to allow for wide participation of stakeholders in forest resource management under Joint Forest Management (JFM) and Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM). The objectives of PFM are to ensure improved forest quality, improved livelihoods, and improved forest governance.

The Village Land Act (1999), The Local Government Act (1982) and Forest Act (2002) together provide the legal basis for villages to identify, declare, own and manage forest resources on village land in ways that are both sustainable and profitable. The Forest Act 2002 recognizes village land forest reserves and provides a provision whereby a village government can make forest management plans, bylaws and rules to be adhered to by resources users. By laws are related to the management and protection of forest resources and stipulate penalties to those who are acting against the law. The Village natural resources committees are empowered to enforce these bylaws in order to protect the forest, levy fines and supervise the procedures of harvesting of forest produce in line with the management plan.

A good example of community based forest management is the SULEDO Forest where 10 villages are managing a 176,000 ha forest and communities in those areas were involved in making many decisions about management of their forest. Revenue collected from the sale of timber from the forest is used to improve health, education and other social services, while revenue collected from charcoal is directly divided among them. Some of the indicators that livelihoods have improved include increases in the number of houses with corrugated iron sheets roofs; improved health care and road maintenance (Blomley and Iddi 2009).

Despite an increase in the coverage of PFM in many parts of the country, communities participating in PFM initiatives have been faced with various challenges such as delays in the signing of joint forest management agreements between community members and the government or private sectors for the purpose of sharing management benefits, which needs assistances from high level authority in order to achieve better forest governance.

2.3 Advocacy opportunities in Village Assembly meetings

The village assembly meeting includes all women and men living in the village and it is supposed to be held at least four times per year and every community members has the responsibility of attending the meeting as stipulated by the Local Government Authority Act of 1982 as amended in 2002 Section 4. The village assembly meeting is the place where community members have the opportunity to presents their needs,

problems and opinions and is used by the majority of Tanzania's communities (REPOA, 2005). When the problem seems to persist or where communities find that they do not have the ability to solve the problem then village leaders can invite government extension officers to attend their meetings and listen to their concerns. If it is within the capacity of the local government to resolve the problem, then action can be taken directly, if not then the matter will be taken to higher level authorities for further actions. The Village Assembly meeting is the place where ordinary citizens have the opportunity to influence decisions on the local government. The village assemblies are statutory meetings intended to review and approve all matters raised by the village council or government. All citizens can attend the meetings and raise any question to the leaders. Also given that the village assembly meeting is a statutory meeting, the minutes of such meetings are sent to the council, in which case the issues raised therein will be known to the civil servants and anybody else interested in knowing what is happening in the lower levels of government. Studies conducted by REPOA (2005) shown that many people make use of the meetings. It is pointed out that people attend meetings, they write letter to the administration, visit local offices, and complain about local government performance in the presence of leaders, and so on. The report further points out that the complaints are picked up by the elected officials, who would then challenge and scrutinize appointed officials in the hope of holding them to account.

2.4 Advocacy opportunities in the Ward Development Committee (WDC) meetings

WDC meeting involves village chairpersons, village executive officers, WEO's, Government officers and CSOs that operate in that ward. Every village leader has the responsibility of making sure that what has been proposed from his/her villages is reflected at the ward plan and also the interests of marginalized groups such as women, children, disabled are also reflected in the ward plan that goes forward to LGA level. The Councilors, who represent the people in the wards, are expected to conduct public meetings to inform the people about decisions made by the Full District Council, inform people about progress on implementation of development plans in the ward. Community members can ask questions and get answers on any issue related to services delivered and forest management in the ward or council.

