

Community involvement in forest management: first experiences from Tanzania

The Gologolo Joint Forest Management Project:
a case study from the West Usambara Mountains

by **Said Iddi**

Director of Forestry and Beekeeping (DFOB), Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Tanzania

SUMMARY

All forest areas in Tanzania are under increasing pressure from encroachment, shifting cultivation, illegal fuelwood and timber harvesting as well as charcoal burning, uncontrolled grazing and fires, which result in deforestation. It has been recognized that the government alone is not able to protect and manage forest resources sustainably. Community involvement in forest management together with clarification of ownership and user rights is seen as a possible solution.

First experiences from various pilot projects have already provided useful information. These projects include examples of: (i) joint forest management in national forest reserves and plantations (Gologolo, Urumwa and Tabora); and (ii) community forestry in several forests on public or village land (Chambogo, Babati and Singida). Indeed, these pilot projects provided valuable input for the revision of the forest policy in 1998, and community involvement in forest management has now been given prominence. The pertinent policy statements cover the following areas: (i) establishment of joint forest management agreements for government and village forest reserves with appropriate user rights and benefits for local communities; and (ii) establishment of a legal framework for the promotion of private and community-based ownership of forests and trees. The challenge now is to extend the approach countrywide.



Identification of the case

The Gologolo Joint Forest Management Project is one of the pilot projects in which community involvement is practised and tested in Tanzania. The purpose of the project was to put in place joint forest management in an area known as Gologolo Forest Area (c 5 300 ha), which is part of the national Shume-Magamba Forest Reserve (12 425 ha) and consists of forest plantations (c 4 000 ha) and natural forest (c 1 300 ha).

The Shume-Magamba Forest Reserve is located in Lushoto District, Tanga Region in northeastern Tanzania. It lies among the West Usambara Mountains, which are part of the Eastern Arc Mountain Range, an internationally recognized area of high biological diversity and endemism.

The West Usambara Mountains have a long history of settlement. Many villages in the vicinity of the forest areas already existed in the nineteenth century. Other communities – and Gologolo is one of them – date back to the early years of the twentieth century. As the British colonial government determined to clear natural forest areas for softwood plantations, large numbers of people were invited to the area to assist in plantation establishment through the Taungya system. After independence all those farmers who had come to settle over the previous 30-50 years were formally allocated 10-acre plots for cultivation.

Local government in rural Tanzanian villages is well organized, with village governments, subvillage leaders



Gologolo village and the National Forest Reserve it manages with the government

and ten-cell leaders. This structure provides a firm and reliable channel whereby innovations can be communicated as required and within a short time.

In rural areas the economy is mainly based on agriculture. The growing population is facing increasing problems because of a shortage of land. Utilization of forest resources is gaining importance as an alternative source of income, but up to now the possible legal uses of forest resources have been very limited for local communities.

Status of the forest resources

The present condition of the forest cover in the project area

The natural forest within the Shume-Magamba Forest Reserve is known to be in an extremely poor condition as a result of uncontrolled fire, illegal timber harvesting, charcoal production, the destructive collection of *mirungi* (*Catha edulis*) leaves – used to make a drug for local consumption – and uncontrolled grazing. Large areas for the regeneration of camphor (*Ocotea usambarensis*), covering one-quarter of the entire estate, have been banned from utilization and have not been monitored effectively for the past decade.

The commercial plantation within the reserve is in no better condition, with over one-third of the estate unplanted following clear felling, some of which took place as long as 20 years ago. As pruning has not been possible during recent years because of financial constraints, the quality of timber is declining. Valuable cedar stands (*Juniperus procera*) have been damaged by debarking (local communities use the bark as roofing material) and degraded by illegal timber use.

Trends in forest degradation and its causes

The main causes of forest degradation are the illegal use of forest products, especially of valuable timber species (see below), and fires. Fires getting out of control (in connection with land preparation), charcoal burning and the collection of wild honey have destroyed large areas of the forest reserve.

The local communities are not committed to the protection of the forest because they do not benefit from it. In addition, young men who have no access to land for cultivation regard forest resources as an alternative source of income. Because the possibilities of obtaining legal user rights are very limited, utilization is mostly illegal. This results in increasing tensions between the forest administration and the local communities.

The forest administration has faced severe financial constraints, preventing much seedling production as well as planting, pruning and other management activities. The infrastructure, especially regarding transport, is very weak. Poor staff management, combined with the steady spread of corrupt practices over recent years, has resulted in the virtual absence of effective protection and management of the reserve.

