

Community forestry in Namibia

Scope and main objectives

A Community Forest (CF) is an area in the communal lands of Namibia for which local communities have obtained the rights to manage forests, woodlands and other types of natural vegetation according to the provisions of the Forest Act No. 12 of 2001. CF management is guided by the principles of sustainable management, whereby it should not deplete but should maintain and improve the resource base and involves the sharing of benefits among all local residents.

The program is aimed at establishing CFs through the devolution of sustainable management and utilization rights of forest resources, enabling local communities to generate income from those areas in accordance with the Forest Act. CFs empower local people to take responsibility.

Innovative approach/Results

Since 1996, 32 CFs have been declared and gazetted over a total area of 301 952 hectares.

Income generation activities in various community forests:

- Harvesting of resins from *Commiphora wildii* used locally for perfume and Devil's claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*) currently being sold to international markets and Guinea fowls farming
- Harvesting permits for fruit and grass, Mopani worms, poles, firewood, timber and craft-making carpentry and ecotourism,
- Communities control the use of forests through community-based permit system
- The average earning from community forest is about N\$100 000/year
- Capacity building
- Traditional and customary forest use and grazing rights are secured
- Employment opportunities by recruiting local people in forest fires management activities
- Global benefit: reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase carbon sequestration



Conclusions/ Lessons learned

Community based natural resource management in Namibia focuses on the management and conservation of community forests and communal conservancies. In community forests the focus is on the management of natural vegetation, whereas communal conservancies promote the community-based management of wildlife and the development of tourism. While both strategies follow the same principles in Namibia, conservancies and community forests are implemented by different ministries and are based on different policies and legal frameworks. Thus, the integration of community-based forest and wildlife management requires the harmonization of related policies and legal frameworks. Community Forestry in Namibia programme has gain recognition from different support agencies and donors because it has provided convincing examples of integrated land and natural resource management.