2.5 Advocacy opportunities in the District Full Council

Full Council is the highest legal organ in the local authorities for making decisions that are to be implemented by the bureaucrats. Full Council meets at least every quarter of the year. The Full Council is supported by a number of committees. These include Finance and Planning Committee, Economic, Works and Environment Committee and Social Services Committee. The membership of these committees is from the list of Councilors. All issues tabled in the Full Council are scrutinized first by the committees and finally the council approves them before forwarded to higher authority level. For example on the issues of budget, the council has the mandatory to approve the LGA budget before forwarded to the regional secretariat and national government. If the budget is not reflecting the needs of the people as planned from the local level (Villages and Wards) then it is their obligation to not approve it until those changes are made (*Haki elimu and policy forum 2007*). Councilors are elected as representatives of the community, and are in danger of not being re-elected if they do not act in the community's interests. CSOs on behalf of communities and individuals can take advantage of this by encouraging councilors to perform their scrutiny and approval role in the interests of marginalized groups, perhaps through presenting research findings on the priorities of these groups, or by arranging for members of the groups to meet with councilors Haki kazi catalyst et all . The proposed plan and budget that is presented to the full council is a public document, which individuals or community members shall be able to access from the Planning Officer or from their councilor. CSOs can also assist councilors by analyzing the proposed LGA budget and publicly commenting on how pro-poor or gender sensitive the budget is. In order to influence accountability and transparency among council members the Local government finance act section 9 provides the opportunities for communities to access reports prepared from full council meeting. The provision states that all council meetings shall be open to the public and minutes of the proceedings shall be open to the public members for inspection. The council director is required to publicize widely the date of the meeting to enable those who want to attend and listen to the intention and strategy of the council while in progress and if there

will be any question then she/he will contact his representatives (councilor) and presents their concerns or opinions. Also the council meeting minutes/reports shall be posted at the public places of the district, wards and villages so that various stakeholders can have the access of the information. Although this is not effectively done in most districts.

2.6 Advocacy opportunities in the District Forest Harvesting Committee

The District Forest Harvesting committee DFHC is the main instrument for implementation of forest harvesting plans. The committee is composed of the District Commissioner (Chairperson), the District Executive Director (Secretary), District Natural resources officer (DNRO) District forest officer (DFO), District Water Engineer and Village representatives (chairperson and VEO) from the villages near to the forests to be harvested. The main function of the Committee is to receive and evaluate applications for harvesting of forest products as requested by various applicants. The other functions include the determination of harvesting areas within the District, preparing and coordinating harvesting plans, and reviewing quarterly reports on harvesting activities prepared by the DFO. The Committee also prepares and maintains a register of all forest products dealers in the District (URT 2009). This data is held under the custodianship of the (DFO). Given that this meeting involves people from higher level authorities who make decisions on policy formulation and implementation then community members through their representatives (Village chairs) have the opportunity to present their concerns regarding natural resources management.

District harvesting allocation committees are required to meet regularly, at least once in every three months (four times per year), to consider applications for harvesting. This is rarely done either because there are inadequate funds for convening the meetings or due to poor attendance as some members give low priority to these meetings (CAG 2012). The Ministry (MNRT) is required to release funds to cater for these meetings on a quarterly basis but some districts have not received such funds for the entire year. Because meetings for approving names of applicants are not consistently conducted, many applicants wait for a longtime as a result these harvesters decide to enter forests and harvest without any approval or license(CAG 2012). However sometimes harvesting permits are granted without the approval of the District forest harvesting committee. Instead approval is provided by DC (Chairperson), the DED (secretary) and other committee members from the district office. This practice is contrary to the guidelines for sustainable harvesting. District officials are sometimes pressurized by Local Government Authority to collect more revenue from the forest by issuing licenses without District Forest Harvesting Committee considerations because most districts depend on forest resources as one of its source of income as pointed out by CAG report. Another challenge is the composition of the committees which limits members to be open and objective. It is practically difficult for DNRO and/or DFO/VEO who are employees of DED to express differences in opinion especially if there are personal/political interests.

2.7 Advocacy opportunities in the Obstacles and Opportunities Development planning process

Budgeting is a way to allocate resources to achieve specific objectives based on program goals and measured results. In community forestry, it measures how effectively and efficiently the funds are used to manage the forest or how the revenue collected serves the public. Tanzanian's Government has committed itself to the participatory planning methodology known as Obstacles and Opportunities to Development (O and OD) which is designed as a bottom up mechanism to ensure that voices of ordinary Tanzanians are heard. Local Government Capital Development Grants are intended to respond to the plans from communities, which will have come from the O & OD planning methodology (*REPOA, 2008*). In all sectors development planning and budgeting of activities for the local communities are suppose to be done using O and OD planning methodology where all people have the opportunity to participate. In case of forest resources management, budgeting begins by listening to community aspirations in forest development planning discussions which often does not occur. Community forestry development planning discussions are held at the village, ward and district levels; at each level, they are conducted in such a way

that the representative from the District Natural Resources Office meet with communities or their representatives in group discussions. Based on the outcomes of the village and ward development planning meetings, the District Natural Resources Department facilitate the drafting of proposals for activities that the community plans to carry out in the following year. Local government officials together with village representatives sift through the proposal and approve activities for inclusion in the preliminary Budget Plan and set the budget ceiling. The draft Budget Plan is then discussed and approved by the Full Council. Once the Full Council has given its approval, the Draft District Budget is then adopted as the District Budget.