The Taungya system, which was used to replant the clear-felled areas, was no longer working because the forest administration was not in a position to provide the necessary tree seedlings and pay for tree-planting activities. Therefore, the cleared forest areas under cultivation for crop production steadily increased each year. In addition the proportion of cultivation permits given to non-local people increased. This was probably because they paid large sums of money to the foresters, who were blamed by the local communities for "selling" the forest. This resulted in a decreasing commitment of the local communities to protecting the forest against fires and may even explain why several forest fires have been started deliberately in recent years.

How the forest service acted to mitigate these trends

The forest administration acknowledged the problems of Shume-Magamba Forest Reserve at the beginning of 1997. In order to deal with the problems related to the forest personnel, a new District Catchment Forest Officer in charge of the natural forest and a new Shume Forest Project Officer in charge of the plantation area were appointed. With the support of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the forest administration developed a new approach for the management of the reserve. It was concluded that the problems facing the reserve could probably be most cheaply and sustainably overcome through practical collaboration with the forest-

adjacent communities and in a framework that tackled natural forest and plantation problems together. The two new forest officers responsible were given technical assistance to develop such a project with a pilot community.

The major uses of the forest resources and how they are marketed

In the natural forest area, timber use is generally banned. On a very limited scale, minor uses such as collection of dead wood as fuelwood are permitted.

In the plantation area, licences for softwood are given on a commercial basis to local as well as to non-local sawmillers and timber dealers. The access of the local population to the plantation timber is very limited. Villagers can apply for cultivation rights in the framework of the Taungya system against payment of a cultivation fee. But they have to compete with the forest officers themselves and with influential people from outside the community.

Apart from these legal uses, forest resources are being illegally exploited in a number of ways in both the natural and the plantation areas. They are listed below according to their negative impact:

- timber harvesting, charcoal burning and collection of mirungi chewing leaves to provide alternative sources of income;
- uncontrolled fuelwood collection because resources outside the forest are insufficient;
- debarking of trees (cedar bark for roofing, camphor bark as a spice for cooking, various kinds of tree bark for traditional medicine); and
- uncontrolled grazing and encroachment because of a shortage of land.



Some illegal harvesting of timber is carried out by people who live far away and use local agents. Some influential people from the villages around the forest are also involved. Most of the charcoal is produced in villages bordering the forest near Lushoto, where there is demand for the product. Mirungi leaves are collected by young men from within the district. The other forest resources are used by local communities living in the vicinity of the forest to cover their household demands.

All forest products are for domestic consumption. None are exported.

Control mechanisms and their effectiveness

The reserve is patrolled by forest guards (one guard per 1 000 ha). They are not in a position to control the whole reserve area, especially the natural forest, which is only partly accessible. The only licences issued by the Shume Forest Project Officer are for softwood – use of hardwood is banned. The control of these licences through hammering, registration and checkpoints is not effective because of corruption and forgery.

The community forestry process

How community forestry became an issue

The forest administration has recognized that the government alone is not able to protect and manage forest resources sustainably. Community involvement in forest management as well as clarification of ownership and user rights is seen as a possible solution.

In addition, the forest administration recognizes the following.

- Most communities living in the vicinity of the Shume-Magamba Forest Reserve consistently indicated longstanding interests in the forest before it was gazetted as a reserve in 1963. Today those “interests” are manifested in the recognition (at least at local level) that different parts of the reserve are linked to the village settlements on their respective boundaries.

- Most people in the villages around the forest reserve do not like those who are involved in illegal timber harvesting. That is probably because they do not benefit from it.
- Most local people see the problems arising from the destruction of the forests, such as changes in weather patterns, less rainfall, shortages and pollution of water, and the negative effects on their agricultural areas.

The village of Gologolo was selected as a pilot community. The village has nine subvillages with forest areas within their boundaries, and one subvillage with no forest area. One reason for selecting Gologolo is the fact that it covers a large part of the reserve and includes natural forest and plantation areas. In addition it is easy for the forest officers to reach. The situation in the area is very challenging because it is densely populated, there is a shortage of land for farming and the villagers very much depend on the forest. The forest administration thought that if it could improve the situation here, it would be easy to replicate the approach in other areas.

The implementation of community forestry and the approach adopted

The Gologolo Joint Forest Management Project started in September 1997. External financial and consultancy inputs were provided for ten months, up to June 1998. The forest administration made additional funds available. The project’s methodology was strictly to “learn by doing”. The project was planned as a pilot project, to be assessed over time and, if successful, to be replicated elsewhere.