O and OD Planning process is a very important opportunity for community members to voice their concern to higher authority such as district authorities; therefore it is the responsibility of every woman and man in the community to attend such meetings and addresses various issues that are facing. On the other hand O and OD shows some weakness that the voices of more marginalized groups in the community, such as women, the disabled and the poor, are not often heard (*Haki elimu and policy forum, 2008*). However the effectiveness of their participation will depend on the extent to which community groups have successfully organized themselves, acquired the information necessary to back up the positions they wish to take in terms of policy/budget priorities, and have chosen effective spokespersons to make their views known, and to feed the results of such meetings back to their communities. Furthermore, in ensuring that community's priorities are included in the national budget plan and implemented according to the plan, some of civil society organization in Tanzania such as Hakikazi catalyst, REPOA, TGNP, Haki elimu and Policy forum have been mobilizing community members to monitor the implementation of the budget to see whether and how public funds are spent through various methodologies such as PETS. CSOs are facilitating communities to use PETS methodology or community score cards to monitor the quality of services they receive in relation to resources allocated (Financial and non financial) to them. People are gathering information about what the budget said would happen and what actually happened. The community feeds the information back to the Government insisting to be provided with the services such as hospitals; classrooms, water etc and publicize the information to the media (PETS, 2008). On the other hand this information can help communities to hold officials accountable for the use of resources and also help to re-set the priorities for spending.

The monitoring and evaluation of the Village Natural Resources Budget and revenue is the responsibility of the community. The community should supervise the Village Natural Resources Budget implementation with respects to its set targets and the revenue collected. At the end of the year, the Village Environmental Committee carryout a self-evaluation of its budget utilization and performance in which it prepares the budget utilization, the performance and the Accountability reports. The village government then integrates the financial reports from other development activities for auditing by the local government.

2.8 Advocacy opportunities in Elections

The local government system is a very important vehicle in establishing the voice of citizens through locally elected bodies. The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania recognizes the need for the people of Tanzania to have control of the elected leaders. The foundation of this constitutional undertaking is provided for under the provision of Article 8 which states categorically that the fountain of all governmental powers is derived from the people who have the sovereign authority on the government (URT, 2005). This provision has been translated into the electoral system of the country under the provision of Article 5 which gives every citizen of the United Republic of Tanzania the right to participate in public elections. The right to participate in elections includes the right to be elected into elective post and the right to vote in every public election (URT, 2005). Generally, this provides the opportunity for communities to use their votes properly to elect a good leader who can fulfill people's demands. Also during election campaigns communities get opportunities to raise their concerns over political leaders who did not fulfill the needs of the communities in their previous tenure. The elected leaders have the

responsibilities of implementing the decisions made by those who elected them and communities have the right to demand accountability of the implementation of the decisions made.

In reality this is not the case in Tanzania, instead what we are experiencing is that politicians are the ones who make most of decisions for the communities and communities are forced to implement even what they don't want. Most of the time politicians are staying outside of their province deciding what they think is right for their communities and they only appear in their province during election period. It is now the right time for citizens to use elections to elect people who are very responsible and are ready to implement what people want. If a leader is unable to fulfill people's requirements then community members should make him step down from his/her position and replace him/her with the right person. Also MJUMITA members should be encouraged to contest for various leadership positions and effectively participate in voting for the right person.

2.9 Advocacy opportunities through CSO or NGO's

Civil society organizations are very important instruments in effective participation and involvement of community members on decision making on issues related to natural resources. CSOs have played a crucial role in informing and sensitizing people on various issues that may affect them and this has been recognized by the government (Haki elimu and policy forum 2008). CSOs are involved deliberately in carrying out activities of civic education, as well as sensitization on issues of law, health, agriculture, environment, gender, accountability, transparency, integrity and human rights. For example ActionAid in Tanzania is facilitating community members in Zanzibar to use a community score cards to evaluate the performance of projects under the Tanzania Social Action Fund (TASAF). This enables local level individuals and user groups at community level to provide feedback and exercise their voice vis –a-vis central and local government and other services provider as well as encouraging accountability. Also through this information CSOs will have the opportunity of forwarding people's concern to the government to influence changes on decision made.