The approach comprises the following implementation steps.

- 1 First, the responsible forest officers presented the idea to the District Commissioner and District Executive Director as well as to the divisional and ward leaders. These are the area’s key leaders and it was important to get their moral support for creating awareness in the villages.
- 2 They then presented the idea to the village council and the village elders in Gologolo. The village elders were included because they had long experience of tree planting and forest protection and the villagers respected them.

- 3 After the forest officers obtained their consent they presented the idea to the village assembly for acceptance and approval to start the process. The village assembly is the main decision-making body of the village, and a quorum is reached only if more than 50 percent of the adult population is present at the meeting. During the village assembly meeting it was agreed that subvillage leaders would select a group of people in their subvillage to participate in a forest walk.
- 4 The forest officers, four representatives of the village council (two men and two women) and the consultant adviser participated in the forest walk. They visited the forest area of each subvillage together with the representatives of the subvillage. The main topics discussed during the walk were the villagers' interest in the forest and the problems that emerged as the walk progressed. At the same time, possible solutions to these problems were discussed, as well as fines concerning illegal forest uses. During these walks the forest officers purposely played a facilitating rather than a determining role.
- 5 After these forest walks all the subvillage groups were invited to participate in a meeting to review all the ideas gathered during the individual visits. About 90 people from all the subvillages participated in this meeting. The aim was to arrive at a common understanding of the problems and to come up with decisions for the solution of individual problems.
- 6 The participants discussed their views concerning the specific problems. They tried to agree upon the best solution. If that was not possible, they decided to accept the solution for which most of the participants voted.
- 7 A first draft of a management plan for the Gologolo Forest Area including a first draft of forest use rules was elaborated, based on the information gathered during this process. This first draft was then tested and adapted over the following months.

A formal joint forest management Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will be signed in the very near future, based on the experiences gained so far. Since the legal provisions for joint forest management are not yet in place, the term MOU will be used for the time being. Because the Gologolo Joint Forest Management Project

is a pilot project, this agreement will have a duration of one year. The implementation will be reviewed and the agreement may possibly be amended and extended.

How community forestry is perceived by the population

The local people very much appreciate the approach of recognizing them as responsible co-managers of the forest reserve. They were highly motivated to start the process because they very much depend on the forest resources. They need the cultivation rights on clear-felled areas because of a land shortage outside the forest. They appreciate the alternative income resources now offered to them, and the clarification of user rights concerning forest resources.

The main incentives to follow community forestry and who is involved in it

Based on the experiences gathered during the implementation of the project, a joint forest management agreement was drawn up by the community and the forest administration. This agreement specifies responsibilities, rights and benefits of each partner as follows.

Village partner

Responsibilities

The main responsibility of the village partner is to patrol the Gologolo Forest Area and protect it against illegal uses of forest products and against fires. An additional responsibility of the village partner concerns the contribution to the replanting of plantation areas through subsidized labour (50 percent of minimum wage rates). A minimum of 80 ha is to be replanted annually.

Rights

- determine who should cultivate open plantation areas within the Gologolo Forest Area;
- receive all relevant information on harvesting arrangements or any other forest development matter from the government partner;
- apprehend and fine those people who do not follow the agreed forest use conditions; and
- use the revenue from fines and related income to support protection management or community needs.

Benefits

- exclusive access to minor forest products;
- exemption from payment of the annual fees for cultivation on open plantation areas;
- priority for employment opportunities within the forest administration; and
- in addition to the written agreement, proceeds from the sale of 1 ha of mature softwood were given in 1998.

Government partner

Responsibilities

The main responsibilities of the government partner are to support the village partner in fulfilling its responsibilities and to solve conflicts with neighbouring villages or within the village of Gologolo. In addition, the government partner should encourage its staff and workers to support the efforts of the village partner.

Rights

- intervene if the village partner does not fulfil its responsibilities concerning the protection of the forest;
- inspect the record books of the joint forest management committee and the subvillage forest committees and require action to be taken in the event of inaccuracies or problems arising;
- intervene and mediate in the event of an unsolved dispute arising within the village partner or between the village partner and others; and
- determine which fallen or standing dead wood is available to the villagers and approve the methods of extraction.

Benefits

- more rapid and cheaper replanting of long-established open plantation areas;
- reduction in unregulated, illegal and damaging uses of the forest;
- improved coverage and effectiveness of protection of the Gologolo Forest Area;
- rehabilitation of degraded natural forest areas through closure and protection by the village partner and, in some cases, its assistance in regeneration;



"You are now entering the Gologolo Forest Area. This forest is guarded and looked after by the people of Gologolo village together with the government. Warning: the rules of Gologolo village apply."