2.10 Advocacy opportunities through the Media

Media is the tool which can transmit messages quickly from one place to another and is the way communities can voice their concerns to the higher level authorities and get responses quickly relative to other means of communications. Generally media is connecting people in order to bring communication and change in the community. The number of media outlets in Tanzania is increasing including television stations, radio stations and print media outlets. Most are concentrated in Dar es salaam and outreach to other regions and district is more limited. Despite the limited coverage, the media have been contributing positively in addressing threats facing forest management and forest governance in Tanzania. For example, through the media, communities living adjacent to Chome forest reserve in Same district-Kilimanjaro region were able to present their concerns about the destruction of the forest caused by people mining gold within the forest reserve. In reacting to this publicized information a Member of Parliament Anna Kilango Malechela with her team visited the area and observed the high destruction of forest in the area. As a result Chome forest reserve authorities received additional funds from central government for patrolling and evicting people doing mining within the forest.

2.11 Advocacy opportunities through Community/Public forums

Community-to-community dialogue by providing a forum where communities and their local governments can meet, share their concerns and discuss practical strategies and solutions for improving decision-making on natural resources management/mutual support in achieving better environmental governance (UNDP,2005). Forums can act as a mechanism to push issues forward to improve policies, practice and governance by bringing together like-minded individuals. One example of communities participating in a community dialogue forum occurs amongst the communities living adjacent to Mahale National park. The forum involves representatives of village environmental committee members and village council members of all villages living adjacent to Mahale national park; government officials, NGO's and civil society

organizations working in the area as well as Tanzania national park staff working in Mahale National park. The forum discusses different issues related to the management of Mahale Mountains National Park such as resolving conflict caused by management of the park, community development projects supported by the Park and community forest management issues such as Participatory Forest Management (PFM). For example Mahale mountains national park authority and community members living adjacent to the park had a boundary conflict for a long time but after the establishment of community dialogue forum the issue was brought up and members discussed on how to resolve the problem. The feedback of the meeting was sent to government authorities and as a result district land surveying unit visited the area and put a clear demarcation between the park and adjacent villages.

3.0 Conclusion

To conclude, Tanzania's government is committed in establishing good policies and laws that provide opportunities for community members to be involved in planning for forest management activities as well as other development programs. However, there is little effort made or nothing at all by the government in making sure that people are becoming aware of the available opportunities and utilize them as well as making funds available to implement those activities. The experience shows that the government is giving low priority to those issues emphasizing on participatory planning and management as most of the time these activities are not allocated funds from central government. For example in the past two years Iringa rural district has not received any funds from the Central Government to implement Participatory forest management activities as a result most of the activities planned for the year 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 were not carried out. Most of the time these activities are supported by different NGOs and development partners who provide an important contribution to ensure that decentralization and devolution policy is implemented in different sectors. Instead there is a dependence on donors to fund the implementation of that policy which sometimes fails to happen. It is time now for the government to put more effort by setting aside enough budget to implement those activities so that community members can get chances to present their concerns and be heard.

Reference:

Blomley,T and Idd, S (2009), Participatory Forest Management in Tanzania: 1993 – 2009:
Lesson learned and experience to date

Controller and Auditor General CAG,(2012). Performance Audit on Management of Forest
Harvesting by the Ministry of Natural resources and Tourism. Dar es salaam.

Envirocare (2007), Training Manual on Good forest Governance at Community level

Haki elimu and policy forum(2008). Understanding the budget process in Tanzania:
A civil society guideline

REPOA (2008), The Oversight Process of Local Councils in Tanzania: A report prepared by
Research on Poverty Alleviation

PET(2008), Follow the Money: A resources book Trainers on Public Expenditures
Tracking in Tanzania; A manual created by Hakikazi Catalyst, REPOA and TGNP

UNDP (2005), Promoting Trans-boundary Dialogue among Communities and Local
Governments in the Lower Mekong River Basin Area. Workshop report 8th -9th
December 2005, Vientiane, Laos PDR

URT (2009). Guidelines for Harvesting in Village Land Forest Reserves; Ministry of Natural
Resources and Tourism, Forestry and Beekeeping Division, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania,
with assistance from the Tanzania Forest Conservation and Management Project
(TFCMP) and the Danish government

URT (2005), The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania of 1977 and amended in 2005