- reduction in conflicts between State and people in the use and management of the forest; and
- decreased requirements for forest administration staff, thereby reducing costs.

Institutional changes necessary to enable community forestry

The established management system comprises forest committees at subvillage level and a central coordinating committee at village level. The subvillage forest committee consists of the subvillage chairperson and five additional representatives. The population of the subvillage selected the members. The committee members then selected a chairperson and a secretary for the committee.

At village level a joint forest management committee was formed as an official committee of the village council. It consists of 28 persons:

- two representatives from each of the nine subvillage forest committees;
- one representative from the subvillage with no forest;
- three members of the village council;
- the two responsible forest officers;

- in addition, four women, appointed by the village assembly to represent women's views. This was necessary because women were underrepresented in the subvillage forest committees.

The members of the joint forest management committee selected a chairperson and a secretary. Once the central government representatives (the two forest officers) became members of the responsible committee of the district council, the link between the central government and the local government was ensured.

The obstacles and how the forest service has reacted

At present no legal provisions exist for joint forest management agreements. Nevertheless the forest legislation is currently under review and it is expected that provisions for joint forest management will be considered. The lack of provision was overcome by exercising the power of the Director of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division to give specific instructions for joint forest management in Gologolo under the Forest Ordinance.

A specific legal obstacle is the fact that only government civil servants are empowered to collect fines under the Forest Ordinance, whereas it is considered important that the villagers themselves are able to fine offenders under joint forest management arrangements. For the time being this problem has been overcome through temporary permission granted by the Director of the Forestry and Beekeeping Division.

In the first year of implementation (1998), the planting target of 100 ha by villagers could not be reached. The partners reacted to this obstacle by agreeing that the forest administration would pay 50 percent of the minimum wage rate for the planting of 80 ha annually.

Some cases of abuse of power by the village partner have occurred. The partners need to gain experience of how to handle these problems.



The impact of community forestry on the conservation and management of forests

The achievements so far

- The protection of the forest has improved considerably. There is now more control over burning permits, hence fewer forest fires, and the plantation areas have benefited from this. The reporting system regarding offences and offenders has been improved and is now more effective. The natural forest has benefited in much the same way as the plantation areas. In addition, patrols have increased, hence the control of illegal uses is more effective.
- There is a better understanding and mutual trust between the forest administration and the villagers, resulting in a reduction of conflicts.
- Boundary disputes between Gologolo and the surrounding villages, as well as between subvillages within the forest area of the village, are more easily resolved.
- Overall, there is some saving in the costs of silvicultural operations (replanting and weeding). But there are even more considerable savings related to the protection of the forest, i.e. reduction of loss of forest value through fires and illegal extraction of timber.

The tangibility of the results

The protection of the forest has improved substantially. For instance, since the start of the joint forest management process almost no illegal timber harvesting and few fires have been observed.

But it must be recognized that the motivation of the villagers to protect the forest against illegal uses of forest resources is declining. Villagers have realized that patrolling is a tough job, involving a lot of hiking over long distances in an area – especially in the natural forest – with limited accessibility. The financial incentives to do this patrolling do not seem to be sufficient. The better the forest is protected by the patrolmen, the less revenue can be gathered by the committees through fining those

who contravene the agreed forest use rules. Therefore, the possibilities of income raising or benefit sharing for the villagers have to be reviewed.

Changes in the attitude of the population and the government

From the beginning, the population and the forest officers were highly motivated to improve the protection and management of the forest. Tensions between the foresters and the population, formerly very serious, have decreased.

Legal and administrative arrangements

The National Forest Policy of 1998 is very supportive of community involvement and clarification of user rights exercised by communities and individuals. The Land Act of 1998 and the Village Land Act of 1998 underline these policy statements. The forest legislation currently under review will provide the legal basis for the involvement of communities in management of the forest resources. For the Gologolo Joint Forest Management Project a provisional arrangement (MOU) has been elaborated.

Control mechanisms at village level

Several precautions have been taken to ensure accountability and transparency in the village community. First, joint forest management could only come into existence after being approved by the village assembly; second, the joint forest management committee is part of the village government structure; and third, the composition of the joint forest management-related committees at village and subvillage levels ensures that all villagers are informed about, and can control, the process.



How the forest service regulates and monitors community forestry activities

The implementation of the joint forest management MOU is guided by the Gologolo Forest Management Guide (detailed forest rules) and a Five-Year Management Plan (plan of operation). Based on these documents a simple monitoring plan has been developed, which allows the forest service to arrive at a fair assessment of progress.

Taxation of community forestry products

At present there is no specific taxation system in place for joint forest management but this may become an issue in future, especially with respect to a modified benefit sharing between the joint forest management partners.

The prospects for community forestry and the sustainability of its implementation

Since the revision of the forest policy in 1998, community involvement in forest management has been given prominence. The example of Gologolo has encouraged the forest administration and a number of neighbouring villages to enter into similar arrangements. The challenge now is to extend the approach countrywide. By now, the community forestry approach is included in almost all new development projects.

Various reform processes (for instance reform of the civil service and local government) under way in the country also promote the delegation of responsibility to local government. This ensures the institutional sustainability of community involvement. The Gologolo example shows that joint forest management can result in considerable financial savings for the government. As far as the community is concerned, better regulation of benefit sharing might be necessary for reasons of sustainability.

External supports needed

The promotion of community forestry is a surprisingly cheap undertaking. The replication will not need much external support, if any. It is mainly a problem of financing the transport of forest staff, to make sure that they are able to reach the villages in the area under their

administration. In future this should be possible through a revised retention system within the forest administration.

Only in the initial stages of developing community forestry approaches are more substantial inputs required with regard to the provision of technical assistance for the forest officers in charge. Experienced personnel in the forest service or consultants can provide such technical assistance.

No shortcomings of community forestry have been noted, but there are challenges, which are reflected below.

Recommendations for the promotion of community forestry

The pertinent policy statements cover the following areas:

- establishment of joint forest management agreements for government and village forest reserves with appropriate user rights and benefits for local communities; and
- establishment of a legal framework for the promotion of private and community-based ownership of forests and trees.

The main lessons learned and how they can be used to promote community forestry in Tanzania and other countries

It is amazing how cheap the promotion of community forestry can be. Hardly any additional finance is required. The main precondition is the willingness of the forest administration to acknowledge the communities as partners in decision making and to share the benefits of forest management.

Community forestry can only work if the key people involved have integrity, i.e. they are not corrupt and involved in illegal practices. The forest administration must be aware that this may require changes related to staff management.

Community forestry is a challenge in communications skills for all partners involved. Decisions cannot be taken in isolation any more, proposals need to be discussed and compromises will frequently be the only solutions. This implies that the process needs more time than may have been considered necessary at the beginning. The extent to which the officers in charge need special training in this respect must be explored.

One must be aware that the introduction of community forestry will always face resistance to change, because there will always be losers, either forest officers (who are deprived of illegal personal advantages) or community members (now being "controlled" by other members of the community).

It is important to mention that problems and problem solving in the course of implementing community forestry schemes are part of the process. Obstacles and mistakes should not be taken as failures but challenges and opportunities for improvement. A Kiswahili proverb says: "To make a mistake is not a failure but to repeat a mistake is a serious failure."

Lastly, it must be ensured that the advantages and benefits to both partners are shared in a fair way. The forest administration should be aware that its savings through decreased loss of forest value (fewer fires and less illegal timber harvesting) justify sharing the proceeds of forest management with the community partner.

These lessons learned are of general relevance and should probably be considered in the promotion of community forestry in other parts of Tanzania and other countries in the region.



Creating an enabling environment for community forestry in Tanzania and the Africa Region: what is necessary and what has been achieved so far

The political will for increased people's participation in decision making is a precondition for promotion of community forestry. In Tanzania, this exists. Prominent examples of this are the general political support for decentralization, the National Forest Policy of 1998, the Land Act of 1998, the Village Land Act of 1998 and the First Draft Bill for a Forest Act.

One cannot, however, assume that the contents and the spirit of the newly developed policies and legislation are commonly known. Therefore, awareness-creation work-

shops to inform the different stakeholders on all levels are necessary. In March and April 1999, such workshops were conducted nationwide to introduce the forest policy.

It cannot be taken for granted that all forest personnel have the skills necessary to promote community forestry. Training programmes for forestry staff are required. For Tanzania, initial training was provided through on-the-job support by a consultant. Meanwhile, formal training opportunities are offered. At national level it is planned to deploy a long-term external adviser to support the community forestry approach.

To promote community forestry countrywide, guidelines need to be developed. At this point in time it seems to be necessary to gather more experience before general guidelines can be elaborated.